

Configurations of Friday's Body in the 1750s Robinsonade

Jakub Lipski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz)

Abstract

The English Robinsonade as a form thrived in the 1750s, but in a variant that revealed affinities not only with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* but also Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and the imaginary voyage more broadly. A central position in this micro-tradition was occupied by Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1751), the popularity of which resulted in several fictions written in its wake, including Ralph Morris's *John Daniel* (1751), *William Bingfield* by an anonymous author (1753), and Adolphus Bannac's *Crusoe Richard Davis* (1756). These narratives explored both the Robinsonade conventions and aspects of the poetics of wonder to offer a variety of 'Friday' configurations, from hybrid animals to winged or feathered women. This article reads the aesthetic and ideological meanings behind these 'strange surprising' character constructs.

Keywords: the Robinsonade; the Imaginary voyage; castaways; Fridays; hybridity; the Body

The 1750s, often dismissed in eighteenth-century criticism of the past but now the focus of increased scholarly attention, was a decade characterised by 'improbable trash', as Simon Dickie has it (2016: 252).¹ This period was traditionally evaluated as a poor-quality interlude between the key works of the 1740s (by Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett) and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* from 1759–67, but this critical tendency has been redressed, and the decade's generically, thematically, and stylistically versatile prose fiction has been appreciated as a significant phase in the development of the modern novel, as the extensive coverage of this fiction in the major histories of the eighteenth-

¹ This article uses some of the material included in my other essays on *Peter Wilkins* (see Lipski 2022; 2023; 2024: 48–67).

century novel recently published testifies (see Garside and O'Brien 2015; Keymer 2018; Downie 2016). Attention has been paid to several so-called 'minor' traditions or subgenres, including pornography, it-narratives, ramble fiction, or oriental tales, and to the work of women writers, including Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, and Sarah Scott. Importantly for my aims here, the 1750s have also been recognised as a period of excessively self-conscious textual creativity and formal experimentation, as can be seen in imitations of Fielding's metafiction, proto-Sternean experimentation (Keymer 2002) and a sustained attention to the power of the medium (Lupton 2011).

The 1750s Robinsonade

One of the most popular narrative forms of the decade was the imaginary voyage, telling stories of travellers to such diverse places as the moon and the centre of the earth, and coming into contact with a variety of fantastic beings. In his classic *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction*, Philip Babcock Gove provides a comprehensive checklist that traces the development of the genre. It lists thirteen English-language imaginary voyages published in the 1750s, out of the 67 in total that appeared between 1700 and 1800 (1975: 316–350). Gove's list, the contemporary reviews he includes and comments upon, as well as his own argument help us to recognise the central role in this tradition of Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, a novel first published in December 1750.

In terms of genre, *Peter Wilkins* oscillates between two major imitative traditions in the eighteenth century: the Robinsonade and the Gulliveriad. Paul Dottin (1924) suggested the term 'robinsonade gullivérienne' in order to address the generic peculiarity of such examples. While Artur Blaim claims that this label refers to 'a nonexistent development in the history of the genre [i.e. the Robinsonade]' (2016: 42), given its incompatibility with Gulliverian satire, Martin Green points out that a number of the period's castaway narratives tinged with fantasy 'have more in common with Swift [...] than with Defoe' (1990: 26). Regardless of the labelling, the castaway narratives of the 1750s testify to the decade's meta-textual experimentations, and in this context it is perhaps more accurate to consider the Robinsonade, or the Gulliveriad for that matter, as modes rather than genres. As Gove's list shows, to readers in the 1750s, *Peter Wilkins* was the model for Ralph Morris's *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* (1751) and *The Travels and*

Adventures of William Bingfield (1753), which used to be attributed to Paltock himself, but also for *A Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth* (anonymous, 1755) and *The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Crusoe Richard Davis* (allegedly by Adolphus Bannac, 1756), despite this last novel's nominal relationship with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. This *Wilkins*-based micro-tradition defines the panorama of the 1750s Robinsonade, and its indebtedness to the fantastic as well as its meta-textual characteristics resulted in highly creative, if surprising, configurations of Fridays and their bodies. This corpus also foregrounds a central aspect of the Robinsonade phenomenon from a historical perspective: the generative potential of imitations themselves, that is, their potential to supersede the primary text in becoming a model for subsequent adaptations. The novels listed above, with the exception of *A Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth*, which does not feature a Robinsonade section, will serve as my material in what follows.

