

CC-BY public copyright license

Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) of

Three Mid-Eighteenth-Century Mash-Ups: Hybridity and Conflicted Discourse in Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* and Its Early Imitations

Jakub Lipski

Published in:

1650-1850. Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era - 2023, Vol. 28, pp. 119-139

This research was funded by the National Science Centre of Poland as part of the Sonata project (grant number 2020/39/D/HS2/02074).

Throughout the eighteenth century, Robinsonades and Gulliveriana—two important fields of the period's adaptational practices—were separated by boundaries that could be considered porous at best. Those boundaries were at times manifested in individual texts, generating their meaning through a dialogue with both Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). The affinities between these two models stem from a common ancestry in the genres of imaginary voyages, utopia, and shipwreck narratives, as well as from a more direct intertextual connection—such as the parodic allusions in *Gulliver's Travels* to some of the more unfortunate lapses in Defoe's novel.¹ Responding to this phenomenon, Paul Dottin put forward the label “robinsonade gullivérienne,”² and while it has not been accepted unanimously, with Artur Blaim claiming that this is “a nonexistent development in the history of the genre,” given the Robinsonade's incompatibility with Gulliverian satire,³ it is difficult not to concur with Martin Green's opinion that a number of castaway narratives tinged with fantasy “have more in common with Swift . . . than with Defoe.”⁴ Be that as it may, the blend of Defoevian and Swiftian topoi in single narratives produces aesthetically and ideologically complex texts.

Postmodern mash-ups typically merge universes that are worlds apart.⁵ Although this does not usually characterize works that (re)mix Defoe and Swift, these narratives do depend on what might be termed open plurality: an aesthetic quality of producing meaning through blending coexistent differences. As Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss puts it, the mash-up is principally “a metaphor for parallel and co-existing ways of thinking and acting rather than exclusionary, causal and reductionist principles of *either or* instead of *as well as*”—and thus it foregrounds “the plural” as an aesthetic and ideological quality.⁶ The history of Defoevian and Swiftian imitations in the eighteenth century, at least as rich and vibrant as that of Sterneana and the afterlives of Richardson's *Pamela*, reveals a curious cli-mactic point in the early 1750s that comes under scrutiny in what follows.

Three Midcentury Mash-Ups

In December 1750, Robert Paltock, an attorney turned writer, published *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, which the anonymous reviewer for the *Monthly Review* dubbed “the illegitimate offspring of no very natural conjunction betwixt Gulliver’s Travels and Robinson Crusoe.”⁷ The novel opens with a relatively extensive bildungsroman-like section, containing echoes of Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random*. At the conclusion of this section, Peter Wilkins, finding him-self rather unwanted at home (his mother is enjoying a new life with Wilkins’s stepfather), begins a turbulent seafaring career—in the course of which he is marooned on an unwelcoming rock near the South Pole. There he finds an underground cataract that takes him to Graundevolet, a twilight fairy island surrounded by rocky mountains. After an impressive display of Crusoesque survival skills, Wilkins rescues Youwarkee, who literally falls down from the above. She is a Gawrey, a winged woman, and proves a perfect wife who gives him numerous offspring. The fantasy of flying might explain the choice of the protagonist’s name, being a possible allusion to John Wilkins (1614–1672), who wrote in *Mathematical Magic* (1648) that man might at one point learn to fly.⁸ The family Robinsonade that focuses on Wilkins’s relationship with Youwarkee then evolves into a Gulliverian political section, with Wilkins traveling to his wife’s homeland. There he helps defeat the country’s enemies and transforms the land according to the ideals of enlightened Western society.

The following year *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* was published by Ralph Morris, a work that the *Monthly Review* immediately linked with Paltock’s novel: “The short account we gave of the adventures of Peter Wilkins, in the *Review* for December 1750, p. 157, will also suffice for this work.”⁹ In a manner similar to Paltock’s novel, *John Daniel* combines a more traditional Robinsonade section with a narrative of flight and exploration of strange lands, including the moon. The novel opens with Daniel finding himself an object of his new stepmother’s desire, which forces him to pursue adventures at sea. He is shipwrecked on what he will later term the Isle of Providence, along with his companion, Thomas. The castaway narrative is modeled relatively closely on that of *Robinson Crusoe*, with several scenes, motifs, and details copying Defoe’s novel to the letter (sleeping on a tree, ascending a hill to view the environs, and retrieving items from the wreck—to name but a few). In a climactic scene in which he is injured, Thomas is revealed to be a woman. The two castaways then start a family and populate their island through arranging incestuous marriages between their offspring. The child without a partner (Jacob) becomes the agent of a shift in poetics, from family Robinsonade to imaginary voyage: he constructs a flying machine that he and his father use to leave the island. Their agency limited by the airy element, they are tossed from one place to another, including the moon, where they encounter strange people with small faces and long hair and a rocky

terrain inhabited by horrid hybrids: excessively thin humans with claws and fishy mouths, who are extraordinarily skilled at hunting in the water.

Paltock is sometimes credited with the authorship of *The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield* (1753),¹⁰ though this attribution was undermined by James Sambrook in his biographical entry on Paltock in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.¹¹ In a manner similar to its predecessors, this novel opens with personal misunderstandings (the protagonist's beloved vanishes without a word) that send the troubled youth to the sea. Along with two companions, he is cast away on an island where they encounter, as the title page puts it, "that most surprising, and amazing Animal," the dog-bird—a hybrid creature more ferocious than any predators they have encountered so far. Their survival ventures include taming dog-birds and raising an army of them that later helps solve future difficulties. Once the three survivors have made themselves at home on the island, they encounter cannibals at their feast. With the help of their dog-birds, they beat the cannibals and save their victims: a woman who turns out to be Bingfield's lost love, Sally, and Malack, a highly conventional Friday figure. In contrast to *Peter Wilkins* and *John Daniel*, no family Robinsonade proper ensues at this point. The five survivors leave the island, using the cannibals' canoes, and enter mainland Africa to begin a long series of adventures. The countries and societies visited do not reveal much of the poetics of the imaginary voyage, but they preserve the political content that plays out in *Gulliver's Travels* and *Peter Wilkins*: Bingfield becomes an adviser to the king, general of the army, member of the council, and so on, and helps sort out the internal and military affairs of the peoples and societies visited. In the meantime, he kills his fellow survivors for their attempt to abuse Sally, suffers her death, finds a new wife, and reunites Malack with his own beloved in a course of coincidences that pose a challenge even to the most romantically inclined reader.

