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CURSES, HALLELUJAHS, AND AMENS: THE RHETORIC
OF DANIEL DEFOE--A CASE STUDY
IN DIDACTIC FICTION

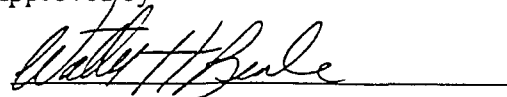
by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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1996

Approved by

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Walter H. Bule", is written over a horizontal line.

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APPROVAL PAGE

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ASHBURN, BETH A., Ph.D. Curses, Hallelujahs, and Amens: The Rhetoric of Daniel Defoe--A Case Study in Didactic Fiction. (1996)
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In *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, Wayne Booth asserts that "we need a criticism that can explain why some cursings of God and shouts of hallelujah succeed and some fail" (188). He is referring to the dilemma presented by didactic fiction. Such fiction exists in a critical gap for which students of literature have little specific terminology. This study is an exploration into the appropriate criteria for the evaluation of fiction which claims to teach a lesson.

Part One examines Defoe's non-fictional rhetoric, searching for rhetorical patterns which might illuminate his didactic fiction. Three significant factors emerge: the role of blame, the role of the audience, and the role of truth.

Part Two endeavors to ascertain if these three areas operate similarly in Defoe's major fiction to allow for an effective combination of didacticism and artistry. Three novels, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*, are analyzed in detail.

The comparison results in a definite correlation between the specific rhetorical techniques used repeatedly by Defoe to persuade audiences to act politically, morally, or economically and the goals and methods which define early fictions. The connection presents a clear case for the inherent didacticism of the novel. More importantly, these techniques offer a vocabulary to facilitate an ongoing and expanded discussion of didactic fiction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Question.	1
Explanation of the Method	4
1. THE LIFE OF DANIEL DEFOE	8
2. THE ROLE OF BLAME IN THE RHETORIC OF DEFOE.	23
<i>The True-Born Englishman</i> (Blame by Ridicule)	27
<i>King William's Affection</i> (Blame by False Praise)	31
<i>The Protestant Monastery</i> (Blame by Example).	33
3. THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN THE RHETORIC OF DEFOE.	37
<i>The Shortest Way with the Dissenters</i>	37
<i>A Hymn to the Pillory</i>	50
4. THE ROLE OF TRUTH IN THE RHETORIC OF DEFOE	57
<i>A Declaration of Truth to Benjamin Hoadly</i>	60
<i>A Friendly Epistle by Way of Reproof</i>	66
<i>An Appeal to Honour and Justice</i>	70
5. THE FUNCTION OF BLAME IN <i>ROBINSON CRUSOE</i>	82
God and Blame.	92
Defoe and Blame.	95
Crusoe and Blame	96
Readers and Blame	100

6. THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN <i>MOLL FLANDERS</i>	111
Moll the Character	115
Moll the Narrator	135
Defoe the Author/Editor.	140
7. THE ROLE OF TRUTH IN <i>ROXANA</i>	143
Truth by Contraries	147
Truth by Silence	154
8. CONCLUSION.	164
General Conclusions	164
Recommendations for Further Study	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	172

CURSES, HALLELUJAHS, AND AMENS:

THE RHETORIC OF DANIEL DEFOE--A CASE STUDY IN DIDACTIC FICTION

INTRODUCTION

In his "Epistle to the Pisones," Horace advises aspiring authors to aim both to please and to instruct. In fact he believes that it is essential to be "close to truth" even if the aim is to please. He explains:

The centuries of elders in the audience cannot stand a play that has no moral; the noble young gentlemen ignore an austere composition; but the writer who has combined the pleasant with the useful (*miscuit utile dulci*) wins on all points, by delighting the reader while he gives advice. This kind of book makes money for the *Sosii* (publishers), this kind of book is sold across the sea and prolongs the famous writer's age. (Horace 103-104)

In the broad sense, any critic can respond in one of three ways to Horace's famous dictum. He or she can ascribe to it saying, "to be great, art should improve the world." As early as Plato, the mandate for art to communicate truth in order to safeguard its powerful delight is a recognizable theory. In *The Republic*, Plato discusses at length the dangers of art as imitation and concludes that "hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be admitted into our State" (X, 607). To Plato, other forms of literature are too far removed from truth and too dependent on emotions while simultaneously too powerful; therefore they present a danger to society and must be excluded.

A second response is one founded in contemporary rhetorical and language theory. Here the critic says, "It's not a choice. For better or worse, all language, including literature, is rhetorical--even the choice to abstain from moral judgment is a moral judgment." Examples of this response include Wayne Booth in *The Company We Keep*, Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, and J. Hillis Miller in *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James, and Benjamin*. J. Hillis Miller writes that "there is a peculiar and unexpected relation between the affirmation of universal moral law and storytelling" and continues, "ethics and narration cannot be kept separate, though their relation is neither symmetrical nor harmonious" (2).

The third possible response is total rejection of Horace's advice. This critical response articulates an art for art's sake theory which not only doesn't justify art by its relationship to a truth external to itself, but in fact elevates art to greatness based on its ability to "not mean but be" (MacLeish 1203). While many theories would argue that this position is impossible actually to achieve in a narrative, it is nevertheless the critical stance assumed in theories such as the following described (but not accepted) by J. Paul Hunter in *Before Novels*: "the tendency has been to minimize or deny the presence of didactic elements as much as possible and to pronounce the residue an unfortunate flaw" (54). This theoretical perspective translates into a feeling on the part of critics that the text would be improved as art by the removal of didactic elements and into the critical practice of ignoring such elements in discussions. A further implication of this attitude is the refusal to admit didactic works into the literary canon. Hunter suggests that the canon of early novelists

would be immediately enlarged if "critics could suspend their disbelief long enough to embrace the didactic rhetoric in their books" (*Before Novels* 56).

These three options help determine a reader's view of what is allowed in "the Republic"--in other words what we define as art, what we teach in the classroom, what we define as canonical. It is not the goal of this study to advocate a particular stance although my own is very close to the second. What I am suggesting is that any theory of literature must address the balance of pleasure and instruction. In either of the first aesthetic approaches the critic's expectations necessitate this. However, even in the third, where the author has consciously abandoned Horace's advice to instruct, I believe the tension will be brought to the debate by the audience, many of whom will continue to look for the work's "meaning." This balancing act is a source of rhetorical tension in the writing of narratives (and probably in all communication). No where is this tension more pronounced than in the discussion of works which overtly claim to be didactic. Didactic storytellers must balance their desire to entrance the audience or in Horace's words to "take the heart of the hearer wheresoever they will" (97) with instruction which can often be perceived as boring, preachy, obscure or self-righteous. And in the twentieth century, they must do this in a critical climate which often demeans works for containing obvious moralizing. For didacticism to succeed as art presents a formidable goal--one which has rarely been addressed in literary criticism (a notable exception is John Holloway's *The Victorian Sage*).

Others have recognized the critical gap that exists on the subject of fiction that makes a conscious choice to instruct. In *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*, Wayne

Booth includes a brief discussion about works of fiction whose goal is primarily to gain affirmation or negation (implying moral decisions). Although Booth claims that such literature is often "badly done," he also argues that its critics may have "had no vocabulary for dealing with a literature that aspires to be scripture." He adds: "But this is just to say that we need a criticism that can explain why some cursings of God and shouts of hallelujah succeed and some fail" (*Modern Dogma* 188).

More recently, Michael McKeon in *Origins of the Novel* and J. Paul Hunter in *Before Novels* have written informative and provocative works in which they address issues of didacticism, epistemology, and truth from the standpoint of the genesis and definition of the novel. While their findings are crucial to any understanding of didactic fiction, my goal is ultimately very different. I propose to explore a rhetorical theory of the didactic novel. Why do we accept some moral writings as literature and consign others to the nebulous categories of propaganda and sermons? Is it simply the age in which a writer writes? Was it acceptable to "preach" in eighteenth-century novels but not in twentieth? Is it the graceful way in which some authors pull it off? What rhetorical techniques operate to reduce the natural tension which comes from combining delight and instruction?

In order to explore these questions, I have made two somewhat arbitrary choices. The first is the choice to concentrate on novels in my analysis. I have done this largely because they are of great interest to me. However, I believe it is also possible to argue with J. Hillis Miller that narrative has a compelling connection to rhetoric and to side with Laura Brown in her opinion that the novel as a genre grew in part out of a need to address moral

issues which were not being successfully addressed by the eighteenth-century drama. For Paul Hunter, "the didacticism of the early novel is central to the conception of the species" (226). If the novel was born not only as art but also as rhetoric, then it is especially fruitful to analyze it rhetorically in an effort to determine why and how it succeeded in melding the two goals of instruction and pleasure in an age which offered an ever broadening literary audience.

My second choice is to use Daniel Defoe as a case study. He is an appropriate selection for several reasons. First is his position in history. He wrote his narratives at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a time in which the role of rhetoric was explosive. The century came in with an emphasis on rhetoric similar to the role it played in the courts and legislatures of Athens and the Senate of Rome. However, this time the bulk of the rhetoric was in print. Both Robert Harley and Robert Walpole recognized that their governments could be saved or lost on the back of rhetoric. New rules, ethics, and laws (Licensing Act of 1737) were being made to control this powerful force. Newspapers flourished and pamphlet wars escalated. Information became a valuable commodity. Those clinging to their often precarious political power recognized the strength of the pen and often tried to use it for their own benefit.

Into this world stepped the bankrupt merchant Daniel Defoe carrying only his pen and paper but ready to make his mark on history. He was a dissenter, an economist, a politician, a spy, a sociologist, and a poet, but in each of these fields he was a rhetorician. This is the second reason he makes such a good choice for this study. Paula Backscheider summarizes Defoe's contribution succinctly: "What Defoe brought in knowledge,

experience, piety, understanding of the book trade, and even theory made him absolutely singular. He was an activist, an analyst, and an artist. So intense as all three, so successful and yet so irredeemably outside the literary establishment was he that he was free to create and transform" (*Daniel Defoe: Ambition & Innovation* 218).

By training (he was educated to be a dissenting preacher) and by practice (he made a living largely as a political journalist), Defoe was a rhetorician. His undeniably rhetorical frame of reference makes crucial the rhetorical analysis of his fictional narratives. As a rhetorical subject, he offers amazing breadth including training in a dissenting academy, a long and varied political career, an astounding array of printed materials designed specifically to be persuasive, and an unfortunately frequent exposure to judicial rhetoric.

To the cynic, he might be viewed as finding all the available means of persuasion in order to sell his works and make enough money to live. While not so noble a goal, it is still a rhetorical one. To the more sympathetic observer, Defoe appears as a man with strong views on nearly every subject and a desire to improve his world in every way he could.

I propose to use Defoe's early rhetoric as a base from which to analyze what is usually considered his greatest contribution--his works of fiction. Defoe's larger body of works provides the context from which, as Malinda Snow believes, any fair assessment of his "genuine literary imagination" must be drawn (2). Setting aside the question of what work deserves to be called the first novel, I think it is fair to say that *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* are standing in the threshold of this new form. While all of Defoe's rhetoric is of interest to the rhetorician, my focus will be on the significance of rhetorical methodology in understanding and describing the success or failure of his didactic fiction.

In Wayne Booth's words, I want to provide a "vocabulary for dealing with a literature that aspires to be scripture" and to "explain why some cursings of God and shouts of hallelujah succeed and some fail" (*Modern Dogma* 188). As I have said, some literary criticism tries to separate rhetoric from literature, but that thought would never have occurred to Defoe. Instead he claimed a rhetorical goal for each of his works of fiction, not only because he was a sidetracked Dissenting preacher who needed a pulpit but also because his audience, scared to death of the power of fiction, demanded rhetorical justification for such works. Entertainment alone would never have made *Robinson Crusoe* a best-seller. Defoe's world was looking for answers but refusing to find them in pat solutions or total rejection of faith. At this significant stage, the literary world was revolutionized by the development of the novel. This revolution is the focus of my research--in what ways was the invention of the novel really the creation of a vehicle for combining truth and delight? As literary critics, as students of rhetoric, and as authors, what can we learn about creating that combination today?

CHAPTER ONE

"TE DEUM LAUDAMUS": THE LIFE OF DANIEL DEFOE

No man has tasted differing Fortunes more,
and Thirteen times I have been rich and poor.

Daniel Defoe

The earliest surviving example of Daniel Defoe's writing occurs in his *Meditations*. Printed from a notebook in his own handwriting, signed with his name and initials, and dated 1681, they give us a glimpse into the mind of the young Defoe. The notebook, which is 195 pages long, contains copies of six sermons by John Collins, all preached on virtually the same text: "And he said unto them, Goe ye into All ye World, and preach ye Gospell unto Every Creature. He that Believeth & is Baptized shall be saved but he that Believeth not shall be Damned" (Mark xvi: 15-16) (Healy v). In the last 23 pages, Defoe writes his own spiritual meditations. In them he expresses a religious faith and confidence that biographers have consistently found to be sincere and lifelong in spite of the many contradictory biographical details. Backscheider, for example, concludes that although Defoe may not have attended a regular congregation, may have been excommunicated, and "certainly did and wrote reprehensible things," that he was "never out communion with God" (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 529-30). Richetti reaches a similar conclusion, believing that "Defoe was...steeped in the Scriptures and committed to an uncompromising Christianity" (*Daniel Defoe* 32).

How did a young man who was destined by his father to be a dissenting preacher and who firmly reiterated that he desired only to be clay for a heavenly potter end up as a spy

for Robert Harley and the famous author of *Robinson Crusoe*? The truth is that no one really knows. These *Meditations* are our only knowledge of Defoe from the time we can place him at Charles Morton's dissenting academy at Newington Green around 1675 and the record of his application for a marriage license (1683) in which he claimed to be a "marchant" (Healy viii).

Although we will probably never know exactly why Defoe chose not to preach, we do know that he never ceased to wrestle with and communicate about issues of vice and virtue. In a meditation entitled "of Hapyness Consisting in a Contented Mind," Defoe writes:

Nothing but Vertue is ye Ground of Peace,
Where that Declines, Our Quiet Must Decrease.
Shadows of Satisfaccon may remain,
But where ther's Guilt there allways will be pain,
For Vice and Vertue wou'd Not Disagree,
If both alike Could yield Felicitie.
He Can Not be content That is not Good.

DF (*Meditations* 19-21)

From these early writings to the end of his life, Defoe consistently claimed to be waging a war for virtue and against vice. Although his own actions sometimes detract from his claims, nevertheless his biographers have tended to believe his basic intentions. He considered one of his most powerful tools in his war to be his pen, and I will attempt to show how his fictions are clearly an extension of rhetorical patterns established in his poetry and pamphlets. He believed that vice and virtue needed to be set side by side for people to see and evaluate, trusting that many of them would reject vice and elect virtue

when presented with a choice. He articulated this belief in the power of writing:

"Preaching of Sermons is Speaking to a few of Mankind: Printing of Books is Talking to the whole World" (Preface to *The Storm*). In *A Vindication of the Press: or, an Essay on the Usefulness of Writing, &c.*, Defoe writes that "the best Support of an Arbitrary Power is undoubtedly Ignorance, and this cannot be better cultivated than by an Absolute Denial of Printing." He goes on to state that if printing is not allowed, then the hands of great and patriotic men are tied even while they are trying to remove the blindfold from across the eyes of the general public (7). He certainly leaves no doubt that freedom is better protected by writings of any sort than by suppression and even credits writing with the Protestant Reformation, "the Glory of our Religion" (10).

The path that Defoe followed to become the creator of one of the best known and best loved myths of all time is often fuzzy. For a man whose name has been a household word for over two centuries, surprisingly little factual, biographical information has typically been available. Even simple facts like the date of his birth, the circumstances of his marriage, and the events leading up to his death have remained mysterious. James Sutherland writes that Defoe studies have evidenced two constants: "what has long seemed to be unquestioned fact has been shown to be pure invention, and stories which have appeared to be undoubtedly fictions of Defoe's have turned out to be perfectly true" (9). Even with all the debate surrounding his life and the apparent secrecy cloaking it, there are some facts that do shed light on his later writings.

We believe that Daniel Defoe was born Daniel Foe in the fall of 1660. His exact birthdate is uncertain, although some have suggested September 30. This tells us several

things. First, we know that his birth coincides with the death of the Commonwealth and the beginning of the Restoration, a less than comfortable entry for a Puritan by birth and belief. The discrepancy in his name also tells us that for whatever reason (some believe an excess of artificial pride but one might also argue for a rhetorical move) Daniel Foe chose to amend his given name to become the more aristocratic Daniel Defoe. His desire for improved social status showed in various ways throughout his life. In middle age, he was often mocked for his ostentatious clothing. He also flaunted his prosperity with a diamond pinky ring, an elbow-length wig, and the purchase of a coat of arms (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe: His Life* 128).

In addition, a birthdate in 1660 places Defoe among the living at the time of the Plague (1665) and the great Fire of London (1666). Although too young to have experienced personally many of the details which he later wrote about in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Defoe may certainly have had some firsthand memories of these events.

His father was a tallow-chandler named James Foe, and he lived with his family in Cripplegate, London. His family had no claim to aristocracy, but there is some suggestion that Mrs. Foe may have been of slightly higher birth than her husband. James Sutherland cites reports that her father may have kept hounds and that Defoe himself claimed to have "had some of the blood of Sir Walter Raleigh in his veins" (2). However, Daniel Foe is generally considered to have come from the new middle class of England. This origin, combined with his family's position as dissenters, had a strong influence on what Defoe later wrote.

Both his class and his religion tended toward isolation in eighteenth-century society.

John Richetti notes this: "Behind Defoe's defiant independence one detects a lingering feeling of marginality and a sense of his alienating distance from the centers of power" (2).

Biographers are nearly certain that although he was a contemporary of Dryden, Bunyan, Milton, Swift, Pepys, Etherege, Sedley, and Pope, he seems to have had no personal contact with them. Of this fact James Sutherland comments: "It is a sad pity; but in that age of bitter religious dissension and public bad temper it was almost inevitable" (25).

Naturally, the fact that he was a Dissenter influenced his education. Defoe attended a boarding school in Dorking for about five years in the 1670's. While we know little about Defoe's academic education there, we do know that the environs became a part of his memory and resurface in his later writing. Defoe reached the age of sixteen while at Rev. Fisher's school in Dorking. Rev. Fisher was apparently a good scholar. According to Bastian, Fisher was "educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, when it was famous as a nursery of Puritan divines, and when he died at the age of 86, he still had notes which he thought it worth while to bequeath, and books in Latin and Greek to divide among his grandchildren" (Bastian 34). At sixteen, Daniel Defoe was at the appropriate age for apprenticeship. The fact that his next step was toward further education indicates that his father thought of him as being set aside for the ministry.

Dissenters, however, were prohibited from sending their children to Oxford or Cambridge, so Mr. Foe had to find another institution of higher learning. Defoe and we are fortunate that his father chose to send him to a dissenting academy that was broader than most--Newington Green. James Foe may have been influenced in this decision by

Samuel Annesley. There he studied under Rev. Charles Morton (later to be president of Harvard [Secord viii]), whose influence is apparent in Defoe's philosophy and writing style. Although Morton was respected both for his spirituality and intellect, he was frequently harassed. According to Backsheider, he was "violating the 'Stamford Oath' that forbade graduates of Oxford and Cambridge to teach 'as in a University'" unless they had been approved by their alma mater. Before finally leaving for America, Morton was "excommunicated, apprehended on a *capias*, repeatedly arrested, and, in his own words, 'infested with Processes from the Bishops Court'" (*Defoe: His Life* 14). His early observation of the sincere religion and extreme persecution of men like Annesley and Morton continued to affect Defoe's view of people, politics, and religion throughout his life (*Defoe: His Life* 12-21)

A special advantage of the Dissenting academy education was that it taught primarily in English rather than Latin, giving Defoe valuable experience writing in the language which would one day make his writings accessible to huge numbers of people. From his Dissenting background, Defoe retained a lifelong contempt for the theater, but his education at Newington and his own habits allowed him to be much more widely read than the typical Puritan might have considered proper. The curriculum was also quite varied, including some Latin, perhaps French and Italian, logic and philosophy, mathematics (which was Rev. Morton's specialty [Sutherland 21]), history, geography, and moral philosophy. Morton consciously made an effort to create a varied curriculum, including the best of Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Independent theologians. He offered a chance to study "conflicting stances on disputed issues" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe: His Life* 15).

This openness surfaces in Defoe's later rhetoric and fiction.

Mr. Foe's choice of school also produced one of the few exceptions to Defoe's isolation from other writers. When the already famous John Bunyan came to preach at Newington Green, it is probable that Daniel Defoe was in the audience. "For an hour or so the future author of *Robinson Crusoe* may have stood listening to the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* as he preached eloquently to the righteous and the sinners" (Sutherland 20).

Whether he ever heard Bunyan speak or not, it is clear that he was influenced by a long tradition of religious writing and speaking. This tradition is one of Puritan confessionals, diary writing, spiritual autobiography, and Guides, which Hunter finds to be "the most popular of the identifiable 'kinds' in all the didactic para-literature of the time--and closest in spirit to the novel." Guides existed for everything from cooking and letter writing to "contentedness" and the "Duty of Virgins" (Hunter *Before Novels* 252-3). Such a tendency to spiritual introspection and constant evaluation of their thought processes gave both authors and readers of the eighteenth century experience and interest in epistemological concerns. Defoe is at the center of this tradition.

However, he inherited his father's interest in business and may have been lost to literature forever if he had experienced only success. Around 1680, Defoe established himself as a merchant. His entry into the world of business coincides with the "financial revolution" and the beginning of the modern age of business. Fortunes were being made much more rapidly than had previously been possible. Defoe's first enterprise seems to have been coordinating the supplier with the seller in the hosiery market. He never liked to be called a hosier, even in later years, although his enemies delighted in calling him a

"dislocated hozier," a "bankrupt sock-seller," and "the son of a four-threaded hose" (Sutherland 29). In fact, he does seem to have supplied a variety of goods, including wine and tobacco, and to have traveled extensively in procuring them. During his travels, he observed much that would later become part of *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (Sutherland 30).

After building a thriving business, he went bankrupt and was forced to look elsewhere for employment. His bankruptcy was probably due to a combination of factors. Certainly, he was temporarily distracted by politics, claiming to have joined the Duke of Monmouth's unsuccessful rebellion. Bastian tells us that Defoe's name does appear thirtieth on a list of thirty-three people who received pardons from the king for their part in the rebellion. In spite of the danger associated with that adventure, Defoe escaped unscathed. However, we also find him participating in the events surrounding the Glorious Revolution, which brought in the reign of the Protestants William and Mary and signaled the end of Catholic kings in England--something clearly of interest to a sincere dissenter.

Even these important distractions, however, do not explain the extent of Defoe's business problems. War had broken out with France, and Defoe lost several cargoes when ships were captured. The root of the problem, however, may have been his own speculation. As an older man, Defoe wrote of the young tradesman's problem when he has traded enough to be rich and to develop a desire to concoct new schemes and plans. He describes such a man's condition as one in which he has more money than he knows what to do with, so he is too ready to accept any proposition which comes his way. At

that moment a young man is in greater danger of failure than at any other time. Defoe also believed that his own failures made him an even better teacher since he had already sunk his ship on just such a rock and could be trusted to know just exactly where in the water it was hidden. He wrote that more people were destroyed by over-trading than by a lack of trade, and he advocated that men who wanted to remain successful set reasonable limits on the level of their ambition (Sutherland 33-34). Of course, this lesson is echoed by Robinson Crusoe, who set out on a path of destruction when he "rejected the voice of Providence, which had mercifully put [him] in a posture or station of life wherein [he] might have been happy and easy," but instead he couldn't believe that for himself or learn it from his parents' example and was left to "mourn" his "folly" (*Robinson Crusoe* 106).

In 1697, Defoe published his first book, *An Essay upon Projects*, which offers proposals for reforming, improving, or creating the banking system, the tax system, worker's compensation, national social security, bankruptcy laws, a national military academy, an English language academy, and an academy for women. Richetti concludes that he argues these points from experience with bankruptcy, law, trade, and travel, adding:

With remarkable consistency and persistence, Defoe advocated similar schemes for the rest of his life. Both practical man of business and high-minded moralist, he continued to the end of his life to issue proposals to reform and rationalize society. In his otherwise embittered last few years, for example, he published in 1728 an exuberant set of proposals, *Augusta Triumphans: Or the Way to Make London the Most Flourishing city in the Universe*. (Richetti 20)

Even the grandiose title helps to paint a picture of Defoe's endless desire to see things around him change for the better--and not just the better but the best "in the Universe." It

is only reasonable to think that these goals continued to influence him when he began to write fictional narratives.

In 1701, he began to publish poetry with amazing success in *The True-Born Englishman*. He represents the changing attitudes of his time in his claim that he could always make a living by his pen. As poetry gave way to pamphleteering, another aspect of Defoe's life emerged. Defoe the Dissenter, businessman, adventurer, and poet found himself in a new kind of trouble. In publishing *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, he claimed he was making a clear statement in favor of the Dissenters and attacking the harshness of the established church leaders. However, he underestimated the depth of their hatred for the Dissenters. Instead of realizing that they were being mocked, they applauded the suggestion that harsher treatment (like killing and deportation) would squash the movement. To his horror he was positioned as being against the Dissenters, from whom his loyalty had never wavered. He was left with a rhetorical and literal nightmare. Once they heard the identity of the author, the church leaders that had been applauding the pamphlet were furious. They realized that they had been made to look both ridiculous and excessively harsh. On the other hand, his Dissenting brethren could not forgive him for having planted the seeds of such bitterness and tended to doubt his innocence. On top of all this, came the legal problems and his apparently real fear of the pillory.

Although he did everything in his power to avoid that particular punishment, he failed, and on July 29, 1703 (Royal Exchange), July 30 (Cheapside), and July 31 (Temple Bar) he was forced to stand in the pillory (John Robert Moore *Defoe in the Pillory* 3). As

evidence of his right to be considered as a rhetorician, we see that from the pillory itself he was "speaking" by way of a new poem entitled *Hymn to the Pillory*. It was being sold in the streets at the exact moment of his punishment. And his confidence in his rhetoric and his fellowman was apparently justified since the crowds around the pillory were amazingly kind. Instead of tormenting him with a barrage of rotten fruits and vegetables, many chose to "pelt" him with flowers instead.

His legal difficulties and his position in a kind of philosophical no man's land forced him to rely on the good graces of Robert Harley. Harley sensed the value and power of Defoe's pen and started him in a new direction. He became a politician and some would use the word spy. He traveled around England and Scotland, observed people and groups, reported his findings to Harley, and wrote pamphlets and essays designed to further the government agenda and to counteract negative sentiments (Backscheider *Defoe: His Life* 160). He became a journalist, writing what would eventually be the twenty volumes of *The Review*. He aligned himself throughout his life with the conservative politicians, claiming always to be a faithful Whig but sometimes causing doubt by his ability to work with moderate Tories if they happened to be in power at the moment. Rather than making him a bad model for our rhetorical study, his pragmatism is probably appropriate.

Frequently his work got him in trouble, and he was sometimes in jail and very often in financial difficulty. He was often accused of switching sides for his own convenience and of using questionable methods to get ahead in business. This is the essence of Alexander Pope's attack on hack writers in *The Dunciad* (Book IV 517-528). The men of letters

found it distasteful that men like Defoe were able to write on demand and for money. However, that concept is not nearly as foreign to the twentieth-century writer or reader. Even Aristotle calls the ability to argue on both sides of an issue a key to a rhetorician's success although he does not recommend using this technique indiscriminately (*Rhetoric* I 1355a). It is nearly impossible for anyone to be sure of the exact circumstances in the ethical dilemmas which surround Defoe, but this is an area that should at least be explored. A few things do seem reasonable to point out. One is that Defoe was a moderate and a practical man. Paula Backscheider credits him with being "consistent" in many of his major positions, sometimes contradicting himself for "rhetorical" rather than "substantive" reasons (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 293). Other times his apparent contradictions evidence an honest change of mind in response to a new set of circumstances (295). He believed that it was worth compromising to accomplish a goal. He claimed that he "wanted to open people's eyes and bring them to temperate behavior" (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe: His Life* 296). He also had a lot of enemies, and some of his problems seem to have been generated by them. According to the *Daily Journal* of April 29, 1731, at least one contemporary critic saw his lack of attachment to political parties as insignificant compared to his steady support for specific principles including both civil and religious liberty (Lee 468).

Defoe's family has tended to remain a mystery. We know that he was married, perhaps less than happily to Mary Tuffley, probably before he was twenty-four years old. She was twenty years old and brought with her a generous dowry of 3,700 pounds. The wedding took place on January 1, 1684. That he had at least seven children seems certain since he

wrote to Robert Harley: "Seven children whose education calls on me to furnish their heads if I cannot their purses, and which debt if not paid now can never be compounded hereafter, is to me a moving article and helps very often to make me sad" (Defoe to Harley 1703). At certain times in his life there seems to have been some estrangement, from his wife, his favorite and youngest daughter Sophie, and, at the time of his death, from his eldest son.

In his last surviving letter, written to his son-in-law on August 12, 1730, he wrote of his sorrow at not being able to see Baker and his wife Sophie (Defoe's youngest and favorite daughter). Apparently he was in hiding due to the resurfacing of an old debt that Defoe maintained had already been paid. In order to preserve his estate for the care of his wife and children, he had turned it over to his eldest son, Daniel, Jr. and fled. The letter states that his son had broken his heart by allowing his mother and the two children remaining at home to "beg their Bread at his Door, and to crave, as if it were an Alms, what he is bound under hand and Seal, besides the most sacred promises, to supply them with" (Defoe to Henry Baker 12 August 1730).

