

VOYAGES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE AS A JOURNEY TOWARDS SELF-DISCOVERY AND SOCIAL AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT:

Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe, first published in 1719, is a classic novel with a titular hero who has turned to be a literary image with a pioneering spirit and has a trend setting influence in the world literature. This paper explores Crusoe's ideologies, including his relationship with God, pragmatic outlook, disregard for convention, defiance of nature, and spirit of innovation and perseverance. Crusoe presents a cult figure in the age of industrialization and globalization. Individualism and the uncertainties that represent the fundamental complexity and incoherence of human nature appear simultaneously in the characterisation of Robinson Crusoe.

KEYWORDS— survivalist, upsurge, individualism, human nature, pragmatism, materialism, island, metaphor, racism, capitalism, morality, colonialism

The island metaphor has been used by many authors as an essential literary device to shape stories and points of view, especially when coupled with imagery of self-discovery. Images of islands are frequently employed in literature to illustrate plot elements, philosophical concepts, metaphorical landscapes, and more. Authors often employ the leitmotiv of being on an island for fictional characters, either voluntarily or unintentionally, to emphasize the extent to which they are being cut off from the mainstream of society.

Crusoe's isolation not only represents his exile from human society, but also exemplifies individual property ownership and prosperity and the island becomes a parody of Bourgeoisie individualism. This is evident given that Robinson Crusoe was published in 1719, just when significant alterations to the social structure and economic system were getting underway. The aristocratic system was progressively being replaced by a capitalist society at this time, where wealth and prestige were decided by an individual's capacity for accumulating riches rather than by their birth or the social standing of their ancestors.

“I should certainly run away from my master before my time was out, and go to sea...”

(Defoe,p.3). His middle-class upbringing helps him swiftly form a moral viewpoint on nature's unpredictable traits. Robinson, who is in great fear, believes that the ship's encounter with a powerful storm is God punishing him for his disobedient act of leaving his parents' house without their permission and can be associated to the Biblical reference of Adam and Eve's initial transgression and original sin. Crusoe asks God fervently to deliver him to safety. He makes a solemn vow to never again leave land or venture out to sea. The following morning, however, after the storm has passed, he starts to enjoy his time at sea and all ideas of morality and religion fade from his thoughts.

The initial goal of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is self-definition. The socio-economic themes pertaining to racism, capitalism, and colonialism are introduced soon, nevertheless. Crusoe first combines romanticism with passion and pragmatism, but over time he develops into a type of idol for narcissistic capitalism.

Corporate concerns and survivalist instincts of Crusoe is manifested when he is marooned on the island. Defoe does, however, constantly consider the nature of God and how he interacts with his creations from Robinson's perspective, as well as frequently examine his own actions and judgments. By doing so, Defoe upholds the moral traditions of the middle class while depicting the growth of commercial Europeans in the eighteenth century.

On his isolated ‘island of despair,’ Crusoe occasionally yearns for a companion, the comforts of society, and his family.

“Defoe recognized the benefits of the state of nature, but he believed that the freedom and purity of Crusoe’s island were minor advantages compared to the comfort and security of civilization” (Novak, 1963: 23) “Although most modern critics have regarded Crusoe as an embodiment of enterprising, fearless economic man...he is always afraid, always cautious” (Novak, 1962: 23).

Defoe was accurately portraying a time of pragmatism and rising materialism as a result of the modern upsurge in trade, commerce, and entrepreneurship, religion or morality in the book has been portrayed from the standpoint of usefulness and convenience. All the events that happen in Robinson's life have an impact on his responses and musings on divinity. He lacks any inborn religious conviction and is inconsistent in his opinions about moral rewards, punishment or sin and virtue. All his speculations depend on the immediate circumstances that he is associated with. Despite being marooned on the unidentified Caribbean Island for numerous years without regard for ethics or religion, Crusoe is battling for his life. He spends the following decade focused solely on his business endeavours, without giving morality or religion a second consideration. His journey to Guinea, his detention by the Turkish rover captain, his experiences with Xury, his rescue by the Portuguese captain, and the prosperity of his Brazilian plantation enterprise show how he gradually rose from a struggling Voyager to a prosperous planter and employer.

