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MOLL FLANDERS, COLONEL JACK, AND ROXANA.

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DEFOE'S ROGUE NOVELS AND THE PICARESQUE TRADITION:
A READING OF CAPTAIN SINGLETON, MOLL FLANDERS,
COLONEL JACK, AND ROXANA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
James Michael Siddens, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1974

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my adviser, Doctor A. E. Wallace Maurer, for his help in directing my dissertation.
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FIELD OF STUDY

Eighteenth-Century English Literature
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Introduction

Several recent critics of Defoe's rogue novels, seeking to align Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, and Roxana with the picaresque tradition, have seized upon incidental conventions and other features of plot which Defoe uses in common with the picaresque authors. The tendency has been to isolate such features and to locate in them the essence of the picaresque; Defoe, such critics say, is a picaresque author because his works also embody the conventions of picaresque fiction. Another tendency has been to identify the "formlessness" of the picaresque (a term that variously means episodic in structure or deficient in meaning) as its remarkable characteristic and to point to a similar quality in Defoe. Neither approach does justice either to the picaresque or to Defoe because neither gets at what makes the two orders of fiction unique and at the same time vastly different from each other: their respective attitudes toward experience and the formal expression of those attitudes in individual novels themselves.

Symptomatic of the impulse to look for "picaresqueness" in easily identifiable features is D. J. Dooley's observation that "Almost automatically we classify The History of Colonel Jacque, Moll Flanders, and Roxana as picaresque works. Defoe's peripatetic hero or heroine is usually en-
gaged in a series of adventures which take him through high society and low; he describes his exploits with gusto and frequently with some pride in his ability to outwit others; and if deception is succeeded by repentance, the same was true of Guzman de Alfarache.¹ Similarly, Stuart Miller includes Moll Flanders in The Picaresque Novel, remarking on two classes of features—those of plot and those of character—that make it picaresque: in the first class are the conventional "rhythm," the pervasiveness of "fortune," and the reliance on "accident" as a plot device; in the second are Moll's picaresque "origins," her "picaresque education," her ability to assume "protean form," and her capacity for "loneliness and love."² In Literature and the Delinquent, Alexander A. Parker finds "three elements in the subject matter [of Moll Flanders] that ally it closely with its predecessors." These turn out to be Moll's "disreputable origins," her "desire to be a gentlewoman," and her redemption by a "religious conversion."³ Finally, a recent dissertation proposes "an investigation of certain arbitrary elements of the picaresque tradition which Defoe included in Roxana" as a means of proving that "Roxana can be seen as the final development of Defoe's picaresque leanings."⁴

All four critics just surveyed find the essence of picaresque fiction in the incidents and conventions of its plot and characterization rather than in its fundamental attitudes toward experience, where I would say its essence re-
sides. Their impulse is harmful because it distracts us from what makes the picaresque genre unique. Furthermore, by calling Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, and Roxana picaresque because they incorporate "picaresque" incidents and conventions, such critics fail to define precisely Defoe's relationship to the literature of roguery. Certainly one can go through Defoe's novels and find counterparts to the standard furniture of the picaresque—the audacious crimes, the harsh punishment, the variety of human types; Defoe uses them all at one time or another. Indeed, it would be surprising if he did not, since he chose to write about the criminal underworld of the eighteenth century, where we know such elements were commonplace. We must remember, incidentally, that many of the same features are present in romances, adventure stories, travel narratives, and criminal autobiographies—all of which influenced Defoe to some degree—as well as in picaresque novels. The critical question is whether these "picaresque" elements mean the same in Defoe as they do in the picaresque novel. I will argue that, to the extent that we can infer Defoe's attitudes from his fiction, they do not.

The other impulse, to condemn picaresque fiction as formless and meaningless—and, implicitly or overtly, to condemn Defoe as well—receives classic expression in Arnold Kettle's Introduction to the English Novel: "what places Defoe in the picaresque tradition," says Kettle, "is . . .
his lack of pattern." Like Defoe's works, according to Kettle, such picaresque classics as Lazarillo de Tormes, The Rogue, and The Unfortunate Traveller "are without pattern." Kettle does, it is true, later qualify and modify his views on Moll Flanders, but he does not, so far as I can tell, significantly alter his remarks on the picaresque tradition. Like Kettle, Shiv K. Kumar (in his introduction to the Oxford English Novels edition of Captain Singleton) sees in Captain Bob "something of a picaro," but unlike Kettle he rejects the application of the picaresque to the criticism of Defoe in favor of "a more rewarding approach to the understanding" of the novel, namely "an assessment of Defoe's concern with moral, ethical, and religious values." We do an injustice to the picaresque tradition as well as to Defoe when we say, as Kettle does, that Defoe's works are picaresque because they lack pattern. By the same token, we ignore the clearly defined meaning of the picaresque when we imply, as Kumar does, that the picaresque has no bearing upon "Defoe's concern with moral, ethical, and religious values." For one thing, the picaresque novel is demonstrably not "without pattern"; to argue that it is so is to ignore its carefully controlled attitude toward experience, usually sinful experience, which gives form to an otherwise diverse subject matter. For another, while it may be true that Defoe does not "formulate [his] sense of life in generalized terms," it is not necessarily true that he inherited the
practice from the picaresque writers. It is far more likely a result of his peculiar way of looking at the lives of the characters he presents, whose stories share many of the surface details but few of the basic impulses of their picaresque forerunners. Finally, Defoe was no more concerned with "moral, ethical, and religious values" than Alemán, Quevedo, Grimmelshausen, or the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

Whether one sees the picaresque novel as a loose amalgam of "picaresque" conventions or as a patternless variety of narrative, then, one denies with equal injustice its formal discipline. In either case, the tendency is to fail to see picaresque fiction as it really is and therefore to preclude the ability to make useful comparisons between it and Defoe's novels. The purpose of the present study, in the face of recent critical distortions both of the nature of the picaresque and of Defoe's claims as a picaresque author, is twofold: first, by closely examining representative examples of picaresque fiction I hope to establish what is essential to the genre; second, on the basis of such conclusions I will define Defoe's relationship to the picaresque tradition with greater precision than is usually done.

It is clearly necessary to begin with a discussion of picaresque theory and practice as inferred from the novels themselves. I shall demonstrate that a too-simple equation of picaresque convention and picaresque meaning prevents a
genuine understanding of how convention operates in the picaresque novel. This dangerous tendency makes itself felt most strongly in an article by George S. Rousseau on Smollett, in which Rousseau attacks "the erroneous belief that 'picaresque' is a term describing the form of a prose work." He goes on to say that "the term [picaresque] describes and always has described the material or content aspect." Perhaps that is so, but accepted practice does not justify what is basically a misunderstanding. Surely no one would deny the importance of the "material or content aspect" of picaresque fiction, but I would suggest that is only as such material is given shape, as it is given distinctive pattern, by the forming consciousness of the artist that it becomes genuinely picaresque. I use "form" in the sense defined by Robert Alan Donovan in The Shaping Vision: Imagination in the English Novel from Defoe to Dickens: "the objective result in the work itself, of the author's way of looking at experience." In the picaresque, that way of looking at experience has an observable pattern that is orthodoxy Christian and intensely moral.

The picaresque writers developed a narrative technique designed to express this characteristic view of life and, as I shall show, they depended heavily upon irony and other devices of indirection in communicating it. Crucial to the picaresque view of life is a code of justice that is uncompromising in the extreme, allowing little ambiguity in the
judgment of human behavior. The picaresque deals in absolute right and wrong. Although we always find in the picaresque novel a first-person narrator telling his own story and exercising the speaker's prerogative to palliate his own sins, we never mistake the narrator's self-serving excuses for authorial apology. Lazaro (in Lazarillo de Tormes) and Guzmán (in Guzmán de Alfarache), that is to say, may be blind to their own moral culpability, and they may try to disguise it to us, but there is clearly a superior moral presence in each novel that is more objective than they. That moral presence is revealed in part through a technique of pervasive and sustained irony.

The theory and practice of the picaresque once established empirically by an examination of the documents (the novels) in which it is expressed, we can proceed to discuss Defoe in the light of such ideas. My argument—and an analysis of Defoe's narrative technique and fictive vision bears it out—is that, while he uses in his fiction many picaresque conventions and incidents (or, more accurately, arrives at them independently), he makes something very different of them from what Alemán, Quevedo, and the anonymous author of Lazarillo de Tormes made of similar material. Furthermore, Defoe's identification with the lives of his heroes and heroines was virtually complete: his authorial stance is one of almost direct participation in, rather than aloof, ironic judgment of, the sins and crimes that make up the experiences
of Jack and Moll. In this respect he differs significantly from the picaresque writers, for whom implied judgment mediated between author and narrator-hero.

Both Ian Watt and Mark Schorer emphasize this same element of authorial identification in Defoe, but only Watt uses it as a link between Defoe and the picaresque. And Watt draws inferences from that link which I cannot accept. According to Watt, Defoe's closeness to the material in his narratives (chiefly Moll Flanders) prompted a more realistic, and thus less comic, treatment of his heroine's activities than was true of the picaresque authors. "Some of Moll Flanders's actions may be very similar to those of the picaro," writes Watt in The Rise of the Novel, "but the feeling evoked by them is of a much more complete sympathy and identification: author and reader alike cannot but take her and her problems much more seriously." Watt's tacit equation of comedy and the picaresque as less-than-realistic modes deserves some examination, especially since it depends upon an observation like the following: "the picaro enjoys that charmed immuni-
ty from the deeper stings of pain and death which is accorded
to all those fortunate enough to inhabit the world of comedy,
whereas it is the essence of Defoe's fictional world that its
pains, like its pleasures, are as solid as those of the real
world." Only on the most local of levels, the level of
the individual episode, does the picaresque resemble comedy,
and therefore differ from Defoe's fiction. We do, I suppose,
laugh more frequently at Guzmán's or Lazaro's exploits than at Moll's. In overall impulse, however, there is nothing in the picaresque vision of life and experience that is genuinely comic. In fastening upon the picaro's "charmed immunity from the deeper stings of pain and death which is accorded to all those fortunate enough to inhabit the world of comedy," Watt stresses an important psychological restriction of comedy: comedy must work toward accommodation, rather than exclusion, of villainous elements. Comedy, that is, would not be comedy if the villain were too severely punished or killed off. The trouble with applying this truth to the picaresque is a formal one: in the picaresque the picaro is both hero and villain. It is, as Watt suggests, unthinkable that the picaro should disappear from the story, either by extreme punishment or death, but not because his doing so would violate some comic principle (as Watt implies). Instead, it would destroy the experiential center of the novel by removing the hero-narrator.

I also challenge Watt's view that a "charmed immunity" exists in picaresque fiction at all or that it constitutes grounds for a contrast between the picaresque and Defoe. The picaro, it is true, does manage to stay alive through a rather devastating series of adventures, but he is hardly unscathed by his brushes with sin and other wrongdoing. If we are to compare, say, Moll Flanders and Guzmán de Alfarache on this point, we would have to say that Guzmán suffers more,
instead of less, than Defoe's heroine. Neither character, of course, succumbs; Moll actually gets off far more easily than Guzmán does. Importantly, in view of Watt's argument, Guzmán's punishment is of a sort similar to Moll's: he does a stint in the galleys as a convicted criminal, from which he emerges with greater spiritual difficulty than she does from her sentence of transportation (softened, interestingly, from one of execution). So if the endurance of great pain is a test of realism, Guzman is more realistic than Moll.

There is more to realism, of course, than the presence of hardship. Watt himself in the same study precisely defines Defoe's technique of "formal realism" as "the narrative embodiment of a premise . . . that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience." Defoe's realism is in fact what distinguishes his work from the picaresque, but only in the restricted sense specified by Watt in his discussion of "formal realism." In the older sense of realism as anti-romance, characterized by "the flaying fingernails and stones that shatter teeth," the picaresque offers as "realistic a view of human life as Defoe does.

The formal implications of Defoe's technique of realism are profound for his relationship to the picaresque. Defoe's wholesale assent to the "premise . . . that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience" explains, among other things, why, although he paid close attention to the minutiae of daily existence and although he urged the
need for piety and repentance in every novel, he failed (in Kettle's words) to "formulate [his] sense of life in generalized terms." Watt shows that "formal realism is only a mode of presentation, and it is therefore ethically neutral: all Defoe's novels are also ethically neutral because they make formal realism an end rather than a means, subordinating any coherent ulterior significance to the illusion that the text represents the authentic lucubrations of an historical person." Watt's argument also suggests the real grounds for distinguishing between Defoe's novels and the picaresque (although Watt does not himself draw the contrast): it is because Defoe allowed "formal realism" an unpicaresque free rein in his novels and not because he depicted a harsher reality for his heroes than was the case in the picaresque, that his novels strike us as marked departures from picaresque practice. In the picaresque we find just the kind of "coherent significance" that Watt misses in Defoe. As a result, a stronger sense of conscious design along religious lines emerges from the picaresque novel than from Defoe's works.

The matter of Defoe's claims as a conscious artist interests both Watt and Schorer. Both critics suggest that Defoe lacked the technique necessary to focus, perhaps through irony, on the issues implied in his fiction. Both critics, in other words, use the inordinate degree of "sympathy and identification" each finds in the novels to explain Defoe's inability or unwillingness to systematize the meanings latent
in his narratives. In remarks that have become a storm-center of recent controversy, Watt says, "there is certainly nothing in Moll Flanders which clearly indicates that Defoe sees the story differently from his heroine." And Schorer feels that Defoe "had no adequate resources of technique to separate himself from his material, thereby to discover and to define the meanings of his material"; consequently, Moll Flanders is "not the chronicle of a disreputable female, but the true allegory of an impoverished soul, the author's." Because Defoe depicts in Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack a disturbing moral confusion and because he gives no formal signals that he is aware of such confusion and that he intends to expose it, Defoe unwittingly reveals, such readings imply, that the confusion was his own. He shared too many of the impulses and motives of those rogues to criticize them adequately, and even if he did disapprove of their sins he lacked the technique to objectify his judgment of them.

Several recent critics, led by Maximillian E. Novak, have taken Watt and Schorer to task for their stand, insisting that if viewed properly, Defoe's technique was in fact consciously ironic. Such a position, if it is to be argued convincingly, must be defended by a demonstration that what appears to be unconscious revelation by Defoe of his own values in Moll Flanders (and by implication in the other novels) is instead subtle authorial condemnation by exposure of values he did not share. To this end, Novak distinguishes
two levels of morality in the novel, which he calls standard Christian morality, with charity as the highest virtue, and natural law, with survival as the highest good ("self-love, self-interest, self-defense"). Defoe understood and sympathized with the claims of both, according to Novak, and he saw human life as a struggle for supremacy between them. This double attitude accounts for Defoe's apparent sympathy with Moll and the others when they find themselves in genuine peril; at the same time, however, Defoe dissociates himself from them when they appeal to natural law in defense of unjustified wrongdoing. Defoe uses irony to signal the difference. I must say that I see no such clear distinction between justified and unjustified sin in Moll Flanders or in any of the other books. It seems to me instead that Moll adopts a uniformly self-exculpatory tone, simultaneously upbraiding herself on religious grounds and excusing herself on so-called natural grounds. I fail to see how we are to know when to take Moll's commentary as accurate statement of fact and when to discredit it as the self-deception of a hardened sinner caught in the act. Novak's reading ultimately rests on observations like the following: "We cannot know [Moll's] tone of voice, but Defoe will vary his style to suggest sincerity or sophistic rationalization."¹⁸ I find this approach over-subtle and not borne out by the unsystematic nature of Moll's narrative.

Another critic concedes a certain amount of moral con-
fusion in *Moll Flanders* but argues that it is part of Defoe's
design: "[Moll] is ingratiating and exculpating herself by
wandering into a thoroughly disarming moral muddle. And it
seems to me that Defoe was not only aware of this muddle,
but that he in fact planned and executed it . . . ." Unlike
Novak, Howard Koonce would not claim for Defoe complete ar-
tistic control of his ironic mode: "though we can be sure
that Defoe was aware of and delighted with Moll's muddle,
we can have no confidence that he was in full command of its
implications to us."19 Koonce's position is more tenable
than Novak's, but it is still compromised by a determination
to see order in the novel because one wishes it to be there.

Defoe's novels are in fact not without order, despite
the fact that they do not create the kind of subtle ironic
tissue of meaning familiar to readers of Fielding and Austen
or even the sustained ironic detachment of some picaresque
novels.20 Moll's narrative, for example, has a kind of uni-
ty because it records from a consistent point of view the
experiences of a remarkably consistent, if shockingly un-
principled, human being. Everything Moll does strikes one
as true to her character as it is presented, even her "mud-
dled" thinking, the naturalness of which one applauds even
while condemning its moral implications. In this sense,
then, the novel is far from being formless: Defoe's vision
was clearly adequate for holding the many episodes in Moll's
career together on the level of narrative personality. Be-
yond that, when Koonce and Novak say that Defoe created Moll intentionally as a narrative presence capable of revealing ironically the flaws in her character that she does not herself suspect, I must dissent. As I will demonstrate in my subsequent analyses of the individual novels, the evidence simply does not support so ingenious a reading. Moll and her creator occasionally seem to be exceedingly devious in their use of language, and they often seem to imply more than they say. The difficulty is to discern anything like a pattern to such linguistic features, to detect a system in the welter of verbal detail.

In Defoe & Casuistry, George A. Starr offers a complementary way of looking at the moral ambiguity in Defoe's novels. By examining Defoe's prose tracts as well as his fiction, Starr demonstrates that Defoe surely knew the tradition of religious casuistry and that he reveals in his fiction many of its characteristic attitudes and methods. Specifically, Defoe "is aware that life is infinitely various, that every new situation poses new problems, and that these problems must be dealt with on their own terms." He tended to reject moral or religious absolutes and to substitute a "casuistical emphasis on intention and qualifying circumstances," to emphasize the motives, that is, rather than the hard facts of behavior. Starr's ideas are particularly relevant to the present study because they suggest one reason why Defoe could not have adopted an ironic stance as
claimed by Novak and others. Irony of the sort these critics prize can function only in an atmosphere of religious or moral absolutism. In other words, only when standards of behavior or belief can be agreed upon and taken for granted can their violation be implied rather than stated overtly. Defoe, with his casuistical outlook, ultimately accepted no norms to imply a deviation from, or at least he was divided in his allegiance to the norms of Puritanism, which is much the same thing.

By implication, Starr's arguments also suggest grounds for distinguishing between Defoe and the picaresque, despite similarities of form and substance between them. Defoe's use of casuistry, as I shall show, accounts for features in his work formerly believed to be picaresque: the exploration of sin, the element of self-apology, and the episodic structure. While there is precedent for each in the picaresque, Defoe's handling of them is unique and pervasively informed by casuistical technique. At the same time, his divergence from picaresque practice was practically assured by his use of casuistical method. Whereas Defoe urges a casuistical interpretation of the sinful behavior he depicts, the picaresque writers lean more toward final and decisive moral judgment. The picaresque moral universe of Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzmán de Alfarache, and La Vida del Buscón is an uncompromising place where the terms of human behavior are not negotiable, as they often are in Defoe. Given such sur-
roundings, we are hardly surprised that irony is an important, though not the only, way of meaning: because the picaresque writer could assume a community of moral values understood, if not necessarily shared, by his readers, he could present violations of norms without always commenting upon them overtly. Since Defoe lacked such a community, his narrative technique could not develop along picaresque lines.

In the chapters that follow, I will explore the grounds for Defoe's resemblance to the picaresque, but I will demonstrate that the resemblance is apparent, not real. In Chapter I, I will begin by summarizing the chief conventions of the picaresque novel, with a view to showing their function in the picaresque way of meaning. I will need to look closely at several major examples of the genre to suggest both the variety of expression, convention, and experience, and the uniformity of meaning. The body of picaresque fiction is not large. As the label suggests, (picaro, rogue), the tradition is of Spanish origin, usually including a group of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works of Spanish fiction in recognition of their most remarkable narrative device, a picaroon or rogue-like anti-hero. Generally agreed to be the first such book, the anonymous Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) contains in its short length most of the features usually thought to be essential to the genre, along with many that are merely incidental and later became conventionalized. Of almost equal pedigree with Lazarillo we have
Mateo Aleman's Guzmán de Alfarache (1599) and Francisco Quevedo's La Vida del Buscón (1626), works which, while retaining the characteristic traits that make Lazarillo a picaresque novel, greatly expand upon the form's possibilities as a vehicle for satire and social comment. From these three seminal works, all exhibiting the picaresque attitude toward experience as I define it, the classification opens out to take in several other Spanish novels, as well as other later European imitations and independent works about rogues. By no means all the works that have been called picaresque transmit the picaresque vision in anything like its original Spanish intensity. The primary focus of my discussion will be on the Spanish prototypes, with references to other pieces as they illuminate Defoe's practice.

Chapters II, III, IV, and V will be devoted, respectively, to individual analyses of Defoe's novels regularly mentioned in discussions of picaresque fiction, Captain Singleton (1720), Moll Flanders (1722), Colonel Jack (1722), and Roxana (1724). The order is chronological by date of publication, an arrangement chosen more for convenience than to suggest any development or progress along picaresque lines. Since I regard Defoe's kinship with the picaresque tradition as largely coincidental, I do not see his art moving toward, or away from, the genre in an orderly progression. It may be true, as Anne K. Kaler says, that "Roxana [Defoe's last novel] possesses more picaresque elements than Defoe's other
novels," but I will insist that that fact does not make it any more "picaresque" than the other novels are. The picaresque tradition, to repeat, is not an amalgam of "picaresque elements" but a peculiarly moral attitude toward rogue-like behavior. In a curious way, *Roxana* comes closer to embodying such an attitude than, say, *Moll Flanders*, but not for reasons that support Kaler's judgment that "*Roxana* can be seen as the final development of Defoe's picaresque leanings." The phrase "picaresque leanings" implies a conscious design for which I find no evidence in the text of *Roxana* or in any of the other novels.
Notes to Introduction


2 Stuart Miller, The Picaresque Novel (Cleveland: The Press of the Case Western Reserve University, 1967), passim.


8 Kettle, Introduction to the English Novel, 1, 26.


12 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Berkeley: University of California
Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 165. In his essay "The Theory of Myths," points out that "the blocking characters [of a comedy] are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated. Comedy often includes a scapegoat ritual of expulsion which gets rid of some irreconcilable character, but exposure and disgrace make for pathos, or even tragedy."


Watt, pp. 32, 117.

Watt, p. 122.

Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," p. 69.


There is considerable local or dramatic irony in the novels, as distinct from structural or pervasive irony. I consider this matter at length in Chapter III and elsewhere in the present study.


Ulrich Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach," PMLA, 89 (1974), 240-48, criticizes both Stuart Miller and Alexander Parker for being too narrow in placing limitations on the picaresque genre: "Neither Miller nor Parker accepts a concept of the picaresque in the wider sense . . . , thus leaving them with a genre comprised of very few specific works. Moreover, Miller excludes historical and social backgrounds, and Parker focuses on them so much that he leaves other important characteristics out" (248). For the purposes of the present study, nonetheless, we need a manageable body of works that have always been regarded as picaresque against which we can test Defoe's works. Miller and Parker offer just the context needed.

Alexander A. Parker, p. 6, prefers to call Lazarillo
the "precursor" of the picaresque novel rather than the "prototype," since Guzman de Alfarache "established the characteristics of form and content which Lazarillo had adumbrated."

Fredson Bowers, "Thomas Nashe and the Picaresque Novel," Humanistic Studies in Honor of John Calvin Metcalf (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1941), p. 19, observes that "the Spanish pícaro was a product of specific Spanish conditions which were largely unknown in England."

Kaler, pp. iii, 40.
Chapter I: Defoe and Picaresque Experience

Most definitions of the picaresque genre stress either the picaro's role as social-outcast, or his role as social-scourge, or both. Thus William Atkinson defines the picaresque novel as the "prose autobiography of one who rebels against all discipline and sense of obligation, by his astuteness passes through various classes of society, to their cost, and satirizes with pitiless but disinterested pen the evils from which they suffer." More recently, W. M. Frohock specifies, in an interview, that "for a novel to be picaresque, the hero himself has to be a picaro, that is a rogue, not a born criminal, but somebody who has to live by his wits, by thinking faster than the rest of the world does; he will steal, play tricks on people, do various things that we would probably call immoral, and his fortunes will go up and down." Similarly, George S. Rousseau identifies picaresque novels as "those prose works which, regardless of their form... contain a first person narrator, a picaro, whose social fluidity is marked, whose perspective towards himself and the external world is demonstrably oblique, and who haphazardly wanders through a variegated natural or mental landscape only to discover that his life is a game from which he ought to and finally does withdraw." And Paul-Gabriel Boucé sees the picaresque as "displaying the life, adven-
tures, experiences, and occasional thoughts thereon of low-born, usually hungry, and amoral characters in search of decent social integration.™ As far as they go, such definitions are not inaccurate. They do, however, emphasize the picaro's assertive function at the expense of his reflective function; they focus upon his external orientation, on the substance of his adventures rather than on the quality of the experiences he reports. As Frohock himself rightly remarks elsewhere, "the picaresque in its entirety . . . is a special way of feeling life." The picaro functions chiefly as a narrative device for conveying that "special way of feeling life."

One would not, however, undervalue the importance of the picaro in the picaresque novel. While it is true that in terms of its total impact the picaresque novel depends less upon so-called "picaresque" adventures than upon its characteristic attitudes toward such adventures, it is just as true that the picaro in practicing his ruses and cheats provides the substance for picaresque judgment. Consequently, one would not go as far as Ian Watt does in observing that "[the picaro] is not so much a complete individual personality whose actual life experiences are significant in themselves as a literary convention for the presentation of a variety of satiric observations and comic episodes."™ In saying what he does, Watt reduces picaresque literature to something less than fictional, to a form of writing primar-
ily critical in its aims and methods, rather than acknowledging it as the vicarious mode of experience that it is. At the same time, he is quite right in noting a kind of conscious design in the picaresque novel, to which even the hero-narrator is subordinated. Yet I would locate such design, not primarily in "satiric observations and comic episodes" but in a more generalized "special way of feeling life." The *picaro* encourages us to see life in a certain way, but we never become so caught up in the activities of Lazaro or Pablos, engaging as those are, that we fail to assess their meaning along predetermined moral lines. Defoe, I will show, rarely directs us to make a similar assessment. The *picaro* is clearly a flesh-and-blood embodiment of very fixed and crystallized ideas about life, although he is not hindered by that fact from acting in a free and spontaneous fashion.

With these cautions and distinctions in mind, we can focus on some of the peculiarly picaresque traits of the rogue, with a view later to pointing out contrasts between him and Defoe's characters. It is right that we should do so: although we cannot expect to find anything like complete picaresque meaning in the *picaro*'s overt actions, we can look for it in his actions combined with his narrative coloring of, and reflections upon, them. If the picaresque novel is not about the rogue in the way that *Moll Flanders* is about Moll, it is still true that, in Frohock's words,
"the picaro himself is very much the central datum of the [picaresque] novel." Anything that touches upon the picaro's moral being should interest the student of picaresque literature. We need to know the rogue in order to measure and weigh his responses, both directly and ironically reported, to the life we glimpse only through his agency.

The picaresque narrative technique turns out to be a good deal more subtle and sophisticated than it is generally given credit for being. Much that has always been regarded as pure sloppiness and inattention to form can be shown to have structural significance, once the complicated picaresque narrative situation is appreciated. Ronald Paulson's remarks aid us in cultivating just such an appreciation: "the fiction adopted by the picaresque novelist is usually that of a man recalling his misspent life .... The emphasis ... is not on his development but on the middle as middle—the series of relationships with masters as he moves up or down, backward or forward, in the world. The picaresque novelist most often stops with the middle, as his protagonist sails for a new life in South America [Pablos in La Vida del Buscón] or departs for a stint in the galleys [Guzmán in Guzmán de Alfarache]. This abrupt end allows for a sequel, but it also supports the illusion of formal realism, implying that life has no pat denouement. When there is an ending, it is an ironic one, like that of Lazarillo de Tormes (1554), where the picaro at last finds the security he has persist-
ently sought—in a life as husband of the local priest's whore." Paulson's reference to irony suggests one important form of picaresque narrative subtlety, and it underscores the need to recognize the picaro as reporter as well as the picaro as actor. Since the picaro conducts us through his world and since he invites us to respond to it as corrupt and sinful largely because it is hostile toward him, he is not wholly reliable. We need some kind of corrective to his necessarily distorted vision. If we read carefully Aleman, Quevedo, and the anonymous author of Lazarillo, we discover that the picaro's "worm's-eye-perspective" (Frohock's term) on society is not the only possible one. Because the picaro habitually makes a plausible case for his anti-social behavior on the grounds that society deserves no better, we must look in part to narrative devices of indirection for a more honest, objective analysis of both society and the picaro himself.

I would offer my observations on picaresque irony as a preliminary answer to Watt and others who see the main thrust of the genre as satirical and the picaro as a neutral satirical voice. One example will suffice, in anticipation of fuller analyses of individual picaresque novels to come later in this chapter. Lazarillo de Tormes presents a vision of widespread clerical corruption in sixteenth-century Spain. Several of Lazaro's masters are connected with the Church in some capacity, and all flagrantly abuse their positions. His
second master, for example, nearly starves him to death out of motives of parsimony, while justifying his cruelty as necessary clerical abstention. Lazaro notes his priest-master's inconsistency in gluttonizing whenever it can be done at someone else's expense, as at funeral suppers. And at the end of the novel a lecherous old "archpriest" retains Lazaro's wife as his whore, while denying to Lazaro that he does so. In the first instance, Lazaro condemns his master's conduct; in the second, he pretends not to notice it. In either case, we form a negative opinion of the priesthood; since no admirable examples of the clergy exist to offset the disgraceful ones, we tend to generalize from the sample Lazaro gives us that all priests are inhuman and sexually debased. The facts of the story would seem to invite such a conclusion. Yet when we take into account Lazaro's own moral position, we begin to question whether he is competent to judge. We suspect that his report is at least partially tainted by a desire to make himself look less degenerate by apportioning some of the blame to a society (in the form of the Church) that is as disgraceful as he. The Church still comes off looking bad because it harbors the misfits of Lazaro's acquaintance, but its corruption is palliated somewhat by our recognition of Lazaro's own unreliability as a judge.

Remembering the ironic element in picaresque narration, then, we must examine some further characteristics of the picaro. While there have been efforts to correct the old
view that the **picaro** is, as Lester Beberfall puts it, "rotten
to the core, completely devoid of any human decency," the
fact of his appalling cruelty and ruthlessness remains. It
must therefore be reckoned with. Several critics, notably
Alexander A. Parker, have pondered the question of just how
much cruelty is picaresque and at what point roguery becomes
criminality. Parker would replace "**picaro**" with the term
"delinquent" to "mean an offender against the moral and civil
laws; not a vicious criminal such as a gangster or a murderer,
but someone who is dishonourable and anti-social in a much
less violent way." It is not for us here to make such fine
distinctions, because the picaresque novel makes it impossi­
bile for us to respond to the individual acts of brutality
themselves and to evaluate the extent of their seriousness.
Such acts have reality and significance for us only as they
are narrated, usually surrounded with a heavy coating of
self-justification and excuse. There seems to be no ques­
tion, however accounted for, that, as Frohock suggests, "the
picaro's outstanding trait, perhaps, is his indifference to
suffering—his own and that which he causes." The pages of
Lazarillo resound with cracked skulls, dislocated jaws, and
teeth knocked out, and Alemán and Quevedo followed suit in
making physical violence a conventional part of picaresque
adventure as they presented it. In part, no doubt, such
material can be explained as a crude attempt at verisimili­
tude. Surely the open road in sixteenth- and seventeenth-
century Spain would have been an uncivilized place, calling forth all the resources of violence at the picaro's command.

More important for the meaning of the picaresque novel, such action, unsettling as it may be, functions structurally. It is the picaro's chief means of self-expression, and it reveals what he sees as his relationship to a hostile social order that denies him admittance as a member in good standing. It may be, as E. M. W. Tillyard thinks, that the picaro is "the underdog, the little man, the fellow a bit worse off than the average, who has his adventures and troubles and somehow survives." It seems to me, however, that recent criticism errrs on the side of being too willing to offer social justification for the picaro's behavior, as when Frohock says that the picaro "is not a degenerate, 'born' criminal, but one whom circumstances of birth and upbringing have left no choice and have thrown in with others like himself." The picaresque authors are in fact far harder on their picaros than recent critics have been; they suggest that beyond any environmental explanation for picaresque waywardness there is the question of individual responsibility for one's own sins. Parker, in one of his more perceptive observations, finds Defoe's novels unpicaresque precisely because Defoe was too much preoccupied with "humanitarianism." Defoe, as we shall see, offers social excuses for his characters more often than stiff moral judgment. Ample evidence exists in the picaresque novel that the picaro
must bear the major burden of responsibility for his own sins, despite the presence in the novels of a society that is as bad as he.

Like Defoe's characters, the picaro is an accomplished casuist. The picaro adopts a posture of the confessed sinner, not only owning his wrongdoing but glorying in it. Most discussions of the picaresque take notice of this aspect of the picaro's narrative, citing it as evidence of his disarming honesty, both with himself and his reader. What they do not go on to observe, however, is that an equally important part of the picaro's narrative strategy involves subtle self-defense. To this end, he gives us detailed accounts of his youthful poverty and disreputable parents, implying, if not actually arguing, that such extenuating circumstances should alter his case. Such strategy, in fact, closely resembles Moll's and Captain Singleton's, with the important difference that Defoe usually lets his heroes get away with it, while the picaresque author silently undercuts it with irony and other narrative devices. We must concede that the picaro's self-explanation is not all sham; he really does get a poor start in life, and, just as he says, people really are heartless toward him. The point, of course, is that once the picaro gets on his feet, he becomes predatory in the way he had formerly denounced others for being, and he continues to plead self-defense as his motive, when in fact he acts out of the sheer love of exploiting
others. He is thus casuistical, in the negative sense of one who invokes sound arguments in the service of an unjust cause. The picaresque author, in control of the implications of his material, reveals the picaro as the fraud he is.

Although the picaro does not know it, at least not until he very nearly brings about his own self-destruction, he transforms himself into another person in the course of his narration. Whereas he had started life as an innocent, he shows every sign of ending it as an unregenerate sinner. In the picaresque view of life, we thus discover, sin is not something one can be intimate with and avoid taking on its coloration. The picaro either, like Lazaro and Pablos (in *La Vida del Buscón*), finds himself uncontrollably compelled to keep on sinning long after he has any objective need to do so or, like Guzmán and Simplicissimus (in Grimmelshausen's *Adventurous Simplicissimus*), he repents of his sins and undergoes a genuine religious conversion after divesting himself of the profits of his crimes. One is irresistibly reminded, because of similarities and categorical differences, of Moll's and Bob's (though, importantly, not Roxana's) abilities to shed all traces of their crimes once worldly conditions permit them to live honestly and comfortably.

The conclusion of the picaresque novel figures structurally in the author's overall design, even when it appears to be inconclusive. In remarks that I agree with, G. S. Rousseau depicts the picaro, at the end of his story and at the
end of his rope, discovering "that his life is a game from which he ought to and finally does withdraw." 16 Paul-Gabri-el Boucé questions this very observation: "Whether life is a 'game' to a genuine picaro, I am inclined to doubt, but if so, it is a cruel game, with more blows, knocks, and buffets to be gained than from the exhilarating thrills of a purely gratuitous sporting activity." 17 Boucé misses Rousseau's point, it seems to me. Rousseau does not suggest that the picaro's life is any less a life-and-death struggle for all its resemblances to a game. He only suggests, and I think rightly, that, once committed to a course of picaresque cheats and deceptions, the picaro has a limited number of options open to him like plays in a sporting contest. The picaro eventually traps himself by his own superior gamesmanship, and, sure to become a loser, he either recognizes that he must quit and does so or continues to play the game, disillusioned about its outcome. The most satisfactory way of disengaging himself from a losing game of life is offered by religion, and accordingly Guzmán, Simplicissimus, and Gil Blas seize upon the opportunity before it is too late. Pablo knows he has cornered himself, but with a heart hardened to good influences he is unable to reform. Only Lazaro continues to play the game unaware that he is doing so.

In discussions of picaresque traits, much is made of the picaro's seeming delight in the most sordid acts and plays of the picaresque game. Indeed, a streak of gratuitous cru-
elty runs through the picaro's behavior that has no discernible relationship to the objective demands of his situation. To some extent, the picaro is a rogue simply because it is fun, as William Atkinson notes: "[the picaro] managed to find life so good that he often chose his calling with all seriousness in preference to an honorable career." Robert Alter would surely agree with Atkinson; "the picaroon," he says, "does delight in his rogueries for their own sake." We do not have to look far to find evidence for such readings. When Lazaro outwits one of his cruel masters, as he does the blind beggar by tricking him into jumping headlong into a stone post, or when he cleverly taps the wineskin, thereby circumventing the greedy old blindman's malicious hoarding, he congratulates himself heartily as one who has done his job well. He takes pleasure in proportion to the intricacy of the ruse and the formidability of the odds against its success. And, while the picaro, when yet a child, could presumably settle down to productive labor (as Guzmán has an early but unheeded chance to do), he permits his restless curiosity and love of adventure to drive him forward on his travels.

That, however, is not the same as saying that "[the picaro] often chose his calling with all seriousness in preference to an honorable career," as Atkinson claims. Little evidence exists in any of the novels to suggest that an "honorable career" would have presented itself if the picaro had stayed home and stuck to business. Home, in
most cases, is as uninviting as anything he meets with on the road. We learn, for example, that Lazaro was "born on the river" in a grist mill, son of the attendant "caught . . . bleeding the sacks belonging to the people who came to have their crops milled there" and his wife, who, after her husband goes off to fight the Moors, admits a black thief to her intimacy.20 Pablos (in La Vida del Buscón) is born of a barber-pickpocket and his witch-wife, both of whom vie for the honor of having Pablos follow in their respective footsteps.21 Such is hardly the stuff that produces honorable careers.

Sordid as his origins are, they still do not justify the picaro's claim that he goes to the devil because he has no good parental example to fall back on. The picaro clearly chooses his life of sin, as Atkinson says, but with the important qualification that he chooses it as the shortest way to his worldly goal of riches and position, not from an excess of high spirits and irrepressible lust for life. When, at some point in his story, the rogue finally settles into a comfortable berth, as happens most notably to Guzman in Rome, he is more than content to remain there until, either through ill-conceived efforts to secure his position or through the vicissitudes of fortune or of his own nature, he is disgraced and thrown back onto the streets. Lazaro and Pablos never enjoy the opportunity of genuine advancement to high Church and civil positions, although Pablos, through an
elaborate ruse, sufficiently counterfeits himself a gentle-
man to bring a rich lady almost to the altar. He thus wants
an elevated and secure position, even if he hopes to find a
dishonest shortcut to it. And even Lazaro, for all his con-
tempt of honor and respectability, does not disdain to ac-
cept a respectable, if not honorable, place as town crier
and pimp (for his own wife) to an archpriest.

The picaro, then, cherishes no illusions about the re-
wards of a life spent in endless idle wandering. Though mar-
ginally successful as a vagabond (he always manages somehow
to survive), he is looking for something better, as Boucé
notices in his description of picaros as "characters in
search of decent social integration." As long as it is
"decent" in the eyes of the world, they care little that
their security is built on a foundation of corruption. A-
gain relevant are the examples of Lazaro and Guzmán, both of
whom contrive to live respectably and comfortably off the
proceeds of their wives' whoring. Like the rest of the "de-
cent" society they would emulate, they care very acutely
what people think of them, a fact further contradicting the
notion of the picaro as a totally unfettered being out for a
good time.

Potential good citizen that he is, the picaro appreci-
ates the power of money. He values money with a capitalist's
zeal, and, although he goes through it as fast as he gets it,
he usually hopes to amass a fortune that will leave him inde-
pendent. Simplicissimus, for example, becomes wealthy and retires to the country with his foster parents on his own farm; Gil Blas winds up in possession of a considerable estate; and most of the rest are better off in the things of this world at the end of their stories than at the beginning. Rare is the picaro who does not enjoy flaunting the things money can buy, chiefly by parading about the streets of town in gentlemanly finery. Pablos wants the status that goes with the clothes, his efforts to achieve it amounting to a mania.

The picaro's aims would thus seem to be fairly conventional, even if his means of realizing them are such as the "honorable" world he envies would condemn. He may ridicule false or exaggerated honor, but he himself wants many of the things honorable men want. The last thing he wants is to remain hungry and cold, both basic conditions of his carte-blanche for unrestricted devilment. If he can keep his belly full with a minimum of effort, he is perfectly willing to submit to a non-picaresque routine, whether through marriage or gainful employment, and to forego the delights of freely practicing his ruses as a transient. Far from content to remain at odds with the society he scourges, he in fact actively seeks a place in it. Sherman Eoff shows that, although Guzmán frequently attacks the abuses of the fixed social order, he does so merely to express his contempt for what is beyond his reach. Proof of his true motives is in
his calm acquiescence in the very corruption he had earlier
declined as soon as he gets the chance. Ronald Paulson ar-
gues that "the picaro is anything but a rebel; he is, in
fact, aspiring to become part of the social order with its
security, comfort, and privileges."  

Robert Alter is unconvincing, consequently, when he
says, "the picaroon, before all else, is an outsider." To
the extent that the term "outsider" designates someone fre-
quently outside the law, it probably does not misrepresent
the picaro. But Alter clearly means something more: "one
can safely say that the anti-hero [i.e., the picaro ] does
instinctively reject the stale and inapplicable truths ac-
cepted by the generality of men, even if he sets up no higher
goal for himself than to get along well in the world."  
One wonders just what "stale and inapplicable truths" the
rogue rejects, since as we have seen he wants pretty much
what "the generality of men" want--"decent social integra-
tion" and a measure of respectability. Nor is it entirely
clear that most men ever wanted anything better "than to get
along well in the world," however much they may cloak their
true motives in idealistic rhetoric. Among other things,
the picaresque novel seems to say that everyone has reject-
ed the "stale" truths of honesty and charity. The picaro,
bad as he is, simply does not pretend ever to have paid al-
legiance to them.

His considerable effectiveness as a vehicle for satire,
in fact, depends upon just such a recognition, upon the per-
ception that he shares the real, if not the professed, values of society. And insofar as he does so, he becomes more than a satiric vehicle and is himself the thing satirized. Criticism of the picaresque novel has not always appreciated this fact, preferring instead to comment on the social orientation of picaresque satire with its indictment of civil and clerical abuses. Ian Watt, for example, regards the picaro as "a literary convention for the presentation of a variety of satiric observations." But to treat the picaresque novel as a catalogue of social ills misses its real point: it is as much about the experiencing of evil and corruption as it is about objective expressions of them. It is important, as we have said, that the picaro cannot emerge from his brushes with crime and sin unpolluted by them. Extravagantly as he claims to abhor the evil practices of the world, especially when he is himself victimized by them, he is often worse than the objects of his criticism. Satire functions to reveal to us the spectacle of the picaro suffering the ill-usage of a cruel world which, through his own depredations, he is helping to make a worse place in which to live.

The focus of the present discussion, it will be remembered, is on those narrative techniques revealing conscious design in the picaresque novel. I am attempting to demonstrate fundamental differences between Defoe's "picaresque" novels—Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, and
Roxana—and the picaresque novel on precisely such grounds. Specifically, I see an abundance of picaresque detail in Defoe but little of the characteristic attitude that fuses such materials into an artistic whole in the picaresque novel. The matter of social satire constitutes one further ground of similarity for those who find picaresque features in Defoe. It is true that all of the novels in this study include some satire: Moll, for example, ridicules the London marriage market, and Roxana turns an unblinking eye on the morals of high society. Neither, however, becomes in turn the object of satire. We accept Roxana's implication that, sinful as her behavior is, she is justified in it by a corrupt society that makes her look innocent by comparison. In my study of that novel (Chapter V), I will suggest that Roxana subtly diverts our attention from the central fact of her own sins, and that Defoe, for all we can infer to the contrary, tacitly approves of her doing so. For the present, it is enough to investigate the workings of irony and satire in the picaresque novel.

Like Defoe's characters, the picaro makes repeated appeals to necessity as a defense for wrongdoing. In Defoe, as we shall see, casuistical arguments are not undermined by irony, much as we might wish them to be. In the picaresque novel, patently self-serving testimony comes to be revealed for what it is. The picaresque author may approve of his hero's conventional goals, but he does not therefore
approve of the means the picaresque chooses to reach them. He discloses his attitude toward the rogue's behavior, as he discloses so much else, by systematically focusing upon the discrepancies between what the rogue says and what he does. For example Pablos says very plausibly, "I thought about how difficult it was for me to be honourable and virtuous, because first I would have to hide the fact that my parents were neither" (129). His own behavior, however, undercuts this specious attempt at self-exculpation; Pablos clearly never tries to be "honourable and virtuous," and if he did, his parents would be no hindrance. Besides the blatant conflicts of the case, Quevedo indicates through his ironic tone that the disparity is intentional; Pablos goes on in the next breath to congratulate himself on his high-minded reflections. We detect the mocking tone of the satirist criticizing the picaresque's moralistic naivete and dishonesty, when Pablos says, "I thought these ideas were most praiseworthy and complimented myself for having them" (129).

We see here part of a larger pattern emerging: the impulse toward self-parody in the picaresque novel. From satirizing the picaresque it is an easy step for the picaresque author to satirize the very conventions and rituals from which the picaresque derives his identity. Self-parody can work in two ways, one quite likely unconscious on the part of the picaresque author, the other plainly intentional. The first results from the episodic nature of the picaresque plot,
which ensures that various elements in the rogue's experience will arise again and again—among them the knocks and bruises of a violent life and the frequent vicissitudes of fortune by which the picaro is repeatedly raised up and cast down. The cumulative effect of such repetition, whether intentional or not, is to reduce to absurdity events which in themselves are far from humorous—and which the picaro himself takes quite seriously. Guzmán, that is, surely derives no great amusement from his regular drubbings at the hands of irate husbands and offended relatives. Yet because he blunders into them predictably, and because he always bounces back, we respond to them as comic rather than as tragic. That is not, incidentally, to concede Watt's point that "the picaro enjoys that charmed immunity from the deeper stings of pain and death which is accorded to all those fortunate enough to inhabit the world of comedy" (95; see my page 8). A distinction needs to be made between obviously comic disgraces (Pablos' being pelted during a parade, Guzman's wild ride through a muddy Roman alley on the back of a sow) and the genuine punishment and humiliation that often exist side by side. One chief difficulty with picaresque narration is that it has a way of blurring this distinction by flattening all incidents into a uniform texture through a single ironic stance. The result, at any rate, is a parody of some fundamental picaresque conventions.

The second form of self-parody works to undercut and
discredit certain givens of the picaresque condition; it is surely intentional. The picaro, as we have already seen, derives from low origins, enjoys a footloose freedom to work his ruses and escape their consequences, and customarily excuses his immorality as the only recourse of a hungry man. In telling his story, he specializes in the crudest form of realism, making his account sometimes preposterously graphic and scatalogical. If, as Paulson says in Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England, early picaresque realism developed in reaction to romantic idealism, then it may be that the picaresque author purposely exaggerated the physical environment and experiences of his rogue. In Lazarillo de Tormes, the picaresque prototype, calculated deflation of romantic conventions takes the form of unflinchingly narrated misery. Lazaro's homelife is not only non-aristocratic, it is downright disgraceful; his belly is not merely more demanding than the knight's, it engrosses his total attention. The demands of realism, in other words, are not only met, they are surpassed. By a curious reversal, the effect is not only to parody the idealism of romance but to parody the very idea of realism, with a technique that is so realistic as to be unrealistic.

In La Vida del Buscon, a self-conscious and highly literary novel, Quevedo goes beyond parody of realistic techniques to parody of the very conventions of the picaresque novel as established in Lazarillo de Tormes. Not content
to endow his *picaro* with a genealogy so disgraceful that it makes Lazaro's look positively respectable, he improves upon Lazaro's string of picaresque adventures by locking Pablos into a series of rogueries that begins as audaciousness but ends as compulsiveness. Long after Pablos has seen the futility of endless wandering and exploitation, he is still projecting new journeys, always looking for the *picaro*'s fresh start. At last he seeks it in the New World, having exhausted the Old: "I made up my mind . . . to go to America with Grajales [his whore]" (213-14). It has now become clear, however, even to Pablos, that the *picaro* cannot simply pick up and move on forever, cheating justice of its right to punish him for his sins. At the end of the novel, while he is not in the hands of the law and is technically free to continue in the old course, he finds that his freedom affords him little pleasure: "I thought things would go better in the New World and another country. But they went worse, as they always will for anybody who thinks he only has to move his dwelling without changing his life or ways" (214). We have here a complete repudiation of that most sacred of picaresque conventions, that there are always new worlds to conquer. The pitiful truth is that Pablos has played out his hand, and would like to, but cannot, withdraw from the "game" that has become his life.

There, in very general outline, we have the chief conventions of the picaresque tradition, as well as their nar-
rative embodiment in novels whose primary meaning is moral. There is some danger that such a discussion is indeed too general, that it ignores important distinctions among what are after all fairly diverse works. In anticipation of that charge, I will examine individually the works upon which any statement about the picaresque tradition must ultimately rest. If, as is generally done, we can speak about a body of picaresque literature or a genre, thereby implying some unity of aim, vision, and method, we are probably only justified in doing so with regard to what Alexander Parker calls the "Spanish source." Philip L. Gerber and Robert J. Gemmett quote W. M. Frohock as saying, "there are the four great Spanish novels. The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes was the first, though some people say that it isn't really picaresque, but proto-picaresque [Alexander Parker so argues]. Then The Life of the Rogue (La vida del buscon) by Quevedo, Guzmán de Alfarache by Mateo Alemán, and a fourth, Marcos de Obregon, which was written by Vincente Espinel."^29 Despite Frohock's remarks, however, only the first three novels in his catalogue appear regularly in discussions of the picaresque. Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzman de Alfarache, and La Vida del Buscon, while they do not exhaust the variety of the genre, represent the full technical and artistic development of the form. In them the "religious-moral" meaning is prominent, but each offers a different technical solution to the problem of presenting such meaning narratively. To a very
great extent, Defoe's fiction is or is not picaresque insofar as it does or does not accord with practices established in these three novels.

A spate of novels loosely termed picaresque followed the publication of *Lazarillo* in 1554. Besides Espinel's *Marcos de Obregon*, which is read now largely for its influence upon Lesage's *Gil Blas*, several other Spanish novels contributed to the genre. Most notable are *La Picara Justina* by Ubeda and *The Spanish Bawd* (or *La Celestina*) by Rojas, works which, among other innovations, introduced the *picara*. I refer to *Celestina* as a novel advisedly, recognizing, in J. M. Cohen's words, that "though written in bare dramatic form, *La Celestina* is certainly a novel." It has few dramatic characteristics, except that of uninterrupted dialogue, to compare with its novel-like features of inordinate length and excessive complication. Although *Justina* and *Celestina* bear in a general way upon picaresque analyses of *Roxana* (Kaler makes use of both in her dissertation on that novel), we can eliminate detailed consideration of them from the present study. Neither suggests ways of meaning significantly original to justify tracing them in Defoe's works. The concept of the rogue is finally an amalgam of the traits and behavior of Lazaro, Guzman, and Pablos. Consequently, Moll, Jack, Bob, and Roxana must be shown to have a preponderance of traits in common with their Spanish forebears if they are to be granted *picaro* status. Furthermore, although evidence is
sketchy, there is reason to suppose that Defoe could have known at least the major Spanish novels in translation.31

Stuart Miller in his study of the picaresque novel uses as "touchstones" what he calls the Spanish "masterpieces." In addition, to fill "the need for an international basis of definition," he looks at "classic" examples of German, French, and English fiction, "works about which there is nearly universal agreement [i.e., that they are picaresque]."32 The first such work, Grimmelshausen's The Adventurous Simplicissimus, shows the influence of Guzmán de Alfarache, not only in the retention of many Spanish conventions, but more importantly in the adoption of a similar moral stance. Of the other works Miller analyzes—Gil Blas, The Unfortunate Traveller, Moll Flanders, and Roderick Random—the first two will be of use in reconstructing the generic context for Defoe. The Unfortunate Traveller, unlike Gil Blas, seems to have been conceived independently of the Spanish source. Fredson Bowers argues at some length that despite Nashe's native English material, the novel is essentially picaresque because it incorporates several standard picaresque plot elements.33 Yet if I am right that the picaresque novel as conceived and executed in Spain draws its artistic sustenance from its moral vision, then The Unfortunate Traveller should be regarded as another kind of production. But because of its status as "the first English picaresque novel" (in Bowers' words) and because of its historical importance in English
fiction, it can still provide important commentary on Defoe's works.

_Lazarillo de Tormes_ (1554) must come first in any account of picaresque literature. Not only is it the first such novel in point of time, but it is in many ways the purest. It expresses most perfectly the qualities always felt to be essential to the genre, and because of its relative simplicity it is free of the conflicts that often make later works more ambiguous. This is not to say that _Lazarillo_ is transparent. Quite the opposite is in fact true: its anonymous author develops a technique of narration that is the nearest thing to pure verbal irony to be found in the picaresque novel. As Lazaro tumbles through his story, giving us revealing glimpses from the inside of various strata of contemporary Spanish society, he maintains a uniform tone of unblinking naiveté. Whether he recounts his efforts to get at the sacramental bread locked in the priest's chest or narrates the escudero's ludicrous attempts to avoid revealing his dire poverty, Lazaro maintains a childlike innocence that is its own comment on the offenses he records. He is of course actually a child at the time many of the events occur, but he is an adult at the time of narration. His narrative innocence is thus a conscious device on the part of the author to underscore the narrative distance between the _picaro_ as actor and the _picaro_ as reporter.

Lazaro's innocence is of a highly selective sort, a fact
that further establishes it as a formal device. It does not keep him from seeing the ugliness that is about him, only from drawing the (to the reader) obvious moral conclusions. In the lengthy give-and-take between himself and the priest, during which Lazaro constantly devises new tricks to get at the bread undetected and his master as persistently finds ways to reinforce the trunk where it is kept, Lazaro is fully aware of the priest's cruelty and stinginess. That he should be so is hardly surprising, since he is the chief sufferer by it. Further, Lazaro recognizes that the priest's behavior is patently unpriestlike: when his master tries to dignify his niggardly hoarding into exemplary clerical restraint ("'Listen lad, priests have to be very temperate in their eating and drinking habits and so I don't make a pig of myself like others do'"), Lazaro comments, "but the bastard lied in his teeth, because whenever we said prayers at brotherhood meetings or in houses of mourning he ate like a wolf at other people's expense" (40). Lazaro has a clear sense of what is going on, but he is little given to analysis of it. Ironies in the priest's conduct strike him, but he misses their finer points; Lazaro is more inclined to think and to judge with his stomach than with his head. The pica­ro's extremely self-centered point of view offers the explanation: he is acutely aware of cruelty done him, and he resents the agents thereof. His perspective, however, does not expand to take in abstract religious and moral abuses,
even when his revelations point them out to the reader, provided they in no way affect him viscerally. Lazaro sees himself as having in no way a stake in the priest's probable damnation; therefore, thoughts of it do not enter his head. His object of concern is the priest's excessive frugality, which causes him to suffer hunger pangs. Defoe, interestingly, would not have been able to resist the temptation to moralize in a similar situation. In this instance of picaresque restraint we have the essence of the picaresque narrative method of ironic implication.

Lazaro is no more alert to certain ironies in his own conduct than he is to those in the conduct of others, although he makes no attempt to disguise the outrageous impiety that reveals those ironies to the reader. In the priest's employ, Lazaro has his only opportunity to eat freely at funeral feasts, and accordingly he turns his prayers to sacrilegious ends, asking for more deaths that he might eat more regularly: "I hoped and even prayed to God that each day should kill its man. And when we brought home the Sacraments to sick people, especially Extreme Unction, and the priest ordered those present to pray, you can be sure that I wasn't the last to begin." As it turns out, Lazaro's prayers are answered: "As the Lord could see my slow and painful death, I think He was glad to kill them to keep me alive" (40). This sentiment is fairly shocking to the conscience of a Christian, which Lazaro himself claims to be, and it
provides ample evidence of his depravity. Yet despite the fact that Lazaro clearly recognizes his sin (his repeated apostrophe "God forgive me!" attests to that), he seems absolutely oblivious to the ironies implicit in his prayers for the death of parishioners to provide him with the wherewithal to live. The further authorial implication that he is guilty of nothing worse than the priest himself can be charged with (the priest gorges in "houses of mourning") gives an additional edge to the irony.

Nowhere does Lazaro's capacity for ignoring the implications of his own faults make itself felt more strongly than at the end of the book. After his picaresque adventures have come to an end, he settles down, marries a "maid" belonging to a neighboring archpriest, and moves into the respectable town crier's job. When gossip discloses the kind of services Lazaro's wife is continuing after marriage to provide for the archpriest, the picaro says piously, "I hope God forgives their lies" (78). That he is not genuinely deceived he reveals indirectly: "Mind you, at the time I always had a nagging little suspicion and had a few bad suppers because some nights I waited for her until lauds or even later" (78). At this point too, he remembers that the blind beggar had predicted cuckoldum for Lazaro, but he dismisses the memory with the comforting assurance that "I think the Devil brought that to my mind deliberately to upset my marriage, but it didn't help him any because, besides the fact
that she wasn't the sort of woman who thought that sort of
ting was a joke, my lord Archpriest made me a promise one
day and I know he will keep it" (78). And so the novel ends
with the prospect of Lazaro's continuing to act the part of
the naif while, it is implied, he has no scruple about ac­
cepting money from the priest for his wife's illicit favors
(according to the priest's "promise"). The point is, of
course, that now he has the security he has been seeking all
along, and taken all in all, he is pleased with his lot. By
obliquely exposing the exact state of Lazaro's menage, how­
ever, the author indicates ironically that Lazaro has no
great reason to congratulate himself on his happiness. In
other words, there is a moral arbiter in the novel that rec­
ognizes Lazaro's culpability even if he does not do so him­
self.

At least one critic would disagree with the observation
that a judgment of Lazaro is implied. In Roland Grass's o­
pinion, "if we find any moral judgment in Lazarillo at all,
it must lie in the biting satire of a society that would
drive a boy to the life of a picaro."

Such a view, I would
argue, ignores the patent irony in the novel, particularly in
the last chapter. This is exactly what Lazaro wants us to
think, and it is at least one of the ironic motives of his
confession. He seems to say in his narrative that since so­
ciety is irredeemably corrupt, he has only dealt with it on
its own terms and has come out a winner. If we were ever
tempted to accept the easy plausibility of Lazaro's account, we could not continue to do so after the last few pages of the book. For here he offers as evidence of his success his happy domesticity, revealing how really tawdry is the foundation of his felicity. Stephen Gilman makes the important point that "only when Lazaro recounts his shame not just with candor but with . . . ironical satisfaction . . . is he fully degraded." Lazaro's "ironical satisfaction" condemns him.

In the words of another critic, Frank Durand, "the events of Lazarillo's life can only be judged by the economic height he reaches in a most dubious moral situation." Again, "[Lazaro's] final wink at the reader reveals that he is not deceived by the circumstances of his situation," even if he tactfully looks the other way rather than answer allegations that his wife "had three children before she married me, speaking with reverence because she's here" (78). Lazaro's polite "speaking with reverence because she's here" is symptomatic of his willingness to acquiesce in conventional social form when it is to his advantage to do so. A character like Lazaro, the author suggests ironically, who can derive happiness from such a marriage ("Thank God, life is marvelous for me with her") has not set his sights very high. The repeated and protracted references to his domestic arrangements make it clear that the matter is not incidental; it is the key to the picaro's relationship to the
society he has pitilessly satirized. Again, as Durand points out, Lazaro knows he would not have enjoyed even his limited success if he had played by society's professed rules. He would still be poor, like the escudero, who is far more punctilious than he. In this sense, but only in this sense, is Roland Grass correct in saying that the "biting satire" signals a moral judgment of society. In view of Lazaro's own unwitting self-exposure, social satire cannot be said to constitute the only moral judgment in the book, as Grass would have it.

Grass is no more convincing on another score, namely his belief that Lazaro undergoes a "genuine moral growth" in the latter part of the novel. Grass cites as evidence Lazaro's loyalty to the penniless escudero of the third tractado. This proud would-be nobleman employs the boy but, far from paying for Lazaro's services, dines off what Lazaro steals. In a telling satirical thrust, the author has the escudero pretend not to know that his diet derives from Lazaro's thefts. Lazaro, it is true, treats this master, both in his direct dealings and in the subsequent narrative account of them, with a certain indulgence we have not seen before in the novel; he betrays something like a note of hurt in his final observation, after being deserted by the escudero escaping creditors, that "masters are usually left by their servants but with me it was the opposite: he left me, in fact he deserted me" (65). But I question both...
ther this momentary regret constitutes "a genuine and sincere altruism" and whether it points to a "genuine moral growth." I would certainly not, as Grass does, go on to see it as a prior condition of Lazaro's worldly promotion to the "modest but respectable appointment of town crier," as though he had to show himself morally regenerate before the good things of the world would come to him. If anything, he gets and holds onto that job because the archpriest has confidence both in his being corrupt enough to sell his wife's favors and discreet enough to remain silent about it. These are engaging qualities, perhaps, but not exactly proof of "genuine moral growth." My point, of course, is that the author intends us to reach just such a conclusion. Lazaro's depravity is calculated, and his complacency in it, which is revealed ironically, functions as criticism of him.

With the appearance in 1554 of Lazarillo de Tormes, the genre received a purpose and direction that were to sustain it for some two hundred years, even though later productions usually exceeded the novel in scope of design and complexity. Lazarillo's chief contribution to the tradition was of course the picaro, the events of whose life and career became conventionalized along lines suggested by that novel. Virtually every trait that matters in Guzmán, Pablos, and the rest can be traced in some form to Lazaro. As much as any of the later novels, furthermore, Lazarillo is about the effects of picaresque experience upon the picaro; it shows
the same authorial impulse to assess the implications of its materials, to examine the picaresque life from more than one angle that Alemán and Quevedo later developed. Because, however, "the author planned and executed his work on a small scale," he did not have room for the systematic satirical anatomy of social abuses that was to become a part of the later picaresque novel. It remained for Alemán, Quevedo, and their followers to evolve a complex machinery for accomplishing what Lazarillo's author accomplished intuitively.

By the time, then, that Mateo Alemán wrote Guzmán de Alfarache at the end of the sixteenth century, he could already be conscious of a "tradition." He was quite intentionally writing a picaresque novel, complete with what he called a picaro. Yet while Guzmán is recognizable as Lazarro's literary brother, he has assumed some duties only hinted at in the earlier novel. As Ronald Paulson says of the narrative technique in Lazarillo, "there is no exaggeration of word or scene, only the repetition of incidents as if they were commonplaces, and the resultant impression of hopelessness is due to the discrepancy between the cold telling of the story and the ugliness of the facts." Much of Guzmán's story is told with similar ironic detachment, but at the same time Alemán has given him the role of official satirical voice in the novel, not only uncovering abuses, but castigating them. The one function Lazarro had performed;
the other he had not. Or, put more succinctly, in R. A. del Piero's words, "Lazarillo acted only. Guzmán acts and discusses." As evidence of Aleman's conception of the rogue, we have Guzmán's own lament upon his uncomfortable position: "For it [his satire against corruption in high places] reflecting generally upon them all, they out of their great power will trample me under foot, and crush mee, that I shall never bee able to lift up my head any more . . . . Because I speake the truth, they count mee a base and obscure fellow; and for that I presume to give them wholesome counsell and sound advice, they call mee Rogue, brand me with the name of Picaro." This notion of the picaro as conscience of his age is probably something the anonymous author of Lazarillo did not intend, but such a picaresque function is nonetheless an understandable outgrowth of the picaro's satirical role as established in the first picaresque novel.

While there has been no failure to appreciate the picaro's public function in Guzmán de Alfarache—his function, that is, as critic of major social ills—less has been said about his role as the object of satire. Yet one of the major problems with the novel's form is solved by a recognition that Alemán uses Guzmán alternately and simultaneously to express outrage at corruption in high places and to ridicule and expose private vice of an equally pernicious, if less harmful, sort. The resulting vision is that of a soci-
ety which is tragically doomed from top to bottom. In a world where ministers, clergymen, and professionals are shown to be thoroughly degraded, it is highly unsettling to know that one cannot look to the private individual (represented by the picaro) for a reaffirmation of traditional values. In Guzmán, we have the spectacle of the picaro, himself far gone in sin and sinking ever deeper, moving across a landscape of moral degeneracy and inveighing loudly against it. He adopts a scathingly satirical tone of moral outrage, as though he were himself a model of virtue. A model he is not, however, and readers have inevitably sensed a conflict between the picaresque experience, which is uniformly sordid, and the "digressions," which overflow with moral fervor.

Apparently it is necessary for at least one reader, Alexander A. Parker, to see the narrator as morally unimpeachable in order to react positively to the moralizing. He is uneasy with the conflict between what Guzman says and what he does, and he finds an explanation in the inadequacy of Aleman's narrative technique: "Aleman wanted the novel to be a doctrinal one, to have a 'thesis,' and perhaps he could not think of a way of making his doctrine emerge from his narrative plot." It turns out, according to Parker, that there are really two Guzmn's, one the unregenerate sinner engaging in crime and violence and the other a repentant convert looking back on his former lapses with horror as he tells the story of his life. These two Guzmn's speak in two
wholly separable voices, "the one belonging to the time of narrating, the other belonging to the time of action." The narrator is thus not the hypocrite he may seem but a wholly upright, genuinely religious man dramatizing his shameful past in lurid detail because his author was aware of the exigencies of the "low style" suitable to a picaresque novel. Now it is true that Guzmán undergoes what is apparently to be taken as a genuine conversion near the end of his story, and consequently he can readily be supposed to regret much of his former ill conduct. But the fact remains that we learn of the conversion only near the end, and consequently the kind of interpretation Parker offers must be a retrospective one. His explanation offers no help in responding to the narrative as it unfolds.

I would argue that the novel demands to be read as a record of picaresque experience in all its complexity, of the effects of sin on the sinner. One such effect is that it turns him into a hypocrite, albeit a hypocrite capable of uttering much truth. I fail to see why we must admire Guzmán in order to take to heart his generally accurate social criticism. Immoral or not, he is an acute observer; he feels the slights and rebuffs of respectable officialdom quite as keenly as a better man might, even if he deserves them more. Too, he has considerable personal motive for castigating public corruption: he finds in the selfishness of lawyers and the partiality of judges material blocks to his ambitions to
join the ranks of the very society they represent. What bothers Parker, of course, is that Guzman does not couch his criticism in personal terms, does not characterize the opposition he meets as a personal threat. Instead, he invokes religious arguments and brings down Biblical judgment on his enemies. In this, however, he does not worse than society at large. The same motives that cause clergymen to abuse religion and public officials to break the civil law cause Guzman to damn what he cannot overcome. The venom of personal ambition thus infects those who use it in their own service, a fact which Aleman recognizes. Aleman ridicules the picaro by revealing ironically his moral barrenness.

I cannot accept Parker's theory of the "two voices." I would concede some tonal distinction between the frankly didactic passages and those of a strictly narrative nature. But I would suggest that the difference is not that between sinful past and penitent present but that between sincerity and insincerity. The picaro is unquestionably a hypocrite (though, as I have said, that fact does not discredit his criticisms), and he reveals his hypocrisy in other ways besides subverting religious judgment to his own ends. Like any candid apologist for personal experience, Guzman puts us off guard by admitting just enough guilt to make his account credible so that we will be more ready to accept the elaborate defenses he contrives for the more serious charges against him. He freely acknowledges, "I was made of nothing
but fraud and deceit" (III, 348), as though there were some peculiar quality in his nature inclining him against his will toward sin: "I was like unto a tree, that is cut downe to the very roote, which leaves some live-sap still remaining, by meanes whereof it growes in time to bee a new Plant, and begins to beare the same fruit it did before" (III, 343). As Guzman would have it, though, others deserve a greater share of the blame for his roguery than he does himself: "I liv'd amongst a company of Wolves, and I learned of them to howle, and devour Lambes, as they did" (II, 44). In a picarensque appeal to necessity, Guzman laments the poverty that prevents him from realizing his ambitions: "I verily thought with my selfe . . . that I should have bee and honest man, if answerable to that glorious show that I made, and the height whereat I liv'd, I had had wherewithall to spend accordingly, and that I had not wanted meanes to uphold this great spirit of mine" (IV, 206). Reprehensible as he may be, he tells us, he has not even entered the bigtime as a criminal: "As for your great rich theeves, such as ride on their footclothes of velvet, that hang their houses with hangings of tissue and costly arras . . . and often hang such poore snakes as wee are, I have nothing to say to them" (III, 338). Guzman may be bad, but, in his analysis, the world is worse. This I take to be the psychology of his lengthy catalogues of vice in hallowed chambers of church and state. Parker is perfectly right in asserting that Guzman sounds different
when he is narrating his own exploits than he does when he is castigating the sins of others; the one instance reflects roguish pride, the other feigned (if justified by its objects) moral outrage.

We are not to conclude that Guzmán is right to acquit himself of the ultimate guilt for his own lapsed moral state. Even in a generally corrupt world, the individual human being has the responsibility to be the best man he can be. Aleman suggests such a view in those brief flashes of genuine self-awareness that the picaro has as the novel progresses, as well as ironically in the passages of demonstrably self-serving rationalization just quoted. Early in the book, we remember, Guzmán has expressed buoyancy and confidence in his resourcefulness; if things got too hot in one place, he could always go elsewhere: "when such unluckie chances as these [disgrace in his Florentine master's service] doe light upon us, there is no such remedy for them, as Time and Travell to weare them out" (III, 165). "Time and Travell" are basic articles of faith for the picaro, until he eventually perceives himself to be "flying as it were from my selfe, not knowing to what end, nor whither to goe" (III, 205). Once the picaro reaches this stage, he is ripe for conversion. He has come to an awareness, as G. S. Rousseau says, that his life is a game from which he should and eventually does withdraw. Aleman thus prepares for the conversion of his rogue by showing him already at the end of his rope, his in-
vention having failed him at last, with no new destination. For this reason, the conversion has a psychological rightness, arising as it does out of the picaro's felt need for some termination of a career that has become repugnant. As we shall see later in examining Defoe, the religious conversion there often becomes a perfunctory device, lacking the careful motivation that Alemán gives to Guzmán's.

Quevedo in La Vida del Buscón is if anything a more astute psychologist than Aleman. Like Aleman, Quevedo is interested in the general question of how picaresque experience affects the picaro, but he anatomizes the picaro's behavior in a systematic way only suggested in Alemán. Quevedo is interested in discovering why the picaro turns to roguery in the first place and to what extent his conduct compensates for deficiencies in his background. He seizes on what are essentially conventions—the picaro's low birth, his disgraceful homelife, and his poverty, as well as his intense desire to be something better than a social outcast—and compounds them into a theory of picaresque behavior.

Here Alexander Parker's remarks are relevant: "deep shame and the accompanying fear of the hostility of society produce in Pablos [the rogue in Buscón] a dominant feeling of inferiority." He regards the subsequent picaresque actions as fantasy on the part of Pablos to atone for this "deep shame": thus Pablos attempts to counterfeit himself a gentleman by buying a suit of clothes and taking to horse—
back; thus he allies himself with the aristocratic Don Diego; and thus he comes near to marrying the heiress Donna Ana. All such actions, to be sure, can be explained on purely conventional grounds; most have precedents in Lazarillo and Guzmán. Quevedo, however, goes one step further to assess the psychological origins and consequences of such conventions.

As always in the picaresque novel, Quevedo points to moral implications in his material. Pablos, in his efforts to remove the imagined stain of poverty on his honor—and the actual stain on his reputation—resorts to crime as the most direct way of setting himself up in the eyes of the world. Exaggerated as Pablos' response to his worldly situation may seem, Quevedo gives him ample reason for embarrassment and shame. His parents are not only poor but scandalous: his father, a barber by trade, exercises his skill as a pickpocket on his customers and eventually hangs for his crimes; his mother, a practicing witch, draws notoriety down upon the family through her marital infidelities. All this is painful to Pablos, a sensitive and proud boy, who resents the mockery of his playmates when a child as he will later resent the mockery of the larger world as an adult. We get an early glimpse of his picaresque, vengeful disposition when gangs of boys torment him about his mother: "I put up with everything until one day a boy dared to shout at me that my mother was a whore and a witch." His touchiness would seem to indicate admirable filial devotion, a son
ready to defend his mother's honor. But we soon learn the real grounds for his resentment: "as [the boy] said it so clearly (if it had been quietly it wouldn't have annoyed me so much), I grabbed a stone and broke his head" (88). Here we see the meanness of Pablos' moral response: an insult is only to be taken as such if uttered publicly. Now to be sure, his mother deserves little more respect than he accords her, but the violent reaction says more about the picaro than about the substance of the insult to which he reacts.

The present passage is typical of Quevedo's narrative technique throughout the novel. He lets Pablos talk on, confessing, ostensibly with a picaro's candid disregard for the reader's good opinion, to shockingly brutal violence and cruelty. At the same time, though, Pablos makes a subtle case for his lapses, looking for excuses chiefly in a world that is as bad as he is. So it is that he would convince us that his earliest contact with vice, his mother's promiscuity, has scarred him for life. He portrays himself early in the story as naive, as a youth who earnestly wants to believe the best of his mother. But because Quevedo's irony reveals the actual source of Pablos' chagrin when he learns the truth about her, it is suggested that the picaro is a good deal less unworldly, even at his tender age, than he would have us believe. When he presses his mother for an explanation of her conduct, she demands to know the source of his rumor. He, because his "thoughts were always noble,"
pretends to think she is questioning the credibility of his informer and pleads with her to tell him if he "really was [his] father's son, or if she had conceived him accidentally by one of lots of men." His mother refusing to deny the aspersions on her character, Pablos says, "when I realized the truth it was like a kick in the stomach." Through the nature of his suspicions, he reveals ironically that he had harbored no very high estimation of his mother before this confirmation. He is less disillusioned than apprehensive that such information might compromise his ambitions. He does not, for example, worry about his mother's soul; the emphasis is on his own embarrassment and shame (both highly selfish emotions). So when he claims that his "thoughts were always noble," he is lying.

Pablos leaves town shortly after this early familial disgrace to enter what he supposes to be a more respectable mode of life as servant and companion to his friend Don Diego. Later on he will look back to this period in his life, after he is entrenched in sin, and reflect: "I thought about how difficult it was for me to be honourable and virtuous, because first I would have to hide the fact that my parents were neither" (129). One suspects that such family limitations would not constitute a material block to one genuinely interested in being "honourable and virtuous." Pablos is as guilty as his mother, Quevedo implies, for placing personal well being above genuine concern for his parents who, after
all, treat him well despite their failings.

Intensely as he desires to be accepted, Pablos remains an outcast during the period of his adventures at Alcala with Don Diego. Initiated crudely and cruelly into college life, he resolves to go his tormentors one better: "'when in Rome, do as the Romans do,' says the proverb, and how right it is. After thinking about it I decided to be as much a tearaway as the others and worse than them if I could" (112). According to T. E. May, Pablos only turns picaro upon leaving his first master, but of course he is never anything but a picaro. His earliest aspirations to something better than his family offers and his confidence that he can get it through his own resources mark him for the picaresque life. His later itinerant career merely develops tendencies already present in his character when he serves Don Diego, playing ruses on his companions for the attention they attract. Always he tries to compensate for, or at least to conceal the evidence of, what he considers his family disgrace. When he hears word that his father has fallen to the hangman and his mother to an auto da fe as a witch, he feels a sense of mingled humiliation and joy: humiliation at the mode of their death, joy at the inheritance he stands to receive. In his words, "I can't say I wasn't upset at this new disgrace but I was also rather relieved; parents' vices can console their children for their misfortune, however great they may be [if they produce money]." Cautiously, he "burnt the letter bearing
the news in case I lost it and somebody saw it" (122).

Inheritance in pocket, Pablos is at the high point in his career, from which he steadily declines. His worldly decline is accompanied by a spiritual decline, as he slips further into sin under the illusion that he can forge himself into a gentleman by an act of will. T. E. May acutely observes that "evil tends to be equated, in the *Buscón*, with unreality; the good with the real and normal." Only one victimized as Pablos is by his own fantasies could hope to pull off the deception whereby he would marry a rich woman for her money and status. After he has been thwarted in this scheme, cut up, and robbed of the clothes he had invested in his future, he bemoans the hardness of his lot: "So there I was, wounded and robbed; I couldn't get hold of my friends, or do anything about getting married and I couldn't stay in Madrid or go away" (194). Yet painfully as he feels this failure, he has no real appreciation that the scheme was doomed to fail by its very extravagance, not to mention its dubious moral complexion. We appreciate this fact, however, even if Pablos does not, thanks to the bemused, slightly uncomprehending tone of the foregoing remarks. Pablos has behaved culpably; his only regret is for the loss of a fortune and his cloak.

Even so persistent a rogue as Pablos has limits to his endurance. A run of bad luck removes what little charm the picaresque existence still holds for him after the fiasco
with Donna Ana, and things go from bad to worse. His ruses become increasingly desperate and unproductive, and he is finally forced to take sanctuary in a cathedral, where he joins company with a whore. They decide to go to America, "not because I was intelligent enough to see what was going to happen [the only indication we get that Pablos may have been apprehended or otherwise come to a bad end] but because I was tired and obstinate in my wickedness" (213-14). This is a marked change from his early picaresque exuberance. Pablos thus arrives at a kind of recognition that the picaresque life has offered illusory rewards. What he has thought all along was superior ingenuity and resourcefulness ("I was a cunning bastard") has turned out to be nothing more than self-deception. He admits that things "went worse [in the New World], as they always will for somebody who thinks he only has to move his dwelling without changing his life or ways." There is, however, no corresponding moral awakening. The concluding vision is of the picaro, hardened in sin and committed to a treadmill existence from which he cannot free himself, continuing to fall deeper into vice. Quevedo does not allow him the relief of repentance and conversion that Aleman permitted Guzman, preferring instead to punish sin in a far more merciless way—by making it compulsive. One is here reminded, by way of contrast, of Defoe's comparatively mild treatment of his rogues, of his tendency to allow them to emerge miraculously unspotted from lives of sin.
In broad outline, the resemblances between Grimmelshausen's *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* (1669) and *Guzmán de Alfarache* are striking. Besides the standard picaresque adventures, the most remarkable parallel is the religious conversion of the rogue and his subsequent withdrawal from the picaresque life. Grimmelshausen, however, outdoes his Spanish model in having his *picaro* turn hermit and retire from the world as well, something Aleman never inflicted on Guzman, at least in the two of three projected parts he got written. Its realism is if anything more brutal and its theology as orthodox, but because of Grimmelshausen's peculiar narrative technique we respond quite differently to Simplicissimus' adventures. Set against the background of the Thirty-Years War in Germany, Simplicissimus inevitably confronts its hero with a more disruptive state of affairs than anything Aleman imagines in Spain. The German *picaro*, early uprooted from his peasant existence, has appalling and senseless violence thrust upon his consciousness in a way that no other *picaro* has to contend with. The book is at least in part about how an ignorant youth comes to terms with experience in a time of social upheaval, when he is deprived of a chance to get his bearing and to feel his way amid recognizable objects. For this reason, Grimmelshausen depends upon the genuine naivete of his initially callow narrator, recording events he does not understand, to establish the full horror of wartime.
One marked instance of Grimmelshausen's ironic technique occurs early in the story, when Simplicissimus reports the pillaging of his supposed father's farm by a company of soldiers. Simplicissimus, who knows nothing of war or of soldiers, blandly recounts the torture inflicted upon various peasants, and coming to his "dad" observes, "my dad was the luckiest, for he with a laughing face confessed what others must out with in the midst of pains and miserable lamentations: and such honour without doubt fell to him because he was the householder. For they set him before a fire and bound him fast so that he could neither stir hand nor foot, and smeared the soles of his feet with wet salt, and this they made our old goat lick off, and so tickle him that he well nigh burst his sides with laughing. And this seemed to me so merry a thing that I must needs laugh with him for the sake of fellowship, or because I knew no better." Since Simplicissimus is only a child when this event takes place, he is unable to analyze what he witnesses. Or, perhaps more accurately, as an adult recalling childhood experience, he imitates his earlier ignorance. Whatever the reason, his attitude is one of total uncomprehension; he rather enjoys what he takes to be the rollicking fun of the scene, unaware that his "dad" can scarcely be enjoying his humiliation and the plundering of his farm. This early experience will stay with Simplicissimus, perhaps hardening him to the suffering he will subsequently both endure and in-
lict. Grimmelshausen implies that in a time of violence and cruelty so rampant that even innocent children cannot escape its effects, the youth cannot grow to manhood untainted by it. The sordidness of war is all the more plain for the child-narrator's insensitivity to it. As in Guzmán de Alfarache, the fact that the narrator is technically and logically a penitent adult at the time of narration does not significantly affect his narrative style. He projects himself imaginatively back into his condition as a youth and recreates it as it must have seemed to him at the time in all its immediacy.

Simplicissimus does not remain uninitiated for long in the corrupt practices of the world. Small wonder, he implies, that he should lose both his native innocence and all traces of the religious instruction he has received from the hermit in the woods (who later turns out to be his real father), when he is cast among hypocrites, blasphemers, and worse. He characterizes himself upon arrival at the Lord Governor's:

"Of vice I knew no more than that I had at times heard it spoken of or read of it, and if I saw any man commit such sin then was it to me a fearful and terrible thing" (52). All around him he sees that "gorging and swilling and loose living, were a daily occupation for them of substance: yet what did seem to me most terrible of all was . . . that some . . . should make of . . . their own godlessness and God's holy will, a mere jest" (53). In spite of his name, Simpli-
cissimus is a fast learner, and he comes in time to do all of these abhorred things. At the same time, he professes to desire to return to the simpler religious life he has left behind. On the occasion of a debauch at the Lord Governor's, Simplicissimus reflects, "I did even deem the poor and miserable life which my old hermit led a happy one, and heartily I wished him and myself back in our old place" (76). Of course a return to innocence is impossible for the picaro, not only because he is bodily held prisoner but more importantly because the life of court and camp exercises a power of fascination over him. As jester, he becomes a favorite of his master and has no inclination to give up his perquisites and go back to a simpler, holy life.

Like Guzmán, Simplicissimus is at some pains to convince the reader that he is not as bad as those he lives among. He views his jester's position as a special trust conferred on him to ferret out vice in other men: "now had I made it my purpose to rebuke all follies and to chastise all vanities... no guest was too exalted for me to reprove and upbraid his vices, and if there were any that shewed displeasure, then was he laughed out of countenance by the rest" (94). Also like Guzmán, Simplicissimus exercises considerable skill at self-deception in criticizing others when his own moral position is anything but exemplary. Yet he is no less effective a satirist for that reason. There need be no fundamental confusion attributed to the author for this dual role of
the *picaro*. It accords perfectly with the Spanish conception of the rogue as both vehicle for satire and thing satirized. One measure of the corrupting influence of the picaresque life (and of sin itself) is that the *picaro* for a time loses all sense of his own responsibility for his condition. He may, as Guzman and Simplicissimus do, candidly confess his crimes—"I became so godless and wicked that no villainy was too great for me to compass," Simplicissimus says (165)—but it is almost as though he were chronicling the misdeeds of someone else. For in the same breath he places the blame elsewhere: "they that should have warned and chastised me rather enticed me to all vices." Indeed, Simplicissimus has ample temptation in wartorn Germany, but he cannot call forth the *picaro*'s standard defense, that he had no childhood example to set him on the right course. Simplicissimus had thorough religious indoctrination from a genuinely holy man, and he has tossed it aside in favor of a life of dissolution. The decision to err, Grimmelshausen makes clear, was Simplicissimus' own.

In time, as all *picaros* do, Simplicissimus comes to abhor the picaresque life. At first, he admits, he does so only because he fears the inevitable consequences of his abandonment to vice: "now I did begin to take this matter to heart [he has been a male prostitute], not indeed for any fear of God or pride of conscience, but because I dreaded that I might be caught in some such trick and paid according
to my deserts" (247). Here he sounds like Pablos at a similar juncture in that picaro's tale. Eventually his conscience asserts itself, and he undergoes a conversion, which, however, proves to be shortlived. For Simplicissimus returns to his sinful ways as soon as temptation offers. But his thoughts have now been given a religious orientation, and he experiences a second, and what we take this time to be a genuine, conversion, followed by a vow to return to a hermit's life. The first abortive conversion has apparently been necessary to show him the difficulty of throwing off a settled habit of sin; greater sacrifice than he was at that point willing to make is required of him if he would remove the stains of picardia.

The judgment of Simplicissimus is thus complete: he renounces his sinful life, and in order to erase its effects he must withdraw from the world and give up his ill-gotten wealth. He cannot continue in the midst of mundane corruption and remain a contrite believer, for, it is suggested, the two courses are incompatible. Grimmelshausen is far too stern a moralist to let him have it both ways, to let the picaro save his soul and at the same time benefit from the proceeds of his crimes. In this attitude, he does not show Defoe's customary ambivalence toward the infirmities of characters whom he has endowed with many of his own motives and drives. Grimmelshausen is closer to the Spanish tradition, in which the sinner must accept the harsh consequences of
his sin, whether his doing so entails an uncompromising con-
version, as in Guzman's case, or a life of subsequent com-
pulsion to sin, as with Lazaro and Pablos.

The Spanish picaresque influence becomes markedly dimin-
ished in its chief French expression, Lesage's Gil Blas.
Though nominally an adaptation of Espinel's Marcos de Obre-
gon, Lesage's book owes little to the Spanish original be-
sides surface detail and some obvious character counterparts.
Certainly none of Espinel's moral feeling survives intact, de-
spite the fact that Gil ultimately repents of a life devoted
to sinful exploitation. The difference between Gil Blas and
his picaro ancestors is that, immoral though he becomes, he
is never very convincing as a rogue. We always feel some-
how, even when he is busy bilking a succession of masters
and displaying the picaro's covetousness of other people's
belongings as Lazaro and Pablos did, that Gil is a good man
gone temporarily bad and that he will right himself in the
end.

Gil takes to the road at the beginning of his career
like the Spanish picaoons Lesage plainly intends him to re-
semble (the story is set in Spain), and his initial behavior
seems to promise a picaresque life of pernicious but small-
scale roguery. Instead, after alternately rising and fall-
ing for a time, he begins to enjoy more ups than downs, un-
til he goes to court as Secretary to the Duke of Lerma. This
is unprecedented success indeed for a picaro, and while there
is nothing in picaresque literature expressly to prohibit it (Guzman occupies more than one high post), Gil's success dilutes the usual picaresque emphasis on survival. Only when Gil finds himself unexpectedly bounced out of office and imprisoned for intriguing do we regain a sense of picaresque instability. Throughout a good part of his story, however, Gil exercises his ambitious drive in high places; his concern is more with flattering his vanity than with filling his belly.

The difference in social sphere between Gil Bias and the Spanish picaresque entails a corresponding ethical difference. His sins are the sins of the highly placed, lusting after power, forgetting old friends, ignoring his humble family. Since such activities seem to be wholly countenanced as acceptable court behavior, Gil's fall and subsequent punishment have a kind of gratuitous quality about them. He behaves despicably, to be sure, but it is difficult to imagine how else one could act in corrupt court circles. Upon his return to court near the end of his story as a reformed man, Gil exhibits a rectitude of principles and a generousness that can only be called ludicrous in context. His fall from power seems unmerited on the grounds mentioned (he is caught in an intrigue, pimping for the Prince) and is clearly to be taken in a general way as punishment for his moral degeneration. Yet the easy morality of his subsequent religious crisis (accompanied, appropriately, by a fever) and conversion is disturbing: "My consolation was all derived from within. I
looked at wealth and honours with the eye of a dying anchor­ite; and blessed the malady which restored my soul. I ab­jured courts, politics, and the duke of Lerma. If ever my prison doors opened, it was my fixed resolve to buy a cot­tage, and live like a philosopher." Miraculously, he is saved from such an unthinkable fate by the convenient inter­vention of his patron Don Alphonso, who, in gratitude for Gil's former favors, makes him a gift of a productive estate. Gil thus faces the comfortable prospect of living out his life as a landed gentleman with a clear conscience, a design interrup­t only by his triumphant return to court in the third part of Gil Blas.

It need hardly be said that in accommodating such a con­clusion, the picaresque tradition in Gil Blas has become mu­tated almost beyond recognition. Vivienne Mylne blames Le­sage's "technical failure" on a too-close imitation of the picaresque novel, by which she means all the Spanish para­phernalia of digressions and "other excrescences." If any­thing, however, Lesage did not imitate his Spanish models closely enough to capture the "special way of feeling life" that they embody. None of Gil's actions bears the imprint of urgent picaresque morality that we remarked in Lazarillo and the rest. His story finally resolves itself into a con­ventional eighteenth-century success story in which, as Par­ker notices, Gil must fumble for his way in a world of tempt­ations before he can know genuine happiness. The emph­
asis is therefore not on sin as a corrupting force but on sin as an almost benevolent initiatory condition of the good life. Faithfully as he includes picaresque elements in his novel, Lesage disregards the picaresque attitude toward wrongdoing which unifies those elements in the picaresque novel. Missing also, for that matter, is Defoe's genuine seriousness and close authorial involvement in the problems he dramatizes, which give his works a kind of substance and immediacy that Lesage does not approach. Gil Blas finally belongs in discussions of the eighteenth-century novel of manners more rightfully than it belongs in discussions of the picaresque. In his classification of it as a "classic" picaresque novel, Stuart Miller uses conventional rather than formal grounds.

By the criteria I have set forth, the picaresque tradition in England also developed along distinctly non-Spanish lines. This fact is scarcely surprising, since the chief product of the English picaresque, Thomas Nashe's 1594 The Unfortunate Traveller, preceded all but Lazarillo de Tormes (1554) in Spain, and there is little evidence to suggest that Nashe knew even that work. Nevertheless, the book has usually been regarded as a picaresque novel. Arnold Kettle calls it "perhaps the most remarkable picaresque story in our language," and Stuart Miller treats it as a "classic example of the genre (Parker, however, gives it only passing notice in his study). The most forceful argument for classifying The Unfortunate Traveller among picaresque novels is
Fredson Bowers', wherein he minimizes the accidental Spanish elements in the tradition and credits Nashe with recognizing "the essentials of the picaresque type as it flourished in Spain." Accordingly, we have "a roguish anti-hero, who makes his way in the world by his wits," who serves more than one master and who tells his story in the first person. Further, the book surveys manners, satirizes society, and maintains a tone that is "strictly realistic" and "cynical," all within a loosely episodic framework. Responding to critics who have found one thing or another to be unpicaresque in Jack Wilton's story, Bowers reasons, "we cannot expect The Unfortunate Traveller to be a carbon copy of Lazarillo de Tormes, nor is it reasonable to demand that an English novel successfully fulfilling the major requirements of the picaresque form should be Spanish in its details." Bowers is of course perfectly right in arguing that much of what later became conventional in the picaresque novel was originally the "product of specific Spanish conditions which were largely unknown in England."54

He is less convincing, however, in his judgment that "Nashe... recognized the essentials of the picaresque type as it flourished in Spain" or that those "essentials" are to be equated with quantifiable picaresque features. There is nothing fundamentally picaresque about the vision of human experience embodied in The Unfortunate Traveller; its relevance to Defoe's novelistic practice as it is or is not pi-
caresque, is therefore limited. Jack Wilton's career does, it is true, resemble Lazaro's to the extent that both serve itinerant masters and both comment on the passing scene. Both, furthermore, inflict and suffer considerable cruelty; sin and evil abound in both works. But the respective authorial attitudes toward such experiences, insofar as they can be determined, differ greatly. Lazarillo de Tormes, I have already made clear, deals with the effects of sin upon the picaro. Corruption in that novel is seen as an active force, destroying the moral constitution of those who engage in it. The picaro matures from an innocent child into a complacently sinful adult, and he gives us ample evidence to chart his progress as he becomes increasingly committed to wickedness. Jack Wilton's scrapes with degradation leave him fundamentally unchanged. He is no more or less roguish and unscrupulous at the end of his story than at the beginning, although he has practiced countless ruses, has been all but anatomized by a greedy Jewish physician to the Pope, and has witnessed the sordid rape of Heraclide.

If evil in Nashe's novel is scarcely recognizable as a counterpart to the same element in the picaresque novel (since it is possible to know it intimately and yet to remain untainted by it), it also lacks the immediacy and urgency we noticed in Defoe's novels. Jack does, to be sure, turn tail and run after seeing Cutwolf brutally executed, vowing to live a reformed life lest the same fate should befall him: "to such
strait life did it thenceforward incite me that ere I went out of Bologna I married my courtesan, performed many alms-deeds, and hasted so fast out of the Sodom of Italy that within forty days I arrived at the King of England's camp."55 His conversion, if that is what it is, is accompanied by little of the soul-searching to which later picaresque writers subjected their picaros, or even of the turmoil that Moll Flanders and Captain Singleton experience. Instead, one suspects, Nashe saw in Jack's sudden change of heart a convenient way of winding up a sprawling narrative, giving little thought to the psychological consequences of a religious crisis. What is missing is the recognition characteristic of the picaresque novel that a man's character is formed by his actions, whether good or evil. We have no reason to suppose that Jack will remain a better man than we have seen him simply because he has been shocked by the example of an execution into an awareness of his own imminent danger. Even Defoe, whose mechanical solutions to complex moral-psychological problems are disturbing, passes at least this minimal test.

Together with some lesser-known works—notably Head and Kirkman's *English Rogue* (1665) and the anonymous *Don Tomaso* (1680)—*The Unfortunate Traveller* constitutes what there is in English of a picaresque tradition before Defoe. Little as any of these works owes to the Spanish picaresque, each resembles Defoe's works even less. The reason is that for
the strong moral stance of the Spanish narratives, Defoe and his English picaresque forerunners found divergent technical substitutes. In Nashe and the rest, witty jests, scatological incidents, and inventive action distract from the basically pointless nature of the narrative: in Bowers' words, "when we finish the work [Unfortunate Traveller], we examine our minds in vain for any total impression of life communicated by the author." In saying what he does, Bowers undercuts his arguments for reading The Unfortunate Traveller as a picaresque novel, since a "total impression of life" —or, as Frohock calls it, "a special way of feeling life" and as I have called it a "conscious design"—is just what the picaresque novel conveys. Defoe makes less of the picaresco's penchant for extravagant behavior, but his works are not therefore more serious morally than either the Spanish picaresque works or The Unfortunate Traveller. Defoe's novels are, however, more compelling because of a technique that Ian Watt calls "formal realism," which creates an illusion of authenticity and credibility to distract from their ethical indifference ("neutrality" in Watt's word). As a result, we may be entertained by the escapades of Don Tomaso or Meriton Latroon (English Rogue); we may be better people for reading Guzman's and Lazaro's stories; but we believe in the flesh-and-blood existence of Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack, and they attract us powerfully even while we have reservations about the moral universe in which they exist.
Ian Watt is not the only critic to discuss the impact of realism upon traditional picaresque materials in Defoe. Stuart Miller, who in *The Picaresque Novel* argues that the picaresque tradition embodies a vision of the world as chaos, regards *Moll Flanders* as "one of the first examples of 'realism' in Ian Watt's sense." But unlike Watt, who finds realism incompatible with picaresque experience, Miller sees no disparity between the vision of the world as chaos and Defoe's realistic technique for representing experience: "By first setting Moll into a middle-class environment and then showing her still made chaotic [i.e., picaresque] by it later, Defoe profoundly enriched the technique of the picaresque novel for projecting its central truth: chaos is universal." Furthermore, says Miller, "the tension between realistic-novel devices and picaresque-novel devices gives the book its peculiar and generalized meaning. Just as the novel combines picaresque and realistic-novel devices, so it combines the world views implied by those devices." I think, however, that an examination of *Moll Flanders* and Defoe's other major novels will show that "realistic-novel devices" are inimical to "picaresque-novel devices" and that what actually results is not a fusion of the two orders of world view but a replacement of the picaresque world view by the realistic altogether.

Although Watt barely touches upon picaresque fiction in *The Rise of the Novel*, he offers the only meaningful way I
have found of accounting for the very unpicaresque form Defoe gives to incidents and characters that would have been familiar to Aleman and Grimmelshausen. Briefly, Watt analyzes Defoe's technique of "formal realism," which he identifies as "the narrative embodiment of a premise that Defoe and Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience." What Watt says here applies to most picaresque authors as well as to Defoe. Both, in varying degrees, sense "an obligation to satisfy [their readers] with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common to other literary forms." But Defoe was the first novelist to push "formal realism" to the extremes that the technique had always potentially invited, and accordingly his works raise critical issues that had never before been raised. As Watt says, "formal realism is only a mode of presentation, and it is therefore ethically neutral: all Defoe's novels are also ethically neutral because they make formal realism an end rather than a means, subordinating any coherent ulterior significance to the illusion that the text represents the authentic lucubrations of an historical person." This, as we shall see, is precisely where Defoe's practice differs from that of his
picaresque ancestors. The works of Quevedo, Aleman, et al are not "ethically neutral"; the satire and irony they invoke are directed to the service of a clearly defined moral center.

Realism is of course a staple of the picaresque novel also, but there it tends to be limited to a means of presentation carefully subordinated to larger moral truths. Like Defoe, the picaresque novelist generally conveys these truths through believable characters acting in recognizable settings; unlike Defoe, however, he seldom attempts to create and sustain an illusion of complete historical accuracy. He informs us of the picaro's parentage and place of birth and usually names the towns through which the picaro wanders on his travels, but he otherwise expends little effort convincing us that we are in the presence of real persons descended of real persons. We are not asked to believe literally in Lazaro's sordid parentage in the same way, say, Defoe expects us to accept Moll's Newgate birth and subsequent residence with foster parents or Captain Singleton's infant kidnapping. A primary means of lending credibility to the events Defoe narrates is his pretense at documentation. Should we wonder why a reformed thief would want to hide her identity, for example, Moll tells us that "My True Name is so well known in the Records, or Registers at Newgate, and the Old-Baily, and there are some things of such Consequence still depending there, relating to my particular Conduct, that is is not to be ex-
pected I should set my Name, or the Account of my Family to this Work."[^9] She seems to exist historically, that is, and to have included only a few titillating incidents from her eventful life in the present story. The gossip's device of pretending to say less than one could say, thereby implying further complexities that the narrator does not choose to reveal, helps Defoe to preserve the illusion of verifiable truth.

Defoe ensured belief in his narratives in other ways, chiefly by controlling the narrative voice so that, at its best, nothing escapes Moll's or Jack's lips that cannot believably be ascribed to the kind of person we know each to be. Even the most controversial matter in the books, the Puritan commentary, finds ready acceptance on the level of narrative credibility, whatever ultimate critical problems it may pose. We have no trouble believing that the likes of Moll or Jack would be capable of the pious outbursts and excesses of guilty self-prostration that both indulge in. Unfortunately, however, our complete faith in the psychological rightness of the religious themes obscures some fundamental doctrinal inconsistencies and contradictions. Defoe so completely surrounds his ideas about sin and redemption with the living, breathing presence of the human being expressing them that his ideas become only an aspect of characterization, springing from the same depths as Moll's materialism and her shrewd business sense. Both orders of response, one sus-
pects, existed within Defoe himself; Moll cannot resolve her various dilemmas (among them the conflicting claims of spirit and flesh) because her author was not able to do so. It is a tribute to Defoe's narrative art that the doctrinal inconsistencies seem to be located in Moll's mind rather than in Defoe's, but inconsistencies they nonetheless remain. The very convincing way in which they are dramatized precludes their being resolved satisfactorily. As Mark Schorer points out, Defoe had no technique that would have enabled his underworld narrators to stay within the limits of their own experience and sophistication and yet point (perhaps through irony) to the larger truths latent in their stories.

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Notes to Chapter I


7Frohock, 44.

8Ulrich Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach," PMLA, 89 (1974), 244, observes, "Genuinely picaresque narrative is, from a formal standpoint, a good deal more subtle and ambiguous than earlier critics and literary historians found it to be, perhaps because in our post-Jamesian awareness of point of view we are more interested in such subtleties and ambiguities. As a result, the narrative function of autobiographical and confessional forms has become a significant subject of critical investigation."


12 Frohock, 45.

13 E. M. W. Tillyard, The Epic Strain in the English Nov­

14 Frohock, 44.

15 Parker, p. 110.

16 Rousseau, 1889.

17 Boucê, 76.

18 Atkinson, 19.


20 Lazarillo de Tormes, anon., in Two Spanish Picaresque
Novels, trans. and intro. Michael Alpert (Baltimore: Pen­guin, 1969), p. 25. All subsequent quotations from Laza­rillo are taken from this edition and are indicated in my
text by page number.

21 Francisco Gomez de Quevedo, La Vida del Buscon, in Al­pert trans. See my n. 20. Subsequent references are to this
dition.

22 Boucê, 77.

23 Sherman Eoff, "The Picaresque Psychology of Guzman de

24 Ronald Paulson, "The Fool-knave Relation in Picaresque
Satire," Rice University Studies, 51 (1965), 68.

25 Alter, p. 145.

26 Watt, p. 94.

27 Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative," 245, dis­
cusses this matter briefly under the heading "Implied parody
of other fictional types (romance) and of the picaresque it­
self."


29 Gerber and Gemmett, 189.

30 J. M. Cohen, Introduction to Fernando de Rojas, The
Spanish Bawd (La Celestina) (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964),
p. 9.
Frank Wadleigh Chandler, The Literature of Roguery (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907), II, 285-6, in his chapter on Defoe, cites the numerous English translations of Spanish picaresque novels at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Quevedo's works came out in 1707, 1709, and 1742, Guzman appeared in a new translation from the French, and "even 'Lazarillo,' unwearied by its sixteenth and seventeenth century vogue, reappeared in 1708 and 1726." Chandler concludes, "Defoe did not want for Spanish picaresque matter had he cared to utilize it." Anne Katherine Kaler, in her dissertation on Roxana, also surveys the English translations of picaresque fiction by Defoe's time, and finds "substantial documentation for the international familiarity with the picaresque genre" (n. 11, p. 11).


Anson C. Piper, "The Bready Paradise of Lazarillo de Tormes," Hispania, 44 (1961), 269, argues for an "interpretation of the chest as a religious symbol, an altar erected to a beneficent god whose earthly minister is a cruel and niggardly hypocrite."


Grass, 198.


IV, 341. Subsequent quotations from Guzman are from this translation and are indicated in my text parenthetically by page number.

43 Parker, Literature and the Delinquent, pp. 33-36.


46 May, 323.

47 Parker details them at length in Literature and the Delinquent, pp. 79-81.

48 Parker says with assurance in Literature and the Delinquent, p. 80, that "Aleman, if he had written his Third Part, would without any shadow of a doubt have made Guzman a pilgrim and, after that, a hermit. The line of succession from Guzman de Alfarache to Simplicissimus is thus unbroken, and this expansion of Guzman's delinquent career is the only logical conclusion to Aleman's own manner of presenting it."


52 Parker, Literature and the Delinquent, p. 121.


54 Bowers, 37, 19.


56 Bowers, 26.
57 Miller, pp. 53-4.

58 Watt, p. 32.


Chapter II: Captain Singleton

After observing that "Captain Singleton is something of a picaro whose chequered career of roguery and piracy is rounded off by a genuine spiritual conversion," Shiv.K. Kumar depreciates the importance of the picaresque tradition as an aid in criticizing Defoe's novel: "a more rewarding approach to the understanding of this novel should be an assessment of Defoe's concern with moral, ethical, and religious values." Similarly, Arthur W. Secord finds "picaresque influence" present in Captain Singleton's "half-cynical delight in his dishonesty" and "something of the boldness and zest for wickedness of the picaros" but concludes that "these traces are slight, however, and are quickly replaced by greater moral seriousness." Of interest here is the attitude implied toward picaresque fiction as something lacking in "moral, ethical, and religious values" or as something lacking "moral seriousness." Neither judgment, as we have already seen, applies to those works at the center of the tradition, to Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzmán de Alfarache, and La Vida del Buscón or to Grimmelshausen's Simplissimus. They are nothing if not records of intensely moral and religious experience.

Both critics quoted above sense something unpicaresque
about Captain Singleton or at least suggest that its pecu-
liar qualities are best accounted for on grounds other than pi-
caresque influence. I could not agree more with that gen-
eral point. Where Kumar and Secord are misleading, however,
is in tracing Defoe's divergence from the picaresque to his
superior "moral seriousness" and to his "concern with moral,
ethical, and religious values." If indeed these qualities
are present in the novel, their presence should urge us to
read the novel in the light of the picaresque tradition.
The point is, of course, that neither Kumar nor Secord has a
clear idea of what belongs to the picaresque tradition, yet
each is willing to dismiss its claims to seriousness. Each
means to say that Defoe's preoccupation with the explicit
matters of religious conversion and repentance is more overt
in Captain Singleton than is the treatment of similar mate-
rial in most picaresque novels. But even that distinction is
more apparent than real, for, as I have demonstrated, Aleman
and Grimmelshausen bring at least as much creative energy and
moral fervor to bear upon Guzmán's and Simplicissimus' spir-
itual conditions as Defoe does upon Bob's. The essential
difference between Captain Singleton and any of the major pi-
caresque works is that Defoe's book, for all its Puritan em-
phases, does not embody a view of life and human behavior, es-
pecially sinful behavior, that is in any fundamental way in-
formed by clearly signaled spiritual values. As a result,
the hero's moralizing, when he is moved to it at the end of
his story, is all the more conspicuous for its inclusion in an alien moral and intellectual environment. This is not to say that Defoe is a hypocrite or that he did not take his Puritan faith seriously. All internal evidence, as well as his preoccupation with religious themes, suggests that he did. Nonetheless, his moral universe is founded upon values of a far more pragmatic, expedient sort than is true of those of Aleman and the rest. These values blunt the edge of Defoe's instruments of moral justice and blur the harsh picaresque opposition between good and evil.

As much as anything, the difference is that between a Roman Catholic world view and a Protestant, Puritan one. The Spanish picaresque world is a Catholic one, wherein good and evil, heaven and hell stand as living realities, as active forces to be almost bodily contended with. The emphasis there is on absolutes—either a man is saved or he is damned; there are no degrees or colorations of damnation. In such a universe, of course, the possibility of confession and redemption always exists; no sin is so heinous as to place a man utterly and irrevocably beyond the pale of salvation. But at the same time, mitigating arguments about motive and intention have little force. They are finally irrelevant in a strictly Catholic context. In Captain Singleton, we find ourselves in the midst of a different theological setting. The insistence on absolute qualities of good and evil, as fixed points of reference in an unchanging world, is played
down in favor of behavioral questions of right and wrong in a changing world. In surroundings like those that Defoe offers us in his adventure novels, a practical code emerges by which issues are decided according to individual cases. Behavior assumes primary interest, irrespective of abstract issues of good and evil. While eternal and orthodox Christian values are recognized and always present in the background, the real center of interest is the hero and the moral decisions he must make in order to deal with a frequently hostile world or with one that he regards as hostile.

When a hostile world drives a man to sin, as it so often does in Captain Singleton, his response must be shown to be understandable in the context in which it is presented, if not entirely justified by it. Hence the enormous interest in "case divinity" or casuistry. Although George A. Starr does not analyze Captain Singleton in his book on Defoe's use of casuistry (except to mention it in passing in an appendix), he clearly intends by the generality of his remarks on Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack, The Journal of the Plague Year, and Roxana to include the earlier novel in his thesis as well: "[Defoe] and his varied personae feel compelled to explain themselves--to spell out not only what they are doing but why--and in this respect they show a marked family resemblance. Confronted on the one hand with novel and trying predicaments, and on the other hand with inherited rules of conduct that often seem irrelevant, contradictory, or in-
adequate, Defoe and his characters alike are naturally drawn (if not driven) to casuistry. In Captain Singleton, as in Defoe's other novels, we have a basically good man forced by circumstances clearly beyond his control (for instance, he is kidnapped when yet an infant) to fend for himself. Also like Defoe's other heroes, Captain Bob is admirably well suited to fending for himself; he is the kind of man who would have been good at anything. One of the central rhetorical problems of the novel, in fact, is to convince us that so amazingly resourceful and capable a man as Singleton really needs to exert himself in socially unacceptable ways in order to survive. Rather inexplicably, Singleton, throughout the story regards (and Defoe plainly also regards) his own hold on life as so tenuous that it justifies any means necessary to strengthen it. Where such means conflict with traditional Christian values, as they inevitably do at almost every point, he must reconcile the two orders of requirements. Here casuistry comes in.

The picaresque authors were themselves no strangers to the art of casuistry, despite Starr's somewhat oversimplified distinction between their works and Defoe's on such grounds: "To some extent [Defoe's characters] simply are what they do, and to this extent they differ little from the traditional figures of roguery, voyaging, and romance. Yet for all that they do and undergo, Defoe's heroes and heroines spend a great deal of time weighing their actions."
It should be clear from my analyses of the major picaresque novels in the preceding chapter that rogues no more "are what they do" than Defoe's heroes, even in the way Starr means. That is, as narrators they are very much aware of their own motives, or at least they offer extensive self-justification. There is, however, a difference in the respective functions of casuistry. In the picaresque novel, we have narrators making cases for their own errant behavior as a device for revealing the operation of sin upon the sinner. The very act of narration itself, with the speaker's conscious decisions to leave out or to include various material, provides an ironic commentary on the life of the picaro. Aleman, Quevedo, and the author of Lazarillo clearly intend us to see that the excuses of Guzman, Pablos, and Lazaro (about disadvantaged childhoods, poor parental examples, lack of education) are excuses and nothing more. Each picaro makes a conscious decision to corrupt himself, and the blame is clearly his own. The cynical tone of his delivery, as well as the manifest discrepancy between what he says and what he does, further undercuts his self-serving efforts. In Captain Singleton, flagrant as this same discrepancy is, we see no indication that the narrator is not to be judged absolutely right in extenuating his own sins. Nothing in his tone or in the conclusion of the novel—the two critical locations, we recall, of picaresque revelation—suggests that Singleton is seriously criticized for being "much more happy than I
deserve."5 (Whether he has reason to be we shall see shortly.) Bob is not exposed ironically even though Secord finds "a half-cynical delight in [Singleton's] dishonesty,"6 thereby implying that Defoe uses Singleton's tone consciously to signal a judgment of him. Except in isolated and clearly marked cases, the tone in Defoe is not structural in the way it frequently is in the picaresque novel. Because Defoe's casuistry is not alloyed with informing irony in Captain Singleton, one is inclined to ascribe to the author the moral ambiguity that develops, rather than to interpret it as picaresque dramatization of evil in action.

