Circling Defoe

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THE CIRCLE STRUCTURES *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Daniel Defoe's narrative of journeys through England, Wales, and Scotland, published in three volumes between 1724 and 1726. Defoe is, first of all, a tourist — that is, one who tours, one who makes, to use his term, a "circuit": "[I]n the course of this journey I shall have many occasions to call it a circuit, if not a circle" (1: 19). (Robinson Crusoe, of course, had used much the same figure in his desire to make a tour round *his* island.) Furthermore, Defoe prefers to enclose the area he works on; he defines and limits. A few terms from the vocabulary of basic geometry, then, will serve as a way of rounding up some of the dynamics of Defoe's touring. In short, I will circle him — use the circle as the unit of meaning for Defoe.

In the thirteen "Letters" that make up *A Tour*, almost all of Defoe's circuits describe routes that loop (if not circle) back to their starting points. Applying a somewhat arbitrary closure to the curved shapes of his trips yields the outline "map" of Great Britain as toured by Defoe (see page 70). But such a schema effaces the centrality of London to the structure of Defoe's text and to his State-of-the-Nation reading of Britain's economic and political status. It also omits the centrality of his own subjectivity. This dual-centrality, coupled with the distinct sense of remoteness (of various kinds) that Defoe notes the farther he goes from London, suggests an alternate schematic, one that better represents how Defoe's narrative of his tours *works* (see page 71).

ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature, 21:4, October 1990

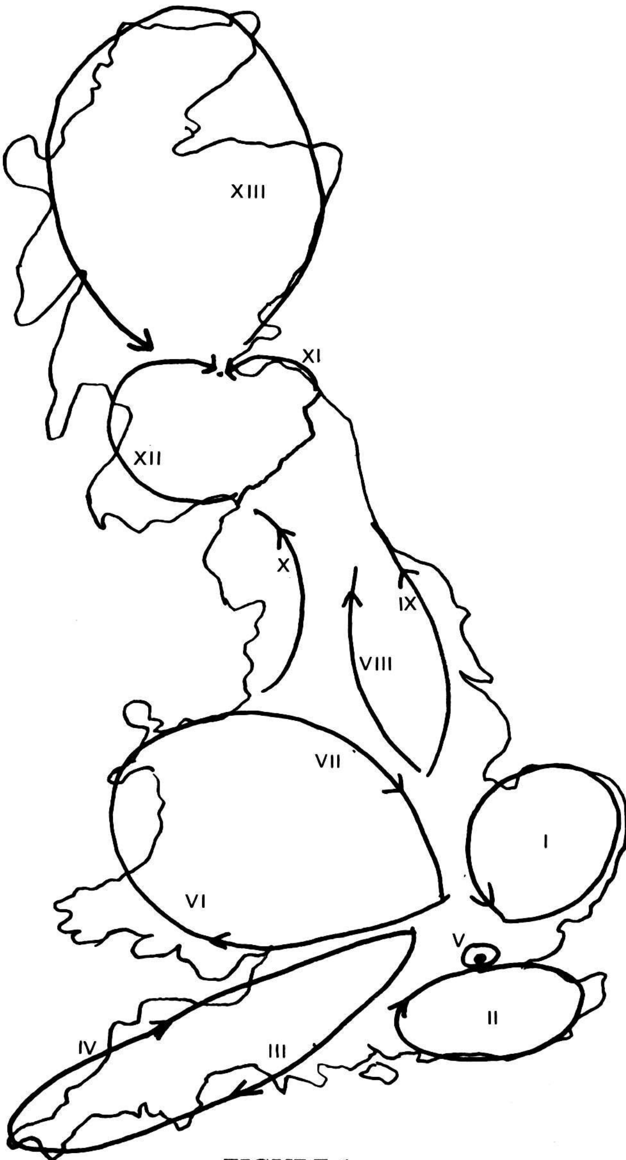

FIGURE 1

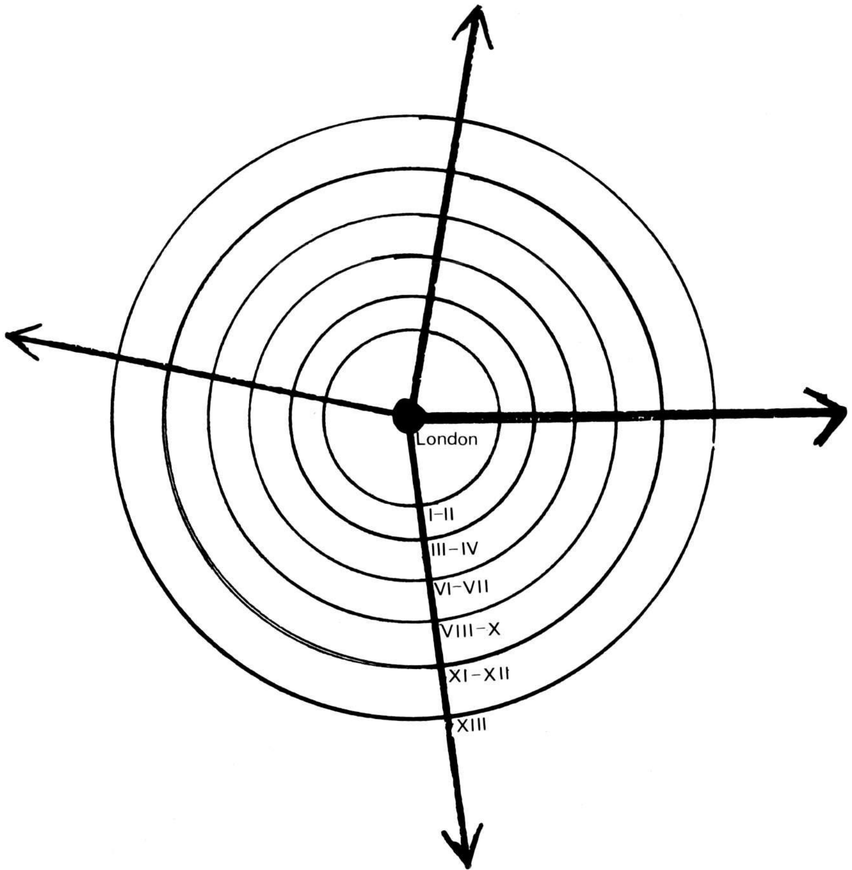

FIGURE 2

According to such a representation, the city of London and Defoe's "I" point from the centre. The thirteen circuits, grouped according to "distance" from London, are seen as six concentric circles. Defoe's ethnography, or the narrative of where he went and his interpretation of what he saw there, extends in rays across the circles from the centre. More specifically, the rays represent Defoe's interrelated areas of inquiry or categories of observations, of which I have selected four: the gentry and fine houses; the "wholesome" land; the impressive national institutions; and the wide range of raw materials so vital for trade and, thus, for the health of the nation. These rays, consisting of Defoe's positive remarks, together act as the "high road," the route of Defoe's nation-building ideology. Where the rays intersect the inner circles (the earlier journeys) relatively little remains un-intersected, which is to say that in the Home Counties not much is unfamiliar, uncivilized, barren, remote, or pagan. To put it more positively, Defoe's shaping implies his attitude: the "closer" to London the "better." Towards the outer circles, however, there are relatively large arcs uncrossed by the rays of Defoe's intelligence. These arcs are the literal and metaphoric barren ground of Defoe's figuring of Britain: more uncivilized, even pagan elements, including linguistic impurities; a breakdown of landscape; fewer people, which always means, for Defoe, less wealth for the nation; and general "decay." The remainder of my paper shall be an elaboration and contrast of two circles of this model, first, with a closer look at its centre, then, with a tracing of the "rays" and "arcs" — the inversely related pride and regret — with which Defoe sees his Britain as he moves out from London. I assume a continuum from the first circuits to the last in the patterns I note.

Defoe articulates one view into the centre of his *Tour* through his "Preface to the First Volume": "If this work is not both pleasant and profitable to the reader, the author most freely and openly declares the fault must be in his performance, and it cannot be any deficiency in the subject" (1: 15). We readers are subject to a performance, and even the conventional nature of Defoe's first words does not hide the fact that one person, our author, is the performer. Defoe makes a further gesture towards his own subjectivity, noting that "[h]e shall best pay the debt of a just and

native writer, who, in regard to the reader, should conceal nothing which ought to be known, and in regard to his country, expose nothing which ought to be conceal'd" (1: 16). In fact, Defoe resembles the ethnographer who "marks a boundary; his ethnography declares the limits of his and his readers' culture. It also attests to his — and his culture's — interpretive power" (Crapanzano 52). Insofar as Defoe's circles describe the boundaries of what he sees and where he goes, what is not circled by Defoe's tours is not comprehended, or, as Defoe might put it, is "not remarkable." Here it is worth noting the *OED* definition, now obsolete but current in Defoe's time, of "Tour": "the course or compass of anything; what it amounts to; range, scope." Indeed, we are subject to Defoe's word on what things "amount to." Defoe himself — idealogue, guide, panegyrist (despite his protestations to the contrary), proto-Tourism Minister — is the centre of the Britain he presents. He is, unavoidably, the centre of his own interpretations.

The subjectivity of Defoe corresponds to that of the Great City itself: "[a]bove all," Pat Rogers, his editor, points out, "Defoe proclaims the teeming identity of London" (1: 8), especially, but not only, the London that is the economic heart of the nation:

> N.B. I am the more particular in my remark on [London], because in the course of my travels the reader will meet with the like in almost every place of note through the whole island, where it will be seen how this whole kingdom, as well the people, as the land, and even the sea, in every part of it, are employ'd to furnish something, and I may add, the best of every thing, to supply the city of London with provisions. . . . (1: 25)

London, so conceived, marks the centre or metropole around which the hinterlands circle in their dependent orbits. Not surprisingly, Defoe's tour of London, a journey all to itself, occupies the fifth Letter, the centre of his ten English tours. He begins with a rather obsessive "LINE OF MEASUREMENT, DRAWN ABOUT ALL THE CONTINUED BUILDINGS OF THE CITY OF LONDON, AND PARTS ADJACENT, INCLUDING WESTMINSTER AND SOUTHWARK, ETC." (2: 70). There is the palpable sense that once London's circumference is measured, its contents are ready to be described in their considerable glory, with hardly a discouraging word. To re-word

a point made earlier: in this London circuit and throughout the *Tour*, "compass," not as measuring device but as unit of area, acts as one of Defoe's favourite metaphors. It suggests not only a desire to encompass but also a general orientation towards what can be and is encompassed. (Furthermore, as I shall discuss later, it suggests a corresponding aversion to open, unenclosed space.) In London, more explicitly than anywhere else in his narrative, Defoe plays the ring-master, the circler, the drawer of lines that both include and exclude.

Defoe's London line, drawn along the city's streets and buildings, "amounts to thirty six miles, two furlongs, thirty nine rods" (2: 75). Thus, "by London, as I shall discourse of it, [he] mean[s], all the buildings, places, hamlets, and villages contain'd in the line of circumvallation ... by which [he has] computed the length of its circumference" (2: 77). The buildings mark his edges, then, the frontiers of advancing civilization. Even marshland — elsewhere associated with unhealthy air and, therefore, with lower population (1: 22) — can be claimed by the power of London's spread. Furthermore, Well Close, which "was so remote from houses, that it used to be a very dangerous place to go after it was dark, and many people have been robbed and abused in passing it," is recuperated and renamed by the city's "prodigious enlargements" (2: 80-1). Defoe's "building," especially when "form'd from the open fields" (2: 82), conveys a sense of something made from nothing, of a city's "brick lines [creeping] relentlessly" (Gray 204) up and out from not only the Great Fire but also the darkness and emptiness of uninhabited space. "Building" becomes his ultimate metaphor: "the whole body of this vast building [is] to be considered as one city, London" (2: 90).

