

Daniel Defoe

Defoe: dissenter, businessman,
“projector,” journalist, political agent,
satirist, novelist

A signature moment: Defoe in the Stocks



What is the status of “**wandering**” in *RC*?
How might you compare wandering in *TPP*?

Some definitions

- Wandering
- Error
- “rambling thoughts” (47)
- “leaving my father’s house” (47)
- “repenting Prodigal” (52)
 - See also p. 75.
 - A father’s advice (47-50): “the middle State” or “the upper Station of Low Life”

But wandering GENERATES THE FICTION
and sets the stage for the development of a self.

- Which ought a son to do: go to sea or comply with the father's direction?
- CLAIM: The explicit moral warnings work against the creation of fiction. If the son stays home and follows all the rules
- Let's complicate the question with Marx's suggestion—that RC soon begins to behave like a "true-born Briton" (383).

Close analysis

- But if I can express at this distance . . . (55)
- Dead heart and horror of mind . . . (56)
- Prodigal son (57); Jonah (57-8)
- Remembrance wore off 59
- Aspiration & ruin (60)
- He sets up for a "*Guiney* trader" (60)
- From merchant to slave (61); Master (61)
- Deliverance (63) Contrivance (64)
- "Nations of Negroes" (65)

Survival & the State of Nature

- The Moor (65)
- Particulars: "a good charge of Powder, and with two slugs" (69)
- Survival alone (85)

Marooned-man accounts

- Like other marooned-man accounts, RC appears to offer the possibility of discovering what life is like in the state of nature, as if these men's experience were accidental experiments.
- See accounts of Alexander Selkirk (4yrs, 4 months alone) (324, ff).
 - "a Man clothed in Goat-skins, who look'd wilder than the first Owners of them" (325) (1712).
 - Solitude and language: "he seem'd to speak his words by halves" (327).
 - "Necessity is the Mother of Invention" (329).

How does Defoe use isolation?

- Benefits of isolation
 - Relief from the principal problems of both the state of nature and civil life of any kind: desire & competition
 - I was remov'd from all the Wickedness of the World here. I had neither the Lust of the Flesh, the *Lust of the Eye*, or the *Pride of Life*. I had nothing to covet. . . . There were no Rivals. I had no Competitor. . . ." (155).
 - RC is a fantasy of resilience, competence, endurance--unimpeded self-development and acquisition.

Isolation allows Defoe to avoid precisely the problems figured in Hobbes's "state of nature"

- In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (Chapter XIII).
- RC builds civilization in solitude.

RC builds civilization in solitude & disrupts
the cultural elevation of head over hand.

"April 22.—tho' I had a Grindstone, I could not turn it
and grind my Tools too, this cost me as much Thought
as a Statesman would have bestow'd upon a grand Point
of Politics, or a Judge upon the Life and Death of a
Man. At length I contriv'd a Wheel with a String, to
turn it with my Foot, that I might have both my Hands
at Liberty. . . ." (116).

- His hands are not the low partners to his mind: the manual event is the significant event.
- Two cultural parallels for re-evaluation of the labor of hands.
- RC might say, "I labor; therefore I am."

Providence

- The miracle of the grain: 112
 - Maybe not a miracle
- Two explanatory systems
- Deliverance:
