An avid reader of voyage narratives, Daniel Defoe nevertheless had sharp criticism for them. In *A New Voyage round the World* (1725), his own foray into the genre, he complains that “a seaman, when he comes to the press, is pretty much out of his element, and a very good sailor may make but a very indifferent author.” More specifically, Defoe stresses the reluctance of these would-be authors to write about anything beyond workaday facts. I quote the passage at length:

> It is to be observ’d, of the several Navigators whose Voyages round the World have been publish’d, that few, if any of them, have diverted us with that Variety which a Circle of that Length must needs offer. We have very little account of their Landings, their Diversions, the Accidents which happen’d to them, or to others by their Means. The Stories of their Engagements, when they have had any Scuffle either with Natives or *European* enemies, are told superficially and by Halves; the Storms and Difficulties at Sea or on Shore have no where a full Relation, and all the rest of their Accounts are generally fill’d up with Directions for Sailors coming that way, the Bearings of the Land, the Depth of the Channels, Entrances, and Barrs, at several Ports, Anchorage in the Bays, and Creeks, and the like Things, useful enough for Seamen going

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thither again and how few are they? but not at all to the Purpose when we come expecting to find a History of the Voyage.

Another sort of these Writers have given us their long Journals, tedious Accounts of their Log-work, how many Leagues they sail’d every Day; where they had the Winds, when it blew hard, and when softly; what Latitude in every Observation, what Meridian Distance, and what Variation of the Compass.

[These narratives] have little or nothing of Story in them, for the use of such Readers who never intend to go to Sea, and yet such readers may desire to hear how it has far’d with those that have, and how Affairs stand in those remote Parts of the World. (2-3)

Defoe points to a number of examples, including the popular Account of Several Late Voyages (1694), which chronicled the recent exploratory missions of John Wood and John Narborough. Finally, he claims to have improved on the genre, insisting that “no Person that sail’d on those Voyages, has thought fit to publish them after this manner” (4).

Defoe’s characterization of voyage narratives is accurate enough. Popular though they were, most of them are made up of terse daily logs relieved infrequently by some dramatic or wondrous event, usually recounted with the same taciturnity. The writers of these narratives tended to limit themselves to nautical and geographic facts that could be acquired by the senses and confirmed by multiple witnesses. No doubt, part of the reason was self-consciousness, or the unwillingness to overstep the bounds of an unlettered seaman. The reticent tone owes much, as
well, to the evolving standards of what we now think of as objectivity, a mandate for scrupulous attention to external particulars. This desideratum applied especially to the testimony of travelers, who functioned as proxy witnesses for natural historians at home. Compared to novels, and imaginative literature more generally, voyage narratives register a greater burden of proof, and perhaps this stands to reason in the midst of what Barbara J. Shapiro calls “a culture of fact.” Actual voyagers insisted vehemently—even competitively—on their honesty, and although novelists mimicked this move, voyagers went further, strenuously rejecting all those embellishments that Defoe championed. Even so, numerous detractors voiced their skepticism. George Stubbe wondered, “[W]hat certainty shall we have of Narratives picked up from negligent, or un-accurate Merchants and Seamen?” Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, scoffed that travel accounts were “in our present Days, what Books of Chivalry were, in our Forefathers.” In response, travelers developed an array of rhetorical techniques to present themselves as trustworthy, and they were guided in this endeavor by the Royal Society’s instructions for travelers, which set forth topics for description, drawn from natural history, and restraints to ensure detachment. Already, the voyage narrative came with a host of methods for recording coordinates at sea and wind patterns, and many writers remarked on hardly anything else. Now, they added natural-historical descriptions,

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5 Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author* (1710), 178.
chiefly of plants, animals, and supposedly “natural” peoples, who were folded in as another feature of geography. The effect was to portray faraway places as virtual worlds, crowded with exotic detail and somehow emptied of authorial presence.

If voyage narratives were a new species of romance, as Shaftesbury had it, the romanticizing eye now turned outward toward the material world, rather than inward toward courtly ideals. Believing that natural history had been too long confined to the familiar, the Fellows of the Royal Society welcomed new information from and about the farthest corners of the world, yet this radical induction opened them to charges of credulity and wonder-mongering, and the pages of *The Philosophical Transactions* (1665--), their unofficial publication, are filled with stories about monstrous births and preternatural stones, stories that any modern reader would find unbelievable, and probably humorous. Travelers, or “travel liars,” helped to fan these flames with their descriptions of strange new lands. They played a major role, moreover, in the delusionary thinking behind the Scots Darien Scheme and the South Sea Bubble, both notorious disasters. The point is that empiricism came with illusions of its own, that fictions, like facts, were usually moored in external referents.