Having described "the figure and extent of the city and its outparts," Defoe proceeds: "I come now to speak of the inside, the buildings, the inhabitants, the commerce, and the manner of its government" (2: 84). Of that inside matter, again the buildings receive by far the bulk of his attention. Any notable structure may be "stupendous," "exquisite," and, like so much else in London, "the most magnificent thing of its kind in the world" (2: 84-90). By describing the hospitals and prisons, the markets and great estates, and the many "publick edifices," Defoe gives us London, *his*

London. Despite Defoe's stated intention, the "inhabitants" receive little remark beyond the fact that they are increasing. When Defoe notes that builders of St. Paul's Cathedral obtained leave "to pull down one whole row of houses on the north side of the body of the church" (2: 89), he says nothing of the human occupants no doubt displaced by such an activity. One must turn to other authors to learn that, "the life of the poor in eighteenth-century London transcended in sheer awfulness even the better-known horrors of the Victorian era" (Gray 228). Tens of thousands of Londoners were homeless at the time of Defoe's *Tour*, their lives brutalized by poverty and cauterized by gin, but Defoe mentions "the poor" only to note that they are "omitted," with "Dissenters" ("Protestant, Popish and Jewish") and "foreigners," from statistics on christenings and burials for the year 1723 (2: 133-34).

Defoe concludes his London tour with "the Account of Mortality" in order to celebrate the increase of London's population and the resulting prosperity. However, his figures obscure the fact that three of four children were dead before their fifth birthday (Gray 226). When Defoe writes from travel literature's conventions — by which the writer "relates to the fact [rather] than the reason of [an observable phenomenon], and is properly to describe the thing, not to shew why it is so" (2: 75) — novelty, not comprehensive coverage, is the objective. Still, for Defoe, London's "teeming identity" is made of brick; the heart of the nation is "building."

Imagining London and Defoe's "I" at the centre, then, I turn to the first of Defoe's circuits. I will combine his first two journeys since they are essentially the same "distance," in various senses, from London. Then I will move to the tenth journey in order to observe what "extremes" (a particularly loaded word for the moderate Defoe) he sees so far north-west of London.[1]

Defoe's first tour strolls, with just that tone of easy familiarity, around East Anglia and the Home Counties. There, Defoe in effect enjoys his own backyard, "the neighbourhood of the city of London" (1: 19). His "first step into the country" calls forth an array of superlatives in a single paragraph: "delightful spot of ground . . . pleasant by situation . . . compleatly agreeable by accident of fine buildings . . . beautiful river . . . best [air, prospect, conversation] . . ." (1: 109). Such is the integration, the near-

perfection, of life at the centre. "[S]everal things indeed recommend it":

1. Good houses, at very easie rents.
2. An airy, clean, and well govern'd town.
3. Very agreeable and improving company almost of every kind.
4. A wonderful plenty of all manner of provisions, whether flesh or fish, and very good of the kind.
5. Those provisions very cheap; so that a family may live cheaper here, than in any town in England of its bigness, within such a small distance from London.
6. Easie passage to London, either by land or water, the coach going through [to London] in a day. (1: 60)

Only so close to London, in Defoe's narrative, can the pleasures of life be listed so assuredly.

He notices the increase in the number of inhabitants, always a significant economic indicator for him: Yarmouth is "encreasing in wealth and trade, and consequently in people" (1: 79). Similarly, he looks for and notes the increase in buildings in certain towns, and, as we have seen, the "very good company" (*i.e.* "many of the gentry here") in a town such as Ipswich (1: 59). And his many references to the raw materials "sent up to London" serve as periodic centripetal nods in its direction. Oysters, hogs, corn, "300 droves" of turkeys "(for they drive them all in droves on foot)" (1: 72), lime, wood, fruit — even a partial catalogue of such items expresses a vigorous, fully-functioning Londocentric trade, just as Defoe would have it. Defoe's *Tour* is thus full value for its reputation as a significant treatise on pre-Industrial Revolution trade.

