

# Space Identity and Literature

Bhaskar Ch Sarkar



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## CHAPTER 11

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# Robison Crusoe and His Way to Moral Survival

*Natka Jankova Alagjozovska and Simona Serafimovska*

### Introduction

Being an Englishman from the town of York in the seventeenth century, the youngest son of a merchant from German origin is not the point of introducing a prototype in the English society. It is a kind of a saga being narrated through the emotional discourse of parental prohibition and descendant's attitudes and goals. Introducing his father as 'a foreigner of Bremen', leads Robinson Crusoe to readers' positive views.

Introducing his parents objectively through their origin, professions and residence, Robinson gives the information that there is no affection or any kind of strong attachment among them. Leaving home may be a kind of tradition and family habit that has been running in the family since his father is an immigrant himself. Contrary to that, his father is the one who finds it difficult to tame Robinson's adventurous disposition and discourages him from social or geographical mobility. Remaining will make him maximize his potential for economic growth. His father considers maintaining stability in the society in freedom without the worst extremes. This is a kind of approval to the path of his own life, a kind of proven strategy to go "silently and smoothly through the World", and comfortably out of it, achieving goals and experiencing pleasures without too much travail. He is trying to show that Crusoe's current situation is the most suitable to him and will enable him life in happiness and rewards for being of that kind. He, his father even blames himself guilty to accept Robinson's foolish step of going abroad.

## Robinson Crusoe in Space and Time

The story of Crusoe paves the way of his transition from social isolation and disconnection to self-actualisation and social reintegration. Crusoe's appropriation of the island serves as an example of this conversion process, as it becomes the place onto which all of his fears and hopes are inscribed. As a result, the island is "transformed" from an undeveloped wilderness into a cultivated "paradise" that stands as a testament to both Enlightenment rectitude and Western accomplishment. "At last, being eager to view the circumference of my little kingdom, I resolved upon my cruise." (Defoe, 218). As a result, Robinson Crusoe creates an appealing and imaginatively approachable concrete cultural space that symbolises a social totality. Even if it is fictional, this kind of cultural space normalises notions of "home" and "empire" by framing the unknown in terms of the familiar. Crusoe's subliminal expression of his neurosis over his "kingdom" being penetrated by outside forces is his conversion of space. As a result, when Crusoe discovers a mystery footprint in the sand, the rationalist and individualistic world order he has built on the island is upset. When the footprint is found, it raises doubts about the validity and durability of Crusoe's island sovereignty. The footprint, a precise spatial marking, takes on symbolic meaning that represents presence as well as absence and loss. Thus, Crusoe's island becomes a utopia of middle-class, eighteenth-century British values. As a result, Defoe was able to familiarise and normalise readers of the eighteenth century with concepts of space that they had never encountered before. The numerous facets of culture that the book might be claimed to contain are the focus of our analysis of Robinson Crusoe. According to Bauman (1987), referring to farming, culture was "the master term for the new mechanisms of social reproduction – both designed and centrally operated". The second part of the seventeenth century saw this change in nomenclature. In the past, social norms and conduct were perpetuated by methods that seemed self-evident, either by adhering to "the nature of things" or a "divine order" (Bauman, 94).

When one examines how simple it is to remove the outward manifestations of Crusoe's inner independent self from the environment, the island's ambivalent nature becomes even more apparent. Crusoe's island becomes a mere embodiment of an Enlightenment vision of progress and rational design, as his being and Friday's are enclosed within an imperialist, masculine, and racist

construction of space. This static nature of the monologist world order that Crusoe establishes on the island also reveals it as a site that resists renewal and lacks authenticity.

Speaking about the wilderness, in most adventure literatures, the isolated island wilderness frequently serves as an idyllic or utopian setting since islands – whether real or symbolic – represent the perfect setting for daring endeavors and imperial ideals. Because the desert island is immune to everyday political, social, and cultural meddling, Loxley (1990) argues that the island in literature is a place where historical and political tensions are erased. As Defoe's story so eloquently demonstrates, the island thus provides the perfect context in which the key issues of colonialism and imperialism can be articulated. Existential anxiety is compared to colonial anxiety by Crusoe, who expresses his experience of displacement in terms of religion and spirituality. Both types of worry are addressed by spiritual change and land confinement. In this way, the philosophical aspect of spatial conversion is added, and Crusoe uses it to mediate his colonisation of the island.

### **The Reverence and Irreverence Between Father and Son**

Through such a condemnation it seems out of proportion to his travel request, a kind of father's command. Robinson Crusoe never suggests that such commands are unwarranted but infuses them as a sense of destiny upon what otherwise may have been well – meant advice. He structured it as a fatal propensity and a rebellion against his father's desires.