The fact that these three curiosities came out in the 1750s comes as no surprise, given the decade's fashion for oddities or, as Simon Dickie puts it, "improbable trash."¹² The period between the masterpieces of the 1740s and Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–1767) was traditionally regarded as dominated by poor-quality fiction—a claim that tended to be supported by, among other things, denigrating remarks about some of the later works of the classics of the 1740s, such as Henry Fielding's *Amelia* (1751), Tobias Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). Things have changed, and just as *Amelia* and *Sir Charles Grandison* are now studied for their own merits rather than as symptoms of the authors' (questionable) aesthetic decline, the versatile (generically and thematically) prose fiction of the 1750s has been seen as an important stage in the novel's development. Much recent attention has been paid to so-called minor subgenres (such as pornography, its narratives, ramble fiction, and Oriental tales) and to the inventive formal experimentation of women writers (including Charlotte Lennox, Sarah Fielding, and Sarah Scott). As Thomas Keymer has demonstrated, the 1750s was also a period of excessively self-conscious textual creativity, as can be seen in imitations of Fieldingesque metafiction and proto-Stermean experimentation.¹³ One good example of this tendency is the subtitle of William Goodall's *The*

Adventures of Capt. Greenland (1752): *Written in Imitation of all those Wise, Learned, Witty and Humorous Authors, who either already have, or hereafter may Write in the same Stile and Manner.*¹⁴

Meanwhile, one narrative form that clearly thrived in the decade was directly related to Robinsonades and Gulliveriana: the imaginary voyage, featuring travelers to places such as the moon and the center of the earth who encounter all manner of fantastic beings. The annotated checklist appended to Philip Gove's classic *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction* (1941) lists thirteen English-language imaginary voyages published in the 1750s, out of the sixty-seven that appeared between 1700 and 1800.¹⁵ Gove's checklist, complemented with con-temporary reviews of the listed fictional works, helps recognize the central role of *Peter Wilkins* in this tradition. To readers of the 1750s, Paltock's narrative was the model not only for *John Daniel* and *William Bingfield*, but also for *A Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth* (anonymous, 1755) and *The Life and Sur-prizing Adventures of Crusoe Richard Davies* (allegedly by Adolphus Bannac, 1756), despite this novel's nominal indebtedness to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, one peculiarity of the Robinsonade phenomenon is the generative potential of the imitations: in other words, their capacity to supersede the primary text and serve as a model for subsequent adaptations.

These texts have so far received only moderate critical attention. *Peter Wilkins*, naturally, has been the most frequently studied, due not only to its superior literary qualities but also to its status as a forgotten classic. The novel went through a number of editions in the eighteenth century, was promptly translated into French and German, was abridged, and was adapted into a melodrama and a pantomime. It was a "Romantic cult book," as Nora Crook calls it, with front-row fans including Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Mary Shelley.¹⁶ Today, the reasons for studying *Peter Wilkins* vary: it is relevant material for genre-oriented approaches, especially those concerned with science fiction and utopia.¹⁷ Socio-cultural perspectives, in turn, have prioritized Paltock's complex handling of such issues as race, slavery, and gender,¹⁸ invariably highlighting the double-voiced nature of the narrative, which is also my focus here.

John Daniel and *William Bingfield* remain rather obscure today, though they have been acknowledged, even if with only passing mentions, in survey studies of the imaginary voyage, the Robinsonade, and early science fiction.¹⁹ Jason Pearl has recently studied *Peter Wilkins* in the broader context of the eighteenth-century novel as a genre and showed how the text complicates some of the binaries constructing the myth of the "rise of the novel," especially the "bias for realism" and the foregrounding of the Western experience.²⁰ These arguments hold for *John Daniel* and *William Bingfield*, too: in general, the predilection during the 1750s for the strange and the marvelous poses a challenge to the traditional critical prioritization of formal realism. Such texts foreground what G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter termed the "underbelly of the European Enlightenment," or "that large and often amorphous bulk of ideas and patterns of behaviour that thrives on the unaccountable, the anomalous, the exotic."²¹ Thus, such texts problematize the provenance of the modern novel by revealing its affinities with nonrealist traditions.²²

Peter Wilkins and its first two imitations form a micro-tradition that gains in specificity and a kind of unity on several levels, including temporal proximity, authorship (both factual and alleged), and a common generic back-ground, as well as intertextual links to one another. Beyond the surface-level relationships between these three castaway narratives—including the fantasy of flying and the related interest in machinery shared by *Peter Wilkins* and *John Daniel*, as well as the military and political ventures of Wilkins in You-warkee's homeland and Bingfield at the side of King Bomarrah in the country of Kronomo—the most rewarding intertextual connections among these texts involve the subversive and ideologically conflicted discourse that they offer. In what follows, I argue that both the discursive and generic complexity of these narratives and the crucial focus on hybridity that gains in metafictional significance as a metaphor of mash-up poetics define the textual identity of this micro-tradition.

Mashed-Up Discourses

All three texts elaborate on marriage as an institution and the possibilities of going beyond the legal and religious conventions in extreme circumstances. Wilkins takes a second wife, having had a night vision of the convenient and timely death of his first; Daniel incestuously marries his children to one another, much like—he persuades himself—Adam and Eve, the first parents, and the hybrid castaways he encounters later on; and Bingfield's rhetorical talents, with the aid of Malack's commonsensical observations, convince his two respective female companions to live with him “as man and wife.” The transgressive content of the respective family romance sections in the three novels (including fantasies of bigamy, incest, and zoophilia) is a peculiarity of this micro-tradition that relates to the wider panorama of Robinsonade fantasies. These compensated for the curious absence of amatory content in the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe*—or “sexed up the original,” as Daniel Cook puts it²³—deriving from the earlier tradition of utopian and Edenic narratives, as well as what might be called Robinsonades that preceded Defoe's novel, such as Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668). In Neville's narrative, which has been labeled a “pornotopia,”²⁴ George Pine is cast away along with four women, and his main preoccupation is populating the island and then coupling his numerous offspring with one another to further his demographic project. The popularity of the Robinsonade television show *Love Island* indicates that the amatory content of the tradition, especially the allure of the island as a space that legitimizes transgressing conventional social norms and is “linked to illicit sexual desire,”²⁵ continues to attract audiences.