With a focus on the human ramifications of the control and exploitation of the colonial people and their lands, Defoe investigates the full influence of post-colonization and imperialism on cultural legacies through the story of Crusoe's existence. From a post-colonial perspective, the value of identity and ownership frequently relies on the opinion and perspective of "Robinson Crusoe," who, like any Western man at the time, believed in white supremacy until his unlucky arrival on the “Island of Despair” or another remote Caribbean Island opened his eyes to the bigger picture and ultimately helped him create his own identity as a devout Christian, only subject to God's will.

Edward Said describes Robinson Crusoe, as “a work whose protagonist is the founder of a new world, which he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England.” (Said,70). Crusoe's idea of ownership in the new world is clear throughout

the book. Even though he has no legal claim to Xury, he sells the fellow slave to the Portuguese Captain. As a result, Crusoe represents or reflects white supremacy and Colonialism, a time when non-Europeans were usually considered inferior and sold into slavery.

Friday, his father, a Spaniard, and the English seamen were under the complete control of Crusoe.: "My Island was now peopled...How like a King I look'd. First of all, the whole Country was my own mere property, so that I had an undoubted Right of Domination. Secondly, My People were perfectly subjected; I was absolute Lord and Law-giver" (Defoe, p.203). Crusoe fully appreciates the Captain of the English ship who "brought me six clean new Shirts, six very good Neck-cloaths, two Pair of Gloves, one Pair of Shoes, a Hat, and one Pair of Stockings [...]. In a Word, he clothed me from Head to Foot" (Defoe,p.230-1).Crusoe reveals that 'I came thither dress'd in my new Habit, and now I was call'd Governour' (Defoe, p.231)

After freeing Friday's father and the Spaniard from the "savages," Crusoe describes himself as a "king," "an absolute lord and lawgiver," and declares that the Island is now his "mere property" to reign over. He also boasts that he had spared the people from the cannibals. He believes that because they were now his property or subjects, he had the right to dominate them. Crusoe's perspective on ownership and control throughout the novel depicts colonialism and its reliance on the proprietary way of thinking. The metaphor used in the sentence "King" historically illustrates how there was no absolute monarchy in England before the English Commonwealth took control of the country in 1651. Though a delusion, Crusoe considers himself as the of 'king' in order to assert control over his small population of subjects (which consists only of animals) and to justify his political savvy in light of the absence of a monarchy and his feeling of "divided from mankind" on the "Island of Despair."

Louis James argues that Robinson Crusoe

[. . .] embodies a sturdy individualism, the values of the English yeoman. Yet, in ruling over his little kingdom, Crusoe also shows a monarchist desire for order and control. Crusoe illustrates the capitalist ideal of acquiring and producing, and even keeps a store of gold sovereigns. Yet he also inhabits an island where the capitalist value system of exchange is entirely absent, and where monetary wealth is useless. Most notably, the island is loss and plenitude, a place of exile and a refuge at the same time. Crusoe salvages everything he needs from the wreck, even pen, paper, guns and ammunition, and lives a paradigm of bourgeois respectability, even down to his cat, dog and his umbrella. Yet he is also portrayed as mere "natural" man, struggling with his bare hands against the environment, and forced to make for himself the most basic objects – a spade, cooking pots and bread from seed he has had to plant. Magically, both images of Crusoe exist side by side, and few readers question the contradiction." (James,p.7)