One after another, the great public institutions catch Defoe's focus: the Royal Hospital for Seamen, Tilbury Fort, the "public works" at Woolwich, and the customs house at Gravesend. These form the pillars of commercial-political-military England; they are remarkable to Defoe for that reason. Especially praiseworthy is the ship-building enterprise at the Navy Arsenal in Rochester:

> The building-yards, docks, timber-yard, deal-yard, mast-yard, gun-yard, rope-walks; and all the other yards and places, set apart for the works belonging to the navy, are like a well ordered city;

> and tho' you see the whole place as it were in the utmost hurry, yet you see no confusion, every man knows his own business; the master builders appoint the working, or converting, as they call it, of every piece of timber; and give to the other head workmen, or foremen their moulds for the squaring and cutting out of every piece, and placing it in its proper byrth (so they call it) in the ship that is in building, and every hand is busy in pursuing those directions, and so in all the other works. (1: 123)

With the Dutch threat frequently, if casually, acknowledged throughout the *Tour*, Defoe's conclusion that "the dexterity of the English sailors in those things is not to be match'd by the world" (1: 123) serves as observation with intent, description with nationalistic purpose.

The first gap in Defoe's observations — the first exposed arc, the first imperfection — has to do with "a strange decay of sex" and its correspondence with the landscape of the Essex marshes. The Essex men, "being bred in the marshes themselves, and season'd to the place, did pretty well with it; but . . . they always went up into the hilly country . . . for a wife" (26). The reason that they took as many as "fourteen or fifteen wives; nay, and some more" (consecutively) was that

> when they took the young lasses out of the wholesome and fresh air, they were healthy, fresh and clear, and well; but when they came out of their native air into the marshes among the fogs and damps, there they presently chang'd their complexion, got an ague or two, and seldom held it above half a year. (1: 26-7)

The pathogenic qualities of some of the Essex landscape can be proven by the fact that Defoe's "London men of pleasure," who are healthy for living in London, one presumes, and who are "such lovers of the sport [of shooting], and go so far for it, often return with an Essex ague on their backs, which they find a heavier load than the fowls they have shot" (1: 25). What Defoe observes about the effects of landscape on cattle — "[t]hese Scots runts . . . coming out of the cold and barren mountains of the Highlands in Scotland, feed so eagerly on the rich pasture in these marshes [Norfolk marshes, not the foul Essex marshes], that they thrive" (1: 79) — he applies to people as well:

> [A]s soon as we come down Boxley Hill from Rochester, and descend from the poor chalky downs, and deep foggy marshes, to

> the wholesome rich soil, the well wooded, and well water'd plain . . . , we find the country every where spangl'd with populous villages, and delicious seats of nobility and gentry; . . . the country this way, I say, is full of gentlemens houses. (1: 130)

The quality of the land itself again indicates the quality of the people who live upon it, Defoe seems to think.

Defoe usually associates this "arc" of "decay" with a falling off of trade: "The loss or decay of this [coal] trade, accounts for the present pretended decay of the town of Ipswich" (1: 54). "Publick things" — churches — decay in Dunwich, a town "manifestly decayed by the invasion of the water" (1: 68). Water likewise figures in the decay of Queenborough, "a town memorable for nothing . . . a dishonour to our country . . . a miserable, dirty, decay'd, poor, pitiful, fishing town" (1: 126). It is a point I will come back to: a town at the edge (of water, in this case) is *more likely* to decay, Defoe implies. Be that as it may, Defoe is quite realistic about the most serious, general decay — that of trade — which is responsible for the "real decay of [a] town" like Southampton: "London has eaten it up" (1: 159).