The family romance sections of the three narratives inevitably address the issues of gender, inasmuch as they fictionalize women castaways, who are active in their sustenance and survival. In *Peter Wilkins*, the winged Youwarkee performs a number of supposedly masculine chores, and when she is about to dress herself in the European manner, Wilkins realizes the threat of gender transgression: “I will make me a Coat, like yours, says she, for I don't like to look different from my dear Husband and Children. No *Youwarkee*, replied I, you must not do so; if you make such a Jacket as mine, there will be no

Distinction between *Glumm* [man] and *Gawry* [woman].”²⁶ Wilkins is adamant that the traditional sartorial indicators of gender remain in place, although otherwise, throughout his relationship with Youwarkee, he is most appreciative of how they androgynously complement each other. As Elizabeth Hagglund and Jonathan Laidlow argue, Wilkins’s “anxiety” about his idealized relationship with Youwarkee subverts “his assertions of European masculinity.”²⁷

A similar double voice in the discourse of gender characterizes *John Daniel*, though the means of expression here are much more powerful. The castaway companion, Thomas, is revealed to be a woman, Ruth, through a shocking scene of injury, in which the snag of a tree “penetrated [her] groin” as she fell from a tree branch.²⁸ While this clearly invites a symbolic interpretation, according to which the injury functions as a metaphorical rape that brutally ends Thomas’s masquerade and punishes the cross-dressing masquerader, the recognition of the true identity of his companion and its aftermath prompts Daniel to speculate about gender norms: “I knew not where to divide between her present and past actions, or to separate the manly from the womanly part of them; but yet, as she had neither said or done any thing unmanly before, so in my judgment, she neither did or said any thing manly now; from whence I naturally judged, that what we take things to be, that they certainly are, as to us; and that the distinction rather lies in our own true or false judgment, than in the objects themselves” (JD, 81).

Such radical observations, questioning the essentialism of gender, seem at odds not only with the symbolic rape that preceded them but also with some scenes that in fact undermine Thomas’s masculinity, in particular his maternal sentiments toward animals. Shortly before the recognition scene, Thomas cries over a calf they had trapped: “his head was bowed over the calf’s, whilst he was rubbing and chasing its limbs very tenderly; . . . [I] perceived tears to trickle down his face in great abundance. . . . [H]e told me (with great seeming satisfaction,) that he hoped he should raise it” (JD, 69). Thomas’s attachment to the calf, his maternal impulses, and his excessive sensibility are presented as unmanly and thus foreshadow the unmasking that follows. Similarly, Thomas’s motherly instincts in this scene establish a disturbing fantasy of an interspecies relationship, a hint that will be elaborated upon in the discussion of the narrative of “hor-rid” hybrids later on.

It would be an exaggeration to read the scenes of sexual or motherly attachment to animals in *John Daniels* as proto-post-anthropocentric content, opening the door to some twentieth- and twenty-first-century Robinsonades’ radical speculations about the relationship between man and nature—such as Michel Tournier’s *Friday* (1967) and its memorable scene of lovemaking between Robinson and Earth. Rather, these scenes are related to the emerging interest in the issues of human-animal intimacy in the eighteenth century²⁹ and the larger theme of the castaway’s devolution: returning to the animal state, or “going native” under the influence of an “infectious island,” as Rebecca Weaver-Hightower puts it.³⁰ The three 1750s narratives explore in depth this implicit threat related to being cast away, the central preoccupation being the fear of becoming a cannibal in extreme circumstances. In the *Crusoe* trilogy, the threat remains in the sphere of the counterfactual. In *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Crusoe saves a “young Woman” who then recounts her misfortunes, including 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.”³¹ Defoe elaborates on the problem in *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720): “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.”³²

Peter Wilkins explores this potential in a memorable way, when a group of survivors, including the protagonist, are stranded in a boat drifting at sea. After two weeks, they turn to cannibalism:

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 of his old Jacket, invited us to Dinner, and cutting a large Slice of 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. (PW, 41)

Paltock’s vivid and tangible description was clearly a model for the scenes of cannibalism in *William Bingfield*. In volume 2, when Bingfield and his second wife, La Bruce, await rescue on board a Portuguese ship, extreme hunger drives one of the crew members to kill another and keep the body in a water cask, cut-ting of slices of the flesh for sustenance: “to our unspeakable Horror, we dis-covered the Remains of the Body of the poor absent Sailor . . . but Abundance of Slices had been cut from the most fleshy Parts of him.”³³ While the language here emphasizes the “horror” of the situation, what is perhaps more disturbing is the ship’s captain’s methodical justification of cannibalism and his plans for a survival strategy that involves feasting on the criminal and then drawing lots as to who should be next:

My Opinion is that he dies; and that the most Benefit may redound his from Death, let him be slain in such a Manner, as that we may all reap the Advan-tage of his Flesh, for our necessary Support. He is a lusty Fellow, and by spar-ing Meals, may last us some Time. Let what is not absolutely necessary for our present Support be pickled up, and used moderately. . . . Providence may relieve us by some other means, or it is my Opinion . . . that another of us must be ofered, to the Preservation of the Crew. (WB, 2:180)

This passage, with its discursive cacophony, provides a very apt illustration of the mash-up poetics characterizing the three narratives. The concerns about basic biological needs are couched here in a style that oscillates between indications of bodily horror and a level of urbanity and civilized moderation, by virtue of both the phrasing itself (“Let him be slain” and “reap the Advantage of his Flesh”) and of the

references to “necessary Support” or pickling (!) that complement the horrible and the grotesque (“a lusty Fellow”). As if that were not enough, all this is to be read with the doings of Providence in mind, whereby the ritualistic “offering” of individuals for the preservation of others recalls disconcerting parallels with the sacrifice of Christ.

