

## **'La Bible du self-made man': Literary Influence IV**

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### *The story so far ...*

I began the first essay in this series on literary influence by introducing the idea of the work of literature as to some extent and in a variety of ways built out of previous and contemporary literature—while suggesting that, in spite of our tendency to characterise as special the persistent recourse to past literature of twentieth-century fiction and poetry, the idea was hardly a new one.<sup>1</sup> What is new about twentieth-century thinking, however, is the conviction that thinking itself—and reading—cannot take place without the benefit of prior 'literacies'; without having grasped a multiplicity and complexity of contexts within which meaning is made. I then went on to suggest that the critical issue of literary influence itself, therefore, along with the discrimination of specific instances, was only obscured by that radical naivety that aspired to an 'innocent', non-literary reading of literary works, a reading unadulterated by literary influences or 'prejudices' as Dr Johnson had called them.

So, on the other hand, are the issue and instances obscured by theories that reduce *all* literature and experience to an indiscriminate literariness or intertextuality, I argued, where 'intertextuality' conceives of the individual work as dispersed into an incalculable and unreadable number of residual traces or fragments from most, if not all, other works of literature. This 'hard' intertextuality, as I called it, sees the individual work as anything and everything *but* individual, in fact. Rather it is the depersonalised 'site' of innumerable intertextual relations, a site that is only arbitrarily marked off from the amorphous body of extant 'literature'. The work or its meaning shifts into

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a sort of conceptual 'space' *between* the work on the one hand and that body on the other: 'the reality of literature for the hard intertextualist, its abstract location or mode of existence, is not to be found in individual texts or in textuality at all; on the contrary, its reality is its intertextual *condition*, or is to be found disappearing into the amorphous intertext'.<sup>2</sup> Finally, I went on to suggest that to identify the influence of this or that work was merely the beginning of a critical exercise that frequently involved difficult questions and demanded difficult decisions.

Where my first essay was concerned with arguing for the continued interest and critical validity of the relationship between a literary work and its predecessors, and for a form of literary influence that respected the integrity of poet and poem, my second turned specifically to 'the ceaseless, often impatient rewriting of past literature that, so characteristic of literary evolution, explains why critical understanding is predicated on a knowledge of literature'.<sup>3</sup> What there concerned me was how and why 'revisionism', or the re-writing that results from re-seeing, took place. I asked what it might have meant both for the writer—'more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival' according to Adrienne Rich<sup>4</sup>—and for the culture that, while it enabled and indeed encouraged revisionary artistic activity, could also be said to be constituted and reconstituted by it. For it is by the persistent, not to say compulsory, revisionary intervention of individual writers working their variations on one or other literary original that modifications—occasionally quite radical changes—to the literary tradition are made.

Of this revisionism, I suggested that the common Classical to mid-eighteenth-century practice of *imitatio* or textual imitation was paradigmatic, actively articulating the paradoxical combination of dependence *and* autonomy that since Aristotle's *Poetics* has been applied to the work of art. In *imitatio* the best that is known, thought, and written in the world is to be eternally recycled, even while it is adapted to the author's own time and place and (to some extent) personal vision—an act, as I suggested, at once of homage and of aspiration. Though in the perfunctory liturgies of the Classical and neoClassical commentators *imitatio* looks distinctly

reactionary and unimaginative, every qualification to the basic project of humbly recycling the original work involved reinterpretation and improvement. And if the relative stress of neoClassical theory should happen to fall on the act of conservation, it is blindingly obvious that in practice Romantic and post-Romantic artists were not the first to feel the obligation to 'make it new'. Culture is nothing other than an evolutionary recycling that blends continuity and innovation on the paradoxical assumption the nothing changes even while nothing stays the same. From *imitatio* and revisionism generally, then, what inevitably emerges—or so I suggested—is a statement both about the nature and about the changing nature or evolution of human experience and knowledge.

To reverse Adrienne Rich's vital distinction: if the need for literary evolution is driven by revisionary acts of survival on the part of individual writers, the wilful (mis)adaptation or revision of past literature is no less 'a chapter of cultural history' for that. In my third essay, accordingly, I focussed on one self-conscious variation of the literary tradition—the mock-heroic—in order precisely to show how complex a chronicle of cultural history revisionism could be. If, as I suggested, 'an act of literary self-consciousness—of detente or dissent with a past work or writer—is at the same time and necessarily an act of historical self-consciousness',<sup>5</sup> the relationship between the mock-heroic and the specific conditions of its cultural and historical origins, far from being straightforward, was a various and often vexed one. The mock-heroic turned out to involve a rather cunning double movement: while using a parody of heroic poetry to mock the insufficiency of contemporary society, it also and simultaneously mocked the heroic as inadequate to the sublunary world we inhabit and inappropriate to the more advanced, 'civilised' state of culture and society toward which the mock-heroic writer betrayed a deep ambivalence.

If, moreover, an essay in literary influence is an essay in literary history, it is also an essay in history as uniquely conceived and expressed by literature—necessarily inviting questions about the status of history itself. From the beginning, poets and

philosophers have seen the ideological significance of language and literature as clearly as any modern linguist or historicist and have recognised the power and the authority they exercise over the human imagination.

I have said that ‘the poet revises his or her inheritance as part of a creative quest for what F. R. Leavis aptly terms the “realization of unlikeness”’ and in my second essay suggested an abundance of ways in which literary forms relate to previous works of art, either affirming them or, through confrontation and controversion, ‘disconfirming’ them.<sup>6</sup> At a straightforward narrative level, for example, this may involve digressing from or continuing a tale, changing its ending or elaborating or modernising it; in terms of narrative focus, it may involve radically changing the point of view by a shift in the centre of consciousness. The forms revision may take, the degree of familiarity with the original required for understanding and interpretation, will vary enormously.

With a handful of texts, however, idiosyncratic works which have spawned, and continue to spawn, reiterations and revisions and parodies and allusions over time and space, some measure of familiarity is always guaranteed. Which is why, in this fourth essay, I want to explore the expressive and argumentative possibilities of literary revisionism by looking, not at a genre, but at a powerfully influential single work: *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>7</sup> I refer to it vaguely as a ‘work’, moreover, rather than more precisely as a ‘myth’ or a ‘novel’, because the terms ‘myth’ and ‘novel’ are *sub judice*, so to speak. The distinction between myth and literature and the way in which they reverberate in a culture is at once the topic and object of our discussion. And what better work to isolate than ‘the prototypical modern realistic novel’?<sup>8</sup>—or is it ‘Defoe’s great myth of economic man’?<sup>9</sup> Novel or myth?

