

2 The Creation of a Business, 1724–1797

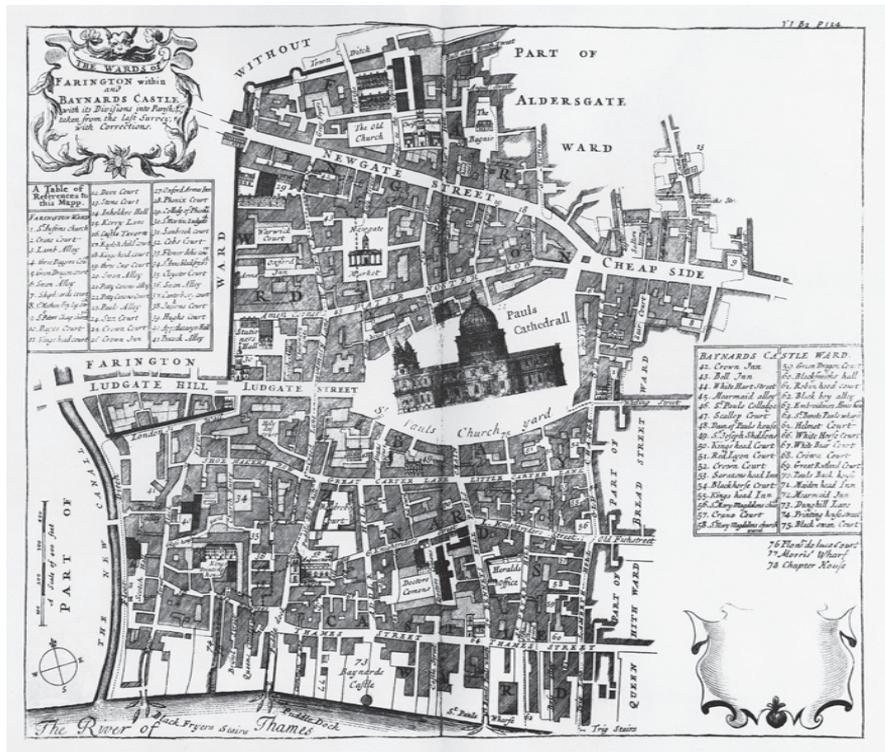
On 4 August 1724, a precise date (old style), Thomas Longman I paid precisely £2,282 9s. 6d. (also old style) for the bookselling and publishing business of William Taylor, who had traded under The Sign of the Ship in London's Paternoster Row.¹ Taylor had died of 'a violent fever' in May 1724, and Longman, born in Bristol and then 25 years old, bought the business from Taylor's executors, John Osborn(e) and William Innys.² He was in a position to do so because four years earlier at the age of 21 he had inherited his father's and some of his mother's West Country properties. He had finished his apprenticeship on 9 June in 1723, and he was to be made a Freeman of the Stationers' Company on 6 October 1724.

'The Row', situated in the parish of St. Gregory, a narrow street, little more than a passage, was then a lively place of activity for booksellers, publishers, authors and, not least, readers. There had already been booksellers there – along with mercers, silk men and lace-makers – in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.³ Indeed, even before the invention of movable printing type in the fifteenth century, the first great modern invention in the history of communications, there had been scribes there, people who wrote on parchment, working alongside the makers and sellers of rosaries.⁴ The area

The title page to the second part of Ussher's *Annales* (1650–54) published by John Crook. The volume carries the device of a ship in full sail, its first known use on a title page. James Ussher, a scholar (who also became the Archbishop of Ireland in the Church of Ireland) wrote this monumental work towards the end of his life, his purpose being to give the date of the foundation of the world