Given his criticism of the voyage narrative, we might expect from Defoe something like *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or *Captain Singleton* (1720), yet the New

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Voyage is actually closer to William Dampier’s factual narrative of the same title (1697). One needs an expansive definition of the novel to account for the variety of prose fiction in the early eighteenth century, when “novel” referred primarily to short tales of romance and intrigue, and I follow Margaret Anne Doody in applying the term as loosely as possible.\(^9\) Still, the classification seems unsuited to Defoe’s text, which is after all presented as a voyage narrative and which dutifully follows the established formula, in spite of his claims to the contrary. If there is more exposition of events, more story, the narrative is utterly bereft of that interiority that made Defoe’s other novels so groundbreaking, indeed so novel. We learn almost nothing about the narrator/captain, not even his name, and the singular “I” is often replaced with the collective “we,” or else elided altogether with the third person. The actions of the crew, moreover, are episodic even by eighteenth-century standards, determined primarily by the shifting circumstances of geography, which are themselves described, or imagined, in great detail.

The question, then, is why Defoe deviates so little from a form he so roundly criticized. One reason, surely, is that he wanted his narrative to be judged on the same basis as Dampier’s, which is to say he wanted it to be accepted as factual and to be granted all the attendant relevance and significance. Another reason, stemming from the first, is that the voyage narrative could more effectively execute

Defoe’s intention to promote the exploration and exploitation of newfound lands. The genre’s objective mode of description adroitly facilitated objectification, turning the raw experience of travel into an inventory of resources and commodities. Further, its self-effacing observer, the posture Dampier assumes, seemed to clear a path between readers at home and the objects of description, bringing these objects within reach of potential investors and thus readying them for the expanding and accelerating circuit of nascent global commerce. As propaganda goes, there were no heroes of empire, to borrow the title of a recent book, or at least there were no heroic conquerors in the mold of the Spanish conquistadors. Heroes got in the way at a time when England’s, then Britain’s, rhetoric of imperialism depended more on patient commerce and less on bold conquest. The hero of Defoe’s *New Voyage*, if we can call him a hero, is about as invisible as Dampier is in his narrative, presumably so that readers could better see and give credence to the commercial opportunities laid out before them. The real hero, ostensibly, is the reader, who might fill the void and do more than voyagers appeared to do themselves.

I begin with Defoe because he raises a number of issues central to this book, in particular the relationship between genre and geography, which I will focus on

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12 James Frohock, *Heroes of Empire: the British Imperial Protagonist In America, 1596-1764* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004). Frohock’s thesis is more nuanced than the above statement might suggest. He explains, "The injustice of conquest [by the Spanish] is continually evoked by a vast array of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century apologists who seek to authorize British imperialism in competing terms. Conquest, paradoxically, is one of the most important British colonial rhetorics because it so often becomes the terminus a quo for these new rhetorics; the discourse of conquest is foundational and transmits its discursive features even as it is denied legitimacy" (26). In my reading, natural history provided a more important source for imperial rhetoric.
here. His *New Voyage*, referred to by some as a novel, is more of a generic anomaly, and that in a period already known for its generic instability. Similar to George Psalmanazar’s infamous *Description of Formosa* (1704), this fiction looks exactly like fact, employing many of the conventions of actual voyage narratives. As such, it will serve as something like an exception that proves the rule, if “rule” is not too strong a word. Straddling the categories of fact and fiction, Defoe’s *New Voyage* helps reveal the otherwise starker contrasts between voyage narratives and the novels that grew out of them.

The distinction bears directly on geographic representation, since each of these genres fostered and hindered certain kinds of description. As I will show, novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Captain Singleton* represent foreign geography in a very different way, simply because of their status as novels. Whatever Defoe wanted to do in the *New Voyage*, he inserted into *Crusoe* and *Singleton* subjective presences that offer a more confessional side of the experience of distant travel, subordinating geographic details to the idiosyncratic perception of them. In effect, the eponymous characters of these novels occupy enough of the frame to supplant readers and take possession of newfound lands themselves. Crusoe, of course, does so literally. Along with Defoe, many others writers, including Aphra Behn, Jonathan Swift, Penelope Aubin, and William Chetwood, revised the voyage narrative as the voyage of an individual, or individuals, and thus challenged the objective perspective on which the expansionist agenda relied. They did so by filling in the framework of bare description with genres such as spiritual autobiography, which