Having expressed his loneliness and sorrow, Defoe goes on to say that all is still well. He makes this claim based on two criteria: first that he is soon to be in heaven "where the weary are at rest" and second that his life still has a purpose. He describes that purpose as follows: "be it that the Passage is rough, and the Day stormy, by that Way soever He please to bring me to the end of it, I desire to finish Life with this temper of Soul in all Cases: *Te Deum Laudamus*" (Defoe to Henry Baker August 12, 1730). Defoe had nine more months to live.

His last days were lived in relative obscurity, but that anonymity allowed him to maintain his freedom. On April 29th of 1731, the editor of the *Grub Street Journal* celebrated both Defoe's life and, in a sense, the manner of his death, rejoicing humorously that Defoe had managed to live to be an old man, escaping the "*Rope-Makers*" who would have loved to send him to his "long Home, by the *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*" (Lee 468).

By his own words, Defoe lived to bring praise to God with a faith that John Richetti reminds us "it is easy to forget he actually possessed" (14). Yet to understand his didactic fiction, we must keep in mind that Defoe, imperfect though he was, really did want to change the world through his rhetoric. Whatever crisis of faith (as some have speculated) may have kept him from being a Dissenting minister and whatever vicissitudes forced him to write voluminously just to keep his family fed and himself out of debtors' prison, he still avowed again and again in a variety of ways, "I do own that I shall never see a notorious scandalous Magistrate, a whoring drunken clergyman, a lewd debauch'd Justice of the Peace, a publick blaspheming Atheist, but I shall be apt to have a fling at him my way" (*More Reformation, Preface*).

In the nineteenth century, William Lee called Defoe the "most voluminous and versatile of English authors" (473); in the twentieth, Laura Curtis describes him as the "most prolific writer in English history" (*The Versatile Defoe* 1); and John Robert Moore lists well over five hundred titles to Defoe's credit including the twenty volume *Review*. By conservative estimates, he wrote an incredible two and one-half million words between May 1724 and December 1730 (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe: His Life*). He repeatedly

affirmed his faith in his God, his love of his country, and his desire to make a difference. In the chapters which follow I will examine various examples of Defoe's rhetoric in an effort to discover exactly what "his way" of "having a fling" at the wickedness of the world really was.

CHAPTER TWO

"BY THE AUTHOR OF A TRUE-BORN ENGLISHMAN":

THE ROLE OF BLAME IN THE RHETORIC OF DANIEL DEFOE

"The END of satire is reformation."

Daniel Defoe

Defoe took great delight in identifying himself as the author of *A True-Born Englishman*. Certainly this was partly because *A True-Born Englishman* was the poem that made him famous, and he was proud of its success. However, I believe it was also because *A True-Born Englishman* was a rhetorical success. Backscheider contends that he used the signature with the intent of reminding his audience and especially Dissenters of "the times he had earned their praise and admiration" (*Defoe: His Life* 126). With this poem, Defoe changed people's minds and attitudes; with it he attained a level of power that he had not had before. He leaves no doubt about the fact that this poem and many others were written with rhetorical goals beyond simply pleasing the audience and paying the bills. Early, he began writing satires that were context specific and clearly intended to achieve definite results. His early and repeated use of satire leads us to examine a key concept in Defoe's later didactic fiction: the role of blame.

Central to the concept of satire is the need to cast blame on someone or something. This fits right in with Plato's idea for controlling literature by requiring it to be limited to "praise to the Gods" (*The Republic* X, 607) and by extension blame for anything opposed to them. As is true of so many of Plato's critical statements, this view of literature

spawned a tradition--one which has been thoroughly documented by O. B. Hardison in *The Enduring Monument*. The tradition is one in which praise and blame, the rhetorical elements which Aristotle tells us make up epideictic discourse (*Rhetoric* 1358b), provide justification and elevation to literature. Praise and blame provide a defence of poetics by building on Plato's original argument. In this tradition, literature is considered powerful in its ability to influence its audience for good or evil, making morally justifiable and politically expedient only the literature that encourages listeners toward good and away from evil.

For Plato, this could be done in two ways. Either the discourse could be so moving that the audience would be moved to imitate the one being praised and shun the actions of anyone being blamed, or the discourse could be so great that the audience would desire to become as famous as the one commemorated by the work. For this reason, as Hardison explains, literary criticism from Plato to the Renaissance includes an element which makes the connection between great literature and epideictic discourse with its key elements of praise and blame (Hardison 27-42). Therefore, one important area for the analysis of didactic fiction must certainly be how praising and blaming are accomplished.

Although he does not discuss its implication, Wayne Booth also suggests that one key to the mystery of didactic fiction might be the issue of blame. In surveying books that make any attempt at all to look at the "literature of despair" and the "literature of faith," Booth cites John Holloway's *The Victorian Sage* as a potential (although insufficient) model. According to Booth, "the Question is, when is a narrative sage a sage and when is he a phony, and how do we decide?" He adds humorously, "Even that fine little book,

The Rhetoric of Fiction, provides little help here" (*Modern Dogma* 188n). His only suggestion for pursuing such a study comes later when he comments almost incidentally that "to justify the ways of God to man is a subtle business, calling for something that the best responses in this century to our peculiarly threatening holocausts have been in literary forms that allow evil a 'fair hearing'" (*Modern Dogma* 191).

I see a common denominator here. Plato called for poetry to be made up of praise for the good and blame for the evil, and Booth is saying that the way in which the evil (or the blaming half) is handled may be the key to success. I agree. Historically the ethical questions surrounding the treatment of evil have always been at the heart of any view of rhetoric (See, for example, St. Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* Book IV.), and they are at the heart of the decline of the drama and the rise of the novel (Brown *English Dramatic, 1660-1760: An Essay in Generic History*). Such questions are also at the heart of which novels succeed and which fail. Consequently they must also be at the heart of any valid criticism of writings which claim to instruct and to delight.

Laura Brown gives us further reason to look at how Defoe handles the question of evil and the need to cast blame. She has argued that the generic change from drama to the novel helps to define the eighteenth century. In her book *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760*, Brown argues convincingly for a "definition of literary form that includes ideology" (xv). She offers the following definition:

Form is the meaningful aesthetic shape that men and women of a particular historical time and place give to their understanding of reality. It is not a simple reflection of social history. In fact, the connection between literature and society may be invisible, complex, or indirect. But literary form is ultimately imprinted with the ideology of the age. (xv)

She supports her definition with a persuasive discussion of the changes in dramatic form over the years between 1660 and 1760, including evidence to show how generic development relates to ideology. Brown believes that early forms of the period ("heroic action and dramatic social satire") are both "shaped by a social standard of assessment" (xv). In contrast, by 1760 merit is no longer defined by a social standard but by inner worth and "assumes a direct identification between audience and protagonist" (xvi).

She concludes tracing the generic development of the drama of this period with a chapter on the novel because she believes "the rise of the novel defines the decline of the drama," in which "the eighteenth-century moral action simply could not find adequate expression" (184). The problem which Brown characterizes as insurmountable for the eighteenth century drama is that the

virtuous protagonist is excluded from the commission of an error that could motivate the plot, since a genuine flaw would undermine the moral standards which that paragon represents and confers to his or her fictional world. The heroes and heroines of these stories are reduced to inactivity or victimization, and their stasis inhibits the energy and engagement of action, just as their flawless virtue hinders its motivation. (186)

What brings death to the drama as it existed is its inability to handle evil in a way acceptable to the audience. According to Brown, what killed the drama was the same thing which gave the novel the opportunity to separate "qualitatively from its inferior literary precedents" (186).

For Brown, the cure has become synonymous with what we now call realism. Of course, Ian Watt has an expanded discussion of realism in his study *The Rise of the Novel*. If the problem is unmitigated virtue which fails to motivate the plot and leaves inactivity

and victimization it its wake or extensive vice which leaves the audience in doubt about which character (if any) one is supposed to admire, then her theory supports my hypothesis that part of the success of the eighteenth-century novel is found in its ability to deal with the relationship between vice and virtue. In the next chapters I will look at three elements which I believe are important factors in understanding this balance between vice and virtue and therefore between pleasure and instruction: the role of blame, the role of the audience, and the role of truth.

The first issue is the role of blame in didactic fiction. I agree with Wayne Booth that for such fiction to succeed evil must be given a "fair hearing." I interpret that to mean that the moralizing in didactic fiction that is also art is rarely presented in black and white terms. Instead blame is cast less directly, using methods that draw the audience into the process. Defoe uses at least three specific techniques to cast blame in poems and pamphlets that are specifically designed to attribute blame. In these three texts, Defoe blames by ridicule, by praise, and by illustration--all techniques that will aid us in determining how blame operates in the even more complex realm of his didactic fiction.

To satirize or blame by ridicule is an historically common method. One example of Defoe's use of ridicule is *The True-Born Englishman: A Satire* which was written in 1701. It has the added advantage for our purposes of being set in a very specific rhetorical context. Defoe not only claims to have supported the Duke of Monmouth in his unsuccessful attempt to take the throne of England from James II, but when that attempt failed, history records his sincere allegiance to William and Mary, who did gain the throne in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Although Mary was the daughter of James II,

William was not English by birth. In spite of his legitimate claim to the English throne, his status as a "foreigner" caused some hostility which escalated after Mary's death in 1694. The catalyst for Defoe's defense was a pamphlet entitled *The Foreigners*, in which John Tutchin attacked William and his associates.

Defoe's satiric poem argues that the idea of anyone being a true-born Englishman and hence not a foreigner is a concept that is ridiculously inappropriate to the history of England, a country created and developed by an amalgamation of "foreigners." To begin his argument he starts with a Preface in which he states that "the end of satire is reformation, and the author, though he doubts the work of conversion is at a general stop, has put his hand to the plow" (267). I take this to mean that Defoe intends to do all he can in the cause of reformation. This is a goal which I believe he still has later when he begins to write fiction. He prophesies that he will be attacked for the "mean style, rough verse, and incorrect language," but his apology is half-hearted to say the least. Basically, since the book is already printed, he's going to let it stand. Furthermore, we sense none of the tension of an Anne Bradstreet ("An Author to her Book"), who sends her metaphorical child out into the world while still cleaning it up as it walks out the door. Defoe simply states the obvious (that the poem has some unpolished elements) and lets the work go to do its intended purpose. This letting go of the results can be dangerous (and sometimes was for Defoe), but it is also part of his rhetorical success.

As he develops the subject of reformation, Defoe labels English attempts at reform as useless banter as long as "an honest drunken fellow is a character in a man's praise" and while those in positions of authority do not act as examples (268). Then he gets in a jab at

ingratitude particularly in Protestant Jacobites, condemning them for denying their Protestant heritage by trying to restore a "Popish" sovereign, and more generally, castigating Englishmen who enjoy the peace and prosperity of William's reign but abuse the King himself.

Next he moves to an introduction which is one lengthy apostrophe to Satire. He describes England's state as being at peace with the world but at war with each other. The reason for this is, at least in part, a system which allows those in power to overlook any problems as long as the system rewards them. Complaints start as soon as someone loses his office: "And when he must the golden key resign,/ The railing spirit comes about again" (Introduction). They are so foolish that they have spent "fifty millions sterling" and now find themselves "with peace and too much plenty cursed" (Introduction). Defoe calls on Satire to cut deep into the English soul and find the poison which must be flushed out. His method for doing this will be to take them back to their own origins.

In keeping with his goal of reformation, Defoe begins at the root of the blame--the Devil. The comparison is interesting. Defoe says that anytime God "erects a house of prayer,/The Devil always builds a chapel there." The devil's congregation is the biggest, has no nonconformists, and needs no standing army since "He always rules us by our own consent." All of this is needed to set up his point that in order to rule us without seeming to, the devil has gone to great pains to match the vices of a country with the inclinations of its populace, so that we hardly realize we have succumbed.

Pride rules in Spain, Lust in Italy, Drunkenness in Germany, etc. Defoe's strategy is clever since he plays right into his audience's contempt for foreigners, the root cause of the

problem that he is addressing. However, it also gives him time to make another point--that England is a relative baby in the world of nations. As he comes back to the English, he asks Satire to draw a veil over England's vices or at to least balance her vices with her virtues, a technique which Defoe himself favors.

So he begins her history. She is untouched, "beauty guarded but by innocence." But early on she is ruined by ingratitude. Ingratitude, according to Defoe, is a nasty sin to be matched with. It is "ugly, surly, sullen," and "selfish," second only to the Devil in destructive power. Then the devil caused England to be conquered again and again, mixing races, languages, and manners until the new breed was an indistinguishable blend of previous generations. A further insult is given by reminding them that the new strain was often represented by the "dregs" of the army left behind. The gist of this is that when the Romans, for example, finished their invasion, the elite went home and left the ordinary soldiers behind. And on top of that, when a foreigner did stay, he stayed as a noble landowner because the new conqueror had taken the land away from an earlier inhabitant and redistributed it, making the English nobility even more "foreign" than the average peasant. He writes that a Turkish horse has a better pedigree than an English noble.

The final section is very pointed, comparing the proliferation of new nobles under the reign of Charles I to the few that William III had been attacked for appointing. He says that most other nations can boast of family names that go back for centuries, but in England those noble names are not English-Saxon names. His conclusion is that wealth makes you "great" in England and to claim the title of "True-born Englishman" is simply to invite ridicule. The country is so mixed that it could be the fulfillment of Christ's

commission to go into all the world--all the disciples would have to have done was to go to England.

The message was persuasive for several reasons. First, it was widely read. Defoe says the poem sold 80,000 copies in the cheap editions. This meant that it reached a large and varied audience. Second, it rings true. It is a good joke to point out that a mutt is the one denouncing another's pedigree. Third, its popular appeal is ensured by not demeaning or limiting the truth that in England the middle class can and does rise and become a part of the nobility. They were persuaded to blame themselves and their fellow Englishmen for their ingratitude to King William. Instead of being blamed for being a foreigner, William III becomes representative of all their middle class hopes and dreams to accomplish something great. They can identify with the King of England--no wonder they accepted the blame and bought both the pamphlet and the argument.

A second way to blame is by false praise. In *King William's Affection to the Church of England Examined, &c* (1703), Defoe uses ironic praise effectively. He takes on the persona of a clergyman of the Church of England who is supposedly arguing that the Church of England need feel no gratitude toward King William. The clergyman roundly condemns ingratitude, which Defoe also attacks in *A True-Born Englishman*, but says it is not applicable here since gratitude really isn't owed in this case. The arrogance of the persona is immediately signaled in textual clues like the use of K.J. and K.W. for King James and King William and P. of O. for Prince of Orange.

Although written close to the time of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, this piece doesn't fall into the same trap of confusion. The persona claims to argue that King James

was a friend rather than a foe of the Church of England and therefore since the threat was not so very great after all then K.W. (King William) should not be viewed as such a great deliverer. However, Defoe allows the argument to simply fall apart. For example the church man writes:

I hope to prove that the Church of England was in no great apparent danger from the mistakes of King James' government, nor so mightily delivered by K.W.'s but rather put into the utmost hazard of ruin, from the favor then shewed to fanaticks, and the partiality of preferring only such as were underhand friends to schism and Nonconformity; and that therefore the true sons of the church are groundlessly branded for ingratitude as having none of those obligations to K.W. so loudly talked of in all publick places; and that if churchmen were blameable it is in the other extreme, of living so easily and quietly under the government of a foreigner, who deserved so very ill, or so very little of them. (44)

First he says the problems under "James the Just" were "mistakes" or miscarriages:--nothing more. He then proceeds to list them. James shouldn't have

1. Brought so many priests into England
2. Built masshouses and convents
3. Brought a Jesuit into the Privy Council
4. Turned out Fellows of Colleges to be replaced by priests and their converts
5. Forced clergy to read a Declaration in favor of Popery
6. Dispensed with laws
7. Kept a standing army

He summarizes as follows, "These are the formidable miscarriages of that reign against which we have had so many outcries and what do they all amount to, but a few slips in politicks....They [men in high places] are living witnesses" (44-45). Clearly this list was not an enumeration of "little slips" to most English Protestants. By praising King James ineffectually, Defoe manages to blame him without rancor and in the process to blame anyone who has been less than grateful to King William for what Defoe has defined as religious tolerance.

A third method of blame is blame by example. We know Defoe believed in this method of persuasion because we have it in his own words. In the *Preface to The Poor Man's Plea*, he tells his audience that "Reformation of Manners" is an absolute necessity in England. In fact he claims that the "present Torrent of Vice... maintains the Tyranny it has usurp'd on the Lives of the Inhabitants" in obvious ways. Defoe believes something must be done about the problem and he offers a solution: the "most direct means. viz. Reformation by Example." He finds that example "is Persuasive and Gentle, and draws by a Secret, Invisible, and almost Involuntary Power" (*Preface, The Poor Man's Plea*).

In *The Poor Man's Plea*, Defoe elaborates on his argument that examples are needed for persuasion. He believes that reformation will never occur in England as long as there is a double standard. The laws may refer equally to both rich and poor, but in practice the rich are not punished for their vices. In fact, the actual magistrates that punish drunken conduct among the poor may have been drunk the night before themselves. According to Defoe, if the gentry of England would change their own practice, they could change the whole country. In fact, "this would do more to Reforming the rest of Mankind, than all the Punishments the Law can inflict; the Evil encreased by Example, and must be suppress'd the same way" (17). This is, of course, reformation by a living, breathing example of good, but Defoe also practiced reformation by offering a blameworthy written example. In *The Protestant Monastery Or, a Complaint against the Brutality of the Present Age*, Defoe is offering a suggestion for providing for old age. To strengthen his argument and get the attention of his audience, he begins by blaming families for the way

they treat their elderly. Interestingly, this essay is written in Defoe's old age and like many of his suggestions comes from some personal interest and experience in the subject. He writes: "It is well it has never been in the young ones' power, to bring in a bill for the better trimming of mankind, *i.e.* to knock all ancient people on the head" (402). He acknowledges that old people are allowed to live but believes that they suffer many indignities in their old age. He admits that everyone isn't guilty but offers blame to "those who triumph in the strength of their youth, and snuff up their nostrils at old age" (403). He then offers a full 3 1/2 pages of anecdotal example of how heartrending such treatment can be.

He tells of a visit to an old school friend who had recently moved in with his daughter. When he realized that he was weary of his merchant/businessman life, he concocted a plan to marry off his daughter and give her his twelve thousand pound fortune as a dowry. In return he expected a comfortable place in her household. Although he was living with his daughter at the time of the visit, his life was anything but comfortable. Instead, the friend was hungry, sad, and worst of all--powerless.

He lived in one of the least pleasant of the rooms the house had to offer, was afraid to play music for fear of disturbing his daughter, and had to plead in order to gain permission to have Defoe to dinner. Even the man's conversation was treated with contempt. Defoe was surprised by the sparsity of the meal, but later learned that the daughter and her husband had controlled their appetites by eating "in hugger mugger by themselves, a good handsome fowl, and oyster sauce" and drinking "a bottle of wine, though they could drink none" at the table (405).

The result of such an example is twofold. First, we are to be horrified at the treatment that some children offer their parents. We are intended to blame not only those in the story, but all such conduct that we see. In addition we are supposed to do something about it. Remember Defoe's goal is almost always reformation and improvement. In this case, part two of the pamphlet offers a fairly detailed plan for a kind of self-funded retirement home, not unlike many that exist in America today. Each person will contribute a lump sum of money to set up the home's facilities. Certain provisions like a doctor, chaplain, and cook will come from the joint account. Each person will be accountable for furnishing his own apartment so that there will be no question of unfair preference.

In the pamphlets I have discussed, Defoe is determined to convince his audience that blame is due--first to the English people for their treatment of King William, second to King James for his treatment of the Dissenters, and third to the young for their treatment of the old. He does this effectively using three very different techniques: ridicule, praise, and example. Each of these methods requires a kind of two-step procedure in which the audience recognizes the surface meaning and then makes a personal decision to cast blame. Miriam Leranbaum summarizes the way in which blame becomes a two-step process in a satirist's methodology:

The satirist exposes a human condition, vice, folly, danger, sin, or sinner in a way that shakes the reader out of complacency and into new awareness or concern. He does so by a strategy of indirection and distortion that creates a two-step reaction: "I can't believe this!" followed by "But, it's true!" Dead truths thus become live fictions and metamorphose into livelier truths. (Leranbaum 228)

By using these indirect methods that require a two-step thinking process, Defoe accomplishes two important goals. First, he redirects most of the anger which is a

byproduct of blame away from the author and onto the subject being blamed. Second, he involves the audience in the thought process, a key element in Defoe's rhetorical methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

PELT HIM WITH FLOWERS:

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN THE RHETORIC OF DANIEL DEFOE

"The *Hymn to the Pillory* is a most significant document. It is the declaration of a man who expects fair play and who believes he will get it from his fellow citizens if it is denied him in the courts of law."

James Sutherland

A pair of works by Daniel Defoe has significant bearing on an understanding of his didactic fiction. The duet is formed by *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters or Proposals for the Establishment of the Church* and the *Hymn to the Pillory*. The first work, published in December 1702, temporarily turned nearly all of England into Defoe's enemies and was the immediate cause of his sentence to stand three times in the pillory. The second was a direct follow up, which was being sold in the streets at the exact moment that his sentence was being carried out and helped to change the attitudes of his audience so amazingly that they rallied to praise him instead of attack him. These two works studied in tandem demonstrate vividly Defoe's fascinatingly complex relationship with his audience.

Contemporary criticism focuses largely on how to classify *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, as might be illustrated by Maximillian E. Novak's article "Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*: Hoax, Parody, Paradox, Fiction, Irony, Satire," in which he concludes that *The Shortest Way* is a mixture of all of the above. Other critics have worked hard to place it in just one genre or to at least exclude it from the genre of

satire (see for example Miriam Leranbaum). This very dilemma in both the interpretation and classification of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* helps to pinpoint the real problem--our lack of attention to Defoe's view of the audience's role.

The ironic proposal begins with a fable, a move which given the nature of fables might be designed to tell us to look for the hidden meaning of *The Shortest Way*. The story is one of a cock among horses in a stable. Since no provision has been made for his roosting, the cock is forced to roost on the ground. As the horses move about, the cock becomes afraid and says, "Pray, gentlefolks, let us stand still for fear we should tread upon one another." Obviously the cock is trying to protect himself since the horses are in no danger from a small cock's step. Viewed within that frame, we can almost defend Defoe's irony as understandable. (He does a similar thing in *Moll Flanders* when he sets up a frame in the Preface and then chooses to leave us to our own devices in interpreting [misinterpreting?] the rest of the novel.) I believe that it is supposed to be clear from the beginning (at least to some of the audience) that the horses (High Church) are in no danger--they are simply too big and powerful to fear a cock (Dissenters); therefore, this is a ridiculous discussion--only the cocks really need protection.

However, the second paragraph leads us astray. We are primed to sympathize with the defenseless cock, even if he is making his request in a humorous way (and perhaps because of that humor). But the second paragraph reminds us that the cock hasn't always been without a roost. In fact, he adds to our confusion when he reminds his audience that the cock used to be very powerful. Since *The Shortest Way* was published only forty-two years after the Restoration, it was not hard for many people to remember that

during the Commonwealth (1642-1660) the Dissenters had a comfortable roost. With echoes of Cromwell between the lines, the cock does not seem so benign. In addition, Defoe begins here to do what he will do so well in *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*--become the voice of his persona so convincingly that he seems inseparable from his creation. Defoe the ironist sounds like Defoe the High Church man, and the result is confusion.

He goes on to remind the audience that for fourteen years (presumably the reign of William III, who allowed the Dissenters to worship freely) the cock (representing Dissenters) has been an annoying nuisance to the High Church. At this point we are reminded of another rhetorical stumbling block--particularly in the utilization of irony--anonymity. If the audience knew what Defoe knows as he writes, that he has been a loyal Dissenter since he was born, then we would be much more inclined to visualize him with a smirk on his face. His language is certainly overblown and exaggerated when he describes the High Church as having been in "tribulation" and as having "borne with an invincible patience the reproach of the wicked" (283). But instead of catching the tone, we allow ourselves to be sucked into the "false" argument.

"What nerve!" we say with Defoe's persona. "Those Dissenters didn't seek reconciliation while they were in power. Why should we be so kind now when they have nothing left to bargain with?" The power they have actually exercised is neatly if harshly summarized in the following sentence: "You have butchered one king, deposed another king, and made a mock of a third; and yet you could have the face to expect to be

employed and trusted by the fourth!" Secord explains that Charles I is the butchered king (1649 execution by a dissenting parliament), James II the deposed king who abdicated in 1688-9, William III the mock king, and Queen Anne the current "king" (284). The text goes on to mock King William III as having been "reduced to a mere King Clubs." The Dissenters are described as managing him and giving any future princes a warning against "coming into [their] clutches." He adds that the current Queen is wise to their danger and will be careful. No one who knew Defoe would ever presume him serious in such disdain for King William III, whom he sincerely admired. Yet the passage is remarkably convincing. Rhetorically, we must ask ourselves why Defoe would do this.

He makes light of the Dissenters' flight for religious freedom under James I, saying that the "worst they suffered" was to have their request for freedom in the new world granted. The suggestion is that if all Dissenters had been forced at that point to go to the West Indies, the Church of England would not now be divided. This "leniency" is blamed for the "butchering" of Charles I in 1649. Too much "mercy" is thus the cause of "the ruin of the nation's peace" (285).

After describing the way the commonwealth mistreated ministers and took over church property in order to divide it among her soldiers, Defoe uses a Biblical allusion to evoke authority: "Just as such measure as they have meted should be measured to them again" (Matthew 7:2). Then the Church of England is honored with cloyingly (falsely) sweet praises for supposedly following the known doctrine of "charity and love" to such an extent that she has actually been "unkind to her own sons" (286). King Charles II is also

"faulted" for his mercy when his throne was restored since he practiced forgiveness rather than vengeance. His reward--he was deposed. James II tried to court the Dissenters in order to achieve his goals for Catholics, but they were not to be courted. The writer then describes their encroaching behavior under a truly sympathetic monarch--William III--under whose rule they not only took over the ministry but in his words managed it "pitifully" (287).

Then Defoe cites Scotland as a case in point where the Scottish Presbyterians gained control and overcame the Church of England. He promises the Dissenters in England as much mercy as the Scottish Presbyterians showed their opponents. The argument is concrete and damning. It raises a fear of the Dissenters. We believe Defoe's rhetoric rather than finding it exaggerated. If these arguments are exaggerated, and Defoe must have believed that they were, then the ignorance of the audience may be part of his rhetorical downfall. He is trusting them to be able to say "He's got to be joking. Everybody knows it wasn't like that in Scotland." But in our ignorance we say, "Did they really do that to the Episcopalians? How can they expect tolerance now?"

He then makes fun of the desire for a union between Scotland and England (something we know Defoe was in favor of and worked for) by explaining that the "Scotch canting long-cloaks" would have a place in the House of Commons. The language is harsh and should be offensive to the sensibilities of people who value individual worth, but again Defoe may be overestimating his audience. He may also be overestimating himself. Remember he is riding high on his satirical victories. He was able to turn the tide with his

The True-Born Englishman and *Legions* satires. He may be feeling rhetorically invincible and therefore taking excessive risks.

Next he turns from his ironic description of the Dissenters to a critique of their argument. Here I think that the irony is more evident, if the average reader were still looking for it. He mocks their claim that they are numerous saying that it's overrated--even if they are out there in large numbers he adds that the French King "effectually cleared the nation of" the Protestants in France and "we don't find he misses them at home."

A normal reaction to the idea of disenfranchising large numbers of English citizens would be shock. Again Defoe is counting on a mature audience to rise up and say "that's not a solution." Especially demeaning is the next reference to Dissenters as "animals" which will "always desert a house when 'tis likely to fall" (288). Surely, while some Englishmen were frustrated with the nonconformists, they would not seriously view them as rats guaranteed to flee at the first sign of danger. A comparison to animals works successfully in Swift's *A Modest Proposal* to show us that his proposal is ironic. But somehow Defoe's audience missed it.

Although he has argued first that a claim of numerical superiority is ridiculous, his second point is that if by some chance the Dissenters really are numerous, then they are more of a danger and better be extinguished quickly. Third, he calls them a contagion, which perhaps is being tolerated only out of fear that it cannot be suppressed. His advice to the High Church party: Give it their best shot. Maybe they will succeed. The writer says they'll be pleasantly surprised at how easily the Dissenters will be defeated.

Surely at this point Defoe's rhetoric is deteriorating. Why did his audience miss it? He advocates that they exterminate the Dissenters while they have the time rather than to "let slip the minute that Heaven presented" and later complain "post est occasio calva" ("opportunity is bald behind; it can be grasped only by the forelock" [290 N]). The Church of England must act quickly while it has a Queen who favors it. A series of repetitions follows beginning "if ever" indicating that now is the time for action.

Then he supposedly meets the legitimate (in my view and in that of at least part of Defoe's audience) complaint that this is a return to burning heretics--"the Act de heretico comburendo." But for those who consider the actions cruel, he has another analogy. It may seem cruel to kill a snake in cold blood, but because of its poison it is actually a kindness to all around. Snakes are killed not for what they have done but for "the evil they may do" (291). He argues that if they are fools enough to spare the Dissenters while they have them in their power, that they might as well "massacre" their own group so at least they can be allowed to die free. He calls up the authority of Moses, known as the meekest man that ever lived, yet he "cut the throats" of 30,000 Israelites when they fell into idolatry. The implication is that we should follow his example.

Defoe then advocates harsher punishments, getting in a joke at Occasional Conformity, saying "they that will go to church to be chosen sheriffs and mayors would go to forty churches rather than be hanged." An easy solution--anyone attending a conventicle will be banished and the preachers hanged. This would end the story.