John Daniel lacks such vivid scenes of cannibalism, and its take on sustenance in extreme circumstances and the related implications of devolution involves feeding on raw meat. The transgressive nature of the castaways’ act is signaled in the chapter abstract: “*Are in great distress for food. Hope of meeting inhabitants. Combat a wild bull. Kill him. Eat of him before dead. Lodge in a tree*” (JD, 22). While “lodging in a tree” has a long Robinsonade history, including a memorable scene in *Robinson Crusoe* itself, its context here is indicative of a wider devolutionary process. This is well illustrated by the scene later in the chapter:

The fall of the beast [the bull] gave us time to recruit our breath a little, and to recover from our fears: But I am almost ashamed to say, that the beast was scarce breathless, before we had each of us devoured a part of him; though our pressing necessities may be a reasonable excuse for us: For he had no sooner fallen upon his knees, unable to renew his former efforts, than our knives were in his haunches, cutting slices to appease our hunger; and though we had neither cook or seasoning, I have often called it to my mind, as the most excellent dainty, I ever tasted in my whole life. (JD, 42)

Daniel’s transgression, here somehow intuitively implied, is later echoed by the actions of the hybrid creatures, which feed on raw meat only and have “a natural antipathy to sodden meats” (JD, 226). The account of how they hunt parallels the adventures of Daniel and Thomas, with the description of the hybrids violently “fixing their claws into [the animal’s] body in divers places” corresponding to the protagonists’ predatory work with their knives when the animal was scarcely dead.

The discursive heterogeneity that establishes the themes of marriage, gender, and the beastly state finds its metonymic conceptualization (indeed, embodiment) in the novels’ emphasis on hybridity—which constitutes the aesthetic and ideological core of this micro-tradition—through both tangible representation and self-reflexive symbolism. Hybrid constructs themselves, mashing up the Robinsonade with Gulliveriana as well as blending conflicting ideologies, value systems, and stylistic orders, these three novels effectively play memorable hybrid creatures as their trump card in the highly competitive curiosity contest of eighteenth-century imaginary voyages.

Representing Hybridity

The three hybrid creatures are inextricably linked with Robinsonade survival exploits in these narratives, thus underlining the disturbing implications of the genre’s focus on intercultural encounter: evolutionary hybridization here is invariably represented as conducive to survival and sustenance. This micro-

tradition, then, corrects the *Crusoe* trilogy by reversing the intercultural relationship (it is not only the other who gains), although the civilizational agenda is already (though inconsistently) questioned in *Farther Adventures*. While this reversal may, in principle, bring to mind the utopian narratives in which castaways are confronted with others who do not apparently need their civilizational input—there are indeed utopian undertones in the representation of Youwarkee’s homeland in *Peter Wilkins*—the crux of these texts’ message is the indispensable role of the other for the preservation of the castaway. Tentatively fore-shadowing the postcolonial Robinsonade of the twentieth century, with its anti-imperialist ideologies and the vindicated role of the Friday figure, the three texts operate on the bodily level, foregrounding the hybrid materiality of others as well as fantasizing about how the castaway may participate in evolutionary hybridization.

That said, the three narratives thematize hybridity and hybridization with different agendas (both narrative and ideological), while the descriptive close-ups oscillate even within single texts between the poetics of wonder, mechanical real-ism, and romantic sensuality. In *Peter Wilkins*, Youwarkee’s hybrid body is described as if it were a machine:

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 playable and springy Membrane, that can be imagined, in the Interspace between them, reaching 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. (PW, 138–139)

This methodical description of the Graundee (as the mechanism is called) continues for another two pages, and its scientific manner corresponds to how the flying machine is described in *John Daniel*. However, such moments of objectifying realism are contrasted with sensuously eroticized passages, such as the following description of Wilkins and Youwarkee’s lovemaking: “The softest Skin and most delightful Body, free from all Impediment, presented itself to my Wishes, and gave up itself to my Embraces. . . . At waking I was very solicitous to find out what Sort of Being I had had in my Arms, and with what Qualities her Garment was endued, or how contrived. . . . We rose with the Light; but surely no two were ever more amorous, or more delighted with each other” (PW, 118). Youwarkee’s body, freed “from all Impediment,” becomes a metaphor for her hybrid constitution: a romanticized body complemented by useful but restraining machinery, a conceptual separation of idealized femininity from otherness. Even if in his amorous ventures Wilkins prefers the machinery out of his way, the everyday sustenance of the two castaways depends to a large extent on Youwarkee’s flying. Thus, the

bodily change in which some of their offspring partake (inheriting their mother's Graundee) is valued positively, while Wilkins designs a flying machine for himself: a flying sedan chair lifted by Youwarkee's countrymen, which is both a form of appreciation and a material token of what he lacks.

The positive valuation of Wilkins and Youwarkee's union and the bodily change imprinted on their offspring finds a counternarrative in the story of the hybrid creatures encountered by John Daniel, whose bodily form was defined by their castaway mother's adulterous union with a sea monster. *Peter Wilkins's* narrative of the mutual benefits gained by the shipwrecked adventurer and the encountered other is then rewritten into a misogynistic confession narrative of a fallen woman, which opens like a witchcraft testimony—"I Joanna Anderson, a child of hell, and companion of demons" (JD, 258)—and goes on to recount how she "entered into criminal commerce" with a monster and gave birth to the pair now encountered by Daniel. He describes how "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" (JD, 221–222).

What makes this zoophilic transgression and its consequences particularly disturbing are the correspondences established between the two pairs of cast-aways. Daniel and Thomas's (or Ruth's) survival also depends on their relationship with tamed animals, and the latter's attachment and motherly instincts (discussed above) gain new significance when juxtaposed with the story of Joanna Anderson. But her as it were demonic union and the ensuing evolutionary hybridization is also given a commonsensical assessment by Daniel, emphasizing how the changed bodies are suited to their circumstances: "Suppose you had been like me, could you have supplied the wants, or sustained the horrors of this loan-some habitation with equal pleasure, as you now can? If not, how happy are you in your present form? Wholly applicable to the life designed for you? And I see no reason, but having been a meer man, you should (in this retirement) have lamented your misfortune, of not having parts and capacities, proper for the lot you was fallen into" (JD, 244). Weaver-Hightower points out that Daniel's hybrids are projections of "colonial fears of miscegenation . . . 'unnatural' love . . . and degeneration,"³⁴ but the narrative also seems to imply that however transgressive a relationship with the encountered other might appear to be, it may nevertheless be seen as a sensible venture, prompting a change that supports the imperialist agenda.

William Bingfield lacks such explicit uses of humanoid hybrids and instead elaborates on the imaginary voyages motif of fantastic animals. The novel's dog-bird would have been a follow-up on the strange surprising creatures in *Peter Wilkins*: a goat-rabbit and a finned water "bear." However, what has a merely anecdotal function in *Peter Wilkins* is foregrounded in *William Bingfield* on the title page as the novel's foremost attraction, 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 realized 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” (WB, 1:37).