## I

L. P. Hartley said that ‘the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there’, but for most of our canonical writers

the present, too, is a foreign country where they do things differently, whoever 'they' might be. And this is especially true for the canonical writers of the eighteenth century. For all their often prevailing in the world of letters, what at least nominally drove the Augustans was their celebrated 'siege mentality': their sense of being an embattled minority in a world going mad. In the comic and satiric mayhem of his *The Dunciad* (1728–1743), Pope figures the destruction of polite letters by a Grub Street which replaces the literary arrangements of the old regime with its own mechanical, democratic, and capitalistic world of literature to order, whose excreta (the analogy is Pope's)—'Journals, Medleys, Merc'ries, Magazines: Sepulchral Lyes ... new-year Odes'—were designed to capitalise upon the taste for sensation of the literate vulgar. And amongst 'the new men' or Moderns was a writer by the name of Daniel [De]Foe<sup>10</sup>—entrepreneur, political opportunist, controversialist, propagandist, journalist and writer who in his lifetime was responsible for producing some 560 books, pamphlets, and journals: 'Earless on high, stood unabash'd De Foe'.<sup>11</sup>

All in all, few things could be more ironic than the survival of *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner*. By all accounts, Defoe saw in the book nothing more than the opportunity for immediate sales. After all, here was an adventure story of storms at home and at sea; of piracy, imprisonment, and slavery, hunting and being hunted; of shipwrecks and terrifying solitude—all in exotic settings, with cannibals thrown in for good measure, and all served up with that familiar boast of being 'authentick': 'The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it'.<sup>12</sup> If Defoe had any original hopes, they were that the book would be the immediately popular and handsomely remunerative exercise it proved to be. And when it went into a fourth print run in its first year, Defoe then did what any respectable businessman or twentieth-century film producer would do—he produced a sequel: *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, in which Crusoe and Friday return to the island and, during a canoe attack by the mainland natives, are

parted forever. Less popular, *The Farther Adventures* still managed to hold its own and there was a third or spin-off the following year: *Serious Reflections During the Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: With His Vision of the Angelick World* (1720). That he had written one of the most catholic and influential of all modern texts after the *Don Quixote* of Miguel Cervantes and before Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* neither occurred to Defoe nor much interested him.

It was, however, precisely his indifference to 'literature' as polite letters, let alone as a high calling, that made Defoe eminently qualified to succeed, for he belonged to his generation in a way that most of the other well known writers amongst his contemporaries did not. Not that early eighteenth-century literary culture divided neatly into 'us' and 'them'; there were cultural midwives of the stature of Joseph Addison (1672–1719), whose *Spectator*, founded in 1711 to educate the newly prosperous middle classes in the arts, letters, and general behaviour, helped to reconcile elegance and morality as Johnson would do so magisterally later in the century. Defoe, however, knew nothing of this Addisonian compromise. For Defoe, social mobility was rather a case of crude economics than of that sense of individual or class culture and style that went by the name of 'manners'.

So indeed was writing itself. Both in his extensive exploitation of every conceivable genre that could be exploited commercially and (as this implies) in his 'unabash'd' commitment to literature as commodity, Defoe resoundingly belongs to the new world of Grub Street rather than the old world of polite letters. 'Writing is become a very considerable Branch of English Commerce' he wrote in an *Essay on Literature* of 1726; 'The Booksellers are the master Manufacturers or Employers. The several Writers, Authors, Copiers, Sub-writers, and all other Operators with Pen and Ink are the Workmen employed by the said Manufacturers'. His projected audience were not so much readers as purchasers who, if their tastes could be anticipated or created for them with this or that work, would pay handsomely enough for their fare. Less cynically, the other side of this commercialism was its liberal vision of general enlightenment through (again to quote Defoe)

‘the spreading of useful Knowledge, making the Accession to it cheap and easy’.<sup>13</sup>

What was ‘useful’ for Defoe was for Pope, as we saw, the end of civilisation as he knew it. Pope singled out Defoe in *The Dunciad* largely because of his association with other capitalisers of and in print, like the extraordinary Mr John Dunton, instigator of an ephemeral print fever of shallow and sensational novelties and curiosities, paradoxically entitled *Athenianism*: ‘my Projects are NEW, and as I venture to embark for *Terra Incognita*, I hope the Hazard I run to oblige the CURIOUS will be accepted, were my Errors in Sailing never so many’.<sup>14</sup> Like Dunton’s, Defoe’s projects were ‘NEW’—or, better still, *novel*. To this extent, Daniel Defoe may be identified with his character Robinson Crusoe, ‘Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone’<sup>15</sup>, both in reality and in literature: seeking always a New World because many of his readers also hungered after novelty. Whether that quest was heroic or mock-heroic depended on one’s perspective, of course, though Defoe’s utter indifference to the literary historical significance of his own enterprise extended to the fact that he had, by most subsequent accounts, fathered the novel—the one genre that Pope could not have included in his élitist contempt for the literary and indeed cultural and social change from an aristocratic to a democratic culture because it did not exist. (Who the novel’s mother was, and which came first, I leave to more courageous and better informed historians.<sup>16</sup>)

Admittedly, the positive results of the DNA testing done on Defoe are in many ways as strange and surprising as Crusoe’s adventures, and it might be worth asking whether *Robinson Crusoe* does indeed satisfy the criteria conventionally used to distinguish the novel, especially criteria as basic as narrative probability, familiarity of setting, and particularity of characterisation. With regard to probability, there were of course those comparably ‘historical’ events recorded in contemporary travel literature like William Dampier’s *New Voyage Round the World* (1697) and Captain Edward Cook’s *A Voyage to the South Seas and Round the World* (1712), and we know that *Robinson Crusoe* was based, at least in part, on the strange surprising adventures of one

Alexander Selkirk, who joined Dampier's expedition in 1703, and was marooned on the island of San Fernandez from 1704 to 1709. There were those amongst Defoe's contemporaries, moreover, who accepted without question the truth of Crusoe's having spent twenty eight years alone on an island with limbs and sanity intact.

The line between being willing to suspend disbelief and being credulous is a fine one, however. As a narrative, *Robinson Crusoe* is surely closer to fantasy or legend or exemplary history. Equally surely, no one would argue that Crusoe's adventures on the island even vaguely recall daily life in familiar, contemporary circumstances among more-or-less ordinary human beings in English society in the early eighteenth century. And what of a realistic or 'life-like' particularity in the main character? A cipher, Crusoe certainly is not, nor is he named allegorically, but there are times when it is more appropriate to read him as a function or servant of his abstract predicament than as a dense, indifferent, or psychotic personality.