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- 1 The reformed Gregorian calendar was not adopted in England until 1752. In old style the year was reckoned as beginning on Lady Day, 25 March. 'Give us back our eleven days' was a popular cry of protest at the moment of change. A monetary decimal system was not introduced until February 1971.
 - 2 Taylor was described in *Read's Journal*, 9 May 1724, as 'an eminent bookseller, reputed to be worth between 40 and 50,000 pounds'. Innys, who published at The Sign of the Princes Arms from 1711 to 1732, married Taylor's widow in 1725. (*London Journal*, 16 Jan. 1725.)
 - 3 See J. Stow, *Survey of London* (1598; revised and enlarged edn., 1603). For a seventeenth-century visit to Paternoster Row to buy not a book but a waistcoat, see Samuel Pepys' *Diary*, 21 Nov. 1660. In 1720 John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster* (Book 3, p.195) in two volumes provided an invaluable supplement to Stow when he discussed old Paternoster Row.
 - 4 W. Harvey, *London Scenes and London People* (1863); 'Aleph', *Paternoster Row and the Chapter Coffee House* (1864); T. Rees and J. Britton, *Reminiscences of Literary London from 1779 to 1853* (1896), Part I, Paternoster Row. For an older, colourful popular description of the early and later history of the Row, with illustrations, see *Pinnock's Guide to Knowledge*, 2 Aug. 1834. For Rees and Britton's association with Longman, see below, p.58.



From a map of Farringdon Within Ward, 1720 by Richard Blome (fl. 1720–1755)

Guildhall Library, City of London

round St. Paul's Cathedral was not, however, London's only bookselling centre in the late seventeenth century. Two others were located around the Law Courts and in 'Little-Britain', off Smithfields, and there were booksellers operating in other places, including Bishopsgate Street and Tower Hill.

A late-seventeenth-century description of the 'Little-Britain' area by the lawyer and writer Roger North successfully catches the atmosphere of bookselling as it must also have been somewhat later in the Row. What North called 'a mighty trade in books' drew large numbers of people, including 'learned authors', to the bookshops 'as to a market', but buying was not the only activity. There was 'agreeable conversation' there too. 'The booksellers themselves were knowing and conversible men, with whom, for the sake of bookish knowledge, the greatest wits were pleased to converse.'⁵

The adjective 'bookish' at that time had few adverse connotations. And it was books themselves that did much to focus images of the Row that shaped perceptions of both bookselling and booksellers. A characteristic example was W. Harvey's *London Scenes and London People* (1863), which described 'booksellers and publishers of modern times' as 'the best patrons of literature' who rewarded their authors with 'both hands, if their

5 GM, Vol. 50 (1780), p.20.

headwork deserves it'.⁶ Folklore clustered. 'The Row [became] legible' as a palimpsest 'not only through ... the physical reality of the buildings, but from the remembered and the memorialized'.⁷ There was a rich literature on the Row, easy of access in both shops and libraries. 'Bookstalling', exploring the bookstalls, was an agreeable diversion as W.R. Roberts described it in *The Book Hunter in London*. One of his illustrations was Paternoster Row on a Bank Holiday.⁸

The unforgettable Great Fire of London in 1666, chronologically the first of several fires to figure in this *History*, destroyed the Great Hall of the Stationers' Company and huge amounts of neighbouring property, much of it in the hands of leaseholders.⁹ It did not obliterate all old boundaries, but it changed the appearance of the area around St. Paul's, destroying along with the old Cathedral St. Gregory's Church which had been attached to its south-west corner.¹⁰ In the new development that followed, the building of Christopher Wren's new cathedral, a protracted process, the cathedral