Unsurprisingly, Bingfield and his companions tame the animals and create a considerable army of them, which they use in their struggles with the cannibals and in the other military ventures of their inland explorations. While in principle the dog-bird in *William Bingfield* is a perfectly conventional embellishment, an allusion to *Peter Wilkins*, and a generic link with the tradition of the fantastic imaginary voyage, it merits attention as an instrument of conquest: the cast-aways are dependent on its unmatched ferocity. For Weaver-Hightower, the dog-bird takes on the role of a Friday figure, “the noble indigene and helpmate,”³⁵ thus adding to the imperial imaginary of the other two narratives—according to which the encountered otherness is embraced as conducive to survival and mastery.

Two hunting scenes in *William Bingfield* are especially powerful in emphasizing the imperial message of appropriated otherness. In the first, Bingfield aims to impress the king of Kronomo by the display of his dog-birds’ potential. And as “the Birds were peached on the Creatures [a bull’s] Back, when slacking his Pace, and bellowing most hideously,” the king, “a Spectator of the Diversion,” “held up his Hands as in Amaze” (WB, 1:198–200). A similar diversion is organized when Bingfield has reinstated Bomarrah as the king. 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” (WB, 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” (WB, 1:247). This praise of violence and the aesthetic of animal gore is significant as a symbolic display of power, a metaphor of conquest, and an indication that the cast-away Bingfield knows better how to use what the land offers than the natives do. When the king requests Bingfield to breed dog-birds for him, the implication is clear: the king needs an imperial outsider to properly manage the natural resources of his kingdom.

Illustrating Hybridity

The visual language used to depict the three hybrid creatures finds artful concretization in the illustrations to the first editions of the three novels, all of which were created by Louis-Philippe Boitard (fl. 1733–1767), a relatively successful London-based engraver of French origin (his father was François Boitard, a collaborator of British publisher Jacob Tonson). In 1742, George Vertue made a passing remark about Louis-Philippe Boitard in his *Note Books*, identifying “some merit” in his art,³⁶ while Horace Walpole (based on the notes of Vertue) dubbed him a “very neat workman” in his *Catalogue of Engravers*.³⁷ Boitard’s career and recognition peaked in the 1750s, and his quirky set of illustrations for

Peter Wilkins resulted in commissions to illustrate similar material: the hybrids in *John Daniel* and *William Bingfield*.

The publishers made sure that his role was paratextually foregrounded. The title page of *Peter Wilkins* does not feature the illustrator's name, but it emphasizes the function of the images: "Illustrated with several Cuts, clearly and distinctly representing the Structure and Mechanism of the Wings of Glums and Gawrys, and the Manner in which they use them either to swim or to fly." Importantly, as the title page makes clear, the illustrations were not a later embellishment. Rather, they were a textualized element integrated within the narrative, by both the author (who refers to Boitard's images in the course of the narrative) and the publisher (who foregrounds their role in the front matter). The value of these prints would immediately have been recognized by the parties involved in the publishing process. In fact, on assigning the copyright of his novel to Jacob Robinson and Robert Dodsley in 1749, Paltock secured not only a rather unimpressive sum of twenty-one pounds but also a set of Boitard's engravings.³⁸ The illustrator would very likely have made a name for himself through these prints. The title page of *John Daniel* also mentions the illustrations, but this time Boitard's name becomes a highlight, as it is printed in the same size as that of Ralph Morris, the author. A similar strategy of trading on the engraver's work, though this time without printing his name, can be seen in *William Bingfield*. The foregrounding of Boitard's contribution to this novel might seem strange, as the sole visual element here is his frontispiece, dubbed "Beautiful" on the title page.

Understandably, Boitard's visuals focus on the hybrid creatures and correspond to the respective narratives' take on hybridity. In *Peter Wilkins*, the engravings depict the machinery of the wings—"the Structure and Mechanism," as promised on the title page. The appropriative politics of the novel are rendered here by the theatrical postures of a Glumm and a Gawrey, who pose as exhibits in a cabinet of curiosities, showing the three modes of their constitution: dressed, ready for flight, and swimming. However, the first plate—"The Front of a Glumm Dresst" (Figure 1)³⁹—is curiously modeled on the iconography of Grand Tour portraits, with the Glumm depicted against the welcoming background of the island of Graundevolet. This posture and the artistic context of similar representations adds to the ideological double voice of the novel, oscillating between the castaway's subjugation and mastery. The latter, in turn, is foregrounded in the plate that closes the set of illustrations. It shows Wilkins on his sedan chair, observing in the manner of a detached general and strategist the sky battle between the different factions of the Glumms (Figure 2).⁴⁰ The double voice aside, Boitard depicts the Glumm and the Gawrey in a manner reminiscent of classical sculptures, thus emphasizing the inherent nobility of the other and responding to Wilkins's remarks on Youwarkee's "incomparable Shape" and "excellent Form" (PW, 108).

In a similar way, Boitard responds closely to the aesthetic of monstrosity in *John Daniel*. The part-human, part-seal hybrids are depicted in a manner that does justice to the paratextual advertisement of the engraver's contribution. Boitard again depends on an iconography of posturing, here against a relatively less pleasing rocky landscape. The use of the *figura serpentinata* (serpentine posture)—which

in the first plate (showing the male hybrid) in *Peter Wilkins* created an aura of nobility—becomes almost a parodic tool here (Figure 3). The demonic context is largely ignored, and the engraver's own input seems to be the implicitly racist agenda behind the represented physiognomies and a possible nudge toward the iconography of anatomical exhibits in cabinets of curiosity. This further allegorizes the narrative's imperial warning against mixing with others. The hybrids' suitability for extreme circumstances becomes a theme of the third plate in *John Daniel*, in which the children of the incestuous couple skillfully hunt for the gigantic oil fish (Figure 4). Evolutionary hybridization, here implied by the perpendicular postures that correspond to or even merge with the shapes of the rocky background and the impression of a swift and effortless hunt to the satisfaction of the observing parents, nevertheless becomes a problematized value in the context of such predatory expressions, indicative of the idea that evolution comes at the cost of beastly devolution.

The "Beautiful" frontispiece to *William Bingfield* (Figure 5) offers a different take on the depicted narrative. If the previous two sets prioritized the hybrids (drawing attention to their bodily constitution) and for the most part represented them as static exhibits, the frontispiece is dynamic and narrativized. Bingfield is tellingly moved to the side, as if he were leaving the place that is now perfectly under his control. The vivid background shows the various achievements of his dog-birds: the beating of the cannibals and preying on animals that would otherwise have posed a challenge to the castaway colonizer. Making sure that he is accompanied by a member of his army, a bodyguard of sorts, Bingfield remains perfectly calm, even thoughtful, while the imperial exploits are orchestrated by the tamed other.