So what, then, is *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner*? Is it a tale of curiosities and wonders—a picaresque adventure or science fiction or exploration fantasy involving the richly detailed imagining of another place, unlikely though that place might be? Is it spiritual autobiography, or an exemplary, providential narrative serving as a popular 'guide' to pious living (for so, at different times, Crusoe himself would have us believe)? Is it an 'occasional meditation' or just occasionally meditative? Or, to come full circle, is it *the* 'myth of modern individualism' or *the* 'prototypical modern realistic novel'?<sup>17</sup>

## II

There are, as it turns out, a number of important senses in which *Robinson Crusoe* is a prototypical novel, or is novelistic, perhaps not least in being formally capacious and promiscuous enough to contain so many different genres. We think of it as a novel, for

example, because its *circumstantiality* renders curiously familiar what is ostensibly strange and surprising. By exploiting what the island has in common with nature anywhere and everywhere, while comprehensively adapting and appropriating what it does not, Crusoe the middle-class speculator and Defoe the middle-class novelist domesticate the exotic. Observed occurrences and objects have a material, rather than intellectual or occult, interest, and are measured almost exclusively by their utility:

I had been now thirteen Days on Shore, and had been eleven Times on Board the Ship; in which Time I had brought away all that one Pair of Hands could well be suppos'd capable to bring, tho' I believe verily, had the calm Weather held, I should have brought away the whole Ship Piece by Piece: But preparing the 12th Time to go on Board, I found the Wind begin to rise; however at low Water I went on Board, and tho' I thought I had rummag'd the Cabbin so effectually, as that nothing more could be found, yet I discover'd a Locker with Drawers in it, in one of which I found two or three Razors, and one Pair of large Sizzers, with some ten or a Dozen of good Knives and Forks; in another I found about Thirty six Pounds value in Money, some *European Coin*, some *Brasil*, some Pieces of Eight, some Gold, some Silver. (p.43)

All of which, it will be noted, is rendered in a 'transparent' literary prose—or is it *unliterary* prose?—that works in a particularising and immediate or unmediated way 'to convey the knowledge of things' in the new traditions of empirical science and empirical philosophy.<sup>18</sup> It was Defoe's being a journalist that, amongst other things, is largely agreed to have qualified him to 'father' the novel. To quote J. Paul Hunter:

The rise of journalism relates two converging cultural movements that, directly or indirectly, it introduces to the novel. One is the empiricism that had, for a century, been changing the grounds of authority in the whole Western world through its claims that meaning derived only from the observation of data. The second involves the validation of individuals, not necessarily trained individuals, as observers and interpreters. It manifested itself everywhere; it is the essence of Protestantism....

... although the doctrine that everyone could be his or her own priest originated as a credo about received texts, it was quickly

applied to the Book of Creation as well. Observation of the natural world became a duty for all.<sup>19</sup>

This metamorphosis from 'something rich and strange' into the familiar and the secular takes place at a number of different formal and thematic levels, not even excepting the unexplained marvel of the monstrous footprint. On the issue of cannibalism, Crusoe is at first appalled by the practice, protesting as a Christian and resolved to put 'twenty or thirty of them to the Sword'. But the irony of murdering them for being cannibals does not escape him and, once the violence of his anger has abated, reason prevails. He discovers a justification for living and allowing to live worthy of a comparative anthropologist:

I began with cooler and calmer Thoughts to consider what it was I was going to engage in. What Authority, or Call I had, to pretend to be Judge and Executioner upon these Men as Criminals, whom Heaven had thought fit for so many Ages to suffer unpunish'd ... They think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox ... these people were not Murtherers ... any more than those Christians were Murtherers, who often put to Death the Prisoners taken in Battle ...

In the next Place it occur'd to me, that albeit the Usage they thus gave one another, was thus brutish and inhumane; yet it was really nothing to me: These People had done me no Injury. (pp.123–24)

As cannibalism is transformed by elaborate rationalisation from an evil into a tribal phenomenon, we witness the process of secularisation associated with rational Protestant dissent and—again—symbolised by the advent of the novel. So it is with the subtle self-empowering of the novel's hero. Throughout his story, Crusoe takes occasion—usually belated and perfunctory—self-consciously to rediscover and affirm God's Providence and its complement, Deliverance:

a certain Stupidity of Soul, without Desire of Good, or Conscience of Evil, had entirely overwhelm'd me, and I was all that the most hardned, unthinking, wicked Creature among our common Sailors, can be supposed to be, not having the least Sense, either of the Fear of God in Danger, or of Thankfulness to god in Deliverances. ... I was meerly [= totally] thoughtless of a God, or a Providence;

acted like a meer Brute from the Principles of Nature, and by the Dictates of common Sense only, and indeed hardly that. (p.65)

In spite of an anthology of such pious and self-punitive moments, however, far from their justifying the ways of God to man, divine election and Providence in fact jostle for ascendancy throughout the narrative with self-reliance and self-determination, as Defoe exploits a paradox in the Protestant ideology itself: 'the Calvinist element of the Protestant ethic equated material success with proof of predestined "election" ', 'while in practice, to seek success as proof of election amounted to the same thing as to seek it freely'.<sup>20</sup> In the end, both narrative and narrator conspire to arrogate to Crusoe the prerogative traditionally ascribed to God, unmistakably affirming self-providence. Indeed, with the fascinated co-operation of 300 years of readers, Crusoe provides for himself in conditions so adverse as to affirm the resourcefulness of an otherwise almost embarrassingly unheroic individual.

It was the implication in Defoe that through resourcefulness and independence Man was becoming the god of his own idolatry that so offended the Tory satirists. The same 300 years of readers have also noticed, with varying degrees of uneasiness, that the admirable pragmatism that marks Crusoe's daily, corporeal existence is equally characteristic of his spiritual meditations. There are times when he obviously wears his religion on his goat-skin sleeves. On this issue of Crusoe's positioning himself in relation to a God often seen to be redundant, what is perhaps the most famous episode in the whole tale is worth a closer look:

It happened one Day about Noon going towards my Boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand: I stood like one Thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an Apparition; I listen'd, I look'd round me, nor saw any Thing; I went up to a rising Ground to look farther; I went up the Shore and down the Shore but it was all one, I could see no other Impression but that one, I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my Fancy; but there was no Room for that, for there was exactly a very Print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot; how it came thither, I

knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering Thoughts, like a Man perfectly confus'd and out of my self, I came Home to my Fortification, not feeling, as we say, the Ground I went on, but terrify'd to the last Degree, looking behind me at every two or three Steps, mistaking every Bush and Tree, and fancying every Stump at a Distance to be a Man; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted Imagination represented Things to me in, how many wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way. (p.112)

This is Crusoe's one confrontation with what is devastatingly alien and uncanny, including even cannibalism. The German word that Freud uses and that we controversially translate as 'uncanny' —*unheimlich*; 'unhomely'—is more than apt in the context, for no event sends Crusoe home with more conviction and dispatch: 'When I came into my Castle, for so I think I call'd it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued'. As if we needed it, the episode intensifies his and our sense of domesticity, not as human creativity and order—civilisation—but as extreme, instinctive creaturalty: 'never frighted Hare fled to Cover, or Fox to Earth, with more Terror of Mind than I to this Retreat' (p.112).