He also explains that any halfway measure is ridiculous. Small fines are just a way of selling liberty. If the actions are all right then make them legal; otherwise punish them

severely. He argues that if the two churches agree in 36 out of 39 articles of their faith, then surely forcing the dissenters back into the church couldn't be that bad in the long run. Conversely, Defoe presumably wants us to think "what would be so drastically dangerous in letting the Dissenters thrive?"

The final allusion is to the Church of England "crucified" between two thieves--popery and schismatics. The church is obviously the savior in the middle, an arrogant thought but one that the High Churchmen apparently liked. Defoe uses overdone language at the close in calling for the rooting out of the "oppressed mother" church's enemies from "this land forever" (297).

The pamphlet succeeds or fails based on our understanding of its blame. Should the High Churchmen be blamed if they hang or banish all Dissenters who would not cry for mercy? Should the Dissenters be blamed so severely for the happenings of the Commonwealth that any action toward them is justified? Are Dissenters sealing their own fate by persisting in the practice of Occasional Conformity? Was William right or wrong in his toleration of Dissenters? Is Queen Anne doing the country a favor by her return to a strictly enforced policy confining the activity of the Dissenters? Defoe is constantly forcing his readers to fluctuate back and forth between two choices.

The idea of killing off Dissenters or banishing them was intended to be as ludicrous as eating babies is in *A Modest Proposal*. Yet *The Shortest Way with The Dissenters* has a long history of misinterpretation, from the pillory until today. I believe the explanation lies in all these choices which signal Defoe's amazingly ambitious and complex vision of the role of his audience. This vision has at least three components. He viewed his audience

with respect, he pictured his audience as varied individuals, and he envisioned his audience as active meaning makers.

First, Defoe respected his audience. He chose to speak the language of the ordinary Englishman, literally and stylistically. He also gave them credit for being informed, sensible, and caring. Sometimes such respect could get him in trouble as in the case of *The Shortest Way*. In this instance he apparently thought that only the horribly blind and bigoted would actually be fooled by such a cruel joke. Writing later, Defoe defended his arguments in *The Shortest Way* by saying that out of respect for his audience's good judgment, he made only one mistake: when he "had drawn the Picture [he] did not like the Dutch-man, with his Man and Bear write under them, This is the Man, and This is the Bear, lest the People should mistake [him]" (*More Reformation, Preface*). To him it seemed that it would be obvious to the average, clear thinking person that deportation and hanging were not to be taken as serious suggestions to remedy religious strife. But Defoe simply didn't count on the level of fear and hatred that existed. In effect, his respect for his audience backfired in this case, and it is a testimony to his courage and sincerity that he refused to lower his expectations in later writings.

A second facet of his view of the audience is that he saw a varied group of individuals. He refused to limit himself to just one audience, and again this is both his rhetorical strength and his downfall in *The Shortest Way*. His first audience is the High Church Party whom Defoe probably did want to fool. L. S. Horsley describes Defoe's method in these terms: "ironically to concede the arguments of the Sacheverellites, with a further concession of the need for the violent suppression of Dissenters, bringing out what he

regarded as the true extremism of the High Church position" (411). In his discussion of Defoe's irony in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, Novak notes that Northrop Frye's definition of sophisticated irony requires that it not reveal itself directly. Instead it "is frequently misunderstood by the naive reader, and perhaps it should be" (Novak 402). This may help to explain the rhetorical dilemma in which both Defoe and his readers find themselves. On the one hand Defoe clearly wants to be misunderstood. He wants to play a good joke on the High Church leaders like Sacheverell, who have been getting away with preaching sermons that, to Defoe at least, sound very much like a less obvious version of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. He wants them to reveal that they are compatible with this rather paranoid and bloodthirsty methodology. In doing so, he hopes they will put themselves in a position where they will be forced to give up any claim to the virtue exalted in this work--charity. In this goal he was an unqualified success. Charles Leslie wrote that he met no one who believed the pamphlet to be written by a Whig and that he had heard much speculation concerning which member of the Church Party might have written it (Novak *Shortest Way* 403).

On the other hand, he doesn't want the Dissenters, his second audience, to misunderstand. He wants them to realize that this is an exaggeration intended to help not hurt their cause. But in this he certainly failed. He writes in *More Reformation* that he had miscalculated the level of judgment among his readers. This confusion in the minds of the Dissenters results because he cannot resist two things. First he mimics the High Churchman so well that he actually is persuasive in his adopted voice. This is perhaps the explanation for some of the subjects which would seem to be nothing but detrimental to

the Dissenters' cause--the lack of tolerance and very real political power wielded by the Puritans in the Commonwealth. In Backscheider's view, one likely source for Defoe's arguments, *The Establishment of the Church, The Preservation of the State: Shewing the Reasonableness of a Bill against Occasional Conformity*, was published just three weeks before Defoe's pamphlet and "included all of the ideas Defoe found most offensive" (Defoe: *His Life* 95). Defoe simply could not resist making the argument as realistic as possible and to give him his due, he seems to have had little fear of the truth. (In other words, if the Commonwealth did practice cruelty while in power, Defoe doesn't run from that even if it hurts his cause.)

Second, he can't resist the urge to get in a few lessons for the Dissenters as well. One can certainly imagine even an informed Dissenter coming away from this pamphlet with a better understanding of why the High Churchmen are so frightened and with a resolution to show the tolerance for which they are asking. It is possible that Defoe is also taking some true jabs at the Dissenters on subjects such as Occasional Conformity. Conceivably, a Dissenter reading *The Shortest Way* could also perceive the line drawn in the sand and take courage to cease the practice of occasional conformity, believing instead that principle demand that liberty be complete or worthless.

A third potential audience exists, one which Defoe was certainly aware of and had been successful with in the past (and would be again in the future). This audience is made up of the interested but undecided. Some critics have accused Defoe of liking the method of setting everybody at one another's throats and then stepping out of the way. Secord describes his method: "He is known to have encouraged disputes by writing on both

sides, and then to have taken the attitude of a mediator trying to still the tempest he had raised" (vii-viii). That is certainly a possibility here. As I read I found myself constantly saying, "Is that true?" Were the Scotch Dissenters that mean? Exactly how much church property did the Commonwealth actually seize? Does Queen Anne have an obligation to all of her citizens or only to the welfare of the nation? And the list goes on.

I can imagine the undecided audience sitting around trying to assign blame, and it is possible that Defoe was modern enough and moderate enough to recognize that there was plenty to go around. If that was the case, then it would surely explain some of the confusion in his works. The issue of blame is a difficult one. It is much easier to assign blame in situations we perceive as colored black and white. Shades of gray are frightening and confusing, but they are a very real part of life, of its fictional representation, and, I will argue, of didactic literature that wants to be considered as art rather than as propaganda.

His instruction fits the pattern described by Peter Elbow in *Embracing Contraries*. Elbow believes that real learning takes place as the mind fluctuates back and forth between opposing sides, often taking what is right from both. This is particularly confusing with blame because Defoe sends out mixed messages. For example, the Dissenters are blamed for practicing occasional conformity, a practice which Defoe found demeaning, compromising, and distasteful. However, the proper alternative in his mind (and probably most modern readers) was complete religious liberty without political repercussions. However, in his day a criticism of the Act of Occasional Conformity could easily be construed as a vote for its repeal, leaving the dissenters with much less toleration and virtually no political power. The confusion comes because Defoe trusts his readers to see

the entire picture. Yet this is arguably his greatest strength.

According to Novak, Defoe argumentation is influenced by the fact that he lived in a age when the "'sceptical' method of argument through paradox was considered to be more convincing because less dogmatic." Novak continues: "In treating controversial subjects--drinking, luxury, political freedom, prostitution--Defoe preferred to raise questions, pretend to have no solution, and then insert his own opinion obliquely. That he should put his own opinions on occasional conformity into the mouth of a speaker whose opinions he detested is an extreme, but by no means unusual, indication of his addiction to paradox" (413).

I believe that *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* shows Defoe's vision of the audience as an active participant in the making of meaning. This makes Defoe's view of the audience's role similar to Louise Rosenblatt's when she describes a work of literature as a "event," a "coming together," and a "compenetration, of a reader and a text" (12). I will argue that his respect for his audience, his vision of a broad and varied audience, and his belief in an active reader are significant elements in Defoe's didactic fiction and keys to the success of all didactic fiction. Defoe's "failures" result when he overestimates his audience or aims at too large an audience or more specifically at two very different audiences at the same time.

As I have suggested, Defoe's method in *The Shortest Way* is one of asking his audience to "embrace contraries" actively and come away having reached intelligent conclusions. But Defoe's give and take with his audience on this occasion doesn't end with the publication and reception of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. When he is

imprisoned and found guilty for his authorship, he is sentenced to stand in the pillory. Defoe greatly feared the experience and with good reason. He would have known that William Fuller, another writer, had been bombarded with rotten eggs, dirt, and various other things while standing in the pillory. He had also received thirty-nine lashes while in prison. In addition, in 1682, Thomas DeLaune and his family all died in prison after he was arrested for writing *Plea for the Non-Conformists* (Backsheider *Defoe: His Life* 103). Defoe tried unsuccessfully to avoid arrest, but on July 29-31, he was forced to stand in the pillory. He stood "held in the unnatural, helpless position of the pillory, [his] neck ached and his arms went numb" (Backsheider *Defoe: His Life* 117). It was probably raining most of those three days, and he would have been unable even to wipe the water away from his eyes. The expectation, based on past tenants of the pillory, would have been for him to have been beaten, perhaps stripped, and hit with rotten fruit, eggs, and all kinds of refuse. Some people had been maimed and a few killed. But Defoe again appeals to his audience with *A Hymn to the Pillory*, and contemporary journalists report that he was ringed about by people and the only thing thrown was flowers (Backsheider *Defoe: His Life* 118).

James Sutherland describes *A Hymn to the Pillory* as a testimonial of faith that a man can expect fairness from his audience even if he can't get it from the law (96).

As in *The True-Born Englishman*, *A Hymn to the Pillory* is an extended apostrophe--this time to the Pillory which Defoe labels a "State *Machin*." He implies that the pillory ought to be used in cases where the one punished is deserving of shame (in other words as an official instrument of blame), but instead it has become an instrument that the

government feels justified in using to "amuse" the masses with the embarrassment of someone for whom they want to show contempt.

However, Defoe believes, virtue cannot be quelled by "Humane Scorn." In fact things have gotten so mixed up that "The Fools look out, the Knaves look on." In an interesting play on words, Defoe describes the punishment as "dirt" throwing "dirt." He is referring here to the literal and very frightening practice that the mobs had of throwing all kinds of refuse at people in the pillory, sometimes becoming very violent and causing irreparable harm. While Defoe certainly didn't consider all of the onlookers as dirt, he did see the irony of any angry man on the street being able to punish Defoe for what he considered expressing his conscience.

In the third stanza Defoe argues that it is impossible to judge the crime by its punishment, offering a serious rebuke to a country where the punishment doesn't match the offense. This is true, he says because parties are ruling instead of laws. Justice is forced to bow to the changing political interest, and right and wrong become relative. Defoe clearly thought such a system should be despised, but his courage in saying so while he himself was about to be helplessly confined before this very mob is amazing. It tells us several things about him. One is that, as afraid as he apparently was of the pillory, he was even madder at what he perceived to be the injustice of his punishment. Such anger underscores the level of his determination to right wrongs even in the face of nearly insurmountable odds. A second thing his actions demonstrate is that he has not lost his high respect for and confidence in his audience. To believe, even to hope, that a piece of writing could be of any value (rhetorical, financial, or judicial) in his circumstances is an

amazing leap of faith, one which I believe we see Defoe making again and again in his rhetoric.

The *Hymn to the Pillory* goes on to argue that the result of the proliferation of injustice is that real criminals are so hardened that the pillory doesn't faze them and the unfairly held captives are strengthened by their innocence, making the power of the pillory virtually nil. This dilemma is further exacerbated by the mixture of great and terrible that have been received by her (the pillory's) "opening Vacancy." Stanza four lists specific men whom Defoe considers men of "learning, wit, and Sence" who have been accorded the same treatment as "Oats [sic] and Fuller." In fact the pillory came close to capturing Selden, and if that had happened then no one would have ever been disgraced again by being put in the pillory since that would have also put them in a class with Selden--something Defoe is trying to do for himself by making the comparison. In the case of a man who is being punished unfairly, Defoe says that the real reproach of the pillory reflects all the way back to the ones who put them there. Again we must admire Defoe's courage even if we gasp at his audacious rashness. He is in prison, soon to be in the pillory, and therefore at the mercy of these very people whom he is denigrating.

Now he gets into the process which he followed in writing *The Shortest Way* and which he claims came directly from what Sacheverell said in a Church of England Pulpit. He was the one who "first found out *the shortest way*." By following this model, Defoe claims to have created a "monster" which scares everyone. To Defoe, the monster is simply an exaggeration of the model already known to the public as the sermons of members of the High Church Party.

The next several stanzas are a who's who of blame. Defoe spares no detail in listing leaders, soldiers, jobbers, brokers, etc., who have earned a place in the pillory but have been spared its reality. He is incensed by the hypocrisy of judges who first "debauch" and then pass judgment on the prostitutes of London or who sit on the bench drunk to punish crimes less harmful than drunkenness. In the discussion, the pillory is metaphorically labeled as "Monster of the Law," "Chariot of the State," and "Pulpit." He then attacks the inconsistent members of the Clergy, wishing to see them take their places in the pillory as well. He holds up for display the "drunken priests" and the clergy who preach against sins which they can not resist committing themselves." He wants them to be held up to the ridicule they deserve so that those who live properly can be separated and not lose their reputations by association. He also points out to the pillory that he has "embrac'd thy wood" because "he was not understood."

On the other hand the "real Authors of *the Shortest Way*" are the ones who "build up Rome." In fact, he believes that the real way to get rid of the Dissenters is to have them all Conform because "for there their certain Ruine would come in, And Moderation, *which they hate*, begin." Modern audiences might appreciate the fact that Defoe would also give the lawyers their time in the pillory to pay for "all that Blood their Tongues ha' spilt." He is obviously incensed that he found he couldn't trust the honesty of lawyers in his case. We do know that he was persuaded to confess to writing the pamphlet, thinking that his confession would bring about leniency. However, historians now say that if he had not confessed to writing the pamphlet, he might well have gone free since his authorship would have been nearly impossible to prove. In that case what it said would have been

legally insignificant since the content couldn't be attached to an author.

The pillory now becomes known as the "Satyr of the Age," implying Defoe's desire that this Hymn to the Pillory will have the same effect as satire--reformation. Of those who mysteriously steal vast sums from "little places" to build "*Gardens, Grottos, Fountains, Walks and Groves*" where vice reigns, he pleads with the pillory to "Tell 'em there's *Mene Tekel's* on the Wall."

This reference is interesting for two reasons. First it is a Biblical reference is to the book of Daniel, where Belteshazzar has corrupted the Hebrew temple vessels by using them for a pagan feast. In the midst of their drunkenness an unseen hand writes on the wall. The words mean: "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." And the nation that thought itself invincible fell that night by invasion from within. Such a parallel is certainly a warning to England that her destruction may not be far away. The second reason it is of interest is the way it addresses the audience. Defoe combines a moving Biblical allusion with the mysterious foreign quotation, but he says it all in a very colloquial style with the contraction of *tell them* and the plurality of the expression, as if in England *Mene Tekel's* are appearing all over the wall. He's allowing a less than erudite audience the opportunity to imagine the kind of depravity that would cause such rebuke on God's part. By extension, he is also attacking the worth of those who have judged him wanting. "How dare they?" the audience is supposed to wonder. These are the ones who "run us all in Debt *"the Shortest Way."* The repetition of "the shortest way" effectively reminds the audience that there are many out there who have done far worse things "the shortest way" than Defoe did by simply pointing out the harshness of the High Church

party. Defoe also evidences courage and even a righteous indignation to be constantly reminding them of his "crime."

Next, using code or nicknames he attacks the personal morals of individual citizens, again amazing us that he wouldn't at least wait until he was out of prison and past the pillory before recruiting any new enemies. He summarizes his argument by references to his own situation. He maintains that if people like him are put in the pillory for honestly admitting that they told the truth which happened to be distasteful to those in power, then the pillory becomes an instrument of fear for honest men and loses its power over real criminals since they are not really shamed by being categorized with honest men. He also tries to reassure his audience (and probably himself) that no shame will be attached to the innocent man just because he is unfairly put in the pillory. Such indignity is meaningless "For Crime is all the shame of Punishment," so if there has been no crime then logically there should be no shame.

The shocking thing is that Defoe's faith in his rhetoric and his audience was well-founded. Certainly he had friends, including Robert Harley, behind the scene trying to control the audience's reaction, but we know for certain that *The Hymn to the Pillory* was being sold in the streets while Defoe was actually in the pillory. We can never know exactly what went through people's heads as they read of the corrupt lawyers, hypocritical clergymen, and greedy politicians whom Defoe wanted them to picture being reformed by the Satyr of the pillory (and by his poem of course), but we do know that instead of rotten tomatoes or dangerous rocks, the audience choose to pelt Daniel Defoe with flowers, a time-honored symbol of tribute rather than mockery.

What we see happening in both *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* and *The Hymn to the Pillory* is Defoe respecting his audience enough to let them fully into their role of meaning makers. It is clearly a risky rhetorical business, getting him thrown in jail in the first instance but saving his hide in the second. I believe this is a pattern of Defoe's rhetoric which will surface again in his fictional narratives and in didactic fiction which succeeds as art. The writer trusts his audience with the arguments and allows the conclusion (for better or worse) to be theirs.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUAKER CONNECTION:

THE ROLE OF TRUTH IN THE RHETORIC OF DANIEL DEFOE

"In defense of truth, I think ...I could dare to die,
but a child may beat me if I am in the wrong."

Daniel Defoe

In many ways the issue of truth has become a defining characteristic in the history of the novel. Starting with Ian Watt, the novel has been explained as a phenomenon based on realism of time and space and relying on new theories of individualism. According to Watt, "the great English empiricists of the seventeenth century were as vigorously individualist in their political and ethical thought as in their epistemology" (62). Watt finds Defoe a particularly complete example of "the connection between individualism in its many forms and the rise of the novel" (62). Such individualism would seem to undermine a strong view of truth. At the very least it implies a redefinition.

Michael McKeon follows this redefining path or strategy in *Origins of the Novel*, categorizing the developing novelists as naive empiricists and extreme skeptics. He takes the view that the traditional way of relating a life or narrative of necessity involved dealing with the "unrationalizable." To explain the inexplicable, storytellers included "'vertical' intrusions into the 'horizontal' movement of individual history" (90). In the new and very unstable climate of empiricism, one way in which authors coped was by substituting historicity for "transcendent truth," creating a constant tension "between individual life and

overarching pattern" (91). Both the novel and Defoe are products of this very real tension.

But J. Paul Hunter emphasizes that the changes and tensions should not be interpreted as a modern world view. Instead, he believes,

The "modernism" of early novels is somewhat deceptive; the early novelists were still close to a world view that subordinated everything--including those everyday things reflected in novels--to struggles that transcended time and place, and the novel today still pays homage to a transcendental view of human life and emblematic way of thinking. (*Before Novels* 229)

From a variety of critical perspectives, the picture that emerges is a literary revolution (culminating in the novel) based largely on the changing conceptions of the nature of truth. Defoe is caught in the middle of this revolution.

His position is not always an enviable one. In a time when, as McKeon specifies, one major criteria of truth was historicity, Defoe chose to write fiction. He then compounded the problem by claiming that the fiction was fact, bringing into question his own veracity and giving him a reputation as a "brilliant liar" (Starr *Defoe and Casuistry* 190). Defoe's connection to truth is admittedly complex and sometimes confusing. However, if we examine his own words and practices, certain patterns emerge.

First, he is typical of his age in a fundamental belief in the existence of truth. As Hunter suggests, Defoe's world "seemed fuller every day of shades of gray," but it was a world in which clear distinctions of good and evil still remained (229). Second, he is typical of his nonconformist religion in his belief in the individual's right to determine truth for himself or herself. In *Defoe and Casuistry*, G. A. Starr confirms that he considers casuistry to be important to understanding Defoe's concept of truth. However,

Starr stresses that casuistry, by definition, deals with individual situations "in which there appears a conflict of duties," and it is not intended to supersede or devalue moral and legal codes (vii). Because Defoe offers a dual vision of truth, we see a tension similar to that referred to by McKeon when he defines the novel in terms of both historical truth and transcendent truth. Defoe's Puritan heritage gave him a belief in a God who intervenes in this world's affairs, and his Dissenting theology allowed him to accept both the authority of the Bible and the ultimate responsibility of man to respond to God and to determine his own fate.

Third, Defoe believed in the power of truth to speak for itself. This characteristic has significant repercussions for any view of rhetoric, with rhetoric tending to flourish in periods where truth is most in question. One might even hypothesize that rhetoric would be nearly insignificant if a culture believed firmly in the power of truth. Theoretically, the truth could simply be laid out, and the rhetoricians could go home. However, this is not Defoe's perspective on the rhetorician's role. He does believe that truth can take care of itself, but he believes just as firmly that man has an obligation to present truths in an appealing way and that an audience must ultimately decide.

With the European view of truth in transition, Defoe relied heavily on two indirect means of communicating truth and retained his confidence that both truth and audience could be trusted to do their parts. The fourth aspect of Defoe's view of truth emerges as a pattern in his methodology: the use of contraries to communicate important truths. Fifth, Defoe demonstrates dependence on controlled rhetorical silence in conveying truth.

To support Defoe's view of truth, I propose to look at several of Defoe's rhetorical writings in which he discusses the role of truth. In the first two examples, Defoe follows a pattern which surfaces frequently in both his pamphlets and his fiction. He selects a Quaker as his persona. Defoe had an ongoing fascination with Quakers, choosing to impersonate a Quaker in nine different pamphlets (Curtis *The Versatile Defoe* 57), and Quakers play key roles in the plots of both *Captain Singleton* and *Roxana*. Laura Ann Curtis suggests that Defoe's interest might stem from William Penn's attempt at rescuing him from the pillory during the controversy over *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* in 1703. (See Defoe's letter to William Penn of 12 July 1703; also Sutherland in Healey, *The Letters of Daniel Defoe* 8.).

As G. A Starr has also noticed, Defoe's complex fascination with Quaker speakers and characters seems representative of Defoe's relationship to truth. In Defoe's day, "no group in England took more literally than the Quakers Christ's bidding, 'Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil' (Matthew 5:37)" (Starr *Defoe and Casuistry* 203). Yet in the guise of a simple, guileless Quaker, Defoe sets forth complicated arguments on the nature of truth. To Starr, "Defoe poses as a dove the better to play the serpent; the effect depends upon his seeming totally naive and forthright in his conception of honesty" (204).

Whatever the source of Defoe's fascination, he often chose to use Quakers to speak for and about truth, and this is the case in a pamphlet entitled *A Declaration of Truth to Benjamin Hoadly*. Published on June 29, 1717, the pamphlet addresses the Bangorian

Controversy. Approximately 200 different pamphlets were produced by more than 50 different authors in response to a sermon preached on March 31, 1717 by Benjamin Hoadly, the Bishop of Bangor, who had preached a sermon in front of the King entitled "The Nature of the Kingdom of the Church of Christ." The sermon coincided with the repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts (1718) and supported the freedom of the individual conscience over ecclesiastical authority (Curtis 57).

From the first paragraph, Defoe makes it clear that this is an essay on the nature of truth. The simple choice of a Quaker as speaker in the pamphlet underscores Defoe's belief that absolute truth does exist, since such confidence in the existence of truth is virtually synonymous with the word Quaker itself. Quakers are, of course, famous for their belief in "inner light" or a spark of the divine. While the exact nature of this light is a subject for theological debate, it is obvious from even a superficial look at Quaker beliefs that such light presupposes the existence of truth and makes that truth accessible to all men (Gwyn 87).

Quakers were often mocked for their beliefs and especially for their "enthusiasm," and certainly irony plays a role in Defoe's choice of persona. However, their belief in the existence of truth is nevertheless compatible with Defoe's own. Defoe believed in the authority of God and the Bible and in the responsibility of the individual to discern truth for himself based on God's revelation. According to Backscheider, Defoe's life was "quite simply,... a conversation with God" (*Defoe: His Life* 530). He considered truth to be absolute and knowable but never simple or uncomplicated. Because of this attitude, he could embrace an approach which looked at a truth from many sides, highlighted its key

elements, underscored its apparent contradictions, and left the resolution to the individual.

Besides their trust in divine light and their belief in the power of truth to be active in the lives of individuals, both tenets which came naturally to the Dissenter Defoe, the Quakers in this pamphlet also portray Defoe's confidence that truth is a powerful weapon in the battle for right in the world. After praising Hoadly for his perception and his courage, Ebenezer informs him that other Quakers like Aminadab also support him. He goes on to call for continued courage in the face of adversity, particularly in relation to those that call out "Thou lyest, thou lyest" (64). The basis of his bravery is to be that he has "spoken the truth and it shall prevail" (64). This is yet another piece in the puzzle of the view of truth. At least for Defoe's persona here (and I believe for Defoe himself), the source of confidence is not found only in the method of communicating a message but in the efficacy of truth itself.

Another Friend named Aaron has also supposedly sent a message to Hoadly in which he reminds the bishop that many wise and good men are on his side. He even indicates that the King (presumably George I) may come over to his side if God enlightens him. The picture is painted of Hoadly as a man yet in darkness but with a thin stream of light shining forth on the words of truth he has spoken. There is hope, therefore, that the light of truth will also penetrate his heart. In the meantime, the Quakers express themselves as willing to "embrace" Hoadly because of the truth he has spoken. Curtis is certainly correct that there is irony here, aimed at both Hoadly, who is pictured as still in partial darkness, and the Quakers whose gentle words mask significant arrogance (58).

It is very difficult to determine in this section just exactly what view Defoe wants his reader to have of the Quakers. I believe that they are supposed to be a sincere vehicle of his praise for Hoadly's courage and correctness in advocating principles of individual liberty (in itself a statement about truth). However, while he was fascinated by their beliefs, Defoe was not a Quaker, and it is therefore typical of him that he would also allow his words to address some of his disagreements with them even while he is using them as spokespersons. This seems to be the case in the next section of *A Declaration of Truth* when Ebenezer repeatedly indicates that the Quakers have an exclusive claim on truth and that it is only where Hoadly is in agreement with them that he can rest comfortably in the knowledge that he is aligned with truth. In fact, Ebenezer, for all his supposed respect for Hoadly, next claims that he will now inform him of the "principles of truth" that the Friends hold to so that he can see where the discrepancies lie.

Their principles are as follows:

1. Only God can really draw men to himself; therefore all forms of human coercion to religion are first of all wrong and second, by implication, useless.
2. Arguments concerning doctrine are allowable and should not be regulated by the state, since government's proper role is to preserve people's "persons and estates" not their opinions.
3. Christ, through his spirit, is the only one who can lead anyone to truth.
4. Some types of submission are set forth in Scripture and are therefore not only compatible with a Godly conscience but actually required by it. However, when the

authority does not match the revealed truth of God all individuals are free to "obey God rather than man" (66).

5. The Bible clearly says that "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we should persuade Men" but Ebenezer warns Hoadly that men often act as if they should use the powers of this world to force outward profession even without inward persuasion" (66).

Though this view pictures truth as firmly settled in God's hands, man's role in its preservation and defense is formidable. Arguments are encouraged as healthy and submission to authority is Biblically defensible only when the authority is clearly in line with the higher authority of revealed truth. Defoe's persona here (probably speaking for Defoe in this case) has a particular distaste for using human threats to force outward compliance instead of using rational arguments in order to encourage inward agreement.

Between the fourth and fifth principle, Ebenezer cites his alleged source for his views on truth as a book "published more than forty and five years since, by a body of our Friends, and signed by John Crook, a man endowed with a spirit of a sound mind, and also by three other ancients, who were likewise men of true wisdom" (66). Interestingly, the book is entitled "Truth's Principles, &c." Again Defoe is reminding his audience that this is not really an essay exclusively about Benjamin Hoadly but a treatise on the communication and apprehension of truth. We must not overlook the contention that, as one who has spoken the truth "as having the light of the spirit," Hoadly has set forth something "which the men of this world cannot be able to resist" (66). A sincere belief that truth really does work as an irresistible force changes the rhetorician's view of his

role. It becomes much more Platonic with the discovery of truth the primary goal and the setting forth of that truth the only real responsibility since the truth can accomplish the persuasion on its own.

I find that such a view pervades Defoe's fiction and helps to explain some of the confusion which arises from his claim that his tale is told to teach a moral and yet so much wickedness goes unreprimanded (Moll Flander's treatment of her children, Robinson Crusoe's connection to slavery, William Walter's willingness to associate for so long with the pirates and accrue great financial benefits from the connection.) It is an oversimplification to argue simply that Defoe wrote so hurriedly that he was unaware of his characters' inconsistencies. Rather both his philosophy and his practice indicate that he recognized such human frailties and contradictions and celebrated the resulting complexities. This view also helps to explain why writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce have been among Defoe's champions. His very ambiguity is not a flaw but a testimony to the role of truth as powerful.

In the *Review* of March, 1710, Defoe warns his enemies that they should beware of the power of truth. He declares that by attacking him personally and by attempting to silence the *Review*, they are basically admitting that his arguments are unanswerable. In other words a refusal to debate the issues signifies weakness in content. However, he tells them, even silencing him will make no difference for they are reckoning without the nature of truth. Writing a false idea is ineffective, he suggests, because "truth will prevail" (43). In fact, if the opposition could even succeed in destroying the *Review*, it still wouldn't matter since "truth would never want champions." Instead, "killing the *Review* would be

like cutting off the monster's head when a hundred rise up in the room of it" (43).

