

On Teaching Another Defoe

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FOR AN AUTHOR whose canon has been a matter of much speculation and debate, there appears to be a surprising level of *de facto* consensus about the body of Defoe's work that bears teaching in university classrooms. Though by no means a rigorous measure, it is interesting to note that, while a Google search for "Defoe" and "syllabus" at the websites of US universities (i.e., domains ending in ".edu") turns up some 3,000 results, that number drops steadily once one begins excluding the terms "Robinson Crusoe" (2,220 results), "Moll Flanders" (1,950 results), "Roxana" (1,860 results), and "Plague Year" (1,770 results). Granted, many (perhaps most) of these results are not actual course syllabi, nor are all course syllabi to be found via Google. More important than the specific figures, though, are the proportions: take away the three "major" novels and *A Journal of the Plague Year*, and Defoe's stock declines by some forty percent, with most of that accounted for by *Robinson Crusoe* alone. Indeed, it is hard to see how things could be any otherwise when we consider the editions of Defoe's works that are widely available for classroom use. Though a few other titles seem to flicker in and out of availability (like Pat Rogers' abridgement of *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* for Penguin or the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Captain Singleton* edited by Shiv Kumar), the Daniel Defoe that is most readily available to university teachers and students is the author of the first *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford, Penguin, Norton), *Moll Flanders* (Oxford, Penguin, Norton, Broadview), *Roxana* (Oxford, Penguin, Broadview), and *A Journal of the Plague Year* (Oxford, Penguin, Norton).¹

This Daniel Defoe, I should say, is one of whom I'm quite fond. He has been a regular and indispensable fixture in classes I have taught on eighteenth-century fiction, on early eighteenth-century literature, and on London in the eighteenth century. He has served as an ideal illustration of the "early" phase of the familiar rise of the novel thesis, providing a convenient link between, say, the

spiritual autobiography of Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and the more temporal, but equally minute attention to individual experience in Richardson's *Pamela*. At the same time, though, this Defoe is too subtle and too shrewd an author to allow facile generalizations to gain much traction. Able to elaborate so fully-realized a reconstruction of what it might have been like to live through the Great Plague that students have to be reminded that "H. F." is not Defoe, for instance, he poses provoking questions about what might have seemed to be simple distinctions between history and fiction. Able to imagine the specious casuistries of a Roxana who can agonize over the propriety of taking a lover to save herself from starvation, on the one hand, but who can also cavalierly dispense with a child in a sentence or two, on the other, he complicates (among much else) our ideas about the relationship between entertainment and moral instruction in fiction of the period. Defoe the novelist thus frustrates, in a most salutary way, any effort to construct overly-neat schemata of or narratives about eighteenth-century literature. As a teacher, I owe this Defoe a great deal.

But of course Defoe the novelist is not the only Defoe, nor perhaps even the one most representative of the author's career and oeuvre (though establishing just what would be "representative" of so topically and generically promiscuous a canon isn't an easy task). In recent years, I've had occasion to begin teaching another Defoe, the observer of and commentator on Britain's commerce. This Defoe, to be sure, has at the very least a family resemblance to Defoe the novelist. He raises list-making and exhaustive enumeration to something of an art form, and yet his discussions of even the most unpromising-sounding topics are shot through with flashes of real rhetorical flair and display a peculiar knack for figurative conceit. To read Defoe on the English woolen manufacture, for instance (which is, he claims, "an exclusive Grant from Heaven to *Great Britain*"), is to come face to face with an imagination of immense (if eccentric) capacity.²

But turning to this Defoe also presents some opportunities for addressing questions that are harder—albeit probably not impossible—to access through the major novels. In what follows, I'll address one recent course, in particular, in which this other Defoe played a leading role. This was the first iteration of a class that should soon find its way into a segment of my university's new Liberal Arts Core (formerly known as "general education") designated for interdisciplinary classes on "Cultural Perspectives." The class examines writings about Britain's global trade beginning in the late seventeenth century and continuing through the eighteenth century. In keeping with the university's interdisciplinary aims for this area of the curriculum, the course readings take in primary texts both literary and non-literary, and secondary readings by social, cultural, and economic historians as well as by literary critics. The class seeks to trace some of the ways that global trade reshaped British society, both in tangible respects—increasing per capita sugar consumption

by a truly staggering amount, to take one example—and at the level of ideas or perceptions that can be partially reconstructed by examining texts in which Britons tried to make sense of a world that was growing larger.