With his comments, noted above, on Essex marriages, Defoe initiates a remark, which persists in the *Tour*, about the crudity and ignorance of the common folk, noting the confusion of wood with iron among the Essex folk (1: 49), and the "terrible character" of the Bury "whores" (1: 65). Horn-Fair at Charleton occasions a comment on "the yearly collected rabble of mad-people" (1: 112), and the steersman at East-Kent is remarkable for his "desperate obstinacy and rudeness" (1: 116). At Darking (today's Dorking), the "indecent mirth" among the "country people" is duly noted. Defoe, however, does not mind appropriating a story from one of these country people to enhance the entertainment value of his narrative:

> They have a story in [Chichester], that when ever a bishop of that diocess is to dye, a heron comes and sits upon the pinnacle of the spire of the cathedral: This accordingly happen'd, about ——— when Dr ——— Williams was bishop: A butcher standing at his shop-door, in the South-Street, saw it, and ran in for his gun, and being a good marks-man shot the heron, and kill'd it, at which his mother was very angry with him, and said he had kill'd the

> bishop, and the next day news came to the town that Dr Williams, the last bishop was dead. (1: 151-52)

In dissociating himself from such a story, despite using it, Defoe often notes that the story cannot be "affirm'd." To the crudity and ignorance of the local people he thereby adds the unreliability of their story-telling.

The people of Canterbury rate a note of scorn simply for their proximity to the shrine of Thomas Becket. But, "[t]he city will scarce bear being called populous" anyway (1: 134); again, I infer here an ambiguity of cause and effect on Defoe's part. Population, landscape, air and soil quality, situation and company, trade and customs tend, in his eyes, to rise or decay together. Thus, the "general ruin" of Canterbury or of the "very few families of note" (1: 130) in Maidstone must, according to Defoe, correspond to a "marshy, and unhealthy, by its situation among the water" feature of demography and/or geography.

Naturally, therefore, as Defoe approaches the "western limit" of his early circuit, he alludes to a place "so unpassable a wild, or overgrown waste" that in ancient times only Britons, Saxons, and Danes would live there. Certainly no one lives there now, apparently: "I saw neither town or village, . . . much less any gentlemen's seats" (1: 172). And the sea — its limitlessness, its "continual encroachments" (1: 146) — is noted for its effects on Bredhemston, "a poor fishing town," which must "beg money all over England" (1: 146). Defoe implies that the sea encroaches *because* the town is poor; nothing else could be expected from a town so situated.

Already, just a county or two away from the centre, pockets of decay, incivility, and natural disintegration have appeared. As Defoe returns on the home leg from Richmond to London, however, "the river sides are full of villages, and those villages of beautiful buildings, charming gardens, and rich habitations of gentlemen of quality, that nothing in the world can imitate" (1: 182). Given as much, what must the *North* of England be like?

"I entered Lancashire at the remotest western point of that county," writes Defoe near the start of his tenth and final English Letter (3: 133). He immediately reinforces the equation of landscape to population: "[t]his narrow slip of land, rich, fertile and

full of inhabitants . . ." (3: 133). Then he meets just the type of person he might have expected so far north. "[S]ome honest Lancashire clown" carries him from ferry to shore: "I was [so] shaken by him that I had the luck to be carry'd by more than I car'd for, and much worse than a hard trotting horse would have shaken me" (3: 133). The first town, Liverpool, "still visibly encreases both in wealth, people, business and buildings" (3: 134), and "has now an opulent, flourishing and encreasing trade" (3: 135), but the sea coast, which "affords little remarkable on the west side of this port" (3: 137), turns him back. Further images, of invaders from the North, rebels, walls and gates, and "sweets of plunder," mark his position on the outer frontier.