The picture is a vivid one. The enemies of truth may think that they wield a large enough sword to cut off the head of a towering "truth," but they are misguided. As soon as they have removed the head, 100 figures rise up to replace it. Defoe voices his confidence that truth is ultimately the most powerful rhetorical method and that it will always raise up warriors.

A writer with this view of truth can be bold and experimental. He has a confidence that is unavailable to most twentieth-century communicators, a confidence in language. J. Paul Hunter writes in his extensive treatment of the characteristics of didacticism that eighteenth-century didactic writers retained "faith in language to affect the behavior of reader in rational and predictable ways" (231). A natural outgrowth of this faith in language is the accompanying respect for readers, which I discussed in Chapter Three.

This view of truth as a power to be reckoned with appears again in another of Defoe's impersonations of a Quaker, *A Friendly Epistle by Way of Reproof from One of the People Called Quakers*. *A Friendly Epistle* was published in 1715 and was an attack on the immorality of the court of George I. In it Defoe sets forth the idea that justice is hard to measure and suggests that it is all too easy to be biased, mistaken, or overly harsh in judgments of specific people. However, he unequivocally calls for people of character to denounce immorality. He closes with a vivid picture of the battle for truth:

But if thou do'st thy Duty; if thou givest warning to the Princes of thy People; if thou speakest boldly and callest upon Men everywhere to Repent; if thou cryest aloud, and sparest not, sparest not the Great, the Powerful, the Fierce, the Furious; if thou sparest not thyself, neither fearest the Face of Man, the Blessing of a Nation ready to Perish, shall come upon thee; the Portion of a Righteous Man shall be thy

Reward. God shall own thee and thy Work, and that in the Face of his and thy Enemies. Thou shalt be a Wall of Fire and Brass against them. Thou shalt fight and shalt prevail, for he shall be with thee, whose Name is Omnipotent. (30)

Again Defoe uses a fictional Quaker to offer a view of truth, this time adamantly arguing that truth is worth fighting for, even in this admittedly imperfect world. Perhaps most significant to our understanding of Defoe and his view of truth, however, is his clear belief that God is the champion of truth, so much so that he will "own thee and thy works, and that in the Face of his and thy Enemies" (38). But somehow in the process of the fight it is not God who is the bulwark against error and immorality but the human combatant.

Defoe urges on rhetoricians, politicians, and leaders of all sorts with the thought that they can be "a Wall of Fire and Brass against them [the enemies of truth]" (38). He further promises them that despite the difficulties of the fight, they are assured of winning because the one who is with them, fighting on their side, is the one "whose name is Omnipotent" (38). The requirement that Defoe stresses is that if a warrior is to have God on his side, he must not play favorites. To achieve success, he must not spare the great, the powerful or the angry, and, perhaps most difficult of all, he must not spare himself either.

Besides Defoe's connection to William Penn, Laura Curtis suggests another factor in his interest in the Quakers. They also made very strong claims for the practice of their religion. Curtis believes that Defoe's interest "centered principally on the discrepancy between Quaker profession and the practices necessitated by life in an imperfect world" (Curtis 59). In other words, Quakers made an appropriate vehicle to discuss and portray the complexities which arise when truth meets the necessities of everyday life. This theme certainly does recur in Defoe's fiction, where he frequently explores how circumstances

necessitate compromise or outright wickedness in order to insure the survival of the protagonist. Both William Singleton and Roxana's Quaker landlady are extended examples of how Defoe used Quakers to represent this dilemma.

Curtis implies that Defoe draws negative conclusions about Quakers based on these discrepancies. However, his writings support the idea that Defoe actually believed that all men are faced with just such controversies as William Walters faces in *Captain Singleton*, when he is abducted by the pirates and selects the most pragmatic and profitable means of coexistence with them while undoubtedly remaining an influence for moderation and good in their midst. Eventually he is instrumental in the repentance and reformation of Singleton himself. Yet for years he sails with him in relative harmony, only sporadically taking a stand against a course of action--occasionally based on questions of right and wrong but frequently simply offering a voice of tolerance, patience, and wisdom in an otherwise rash situation.

In *A Declaration of Truth to Benjamin Hoadly*, Defoe's methodology is fraught with the same sense of contraries that William Walters represents. Curtis believes that Defoe is using the Quakers as an extreme example and to an extent I think she is accurate. However, I believe the model is more complex. The goal of the pamphlet is not to mock the Quakers, for whom Defoe had definite sympathy (Moore "Defoe's Persona as Author" 511). Instead, Defoe is setting up a kind of dialectical approach to the issue in which the reader hears the argument against extreme ecclesiastical authority from (by implication) Benjamin Hoadly, from Ebenezer, Aminadab, and Aaron, and from a more moderate Presbyterian stance.

As is typical of Defoe, his response to the sermon is neither black or white. Instead he supports much that Hoadly says, berates Hoadly's attackers, and yet still leaves room for critics like Laura Curtis to consider the pamphlet a "brilliant example of argument based upon sheer impudence" (58) and to argue that it is largely ironic. Such a mix of fact and fiction, truth and error, agreement and disagreement underscores Defoe's view of truth. He believes that it is best seen in terms of contraries.

Ebenezer begins by addressing Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor as Friend Benjamin. His explanation for this is that the Quakers cannot recognize his title or position because they believe such distinctions to be of God rather than of man. However, Ebenezer claims that he will treat the Bishop with respect--a statement which Curtis finds ironic and describes as shockingly humorous (58). But the irony is not pointless. Defoe is using it to convey a message. He is pleased that Hoadly has taken a stand against excessive ecclesiastical dictatorship (although he disagreed with his methods). However, he is reminding Hoadly and, of course, the real audience of readers that if church hierarchy breaks down, then its total disintegration is a real possibility--not a joke but an option that some living, thinking people might actively advocate. We are participating in the dialectic as soon as we ask ourselves, "Well, which is it? Should the church hierarchy be powerful and respected or torn down in favor of individual freedom and responsibility?" Defoe himself sets up the conflict when he declares that "Friend Benjamin" has "uttered much truth" and because of that he has caused the "wrath of wicked men" to be turned against himself (63). This statement implies two things about the nature of truth. It can be mixed with error, and it draws attacks from wickedness.

No where is the conflict more obvious in this pamphlet than at the end, where the Quaker speakers give Hoadly instructions on his need to combine his theory and practice. Ebenezer writes that now that Hoadly has experienced so much truth he surely "canst not any longer continue among them, or wear those profane ensigns of idolatry, whereby thou art distinguished from other men." Instead, the next logical step is certainly for Hoadly to join forces with the Quakers, since he has shown his compatibility with them. Curtis again stresses the ironic humor here, since it would have been a horrifying shift for Hoadly (58). But Defoe, as a master of contraries, has more ammunition in this confusing battle. He brings in a third view--that of the more moderate Presbyterians of whom he was a part. The text declares that Hoadly could not even entertain the notion of joining with such a group because of all the things they believe. As Defoe has the Quakers malign the Presbyterians, he has the opportunity to set down the moderate stance they hold, giving his audience a standard for comparison.

The rhetorical strategy (and occasionally accident) of placing himself in the middle of two opposing views is not a new stance for Defoe. He describes such a position at great length in *An Appeal to Honour & Justice, Etc.* (1714). Although this essay does not use a Quaker persona, it does address the same issues of truth which Defoe typically represented by Quakers. However, this time Defoe is speaking in his own voice. The essay is designed to provide a defense for his actions since 1704 and is in part an apology for Harley (Backscheider *Defoe: His Life* 356). He shows special concern for the difficulty which the attacks on him have caused his family. In his defence of himself, he relates the controversy over his two ironic pamphlets *What if the Pretender should come?*

and *Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover*. He argues that the meanings of both these pamphlets are clear. His goal, he claims, was to make the titles deceptive in order to get them into the right hands--those who had been deluded by the Jacobites. In fact, he says, he has virtually given away some of his pamphlets aimed at Jacobite proselytes because of his concern for poor people, especially the deluded populace of the North. No twentieth-century critic seriously doubts Defoe's support for the Protestant succession, and Defoe is arguing that the issue was not really confusing in his own day. Instead the titles are contraries, designed to gather in an audience and get them to think. However, the titles gave his enemies some ammunition to use against him. In fact, according to Defoe, they admitted as much saying, "they knew this Book had nothing in it, and that it was meant another way; but that Defoe had disoblig'd them in other things, and they were resolv'd to take the Advantage they had, both to punish and expose him" (215).

Defoe describes accurately the rhetorical dilemma in which he repeatedly found himself and in which he is often caught by later literary critics. He writes, "Nothing can be severer in the Fate of a Man than to act so between two Parties, that both Sides should be provok'd against him" (213). According to Defoe, there was no doubt that the Jacobites were legitimately antagonized by what he had written. In fact, if the Pretender had somehow succeeded in coming to the throne, his own life would have been forfeit--so clear was his condemnation. But the opposite was true as well: "On the other hand, I leave it to any considering Man to Judge, what a Surprise it must be to me to meet with all the publick Clamour that Informers could invent, as being Guilty of writing against the

Hanover Succession, and as having written several Pamphlets *in favour of the Pretender*" (213). Defoe is describing the uncomfortable position of having made both sides mad. Of course, this is the same predicament in which he found himself after *The Shortest Way with the Dissenter* and is remarkably comparable to the debate which rages among Defoe scholars today. He is too Protestant for the pragmatists and too pragmatic for the Protestants, too secretive and ethically suspect for the moralists and too religiously dogmatic for the secularist. It is tempting to ask, "Will the real Defoe please stand up?" I am suggesting that Defoe found himself in such predicaments largely because of his use of contraries as a method. By constantly moving back and forth between opposing viewpoints, he took the risk of being misunderstood, but he also offered his audience a rich opportunity to find the truth for themselves. Since it is years too late to solve all the mysteries, it seems constructive to look at this dilemma in terms of a rhetorical pattern and seek the rationale behind it, since it is at once Defoe's biggest problem and, as I will show, his greatest contribution to the development of the novel.

One explanation for his use of contraries is that Defoe was the product of the emphasis on dialectic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to James Rembert, "dialectic is the use of the question and answer method in the pursuit of truth, or logical argumentation aiming at victory in pursuit of truth rather than at testing of validity of inferences, which is the province of logic" (*Swift and the Dialectical Tradition* 11). Dialectic is foundational to several of Defoe's methods. The significance of question and answer helps explain his readiness to include the reader in the making of meaning. Rembert also points out that contraries are significant to dialectic because "one of the

most basic elements in dialectic" is "its binary aspect" which allows an author to argue on either side of an argument (128). While dialectic would not cause Defoe to be caught in the middle of two arguments, it is certainly an influence in his ability to see both sides of an issue and sometimes include arguments from two different perspectives (as we saw in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*).

Defoe certainly gave serious thought to the concept of contraries. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe speaks, "Thus we never see the true state of our condition, till it is illustrated to us by its contraries nor know we how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it." (149). Robert James Merrett discusses Defoe's explanation of the importance of contraries in *A System of Magick*, where Defoe claims that the "blackest Agents" can be the "brightest Examples." According to Merret, Defoe was a "provocative teacher" who made use of "narrative contraries and dialectic play in his fiction" (*Daniel Defoe's Moral and Rhetorical Ideas* 7). It seems clear that Defoe not only believed in, but could articulate a system of thought in which contraries could be used to illuminate one another. In "Narrative Contraries as Signs in Defoe's Fiction," Robert James Merrett explores many narrative contraries in *Robinson Crusoe*, concluding that "the dialectical nature of his narrative significantly matches his ideological and rhetorical contraries" (185). Merrett is exactly right, and he also realizes that such a system of contraries must of necessity involve the reader in figuring out the puzzle. However, Merrett's discussion stops with that suggestion. Instead, I believe this is a place to begin in order to understand the complexity of Defoe's fiction.

Just as Defoe's use of contraries has roots in classical dialectic, his approach is quite similar to that of twentieth-century composition studies. According to Peter Elbow in *Embracing Contraries*, the early meaning of the word dialectic referred to the utilization of conflict, starting with dialogue, with the goal being truth. Elbow's book provides a celebration of this method, and he argues that "you don't teach anyone anything by feeding him information." Instead it is Elbow's contention that real learning and certainly real persuasion happens not with the facts themselves but with the way in which the recipient files those facts. A new piece of information filed in the same old set of categories makes little difference in the reader's mind. In fact, to Elbow, even brand new data may become old hat immediately and virtually inseparable from the same old stuff because it has been assimilated so completely into the old way of thinking. However, a restructuring of the way in which the mind categorizes information is a lifechanging occurrence. For Elbow "the paradigm learning activity is categorizing or learning concepts" (xiii).

Under the chapter heading "Cooking: The Interaction of Conflicting Elements," Elbow provides an example of the way such conflict works in literature. His model is Chaucer. He believes that Chaucer sets up opposites and then "affirm[s]" both sides. Because both sides have merit, it is therefore impossible for either side to "win." "He arranges the dilemma so that we can only be satisfied by taking a larger view. Sometimes he even creates that larger view" (Elbow *Embracing Contraries* 240). If Elbow is correct about Chaucer's use of contraries or oppositions to reach truth and in turn impact others' lives with it, then it is believable to argue as well that Defoe's use of conflict as a means to truth is a serious rhetorical method designed to achieve the greatest degree of change in

the lives of the audience rather than a careless inattention to consistency as some have argued in Defoe's case.

Such a concentration on the importance of categories as methods of assimilating data is certainly not exclusive to Elbow or to composition studies. I find it significant that such theories have also been adopted for the teaching of reading. For example, In *Understanding Reading*, Frank Smith also stresses the role of categories in organizing "the system of knowledge that is the theory of the world in our heads" (9). He believes that all information systems (from libraries to brains) must be made up of three things: "a set of categories, some rules for specifying membership of those categories, and a network of interrelations among the categories" (9). According to Smith no living thing can survive by treating all of its experiences the same. Conversely it is just as disastrous to treat all things differently. His simple example is that to make sense out of our world we must have the capacity to distinguish dogs from cats, but at the same time we must also be able to ignore the many differences among kinds of dogs in order not to have to look at each dog as a totally separate class (an organizational nightmare). His point is that categories are essential to processing information.

He goes on to explain that categories are conventions often based on our culture. This point is significant to our study of Defoe's methods. According to Smith, "to share a culture means to share the same categorical basis for organizing experience" (10). He believes that our categories are strongly connected to our language and furthermore that if we do not have a category for any given experience we will experience bewilderment. To him our categories determine our perception, and I find his argument highly persuasive. In

addition and perhaps most significantly, "perception must be regarded as decision-making" (11). These theorists are telling us that classical views of dialectic can be utilized in structuring pedagogy for both reading and writing. Defoe, because of his strong rhetorical training and goals and his desire to involve his reader in the search for truth, is following the pattern that Elbow and Smith are teaching for writers and readers today.

In many of Defoe's pamphlets (and, as we will see later, in his fiction) what occurs is a shake up of categories which makes the audience question its perception and therefore enhances the decision-making process. This happens on a spectacular level with *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* and *Reasons Against the Succession of the House of Hanover*. Defoe forces his audience to look with painstaking detail at the way in which they perceive the world in order to make sense out of his admittedly contradictory titles, content, and goals. I believe that once we understand that, for Defoe, forcing his audience to reexamine the way they look at the world around them is a major method for exposing truth, we have a key to help us understand some of the "contraries" in his fiction.

The very difficulty of understanding some of Defoe's works is in fact a largely overlooked element of didactic writing. It is easy to believe that the best way to convince an audience to change behavior or beliefs is to present a clear cut and unmistakable case for a given point of view. However, that approach, while almost instinctive with many moralists, may be faulty. In *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, Wayne Booth writes, "what is clear is that for all of us, the most powerful effects result when we have expended a great deal of mental energy reconstructing an image from minimal clues" (298). Booth elaborates by defining mental energy to include a wide range of things

from the "adrenaline-charged energy of sheer fright and horror to the quieter energy of trying to figure out what is going on" (298). Booth's major thrust is the importance of the energy expended in the interpretation of metaphors, but I believe the parallel is clearly implied to other types of difficulty as well, including some of Defoe's favorite methods, such as irony (particularly in titles so that he confounds our expectations) and contradictory, complicated, and figuratively significant impersonations (such as having a Quaker persona speak for a Presbyterian author to an Anglican Bishop [Benjamin Hoadly] concerning the nature of truth). In *The Rhetoric of Irony*, Booth describes irony as "an aggressively intellectual exercise that fuses fact and value, requiring us to construct alternative hierarchies and choose among them" (44). By the time we have sorted through the layers of meaning, we have been forced to reexamine our way of looking at the world--exactly what Defoe wanted us to do in the first place.

An Appeal to Honour & Justice, Etc. not only demonstrates Defoe's position in the midst of contraries, it also explains Defoe's reliance on a final rhetorical strategy in the defense of truth. As he begins his defense, Defoe tells his readers that he feels the time is finally right for his explanations to be heard. In the process of explaining how the furor and noise have made a real hearing difficult up to this point, Defoe mentions almost in passing a critical aspect of his rhetorical philosophy--the value of silence. He explains that because his audience has been unprepared to listen, he has refrained from explaining, continuing:

And this alone has been the Cause why, when other Men, who, I think, have less to say in their own Defence, are appealing to the Publick, and struggling to defend themselves, I alone have been silent under the infinite Clamours and Reproaches,

causeless Curses, unusual Threatenings, and the most unjust and injurious Treatment in the World. (191)

Again a possible correlation to one of Defoe's favorite fictional roles arises. As the Quakers put great stock in appropriate periods of silence, so apparently did Defoe.

As I have already shown (Chapter Three), Defoe's perception of his audience is usually complimentary, and that view surfaces again in his preliminary remarks to *An Appeal*. After expressing his disappointment that "Prejudices and Passions" have thus far made it doubtful that his defense could receive a fair hearing, he still states clearly and confidently his expectation that many listeners will "judge impartially" and will not only operate on reason but will exert themselves to "answer for" Defoe after they have perceived the real state of affairs. In addition he remarks that his only course for those "who are prepossess'd, and according to the modern Justice of Parties are resolv'd to be so" is to "*Let them go*" (191).

He refuses to argue "with them," planning instead to argue "*against them*," stressing the point because he classes them as opponents to justice, reason, religion, Christianity, and good manners. As such, they no longer deserve to be considered as an audience, a group for whom Defoe had the greatest respect. Instead they are a part of the problem. To Defoe, a man or woman who refuses to be reasonable should either "be expos'd, or entirely neglected" (191-192).

After justifying his lengthy silence, Defoe proceeds to explain his decision to speak out at this moment. Since he has put up with slander to this point, he feels it necessary to defend his decision to respond now. First he says he would be "wanting to Truth, to [his] family, and to [him] Self" if he didn't speak up. It is indicative of Defoe's whole

philosophy of life and epistemology that he puts truth first in that list. It is the value of objective truth itself that makes the most demands on Defoe--greater demands in fact than his family or his own reputation. This is not a casual observation on Defoe's part. This attitude that truth must be told by right minded people pervades Defoe's life to such an extent that Paula Backscheider concludes her definitive biography of Defoe with a chapter entitled "Bred in the Bone" and summarizes the discussion of things which were bred in the bones of Defoe with his own claim that "While such publick, scandalous Practices are found among us...it shall never be said, that my Father's Son liv'd to see it, and fear'd to speak it" (Backscheider 541).

Defoe also notes his recognition of his own mortality as a reason to speak up now. With hindsight we, of course, know that Defoe had another 15 years to live, but according to his publisher's note (*An Appeal to Honour & Justice* 238) he was very sick at the time. Apparently, he thought it a real possibility that he would die and lose his chance to offer any explanation at all.

His third reason for choosing to speak now is that he feels that the "lucid interval ... of moderation" (192) might be short lived. In looking at Defoe's biographical data from a rhetorical perspective, we do find a major shift which is marked by the publication of *An Appeal to Honour & Justice*. From this point on, Defoe no longer writes predominantly political pamphlets and religious tracts. Instead he writes secretly for the government, sometimes serving as a double agent, and publishes narrative works of fiction.

Undoubtedly this change of approach is caused in part by the shift in climate which Defoe is describing here. In his own defense, Defoe writes that it is true that he has taken his

obligations to both Robert Harley and Queen Anne very seriously. Out of gratitude (a powerful motivator to Defoe as anyone who has read *The True-Born Englishman* can attest), he readily admits that he has supported their policies when he agreed with them and has remained silent when he could not agree with them. He defends himself by giving precedence to his debt to them. However, he also suggests that much of what he has been attacked for was either misunderstood or simply never occurred at all. As an example of misunderstanding, he relates his writings on the subject of peace with France. He was attacked for switching sides and writing in favor of France, something Defoe specifically denies. He explains instead that once the peace was a fact, he did choose to recommend ideas for a good peace:

This was the Foundation I ever acted upon with relation to the Peace. It is true, that when it was made, and could not be otherwise, I thought our Business was to make the best of it, and rather to enquire what Improvements were to be made of it, than to be continually exclaiming at those who made it: and where the Objection lies against this Part I cannot yet see. (*An Appeal to Honour & Justice* 210)

In this statement he is defending his silence on an issue which had already been decided.

He also believes that silence is in order when words are ineffective. As an example of necessary silence, he refers to times when he was falsely accused. According to Defoe, it was common for any controversial pamphlet that came out to be assigned to him even if he had nothing to do with it. As a defense, he resorted to comparative silence. His frustration with this situation is evident in his claim that for most of the next year he refused to write anything ("never set pen to paper") except the *Review*.

What Defoe is really telling his audience throughout *An Appeal* is that sometimes silence is the only effective argument and that it is a justifiable method. Sometimes this is

true because of the nature of the audience, sometimes silence is necessary because of a higher goal such as gratitude to and respect for a superior authority, and sometimes silence is really just a matter of correct timing so that when the truth is shared it can be received. That Defoe believed that silence and truth were compatible in certain circumstances is another important key to understanding his view of truth.

In both his own voice and in the voices of a variety of fictional Quakers, Defoe "demonstrates that truth is seldom pure and never simple" (G. A. Starr *Defoe & Casuistry* 190). But as I have suggested, Defoe believed firmly that truth does exist and that it is the responsibility of individuals to think for themselves in determining it. He believed that truth is powerful enough to fight its own battle but that men have a responsibility to help make up the bulwark against evil. Finally, Defoe practiced and preached the value of contraries and silences as means to persuasively communicate the complexities of truth.

CHAPTER FIVE

"WHAT HAVE I DONE TO BE THUS USED?":

THE FUNCTION OF BLAME IN *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

"The story consists of more than the dry
bones of a parable: it has flesh and spirit."

Angus Ross

After eight and one half months alone on his island, Crusoe becomes sick with a violent ague. He is frightened, weak, thirsty, shivering, and more helpless than he has been at any time since the shipwreck. He is also facing a pivotal point in his life and in his narrative. He dreams vividly, seeing an "inexpressibly dreadful" creature "as bright as a flame" coming down out of a "great black cloud" (102). To the dreaming Crusoe, the figure's entrance seems to make the earth quake, and then the being speaks these chilling words: "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die" (103). As Crusoe recounts his tale, the apparition seems to lift his spear and prepare to kill. This dream serves as a revelation to Crusoe, who claims that until now he "never had so much as one thought of it [his miseries] being the hand of God" (103). His life as a sailor has passed in a "certain stupidity of soul, without desire of good or conscience of evil," but in this scene, where he finally faces the issue of who is to blame for all that has happened, Crusoe's entire attitude toward life changes.

Critics have variously suggested that *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel about politics (Kay 75-92), economic individualism (Watt), and adventure (Richetti *Daniel Defoe* 52-74). Of course, critics have also discussed important aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* as a religious

novel. In *Spiritual Autobiography*, George Starr defines Crusoe's flight from his father as a demonstration of original sin, sin that all human beings are born with and which youth in particular act upon. Starr also recognizes that the pattern of Puritan autobiography is heavily invested in determining warnings from even the most minute happenings of life (*Spiritual Autobiography* 20-21). Starr reminds us that the Puritans were cognizant of the idea that the same violent storm can be a "deliverance" to some and an "affliction" to others. In either case, "Providence is responsible." Starr continues, "Indeed, afflictions and deliverances are regarded as having essentially the same purpose, so that sermons of humiliation and thanksgiving tend to be strikingly similar in argument if not in tone" (95).

Although Starr doesn't pursue the connection, his recognition of the relationship between humiliation and thanksgiving and of their sermonic quality points to an important rhetorical combination. Thanksgiving and humiliation clearly parallel the classic pairing of praise and blame said by Aristotle to work together to accomplish the rhetorical goals of the audience-centered, present-related, celebratory discourse known as epideictic rhetoric (*Rhetoric* 1358b). This insight into one of the central focuses of the rhetoric of Puritan autobiography offers valuable data in the search for a systematic view of how the constant, introspective attention to providential blessings and warnings so common to Puritan life and writing was instrumental in the eventual creation of enduring fictions. One answer lies in the rhetorical technique of blame.

In *Robinson Crusoe* the importance of blame is two-fold. First, blame is part of the subject under consideration in the novel. As J. Paul Hunter has pointed out in *The Reluctant Pilgrim*, Crusoe's story is unified in part by its correlation to the established

"guide tradition," a literature frequently designed to teach people, especially young people, to avoid wrong choices (31). For such guides to be effective, such wrong choices must emerge condemned (blamed). Second, I believe this novel exemplifies the use of blame as a rhetorical technique. After establishing that *Robinson Crusoe* is both a novel about blame and a demonstration of blame, I would like to explore the question of how blaming operates effectively in the novel to shape this narrative into one of the most widely read and enjoyed moral treatises of all time, teaching multiplied lessons on a variety of subjects including redemption (111), covetousness (140), ingratitude (141), fear (189), prayer (171), providential signs (182), contentment (198), the Bible (221-223), liberty of conscience (241), and instinctive warnings (283).

To understand the significance of *Robinson Crusoe* as an example, we must first recognize Crusoe as one of the most frequently read, translated, cited, and imitated moral heroes of all time. In *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, Martin Green shows the sheer numbers in the following terms: the National Union Catalog devotes fifty-four pages to the editions of *Robinson Crusoe* but requires only four pages each for Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. But perhaps even more astounding is his claim that if we also add in the books based on versions of the Crusoe story, we end up with a comparison as wide as the difference between a genre and a single title. His point is that the Crusoe story has multiplied its influence to a striking degree. Green also summarizes the novel's printing history: "There were seven reprints in London in seven years; it was serialized within the first year and pirated, abridged, adapted, and dramatized endlessly" (20). The book was promptly translated into French, Dutch, and

German, with Russian and Spanish coming later (It is interesting to note that the Spanish actually banned the book until well into the nineteenth century, testifying to the fact that it is not a neutral tale but rather a moral treatise in a fictional package [20].) But one might argue that Defoe has less in common with Richardson and Eliot and their audiences than he does with John Bunyan and *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is certainly true that Defoe joins with Bunyan in engaging a dynamic popular audience. But as an allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress* offers a much different approach to didacticism. It is unabashedly and overtly instructive. We love it for its creative richness and for its innovative use of standard religious images, but we are not tempted to call it a novel. It is, from beginning to end, a lesson in how to get to heaven and the best way to live while on the way there. The focus of this discussion is on Defoe's ability to combine a religious message addressed to readers whom some contemporary critics like Charles Gildon found deserving of ridicule because of their social status (Hunter *The Reluctant Pilgrim* 21) with a fictional narrative which has retained its popular and critical appeal for nearly three centuries. The question should be asked: "How is Defoe able to use Crusoe to present so many pointed and culturally explicit lessons and yet keep him approachably and timelessly human?" My contention is that he does so with the judicious use of blame.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, moralists were in the process of reaching agreement on the value of example over precept (Hunter *Occasional Form* 84). However, some writers like Henry Fielding found a negative example or evitation even more powerful than a positive exemplar. This is the theory behind such traditional literary genres as tragedy and satire. As J. Paul Hunter points out, this dependence on the

"didactic efficacy" of bad examples was flourishing in the eighteenth century in several arenas. The audience reaction to the art of Hogarth was one demonstration of the power of negative models, and another evidence was the reliance on public executions and punishments like the pillory as means of deterring crime. According to Hunter, what Fielding is recommending is the "use of negative examples, cautionary figures placed in our path for evitation rather than imitation" (*Occasional Form* 86).

However, an aesthetic of negative examples is admittedly complicated. First, it is necessary to reiterate that good and bad examples need not be mutually exclusive or contradictory, although Hunter believes that both genres and individual artists usually evidence one tendency or the other (*Occasional Form* 86). Second, bad examples cannot succeed in a vacuum. Even those who argue for the power of a negative example, would not advocate, for example, that the worst human being would make the best schoolmaster (in theory, the one who should scare his students away from all vice). In that case his position might delude the observer into a false admiration. Instead, for bad models to be "repulsive and repellant,...they must be seen for what they are" (*Occasional Form* 120). I would concur with Fielding's view on the power of a negative example in both life and fiction and would further argue that the distinguishing between the good example and the bad example (the advancement of "what they are") is the role of blame.

Rhetorically, blame plays a necessary but rarely elaborated role. Even Aristotle, that great enumerator, finds it sufficient instruction to simply say that a rhetorician should determine all the means of praising and then reverse them (1368a, 35-39). For Aristotle, praise and blame operate similarly and are legitimately used "to urg[e] a course of action"

(1367b, 37-38). Recommending for or against a certain course of action is exactly the goal of didactic fiction, so it should come as no surprise that the role of blame is actually a pivotal one in books that wish to teach. It serves to balance the accounts, to complete the picture, and to repress the "too good to be true" label which is the death warrant of moral examples.