The Friday figure

Even without adopting a strict view on genre and the differences between such forms as the Robinsonade, the Gulliveriad, and, more broadly, the castaway narrative and the imaginary voyage, the very idea of surveying configurations of the Friday figure in this decade requires some basic generic differentiation: not so much to distinguish Robinsonades from the other forms, but to distinguish the Friday figures from a wide array of 'others' with whom the travelling protagonists of these texts are confronted. In principle, the differences between the forms mentioned could be delineated with reference to two key levels of divergence: the reliance on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* versus the reliance on Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and the realist versus the fantastic. But the actual textual reality of these fictions is much more complex. The Robinsonades written in the wake of *Peter Wilkins* display formal and thematic indebtedness to both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*, albeit deprived of the satirical element, as well as oscillating between the realist and the fantastic modes, at times interchangeably, at other points more or less simultaneously. Indeed, as Jason H. Pearl argues, the major contribution of *Peter Wilkins*, and by extension the novels written in its wake, is how these texts complicate the realist/non-realist binary (2017: 542–543). Generically hybrid narratives, these novels are not structurally consistent, and the Robinsonade mode can be switched on and off to give

way to narrative elements not typically associated with *Robinson Crusoe* and its literary progeny. That said, it is worth bearing in mind that the narrative coherence of the Robinsonade—a story of shipwreck, survival, civilisational progress, encounter with others, and rescue—is a later invention promoted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famous though reductive reading of *Crusoe*, which ignored the novel’s complexity and explained away its alleged redundancies as poor writing.²

When it comes to Fridays, just as not every encounter with others in the *Crusoe* trilogy—from Xury at the beginning of Volume I to Russian dissidents at the conclusion of Volume II—is based on the Robinson-Friday dynamic, so are the encounters of the 1750s castaways diversified. In order to acknowledge this diversity, but at the same time to attempt to analyse the configurations of *Fridays*, not simply ‘others’, I would like to use a working definition of the Friday figure that is based on Carl Fisher’s classic, both comprehensive and accurate, definition of the Robinsonade as any narrative that ‘repeats the themes of *Robinson Crusoe*’ while rewriting ‘specific physical aspects of Crusoe’s existence’ (2005: 130). Accordingly, I understand the Friday figure as the ‘other’ character in the Robinsonade that repeats specific aspects of Defoe’s Friday and the dynamic of the Crusoe-Friday relationship. The Friday figure, then, is a character encountered by the castaway during some kind of isolation who adopts a subservient position, at least to some extent, assists the castaway in their survival and/or civilisational ventures, and often undergoes a change (cultural and religious). It must be emphasised that these prerequisites may be met with varying degrees of accuracy or transformed for various reasons; indeed, the ‘configurations’ of Friday may also critically refer to these aspects in an attempt to mark a narrative and ideological distance from the prototype.

Fridays and their bodies in Robert Paltock’s Peter Wilkins

A peculiarity of the *Peter Wilkins* material of the 1750s is that one of the ways in which its metafictional identity reveals itself is through a poetics of repetition, whereby the Robinsonade mode can be switched on more

² In *Emile* (2010: 332), Rousseau writes: ‘This novel, disencumbered of all its rigmarole, beginning with Robinson’s shipwreck near his Island and ending with the arrival of the ship which comes to take him from it, will be both Emile’s entertainment and instruction throughout the period which is dealt with here’.

than once and thus offer various castaway scenarios within one novel, and, consequently, various configurations of Fridays. The example is set in Paltock's model text, which offers three Robinsonade settings responding to different aspects of Defoe's *Crusoe*: the first is a drifting boat in the company of fellow castaways, which problematises issues of necessitated cannibalism; the second is the African wilderness, which stages the protagonist's captivity and escape, as well as his friendship with Glanlepze, offering a corrective to Crusoe's harsh treatment of Xury; the third is the twilight island of Graundevolet, where Wilkins is confronted with the novel's most memorable Friday figure—the winged woman Youwarkee. The relationships established between the protagonist and the others with whom he is confronted against the background of these varying settings underline three aspects of the original Crusoe-Friday dynamic: the issues of cannibalism, slavery, and bodily difference, and Paltock either distances his narrative from Defoe's model or elaborates on the latter's counter-imperial undertones.

