
Nationalism, Commerce, and Imperial Anxiety in Defoe's Later Works

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In *Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis*, Daniel Defoe confidently delineates the globe into markets for English goods and objects of British imperialism. He finds much of the world promising but turns his thoughts most emphatically and explicitly towards North America in an effort to write a prescriptive and wishfully prophetic history. He is anxious to make it clear that Providence seems to have decreed that “all North-America would be English” (282). He regularly refers back to this “decree,” distinguishing England’s North American colonies from those of other European powers — especially the French — and from English commercial ventures in other parts of the world. “The settlements of these,” he writes of North America,

are not Factories, Forts and Castles, as in the East-Indies, or on the Coast of Africa, for the Protection of our Merchants and of their Trade, against the Natives; but these are the British Patrimony, and may be call'd their own in Sovereignty, they are part of the King of Great Britain's Dominions; all the Inhabitants are his Subjects, or the Slaves of his Subjects, none excepted: Nor has any Prince in the World any Claim to them, or any Part of them, but the King of Great Britain. (325)

The *Atlas*, an ambitious, enormous work directed toward the ruling class, was just one in a career of works with similar intentions. These include *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Colonel Jack*, and the economic tract *A Plan of the English Commerce*, all aimed at a more general audience than the *Atlas* was, and dedicated to extending English interests in America during the consolidating phase of the Age of Discovery. Much of Defoe’s body of work can be seen as a heterogeneous speech act that sought to do what Edward Said’s *Orientalism* claims the French and British in the next century would do concerning the East: represent the Other in terms that rendered it familiar yet inferior, and as such colonizable and possessable. Print culture leads directly to imperial and economic expansion.

Defoe used the rise of print culture to forward England’s imperial aims, which were considerably more ambitious than those of other European powers of the

age when regarded in terms of modern views of nationalism and imperialism. He wanted not just an entry to markets but complete control of the commercial and geographical prospects of North America, both of which are gendered female in much of his fiction and poetry, and proper objects for masculine, imperial possession. The *Atlas* is a good demonstration not just of the kind of knowledge that Said argues made the East colonizable, but of what Benedict Anderson claims made communities vaster and manageable through the spread of words. "Print-capitalism," as Anderson argues, "gave a new fixity to language," and this property helped readers to form "in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community" (44). Defoe, in the *Atlas* and elsewhere, was able to imagine much of the Western hemisphere as belonging to a community defined by the English language and British commerce.

Defoe's "imagined community" included the entire world as a potential commercial market, but specifically America, as the above quotation from the *Atlas* makes clear. In previous generations, empire was aggrandizement, as Anthony Pagden and other recent historians of empire have shown. A monarch, or nation, was as powerful as it was vast. Defoe was strongly bound to the merchant class of England and sought to change the British Empire through his writings by marking the colonies as sites of commerce above all else. The *Atlas* and *A Plan of the English Commerce* are nothing less than attempts to redefine how the British Empire viewed itself. "In a world in which the honour and glory to be gained from expansion and conquest were the only measurable political goods," Pagden writes in *Lords of All the World*, "the transition to any other form of society did not constitute a shift in direction by the crown. It demanded a change in the self-understanding of the entire society" (110). The threats were hardly theoretical, as Pagden shows. "Any attempt to transform the nature of the empire without some such reordering of the political culture which sustained it could only result, as the Spanish example had shown by the end of the seventeenth century, not in the preservation of what already existed, but in the loss of everything" (110). Defoe's reordering is channeled into the act of writing. It is impossible to resolve whether his efforts, and the efforts of those with similar thoughts, prevailed. Imperialism clearly took a more commercial direction as the eighteenth century ended and the British lost physical possession of much of North America. Various economic and political realities worked upon each other until British commerce ruled imperial policy. Many of these manifested themselves in works like those of Defoe, making print culture an active participant in the transformation of empire.