From the beginning, Captain Bob as narrator displays the picaro's seemingly conflicting impulses to boast of his wrongdoing and to excuse it. The two strands are not separable, as they are in the picaresque novel, except in certain obvious and isolated instances, because Bob's narrative strategy springs from the instincts and emotions of his author, unmediated by a conscious technique for focusing on its moral issues. Bob initially characterizes himself as a picaro, pointing up elements in his own character and background that remind us of his rogue counterparts. Emphasizing his rootlessness and lack of family advantage, Bob tells us that he has known no other parent than his "good Gypsy Mother," from whom he learns that in infancy he was kidnapped from his real parents by a band of professional child-thieves. He lives with this admirable person until he is six, when she
is hanged "for some of her worthy Actions no doubt," leaving him too young "to be perfected in the Strolling Trade." One is reminded of Pablos' disreputable parents in La Vida del Buscón, who share the same fate as Singleton's "good Gypsy Mother," thereby providing that Spanish picaro with much the same excuse that Bob brings forth in his own defense: namely, that little more than arrant roguery should be expected of one reared among thieves. His entire childhood education seems to have consisted of the Parish School minister admonishing him "to be a good boy; and that tho' I was but a poor Boy, if I minded my Book, and served God, I might make a good Man" (2).

Understandably, such instruction is lost when, shortly, Bob is bound to the avaricious pilot of a Portuguese merchant ship on its way to the East Indies. Like the conventional picaro, he thus assumes his role as servant to a cruel master, whom it will be his self-appointed task to outsmart and bilk whenever possible, at the same time that he disingenuously gains that master's trust. Also like the picaro, he makes shockingly brazen admissions of his guilt: "In short, I learnt several material things . . . among the Portuguese: I learnt particularly to be an errant Thief and a bad Sailor." Of his master, he says, "in Requital for his mistaken Confidence, I found Means to secure, that is to say, to steal about twenty Moydores"; of his master's high opinion of his diligence, he says, "I was diligent indeed, but I was very
far from honest; however, they thought me honest, which by the Way, was their very great Mistake" (5). The pride Bob Singleton takes in his work is not unlike Guzmán's or Lazaro's, both of whom congratulate themselves on their slipperiness. In Singleton's own case, "the Captain seldom ordered any thing out of the Ship's stores . . . but I snipt some of it for my own share."

In striking resemblance to Guzman et al, Bob shows an acute sense of injustice when he is on the receiving end of it. He is curiously offended, for example, when he discovers that his master does not intend to turn over to him the half-moydore a month allotted him as salary by the Captain--this despite the fact that he has just admitted to "snipping" his own share on the sly. He has, by his further admission, had ample "Opportunity particularly to take care of my Master's Man [i.e., himself], and to furnish my self with sufficient Provisions to make me live much better than the other People in the Ship" (6). So loudly does he protest the injustice that he nearly gets himself carried before the Inquisition as a Turk, and only then does he hold his peace. His judgment at this stage of his story is as poor as anything Pablos or Guzmán was guilty of, but Bob has an unpicaresque facility for escaping its worst consequences. Later on, although he changes little with advancing age, he does acquire a counselor in the person of Quaker William to overrule his wrongheaded decisions.
While Bob seems unaware of the patent ironies in his moral outrage, he nonetheless has an answer ready for charges against him of corruption should any be lurking in the reader's mind. As he is quick to remind us, "I had no Sense of Virtue or Religion upon me. I had never heard much of either, except what a good old Parson [presumably the one at the Parish School] said to me when I was a Child of about Eight or Nine Years old" (6). Lacking religious instruction and finding himself among scoundrels, he calls up a favorite picaresque defense and invokes "the English Proverb, He that is Shipp'd with the Devil must sail with the Devil; I was among them, and I manag'd my self as well as I could" (7). He does no more, he tells us, than act as necessity dictates; he is no more corrupt than the corrupt world. Singleton has the further consolation that his career is being dictated by fate: "Fate certainly thus directed my Beginning, knowing that I had Work which I had to do in the World, which nothing but one hardened against all Sense of Honesty or Religion, could go thro'." A bit later the ship's Gunner "takes me by the Hand, and looking in the Palm of my Hand, and into my Face too, very gravely, My Lad, says he, thou art born to do a World of Mischief; thou hast commenced Pyrate very young, but have a Care of the Gallows, young Man; have a Care, I say, for thou wilt be an eminent Thief" (25). If it is in the stars and in his palm, a mere man can do little to avoid his destiny, Singleton implies; at the very least he is
guilty of no more than befits one "in this State of Original Wickedness" (6-7).

Autobiographical detail of the sort just examined constitutes one of the strongest arguments for regarding Defoe's novels as picaresque. To equate the use Defoe makes of such material with its use by picaresque authors, however, is misleading. In both cases, family and educational background functions first informationally; in a conventional narrative that begins at the beginning, a first-person narrator must satisfy the reader's curiosity about his origins. In both cases, furthermore, background material functions casuistically, to provide both a context and motive for the rogueries to follow. The difference is in the relative responses invited by Defoe and the picaresque authors and the extent to which the technique is a conscious one. Captain Bob, like Lazarillo and the rest, implies more than he says. As George A. Starr accurately perceives, "Details [in Defoe] that appear to be introduced for their psychological, social, or economic import, or for the sake of narrative realism, frequently involve covert appeals for sympathy as well; their function is not only descriptive or analytic, but also rhetorical." Bob does not, importantly, ever say that his wrongdoing should be excused because he was brought up by a thief. Such an idea would be repugnant to the Puritan conscience of Defoe, and even at his most depraved Bob never argues that wrong is right. At the same time, Bob sets be-
fore the reader his sordid childhood in all its immediacy, letting the facts speak for themselves. He does not have to tell us that temptation was too strong to resist, because we make that acknowledgment for him. If it could be shown that Defoe planted casuistical arguments in Bob's story to discredit him as a narrator, then his claims as a conscious artist could be established. In fact, Defoe gives himself away by his very restraint and inhibitions. By always allowing Bob to retain a shred of self-respect and dignity even when making the most damaging admissions, Defoe betrays the closeness of his own point of view to Bob's. The kind of irony that Novak and Koonce (see my pages 12-14) see in Defoe's work presupposes an authorial distance that just is not there. Had Defoe been able to bring himself to depict Bob as wholly degraded prior to his conversion, then we could have accepted both the substance and the manner of Bob's narrative revelations as critical commentaries on his own moral condition.

That is just what we do in the picaresque novel. The kinds of admissions and disclosures of wrongdoing made by Lazaro and Pablos differ only nominally from those of Bob. In the manner of such revelations, however, the contrast is striking. Though no less able a casuist or self-apologist than Bob, Lazaro undercuts his own credibility by the very exaggeration and extremity of his narrative demeanor. He is so categorical in condemning all about him, and so unwilling to equate his own abuses with those of the world at large,
that he makes the discrepancy obvious by implication. The element of exaggeration in the picaresque, which is usually explained as a primitive comic or entertainment device, works structurally to regulate our response to the material so treated. In place of Bob’s realistic but sordid childhood, Lazaro offers an improbable account of moral and civil lapses clearly not to be explained as verisimilitude. In remarks that Defoe echoes, albeit unknowingly ("He that is Shipp’d with the Devil must sail with the Devil"), Pablos expresses the picaro’s philosophy: "'when in Rome, do as the Romans do,' says the proverb, and how right it is."

He goes ahead on the strength of this wisdom to embrace picaresque villainy in all its ugliness, not for a minute troubled by possible ethical or legal consequences. Captain Bob, in contrast, portrays himself as an unwilling participant in crime, at least fundamentally so, despite his forwardness to be as bad as the next man. He implies, that is to say, that his inclination is really to do otherwise if only adverse fate and a low birth had not predetermined the course of life for him. By confessing his own acts to be sins and by deploring them as such, Bob enlists himself on the side of the moral reader, disowning his behavior as not belonging to his essential moral being.

Bob from the start shows promise of becoming a desperate sinner, then, and the autobiography of his youth seems designed in part to mitigate some of the blame. This elab-
orate rhetorical ploy, for all its psychological rightness, is undercut in an unexpected way by the events that follow. Eager as Bob is to rush headlong toward certain damnation, he has no opportunity to do so once he finds himself exiled along with several crewmates on a remote island as punishment for inciting a mutiny. He shows himself willing to embrace crime as a solution to the immediate problem of escaping certain death in a hostile region: "I should make no scruple to take the first Shivo I came at" (25). But for reasons that are never made entirely clear, that resolution cannot be put into effect until much later in the story. Bob thus compromises himself gratuitously through his initial proclamations of guilt and through urging criminal acts when no necessity, or even occasion, exists for performing them. Instead of turning pirates, the crew begins a long trek through the savage wilds of Central Africa, which journey takes up roughly half the book. Money, it turns out, is free for the taking in the form of rich veins of gold just waiting to be worked and enormous elephant tusks lying abandoned waiting to be picked up. Aside from shooting an occasional native and scaring many more, the would-be pirates behave more like tourists than lawbreakers until they return to civilization rich men.

In the midst of the long African adventure, Defoe includes a scene that has important implications for Bob's moral condition. As if in anticipation of later events, Single-
ton turns thoughtful after seeing a (to him) disgusting paga-n religious display. In abject gratitude to Singleton's party for sparing their lives, several captured natives prostrate themselves before their conquerors, "and rising up again, made the oddest, wildest Cries that ever I heard." Singleton declares, "I think it was the first time in my Life that ever any religious Thought affected me; but I could not refrain from some Reflections, and almost Tears, in considering how happy it was, that I was not born among such Creatures as these, and was not so stupidly ignorant and barbarous. Even though the effect of his meditation is not lasting—"this soon went off again, and I was not troubled again with any Qualms of that Sort for a long time after" (61)—we now have Singleton characterized as one susceptible to good religious influence should any come his way. In a conventional story of sin and reformation, this incident would have been a signal to the reader that, although the hero continues to fall deeper into sin, he is doing so as a precondition of his ultimate repentance. Such a pattern, for example, operates in *Moll Flanders*.

Defoe dulls the effect of his various clues and rhetorical devices by suspending Bob in a moral vacuum in which he refrains from sin only because his energies are channeled into surviving in a hostile natural environment. Here, without the usual temptation of money, the hero does not maneuver himself into the moral dilemmas familiar from the other nov-
els. Here he can kill and plunder to his heart's content, and as long as his victims are illiterate natives he recognizes no moral breach. I would not criticize Defoe for being no more humane than his age. I wonder, however, why he should have thrust Bob into a physical and moral environment so clearly foreign to his usual ethical preoccupations.

Secord offers a plausible explanation: "the sensational scheme of traversing the unexplored regions of Africa lured [Defoe] away from what . . . appears to have been his original plan, and itself became the center of interest." In his "original plan," if we can reconstruct it, Defoe apparently meant for Bob to fall into piracy from necessity, as a way of saving his life after he is abandoned on the island. All evidence seems to point to such a reading, both the introductory passages of careful motivation that we have examined and the initial realities of Bob's situation. Although Bob seems a bit overeager for adventure for its own sake, his plan is not unreasonable in the context in which it is presented. As he says, "we must be Pyrates, or anything, to get fairly out of this cruel Place" (29). According to the doctrine of necessity that, as Novak shows, Defoe espoused at least part of the time, desperate circumstances require desperate measures. Surely the extremity of the physical situation in which Bob finds himself justifies even piracy in the name of survival—or so, one imagines, Defoe might have reasoned. Hence the resolve "to cruize for any
thing we could see." Had this not unthinkable plan been put into immediate effect, it would have forestalled the larger question of Bob's motives. But nearly a hundred pages elapse before he resorts to piracy, after he has shown that he can make it without undue dishonesty, and then he does so more for reasons of diversion and profit than of survival, having squandered his fortune and impoverished himself. One is tempted to overlook the moral difficulties that Defoe thus betrays himself into as the price necessary for a marvelously creative travel account, surely one of the most interesting in eighteenth-century literature. But ultimately we have to recognize that the ethical impact of the novel is seriously compromised, probably in a way Defoe was not aware of. One always hesitates to accuse so compelling a writer as Defoe of sloppiness, but this is one time when some revision, to bring the two halves of the novel into line, would have helped enormously to clarify its statement.

In the second part of Captain Singleton, Defoe finally justifies Bob's early half-boast, half-apology, "I was preparing, and growing up apace, to be as wicked as any Body could be, or perhaps ever was" (6). Through sheer daring and total abandon, he exerts his leadership over a band of pirates that eventually becomes the bane of English, Dutch, and Spanish shipping. Defoe, however, is careful also to suggest traces of finer qualities in Bob than those the Captain customarily displays. The Captain's complete trust in
Quaker William, who not only counsels prudence but humanness, is in his favor, as is his premature apprehensiveness for his soul, long before he truly desires salvation. In a fashion strongly reminiscent of Robinson Crusoe, Singleton is brought momentarily to fear his own damnation when, during a violent storm at sea, he hears "the terriblest Clap of Thunder . . . that was ever heard by Mortals" (194). Even in his hardened state, Bob "began to feel the Effects of that Horrour which I know since much more of, upon the just Reflection on my former Life." He fears "that God had taken me into his immediate Disposing, and had resolved to be the Executor of his own Vengeance" (195). Again, his terror is short lived; once the danger is past, "we were soon the same irreligious hardened Crew that we were before, and I among the rest" (196).

When Captain Singleton's apprehensiveness for the welfare of his soul returns, as it predictably must (though not, interestingly, until he has amassed so great a fortune through his crimes that he can leave off "the cruising life" without financial regret), his friend and counselor Quaker William is there to orchestrate his religious conversion. In his capacity as friend and confidant to the hero-narrator, William Walters resembles Moll's "Governess" and Roxana's kind Quaker. But in his more important role as religious adviser and spiritual spokesman, William resembles neither so much as he does Colonel Jack's "tutor," and even there
the resemblance is not complete. Quaker William, whose comic possibilities Defoe also explores tentatively, assumes a kind of authority in the novel unparalleled in the other works in this study. With his biting wit, "the dry gibing creature" is far more attractive than Captain Bob himself; coming from his glib mouth, patent rationalization is more credible than if it were ascribed to the rough, uneducated Singleton. James Sutherland calls William "a casuist of the first order, a rogue with a dry humor whose moral sensitivity is active in certain areas, but completely anesthetized in others." 10 This is an apt assessment of William, whose "agreeable, insinuating Behaviour" wins Bob over and makes him dependent morally and physically on the Quaker.

Quaker William enjoys an ambiguous moral position in the novel. As a wily, resourceful, imaginative captive (he comes aboard the pirate ship of which Singleton is a crew-member at gun point), William, ostensibly a surgeon, is endlessly useful in planning and executing maritime depredations on Spanish, Dutch, and English merchant ships. But as a devout Quaker, and man of strict conscience, he avoids direct participation in bloodshed, even when it is an immediate consequence of operations he has directed. His wit only underscores the ambiguity, as is revealed in an exchange between William and the Captain (not Singleton at this point in the story) shortly after William comes aboard. William having ingratiated himself with the Captain, the Captain talks of
admitting him to full status as a partner in crime. William will go only so far: "I shall make my self as useful to thee as I can; but thou knowest it is not my Business to meddle when thou art to fight." The Captain, suspecting William of scheming to save his neck and still have a cut of the profits, says, "No, no . . . but you may meddle a little when we share the Money." William's sly response: Those things are useful to furnish a Surgeon's Chest, says William, and smiled; but I shall be moderate" (144).

While as a comic creation Quaker William is undoubtedly a masterstroke, the very effectiveness of his characterization undercuts what Defoe clearly saw as his chief role in the novel, that of arbiter of religious and moral questions. Not that a wry sense of humor and a gift for the felicitous wisecrack disqualify one as a figure of moral authority. The question naturally arises, however, whether his wit covers some fairly shoddy motives. One wonders, for example, about the extent to which William's aversion to crime springs from religious scruples, as he claims, and the extent to which he simply hates to sully his hands when he can get others to do his dirty work for him. He holds to the letter of his religious duties, stoutly resisting any pressure to join in the piratical mayhem and violence. But he surely violates the spirit of any proscriptions against violence, for as a behind-the-scenes maneuverer William demonstrates considerable resourcefulness in directing the activities of the gang. His
very presence among them, although officially constrained, is more willing than otherwise. Bob senses that he is "not very averse to go along with" his captors, but William insists that it be made to look as though he was abducted forcibly. He goes to the extreme of demanding that Bob secure a sworn statement from his captain attesting to his having been kidnapped, should he later be charged with desertion. Again, William's consummate circumspection and cunning do not in themselves work against him in his moral capacity, but they point to deeper motives of evasiveness and dishonesty that put one on guard against him.

One who manages as successfully as William, that is, cannot but arouse our suspicion, especially in view of the magnitude of the theological argument that issues from his mouth. George A. Starr says rightly, "William's prudence is obvious, but the problem is whether he sacrifices the dove's innocence to the serpent's wisdom. . . . On the whole, we are made to feel that the innocence he preserves is little better than what Singleton calls a 'quaking quibble,' a contrivance at crime that shares its profits without its risks." What is disturbing is that William offers, and Captain Singleton accepts from him, spiritual guidance that in the context can only be interpreted as genuine and admirable. No one to my knowledge has argued that William's part is to be read ironically, that he is to be criticized by authorial implication for the facility of his commentary in direct op-
position to his overt behavior. The only other conclusion, and the one I would urge, is that Defoe seriously offers William's character and beliefs as desirable patterns; he presents William as one in whose superior learning and experience Singleton does well to acquiesce. I have been able to detect nothing in the novel to suggest any other reading, although I realize the seriousness of my charge in terms of the novel's stature as a conscious work of art. My analysis of the concluding section of the novel, wherein Quaker William assumes his role as religious counselor, will, I hope, establish the grounds for my judgment.

William begins the work of saving Bob's soul (his own, presumably, already being safe) upon their joint retirement from "the cruising life." William engages the Captain in a dialogue about his soul, representing "that there was something to be thought of beyond this Way of Living." Singleton would jest William out of this unaccustomed serious mood, but the Quaker speaks so persuasively of the need for repentance that Singleton's own latent fears (hinted at earlier in the novel; see my pages 107-8 and 112) are brought to the surface. An immediate obstacle occurs to him: "Why, says [Singleton], did you ever know a Pirate repent?" William disposes of this qualm by remarking that even at the gallows it is not too late, and they proceed to the present business of extricating themselves from their trade: "we must never talk of repenting while we continue Pirates." There is more
to reversing a life of crime than merely desiring to end it, however, and considerable maneuvering, both physical and spiritual, is necessary if they are to secure both their worldly goods and their souls.

Defoe can be praised for recognizing the harsh realities of the situation confronting William and Captain Bob as they set about converting their prodigious wealth into portable form and removing it from under the vigilant eyes of their fellow crewmembers, who might expect a share of it. But the order of events casts Singleton's new pious resolve in a fairly questionable light. To appreciate the impact on the reader of what happens at the end of the novel, we must realize that Defoe asks us to suspend in our minds Singleton's promise to William "to break off this wretched Course, and I'll begin there with you with all my Heart" while the two enter into an elaborate scheme to bilk their companions and enrich themselves. There is seemingly no recognition on the part either of Singleton or Defoe that the Captain's concern for the proceeds of his crimes undercuts whatever high-minded intention he may have of removing the stain of those same crimes. Perhaps this is one of those places where critics of Defoe would find structural irony, a reading they might support by arguing that Defoe cannot have been unaware of the flagrant contradictions in the passages just cited. If this were so, one would expect some kind of subsequent indication that Singleton's vow to reform and abandon his life
of crime so he can repent in earnest was a sham. Instead, Defoe seems to endorse it implicitly, by allowing Singleton to succeed and ultimately to find peace of mind into the bargain.

A close reading of the last ten pages or so of the novel, which recount the Captain's religious crisis and the eventual resolution of it through the helpful ministrations of Quaker William, will demonstrate the unlikelihood of informing irony in Defoe's narrative technique in Captain Singleton. After spending several pages minutely describing William's clever scheme for seizing the "Mass of ill-gotten Wealth we had got together," for outsmarting one of their accomplices, and for landing the booty safely ashore at Basso, Singleton hardly draws a breath before he begins protesting his disregard for the money: "I began to be sensible of the Crime of getting of [the money] in such a Manner as I had done, that I had very little Satisfaction in the Possession of it . . . . I had no Expectation of keeping it, nor much Desire" (263). This mood grows upon him, and thoughts of repentance "engross'd my Hours, and in a Word, I grew very sad." In an uncharacteristic profession of disgust with material things, Singleton says, "As to the Wealth I had, which was immensely great, it was all like Dirt under my Feet; I had no Value for it, no Peace in the Possession of it, no great Concern about me for the leaving of it" (265). The sentiment, and even the genuine reaction, thus expressed
is understandable in one who has just come through the perils of a criminal career. The problem I have with it stems from its juxtaposition with, for example, descriptions of their disguises as "long Vests of Silk, a Gown or Robe of English Crimson Cloth, very fine and handsome" as though such items were quite other than "Dirt under [his] feet." It is of course conceivable that, as he says, Singleton has had a genuine change of heart and come to despise what he formerly relished. His characteristic love of finery, however, betrays a continuing interest in the things of this world, his protestations of unconcern for them to the contrary.

If we reject irony as an explanation of the contradictions just outlined, as I am inclined to do, we still must account both for the appearance of irony and for the presence of those contradictions. By denying that they are evidence of conscious ironic technique, we do not explain them away. Ian Watt suggests a shift in perspective, a change in attitude between Defoe's time and our own to explain "the fact that a novel which was not intended ironically [Moll Flanders] should be seen in such a light by so many modern readers." Watt identifies two products of our replacement of eighteenth-century attitudes by modern ones: "the guilt feelings which are now fairly widely attached to economic gain as a motive; and the view that protestations of piety are suspect anyway, especially when combined with a great attention to one's own economic interest." As Watt shows,
"Defoe was innocent of either attitude."\textsuperscript{13} We finally have to accept the fact that Defoe was not disturbed by Singleton's economic preoccupation and that he sensed no fundamental conflict between such a preoccupation and genuine piety. On these grounds, Defoe's position is unassailable. What troubles one more deeply, of course, is that Singleton goes beyond what even Defoe regarded as legitimate economic endeavor\textsuperscript{14} and engages in acts which Defoe clearly regarded as crimes. In doing so, Singleton accumulates a weight of sin that can only be atoned for by an agonizing process of repentance and reformation. One expects the ethical machinery of the novel to focus on the uncompromising terms of salvation, making clear that a just and honest detestation of the crime must precede repentance of it. In the normal course of events, too, if the penitent is to be entirely consistent, he must come to despise the proceeds of his crimes, as Singleton in fact claims, though unconvincingly, to do. Instead of focusing on the terms of salvation, however, the ensuing conference between William and Bob seems designed to justify the preservation of as much wealth as possible and the preservation of it in such a way as not to violate the dictates of conscience. Rather appallingly, a happy resolution of this problem is in fact reached. Surely such tactics represent casuistry in the negative sense of the word.

Captain Singleton's case is not settled without some intervening spiritual agitation on his part. After William
and the Captain have eluded their jealous shipmates at Bas-
saro, Singleton decides that the outlook for his spiritual
condition is not bright. He begins to worry "that there was
something beyond all this, that the present Time was the Time
of Enjoyment, but that the Time of Account approached; that
the Work that remain'd was gentler than the Labour past, viz.
Repentance, and that it was high Time to think of it" (265).
After claiming to detest the wealth he has spent years accum-
ulating and has salvaged through considerable hardship, he
finds himself bothered by two things: first, whether God
will not punish them for their crimes—"Do you think if [God]
be a righteous Judge, he will let us escape with the Plunder,
as we may call it, of so many innocent People . . . and not
call us to an Account for it before we can get to Europe,
where we pretend to enjoy it?" (266). The resourceful Wil-
liam makes short work of this misgiving, reasoning "that if
we consider the Justice of God, we have no Reason to expect
any Protection." But the ways of Providence being beyond
man's comprehension, "so we may hope for Mercy still upon
our Repentance, and we know not how good he may be to us"
(266).

Singleton's second worry is more pressing: since true
repentance includes reformation, how can he be truly re-
penant? After all, he cannot give back the profits of his
crimes, the victims having long since vanished (some of them
killed): "If we keep it, we continue to be Robbers and.
Thieves, and if we quit it, we cannot do Justice with it, for we cannot restore it to the right Owners?" (266). William will hear no talk of rashly abandoning their hard-won property: "to quit what we have, and do it here, is to throw it away to those who have no claim to it, and to divest our selves of it, but to do no Right with it" (266-7). William's solution is to wait until Providence discovers to them the means of doing justice to their victims; in the meantime, he is for protecting their wealth. Singleton breathes a sigh of relief at this stiff dose of common sense, for, as he tells us, he had been on the brink of running "away from [the riches] as the Devil's Goods . . . . I had nothing to do with that did not belong to me, and that I had no Right to keep, and was in Danger of being destroy'd for" (267). Difficult though it is to conceive of any Defoe character capable of such unsound fiscal policy, Bob's intentions are apparently to be taken as sincere, for he is subsequently so mortified by his guilt that he is at the extremity of putting a pistol to his head. William again restrains him, though with some difficulty, only by pointing out that repentance can be carried too far; it is possible to have too much of a good thing: "it ought to be attended indeed with a deep Abhorrence of the Crime . . . . but . . . . to despair of God's Mercy was no Part of Repentance, but putting my self into the Condition of the Devil" (270). All God asks, it seems, is
"that I must apply my self with a sincere humble Confession of my Crime [to God, that is, not to the authorities], to ask Pardon of God whom I had offended, and cast my self upon his Mercy, resolving to be willing to make Restitution, if ever it should please God to put it into my Power" (270).

Once got over these thorny problems, Singleton goes busily about setting his affairs in order prior to his departure for England, convinced, apparently, that "to be willing to make Restitution" is as good as actually making it. To be fair, we should observe that God does accommodate him with an opportunity "to preserve a ruined Family," the full report of which charity he will give "if I have Room for it in this Account." Room, it seems, is in short supply, since the subject never comes up again. But one thing is sure: he is somewhat less than charitable "even to the utmost extent of what I had in the World," because he goes back to England a rich man and marries William's sister, the only other (hardly disinterested) object of his charity in the book. By his own admission, he is at the end of the novel "much more happy than I deserve" (277). Bellessort's observation about Moll and Roxana can with equal, if not greater, justice be applied to Captain Singleton as well: "ni leur conscience, ni aucun verset de la Bible ne leur ordonne de réstituer ce qu'elles ont volés. Elles ne le réstituent jamais. Elles vieillissent dans la calme, la prospérité et sans doute la considération."15
This complacent condition, notes Bellessort, contrasts strikingly with the picaro's condition at a corresponding point in his narrative: "Quand ils se sont frauduleusement enrichis, ne jouissent pas longtemps de leur richesse. La fortune les rend bêtes et ils perdent par bêtise ce qu'ils avaient acquis par leur intelligence de ruses coquins."\textsuperscript{16} As Bellessort notices, the picaros pay dearly for their coquinerie, although one would refine upon Bellessort's generalization that they lose through their stupidity ("bêtise") what they have gained by roguery. \textsuperscript{16}His happens, of course, again and again, notably in Guzman de Alfarache among the Spanish works and in Simplicissimus, Gil Blas, and The Unfortunate Traveller, where the heroes insinuate themselves into positions of trust and emolument. And just as regularly, as Bellessort says, they become excessively proud and negligent (if not bêtes) and find themselves stripped of possessions and disgraced. He is right too that "fortune" has a hand in both picaresque success and failure, a fact which suggests that no amount of caution and circumspection can prevent an inevitable downfall of someone enjoying eminence. But the point of his comparison is with the end of the picaresque novel as it differs from the ends of Defoe's works ("[Moll et Roxana] vieillissent dans le calme [et] la prosperité"). The simple moral lesson that Bellessort finds in the picaresque novel is really part of a complex theory of evil, whereby the picaresque writer analyzes the effects
of sin upon the sinner. In the world of picaresque experience, a man pays for his roguery by becoming dehumanized. The more he sins, the easier it is for him to sin, until he either repents of his crimes or—a worse fate—finds himself unable to repent. I know of nothing in Defoe more bleak than the outlook for Pablos when, at the end of *La Vida del Buscón*, he recognizes that he has exhausted his fund of rogueries and run out of fresh territory. Although he is free of the law if he keeps running, he has little hope that he will find the stability he desires. This is the real difference between the picaresque novel and Defoe's novels.

My point about **Captain Singleton**, then, is not that the hero should have gone to prison (he is far too recognizably human for one to wish that punishment upon him) or that he should have generously tossed away his fortune. A pirate turned philanthropist would hardly be credible. If the book presented itself merely as the accurate imitation of a typical pirate's memoirs, it would not be open to criticism. Defoe, however, does not ask us to accept the story chiefly as a realistic portrait of human nature, although that is its greatest appeal, but as a moral document. Despite his omission from **Captain Singleton** of the usual statement of moral intent by way of a preface, Defoe clearly encourages a religious-moral judgment of the Captain, and on such grounds the narration of the Captain's story is extremely unsettling. At the very least, one would have liked some recognition that
what Singleton does is wrong by standards implied in the book, that one cannot sin and come out "much more happy than I deserve" (a phrase which really does not imply a value judgment but in context means nothing more than "very happy"). The unresolved state of his crimes is reason enough why he should not be happy, even if he is not actually behind bars.

What has obviously happened is that, in the course of recounting Captain Singleton's adventures, Defoe has become so engrossed in the material himself that he has failed to assess it. For him, with his Puritan bias against lying, realism meant nothing less than a true account of actual events. When, as with Captain Singleton, the material was largely pure invention, it must still look like the real thing. This illusion Defoe created and sustained instinctively by making the responses and impulses of his characters accord as nearly as possible with what he knew of human nature, and inevitably he himself served as the standard. As Jane Jack says in her introduction to Roxana, "We realize that the question that Defoe asked himself was not 'How would such a woman behave?', but 'How would I behave in her place?'" The book (whether Roxana or Captain Singleton) thus sounds exactly like what it essentially is: the record of a man making casuistical excuses for behavior that he feels is perfectly natural yet that he recognizes as violating religious sanction. The conflict which arises between Singleton's materialistic inclinations and his abject guilt
resolves itself, or fails to resolve itself, in precisely the way that most of us resolve our own moral dilemmas—we ignore troubling inconsistencies. To repeat an earlier point, Defoe's narrative brilliance lies in the fact that he manages to convince us that the moral confusion which results is Singleton's own. He is so faithful to the representation of human nature that he imitates with absolute accuracy even the "muddles" (Koonce's word) it is subject to.19

Or, to recall Watt's explanation of the same problem, we can say that we have in Captain Singleton an excellent example of the technique of formal realism, complete both with its strengths and weaknesses: "formal realism is only a mode of presentation, and it is therefore ethically neutral: all Defoe's novels are also ethically neutral because they make formal realism an end in itself rather than a means, subordinating any coherent ulterior significance to the illusion that the text represents the authentic lucubrations of an historical person."20

No one can doubt that Defoe's careful handling of that "illusion" is masterful. Evidence of his conscious efforts to create it are of two sorts, what might be called mechanical and stylistic. Of the first sort, we have Defoe's clever hints that Bob has an existence outside the novel, as in the conclusion, when he cuts his story short "lest some should be willing to inquire too nicely after Your Old Friend, CAPTAIN BOB" (277), or when he hesitates to divulge the iden-
tity of an acquaintance, "Captain----, I forbear his Name at present, for a particular Reason, Captain of an East India Merchant Ship" (169). Such mechanical devices, in some ways crude as they are, as well as the repeated enumeration of technical terms and lists of goods, which comes to seem almost compulsive, point to a larger world of activity, of which only a small part can be crowded into a written account. More importantly, Defoe nurtures "the illusion that the text represents the authentic lucubrations of an historical person" stylistically by imitating the speech rhythms and predictable responses of someone of Bob's class and background. This technique is less easily demonstrated than Defoe's reliance upon mechanical devices, but it is seen whenever Bob takes his usual deep interest in the most routine details of shipping and commerce. His piety and moralistic bent function in much the same way. Probably no one would disagree in general with such commonplace observations about Defoe's fiction.

What may not be so widely appreciated is the extent to which these unquestionable narrative strengths absolutely preclude the meaningful shaping of the story so as to point to the truths latent in it. Since Defoe was primarily an autobiographer and not a novelist, he does not manipulate our responses to characters and events except in the most obvious and overt ways, by having the narrator tell us what to think. We of course have no way of knowing what Defoe may
have conceived of as the central meaning of his work, but it is clear from an analysis of it that he builds in none of those "signals of evaluation" that Sheldon Sacks talks about. We learn from Sacks that "formal variables which affect our reactions to characters, their acts and thoughts include the author's choices of diction when he describes the activities and thoughts of his characters, the point of view from which a character is presented, the effect of any act upon those characters with whom our sympathies have already been identified. In short, they consist of a host of possible combinations of stylistic, rhetorical, and structural elements which can be summed up in the phrase 'devices of disclosure.'"  

I would not be taken to mean that Defoe is not a conscious rhetorician in his fiction, or that he uses no subtle appeals. The point of Starr's discussion of casuistry in Defoe, with which I basically concur, is that much of what any one of Defoe's narrators says contains a covert appeal for sympathy, for a favorable verdict. But in Captain Singleton, as in Defoe's other fiction, there are no "devices of disclosure" to suggest that the official morality of the book is anything other than what Singleton espouses. No built-in clues, no ironic revelation suggests how we are to judge Singleton if we reject his own account of himself. We have no judgmental frame of reference, in other words, except our own beliefs, and these cannot be brought to bear in any relevant way upon the life of Singleton. It matters
little whether one approves or disapproves of Singleton, but it matters a great deal what Defoe thought of him. That information might have been conveyed more decisively than it was.

The present discussion shows, then, to use Sacks' terms, that Defoe's "choices of diction when he describes the activities and thoughts of his characters, the point of view from which a character is presented, [and] the effect of any act upon those characters with whom our sympathies have already been identified" all suggest a fundamentally uncritical authorial attitude toward the fictional experience of Captain Singleton. Importantly, such an attitude is uncharacteristic of picaresque fiction, despite the fact that Quevedo, Aleman, and the rest deal with similar rogue-like behavior. Parallels for even the most Defoe-like (that is to say, most Puritan) incident in the novel, Singleton's repentance, can be found in the conversions of Guzman and Simplicissimus. But neither Aleman nor Grimmelshausen backs away from the harsh conditions and consequences of genuine religious experience, each seeing a total renunciation of the world as requisite for redemption of picaresque sin. Finally, while this attitude is never stated explicitly, it does not have to be; we find sufficient signals ("devices of disclosure") in the picaresque narrative itself to indicate the author's moral stance.
Notes to Chapter II


4 Starr, p. ix.

5 Captain Singleton, ed. Shiv K. Kumar, p. 277. All subsequent quotations from Captain Singleton are from this Oxford English Novels edition and are indicated in my text parenthetically by page number.

6 Secord, p. 163.

7 Starr, p. vi.

8 Secord in his chapter "The Composition of 'Captain Singleton'" (pp. 112-64) cites the influence of Defoe's reading in, besides Hakluyt and Purchas, the works of Mandelslo, Knox, Dampier, and Misson. See also Gary J. Scrimgeour, "The Problem of Realism in Defoe's Captain Singleton," The Huntington Library Quarterly, 27 (1963), esp. 23: "[Defoe's] use of geography does not support the older view that he possessed a knowledge of Africa not available to his contemporaries; it suggests, rather, that he had no knowledge beyond that published in the fashionable atlases and travels of his time."

9 Secord, p. 162.


11 Starr, p. 208.

12 See my pp. 12-14.

13 Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Berkeley: University of California
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14Hans H. Andersen, "The Paradox of Trade and Morality in Defoe," Modern Philology, 39 (1941), 46, finds that "the work of Defoe is an intimate revelation of the conflict between morality and commercialism in his age. He did not see the paradox with the complete intellectual detachment of Mandeville. He looked before and after. But he was consistent with reference to either direction and consistent also, finally, in voicing and supporting to the last the aspirations of England's increasing commerce, though he continued to pay morality the conventional, if economically inexpensive, tributes."


16Bellessort, 445.

17Vivienne Mylne, "Changing Attitudes Towards Truth in Fiction," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 7 (1963), 56-7, suggests a basis for Defoe's realistic impulse in eighteenth-century critical theory. Unlike modern criticism, which distinguishes between "imaginative belief" and "literal belief" in a work of fiction, the eighteenth century did not make such a distinction: "Belief was for them a single activity, one that admitted no difference of kind or degree." Thus "the reader of a novel should believe what he is reading as though it were a true account of true events, conversations, etc., which had in fact taken place."


19Howard Koonce, "Moll's Muddle: Defoe's Use of Irony in Moll Flanders," 30 (1963), 378, finds Moll "ingratiating and exculpating herself by wandering into a thoroughly disarming moral muddle." I agree, but I part company with Koonce when he says, "Defoe was not only aware of this muddle, but . . . he in fact planned and executed it as a means of uniting what had long been the two basic elements of the criminal narrative."

20Watt, p. 117.