First, he fleshes out Crusoe's thoughtful remarks on cannibalism with tangible details of Westerners being reduced to man-eaters in adverse circumstances. In both *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720) Defoe complemented Crusoe's internal monologue on cannibalism from the first part of the trilogy with hints that it is possible for anyone to be reduced to a cannibal state. In *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe saves a 'young Woman' who recounts, among other misfortunes, the hunger she experienced when on board the ship: 'had my Mistress been dead, as much as I lov'd her, I am certain, I should have eaten a Piece of her Flesh' (2017a: 117). Defoe elaborates on the problem in *Serious Reflections*:

What shall we say to five Men in a Boat at Sea, without Provision, calling a Council together, and resolving to kill one of themselves for the others to feed on, and eat him? With what Face could the four look up, and crave a Blessing on that Meat? With what Heart give Thanks after it? And yet this has been done by honest Men [...]. (2017b: 80)

In *Peter Wilkins* this theorising is memorably concretised in the first Robinsonade narrative, when a group of survivors, including Wilkins, are stranded on a drifting boat. It takes two weeks for them to turn to cannibalism:

14 *Jakub Lipski*

On the fifteenth day in the morning, our Carpenter, weak as he was, started up, and as the sixth Man was just dead, cut his Throat, and, whilst warm, would let out what Blood would flow; then, pulling off his old Jacket, invited us to Dinner, and cutting a large Slice off the Corpse, devoured it with as much seeming Relish, as if it had been Ox Beef. His Example prevailed with the rest of us, one after another, to taste and eat [...] It has surprised me many Times since, to think how we could make so light a Thing of eating our Fellow Creature just dead before our Eyes [...]. (Paltock 1973: 41)

While no typical Friday figure appears in this narrative, the whole section features the presence of a shadowy other in each of the representatives of the West. It thus reworks a Robinsonade pattern of reversal, whereby the castaways themselves become the Friday figures, conventionally associated with cannibalism. But the above scene, apart from its discursive function, foregrounds the bodily: the implied Friday figure is both a man-eater and a consumed body. Man-eating, prompted by extreme circumstances, is metonymic of the castaway's devolution, a process which Robinsonades foreground, either implicitly or explicitly, as the feared alternative to the story of survival and civilisational development. The consumed body, in turn, becomes a broader metaphoric concept warning against the dangers of isolation and exposure to otherness; it captures the castaway's fear of being consumed by the island. In this way, the boat episode not only reworks, or even reverses, the Crusoe-Friday dynamic, it also addresses the centrality of the body within this dynamic.³

If the first conceptualisation of Friday in *Peter Wilkins* is an elaboration on what is only a shadowy presence in *Robinson Crusoe*, the second writes against the model, at least to some extent. The narrative of captivity and escape that makes up the African episode in the novel would suggest that Glanlepze should rather be seen as a corrective to Crusoe's treatment of Xury, but the bodily prowess and ingenuity that Paltock emphasises in the construction of Glanlepze correspond to Friday's qualities, only here they become indispensable for the castaway's survival rather than, as in the case of Defoe's Friday, a source of amusement (bear

³ The theme of the castaway's cannibalism reappeared in later Robinsonades, involving grotesque transformations of the body. For example, *William Bingfield* features a preposterously serious discussion about 'pickling' fellow crew members (*William Bingfield* 1753: vol. 2, 180), while in a later French narrative, *The Shipwreck and Adventures of Mr. Pierre Viaud* from 1768, the castaway at one point devours the Friday figure and prepares smoked chops as provisions.

fighting) and wonder (questions about God). Paltock does not provide a character sketch comparable to Defoe's memorable portrait of Friday, but constructs his Friday figure indirectly, through actions. Glanlepze ensures a safe passage through the wilderness, from captivity to his home village, displaying outstanding strength, decisiveness, and inventiveness. The castaway is reduced to the role of a sidekick, not only depending on the other, but also admiring him. Glanlepze plunders an enemy's village cottage on their way, manages to gag a crocodile with a piece of wood, frightens a lioness away, and helps Peter cross a river by constructing a buoy out of reeds. Self-reflectively, in a manner reminiscent of Crusoe, Glanlepze teaches Peter about problem-solving skills:

[T]here is nothing but a Man may compass by Resolution, if he takes both Ends of a Thing in his View at once, and fairly deliberates on both Sides, what may be given and taken from End to End. What you have seen me perform, is only from a thorough Notion I have of this Beast [i.e. the lioness], and of myself, how far each of us hath Power to act and counter-act upon the other, and duly applying the Means. (Paltock 1973: 50)

The discursive distance that Glanlepze adopts may surprise, as does indeed the very possibility of the two communicating with each other in such abstract terms. In fact, the episode reworks analogous narratives in imaginary voyages, where travelling Westerners are confronted with representatives of imagined societies, who surprise the incomers with their rationality and thoughtful ordering of their lives. In line with its hybrid generic constitution, reconciling the Robinsonade with the Gulliveriad, and the realist with the fantastic, *Peter Wilkins's* configuration of the second Friday figure adds to the poetics of reversal that was signalled in the boat cannibalism episode, but in this case, apart from the castaway becoming a sidekick, we are presented with a Friday who manifests both physical and intellectual superiority, very much in line with the superior others familiar from the imaginary voyages tradition, such as Swift's Houyhnhnms.

All these ideas and concerns come to the fore in the most extensive Robinsonade section: Peter's life on Groundevolet, and his confrontation and subsequent marriage with the novel's third Friday, Youwarkee, a winged hybrid. Like Glanlepze, Youwarkee is indispensable to Wilkins's survival. He does rescue her when she crashes into the island, much as Crusoe saves Friday, but afterwards it is her skills and her mobility in the air and on water (in a boat formed by her wings) that ensure they obtain

the necessary resources, including items retrieved from the shipwreck. Above all, however, through staging Youwarkee in his narrative, Paltock compensates for Crusoe's asexuality and ponders the question of interracial marriage and hybridisation. Consequently, this Friday's body comes to the fore as a source of curiosity, an object of desire, and an incentive to speculate about the effects of miscegenation, in that order. First, we are presented with a highly meticulous description of the machinery, called the graundee; it takes almost three pages, but even an excerpt will suffice as a specimen of the kind of language Paltock uses for the verisimilitude effect:

She first threw up two long Branches or Ribbs of the Whalebone [...] which were jointed behind to the upper Bone of the Spine, and which, when not extended, lye bent over the Shoulders, on each side of the Neck forwards, from whence, by nearer and nearer Approaches, they just meet at the lower Rim of the Belly, in a sort of Point; but when Extended, they stand their whole Length above the Shoulders, not perpendicularly, but spreading outwards, with a Webb of the softest and most plyable and springy Membrane, that can be imagined, in the Interspace between them, reaching from their Root or Joint on the Back, up above the hinder part of the Head, and near half way their own length; but, when closed, the Membrane falls down in the Middle, upon the Neck, like an Handkerchief. (Paltock 1973: 138–139)

The Defoevian idiom of the minutiae is adopted here as a way to reconcile realist aspirations with a poetics of curiosity that was typical of imaginary voyages. The sketch was accompanied by a set of illustrations by Louis-Philippe Boitard (fl. 1733–1767), which were textualised through direct references in the novel (Fig. 1).

The illustrations, alluding to the classical iconography of bodily beauty, complement the description by concretising what is only implied in the above passage: the nakedness exposed by the machinery 'spreading outwards'. When Paltock's Wilkins himself comes to comment on it, as he first makes love to Youwarkee, the language of the minutiae gives way to the sensuous, which partly explains why the novel was praised by the Romantics (see Crook 1992: 86–98): '[T]he softest Skin and most delightful Body, free from all Impediment, presented itself to my Wishes, and gave up itself to my Embraces [...]' (Paltock 1973: 118). The syntax here draws attention: the body is both objectified and endowed with an agency, and is somehow separate from Youwarkee as a character. A body presents itself to the castaway's wishes, not Youwarkee as a human-like being. This is a hint that in reforming Defoe's imperial take on the Crusoe-

Friday dynamic, Paltock does not entirely abandon the colonial language: the interracial family—however accepting of otherness Wilkins appears to be and however reliant on the other's skills he is—nevertheless becomes a space of conquest, which in the later part of the novel translates into Wilkins's rise in and mastery over the land of his wife's countrymen. Wilkins may not be a name-giver, he learns the others' language, appreciates their culture, and does not limit their freedoms, but at the same time, the interracial marriage puts the spouses in their conventional gender roles and becomes a colonial allegory.