Thomas Keith Meier's monograph, *Defoe and the Defense of Commerce*, argues convincingly that "Defoe was at pains to show that commerce enhanced rather

than destroyed the best features of the older aristocratic order" (7). As Meier's analysis of *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* shows, Defoe successfully promoted the new commercial culture by mapping economic possibilities onto familiar terrain. "[H]e is not so much interested in describing the anatomy of England as in detailing its physiology and in making pronouncements upon the health of the various parts," Meier writes. "For Defoe, of course, the processes most worth detailing are economic ones, and the objective geographical facts are but the skeleton which lend structure to his succession of comments upon commercial matters" (57). But Defoe had no such skeleton to work with in the case of America. He had to — and was free to — write America's skeleton himself. His anxiety to possess America should be seen as an enthusiasm for a land that could be made over according to the English model, but possibly even better, since it would be approached as a pure space. The *Atlas* in particular is an effort to create a site, or a blank page, upon which England could write its commercial ideology without being troubled by the aristocratic fears Meier mentions.

But of course a space that could be imagined from scratch was inherently unstable. Defoe clearly understood the possibility of imperial loss, despite his constant affirmation in the *Atlas* that America belonged to England forever. He points to the example of the Dutch, who lost "the two Jerseys" in a maritime war with Britain in 1665-1667. "The Loss of this Colony," Defoe writes, "was a great blow to the Dutch, not so much for the Interest of it, tho that was considerable, as for its being so well situated for Commerce, and especially for them, of any of them, of any in all North America ..." (292). The Dutch lost ports, navigable rivers, and control of the whaling industry, as well as a potential future in tobacco planting and sales. Defoe is firmly on the side of mercantile interests in his calculation of losses here, a recurrent feature of the *Atlas* and his other works.

Frank Donoghue's recent argument that Robinson Crusoe "is never so solitary as he imagines himself, and moreover that the individual identity that he does possess is in a sense produced by the mercantilist world that he denies" (1), is more persuasive when placed within an analysis of the *Atlas*. Defoe's ideological project must be taken into account if we are to understand that Crusoe is placed on the island not to be an admirable individual, but to be the vanguard of a commercial and imperial enterprise. While "Crusoe's possessiveness of the island," as Donoghue argues, may be "an expression of his fantasy of isolation and an attempt to suppress his more plausible suspicions that someone else owns it," his status within Defoe's commercial ideology is that of an economic pioneer (3). Crusoe is, as Donoghue notes, clearly anxious about his claim to his island. But glorifying

isolation is hardly the novel's mission. Once Crusoe has taken possession, the move toward an imperial economy can begin.

This move is present throughout Defoe's fiction. Models of communities he is trying to bring about through political and economic works are imagined, then organized and peopled. By the end of *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, the novel's hero has passed from frightened, solitary survivor to successful colonist to, finally, the supreme representative of English imperial power in its newest dominion. Crusoe's repeated efforts to control his surroundings and anyone who should follow him into them echoes an eagerness Defoe showed in his fiction and political writings concerning the Americas, for securing North America and the islands in the Caribbean to the British Crown, not just as friendly commercial ports, but as imperial possessions bound by loyalty and tamed to British desires and uses. He addresses his imperial anxieties with written attempts to define America as bound to Britain by economic interests and legal decisions, and seeks a geographical, topographical, and societal remaking of the colonies in an English patriarchal mode. Defoe's model for establishing imperial holdings and making them English in inclination as well as appearance is discernible both in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, where a progression from discovery through physical improvement and societal formation are shown.

Defoe's writings should be seen as a praxis with the aim of carving out a physically and psychically larger world for English action and thought. As Benedict Anderson writes, "The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness" (11). We see Defoe struggling against this in fiction and non-fiction attempts to widen the space for England in the parts of the world Europe was engaged with in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. "With the ebbing of religious belief," Anderson continues, "the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary" (11). This striving to continue in ever larger spheres that characterizes *Robinson Crusoe*, and the transportation of Moll Flanders to America to find penitence and a sense of renewal unavailable to her in England, is vividly endorsed in the *Atlas* and *A Plan of the English Commerce*, both written near the end of Defoe's life.