If there were an occasion of enough anxiety to drive him to prayer it is surely this footprint in Eden, but the result is by turns comical and honest, and perhaps more than any other incident registers the secularisation in *Robinson Crusoe* and represented by the novel genre: 'Sometimes I fancy'd it must be the Devil', Crusoe recalls, but an abundance of things 'assisted to argue me out of all Apprehensions of its being the Devil'. More to the point, however, he presently concludes 'that it must be some more dangerous Creature. That it must be some of the Savages of the main Land over-against me'. Crusoe's convincingly hysterical reaction to the incident slides quietly past the truth that, to his reformed imagination, the immediate, physical threat of hostility far outweighs any spiritual threat offered by the Devil (p.112). What this does, in turn, is to inspire a meditation upon the human fickleness that Crusoe himself is content to exemplify:

How strange a Chequer-Work of Providence is the Life of Man! and

by what secret differing Springs are the Affections hurry'd about as differing Circumstances present! To Day we love what to Morrow we hate; to Day we seek what to Morrow we shun; to Day we desire what to Morrow we fear ; nay even tremble at the Apprehensions of; this was exemplify'd in me at this Time in the most lively Manner imaginable; for I whose only Affliction was, that I seem'd banished from human Society, that I was alone, circumscrib'd by the boundless Ocean, cut off from Mankind, and condemn'd to what I call'd silent Life; that I was as one who Heaven thought not worthy to be number'd among the Living, or to appear among the rest of his Creatures; that to have seen one of my own Species would have seem'd to me a Raising me from Death to Life, and the greatest Blessing that Heaven it self, next to the supreme Blessing of Salvation, could bestow; I say, that I should now tremble at the very Apprehensions of seeing a Man, and was ready to sink into the Ground at but the Shadow or silent Appearance of a Man's having set his Foot in the Island. (pp.113–14)

Crusoe, it is true, then endeavours to use the episode and his own fickleness to recover a place for his God. It is only one of 'a great many curious Speculations', however, and having just been reminded at length of how circumstances influence the affections and thoughts, and of how thoroughly untrustworthy Crusoe's responses are, the reader cannot help but see his thoughts on God as the projection of a labile conscience and as contingent rather than conclusive.

In short, the spiritual autobiographical element of Robinson Crusoe's fictional memoirs is secularised by an exclusive focus on the 'auto'—on the self or ego—rather than on the spirit. That religion should enter most dramatically into the history as part of a character's negotiations with the actual and the every day, moreover, is yet more evidence of the drive toward novelistic 'realism', distinguishing it from the simple homiletic or didactic text the autobiographical voice of Crusoe sometimes purports to be writing. *Robinson Crusoe* is not a novel of ideas so much as a novel about a man who, insofar as he is human, has ideas. It anticipates the nurturing by the novel of the individual as a morally autonomous consciousness, manifest *within* the novel as the preoccupation of an author with an individual character, or of an individual character with him- or herself and with his or her

own thoughts and feelings. If the self upon which Crusoe focuses strikes us as alien or unattractive in ways that challenge and perhaps even defeat the will to empathy of our historical imaginations—precisely in its disingenuous negotiations with its God, for example, as part of an often unapologetically calculating attitude—still Crusoe’s unrelenting self-referentiality is in other ways, both as a habit and as literature, more familiar to us than the kind of characterisation we find in other, subsequent literary heroes like Fielding’s or Dickens’s, say, for whom we may well feel more individual or historical sympathy.

### III

There is, then, this remarkable turn in *Robinson Crusoe* towards circumstantiality and familiarity, towards the secular and the individual as technically and existentially central, a turn typical or prototypical of the novel as a genre. Yet still there remains the fact that it has also proved itself over the last three hundred years one of the most resilient of modern myths. Why? Or is it ‘how’? Which of the two did Defoe ‘father’, a myth or a novel? For surely the two are distinct, even to the point of defining each other by their radical (root) opposition, as in Northrop Frye:

Myth, then, is one extreme of the literary design; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance ... as the modes of fiction move from the mythical to the low mimetic and ironic, they approach a point of extreme ‘realism’ or representative likeness to life. It follows that the mythical mode ... is the most abstract and conventionalized of all literary modes.<sup>21</sup>

A myth is a primal narrative sequence passed down by a culture ‘to reach by the shortest possible means a general understanding of the universe’ (Lévi-Strauss).<sup>22</sup> By definition reductionist, it shares its generalising reductionism with the physical and the social sciences that have replaced it as a comprehensive system of explanations for individual, social, and natural phenomena. Today we extend its usage to include any story (Greek *mythos*), authored as well as pre-literate, that expresses a common cultural

intuition, desire, or anxiety, often rereading ancient myths accordingly. But still the myth is constituted by narrative: a single, stark sequence of actions and events that can be held, if only for mnemonic reasons, complete and total in the mind. The novel, on the other hand is detailed, contingent—too detailed and contingent to allow the starkness of outline required for mythic form and force, and thus mythic *influence*; too hedged around with reasons, causes, qualifications; with character and the decidedly unmythic quotidian.

Almost unique amongst the tragic dramatists, Shakespeare's is an interesting case. Whatever ways myths may be said to figure and to function, we note with George Steiner that Shakespeare only rarely draws upon them.<sup>23</sup> When he does, as in Steiner's 'problematic exception' of *Troilus and Cressida* for example, it is only to exploit the contrariety between literature and myth that we are ourselves trying to resolve. In *Troilus and Cressida*, as I argued in a previous issue, we witness *literary* characters habitually speculating about their own destined metamorphosis into *mythical* characters!<sup>24</sup> By dramatising and embodying the myth, Shakespeare demythologises it, taking the action out of the realm of myth and renouncing any alternative mythopoeic intentions of his own. If this meant Shakespeare's sacrificing in his tragedies what Steiner calls 'the intolerant immensity of the mythical moment',<sup>25</sup> it did not mean his forgoing the immensity of the tragic moment, sometimes the more immense for tolerating the comic and the absurd.