Chapter III: Moll Flanders

Of all Defoe's major novels, Moll Flanders is treated most frequently in studies of the picaresque. The reason, plainly, is that Defoe (I will say unknowingly) incorporates into Moll more of the conventional picaresque situation and incident than he does in any of the other works. All the novels we are looking at in this study recount the lives of rogues, but in each of the others we also find several unpicaresque elements: in Captain Singleton, the hero is a rogue-turned-pirate; in Colonel Jack, he is a merchant in the disguise of a rogue, and the disguise is not a very convincing one; and in Roxana, the heroine specializes in court amours that have their only picaresque parallel in Gil Blas. Moll's own obvious qualifications for the role of picara have not gone unnoticed by critics, who until recently "took it as axiomatic that this was a picaresque novel."¹ There are, first of all, Moll's crimes and her clever dissimulations. Even as a very young girl in the Colchester home of her foster parents, Moll contrives to effect the best possible marriage match for herself, with all the calculation of a Pablo or a Guzman. As she proceeds in her career, she becomes increasingly devious, passing herself off on the London marriage market as a "fortune" in much the same way Pablos
sought to win the rich Donna Ana. In the second stage of her story, after she has been left destitute by the death of a husband and has turned to theft as a means of support, she earns her title of rogue in its more literal sense, as one who is guilty of anti-social behavior. Even her eventual capture in the act of committing a theft and her harsh sentence have precedents in Guzman's story and elsewhere.

In broad outline, then, Moll's career resembles those of the picaros of earlier literature. Nor do the similarities end there. What Parker calls Moll's "disreputable origins"—her mother a condemned Newgate prisoner who pleads her belly to avoid transportation—are straight out of picaresque fiction. One is reminded of Lazaro's and Guzman's whore-mothers and of Pablos' whore-witch-mother. Like those earlier picaros too, Moll gets a sound picaresque education in sin in her Colchester family, where, at a very early age, she is seduced by the older brother and married by the younger. Stuart Miller compares the seduction episode to "the picaresque rite of passage," much like Pablos' cruel and disgusting initiation at Alcala, Guzman's on the road, and Lazaro's at the hands of the blind beggar. As Miller points out, once Moll has sinned, she is "able to meet the rogueish world that has corrupted her" on its own terms. Although the traditional picaresque master-servant relationship does not figure prominently in Moll's story (Lazaro and the rest serve a succession of different masters), Moll does never-
theless begin her life as a kind of maid and companion to the daughters in the Colchester family. Beyond that, Defoe's was far too much an independent eighteenth-century English mind to make his heroine anything but mistress of herself. According to Miller, however, Moll is no less picaresque for that fact. While it is true that "there is no part that the picaro will not play," Moll is not therefore unpicaresque. In fact, "the plasticity of personality implied by being able to marry seven or eight different men . . . is infinitely greater than that implied by being able to serve many different types of masters." Not even Defoe's characteristic scenes of repentance lack precedent in the picaresque novel. Says D. J. Dooley, "the same was true of Guzman de Alfarache." Moll's career, in other words, embodies many, if not most, of the picaresque conventions. There is, furthermore, a kind of structural resemblance between Moll's chronological narration of incident piled upon incident and the sequential, episodic picaresque plot. It is true, as Stuart Miller points out, that Defoe introduces some non-episodic elements into Moll Flanders, notably the prolonged presence of Moll's "Governess," as well (though Miller makes no mention of it) as the periodic reappearance of Moll's Lancashire husband. Miller concludes that "the episodic plot still dominates the novel," and in his view this feature makes it picaresque, "since the notion that the picaresque novel typically has an
episodic plot is widespread and correctly held.⁶ This point needs little illustration with regard to Moll Flanders, since few commentators have failed to make it. Most memorable of the episodic features in Moll are the many marriages and amours, each of short duration, except that with Jemmy, and each completely effacing all memory of the last.

Those critics who see in Moll Flanders a picaresque novel have considerable quantitative evidence, it must be admitted, in their favor. That fact, however, has not prevented other critics, especially recent ones, from reading the novel as something other than a picaresque work. As early as 1929, Ernest Baker in his famous History of the English Novel, dissented from the usual position: "Except in its autobiographical procedure, incidents succeeding each other with the chance disconnexion of real life, there is nothing of the picaresque in Moll Flanders."⁷ Baker finds lacking in Moll's make-up the requisite picaresque spontaneous joy in existence, the temperament which he believes makes Lazaro and the others rejoice in their roguery. Writing much more recently, Robert Alter picks up on Baker's suggestion and writes approvingly, "Moll is no picaroon because she is a rogue who does not rejoice in her rogueries."⁸ I have said elsewhere in the present study⁹ that I disagree with Alter's view of the picaro as spontaneous celebrant of life and freedom, but I agree in the main with the general point that Moll Flanders' "sense of life, its imaginative atmosphere, and its moral
feeling are in most significant respects antithetical to those of the picaresque novel. And Alexander Parker's position on the novel can best be described as ambivalent: he discusses *Moll* as a picaresque novel, but allows that "Defoe's attitude to delinquency is markedly different from those of Aleman, Quevedo or Grimmelshausen." 

Alter and Parker, it seems to me, address the issue of picaresque meaning in *Moll Flanders*, even if neither reaches a conclusion about it that I can agree with wholeheartedly. Robert Alter, in particular, totally misunderstands the picaresque genre, or he could not say that "there is a perceptible relaxation of existential seriousness in the picaresque novels: here, one feels, is life as it could be lived, with difficulties to overcome, but without crushing responsibilities to bear." But at least he is not content, like D. J. Dooley, to announce, "almost automatically we classify... *Moll Flanders*... as picaresque." Alter's comments on the genre suggest that he would look for the essence of picaresque fiction in its characteristic attitudes, not in its incidents and conventions. Surely that is a positive sign and a healthy antidote to George S. Rousseau's inordinate insistence upon the "subject matter" of the picaresque novel. I cannot accept Alter's interpretation of the instances he cites to illustrate the "sense of life," the "imaginative atmosphere," and the "moral feeling" of *Moll Flanders*, but I applaud his recognition of the need to examine
Alexander Parker comes much closer to a position that accounts for the novel's artistic problems, at the same time that he does not really resolve the difficulty that has troubled critics of both picaresque literature and of Defoe's works. I refer to the problem of isolating picaresque meaning and of tracing it in Defoe. Parker focuses on the end of Moll Flanders, pointing to the condition of united bodily and spiritual bliss Defoe grants his heroine and her husband at the end of their spotted lives: "Now that they are rich and permanently secure," says Parker, "their thoughts turn to virtue and religion, and since God has favoured them with material rewards they become sincere penitents for their past lives. The thieves have prospered and so turned pious." Parker rightly apprehends that the moral and artistic values here differ greatly from those in the picaresque, specifically in Guzman de Alfarache, where "the criminal, tortured and suffering, feels pity for the first time, pity for mankind because of man's inhumanity to man." In language that may be too extreme but that nevertheless shows why it is impossible to equate Defoe's moral position with that of the picaresque, Parker detects a "disparity between this ending and the moral intentions [Defoe] had expressed in the preface," a "glaring . . . lack of a serious design in the novel," and a "shallow . . . moral attitude to [Defoe's] creation."14
Parker raises two very different orders of objection here to Defoe's handling of the moral experience and moral point in *Moll Flanders*, despite the fact that he implies no quantitative distinctions between them. His first charge is simply that Defoe does not do what he claims is his purpose; his other, more serious, charge is a compound one of internal formlessness. Let me deal with the simpler charge first: the objection that the moral thrust of *Moll Flanders* violates the book's preface is largely irrelevant. Like Frank W. Chandler, who rather naively takes Defoe at his word with regard to his prefatory professions of moral intent, Parker wants to give rather more credence to the Preface than most readers are probably inclined to do. There is no way of determining conclusively whether Defoe was levelling with the reader in announcing the book's uplifting aim. We tend to dismiss as sheer lying Defoe's confident claim that "the first part of [Moll's] lead Life with the young Gentlemen at Colchester, has so many happy Turns given it to expose the Crime, and warn all whose Circumstances are adapted to it, of the ruinous End of such things, and the foolish Thoughtless and abhor'd Conduct of both the Parties, that it abundantly attones for all the lively Discription she gives of her Folly and Wickedness." Defoe may indeed have "abhor-r'd" Moll's conduct, but skeptical modern readers are inclined, perhaps without warrant, to detect some devious pleasure on the author's part at the novel's more lurid pas-
sages. At any rate, one can only agree when Defoe says, "there cannot be the same Life, the same Brightness and Beauty, in relating the penitent Part, as in the criminal Part," and it may be that Defoe was purposely misleading us when he affirmed that the diminished pleasure exists "because there is not the same taste and relish in the Reading, and indeed it is too true that the difference lyes not in the real worth of the Subject so much as in the Gust and Palate of the Reader" (2). But it really does not matter. Defoe may with equal likelihood have genuinely believed in his own claims. Everything else about the book bears the stamp of moral earnestness, if not of moral awareness. The preface clearly seems to be after the fact, to stand outside the novel rather than as an integral part of it. As such, it can have no bearing upon the interpretation of the novel. We must treat *Moll Flanders* as an entity in and of itself; anything Defoe may have said about it, though enormously interesting, in no way alters the essence of the book. Defoe has given us Moll and her world, and therein consist, or should consist, all the materials we need to interpret them.

As to the "glaring . . . lack of a serious design in the novel" and its "shallow moral attitude," these charges deserve closer attention. Taken together, the two charges amount to a judgment of the novel as formless, since the "serious design" would presumably be a means of revealing (or, in Schorer's term, of "discovering") "moral attitude"
or moral attitudes. At the very least, a book with a serious moral design would incorporate a system of values and provide a framework for judging the behavior of its characters. Probably such a system of values would not have to be made explicit, inasmuch as imaginative literature, unlike theology or other polemic writing, makes its points implicitly, by using dramatic techniques. We analyze the behavior of the characters in a work of fiction, that is, in the light of implied values and standards of human conduct, and we reach a decision objectively regarding the ethical import of that behavior. Nor would such a system of values have to be unique to a single author; he might invoke, for example, orthodox Christian beliefs as a background for his story.

whatever the author's choices, he should make us feel that, after reading his work closely and alertly—something any writer of serious literature has a right to demand—we sense a moral universe in which men and women act in relation to the general scheme of things he has laid down. We cannot ask of the author that he present us with a fictional landscape that we will recognize in every particular, but we can demand that human behavior have approximately the same repercussions in his imagined world that it has in the world we know. Otherwise we will accuse him of fantasizing about a life that never was nor ever can be. In that case, he may still divert us, as science fiction diverts, but he can never engage our total interest, as science fiction fails to
The "serious design" of a work of literature, then, need not be revealed overtly. It is possible, through the use of various technical devices, chiefly irony, to indicate deviations from moral or social norms without commenting upon them explicitly. Such techniques have come to be highly prized in the novel during the last two hundred years, so much so in fact that for many readers and critics a novel must be ironic to be good. Parker acknowledges the tendency to overvalue irony as a way of meaning and accuses Defoe's recent critics of finding it where it is not. He quotes with approval Ian Watt's distinction in *The Rise of the Novel* between interpretations of *Moll Flanders* as "an ironic object" and as "a work of irony," concluding, more or less as Watt concludes, that the "interpretation [of *Moll* as an ironic novel] cannot be successfully defended." Like Watt, Parker sees as the central issue in the controversy over Defoe's claims as an ironist the matter of authorial distance and resultant authorial sympathy with the characters, chiefly the narrator. Also like Watt, Parker regards the sympathy Defoe accords his narrator as genuine and unconscious, and he sees in it the book's great artistic flaw. He concedes that Defoe, because his point of view coincides with Moll's, thus imparts considerable realism and urgency to the novel's fictional experience, but he concludes, "this sympathy established between reader and character cannot give the novel
an intellectual solidity that can see life whole, not only on the surface, and give it a pattern of depth and significance." Expectedly, "in this respect it falls short of its important predecessors in the [picaresque] tradition."18

In the material just reviewed, Alexander Parker makes some fairly sweeping judgments and levels some devastating charges. Unfortunately, the scope and nature of his discussion (the book is essentially a survey of picaresque literature from its origins) do not allow for much development or support of his findings. Since, in Parker's view, the absence of "serious design" in Moll Flanders seems to be closely related to its non-ironic qualities, he might profitably have spent more time than he does establishing that in fact the novel is not "a work of irony." Watt's position has drawn much criticism since its publication, not all of it easy to dismiss, as Parker does rather summarily. Surely the conclusions Perker reaches— in the main sound as they are— can only come after a searching examination of the novel itself. To remark on Defoe's "unqualified and unironical sympathy for his delinquent" without demonstrating its operation and to take the further step of calling such sympathy unpicaresque are less than convincing. In the following pages, I shall test Parker's findings, first by looking closely at the evidence for Defoe's claims as an ironist in Moll Flanders, particularly as they have been analyzed by other commentators and as they are borne out by the text. Subsequently, it
will be possible to make some cross-comparisons between Defoe and the picaresque novel on these grounds.

The central critical problem in *Moll Flanders* has for some time been to determine just how far Defoe himself was aware of, and therefore intended, the patent inconsistencies and conflicts in Moll's account of her life. A sizable body of critics believes that if it can prove that Defoe was in control of the artistic situation—that is to say, if his techniques can be shown to be an ironic revelation of Moll's inconsistency as a narrator and not an unintentional exposure of his own moral confusion—then Defoe will rank higher as an artist. Reserving final comment, we can look at several trouble spots in the novel where Moll's testimony seems most markedly incongruous and analyze them for traces of both local and structural irony. As a preliminary caution, Wayne Booth's remarks in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* deserve to be kept in mind: "Everyone finds some examples of intended irony in the novel; everyone finds moments when Defoe seems to be giving himself away. But there is a large tract of Moll's behavior where most of us would be hard put to decide whether the inconsistencies we are amused by were intended by Defoe."¹⁹

Booth's distinction is an important one. Quite clearly, in several places in the novel, Moll points—rather heavy-handedly, it must be admitted—to the ironies in her situation. The technique at such times resembles what would
elsewhere be called dramatic irony, the shrewd recognition by Moll and the reader of incongruities in her situation which escape the notice of other, less knowing characters in the story but which affect them all the same. Many of these are downright funny, since they involve an unusually hard-headed attitude toward Moll's whoring activities. One such instance occurs when Moll visits for the first time the "good sober Person" who eventually becomes one of her husbands, a clerk in the bank where she takes her money for safe keeping. He is immediately taken with Moll's charms and makes matrimonial advances, at the same time castigating his own wife, who "is a Wife and no Wife." When he tells Moll, "she that will be a Whore, will be a Whore," the conversation begins to hit home. Understandably made uneasy, Moll dismisses the subject with "I WAV'D the Discourse, and began to talk of my Business" (135). The dramatic irony in the present passage is obvious; less obvious here is a bit of ambiguous irony as well, the exact nature of which, as Booth tells us, is difficult to diagnose. When Moll talks of her "Business," is she referring only to the immediate official business at hand, namely the securing of her dwindling means? That is probably as much as she intends by the remark. Is Defoe, however, through his unsophisticated narrator, making a sly reference to the "business" of matrimony, always Moll's chief objective as she admits herself many times? We can be relatively sure that Defoe means for us to wink at Moll's
uncomfortable response to the discussion of whores, but is he taking a further jab at her mercenary impulses? We can never, I suppose, really say; the most we can hope to do is to gain a sense of Defoe's methods through broad exposure to and analysis of their operation.

Another and more famous example of Moll's irony at her own expense involves the watch she gives her son upon their reunion in Virginia at the end of the novel. She is so overcome with apparently genuine emotion at the sight of her offspring, not to mention overjoyed at the inheritance he tells her of, that she wants to give her son a token of her appreciation. She settles upon a gold watch ("I had two in my Chest"), and she urges that "he would now and then kiss it for my sake." But gold watches have previously played an important part in her story, and Moll cannot resist observing, "I did not indeed tell him that I had stole it from a Gentlewomans side, at a Meeting-House in London, that's by the way" (337-38). The present passage, unlike the one examined just before it, seems relatively unambiguous. The irony, that is, seems to be located entirely within Moll's own consciousness and to betray no evidence of undercutting by Defoe. A similar example shows how ingrained is Moll's compulsion to reflect ironically. As Moll is making her escape from Harwich with a trunk she has stolen from a Dutchman and finds herself in the road at Colchester in need of a ride to London, she approaches a countryman and arranges
for passage. To her generous offer of a reward for helping her to secure a ride, he responds, "why that's honestly said too." And Moll—"not so honest neither, said I, to myself, if thou knewest all" (267). Moll cannot resist the temptation to remind herself and her reader that all is not as it appears. The point I would make about ironies of this sort is that they are extremely obvious, even clumsy. Some readers may detect an ironic juxtaposition, in the gold watch passage, of conventional emotion and sentimentality with crime. In general, however, Moll leaves little possibility for misunderstanding; she painstakingly identifies each subtlety as such, calling attention to her narrative cleverness with "I wav'd the discourse" or "that's by the way." She thus gives us our clue to laugh or to wince at her uncomfortable situation and perhaps to reflect morally upon the difficulties those who lie or sin bring upon themselves.

Much less frequently, Defoe includes local irony of a different, but no less obvious, sort. In more than one place, Moll undertakes what amounts almost to a formal satirical anatomy, most notably when she rails at the London marriage market. Resolved to set herself up with a rich husband, she goes to London, where she thinks such bargains can best be made. Her high hopes are soon checked, however, when she finds how much more highly money is valued there than beauty or love. She describes her impressions in a set piece worthy of Swift: "Beauty, Wit, Manners, Sense, good
Humour, good Behaviour, Education, Vertue, Piety, or any other Qualification, whether of Body or Mind, had no power to recommend: ... Money only made a Woman agreeable: ... Men chose Mistresses indeed by the gust of their Affection, and it was requisite to a Whore to be Handsome, well shap'd, have a good mien, and a graceful Behaviour; but that for a Wife, no Deformity would shock the Fancy, no ill Qualities, the Judgement; the Money was the thing; the Portion was neither crooked, or Monstrous, but the Money was always agreeable, whatever the Wife was" (67). The cynical tone of this material is unusual in Defoe's fiction; the passage calls a kind of self-conscious attention to itself through its formal style, and somehow it really does not seem to belong in Moll Flanders (not least because Moll is hardly one to be depreciating the importance of money to marriage). Defoe has not integrated such remarks, as he does most others of Moll's opinions, with her narrative personality, and while they are not altogether implausibly expressed by her, they seem alien to her practical, self-centered perspective on experience.

The focus of the present discussion is on the distinction between local ironies of the sort we have just surveyed, which are so blatantly explicit or otherwise stylistically differentiated from surrounding passages that we cannot mistake them, and a pervasively ironic habit of mind, which is necessarily a good deal more subtle. Proof that Defoe was
capable of using isolated irony on occasion far from establishes his reliance upon structural irony as a sustained narrative technique, although such is essentially Maximilian E. Novak's line of reasoning. Recognizing the artistic demands of a first person narrative in *Moll Flanders*, Novak theorizes, "what Defoe needed was a method of making meaning transparent without sacrificing the integrity of his point of view," without, that is, making Moll implausibly analytical or, alternatively, resorting to an external commentator. Indeed, Defoe needed just such a method, and it is the thesis of this study, buttressed by the opinions of Schor- er, Watt, and others, that he lacked the technique to handle the artistic situation adequately. Novak, however, sees evidence of a conscious, if not completely systematic, ironic technique in Moll's use of puns and "double-entendres," among other verbal features of her narrative. Examining a series of more or less obvious puns and plays on words, Novak concludes that "Moll is extraordinarily playful in her use of language," that she "converses in double-entendres and expects her listeners to understand them," and finally that "of Defoe's use of puns and word play as a method to convey subtle meanings underneath Moll's narrative there cannot be the slightest doubt."  

Illuminating as I find Novak's analyses of the language in selected passages (notably the scene wherein Moll rejects her "Governess'" proposal that she have an abortion, and that wherein she tells of her courtship with the Brother-Husband), I still cannot make the leap, sug-
gested by Novak, from acknowledging the presence of local ironies to acknowledging the presence of structural irony.

Novak himself refers to a distinction much like the one I have made, between what amount to dramatic irony and structural irony. "It should be noted," he says, "that in passages where irony results from juxtaposing present and future perspectives, as when Moll discusses in advance the likelihood of a Newgate incarceration which we know will subsequently materialize], Moll's narrative may be viewed ironically (by anyone's definition) on the present level of the told narrative, while functioning realistically as a record of the action that is occurring." I have already conceded as much, as does Watt. I think it entirely possible that Defoe was attuned to many of the more patent ironies in Moll's situation and that on the level of the individual scene, he may have been in control of its broader implications. But in terms of the overall strategy of Moll's narrative defense, I can detect no systematic control of the judgmental possibilities of an ironic detachment, even when Defoe occasionally seems to be backing off to view Moll in perspective. To illustrate his point that both kinds of irony are present, Novak cites two controversial passages, Moll's account of her theft of a child's necklace (193-95) and her account of the robbery of a drunken gentleman in a coach (225-38). In both cases, Moll argues, with marked inconsistency, a kind of perverse morality for what she pre-
sents as flagrant crime. In the first instance, she treats her cruel theft of the child's necklace as a lesson to parents to take better care of their children; in the second, she elevates her robbery of the gentleman into a lesson to careless gentlemen to be more careful of the company they keep and the amount they imbibe. Both justifications are spurious and both are after the fact. Moll obviously wants to deflect as much blame as possible from herself onto the victims of her crimes; if she can show that her crimes ultimately may work to the good of the victim, by making him more cautious, then she will have been responsible for a good act in effect. In neither case is Moll's strategy consciously or explicitly stated; officially, Moll claims to abhor her crime and to despise herself as a sinner. She builds up a psychological mementum in her narration, however, that allows her to project herself back into the acts as she performed them without having to assess their moral implications. So completely is she victimized by her own rationalization that she totally misses the point that the unsuspecting would not have to be excessively cautious if there were no predators like herself. She unconsciously sides with the law-abiding portion of society in deploiring crime, without recognizing that she in fact belongs with the lawbreakers.

The question Novak raises, and answers in the affirmative, is whether Defoe planted such inconsistencies in Moll's narrative so as to reveal the mind of a self-serving apolo-
gist in action. He depends, it seems to me, too much upon simply pointing out that the conflicts are there and saying that surely Defoe cannot have been unaware of them. Being aware of them (if one grants that he was, a concession I am not willing to make) and being in control of them are two different things. I recognize, of course, that Defoe certainly did not think that sin was admirable and that he cannot be assumed to recommend it. At the same time, I remain convinced that he believed Moll's plight to justify otherwise inexcusable behavior—at least he implicitly so believed—and that he tried in conducting her narrative to imagine how one possessed of an officially Christian conscience would explain one's own sin to oneself. Surely one would do just as Moll does, by contriving an artificial distinction between oneself as sinner and the generality of other sinners, whose sins would inevitably seem more reprehensible. Thus Moll's defense has an absolutely perfect psychological rightness about it, even if it is deplorably immoral. The ultimate question about *Moll Flanders* is whether all such passages of self-vindication in the novel taken in the aggregate suggest a pattern of ironic disclosure. Does Defoe, in other words, preserve the necessary objectivity in his presentation of Moll to balance the psychological and ethical demands of her narrative? And finally, does he signal his intention in such a way that it is unmistakable to a reasonably alert reader?
In this connection, Sheldon Sacks' lucid discussion of narrative "signals of evaluation" is helpful. Says Sacks, in a passage already examined in Chapter II of this study, "Formal variables which affect our reactions to characters, their acts and thoughts include the author's choices of diction when he describes the activities and thoughts of his characters, the point of view from which a character is presented, the effect of any act upon those characters with whom our sympathies have already been identified. In short, they consist of a host of possible combinations of stylistic, rhetorical, and structural elements which can be summed up in the phrase 'devices of disclosure.'" Novak too eagerly fastens upon what is merely one aspect of Defoe's technique —his use of diction—to the exclusion of other important "formal variables." He says (what no one would deny) that "Defoe is conveying a great deal . . . through tone and language." Furthermore, it is possible in each instance where Novak finds a revealing double-entendre to insist upon a literal, rather than an ironic, reading. Denis Donoghue, for example, commenting upon the speech wherein Moll characterizes herself as a "loose, unguided creature," finds that "even when [Defoe's idiom] uses terms like 'true,' 'virtue,' and 'vice,' it neutralizes their ethical implications and assimilates them to a purely social image . . . . 'Loose,' for instance, has nothing to do with sexual behaviour; it simply means 'unsettled,' blown about in the storm." No-
vak would surely derive from the passage in question just such a sexual meaning as is denied by Donoghue, and he would advance it as evidence that Defoe was slyly criticizing Moll by making her speak more truthfully about herself than she knows. Again, we cannot know for sure just how subtle Defoe's narrative technique is, but since elsewhere (as we have seen) his ironic asides are rather unmistakable and are clearly located inside Moll's conscious handling of the narrative, we might wish for additional proof that extreme subtleties are intentional. This is especially true when the ironies depend upon our appreciation of Moll's habit of juxtaposing diverse kinds of materials. Surely the conscious ironist who wishes to be understood will take it upon himself to give sufficient signals of his intent.

Novak having already directed our attention to two instances of Moll's efforts at self-justification, we might examine others as well to see whether indeed the pattern he claims to see in fact takes shape. Along these same lines, we will have occasional reference to George A. Starr's arguments about Defoe's use of casuistry in *Moll Flanders*, since casuistry deals with just the sort of moral and religious compromises Novak talks about. Particularly in the two passages Novak discusses—Moll's theft of the child's necklace and her robbery of the drunken gentleman—casuistry figures importantly, when Moll tries to minimize her own guilt by bringing up competing moral issues. As Starr says, "Moll nev-
er explicitly maintains that her extraordinary situation alters the sinful or criminal character of her action, but she often adduces circumstances that serve to palliate if not justify what she has just done or is about to do. In the process, the notion that an act is inherently right or wrong is at least called in question; moral judgment, it is suggested, must take into account the total context of a given act, and the context often works to Moll's advantage.  

Starr shows us how the casuistical element in Moll's testimony works at the very outset of her career, when she allows herself to be seduced by the elder brother in the Colchester family. This incident might at first seem to contradict Starr's claims about Moll as a casuist, because, far from trying to gloss over the lapse as one dictated by necessity—as she does other lapses—she readily admits her willingness to run headlong to damnation: "I gave myself up to a readiness of being ruined without the least concern" (25). She does not make the claim of yielding only under duress, as she does so notably later on, but instead describes herself as, if anything, more eager to sin than the "gay Gentleman that knew the Town" himself: upon his approaching her with a violent embrace, Moll confesses, "I struggl'd to get away, and yet did it but faintly neither" (22). Such engaging honesty, however, conceals a subtle appeal to her own unworldliness, if not in defense, at least in partial extenuation, of the slip. She does not know what she is doing,
she implies: "It is true, I had my Head full of Pride, but knowing nothing of the Wickedness of the times, I had not one thought of my own Safety, or of my Vertue about me; and had my young Master offer'd it at first Sight, he might have taken any Liberty he thought fit with me" (22). Starr astutely argues that "by stressing the folly that precedes the act, and by blaming herself for this folly, she seeks to deflect the reader's judgment from a question of fornication to one of stupidity, and to soften his verdict by forestalling it herself."26

Again, the question we have to concern ourselves with is not whether Moll's self-defense works as Starr says it does; that question is scarcely a matter for debate. More arguable is the matter of Defoe's design in the passage and the extent to which he planned its spurious moral thrust as a way of disclosing Moll as a self-deluded sinner. We are faced with a situation that is far from simple, because as always Defoe gives Moll some very plausible arguments to urge in her own behalf. She really is victimized by the "young Master," and she really is innocent of worldly corruption early in her story. No simple solution exists. We cannot, for example, simply say that because Moll offers excuses her veracity is therefore undercut, as Novak in effect says. But neither can we say that because her remarks are morally confused Defoe betrays his own hand in the conduct of those remarks. That argument would be as facile as No-
vak's, and it would also err on the side of ignoring the complexity of the narrative. It seems that Starr comes nearer to assessing the problem accurately than either position outlined above: "Those who find the heroine an object of continual irony imply that we are always coolly judging her, and never emotionally involved in what she says or does. My objection to this is not that we never judge her, but that we are not allowed to do so with any such rigor, or from any such comfortable distance, as we might ordinarily adopt in the face of 'all the progression of crime which she ran through in three-score years.' Sympathy keeps breaking in, and our ironic detachment—along with Defoe's—is tempered by imagina-tive identification." Starr, that is, acknowledges that Moll's narrative-rhetorical strategy is not static, that she is not uniformly either hard on herself or self-indulgent. There are times when we accept her assessment of her own situation, and times when we reject it.

The real problem with the novel is that we never know just what our response should be. Most passages seem to call for a precarious blend of sympathy and judgment along rather ambiguous moral lines. In part, of course, the shifts that result reflect a gradual, incremental moral decline in Moll as the novel progresses. In general, her posture ranges from honest if frail resistance at Colchester to deeper and deeper deterioration and increasingly facile and specious rationalization which is always a symptom of, and index to, the
awesome extent of her deterioration. Our sympathy is moved because Moll is not a highly sophisticated intelligence, systematically conscious of what she is doing. Such features of the narrative increase, rather than diminish, our enjoyment and appreciation. Unfortunately, however, the materials simply are not there for a systematic judgment on our part, as distinct from a systematic position on Moll's. Perhaps most damaging of all to Defoe's claims of conscious artistry in presenting Moll is the disparity between her attitude toward her fall and her attitude toward her repentance. She seems far less naive or unsophisticated in the second instance than in the first. She goes about the business of saving her soul with the kind of calculation and awareness she has not previously possessed or at any rate displayed; that fact calls her professed naivete into question. Since Defoe places great emphasis upon the genuineness and spontaneity of her conversion, that fact also casts his own artistic control in a questionable light.

To the extent I have suggested, then, I accept Parker's position that there is a "glaring . . . lack of a serious design in the novel." Furthermore, his point that Moll Flanders is therefore unpicaresque seems to me a tenable one. He is, however, assailable on other grounds. As the polar opposite of the critics Starr mentions (chiefly Novak) "who find the heroine an object of continual irony," Parker implies that we never judge Moll, a position no less extreme
than Novak's own. Parker ignores what I think we have to keep in mind, that while Defoe's artistic control suffers in some respects when compared to that of either the picaresque or the modern ironic novel, *Moll Flanders* is not without its own kind of design. The individual episodes, for example, succeed one another in a kind of observable pattern. As Moll's decline proceeds, the episodes become differentiated from one another both in kind and in degree, as I have suggested above. Starr recognizes this feature, and consequently his remarks offer a much needed restoration of balance. He sees that we need not espouse one extreme position or another but that we are free to respond to Moll's story as it develops. The various episodes call for differing degrees of detachment, but *Moll Flanders* is not for that reason (or any other) chaotic. As long as we do not try to make of it something it is not and was never intended to be --either a picaresque novel or a modern ironic novel--then we can appreciate it for what it is: a richly personal account of intensely human experience. So while Parker does immeasurable service in warning us away from a too-ingenious reading of the novel and from valuing it on mistaken and irrelevant grounds, he overcompensates by underrating Defoe's considerable art.

Returning to the examination of crucial passages for what they reveal about Defoe's narrative technique as regards ironic detachment, I pass over Moll's troubles in Vir-
ginia with a husband who proves to be a brother and a mother-in-law who proves to be a mother. The central issue, incest, is not presented as something Moll could have avoided, and indeed she says herself that she is not troubled by it on moral grounds. She characterizes her marriage as "an unlawful incestuous living," but admits, "I had no great concern about it in point of Conscience" (8). She does, however, have momentary pangs of conscience in the early stages of courtship with the man who turns out later to be her brother. She connivingly misrepresents her fortune in order to snare a husband: "he was the best humoured merry sort of a Fellow that I ever met with; and I often reflected on my self, how doubly criminal it was to deceive such a Man." But much as Moll may object to duplicity on principle, she finds the present case an exception: "that Necessity, which press'd me to a Settlement suitable to my Condition, was my Authority for it, and certainly his Affection to me, and the Goodness of his Temper, however they might argue against using him ill, yet they strongly argued to me, that he would better take the Disappointment, than some fiery tempered Wretch, who might have nothing to recommend him but those Passions which would serve only to make a Woman miserable all her Days" (80).

This passage illustrates the blend of sympathetic identification and ironic detachment (our own and Defoe's) in Moll Flanders. First, Defoe sows the seeds for some retrospective dramatic irony, or irony of situation, when he has Moll
compare her husband-to-be favorably to "some fiery tempered Wretch" who would "make a woman miserable all her Days." We soon discover that Moll could hardly be more miserable with any other man on earth. Although her subsequent troubles in Virginia have nothing to do with her husband's passionate nature, there are worse problems in store for her. Defoe probably planned this irony, for he has Moll dwell on it in suggestive terms that would otherwise be irrelevant here. To be sure, we only appreciate Moll's ironic comments upon re-reading the novel, or if we have very keen memories. Unless, however, Defoe was totally out of touch with the realities of his heroine's situation or did not plan ahead at all, he must have appreciated the surprise in store for Moll, and he may even have felt that it served her right for going about the business of selecting a husband in the coldhearted way she does. All evidence, however, suggests that he valued the economic motive in marriage at least as much as Moll.

Second, and more important to the present discussion, Moll does something here that typifies her habit of negotiating with her conscience. Faced with the reality of her own dishonesty, she is properly conscience-stricken, but she immediately reflects that she is a lone woman at the mercy of predatory males. Indeed, the immediate context of the remarks is Moll's cynical commentary about the London marriage market, where men are seen as having all the advantages on their side and as being willing to exploit a defenseless wo-
man. So "Necessity, which press'd me to a Settlement suit­able to my Condition," is Moll's defense, as it is frequently in the novel. She is doing no more than preserving her own life; how can she be criticized if she has to do what most men would do to her if given half a chance? The reasoning so far, though perhaps heartless, is sound enough. The only possible ground for skepticism is whether Moll overestimates the "Necessity" of her situation, and given the harsh facts of women's lives in eighteenth-century England, she probably does not. (It should be pointed out, however, that Moll is never in imminent danger of starvation; like Captain Singleton, she is far too resourceful for that calamity to befall her. Defoe never convincingly shows that Moll faces imminent physical peril except that of her own creation.)

Immediately, she lapses into what would be shocking il­logic to a systematic philosopher and a disciplined, articu­late shaper of an ethical system, which Moll is not. She argues that because her suitor is good natured and loves her, she can the more readily deceive him, since he is not as likely to retaliate as "some fiery tempered Wretch." One winces at such mental and moral gyrations, although the impulse which actuates them is fully understandable. Moll, if we can trace her shifting thoughts, softens for a moment toward the man she wishes to marry, as she recalls how kind he is and how dishonestly she is behaving in return. Immedi­ately, however, the instinct of self-preservation surfaces,
and she decides that her concern should be for her own well-being before his. Further trying to rationalize what she is determined to do at all costs, she assures herself of the comparative safety of misleading a kind man. Then to prevent a recurrence of her melting mood, she reminds herself in turn of the rascality of most men, who exist for the sole purpose of making women miserable. Since she can be justifiably outraged at such enemies, she has salvaged her own conscience and cleared the way for action she knows to be essentially wrong.

As always in Moll Flanders, the difficulty is to determine the extent to which Defoe, with ironic detachment, planned Moll's display of self-serving casuistical evasion in the passage at hand. His imitation of the human art of self-deception, no one would deny, is consummate, but is it in fact imitation or unwitting self-revelation? Does Defoe accomplish his characterization through imaginative identification, in which Moll's responses are essentially his own, or is he so completely in control of his art that he can cause Moll to indict herself through her own words? Do we judge Moll without judging Defoe? Our answer is necessarily complex. We must first determine on just what grounds Moll is actually culpable in Defoe's eyes. Surely, he would not have disapproved of her strong economic motivation for marriage or even of her supreme guarding of her own interests in a potential marriage. Furthermore, he clearly sympathized with her po-
sition as a lone woman and would conceivably have approved of all legitimate measures to reduce the risks inherent in such a situation. Only when Moll decisively oversteps the bounds of necessity or when she represents the situation or her own part in the proceedings to the reader and to herself does she seem likely to lose authorial blessings. She loses the author's blessing, it seems to me, when she takes advantage of her suitor's good nature in advance of any exploitation on his part and in violation of her own best instincts. Only at that point does her justification become facile, because it does not square with the demands of the situation as she presents them, and only then can we suspect irony as a mode of revelation. I would still insist, however, that Defoe includes none of the "formal variables" (Sacks' phrase) that one might expect to signal ironic disclosure. It seems that we are justified in doing no more than crediting Defoe with presenting Moll in the act of moral evasion. We recognize the gap between her professions and the facts of the case; whether Defoe did likewise we can only guess, since beyond creating that gap he does nothing stylistically to call attention to it. Nothing in the novel prohibits judgment, but then nothing demands it either.

Nor do subsequent events decisively call her moral behavior into question. By all immediate standards of measurement, Moll's matrimonial strategy is a great success. She undeniably accomplishes what she sets out to do by maneuvering
herself into a marriage that appears advantageous. Moll's worldly advancement seems to vindicate her philosophy of self-interest, for she has no other discernible principles. Her later discovery that the man she has schemed for is her brother is not in any way presented as qualifying her success at the hard business of getting along in life. It is ironic, to be sure, but a crude and conventional irony far less subtle than what Novak talks about. Even if Moll had been above-board in her matrimonial dealings, she would still have had no way of knowing what she was getting into. The brother-suitor himself does not know his own mother's story, and the mother is safely off in Virginia where Moll could not meet her until after the marriage. Therefore, the argument that Defoe urges an ironic interpretation of Moll's actions depends largely upon our recognition that she is fundamentally immoral. No evidence exists that Defoe urged that recognition.