Figure 1. Louis-Philippe Boitard, A Gawrey Extended for Flight, an illustration to Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1751). The Public Domain Review.

This is also reflected through the configurations of the body, in this case, the dressed body. In *Robinson Crusoe*, when the castaway rescues Friday, the latter 'seem'd very glad' when he received clothes from Crusoe, whose reading of Friday's presupposed desire to be dressed like himself is an imperialist projection of colonial mimicry, to use Homi Bhabha's terms (1994: 85–92). At one point, Youwarkee, too, wishes to mimic Wilkins in this manner: 'I will make me a Coat, like yours, says she, for I don't like to look different from my dear Husband and Children' (Paltock 1973: 142). Peter disagrees, not wanting Youwarkee's masculine traits, as reflected through her mobility and role in their survival, to be imprinted

on her body: ‘No *Youwarkee*, replied I, you must not do so; if you make such a Jacket as mine, there will be no Distinction between *Glumm* and *Gawry* [i.e. the male and the female]’ (Paltock 1973: 142). Later on in the novel, however, when the couple meet *Youwarkee*’s family members in her country, Peter puts on a masquerade performance of sorts, whereby his wife’s body is colonised by Western sartorial signifiers: she is wearing ‘her *English Gown*’, which hides the *graundee*, and thus makes it impossible for the family to recognise her (Paltock 1973: 207).

Youwarkee as a character modifies the *Crusoe-Friday* dynamic, very much like the novel’s other *Friday* figures, but her body remains a space of colonial exploration and conquest. As such, it comes to the fore in the novel’s treatment of miscegenation. As Roxann Wheeler has explained, the theme of interracial marriage gained in importance in the mid-eighteenth-century novel, even superseding the ‘master/slave dynamic’, as the imperial concerns of the time moved from the politics of conquest to ‘issues of governance’ (2000: 147); in terms of *Robinsonade* narrative conventions, this translated into a greater interest in the aftermath of conquest, which was metaphorically rendered by the marriage of the castaway and the *Friday* figure of the opposite sex. The question that Paltock’s novel ponders through its focus on *Youwarkee*’s body concerns the consequences of miscegenation; to put it simply, these consequences, as embodied by Peter and *Youwarkee*’s offspring, are difficult to predict:

Pedro, my eldest, had the *Graundee*, but too small to be useful; my second Son, *Tommy*, had it compleat; so had my three Daughters; but *Jemmy* and *David*, the youngest Sons, none at all. [...] And what is very remarkable in my Children, is, that my three Daughters and *Tommy*, who had the full *Graundee*, had exactly their Mother’s Sight, *Jemmy* and *David* had just my Sight, and *Pedro*’s Sight was between both [...]. (Paltock 1973: 160–161)

On the one hand, the fact that the three daughters do not take after their father may be interpreted as a patriarchal allegory of inheritance, but on the other, this idea of colonial and gendered legacy is compromised by the sons, who display various bodily constitutions, as if implying that there is no telling as regards the effects of the union of the coloniser and the colonised. The most interesting case is the first-born *Pedro*—a complete hybrid, though with a *graundee* that is a mere embellishment. The first-born occupies a central position in the line of succession, so his faulty *graundee* may be interpreted as a warning, suggesting that the traits inherited from the other may serve no useful purpose, but nevertheless

remain a lasting sign of difference. *Peter Wilkins* does indeed add to a relatively extensive corpus of interracial romance in English texts that developed from the seventeenth century onwards, and which depicted the relationship 'often sympathetically', as Susan B. Iwanisziw puts it (2007: 56). However, in doing so, it problematises the 'sympathy' that was typical of eighteenth-century abolitionist writing, but which also characterised *The Farther Adventures* (especially in the treatment of Will Atkins and his Indigenous wife), with hints that—even if not 'coarse' or 'depreciative', as Iwanisziw dubs the alternatives to sympathy (2007: 56)—are at least ambiguous.