Defoe seemed a perfect fit for a class like this one, as he is equally at home in imaginative and argumentative modes—sometimes in the same work. As initially planned, the class was to include four of his works: an excerpt from *A Plan of the English Commerce* at the beginning of the semester to frame the themes of the course; *An Essay on the South Sea Trade* and *A New Voyage Round the World* as part of a unit on the political and commercial dimensions of the perpetually unrealized British fantasy of a lucrative trade to Spanish South America; and the first *Crusoe* novel, which was to serve as one of three “global lives”—stories of individuals whose travels carried them around the world on the currents of larger commercial forces (the others being those of Olaudah Equiano and of Elizabeth Marsh, as reconstructed by Linda Colley). I was pleased at the prospect, on the one hand, of placing *Crusoe*—a literary work everyone has heard of, and Defoe’s most famous novel—against a background that would highlight the novel’s concerns with questions of property, productivity, and trade. Then too, I was happy to be showing students more of Defoe’s range than they might ordinarily see. I was, in particular, eager to teach *A New Voyage* for the first time; it seemed the *perfect* text for the course: a work of fiction that was, at the same time, a speculative treatise on commerce, it offered students the two versions of Defoe I had in mind—Defoe the novelist and Defoe the writer on trade—in a single work.

In the event, though, things didn’t work out quite as planned, and the choice of which Defoe to read became quite a concrete one: the students found *A New Voyage Round the World* such hard going that I ended up dropping *Robinson Crusoe* to allow more time for coming to grips with it.³ Some would say this was a bad bargain. Though it has begun to attract more attention in recent years (figuring, for example, in Srinivas Aravamudan’s *Tropicopolitans* and Robert Markley’s *The Far East in the English Imagination*), it’s safe to say that *A New Voyage Round the World* remains one of Defoe’s less-read novels.⁴ While I happen to find the book fascinating, I won’t attempt to persuade anyone that we should all drop *Robinson Crusoe*, *Roxana*, or *Moll Flanders* in its favor. Nor will I attempt here to offer a reading of the book, as such (though I think it can sustain some very interesting ones, as Markley’s work on the novel suggests).⁵ Rather, I’ll focus on some of the challenges of teaching a book like this one, some of the reasons I was keen to do so (despite those challenges), and some of the strategies I tried to employ to make the book turn to account for the purposes of the class.

A New Voyage Round the World simply doesn’t answer most modern readers’ expectations of what a novel should be. Jane H. Jack declares it “the least ambitious and the least dramatic of all Defoe’s works of fiction,” one with “hardly

any interesting characters. The narrator is anonymous and the book can hardly be said to have a hero.”⁶ Even those inclined to speak well of the text tend not to dwell on its literary qualities. John Richetti suggests, for instance, that in *A New Voyage*, Defoe did not “[bother] to develop a central subjectivity or even very specific identity for his narrator.”⁷ Though Richetti himself is able to appreciate the novel’s “seamless joining of adventure and travel in an exciting and exhilarating economic scene,” and to see in it “yet another instance of [Defoe’s] defining energy, his nearly infinite enthusiasm and capacity for imaginative projection,” it seems clear that he does not expect many modern readers to share Defoe’s apparent belief “that mercantile travel-adventure, with its triumphant accumulations both of wealth and experience, was ample attraction for extended narration.”⁸ If *A New Voyage* is not liable to precisely the same objection that Richetti suggests many will have to *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (that is, that it lacks “a defining purpose, a unifying quest or goal, a clear subjective presence within the welter of objective facts and situations the narrative offers”), it is perhaps only because the novel is, in Jack’s phrase, a *roman à thèse*, a text “designed to enlist the sympathy of its readers for a serious scheme of colonization and commerce.”⁹ Even John McVeagh, who allows the novel greater literary merit than many, notes that *A New Voyage* is remarkable among Defoe’s fictions for the “undigressive concentration with which [he] advances his idea of trade and colonization, resulting in an unusually tight structural unity.”¹⁰ What holds the novel together, then, is not so much character or plot—the kinds of things that most undergraduate students of literature are accustomed to analyzing—but a set of ideas about commerce and national interest.¹¹ Though it is a novel by Defoe, *A New Voyage Round the World* doesn’t seem to belong to the mode we typically identify with Defoe the novelist. It seems, at first, to be a work by another Defoe.