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- 6 Harvey, *op. cit.*, p.214, where he described 'the flight of fashion' from the Row. 'What a changeable world we inhabit ... think of beaux and belles resorting thither on foot to purchase their gay clothes'.
- 7 J. Raven, 'Memorializing a London Bookscape: The Mapping and Reading of Paternoster Row and St. Paul's Churchyard, 1695–1814' in R. Alston (ed.), *Order and Connection* (1997), p.179. Raven has meticulously mapped and analysed details of occupation and ownership, following in the wake of P.W.M. Blayney, *The Bookshops in Paul's Cross Churchyard* (Occasional Papers of the Bibliographical Society, No. 5 (1990) and his work has been continued by Nigel Hall. See also Raven's 'Constructing Bookscapes: Experiments in Mapping the Sites and Activities of the London Book Trades of the Eighteenth Century' in J. Murray (ed.), *Mappa Mundi: Mapping Culture/Mapping the World* (2001), pp.35–39, his 'The Book Trade and the Precinct' in A. Burns and D. Keene (eds.), *The History of St. Paul's Cathedral, 600–2004* (2004), and 'The Book Trades' in I. Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth Century England: New Essays* (2001), pp.1–34.
- 8 W.R. Roberts, *The Book Hunter in London* (1895), p.209.
- 9 Pepys described in his diary (26 Sept. 1666) 'the great loss of books in St. Paul's Churchyard and their Hall also': John Evelyn claimed that many businesses survived the Fire without great loss: 'only the poor booksellers have been indeed ill-treated by Vulcan'. Most of the records of the Stationers' Company were preserved.
- 10 Tom Fuller wrote that St. Paul's may be called the Mother Church, having one babe in her body (St. Faith's in the crypt) and another in her arms (St. Gregory's). For the 'Great Fire' see J. Bedford, *London's Burning* (1966), and for the rebuilding of London and the range of regulations associated with it see T.F. Reddaway, *The Great Fire of London* (1951 edn.) and P.E. Jones and T.F. Reddaway (eds.), *The Survey of Building Sites in the City of London after the Great Fire of 1666* by Peter Mills and J. Oliver, 5 vols. (1962–7).

dominated the cityscape from the time of the laying of its foundation stone in 1675. The Choir was completed by 1697, and in 1710 the great dome, which stood out above all the buildings around as it was to do until the fierce fires of the Second World War.

It was during the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714) that the St. Paul's area became 'the greatest book mart in the world', and from the start there was a physical contrast between the open churchyard of the cathedral and the hidden haunts of booksellers and book buyers, the kind of contrast that engenders legend.¹¹ Each of the houses in the narrow street had its secrets. Many of the houses were small with narrow frontages, but some were surprisingly large. Leasehold was the most common form of property tenure, and there were frequent changes of tenure and of trading. Sometimes books were sold on their own: frequently other items were sold too.¹²

When Thomas acquired his new business in 1724, the substantial purchase price that he paid for what was a successful going concern in the Row covered Taylor's household goods as well as his stock-in-trade, his books 'both bound and in sheets', and his premises, shop and warehouse. Taylor, 'a man of capital, respectability and position',¹³ had occupied two adjacent properties with different histories – one at The Sign of the Ship in Paternoster Row and the other at The Sign of the Black Swan, at the corner of Paternoster Row and Ave Maria Lane. Both Signs were to be used by the House of Longman, the former far more frequently.

The property at The Sign of the Ship had been described in a twenty-one-year lease of 1667 as a 'good and sufficient house in accordance with the Act of Parliament for rebuilding the City'.¹⁴ The property at The Sign of the Black Swan had been a separate bookshop until 1719 when Taylor acquired the remaining lease of it from the influential bookseller and publisher Awnsham Churchill after the death of his brother and partner John. Praised as a bookseller 'well furnished for any great undertaking', Awnsham, who never married, was from 1705 to 1710 Member of Parliament for Dorchester, where his father had been a bookseller.¹⁵ Awnsham's brother

11 C.H. Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing with the Progress of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (1839) and his *Encyclopaedia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote* (1842), largely a second edition of his earlier work.

12 James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450–1850*, (2007) pp.28, 116–7, 177.

13 *The Critic*, 24 March 1860, p.366.

14 Before the Great Fire there had been a building on the site called the 'Cherry Tree' and later the 'Cross Keys'.

15 J. Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Late Citizen of London written by himself in Solitude* (1818 edn.), p.204. For Dunton, a lively but challenging source, see SOB, Ch.II, and below, pp.112–3. See also H.R. Plomer, *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668–1725*, Vol. 2, (1922), pp.69–70.