Recognizing that blame is a legitimate rhetorical technique, which held particular significance in the eighteenth century with its emphasis on satire, we must still understand that to pursue the issue of blaming will involve not only rhetorical but ethical criticism as well. In determining his or her view of blame, a moral storyteller is exercising the option to participate in one of "two strong ethical traditions" that Wayne Booth describes as "seemingly contrasting ways about how to address the deceptive heroes and villains, saints and sinners who offer themselves to us from our first years onward" (*The Company* 483). The first vein defines virtue as the ability to recognize and remove evil. This approach "advises a purifying caution and restraint, a defensive drawing of lines and boundaries" (Booth *The Company* 485). According to Booth this tradition is illustrated by isolationism, censorship, Pharisees, and even strong environmentalists--anyone who sees the solution to a problem as keeping away from any person or thing that is potentially harmful. This tradition presupposes that even strongly moral people will be influenced by the evil they contact. Booth suggests that this approach is protectionist, a point that is particularly appropriate to the rhetoric of didactic fiction. In its strongest form, this tradition would require a work which sets forth only good examples--the "good friends" with whom we should be spending our time.

The second tradition urges its followers to be open to the world. "Here the worst vice is to be self-protective, 'holier-than-thou'" (Booth *The Company* 487). Booth's examples of this tradition include children who are sent to rough schools to toughen them up and therapists who "hobnob...with characters whose influence sometimes ends in a 'negative transference'" (Booth *The Company* 487). This view varies according to whether the proponent believes in the existence and determination of right and wrong. Those who believe in openness but who have no belief in what is traditionally called vice advocate total openness. They redefine vice as being "hypocrisy" (487). According to Booth, such a person sins "only by the inauthentic, fearful ostracism of some vicious practice or person" (487).

The presumption might be that writers with a strong moral or religious agenda would not embrace openness and often they do not, but the two are not mutually exclusive. If one does believe that evil exists and should be addressed, then he or she can legitimately believe that confronting evil gives one strength to combat it. A classic expression of this view is offered by Milton in his *Areopagitica* when he writes:

He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue [sic], unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat....[T]hat which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary....[T]rue temperance [is that which can] see and know, and yet abstain. (2:514-16)

Booth suggests that *Areopagitica* was always on his desk in college and further states that it has a long history of importance for the "defender of civil liberties" (488).

Whether or not he knew *Areopagitica*, Defoe was certainly familiar with another tradition which operated on the same premise. George Starr has documented Defoe's debt to spiritual autobiography. He explains that it was normal for a convert to relate his original symptoms and spiritual crisis in order to help others "recognize their own conditions and proceed accordingly" (67). According to Starr, the clear goal of relating sins to others was "essentially didactic" (67).

Such a view finds support from an even earlier example of rhetorical narrative, too--the Bible. Hunter discusses at length the reliance of Puritan allegory on Biblical metaphor and even the specific Biblical knowledge of both writer and audience (*The Reluctant Pilgrim* 93-124). It is only a small step to suppose that a writer whose tradition emphasized the Bible's metaphorical method might also adapt the Bible's approach for confronting evil. Once evil enters the world through Adam's and Eve's sin, God casts them out of Eden and no longer shelters them from vice. Instead he chooses to reveal himself in and through imperfect human beings without covering their "warts." Since Defoe lived by a faith which Backscheider describes as "dynamic, personal, even intimate" (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 530) and definitely believed the Bible to be the Word of God, it is probable that he would have been influenced by its patterns. But either consciously or unconsciously, Defoe is following a pattern which permits readers of the Bible to know that holy Samuel raised two wicked sons (I Samuel 8:1-5), that great King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband (II Samuel 11), that wise king Solomon was foolish enough to dally with 700 wives and 300 concubines (I Kings 11:3), and that courageous Peter denied his Savior out of fear (John 18:17). Readers

would be less impressed with the level of Moses' meekness ("very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" [Numbers 12:3]), if we didn't also know that he was denied admission to the promised land because he lost his temper with this clamoring hoard and disobeyed God's directions (Numbers 20:12).

A holy God revealing himself in the context of sinful people's actions and words becomes a model for the revelation of truth, a revelation which must include blame for the wickedness revealed if it is to remain true to itself. By saying this, I am placing both the Bible and Daniel Defoe in the second of the two traditions that Wayne Booth describes in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. They allow vice to be confronted (and blamed), believing that by doing so virtue will be strengthened. They belong to the "openers" rather than the excluders.

Earlier, I showed how Defoe's poetry and pamphlets were often based on blame for evil in the world with a pointed desire to participate in the reformation of vice. To do that Defoe often blamed with techniques which required audience participation in the determination of blame. He used satire to ridicule the criticisms of King William, false praise to condemn King James, and a horrible example to advocate contempt for ungrateful children (see Chapter Two). Always, he asked his audience to evaluate his words and cast the blame themselves.

The premise of this study is that successful blaming is essential to successful didactic fiction, since allowing "evil a fair hearing" seems to be true of works that succeed as both art and teaching. Conversely, lack of blame minimizes any attempt at correction or improvement in the audience. (Each of us has experienced the frustration and even

boredom of characters who are meant to be instructive based solely on their astoundingly good behavior. See, for example, Amelia in *Vanity Fair* or Esther in *Bleak House*.)

What this means is that the author of didactic fiction must constantly be correcting the balance between blame and example in order to keep interest and believability high and at the same time to accomplish his moral or didactic goals. This involves significant rhetorical risk taking, something which does not come naturally to a great many didactic writers. Frequently they desire to draw distinct lines, which allow the fiction to deteriorate into propaganda. Defoe does not fall into this trap. Ross describes *Robinson Crusoe* as having a "real tension between God's purpose and Crusoe's very human impulses." It is this very tension that Ross believes elevates *Robinson Crusoe* above "the imperfection of a humdrum religious tract" (15). According to Ross, Defoe keeps this tension alive by not requiring the reader to step back and judge Crusoe but instead allowing us to identify with him. Defoe blames in a way that some early fiction writers didn't. Richardson's blame is limited to the wicked characters. Lovelace and Mr. B. are blamed but Pamela and Clarissa emerge "blameless." This cannot be said of the roving, restless Robinson Crusoe, the bewildered (and bewildering) but determined Moll Flanders, or the haunted Roxana. They deserve our blame, but because of that we listen the more carefully to their lessons.

Blaming is especially significant in understanding *Robinson Crusoe* since four different areas of blame are evident: God and blame, Defoe and blame, Crusoe (and other characters) and blame, and, finally, the reader and blame. Two of these subjects appear at the allegorical level, and two function in the narrative itself. It is the last area--blame and

the reader--which is crucial if didactic fiction is to operate as a life-changing force. To determine how blame works in *Robinson Crusoe*, I will look at all of these areas of blame.

Blaming God is a part of the allegory of the book and is especially significant at the time of Crusoe's salvation experience. Certainly, it is fair to take the allegory seriously since in the *Preface to Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe has Crusoe claim that the story is an allegory. This is, at the very least, an indication that the reader or critic is justified in looking for a deeper meaning to a story that has often been read and appreciated as an adventure story. Angus Ross writes that "the allegory may or may not be there" but "is in any case irretrievable from the complexities of Defoe's biography" (14). While that statement may be true as it relates to the lost biographical details which will probably never be recovered about Defoe, I think that the most important allegorical aspects are and always have been available. Defoe expected his allegory to be very accessible and it was exactly that for large numbers of his contemporary audience (Hunter *The Reluctant Pilgrim* 122).

Many modern critics have succeeded in delving into the depths of Defoe's many complexities which exist in the realm of economics, psychology, and religious practice, while overlooking the fact that Defoe is making a clear-cut statement about sin in the book. Having established that Defoe's *Preface* invites us to make "religious application of events" in *Robinson Crusoe*, we are justified in recognizing Crusoe's "ancient," "wise," and "grave," father, allegorically, as God. Furthermore, Crusoe battles with "a wandering inclination...for leaving [his] father's house" (28). This instinct is repeatedly paralleled in the text to the wanderings of the prodigal son of Luke 15. Defoe builds his allegorical

case throughout the text. For example, after only a short while on the ship which took him away from his home, a tremendous storm comes up. Not only does this echo the circumstances of the disobedient Jonah, but he describes his feelings in terms of the parable of the prodigal son. Momentarily at least, the frightened Crusoe decides to go home to his father "like a true repenting prodigal" (32). And a little later he determines that if he had gone home after being warned by the first big storm, he would have been happy. In fact, his father would have "killed the fatted calf" just as the father in Luke does when his prodigal son returns (37).

Crusoe's slavery and shipwreck are also events that allegorically represent a life destroyed by sin. Both bondage and shipwreck are familiar religious metaphors for sin's effects. What is important to our point here, however, is God's role in all of this, and God's part becomes much clearer after Crusoe reaches the island. After living there for about eight months, Crusoe falls very ill and becomes aware of his own weakened condition. For the first time, he recognizes the depths of his own helplessness. It is certainly no accident that Defoe describes the illness in such detail. He is shivering, wracked by violent headaches, hungry, weak, out of water, and depressed. In an allegorical sense, Crusoe has been sick with sin his whole life, but he hasn't recognized his condition. Now his desperation forces him to turn to God, and he "pray[s] to God for the first time since the storm off of Hull" (102).

Defoe has pictured in a detailed allegory the concept which Jesus explains to his disciples in Luke 5:30-32. When the Pharisees complain because he is eating with "publicans and sinners," his response is that "They that are whole need not a physician; but

they that are sick." The context makes it plain that sickness is used as a metaphor for sin, and that a Savior can only save those who know they have a need. Defoe is doing the same thing. Crusoe's problem all along has been that he wants to do everything his own way, and his sickness is Defoe's picture of his dawning recognition of his need for redemption. His illness starts on June 19, and on June 27 he has his revelatory dream. George Starr believes that in his effective use of Crusoe's illness as a traditional medical/spiritual metaphor, Defoe gives a "striking" example of his "ability to exploit fully the narrative possibilities of commonplace events" (*Spiritual Autobiography* 103).

In the dream Crusoe is sitting quietly on the ground when a man descends out of a black cloud. "He was all over as bright as a flame, red light upon the ground, so that I could just bear to look towards him; his countenance was most inexpressibly dreadful, impossible for word to describe" (102). When the apparition touches the ground, it trembles like an earthquake and the air seems charged with fire. Later, after moving closer, the figure speaks: "Seeing all these thing have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die" (103). Crusoe expects to be killed at any moment but instead wakes up--with a new sense of reproach. He realizes that he has been living with a "stupidity of soul" during his eight years as a sailor. By this he means that he has been totally unaware of God's hand in his life either for punishment or deliverance. He spends a full day deliberating concerning what has been happening to him. At first he dwells on his father's previous warnings and on his own wickedness in disobeying, but after a while he delves deeper into the issue of blame.

For a brief interval, Crusoe tries to defend himself against the blame he feels, reasoning that God as creator made all things and rules over them. Therefore, if God allows everything that happens to anyone, the next logical step is to blame him for this disaster. And momentarily Crusoe does, asking himself, "Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used" (107). Once again we are at the central theme of who is to blame for man's suffering, and once again Defoe through Crusoe repeats that the answer is not God. Crusoe reflects on "a dreadful misspent life" and decides that it is really more appropriate to ask why he has lived this long:

WRETCH! dost thou ask what thou hast done? Look back upon a dreadful misspent life, and ask thy self what thou hast *not* done; ask, Why is it that thou wert not long ago destroyed? Why wert thou not drowned in Yarmouth roads? killed in the fight when the ship was taken by the Sallee man of war? devoured by the wild beasts on the coast of Africa? or drowned *here*, when all the crew perished but thy self? Dost thou ask, "What have I done? (107)

Crusoe has finally faced up to the issue of blame. In the next few days he sleeps fitfully, conserving his limited strength and gradually recovering. Eventually, on July 4, Crusoe is recovered enough to take the Bible and read carefully. He prays for deliverance, no longer from sickness or from the island, but from "the load of guilt" that weighs him down (111), like Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

As he transfers blame from God to himself, Crusoe takes the audience into the second area of blaming, focusing squarely on Defoe himself. Whether we believe that the allegory is actually his life, as he claims in *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* or whether we prefer to call such incidents "symbolic parallels" as Paula Backscheider does (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 414), it seems clear that

Defoe is making some correlations to his own spiritual and physical journey. The point is really the same for our purposes, for even after giving the qualifying description of "parallels" to replace the term allegory, Backscheider writes, "The mind and experience of Defoe are everywhere in Robinson Crusoe" (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 417). At least at certain parts of the narrative, Crusoe is symbolic of real events in Defoe's life. When Crusoe determines that God is not to be blamed for the struggles he has experienced, the blame is transferred not only to Crusoe, but by implication to Defoe himself. This is, of course, an accurate view of repentance--that one would acknowledge one's own culpability. In fact, Backscheider recognizes that "Crusoe's repentance and ultimate salvation is assured" from the time he recognizes his guilt and wants nothing more than deliverance from it (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 418). Crusoe/Defoe (for here they are very close) takes time for an aside to those who supposedly will one day read this journal in which he admonishes that when a person "come[s] to a true sense of things" he/she will find forgiveness and deliverance from sin to be far more significant than "deliverance from affliction" (111). So in the allegory, God is not to blame for the evil in the world. Instead, the individual sinner, including Robinson Crusoe representing Daniel Defoe and any human being, is to blame for his own sins. Because of that sin, he or she must experience redemption. This is certainly one of the messages of this book, and it can only be experienced or conveyed by an adjustment in the way we view blame.

But all the blame is not at the allegorical level. Blame also functions to keep our interest in the narrative itself. We can identify with the characters because they are not too perfect. After all, Crusoe is represented in the text by Jonah, a man whose name is

actually the answer to the question "Whose fault is this mess?" (loosely paraphrased from Jonah 1:7). The connection to Jonah begins when a huge storm blows up as soon as Crusoe begins his first voyage. The comparison is made even more explicit in the follow-up discussion with the master's son on board the ship. Since Crusoe took the voyage as a kind of test and since it was clearly a disaster, the sailor advises: "Young man you ought never to go to sea any more, you ought to take this for a plain and visible token that you are not to be a seafaring man" (37). That is strong enough, but after he hears more details about Crusoe's reasons for leaving home (presumably including the fact that he is doing so in disobedience to his father), he declares, "I would not set my foot in the same ship with thee again for a thousand pounds" (37). The master's son makes his decision based on his belief that the storm was probably all Crusoe's fault just like "Jonah in the ship of Tarshish" (37).

But of course we know that Crusoe doesn't listen. He continues to travel and ends up a captive. Even after he is free, he continues to fail to follow his father's plan, writing, "My father recommended a quiet life. I couldn't do it then--I can't do it on the plantation now" (58). This becomes a much more poignant exhortation for obedience than Crusoe's perfect acceptance of his father's strictures could ever be. Ironically, we listen to his good advice because he is failing to follow it himself, and therefore we presume him to be free from moralizing. However, in the overall scope of the narrative, Defoe is certainly using such blaming incidents as significant moments of instruction. Crusoe makes a habit of telling us what he ought to think or do even when he fails to take his own advice. The reminders of the lesson of obedience (or perhaps better called disobedience) are scattered

throughout the text. For example, Crusoe sets out on a new voyage on the first day of September, exactly eight years after his initial disobedience. Later, he commemorates the anniversary of his shipwreck with a kind of blaming ritual, prostrating himself on the ground, confessing his sins, and fasting (117).

Crusoe is portrayed as a disobedient son, who struggles with restlessness and discontent, but his other very human imperfections also show clearly. Defoe makes no attempt to make Crusoe seem better than the average human being. He is frequently self-centered. After a striking picture of loss of life, in which Crusoe tells the reader, "I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them, except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows," he presents his own feelings (66). Surprisingly, he seems sadder for himself that he is alone than for his fellow sailors that are dead. In our minds, we blame Crusoe for his selfishness, but we also find him a believable, human, and accessible teacher. According to Frank Ellis "what makes *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* a novel and not a devotional work is that our hero continues to indulge his *Wanderlust* until the end of his life" (10). In the broader sense, we could say that although he is redeemed, he never stops being a very human man. In fact, each time he blames himself for an error in judgment or a sinful thought, he is helping to shape the future of the novel, because Defoe is using those moments to turn a simple adventure story into an account of "a suffering human being" (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe: His Life* 430).

That blame is a part of Crusoe's rhetorical methodology, thought patterns, and philosophy of life is clear when he buys his plantation in Brazil. He realizes that he has

made a big mistake in selling Xury, the slave with whom he escaped from the Moors (44-45). His reason is again a selfish one: he has discovered that he needs him. But his commentary on his faulty action is actually much deeper than a simple misjudgment for Crusoe says:

But alas! for me to do wrong that never did right, was no great wonder. I had no remedy but to go on: I was gotten into an employment quite remote to my genius, and directly contrary to the life I delighted in, and for which I forsook my father's house and broke thro' all his good advice; nay, I was coming into the very middle station, or upper degree of low life, which my father advised me to before; and which if I resolved to go on with, I might as well ha' staid at home, and never have fatigued my self in the world as I had done; and I used often to say to my self, I could ha' done this as well in England among my friends, as ha' gone 5,000 miles off to do it among strangers and savages in a wilderness, and at such a distance as never to hear from any part of the world that had the least knowledge of me. In this manner I used to look upon my condition with the utmost regret. (55)

Crusoe is reviewing his life, looking for patterns, and extrapolating lessons just as the typical Puritan autobiography would require. He recognizes that he has no choice but to live with and make the best of Xury's absence and that he also must live with the consequences of his flight from England. Ironically, he has fled into the same station in life which he had sought to avoid, hence his contention that he was one who always did wrong. When Crusoe learns that life in Brazil is very much like life in England, he figures out that life is usually what we make of it and that contentment comes from within rather than from without. This places the blame for his restlessness on him rather than on his circumstances. These kinds of simple but profound lessons in the "all I ever needed to know I learned in kindergarten" category often originate in the rhetoric of blame and are scattered throughout *Robinson Crusoe*. Such lessons were very important both to Defoe and to his contemporary audience. While it is certainly appropriate for twentieth-century

critics to reexamine the historical context relevant to Defoe's economic and social lessons, it is also important to historicize his religious themes, adding depth of meaning and significance to lessons like contentment, gratitude, and providential leading. By allowing Robinson Crusoe to be imperfect, Defoe invites the reader to listen to the lessons which he teaches. This connection to the reader is the fourth area of blame.

In a didactic novel the application of blame to the reader is probably most important. The writer desires his audience to accept blame where they are wrong and to act to improve themselves. As I have already suggested, Defoe is using the method of blame to address huge issues like the need for individual salvation. But Defoe can't resist blaming many other "sins" right along with original sin. He attacks Catholicism when Crusoe is distressed to find that even pagan tribes have developed "priestcraft" (219). All religions which maintain secrecy in order to keep the people dependent on the clergy are blamed in the devastating one word connection between priestcraft and the implied witchcraft. He directly blames the elders of Friday's tribe by calling their religious practices a "cheat" (219). He wrongly blames Friday at one point for disloyalty (225). The captain of course expresses blame towards those of his crew that mutinied (265). At the very end of the story the townspeople blame the travelers for their foolishness in standing between the wolves and the horses (295). What I am suggesting is that the list is endless. Crusoe is constantly blaming both himself and others in order to draw the reader into the evaluation process. He does this by a kind of dialectic with the final answer missing. The reader is then supposed to fill in the blank himself or herself in order to achieve closure. We are in the position of passing judgment. Defoe has no illusions. He is aware that making the

reader think is a risky business. He is, remember, the same man who stood in the pillory. But he consciously opts to invite the reader to participate in the meaning anyway. In the *Preface to Roxana* he writes: "when Vice is painted in its Low-priz'd Colours, 'tis not to make People in love with it, but to expose it; and if the Reader makes a wrong Use of the Figures, the Wickedness is his own" (36).

Frequently, when Defoe wants to teach a particular lesson, blame serves as the springboard that activates our thinking. I have selected a variety of Defoe's lessons in order to illustrate the role played by blame in his didacticism. First, Defoe has some lessons to teach on perseverance or pragmatic action. In more contemporary phrasing, Crusoe is an expert on making the best of things, yet Defoe has avoided a Pollyanna approach. According to Backsheider, Crusoe "may be a more inspiring example of patience, application, and resolution because he perseveres in a life that is an unpredictable 'checquer work,' ...rather than in a quest he chooses" (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 429).

One way Defoe creates the picture of patient persistence is by illustrating that sometimes blame cannot be resolved but must be born or simply dismissed from mind. We may not be happy about the past--may not even be pleased with our own role--but we should not give up. Crusoe finds himself in this situation when he wakes on the "Island of Despair" and sees his ship driven to land by the storm and high tide. It is sitting upright and in one piece. His emotions are mixed because he has great hopes for what he may salvage from its contents but feels grief and self-incrimination because he realizes if they had all kept to the ship at least some others would have probably survived. As he tells it, he "spent great part of this day in perplexing [him] self on these things." However, with

the quiet, unobtrusive irony that Defoe uses so well in *Robinson Crusoe*, he writes that, "seeing the ship almost dry," Crusoe walked as close as he could on sand and then swam out to the boat (87). There was a time for blaming, for philosophizing, and for meditating, but it did not overwhelm or undercut the need for pragmatic action. Defoe himself definitely saw this as an important message in *Robinson Crusoe*, since in *Serious Reflections* he wrote:

Here is invincible patience recommended under the worst of misery, indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances; I say, these are recommended as the only way to work through those miseries, and their success appears sufficient to support the most deadhearted creature in the world. (xii)

A similar combination of the profound and the practical is taught in an ironic confrontation with money. Defoe the merchant certainly cared about the making and spending of money. Going bankrupt was one of the most significant events of his entire life and may well be included allegorically in Crusoe's loss of money and subsequent reevaluation of its worth. After his shipwreck, Crusoe returns repeatedly to his ship to cull valuables from the wreckage. When he finds "about thirty six pounds value in money" in a variety of currencies he speaks in a negative apostrophe, addressing money, "O drug!" (75). Money is attacked as a useless hindrance, worth less than a single knife which at least is useful in this deserted place. It would be better to just leave the money and let it go to the bottom of the ocean. However, in a classic line Defoe writes, "However, upon second thoughts, I took it away" (75). The weight nearly causes him to sink on that trip to shore, and when he does arrive through the rough seas, he gets himself into his tent and lies "with all [his] wealth about him very secure" (76). The next morning the ship has

disappeared from view, and his salvaging days are over. Instead he must spend his time in making up a defense against savages and wild beasts (76). It is important to point out that Defoe doesn't dictate our attitude about money. In fact this passage is often debated. Instead he raises the negatives--money can be useless, it can weigh us down, and it may even endanger us. But nevertheless Crusoe takes it.

As John J. Richetti has explained, Defoe himself had an ambiguous relationship with money, and his morals may have sometimes been in conflict with his economics. Richetti comments on Defoe's ability to argue on both sides of the economic coin. He saw and admired the many benefits conferred by wealth, but he also recognized that luxury was in once sense the downfall of the aristocracy. Richetti describes Defoe as "a man who clearly enjoyed an argument," "was quite capable of defending contradictory positions, relishing the rhetorical elaboration of different, perhaps equally convincing positions" (*Daniel Defoe* 41). In addition, Richetti writes, "with an almost obsessive regularity that underlines their seriousness for him, Defoe returns in all his writing to these paradoxes of consumerism" (41). No wonder our response is conflicted. That is a reflection of Defoe's own paradoxical ideology. Are we supposed to blame Crusoe for his foolishness and by extension forsake our own materialism? Or are we supposed to reevaluate the amount of value we place on money, keeping it but recognizing it as temptation? The choice is ours and that is Defoe's genius--he can raise the questions cleverly and leave the ultimate blaming of Crusoe or ourselves in our hands. The passage sounds far from "preachy," and we have enjoyed thinking about whether our view of money is appropriate.

Blaming is also a key to teaching lessons about human justice. Crusoe goes on record as refusing to blame God for being sovereign. He puzzles over why savages haven't heard the gospel that he had been privileged to hear but had ignored for so long (212). But he refuses to blame God. This brings him to the point where he can realize that some forms of justice are in God's hands and are therefore outside of his own jurisdiction. This same attitude keeps him from killing all the cannibals he can get his hands on. His first impulse is to execute every cannibal because he finds their eating of human flesh so disgusting. He decides, however, that since they have done him no harm he should leave their judgment in God's hands. Instead he concludes that he "was certainly in the wrong of it" (177). He theorizes at great length on the justice of blaming someone rather than letting God be judge (177-179). In the process, the audience is reminded to let God be God instead of playing God ourselves.

Crusoe also blames himself when he takes God's providence for granted. After he sees the first footprint, he suddenly realizes that someone could come in and steal his provisions, so he resolves to plant extra corn rather than complacently believing that no accident or interference would diminish his supply (164). "Plan ahead and take nothing for granted" might be the lesson here.

In a reversal that is typical of Defoe's method for encouraging his audience to participate in meaning making, Defoe sometimes uses blame to praise. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated how Defoe utilized the reverse of this technique when he used praise to cast blame in *King William's Affection to the Church of England Examined, &c.* When Crusoe wants to make beer, he "reproves" himself for his simplicity in neglecting to realize

how involved a process it would become. But the real point of the passage is praise.

Defoe anticipates that the reader will admire Crusoe for his ingenuity and persistence in taking tasks just like this and persevering until he accomplishes it. This is true of his bread, candles, clothes, fortresses, and even a dairy.

He concludes his discussion of beer by saying that if interference had not occurred in the form of savages, he "had undertaken it, and perhaps brought it to pass too;" since he "seldom gave any thing over without accomplishing it, when [he] once had it in [his] head enough to begin it" (175). The message is that he could do it if he wanted to. The implication is that we can also accomplish amazing things with enough persistence, but he has taught it without even the slightest tinge of "cheerleading" tones. The conclusion is a laudatory one, but it is based on a foundation of blame.

The vice which Defoe had the least tolerance for seems to have been ingratitude, and he blames it in many of his writings, concluding in *The True-Born Englishman* that it was England's besetting sin. According to Maximillian Novak, "gratitude was not only one of Defoe's literary themes but also involved a personal creed" (*Defoe and the Nature of Man* 114). It comes as no surprise that *Robinson Crusoe* is full of lessons on gratitude. Again, this emphasis is compatible with Puritan doctrine and practice, with some spiritual autobiographies written with the intention of stirring up the soul to "thankfulness" since "gratitude obliges one to observe and acknowledge such deliverance." Ingratitude on the other hand constituted "practical atheism" (Starr *Spiritual Autobiography* 8).

In one particular exhortation on gratitude, Defoe blames himself for what "should have been." Crusoe recounts with an almost theatrical tone the tale of the amazing barley seeds

which grow "miraculously" after he shakes out a bag of "chicken's meat" in the area.

While he still thinks it is an amazing case of grain grown seedlessly by God's providence, Crusoe is impressed. After he finds a human explanation, his gratitude wanes, but he realizes that that is the wrong attitude and that instead he

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, that should order or appoint, that 10 or 12 grains of corn should remain unspoiled (when rats had destroyed all the rest) as if it had been dropt from heaven; as also, that I should throw it out in that particular place, where, it being in the shade of a high rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it anywhere else at that time, it had been burnt up and destroyed. (95)

He concludes that if a human being can't recognize God's care in the ordinary areas of life, he has only his own foolishness to blame, and Defoe expects at least a portion of his audience to wake up and plead guilty. But he doesn't force us to. Instead, Crusoe simply rebukes himself, and waits to see if we identify with his failure. And of course we do.

Who doesn't find it easier to see God in miracles than in everyday sunshine and rain?

Not only does Crusoe (and by implication Defoe) blame himself for many of his actions and attitudes, but he also suggests that he is being reproved from another source--presumably God. In language that echoes the story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12), Crusoe continues to blame ingratitude when he tells how when he gets most discouraged this thought comes to him:

Well, you are in a desolate condition, 'tis true, but pray remember, where are the rest of you? Did not you come eleven of you into the boat? where are the ten? Why were not they saved and you lost? Why were you singled out? Is it better to be here or there? and then I pointed to the sea. All evils are to be considered with the good that is in them, and with what worse attends them. (80)

By calling to mind the story of the lepers, Crusoe is specifically blaming himself for lack of gratitude. In the story, Jesus cleanses ten lepers, but appallingly only one returns to say "thank-you." The lack of gratitude is horrifying, and Crusoe is realizing and therefore reminding the audience that he and we are guilty of the same thing. Defoe is much more effective in teaching a lesson in gratitude this way than he would be if he simply moralized about the virtues of gratitude. We come much closer to identifying with Crusoe in his failure than we ever could if he had no trouble adjusting to his island.

Basically Defoe is casting blame in the role of giving perspective. With a "fair hearing," evil puts in the shadows which are necessary to make the picture accurate, complete and even beautiful. Without evil, no one can see the whole picture. Only when the good and bad are seen side by side and rationally compared can we really appreciate the true nature of things. Crusoe himself makes this point when he proposes to "set the good against the evil" in a kind of ledger (83). He does so in a set of contraries listed in two columns set side by side. For example,

EVIL	GOOD
I am cast upon a horrible desolate island, void of all hope of recovery.	But I am alive and not drowned as all my ships company was.

After extending the list of comparisons, Crusoe alleges "that we may always find in [our condition] something to comfort ourselves from, and to set in the description of good and evil, on the credit side of the account" (84). The very idea of setting the good and the bad side by side in order to make sense out of life is a simple version of the point of this chapter which is that blaming is an essential part of setting up an example to follow.