Which prompts the thought that if any one of Shakespeare's plays contains the structural simplicity and suggestive power characteristic of the mythic it is *King Lear*, whose ageing king and three daughters in primitive conflict over rights and rites surely give the play the potential to do expressive or explanatory duty at any number of anthropological, cultural, and psychoanalytic levels. And yet its being all over the place, like Lear on the heath, robs the play of mythic simplicity and assimilability. Perhaps this is because Shakespeare was bad at plots. Think of Aristotle and the primacy of plot (a rare dogmatic moment in the *Poetics*); think of the neoClassical projection of a rude and barbarous

Shakespeare, untidy and uncombed, his shirt hanging out of his breeches. Even the 'classical' purity of a play like *The Tempest* has its awkward digressions and parodic and ironic subplots. Indeed, its best known speech erupts precisely to destroy the self-contained formal beauty of a masque in recognition of the need for discontinuity, incompleteness, loss: 'Well done, avoid. No more ... Our revels now are ended' (IV.i.142–163). *Macbeth*? The least busy and sprawling of the tragedies is in other ways the least mythic of the tragedies. Is it because Mr and Mrs Macbeth are at times the least aristocratic of characters? (Even the dribbling, giggling Lear remains every inch a king.)

Shakespeare's characters are so much more and so much less than archetypes, what happens in a Shakespeare play so much more than its plot, what people say so much more than speech. Each digression, each subplot is realised with such sympathetic imaginative power and such poetry that it can never be said only to subserve a primary story. At its best, of course, it will do that too, but if there is a Coleridgean unity to all of this, operating *ab intra* according to a prevailing idea, it does not obviate the heterogeneity that militates against the mythic. The simplicity the neoClassical critic prescribed as a cure for Shakespeare's uncivilised, popular drama could just as easily be seen as far from civilised. 'We have associated archetypes and myths', writes Northrop Frye, 'particularly with primitive and popular literature'.<sup>26</sup> It is certainly nostalgic. Shakespeare's messiness is in part at least a willingness to defer to the multiform moment—no less the popular or theatrical moment, admittedly, than the human moment—refusing the reductionism dear to intellectual and ethical and artistic formalists. And (more to the point) dear to myth.

It is in part this unevenness or want of proportion that encourages the persistent reinterpretation of Shakespearean texts, in criticism and performance. A minor character or scene will not stay minor in the individual or collective mind, taking the imaginative floor for a generation. A Shylock, a Malvolio, a Katherine, an Isabella, a Poor Tom, a Caliban—suddenly will not do or be what he or she is told. Nor is this perversity only in

response to fashionable socio-political interests (which are exigent) or the commercial pressure to reinterpret (which is immense). These and other characters and occasions come so intensely into focus in a turn of phrase and metaphorical concentration as to make them utterly, if only momentarily, compelling. If, as a result of this persistent staging and study, Shakespeare has been enormously influential in the English-speaking and Western traditions—and to say that it is hard to imagine our language and culture without that influence may be literally true—his plays have not generated the same number and diversity of specific reiterations and recriminations as *Robinson Crusoe*, not to mention the *Bible*; the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; the *Prometheus*, *Oresteia*, *Antigone*, *Philoctetes*, *Oedipus* plays, *Electra*, *Iphigenia*, and *Medea* of the Greek tragic playwrights; the *Aeneid*; *Don Quixote*; *Faust*; *Frankenstein*. There have, of course, been other Hamlets (though usually self-conscious imitators like Goethe's *Werther*), other Macbeths and Othellos (Ionesco; Verdi), other Lears (Bond), but many, many fewer than there have been incarnations of Prometheus or Faust—or Robinson Crusoe. All the energy has gone into rereading and restaging rather than reincarnation and revision, for the fact is that Shakespeare created, not myths, but characters: characters inseparable from their speech, and speech inseparable from its poetry—and it is an old joke that the only thing lost in translation is the poetry.

#### IV

The 'Shakespearean perspective may well be true to organic life itself', writes George Steiner, conclusively: 'It will constitute the foundations of the novel'.<sup>27</sup> Myth/novel: again we confront the distinction, not to say antithesis, one that would be acceptable enough were it not for a work like *Robinson Crusoe*, the novel whose mythic *potens* is confirmed by the proliferating afterlives it has encouraged—so numerous and coherent a body of imitative and derivative texts, in fact, that the Germans and French refer to *die Robinsonade* and *la robinsonnade* respectively.<sup>28</sup> All of the

thousands of books constituting the Robinsnade are revisions of one form or another, though they might without too much violence be separated into those that take their inspiration from the original story on the one hand, and those that, on the other, engage directly and critically with the physical and ideological assumptions of Defoe's novel. Referring only to the better known: Johann David Wyss's patriarchal *Swiss Family Robinson* (*Der Schweizerische Robinson*), Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* (*L'Île mystérieuse*), Captain Marryat's *Masterman Ready*, and the Scottish 'boys own' Robinsnade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including *Coral Island* and *Treasure Island*, all exploit aspects of the predicament in which Crusoe finds himself and borrow specific narrative details from Defoe's original or from later innovations in the tradition.

Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, on the other hand, succumbs to the *Heart of Darkness* from which Robinson emerges unscathed. Kurtz's original corruption is inherited by William Golding's little crusoes: the degenerate schoolboys in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding's contribution to what might be termed a Catholic Robinsnade, allied across time with the work of Augustan Christian pessimists like Swift (whose *Gulliver's Travels* of 1726 was one of the first to parody *Robinson Crusoe* and attack the assumptions of its author). Michel Tournier's post-Freudian *Friday* (*Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*) and the post-Colonial *Omeros* and *Foe* of Derek Walcott and J. M. Coetzee respectively draw at different times upon all the different parts of the physical and ideological anatomy by which we know ourselves in the late twentieth century.

For the critical, revisionary arm of the Robinsnade, Crusoe's 'idyllic' island retreat is either irresponsibly naive in its physical or psychological omissions (sex; violence; silence; insanity) or irresponsibly cunning in its ideological commissions (Puritanism; capitalism; slavery/colonialism). But I anticipate. Suffice it to say at this stage that the undiminished animosity it is still capable of evoking testifies, if to nothing else, to powerfully articulate forms implicit and explicit in Defoe's original, even if in various, characteristically self-reflexive ways the imaginative response

to the Crusoe myth is now as much a response to its role in culture as to the myth itself.