Configurations of Friday's body in imitations of Peter Wilkins

In configuring their Fridays, the three imitations of *Peter Wilkins* published in the 1750s invariably repeat Paltock's idea to complement Defoe's concern with race and cultural difference with a fantasy of marriage and hybridisation. The case of Ralph Morris's *John Daniel* is slightly different in this respect, as the novel constructs its Fridays out of castaways, but in doing so it does remain close to the two central issues. The first quasi-Friday is John Daniel's castaway companion, Thomas, who accompanies the protagonist in his survivalist and civilisational ventures, which largely repeat the corresponding section of Defoe's narrative. At one point, however, Thomas is recognised to be, in fact, a woman—Ruth. The discovery, tellingly, is preceded by the companion's disappearance, so in narrative terms the appearance of Ruth is staged in a manner characteristic of the introduction of the island's other. The relationship between the two is then revised:

[C]ould my reader have seen the ceremonies we used to each other, he would never have suspected us for the same pair, he had been acquainted with before; but yet, had he been able to have penetrated our bosoms, he would have there espied far greater differences, than our actions were capable of exhibiting. (Morris 1751: 85)

The narrative subsequently concentrates not so much on the civilisational growth on the island as on the ideologically taxing questions of marriage beyond legal and religious systems: first between Daniel and Ruth, and then, incestuously, between their offspring. In this, Morris's novel returns to the troubling matrimonial issues that came under scrutiny in *Peter Wilkins*, in which the castaway had to kill off his wife Patty in a dream to make room for Youwarkee.

This is also the point of convergence for the novel's concern with marriage and hybridity, as the other encounter with castaways-turned-Fridays makes clear. While interracial marriage and hybridisation in *Peter Wilkins* is depicted in a tentatively sympathetic way, with the ambiguities discussed, *John Daniel* is situated at the other end of the spectrum with its hybrid creatures—humanoids with the features of fish—represented in a grotesquely horrid manner as offspring of their castaway mother and a sea monster:

they bore the exact resemblance of the human species in their erect posture and limbs, save their mouths were as broad as their whole faces, and had very little chins; their arms seemed all bone, and very thin, their hands had very long fingers, and webbed between, with long claws on them, and their feet were just the same, with very little heel; their legs and thighs long, and strait, with strong scales on them, and the other parts of their bodies were exactly human, but covered with the same hair as a seal. (Morris 1751: 221–222)

This grotesqueness is skilfully captured in the accompanying illustrations by Boitard, the same artist who created the *Peter Wilkins* prints (Fig. 2).

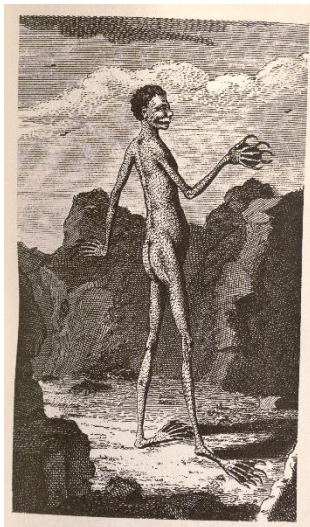


Figure 2. Louis-Philippe Boitard, the illustration of the male hybrid from Ralph Morris's *John Daniel* (1751), from the 1926 edition (London: Holden). Courtesy of the University of Michigan Library, Special Collections Research Center.

The correspondence between Daniel's two encounters with 'others' is not only established by the incestuous pairing of the respective offspring, but also by the 'animal' element attached to otherness: what is rather straightforward in the case of hybrids was implied earlier in Thomas/Ruth's attachment and their expression of motherly instincts towards animals. There is a curiously troubling line of parallels established between an island marriage of the protagonist and his companion and the 'criminal commerce' between the mother of the hybrids and the monstrous other.