Moll's decline becomes more precipitous upon her return from Virginia, when she begins the first of her adult amours for which she deserves full moral responsibility. As might be expected, so momentous an event is not unattended by elaborate justification. Initially, Moll makes no secret of her intentions; her business concluded in Bristol, she makes straight for Bath, "for as I was still far from being old," she says, "so my Humour, which was always Gay, continu'd so to an Extream" (106). But it is not for mere pleasure that
she goes to the spa, but to look for something to her advantage: "being now, as it were, a Woman of Fortune, tho' I was a Woman without a Fortune, I expected something, or other might happen in my way, that might mend my Circumstances" (106). At length something does happen, in the form of "a compleat Gentleman" whose "Company was very agreeable to me" and who takes an immediate interest in Moll's financial problems. Moll insists in her account upon the gentility of their relationship: "he made no Professions to me but of an extraordinary Respect, and he had such an Opinion of my Virtue, that as he often profess'd, he believ'd if he should offer anything else, I should reject him with Contempt" (108). According to Moll, it would be a kindness to entertain such a man, whose further qualifications include an insane wife at home and who "came to the Bath to divert his Thoughts from the Disturbance of such a melancholy Circumstance as that was" (109). Moll thus neatly disposes of the issue of marital infidelity, since a "Lady [who] was distemper'd in her Head" can be no wife and since Moll is for all practical purposes single, having left her brother-husband in Virginia and lost track of her merchant-gentleman second husband.

Their intimacy develops with ludicrously slow accelerations, while Moll schemes to look after her own interests without appearing to do so. She repeatedly stresses his high principles: "tho' we log'd both on a Floor, and he had frequently come into my Chamber, even when I was in Bed . . .
yet he never offered any thing to me farther than a kiss" (109). Even when they have passed the preliminaries of friendship, Moll describes their behavior as "still within the Bounds of the strictest Virtue on both sides" (110). She handles things so well that, without acknowledging her need for money, she has her gentleman offering to relieve her of all financial worry. Seeing her reluctance to take money, he actually goes to the extreme of forcing it upon her, putting her hand in his money drawer: "I was backward at that, but he held my Hand hard in his Hand, and put it into the Drawer, and made me take out as many Guineas almost as I could well take up at once" (112). Moll relates this incident, she says, "because of the good Humour there was in it, and to show the temper with which we convers'd" (112). Later their intimacy increases after she nurses the gentleman through an illness, and he proposes the experiment of their sleeping together chastely. Moll "resisted a little, but I confess I should not have resisted him much, if he had not made those Promises at all" (115). He is as good as his word, however, but not entirely to Moll's satisfaction: "this was a surprizing thing to me, and perhaps may be so to others who know how the Laws of Nature work; for he was a strong vigorous brisk Person." When nature finally takes its course, Moll is the first to yield, and her weakness brings on much guilty self-reproach. She gets, nevertheless, what she was after all along, a settled maintenance. After six years,
her lover; in a fit of remorse, breaks off the affair, which action Moll can do nothing to prevent, although she gets a last fifty pounds out of him in severance money.

Moll's narrative manner in this passage marks it as a further stage in her decline. Not only have her sins become more serious, but her defense has become more transparently contrived. In a general sense, Moll's mode is casuistical, in the respect that she presents behavior which she knows to be bad in as favorable a light as possible. Typically, she does not focus on the fact of her sin so much as on the motives which she claims drove her to sin. At the outset, we learn that lust was not a motive: "I had resisted some Casual offers of Gallantry [the previous Bath season], and had manag'd that way well enough; I was not wicked enough to come into the Crime for the meer Vice of it, and I had no extraordinary Offers made that tempted me with the main thing which I wanted" (107). She remembers this mercenary motive later, after she has become the gentleman's mistress: "tho' I was not without secret Reproaches of my own Conscience for the Life I led, and that even in the greatest height of the Satisfaction I ever took, yet I had the terrible prospect of Poverty and Starving which lay on me as a frightful Spectre, so that there was no looking behind me: But as Poverty brought me into it, so fear of Poverty kept me in it, and I frequently resolv'd to leave it quite off, if I could but come to lay up Money enough to maintain me" (120). As al-
ways, there is a grain of truth in Moll's excuses—though no more than a grain this time. She really is without financial resources upon her return from Virginia, and as always poverty is a "frightful Spectre." At the same time, however, she admits that her worst slip was prompted not by necessity but by the very lust which she denies experiencing. Either Moll is woefully confused, or Defoe is intentionally planting a purposely unsound argument in her narrative to display her deterioration graphically.

Moll urges her essential innocence in another, more subtle, fashion by establishing the general honorable ness of the entire relationship with the gentleman. She is no common whore, he no drunken lecher; instead, they are two mature adults interested primarily in each other's company, she because she is alone in the world and he because his wife is no wife. So successful is she in creating a favorable image of the gentleman, in fact, that she cannot plausibly cast him as the aggressor in the sexual relationship that eventually develops. This problem leaves her in the difficult position of accepting the blame for ending a chaste friendship herself, and she cannot use necessity as an explanation since she has already extorted money before she initiates sex. She thus appeals to "weakness" and ends up contradicting her earlier claim that she was not lustful: "It is true, and I have confess'd it before [116], that from the first hour I began to converse with him, I resolv'd to let him lye with me, if he
offer'd it; but it was because I wanted his help and assistance, and I knew no other way of securing him than that:
But when we were that Night together, and, as I have said, had gone such a length, I found my Weakness, the Inclination was not to be resisted, but I was oblig'd to yield up all even before he ask'd it" (119). In a footnote to the passage just quoted, Starr points out that "throughout his writings D[efoe] maintains that 'Inclination' is sufficient to overturn 'principle,' 'Moderation,' and reason itself" (377, note to page 119). Starr cites examples from his Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography in support of this statement, which does much to explain Moll's strategy in the present passage. By presenting herself as mildly drunk and a victim of her own passion, she separates her essential, moral self from the odious act of fornication. Her body may have yielded to temptation, she seems to say, but her soul was where it should have been--firmly grounded in her own economic best interests.

If there is potential irony anywhere in the foregoing episode, it is in precisely the way Moll chooses to excuse her sins. She regards her own yielding to the temptations of the flesh as wrong (as surely Defoe would have regarded it too, at least in Puritan principle), and she assures us that she meant to use sex only as currency to get what she really wants--implying that she would have withheld the sex if she could have had the money without it. At the same
time, human weakness being understandable, she appeals to the
headiness of the moment in her own defense (rather inexpli-
cably, since, as we have seen, she disavows lust as a motive
for sex). Her defense is finally more damning than the lapse
it is designed to account for, because it involves deflect-
ing attention from a lesser sin (fornication) by admitting a
greater (greed). Defoe would not, of course, have criticized
Moll for looking to her livelihood, but he can hardly have
condoned her method of going about getting it. By her own
admission, she mercilessly exploits the kindly gentleman right
up to the termination of their affair, despite the high re-
gard she claims to have for his character. I suspect that
Defoe sensed some of the ironies latent in Moll's defensive
strategy, for he does after all (whether purposely one can-
not say) undercut her arguments about necessity with her ad-
mission that she yielded to the gentleman before he asked her
to do so. He would clearly have appreciated the obvious con-
tradictions in Moll's story, even if he did not plan them.

But I doubt whether Defoe was in total control of the
larger ironies that manifest themselves. He spends a great
deal of time, for example, characterizing the relationship
as an admirable and respectable one, as if in preparation for
Moll's later argument that illicit sex with a man of good
character is more honorable than with a knave. Her resolve
to sin if given the chance, however, is less a compliment to
his character than to his pocket book; presumably for pur-
poses of staving off poverty, however, a well-to-do "gallant" would be equally satisfactory. In other words, if necessity is so pressing a threat that even fornication can be made to look understandable if not justifiable, then surely the ethical complexion of the partner matters little. If there is irony in an ostensibly chaste friendship that deteriorates into a sordid affair, its objects are not very clear. Nor is the object clear of Moll's eventual seduction of the gentleman, except to bear out what we already know anyway, namely that Moll is not nearly so demure as she pretends to be. Martin Price says correctly, "In Defoe's narratives the inconsistencies are such that we want to find a significant design, yet they hardly accommodate our wish." Defoe leaves so many loose ends, some of which undeniably produce ironies, that we are forced to conclude that the present passage got out of hand. Probably the rather clumsy introduction of sex into a situation which did not require it was dictated by mechanical rather than formal considerations. Defoe had to end the episode somehow and he had to end it decisively. Thus a sexual relationship, from which the gentleman could later recoil, satisfied the more pressing demands of the plot. Finally, instead of capitalizing as he could have upon the ironies inherent in the gentleman's remorse at a liaison in which he bore the passive part while Moll took the active, Defoe brushes the entire matter aside with a brief lesson in morality. The emphasis throughout is on the sexual guilt, not upon the other ethical problems raised in the passage.
Novak is quick to seize upon Moll's own assessment of herself as she moralizes about her behavior. Reflecting "upon the unhappy Consequence of too great Freedoms between Persons stated as we were, upon the pretence of innocent intentions, Love of Friendship, and the like," Moll admits that she herself sets a poor example and is hardly one to inveigh against sin, calling herself "an indifferent Monitor" (126). To Novak, this is Defoe's way of alerting us to Moll's unreliability as a narrator and a clue that we should not take as literal truth what she says about herself: "Moll's willingness to confess that any admonitions coming from her about manners and morals might well be regarded skeptically should put the reader on his guard at once. . . . After all, Moll has just testified to her dishonesty. Surely at this point simple solutions (i.e., it is Defoe with his somewhat questionable puritan moral standards speaking) will not work." 29

It seems to me far more likely, however, that in taxing herself with dishonesty, Moll is simply using the standard rhetorical device of dissociating herself from the valuable lessons she has to teach. Her implication seems to be that if she, a confessed sinner, can see the undesirability of vice, then its perniciousness must be even clearer to the moral reader. She subtly compliments the reader on his own propriety, so that to accept her advice is not also to accept her character, which, she tells us, is deplorable: "I leave the Readers of these things to their own just Reflections,
which they will be more able to make effectual than I, who so soon forgot my self, and am therefore but a very indifferent Monitor." If anything, this is a device to increase Moll's credibility as a narrator, not call it into question. It does not entirely work that way, to be sure, since Moll disqualifies herself as a moral paragon in only one area, that of her sexual lapses. We have looked at several others that Defoe does not acknowledge and seems unaware of.

Toward the middle of her story, Moll finally turns to theft, after her broker husband has failed in business and died, leaving her destitute. So we will not think the transition from respectable matron to common thief an easy one, Moll assures us, "I LIV'D Two years in this dismal Condition wasting that little I had, weeping continually over my dismal Circumstances, and as it were only bleeding to Death, without the least hope or prospect of help from God or Man; and now I had cried so long, and so often, that Tears were, as I might say, exhausted, and I began to be Desperate, for I grew-Poor apace" (190). Again, circumstances alter cases; whereas it would normally be unthinkable to resort to theft, there are times when moral judgment of the thief ought to be suspended: "O let none read this part without seriously reflecting on the Circumstances of a desolate State, and how they would grapple with meer want of Friends and want of Bread; it will certainly make them think not of sparing what they have only, but of looking up to Heaven for support, and
of the wise Man's Prayer, *Give me not Poverty least I Steal*" (191). As she makes her first sally, distracted as above by want, she affirms, "I am very sure I had no manner of Design in my Head, when I went out, I neither knew or considered where to go, or on what Business; but as the Devil carried me out and laid his Bait for me, so he brought me to be sure to the place [where she commits the crime], for I knew not whither I was going or what I did." With total unpremeditation, Moll tells us, she steals a bundle from a shop: "This was the Bait; and the Devil who I said laid the Snare, as readily prompted me, as if he had spoke, for I remember, and shall never forget it, 'twas like a Voice spoken to me over my Shoulder, take the Bundle; be quick; do it this Moment." She makes her escape through London streets, running blindly and "under such a Surprize that I still knew not whither I was a going, or what to do" (192).

Moll has a due sense of the gravity of her crime, at least for its potential repercussions: "Lord, said I, what am I now? a Thief! why I shall be taken next time and be carry'd to Newgate and be Try'd for my Life!" For a moment she is even tempted to return the spoils, "but that went off after a while," and she projects herself imaginatively, as she often does on occasions of wrongdoing, into the life of the victim. In the present instance she imagines a poor widow worse off than she is, suffering for the loss of her small property. This mental exercise has the effect of reminding
Moll of her own destitution "and the prospect of my own Star­ving, which grew every Day more frightful to me" and hardens her heart against pity. She recalls briefly her reformed, penitent life as the wife of her last husband and regrets the necessity she is now under to steal for a livelihood. Finally, part of the blame belongs to "an evil Counsellor" who "was continually prompting me to relieve my self by the worst means" (193). And so she makes her second foray.

Never once does Moll explicitly play down the seriousness of her crimes or deny her own guilt. Most of the time, in fact, she berates herself in excess of what the situation calls for. Modern readers, and very likely eighteenth-century readers as well, are much more sympathetically disposed toward Moll than she or Defoe officially assumes. In part, we react as we do because at the same time that she acknowledges her sins, she constantly palliates them by stressing her painful circumstances and by implying her helplessness to resist strong temptation. Thus her candor is deceptive. She seems to confess much more honestly than she in fact does. When she claims, for example, that the devil led her astray, she means nothing more than that she has obeyed the worst impulses of her nature. But by ascribing to the devil the volition necessary to steal, she seems to remove some of the blame from herself. After all, if the forces of evil are so strong that a penitent like herself can be made to steal against her will, then the reader, who may be no firmer in
his own principles than Moll, can hardly criticize her. She readily admits both that she has sinned and that she was wrong to do so, but her emphasis is not on the sin but on what weakened her will to resist. In much the same way, of course, she makes her appeal to poverty as a temptation to commit, but not as a valid excuse for committing, a crime. She denounces the ugly act, but she also insists that there were no alternatives: "I should be driven by the dreadful Necessity of my Circumstances to the Gates of Destruction, Soul and Body" (193). We should be cruel judges indeed if we did not at least concede some extenuation in Moll's case, and that is as much as she asks for.

Interest in Moll Flanders as a moral document has focused upon its concluding pages. It is here, when Moll's long career as a thief comes to an abrupt end and she is caught and thrown into Newgate, that Defoe diverges most sharply from picaresque practice, as we shall see. In prison, she undergoes a variety of bodily and spiritual agonies, finally submitting to a genuine religious conversion just before her sentence of death is softened to one of transportation. That news makes Moll's newly acquired asceticism irrelevant, and she manages to wriggle free of its binding inconvenience. One agrees with E. M. Forster that "[Moll's] penitence is sincere, and only a superficial judge will condemn her as a hypocrite." There is no serious room for doubt, I think, that Defoe intended Moll's penitence as the
real thing, and in that sense neither she nor her author can be charged with hypocrisy. Yet one wonders whether Moll or Defoe had a genuine appreciation of the terms on which orthodox Christianity grants forgiveness. Surely, Puritan that he was, Defoe knew such terms intellectually, but the question is whether he was able to realize them artistically, or whether his sympathy interfered with the process of judgment. Forster, sensing the pragmatism of Moll's conversion, says, I think in the main accurately, "A nature such as hers cannot for long distinguish between doing wrong and getting caught—for a sentence or two she distinguishes them but they insist on blending, and that is why her outlook is so cockneyfied and natural, with 'sich is life' for a philosophy and Newgate in the place of Hell." Now Moll may have been an untutored cockney, but Defoe was not; so while we can praise Defoe, as Forster does, for imitating with remarkable fidelity to the original the idiom and even the spiritual limitations of one of Moll's class, we must condemn him if we feel that he shared those characteristics. Forster does not speculate about the authorial position with regard to Moll's testimony, but recent critics have read her narrative as a consummate stroke of irony. According to them, Defoe reveals Moll in all her spiritual and ethical poverty through a technique of accurate quotation of her mental calisthenics.

On a theoretical level, at least, Moll recognizes and acknowledges a distinction between genuine religious peni-
tence, which involves a just abhorrence of the crime itself, and mere dismay at the effects of the punishment, which does not. Shortly after her incarceration, she "repented of all my Life past," but even she realizes, apparently retrospectively, that "I was a Penitent as I thought, not that I had sinn'd, but that I was to suffer, and this took away all the Comfort, and even the hope of my Repentance in my own Thoughts" (274). She represents her state of mind while in Newgate awaiting trial as one of extreme turmoil, her troubled conscience not the least of her distractions: "it is not to be express'd by Words how I was harrass'd, between the dreadful Apprehensions of Death, and the Terror of my Conscience reproaching me with my past horrible Life" (277). She rejects what consolation the prison ordinary might have provided because of his drunkenness, and she slips into total despondency, becoming at last "a meer Newgate-Bird" (279). Not until she discovers her Lancashire husband in Newgate as a fellow prisoner does she begin to recover from her "Degeneracy," and from this point she begins the work of saving her soul, although not without setbacks. When she comes up for trial, according to Moll, she "began to think, and to think is one real Advance from Hell to Heaven . . . . He that is restor'd to his Power of thinking, is restor'd to himself" (281). Moll seems at this point to be developing powers of self-analysis that we have no previous evidence of (see my comments on pages 156 and 157 of this study). She does not, of course, be-
come a systematic philosopher or intellectual, even now, but she does display an awareness of the changes she is going through that undermines her earlier claims of naivete. It might be argued that Defoe presents Moll's spiritual reform as a gradual process of self-enlightenment with complete moral insight into herself as its ultimate goal. One argument against that position, however, is that Moll recedes into her former moral complacency once the heat is off. The extremest form of criminal justice is not meted out, as she fears it will be, and along with her apprehensions for her life she loses those for her soul. She ends her story as unenlightened as she began it, though in considerably better worldly circumstances.

The remainder of Moll's experiences at Newgate suggests that her claim that she "began to think" is premature. A minister sent by her "Governess" exhorts Moll to pray, and "it was now, that for the first time I felt any real signs of Repentance" (287). Through his careful instructions she comes to understand "the Terms of Divine Mercy, which according to him consisted of nothing more, or more Difficult than that of being sincerely desirous of it." So fortified is she by her new faith "that I thought I cou'd freely have gone out that Minute to Execution, without any uneasiness at all, casting my Soul entirely into the Arms of infinite Mercy as a Penitent" (289). Nonetheless, when the "Dead Warrant" comes down with Moll's name on it, she is again cast down, until
the "good Man" comes with the news of a reprieve. This, and not her religious consolation, eases her mind and lifts her spirits. The "good Man" senses that Moll is in greater spiritual danger from good news than from bad, since with the news that she will live comes the concurrent temptation to fall back into her old ways. When he urges her therefore not to backslide, Moll assures us that nothing could be more unlikely: "I had deeper Impressions upon my Mind all that Night, of the Mercy of God in sparing my Life; and a greater Detestation of my past Sins, from a Sense of the goodness which I had tasted in this Case, than I had in all my Sorrow before" (290-91). As always, Moll's instincts as she goes through repentance are eminently human; she does precisely what one knows would be normal human behavior, even down to her hasty renunciation of the world, which becomes inconvenient once the threat of execution is past.

What is finally unsettling, though, is that she still continues to take credit for being a convert even when, for all practical purposes, she has returned to her old ways (without their criminal content, admittedly, but only because she is rich at the end of the novel). As Alan D. McKillop observes, "Moll is finally caught, and faces destiny in some remarkable scenes at Newgate, but her repentance is not so convincing as her anguish at the thought of being caught, or her pervasive fear of being stranded without money." I would qualify McKillop's remarks slightly to point out that
Moll's conversion is only unconvincing in view of what we know to be the larger interests of the novel, as well as Moll's drives and impulses. We remain skeptical, perhaps, whether Moll would really be capable of "casting [her] Soul entirely into the Arme of infinite Mercy as a Penitent" voluntarily, but only because nothing in her story before or after Newgate suggests so little regard for the world. In other words, Defoe has not controlled the moral implications of the heroine's life sufficiently to make her spiritual experience believably consistent with the other diverse incidents that make up her spotted career. Defoe's handling of the scenes laid at Newgate is nonetheless without parallel in the novel for the sense of physical and spiritual urgency it imparts. I think for this reason alone that he intended Moll's religious crisis and subsequent conversion to be regarded as genuine.

Defoe probably foresaw some difficulty in finishing off Moll's story with a perfunctory (if intensely recounted) religious conversion, for in thinly disguised direct-address fashion he forestalls criticism of it: "I reflect," says Moll, "that many of those who may be pleas'd and diverted with the Relation of the wild and wicked part of my Story may not relish this, which is really the best part of my Life, the most Advantageous to myself, and the most instructive to others; such however will I hope allow me the liberty to make my Story compleat: It would be a severe Satyr
on such, to say they do not relish the Repentance as much as they do the Crime; and that they had rather the History were a compleat Tragedy, as it was very likely to have been" (291). Because of its very crudeness, this device reveals what Defoe must himself have seen as an artistic problem in Moll Flanders. He attempts to shift the blame for it from his own inadequacies to the reader's perverted taste for evil, but he is not entirely successful. Our objections to the end of the novel are not to the intrusion of uplifting material, as Defoe pretends to fear, but to his failure to differentiate Moll's penitent from her sinful behavior, beyond telling us of her conversion.

One further difficulty involves the extent to which Defoe inspires our faith in the exigencies of Moll's situation. Despite the moving way in which Defoe recounts Moll's imprisonment, one has trouble believing that Moll is ever a very likely candidate for execution. It is not entirely clear why this should be so, since Defoe carefully authenticates his presentation of the machinery of criminal justice (the law courts, the police, Newgate, transportation) and thereby makes what would otherwise remain only a vague and abstract threat into a palpable danger. Too, the scenes of fellow prisoners dying left and right all around Moll are as lurid as we could well wish them to be ("a dismal groaning and crying was heard from the Condemn'd Hole, where there lay six poor Souls, who were to be Executed that Day," 291). Despite such measures, we
never really doubt that Moll will survive her encounter with the law; little danger seems to exist that her "history" could ever have become a "compleat Tragedy," as she tells us it almost did. The very fact that Defoe felt it necessary to remind us of Moll's extremity casts it in a doubtful light. Furthermore, Defoe's superb characterization of Moll as someone in whose well-being we have a stake precludes his prematurely killing her off. It is unthinkable that someone with whom our sympathies have been so closely identified as they have been with Moll could do anything but overcome her trouble. Nonetheless, and here is where Defoe gets into trouble, both we and Moll have to be persuaded of the very real likelihood that execution can indeed finally come about if the conversion is to be effective and convincing. To that end, Defoe stresses Moll's imminent danger, but we trust that one who has withstood the privation that Moll has and picked her way through domestic and criminal intricacies with Moll's sureness can also emerge from her legal troubles unscathed.

On the grounds just outlined, then, I disagree with Ian Watt's distinction between Moll Flanders and the picaresque novel. To refresh our memories, we might recall Watt's opinion that "the picaro enjoys that charmed immunity from the deeper stings of pain and death which is accorded to all those fortunate enough to inhabit the world of comedy, whereas it is the essence of Defoe's fictional world that its
pains, like its pleasures, are as solid as those of the real world. If anyone enjoys a "charmed immunity from the deeper stings of pain and death," it is Moll, not the picaro, and in her case it has nothing to do with comedy. Instead, for the whole range of technical and moral reasons I have discussed, we know that Moll will never have to suffer the worst possible consequences of her acts, as the picaro stood in imminent danger of having to do. As further evidence in support of this point, I would cite the very unpicaresque vision of bliss with which Moll presents her Lancashire husband upon their embarkation for Virginia to become planters under sentence of transportation. She imagines them "living where no Body could upbraid us with what was past, or we be in any dread of a Prison; and without the Agonies of a condemn'd Hole [which Moll never sees the inside of at Newgate, living as she does in special separate chambers for which she pays a fee] to drive us to it, where we should look back on all our past Disasters with infinite Satisfaction, when we should consider that our Enemies should entirely forget us, and that we should live as new People in a new World, no Body having anything to say to us, or we to them" (504). Moll's rhetoric is fatuously optimistic as she lists the advantages of life in the colonies (though it must be admitted that she is purposely idealizing a life she already knows in order to sell her reluctant husband on the idea of leaving the security of England). The tacit assumption seems to be that one can cast
off the effects of one's sin by changing one's place of residence. Moll's view of the life in store for herself and her husband, their lives of crime now past, is one of as complete bliss as she or Defoe can imagine: anonymity, respect, and decency. Terence Martin pictures Moll "quite content to enter the coupon-clipping utopia of all would-be capitalists; she can now live on her interest." Furthermore, according to Martin, her values receive authorial approval: "were there any implied hollowness in [Moll's] final achievement, we might still have an ironically moral ending." But that is not the case. Moll is extremely satisfied with herself, and Defoe implies that she has every right to be.

No precedent exists in the picaresque tradition, despite its similarities in subject matter, for Moll's easy transition from vile sinner to redeemed saint by the simple solution of moving on. Even though the lives of the picaresque heroes are peripatetic, there is the suggestion that one cannot indefinitely run away from morality and decency. Pablos, it will be recalled, has some such notion at the end of La Vida del Buscon, when he proposes an escape to America with his whore after he has exhausted all his roguish resources in Spain. But he comes to his senses in time to disabuse himself of groundless optimism, admitting, "I thought things would go better in the New World and another country. But they went worse, as they always will for anybody who thinks he only has to move his dwelling without changing his
life or ways" (214). Pablos confesses that he is "tired and obstinate in [his] wickedness" and that he has no intention, or is incapable, of changing. It might be argued that Pablos' case has no bearing upon Moll's, since he concludes his story frankly unregenerate, whereas she claims to have repented of her sins. That objection is not valid, however, because what is at issue is the fundamental attitude toward the experiencing of sin as revealed in Quevedo and Defoe, and on those grounds the two are comparable. Quevedo shows the effects of sin on the sinner as permanent; sin changes him into someone who resists the beneficent influence of religion. Pablos, for example, thinks of the cathedral as a place to find sanctuary from prosecution, not divine mercy. In contrast, Defoe shows Moll--after a life of sin--able to shed its psychological effects and emerge a spotless penitent.

Other picaresque writers deal directly with the problem of penitence for the sinner. In Guzman de Alfarache, the picaro ends his story, like Moll, a sincere penitent. But unlike Defoe's heroine, he does not retain intact a stock of ill-gotten wealth with which to begin the world anew, and he does not find himself suddenly free at last of his initial incitement to sin, namely poverty. Aleman does not allow Guzman the luxury of saving his soul and preserving his wealth and reputation at the same time. The end of the novel is not hopeless for Guzman as that of Buscon is for Pablos, because
Guzman has shown himself willing to make the necessary sacrifices to leave behind him a life of sin. There is, nevertheless, no suggestion that the decision is an easy one to make or to act upon as in *Moll Flanders*. Similarly, Grimmelshausen places rigorous demands upon his hero as a condition of salvation. At the end of *The Adventurous Simplicissimus*, the picaro reverts to his early condition as a religious hermit, one who has sworn off the world in order to atone for his past lapses. Again, the picaresque author shows worldly success and penitence to be incompatible, and he implies that the picaro must depart from his roguish ways if he is to remove the guilt of them. Defoe leaves Moll in a state of dubious moral reform much like that which prevails at the end of *Gil Bias*, in which the hero, converted under duress of a stint in prison, is newly restored to a comfortable standard of living and to total ease of conscience after a sinful life. Like Defoe, Lesage depicts a turbulent religious crisis for his hero, but he also shows its effects to be rather short lived.

Moll concludes her autobiography by reaffirming her penitence, but she emphasizes not self-denial but comfort and tranquillity. It is not, of course, that one begrudges her a safe haven after a life of exposure to risk and danger; it is only that she insists upon giving a religious turn to her story, reminding us of her holiness without ever giving us any evidence that she has disengaged herself from "all the
progression of Crime which she has run through in threescore Year" (Preface, 1). Throughout her career, she has justified every moral and ethical lapse as no more than natural for one under extreme necessity, yet when she finally reforms she does so only after all necessity for sinning is past. If anything, her prosperous state at the end of the novel vindicates the shrewd calculations by which she has overcome poverty. Far from showing the error of her ways, she actually proves that sin is highly remunerative, even as she denounces her own past sins. In view of such inconsistency, one is forced to agree with Alexander Parker, whose view that Moll Flanders has a "glaring . . . lack of a serious design" and a "shallow . . . moral attitude" this chapter has tested. Furthermore, on the basis of the analysis just completed, as well as previous discussions of the picaresque novel (see my Chapter I), the conclusion is inescapable that Defoe has little moral or artistic kinship with the picaresque writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When Moll bids the reader adieu from England, "where [she and her Lancashire husband] resolve to spend the Remainder of [their] Years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives [they] have lived" (343), both she and Defoe clearly regard her as having at last squared herself with the world and ensured herself a place in heaven. The disparity between what she says and what the reader sees depends upon an ironic perspective not built into the novel, as was the case with certain pica-
resque works, but applied externally as a result of values and biases that Defoe cannot have understood or shared.
Notes to Chapter III


2 Parker, p. 102.


4 Miller, p. 70, 76.


6 Miller, pp. 19-20, 13.


9 See my pp. 33-4 for a response to Alter's notion that the picaro is a joyous free spirit.

10 Alter, p. 57.

11 Parker, p. 106.

12 Alter, p. 57.

13 See my p. 6 for comments on Rousseau.

14 Parker, p. 105.


16 Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, ed. and intro. G. A. Starr (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 3. All subsequent quotations from *Moll Flanders* are from this edition and
are indicated in my text parenthetically by page number.


18 Parker, p. 105, 106.


21 Novak, 359-60.


23 Novak, 354.


26 Starr, p. 136.

27 Starr, p. 164.


29 Novak, 353-54.


31 We always need to remind ourselves that Moll tells her story as a penitent looking back over sins committed in the past. Thus she can be assumed to be more alert to her own sinful behavior at the time of telling than at the time of acting. While this fact colors our reading of the novel to some extent, however, it probably affects Moll's narration less than might at first seem likely. Defoe in fact maintains no rigorous distinction between Moll's two conditions: at times Moll seems to have the perspective and distance to
judge her past sins, while at other times she seems to be narrating them at the moment she commits them. I cite this fact as further evidence against Defoe's claims for complete control of the artistic and technical demands of Moll's story.


33 Watt, p. 95.


35 In a passage I have already quoted in part (pp. 118-19 of this study), Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, p. 127, talks about modern "predispositions to regard certain matters ironically which Defoe and his age treated quite seriously." Watt goes on to cite two such predispositions: "the guilt feelings which are now fairly widely attached to economic gain as a motive; and the view that protestations of piety are suspect anyway, especially when combined with a great attention to one's own economic interest." Watt is absolutely correct in saying, "Defoe was innocent of either attitude. He was not ashamed to make economic self-interest his major premise about human life; he did not think such a premise conflicted either with social or religious values; and nor did his age."
Chapter IV: Colonel Jack

In a recent book on Defoe, James Sutherland says near the end of his section on Colonel Jack, "Colonel Jack . . . has more of the picaro in him than Defoe's other heroes; he knocks about the world, engaging in a series of miscellaneous and unrelated adventures, and his failures are given as much prominence as his successes . . . . [He] is at once passive, blundering, and frustrated." Surely such casual treatment of the picaresque cannot go unchallenged. We can defer for the time being the question whether "Colonel Jack . . . has more of the picaro in him than Defoe's other heroes"; it could as easily be argued that Jack has less, and on the same grounds Sutherland specifies in arguing the reverse. Those grounds themselves, however, require some investigation. Sutherland implies that the essence of picaresque fiction is to be located in the presence of a protagonist who "knocks about the world, engaging in a series of miscellaneous and unrelated adventures." The origins of this definition are not entirely clear, since, as we have seen, it does not apply to Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzman de Alfarache, or Simplicissimus. These classic picaresque novels, this study has argued, focus upon roguish behavior and work toward a theory of wrongdoing that is orthodoxly religious and
highly moral. The various adventures recounted in them are not "unrelated," except perhaps causally, since each contributes to the central interest of the picaresque novel, which is to measure the effects of sin upon the moral being of the sinner.

Sutherland leaves out of the reckoning completely the matter of sin in picaresque fiction. Whatever else the picaresque hero may be, he is first a rogue, by definition a sinner. His wanderings, while they occasionally reflect the aimlessness implied in Sutherland's phrase "knocks about the world," more often involve flight from punishment. It is no exaggeration to say that the concept of picaresque fiction would not exist were it not for the discernible presence of the sinful picaro, whose depredations upon society the genre exposes. Yet a few pages earlier in the same study we find Sutherland commenting upon the relative absence of wrongdoing in Colonel Jack: "what is . . . unusual for Defoe, and what gives a theme to even this chaotic story, is the fact that its hero has a natural propensity to goodness." If Jack's story has a "theme," it can hardly be "a series of miscellaneous and unrelated adventures"; and if that theme is Jack's "natural propensity to goodness," the story can hardly be picaresque. The novel may in fact be "chaotic," and Jack may, as he tells us, himself, have a "strange kind of uninstructed Conscience." But these are not reasons to call Colonel Jack a picaresque novel, for no precedent for
such qualities exists there. The picaresque novel was often episodic, but seldom "chaotic." The picaro very seldom had a "natural propensity to goodness," although he was not always utterly beyond redemption. Two of the major anti-heroes of the genre, Pablos and Lazaro, had if anything a natural propensity to evil; two others, Guzman and Simplicissimus, ultimately found grace, but only after lives of sin which they finally renounced as a condition of their redemption. In spite of such evidence, Sutherland observes that in the supposedly picaresque Colonel Jack "[the hero] is not shown undergoing any form of repentance like that of Crusoe and Moll Flanders, and we are left with the impression that in his case there is not the same need for it." All one can say is that we are not left with the same impression in Lazarillo de Tormes.

So much for the general issue of whether a hero with a "natural propensity to goodness" who engages "in a series of miscellaneous adventures" can be a picaro. Before we can assess Jack's qualifications for picaro status, we need to determine his exact moral condition as presented in the novel, since it is on ethical issues that the decision ultimately rests. As it turns out, neither Sutherland nor Defoe makes the task of judging Colonel Jack easy. Sutherland comments on Jack's "natural propensity to goodness," in reference, apparently, to Jack's own claims of a "strange kind of uninstructed Conscience." We might expect this inborn
guiding principle to direct Jack's steps aright, and yet he accuses himself of "levity, and profligate Wickedness." Here we encounter two obstacles in interpreting the religious and moral meaning of Colonel Jack: the first is that in practice Jack's "conscience" has little control over his actions. It is true that his sins are not as bad as they might be, or as Moll's, for example, are, but for that self-restraint he has the knowledge of his gentle birth to thank, not his conscience. Defoe blurs the distinction, sometimes implying that gentility and spiritual purity are the same thing, sometimes tacitly differentiating them. The second obstacle in assessing the meaning of Colonel Jack involves the narrator's own tendency to tell us how bad he is, at the same time that he actively tries to palliate his sins with casuistical arguments. While it is true, as Sutherland says, that Defoe does not show Jack "undergoing any form of repentance," it is not true, as Sutherland also says, that Defoe gives the "impression" that Jack has nothing to repent. Jack ends his autobiography as a self-accusing penitent with a life of sin to atone for. The chief structural flaw that I see in the novel, in fact, is Jack's tendency to berate himself as a sinner, while providing little of the evidence upon which that judgment is based.

A close examination of the text reveals the contradictory impulses in Jack's narrative. The only activity in his long career that can be called sinful occurs in his youth.
As a London street urchin, he is thrown among a group of petty thieves and small-time criminals whose way of life exerts a considerable influence over his childish imagination. Even though he joins them for a time and even though he becomes quite proficient in the art of diving, Jack makes it clear that he is never as bad as his associates. By implication, he is better than his foster brother, Captain Jack, for example, who, "as if he was born a Thief . . . would steal every thing that came near him, even as soon almost as he could Speak . . . . He was an original Rogue, for he would do the foulest and most villainous Things, even by his own Inclination." But then Captain Jack does not share Colonel Jack's gentle blood. Jack chronicles his own adventures in crime with all of the particularity and much of the gusto of Moll Flanders, and like her he invokes a subtle casuistical defense of himself on the premise that circumstances alter cases. His ignorance, he tells us again and again, should be taken into account when his crimes are weighed against him; he characterizes himself while yet a boy as one who "understood nothing of the Wickedness of [the world]" (6). So extreme is his naivete as he enters upon his first crimes that he thinks he is being introduced to a trade: "as to the Nature of the thing, I was perfectly a Stranger to it; . . . it was a good while before I understood the thing, as an Offence: I look'd on picking Pockets as a kind of Trade, and thought I was to go Apprentice to it" (18). He makes no
explicit plea for leniency in the judgment of his case, it should be noted, but he clearly implies that a boy who sins in good faith, thinking he is performing his rightful and assigned duty, cannot be held fully accountable for his unlawful actions.