Boitard's illustrations, focusing on the hybrid creatures, further confirm the identity of this micro-tradition: its mash-up poetics finds an indirectly metafictional embodiment in the mash-up beings, serving at the same time as the key to interpreting the similarly hybrid ideological dimensions of the narratives. If we put aside the traditional questions regarding literary merit, the three novels make for a provocative episode in the wider history of eighteenth-century Robinsonades and Gulliveriana, as well as inadvertently foreshadowing some pre-occupations of contemporary literary heterotopias: from Tournier's *Friday* and its interspecies speculation to the Nobel laureate Olga Tokarczuk's fantasy of a castaway's androgynous evolution in "The Island" (2001). As products of the 1750s' metafictional turn and fashion for the strange, the three works manifest the polyphonic qualities of the novel genre as well as posing a challenge to homogenized narratives of the rise of the novel concentrated around the ideal of formal realism. In the wider panorama of eighteenth-century adaptation and imitation, these texts foreground the creative energies of minor traditions and exemplify the phenomenon of adaptation "in the second degree," to use Gérard Genette's wording,⁴¹ with such "illegitimate offspring" as *Peter Wilkins* becoming a parent text to others.

Notes

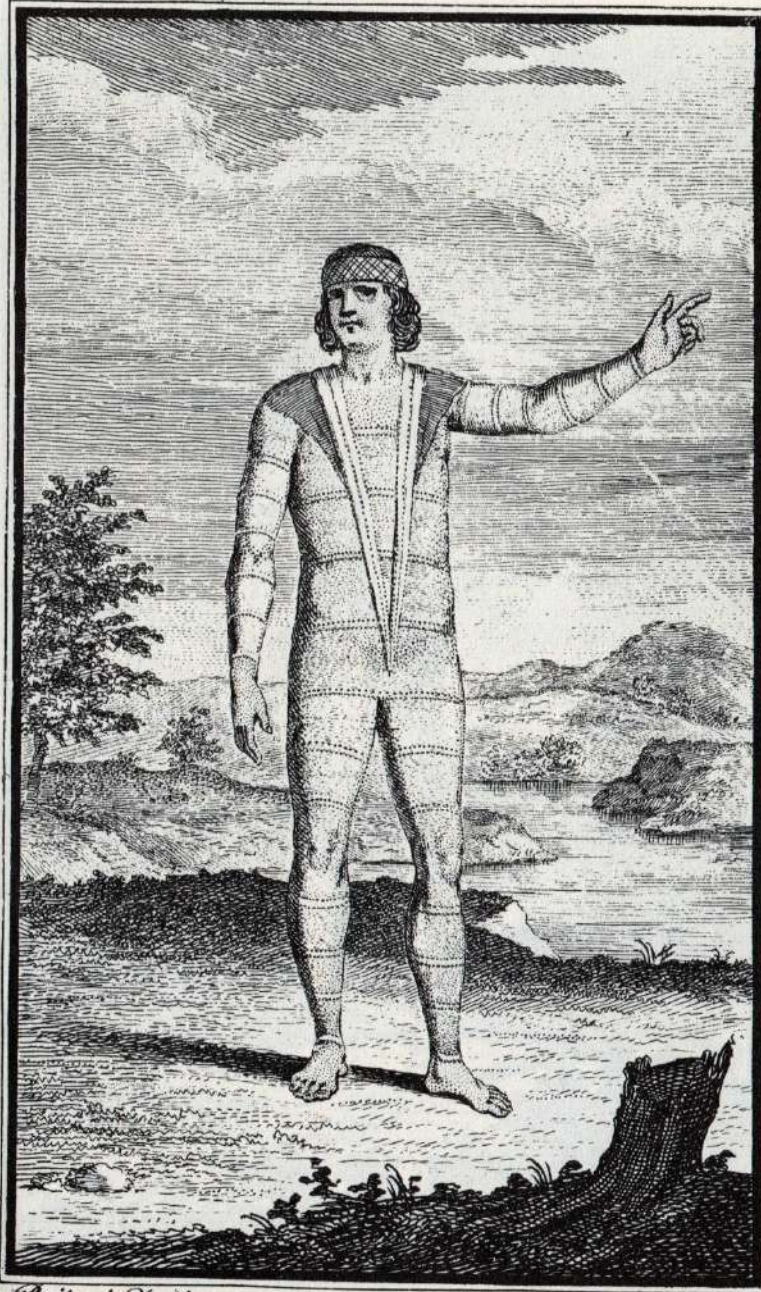
This research was funded by the National Science Centre of Poland as part of the Sonata project (grant number 2020/39/D/HS2/02074). For the purpose of Open Access, the author has applied a CC-BY public copyright license

to the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) version arising from this submission and deposited in Kazimierz Wielki University Repository.