There are certainly eighteenth-century novels that can be read successfully and with appreciation (even pleasure) with comparatively little knowledge of their cultural contexts, but *A New Voyage Round the World* is not one of them. The opening pages of the narrative emphasize the very particular circumstances surrounding the voyage:

Having been fitted out in the River of *Thames* so lately as the Year 1713 and on a Design perhaps not very consistent with the Measures taking at that time for the putting an End to the War, I must be allowed to own I was at first oblig’d to act not in my own Name, but to put in a *French* Commander into the Ship, for the Reasons which follow, and which those who understand the manner of Trade upon closing the late War, I mean the Trade with *Spain*, will easily allow to be just and well grounded. (4)

Though Defoe provides a quick gloss for those who do not quite recall the state of trade at the end of the War of Spanish Succession, there is a clear sense that a basic grasp, at least, of broad patterns of international trade and of inter-European political and commercial rivalries is requisite for following the book (indeed, the specification “so lately as the Year 1713” suggests that rather more than that may be required).

The novelty of the voyage that the text describes lies in the fact that it pursues, in the words of the title page, “A Course never sailed before.” Setting out with a cargo of British manufactures ideally suited to the tastes of the Spanish colonists on the Pacific coast of South America, the narrator wishes instead to sail eastward, to the Philippines, and only from thence to Spain’s South Sea colonies. This plan is initially rejected by the crew as “preposterous, and just setting the Voyage with the Bottom upward,” and they resolve to round Cape Horn and enter the Pacific:

For, as we were loaden with Goods, and had no Money, our first Business was to go to the *South Seas*, where our Goods were wanted, and would sell for Money, and then to the *East Indies*, where our Money would be wanting, to buy other Goods to carry home, and not to the *East Indies* first, where our Goods would not sell, and where we could buy no other for want of Money. (34)

This, the crew argues, is simply the way sensible people do business. After struggling for some two months against (providentially) contrary winds, however, the ship arrives at the Cape of Good Hope, and Defoe’s narrator reopens his proposal to his fellow officers, this time arguing at greater length for the commercial advantage of the plan.

The entire scheme turns on understanding how things are normally done and then doing the opposite. The Spaniards at the Philippines, he argues, receive all of their European goods by way of ships crossing the Pacific from Acapulco. Because those goods must pass through so many hands on their journey (from England to Cádiz, from Cádiz to Porto Bello, from Porto Bello to Panama, from Panama to Acapulco), they come to the end purchasers at the Philippines “at three Hundred *per Cent.* Advance” (41). Carrying English goods directly to the Philippines, by contrast, the narrator reckons he and his crew can both pre-empt and handily undercut the Acapulco merchants, “so that if we were to sell [the European goods] a Hundred *per Cent.* cheaper than the Spaniards usually sold, yet we should get abundantly more than we could on the Coast of *Peru*, tho’ we had been allowed a free Trade there” (41). Moreover, he argues, they will be able to acquire Asian goods such as “*China* Damasks, and other wrought Silks, Muslins, and Chints, *China* Ware, and *Japan* Ware” on more favorable terms than they could be gotten at the more usual markets of the East India trade. Such goods

could either then be carried back to England at a handy profit or (what the narrator prefers, and what proves to be the case), carried to the Spaniards at Peru and Chile who would otherwise have to await the return voyage of the Acapulco fleet. By pursuing a voyage that is out of sync with the usual course of commerce, the narrator argues, they can beat the Spaniards to their own markets and reap what will be fantastic profits simply by undercutting the inflated prices the Spanish colonists are used to paying.¹²

