Reading Defoe with Rawson

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Abstract: This essay considers the implications for eighteenth-century studies of Claude Rawson's *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945*, as the book approaches the twenty-fifth anniversary of its publication. In this wide-ranging monograph, several of Rawson's key arguments turn on readings of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *A Modest Proposal* (1729), and other works by Jonathan Swift, but they also have important consequences for Swift's great contemporary and antagonist Daniel Defoe. Emphasizing Rawson's approach to irony as unstable and double-edged and his confrontation with questions of genocide, we analyze the vexed case of Defoe's controversial pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) and Defoe's troubled revisiting of themes from *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) in the two continuations of 1719 and 1720, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

Keywords: irony; extermination rhetoric; genocide; idolatry; Amalek

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Ever since his groundbreaking books about Henry Fielding and Jonathan Swift in the 1970s, which revolutionized understanding of both writers by creatively juxtaposing their work with experimental texts of the modernist era, the scholarship of Claude Rawson has always been distinguished by its intellectually capacious scope. No less characteristic of his work are its virtuoso effects of sustained

close reading. Terry Eagleton's description of Rawson as "a critic of striking flair and delicacy" catches the unusual blend of boldness and nuance with which a Rawson monograph grounds large patterns of argument in the most telling, often quite startling, details of language and form ("Firm Government"). Eagleton was reviewing *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945*, a magisterial study now approaching its twenty-fifth anniversary, and as prescient today as on first publication in 2001. In the following essay, we first revisit the arguments of this landmark book, and then pursue an application that Rawson occasionally gestures towards but leaves for others to develop. What happens, we ask, if we carry forward the implications of *God, Gulliver, and Genocide*, especially in its account of Swift, into the work of Swift's great antagonist Daniel Defoe? The question might lead in many directions, but we focus below on two prominent cases: *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), a tract advocating punitive suppression of the religious minority to which Defoe himself belonged, and *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (1719), which with its sequels, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720), explores the psychological conflict of a colonial hero torn between paranoid distress and violent revenge.

Not not meaning it

Perhaps the most surprising rabbit pulled from the hat in *God, Gulliver, and Genocide* (if a less endearing one than the image suggests) is a 24-page pamphlet that was previously little known except to a handful of specialist scholars: *A Proposal for Giving Badges to the Beggars in All the Parishes of Dublin* (1737). Writing a decade after *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift here addresses his fellow citizens with a lurid call to arms—or, to be precise, a call to whips—in a tract he terms "a very plain Proposal" (*Irish Political Writings* 309). The streets of Dublin are now infested by "perpetual Swarms of Foreign Beggars," with each vagrant bringing in tow "his Trull, and Litter of Brats" (311-312). Flirting with a biblical idiom of mass slaughter, the pamphlet echoes God's antediluvian curse on mankind by casting the migrant hordes as "a profligate Clan of Thieves, Drunkards, Heathens, and Whore-mongers, fitter to be rooted out of the Face of the Earth, than suffered to levy a vast annual Tax upon the City" (317).[1] Elsewhere, his voice unsteadily attempts

1 Cf. Genesis 6:7 ("And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth"), Genesis 7:4 ("every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth"), and later Old Testament passages reworking this formulation.

a technocratic dispassion, modestly proposing milder means by which these "Caterpillars" might yet "be banished in a Month without Expence, and with very little Trouble" (318, 312). A few apprentices with horse-whips would do the job quicker, to be sure. But failing that, a badge system confining the indigent to their native parish would soon enough, if rigorously enforced, purge the city of "strolling Beggars, or Bastards from the Country," along with all other "vagabond Wretches" (317-318).

Connoisseurs of irony will be tempted to cut through here to a subtext that sounds less disquieting, and more happily in tune with the urge, still pervasive in eighteenth-century studies, to retrofit authors of the past with sensibilities of the present. The splenetic rhetorical overkill, the rancorous analogies with vermin or at best livestock, the abrupt lurches between po-faced moderation and misanthropic ferocity, surely point just one way. This must be an ironic piece, written in a spirit of derisive mimicry, which targets not the ravenous alms-seekers swamping the city but the fears, resentments, and jealousies of its tradesmen and gentry. Swift's real concern is not the inundation of resource-hungry aliens ("foreign" meaning foreign to Dublin, whether drawn to the city from provincial Ireland or transported there from England); his satirical animus turns instead on the gut prejudices and gutter rhetoric of the city's authorities and opinion-formers.

Yet this pamphlet is no teasing re-run of Swift's celebrated *Modest Proposal* (1729), a mock-recommendation of cannibalism that is often read as figuratively deploring—its sympathies always with the underdog—a devouring of the native poor by the settler elite, or of Ireland by Walpole's England. Eight years later, *A Proposal for Giving Badges to the Beggars of Dublin*—a work excluded from most teaching editions of Swift, but given equal billing with *A Modest Proposal* in *God, Gulliver, and Genocide*—is defiantly sincere.[1] On the title-page of this rebarbative tract, Swift not only reveals but highlights his authorship ("By the Dean of St. Patrick's" above a woodcut of his famous "Drapier" eidolon): an unusual gesture in a writer so given to evasive ventriloquism, and one he reinforces further with an autobiographical reflection in his closing paragraph over the signature "J. SWIFT." As for the argument of the pamphlet, it rehearses recommendations that over many years, Swift says, he had personally urged on several Lord Mayors as well as the late William King, the long-serving, politically influential Archbishop of

1 Rawson also includes it, with other inconvenient items, in *The Basic Writings of Jonathan Swift*. Elsewhere, omission of the pamphlet is especially striking in *Swift's Irish Writings: Selected Prose and Poetry*, whose editors cheerfully celebrate "Swift's felt kinship with the lower classes" and his daily walks "getting to know [...] the beggars entreating passersby in the vicinity of the cathedral" (xxii; xvi).

Dublin. The personal investment is unmistakable, whatever the instability of tone. As Rawson puts it in his brilliant, uncompromising reading of this aggressive text, "the nagging accents of the Modest Proposer [...] are detectable, but we should not on that account infer any significant attenuation of Swiftian commitment in this case, only perhaps an incidental impish jokerie" (226). We should also, he adds, reconsider *A Modest Proposal* itself, and ask whether its disconcertingly similar gestures really can be explained away, in tune with liberal or postcolonial desires, as unimpeachably progressive. Rawson's constant emphasis is that irony is, among other things, a sanitizing rhetoric or legitimizing device: a protective way of giving vent to, while appearing to disavow, meanings that may well remain meant—perhaps quite intensely so.