John had acquired the lease of the Black Swan for 21 years in 1714, and on his death it passed into Awnsham's hands. The Churchills were the publishers, *inter alia*, of William Camden's *Britannia* and of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

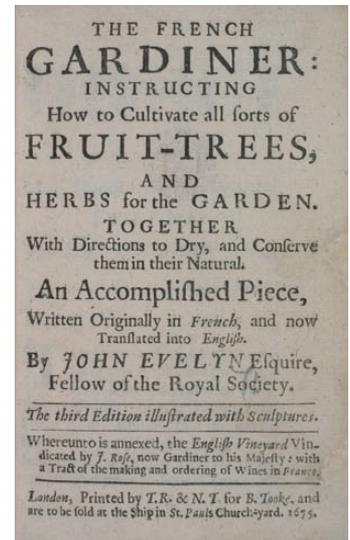
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The pre-Longman history of 'At The Sign of the Ship' leads back deep into the seventeenth century before the Great Fire. While Thomas Longman was a new recruit to the book trade, the business that he acquired was already old in 1724. Long before the Taylors, 'At The Sign of the Ship' had been seen over a London bookseller's shop in 1640 in the Churchyard of old St. Paul's. The owner, John Crook(e), who had started as a London bookseller in 1638 at The Sign of the Greyhound (not a new sign), also in St. Paul's Churchyard, offered his customers 'all manner of books ... brought from beyond the seas', by which he meant books from across the Irish Sea, not very far away, where he played an important role as a printer.¹⁶

In 1660 Crook(e) was appointed Printer General in Ireland, with power to print all books and statutes, but he continued to trade in London also, and when his shop was destroyed in the Great Fire, he moved temporarily to Duck Lane, a small street leading out of Smithfield, under a different but related Sign, that of the Anchor.¹⁷ The last book which he published was *The French Gardiner*, 'Englished by John Evelyn'. His finest book, a magnificent folio of Archbishop Ussher's *Annals* (1650–54), incorporated a device of a ship in full sail with a Latin imprint on the woodcut *Sub Insigne Navis in Cemeterio Sancti Pauli*.

After Crook(e) died in 1669, leaving a widow but no will, his former apprentice, Benjamin Tooke, also connected with Ireland, took over his business; and in 1670, during the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire, he moved the Sign of the Ship back to St. Paul's Churchyard. Tooke was a substantial publisher who held shares in many publishing undertakings, including the works of Jonathan Swift, and it was Swift who helped him to secure the title of Printer to the Queen in 1713. Active in the affairs of the Stationers' Company, Tooke died in 1716, leaving his business to his son, also called Benjamin.¹⁸

In 1687, however, Tooke had sold his Churchyard shop to William Taylor's father, John, who traded there until 1706. The son of a Sherborne clothier, John was described by Dunton as an honest, industrious and



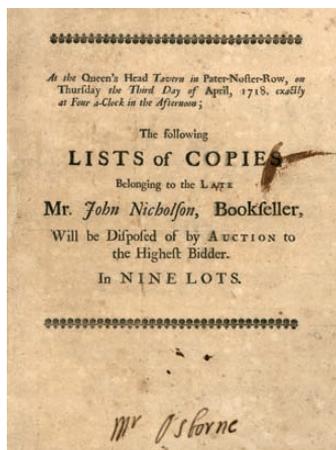
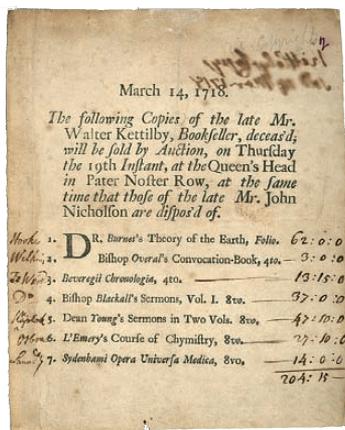
The title page of the third edition of *The French Gardiner*, 'Englished by John Evelyn', 1675

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¹⁶ For reference see Plomer, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 1641–1667 (1907), p.11.

¹⁷ No ships are portrayed in R.B. McKerrrow, *Printers' and Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland, 1485–1640* (1913), although there were several anchors.

¹⁸ Tooke held many Stationers' Company offices. From 1687 to 1702 he was Warehouse-Keeper of the Company and in 1688/9 Junior Warden. He was Treasurer from 1677 to 1702.



These trade sale catalogues show how a bookseller could build up his list at auctions of the stock and copyrights of other booksellers

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obliging man with 'moderate principles'.¹⁹ In 1703 he instituted an annual sermon at the Baptist church in Lincoln's Inn Fields to commemorate his escape from death in the great storm of that year. Taylor had previously traded successfully under The Sign of the Globe at the west end of St. Paul's Churchyard, and for a time he worked in partnership with his son William, who had served his apprenticeship with him. The last book of his to bear the Globe imprint was *The Female Advocate, A Poem written by a Lady in Vindication of her Sex* (1686). By a coincidence, the last of his books bearing the Ship imprint was *The Husbandman's Disputation* (1706).