The section of the text in which the narrator explains his scheme represents five densely-argued pages in the 1725 facsimile my students read.¹³ It lays the groundwork for the commercial fantasy that follows, one in which the voyagers alternate between approaching established markets in novel ways (as is the case with their lucrative trade at the Spanish colonies in the Philippines and Chile) and discovering entirely new markets and sources of wealth (as is the case in their discovery of previously unknown South Pacific islands and in their exploration of the “unpossessed” land of Patagonia). The argument of Defoe’s text is that such a trade strategy would be fabulously profitable precisely *because* it runs counter to the established ways of doing things. Throughout the text, Defoe’s narrator urges his readers to see new possibilities in a seemingly “preposterous” trade—one that, as he says, puts “the Bottom upward,” or, in the more colorful phrase we arrived at as my students wrestled with the details of the text, one that is “bassackwards.”¹⁴

To understand what is productively preposterous about this notional voyage, though, one must have a tolerably good grasp of the more usual commercial patterns from which the novel diverges. Thus, a principal challenge in teaching *A New Voyage* lies in establishing enough context for students to be able to grasp what’s going on and why it’s important for Defoe’s purposes.¹⁵ In theory, I suppose, a sufficiently attentive reader could gather from the narrative itself the gist of most of the contemporary arguments about trade with which Defoe is working. Even if this were practicable, however (and I have my doubts), my hope for this class was to show the ways that a novel like *A New Voyage Round the World* was embedded in a larger set of conversations and debates that we can, at least in part, begin to reconstruct, even in so short a span as a fourteen-week semester. Our reading of *A New Voyage* played out against a background established over a number of weeks, in which our discussions turned on other texts from realms that seemed far removed from fiction. I chose texts to lead up to Defoe’s peculiar novel with an eye towards engineering periodic shocks of recognition when we would see Defoe’s narrator making—or, as often as not, disputing—points that we had seen in other connections. The decision to carry French colors, for instance, grows out of an assessment of the peculiar political circumstances that gave France advantageous access to South American trade during the War of Spanish Succession. (Philip of Anjou was in no position to resist French encroachment on

the Spanish colonial trade, as Louis XIV was providing crucial military backing against the supporters of his rival for the throne, Archduke Charles—Louis was, moreover, of course, Philip’s grandfather). This was a point that was much discussed around the time of the formation of the South Sea Company—it appears in Defoe’s *An Essay on the South Sea Trade*, which the students had read, as well as in Robert Allen’s *An Essay on the Nature and Methods of Carrying on a Trade to the South-Sea*, which they had read alongside Defoe’s *Essay*.¹⁶

Likewise, the narrator of *A New Voyage* offers several reflections on the East India trade that echo views Defoe registered in a number of his writings on commerce. As the voyage proceeds to the Philippines, the narrator notes in passing that “tho’ we were to sail thro’ the very Center of the *India* Trade, yet it was perfectly without any Business among them” (82). This is a highly pointed omission. Defoe’s narrator opts for the Philippines rather than, say, the Malabar or Coromandel coasts because, he insists, there is actually a market for English goods there. He articulates his thinking more fully at the end of the South Pacific episode. The South Pacific islands, he suggests, though remote, represent a much better commercial prospect for England than the trade to India or China, which

... is all carry’d on, or most Part of it, by an Exportation of Bullion in Specie; and a Return of foreign Manufactures or Produce ... either trifling and unnecessary in themselves; or such as are injurious to our own Manufactures ... For all these we carry nothing or very little but Money; the innumerable Nations of the *Indies*, *China*, &c. despising our Manufactures, and filling us with their own. (130-31)

The Spanish at the Philippines, however, (and, he maintains, the islanders of the South Pacific), are receptive to English manufactures and willing to pay either in gold or other commodities for which English merchants have been paying too much in the more usual markets of the Asian trade. Such passages could as well have been drawn from any of a number of Defoe’s commercial pamphlets. For our purposes, some excerpts from *A Plan of the English Commerce* had to stand in for much else, but the broader questions of England’s disadvantages in Asian trade were filled in by readings from K. N. Chaudhuri’s *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* and Holden Furber’s *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*.¹⁷