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at once augmented and contradicted it. In spatial terms, early novels put together concepts of space, or space understood scientifically, and impressions of place, place felt through experience, at once synthesizing them into a coherent whole and weighing them against one another. The imagined sense of place emerges from an enactment of new social possibilities that opposed not just science but also the commercial and imperial projects it abetted. Hence the commonness in the early novel of shipwrecked castaways who find all they need beyond the grasp of the rest of the world. The experiment usually ends in failure, however, for instance in the castaway's return home and subsequent relapse into the vices of greed and luxury. This defeat comes with a larger awareness of the moral implications of overseas commerce and imperialism. The novel, an institution in British culture, became an important venue for critiquing it, and in particular for critiquing the creation of the so-called “First” British Empire.

The relationship between travel writing and the novel is usually described in terms of influence. Percy G. Adams has done more than anyone, uncovering countless lines of potential influence.\(^\text{15}\) John J. Richetti has demonstrated the prevalence in early eighteenth-century fiction of narratives based on the lives of pirates, sailors, and pilgrims.\(^\text{16}\) More recently, Michael McKeon has ascribed to travel writing a seminal role in raising epistemological issues that the novel would go on to scrutinize more self-consciously.\(^\text{17}\) It is beyond the scope of this chapter, let

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alone this book, to run through a comprehensive list of influences, but it will suffice to note four key points of contact. First, most readers of eighteenth-century novels know that fiction often announced itself as fact by imitating the generic markers and prefatory truth claims employed by actual travelers. Thus, Defoe introduces *Robinson Crusoe* as “a just History of Fact.” The importance of such “paratextual” cues is hard to overstate given that new genres poured from the presses and forced writers to explain and position their works for readers who had no idea what to expect. Next, and more concretely, novelists picked out particular facts about particular places, setting their distant adventures not in the allegorical landscape of romance but in concrete locations described by travelers and mapped by cartographers. To use the same example, Crusoe’s island has a real location and real coordinates, and this ontological status limited what was possible there to what was plausible at home. Further, novelists took suggestive but under-explained anecdotes, such as reports of castaways and captives. This includes Alexander Selkirk, whose story, recorded in Woodes Rogers’s *Cruising Voyage round the World* (1712), is widely regarded as a principal source for *Crusoe*. Finally, and very generally, novels were attuned to what can be called the outward orientation of travel writing; both operated from similar empirical perspectives that could linger patiently and carefully over minute physical details that would have been low or

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20 There are also examples in poetry, for instance Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798), derived from an incident in George Shelvocke’s *Voyage round the World by Way of the Great South Sea* (1726), and William Cowper’s “The Castaway” (1803), based on a brief passage in Richard Walter’s *A Voyage round the World by George Anson* (1748).
vulgar for writers of romance. The empirical mode of representation was ascendant enough to elicit self-consciousness on the part of writers who rejected it, so that imaginary voyages, such as *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), are less unempirical than anti-empirical, highly aware of their divergence from the representational norm.

Perhaps just as influential was the “contact zone” itself, secondhand or otherwise. According to Mikhal Bakhtin, multilingual border areas provide fertile ground for the sort of contestation of voices that he saw as one of the novel’s essential characteristics. “Where languages and cultures interanimated each other,” he writes, “language became something entirely different, its very nature changed: in place of a single, unitary sealed-off Ptolemaic world of language, there appeared the open Galilean world of many languages, mutually animating each other.” This linguistic relativity resulted in a corresponding generic relativity, or “a new and large multi-genred genre”: that is, the novel. More literally, Doody asserts, “The Novel [...] is a ‘foreign’ import—or rather, it is the product of combination, of contact between Southern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa.” By the beginning of the eighteenth century, I would add to this list the New World and especially the South Seas. Newly discovered places introduced new perspectives, which themselves helped generate new genres, not just the voyage narrative but also the novel.