In 1711 William Taylor, who for four or five years had been operating on his own account, moved The Sign of the Ship, by now a ship in full sail, around the corner from St. Paul's Churchyard into the premises in Paternoster Row that Thomas Longman I was to buy. A catalogue of books printed for him 'At the Ship' includes John Donne's poems as well as *Lex Mercatoria: Or the Laws relating to Merchants* and *The Best Way to be Wise and Wealthy: Or the Excellency of Industry and Frugality*. In less serious vein, the list included *The Tunbridge Beau's Love Letter* and *The Epsom Lady's Answer*. The catalogue list was headed with a Ship colophon: the first of his books to bear a Ship colophon had appeared in 1707 while he was still operating from St. Paul's Churchyard. It was an edition of the Book of Common Prayer with paraphrases of the Psalms.

These were stirring times, when religion and politics were inextricably intertwined on both sides of the Irish Sea and when there was a brisk demand both for pamphlets and for news concerning both. They were years of strategic importance, therefore, in the history of the periodical and of the newspaper as well as in the history of the book.²⁰ In 1688 William and Mary had succeeded James II, who fled abroad, and the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland, which was to pass into legend as well as into history, was won by the Protestants in 1690. Religion and politics were intertwined also on European soil during the long War of the Spanish Succession, which began in 1702 and did not end until the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. William died in 1702, and the reign of Queen Anne was shaped not only by foreign conflict but by a 'dreadful Spirit of Division' in Britain itself which also found ready expression in books.

According to Joseph Addison (1672–1719), writing in 1711 in *The Spectator*, a periodical which did much to proclaim the 'civilising culture' of the book (and of the essay), 'as men formerly became eminent in

19 Dunton, *op. cit.*, p.207.

20 Dunton (*ibid.*, pp.210–11) referred to Roper, a former partner of his, who printed the *Postbag* and *The Annals of Queen Anne*, and to John Salusbury, 'a desperate Hypergorgonic Welshman' who printed *The Flying Post*.

learned Societies by their Parts and Acquisitions, they now distinguish themselves by the Warmth and Violence with which they espouse their respective Parties.²¹ Preceded by *The Tatler*, 1709–11, edited by Richard Steele (1672–1729), it referred to the ‘perusing’ of a book in its first sentence.²² This was the first great expansionist phase in the history of the book in times when the ‘ubiquity of print’ came to be taken for granted.

Expansion had preceded the lapse of the licensing system in 1695, a landmark date. If ‘something of a legislative accident’, as it has recently been called, since the lapse followed differences between the Commons and the Lords on the wording of any new legislation to replace the old, nevertheless, according to Macaulay, it did more for liberty and for civilisation than the Great Charter or the Bills of Rights.²³ The licensing system had been in operation (with a break between 1679 and 1685) since 1662 – and had replaced earlier executive decrees going back to 1557, the year when the Stationers’ Company was founded. The Company was no longer in full control of the process, although it maintained intact many of its controls, among them its apprenticeship system.²⁴

Whatever their background or attributes, all book trades apprentices were required to advance by the same route, learning from practice ‘the Mysteries of the Trade’. They also had to follow its ‘Customs’. Boys were expected to be fourteen years old when they began their apprenticeship, and Masters had to show that they were Freemen of the City of London as well as the Company. Yet as late as 1757, John Nichols, the source of much of our knowledge of publishing, was apprenticed before he was ‘quite thirteen’, and Thomas was older than the average.²⁵ As an orphan too, Thomas was outside the trend. The number of fatherless apprentices fell by forty per cent between the first and the last decades of the century.

By then the business side of ‘publishing’ was more openly apparent to the world than it had been when Daniel Defoe (1660?–1731), a prolific as well as a perceptive writer, published his treatises, along with pamphlets and a



Engraving of John Nichols, (1745–1826), author of *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* in nine volumes (1812–15)

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21 *The Spectator*, No. 125, 24 July 1711. *The Spectator* was launched in March 1711.