Such juxtaposition of texts from different realms—fictional and nonfictional primary texts, literary texts and works of economic history—was a principal feature of the course, but I also wanted to supplement that textual work with a different kind of exercise that aimed to help students, quite literally, *locate* the texts they were reading. Students worked in groups to prepare oral presentations on readings, with each presentation accompanied by an annotated map prepared using tools available at [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps).¹⁸ Google Maps allows users to mark up a map of the

world by affixing pins (or other markers) to places of interest and providing a descriptive note (these notes can be of any length, and, because they allow for basic HTML, can also include embedded pictures or video as well as hyperlinks to other resources on the web). In addition to simple pins, users of Google Maps can also overlay colored lines or shapes on the map (each of which can also be annotated as pins are), ideal for indicating routes, on the one hand, or regions that might not correspond with modern geographical boundaries, on the other. The texts that the class read ranged (in fact or in imagination) all over the globe, something that I wanted students to reinforce for themselves visually by translating the words on the page into information that could be represented graphically on the screen. I took the lead on this exercise by creating [the first map of the semester](#), which located (and, in some instances, glossed) all of the places that Defoe mentioned in the three chapters of *A Plan of the English Commerce* that we read.¹⁹

A secondary aim of this exercise was to enforce deliberation and attention in reading: it is all too easy for these texts' very meticulous arguments about the nature of (and prospects for) commerce in different parts of the globe to blur into an indistinct succession of vaguely exotic-sounding place names (as I myself experienced). Where, precisely, is "La Vera Cruz," and how does it stand in relation to "Carthagená" or "The Havana"? Understanding the shape of Spain's New World trade is made much easier when we can see it laid out in front of us, as one group of students was asked to do in [this map](#), which attempts to translate the account offered by Allen into visual form.²⁰ This map actually displays a gross error in suggesting that the Spanish galleons sailed from Cartagena entirely around the continent to Chile. In fact, Allen's text details the ways that messages were sent overland from Cartagena to Peru, and from thence further dispersed either overland or by a separate, Pacific fleet (in fairness to the students who prepared it, though, the passage in Allen's text they were referring to is *quite* confusing.) Mistakes like that one, though, actually presented fruitful opportunities for revisiting the texts and for working through the networks of commercial relations that they described.

The geographical questions raised by our readings couldn't always be answered simply by reference to Google Maps, naturally, as many place names have changed. To resolve such perplexities, I also directed students to the [David Rumsey Map Collection](#),²¹ an online archive of historical maps that can either be viewed in a web browser or downloaded as high-quality, zoomable MrSID ("multiresolution seamless image database") files that can be viewed with a [freely-available software application from LizardTech](#),²² the proprietor of the format. Frequently, these maps were able to clarify otherwise obscure points. As the students who prepared the map of Spain's South American trade discovered, for example, "Tierra Firma" corresponds more or less to modern-day Venezuela (as is

evident from Thomas Jefferys' map of the northern half of South America in *The American Atlas: Or, A Geographical Description Of The Whole Continent Of America* [1776].²³ "Gombaroon," mentioned by the narrator of *A New Voyage* as a place where the "Persians" would be willing to buy English woollens, is now "Bandar Abbas" in Iran. (Istanbul, of course, was Constantinople.)

The historical maps served another purpose, as well, to the extent that they offered graphic reminders of how differently the world appeared to eighteenth-century Britons: how like, and yet how unlike our own mental maps. Though otherwise instantly recognizable as a picture of the world we know, Emanuel Bowen's *A New & Accurate Chart of the World*, from his 1747 *A Complete System of Geography*, is unable to represent anything of northwestern North America, shows only about half the coastline of Australia, and registers just a suggestion of a part of New Zealand: all of these places simply dissolve into blank space, though a grid of latitude and longitude lines is inscribed over the whole, ready to articulate the location of "Places Undiscovered" at such time as they shall be charted.²⁴ *A New and Accurate Map of Africa*, from the same volume, confronts the modern viewer with surprises of a different sort: though we recognize the shape and proportions of the continent, and the interior is convincingly sketched in (though I won't vouch for its accuracy), we must experience at least a momentary shock upon seeing a large swath of West Africa labeled "Negroland."²⁵ There is something similarly unsettling about seeing the region near the Bight of Benin matter-of-factly labeled "Slave Coast" in S. Boulton's 1787 *Africa, with all its States, Kingdoms, Republics, Regions, Islands, &c.*, which appeared in Thomas Kitchin's *A General Atlas, Describing the Whole Universe* (1790).²⁶ We know perfectly well, of course, that there was a traffic in slaves in the eighteenth century (the students who provided the map to accompany *Equiano's Interesting Narrative* recreated some of the contours of that trade for the class), but it is quite another thing to see the ways that that traffic could be literally inscribed on the picture of the world that Britons knew.²⁷