## V

So far as I can make out there are two reasons for the double life of myth and novel led by our text. The first also applies to various other influential texts like *Frankenstein* and is obvious enough: because *Robinson Crusoe* is known to our culture without its necessarily being read—either ‘known of’ or experienced in one or more of its innumerable reincarnations, including three centuries of literary adaptations for children, cartoons, *Space Family Robinson*, and *Gilligan’s Island*—the myth of Robinson Crusoe and the novel *The Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* are quite distinct ‘texts’. Compare, for example, the physical and narrative details: in the myth, Robinson Crusoe is shipwrecked on an island, shifts for himself with admirable ingenuity and dexterity, builds an elaborate wooden castle, and manages to maintain a semblance of civilised life that verges on parody, before being joined after an indefinite (shortish?) period by a single native, Man Friday, who is initiated into his ‘Master’s’ inappropriate but endearing European lifestyle, including dress and a complex of fussy habits and domestic rituals: ‘When I took leave of this Island, I carry’d on board for Reliques, the great Goat’s-Skin-Cap I had made, my Umbrella, and my Parrot; also I forgot not to take the Money I formerly mention’d’ (p.200).<sup>29</sup>

In the novel, on the other hand, well ...

I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of *York*, of a good Family, tho’ not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of *Bremen*, who settled first at *Hull*: He got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at *York*, from whence he had married my Mother, whose Relations were named *Robinson*, a very good Family in that Country, and from whom I was called *Robinson Kreutznaer*; but by the usual Corruption of Words in *England*, we are now called, nay we call our selves, and write our Name *Crusoe*, and so my Companions always call’d me.

I had two elder Brothers, one of which was Lieutenant Collonel to an *English* Regiment of Foot in *Flanders*, formerly commanded by the famous Coll. *Lockhart*, and was killed at the Battle near *Dunkirk* against the *Spaniards*: What became of my second Brother I never knew any more than my Father or Mother did know what was become of me.

Being the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade, my Head began to be fill'd very early with rambling Thoughts! My Father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent Share of Learning, as far as House-Education, and a Country Free-School generally goes, and design'd me for the Law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea, and my Inclination to this led me so strongly against the Will, nay the Commands of my Father, and against all the Entreaties and Perswasions of my Mother and other Friends, that there seem'd to be something fatal in that propension of Nature tending directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me.

My Father, a wise and grave Man, gave me serious and excellent Counsel against what he foresaw was my Design. He call'd me one Morning into his Chamber, where he was confined by the Gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this Subject: He ask'd me what Reasons more than a meer wandring Inclination I had for leaving my Father's House and my native Country, where I might be well introduced, and had a Prospect of raising my Fortune by Application and Industry, with a Life of Ease and Pleasure. He told me it was for Men of desperate Fortunes on the one Hand, or of aspiring, superior Fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon Adventures, to rise by Enterprize, and make themselves famous in Undertakings of a Nature out of the common Road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle State, or what might be called the upper Station of *Low Life*, which he had found by long Experience was the best State in the World, the most suited to human Happiness, not exposed to the Miseries and Hardships, the Labour and Sufferings of the mechanick Part of Mankind, and not embarass'd with the Pride, Luxury, Ambition and Envy of the upper Part of Mankind ... this was the State of Life which all other People envied ...

and so on (pp.3–4): particularising and contextualising in such a way as to bind its autobiographical subject to the very circumstances it struggles to render intelligible. Then there is the cast of other characters whose hold on the cultural imagination has

slackened as the myth of Crusoe and Friday has assumed exclusive priority. Admittedly, the appearance of these other characters is short-lived and many remain nameless—except when it suits him or his creator, Crusoe himself has a memory like a sieve—but still they are part of the original novel by Daniel Defoe. Though we dare not dwell too closely on the fate meted out to the young slave Xury by Defoe and Crusoe, for example, he functions as part of a set of expressive relations set up within the novel, a telling anticipation of Friday and the role he will play on his arrival on the island after twenty one years to end Crusoe's solitary servitude. For a number of quite compelling if hardly noble or even liberal reasons—compelling in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, that is—the two black characters are the only ones to elicit affection and even love from the narratorial Crusoe.

Again in the novel and still on the subject of paternalism and paternity, we note the way Defoe exploits the persistent analogy set up by Crusoe between his father on the one hand—by convention, adviser and disciplinarian; in reality also, being aged, 'maternal' in his affections and in his openness about them—and, on the other, the God whom Crusoe alternately ignores and petitions throughout: 'I forsook my Father's House'; 'not to look back upon my primitive Condition, and the excellent Advice of my Father, the Opposition to which, was, *as I may call it*, my ORIGINAL SIN' (pp.27; 141). The father-son relationship is then played out by Crusoe with a variety of other characters, and by Defoe most significantly in a scene between Friday and the father he rescues from being eaten, as Crusoe has rescued him: 'It is not easy for me to express how it mov'd me to see what Extasy and filial Affection had work'd in this poor *Savage*, at the Sight of his Father' (p.172). No less than in the world according to Freud, does the theme of the Father, fathers, and sons dominate—without, however, being reduced to the Oedipal or any other myth.

It is, in fact, in the first person narrative voice occasioning and enabling the drama of conscience in which this theme of paternalism is explicitly meditated that we glimpse the major formal or rhetorical distinction between the novel and the myth. The mere use of the first person for information and authentication

(‘I was there and saw it all’) arguably attenuates the mythic by relativising it. How much more threatening is any use of the first person that involves an author’s more or less ironic exploitation of his or her narrator (not all of which are covered by the term ‘unreliable narration’)? Can a myth ever be or have a point of view, and all that that implies? Having no inward, myth may embody the ironic—what could be more tragically ironic than the myth of Oedipus I have just alluded to?—but it cannot regard itself ironically.

## VI

However necessary, this discrepancy in narrative content and form between Crusoe the myth and *Robinson Crusoe* the novel is alone insufficient to explain why it exemplifies both of two cultural forms not only antipathetic to each other, but also evolving from and expressing vastly different cultural assumptions and *modi operandi*. The second reason is that novel-ness, and its own novel-ness, is so large a part of the Crusoe myth itself. Many of the generic attributes that are identified as typically novelistic, in other words, and (more significantly) many of the cultural and ideological conditions now identified as necessary for the development of the novel, actually go into making up the Crusoe myth or are rendered mythic by the Crusoe story.