It is in this alarming space between proposal and disavowal that Rawson's account of European visions of barbarism from the conquest of the Americas to the ending of the Holocaust ambitiously, and eloquently, dwells. "A volatile combination of 'meaning it,' not meaning it, and not not meaning it" typifies the compendious range of texts that Rawson assembles, throughout which the category of "barbarian" is foisted, with varying complexities of implication and menace, on a range of subaltern groups (12). A defining presence here is the scripturally inflected idiom of extermination employed by Swift, reaching back to the unblinking exposure of conquistadorial genocide ("estirpar y raer de la haz de la tierra") published by the Spanish reformer Bartolomé de Las Casas in 1552, and looking forward to the robotic determination of Heinrich Himmler, architect of the Holocaust ("dieses Volk von der Erde verschwinden zu lassen"), in 1943 (Las Casas 74; Himmler 169; qtd. in Rawson 311, 287). Behind this extended catalogue of slaughter, the locus classicus is the retributive fury of Genesis 6:7 before the Flood (see above, p. 75, n. 1): a text giving rise, Rawson later notes, to more tribally or racially specific maledictions elsewhere in the Old Testament (299-304). A conspicuous example is 1 Samuel 15:3 ("Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass"), a verse that perplexed several Enlightenment commentators but was embraced with relish (see below) by religious provocateurs during the reign of Queen Anne.[1]

In analysing the "spectrum of aggressions which inhabit the space between such figures of speech and their implementation"—a space the Nazis in the end made nonexistent—*God, Gulliver, and Genocide* is incidentally an important

1 See Joseph Waligore, *The Spirituality of the English and American Deists: How God Became Good*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2023, 81-82, 89.

book about literary and political rhetoric (vii). In its searching attentiveness to the slippages and grey areas of ironic discourse, it overturns traditional accounts of irony as a figure that annuls surface content in favour of an implied alternative, and emphasizes instead the troubling residues of meaning that persist in its wake. The main business of Rawson's book, however, is with the deep structures of colonial and social thinking over five centuries, as manifested in a broad range of European writing about overlapping categories of "ethnic others and home-grown pariahs," who include Amerindigenous peoples, Jews, the Irish, the domestic poor, and special anathematized categories such as "witches" (viii). Throughout, Rawson focuses his formidable interpretive energies on what he calls the "velleities and shrinkings" of his literary sources: their qualities of seeming to will (without actually working to enact) the extermination of the barbarous "other," while simultaneously recoiling from their own most sanguinary fantasies (15). Often the recoil comes in the form of destabilizations of the polarity between barbarism and civilization, and Rawson pays special attention to those literary manoeuvres through which the "other" becomes kin to ourselves—typically, in the examples he highlights, with an effect of mutual discredit, not sentimental uplift.

Central to this account are Montaigne and Swift, writers in whom Rawson finds a radical pessimism about the species, which studiously assimilates civilized readers to the groups they despise, while never refuting, and in some ways advancing, the primary demonization of these groups. Here Rawson is scathing about the tendency of criticism to cast Swift in particular, and early writers on colonialism in general, in crude opposing moulds, either by wishfully recuperating Swift as a proto-liberal or radical defender of good causes, or by superciliously outing him as a peddler of oppressive norms. Still less is Swift the holder, Rawson adds, of "some wise balanced position between" these options (16)—a phrase he takes from William Empson's classic account of "double irony," a technique (in Fielding) of outlining alternative responses to narrative cruxes but then undercutting both without any accompanying offer of a middle way (218-219). In this spirit, Rawson's tough-minded analysis acknowledges and confronts features of his sources that are, as he drily puts it, "not always attractive to a modern sensibility," and refuses to manufacture comfortable interpretive escape routes (1). He relentlessly documents the ways in which anti-colonial fury and contempt for the injustice of conquerors could coexist with, or even derive from, conservative-authoritarian foundations.

Montaigne, in this account, is no straightforward purveyor of liberating oppositions between noble savage and barbaric colonialist, though he moves in that direction with his allegation (in "Des cannibales") that Frenchmen who roast their

enemies alive are more barbaric than Amerindigenous peoples (the Tupinambá of Brazil are specified) who reportedly eat them dead. Having challenged the pretensions to civilization of his own kind, Montaigne shies away from acknowledging the very thing that might have clinched his case: widely reported evidence that the wars of religion had generated not only sectarian burnings (and of course the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Huguenots) but also literal anthropophagy in modern France, including notorious episodes of famine cannibalism in the besieged Protestant city of Sancerre, or again revenge cannibalism by victorious Catholics at Auxerre. Montaigne later expanded his earlier essay "De la modération" with reference to live burnings perpetrated by Mexican natives, thereby compromising in advance the antitheses of "Des cannibales," in which the barbarity of torture is exclusive to Europe.

Rawson is always keen to stress differences between Montaigne and Swift, "the one thrusting and aggressive as the other was fastidiously tentative" (7). But he finds in both the same strategies of blurring and contradiction, and the same radical inculpation of all mankind. In this perspective, *A Modest Proposal* is nothing more liberating than a grim satirical *tu quoque*, attacking the settler elite and neighbouring England only in so far as it assimilates them, in their metaphorical voracity, to the literal cannibalism traditionally alleged against the "savage" Irish—a category for whom, throughout Swift's oeuvre, pity fights a losing battle with scorn and disgust. The same angry comprehensiveness of incrimination is concentrated in the Yahoos of *Gulliver's Travels*, whom the virtuous Houyhnhnms (with little sign of Swift's imaginative detachment from the scheme) consider "exterminat(ing) from the Face of the Earth" (408). A noisome compound of Hottentot and Irish stereotypes, the Yahoos are also, in Swift's first edition, the probable descendants of a primeval English couple, so confirming the satire's insistence, as Rawson puts it, "that the European conqueror or English settler is just as Yahoo as the Yahoos of the bush or the bog" (5).

God, Gulliver, and Genocide achieves a vast chronological sweep, and combines massive erudition with deft alertness to paradox, slippage and nuance. Just as compelling as Rawson's account of Montaigne is his reading of the Huguenot writer Jean de Léry, each of whose books of the 1570s about Sancerre and Brazil is haunted by the subject of its counterpart—and haunted, too, in the matter of cannibalism, by the Eucharistic controversies to which so much real flesh was sacrificed in both places. An iconoclastic chapter on "Killing the Poor: An Anglo-Irish theme?" looks forward to coy restagings of *Modest Proposal* themes by Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and others, and the book culminates with the ghoulish relationship

between the Nazi rhetoric of genocide and its original prototype (via Luther's translation "Ich will die Menschen [...] vertilgen von der Erde") in Hebrew scripture (287, 372). It might be added that more recent history only confirms the prescience of this analysis: in a speech following the Hamas attack of 7th October 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked Amalek, the unforgettable enemy of the Israelites and a staple, incidentally, of Purim Torah readings.[1] The speech quotes from Deuteronomy 25:17-19, which opens with the command to "remember what Amalek did unto thee" and closes, paradoxically, with the exhortation to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." Forgetting to forget Amalek has transformed the biblical Amalekites (descendants of Esau) into an all-purpose demonizing archetype: the Romans, medieval Christians, Nazis, Jews who have strayed from the faith, and more recently ISIS, Hamas, Iranians, and Palestinians have all been associated with Amalek, Netanyahu's chilling invocation being only the latest instance.[2]

Contagions and extirpations

God, Gulliver, and Genocide is first and foremost a book about Swift, a landmark study of his satirical rage in its largest ramifications. Looking back, Rawson definitively establishes the pervasive subtextual presence of Montaigne: a presence, above all in the culminating voyage to Houyhnhnmland, now documented in detail by David Womersley in his definitive 2012 edition of *Gulliver's Travels*. Looking forward, Rawson makes the most comprehensive exploration to date of a standard theme of criticism since Orwell broached the subject in his classic essay "Politics vs. Literature" (1946) at the end of the Second World War: the status of *Gulliver's Travels*, and specifically the Houyhnhnmland voyage, as a proleptic satire, disturbingly noncommittal in tone, about modern totalitarianism—though where Orwell had Stalin in view, Rawson's focus is on Nazi atrocity. Swift's works, Rawson contends, "are a meeting-house for some of the most troubling moral nightmares of European intellectual history in the last five hundred years: war, imperial conquest, the impulse to exterminate" (1).