Since America in these works is being fought for and claimed as a part of England's economic sphere, it is not surprising to see an encouragement of immigration recur. The end of *Robinson Crusoe* and much of *Moll Flanders* promote this project. "From the first," Daniel Statt argues, "[Defoe] was a supporter of schemes to encourage foreigners to settle in England" (295). Statt's observation

that Defoe and his contemporaries “were convinced that England needed more people” (297) should not be seen as conflicting with the promotion of emigration from England to America. After all, once America was possessed by real-life Crusoes — as much as by their print counterparts — it was a part of “the British Patrimony,” as the *Atlas* makes clear.

The use of the word “Patrimony” has important gendered implications. Defoe wants to make America into a sustainable plantation along male models of control and development, taming the female aspects of the land itself, and reducing everything to a commercial transaction designed to improve England. In this formulation, females, like Moll Flanders, are objects of commerce only, and until the colony is ready to function for profit, they are as dangerous to the shaping of “new” worlds as Eve is dangerous to Adamic peace in Milton’s version of the Fall. Crusoe’s sexless colonization of his island points to a model that avoids the weakness apparent in the Miltonic version of biblical paradise, which is woman. Crusoe establishes a largely self-sufficient colony that is bound to him and, by analogy, to Britain. It only lacks the means of perpetuating itself, and this seems to be by design. The female, as Eve, or as America, is dangerous and must be tamed or de-sexed before it can become a viable commercial entity. Only then, Crusoe tells us, in the third paragraph from the end of the first part of his adventures, does he send “seven Women, being such as I found proper for Service, or for Wives to such as would take them,” for the Spanish men he left on his island. “As to the *English Men*, I promis’d them to send to some Women from *England*. . . . I sent them also from the *Brasils* five Cows, three of them being big with Calf, some Sheep, and some Hogs, which, when I came again, were considerably encreas’d” (220). The women here are clearly designated as objects of commerce, valued similarly to the “Cargoe of Necessaries” and the cows, sheep, and hogs. The presence of women is allowed only after the feminine nature of the island itself has been tamed.

From the earliest pages of *Robinson Crusoe*, a sense of a world without limits for European males is present. Defoe’s journalism career and insistence that, in Ian Watt’s words, “the work should be regarded as historically true” (149), make it reasonable to view the novel as a commentary on geopolitical realities in the early eighteenth century. Margaret Doody addresses the idea that novels can “tell the true history,” because unlike other documents, they are not bound to political pressures (263). While this is a questionable assertion — political pressures are as real to novelists as to historians, especially to politically involved novelists like Defoe — it has a grain of plausibility. Encoded in the plot and story we can see a model of colonialism laid out in a richer fashion than is visible in Defoe’s explic-

itly political writings. Doody argues that novelists can show characters “subject to — and part of — human structures and arrangements over which they have little and sometimes no control — including war and slavery. . . . Everyone wants power and feels the lack of it” (264). Defoe’s achievement in *Robinson Crusoe* is that he shows that the eighteenth-century European male, even with no fortune or education, could roam the globe and even establish societies. Crusoe and Colonel Jack are not “subject to” existing power structures in many senses, because the international competition concerning empire, and the commercial pressures that resulted from the opening of the globe to Western European influence and in many cases domination, created fissures in class-bound societies like England’s.

Robinson Crusoe, written in a time of discovery and colonial expansion, shows that men could exert a kind of control impossible in a socially stratified world, or even within a single layer of society. The world is Crusoe’s in a way particular to his age. His family migrates from Germany. Crusoe then travels to Africa, back to England, to Africa again, and finally to the Americas. He is prosperous precisely because of his mastery of the world, but his prosperity and his life are imperiled by this same mastery, because it’s shown to be a dangerous thing. His travels are violations of his father’s advice, and his landing on the island alive is in stark contrast to the deaths of all those who accompanied him. The world is open to mastery, but is also a capricious, violent place.