Crusoe doubts the earth's existence during his lengthy religious monologues, asserting that there is a huge power greater than humans. In an effort to atone for his errors, he frequently asks God for assistance. He feels that God is punishing him for his transgressions. He says that "I rejected the voice of Providence, which had mercifully put me in a posture or station of life wherein I might have been happy and easy" (Defoe,p.69). He becomes more devoted to God and religion as is obvious from the text's abundance of religious allusions. Then, he discovers and keeps the Bible, which demonstrates his religious identity because he reads it frequently. As Kay summaries: 'In Defoe's state of nature, humankind is fearful and weak. Self-preservation is the first law of nature [...]. Crusoe's anxious condition on his island was a state of war in Hobbes's sense because it was not just a determinate time of battle but a "continual state of mind"' (Kay, p.68)

Criticism of human nature by Defoe comes from Crusoe when he says "I was removed from all the wickedness of the world here. I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life" (Defoe, p. 98). Robinson Crusoe's persona serves as yet another instrument for criticizing humanity's selfishness. He criticizes society without understanding his own character and the arbitrary nature of his identity.

He always deliberates over his situation before making a decision. He applies reason, which is essential to understanding human nature and preventing violence. "I consulted several things in my situation, which I found would be proper for me" (Defoe, p. 44). He keeps books and writes a diary. It is the merit of civilized man to read and write, and use his logic. He makes a division of positive and negative sides of his condition which shows his reasonable wit. He tries to be as logical as possible, considering his situation.

Crusoe has become so egotistical that he appears to be frightened of people. Throughout the book, he appears terrified frequently which explores the psychology of people in their most natural form. The message might be that people aren't suited to be alone in the natural world. In addition, because humanity is so cruel, individuals tend to distrust one another. 'Although most modern critics have regarded Crusoe as an embodiment of enterprising, fearless economic man, he is always afraid, always cautious' (Novak, 1962: 23). He is extremely frightened by natural occurrences like earthquakes and violent storms. He has been unable to sleep for days because of his fear of the footprint he sees on the coast. He considers a number of options to which it might belong. "Fear of Danger is ten thousand Times more terrifying than Danger itself" (Defoe, p.135).

"Robinson Crusoe survives his loneliness, conquers his environment and becomes the 'King' of his island, ruling, at first, over his parrot, goats, dog, and cat." (Novak, 1963: 50-51). As soon as he rescues and acquires Friday, he views him as his servant. That demonstrates the innate human desire to be like God and superior to others. He claims that he needs to take a savage into his possession when he says that he needs someone to help him leave this island. He makes no mention of the need for a friend of his calibre. We can learn a lot about the nature of man from this text. Men typically require a community to live in since they are never safe on their own. Man may require the company of others, yet he seldom ever abandons his pride in society. The way Crusoe treated Friday demonstrates this aspect of human nature.

“This reckless and egoistic attitude towards one’s neighbour results naturally in a strong impulse to dominate and to command” (Häusermann, 1935: 449). This situation is the same when he saves the captain and the other men. When he has more people in the island, he asserts that he is the authority.

Ian Watt observes that the advent of the novel was accompanied by the emergence of a new social and economic philosophy, suggesting that Robinson’s “travels, like his freedom from social ties [...] by making the pursuit of gain a primary motive, economic individualism has much increased the mobility of the individual” (Watt,p.67). Literature influences society in a variety of ways, just as social events shape literary activities.

CONCLUSION

In this book, Defoe addresses colonialism by creating a fictional character who eventually takes control of an island and starts his own colony. Defoe's worldliness and selfish interests are projected through Crusoe's daring spirit .It was the time when white men had the aspirational goal of discovering new territories in order to establish their own colony and see themselves as the rulers of an island.Robinson Crusoe is a perfect choice to examine this aspect of human nature because it is built around the narrative of a single main character, which allows for a full presentation of human psychology. The various circumstances that the novel progresses through reflect the complex human character and psyche. In this regard, the connections between literature and social life are apparent. We have reached the question of individualism and the emergence of the novel thanks to the process that began with the Renaissance and Humanism.

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