Take, for example, the journalistic circumstantiality usually associated with the development of literary realism; the decidedly unmythic quotidian I talked about earlier. This is accompanied in Crusoe’s case by a literal-minded deference towards the physical object that, far from being casual and far even from being dutiful (‘Observation of the natural world became a duty for all’)<sup>30</sup>, is in fact obsessive—call it empiricism or fetishism. Object and observation, along with the self-authorising elaboration of observation into opinion and opinionation, all at different times become curiously surreal. It is at such times, when the realistic imagination transfixes ‘the thing’ itself in a process of Freudian *cathexis* or sudden investment of energy, that the novelistic

becomes mythic. Witness the account of Crusoe's deliverance from the ocean, or at least of his response after his deliverance:

I walk'd about the Shore, lifting up my Hands, and my whole Being, as I may say, wrapt up in the Contemplation of my Deliverance, making a Thousand Gestures and Motions which I cannot describe, reflecting upon all my Comrades that were drown'd, and that there should not be one Soul sav'd but my self; for, as for them, I never saw them afterwards, or any Sign of them, except three of their Hats, one Cap, and two Shoes that were not Fellows. (p.35)

To finish with the phrase 'I never saw them afterwards' would have been enough; we do not need any more information than that. Even to add the gratuitous detail of the 'Hats', 'Cap', and 'two Shoes' would have suggested little more than a passion for authenticating detail. It is in the casual asymmetry of the shoes that realism transcends or transgresses itself.

Again and again, the successful depiction of the credible or realistic turns out to be only the point of departure for a more active mythologisation. So unrelenting is Crusoe's self-reference that it passes beyond the habit of an individual to become a unifying factor in the novel as a myth of puritan inwardness and individualism (though we might want to ask with Daiches and Barbu whether 'self-centredness or inner-directedness is in this case, as in the case of a psychopath, an anti-social character trait!').<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it is precisely the conditional fiction of his aloneness that makes a myth of individualism out of the individual called Robinson Crusoe, who can be read—and at least since Coleridge has been read—as a universal figure, like Everyman, Bunyan's Christian, Milton's Adam and Eve, or Coleridge's *l'homme moyen intellectuel et spirituel* (and unlike, say, Lear or Macbeth).<sup>32</sup>

So evocative indeed has that conditional fiction proved that it is hard to avoid reading *Robinson Crusoe* as an existentialist parable reflecting the human condition as one of inescapable isolation, in which language is either misguided (the dog) or empty mimicry (Poll) and the mysterious footprint 'suggests the utter terror in confronting, within one's own accustomed isolation,

the other'.<sup>33</sup> Defoe himself could not resist the inference. The third volume of his *Robinson Crusoe* 'trilogy', *Serious Reflections During the Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: With His Vision of the Angelick World*, opens with a chapter entitled 'Of solitude' that begins on a personal note with Crusoe's wondering how so solitary a life could be supported. 'It seems to me', he goes on to reflect,

that Life in general is, or ought to be, but one universal Act of Solitude: but I find it is natural to judge of Happiness, by its suiting or not suiting our Inclinations. Every Thing revolves in our Minds by innumerable circular Motions, all centring in our selves. We judge of Prosperity, and of Affliction, Joy and Sorrow, Poverty, Riches, and all the various Scenes of Life: I say, we judge of them by ourselves ... our Dear-self is, in one Respect, the End of Living.<sup>34</sup>

An island on an island, then, Crusoe is exposed in laboratory conditions of the kind then becoming habitual to empirical scientific method (Defoe was probably born in 1660, the year of the foundation of the Royal Society). The complicating variables that would become dear to the fully developed realistic novel—human relationship (marriage; family; relations) and human society (business; politics; culture)—have been removed and we see Crusoe abstractly tested. It is then that we witness the triumph of, besides individualism necessarily, an array of what the world has agreed to recognise as historically specific, Puritan virtues: 'La Bible du self-made man' (Paul Dottin).<sup>35</sup> Of human resourcefulness, for example: Crusoe's industry and dexterity become so singular and characteristic as to have intensified into a myth opposing to the idealist tradition of man as *homo sapiens*, a myth more congenial to Puritan pragmatism of man as maker or *homo faber*: 'No Joy at a Thing of so Mean a Nature was ever equal to mine, when I found I had made an Earthen Pot that would bear the Fire; and I had hardly patience to stay till they were cold, before I set one upon the Fire again' (p.89). And to the myth or myths of resourcefulness and industry are invariably added the myth of capitalism. After all, anyone who weighs his fortunes and maintains his sanity by using double entry bookkeeping must be a myth, surely?

EVIL

I am cast upon a horrible desert Island,  
void of all Hope of Recovery.

I am singl'd out and separated, as it  
were, from all the World to be  
miserable.

I am divided from Mankind,  
a Solitaire, one banish'd from  
humane Society.

I have not Clothes to cover me.

I am without any Defence or Means  
to resist any Violence of Man or  
Beast.

I have no Soul to speak to, or relieve  
me.

GOOD

But I am alive, and not drown'd as  
all my Ship's Company was.

But I am singl'd out too from all  
the Ship's Crew to be spar'd  
from Death; and he that  
miraculously sav'd me from  
Death, can deliver me from  
this Condition.

But I am not starv'd and perishing  
on a barren Place, affording no  
no Sustenance.

But I am in a hot Climate, where if I  
had Clothes I could hardly wear  
them.

But I am cast on an Island, where I  
see no wild Beasts to hurt me  
me, as I saw on the Coast of  
Africa: And what if I had been  
Shipwreck'd there?

But God wonderfully sent the Ship  
in near enough to the Shore, that  
I have gotten out so many  
necessary things as will either  
supply my Wants, or enable me  
to supply my self even as long as  
I live.

(pp.49–50)

And from here it was not far to Crusoe as the archetypal imperialist or coloniser—‘to think that this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance, as compleatly as any Lord of a Mannor in *England*’ (p.73)—first imposing his will upon nature, then with Friday underfoot upon the handful of stragglers that come within his colony: ‘It isn’t about solitude. It’s the manual of the perfect English colonizer’ (Jean Psichari).<sup>36</sup> The making of the self involves the unmaking of the other.

In the now popular reading of *Robinson Crusoe* as an originary myth of Western colonisation, we witness a clear example of the way the social and historical conditions for the novel as a genre enter into and constitute Defoe's myth. The mutual implication of literary with colonial expansion in John Dunton's shallow analogising of trivial 'curiosities of literature' as *terrae incognitae* has become a common assumption of critical readings and critical revisions. For Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, for example, the novel is

*the aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study. The prototypical modern realistic novel is Robinson Crusoe, and certainly not accidentally it is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island.*<sup>37</sup>

## VII

Being interested in only one part of the homological network, however, Said does not elaborate on the relationship between the colonist's and the writer's restless search for the New Worlds of novelty and originality. Like Prospero on his island of Art in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Crusoe makes (*poesis*) and manufactures out of chaos. Not *ex nihilo* or out of airy nothing, however, for nothing will come of nothing. In the *myth* of Robinson Crusoe, the fort and furrows might be conjured by inspiration and industry out of untamed Nature in an unknown space (*terra incognita*), but for 'rummaging' Robinson Crusoe (p.38), the eponymous hero and voice of the *novel* by Daniel Defoe, there is always the wreck of a Ship bearing the remains of past lives and past modes or genres of living. Time and again, readers familiar with the story but new to the novel betray some surprise at how exhaustive and, as always, obsessive Crusoe's clearing of the wreck is:

I lay with all my Wealth about me very secure. ... I had lost no Time, nor abated no Dilligence to get everything out of her that

could be useful to me, and that indeed there was little left in her that I was able to bring away if I had had more time.