The students responsible for mapping Defoe's *A New Voyage* gave their presentation before the class had completed the novel, so [their map](#) takes Defoe's narrator only so far as the South Pacific leg of the voyage.²⁸ Still (and notwithstanding some errors), this partial map shows quite vividly the reach of Defoe's imaginary voyage—perhaps nowhere so clearly as in the speculative route northwards and back to England that the narrator sketches as a rejected possibility. By plotting Defoe's narrative on the map, we see how Defoe projected his readers imaginatively across the globe. By reading *A New Voyage* alongside primary and secondary works about Britain's commerce, we see how Defoe led his readers through a system of global markets, plotting a possible, if preposterous, course towards British prosperity.²⁹ *A New Voyage Round the World* is at once a novel and

a commercial treatise. It is precisely this doubleness that attracted me to the text for the purposes of this class. *Robinson Crusoe*, too, bears traces of Defoe's abiding interest in trade, of course, and I think few would dispute that it's the better novel. But of the two Defoe novels initially on the syllabus, I'm persuaded I chose the right one to keep for *this* course. Particularly because I expect the class to serve as a general education course, it was important to me to prompt students to consider the ways that the insights of various disciplines might be brought to bear on complex questions of cultural history.³⁰ Literature (and the study of it), I want to suggest to students, isn't always something entirely apart from the world of politics, business, and all the rest of the fretful stir unprofitable—it certainly wasn't for Defoe. Though I have distinguished between "Defoe the novelist" and "another Defoe," it is a distinction that is more heuristic than actual, and it is in tracing the ways that the two projects intersect, I believe, that students in this class stand to learn the most about Defoe as an author and about the age in which he lived.

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NOTES

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- ¹ *A Journal of the Plague Year* is itself a comparatively recent addition to this list. Oxford revived Louis Landa's 1969 edition in 1990 with a new introduction by David Roberts, while Paula Backscheider's Norton Critical Edition appeared in 1992; Cynthia Wall's edition for Penguin appeared in 2003. Of the major paperback publishers, Penguin has stepped the farthest beyond this core list in recent years, with an edition of *The True-Born Englishman and Other Writings* edited by P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens in 1997 and a 2003 edition of *The Storm* edited by Richard Hamblyn for the Allen Lane hardcover imprint, repackaged as a Penguin Classics paperback in 2005. It is also worth noting, perhaps, that a number of on-demand houses have begun hawking other Defoe texts, but these employ the (to my mind, at least) rather dubious practice of charging \$15 and more for printouts of freely-available texts from the Project Gutenberg archive. These texts generally provide no editorial apparatus, unless one counts the sometimes bizarrely inapposite stock photographs that they employ for cover art.
- ² Daniel Defoe, "A Plan of the English Commerce" in *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe*, vol. 7, *Trade*, ed. John McVeagh (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000), 215.
- ³ At one level, the difficulties my students faced with *New Voyage* were practical ones. Because there is no classroom edition of the novel, we were working from copies of a facsimile of the 1724 first edition. Thus, in addition to the obvious lack of interpretive notes, students had the foreignness of eighteenth-century print to contend with. I am a strong advocate of having students see what eighteenth-century texts looked like when they originally appeared. Seeing the differences in type size and quality, in line spacing and margins, etc., I think, shows them, in a very immediate way, some things about eighteenth-century print culture that are otherwise difficult to imagine. In retrospect, however, my use of this facsimile was a mistake. For a text of this length, and one that presents enough challenges to students' comprehension without the additional difficulty of making out the words on the page, I would have done better to have provided them with a later, modern print edition. Two editions from around the turn of the twentieth century are available from Google Book Search: Daniel Defoe, [A New Voyage Round the World in Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe](#), ed. George A. Aitken, vol. 14 (1895; London: J. M. Dent, 1900); and Daniel Defoe, [A New Voyage Round the World in The Works of Daniel Defoe](#), ed. G.

H. Maynadier, vol. 14 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1904). [Another 1905 issue of the Maynadier edition](#), from The Jenson Society, is also available.