1. For further information, in particular regarding Swift's parodic treatment of the castaway's pockets and their contents, see J. Paul Hunter, "Gulliver's Travels and the Novel," in *The Genres of "Gulliver's Travels,"* ed. Frederick N. Smith (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 56–74.
2. Paul Dottin, *Daniel de Foe et ses romans* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1924), quoted in Artur Blaim, *Robinson Crusoe and His Doubles: The English Robinsonade of the Eighteenth Century* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016), 42.
3. Blaim, *Robinson Crusoe and His Doubles*, 42.
4. Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 26.
5. A particularly noteworthy example of a postmodern mash-up Robinsonade is Ivan Fanti, *Robinson Crusoe on Zombie Island* (New York: Nonstop Press, 2014).
6. Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss, "Introduction: Mashups, Remix Practices and the Recombination of Existing Digital Content," in *Mashup Cultures*, ed. Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss (Wien, Austria: Springer-Verlag, 2010), 8.
7. *Monthly Review* 4, 1750, 157.
8. James Sambrook, "Paltock, Robert," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21228>.
9. *Monthly Review* 5, 1751, 518.
10. Blaim, *Robinson Crusoe and His Doubles*, 27.
11. Sambrook, "Paltock, Robert."
12. Simon Dickie, "Novels of the 1750s," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. J. A. Downie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 252.
13. Thomas Keymer, "Sterne and the 'New Species of Writing,'" in Thomas Keymer, *Sterne, the Moderns, and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–48.
14. William Goodall, *The Adventures of Capt. Greenland* (London: R. Baldwin, 1752).
15. See Philip Babcock Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction* (New York: Arno Press, repr. 1975), 316–350.
16. Nora Crook, "Peter Wilkins: A Romantic Cult Book," in *Reviewing Romanticism*, ed. Robin Jarvis and Philip W. Martin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 86–98.
17. See, for example, Paul Baines, "'Able Mechanick': *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* and the Eighteenth-Century Fantastic Voyage," in *Anticipations: Essays on Early Science Fiction and Its Precursors*, ed. David Seed (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 1–25; Christine Rees, *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge, repr. 2014), 73–122.
18. See, for example, Peter Merchant, "Robert Paltock and the Refashioning of 'Inkle and Yarico,'" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 9, no. 1 (1996): 37–50; Elizabeth Hagglund and Jonathan Laidlow, "'A Man Might Find Every Thing in Your Country': Improvement, Patriarchy, and Gender in Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*," in *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 133–146.
19. See Blaim, *Robinson Crusoe and His Doubles*; Adam Roberts, *The History of Science Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 85–120; Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Voyages to the Moon* (New York: Macmillan, 1960); and Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction*.
20. Jason H. Pearl, "Peter Wilkins and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 57, no. 3 (2017): 541–559.
21. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, preface to *Exoticism in Enlightenment*, ed. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), vi.
22. See Joanna Maciulewicz, "Renarrating Women's Stories: Imogen Hermes Gowar's *The Mermaid and Mrs. Hancock*," in *Neo-Georgian Fiction: Reimagining the Eighteenth Century in the Contemporary Historical Novel*, ed. Jakub Lipski and Joanna Maciulewicz (London: Routledge, 2021), 98–114.
23. Daniel Cook, "Rewriting the Robinsonade," in *Rewriting Crusoe: The Robinsonade across Languages, Cultures, and Media*, ed. Jakub Lipski (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2020), 166.
24. Pawel Rutkowski, "Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines*: A Pornotopia or New Eden?," *Acta Philologica* 29 (2003): 21–26.
25. Johannes Riquet, *The Aesthetics of Island Space: Perception, Ideology, Geopoetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 103.
26. Robert Paltock, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, ed. Christopher Bentley (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 142. Further references will be parenthetical in the text and will use the abbreviation PW.

27. Hagglund and Laidlow, “ ‘A Man Might Find Every Thing in Your Country,’ ” 146.
28. Ralph Morris, *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* (London: M. Cooper, 1751), 78–79. Further references will be parenthetical in the text and will use the abbreviation JD.
29. See Laura Brown, *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
30. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 133–141.
31. Daniel Defoe, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. W. R. Owens (London: Routledge, 2008; repr. 2017), 117.
32. Daniel Defoe, *Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. G. A. Starr (London: Routledge, 2008; repr. 2017), 80.
33. Anonymous, *The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield* (London: Printed for E. Withers and R. Baldwin, 1753), 2:177. Further references will be parenthetical in the text and will use the abbreviation WB.
34. Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, 155.
35. Weaver-Hightower, *Empire Islands*, 238–239, note 11.
36. Quoted in Timothy Clayton and Anita McConnell, “Boitard, Louis-Philippe,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2784>.
37. Horace Walpole, *A Catalogue of Engravers, Who Have Been Born or Resided in England*, 2nd ed. (Twickenham, UK: Strawberry Hill Press, 1765), 134.
38. Sambrook, “Paltock, Robert.”
39. Louis-Philippe Boitard, “The Front of a Glumm Dresst,” an illustration to Robert Paltock’s *Peter Wilkins* (1750), “The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man (1750),” *Public Domain Review*, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/the-life-and-adventures-of-peter-wilkins-a-cornish-man-1750>.
40. Louis-Philippe Boitard, “Nasgig’s Engagement with Harlokin’s General,” an illustration to Robert Paltock’s *Peter Wilkins* (1750), “The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man (1750),” *Public Domain Review*, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/the-life-and-adventures-of-peter-wilkins-a-cornish-man-1750>.
41. See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

Tab. I.



Boitard Fecit.
The Front of a Glumm Dress.

Figure 1 Louis-Philippe Boitard, "The Front of a Glumm Dress," an illustration to Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1750).
The Public Domain Review.