I now gave over any more Thoughts of the Ship, or of any thing out of her. (p.43)

Behind one who appeared the most autonomous, most self-made of individuals, there turns out to be a complex inheritance that only a fool would leave un plundered. So behind the myth of the novel as 'a renovation of literature, a return to origins',<sup>38</sup> there is the reality of a rich, negotiable literary influence.

The question of why *Robinson Crusoe*, whether known or known of, should be one of a select handful of the most influential texts in English takes us back to the set of values and gestures that constitute the myth of Crusoe, a character who spreads his wings, as it were, only as he goes to ground. So compelling are what Crusoe is and represents as to provoke both confirmation and a more spirited revisionary disconfirmation 300 years down a track still marked by his outsize footstep. To put it the other way around: so angry with the present and with the history and culture of the West is the chorus of denunciation of all that Crusoe stands for that it is hard to resist the thought that for Daniel Defoe, who shared a good deal of his character's unapologetic self-interest and arsenal of secularised Puritan values, the future was a familiar country where they would do things pretty much as he imagined.

#### Notes

- 1 The previous three essays in *Arts* on literary influence are 'Literary Influence: A Rule of Thumb?', *Arts* 17 (1994–5): 7–22; 'Eating Their Words: Literary Influence II', *Arts* 18 (1996): 43–67; 'Meaning and the Mock-Heroic: Literary Influence III', *Arts* 19 (1997): 36–66.
- 2 *Arts* 17, pp.9–10.
- 3 *Arts* 18, p.43.
- 4 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', in her *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966–1978*, London, 1980, pp.33–49, esp. p.35.
- 5 *Arts* 19, p.36.
- 6 *Arts*, 18, p.44. The Leavis reference is to *The Great Tradition: George Eliot; Henry James; Joseph Conrad* (1948), Harmondsworth, 1972, p.19.

- 7 The text of *Robinson Crusoe* that I use throughout, including for the page references in parentheses after quotations, is the Norton Critical Edition, ed. Michael Shinagel, 2nd edn, New York and London, 1994.
- 8 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1993, pp.xii–xiii.
- 9 See Stephen Coote, *The Penguin Short History of English Literature*, Harmondsworth, 1993, p.240.
- 10 Daniel Foe changed his surname to Defoe in the mid 1690s for what are assumed to be reasons of vanity and self-advancement. For an authoritative biography, see Paula A. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life*, Baltimore, 1989.
- 11 Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad* (1742), II, 147, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt, London, 1963, p.741. Not only was Defoe a late seventeenth-, early eighteenth-century entrepreneur, trying numerous businesses and even achieving the ultimate qualification of being a declared bankrupt in his hosiery business, having incurred the massive debt of £17,000—he also went into print extensively on economic and commercial issues, writing on banking, e.g., and credit in his *Essay on Projects*—which being a bankrupt he was, of course, eminently qualified to do! While Pope railed against the prevalence of a rational, secular philosophy and machine technology, Defoe with his training in mathematics and surveying was attempting various sophistications in his factories (he owned a brick kiln at one stage). To my knowledge, there are no editions of Defoe’s non-fictional writings readily available now that James T. Boulton’s anthology of excerpts, *Daniel Defoe*, London, 1976, has gone out of print.
- 12 In the words of the fictional editor’s Preface to the original edition, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Michael Shinagel, p.3.
- 13 Daniel Defoe, *Essay on Literature*, London, 1726, p.114.
- 14 John Dunton, as quoted in J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels*, New York, 1990, p.17.
- 15 So William Wordsworth on Defoe’s older contemporary Isaac Newton, *The Prelude* (1850), III, 63.
- 16 Interested readers might like to consult Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*, NY and London, 1986; Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*, Oxford, 1986; and Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction, 1660–1800*, London, 1989.
- 17 Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*, Cambridge, 1996, pp.141–192; Said, p.xiii.
- 18 ‘If any man was to ask me, what I would suppose to be a perfect stile or language, I would answer, that in which a man speaking to five hundred people, of all common and various capacities, Ideots or Lunaticks excepted, should be understood by them all, in the same manner with

- one another, and in the same sense in which the speaker intended to be understood, this would certainly be a most perfect stile', Letter III, 'Of the Trading Stile', *The Complete English Tradesman*, 2nd edn, London, 1727, p.26.
- 19 Hunter, p.197.
  - 20 David Daiches and Zev Barbu, 'The Rise of the Novel in England', in David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby, eds, *Literature and Western Civilization: The Modern World I*, London, 1975, p.463n.
  - 21 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Princeton, NJ, 1957, pp.136, 134.
  - 22 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, London and Henley, 1978, p.17.
  - 23 George Steiner, *Antigones*, Oxford, 1984, p.303.
  - 24 In 'Eating their Words: Literary Influence II', *Arts* 18, pp.49–50.
  - 25 Steiner, p.303.
  - 26 Frye, p.116.
  - 27 Steiner, p.236.
  - 28 Hermann Ullrich tried to stimulate a complete bibliographical record back in 1898 when he offered, by way of a first volume, *Robinson und Robinsonaden: Bibliographie, Geschichte; Kritik*, Teil I, Weimar, 1898—supplemented by his *Defoe's Robinson Crusoe: die Geschichte eines Weltbuches*, Leipzig, 1924—but no one has since attempted to complete the record. For the influence or afterlife of the novel/myth, see Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, University Park and London, 1990 and the collection of articles in *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses*, eds Lieve Spaas and Brian Stimpson, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and NY, 1996.
  - 29 Michael Seidel discusses this distinction—and the novel—in his *Robinson Crusoe: Island Myths and the Novel*, Boston, 1991.
  - 30 See above, p.84, note 19.
  - 31 Daiches and Barbu, p.465.
  - 32 Coleridge is quoted in Shinagel, pp.267–8.
  - 33 Hunter, p.136.
  - 34 'Of Solitude', in Shinagel, p.243–6, esp. p.244.
  - 35 As quoted in Green, p.29.
  - 36 Jean Psichari, *Le solitaire du Pacifique* (1922), as quoted in Green, p.168.
  - 37 Said, pp.xii–xiii.
  - 38 So Peter Conrad sums up the novel as a self-conscious literary historical phenomenon in his *Everyman History of English Literature*, London, 1985, p.330.