This theme is one Jack returns to throughout the novel, stressing both his innocence of darker criminal intentions and his unfamiliarity with the ways of his brothers in crime. When, for example, it falls to Jack to return a stolen letter case to the Custom-House for a reward, he reflects on his own inadequacy for the job: "it was an Errand of too much Consequence to be intrusted to a Boy, not only so young as I was, but so little of a Rogue as I was yet arriv'd to the Degree of" (31). He refers later to his youthful "state of Ignorance" and insists that he "knew no Good, and had tasted no Evil; that is to say, the life I had led, being not Evil in my Account" (40). He repeats himself in similar words a few pages further on, when the matter of his participation in theft comes up: "I had, I say, all the way hitherto, no manner of thoughts about the Good or Evil of what I was embark'd in; consequently, I had no Sense of Conscience, no Reproaches upon my Mind for having done amiss" (60). Still later, after Jack has found his spiritual "tutor" in Virginia, he again reminds us, "As I had no Education but as you have heard, so I had had no Instruction, no Knowledge of Religion, or indeed of the meaning of it; and tho' I was now in a kind of search
after Religion, it was a meer looking, as it were, into the World to see what kind of a thing, or Place it was, and what had been done in it" (168).

Not content with ignorance of good and evil as a defense, Jack invokes two other pleas familiar to us from Moll's and Captain Bob's stories. If any guilt is to be assigned, he tells us, it belongs to "the subtile Devil [who] never absent from his Business, but ready at all Occasions to encourage his Servants... brought me into an Intimacy with one of the most exquisite Divers, or Pickpockets in the Town" (17). So great is the devil's grudge against Jack for turning honest that he devises special means to trip him up: "the Devil owing me a Spleen, ever since I refus'd being a Thief, paid me home, with my Interest, by laying a Snare in my way, which had almost ruined me" (186). The "snare" turns out to be the bewitching creature who becomes Jack's first wife and who later reveals whoring tendencies, which he, "a meer Boy in the Affair of Love," had never suspected. Since Jack has so formidable an adversary as the devil plotting his destruction, it is small wonder that his behavior should be less than exemplary. This argument, which served Moll so well, receives only token mention from Colonel Jack; he never really develops it. Blaming the devil for one's own sins cannot alone acquit one of guilt, but it helps to sway the balance of judgment in one's favor. A casuistical technique can ultimately do no more.
The other argument has potentially greater utility, bringing to bear as it does on Jack's story the standard casuistical position that each case should be judged on its individual merits. Jack's strategy is to urge that arbitrary rules of right and wrong cannot apply in extreme situations, and he proceeds to convince us that his case is extreme indeed. As a poor orphan, he is a prey to the pangs of necessity, a condition aggravated by his not being bred up to a legitimate trade. On the occasion of a walk to the very spot where he had earlier taken part in robbing the poor widow of Kentish Town, Jack expostulates, "O! that I had some Trade to live by, I would never rob no more, for sure 'tis a wicked abominable Thing" (83). In the army in Scotland, he has "a Secret satisfaction at being now under no Necessity of stealing, and living in fear of a Prison, and of the lash of the Hangman" (104) because he has the military profession as his trade. With greater reason, he rejoices later in Virginia, "how Happy I was, that I cou'd live by my own Endeavours, and was no more under the Necessity of being a Villain, and of getting my Bread at my own Hazard, and the Ruin of Honest Families" (156).

A causal link thus established between privation and crime, Jack does not attempt explicit justification of his sins on the ground that he was driven to them by necessity. He in fact tacitly passes unfavorable judgment on his own weakness by citing the strong example of his Virginia "tu-
tor," whose career parallels Jack's own in some important respects. When Jack asks him, "suppose you to be under the same necessity, in the same starving Condition [as you were before you were caught and transported to Virginia], Should you not take the same Course [i.e., steal]?" The tutor "replied very sharply, that shows us the need we have of the Petition in the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into Temptation; and of Solomon's or Agar's Prayer: Give me not Poverty, least I Steal." The tutor's next words can scarcely fail to have an effect on Jack: "I should ever beg of God not to be left to such Snares as Human Nature cannot resist. But I have some hope that I should venture to Starve, rather than to Steal" (163). This passage makes clear why Jack cannot overtly defend stealing as a legitimate solution to poverty, and it incidentally answers critics like Maximillian Novak, who stress the importance of natural law in Defoe. Jack and Defoe know that a strict Christian moralist would prefer starving to committing sin, and the tutor, who in large part speaks for Defoe, echoes that sentiment. At the same time, however, Jack can and does suggest the enormous power of want to make even a strong man of the best upbringing (which the tutor is) waver in the course of right. How much less, then, by implication, is a poor untutored wretch like Jack to be blamed for faltering. To his credit, Jack remembers his own temptation later when he vows to relieve his estranged wife's needs despite her scandalous treatment of him: "Poverty was
a Temptation which a Woman could not easily withstand, and I ought not to be the Instrument to drive her to a horrid Necessity of Crime, if I could prevent it" (232). As one who has been there and knows, Jack speaks convincingly of extremity. By applying his own experience to his judgment of another, he rather neatly achieves the double end of reinforcing his own position and revealing a dimension of magnanimity that we have not seen before in him.

The precise conduct of Jack's defense becomes less important as the story proceeds, because quite early in his career he develops an aversion to crime, once, that is, he knows what it is. Interestingly, in view of his ultimate conversion, Jack's objection to the criminal activities of his associates is primarily social, not moral: "Why, says I [to Will, his fellow thief], was it like a Gentleman for me to take that Two and Twenty Shillings from a poor antient Woman, when she beg'd of me upon her Knees not to take it, and told me it was all she had in the World" (67). Active as Jack's compassion for unfortunate victims may be (he returns the money he has stolen from the "poor antient Woman" above), his accumulating revulsion to crime seems to reflect an even greater fear of the ungentlemanly fate of imprisonment and execution. On the way to Scotland with light-fingered Captain Jack, he has little success restraining the unprincipled foster brother's criminal forays, even though "I scolded heartily at him, when he came back [after some
small thefts in Lincolnshire], and told him he would cer-
tainly ruin himself, and me too before he left off" (95). In
Edinburgh, the sight "was very shocking to us" of a man be-
ing whipped through the streets "for [as they are erroneously
informed] Picking pockets; and other petty Thieveries" (100-
101), and Jack forms "a secret Resolution" to return a horse
his companion had stolen on the journey northward. As if in
anticipation of the shrewd businessman he is to become, Jack
observes that "Horses yield but a sorry Price in Scotland," and he is consequently the less eager to unload it.(101).
Jack further reveals the nature of his distaste for crime in
the admission that "tho' I was all the way so wary, that I
would not Joyn with my Captain in his desperate Attempts, yet
I made no scruple to live at his Expence, which as I came out
of England only to keep him Company had been but just, had I
not known that all he had to spend upon me, was what he robb'd
honest People of, and that I was all that while a Receiver of
stolen Goods; but I was not come off so far than as to scru-
ple that Part at all" (102). In other words, once the rob-
bery has been committed and the risk run, he does not object
to sharing the spoils. Like his fellow rogues Bob and Moll,
Jack is chiefly opposed to crime because of its riskiness;
unlike them, however, he always has with him the nagging
doubt that by breaking the law he is not being true to his
destiny as a gentleman. His repeated misgivings about whe-
ther "this was the Life of a Gentleman" reverberating through-
out the story suggest qualms that have nothing to do with religion or morality.

Jack oddly persists in thinking of himself as wicked long after the fact of his crimes is past. For soon after his desertion from the army, he is kidnapped by a dealer in the illicit indentured servant trade to Virginia and thus put beyond all possibility of committing crime, even if he had not already left off of his own accord. Upon his arrival in Virginia, Jack gives a very different turn to his story, no longer concentrating upon the give-and-take of picaresque survival. In a very short time (as measured in pages, not in years), he becomes prosperous and leaves behind him the necessity of stealing to survive. Virtually nothing that Jack does from this point forth (that is to say, in the latter two-thirds of the book) constitutes overt sin, although his flexible mercantile morality leaves much to be desired by a strict judge of behavior. But that is a different matter altogether, and one that is never made an issue of. As Ian Watt points out, "Defoe was not ashamed to make economic self-interest his major premise about human life." 

One wonders, since Jack reforms rather prematurely, why he should be so remorseful at the end of his story as he looks back with regret at a missed opportunity of repentance: "O! had I with [his tutor] sincerely repented of what was pass'd, I had not for 24 Year together liv'd a Life of levity, and profligate Wickedness after it" (308). The "24
Year together . . . of levity, and profligate Wickedness" refers to the time span after the tutor has instructed Jack in the need for repentance (including his amorous misadventures and his military escapades), which advice he has ignored: "but as to commencing Penitent, as [the tutor] had done, I cannot say, I had any Convictions upon me, sufficient to bring it on, nor had I a Fund of religious Knowledge to support me in it; so it wore off again Gradually, as such things generally do, where the first Impressions are not deep enough" (171). In glaring conflict with his earlier casuistical maneuvering, the end of Jack's story places him in the light of one who has had much to atone for but who has come through the trial of his soul and gained a spiritual victory. But surely Jack's affirmation, as his narrative ends, that he has had "leisure to reflect, and to repent, to call to mind things pass'd, and with a just Detestation, learn as Job says, to abhor my self in Dust and Ashes" (308), overstates the case. Jack has been bad, but not that bad. He has, at any rate, not made the reader privy to whatever transgressions justify his self-assessment. William H. McBurney correctly observes, "Leading as he does 'a very regular sober life,' . . . [Jack] has little to repent, except from a strict Calvinistic viewpoint." And yet he does repent his "Life of levity, and profligate Wickedness" on the last page of the novel.

As he takes his leave of the reader, Jack sounds very much like Moll and Bob in the corresponding portions of their
narratives. Only they had genuine cause for repentance, since both were sinners by anyone's standards, right up until the end. Furthermore, their sins constituted the central experience in each novel. With Moll and Bob, consequently, while we may question the sincerity of their repentance, we do not doubt the need for it. But only approximately the first third of Colonel Jack corresponds in any important way to the rogue biographies of the two earlier narrators, yet the novel winds up in much the same way. It is tempting to offer an explanation, even though to do so requires reconstruction of Defoe's process in writing the novel (and in view of the lack of evidence about Defoe's composition of the novel, to do so is necessarily to resort to conjecture). Quite clearly, the first third of Colonel Jack is not of a piece with the latter two-thirds, and Defoe's plans for the book may have changed drastically from one section to the other. One can speculate that he may have begun with a rogue biography along the lines of Moll or Captain Singleton in mind, and to this end have written the conventional first third, which traces Jack's descent into sin. As he wrote, the theme of gentlemanliness present from the beginning emerged and captured his interest, diverting him for the remainder of the book into a treatment of material we already know fascinated him from his previous handling of it in The Compleat English Gentleman and the Review. Only in the conclusion of Colonel Jack does Defoe return to earlier themes, rounding
off the story he may have intended to write but never actually completed by hastily portraying a contrite narrator remorseful for sins he failed to commit. 14

The problem can be stated another way: in Moll Flanders and Captain Singleton, Defoe dramatizes the experiences of sin and repentance; in Colonel Jack, he does little more than summarize them. This is not to say that there is no intensely felt experience in the later novel. We have only to remember Jack's distress at losing his money in the tree or his agonized fears for his wealth in the ash pits, to see that such is not the case. Nonetheless, as the novel progresses, Jack increasingly tells us about his activities rather than letting us see for ourselves. In part, of course, the reason is that the composition of those activities itself changes; from the time of Jack's arrival in Virginia to the end of the novel, very little happens that can be effectively dramatized, with the notable exceptions of his courtship of the first wife and his encounter with her bill collector. But even these incidents pale beside Moll's love intrigues and her thieving bouts. In part also, Defoe's interests become increasingly topical and abstract in the latter two-thirds of the novel. He is eager to explore social and economic theories, and at times he seems in danger of letting Jack disappear altogether under a burden of doctrine. That this never quite happens is testimony to the intellectual vigor of Defoe's ideas, as well as to his ability to infuse life
into prosaic issues. Even the most abstractly conceived passages, that containing Jack's views on treating slaves humanely and that recording his military exploits—the one essentially a tract and the other a history—still have some dramatic interest, as well as thematic and plot relevance to Jack's career. The trouble is that such passages provide very little of the moral evidence on which Jack is ultimately judged.

Both *Moll Flanders* and *Captain Singleton* concentrate on the moral behavior—or lack of it—of their respective heroes. They are not, one would hasten to say, for that reason any more picaresque than *Colonel Jack*, since, as I have argued, they deal with moral problems in unpicaresque ways. Still, each novel has a kind of unity based on the relevance of all incident to a central theme that *Colonel Jack* lacks. Moll had her ambitions to be a gentlewoman and yearned for what amounted to middle-class stability, but her propensity to sin stood in her way constantly. My chief objection to that novel, outlined in Chapter III of this study, is that Defoe urges the need for Moll to repent as a condition of her achieving the earthly bliss she desires (in itself a perversion of Christian doctrine), at the same time that he shows Moll's conversion to come after she has achieved her worldly ends. Her conversion is thus unnecessary in the context in which it is presented. Similar charges can be levelled against *Captain Singleton*. So although both novels deal with
moral experience, they do not deal with it in a strictly moral—or picaresque, since they are the same thing—way. Now Colonel Jack avoids that difficulty in large part by straying from the theme of moral experience, but it raises other difficulties by superimposing a religious interpretation upon generally secular experience.

For in Colonel Jack the chief thrust of Jack's career is toward, not spirituality, but gentility. The idea is first put into his head by his "Nurse," who was instructed by his father ("a Man of Quality") that "she should always take care to bid me remember, that I was a Gentleman, and this he said was all the Education he would desire her for me, for he did not doubt, he said, but that sometime or other the very hint would inspire me with Thoughts suitable to my Birth, and that I would certainly act like a Gentleman, if I believed myself to be so" (3). This suggestion is reinforced by several incidents that occur in Jack's childhood, some of them insignificant in themselves but full of meaning for Jack. When, with his companion Major Jack, he has his first meal in a public house (paid for by the proceeds from picking pockets), he "thought with my self we began to live like Gentlemen, for we had Three-penny-worth of boil'd Beef, Two-penny-worth of Pudding, a penny Brick . . . and a whole Pint of strong Beer." While the meal is going forth, "the Maid and the Boy in the House every time they pass'd the open Box where we sat at our Dinner, would look in, and cry, Gentlemen Do ye call? and
do ye call Gentlemen? I say this was as good to me as all my Dinner" (15-16). Evidence that gentility is something in-born and not something acquired—although it can be refined upon, as Jack later learns—comes when a woman in a rag shop discerns the marks of a gentleman in Jack's face. Taking a close look at him, she agrees with the shopkeeper, "so he is, a very well looking Child, if he was clean and well dress'd, and may be as good a Gentleman's Son for any thing we know, as any of those that are well dress'd." Jack admits that "she pleas'd me mightily to hear her Talk of my being a Gentleman's Son, and it brought former things to mind" (27).

Like Moll, who in the early stages of her career wanted to be a gentlewoman but had no idea of what that condition entailed, Jack has no very clear notion of what belongs to a gentleman's station. For a time he thinks he is on the right track as his criminal exploits begin bringing in money. But he soon suspects that the ideal of gentility must involve something higher than mere elevation in the thieving profession. Jack demurs when his partner Will promises that by engaging in the gentlemanly art of highway robbery he can become a gentleman: "Will it seems understood that Word in a quite differing manner from me; for his Gentleman was nothing more or less than a Gentleman Thief, a Villain of a higher Degree than a Pick-pocket; and one that might do something more Wicked, and better Entituling him to the Gallows, than could be done in our way: But my Gentleman that I had my
Eye upon, was another thing quite, th'o' I could not really
tell how to describe it neither" (62). He learns fast, how­
ever, and the subsequent course of his life takes him through
successive discoveries of different aspects of gentleness,
until at the end of his story he emerges a "compleat English
gentleman" as Defoe understood the concept. On his planta­
tion in Virginia, Jack first accumulates the requisite wealth
to set up for a gentleman, and then he acquires learning and
a thirst for travel from his Latin-speaking tutor. He next
experiences the amorous intrigues of high society and tries
his mettle as an officer in military adventures on the Con­
tinent. As a natural conclusion to round out such a varied
and upward-mobile career, Jack ought by rights to find that
social graces are nothing without spiritual grace. He does
so, in a token fashion as I have suggested, but in a way
that satisfies none of the novel's basic impulses.

McBurney believes that the "motif of gentility . . .
succeeds in making an organic whole of the novel."17 I agree
that the motif or theme of gentility is a prominent one in
Colonel Jack and that Jack's gentlemanly aspirations consume
his best energies. Yet I think that there is some question
whether Defoe recognized the true center of Jack's story or
at least whether he was willing to acknowledge it. His ea­
gerness to wrench the secular experience into a conventional
religious pattern suggests that he did not. At any rate,
the novel cannot be said to be "an organic whole" if its ac­
tual and official subject matters are at odds. I have difficulty responding to the novel in the two discrete ways De­foe apparently intends. If the novel were frankly and openly a conduct book for Christian gentleman along the lines of The Family Instructor, The Complete English Tradesman, or Reli­gious Courtship for other audiences, or, indeed, The Compleat English Gentleman itself, I could accept its practical and prescriptive qualities for what they obviously are: Defoe's statements on matters of great importance to him. But De­foe was not content to write another conduct book and felt duty bound to present Jack's interesting upward social struggle in the context of sin and redemption. Even that ready­made solution would not have been impossible if there were any evidence of an attempt to reconcile religious and secu­lar experience. Defoe fails to do so to such an extent, how­ever, that he confuses the two orders of experience without seeming to be aware that he is doing so.

There is very little religious experience in Jack's story. Defoe's idea of the gentleman of his day, which has been studied by various critics of Colonel Jack, is a suitably lofty one, but the qualities it embraces are in no way to be confused with Christian ones, although there is a cer­tain amount of inevitable overlap. McBurney, who examines the novel in the light of Defoe's opinions on gentility as expressed in The Compleat English Gentleman (1728-29), ob­serves that Jack's youthful knowledge of inborn gentility
"kindles in the child an innate 'rectitude of principles,' an embryonic conscience which is based, one should note, not on religious ideals but on social aspirations." Crucial as the distinction McBurney makes is, we are in danger of overlooking it, chiefly because Jack does so himself. It must be admitted that Jack's sense of his own destiny makes him less of an offender than he might otherwise be and that he leaves off the petty criminal activity of his childhood when he decides that such behavior does not befit a gentleman. Too, Jack never claims for himself any religious sense; in fact, he constantly reminds us of the absence of religion from his upbringing. Arguing, for example, that he cannot be blamed for his errant behavior as a child, he reminds us, in a passage we have already looked at, that he was troubled by "no manner of thoughts about the Good or Evil of what I was embark'd in; consequently, I had no Sense of Conscience, no Reproaches upon my Mind for having done amiss" (60). This would seem to be a simple statement of fact, unrelated to the theme of gentility.

In the next breath, however, Jack lays claim to something that sounds very much like an inborn Christian conscience, and he leaves little doubt about its source: "Yet I had something in me, by what secret Influence I knew not, kept me from the other degrees of Raking and Vice, and in short, from the general Wickedness of the rest of my Companions: For Example, I never us'd any ill Words, no Body ever heard me swear, nor
was I given to drink" (60). Elsewhere, Jack claims to have a "strange kind of uninstructed Conscience" (46). Jack may not know "what secret Influence" he has to thank for his uprightness and his "rectitude of principles," but we know that it is his gentle birth or, more specifically, "That Original something, I knew not what, that used formerly to Check me in the first meanesses of my Youth, and us'd to Dictate to me when I was but a Child, that I was to be a Gentleman" (155). To be sure, all the virtues Jack boasts of spring, as McBurney says, from "social aspirations," and it is not impossible to speak of a conscience founded upon social mores rather than religious beliefs. But it is also true that abstinence from cursing and drinking lay close to Puritan doctrine and that the very concept of the conscience itself has an inevitably religious association for most readers. By implication, Jack treats such matters not as if they were evidence of breeding but evidence of piety. That impression is confirmed by what happens early in the story: a gentleman who comes into the glass house where Jack resides "swore most horrid Oaths at every two or three Words." The proprietor, "an antient grave Gentleman," takes such offense at his customer's cursing that he voices a fear that "my Glass-House should fall on your Head while you stay in it." Since it would presumably be through divine agency that the roof would collapse, we sense that Jack refrains from cursing because of some innate religious principle that he has not yet recognized
If Jack has an unconscious tendency to regard all things gentlemanly as also virtuous, he is perhaps equally inclined to see the ungenteel as also sinful. Intellectually, of course, he knows the difference, and he says as much when, moved by his tutor's example to investigate his own condition, he reflects, "I had been an Offender as well as he, tho' not altogether in the same Degree, but I knew nothing of the Penitence; neither had I look'd back upon anything, as a Crime; but as a Life dishonourable, and not like a Gentleman" (162). Jack, in other words, identifies certain lapses as sins ("Crime") and certain others as social disgraces (things "not like a Gentleman") and officially abhors each according to its relative seriousness. Jack, the regenerate narrator looking back over his life, has his priorities in order. But Jack, the imaginative participant in his own former adventures, projecting himself back into his state of mind and heart at the time he committed various acts, tends to blur his own careful distinction.

As much as anything, the problem is a tonal one. Like Moll and Bob, Jack undergoes violent palpitations and sharp physical reactions to shocking experiences or sudden startling revelations. These gut-level responses differ little, whether the provocation is social or moral. Remembering how he felt when he thought what his fate might have been if he had not gone to Virginia and reformed in the nick of time,
Jack assures us, "The thought of it was like Reflections upon Hell, and the Damn'd Spirits; it struck me with Horror, it was Odious and Frightful to look back on, and it gave me a kind of Fit, a Convulsion or nervous Disorder, that was very uneasy to me" (156). At the time of this admission he is still in an in-between state of spiritual awakening, half come to acknowledge his sins as such, half unconcerned as long as he can avoid punishment. The important thing, though, is that at the time of narration—when presumably the words are being chosen—Jack has seen the light. So his account can be supposed to have been colored by subsequent realizations. We might expect Jack to reserve a special narrative manner for intense moral commentary of this sort, a style to reflect the grip of experience on his mind as he was living it. But I detect little tonal difference between Jack's "Convulsion or nervous Disorder" at the prospect of "Hell, and the Damn'd Spirits" and his earlier recoiling in an exclusively social context. I refer by way of comparison to the glass-house scene once more, with Jack's overhearing of the proprietor's reproving a well-dressed customer for his ungentlemanly cursing: "I heard all this, and it made the Blood run Chill in my Veins, when he said Swearing was only fit for such as we were "the dirty Crew that lay in the Ashes"; in short, it made as great an Impression upon me, as it did upon the Gentleman" (61). Violent physiological manifestation, it seems, represents the utmost emotional and psy-
chological disturbance Jack is capable of. It would help if, instead of being thrown into turmoil with any discomfiture, social or moral, Jack the narrator (or Defoe) could adjust the intensity of his reaction to the magnitude of the cause he cites.

Not all ambiguity, however, is tonal. One further example shows that failure at being a gentleman is very closely linked in Jack's mind with evil: "when I began to grow to an Age of understanding," he says, "and to know that I was a Thief, growing up in all manner of Villainy, and ripening a-pace for the Gallows, it came into my thoughts that I was going wrong, that I was in the high Road to the Devil, and several times would stop short, and ask my self, if this was the Life of a Gentleman?" (61-2). The issue, it seems, has subtly shifted from one of right and wrong to one of social station, yet Defoe gives no indication, tonal or otherwise, that one order of lapse is more reprehensible than the other. Swearing, for example, begins to look like a sin roughly on the order of stealing, even though the latter places one "in the high Road to the Devil," while the worst that can be said of the former is that "it is not like a Gentleman to swear." Or, perhaps more damaging to Jack's moral status as a narrator, the confusion tends to take the sinful edge off of crimes, reducing their seriousness roughly to that of a social lapse.

We began our study of Colonel Jack by examining James
Sutherland's response to Jack as a picaro. Still to be considered are Sutherland's opinion that "[Jack's] failures are given as much prominence as his successes" and his opinion that "the picaro is at once passive, blundering, and frustrated." My objection to Sutherland's view is twofold: first, if failure is a general picaresque condition, it is chiefly so only in the very specialized sense of spiritual or moral failure, which Sutherland does not seem to intend; second, I do not agree that Colonel Jack is about failure, however defined. Since Sutherland does not specify what incidents in picaresque fiction he thinks constitute failure, one can only assume that he refers to the pervasive humiliation and outright disgrace that the picaro undergoes, those incidents, in other words, which show the picaro as "at once passive, blundering, and frustrated." In an immediate sense, the picaros of Spanish and other continental literature are an unsuccessful lot; all of them contrive schemes and "cheats" for getting on in the world, but since most such devices are unrealistic and unethical, their perpetrators are doomed to failure. Localized failure of this sort—of which Pablos' discovery in a plot to marry an heiress and Guzman's detection as a masquerader in the disabled begging trade are examples—abounds in the picaresque novel, but it merely reflects moral failure on the part of the picaro. Pablos, that is, becomes increasingly desperate in his ruses as he lapses further into sin. His final failure is that he is too debased to pull himself
out of the mire into which he has sunk, even though he at last dimly perceives the need to do so. In worldly terms, Lazaro's story is not about failure at all but about success. At the end of his narrative, he has achieved all he has set out to accomplish. His worldly condition is comfortable. He has managed to anesthetize his moral sense to the point where he is not insulted by the flagrant excesses of his wife with the archpriest. The novel depicts moral failure, then, in the midst of earthly success.

We have something very different in Colonel Jack. With the notable exception of Jack's four hilarious ill-fated marriages, in fact, Defoe's novel plots a course of almost uninterrupted success. Except in love, Jack is not "passive, blundering, [or] frustrated." Such setbacks as he suffers—his beating by a London bill-collector sent by his first wife and his kidnapping by an unscrupulous ship's captain—eventually turn to his account. Made in the first instance to suspect his own courage, Jack later exerts himself the more vigorously on the battlefield, thus improving his credentials as a gentleman. Because of the second, he finds prosperity in Virginia, a prerequisite to gentility. Even the marital comedy ultimately resolves itself in Jack's remarriage with the divorced first wife, who turns up later as his servant in Virginia. She proves to be faithful and eminently practical. Her schemes save Jack's neck more than once, at the same time that they increase his wealth. In-
deed, Jack pursues his consuming aim in life, to forge himself into a gentleman, with remarkable singlemindedness unseen elsewhere even in Defoe and certainly in the picaresque novel. One can almost graph the upward trend in Jack's fortunes from the time he reaches Virginia and the golden colonial opportunity Defoe never tired of extolling. And, according to Jack's account of himself, which Defoe does not undermine iron­ically,21 his moral condition improves with his economic and social conditions. Contrary to what Sutherland says, one remembers the successes of Colonel Jack's career far more vividly than the temporary failures, for the simple reasons that there are so many more of them and that they are so much more decisive.

Finally, we conclude where we began, with Sutherland's opinion that "Colonel Jack . . . has more of the picaro in him than Defoe's other heroes." If Sutherland's reference to "Defoe's other heroes" includes Moll or Bob, its force is doubt­ful. Those novels, this study has argued, although they contain considerable "picaresque" detail, embody a vision of life and wrongdoing that is unpicaresque in its final judgments and values. My argument rested primarily upon analyses of Defoe's narrative technique in Moll Flanders and Captain Singleton, both novels frequently regarded as picaresque. We saw, for example, that while Moll sinned quite as compulsively as her picaresque counterparts, she did not pay the price for her behavior exacted of them. Her religious con-
version seemed irrelevant to Defoe's final disposition of her case, since he showed her comfortable, untroubled security at the end of the novel to be a product not of repentance but of shrewd calculation and crime. Furthermore, I questioned her rather startling ability to come through a life of sin with no marks on her character. She was able miraculously to divest herself of the effects of sin along with the fact of sinning in a way I found to be unpicaresque. Last, I answered the claims of various critics who argue that Defoe purposely built such discrepancies into the novel as an ironic means of rendering a moral judgment of Moll. I distinguished between local—and obviously intended—ironies and structural irony, denying the existence of the latter in Moll Flanders.

On each of the points just enumerated, Defoe's practice differs sharply from that of the picaresque writers. To find, then, that "Colonel Jack . . . has more of the picaro in him than Defoe's other heroes" is not necessarily to find any preponderance of rogue-like qualities in him or in his story. Even in the quantitative sense of conventional "picaresque" detail, which Sutherland probably means, Colonel Jack is, if anything, less picaresque than the other novels in this study, if only because Jack's career as a rogue is so short. Beyond his picaresque "origins" as a bastard, his "education" in crime, his ability to assume "protean form," and his episodic narrative, we find little to link his story with the more
sinful accounts of Moll and Bob. But it matters scarcely at all whether, on balance, we find Colonel Jack to be more or less of a picaro than Defoe's other heroes. All of them stray so far from the picaresque norm as established by Ale- man, Quevedo, Grimmelshausen, and the author of Lazarillo that to compute degrees of picaresqueness is an idle exer-
cise.

Alexander A. Parker comes closer to offering a meaningful approach to the problem of defining Colonel Jack's relationship to the picaresque tradition than anyone else I have read. He points out that "[Colonel Jack] shows the same two features of the picaresque tradition as are in [Moll Flan-
ders]: the protagonist is imbued from an early age with the desire to become a gentleman, and he undergoes at the end a religious conversion." Since, however, these two "features" in themselves are in no way central to the picaresque expe-
rience, their presence in Colonel Jack does not make that novel picaresque any more than it did Moll Flanders. Then Parker offers a critical distinction between Defoe's work and picaresque fiction: "[in Colonel Jack] the picaresque tradition has moved away from religious-moral preoccupation to humanitarianism." By "humanitarianism" Parker presumably means Defoe's attempts to understand the delinquent's reasons for turning to crime; under the heading he would no doubt place the casuistical techniques Starr notices, as well as the attitudes toward sin which those techniques imply.
Parker's point that the preoccupation of Colonel Jack is not "religious-moral" is sound and agrees with the arguments advanced in this study. To demonstrate that picaresque fiction has concerned itself with just such religious-moral issues, I need say little more than what I have already said in Chapter I. Recalling the unflinching terms of moral justice imposed upon such picaros as Simplicissimus and Guzman or the impossibility of redemption for such sin-hardened rogues as Lazaro and Pablos, one concurs with Parker's cogent point. Defoe shows us a world in which a greatly different set of values is in operation. He invites us to interpret Jack's career in the light of Puritan values, but at the same time he reveals unwittingly their inadequacy to explain and to account for the impulses of behavior. In a novel at least nominally about sin and wrongdoing, as Colonel Jack is, I find significantly little emphasis upon abstract questions of right and wrong. After examining Captain Singleton and Moll Flanders in the light of picaresque ethics, we are scarcely surprised at such a discovery. It has been the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the peculiar workings of Defoe's ideas about human behavior in Colonel Jack and to point up their basically unpicaresque qualities on specifically "religious-moral" grounds.
Notes to Chapter IV


2Sutherland, p. 203.

3Daniel Defoe, Colonel Jack, ed. and intro. Samuel Holt Monk (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 5-6. All subsequent quotations from Colonel Jack are from this edition and are indicated in my text parenthetically by page number.

4George A. Starr, Defoe & Casuistry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 33, points out that "Defoe shifts attention from overt acts to their contexts, and brings out conflicting strands in the narrator's circumstances, motives, and reflections."


7Samuel Holt Monk in his introduction to the Oxford English Novels edition of Colonel Jack (1965), pp. xi-xii, remarks that "Colonel Jack is an admirable example of a novel in which the action reveals an unusually large number of the author's convictions." One of the beliefs given shape in the novel is expressed in "Solomon's Prayer," which Defoe quotes regularly in the novels in the present study: "Give me not poverty, least I steal."

8This is one of those junctures in the novel where Novak would probably detect irony working subtly to expose Jack's true motives. Evidence that Defoe may in fact have approved of Jack's shrewdness exists, however, in his similarity to Quaker William in Captain Singleton, who also contrives to get others to do his stealing for him. As we saw, that fact did not impair his function as doctrinal spokesman in the novel.
Hans H. Andersen, "The Paradox of Trade and Morality in Defoe," Modern Philology, 39 (1941), 46, finds that "the work of Defoe is an intimate revelation of the conflict between morality and commercialism in his age. He did not see the paradox with the complete intellectual detachment of Mande­ville. He looked before and after. But he was consistent with reference to either direction and consistent also, finally, in voicing and supporting to the last the aspirations of England's increasing commerce, though he continued to pay morality the conventional, if economically inexpensive, trib­utes."


Jack also regrets his youthful criminality: for example, he decides, "I was brought into this miserable Con­dition of a Slave [in Virginia] by some strange directing Power, as a Punishment for the Wickedness of my younger Years" (119). On another occasion, when he loses a shipload of pro­visions on a risky Atlantic crossing, he claims that he "had such an Abhorrence of the wicked Life I had led" that he re­joices in the loss of goods bought with the proceeds of crime.


This McBurney does, 322-24: "Perhaps the original plan of Colonel Jacque was that of a 'rogue biography' in which the hero would be followed through activities as a pickpocket and thief, as colonial bondservant and planter, and (after a series of marital misadventures) as a soldier of fortune." After telling of his youthful criminality, "Colonel Jacque does a volte-face and . . . the rest of the novel is not a complementary but a contrasting picture to that of Moll Flan­ders.

Frank Chandler, The Literature of Roguery (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1907), 11, 295, says, "Defoe in [Colonel Jack] arouses expectations never satis­fied. Jack's recollection that he is the son of a gentle­man and his boyish striving in his poor way to be true to that ideal seem significant. Yet after much apparent prepara­tion for the discovery of the father or the final redemp­tion of the son, nothing happens." It is not, of course, true that "nothing happens," simply that what Chandler thinks should happen does not. That is a quite different point from the one I am making here. Too, Chandler apparently misreads the end of the novel: if he misses "the final redemption of the son." In cursory fashion, to be sure, Jack ends his
story with an account of his conversion.

15 Michael Shinagel, Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 176, observes, "Jacque, significantly, is represented by Defoe as seeking the same kind of goal in life as Moll Flanders; for he remarks, 'A settled life was the thing I loved.'"

16 James T. Boulton, ed., Daniel Defoe (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 247, points out that Defoe actually argues the opposite position in The Complete English Gentleman: "The accident of birth . . . has little to do with the 'complete gentleman' who must be 'a Person of Merit and Worth; a Man of Honour, Virtue, Sense, Integrity, Honesty, and Religion'; and these qualities will be fostered only by instruction and example."

17 McBurney, 331.

18 McBurney, 324-5.


20 As I have said elsewhere (note 31, page 191 of this study), Defoe does not maintain a consistent or rigorous distinction between the narrator's state of mind as a penitent and as a sinner.

21 Starr, Defoe & Casuistry, p. 108, draws our attention to what is indeed interesting: "although Colonel Jack has not yet (to my knowledge) been interpreted as an ironic work, it contains most of the features that have lately been cited as proof of Defoe's ironic intent in Moll Flanders." Because the issue has not been raised in Colonel Jack criticism, I have not felt it necessary to demonstrate that the novel is unironic. An argument, however, could be conducted along the lines of my discussion of Moll Flanders (Chapter III).

22 Stuart Miller, The Picaresque Novel (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1967), explores these and other conventions in picaresque fiction.

Chapter V: *Roxana*

As Defoe's last novel and the last book in this study, *Roxana* poses a special problem of interpretation. There are critics, like Bonamy Dobree, who want to see the novel as Defoe's abortive effort to break away from the limitations of his earlier fiction: "it was Defoe's last attempt at novelistic fiction, and had he been able to carry it through, it might have constituted another forward step in the art; but he abandoned it, feeling perhaps that he was faced with a technical problem, as well as a moral one, that he could not solve, or had not the leisure to attempt."¹ A recent dissertation, reacting to the assumptions implicit in Dobree's discussion, argues that Defoe succeeded eminently well at what he in fact intended to do, write a picaresque novel, not a modern novel *a la* Richardson or Fielding. If we overcome our "critical blindness," according to Anne K. Kaler, we will see that "Defoe purposely imitates the older tradition of the picaresque novel: his intent was not to create a new genre but to perfect an old one." Kaler's position is not untenable. Though one may wonder how she knows so much about Defoe's "intent" and though one may doubt whether "Roxana possesses more picaresque elements than Defoe's other novels,"² one would not deny that *Roxana* shares a great many
traits with the picaresque. As Jane Jack accurately notes, "Like Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, and Colonel Jack, Roxana is a dishonest person who travels about and preys on society. Like them she is on her own: she describes herself as 'entirely without friends, nay, even so much as without acquaintances.'"