Nowhere is his point more harrowingly substantiated than in the exactness with which the punitive imaginings of *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travels*, though rooted in existing myths about Scythian, Irish and Amerindigenous "savagery," also prefigure the Holocaust's most odious perversions (an outcome that would have

1 See, in particular, Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Judges 6:1-6; 1 Samuel 15:1-9; 1 Samuel 27:8-9. For the biblical history of Amalek and its genocidal implications, see Kugler 1-16.

2 On Netanyahu, see Gearty, "War Crimes;" on the longue durée, see Horowitz 1-12.

struck Swift as proving his point about the depravity of the species as a whole): Gulliver's use of Yahoo skin for shoes and sails, and the Modest Proposer's idea of similarly manufacturing "*Summer Boots for fine Gentlemen*"—the specification of season owing, presumably, to the delicacy of infant hide (*Irish Political Writings* 151).

One question left open by Rawson's unflinching accumulation of transhistorical connections is how pervasive the discourses and visions he identifies might be in Swift's own day. Perhaps, in an age when moderation was increasingly professed (if not always practised), pseudo-biblical malediction is simply a marker of derangement: there are mid-century instances in Richardson (*Clarissa* letter 497, p. 1345) and Fielding (*Voyage to Lisbon* 637). During Queen Anne's reign, however, the grim idiom of genocide is a conspicuous feature of religious and political discourse. Defoe is a key subtextual presence throughout Rawson's book, credited with much of the predictive power belonging to Swift, most obviously in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, where, mimicking the paranoid though camouflaged rhetoric of High Church incendiaries, "actual or potential murderous intentions are insinuated in non-murderous language" (Rawson 184). For Rawson, by fluctuating between fairly blatant sanguinary menace and a mollifying language of milder solutions and selective exemplary punishment, Defoe's pamphlet exemplifies the "classic equivocation found in much extermination rhetoric" (184). The same "sinister sweet-reasonableness, with its veiled and deniable intimations of unspeakable purposes, may be detected in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, no mean evidence of Defoe's understanding of the mentality" (185).

Since the time of Ian Watt's crisp, categorical formulation of 1957 ("a masterpiece not of irony but of impersonation"), debate about *The Shortest Way* has been dominated by the question of ironic control or its absence (126). Scholars focused on the historical background and immediate reception of Defoe's tract, which for a time was widely accepted as genuine, have read it as an elaborate hoax in which ironic subversion or implication played no part. From this point of view, *The Shortest Way* was a clever exercise in malicious ventriloquism, designed to trap unwary opponents into embracing the murderous recommendations of the text and so discredit themselves as extremists; no one was being asked to excavate subtextual layers of meaning. Writing in *agent provocateur* mode, Defoe perfectly counterfeits the high-toned rhetoric and metaphorical overkill of a High Church sermon or tract, but tips its deadly hints and innuendos into the realm of explicit suggestion, so stripping the veil of respectability from the arguments of his opponents. In the alternative interpretive camp, close reading has been used to argue for the presence of clear irony markers throughout Defoe's text.

The pamphlet opens by handling an Aesopian fable (by the strident Jacobite Roger L'Estrange) as though it were a passage from Scripture, and closes with a dizzying, nonsensical lurch from the language of victimhood ("*Alas! the Church of England!* [...] how has she been Crucify'd between two Thieves") to the language of persecution ("Now *let us Crucifie the Thieves*")—an injunction then capped by a grotesque perversion of Matthew 16:18 on the rock of faith: "Let her Foundations be establish'd upon the Destruction of her Enemies" (*Dissent* 109).

Conveniently, and with characteristic elusiveness, Defoe himself offers support for both these interpretations. In the first of his wildly inconsistent later reflections on *The Shortest Way*, he writes that "[i]f any man take the pains to reflect upon the Contents, the Nature of the Thing and the Manner of the Stile, it seems Impossible to imagine it should pass for any thing but an Irony" (113).[1] Elsewhere, and more often, Defoe emphasizes the "hoax" explanation: "When the Book, call'd, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, first appear'd in the World, and before these High-flown Gentlemen knew its Author; while the Piece, in its Outward Figure, look'd so Natural, and was as like a Brat of their own begetting, that like two Apples, they could not know them asunder, the Author's True Design in the Writing of it, had its Wonderful and Immediate Effect" (*Review*, 11 August 1705, p. 492). He even claimed to have seen fan mail sent to his bookseller by an ardent Tory who esteemed *The Shortest Way*, after Scripture, "*the most Valuable Piece I have; and I pray God put it into the Heart of the Queen, to put all that is there prescribed into Execution*" (492).

Recent scholarship has shown how much mileage there is in both approaches. Joseph Hone and Howard D. Weinbrot have extended our sense of the pamphlet's assumed authenticity at first: even such well-informed readers as the Jacobite newsletter writer John Dyer took *The Shortest Way* for the real thing (BL Add. MSS 70074 fol. 144r; qtd. in Hone 163), while Charles Leslie, another leading Tory controversialist, reported that "all over the *Town*, among all sorts of People," the tract was read at face value as the work of a High Church author (*New Association* 6; qtd. in Weinbrot 72). The immediate effect, Leslie goes on, was "to *Blacken* the *Church Party*, as Men of a *Persecuting* Spirit" (6). Most recently of all, Andrew Benjamin Bricker points to Leslie, as well as to the radical Whig *Observator*, for the assumption that *The Shortest Way* was a clever counterfeit and nothing more, while cautioning that modern arguments for ironic subversion "have relied on a surprisingly recent and tidily theoretical view of irony" (99). Usage by Defoe and his contemporaries must be handled with care, since "in 1702, irony was a poorly

1 See also editor W.R. Owens's textual note on p. 386; "an Irony" is the first-edition reading, but Owens follows later editions reading "a Banter upon the High-flying Church-Men."

understood and even obscure term," and did not swim into focus in its modern sense (i.e. as verbal irony) until the later 1720s (100).