21 Mary Louise Pratt coined this now common phrase and defines it in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7.
Distinguishing between fact and fiction would have been difficult, maybe impossible, for many readers. Our modern criteria for factual testimony was still gestating, its criteria only then coming into being. Beyond this, however, many novels resemble travel accounts so closely as to make the difference meaningless to those reading solely for entertainment. The point has been made again and again. McKeon, for one, claims that “the conventions of imaginary and ‘real’ voyages were the same.” Neil Rennie asserts that “the border between factual and fictional voyages can be easily crossed and can even move.” According to Jonathan Lamb, “Dampier’s and [George] Anson's journals [were] indistinguishable (in the opinion of many readers) from Gulliver’s.” The line between fact and fiction ran not at the edges of individual works but down their middles, splitting them into generic multiplicities and effectively fragmenting the “horizon of expectations.” In the words of Lennard J. Davis, the early eighteenth-century novel was a “factual fiction,” a form in which fiction coexisted with fact in something like an “undifferentiated matrix.” Because of the undecidability of its genre, the novel could compete for factual status and present an alternate version of the facts themselves. In other words, Swift and others did as much to extend an existing genre as to initiate a new one, so in order to read these novels as their first readers did, we must see fictions

27 Lamb, *Preserving the Self in the South Seas, 1680-1840* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 75.
in the vein of the facts they imitated, regarding them as no less engaged with world
and only offering a competing way of looking at it.

The line between fact and fiction was indeed crossable and moveable, but
McKeon and Lamb go too far, and I propose a flexible distinction based mainly on
formal qualities. The difference between traveling and not traveling is obvious
enough, but this simple fact seems to have engendered quite different compositional
strategies. For one thing, homebound novelists could afford to disregard the
demands of reliable testimony, and they did, portraying faraway places through
genres grounded in less empirical ways of knowing. Ian Watt's notion of “formal
realism” has helped conceal the persistence of romance and other such “unrealistic”
genres, yet if the eighteenth century saw “the rise of the novel” or at least the rise of
a new kind of novel, this new genre was by no means pure or purely realistic.30
Defoe himself admits that his goal in *Crusoe* is to “justify and honour the Wisdom of
Providence.”31 Never do we see in what I am calling novels the sort of self-
abnegating discipline of Dampier's *New Voyage*, or for that matter Defoe's *New
Voyage*. Instead, novelists aimed at truth beyond the visible, metaphysical truth.
Shaftesbury describes the opposition succinctly in his criticism of what McKeon
labels “naïve empiricism”: “Facts unably related, tho with the greatest Sincerity, and
good Faith, may prove the worst sort of Deceit: And mere Lyes, judiciously
compos’d, can teach us the Truth of Things, beyond any other manner.”32 By
juxtaposing contrary epistemological modes, in the form of contrary genres, many

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novels of the period both adopted but then questioned and even subverted the objective manner of geographic representation promulgated by scientists and travelers. In doing so, they make good on Bakhtin’s assertion that novels create a field of competing genres, relativizing them in relation to one another and calling otherwise dominant genres into doubt: “The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accenting them.”

Voyage narratives employed a narrow set of conventions to advance a narrow set of interests. Novels, by contrast, with their generic heterogeneity, became a venue for saying anything and everything that one could not say in a voyage narrative.

The distinction is not perfect, and it breaks down when we move from the voyage narrative to other kinds of travel writing, such as captivity narratives or biographies of pirates. The English version of Mary Rowlandson’s famous work was entitled *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), yet the title of the New England edition reveals Rowlandson’s explicit religious objectives: *The Soveraignty and Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed*. Her purpose was to justify and honor the wisdom of providence, as Defoe might say. The *General History of the Pyrates* (1724) is still a source for historians, but its distance from first-hand testimony obviated precisely those standards that a voyage writer would have labored under. No one’s name was at stake, and even today its authorship is uncertain. Supposedly by one

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Captain Charles Johnson, the author was more probably Defoe or Nathaniel Mist, a London printer. Both genres allowed—even required—creative liberties for the sake of a particular subject, much as novels do.

Thus defined, novels could turn geography into a narrative, portraying it as an ongoing product of human activity, as the function of an individual’s choices and practices, not simply an anonymous, static, and incontestable body of knowledge. Whereas travelers stepped aside, novelists stepped forward, inserting surrogate subjectivities into the worlds that travelers had described almost exclusively with their eyes. The effect was to make opaque the transparent perspective of voyage narratives and to block the exchange between readers at home and opportunities abroad. Instead, novelists claimed this space as their own, imbuing it with metaphorical meanings and imagining new ways of life there. As Michel de Certeau puts it, “the novel [...] has become the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science.” Such practices are marginalized or even elided in scientific discourse, but the novel revives them and acts them out in the albeit lesser realm of fiction. The realm of science, by contrast, eliminates accidents and surprises, freezing places into mere present tense descriptions. Walking the city, for de Certeau, is a covert tactic for re-appropriating it, and telling a story is a parallel tactic for taking back space from science. Just as walkers make idiosyncratic routes through the rationally organized city, so novelists made their own routes through the space of voyage narratives and sea atlases. True, the events of a genre such as romance are not the practices of everyday life; in some ways, they are the opposite.