Jack thus ascribes to Roxana two primary picaresque features, roguery and isolation; similarly, Kaler observes that "Defoe knew the picaresque traditions." The two critics, however, come to rather divergent conclusions: Jack argues that despite its picaresque incidents, "Roxana is far from being a picaresque tale," while Kaler believes that "[Defoe] used ["picaresque traditions"] to make Roxana the most strongly picaresque of his heroines." These two positions are finally irreconcilable, and although Jack's conclusion comes nearer than Kaler's to my own, it depends upon premises that I cannot accept. And Kaler, it seems to me, mistakes the presence of picaresque narrative conventions for the feelings and attitudes they reflect in the picaresque novel: Roxana has the former but not the latter. I will show in this chapter that there is a sense in which Defoe's treatment of Roxana's moral experience comes closer to the picaresque norm than anything we have seen in the previous novels; yet that fact has nothing to do with the presence or absence of "picaresque traditions." Similarly, Jack is right that "Roxana is far from being a typical picaresque tale," but only
partly for the reasons she cites: specifically, "it is so evident that there is an element of Daniel Defoe in each [of his major protagonists]," observes Jack, "that we know very well that they will not suffer the worst of indignities to which a true picaro is liable: it is inconceivable that Moll or Roxana should be hanged [though, one should remember, Lazaro, Guzman, Pablos, and Simplicissimus are also spared that fate]. Indeed, they have a certain paradoxical dignity about them, a bourgeois air of substance and an unshakeable determination to get on in the world. Even when they are destitute their minds are set on property and the independence and self-respect that will accompany it." Defoe's close identification with his heroes and heroines, something no Defoe critic (including the present one) has ever failed to comment upon, does, as Jack says, distinguish Roxana and Moll Flanders from most picaresque fiction, because it interferes with the strict authorial judgment that Roxana and Moll both merit. Although that identification is less complete in Roxana than in Defoe's earlier novels, it is still pervasive enough to give a quite unpicaresque cast to his last novel. Where Jane Jack misleads us is in her implication that Roxana is not a picara because she is middle-class and property-minded. Chapter I of this study has demonstrated the essentially middle-class aims of earlier picaras; if my conclusions are correct, then Roxana's wholehearted participation in those aims should make her no less picaresque than her
roguish forerunners.

My point, it should by now be anticipated, is that the essence of picaresque literature does not reside in its conventions, or even in the bourgeois impulses of its heroes, but in its attitudes toward sin and wrongdoing. On these grounds, Defoe actually approximates something like a picaresque vision in *Roxana*, but, I will insist, he does so independently of picaresque influence. The resemblance is striking, especially toward the end of the novel when Roxana, irrevocably committed to sin and deception, finds it increasingly difficult, and finally impossible, to remove the traces of her behavior from her character. Roxana is frequently compared to Moll Flanders, and the two have a great deal in common, from their astonishing powers of endurance and willingness to use others to their casuistical tendencies to excuse their own sins. There are, however, differences: Moll, we remember, exploited others throughout a career of "threescore Year" and still lived to repent and settle at last into total marital bliss, in possession of a sizable fortune at least partly derived from her crimes. I found the end of *Moll Flanders* disturbing because of its implicit assumption that sin is something one can forget as soon as one's participation in it is no longer necessary. I argued that this assumption conflicts with the official Puritan values of the novel and that furthermore Defoe gives no indication, direct or ironic, that he regards the conflict in a
critical light. If sin is the insidious force Defoe and Moll say it is, then more than a perfunctory religious conversion should be required to erase its memory. In making Roxana ineligible for the kind of easy conversion Moll enjoys, Defoe inadvertently brings her experience closer to that of the picaresque novel. Curiously, it is not on such grounds that critics who favor a picaresque reading argue for Roxana's claims to be a picara.

There is little precedent for Moll's (or Jack's or Bob's) easily satisfied conscience in the picaresque novel. In Chapter I of the present study, we examined representative picaresque novels for their common attitudes toward human behavior, especially roguish or otherwise sinful behavior. Although the picaresque novels of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe are a diverse lot with few shared qualities, we did notice the emergence of what Alexander Parker calls "a religious-moral preoccupation." Beyond a certain point in each picaresque novel we looked at, the hero's actions were regarded not as harmful youthful excesses but as serious moral lapses and downright sins. In the stories of Lazaro, Guzman, Pablos, and Simplicissimus, sin eventually became compulsive, something each was able to avoid, if at all, only by undertaking a rigorous program of repentance and by renouncing the world. Lazaro and Pablos were unable or unwilling to make the necessary sacrifice, and consequently each was shown to be guilty of the sins of a disillusioned adult,
no longer a high-spirited, spontaneous youth. Pablos knows that the future holds little for him but more flight and more failure, and Lazaro blinds himself to the ugly realities of his domestic arrangement to remain doggedly convinced of his own happiness. Evil and wrongdoing in the picaresque novel, whatever their adverse social effects, become undesirable primarily because they debase the human being responsible for them. They harden his heart to the religious salvation that, as Moll says, man has only to desire sincerely in order to be granted.

If sin is hardly recognizable as such in Moll Flanders, Captain Singleton, and Colonel Jack, and if in those novels wrongdoing consequently does not resemble its picaresque counterparts, we cannot level the same charge at Roxana. In his last novel, Defoe has answered several of our objections in advance—not, however, from any apparent design to do so. A comparison of Roxana with the novels we have already looked at will suggest that despite her family resemblance to Moll and the rest, Roxana exists in a very different moral universe. The problem for the critic is to determine at what point Defoe decided to hold Roxana accountable for her sins in a way that he never did Moll, Jack, or Bob. In order to argue (as Kaler, for example, does) that the novel has a conscious design, whether picaresque or otherwise, one must demonstrate that Defoe conducts Roxana's narrative from the beginning in such a way as to accommodate her ultimate moral
upset. This I do not believe can be done.

Initially, very little seems to distinguish Roxana from Moll or, for that matter, from Bob or Jack. Roxana, it is true, enjoys the childhood advantages of respectable parents and a secure social position, which ensure her a good match with the son of a prosperous brewer. Moll, Bob, and Jack, for all any of them knew to the contrary, began the world as orphans, at the bottom of a society that was palpably hostile to them. The temptation to sin, accordingly, was present from the beginning in each of their cases: in the form of sex with the Colchester elder brother for Moll, petty street crime for Jack, and high-seas piracy for Bob. All of these earlier heroes pled ignorance and necessity in their defense, and in the main they were justified by their circumstances in doing so. In the telling of her own story, Roxana truncates the account of her apparently easy childhood and condenses that of her first marriage into a few pages, bringing the story quickly to her abandonment by the brewer. Defoe thus minimizes Roxana's early advantages to focus instead upon her disadvantages, stressing the extremity of her situation as he did Moll's. From this point in her story, Roxana urges with some justice, she has almost overpowering pressure upon her to sin in order to prevent starvation.

The question we have to ask ourselves, in view of what happens later in *Roxana*, is whether Defoe suggests that Roxana's crimes are any worse than those of Moll, Bob, and Jack,
or whether she has any less provocation for them. Moll, it will be recalled, sounded very much like Roxana when she was in a position similar to that of Roxana at the departure of the brewer: left a widow in distress by the death of her third husband, Moll quails at the prospect of starvation: "0 let none read this part without seriously reflecting on the Circumstances of a desolate State, and how they would grapple with mere want of Friends and want of Bread; it will certainly make them think not of sparing what they have only, but of looking up to Heaven for support, and of the wise Man's Prayer, Give me not Poverty least I Steal." Half a page later, Moll commits her first theft, and she is clearly premeditating it in the speech just quoted. Several times near the beginning of Roxana's career in sin and vice, as she likewise weighs the possibility of committing the first sin, she echoes the words of her maid, Amy: "Poverty is the strongest Incentive; a Temptation, against which no Virtue is powerful enough to stand out." After she has yielded to her landlord, Roxana refers to "the terrible Pressure of my former Misery, the Memory of which lay heavy upon my Mind" (33-34), and she bursts out a bit later with, "O let no Woman slight the Temptation that being generously deliver'd from Trouble, is to any Spirit furnish'd with Gratitude and just Principles" (35). Again, as she berates herself for sinning knowingly, she concludes, "but Poverty was my Snare; dreadful Poverty!" (39). Finally, she claims, and we have
no reason to doubt, that her sexual sins are prompted by ne-
cessity, not lust: "I had nothing of the Vice in my Consti-
tution; my Spirits were far from being high; my Blood had no
Fire in it, to kindle the Flame of Desire" (40-41). With
due allowances for minor differences in their respective sit-
uations, then, Moll and Roxana excuse similar behavior on
similar grounds.

The present discussion is intended to show that, al-
though Roxana's ultimate spiritual downfall would seem to sug-
gest an extraordinary degree of guilt on her part, very lit-
tle in her story as she gives it to us indicates anything
but routine wrongdoing. The point of my comparison of Rox-
ana and Moll Flanders is to establish that although the two
stories develop in much the same way, with progressive es-
calations of sin and commentary thereupon, Moll finally ex-
tricates herself while Roxana does not. It is idle to spec-
ulate whether in some abstract sense Roxana's crimes are more
reprehensible than Moll's so as to preclude an affirmative
conversion. In actual practice, Roxana presents her story
in much the same way Moll does, and she seems to be prepar-
ing the way for a similar spiritual awakening. If we cannot
detect some early evidence of a design to punish Roxana by
withholding from her the peace and tranquillity of salva-
tion, we must conclude that Defoe's disposition of her case
was an afterthought. I will conjecture later why Defoe, af-
ter apparently introducing a conventional story of sin and
redemption, felt compelled to abandon his original design and to make something ambiguous of Roxana's moral experience. For the time being, it is enough to emphasize that Moll makes a defense of herself that resembles Roxana's both in substance and tone.

Both Moll and Roxana are able casuists. Chapter III of this study has traced Moll's efforts at extenuating her sins by stressing motive and extraordinary circumstances. As George A. Starr remarks, Roxana does not, explicitly or otherwise, deny her lapses or attempt to present them as anything other than heinous moral offenses. She regards her illicit relations with her landlord, for example, as nothing less than a way of plunging herself "into the Jaws of Hell, and into the Power of the . . . Devil" (38). According to Starr, "there is something disarming about the blunt candor of Roxana's confessions, and they sometimes have the effect of increasing, not lessening, our sympathy for her. They do this by forcing us to distinguish between what Roxana is and what she does. We may 'abhor the Crime,' but no more so than the criminal herself [does], whose energetic strictures on her own conduct forestall ours, and align her values with our own."10 Roxana's "strictures" are indeed "energetic," and they surely function in the way Starr outlines. Importantly, the same technique pervades Moll's narrative: she repeatedly tells us how bad she is, and she thereby implies that by her very ability to recognize her own sins she dissociates her-
self from them and sets herself above them. Ultimately, the
technique works to Moll's advantage, however, because she re-
veals that her self-awareness has little power to restrain her behavior: she sins just as much, whether she admits it or not. Only in the conclusion of her story, when her es-
essential moral being, present all along in the moral commen-
tary on her sins, asserts itself (however improbably and un-
convincingly), do the self-accusatory passages receive their rationale. Moll, we discover, has been a penitent all along. Deprived of a similar awakening, Roxana seems to argue with casuistical ingenuity that undermines her moral professions. In this sense alone can her guilt be said to exceed Moll's.

As in Moll's case, Roxana's "energetic strictures" func-
tion in another, and probably more important, way. At the
same time that they subtly urge a defense of indefensible acts, they also embody overt authorial criticism of those acts. They reflect the limitations of Defoe's primary con-
vention, that of the penitent first-person narrator. Through this convention, we understand the crimes and other sins that make up the bulk of the narrative to have occurred sometime in the past. We are asked to accept the condition that the narrator has come to repent of her sinful past and to offer her story as a deterrent to like sins in her readers. (We know from Defoe's prefaces that he at least publicly espoused such a moral aim.) The self-accusations of Moll and Roxana, then, constitute one of the few credible first-person author-
ial resources for denouncing behavior that is intended as a bad example. Defoe may in fact have intended nothing more subtle in his conduct of Roxana's narrative than to show through Roxana's own words what it means to be a sinner. He may not have calculated the "disarming" effect of Roxana's casuistical maneuverings: if his identification with his heroine is as complete as Jane Jack thinks, he may have thought he was doing his religious duty by denouncing Roxana's sins while unwittingly constructing a good defense that undercuts the denunciation. We really do not know how Defoe regarded his heroine, but we do know that her self-criticism accords with Defoe's stated prefatorial announcement of moral intent. The problem, of course, is that Defoe robs Roxana of the authority necessary if she is to be a moral spokesperson by depriving her of a last-minute conversion. Although her pious moralizing sounds like the genuine article, its issuance from the mouth of a hardened sinner compromises it severely.

In *Roxana*, Defoe pays dearly for the advantages of a first-person narrator that had served him so well in his previous novels. The obvious advantage of the device is that through it the author can satisfy the reader's curiosity for vicarious sinful experience by fully unfolding the life of his hero in graphic detail, and he can at the same time escape the charge that he is himself promoting sin by deploring the same sinful experience. Among the disadvantages is
is the problem that the narrator must persist in denouncing his own acts as sins and yet go on committing them, because, while the sins belong to an earlier, pre-penitent period, the narration belongs to a later, regenerate period in his life. Logically and artistically, the conversion can come only late in the story, after the narrator has given the events of his life in chronological order as they happened. To remind us early in the narrative (as distinct from the preface) that we have the words of a religious penitent would be to rob the account of whatever suspense may be built up. Yet to have an unregenerate sinner telling of his sins would be to make moral commentary upon them implausible. So Defoe compromises: in Moll Flanders, the narrator adopts a tone of moral outrage directed at her own acts, but she suspends the information about her conversion (not without hinting at its eventual materialization) until the proper chronological moment. For conventional patterns of this sort, the technique works perfectly well. But in Roxana, where Defoe tried to interrupt the pattern, the result is confusion. Roxana's narrative manner, as we have seen, is indistinguishable from Moll's, but in Roxana's story the conversion itself—although prepared for—is only obliquely alluded to, even at the end. Although she surrounds her narration with a penitent's religious fervor, Roxana concludes her story in a state of sin. The disparity between the facts of her case as she gives them to us and her narrative manner thus accounts for our sense of
unresolved conflict as we finish the book.

The unresolved conflict itself could be structural in the novel if we believe, as Maximillian Novak argues, that Roxana "narrates her story during the anguish and remorse of Christian repentance." In order to regard the conclusion as part of an intentionally interrupted pattern of sin and redemption that catches Roxana at the moment of wrestling with her conscience, we must believe that her moral commentary throughout springs from this very stage in her moral progress. That is to say, we must be prepared to demonstrate that Roxana's "tortured self-condemnations" reflect a state of mind somewhere between sinfulness and salvation. In fact, however, these self-condemnations have instead the stamp of a converted sinner looking back in horror at her former lapses. For example, only one who had come to terms with her conscience could say that she wishes "not to make the Story an Incentive to the Vice, which I am now such a sorrowful Penitent for being guilty of" (75). Passages like this one, and others less explicit, suggest that Roxana tells her story as a reformed sinner, just as Moll had done. Or rather, such passages suggest that Defoe intended Roxana to be a reformed sinner as narrator but for some reason changed his mind. Defoe does not, it is true, leave Roxana in utter darkness; by the end of her story she seems to have advanced part of the way toward repentance, but her actual conversion, if there is to be one, is apparently completed off-stage. So the un-
resolved conflict of Roxana's parting remarks remains just that. We sense that an element in her story for which we have been prepared carefully and deliberately up to a point has been inexplicably slighted.

Defoe contrives a double ending for Roxana as a device for treating individually two separate aspects of the heroine's story. The novel comes to a first, tentative conclusion with Roxana's departure for Holland as the newlywed wife of the Dutch merchant. Although she has just received a title and is enormously wealthy, she tells us that she "was Hag-ridden with Frights, and terrible things, form'd meerly in the Imagination; and was either tir'd, and wanted Sleep, or overrun with Vapours, and not fit for conversing with my Family, or any-one else" (264). At this point, we do not know the precise cause of Roxana's disturbance, except that it derives in some vague way from guilt about her disgraceful past. Congratulating herself that she is not "Roman-Catholick," since then she would have to reveal all in confession to a priest and perhaps incur an impossible penance, she leaves England with "none of the Absolution, by which the Criminal confessing, goes away comforted." Instead, she describes herself as having "a Heart loaded with Crime, and [going about] altogether in the dark." There is no more than a hint of some sort of subsequent abatement of her torment: "If Providence had not reliev'd me, I shou'd have died in little time: But of that hereafter."
The pregnant phrase "But of that hereafter" seems to promise much, but "hereafter" never arrives. Defoe seems to foreshadow, in Roxana's allusion to "Providence," some spiritual solution to her troubles, but nothing of the sort develops. Defoe backs up to fill in the concluding episodes that deal with Roxana's imminent exposure as a whore by her daughter, and we expect a full account of the spiritual experience apparently prepared for as above. We can be excused if we persist in wanting to read Roxana as a spiritual journey toward repentance as we did Moll Flanders. Defoe more than once shows Roxana futilely groping her way toward repentance as Moll had done, mistakenly confusing a fear of punishment with a genuine abhorrence of the sin itself: "I was not come to that Repentance that is rais'd from a Sense of Heaven's Goodness; I repented of the Crime, but it was of another and lower kind of Repentance, and rather mov'd by my Fears of Vengeance, than from a Sense of being spar'd from being punish'd, and landed safe after a Storm" (261). The implication is that although she does not presently know what genuine repentance is, she will in time come to experience it when she is in the proper frame of mind. Earlier, when Roxana leaves off whoring in disgust at her old lord's behavior, she admits, "there was not the least Hint in all this, from what may be call'd Religion or Conscience, and far from any-thing of Repentance, or any-thing that was a-kin to it, especially at first" (200). Roxana's "especially
at first," like her "of that hereafter," seems designed to foreshadow some religious awakening. Moll, we remember, sounded much the same theme as Roxana several times during her sojourn at Newgate. One example will suffice: "tho' I cry'd, and repeated several times the Ordinary Expression of, Lord have Mercy upon me; I never brought my self to any Sense of my being a miserable Sinner, as indeed I was, and of Confessing my Sins to God, and begging Pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ; I was overwhelm'd with the Sense of my Condition, being try'd for my Life, and being sure to be Condemn'd, and then I was as sure to be Executed" (Moll Flanders, 283).

After several false starts of this sort, Moll finally begins to repent in earnest. We had some reservations about the expediency of Moll's conversion and about her (and Defoe's) readiness to ignore troubling inconsistencies, but no reservations about the successful resolution of the dramatic tensions in the novel.

In Roxana, however, precisely the reverse holds true: Defoe remains admirably faithful to the spiritual exigencies of Roxana's situation, but in doing so he fails to reconcile various conflicting dramatic elements. We do not necessarily demand a pat working out of Roxana's experience; ambiguity can be satisfying and meaningful. But we do expect a systematic handling of the details of such experience, so that the very lack of a solution can be focused on. Defoe misleads us by suggesting a full-blown religious crisis and resolution
that never develop or that develop only in truncated form. For after the gripping account of Roxana's pursuit by the daughter, which comes to an end only with Amy's implied murder of the girl, Roxana depicts herself as anything but liberated: "the Beast of Heaven seem'd to follow the Injury done the poor Girl, by us both; and I was brought so low again, that my Repentance seem'd to be only the Consequence of my Misery, as my Misery was of my Crime" (330). If she repents at all, Roxana seems to say, it is only that "lower kind of Repentance" she had disparaged earlier (261). The problem with the conclusion of the novel, then, is not that Defoe leaves things up in the air but that he seems to promise a more decisive conclusion than the one he delivers.

For reasons I have outlined in advance, I reject the implications of Jane Jack's judgment that Roxana is "a study which brilliantly illustrates the misery of a guilty conscience." That is, while I agree that the novel has the effect Jack speaks of, I reject her implication that it is achieved by design. One does not for a moment question the fidelity of Defoe's writing to the realistic demands of Roxana's situation. He has imagined the plight of one with a guilty conscience with such accuracy and thoroughness that, as seldom in Defoe, one really does share in all the horror of the experience. Jack praises the "more than Hogarthian horror" of the following passage near the end of the book, after Roxana has received word of her daughter's disappear-
ance and has attributed the crime to the too-faithful Amy:
"As for the poor Girl herself, she was ever before my Eyes; I saw her by-Night, and by-Day; she haunted my Imagination, if she did not haunt the House; my Fancy show'd her me in a hundred Shapes and Postures; sleeping or waking, she was with me; Sometimes I thought I saw her with her Throat cut; sometimes with her Head cut, and her Brains knock'd-out; other-times hang'd up upon a Beam; another time drown'd in the Great Pond at Camberwell" (325). Where I differ with Jack is in the structural and thematic importance I would grant to such material in Roxana. I see the concluding portion of Roxana's narrative—in which through a slow accumulation of incident and a carefully staged tightening of events around the heroine—she becomes increasingly desperate—as essentially a single episode, albeit a brilliantly executed one.

The episode involving the conflict of Roxana with her daughter does not provide evidence of overall design in the novel. It has considerable internal unity and integrity, and it takes on greater complexity than individual episodes in Defoe generally do. But it is not of an emotional or moral piece with the rest of the novel and does not appear to have been a part of Defoe's original plan for Roxana. Surely the stroke of genius that makes the novel so powerful is the product of a moment's inspiration, something that came to Defoe long after he had determined the conventional course of Roxana's story. If anything, the belated concern Roxana
shows for her children by the brewer (of which the daughter in question is one) represents Defoe's attempt to tie up loose ends and to prepare Roxana for her expected repentance. What happens, of course, is quite the opposite, and from the moment Defoe sets Roxana and her daughter on a collision course all hope of a conventional resolution vanishes. The girl cannot be made to disappear conveniently, and guilt for her murder (which Roxana shares, although she is not the actual murderess) cannot be brushed aside by a repentance in the nick of time. Nothing in the early part of the novel indicates that Defoe is working toward "a study which brilliantly illustrates the misery of a guilty conscience," as we have already seen. To summarize the argument I have been advancing: Roxana does, it is true, have periodic guilt seizures, but in this she differs not at all from Moll, Jack, or Bob, each of whom frequently reflects on the inevitable result of a life of sin. Nevertheless, Defoe somehow thrusts Roxana into despair from which he never rescues her, and he spares the earlier heroes the same destruction. If we assume that he designed from the outset to bring Roxana to her damnation, we must believe that he somehow-saw—and attempted to show in the novel—Roxana as more guilty than her predecessors. Or we must conclude (as I am inclined to do) that the episode was an afterthought.

George A. Starr, in *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, finds rather more evidence of conscious design in *Roxana*
than I do. He diagnoses the point of view in the novel as "equivocal," explaining that "Roxana frequently sounds like Moll, but the force of her moralizing is seriously impaired by her essential similarity to Mr. Badman"—that is, to the impenitent sinner of Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, whose story must be narrated and commented upon by the regenerate Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive respectively, if its moral point is to be made clear and plausible. Committed to a first-person narrator in *Roxana*, Defoe could not effectively put plausible self-condemnatory opinions in Roxana's mouth and at the same time show her slipping into sin, since such opinion, as we have shown, implies a regenerate narrator like Moll. Starr offers two "hypotheses" to explain the "difficulty": first, he suggests, Defoe may have "set out to portray a process of hardening, as in *Moll Flanders*, with every intention of bringing Roxana to eventual repentance, but at some point decided to let her spiritual development complete its natural course, and end with the distinct prospect of damnation." Because, however, this explanation amounts to an admission that Defoe lost control of his material at some point, Starr rejects it in favor of a second "hypothesis": "that [Defoe] conceived Roxana as more or less a Badman-figure from the outset; that having chosen to put the story in her own mouth, he was at a loss to insert the required moral interpretation of Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive; that he in- judiciously elected to make Roxana her own commentator; and
that by this expedient he not only deprived her reflections of much of their intrinsic validity but made her entire character extremely ambiguous."

As Starr points out, "both views challenge the status of the book, and a case could be made for either one." Starr's preference for the second explanation, the one he illustrates by analogy to Mr. Badman, depends upon recognition of "fairly early indications that Defoe means to consign Roxana to the devil." These turn out to include instances of Roxana's flouting of "Providential chastisements and deliverances," as when she escapes the evil Jew, or when she and Amy escape drowning on a Channel crossing. Yet since Moll's story also includes such incidents and she still manages to repent at last, the force of Starr's argument depends upon his ability to prove that "there are features of [Roxana's] hardening that have no real parallel in Moll Flanders, traits that align her more closely with Mr. Badman and his ilk and that rule out, in Defoe's mind at least, the feasibility of a last-minute conversion." It seems to me, however, that Starr's argument is undercut by his own admission that "[Roxana's] hardening fails to obey an orderly progression, or at any rate lacks some of the gradual, cumulative quality that traditionally characterizes the process." Starr's answer, predictably, is that "Defoe wants to indicate that [Roxana's] soul reaches a fairly desperate condition early in her career, but since he has made her the narrator of her own story,
she herself must continue to supply its 'improvement.'"

I think that Starr is most assailable when he summarizes the differences between Roxana's moral position and Moll's as follows: "Although [Roxana's] overt deeds are scarcely more criminal than those of Moll Flanders, there is the important difference that while Moll seeks prey, Roxana seeks proselytes. While Moll is drawn to commit sins, Roxana actively avows them; like Jezebel, Roxana is guilty not merely of fornication but of preaching and promoting it."¹⁵ He cites as evidence chiefly Roxana's feminist views, which, he argues, should not necessarily be taken as a statement of Defoe's own position on women's rights simply because they are vigorously urged. Drawing our attention to others of Defoe's writings, Starr shows that, while Defoe approved of a just and decent liberty for women, he would place some limitations on it. Otherwise, the institution of marriage would be weakened—something, Starr observes, Defoe would never have sanctioned. Starr's point, then, seems to be that Roxana oversteps, and by the very extremity of her views (total freedom from all regulation by, or even cooperation with, men) prejudices her own case. This strikes me as over-subtle and rather too much dependent upon our apprehension of structural irony, for which Defoe gives no clues.¹⁶ Then too, Moll promulgated some stiff feminist views of her own, and those did not constitute evidence of her irrevocable damnation.
More fundamentally, however, the problem is one of how we respond to a first-person narrative. Surely a fine line divides the commission of sin and the avowal of it; it could be argued that by the very act of reporting her own sins—as she must do if we are to learn of them—the first-person narrator "avows" them. Even when the narrator, as it were, disavows them (that is, denies that they are sins because prompted by necessity), the psychological effect is much the same. For that matter, Roxana devotes quite as much energy as Moll to denouncing her own lapses: my impression is that she devotes more. We do not respond entirely favorably to such exercises, to be sure, because they take on the appearance of attempts to divert us from the fact that crimes are still crimes even when candidly acknowledged as such. The fact remains that Roxana's posture of self-apologist has the effect of proselytizing, even when it is not overtly designed to do so. Roxana cannot escape the consequences of the first-person narrative form, which make even factual reporting take on the aura of argumentation. This is not to say that Roxana seeks converts any more actively than Moll does.

And yet Moll gets off, and Roxana does not. James Sutherland, in Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study, offers a "hypothesis" of his own, and in doing so contradicts Starr's argument: "It is at least a possible hypothesis," according to Sutherland, "that ill health forced Defoe to abandon Roxana before he had completed it, and that the puzzling last para-
graph, together with the Preface [which offers the book as a moral lesson], were the work of another hand." Sutherland posits a projected conclusion, never written, that would have taken Roxana the further step from despair to genuine penitence. His evidence includes the passages we have already looked at, wherein Roxana reproaches herself for her own sins. Sutherland asks, "if [Defoe] thought of Roxana as a damned soul, why did he allow her to reproach herself as frequently as she does? Why does she still seem to have an active conscience? And why, if she is not a genuine penitent, does she talk so much about repentance?" For Sutherland, the answer is clear: because Defoe intended to prevent Roxana's damnation at last but apparently never wrote the intended conclusion.

I suspect that Sutherland more accurately explains or accounts for what actually happened between the conception and the writing of Roxana than Starr does; only Defoe's biographer, however, as Sutherland is, can speculate about the state of the author's health at the time of writing. I agree that all the evidence seems to foreshadow an eventual conversion for Roxana, as a conventional end to an otherwise conventional story of sin and reformation. In the absence of hard evidence, I do not think that we need to look to "another hand" to account for the problems with Roxana. We have ample precedent in Defoe for regarding Roxana as a formula narrative that refuses to stay entirely within the con-
fines of the formula, as a story that strains the limits of a convention until it becomes something else. We saw what happened in Captain Singleton, for example, when Defoe set out to write a conventional rogue biography and became so engrossed in the inventiveness of his travel narrative that he gave free rein to that element instead. The resulting book lacks the neatly contained shape of the genre Defoe was working in, but probably no reader has ever wished that Defoe had stuck to his original design. And in Colonel Jack the theme of gentility overwhelms more conventional rogue materials. Examples of obviously impromptu solutions to artistic and formal problems on a smaller scale in Defoe are too numerous to list here. We need do no more than observe that Defoe was capable of becoming caught up in the events he was writing about and letting them dictate their own course.

One such instance, I am convinced, is the last fifth of Roxana, when, just as he might have reversed the course of Roxana's career with a routine conversion, Defoe is inspired to have her daughter return as a judgment of her past upon her, to haunt her last days. Beyond a certain point, Defoe must have despaired of reconciling the new material with his traditional form and finally have given up all efforts to do so. The perfunctory conclusion, alluding as it does indirectly to a repentance sometime in the future, may simply have been as near as he was able to come to satisfactorily
discharging the logical and artistic requirements of his story as it finally developed. If evaluative judgments are in order, we should seek some balance in them. Although we do not wish to condemn Defoe for writing a book like *Roxana* with its brilliant passages and powerful spiritual experience, we do not, as Jane Jack does, need to praise excessively the "brilliant compromise [between death and a happy ending] of leaving [Roxana] in physical safety and prosperity, yet in spiritual torment." He could have done little else, given the uncontrollable series of events he had set in motion, perhaps inadvertently.

I began this study of *Roxana* as a means of inferring, from the novel itself, Defoe's attitude toward his heroine's sinful experience. I hoped thereby to show that if *Roxana* has any kinship to the picaresque novel, it is to be found in its concluding vision of sin and despair, not in any mere presence of "picaresque" detail, although there is plenty of that. Furthermore, I argued that although *Roxana*'s "hag-ridden" condition at the end of her story resembles Lazaro's and Pablos' at the end of theirs, the resemblance is superficial and probably unintentional. In those Spanish picaresque novels, the hero's ultimate unregenerate sinfulness was accomplished through a deliberate process of hardening, detailed in the course of each story. We were not, or should not have been, surprised to discover that Lazaro was not saved by a last-minute religious conversion. Nothing in his
story suggested that he was merely being tried, or used as an example, and that some innate moral sense would eventually assert itself and bring him around. Such a reversal would have run counter to the author's theory of sin and sinful experience, to the belief that they harden the heart of the sinner to all good influence, religious or otherwise. The author, as I attempted to show, incorporated this theory into a fictional design in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, into a narrative technique for tracing and measuring the hero's decline into sin and damnation, without the incumbrance of the hero's own awareness of the process. The author accomplished this end not only by showing Lazaro in a series of scenes designed to further his debasement (mistreatment by the blind beggar, near-starvation at the hands of the priest, exploitation by the escudero) but also by registering ironically Lazaro's own obliviousness to the meaning of these experiences.

A close examination of *Lazarillo* shows that from the first the anonymous author intended Lazaro's damnation and that he marshaled all his picaresque resources of character, setting, and irony to bring it about.

Much the same thing can be said for Pablos in *La Vida del Buscon*. For all the novel's "picaresque" randomness, a pattern can be discerned among the diverse episodes that make it up. Retrospectively, we can see that Pablos never had a chance for salvation, from the time that he left his squalid home at the beginning of his story to the time that he seeks
refuge from the law in the Cathedral at the end. Although *Buscon* is not an explicitly religious novel, not in the way that some other picaresque novels are, it is nonetheless informed by Christian values. Ironically, Pablos flies to the Cathedral when he is pursued by the law, but instead of seeking spiritual sanctuary he looks for physical safety. Quevedo examines Pablos' picaresque articles of faith, chiefly the belief that he can always make a new start for himself elsewhere if things get too hot where he happens to be. To his chagrin, however, Pablos discovers after it is too late that his own sinful nature will make every residence intolerable at some point and that whether he runs or stays matters little. Again, the cynical picaresque conclusion is not one that Quevedo imposes casually upon Pablos' story; he prepares the reader for it by carefully managing the course of Pablos' adventures so as to point the way to his ultimate damnation.

Given these picaresque touchstones, then, I examined the passages in *Roxana* which show the heroine hardening into sin, to see whether they supported Starr's argument that "there are fairly early indications that Defoe means to consign Roxana to the devil." I found that Roxana, each subsequent time she sinned, resisted less than she had the last time; to that extent she becomes "heart hardened" as Starr calls it. But at the same time she regularly softens each offense by a casuistical admission that she is doing wrong,
thereby implying a capacity for doing better that militates against her ultimate damnation. Certain observations of Roxana's also seem designed to foreshadow an eventual conversion and seem contrived to account for the difficult narrative situation of a sinner "improving" her own account (for example, her claim that she is "now such a sorrowful Penitent for being guilty of [vice]"). Finally, I see no evidence that Defoe conceived of Roxana's career as an integrated whole, as the picaresque writers did the careers of their heroes, and as a result I cannot regard the story as picaresque.
Notes to Chapter V


4 Kaler, p. 133.

5 Jack, p. vii.

6 See my pp. 35-37.


11 I would make a distinction between general social criticism, which, as we saw in Guzman de Alfarache, can proceed very believably from the mouth of a hypocritical narrator, and self-apology, of the sort we have here, which cannot.


13 Jack, p. xii.
Like Moll, Roxana is an almost compulsive dramatic ironist: she can scarcely resist sharing the delicious ironies of her case with the reader, and on occasion almost smirking at its secrets. One such example occurs during Roxana's conference with Sir Robert Clayton, who acts as her investment counselor and financial confidant. After he makes an allusion to her considerable interest income, Roxana nudges the reader and comments, "but he neither knew, nor mistrusted, that with all this Wealth, I was yet a Whore, and was not averse to adding to my Estate at the farther Expence of my Virtue" (171). While such ironies may make us suspicious of further ironies of a more subtle sort, I do not think that an examination of Roxana establishes their presence any more than was the case in Moll Flanders. To avoid being repetitious, I have not analyzed potentially ironic passages in Roxana as systematically as I did those in Moll Flanders, although the materials for such an analysis are present in the later novel as well. I have been more interested in this chapter in Defoe's remarkable approximation of the picaresque vision at the end of the novel than in the perhaps equally relevant matter of irony.


Jane Jack, p. xi.
Conclusion

If I have dwelt on problems of form in Defoe's novels, I have not done so with the purpose of proving those novels formless. I have attempted instead to demonstrate that, while *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana* have a kind of formal integrity derived from the imprint of a single narrative consciousness on a series of experiences, they nonetheless do not have, and do not aim to have, the moral design of the classic picaresque novels. Only because so much criticism insists on reading Defoe's novels as something I believe they were never intended to be—picaresque novels—has it been necessary to emphasize the vast differences in thought and feeling between them and the picaresque as represented by *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Enough similarities do in fact exist between Defoe's rogue novels and those of the picaresque authors to make a comparison useful. Ultimately, however, those similarities have to be recognized as resemblances of plot and character that are incidental and no more. On more fundamental points of moral design and conscious artistry, the two orders of novel remain at odds, and the presence of no amount of surface detail can finally reconcile them.

The question of a value judgment inevitably arises. In
my efforts to demonstrate the careful artistic control of the
great picaresque authors and to distinguish between their
work and Defoe's on such grounds, I may have seemed to say
that to be unpicaresque is to be without design altogether.
I intend, of course, no such conclusion. As we read Defoe,
we sense that he presents us with a fictional world whose
boundaries and limits he knows well and whose conditions he
understands fully. Quite clearly also, he presents us with
a world in whose existence we place implicit faith. The ac­tions of Moll and Jack as they live within the confines of
that world have the stamp of real-life experience lived out
in the real world. Still, as Watt argues so forcefully, to
convince us of the literal truth of fictional events is not
to show us the meaning latent in them. The picaresque nov­els, besides making fictional experience believable, make it
meaningful in terms of eternal moral and religious values.
Although one would not go to the extreme of saying, as Al­exander Parker does, that Colonel Jack belongs to "a world
of lower intellectual and emotional significance" than that
of Guzman, one still looks in vain for the picaresque sug­gestion that in Moll Flanders or Colonel Jack Defoe is say­ing anything significant about the human condition. His
prefaces indicate that he perceived a moral purpose in rela­tioning the lives of his rogues, but the technical deficiencies
in the narratives themselves, as Schorer notes, prevent a
sharp focus on whatever meaning exists.
Finally, I have had to reckon with attempts by critics to detect and lay bare an ironic meaning that they say operates beneath the surface of Defoe's narratives. To do so has been the most difficult part of the present study, both because it required unravelling ingenious arguments in Defoe's defense by other critics and because it involved analyzing a narrative technique that is anything but simple, even if unironic. To see the novels as unironic documents, however, has been essential to my point that Defoe's narrative technique varies widely from that of the picaresque, in which irony is an important avenue of meaning. I would only add, by way of caution, that the presence of irony, however much prized by modern readers, does not in itself ensure artistic value, nor does its absence ensure the opposite. It is ultimately on the entire range of technical and intellectual resources of fiction that any relative value judgments must rest. When viewed across the spectrum of his discernible capacities and genius as a novelist, Defoe's rather obvious limitations do not undercut the narrative brilliance and emotional intensity of his greatest works. The accounts of Moll's first theft and of Roxana's desperate maneuvering to avoid detection by her daughter remain what they have always been: records of compellingly human experience.
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