Max Novak has pointed out in *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* that Defoe’s fiction was an instrument for disseminating his political and economic arguments concerning colonialism and imperialism. He particularly saw America as a market for England’s overproduction of woolen manufactures. But his reach in the *Atlas* is broader. “As a journalist, a publicist, a political agitator, and a spy,” Novak writes, “Defoe was instrumental in bringing about the union of England and Scotland, but he never was able to stimulate enough colonial activity to make England the undisputed economic and political power” (140). This was not for lack of trying. Defoe addressed the ruling classes personally and through works like the *Atlas*, and the merchant classes through works like *A Plan for the English Commerce* and his novels. But Defoe was myopic in not recognizing the human communities that would develop as settlements grew and perpetuated themselves. He sought to bind the English to a concept of America as a useful, commercial property but failed to consider that America might use the same means — print — to develop communities more locally oriented and less loyal to English economic desires.

Crusoe seeks to guard himself against the dangers of his colony becoming anything but an extension of England by recreating England on the island. His

“castle,” and “country house,” and “valet” Friday, fortunately weaned from cannibalism, paint Crusoe as a kind of English gentleman in the wilds of America. One reason for this attempt to remake America in the model of Europe is a fear of the “new” world as dangerously sexual and barbarous, the two being part of the same concept in many works by early explorers and travelers to the Americas and Africa. The concept of a feminine (but hardly pure, and unsafe to possess) new land is a recurring feature in narratives of discovery and exploration. Before emigration to America can enrich England, the former must be purified. This purification amounted to a de-sexing. Robyn Wiegman effectively shows the anxiety this necessity causes Defoe in her article on “Gendered Sites in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana*.” She convincingly argues that the “system of signification we encounter in *Robinson Crusoe* “reiterates masculine subjectivity. . . . Man penetrates his environment, erects his dominance, spreads his seed, and in an astounding colonization of the female body (the object of his look) gives birth to art, culture and progeny” (34). Wiegman might have more explicitly added commerce to this list. The colonized female body is, I would argue, the site of economic expansion above all. As Ann Louise Kibbie insists, female bodies in Defoe’s works, particularly those of Moll Flanders and Roxana, “become the body of capital” (1024).

As Anne McClintock writes in *Imperial Leather*, “Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination — a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (22). Defoe’s gendering of Crusoe’s island is clearly demonstrable. His earliest efforts are aimed at finding entries into the island’s interior, a symbolic penetration of this untamed feminine space. His most strenuous effort is improving his cave, very much a womb-like home, naturally present but worked by Crusoe in order to conform to his own physical and psychic needs. And this home, while necessary to his survival, is a place he builds but will not sleep in. He prefers his hammock outside its entrance, as if it isn’t to be trusted even after he has reconstructed it to suit him (55). As such, it is the gestating place of his English settlement, but he, as an Englishman, has already been born.

While the cave is a womb when he finds it, it is not yet *his* womb. So he fixes it. “I went on, and working every Day, as my Strength and Time allow’d, I spent eighteen Days entirely in widening and deepening my Cave, that it might hold my Goods commodiously” (55). This topographical womb is a necessary contrivance before Crusoe’s civilization can be born. As McClintock writes,

America allegorically represents nature's invitation to conquest, while [Amerigo] Vespucci, gripping the fetish instruments of imperial mastery -- astrolabe, flag and sword -- confronts the virgin land with the patrimony of scientific mastery and imperial might. Invested with the male prerogative of naming, Vespucci renders America's identity a dependent extension of his and stakes male Europe's territorial rights to her body, and, by extension, the fruits of her land. (26)

Crusoe will of course take up this "male prerogative of naming," even naming Friday, who most likely already had a name, but not one given by the colonizer, and as such a potentially dangerous symbol of intrusion into a society that is being marked as European.