That said, we may be confident enough of Defoe's own usage: witness his account of the ironic messaging achieved in his 1713 pamphlets about the Hanover succession, which were calculated, as he pleads in his Petition to Queen Anne that autumn, "by An Ironicall Discourse of Recomending The Pretender; In The strongest and Most Forcible Manner to Expose his designs" (*Correspondence* 777). Here, Defoe clearly understands irony as a mode of implication in which subtextual meaning discredits the textual surface, even if, in practice, some readers fail, or choose to fail, to read between the lines. Renewed attention to the most conspicuous rhetorical missteps in *The Shortest Way* has strengthened the case that the same dynamic operates in the earlier tract, with Defoe working behind the scenes to undermine the High Church voice he assumes. Exhibit A is the tract's glowing praise for the biblical Moses, who "was a merciful meek Man, and yet with what Fury did he run thro' the Camp, and cut the Throats of Three and thirty thousand of his dear *Israelites*, that were fallen into Idolatry" (105). Unruffled by the contradiction between meekness and fury (the insouciant "and yet" transition is a masterly touch), Defoe's controversialist zanily exaggerates Exodus 32:28, in which Moses orders (as opposed to personally performing) the slaughter of idolaters, and the body count extends no further than 3,000. Which is still, to be sure, an impressive number, but well short of *The Shortest Way*'s sanguinary fantasy, which, as Weinbrot notes, would have required swift running by Moses, extreme inattention by his victims, inexplicable blindness to the 33,000:1 odds in their favour and, even so, a Mosaic kill rate of ten idolaters per minute for the massacre to be fully achieved, without so much as a bathroom break, within six hours. As Weinbrot adds, Defoe knew the Pentateuch far too well to commit such errors himself, as opposed to attributing them to his incendiary persona, and other sermonists citing the "golden calf" episode (churchmen like Thomas Bennet and Francis Atterbury, very much within Defoe's target audience) always get the number right (74-75). It is hard to resist Weinbrot's conclusion that Defoe is marking his speaker as conspicuously deranged.

Other *Shortest Way* passages might be adduced in which contradiction and muddle not only discredit Defoe's assumed voice but implicitly refute his core arguments. Such passages cluster most intensively in the closing pages, where, among other gaffes, Defoe's controversialist loses control of another scriptural reference ("the ignorant Mob think we are all Idolaters, and Worshippers of *Baal*") to the point of aligning Dissent with the rigour and purity of the early Church, and Anglicanism with its opponents or corrupters: "The primitive Christians were not

more shie of a Heathen-Temple or of Meat offer'd to Idols [...] than some of our Dissenters are of the Church, and the Divine Service solemnized therein" (108). It is not simply that Defoe's speaker is rhetorically incompetent here; his incompetence reinforces the nonconformist position he seeks to discredit, in which Dissent equals true religion and the crypto-Catholicism of High Church ritualists is indeed borderline idolatry. With such moves, Defoe insinuates dissenting arguments into his counterfeit High Church pamphlet. Barely a page later, Dissenters are held to "endanger the Extirpation of Religion in the Nation" (109): a charge frequently levelled against them by Tory zealots, but in this case subverted by the deft double negative that Defoe introduces over the head, as it were, of his frenzied controversialist. Literally understood—and that, surely, is Defoe's invitation—Dissenters here do the very opposite of endangering religion; they endanger the High Church project of rooting it up.

Hoax or irony, then? Historically, and textually, the evidence is complex, and points in two directions. But not irreconcilably so, and that is the genius of the pamphlet. For the bluntest modern exponents of either view—"close reading of *The Shortest-Way* carried out without the presumption of ironic intent does not turn up plausible 'signals' of irony" (Marshall 242-243); "readers who arrived at the last page without knowing what Defoe was up to [i.e. irony] would have to be more than dense" (Weinbrot 79)—there is only one scene of reading. But of course there were originally two: first, the moment of publication (c. 1 December 1702), when few readers would approach a topical pamphlet hot off the press with the leisurely scrutiny demanded by verbal irony; second, the excruciating period between Defoe's outing in January 1703 and his pillorying in July, when readers like Leslie demonstrably returned to the text with greater vigilance, turning on it now, we might say, a hermeneutics of suspicion. *The Shortest Way* could thus function first as a hoax discrediting and ensnaring High Church hotheads; it could then function as irony when more attentively read, or in Defoe's words more seriously reflected on, as the truth about authorship emerged.[1] None of this could be enough, of course, to get Defoe out of trouble, and Swift, for one, gloated loftily about the ritual of humiliation he finally faced. Defoe was, Swift writes in 1709, "the Fellow that was *Pillor'd*, I have forgot his Name" (*Sacramental Test* 6)—a name, Rawson observes, "we know Swift did not forget, because in 1735, when reprinting his works, he added Defoe's name in a footnote without deleting the remark about having forgotten

1 For this view, see Thomas Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory: English Literature and Seditions Libel, 1660-1820*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 130; see also Joseph Hone, *Literature and Party Politics at the Accession of Queen Anne*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 157.

it" (*Satire and Sentiment* 251). There could be few defter insults *de haut en bas*. But as Rawson suggests elsewhere, Swift in the *Modest Proposal* may also have drawn lessons from the unstable irony of *The Shortest Way* by inserting into "his own mock-extermination pamphlet […] such outlandish particulars as to neutralize the likelihood of a literal misprision, though even here, as in the case of *Gulliver's Travels*, a minority of readers are sometimes taken in" ("Swift, Satire" 538).

Rawson's most sustained account of the episode comes in his *Times Literary Supplement* review of Maximillian E. Novak's heavyweight biography *Daniel Defoe: Master of Fictions*. Questioning the standard "impersonator/ironist opposition" inherited from Watt and others such as Wayne C. Booth (in his influential *A Rhetoric of Irony*), Rawson emphasizes two complicating factors. First, that since Defoe's adversaries (notably the rabble-rousing cleric Henry Sacheverell) never crossed the line into extermination rhetoric as such, Defoe's supposed impersonation in *The Shortest Way* is in its most salient feature "an impersonation without an original" ("A Hack's Freedom" 4). Second, that on inspection this salient feature is repeatedly and heavily qualified in the text itself, with its suggestion that a few exemplary atrocities will be enough to pre-empt broader massacre *à la* St Bartholomew's Day, since prudent rank-and-file Dissenters will simply return to—and, the speaker silkily adds, be welcomed by—the Church. Then there is the tract's equivocating tendency to represent the "Contagion" to be killed off in abstract terms: Dissent as a religious stance, as opposed to actual Dissenters in the flesh. It follows that *The Shortest Way* is best thought of as a kind of prolepsis, generated to be sure by the sermon wars of the day, but in its most important insights, and most vivid imaginings, looking forward in time. While misrepresenting Sacheverell and the rest, Defoe "captured a sense of how exterminators really do go on," which is indeed in veiled terms, with distracting metaphors, ambiguous syntax, and plausible decoy targets:

> His parody does not so much unearth or exaggerate a potential in his authors as invent another person, who knew his business as the Hitler of *Mein Kampf* was to know his business. In that event, it is not the reality of what Defoe imitated, but the additive of a semi-extraneous intuition, that caused his tract to be taken for real. (4)

It might be added, by analogy with Swift in Rawson's account, that something in Defoe's ambivalent feelings about his fellow Dissenters allowed him (in "not not meaning it" style) to imagine and voice this position with special vigour, or with

relish in marked excess of the satirical need. A literary loner par excellence, his imagination forever drawn to states of isolation or abandonment, Defoe likened Dissenters who joined the outcry against him to Casca stabbing Caesar: "Nay Even y^{e} Dissenters Like Casha To Cæsar Lift up the first Dagger at me: I Confess it makes me Reflect on y^{e} wholl body of y^{e} Dissenters wth Something of Contempt More Than Usuall, and gives me y^{e} More Regrett That I Suffer for Such a People" (*Correspondence* 11, letter to William Paterson, 11 April 1703).