To Crusoe, blame rightly accepted nearly always results in a converse reaction--often gratitude (143)--since the sinner realizes that no matter how awful the things that happen to him are, they are not as bad as he deserves. Although Crusoe advocates submission to God's will, he clearly sees more than just a God of blame since he also feels it his duty to "hope in him" (165), and devotes many "cogitations" to the subject of deliverances, finally latching on to Psalm 27:14 which says "Wait on the Lord, and be of good cheer, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." Such a promise and a view of the other side of the coin gave Crusoe great joy.

Just as Crusoe believes that "we never see the true state of our condition till it is illustrated to us by its contraries" (149), we never appreciate the good (praise) until we face and come to terms with the evil (blame). In his article "Narrative Contraries in Defoe," Robert James Merrett writes that this constant dialectic is typical of Defoe. He suggests that Defoe's narrators "identify with and condemn their former selves in hard-to-predict ways" (177). Adding further to the tension and complication, they also "often undermine their own narration, commenting on their inadequacies and inviting the reader to improve or read beyond the written text" (177). Merrett is exactly right when he notes that Defoe's narrators comment "on their inadequacies," and I have chosen to call what they and Defoe do "blame." My terminology fits into a long rhetorical tradition from Plato and Aristotle through O. B. Hardison's "enduring monument" of praise literature and into the importance of conviction in Puritan autobiography and theology (Starr *Spiritual Autobiography* 109). The concept of blame locates the didactic novel in a larger literary and rhetorical context. I also agree with Merrett that the result of

such blame is to invite the reader into the text to make his or her own moral judgments, creating a didactic novel, which is far superior to one which takes fewer rhetorical risks by painting good and evil in unrealistic black and white.

A moral voyager is constantly faced with choices between good and evil, wise and unwise, practical or impractical. As readers of a didactic novel, we must be drawn into the process if the teaching is to have any meaning. Without blame, a person has what Crusoe labels in himself as a "stupidity of soul," and that is a dangerous position to be in. With no "conscience of evil," Crusoe is like "the most hardened, unthinking, wicked creature" among the sailors (103). In this condition, blame interrupts his life as a dramatic revelation, bringing deliverance and joy so great that Crusoe claims to have figured out that he could never have been happier anywhere else than he was right there on the island (126).

At the allegorical level then, Defoe teaches that God is not to blame for the evil which befalls men. He is "justifying the ways of God to men" in a way which is reminiscent of Milton. He is also endeavoring in his allegory to teach that redemption comes only when we recognize our guilt and take the blame upon ourselves. This message can arguably be the core of Defoe's reason for saying that the novel is an allegory of his life--it may well be an allegory of his spiritual "voyage," even if we find a dearth of biographical data to parallel the allegorical aspects of the narrative. The allegory is part of Defoe's moral rhetoric, but he doesn't stop there. This is a novel because he also has realistically drawn characters in real circumstances, and I have shown that blame is an important rhetorical strategy, both in making them interesting and in using them to teach lessons to the reader as well.

Defoe followed the Biblical pattern of allowing evil to be heard and placed himself in the ethical branch which Booth labels "openers." By so doing, he helped shape the novel into the genre we know today. He added realism and negated the stultifying effect that too much goodness was having on the eighteenth century drama (Brown *English Dramatic Form 1660-1760*). He allowed Robinson Crusoe to be an accessible human model--the good example which Defoe repeatedly called for in his non-fiction writings--by allowing him to sin, to make mistakes, and even to regress from lessons supposedly learned. But in the process, Defoe went to great lengths to encourage readers to place the blame where it belonged. It is those very blaming incidents which offer the most long-lasting lessons in *Robinson Crusoe*.

CHAPTER SIX

"TO THOSE WHO KNOW HOW TO READ IT":

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN *MOLL FLANDERS*

"Moral indeed of all my History is left to be
by the Senses and Judgement of the Reader"

Moll Flanders

Wayne Booth has said that "whenever an impersonal author asks us to infer subtle differences between his narrator's norms and his own, we are likely to have trouble" (*Rhetoric of Fiction* 321). That kind of "trouble" seems characteristic of the critical debate which surrounds *Moll Flanders*. The debate is an especially significant one because it involves important scholars taking diametrically opposed views of the same novel. The views are so different that a critic's position will affect his standard for judging both meaning and artistic merit in the novel. The critical climate is intense.

The first and perhaps most important issue is that of irony. Laura Curtis calls this "the crux of the still unresolved debate" about *Moll Flanders* (138). Ian Watt addresses the debate in his detailed commentary on the book. Since his discussion of the novel is both complete and influential, his very strong objections against an ironic reading of the novel must be answered in any viable argument in favor of a system of irony. Watt says, "whatever disagreement there may be about particular instances, it is surely certain that there is no consistently ironical attitude present in *Moll Flanders*" (*The Rise of the Novel* 126). In fact, he finds it lacking in any real coherent plan (99). He suggests that modern critical expectations cause readers to look for and therefore to find a system of ironies where, in fact, none exists (127).

Henry N. Rogers III, in basic agreement with Watt on the issue of irony, tries to explain some of the novel's incongruities in his article "The Two Faces of Moll," which stresses the importance of recognizing the distinction between Moll's "two consciousnesses"--the younger Moll character and the older Moll narrator (117). For him, this duality solves one of the key problems in an interpretation that does not contain irony--that of the doubt which Defoe casts on the sincerity of Moll's confession (*Preface*). Rogers believes that the narrator is truly repentant and that she represents Defoe's moral view in the novel. When conscious irony occurs, it is brief and shows that the older Moll is reflecting on "the incongruity of an incident in her past" (123).

Another approach to the conversion question is offered by Robert Erickson in *Mother Midnight*. He suggests that, whether or not we believe in Moll's prison "conversion," we should recognize that she is "more confident and capable" in her "New World" and has undergone "at least a partial moral regeneration" (66-67). This represents a kind of economic or psychological conversion.

However, many critics insist that an ironic structure does exist in *Moll Flanders*. For example, Howard L. Koonce has written of Ian Watt that "surely he is wrong" on the issue of irony. Koonce asserts that what he calls "Moll's Muddle" or what we might think of as an invitation to read ironically is based on the combination in the novel of "a zest for tales of criminal ingenuity and taste for moral preachment" (379), a combination highly reminiscent of Horace's balance of instruction and delight and of the interworking of praise and blame at work in *Robinson Crusoe* (See Chapter Five).

In "Defoe's 'Indifferent Monitor': The Complexity of *Moll Flanders*," Maximillian Novak argues for a "coherent structure and an elaborate pattern of events" (365). His premise is that whether what Defoe does in this novel should strictly be called irony is not really as important as a recognition that Defoe's greatness as a writer is identifiable in the complexity of his language and narrative (352). He predicts correctly that reaction to Ian Watt's "objections to the carelessness in Defoe's craft...will continue to produce essays...discovering new elements of artistry in *Moll Flanders*" (365).

In fact, much subsequent scholarship has focused on the significance of language and narrative technique. Carl Lovitt, for example, notes the novel's dependence on metaphysical intervention in a few isolated but significant "extreme" moments, such as the occasion when Jemmy hears Moll calling him from twelve miles away. Such supernatural manipulation of narrative flow, according to Lovitt, shows external authority in the novel--external authority (Defoe) with a functioning plan (4).

Certainly a focus on language and narration is appropriate and fruitful. Defoe invites a rhetorical analysis of *Moll Flanders* when he recommends the work "to those who know how to read it" and explains that such a reader will be one who is more concerned with "the end of the writer than with the life of the person written of" (*Preface* 29). A reader might ask, however, just exactly what that instruction or "end" is intended to be. It is, after all, a book which claims to be true and yet suggests falsehood at every step. Defoe claims that his work is but an edited version of Moll's own story faithfully told by her and made more modest by him. However, throughout the *Preface*, even as he makes his claim for truth, Defoe is encouraging us to look for lies. He tells us that "it will be hard for a

private history to be taken for genuine" in this age of novels and romance, especially since the teller has been forced to conceal her name (28). Although she is the one who "pretends" to be penitent, Defoe casts further doubt on the depth of her conversion when he admits that he has had to clean up some of her language. We are also informed that a very old, very rich Moll has now left the new world to live again in England, but that she lives as "not so extraordinary a penitent as she was at first" (32). My contention is that, although Defoe's claim that he is presenting a true story is significant to our understanding of how *Moll Flanders* fits into the history of the novel, it is even more significant to realize that Defoe undercuts his claim to truth throughout the Preface. Such an invitation to read guardedly plays an important role in making us the kind of readers Defoe is addressing. Michael McKeon is correct in pointing out that claims to historicity served eighteenth-century authors as bridges to span the gap between the fascination with true accounts of individuals (traditions like spiritual autobiography, criminal biography, and travel books) and their very real desire to be didactic concerning larger spiritual truths (100). But I am suggesting that, when Defoe self-consciously asserts that he is an editor writing the story of a repentant criminal as she tells the story of her wicked life, he is doing more than simply fitting into the mold of naive empiricism (although I find McKeon's distinctions to be very helpful). He also wants us to be aware of our own role as an audience of meaning makers, who must sort through all these layers of narrative to determine just exactly what truth (if any) is really in there. One way to explore the rhetorical goal of the novel is to analyze its three major rhetoricians: Daniel Defoe, author/editor; Moll Flanders, narrator; and Moll Flanders, character.

In his influential analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Richard Weaver argues that for Plato there are only three kinds of rhetoricians: the non-lover, the evil lover, and the noble lover (6). Weaver's thesis is that the *Phaedrus* demonstrates that there are really "only three ways for language to affect us. It can move us toward what is good; it can move us toward what is evil; or it can, in hypothetical third place, fail to move us at all" (6). The non-lover represents a "semantically purified," non-rhetorical, notation-like speech which "communicates abstract intelligence" (7). The evil lover is someone who exploits speech in order to always control, using the object of desire to please himself or herself. This speaker likes an audience who is intellectually and materially inferior. Naturally, such a lover hates truth since it refuses to yield to him/her. The third lover/rhetorician is the noble lover, whose speech is passionate, but who works through dialectic and poetic language to "add impulse to truth" (21). I would like to compare each of the rhetoricians connected to *Moll Flanders* to the standards in the *Phaedrus*, focusing on how Moll Flanders, narrator, fits into Weaver's rhetorical scheme. I believe that a clear view of the narrator's rhetorical identification is significant in attempting to solve the question of whether the novel is systematically ironic. My analysis will attempt to answer the following questions: Is Moll Flanders (narrator) an evil or a noble lover? In other words, is she interested in presenting herself in the best possible light or is her goal truth? What is Defoe's rhetorical goal in the novel? Is the novel's rhetorical method ironic?

The first rhetorician in the novel is the character Moll, and she is clearly a master of rhetorical skills. Readers should readily identify her as a classic example, in Weaver's terms, of an evil lover. Socrates describes this kind of lover as "an exploiter," who loves

"as wolves love lambs" (Weaver 10). Weaver explains that an evil lover is one that "seeks to keep the understanding in a passive state by never permitting an honest examination of alternatives" (12). In other words, the evil rhetorician keeps secrets and tells lies in order to gain his or her own goals. This description is apt for the character of Moll. Weaver offers some specific ways in which he believes that language parallels this attitude. The base rhetorician hates truth, so she (in this case Moll the character) will avoid a "true dialectic." Instead she dresses up the choices in "meretricious images" (12). The real facts could present a distraction from her rhetorical goals and would also give the listener the power to make a reasonable choice. The evil lover does not want that to happen because she is also desirous of maintaining control of the relationship.

Moll speaks just as Weaver expects an evil lover to speak when she attempts to persuade her nurse that she should not be allowed to go into service. She very convincingly describes her fears of service. However, Weaver reminds us that an evil lover will "dress up one alternative in all the cheap finery of immediate hopes and fears" (12). An evil lover "often blocks definition and cause and effect reasoning" (12).

Ian Bell notes that although Moll describes service as "a frightful thing to me" (*Moll Flanders* 36), "no reasons are offered" ("Narrator" 159). Moll claims, when pressed, that she is too young for service; she will be beaten and unable to defend herself. That sounds like a good reason until we learn what her nurse is willing to promise that she will not have to go into service until she is older. Moll (the narrator) tells us here that "if she had assured me I should not have gone till I was twenty years old, it would have been the same to me" (36). There undoubtedly are valid reasons for being afraid to go into service;

however, the point is that Moll does not offer those reasons. Instead she persuades her nurse with a mixture of unexplained fears and hopes combined with an overwhelming quantity of tears (36). She completes the other half of Weaver's description by next focusing on her hopes. She wants to be a gentlewoman. This hope also helps her to attain her goal. Her listeners all find the naiveté of her aspirations to be moving. The discussion makes it quite clear that Moll does not really understand what being a gentlewoman means. In fact, this is one of the few passages that critics are able to agree is ironic. Even Ian Watt, who argues against an ironic interpretation of the novel, says of this passage, "we can be certain that the irony is conscious" (121).

The character Moll indicates repeatedly that she is aware of the power of rhetorical manipulation. She learns from a master teacher long before she leaves the relatively safe haven of Colchester. The older brother is a master of keeping secrets, but the younger brother (who is by far the nobler man) makes no attempt at subterfuge. He is in love with "Moll" and doesn't care if everyone knows about it. The older brother, however, is even willing for Moll to marry his own unsuspecting brother just to avoid having the truth of his affair be revealed. As they discuss the problem, Moll tries to be persuasive, arguing that even if she turns down the younger brother's marriage proposal, such amazing self-denial by one in her position will surely cause suspicion. She is, of course, hoping that her lover will give in and marry her. However, the older brother simply turns her own argument back on her, advising her that the only way to avoid discovery is for her to go ahead and marry his brother if he proves to be sincere (58). At this stage of the narrative, Moll has some questions about the advisability of such drastic action, arguing forcefully that if her

earlier protestations of love and her willingness to sleep with him have been anything but lies, then he is asking her to do something unthinkable not only in marrying his brother but in deceiving him about their previous relationship (60). After days of debate and even physical illness on her part, he wins the argument using a strategy which the narrator Moll is later able to describe in detail:

He spoke this in so much more moving terms than it is possible for me to express, and with so much greater force of argument than I can repeat, then I only recommend it to those who read the story, to suppose, that as he held me above an hour and a half in that discourse, so he answered all my objections, and fortified his discourse with all the arguments that human wit and art could devise. (74)

It is particularly significant that although she is losing the argument, she is self-consciously aware of the discourse going on. And as the novel progresses, we will see her follow the path that the older brother demonstrates to her here. He is definitely an evil lover, dressing up his affair with her as a marriage (60), calling himself her "sincere friend" and their past some "follies" (73). While managing to minimize both their immorality and their planned deceit of the younger brother, he also carefully warns her of her impending danger if she doesn't cooperate. First he insists that he can never be the lover of a woman whom his brother courts, and then he goes on to picture graphically her status as a "cast-off whore" if their secret becomes known. Moll describes his method in these words: "he took care upon all occasions to lay it home to me in the worst colours that it could be possible to be drawn in" (74). At the same time he is also being careful to paint a lovely picture of "the easy, prosperous life" which she could have if she were married to his brother. Moll summarizes his rhetorical expertise clearly: "Thus, in a word, I may say, he reasoned me out of my reason, he conquered all my arguments, and I began to see a

danger that I was in, which I had not considered of before, and that was, of being dropped by both of them and left alone in the world to shift for myself" (75). Reasoning someone out of her reason certainly fits the *modus operandi* of an evil lover. To add to an already selfish approach to the situation, the elder brother also manages to convince his younger brother that he should get the credit for persuading their mother to consent to the marriage and therefore gains "the thanks of a faithful friend for shifting off his whore into his brother's arms for a wife" (74).

Moll learned early that words could be effective weapons, and we see her launching them throughout the book. When an acquaintance of hers is rejected by her suitor because she has had the nerve to inquire about his background, Moll steps in and remedies the situation in much the same way that the older brother operated. First she encourages the young lady concerning her rights, giving her every reason to be proud of her own sense of her self-worth. This alone is a great help since she "was very well pleased with the discourse" (85), but then they come up with a way to force him to marry her anyway, using only words as their weapons (but not necessarily truth). They plan a strategy that consists of telling people that 1. She rejected him (as opposed to his story that he had been the rejecter), 2. He is not possessed of the estate which he claims to have, and 3. He is ill-tempered and debauched (partly true). The young lady spreads the rumors successfully, but every time Moll Flanders is asked (as her friend) to confirm the rumors, she adds one additional tidbit; she claims that he is also in financial difficulty. Then, just for good measure, because she is "heartily piqued" at him for his chauvinism, Moll also mentions that she has heard that he has a "wife alive at Plymouth, and another in the West Indies"

(86). Naturally the poor man starts to have trouble finding any women who will allow him to court them. He even tries a new town, but the rumors follow him. The young lady has had the foresight all by herself to set up a rival suitor. When that happens, the young man is ridiculed by all his acquaintances, and he can't take it anymore. In desperation, he begs to see the original young lady again. Of course, this is exactly what she has been planning. In their meeting, she takes "full revenge" by requiring him to explain himself in full, providing her with a defense for all her made up rumors. The result is that "he was so confounded by her discourse that he could not answer a word" almost causing her to believe her own rumors (87). Eventually, she gets her man on her own terms, even reserving some of her fortune for her own use (one of Moll's favorite games). Moll's advice to her readers is that women should learn the value of being "uncomeatable" (89). My point is that this tale is really an anecdote about the power of discourse, first Moll's and later the young lady's.

Moll also manipulates words for her own benefit when her linen draper husband is forced to flee because of debts. In Moll's mind, she is again a free woman, and she must survive the only way she thinks is open to her: she looks for a new husband. She is relatively poor since she and her husband have lost not only his money but most of hers as well. Of course, that would never do on a husband hunt, so she solves the problem by having her friend the ship captain's widow spread the word that she has at least a 1500 pound fortune (92).

From the men who court her, she picks the one who seems least likely to inquire too deeply into the real extent of her fortune. She and her suitor have a interesting scene in

which they discuss this very issue by scratching the words with a diamond on the glass in the window of her chamber. He writes: "You I love, and you alone." and she writes back, "And so in love says every one." They continue to debate the idea of whether anyone would offer marriage based on the person's real value rather than monetary worth. She manages to make him so mad at her distrust of his motives that he finally carves, "I scorn your gold, and yet I love." With this declaration, she has him right where she wants him. She gambles everything by revealing the truth in this jesting context, hoping first of all that he will not really believe her, but feeling fairly certain that after his dramatic declaration he will be too embarrassed to call her to account concerning her real worth. She responds, "I'm poor; let's see how kind you'll prove." He hugs and kisses her, and, claiming that he can not wait to carve his words, he nevertheless writes on paper (instead of just speaking the words) the request she has been manipulating for: "Be mine, with all your poverty." She taunts him further, "Yet secretly you hope I lie" (93-94). By admitting the truth in a doubtful context, she forces her suitor into a position where he can never blame her for her actions. He has heard the confession from her own lips and can never accuse her of hiding her true circumstances. However, he still has plenty of reasons to believe that she is either exaggerating her poverty or making it up as a test of his love.

After they are safely married, she brings the discussion to a more definite conclusion, again manipulating his responses with expertise. She tells the reader that she picked her time and then announced that she had heard that he had been told (not by her!) that she might have a great deal of money, and she feels she must set the record straight. We know, naturally, that the courtship has been a planned hoax, but to her husband she

sounds sincere and noble. She is able to control his perception of her wealth by implying that she is terribly poor--virtually destitute. She then gives him 160 pounds and tells him that that is "not quite all neither" (97). This is all planned on her part because she tells the reader that she "had brought him so near to expecting nothing...that the money, though the sum was small in itself, was doubly welcome to him" (97). She then drags out the process by giving him 160 additional pounds a few days later and then following that up with 100 pounds in gold and so on, so that she spreads the installments out over time and causes him to feel gratitude and hope at every turn. Ultimately, Moll turns her deception into a rhetorical victory, which she describes as having "got over the fraud of passing for a fortune without money, and cheating a man into marrying me on a pretence of a fortune; which, by the way, I take to be one of the most dangerous steps a woman can take, and in which she runs the most hazard of being ill-used afterwards" (98).

The idea that *Moll Flanders* is a book about power is not a new one. In *Defoe's Narratives*, John J. Richetti calls his chapter dealing with the narrative of *Moll Flanders* "*Moll Flanders: The Dialectic of Power*." Her desire to achieve power through persuasion without truth is certainly apparent as Moll attempts to persuade her Bath lover to give her an additional fifty pounds. Since her last marriage, Moll has lived in Virginia for eight years, has had three more children, has met her long lost mother, and has discovered that she had accidentally married her own brother. Now she has taken a lover in Bath. The man is kind and very noble in his concern for her, but he is married to a woman with a mental disorder. Their relationship is a happy one, but after he becomes deathly ill, he experiences repentance and decides that he cannot continue to commit

adultery. Although Moll has apparently cared about him, she is now primarily concerned with providing something for her future. To advance her agenda, she claims that she will be going to Virginia, but the reader knows that "this was indeed a cheat thus far" (133).

In addition, she offers her Bath lover some immediate gratification just as the *Phaedrus* suggests. She even calls this offer her "argument" (*Moll Flanders* 133). She gives him a general release in exchange for the money. From the way she signs the document, we infer that she feels that she has nothing further to gain from him anyway and is willing to offer this to get a little more money. She tells us that she is "now a single person again," noting almost as an afterthought that she does still have her linen-draper husband besides her incestuous husband/brother in Virginia. However, since she hasn't heard from the linen-draper in almost fifteen years she persuades herself (and her readers?) that "nobody could blame me for thinking myself entirely freed" (134).

Alone again, Moll looks for an honest man to manage her money. The one she finds also begins to fall in love with her, but Moll is still managing everything with her rhetoric. She praises him, telling him how great a trust he has inspired in her, and when he tells her how much her words have meant to him she says to herself, "So I intended it should" (144). As always, she has been considering all her words in order to get the best advantage from them. Of course, she has made a slight miscalculation in this case because she was unaware that this man was also married. In his case, he is unhappy because his wife has been continually unfaithful to him, but he is, none the less, still married. However, to prove his sincerity, he asks her to marry him, promising that he will not expect her to live with him until his divorce is final (145). In contrast to his sincere good-

faith offer, Moll is already planning to say "yes," but she must "play the hypocrite a little more with him," seeming "to decline the motion with some warmth, and besides a little condemning the thing as unfair (145). Her concern is that she doesn't want to make any kind of commitment that brings no security for her. Instead she puts him off. There is no doubt that she knows exactly what she is doing since she describes her actions with the metaphor of catching a fish:

I played with this lover as an angler does with a trout. I found I had him fast on the hook, so I jested with his new proposal, and put him off. I told him he knew little of me, and bade him inquire about me; I let him also go home with me to my lodging, though I would not ask him to go in, for I told him it was not decent.

In short, I ventured to avoid signing a contract of marriage, and the reason why I did it was because the lady that had invited me so earnestly to go with her to Lancashire insisted so positively upon it, and promised me such great fortunes, and such fine things there, that I was tempted to go and try. "Perhaps," said I, "I may mend myself very much"; and then I made no scruple in my thoughts of quitting my honest citizen, whom I was not so much in love with as not to leave him for a richer. (146)

So she keeps her "fish" on her rhetorical hook while she goes angling for bigger fish. And she finds one, but this time she gets caught herself. While her "faithful citizen" is getting his divorce, she meets and marries a supposedly wealthy man, who has actually married her for her money. They are both disappointed (to say the least) and end up separating although they have each expressed great love for the other. Although Moll claims that he has made her very happy, she ends the relationship rejoicing that she has refrained from telling the truth about how much money she really has. She has even married him without telling him her real name.

Although she does consent to give him a way of writing to her, Moll proudly tells her readers that she "never broke [her] resolution, which was not to let him ever know [her]

true name, who [she] was, or where to be found" (162). She has her husband Jemmy's baby but continues to correspond with her banker friend so that she can marry him after his divorce. Her role as an evil lover, who keeps secrets in order to further her own goals, is described succinctly when she returns to marry her banker. Not only has he received a divorce, but he also announces that his wife has died in the meantime and he is now completely free. He has a diamond to offer Moll and is ecstatic when she accepts it. Even Moll is touched when she sees tears of joy in his eye and experiences what she thinks might have been a "grain of true repentance for a vicious and abominable life for twenty-four years past" (181). As she dwells on her temporary attack of conscience she recalls:

"What an abominable creature am I! and how is this innocent gentleman going to be abused by me! How little does he think, that having divorced a whore, he is throwing himself into the arms of another! that he is going to marry one that has lain with two brothers, and has had three children by her own brother! one that was born in Newgate whose mother was a whore, and is now a transported thief! one that has lain with thirteen men, and has had a child since he saw me! Poor gentleman!" said I, "what is he going to do?" After this reproaching myself was over, it followed thus: "Well, if I must be his wife, if it please God to give me grace, I'll be a true wife to him, and love him suitable to the strange excess of his passion for me: I will make him amends if possible, by what he shall see, for the cheats and abuses I put upon him, which he does not see." (181)

Even in the midst of what appears to be a sincere regret for the harm she is doing to an honest man, Moll cannot consider revealing her secrets. The best she has to offer is to try to make the pretense one which will make him happy. She is prosperous and content with this husband, so much so that she "flattered" herself that she "had sincerely repented" (186).

But it is not so, for after five years and two children, he loses his money, sickens, and dies. Horrified by the specter of poverty, Moll turns to thievery. At this stage she even

turns her rhetoric inward. For example, when she steals a gold necklace from a little child, she is proud of herself for resisting the temptation to kill the child in an alley and goes so far as to give herself credit for teaching the child's parents a lesson about the need for better supervision (192). As a thief, Moll establishes another pattern in her life. She frequently experiences a temporary remorse after performing some new act of treachery. However, it soon passes, and she is ready for a new "adventure." During this time, Moll also becomes a master of disguise. She keeps her real name a secret and frequently goes about in disguise. Sometimes she is a widow (231), sometimes a beggar (241), and sometimes even a man (209). But as skilled as she is in the arts of thievery and rhetoric, Moll finally gets caught in circumstances which she cannot explain with her fancy words. Her worst fear comes true and she ends up in Newgate, and it is here that her alleged conversion occurs (273-274).

Although the extent of Moll's reliance on rhetorical technique and especially her role as an evil lover add to our knowledge of Moll the character, it should nevertheless not surprise readers to find out that the young character of Moll is self-serving. After all, this Moll is a criminal. No matter what interpretation individual critics give to the book as a whole, critics and readers alike recognize that Moll (the character) is using her rhetoric to gain her own selfish goals--money, power, husbands, freedom.

The debate hinges on the question of Moll's conversion. This is an important point in the novel because it is the area most called into question by Defoe in his *Preface*, when he says that Moll's language has been altered to make it "modester" than it was when she first told the story so that the account sounds more like "one grown penitent and humble, as

she afterwards pretends to be" (28). Several factors surface in this passage. First, Moll's conversion has not changed her language, but telling about it has. Second, Defoe's use of the word *pretends* forces the reader to question the validity of Moll's conversion and raises the possibility of an ironic interpretation. As Larry Langford explains, it really doesn't matter whether the word is intended to mean "pretense" or "affirmation" because the implication of doubt about her repentance has still been raised (70). Although he is firmly of the opinion that "it is unconvincing to represent Defoe as an ironist in his novels," Brean Hammond argues persuasively that repentance is central to an understanding "about the kind of novels Defoe was writing" (330,337). He bases his discussion on Defoe's Puritan roots and shows that it would be nearly impossible for Defoe to have taken such a subject lightly. His main point is that repentance is the key to understanding Defoe's characters. As I have already shown, repentance is a pivotal act in *Robinson Crusoe*. The issue of Moll's repentance is also at the heart of the narrative's central message.

George Starr believes that Moll's conversion should be interpreted as sincere. He argues that Moll's abortive attempts at repentance, which culminate in Newgate when she once again attempts repentance for all the wrong reasons (*Moll Flanders* 259-261), are designed to contrast with the true repentance of the conversion scene (271). It is possible, however, to see all these examples of false repentance as signals to the reader to examine the final repentance carefully in case it is simply a more advanced example of partial repentance which never comes to fruition. If we do so, we find some interesting gaps.

First, Moll has great difficulty expressing any heartfelt description of what should be

occurring in her spirit, if this is repentance. Robinson Crusoe, alone on his desert island, waxes eloquent concerning the burden of his guilt, the message of the Bible, and the blessing of deliverance. He is specific about the fact that being saved from the isolation of the island is insignificant compared to the jubilation accompanying the salvation from sin (111). On the other hand, Moll, an artist with words, tells of her conversion with indefinite expressions. Of her thoughts on eternity, she "know[s] not how to express them" (270). She is "not mistress of words enough to express" her "reflections" concerning the effect her past sin on her hopes for the future (270). She "is not able to repeat the excellent discourses" of the minister (271). After she receives a temporary reprieve from the death sentence, she experiences a fit of crying that lasts almost two hours. She cries from the time the other criminals leave Newgate until they "were all out of the world" (274). This misery is followed by great joy, but even then she "is unable to give vent to it by words" (274). Of course, not being able to express emotional experiences does not necessarily mean they are not real. However, it does leave a gap in our understanding of Moll's sincerity that does not exist after Crusoe's detailed description of his regeneration. I am suggesting that Defoe considers it to be important that we continue to evaluate Moll's experience.

Other signs exist as well. The minister is an important part of her repentance. He explains her problem to her, helps her achieve a temporary reprieve, and visits her frequently to exhort her to repent. But repeatedly he prays that her "repentance might be made unfeigned and sincere" (273) and expresses "his fears of [her] relapsing into wickedness" when she is transported (274). Such doubts are realistic for a minister faced

with a hardened criminal's testimony, but again Defoe has skipped an opportunity to give conclusive evidence that someone is sure that Moll's repentance is real this time.