McClintock's view of America as the dangerous female puts Milton's Eve in mind. The Puritan Eve is clearly the undoer of Man, and the cause of the Fall. Crusoe is constantly on guard against this. While he is in a land similar to Eden, which provides him with everything he needs and where he has the right to name, and thereby claim, all he sees, the female apparent in America must still be tamed. His first assault on the feminine nature of his new settlement is seen in his attack on his ship. His ransacking of the now useless vessel, perhaps his first womb in the voyage that landed him on the island, is gendered female and plays out almost like a rape. "I now gave over any more Thoughts of the Ship, or of any thing out of *her*, except what might drive on Shore from *her* Wreck, as indeed divers Pieces of *her* afterwards did; but those things were of small use to me," Crusoe informs us shortly after he lands on his island (43; emphases added). While ships are traditionally gendered female, Crusoe's repeated emphasis of his ship's feminine status, added to his pillaging, represents a violent act on the female body that is no longer useful to him. It is almost as if, the ship's utility exhausted, her body must be mutilated and discarded. The settlement is too new to allow the dangerous influence of the female.

Crusoe's fear of cannibals also plays into this idea of America as a discursively female place. McClintock, analyzing a picture of America represented as a seductive, indolent, naked woman in a hammock inviting the European explorer while cannibals munch on a human thigh in the background, provides a persuasive commentary on the early view of America. "The gendering of America as simultaneously naked and passive," she writes, "*and* riotously violent and cannibalistic represents a doubling with the conqueror, disavowed and displaced onto a feminized scene" (27). Thus, Crusoe's fear of the feminine is not necessarily a fear of the unknown female of the Western hemisphere, but a fear of female influences of any kind. The comparison of the island to the Eve who must be tamed so this

new "paradise" will not be lost through her treachery is one that shows Crusoe's English consciousness as much as his fear of the unknown elements of America.

Even Crusoe's cave, despite his improvements and, through such action, his claiming of it for himself, remains a dangerous space until he has fully tamed the land. The womb/cave which had seemed his is suddenly not entirely sheltering. It soon threatens to close in on him. "I began now to think my Cave or Vault finished," Crusoe says, "when on a Sudden, (it seems I had made it too large) a great Quantity of Earth fell down from the Top and one Side, so much, that in short it frighted me, and not without Reason too; for if I had been under it I had never wanted a Grave-Digger" (55). The idea that Crusoe may have made his cave "too large" seems to show that his enclosure is only safe within carefully prescribed limits. He is allowing the presence of the female, but until he has controlled it, he is in danger of it collapsing on him in a way that conflates the idea of the female with a fear of death, as his comment about the cave being his grave makes clear.

Crusoe proceeds to fix his "womb" house according to his order, and for a brief time no longer feels threatened there. Nature has been tamed to a degree. But soon, an earthquake comes and gives him new reasons to fear the land and its arguably feminine aspects. The earthquake hits when he has finished the wall in front of his fortress, and as he is standing in the entrance of his cave. The sea is put into "violent Motion by it" and the shaking makes Crusoe's "Stomach sick like one that was toss'd at Sea" (59). The repeated references to the sea point to a feminization of the geography, as if the amniotic fluids of the Earth are shifting and threatening to submerge Crusoe. After the earthquake Crusoe fears the cave. "The fear of being swallow'd up alive, made me that I never slept in quiet," he says, reinforcing the idea of the devouring female. The feminine dangers of the landscape are eventually controlled, but the island will hold dangers until he becomes Friday's "father/master/God." This Puritan Eden depends upon man for its proper functioning, the taming of the feminine, and in the end Crusoe is as much God as man.