The identity of the land out there appears uncertain. Defoe passes "a great bog or waste" (3: 130) on the road to Manchester. It is "indeed frightful to think of, for it will bear neither horse or man. . . . What nature meant by such useless production, 'tis hard to imagine; but the land is entirely waste, except . . . for the poor cottagers fuel" (3: 138-39). Again, only "poor cottagers" would bother with such a place; they are poor cottagers *because* they bother with such a place. Between "remarkable" points on the circle, then, lies a waste-land. The distance along the circle from ray to ray, at this outer limit of Defoe's touring, is analogous to the distance from one town to the other, often with "nothing worth noting" in between. The pattern now is not pockets of decay in a field of civilization; it is the reverse.

Once over the bog, and its distasteful "antient fir trees," Defoe arrives back on the solid ground of trade, the "Manchester trade we all know" (3: 140). He states the familiar and obvious: "as the manufacture is encreased, the people must be encreased of course" (3: 140). He does not fail to give his account of the corresponding increase in buildings, houses, streets, churches — the trappings (even "a fine new square") of a civilized centre.

"But now I must look northward," and a note of doom sounds through Defoe's words: "This great country, as we advance, grows narrow, and not only so, but mountainous, and not so full of towns or inhabitants. . . . Preston and Lancaster are the only towns of note remaining" (3: 147). His words betray a fear, a dismissal, as if the best were behind him. The "country people," moreover,

exacerbate his relative bleakness at this point in his travels: they "enlarge upon . . . things rather than lessen them," and from these people Defoe hears nothing he can "give any credit to" (3: 146). His praise of Preston requires qualifications:

> . . . fine town, and tolerably full of people, but not like Liverpool or Manchester; besides, we come now beyond the trading part of the country. . . . The people are gay here, though not perhaps the richer for it. . . . Here is a great deal of good company, but not so much as was before . . .

and so on (3: 147). Lancaster, in a "part of the country [that] seemed very strange to us," has "little to recommend it but a decayed castle, and a more decayed port" (3: 147); Defoe finds himself "lock'd in between the hills on one side . . . and the sea on the other, and the sea itself seemed desolate and wild." Later, mountains, so often demons to the English traveller, terrorize his very thoughts: "Indeed, they were, in my thoughts, monstrous high," Defoe admits. He adds:

> [T]hey had a kind of unhospitable terror in them. Here were no rich pleasant valleys between them, as among the Alps; no lead mines and veins of rich oar, as in the Peak; no coal pits, as in the hills about Hallifax, much less gold, as in the Andes, but all barren and wild, of no use or advantage either to man or beast. (3: 148)

No picturesque traveller, Defoe cannot even find economic value in these mountains. This is barren ground indeed.

Defoe next enters Westmoreland, "a country eminent only for being the wildest, most barren and frightful of any I have passed over in England, or *even in Wales it self*" (3: 148; my emphasis). He goes on to make explicit his favoured point of view: "But 'tis no advantage to represent horror, as the character of a country, in the middle of all the frightful appearances [mountains, sea] to the right and left; yet here are some very pleasant . . . manufacturing towns, and consequently populous" (3: 149).

Having descended "the frightful mountains," Defoe happily finds the "pleasant, rich, fruitful, and, compared to the other part, populous" flat country beyond (3: 150). He cannot find his "vitals," his raw materials destined for London, but he does note "some towns of good trade" (3: 151). And his unease in the

mountains does not in this instance prevent him from speculating on "the inexhaustible mines of copper" therein. It is typical of such a rough place, Defoe might say, that the greatest wealth "lies so deep, and is so hard to come at" (3: 150).

By the time he crosses the Derwent, not far below the Scottish border, his narrative has lost both the exuberance of tone with which it celebrated the wealth of the Home Counties, and the atmosphere of horror, which it conveyed north from Liverpool. "Here also the great Roman Highway," he writes, "has its end, this being the utmost station of the Roman soldiers on this side" (3: 151). Defoe has periodically notated the signs of civilization, Roman style. To him they still correspond, in fact, to contemporary civilization, ancient Rome being the only match for his present-day London. In Cumberland, then, the road has ended, and his narrative has atrophied to the bare bones of a guide book, a scant collection of curiosities, inscriptions, statistics on plague, and antiquities.