Moll herself seems to ignore the idea that a real conversion should have altered her prospects. After conversion, Robinson Crusoe is no longer worried about being rescued from the island because he is more concerned with his new life (111, 125). Moll, however, explains that transportation would be the beginning of a hard life but that it is made palatable by the alternative of "an uncomfortable prospect beyond" death (275). While it is certainly true that different approaches to theology allow for differing degrees of assurance of salvation, such a dread of dying was not considered a typical attitude for a repentant criminal in Defoe's day. Lincoln Faller points out that one of the reasons that criminals were expected to give public testimony in England was that such testimony should give evidence of their great faith in the efficacy of God's saving grace. For example, one criminal claimed that he would not miss the blessing of his execution for "ten thousand worlds" since it would take him where he "would never sin again." Another condemned prisoner claimed that his death would be the happiest event in his life (*Crime and Defoe* 10). Such a confidence in a happy afterlife is not reflected in Moll's attitude. By breaking with the familiar pattern of criminal biography, Defoe is once again raising a doubt about Moll's repentance.

Her attitude toward other people is suspect as well. She believes that the prisoners that she will have to associate with if transported will be a "wretched crew" and implied in her judgment is a continuing attitude that she is somehow far above them. Such an attitude undercuts any compatibility with Biblical examples like Paul the apostle, who

expressed a more typical view of a repentant heart when he wrote, "...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15). But not only does she think she is better than the average sinner, she thinks she is less than the best penitent. Her "governess" is, by contrast, a "true penitent" (269) and a "very great penitent" (275) and remained one until "the day of her death" (269), unlike Moll who lived her last years "not so extraordinary a penitent as she was at first" (*Preface*). All of these less than convincing aspects of Moll's conversion justify an ongoing evaluation of her repentance, something which an audience familiar with spiritual autobiography would have been used to doing. J. Paul Hunter explains that in such writings the goal was to "look for patterns and meanings that could presumably be discovered by the close observation of the details of a life" (*Before Novels* 45). Such close examination was traditionally signaled by the use of first person narration, which is obviously a factor in *Moll Flanders*. According to Hunter, the precedents like confessions, diaries, and autobiographies prepared audiences for a type of reading based on "incessant questioning and second guessing" (45). Hunter summarizes the capacity of such readers:

Instead of authority and certitude, therefore, first-person perspective offered a field for speculation and sorting; to recount events as personal experience was to raise the questions of meaning and significance that a diarist faced in reviewing his or her own life. "Face value" was not a viable option for diarist, spiritual autobiographer, or first-person narrator of any kind at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Questions of reliability of fact and interpreter were always open and always urgent. (45-46)

It is exactly such questioning that Defoe is asking of his readers. The confusion surrounding the validity of Moll's redemption can be unraveled best by continuing to examine her rhetoric--both as a character after "repentance" and as a narrator.

If Defoe intends for his reader to believe in the sincerity of Moll's conversion, we should be able to document a change in her rhetorical method in the "post-conversion" scenes. According to David Trotter, who is speaking of narratives in general, "conversion will have failed if anything escapes its power to inspect and revise" (*Circulation* 26). Certainly Defoe was capable of reflecting such a change in Robinson Crusoe even though Crusoe was a much less self-conscious rhetorician. We see Crusoe's conversion reflected metaphorically in his healing and rhetorically in his journal and in his missionary zeal for Friday. His actions also become subject to scrutiny and reversal as in the case where he wants to kill all the cannibals and decides that such a decision really belongs in God's hands (232-233). In other words, if we apply such a criteria of reformation specifically to *Moll Flanders*, a changed Moll should begin to speak and write as a noble lover instead of as an evil lover in her relationships with other characters. To use Weaver's terms, Moll's rhetoric should shift from a dependence on lies and secrets to an artful presentation of truth. She should abandon arguments in which only one half of the picture is given and concentrate on the use of convincing analogies. Listeners should be encouraged to see the whole picture plus its larger context: "The position being urged resembles or partakes of something greater and finer" (Weaver 18). In summary, if Moll has become a noble lover of rhetoric, she should begin to tell the truth in such a way that it will exemplify larger truths.

But there is no evidence of such changes in Moll. One of her first rhetorical opportunities after her "conversion" is her appearance before the court. She is convicted of a felony and the sentence is death, but she is allowed an opportunity to "say why the

sentence should not pass" (268). After a short period of "muteness," someone prompted her, and she began to explain the circumstances, giving every defense she could think of. At the end of her plea, she evaluates herself as having spoken with "courage" and in a "moving tone" (269). Most interesting, though, is her comment that she spoke with tears "yet not so many tears as to obstruct my speech" (269). She then congratulates herself that her speech has moved others to tears as well (269). In this scene Moll appears as the same manipulator that she has always been, controlling her performance with finesse. Guilt does not seem to be an issue at all in any sense except the legal sense.

She also seems just like her old self when she first visits the now incarcerated Jemmy. She is still a master of disguise, recounting later that she "concealed [her] face" and "counterfeited [her] voice" (277). Jemmy, this husband whom she supposedly still loves, cannot even recognize her. Admittedly, much of this pretense is a protective show for the benefit of the keeper, but Moll has certainly not deserted her habit of thinking of self first.

The way in which Moll deals with Jemmy as they get ready to leave for the new world also illustrates her rhetorical method after "conversion." Jemmy is described as being "as much at a loss as a child" and in need of directions (290). As we know from our earlier analysis, this dependence provides the perfect opportunity for an evil lover to achieve the desired power. Jemmy tells Moll the truth about his assets, but although she claims to love him very much, she can only bring herself to tell him about the stock which she has brought with her. The rest, which is more than half of all she has, she has left with her governess. That Moll is still keeping secrets not only from Jemmy but also from the world seems obvious from the fact that she goes to the ship in clothes that are ragged and dirty,

and no one knows that she has anything of value. Her valuables are kept in a secret drawer in her chest "which could not be found, or opened, if found, without splitting the chest to pieces" (291). Even her governess is not allowed to hear all. Moll is "forced to let her into the whole matter, except only that of his being my husband" (289). To make sure that the governess is on her side, Moll confides "as a great secret" that she is going to marry Jemmy as soon as he comes on board (290). Moll is still manipulating the facts in order to facilitate her own agenda. Even when she seems to have some real concern for the people she is dealing with (like the governess and Jemmy), she never allows that affection to put her at a disadvantage.

When they arrive in the new world, she finds that there is still gossip about her incestuous relationship with her half-brother. These rumors bother her so much that Jemmy notices her preoccupation, and she says she could only find "relief" from "this weight" by letting her husband "into so much of it as ...would convince him of the necessity there was for us to think of settling in some other part of the world" (303). She tells only enough to get her own way and to protect herself. Richetti argues that keeping things to herself is the source of Moll's power throughout the book (*Defoe's Narratives* 105).

She treats her son in the very same way. After a dramatic speech on the depth of her thankfulness to God, she proceeds to make a will naming him as her heir. However, in the course of the conversation, she alludes to the fact that she is not married. She conveniently forgets Jemmy, who is waiting for her back at the plantation. She gives her son one of her stolen gold watches, and, in the same breath, she tells him that she has

nothing else "of any value to bestow but that" (312). The reader, of course, knows that she is lying, but her son is convinced. He takes it, kisses it, and vows to owe her a debt for the rest of his life. Again, Moll has manipulated someone into exactly the position she desires. Naturally, she does not tell him that the watch is stolen (312-3).

Later when she hears the "not disagreeable news" that her old husband is dead, she gives a cunning speech about her shyness in marrying "a gentlemen who had a plantation" near her. After an appropriate amount of time, she lets her son know that she is married. The timing of all of Moll's confessions is always skillfully planned to avoid unpleasant results and to maximize the sympathy of her audience. Because the secrets, lies, and exploitations continue, I would argue that Moll's rhetoric does not change after her conversion, casting further doubt on its sincerity.

Robert Bell writes that it "is correct to place *Moll Flanders* in the tradition of spiritual autobiography, but *not* because *Moll Flanders* is the genuine article" (275). Bell's point is that Moll's conversion "explodes the pattern of redemption" (275). He finds her descriptions of her repentance "formulaic," contrasts her negatively with Bunyan's view of salvation, and describes her as "stubbornly consistent...before and after conversion" (276-278). Although Bell is not intentionally describing Moll's rhetoric, his terms are especially appropriate for this analysis. He writes that Moll "simply expands the scope of her manipulations to include the Almighty as well" (278). Instead of ceasing her manipulation after "conversion," Moll is simply doing the same old thing but on a grander scale.

Another important question, however, is whether or not these same criticisms apply to the narrator Moll. After all, she is supposedly the voice of the repentant Moll. As I have mentioned, some critics such as Henry N. Rogers III find a resolution to the inconsistencies in the novel by emphasizing that we are dealing with two Molls over a long period of time. However, I would argue that the rhetorical methods which Moll uses in narrating her story to the reader are exactly the same as that which the character Moll has used repeatedly to get her way with her husbands, lovers, accusers, governess, son, and others.

Although John Richetti does not find the novel to be ironic, he nevertheless points out that the narrator "has sufficient dramatic sense...to arrange the opening pages of her narrative in sequences which favour calamity" (*Defoe's Narratives* 97). For example, "when her nurse dies, Moll lingers over childish terrors and the cruel taunts of her nurse's daughter who withholds her fortune of twenty-two shillings" (97). Richetti notes that it is not until after we have experienced a sensation of sympathy for Moll that we find out that she has been taken home by the mayoress and is safe in her household. Richetti believes that this telling is essential in presenting Moll as a victim (100). I think that Moll must tell her story in such a way that she avoids placing full blame on herself (which is exactly the opposite of what a true confession is really supposed to do). Instead she always has an explanation involving extenuating circumstances.

Moll has always had one overwhelming ambition--to be a gentlewoman. Now she is finally in a position to be one. She has a husband and she has money, so it is safe to "repent," at least as much as is necessary to gain our sympathies. As Ian Bell explains,

"Moll's way of presenting her tale is made central to any reading of it." He explains that Moll's "character" seems "to shape the presentation of adventures, not just to link them" (158). According to Bell, this prejudices the readers' understanding of these events, and opens up the possibilities of irony" (158). Keeping the reader or listener from achieving a clear understanding of the facts, what Bell calls prejudicing the reader's understanding, is one of the key methods of an evil lover.

Bell also points out that critics are often surprised that Moll is so reticent about sex in her narrative. He calls it her coyness (158). I would suggest that this coyness is part of Moll's effort to impress us with her morality. She also uses her reaction to abortion and to incest to try to convince us that "down deep" she is a good person--one whom it is acceptable to like and admire. The facts do not always support the words. For example, she says she finds incest intolerable, but the fact is that she continues to live with her husband for three years while she makes up her mind what she should do. George Starr notes the same discrepancy: "What Moll undergoes, then is not a crisis of conscience. When she says, 'I was now in a very great strait, and really knew not what to do' (37), her perplexity is essentially tactical, not ethical" (83). She is not making her judgments, even those that relate to moral issues, based on truth but on expedience. She does not try to be bad, but neither does she try to be good, unless it is convenient to her plan.

The fact that she tells her own story is also significant. Wayne Booth believes that the first person narration encourages us to become engaged by the character and "soften our judgment of her worst misdeeds" (*Rhetoric* 322). But one might argue that Moll tells the truth. The reader is told that she is a thief, a bigamist, a woman who deserts her children,

a consummate liar. However, in *Defoe and Casuistry*, George Starr has noticed that she does all of this while improving our image of her. Starr notes that her apparent candor is disarming (113). Weaver tells us to expect an evil lover to mention "cause without consequence or consequence without cause, acts without agents or agents without agency" (12). Starr's description almost parallels Weaver's. Starr says of Moll the narrator: "She distinguishes her essential self from her admittedly reprehensible doings" (113). In other words, Moll is skilled at separating her person from her deeds.

One example of how we are taken in by Moll is the way in which we respond when she tells us repeatedly of her marriages. We know that she is never divorced from her first husband, but having told us that, she simply ignores the fact and recounts her various marriages. She makes the weddings seem so much better than the alternative immorality that we are actually proud of her for committing bigamy. In the midst of her horror over her unintentional incest, she mentions casually that her comments to her brother/husband have made him wonder if she was perhaps already married. The context makes it clear that that is the last thing on Moll's mind. She has effectively dismissed her "other husband" considering "him dead in law" (106). More surprising than Moll's ability to dismiss her previous husband's existence is the fact that her readers forget as well.

We do the same thing later when she is going through a temporary repentance phase concerning her Bath lover. She has been content to live with him and bear him three children, but when a near death experience causes him to repent, she begins to consider what she has actually been doing. Suddenly, it occurs to her that while she has experienced some guilt for living with her lover outside of marriage, she has simply

forgotten that her crime is really no different than the adultery which is causing him such a crisis of conscience. She already has not one but two living husbands--the linen draper and the brother/husband (132). But only a few weeks later, she tells us that since she is "now a single person again" she must search for a new husband (134). Moll the narrator represents herself at this stage in praiseworthy terms, telling the reader that in all the times she has been a wife she has never given her "husbands the least uneasiness on account of [her] behaviour" (136). We come away from the scene thinking of this adulterous bigamist as a very good wife.

According to John Richetti, "Moll's narrative is interested only in promoting Moll no matter what she herself may say to the contrary" (132). She is in fact still protecting herself in exactly the same way because even we never get to know her real name (*Moll Flanders* 33). Because this self-promotion is true of both Moll the character and Moll the narrator, we can conclude that Moll is an evil lover and that her conversion is more a matter of expediency than faith. If this is true, then the next question must be concerned with the rhetoric of Daniel Defoe.

Defoe's *Preface to Moll Flanders* claims that his purpose is a moral one, but that is hard to comprehend when he has allowed us to identify so strongly with a woman who is a thief, bigamist, and liar, and who has managed to desert her children and forget about many past husbands and lovers in the course of her lifetime. Yet Virginia Woolf accurately described the reading experience of most readers when she wrote that "we admire Moll Flanders far more than we blame her" (132). We have two basic choices. As Dorothy Van Ghent explains, "Either *Moll Flanders* is a collection of scandal-sheet

anecdotes naively patched together with the platitudes that form the morality of an impoverished soul (Defoe's)...or *Moll Flanders* is a great novel, coherent in structure, unified and given its shape and significance by a complex system of ironies" (42). I believe that Defoe is a noble lover, combining truth with artful presentation (rhetoric) for the good of his reader. I think that there are signs throughout the book that Defoe is telling the truth when he says that the book holds a lesson for those who know how to read it and are willing to pay more attention to the end of the writer than the telling of the story.

Richetti has used Moll's own words to label her the "indifferent Monitor," and yet critics often treat her as a trusted authority. Defoe has encouraged us to doubt her conversion and her narrative. He has pictured her repeatedly as an evil lover--a master at using rhetoric to make herself look better than she is and to get her own way in the world. As Richetti notes, Moll herself warns us that we must learn to survive in a "world full of Moll's" (144).

According to Leopold Damrosch, Jr., Moll confesses that "she is a poor moralist and unable to retain the lesson for long" (*God's Plot & Man's Stories* 190). Moll clearly states that she gave only "a bare flying touch" to thoughts of heaven and hell. Moll tells us that she is "not qualified to preach" to us, but that her story can be helpful if we will remember "to afford a due caution to people of some sort or other to guard against the like surprises" (254). She wants us to keep our eyes open when we deal with "strangers of any kind, for 'tis very seldom that some snare or other is not in their way" (254). When she cautions us, she is referring directly to thieves who are eternally vigilant to take advantage of us as soon as we let down our guard, but the context warns us to consider "every

branch" of her story in this light. Moll is repeating for us what Defoe has already said in the *Preface*:

All the exploits of this lady of fame, in her depredations upon mankind, stand as so many warnings to honest people to beware of them, intimating to them by what methods innocent people are drawn in, plundered, and robbed, and by consequence how to avoid them. (30)

I am suggesting that one of the main tools that the novel demonstrates for drawing in innocent people is manipulative rhetoric. Therefore, the teaching or moral benefit which Defoe is offering is the opportunity to avoid being tricked by the rhetorical skill of a Moll Flanders. The ultimate irony is that unless we pay close attention to the clues that Defoe has placed in his *Preface* and the hints that surface throughout the book, we will love Moll and forgive her sins even as she confesses them, acting just like the younger brother, the Lancashire husband, the deserted son....

John Richetti argues that the book cannot be ironic because we do not experience the distance from Moll that irony requires (*Defoe's Narratives* vii). Ian Watt finds no irony because he believes the moral lesson Defoe is trying to teach is that "vice must be paid for and crime does not pay" (115). He rightly believes that the novel doesn't support that moral adequately. However, John Preston gives us the key to Defoe's irony. He says that Defoe's irony "is not *in* the novel" (11) but "is an art of the real, an art of rhetoric, a traffic with the reader" (14).

I have suggested that both Moll the character and Moll the narrator are evil lovers, that Defoe is a noble lover, and that he challenges us to unmask Moll for what she is. This is an explanation which fits both our guided distrust of Moll and our overwhelming

identification with her. We are to learn that one cannot afford to believe the Molls of this world. But as Moll's governess tells us specifically, sometimes getting taken in by Moll is the best way to learn the lesson. After Moll has seduced and robbed the gentleman from the Bartholomew Fair, her governess is delighted saying "the usage may, for aught I know, do more to reform him than all the sermons that ever he will hear in his life" (220). Not to be fooled by the Moll's of the world is the lesson of the little girl with the necklace, the Lancashire husband, the Newgate clergy, the boat captain, etc. If she was able to convince all of them, is it any wonder that she almost fools us, too? If Defoe had not warned us to beware, we would surely do exactly what she wants us to do--pronounce her a gentlewoman.

Although his conclusions are very different from my own, Larry L. Langford has also recognized the significance of the *Preface* in understanding *Moll Flanders*. He believes that the warnings in the *Preface* encourage us to read the novel ironically, listening for two voices--Moll's and a fictional editor's who should be considered as separate from Defoe himself (164-165). According to Langford, Moll's voice is courageous but rough whereas the editor's version has been cleaned up for the public. My contention is that Langford is correct to notice the duality. I agree that the *Preface* does hint that "this repentant and contrite Moll is, in fact, an editorial creation" (168). However, I believe Defoe has provided us with many signs that much of the editing is actually done by the narrator Moll in order to make her story more palatable to us.

In addition to defending a cohesive ironic interpretation of the novel, my reading also focuses on Defoe's view of the reader. Paula Backscheider has written that one of the

great strengths of *Moll Flanders* is that it leaves us with "enduring questions." She believes that "Defoe makes judgment difficult and teases us into engaging yet again eternal questions that each of us must finally take responsibility for answering for ourselves" (*Moll Flanders: The Making of a Criminal Mind* 99). When comparing Defoe's fictions featuring criminals to the standard criminal biography of his day, Lincoln Faller advances the thesis that "Defoe took an already remarkably complex reading experience and made it still more complicated, producing...novel readers as well as novel criminals" (xiii). He confesses his own bias, one which certainly matches mine, that such a tension filled reading experience "must have been [and still is] exciting, challenging,...and in some ways edifying" (xiii). I agree. "To those that know how to read it" *Moll Flanders* teaches the lesson of thinking critically, of not being tricked by the smoothest tongue. The author of *Moll Flanders* is the author of *The Shortest Way With the Dissenters*, trusting his readers to reach the right conclusions and valuing their participation above all else. He tells us in the *Preface* that he "must be content to leave the reader to pass his own opinion upon the ensuing sheets, and take it just as he pleases" (28). Ultimately, this attitude on the part of a didactic author places the reader in a position of great trust. In the end, it is not Daniel Defoe but the reader who continues to make *Moll Flanders* a living work.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROTESTANT WHORE WITH A HOLE IN HER HEART:

THE ROLE OF TRUTH IN *ROXANA*

"Art thou for something rare and profitable?
 Wouldest thou see a truth within a fable?"

John Bunyan

Much has been written concerning Defoe and verisimilitude--the appearance of truth. E. M. W. Tillyard goes so far as to say that "all recognize Defoe's special gift of making the reader believe" (72). Paula Backscheider credits Defoe with writing prose in *Roxana* that is "filled with the accurate, convincing details that Defoe made characteristic of every English novel after his" (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 200). Too little, however, has been said about the role that truth itself plays in Defoe's fiction. As an eighteenth-century dissenter, Defoe believed in the existence of absolute truth and in its powerful effectiveness to change hearts, minds, and lives. In Chapter Four, I suggested five criteria which help to define Defoe's view of truth: his belief in the existence of absolute truth, his conviction that the individual must be allowed to think for himself or herself in the determination of truth, his confidence in the power of truth to speak for itself, his continuing reliance on contraries as a means of expressing truths, and his acceptance of the idea that silence can sometimes be the most powerful vehicle for truth.

The first three points provide the perspective with which Defoe comes to his fiction. The role of truth is problematic in any view of eighteenth-century epistemology, as Michael McKeon explains in his *Origins of the Novel*. A constant tension exists between

"the older criteria for capturing transcendent truth" and "new, more quantitative demands for full and faithful detail" (90). Historicity and metaphysical truth actually compete with each other for authority. Although the discussion of Defoe's relationship to historicity is a provocative one, the focus of this study is not historicity. Instead, I am interested in Defoe's methods for conveying what McKeon calls transcendent truth.

My last two criteria are techniques, and an analysis of their application in *Roxana* helps to explain some of the confusion (and lasting interest) of *Roxana*, whom David Blewett identifies as "the most complex character Defoe ever created" ("Introduction" 17). In this chapter, I examine the contraries which Defoe has set up throughout the book (the "fortunate" mistress, France vs. Holland, Charles II vs. George I, Court vs. City, Amy vs. the Quaker, *Roxana's* lifestyle vs. her material success, etc.) and show how Defoe is using all these binary opposites to reinforce the sure steady downfall of a sinner. I will also show how Defoe's silence, just when we most expect him to moralize, is not rhetorical inconsistency but a dependence on silence as a method of conveying truth. Defoe's consciousness of silence as a method is supported by the fact that *Roxana* frequently articulates her own reliance on silence as a rhetorical tool, saying of her relationship with her first husband, for example, that she "held [her] Tongue, which was the only Victory..." (41).

Roxana fits into several narrative traditions. Paula Backscheider has located the book in the category of women's fiction, and G. A. Starr has shown how it relates to spiritual autobiography. Both of these contexts help us to understand how rhetoric operates within the novel. On the subject of women's fiction, Backscheider describes *Roxana* as fitting into

three strains that are typical of eighteenth-century women's fiction. First, Roxana is one of the "newly fascinating evil women," and Defoe signals that to his readers by what Backsheider calls "coded signals" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 186). Backsheider includes an array of literary antecedents, showing that by the time Defoe wrote his novel, the name Roxana would have been synonymous with exotic harem types. Second, she is vain and her actions are motivated by that vanity. According to Backsheider, "the vain, energetic woman who loves society, excitement, and flirtation was already a character associated with women's anti-social tendencies, with frivolity and folly, and with feminine ruin" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 187). Third, Roxana chooses to be a single woman, a choice that women writers of the eighteenth century were offering as "viable, desirable, and even admirable" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 189).

A discussion of *Roxana* as a part of a long tradition of spiritual autobiography indicates how problematic a novel *Roxana* actually is. Believing that "Defoe means to consign Roxana to the devil," Starr argues that, although in some ways Roxana's story fits into the patterns of spiritual autobiography, she is never intended to reform or repent, (*Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography* 165). On the surface, a failure to include repentance would seem to negate any effort to place the novel in the realm of functioning didactic fiction--especially fiction intended to convey moral truth. The bibliographic history supports this misconception, since *Roxana* "failed to attract imitators or even numerous readers" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 213). Its denial of poetic justice is one of the

causes which Backsheider cites for the book's lack of impact and profit in its own day (214).

In addition to the problem posed simply by having an unrepentant character, Starr also finds Roxana's first-person commentary unconvincing in an unrepentant narrator. "Since he [Defoe] has made her the narrator of her own story, she herself must continue to supply its 'improvement'" (Starr *Spiritual Autobiography* 173). He believes that since Roxana must continue to comment on her own sinful actions, her story loses some of its "consistency and plausibility" (173). However, according to Backsheider, Roxana's self-consciousness is another way in which she fits the pattern of women's fiction. Backsheider believes that women, both real and fictional, think of themselves as actors and actually watch themselves (*Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 196-7). This explanation helps to defend Defoe against Starr's complaint that it is unnatural for Roxana to be commenting on her own sin when she never qualifies as a repentant narrator.

Backsheider also finds value in a comparison of *Roxana* to spiritual autobiography. She finds Roxana more like Bunyan's Christian than Richardson's Clarissa. Of Roxana's pilgrimage she writes, "Her quest blends with a symbolic, moral landscape. Her story defines humankind's relationship to the world and especially to God" (Backsheider *Daniel Defoe : Ambition* 206). Explaining how Roxana's role is more active than that of the traditional protagonist in women's fiction, Backsheider writes: "To search out the relationship between God and his creation, to learn to judge a life in terms of that relationship is active and, in Roxana's case, frightening. Women's fiction gives us piety without quest; *Roxana* unites them" (207). Such a quest gives power and significance to

Roxana's story, but it presents her as different from the very fictional strains to which she is most indebted:

Experience has taught Roxana, as it did Christian and Crusoe, that the question of life is "What shall I do to be saved?" Because of Defoe's reliance upon this theme of the spiritual autobiography, Roxana has unusual depth of character. Unlike Haywood's heroines, she possesses an inadequate code of honesty and chastity and unlike Aubin's, she adheres to no fixed set of religious ideals. Crusoe learns to trust God and to interpret, Roxana to interpret but not to trust. Just as she could not depend on a man, she cannot surrender to God. (Bakscheider *Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 207-208)

What we learn then from comparing *Roxana* to these two significant narrative traditions is that this novel certainly grows out of them, but that ultimately it is set up in contrast to them. In fact, Roxana is so different from contemporary heroines that Bakscheider says it takes a "Blast of Heaven" to put her back "in her place as a child of Defoe's God and eighteenth-century England. Defoe has captured the themes of longing and rebellion in the women's novel, transformed them, and elaborated upon them until the implications are clear. Roxana's a spiritual quest gone awry" (Bakscheider *Daniel Defoe : Ambition & Innovation* 212).

Writing "a spiritual quest gone awry" in tandem with a women's novel that breaks the typical molds of piety exemplifies one of Defoe's major techniques for conveying truth. Robert James Merrett has commented on Defoe's use of contraries as a narrative method ("Narrative Contraries as Signs in Defoe's Fiction), and I have discussed contraries as a part of Defoe's epistemology in Chapter Five. He loves to set up contraries that allow (perhaps even force) the reader to make determinations. In relying on contraries as a method, Defoe makes his first significant choice when he decides to use a negative

example instead of a positive one. In other words, Roxana herself is one of Defoe's biggest "contraries" in the novel. She is designed for comparison and, more importantly, contrast with the readily accessible patterns of spiritual autobiographies and women's novels.

To make Roxana's story suspect was not a choice without precedent. As J. Paul Hunter points out, personal testimonies, confessions, and journals allowed for such a thing in this still very Puritan world. The goal in such writing (There is an oral tradition as well) was close observation and evaluation (*Before Novels* 45). Hunter concludes that the eighteenth-century audience had "quite sophisticated" expectations which allowed them to observe first-person accounts and weigh their content. According to Hunter, "the prevalence of diary keeping--and the epistemological practices it harbored and promoted--created a climate of incessant questioning and second guessing. Instead of authority and certitude, therefore, first-person perspective offered a field for speculation and sorting." Giving a listener or reader both good and bad examples and allowing them to pass judgment was considered a legitimate didactic technique. However, such a technique was somewhat controversial, with Samuel Johnson, for example, arguing against it in the *Rambler* (45-46). This underscores an important aspect of Defoe the rhetorician--he is a risk taker. In this case he opts for a sympathetic portrait of a negative example, one which causes some critics to think that he has missed the mark as a moralist and accidentally succeeded as a novelist. But this is not true. The use of contrast is part of the rhetorical methodology.

Such contraries appear throughout the text. For example, as critics have often pointed out, the various geographical and temporal settings (France vs. Holland, Charles II vs. George I, Court vs. City) of the novel are designed to operate as contrasts. France, the home of the prince, represents wickedness. It is also Roxana's birthplace. It seems, therefore, more than an aside that Defoe tells us that Roxana "retain'd nothing of *France* but the Language" (37). The continuing explanation includes the fact that she has English schooling and has "learnt the *English* Tongue" so well that she had no remnant of a French accent. She sounds just as if she had been born in England, but Defoe points out more than once that, although it is undetectable by the sound of her speech, she has retained the "speech" of France (38). We also know that even as a child Roxana was a wit, "quick and smart in Discourse; apt to be Satyrical; full of Repartee, and a little too forward in Conversation;" or to put it more succinctly Defoe translates her speech into one word--"BOLD" (39).

In addition to her retention of the French language, Roxana also receives her ability to dance and her love for dancing from her French heritage. This love of dancing, and by extension France, is a catalyst for many wrong moves in the novel. She marries the brewer because "he danc'd well" (39), and much later she can't resist showing off both her Turkish costume and her French dancing in her apartment (216). On the other hand, the more sober, loving men in her life are both merchants, one from England and one from Holland. This contrast of French to Dutch and Prince to merchant is clearly part of Defoe's didacticism.