Long before Crusoe leaves his island, he has made it English property by improving it and by putting it to agricultural use. His grain grows into something "of the same Kind as our *European*, nay, as our *English Barley*" (58). It is England's by the Roman law of *res nullius*, which argued that, as Pagden notes, "all 'empty things,' which included unoccupied lands, remained the common property of all mankind until they were put to some, generally agricultural, use" (*Lords of All the World* 76). The island is no longer a "virgin" land or a feminine space. It has become the property of Crusoe through his work, and the property of England through the allegiance of Crusoe and, in his words, the barley he grows. It is now

safe to send women in order to populate the island, a safely de-sexed Eden that will support English commercial interests. Crusoe's career as a merchant and farmer is important to his future status as a lawgiver and civilizer. As Pagden writes in *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*, "Commercialism had always been more than mere trade. But in the eighteenth century, the merchant, once despised because of the non-military profession he pursued, came to be seen as the agent of the transmission of civilization.... Unlike the colonist who merely exploits -- and exports -- whatever the colony has to offer, the merchant develops" (170-171). In this construction, Defoe is not only able to excuse the European occupation and control of America, but to valorize it.

The role of the female in Defoe's view of an interdependently commercial world oriented toward the masculine power of the English state is portrayed metaphorically in the early pages of *Moll Flanders*. Moll, the weak, poor, but dangerously alluring feminine presence in the upper class English home is "colonized" and made into a commodity early in the novel. Her colonization comes when the older brother of the family expresses interest in her by throwing her "down upon the Bed," kissing her, and "professing a great deal of Love" for her. But at this stage, the relationship is entirely to Moll's benefit, since he pays her five guineas and leaves, her virtue intact (23). This is analogous to Defoe's weighing of colonial benefits. He argues in the *Atlas* that in the power relationship between England and North America, the latter is easily the gainer. While England is able to export its manufactures and finds a much needed market in the colonies, America needs these goods more than England gains by selling them, Defoe argues. All that America supplies England is pelts, turpentine, whale oil, ships, tar, and masts for ships, all in too small quantity or of too little use to make the exchange an equal one. "It cannot be supposed," Defoe writes, "that these Articles, were they much greater than they are, could ballance the exceeding great Demand of Goods from Great Britain, which those Colonies necessarily make every year, and without which they could not subsist their Colony ..." (329).

Moll is also unable to subsist without the favors of the family, one of whose members makes her a whore, another his wife. She benefits financially, and raises her social status without her whoring being discovered. Her body, from her first encounter with the older brother, has been commodified. First he gives her five guineas. The next time she receives "almost a Handful of Gold" (25). Leading up to the scene where she gives in totally to her mercantilist seducer, she is placed in a complex web of commerce analogous to the one Defoe pictures in the *Atlas* as occurring between England, North America, England's possessions in the Caribbean, and the rest of Europe. First Moll is shown to belong to the family's sisters

when the brother contrives to send her on an errand and they seem to object, and he asks "if you can't spare" her. Then she is supposedly being sent out to haggle with a merchant over "Neckcloths." Finally she ends up giving in to this brother, receiving "a silk purse, with an Hundred Guineas in it" for her troubles. The brother also promises to marry her "as soon as he came to his estate" (28). Her commodification is complete, as is the commodification of the institution of marriage. Later, the younger brother complicates things by sincerely offering marriage, something he is able to do because "he was now in a Way to live, being bred to the Law, and he did not fear Maintaining me." The clearest statement that Moll is a family property, besides her being one brother's whore and the other's wife after being placed on loan by their sisters, is that the younger brother "scorn'd to be afraid to own me now, who he resolv'd to own after [she] was his Wife" (31). The term "own" is obviously being used in both of its senses here, and by the end she clearly is property. Her later transportation to America makes her analogous to a colonial possession, just as the family in the early part of the novel is an established entity of the British polity.