There remains one major marker of degeneration or decay which Defoe notes as he journeys through his circuits: the decay of language. Defoe first separates himself, if mildly, from linguistic coarseness during his Sussex circuit: "It was a fire-ball, if we take it from the inhabitants, or, to speak in the language of nature, the lightning . . ." (1: 151). Another observation on language becomes a vehicle for his analysis of class:

> [S]lander is a meanness below persons of honour and quality, and to do injustice to the ladies, especially, is a degree below those who have any share of breeding and sense: On this account you may observe, 'tis more practis'd among the citizens than among the gentry, and in country towns and villages, more than in the city, and so on, till you come to the meer *canail* [sic], the common mobb of the street, and there, no reputation, no character can shine without having dirt thrown upon it every day. (1: 145)

This is "a digression," as Defoe says, but one that emphasizes the impurities of life beyond the city. In Somerset, another indignant digression is in order:

> It cannot pass my observation here, that when we are come this length from London, the dialect of the English tongue, or the country way of expressing themselves is not easily understood, it is

> so strangely altered; it is true, that it is so in many parts of England besides, but in none in so gross a degree as in this part; This way of boorish country speech, as in Ireland, it is call'd the brogue upon the tongue; so here 'tis call'd *jouring* and 'tis certain, that tho' the tongue be all meer natural English, yet those that are but a little acquainted with them, cannot understand one half of what they say. (3: 236)

A speaker of such a dialect is dismissed as a "dexterous dunce" (3: 237). Similarly, in Northumberland, "the natives of this country . . . are distinguished by a shibboleth upon their tongues, namely, a difficulty in pronouncing the letter *r*, which they cannot deliver from their tongues without a hollow jarring in the throat" (3: 130). The northern Scottish, it seems, have gone so far wrong, linguistically, that they've come around to correct speech once again:

> [Cromwell's soldiers] left them the English accent upon their tongues, and they preserve it also to this day; for they speak perfect English, even much better than in the most southerly provinces of Scotland; nay, some will say that they speak it as well as at London; though I do not grant that neither. (3: 291)

In language, as in everything else cultural and economic, London defines the centre.

My circling of Defoe acknowledges the "centre" that is found in one form or another in all travel literature: the home to which John Evelyn returns at the end of a Grand Tour, the armchair from which Sir John Mandeville's imagination is cast, the would-be centre of the universe for Hakluyt's mariners. The England of Hakluyt's *Voyages*, in fact, is to the rest of the world what Defoe's London is to England: the authority, the point, the assumed and assured core.

NOTE

[1] My discussion excludes Scotland for reasons stated by Pat Rogers: "Defoe knew only Edinburgh at all well, and his sojourn there lay a number of years back; he probably never visited most of the Highlands at all. It is also the case that Scotland remained socially and economically a separate country, for practical purposes, long after the enforced political union of 1707. Most of Defoe's generalizations on matters such as trade or transport relate specifically to conditions south of the border, where the only regions he knew well at first hand were located" (1: 4).

Even a half-century later, Scotland was foreign ground to a Londoner:

Samuel Johnson. His *Journey* (1775) begins in Edinburgh, "a city too well known to admit description" (3), but already, in the third paragraph of his narrative, he visits an island that is "nothing more than a rock covered with a thin layer of earth, now wholly bare of grass, and very fertile of thistles. . . . It seems never to have afforded to man or beast a permanent habitation" (4). What a different appearance "this little island" would have made, Johnson muses, "if it had been placed at the same distance from London, with the same facility of approach; with what emulation of price a few rocky acres would have been purchased, and with what expensive industry they would have been cultivated and adorned" (4). His regret at Scotland's various disadvantages never overmatches his "dignity of writing," however, and, in the end, Johnson expresses this hope for Scotland: "after having seen the deaf taught arithmetick, who would be afraid to cultivate the *Hebrides*?" (148).

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