The novel actually has four physical settings: England (Court and City), France, Holland, and the spiritual universe. As Backscheider suggests about several of Defoe's novels, "one aspect of setting is the eternal world, and Defoe used it for artistic and didactic purposes" (*Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 173). If we use Henry James' terminology, we could even add a fifth--Roxana's consciousness. James wrote "The moral consciousness of a child is a much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish main, and the one sort of geography seems to me to have... 'surprises'... quite as much as the other (James "Art of Fiction" 4). Merrett argues that when Roxana debates whether to leave England or hide in the countryside, we see a reflection of her confused mental geography as well. Those impulses "signify that she has habituated herself to avoiding moral implications to the point of self-destruction" ("Narrative Contraries as Signs in Defoe's Fictions" 173-4). Defoe uses such geographical clues to signal moral judgment. Roxana's English jeweler may have coaxed her into immorality, but Defoe presents him as a kind and industrious man worthy of our respect. The same can be said of the Dutch Merchant, who is "an honest man" (153) and would readily have married Roxana much sooner if she would have consented (183-201). When Roxana is caught by the allure of the secretive French prince, she is Defoe's spokesperson for the danger of an aristocratic life of luxury (Blewett "Introduction" 12). We see this more clearly when she is forced to flee France. She is on a ship bound for Rotterdam, but when it passes "between *Dover* and *Calais*" she is struck with a deep desire to see England again. As a result of a truly terrible storm (certainly a warning sign in Puritan autobiography), she gets her wish. As the storm rages, she experiences "Storm repentance," but it does not last once she and Amy are safe on the

shores of England. Typically, in *Roxana*, England and Holland represent honesty, solidness, and industry, and France, Roxana's birthplace, represents indulgence, immorality, and excess. Similarly, the court offers licentious behavior and the city, hardworking bourgeois ideology.

The novel also has three temporal settings: the time of Charles II, the reign of George I, and eternity. Defoe contrasts the settings by a complicated "double time scheme" (Blewett "Introduction" 13). The title page of the novel announces that Roxana lived "in the Time of King Charles II," so it is presumably the wickedness of the court of Charles II which we learn of when Roxana describes her life as a courtesan. Blewett also notes the presence in the novel of Sir Robert Clayton, who lived during the reign of Charles II, and allusions to Nell Gwynn, Charles' famous mistress who, "like Roxana, referred to herself as a 'Protestant Whore'" (13). However, the first page of the novel informs the reader that Roxana was brought to England in 1683 at the age of ten. This would mean that she would only have been 12 years old at the time of Charles' death. Therefore, her age places her in the court of George I. According to Blewett, Defoe is setting up a comparison between the two courts to criticize the morals of his own day (13). Even eternity comes into the scheme during the storm. Roxana stares death in the face; Amy falls down as if she were dead (162). When Roxana opens the hall door in search of help, she sees only two seamen praying. Later, Roxana informs Amy that the storm has not yet ceased but "it may be it will be calm by-and-by, when we all [are] drown'd, and gone to HEAVEN" (163). Amy responds, "HEAVEN! I go to HEAVEN! No, no, If I am drown'd I am damn'd!" (164). Readers should consider the implications of each view of time.

Not only has Defoe provided contrasts among a variety of geographical settings and time periods, but certain characters also act as contraries. Amy and the Quaker are "opposites" with a meaning. Amy is constantly talking and the Quaker is silent. Amy tells lies and rationalizes without difficulty, but even when the Quaker bends in order to protect Roxana, she never verbally lies. Each becomes a kind of alter ego with Amy filling many of Roxana's roles (sleeping with the merchant, mothering her children), and with Roxana masquerading as a Quaker. The more like Amy Roxana becomes the further away from repentance she slips. The closer she comes to "being" the Quaker, the more contentment and apparent conversion she attains. She learns to "dress like a QUAKER" and to say *thee* and *thou* so that she "talked like a QUAKER" (256). She is able to "pass" as a Quaker, and in that role she experiences protection and a degree of peace. However, she is "like a fish out of water" (257) because her repentance is never more than external as indicated by the changed clothes and speech.

Even the idea of a "fortunate mistress," playing as it does off of other eighteenth-century titles, sets up a contrary of lifestyle and material success which contrasts to spiritual disaster. Roxana is rich. She is definitely a successful business woman, and Defoe does not fault her for that. In fact he and we admire and identify with her because of her success. Such success, however, is in contrast to her very real downfall. Her internal decay is shown throughout the novel, substantiating Starr's contention that Defoe never intended to have Roxana repent. Instead, her life is designed to show us the contraries of material wealth and spiritual poverty.

Roxana's internal conflict is highlighted by the fact that her daughter Susan is named after her, so that in the final stages of the story, where Susan is her "enemy," Defoe is also picturing the truth that throughout the book Roxana has undermined her own spiritual best interests by making choices based on the wrong criteria. She has transgressed the "Light" of her own "Conscience" to become the mistress of the English jeweler (79). A strange perverseness causes her to force Amy to sleep with the jeweler so that both mistress and maid would be whores (81). Her conscience is alive and pricking her during the stormy voyage to Rotterdam, but once she is safe, she again squelches it (167-169). "Blinded by her own vanity," she misses the opportunity for a happy marriage with her Dutch merchant (201). Susan represents the past that Roxana cannot escape. She is eager to find her mother, telling Amy whom she first suspects: *"But O do not say you a'n't my Mother! I'm sure your are my Mother."* The narrator continues, "and then the Girl cry'd again like to kill herself" (312). In her desperate desire for relationship, she contrasts with Roxana, who cannot truly love anyone except herself. Backscheider calls Susan the "sign of a life in which every chance to repent and every chance to send for her children was deliberately rejected" (*Daniel Defoe: Ambition* 207).

Often discussions among characters also serve as points of contrast. For example, one of the great feminist moments of the text is actually open to two very different interpretations. After three "very merry" days of intimacy, the Dutch merchant proposes marriage yet again. This time he is sure he will be accepted. In fact this was a strategy which he thought to be "a sure Game." But Roxana turns him down, asserting that

a Woman gave herself entirely away from herself, in Marriage, and capitulated only to be, at best, but an Upper-Servant, and from the time she took the Man, she was

no better or worse than the Servant among the *Israelites*, who had his Ears bor'd, that is, nail'd to the Door-Post; who by that Act, give himself up to be a Servant during Life. (187)

Roxana is eloquent and Defoe's sympathy for the plight of the eighteenth-century woman is real. But we also know that Roxana has been forced to articulate her position this way because she was too embarrassed to tell the merchant that she was afraid to relinquish control of her money. As appealing as Roxana's words are to twentieth-century readers, Defoe also presents a viable alternative to a feminist reading. The merchant replies that a woman married to the right kind of man has a wonderful life and that "where there was a mutual Love, there cou'd be no Bondage," since both would be working to make the other happy (189). At no time is Roxana closer to making the right decision and changing her life. She is pregnant, and the father of her child wants to marry her. He will allow her to retain her independence to the highest degree possible. She has the option to quit "a Life of Crime and Debauchery, which [she] had been given up to for several Years, and to have sat down quiet in Plenty and honour, and to have set [her]self apart to the Great Work, which [she has] since seen so much Necessity of, and Occasion for; ... that of Repentance" (199). But Roxana refuses, and the reader is left to sort through her decision. Such contraries could be set up for moments of authorial intervention. Defoe, or at least his narrator, could speak to point us in the "right" direction. But in this case, although there are certainly signs that Roxana is not acting wisely, we are left to draw our own conclusions. This rhetorical strategy, which often accompanies Defoe's contraries, I have chosen to call silence.

Silence also plays a large part in the conveyance of truth and in the complexity of the novel. Sometimes Defoe is silent when we expect him to moralize. He doesn't criticize Roxana (although he does allow her to criticize herself). He simply presents her story. Outside the conclusion, where he hints at poetic justice, the narrator is basically silent concerning Roxana's judgment for her sins. This has sometimes been read as moral ambiguity, but I believe that it is a highly rhetorical silence rooted in Defoe's belief that silence and example speak louder than words.

Defoe had many reasons to appreciate the value of silence. He grew up attending dissenting congregations where people went to jail for speaking their beliefs. He stood in the pillory for making too much "noise" in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, and he served his country and made a living by secretive and anonymous writing that many would consider spying. According to Paula Backscheider in her comprehensive biography, Defoe called himself at different times "a buoy, a guide, a pointing finger, a memento mori, and described how his experience exposed, condemned, warned, and shamed others." In fact he often described himself as "silenced" (*Daniel Defoe: His Life* 131). He wrote of himself: "What tho' to Silence they condemn thy Rhymes,/Even that Silence shall condemn the Times" (*An Elegy on the Author of the True-Born-Englishman*).

Not only does Defoe's life evidence his experience with silence, he actually tells us in the *Preface* that the "History...is to speak for itself," which allows him a whole range of silences within which to do his work. As is true of Defoe's other fictions, it is necessary to give credence to the Preface to *Roxana* if we are to do justice to Defoe as a didactic writer. After all, we are in effect trying to measure his success in this analysis, and it is

therefore fair to examine his own words as to what the goal of the fiction was intended to be. He tells us definitely that Roxana's story is not a recommendation of her life. "On the contrary," Defoe says, she often presents "a just censuring and condemning" of her activities (*Preface* 36). This is exactly the same technique which I have elaborated on in *Robinson Crusoe*--the effective use of blame as a teaching moment, devoid of a pious or preaching tone.

But other factors are at work in *Roxana* as well. Robinson Crusoe blames himself for forgetting God, for rebelling against his parents, for ingratitude. Roxana rightly blames herself for deserting her children, adultery, lying, vanity, and ultimately contributing to a murder. The sins have clearly escalated. David Blewett labels the ending of the novel as "dark" because of the moral degeneration which occurs. Lying is a normal pattern for the characters. Only the Dutch merchant seems untouched by the deceit around him. But through it all we retain our sympathy for Roxana. I always expect to be far less sympathetic with Roxana herself than I am. I know that I can expect no genuine, heartfelt conversion and redemption (like Defoe gives us in great detail in *Robinson Crusoe*). However, I do find her engaging. We might conclude that Defoe has succeeded as a storyteller but failed as a moralist. But I do not believe that to be the case. I think it is essential to realize that Defoe is presenting one basic truth in the novel--that "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). He is demonstrating that such payment is sure and unavoidable, that only true repentance interrupts the cycle. His argument is against rationalizing, reformation for show, cover-ups, etc.--everything except true redemption. In his own words, "What a glorious Testimony it is to the Justice of Providence and to

the Concern Providence has in guiding all the Affairs of Men (even the least, as well as the greatest) that the most secret Crimes are, by the most unforeseen Accidents, brought to light, and discover'd" (*Roxana* 297). Instead of frequent sermonizing, Defoe often chooses to be silent and let the example speak for itself.

Defoe reinforces my point in the novel by allowing Roxana to be a master of rhetorical silence, showing us that he is perfectly aware of the power of this method. Richetti describes Defoe's Roxana as a "shockingly powerful...character" (*Defoe's Narratives* 193), and I would agree. Roxana seeks and gains economic, social, and psychological influence. However, as a first-person narrator, much of her power comes from the way in which she tells her story. Although we often think of rhetoric as being entrusted to words, Roxana's rhetorical power is based on knowing when to be silent.

She articulates her rhetorical method when she says that she is able to get her husband to do what she wants him to do by using silence. She describes the brewer as "a most unbearable Creature" and explains her most successful method for dealing with him:

However, I did as well as I could, and held my Tongue, which was the only Victory I gain'd over him; for when he would talk after his empty rattling Way with me, and I would not answer, or enter into Discourse with him on the Point he was upon, he would rise up in the greatest Passion imaginable, and go away; which was the cheapest Way I had to be deliver'd. (41)

In this scene, Roxana claims silence as her most effective method, and I would argue that she follows this same rhetorical pattern with other characters in the novel and with her readers as well. Roxana herself supports this generalization by giving her personal maxim as: "*That Secrets shou'd never be open'd without evident Utility*" (375).

The brewer, on the other hand, fights back using silence. The first major crisis of her life comes from silence--her husband's leaving her without a word and never even sending her information about his whereabouts. He leaves money, but not knowledge, giving us a signal concerning the value of information as a commodity (something Defoe the journalist and spy could certainly have appreciated in more than a abstract way). When her husband leaves her, Roxana is in misery. She has nothing with which to support her children, and is reduced to selling possessions in order to put food on the table. Her situation is described as "the most deplorable that Words can express" (46). The implication is that there are worse conditions but no worse words. Therefore some things must be conveyed without words or without words in their normal usages. The expression is reminiscent of the biblical "with groanings which cannot be uttered" in reference to prayers.

Having recognized the ineffectuality of language, the narrator continues to use silence as an effective means of communicating emotion. When Amy brings the "poor woman" and the "old aunt" to assist Roxana, Defoe writes, "there was no Need of much Discourse in the Case. " In fact, they sit in silence and Roxana describes herself as being unable to speak "for a great while" (51). Her love for the jeweler is "to a Degree inexpressible" (89), her repentance during the storm is a "silent sullen kind of Grief" (167), and when she is finally reunited with her Dutch merchant, she "could not speak one word" but "sat as motionless as a Statue" (265).

Roxana also knows that sometimes silence is less offensive than facts. When the Prince surprises her with the news that he has been faithful to her while in Italy, she almost blurts

out her thoughts about his wife. Later she is glad that he kept her silent by kissing her before she could start her speech. She believes that the interruption kept her from giving "him Offense" (142). As is the pattern in the novel, she applies this rhetorical principle to her readers as well. As mistress to the English Lord, she participates in conduct that "will not bear telling" (250). For Roxana, the least offensive and most rhetorically sound way to deal with sexual encounters is to make suggestions and then shroud them in silence.

Roxana also uses silence to gain credibility. Just as she hides her identity in order to change her social status when she goes to live with the Quaker, she also refuses to name names in the novel. Defoe suggests in the *Preface* that names will not be included in this story because it is a history instead of a fiction. Although a part of literary tradition, the many _____'s that replace names in this book are a rhetorical ploy (based on silence), intended to draw the reader into the fictional world.

Sometimes silence is eminently practical. Roxana tells Sir Robert Clayton only as much information as he needs to know in order to handle her business affairs wisely, saying "I left him in the dark, as much as I found him" (209). This same practicality surfaces in the narrator's dealings with her reader. Some things, for example, are simply "too long to relate here" (281).

In addition to Roxana's use of silence to express emotion, avoid offense, gain credibility, and make narration practical, silence is important symbolically and thematically as well. For much of the book, Roxana claims "to be extreamly in Love with the Dress of the Quakers" (254). Of course, the plot demands this in order to provide her with a disguise. But it is also significant that certain sects of Quakers are known for the value

which they place on silence. For Roxana, a Quaker silence is just as important to her disguise as a new "Suit of ...cloaths" (254).

Finally, in this novel silence is power. Roxana knows this and is a master of rhetorical silence. With it she manipulates husbands, children, lovers, friends, and readers. She keeps her silence faithfully, even refusing herself the satisfaction of going to confession. Her one lapse of silence is with Amy, about whom she writes: "Amy knew all the Secret History of my Life" (365). That lapse gives Amy power in the story, and the result is murder, grief and haunting visions (374). Ultimately, Susan dies because she flaunts the law of silence, insisting: "if I cou'd but speak to her, I wou'd prove my Relation to her" (369). The more others know, the less control of herself and her surroundings Roxana is able to maintain. "'The clouds began to thicken about me, and I had Allarms on every side,' Roxana says as more and more information comes to her husband and the Quakeress. Roxana not only sees that the Quakeress is "greatly mov'd indeed" but knows that neither she nor her husband will accept her past life" (Backscheider *Daniel Defoe : Ambition* 195). Appropriately, the story ends in silence or what John J. Richetti calls a "suitably confused and murky fashion" (*Daniel Defoe* 118). We never really know what happens to Susan, Amy, or Roxana, but in that murky silence, the power of the narrative lives on.

We know that Roxana's reliance upon silence is not simply a coincidence. Defoe has told us in many ways that silence is something he recognizes as powerful. He was a successful spy, he commented on his own use of silence, his preface suggests silence as a method, and Roxana models rhetorical silence. Defoe can afford to be silent. The example speaks for itself. Defoe believed in silence:

By the Doctrine of Idea's it is allow'd That to Describe a Thing, Ugly, Horrid, and Deform'd, is the best way to get Abhorrence in the minds of the Pelp--and this was the Method...in the Ages of Hieroglyphics, when Things were more accurately Described by Emblems and Figures than Words; and even our Savior himself to the Method...By Parables and Similitudes. (*Review* 7:25 April 11, 1710)

In the midst of a novel based on contraries and silence, Defoe has given many clear indications of his didactic goal. If the Quaker is representative of honesty and sincere belief, and I believe that she is, then it is significant that Roxana only dresses and talks as a Quaker for her own ends. She never really changes on the inside. She never actually embraces truth, but she nevertheless points readers to truth. And that is part of Defoe's philosophy. He believes that "when Vice is painted in its Low-priz'd Colours, 'tis not to make People in love with it, but to expose it; and if the Reader makes a wrong Use of the Figures, the Wickedness is his own" (*Preface* 36). This of course points to the second criteria which I have established for evaluating didactic fiction--a investment of trust in the audience, an assumption that they can translate the fiction into the correct applications. But it also reminds us that Defoe believed that both Vice and Virtue existed and that, when pictured accurately, Vice would be repulsive to the audience.

What makes this such a rich novel is that Defoe's methodology is, in a sense, timeless--and that that timelessness comes from presenting truths by contraries and silent example so that very different audiences can still perceive transcendent truths. J. Paul Hunter has argued that eighteenth-century readers were masters of evaluating moral implications. The twentieth century, however, is a good test case for Defoe's rhetorical theories, since vice is often considered relative or non-existent. Many readers would see nothing at all immoral about Roxana's first affair with the jewelry merchant. They would

endorse the merchant's claim that since they had both been deserted by their spouses, they could consider themselves as free agents and act accordingly. But Defoe doesn't believe that, and that is not the message Roxana brings to her readers. Instead, only Amy really accepts that argument. Roxana sins knowing that she is sinning. And her reasons for sinning become weaker as the book progresses. From the need for food and shelter, Roxana slips to greed, deteriorates to vanity, wallows in selfishness, and eventually loses contact with morality to the extent that Susan becomes a "slut" and a "jade" simply because she is a threat to Roxana's peace of mind. By name and by description, she *is* Roxana. And she dies.

Even Roxana's character growth is described in the text in words of absence not of presence--she is the Protestant whore with a hole in her heart (79), a hole which is gnawed bigger and bigger as her sinful life continues. The hole seems representative to me of Defoe's methodology. In fact, *Roxana*, when viewed as truth presented through contraries and silent example, ceases to be an isolated departure from Defoe's norm and becomes the culmination of his most successful didactic techniques. In this work Defoe chooses blame over praise, trusts his audience to look for and comprehend the signs of the eternal world, and communicates multiplied truths relying heavily on contraries and selective silence to add depth to his writing. Instead of preaching, he has chosen to "gnaw." Present day readers can and do come to *Roxana* with different moral criteria than Defoe or his eighteenth--century readers. But we should not miss Defoe's point. Roxana knowingly chooses evil over good, selfishness over love, and money over relationships. She ignores the importance of the spiritual world in favor of accumulating much in the temporal world,

and the result is a moral wreck. If we comprehend that, I believe Defoe would feel like a rhetorical success.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Preaching of Sermons is Speaking to a few of Mankind:
 Printing of Books is Talking to the whole World."
Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe repeatedly recommended his fictions for the "Instruction and Improvement of the Reader" (*Preface to Roxana* 35), making him an ideal candidate for a study of narratives that are designed to teach. But he was also concerned with his audience's enjoyment, directing that *Roxana* should be read for both "Profit and Delight" (*Preface* 36). John Bunyan, Defoe's predecessor in the journey toward the novel, wrote of his own particular combination of instruction and delight that anyone who wanted to remember a truth "From New Year's Day to the last of December" should read his "fancies" for they would "stick like burrs" (*Apology to Pilgrim's Progress*). In once sense, this exploration has been an attempt to explain how a writer goes about making it pleasurable to be pricked by burrs that will cling to a reader for the rest of his or her life.

I began my study in an effort to improve my understanding of didactic fiction. My premise was a reader's intuition that fiction is a powerful medium for communicating ideas and for changing minds and actions. As readers, we often sense the significance of narrative without being able to explain it. J. Paul Hunter writes that "we still know little about the nature of the human need for narration, despite a dramatically growing awareness among students of literature that such a need seems to manifest itself in vastly different cultures, perhaps almost universally" (*Before Novels* 155). As a student of

rhetoric, I believed but found distasteful the perspective presented so clearly by J. Paul Hunter in *Before Novels*, when he explains the current attitude toward didacticism. He writes: "readers of our time are not comfortable with such content, such aims, or the tones that support them, and literary historians and critics seem to spend their time wishing--or pretending--that texts were otherwise" (225). Such a perspective (which Hunter is not advocating, but simply describing) either condemns didactic fiction to the noncanonical slush pile or "open-mindedly" and "tolerantly" agrees to overlook the blight of rhetoric in favor of concentrating on the story. I agreed with Wayne Booth that one of the reasons for such a perception is that we have no vocabulary for describing didactic fiction (*Modern Dogma* 188). I hypothesized, however, that if fiction can be used to communicate powerful, lifechanging messages, then it should also be possible to describe, at least partially, the rhetorical processes which allow it to succeed in doing so.

Although I narrowed the scope of my study significantly (I originally hoped to look at a variety of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novelists.) in order to do justice to specific texts, I believe that my findings are richer than my projections. In theory, I expected to find specific techniques which succeeded or failed--a set of rhetorical commandments which would inform and facilitate the creation and criticism of didactic fiction. My plan was to start with Defoe's rhetoric, hoping that any discovered correlations would help me to understand which elements of didactic fiction were drawn directly from rhetorical rather than artistic precedents. This connection seemed especially valuable in reference to Defoe, since his extensive contributions to the journalism of his day (over twenty volumes in *The Review* alone) situated him in the midst of a rhetorical revolution concentrated in the

present, the new, and the newsworthy (Hunter *Before Novels* 171). In *Daniel Defoe's Many Voices: A Rhetorical Study of Prose Style and Literary Method*, E. Anthony James argues from a similar point of view when he reasons that the "meaningful generalizations possible about Defoe's major 'voices' ...in an author so protean" show that Defoe had to have written with "predetermined principles in view" (256). James is arguing the thesis that correlations between his non-fiction and his fiction support the view that Defoe is a conscious artist, and I would certainly concur. However, instead of just looking to determine whether or not patterns existed, I wanted to examine any correlation with the intent of determining its rhetorical significance. What I found was much broader than a list of rhetorical do's and don't's. I discovered three overarching patterns--patterns of proven importance in the study of rhetoric.

As the previous chapters have made clear, the first of these patterns is blame. Although the goal of epideictic discourse has generally been to praise, it has always been necessary to balance praise with blame. A simple good example will not always be adequate for changing minds and actions. The criminal biographer certainly understood this principle as did the eighteenth-century hangman. In *Defoe and Casuistry*, George Starr writes "Nearly all of Defoe's fictional works cause us to identify with characters whose actions we regard as blameworthy" (v). I have given many examples which support Starr's contention and indicate that blame was an important teaching tool for Defoe. It was important because he wanted to combat the evil in the world, claiming that with "principle" and "truth" on his side he would not fear to combat "all the devils in Hell, and all the knaves on earth" (*Review* I No. I Saturday, August 2, 1712). But Defoe did not

blame only because he recognized the evil in the world. He used a variety of blaming techniques which clearly draw the reader into the moral dilemma.

This demand by Defoe for the active participation of his reader is the second pattern which my study establishes. A focus on the reader seems natural in a genre which has roots in both casuistry and the guide tradition. The first emphasizes the individual's role in moral decision making and the second is a teaching tool frequently designed to provide general direction. In Hunter's words, "casuistry's relationship to Guides is imprecise; both are manifestations of the intense cultural concern with behavioral decisions" (*Before Novels* 290). George Starr explains that although casuistry often serves as a defense for Defoe's fictional characters, it still involves the reader in passing judgment:

This [the explanations for their actions] is not to say that Defoe forbids us to judge his characters, or that he asks acquittal for one and all. Both their prosecutor and defender, he tends to seek a verdict of guilty, but also a suspended sentence and even, in some cases, a full pardon. The reader, of course, is both judge and jury. (*Defoe and Casuistry* vi)

As Lincoln Faller explains in *Crime and Defoe*, his expectations of his readers may have been one of Defoe's greatest contributions to the history of the novel (xiii). Faller describes this role more fully in *Turned to Account*, explaining that Defoe's fictions "encourage their readers to 'take part' in the stories they tell, to become producers, not merely consumers of meaning" (201). He admits, however, that that must be the subject of another book. Hopefully, we have begun to address the reader's role in this study by showing that something happens when an author "creates a reader" (Preston 2). Even though such a reader is in a sense a fictional construct, when a real reader participates in

the reading experience, he or she is cooperating in the making of meaning, and I have shown that such cooperation enhances the didactic effect.

The third overarching pattern is truth. Throughout his career in both journalism and fiction, Defoe emphasized the role of truth. Much of Defoe's reliance on truth comes from his very real faith in God and the Bible. In *Captain Singleton*, Defoe expresses his view through the words of Robert Knox, a desolate captive, who wishes desperately for a Bible so that he can have "the Truth from the original Fountain" (242). But, for Defoe, truth is powerful outside of the religious world as well. It vindicates him (*Review VIII* No. 105 Saturday, November 24, 1711), motivates him, and inspires him (*Review VIII* Preface July 1712). He claims always to be truth's servant (*Review VIII* No. 137 Thursday, February 7, 1712). A close look at Defoe's fictions has shown that his methods for expounding truth are innovative, relying heavily on techniques like silence and contraries.

What perhaps came as the biggest surprise to me is that, although these areas were discovered inductively, I soon realized that they also connected to key critical concepts in the study of the genesis of the English novel. This is, of course, logical since Defoe wrote during that inception. This connection tells me is that my three criteria, taken independently from my readings of Defoe (including significant numbers of non-literary texts) have validity as significant bridges to understanding the development of the novel. J. Paul Hunter puts the connection succinctly in *The Reluctant Pilgrim*: "it is no coincidence that the first major early English writers of prose fiction were steeped in Puritan tradition, and I suspect that the novel as an art form owes a great debt to Puritan

modes of thought and to the Puritan response to significant ideological developments of the seventeenth century" (94). The function of blame, the role of the audience, and an emphasis on truth were important to Defoe's rhetoric even before he started writing fiction. That lends credence to the argument offered by Hunter concerning the guide tradition, Starr concerning spiritual autobiography, Backscheider concerning women's novels, and Faller concerning the criminal biography. Each of these writers contends that to understand the novel as a genre we must understand its connections to these influential traditions. Such emphasis on the historical context also shows how much of a mistake it is to try to have a critical discussion of novels while ignoring their strong dependence on a rhetorical tradition. Certainly guides, women's fictions, spiritual autobiographies, and criminal biographies were written because there was a market for them, and they strove to entertain their audience. However, they were also written to have an effect on their audiences. As he reacted to and drew from their precedents, Defoe worked a rhetorical gold mine. With his ever increasing middle-class audience, he did not dare nor did he want to overlook the need to entertain, but he always wanted to teach as well. In order to get the job done as efficiently and effectively as possible he participated in the creation of the novel.

An important application of this research will be to apply the same three categories to other periods of development in the English novel. My hypothesis is that we will see a similar correlation between the historical and social perception of blame, audience, and truth and the adaptations which the novel makes in different eras. If Hunter is correct that novels "tell the story of what life is like now and [help] to explain how it got that way,

then I believe that issues of blame, audience, and truth will always be central to how novels define themselves in a given age (*Before Novels* 194).

In her concluding chapter on his life, Bacscheider writes of Defoe: "For us, however, Defoe will always be the novelist. The novel is a great form when it captures the temper of its time even as it incorporates the timeless concerns of the human race." She summarizes his contribution: "Defoe's novels give us the eternal struggle of the individual versus the 'wilderness of this world,' but he also demonstrates new ways for literature to participate in immediate debates, to become an instrument of persuasion, and to be 'useful' (533). I believe that if Defoe could have seen into the future, he would have applauded Bacscheider's summary of his novels, for I think that he actively helped to create an art form which was not only formed by its culture but was determined to reciprocate by continuing to shape its society. Lincoln Faller summarizes this goal well when he writes, "It is the problem-solving, problem-creating dimension of Defoe's novels that interests me most." He explains that he sees the novels "as remarkable instances of how thoroughly literary discourse can be implicated by the socially and politically problematic, and how, too, such problematics can provide an 'occasion' for literature, starting it off and spurring it on, sometimes in quite new, even 'novel directions' (*Crime and Defoe* xvi).

I have tried to show that Defoe was a highly religious and zealously didactic individual who epitomized the discovery and use of all the available means of persuasion. He could say with John Bunyan:

Wouldst thou be in a dream and yet not sleep?
Or wouldst thou in a moment laugh and weep?
Wouldst thou lose thyself and catch no harm?

And find thyself again without a charm?
 Wouldst read thyself and read thou knowest not what
 And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
 By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
 And lay my book, thy head and heart together.

(*The Apology to Pilgrim's Progress*)

Defoe serves as a case study for didactic fiction because he leaves us with no doubts about two things. First he was an experienced rhetorician, cognizant of the methods which got results and aware of the slippage between author and audience. Second he articulates the concept of a clear teaching goal for his fictions. He leaves no room for debate about the fact that moral advancement is one of his stated goals.

Multiplied studies support the legitimacy of looking at both Defoe and the eighteenth-century novel in terms of didacticism. These studies also elaborate on the difficulty of achieving literary status for those works whose claims include teaching. The contribution of this analysis has been to offer a methodology or at least some criteria for evaluating didactic fiction as literature.

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