Robinson is unable to take that concern to his heart. He seems to be of the kind left with no consideration of circumstances or consequences, but strongly persuaded in the belief in 'fatal' quality of nature. Crusoe leaves the circumstances in which he has been advised to stay and departs for a long experience or wisdom, seeking for a home or an ordeal grasping the notion of adopting to one's environment believing that identities, or at least names may change when people change places. This shows his ambivalences of mastery, the necessity of repentance and the importance of self – awareness. He suffers a storm at sea near Yarmouth, foreshadowing his shipwreck years later, dreaming of cannibals arriving and ensuring his survival through storms, enslavement and twenty – eight year isolation on Desert Island. He succeeds to be the master of the situation, overcoming almost all the obstacles and controlling the



environment he's been stucked at. Here, on this island, which he calls the Island of Despair, he finally realises the meaning of his father's words. Surrounded by nobody to share his distress with in that wilderness, he has to fight with nature for his survival:

All the rest of that day I spent in afflicting myself at the dismal circumstances I was brought to, viz. I had neither food, house, clothes weapon, or place to fly to, and in despair of any relief, saw nothing by death before me, either that I should be devoured by wild beasts, murdered by savages, or starved to death for a want of food. (p. 61)

This is moreover his self-determination i.e., to suffer a hard fate and find prosperity. This is in fact the positive or light side of the condition of mastery in himself, illustrating his newfound control over nature. This makes him a master of his fate and of himself. But his mastery gets a kind of a shadow and becomes less possible after Friday's arrival. This seems to show the unfair relationships between humans.

### **The Moral Side of the Story**

His story illustrates also the right and wrong ways of living one's life. This dimension is moral and religious, instructs God's wisdom and repents people's sins. Crusoe is persuaded that his major sin is his rebellious behavior towards his father and he considers it as an 'original sin' (Novak, 1961). Defoe wrote Robinson Crusoe primarily with the intention of spreading a Christian message. As the novel goes on, Crusoe grows more and more devout because he understands that God had given him plenty of warning – storms, pirates, etc. – that calamity would befall him if he disregarded his father's admonition. He also understands that his good fortune in escaping the catastrophe, having access to the ship's supplies, and finding himself on an island with food, drink, and no dangerous animals could not have happened by accident. He finds himself a wealthy man upon his return to England, and his luck keeps getting better. Crusoe comes to the conclusion that these circumstances could only be explained by an all-powerful, loving, and forgiving God. But he also believes that a human must keep clear state of his own soul. He always keeps accounts of himself enthusiastically and in various ways.

### **The Philosophical Side of the Story**

Writing his autobiographical calendar, Crusoe exposes to the reader the importance of always staying aware in the situation and he teaches nature itself to reflect his own self-awareness. But, what's the major point of this? You have to have food, to be well fed if you want to survive. This illustrates the philosophical taught "eat or be eaten" i.e., the image of self-existence. But there is always danger and fear. In the novel it's hidden in the water – the major source. Natural philosophy in the classical tradition involved the pursuit of the ultimate cause of creatures, the purpose appropriate to the subject of inquiry. Any thing's veracity as such may only be observed after its purpose is established. For example, the eye is only deserving of the name since it is able to see. The goal or appropriate operation of the eye is sight. In other words, sight serves as the "end" or "the final cause" of the whole eye activity. Because of this, the goal of classical philosophy was to become wise with regard to the purpose or "good" of everything. This is made evident by Aristotle's description of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom, which is a manner of thinking that aims to express the ultimate reason for everything – the "why" and "good" of it all (Aristotle, 1999). "The one who knows that for the sake of which everything must be done, and this is the good in each case, and, generally, the highest good in the whole of nature," is the ultimate philosopher and knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

All these concepts represent the abstract ideas of human survival or opportunities for enjoyment. Life may be enjoyed only after hard work. When you finish it, your goals and aims are achieved. Robinson's geographical mobility leads him to economic success. Being a kind of a self – maid man he records his experiences and achievements, scrutinising the nature of his moral survival in front of his father and in front of God, showing that there's nothing stronger than the unity of heart and mind. At the end, he is the hero to himself, practical maybe rather psychological but with fascinating aspects of mind being previously confirmed through his narrating to himself, his father and the society he lived in. By applying the lens of the relationship between narrativity and cultivation (of nature) to an examination of Robinson Crusoe, one may see that the book presents one of the fundamental myths that establish the connection between "man, his culture, and his biophysical surroundings". Its impact can be seen in many fields, most notably educational theory.

Crusoe was an allegory and a work of history, according to Defoe. Defoe did his hardest to make the events in the book seem credible, insisting that his protagonist was a real person whose experiences he was just describing. As an allegory, Crusoe tells the story of the rise of civilisation – at least the kind found in western Europe – from his unfortunate tree-hooping refuge to his eventual mastery of shipbuilding, horticulture, potting, herding, and shepherding, as he gradually gains control over more and more of the island. The narrative implies that this growth required the intervention of a loving God, as well as good fortune or grace. More troublingly, it also implies that civilisation is superior. It has no compunctions about slaughtering or enslaving people from purportedly lower civilisations. The castaway's situation was widely perceived in the eighteenth century as a sign of spiritual detachment. Thus, in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment, the castaway had to transcend the constraints of worldly existence. Through his interactions with the island environment, Crusoe shows how one man overcomes a state of spiritual desertion by providing the island with all the necessities of a civilised existence.

Finally, apart from the ethical and theological readings of the book's narrative, economists consider several economic forces that have shaped Robinson Crusoe's evolution over time. When Crusoe first considers himself alone on the island, he observes that his money is worthless in comparison to his equipment. This point was further examined by Karl Marx (1926), in relation to the worth of labor and capital. It is also shown how Robinson Crusoe must choose between work and leisure time in order to meet all of his wants in the absence of money, prices, and commerce. When Friday finally arrives, it is shown how the man's life was improved by trade apart from all the other reasons mentioned above.

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