22 Both Steele and Addison were keen social observers as well as readers. T.B. Macaulay believed that if Addison had written a novel it would have been ‘superior to any that we possess’. (*Literary Essays* (1923 edn.), p.651.)

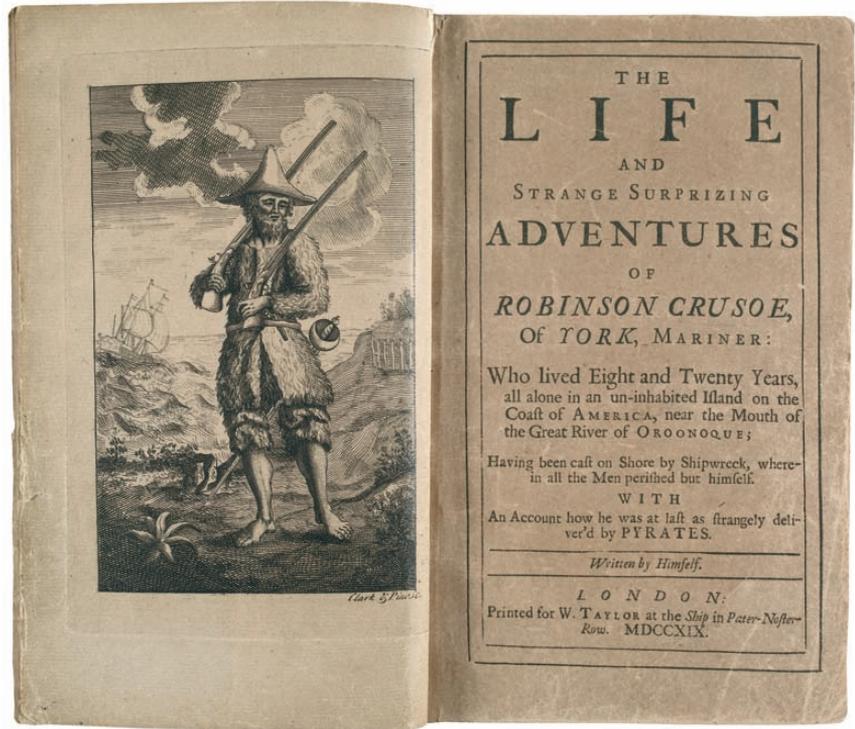
23 J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination, English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (1997), p.131; T.B. Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, 2 vols. (1948), Vol. 2, Ch. 21. See also R. Astbury, ‘The Renewal of the Licensing Act of 1693 and its Lapse in 1695’, in *TL*, 5th series, Vol. 38 (1978), pp.296–337.

24 Raven, *The Business of Books*, *op. cit.*, pp.65–8, 85–8, 201–4.

25 J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. VI (1815), p.628. For Nichols see above, p.11.

Frontispiece (which includes a ship) and the title page of *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* by Daniel Defoe, Taylor's edition (1719)

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Review as well as fiction. His fiction, Ian Watt observed in his pioneering study of the English novel in 1957, is the first that presents us with a picture both of the individual's life in its larger perspective as an historical process and with a closer view 'which shows the process being acted out against the background of the most ephemeral thoughts and actions'.²⁶ Yet Defoe did not refer to his own works as 'novels' and he denied that he was writing 'fiction'.²⁷

A study of him, traveller as well as writer, was to appear in 1856 among the first fifty volumes of Longman's *Travellers' Library*, an ambitious new

26 I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), p.24, subtitled *Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Subsequently much has been written about eighteenth-century novels from many different angles. For contemporary comment see I. Williams (ed.), *Novel and Romance, 1700–1800: A Documentary Record* (1970). For retrospective narrative and analysis see L. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (1983); G. Day, *From Fiction to the Novel* (1987); M. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987); and J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels* (1990).

27 See E. Zimmerman, *Defoe and the Novel* (1975); J.J. Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (1975); P. Earle, *The World of Defoe* (1976); P. Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe* (1979); and G.M. Sill, *Defoe and the Idea of Fiction, 1713–1719* (1983).