- ⁴ Because *A New Voyage Round the World* is not especially widely read, a brief plot summary may be in order. The novel is, we might say, a work of capitalist pornography, in which clever and enterprising merchants reap astounding profits. Narrated by a nameless Englishman, it recounts a commercial voyage of fantastic success and dubious legality. When in Spanish waters, the voyagers pose as French to capitalize on the alliance between France and Spain and trade with the Spaniards in ways that English merchants were prohibited from doing. They also carry phony letters of marque, however, which offer a pretence for attacking any Spanish ships they might meet on the open ocean, as they may claim to be English privateers. The text can be divided roughly into five sections: 1) an initial bit of freebooting on the Atlantic coast of South America and a failed attempt to enter the Pacific by rounding Cape Horn; 2) a voyage to the Philippines, where the merchants trade with the Spanish colonists under French colors; 3) a voyage across the South Pacific, in which the crew encounters a succession of accommodating islanders who happily exchange gold for European trinkets; 4) a voyage to Chile, where the merchants once again pretend to be French in order to trade with Spanish colonists, and where a surprisingly broad-minded Spaniard articulates a critique of Spanish colonial policy that, in effect, invites any sufficiently enterprising nation to take possession of territory in loosely-held sections of South America; and 5) an overland eastward crossing of South America, during the course of which the adventurers find more gold than they can carry lying around on the ground, and which also demonstrates the hospitableness of Patagonia to English colonization.
- ⁵ In addition to the discussion in chapter six of *The Far East in the English Imagination*, Markley addresses *A New Voyage* in “So Inexhaustible a Treasure of Gold: Defoe, Capitalism, and the Romance of the South Seas,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18.3 (1994): 148-67.
- ⁶ Jane H. Jack, “*A New Voyage Round the World*: Defoe’s *Roman à Thèse*,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 24 (1961): 323.
- ⁷ John Richetti, *The Life of Daniel Defoe* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 222.
- ⁸ Richetti, *Life of Daniel Defoe*, 224, 222. Richetti reminds us, however, that “for Defoe (despite his proto-novelistic flair) the objective world of facts mattered much more than the merely subjective” (224).
- ⁹ Richetti, 222; Jack, 324. James R. Sutherland, likewise, suggests notes that Defoe “wished to offer a new method for trading with the Spaniards in South America, and he wanted to outline a scheme that had long been in his mind for settling two new English colonies.” James R. Sutherland, *Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 156.
- ¹⁰ In the Preface to his recent edition of the novel, McVeagh argues that “as elsewhere [Defoe] concentrates on character rather than escapade ... [and] sustains throughout his description even of piratical doings an interest in moral and political analysis, refracting adventure through a moral lens and making *A New Voyage* into a thoughtful, even philosophical text.” McVeagh also sees in the novel a nuanced relationship to the genre of travel writing that serves to “[debunk] the whole genre ... and results in an intriguing, complex tone.” Daniel Defoe, *A New Voyage Round the World*, ed. John McVeagh, *The Novels of Daniel Defoe* vol. 10 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 1. Subsequent citations of *A New Voyage Round the World* will be from this edition, and will be given parenthetically.
- ¹¹ In this respect, *A New Voyage* presented greater difficulties for the students in the class than *Captain Singleton* did to a similar group of students the following semester in a senior seminar on “The Figure of the Pirate.” Though the students in that class found Bob Singleton’s peregrinations about the Indian Ocean similarly difficult to keep straight, they were able, at least to latch on to Singleton as a narrator, and to find in his relationship with William the Quaker something that looked like character development.
- ¹² At the Philippines, for example, their profits on the European goods they dispose of would appear to be 500% and more: three Spanish merchants purchase goods for 22,000 pieces of eight which, Defoe’s narrator supposes, “might cost in *England*, one sixth Part of the Money, or hardly so much” (91). The profits on the Philippines episode as a whole would seem to be still higher. The super cargo reports “he had dispos’d of as many Goods, as he receiv’d the Value of one hundred thousand Peices of Eight for, all which, by his Accounts did not amount to, first Cost, above three thousand Pounds Sterling in *England*”