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Nevertheless, romance defines space and action reciprocally, using space as a proving ground for mettle and virtue while allowing it to bear the impress of heroes’ victories and defeats.

Early novels did more than personalize space; they put together and synthesized contrary modes of geographic representation, combining the space of romance, for instance, with that of voyage narratives. Henri Lefebvre would call this act of mediation a “spatial practice,” a practice that fills in the gap between “representations of space” and “representational spaces.” The former Lefebvre defines as “the space of scientists [who] identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.” The latter is “space as it is directly lived,” phenomenological space that has “an affective kernel or centre [and that] embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations.” Roughly speaking, we might think of the latter as “place.” Spatial practice permits “continuity and some degree of cohesion” between representations of space and representational spaces, enabling a “guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance.” It is a necessity and even a given of modern life, since most of us can reconcile a city map or a roadmap with our more impressionistic mental maps, and it is likewise a given among navigators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though we have no real window on this activity. Early novels restored this window, if hypothetically, showing how travelers might reconcile concepts and impressions of space in acts of

36 See Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.
37 Lefebvre, Production of Space, 33, 40.
self-location and purposive travel. I would add, however, that the spatial practices of early novels entailed not just mediation but also evaluation: most often, the tension does not melt away, and many novels, including *Robinson Crusoe*, function as test cases that assess competing modes of representation and ultimately privilege the space of the individual over the space of science. Propelled by some uncontrollable accident—a shipwreck, an abduction—numerous characters suddenly find themselves at or beyond the edges of the mapped world, whether in continental interiors or uncharted islands, and they lay claim to these spaces from alternate perspectives and for alternate purposes.

In the hands of novel writers, blank spaces on the map became sites to imagine new social arrangements purportedly outside the connective sphere of incipient global commerce. It is a fantasy of escape, articulated in a variety of scenarios: in the creation of pirate or maroon colonies; in the solitude of ascetic castaways; in assimilation within some utopian society. The desirability of, say, the castaway’s life inhered primarily in the absence of the corrupting effects of commercial society, which of course voyages and voyage narratives helped make possible. No doubt, the predicament came with fears of devolution into savagery, or anxiety about “self-preservation,” as Lamb has argued, yet in the minds of many it might also inspire spiritual purification. This is the idea behind Peter Longueville’s *The English Hermit* (1727), an early robinsonade that tells the story of a willing exile, who, when offered a trip home, replies, “was I to be made Emperor of the Universe, I would not be concern’d with the World again, nor would you require me,
did you know the Happiness I enjoy out of it.”38 Even the *Crusoe* trilogy, in its own conflicted way, criticizes cosmopolitanism and endorses a life of solitary simplicity. Usually, the attempt at extrication proves unfeasible against what then seemed like the momentum of history, and most novels express this failure with sad or even bitter resignation. Crusoe, after all, leaves his island behind, though he later regrets it. What I am talking about is a more specifically geographic version of the frustrated seekers and the modern sense of homelessness described by Georg Lukás in his *Theory of the Novel* (1916).39 These protagonists never find the nostalgic ideal they are looking for, or if they do, it ends up being vulnerable to modern realities that cut the roots between person and place and subject geography to abstract economic and political systems.

Undeniably, these are fantasies of escape, not blueprints for liberation. Later in life, Lukás wrote that his *Theory* was based on a “highly naïve and totally unfounded utopianism,” perhaps a good characterization of the novels I am interested in.40 What is more, these fantasies come with their own versions of imperialism or at least imposition, not least because they involve making homes on foreign soil. They may be counter-narratives, but they grow from the same stalk, and no matter how far Crusoe travels, he never seems too far from Europe, ideologically speaking. Often, there is an almost solipsistic deafness to outside perspectives,

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38 Longueville, *The English Hermit, or the Unparalleled and Surprizing Adventures of One Philip Quarll* (1727), 15.