Above all, in embodying monstrosity, the hybrid others tangibly represent the fear of 'going native', as Rebecca Weaver-Hightower puts it (see Weaver-Hightower 2007: 128–158); that is, the fear of the castaway's failure to protect his body on the island. In Defoe's novel, Crusoe makes sure his clothing protects him from the island climate, while his mental exercises, such as speaking to his animal family or reflecting upon his lot, will prevent him from intellectually regressing to the animal state, which is something Alexander Selkirk allegedly experienced (see Rogers 1718: 129). The family history behind the hybrids is an explicit lesson on the consequences of not protecting the body—in this case, 'going native' is prompted by the female castaway's adulterous 'commerce' with the island other. The castaway's 'open' body absorbed monstrous otherness, resulting in 'horrid hybrids', as the offspring is labelled in the novel.

The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield of 1753 was sometimes attributed to Robert Paltock himself, though this attribution has been questioned (see Sambrook 2004). While all the examples of Robinsonades studied here, due to their reliance on the poetics of the imaginary voyage, feature strange animals—for example, there is a goat-rabbit and a finned water 'bear' in *Peter Wilkins*—it is *William Bingfield* that uses a fantastic animal as a Friday figure. The animal in question is the dog-bird, a hybrid creature tamed by the castaway and subsequently grown in a farm of sorts. The dog-birds help fight the cannibals at their feast, save innocent Malack (a more typical Friday-figure), and eventually leave for the continent. In the post-island narrative, Malack, in a manner reminiscent of the Glanzepe episodes in *Peter Wilkins*, is reunited with his beloved at home in Kronomo, while Bingfield, using his army of dog-birds, helps the local king Bomarrah to subjugate political opponents.

The central role of the dog-bird is already signalled on the title page with the subtitle promising 'An accurate account of the Shape, Nature, and

Properties of that most furious, and amazing Animal, the DOG-BIRD'. The promise is first realised in the frontispiece (again by Boitard, see Fig. 3), and then descriptively, shortly after the shipwreck:

a very large Creature of the Bird Make, walking upon two Legs, but without the least Feather or Down about it, its Covering being of long shaggy Hair. It had a short thick Neck, and Bony Head, in Make like a Greyhound's, with the sharpest and strongest Teeth in its Mouth, of any Creature of its Size that I ever saw, and a long Tail hairy, and like a Pig's. (*William Bingfield 1753: vol. 1, 37*)



Figure 3. Louis-Philippe Boitard, Frontispiece to *William Bingfield* (1753). Private collection.

The dog-bird merits special attention as an instrument of conquest, with the castaway totally dependent on its unmatched ferociousness—as depicted in the narrative summary offered by the frontispiece. It follows the imperial imaginary of *Peter Wilkins*, whereby the encountered

otherness is embraced as conducive to survival and mastery; the taming and growing of the hybrid, in a sense, parallels Peter's relationship with Youwarkee, who first helped him survive, and then placed him in the role of a patriarch.

Apart from its central role for survival and conquest, the dog-bird also becomes a source of dubious entertainment, in a way reminiscent of how Defoe's Friday 'make you good laugh' in the bear-fighting scene. In *William Bingfield* there are two hunting scenes that are especially powerful in emphasising the imperial message of domesticated and appropriated otherness. In the first, Bingfield aims to impress the King of Kronomo with the display of his dog-birds potential. And as 'the Birds were perched on the Creatures Back [i.e. a bull], when slacking his Pace, and bellowing most hideously', the king, 'a Spectator of the Diversion', 'held up his Hands as in Amaze' (*William Bingfield*: vol. 1, 198–200). A similar diversion is organised when Bingfield has already reinstated Bomarrah as the King of Kronomo. Bingfield is dared to try his dogs first against the king's dogs, which do not pose much of a challenge, and then against a 'most hideous Beast', a creature of 'the Serpent-Kind, but at least six Yards long' (*William Bingfield*: vol 1, 245):

before we could well perceive what Part the Bird aimed at, he had clasped his Tallons about the Creatures Throat, and in two Minutes had torn his Head to Pieces; and when we came up to him was feeding heartily on the Neck and Body. (*William Bingfield*: vol. 1, 247)

This praise of violence and the aesthetic of animal gore gains in significance as a symbolic display of power, a metaphor of conquest and an indication that castaway Bingfield knows how to use what the land offers better than the native people. When the King of Kronomo requests Bingfield to breed dog-birds for him the implication is clear enough: he needs an imperial outsider to manage the natural resources properly.