Rawson relies at this point on Novak's account of the polemical background to *The Shortest Way*, which in playing down the violence of High Church polemic ("Henry Sacheverell never wrote anything so outrageous as Defoe's piece"), may be open to question (*Master of Fictions* 173). For all its inconsistences and fluctuations, the genocidal language of *The Shortest Way* is its most emphatic characteristic, most of all when reworking the Old Testament formulations identified by Rawson. The tract deplores the lenity of James I, who could "have rooted the Puritans from the Face of the Land;" insists that ministers must now (in something of a mixed metaphor) "find effectual Methods for the rooting the Contagion from the Face of this Land;" declares that "Heaven has made way for [the Dissenters'] Destruction," so enabling good Anglicans to serve the Church "by extirpating her implacable Enemies" (100-103). Then there is the prediction "How many Millions of future Souls we save from Infection and Delusion, if the present Race of poison'd Spirits were purg'd from the Face of the Land" (105). No modern editor or commentator seems to have noted the chilling appearance of Amalek in *The Shortest Way*'s repertoire of biblical allusions. If we fail to act now, Defoe's controversialist insists, suffering posterity will hold us responsible: "You had an Opportunity to root out this cursed Race from the World, under the Favour and Protection of a true *English* Queen; and out of your foolish Pity you spared them [...] your sparing this *Amalakite* Race is our Destruction" (105).

This is strong stuff. Yet on inspection, there is little here that Sacheverell and his allies do not come close to saying themselves. Weinbrot has anatomized the apocalyptic tropes recurrent in High Church discourse, notably "the repeated terms of destructive uprooting [...] consistent with its cousin *extirpation*," adding that Defoe's adversaries "lacked the word but not the concept of genocide" (60, 62). Sacheverell is of course prominent among Weinbrot's examples, insistent in his desire to follow God's command "*to* Cry aloud, *and* Spare *not*;" Dissenters are "a *Generation of Vipers*" who deserve "Condign Vengeance" and on whom the authorities must "*Execute Wrath*." Leslie is no less to the fore with his insistence that such "Incendiaries of *England*" must be hanged, or worse, for their efforts to "set a whole Kingdom on

Fire" (Sacheverell, *Perils* A2v; Sacheverell, *Nature and Mischief* 54, 26, 57; Leslie, *Principles* 17; qtd. in Weinbrot 61-62). The palm goes, however, to the ferocious rector of St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate, in Ian Higgins's words "the high-flying pulpit celebrity Luke Milbourne, proponent of an unreconstructed political theology of divine right monarchism," known especially for his bloodcurdling 30th January sermons on the regicide of 1649 (13). One such sermon, *The Utter Extirpation of Tyrants and Their Families* (1708), begins from Isaiah 14:20-21, a text declaring the need to "prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land." Citing with enthusiasm God's command to "*Israel* in their Wars against the *Canaanites*, and *Saul* in his war against *Amelek* [...] to destroy *Infant* and *Suckling* for the *Sins* of their *Predecessors*," Milbourne concedes that in the case of Dissenters "utter Extirpation" might possibly go a bit far. That said, they must not be allowed to "*Rise and Possess the Land again*," as they did in the 1640s and might again—and "if we can be so stupid as to permit it, who can Pity us? Where God sets us a *Pattern of innocent Policy*, we may safely follow it; if we pretend to *be wiser than God*, we may and must smart for it" (14, 17).[1] It is worth adding that words of this kind were not mere policy recommendations; they were calls to mob action.[2] Defoe coolly alleges the rationale in one of his later commentaries on *The Shortest Way*: "Nothing can justifie it that I know, but their being a People fit to be extirpated from the Face of the Earth" (*Dissent* 213).

In light of Rawson's comment about the proleptic character of Defoe's pamphlet—the fact that it anticipates more than it reflects extermination rhetoric—it is notable that the most openly menacing of the sermons cited by Weinbrot—culminating, of course, in *The Perils of False Brethren* (1709), for which Sacheverell was impeached—postdate Defoe's parody. If *The Shortest Way* looks forward to the horrors of modernity, then, it looks forward first to an intensification of High Church extremism in its immediate wake, as though Defoe had emboldened more than chastened the sermonists whose tropes and figures he targeted so closely. It is worth dwelling, from this point of view, on one of three provocative pages (11, 18, and 26 in the original pagination) marked for special scrutiny when *The Shortest Way* was brought before Parliament in February 1703. As Hone astutely observes of these pages, two (11 and 26) deal not with High Church/Dissenter relations but with the proposed union with Scotland and succession of the Crown, so indicating that Defoe was targeted, beyond his immediate

1 On Amalekites more generally in anti-Dissenter sermons, see Howard D Weinbrot, *Literature, Religion, and the Evolution of Culture, 1660-1780*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, 93.

2 On sermons and the provocation of riots, see Geoffrey Holmes, "The Sacheverell Riots: The Crowd and the Church in Early Eighteenth-Century London," *Past and Present* vol. 72, August 1976, 55-85.

subject, for rocking the political boat on the largest constitutional issues. It may go too far to conclude, however, that "parliament did not care what Defoe said about dissent" (162). The original page 18 features the most egregiously genocidal passage in the whole tract, and thus the one most likely to incite sectarian violence, whether initiated by wound-up loyalists or by panicked Dissenters. This page also marks Defoe's most intensive use of favourite tricks from the Sacheverell playbook: metaphors of parasitism and contamination that by association demonize, without needing to specify, real human targets. "If ever you will free the Nation from the viperous Brood that have so long suck'd the Blood of their Mother," Defoe's controversialist asks: "If you will leave your Posterity free from Faction and Rebellion, this is the time. This is the time to pull up this heretical Weed of Sedition, that has so long disturb'd the Peace of our Church, and poisoned the good Corn." Would that not be cruel or barbarous, it might be asked? Not really—because "TIS Cruelty to kill a Snake or a Toad in cold Blood, but the Poyson of their Nature makes it a Charity to our Neighbours, to destroy those Creatures, not for any personal Injury receiv'd, but for prevention; not for the Evil they have done, but the Evil they may do" (*Dissent* 104).

The amped-up rhetorical figures—the anaphora, the anadiplosis—are easy enough to spot in this tirade; where might we locate the irony, however? Perhaps in a sinister echo of *Julius Caesar*, a play frequently performed in the period at moments of political crisis. Struggling to justify pre-emptive assassination in plain Roman speech, Brutus falls back on figurative language, likening the ascendant Caesar to an adder, contemplating not his record ("I know no personal cause to spurn at him") but his potential, and doing so in a way he acknowledges to be rhetorical deception or self-deception:

> So Caesar may.
> Then, lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
> Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
> Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
> Would run to these and these extremities.
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
> Which, hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
> And kill him in the shell. (II.i.11, II.i.28-36)

Defoe clearly suggests the parallel, and with it the ironic indication that only through linguistic wiles and duplicitous figures—antidoting poisons, uprooting weeds, neutralizing predators or parasites—can the slaughter proposed in *The Shortest Way*

be articulated and advanced. Genocide begins with rhetorical dexterity. The only question is where Defoe himself stands amidst his alarming acts of ventriloquism: meaning it, not meaning it, or not not meaning it, with the conscience of Brutus and the dagger of Casca on his mind.