40 Ibid., 20.
perhaps owing to that simple fact of traveling or not traveling.\textsuperscript{41} Nevertheless, utopianism was perhaps revolutionary enough in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when global capitalism was still taking shape.\textsuperscript{42} Moreover, for their earliness and popularity, indeed for their centrality to British culture, these novels constitute an important self-criticism of the economic and political ties formed in the early British Empire. They made a serious and significant contribution to contemporary debates about imperialism and the country’s position in the expanding world, though they have yet to receive their due.\textsuperscript{43}

There is an example of the plot I am describing, writ small, in Richard Steele’s \textit{Spectator} 11 (1711), where he tells his tale of Inkle and Yarico. The kernel comes from Richard Ligon’s \textit{True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados} (1657), where the anecdote is treated so briefly one wonders how it attracted any attention at all. Steele, however, was only the first in a long line of writers, including novelists, poets, and dramatists, to tell the story more imaginatively.\textsuperscript{44} He begins with precisely those questions about testimony that readers would have put to Ligon. Arietta, the storyteller, asserts that Petronius “invented” his Ephesian Matron and

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\item \textsuperscript{41} Such outside perspectives are the topic of Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s \textit{The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic} (New York: Verso, 2000), 143-73.
\item \textsuperscript{43} See David Armitage, \textit{The Ideological Origins of the British Empire} (New York: Routledge, 2000), 146-69. Armitage focuses mainly on intellectual history, strictly defined, and one of the criticisms is that he gives short shrift to voices of dissent. Clement Hawes has begun to supplement this deficiency in \textit{The Eighteenth Century and Global Critique} (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).
\item \textsuperscript{44} See the anthology of Inkle and Yarico retellings in \textit{English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World}, ed. Frank Felsenstein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
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calls Ligon an “honest Traveller,” exhorting her listeners, “let us take Facts from plain People, and from such as have not either Ambition or Capacity to embellish their Narrations with any Beauties of the Imagination.” Of course, this is before she does just that herself, giving Thomas Inkle his name and back story, adding numerous details about his romance with Yarico, and generally emphasizing those sentimental qualities that are only latent in Ligon’s account. Inkle, we are told, is “a perfect Master of Numbers” and is instilled with a “quick View of Loss and Advantage” (194). When attacked by Indians, he flees the scene, later to be saved by Yarico, a beautiful girl who “grew immediately enamoured of him, and consequently solicitous for his Preservation” (194). What follows is an idyllic, rather one-sided love story. She gives him shelter, and while feeding him delicious fruits, “she would sometimes play with his hair, and delight in the Opposition of its Colour, to that of her Fingers: Then open his Bosome, then laugh at him for covering it.” She brings him “the most beautiful Shells, Bugles and Bredes” and decks his cave out with “the spotted Skins of Beasts, and most Party-coloured Feathers of Fowls, which that World afforded” (194). At night, she brings him to “unfrequented Groves and Solitudes,” where he can “lye down in Safety, and sleep amidst the Falls of Waters, and Melody of Nightingales” (195). Inkle, for his part, promises silks and coaches, but when they escape to “English Territories,” he considers his lost time and promptly repays her affections by selling her and their unborn child to a Barbadian merchant (195). Thus, their romantic Arcadia, with all its sensuous allure, proves only an anachronistic impossibility. When Arietta is finished, Mr. Spectator departs

with tears in his eyes, which she takes as “greater Applause, than any Compliments I could make her” (195). This sentimental defeatism is the desired response, and probably the most radical one Steele was ready for. The purpose was to provide a counterpoint to the story of the Ephesian Matron, yet the tale provides a counterpoint to Ligon’s account, as well, adding to it tropes of romance that both supplement and challenge it. Early novels do much the same in their rewriting of voyage narratives.

This subtle interplay of influence and critique has yet to be recognized by historians of the novel, who often regard the genre merely as an instrument of imperialism. Perhaps this is because our scholarship on its connection with travel writing focuses mainly on the ways travelers influenced novelists and the similarities of these two categories of writing. In this context, it might seem only logical that novels would extend the rhetoric of travel writing. Some time ago, James Joyce expressed what might now be the consensus, that Robinson Crusoe was “the true prototype of the British colonist.”46 Following this argument, Edward Said has argued that the ideology of Robinson Crusoe became the generic norm and that “imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible [...] to read one without in some way dealing with the other.”47 More recent work has elaborated and qualified this position. Bruce McLeod, for instance, argues that early modern literature, including the novel, played a crucial part in imagining an

overseas geography serviceable to England’s imperial ambitions.  

Aravamudan claims that the novels of Behn, Defoe, and Swift contain “anticolonial potential” but that this potential is only actualized later, in “the reading situation, when we read with a view to uncovering, retroactively, the mechanisms of agency.” Most recently, Laura Doyle analyzes what she calls the novel’s “liberty plot,” which entails the liberation of a British protagonist and the consequent subjection of African slaves and Native Americans.