Adolphus Bannac's *The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Crusoe Richard Davis* of 1756 repeats the idea familiar from *Peter Wilkins* and *William Bingfield* of complementing a relatively conventional Friday figure 'othered' by means of racial difference with a hybrid being. In this case, the first Friday is Lightfoot, so named by the castaways, who helps Richard and his companion Will survive in the first Robinsonade section, and the second is Mary (also addressed as Molly and Polly), a feathered woman, whose 'birdiness' does not involve flying but possessing

exceptional speed in running and a non-standard (that is, erect) sleeping posture, and who accompanies Davis during his isolation on a floating island, and then starts a family with him in her homeland (when the island reaches its shores).

Crusoe Richard Davis is no masterpiece, and it is difficult not to concur with the reviewer in the *Monthly Review*: ‘From some disagreeable peculiarities in the language, and a parity of nonsense, and ridiculous extravagance, we are led to conclude, that this is the manufacture of that notable genius, Mr. Adolphus Bannac’ (1756: 656). It is indeed a tedious read, especially given the fact that the *Peter Wilkins* micro-tradition had already generated three novels. Nevertheless, how the novel configures its hybrid Friday—Mary, Molly, or Polly—merits attention.

In *Peter Wilkins*, Youwarkee’s graundee, the wings, was constructed as both useful and curious, from the observer’s perspective, and in a sense admirable; it was clearly not something that constituted an obstacle to the castaway’s attraction to the other. Subsequently, when Peter and Youwarkee’s offspring are born either with the graundee, or without it, Wilkins feels rather sorry for those like himself who are deprived of the ability to fly. Otherness in *Wilkins* may well be appropriated, but it is also appreciated, at times even looked up to. In *Crusoe Richard Davis* the castaway, in love with the hybrid, is not willing to take the risk of seeing his offspring reduced to a semi-beastly state. As a result, Mary disappears and returns changed, as if she has undergone a purifying rite of passage. In fact, she subjects herself to a painful bodily mutilation, using wax and heat, to get rid of the feathers, bringing to mind some beauty procedures of our own time. Mary’s metamorphosis apparently makes her worthy of Davis, and their offspring, for some reason unaffected by the laws of genetic heritage, are born featherless. The fantasy of interracial marriage in *Crusoe Richard Davis* can thus be placed somewhere between the tentative positivism of *Peter Wilkins* and the warning given by the macabre tale of *John Daniel*’s hybrids. At the same time, the narrative offers a fantasy of colonial mimicry, whereby the other goes to great lengths in order to imitate the castaway. Molly does so effectively, exemplifying a ‘success’ story that goes counter to the conventional strategies of preserving the Friday figure’s difference till the very end; more broadly, however, it adds to the period’s ambiguous verbal and iconographic representations of race, which did not always emphasise its essentiality, but depicted it as an arbitrary and negotiable product of manners, make

up, or clothes (see Wahrman 2004: 83–101). *Crusoe Richard Davis* is thus not only a narrative of interracial marriage, but also a thought experiment, in a sense, on race as a malleable category.

Conclusion

The 1750s corpus of Robinsonades written in the wake of *Peter Wilkins* presents us with four types of Friday configuration: apart from the conventional examples, including Glanlepze, Malack, and Lightfoot, who become carriers of the novels' seeming progressivism regarding race and empire through a sentimental or naively enthusiastic portrayal, the narratives feature:

- a) Castaways turned Fridays, foregrounding issues of cannibalism and devolution;
- b) Female Fridays, making it possible to problematise the questions of sex, marriage, and offspring;
- c) Hybrid Fridays, embodying fears and hopes concerning interracial/interspecies hybridisation.

These types should be treated as concepts that lead to obvious mergers and overlaps in the specific examples discussed. They invariably foreground the body, elaborating on the two bodily paradigms central to the Robinsonade tradition: the imperilled body and the othered body. These configurations, I would argue, reconcile the seeming progressivism of the *Peter Wilkins* micro-tradition (acknowledged and appreciated difference, criticism of home) with the discourses of sovereignty and control that finally surface, and show how the 1750s Robinsonade gradually moved from issues of immediate survival and conquest to ideas of long-term governance allegorised through narratives of family, offspring, and political activism.

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