Unspeakable Crusoe

A comparable blend of masochistic relish and suppressed horror haunts Defoe's fiction, in ways that may well be related to Defoe's likely trauma (Tom Paulin has argued in *Crusoe's Secret*) as a survivor of Sedgemoor and the subsequent mass hangings of Protestant rebels. In *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), it seems as though the narrator's own city might be "designed by Heaven for an Akeldama, doom'd to be destroy'd from the Face of the Earth" (18).[1] On Crusoe's island, the tables are turned as the colonizing hero, sensing he has cannibal company, considers exterminating the brutes, while worrying that in doing so he would re-enact the "Barbarities" of the conquistadors, who "destroy'd Millions of these People, who however they were Idolaters and Barbarians [...] were yet, as to the *Spaniards*, very innocent People" (145). Here is Defoe's version of the classic turn found in Montaigne, which throws back on the "civilized" European the very allegation—the allegation of barbarity—that sanctions his depredations: an allegation lurking beneath the surface at key moments in *Robinson Crusoe*.

To kill, or not to kill: that is the question occupying Crusoe's thoughts as he passes two years in a state of "Dread and Terror" following his discovery of a single naked footprint in the sand (138). An ambiguous mark of both presence and absence—complete with "Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot," except for the other foot—the footprint is one of many traces of human activity that Crusoe encounters (130). In the aftermath of his shipwreck, Crusoe's search for survivors yields only "three of their Hats, one Cap, and two Shoes that were not Fellows;" years later, he stumbles upon what appears to be the remnant of a cannibal barbecue, a shore "spread with Skulls, Hands, Feet, and other Bones of humane Bodies" (41, 139).[2] Whether encountering clothes, body parts, or the enigmatic footprint, Crusoe is always a step too late and never sees the full picture.

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1 Defoe's allusion is to the "field of blood" near Jerusalem, forbidden as a place of habitation from its association with Judas (Acts 1:18-20).

2 "Barbecue" originates from the Arawak word "barbacoa," which means wooden frame on posts. Peter Hulme points out that "to wean Friday off human flesh," Crusoe teaches him the European method of string-turned roasting. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, London: Methuen, 1986, 210-211. On Caribbean barbecuing, see Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, edited and translated by Janet Whatley, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 79.

The fragmented phenomena Crusoe sees and, perhaps more crucially, does not see cause him to second-guess his instincts, especially when it comes to the looming threat of the "Savage" cannibals.[1] Although he claims to be "ill enough qualified for a Casuist," Crusoe invokes casuistical reasoning to resolve his case of conscience (184). G.A. Starr's classic 1971 study examines the significance of casuistry in Defoe's fiction, when the general rules of religion and morality are seen as inadequate for cases of particular complexity in which there seem to be conflicting imperatives. However, Starr says little about Robinson Crusoe, whose vivid dreams of "killing the Savages, and […] the Reasons why I might justify the doing of it" are disrupted and ultimately thwarted by moral qualms (156).

Crusoe initially considers drastic measures to sort out his cannibal problem. By planting gun-powder explosives underneath their firepit, Crusoe can reduce the cannibals to the state of their victims—a heap of body parts strewn across the shore. But this plan seems too risky and wasteful, so Crusoe prepares for a more definitive solution. Armed to the teeth with two muskets, a fowling-piece, and several pistols, Crusoe suddenly checks the impending killing spree when "cooler and calmer Thoughts" manifest (144). "What Authority, or Call I had, to pretend to be Judge and Executioner upon these Men as Criminals," Crusoe asks himself in a remarkable meditation on national crime and punishment, "what Right I had to engage in the Quarrel of that Blood, which they shed promiscuously one upon another […] How do I know what God himself judges in this particular Case?" (144) Reversing his prior language of arbitrary injustice, Crusoe now frets about playing judge, jury, and executioner for a people he knows little about. Thinking again of Paulin's suggestive reading of *Robinson Crusoe* alongside Sedgemoor, no longer do we hear in Crusoe's voice the "cruel bloody Entertainment" of Judge Jeffreys, James II's hanging judge at the Bloody Assizes (142). Instead, as Crusoe concludes that the cannibals "think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox; nor to eat humane Flesh, than we do to eat Mutton," Defoe's novel turns the discourse of cultural relativism that we find in Léry and Montaigne into a casuistical debate that Crusoe never resolves (145).

In the first novel Crusoe finally chooses to kill when he rescues imprisoned Spaniards from the possibility of revenge cannibalism; even then he is curiously hesitant and delegates most of the killing to Friday and a liberated Spaniard (197-199).

1 Defoe's portrayal of Caribs amalgamates various proto-ethnographic stereotypes. For more on categories of difference in *Robinson Crusoe*, see Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, 49-89.

The killing increases to a global scale in Defoe's sequels, *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections*, which confound scholars who are committed to reading Crusoe's adventures as an island experience. On his return trip in *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe visits the island for a mere twenty-five days before making a clean break: "I have now done with my Island, and all Manner of Discourse about it" (125). He leaves the island without a name and without a leader, "belonging to no Body; and the People under no Discipline or Government but my own," and admits that he "never so much as pretended to plant in the Name of any Government or Nation; or to acknowledge any Prince, or to call my People Subjects to any one Nation more than another" (125-126). Wolfram Schmidgen proposes that Crusoe's fear of the cannibals is intertwined with anxieties surrounding property, land claims, and the doctrine that would later become formalized as *terra nullius*. His hostility towards national affiliation is not a critique of colonial practice per se but instead reflects how English colonialism of the mid-seventeenth century "was not yet shaped by government policy" (41). What are we then to make of the colony's abject failure? After Crusoe leaves the island behind, skirmishes soon erupt between the remaining English and Spanish colonists and the Caribs. Crusoe gets wind of the colony's collapse years later, having lost interest and moved onto his next "*Wild Goose Chase*," raising a fortune from goods acquired in China and Siberia (126). Crusoe's self-interest is costly as he fails in his promise to the colonists "to fetch them away, that they might see their own Country again before they dy'd" (126). His haphazard hunger for profit—inspired implicitly by the early modern predecessors of *terra nullius*—ironically leads Crusoe to abandon his colonial project. As Montaigne concedes in his elusive essay "Des cannibales," which bursts the imperial balloon with prophetic insight, "I fear that our eyes are bigger than our bellies, our curiosity more than we can stomach. We grasp at everything but clasp nothing but wind" (231).

By the time of *Serious Reflections*, Crusoe's wanderlust is confined to armchair adventures. Defoe's final instalment in the Crusoe "trilogy" is a collection of digressive essays that takes the past adventures as a point of departure for both philosophical and satirical designs. Much attention has been given to "Robinson Crusoe's Preface," where Crusoe responds to allegations that the adventures are fictional by declaring that "the Story, though Allegorical, is also Historical" (51). The preface slips between Crusoe's voice and a voice that seems closer to the historical author. Is Defoe playing mind games as in *The Shortest Way*? Or is this an ironizing tactic? In his more recent study of the sequels, Starr concludes that "The Crusoe of this third volume is not a fully realized persona […] at certain moments it is so much Defoe's that it cannot be Crusoe's" (75). Rawson would object to

a distinct authorial persona since it shields the author from being rhetorically complicit in speaking—or, in Montaigne's case, "unspeaking"—the unspeakable (24; see also 31). Even as Gulliver descends into misanthropic madness, he is always Gulliver, but never not quite Swift. Still, *Serious Reflections* presents such a shift in tone that irony comes to seem the most convincing explanation.