The sexual anxiety solved by turning Moll into a commodity and de-sexing the topography of Crusoe's island is related to an anxiety of loss that Defoe seems at pains to dispel in the *Atlas*, but which he recognizes in *A Plan for the English Commerce*. In the Appendix to this work — a small book intended for a general audience which it argues should care more than it does about the subject of commerce — Defoe recognizes that the British are the biggest gainers in colonial trade because of navigational superiority. He also recognizes that this means England has the most to lose by the interruption of trans-Atlantic commerce. "It is observ'd of our Colonies," he writes, "that every Englishman going from England . . . and settling there with his Family and Servants to Plant and Trade, is of ten-fold more value in real Substance to the public Treasury of England, and of ten-fold more weight in the Ballance of trade to the Nation, when he comes there (*viz.*) into America, than he was before in Old England . . ." (36). He also expresses fears that any European war that would upset that commerce would affect England heavily. "We are therefore tenfold the sufferers in the stop of Commerce to our own Colonies, than any other Nation can be by the stop of their Commerce in Europe; no Nation having any such Intercourse of their Navigation and Correspondence and Commerce, among themselves, as our Colonies have" (37). Defoe's recognition of England's dependence on its American possessions, while seemingly at odds with his remarks in the *Atlas* that America gains more by the exchange, is a telling one. He is basing his valuation of America on a calculation of benefits to be gained from imperial possessions. As Pagden writes in *Lords of All the World*, the preoccu-

pation with profits replaced the concept of possessions concerned more with grandeur than materially measurable gain. The shift resulted,

as it did in other areas of political discourse, in a shift from the consideration of rights and legitimacy to a concern with interests and benefits.... Henceforth societies could only be considered great -- and legitimate -- in proportion to the degree to which they could make their members happy. (157)

Defoe writes anxiously in the *Atlas* that America is bound by interest to England, and by all laws and treaties. He writes that the French will have to be expelled in order for English civilization to proceed peacefully in North America (282). He turns Moll from a whore to a repentant colonist in Virginia, bound more to England than to her husband, and more to colonial commerce than her own formerly exaggerated sexuality. He de-feminizes Crusoe's island in order to promote a society based on English mercantilist interests. His contrivances, fictional and real, betray an anxiety that the Dutch fate of imperial loss could very well be the English fate if everything is not ordered according to the practical laws of commerce in an expanding world. His anxieties, of course, were correct, since all the taming of America and the Americans couldn't stop the establishment of "imagined communities" in the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, brought about by the same methods Defoe sought to use to bind America to England. As Anderson argues, print capitalism became the means for the building of a separate American polity that would break from England a half century after Defoe's death. "Printers starting new presses always included a newspaper in their productions, to which they were usually the main, even the sole, contributor," Anderson argues. "Thus the printer-journalist was initially an essentially North American phenomenon" (61), and Benjamin Franklin was to become the American Defoe, succeeding in removing from England what the first had sought to attach.

Defoe more than recognized the value of America to England. In the *Atlas* he describes a land "furnish'd for Commerce, and for the Conveniences and Delights of Life, as much as any Country in the World." In a perceptive, prophetic passage, he wrote that

Navigation would call this its Center, if it were as well peopled as other Parts of the World. The Globe does not show such a Place for Trade and Shipping, as the Bay of Chesapeake, or such Rivers for Trade, and so far navigable, and yet so immensely large, as the Rivers of Mississippi, Canada, Delaware, Oroonoque ... besides innumerable smaller Rivers.... In a word, fitted by Nature for Commerce, it affords the best Product for Trade, and the best Harbours for Shipping, of any other Part of the World. (277)

What Defoe tried to control by arguing for a commercially oriented web of relations with America, he tried to augment with fictional representations of how such a world could be bound to England psychically as well. While his commercial web was a relatively accurate reading of the way colonialism was to play out in North America, his Utopian scheme of settlement with the suppression of female influence, and as such, the impossibility of building any complete society, was fictionally engaging but impossible to sustain practically. The "imaginary community" would soon define itself apart from England as generations of Americans were born away from the country to which they were supposedly bound, and an inevitable sense of connection was lost. No web of commercial intercourse, no matter how beneficial to English merchants, was able to sustain this community over an ocean in a time when communication, if not imagination, was more local than global. The influence of the printed word, as wielded by Defoe, should not be underestimated, but neither should the inevitability that American print culture would develop with local concerns and a vision of itself as the center of those concerns.



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