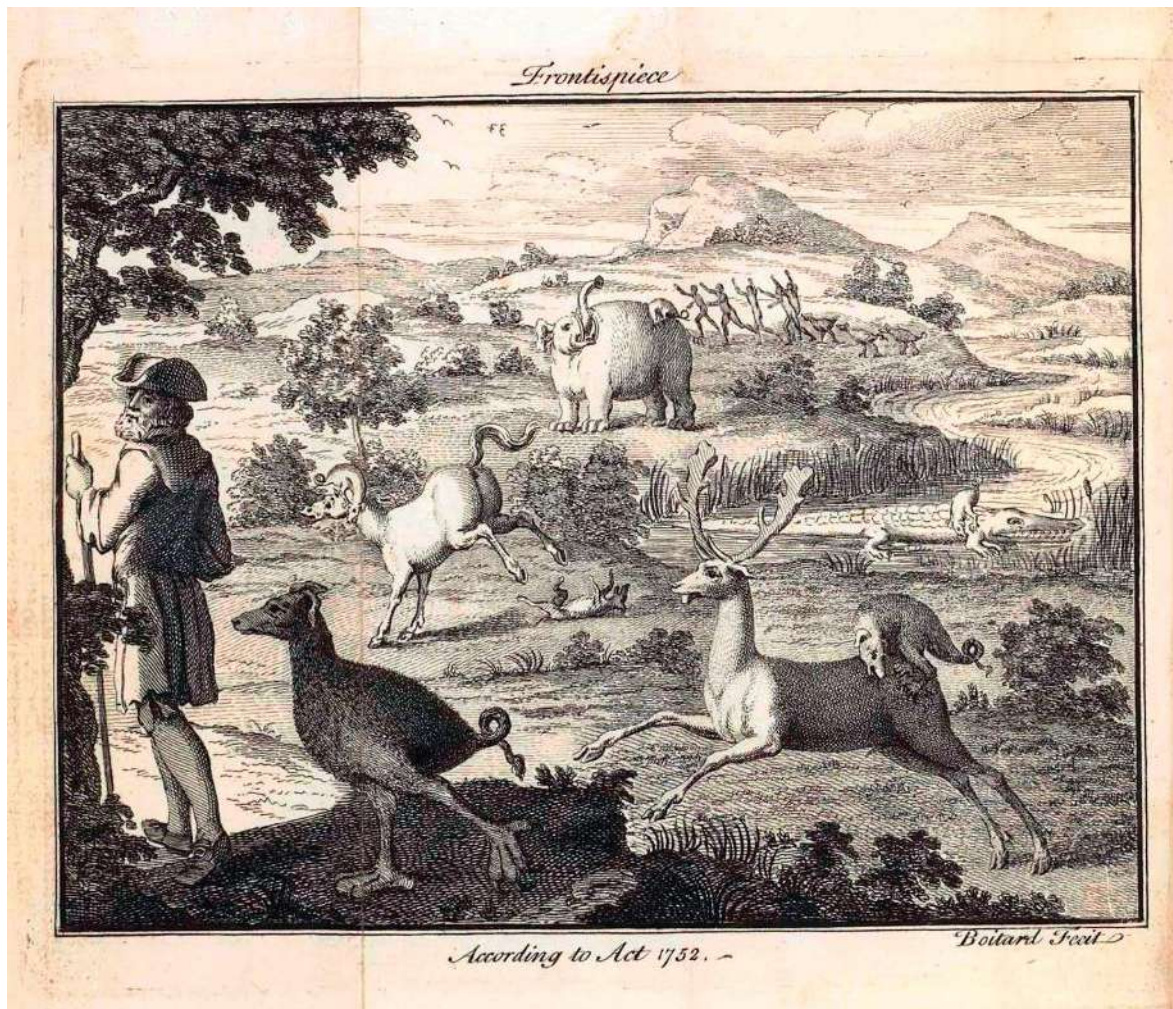


Figure 2 Louis-Philippe Boitard, "Nasgig's Engagement with Harlokin's General," an illustration to Robert Paltock's *Peter Wilkins* (1750). *The Public Domain Review*.

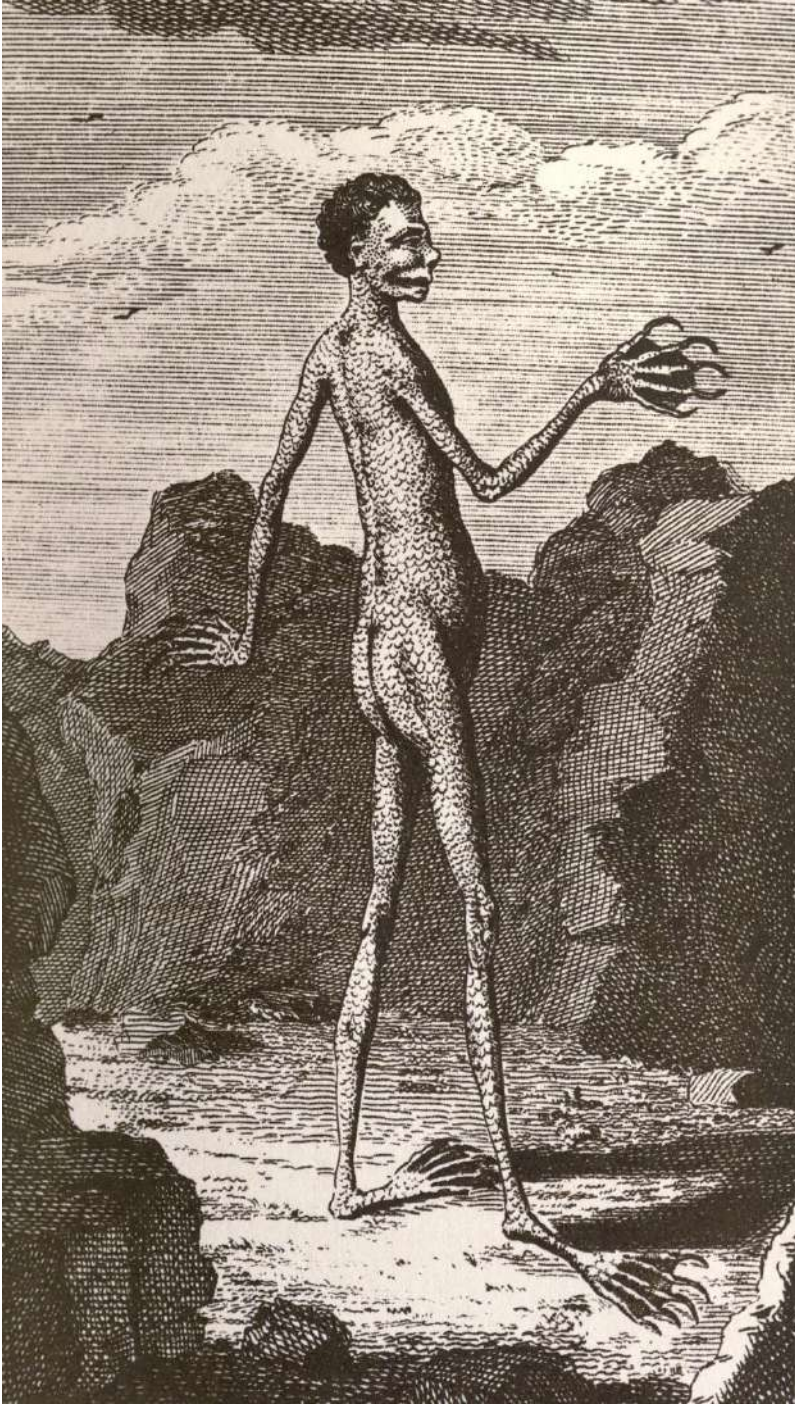


Figure 3 Louis-Philippe Boitard, illustration of the male hybrid from Ralph Morris's *John Daniel* (1751). From the 1926 edition (London: Holden), courtesy of the University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).



Figure 4 Louis-Philippe Boitard, illustration of the hybrids hunting from Ralph Morris's *John Daniel* (1751). From the 1926 edition (London: Holden), courtesy of the University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).

Tab. VI



Boitard. Scul.

Nasgigs Engagement with Hartokins General.

Figure 5 Louis-Philippe Boitard, "Beautiful," frontispiece to *William Bingsfield* (1753). Private collection.