Or does it? Nicholas Seager takes an unusual approach in applying *God, Gulliver, and Genocide* to the Crusoe sequels. Seager focuses on "the most perplexing and alarming section of the *Serious Reflections*" (197). Alone in his London apartment, Crusoe worries about "how small a Part of the World it is, where the Christian Religion has really prevail'd" (201-202). He dreams up a unified holy war against all pagan and Muslim nations, punctuated by a British and Dutch naval invasion of Japan.[1] "This is my *Cruisado*," he callously puns, "a War that would bring Eternal Honour to the Conquerors, and an Eternal Blessing to the People conquer'd" (218). For Seager, this is Defoe's version of not not meaning it. We cannot dismiss Crusoe's "*Cruisado*" given the genocidal rhetoric he espouses in *Farther Adventures*, just as we cannot dismiss the genocidal rhetoric Defoe alludes to elsewhere in his writings on trade and empire.[2] Yet Seager overlooks the way in which a Rawsonian reading helps us bridge the gap between the first novel and the sequels. *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections* stage troubled returns to problems raised but not resolved in the first adventure. Consider, for instance, how Crusoe envisions his holy war as "a bloodless Conquest," only to admit moments later that "the Business of Power"—which he clarifies to mean "military Power"—will be necessary in order to "reduce the Pagan World, and banish the Devil and Mahomet from the Face of the Earth" (208-209). Seager rightly observes that Crusoe is "fully prepared to countenance violence, even genocide, where indigenous peoples prove recalcitrant" (200). But as we have seen, Crusoe's inconsistent application of the language of mass killing is nothing new. While the scale changes from banishing the "Savages" from the island to banishing the "Savages" from "the Face of the Earth," the question of whether to kill, or not to kill, persists.

Crusoe no longer considers casuistry in *Farther Adventures* as his voice becomes less coherent and rife with contradictions. In Madagascar, he vehemently condemns his English shipmates for the burning and sacking of two villages in a calamitous revenge he labels "the *Massacre of Madagascar*" (140). The boatswain

1 Crusoe previously casts the Japanese as "a false, cruel, and treacherous People" (*Farther Adventures* 170-171).

2 See Nicholas Seager, "Crusoe's Crusade: Defoe, Genocide, and Imperialism," *Études Anglaises*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2019, 208-209; he singles out *The Commentator* for 17 June 1720, *A General History of Discoveries and Improvements* (1725-1726), and *A Plan of the English Commerce* (1728).

invites him to join in the killing to "root out the very Nation of them from the Earth" (136). As in *The Shortest Way*, "root out" and "Face of the Earth" are synonymous with the scriptural language of genocide. Their etymology is closely tied to the act of extirpation, meaning to remove or destroy land, trees, stock, and livestock. With this terminology a colonial metaphor also emerges, as Christopher Loar reveals in his analysis of the crew's destruction of Malagasy spaces: clearing out Indigenous land to create one's own plantation (*Political Magic* 121-125). Although Crusoe denounces this act of bloody vengeance, in *Serious Reflections* he uses similar expressions to justify Spanish conquistador genocide, cutting through the debate he had staged in the original novel (see below). This semantic instability is also apparent when Crusoe wavers after seeing the dead body of the crew member who inspires the Madagascar massacre, the perhaps ironically named Thomas Jeffreys, who is killed after raping a Malagasy young woman. Crusoe confesses "I was urg'd then myself, and at another Time should have been foreward enough" (137). However, he holds firm by citing Genesis 49:7, where Jacob rebukes the brothers Simeon and Levi who take disproportionate revenge for the rape of their sister Dinah by slaughtering the Sechemites.[1] Crusoe resists his crew's thirst for blood, or so it appears. For Crusoe's verdict that the perpetrators "ought to be every one of them put to the worst of Deaths" enacts his own version of Old Testament reciprocal justice (135). According to Montaigne's subversive logic, Crusoe's taste for torture makes him just as barbarous as his shipmates, if not worse. Moreover, the massacring of two villages for the killing of one man echoes Crusoe's call for divine retribution after Friday is killed by "old Friends, the same Sort of Savages" from the first adventure, off the coast of Brazil.[2] There Crusoe feels "justify'd before God and Man, [and] would have been very glad, if I could, to have overset every Canoe there, and drown'd every one of them" (121). Crusoe's relationship with the divine deteriorates in the sequels into a mission to "root out" all of God's enemies. He even verges on apocalyptic fanaticism when he warns his shipmates, as they set sail from Madagascar, that "God would blast the Voyage" (139).

Crusoe's contrarianism is most troubling when he journeys westward on a caravan through the Russian-occupied regions of Tartary. There he reverses course and encourages unjustifiable violence against Tartar villagers who worship the Chinese idol, Cham-Chi-Thaungu. Crusoe concedes "I was more mov'd at their

1 Cf. Genesis 49:7 ("Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel").

2 Crusoe tries to clarify that "the Savages who came to my Island, were not properly those which we call *Caribbees*, but Islanders, and other Barbarians of the same kind," but his distinction is unclear and seems to reverse the usual gentle Arawak/ "savage" Carib dichotomy (*Farther Adventures* 26).

Stupidity and brutish Worship of a Hobgoblin, than ever I was at any Thing in my Life" (*FA*, 192). His past fantasies of killing Caribs are displaced onto what Eun Kyung Min describes as "faceless Tartar hordes," but this time there is no case of conscience to deter his bloodlust (78). To incite his fellow caravan voyagers to violence, Crusoe relates "the Story of our Men at *Madagascar*" and reasons that "we ought to do [the same] to this Village" (194). The plan is heinous; nothing about Crusoe's invocation of Madagascar for what should be done to the Tartar villagers—the killing of "Man, Woman and Child, for their murdering one of our Men"— is consistent or justifiable (194). His allies are not convinced, so they settle instead for blowing up the idol. The twisted revenge Crusoe contemplates in the first adventure takes shape as he and his men mix "combustible Matter with Aqua-vitae [and] Gunpowder" (195). They capture three priests standing guard and, in a twisted form of dramatic irony, force them to watch a different kind of iconoclasm. Protestantism not only triumphs over pagan idolatry but also implicitly over Russian Orthodoxy. The destruction of Cham-Chi-Thaungu encapsulates the dizzying changes to Crusoe's violent energies. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile Crusoe's earlier admission that he is "sick of killing such poor Savage wretches" and "would even now suffer a great deal, rather than […] take away the life, even of that Person injuring me," with his plot to extirpate idolaters without a hint of remorse (158). The allusions to Crusoe's imagined violence from the first novel make his crimes in the second even more unsettling. The subtle parallels between parts one and two do not form a clear coherence; yet we cannot dismiss the possibility that Crusoe internalizes his island encounters as a war against "savagery," either.