I would like to enter this conversation and show how early novels anticipate the postcolonial argument, however naïvely. Said relies on Watt for his definition of the novel, a definition that gives a founding role to philosophical empiricism and the rise of the middle class, in so many words the intellectual and economic pillars of British imperialism. Opening up the scope of what we think of as novels opens the scope of its ideological valences. It is of course fair to see extra-generic commonalities, but McLeod’s relative neglect of textual kinds obscures important differences in how they could represent foreign geography. The distinctions are not always clear, however, and what Aravamudan regards as mere potential I see roughly as the interpretive confusion required for novels to inhabit and deconstruct the forms of imperialism. Admittedly, the critique entailed not direct confrontation but rather escapism. In contrast to Doyle, then, I look at a different kind of liberty plot, one that is structured by genres that espouse liberty not within but from the

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world of modern global interrelationships. As for Joyce, it is certainly true that Defoe was an articulate spokesman for overseas expansion, yet the very nature of the genre he helped found, with its propensity for self-reflection, complicated and interfered with these intentions and led him in a different direction.

My methodology is derived mainly from recent work in genre studies, especially the pragmatic approach outlined and practiced by Ralph Cohen. In “The Law of Genre” (1980), Jacques Derrida brought us to something of an impasse, arguing that generic classifications are untenable, as much as they are simultaneously necessary as frames for interpretation. Genres, he claims, come with prescriptive rules, yet these are rules that individual works cannot but disobey. Derrida’s thesis, however, is no revelation, since on a practical level most writers and readers understand that generic rules are provisional and are rewritten by every successive text. As Cohen explains, Derrida “creates a Herculean dilemma where there is none,” taking “a road that leads not to a history of generic purposes in a study of individual texts, but to a study of individual texts as distinct from genre.” Even among Neoclassicists, genres were regarded as not static and pure but flexible, combinatory, and relational. They are thus not timeless essences but constantly unfolding processes, anchored as much in texts as contexts, and even the

most stable genre is likely to be understood differently at different moments in history. We debate the definition of the novel long after the first novels were written, and this debate has a history, with different definitions serving different critical purposes. In the eighteenth century, novel writers had their own definitions and purposes, and we would be remiss to ignore them. The ramifications are ideological, as well as formal. As Thomas O. Beebee points out, “not only are genre systems ideological, but their cusps provide a most advantageous place from which to observe the workings of ideology in literature.”

I will be following this suggestion in my analysis of the early novel and the generic imbrications within it.

I start, in Chapter One, with seventeenth-century natural history and its usefulness to England’s commercial and imperial expansion. More specifically, this chapter, entitled “Prescriptive Geography,” analyzes the geographic “pre-representations” implicit in the Royal Society’s instructions for travelers. These instructions aimed to “reform” travel writing by yoking it to early modern science, an efficient vehicle for not just reconnaissance but also propaganda. Modeled after Solomon’s House, in Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627), the Royal Society inherited its imperative for global fact-collection and approximated its division of intellectual labor. Throughout the early numbers of *The Philosophical Transactions*, the Society’s instructions supplemented Bacon’s vision with detailed methods that called for special instruments and careful descriptions within the rubric of prescribed categories. Even before travelers followed them, the instructions created an expectation that newly discovered lands were so much blank and malleable.

space, space to write something new on or to reshape into any more desirable form. Thus, they helped set up the “agriculturalist” justification for land expropriation, delineated most famously by John Locke’s theory of land rights in his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690).

These instructions were highly influential, and in Chapter Two, “Writing the Voyage,” I discuss their effect on contemporary travel writing, especially the voyage narratives of Dampier, Lionel Wafer, and Rogers. These voyagers, along with many others, put theory into practice, though in doing so they continued to rely on forms already at hand, for instance the buccaneering narrative or the captivity narrative. Indeed, the fusion of narrative and description was a vexed one, for although narrative is typically justified as means of authentication, this is also where travelers betray their perspectives as circumstantially and psychologically contingent. Still, for the most part, voyage writers covered this conflict over, segregating narrative and description with awkward and defensive apologies. Whatever their affiliation with buccaneers, they argued vigorously on behalf of national interests and rarely lost a chance to single out a favorable trading opportunity or propose a good location for a new settlement. Quite often, their voyages themselves were designed to facilitate such endeavors.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five serve as case studies with close-readings of novels that both adopt and undermine the model of geographic representation conceptualized by the Royal Society and actualized by voyage writers. In these chapters, I concentrate on Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1689), Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and *Captain Singleton*, and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, as well as Margaret
Cavendish’s *Blazing World* (1666), Henry Neville’s *Isle of Pines* (1668), Denis Veiras’s *History of the Sevarites* (1675), Aubin’s *The Noble Slaves* (1722), Chetwood’s *Captain Robert Boyle* (1726), and Longueville’s *English Hermit*, among others.