- (92). Judging by the figures provided in John J. McCusker's *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 100,000 pieces of eight would have been worth approximately £20,350 in 1713, which would represent a nearly six-fold profit (309.) Figuring the profits of the South Pacific leg of the voyage is more difficult, as the crew receives pure gold from the islanders, but they seem almost incalculably large. At one point, two sailors receive "near five Ounces" of gold in exchange for beads and other "toys" equaling "about the Value of two Shillings" (109). When they come to deal with the king and queen of one nation, they receive, in all, some two pounds of gold pieces and eleven pounds of gold dust (114, 119). One roughly contemporary source gives the price of gold as £3 14s. 2d. per ounce, so even the more modest exchange yielding five ounces of gold (£18 10s. 10d., or a little more than 370 shillings, for simplicity's sake) for goods worth 2 shillings would represent something more than 18,000% profit. (See Guy Miege, *The Present State of Great Britain and Ireland*, 3rd ed. [London, 1715], 311.)
- ¹³ Daniel Defoe, *A New Voyage Round the World* (London: A. Bettesworth and W. Mears, 1725), Part I, 19-23. The section appears on pp. 40-42 of McVeagh's edition.
- ¹⁴ I recall with glee the moment when one of the sharpest students in the class asked, with a sense of dawning understanding, but also of incredulity, "So the whole point of this book is that they sailed around the world *counterclockwise*?"
- ¹⁵ The question of context, of course, is a perennial one. I don't mean to suggest that *A New Voyage* is unique *in kind* where the problem of context is concerned, but I do think it's fair to say that it's remarkable *in degree*. Knowing something about the '45 enriches students' understanding of *Tom Jones*, to be sure, but they can get by reasonably well without it. Or, perhaps more to the point, a professor teaching *Tom Jones* can have plenty to occupy a class of students without ever venturing beyond the gloss of "Jacobite" to be found in the endnotes of any decent classroom edition. The same cannot be said of *A New Voyage*.
- ¹⁶ Daniel Defoe, "An Essay on the South Sea Trade" in *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe*, vol. 7, *Trade*, ed. McVeagh. Robert Allen, *An Essay on the Nature and Methods of Carrying on a Trade to the South-Sea* (London, 1712). I might also have done well to have assigned the students a small number of essays from the *Review*. In the numbers for 7 and 12 July, for instance, Defoe's discussion of the French advantage in the South Sea trade is especially clear and forceful.
- ¹⁷ K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (1978; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976).
- ¹⁸ <http://maps.google.com>
- ¹⁹ <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=111040975458502544962.000444527ad4afc9398d2&sz=2>
- ²⁰ <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=111720326775035987505.000445bf1bdf570032fd2&dl=-9.963184,-51.196289&spn=101.947017,144.140625&sz=3>
- ²¹ <http://www.davidrumsey.com>
- ²² http://www.lizardtech.com/download/dl_options.php?page=viewers
- ²³ <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~1925~120031:A-Map-Of-South-America-Containing-T?qvq=q:tierra+firma;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=7&trs=10>
- ²⁴ <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2551~270003:A-new-&-accurate-chart-of-the-world?qvq=w4s:/who/Bowen,+Emanuel;q:bowen;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=5&trs=73>
- ²⁵ <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2592~280008:A-new-and-accurate-map-of-Africa--D?qvq=w4s:/who/Bowen,+Emanuel;q:bowen;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=40&trs=73>
- ²⁶ <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~3659~430001:Africa,-with-all-its-states,-kingdo>
- ²⁷ <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=102371195111729249337.000449be7e9530100b8de&dl=76.268695,7.03125&spn=87.253353,288.28125&sz=2>
- ²⁸ <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=115034906446677589196.000447f53923b38ee522d&dl=8.961384,34.101562&spn=176.509173,360&sz=1>
- ²⁹ The pun inherent in "plot" in this context is, I trust, too familiar and too obvious to require elaboration.

³⁰ Indeed, my hope is to pose the possibility that there might be an entire class of questions that can only be successfully interpreted, as the historian Woodruff D. Smith suggests of the habit of taking tea with sugar, through interdisciplinary analysis. Woodruff D. Smith, "Complications of the Commonplace: Tea, Sugar, and Imperialism," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23.2 (1992): 259.