Serious Reflections turns Crusoe's contradictions into a series of paradoxes. The volume's final essay, "*Of the Proportion between the Christian and Pagan World*," where Crusoe presents his blueprint to rid the world of pagan idolatry, embellishes enough of Crusoe's past reflections to raise questions as to whether this is Crusoe gone mad, a disjointed spoof, or Defoe projecting macabre fantasies of colonial violence through the voice of his colonial hero. Nevertheless, as Starr points out, "The opinions expressed, and the voice uttering them, seldom violate jarringly those we associate with Crusoe" (75). It all depends on how we identify the voice, yet Defoe withholds sufficient certainty to settle the matter. Crusoe's shifting stance on Spanish atrocities helps spell out this Rawsonian problem. During his casuistical debate in the first adventure, Crusoe invokes the Spanish Black Legend promoted by rival colonial powers to justify his trepidation. As he denounces the Spaniards for their "bloody and unnatural piece of Cruelty, unjustifiable either to God or Man," Crusoe reasons that although their Amerindigenous victims

"were Idolaters and Barbarians, and had several bloody and barbarous Rites in their Customs, such as sacrificing human Bodies to their Idols, were yet, as to the *Spaniards*, very innocent people" (145). Defoe seems to draw on Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación* as Crusoe articulates his decision to leave the cannibals alone for the time being. And while Defoe's library is known to contain extraneous items, Kathryn Rummell argues that the 1642 Lyon edition of Las Casas' *Histoires des Indes Occidentales* was originally his own (17, n. 9). *Farther Adventures*, by contrast, throws barbarity back on the English. Unlike the roguish mutineers, the Spanish colonists, "who [are] so universally Modest, Temperate, Virtuous, so very good Humour'd, and so Courteous," show dignity and restraint in refusing to take Carib women as "temporary" wives (58, 55). Dennis Todd makes the inversion clear, arguing that "it is the English who act out the role of cruel barbarians [that] English colonial ideology had assigned to the Spanish" (59). Add to this the English massacre in Madagascar, and the contradiction between parts one and two suggests that since barbarity is not exclusive to the Spanish, then "savagery" is not exclusive to racialized and/or Indigenous foes. Remarkably, Crusoe comes to a similar conclusion in *Serious Reflections*. His Montaigne-like meditation, which reminds us of Crusoe's defence of the Spanish, blurs distinctions between "civility" and "savagery": "as to the Difference between Eating and Killing those that offer to yield, it matters not much. And this I observed at the same Time, that in their other Conduct, those Savages were as human, as mild, and gentle, as most I have met with in the World, and as easily civiliz'd" (137).

How does Crusoe's ambivalence square with his later thoughts on conquistador genocide in *Serious Reflections* that seem mad by comparison? He begins by condemning the Spanish because they "rooted out the Idolatry by destroying the Idolaters, not by converting them" (206). Here Crusoe is being explicit about a distinction that *The Shortest Way* blurs. Defoe looks forward to Rawson's point that extermination rhetoric is often aimed at an abstraction: is the author attacking the faith or killing the people (see Rawson's comparison between Houyhnhnms and Nazis, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide* 256-258) who are practising it? But instead of suggesting a less bloody alternative, Crusoe does the opposite. He is convinced that "Heaven had determined such an Act of Vengeance should be executed, and of which the *Spaniards* were Instruments, to destroy those People, who were come up (by the Influence of the Devil, no Doubt) to such a dreadful height, in that abhorr'd Custom of human Sacrifices" (206). The debate descends into a maniacal fanaticism that is incongruous with Crusoe's past reflections. Suddenly it is the Christian God's divine prerogative to punish Amerindigenous peoples such as the Aztecs for

the devilish crime of human sacrifice. Violence that Crusoe previously considers "unjustifiable either to God or Man" he now endorses with the flippant remark "it seemed to be a Time to put a Stop to that Crime" (*Robinson Crusoe* 145; *Serious Reflections* 206). Better to put the "Savages" out of their misery than for them to "at last be extinct by their own Butcheries" (206). Is Defoe playing God? Or is he playing us? For Crusoe's flawed logic implies that the Spanish are much worse than their Amerindigenous victims. They are doing God's work "by destroying those Nations from the Face of the Earth," even though massacring innocent people is clearly more reprehensible than committing human sacrifice (206).[1] Crusoe pursues this paradox further with the help of Scripture. He claims that the conquest of Canaan from Joshua 1-12, where the Israelites spare nothing, "killing Man, Woman, and Child; nay, even destroying the very Cattle, and Trees, and Fruits of the Earth," is as cruel and inhumane "as ever the *Spaniards* were charg'd with in the Conquest of Mexico" (206-207). But because the Israelites were following orders from above, "therein *Joshua* was justify'd;" likewise, the Spanish conquest of the Americas, "however abhorr'd by us, was doubtless an Appointment of God" (207). Crusoe defends his proposed "lawful and just War" with a chilling equivocation that paints the conquistadors as divinely ordained hitmen executing God's mission (210). Crusoe's paradoxical conclusion—that the ends justify the means no matter the bloodshed—leaves the text uncomfortable and uncertain.

The onus is on the reader to determine whether we should take Crusoe's raving reflections seriously or whether the essay triggers the rhetorical equivalent of a kamikaze, which Rawson terms the comprehensiveness of incrimination, inculpating everyone in self-destructive fashion so that no respectable or humane position survives in the text. The tone abruptly swings to the opposite extreme when Crusoe puns on the fate of the Amerindigenous peoples who are supposedly under the sway of the devil and therefore must be eliminated:

> the poor Wretches the *Indians* in *America* […] when they were talked to of the Future State, the Resurrection of the Dead, Eternal Felicity in Heaven, and the like, enquir'd where the *Spaniards* went after Death, and if any of them went to Heaven? and being answered in the Affirmative, shook their Heads, and desired they might go to Hell then, for that they were afraid to think of being in

1 For Las Casas' thoughts on human sacrifice, see José Cardénas Bunsen, "Opinion, Idolatry, and Indigenous Consciousness: Bartolomé de las Casas' Approach to Human Sacrifice," *Casuistry and Early Modern Spanish Literature*, edited by Marlen Bidwell-Steiner and Michael Scham, Leiden: Brill, 2022, 156-175.

Heaven, if the *Spaniards* were there. (217)

Defoe's sardonic twist would make even his rival Swift proud. The joke is aimed not only at the Spanish, but also at the hypocrisy of missionaries whose efforts at conversion, doctrine of providence, "and the like," fall flat. The essay overturns the Christian cosmos with paradoxical inversion. For the Amerindigenous victims of conquistador genocide, Heaven is anywhere where the Spanish are not, even if that means spending the rest of eternity in Hell.[1] While the timing may seem odd and out of place, Defoe's sardonic sense of humour brings us back to Rawson's question of meaning it, not meaning it, and not not meaning it. As soon as we give up on *Serious Reflections* and convince ourselves that Crusoe's voice is a set of extreme projections, Defoe pulls the rug. No less perplexing than Gulliver's adventures, the relationship between the three Crusoe texts is tense, disorderly, and vexed. Defoe's series explores troubling questions and offers both violent ironies and violent realities in return, forever restaging its moral nightmares, never quite waking from them.

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1 Starr notes that Defoe uses a similar figure of speech in his *Reformation of Manners*, l. 348 in *Poetry*, 166, when he compares slavery to Spanish conquest: owing to the "more than Spanish cruelty of their masters," the enslaved people "fear no Hell, *but where such Christians go*" (*Serious Reflections* 217, n. 633).

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