Collocating opposed geographic perspectives, these novels set their characters loose in the wide world of economic and political relations but then push them beyond it, past its network of contacts and exchanges to unknown peripheries. Here, they imagine their alternatives to contemporary life, which turn out to be as far away as they were far-fetched.

More specifically, Chapter Three, “Romantic Otherworlds,” focuses on *Oroonoko* and its reconfiguration of foreign geography through the genre of romance. Specifically, I look at the ways Behn rewrites George Warren’s *Impartial Description of Surinam* (1667). Borrowing from Warren his catalog of resources and wonders, she interposes herself as the narrator and Oroonoko and Imoinda as romantic heroes, thereby claiming the space of the colony as an aspect of their experiences. From this standpoint, Surinam becomes categorically different, a place with hardly believable natural and social laws. Behn’s narrator enters the narrative only hesitantly and fleetingly, calling attention to her presence and absence with apologies that actually emphasize her status as observer and recorder. She has much criticism for the colonial government and seems embodied as a character only when moving beyond its limits to Surinam’s interior, where she redefines herself in what can be described as a fashion show in the contact zone. Oroonoko, meanwhile, waxes romantically about fleeing with Imoinda, claiming they will find some location outside the world of great deeds and great men. Finally, he leads an
abortive revolt in hopes of establishing a maroon colony. At different levels of the colonial hierarchy, both characters seek escape, the narrator—less desperately—from the patriarchal culture of the English settlement, Oroonoko from slavery.

In the next chapter, “Islands of Salvation,” I concentrate on *Robinson Crusoe* and its utilization of the genre of spiritual autobiography to elaborate on Rogers’s account of Selkirk and the Island of Juan Fernández. Defoe moves the perspective from Rogers to Selkirk, or Crusoe, and expands on Rogers’s brief speculations about the physically and spiritually purifying effects of asceticism. At first a prison, Crusoe’s island soon becomes a sanctuary from the temptations of geographic and social mobility. The island is findable on the map, a real location, yet it is infused with allegorical meaning and animated by providential will, which in effect bend the environment around Crusoe’s consciousness. Eventually, when found, Crusoe turns his island into property, integrating it within the budding world economy and converting its resources into tradable goods. It becomes a colony, though his colony, bearing the stamp of the personality that dominates the narrative itself. At this point, the earlier bouts of self-flagellation and repentance may seem hollow, maybe even a justification for the self-interest that follows, but these feelings are repeated meaningfully in *The Farther Adventures* (1719), not to mention a number of other works that capitalized on the popularity of *Crusoe*.

Finally, “Utopia/Misanthropia,” my final chapter, takes up *Gulliver’s Travels*. Swift models his narrative loosely on Dampier’s *New Voyage* and the fictitious William Symson’s *New Voyage to the East-Indies* (1715). At the same time, he draws on the genre given its name by Thomas More (1516), and like Utopia,
Houyhnhnmmland is both a good place and no place at all. Unlike More’s utopia, however, Swift’s is perfect because of the perfection of its inhabitants, not their bureaucracy. In other words, Swift imagines a perfection that cannot be copied simply by shifting the balance of labor or resources. The limitations of geography are exaggerated by the discovery of incredible and sometimes-grotesque non-sequiturs, envisaged in Part IV as a society of talking horses ruled by reason alone, reason that is either coolly efficient or genocidally inflexible. Better than Crusoe himself, Gulliver hews to Crusoe’s ideals, embracing a simple life without luxury and refusing to go home. Go home he must, however, because of his natural failings, or the impossibility of shedding them. Ultimately, Gulliver has nowhere to go but his stable and the recesses of his imagination.

These novels, and others, anticipate the closing sentiment of Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759). The ingénue protagonist travels the world over, encountering horrors around every corner, before finally forsaking worldliness and settling down in a nondescript location outside Constantinople. Here, he and his companions take for themselves only the modest space necessary for a life-sustaining garden: “The little society entered into this laudable plan. Each began to exercise his talents. The little bit of earth became productive.” Invited to speculate on whether this is the best of all possible worlds, Candide declines and presses for simple, hard work: “we must cultivate our garden” (119).

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