
REALISM AND COLONIALISM IN DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE***Mariwan Hasan,* Awara Hamasaeed**Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Sulaimani,
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ABSTRACT

This study deals with realism in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Realism in the study explained the straightforward treatment in life. Realism sheds light on the immediate, the specific actions and their verifiable consequences. Realism seeks a direct connection between representation and the subject. The study is aimed to interpret the actualities of any aspect of life, not restricted to subjective prejudice, idealism, or romantic color. First, an introduction is presented about Realism, which is comprehensively linked to the history of realism and its revolution. Then, the reasons that affected development of English novel will be explained in details. Moreover, we give an extensive emphasis on realism in English literature and describe the novel in 18th century. Then, characteristics of English novel is explained in details and definitions of realism according to a number of authors expressed then we talk about Daniel Defoe as the father of early English novel. Finally, *Robinson Crusoe* is analyzed and the most important themes of the novel such as colonialism and realism are shed light on to show the degree of similitude in the novel that drew the attention of its readers since the 18th century.

Keywords: eighteenth century novel, early English novel, Daniel Defoe, Realism, Robinson Crusoe

INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the word realism is an idea that has been based on the senses of human. For example, we humans believe what we see. There are various definitions of the word realism. It is a rich term and has been used in many ways throughout the history. It was being used by the old philosophers of Greek. Then it was used in other areas to make those better. It was changing from time to time but the principle was the same. We have to know what the definition of realism is to be able to comprehend the meaning of the word. There are two ways of looking at the definition of the term. The first way is by

using a dictionary to define it. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of the word realism is the “concern for fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and visionary.” Through this definition, we can see that the definition of the word is to accept the reality and reject unreasonable factors. The second way to look at a definition of the word is to mean realistic novels. According to Virginia Woolf, “Realism is an aesthetic mode which broke with the classical demands of art to show life as it should be in order to show life as it is” (Bignami, 1997 and Defoe, 1791). We can say that it is an idea where there are things that can be believed or not but they remain the same. For example, we can say the Earth is sphere whether we believe it or not, it is a fact and we cannot stand against. This is the definition of the word in two different ways. There is a big difference between them. We can say that the word is very different in dictionary than the idea. The idea in the novel is more abstract than the dictionary definition.

The origin of the word or the idea goes back to the ancient Greek. We can see this word in the writings of great philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. They have discussed this term in their time. In their time, there were people who were with and against the idea of realism. The term has been used in many ways like arts, novel and physics. The realism in art was started by Gustave Courbet who was a French painter after the nineteenth century. He started this movement because the art at that time generally was about Romanticism which is more about idealism or imagination. He changed this term to a more realistic term and used it in the new era of art. The term of realism in this essay is novel realism as we defined it above. The first appearance of the term ‘realism’ in novels was back to the nineteenth century. The pioneer of the realistic novels was Honoré de Balzac who was a French novelist. He started using this term in his writings. He believed that a hero in a novel should be a simple man who cannot have super strength or be exceptional. Before him, novels were describing the hero of the story to be an extraordinary man who could be different from an ordinary man. Balzac changed this idea to be a more realistic hero. This idea became alive because the writings of that time were not close to the real-life examples. As we can see in a quote, that is being mentioned after this sentence that the first writers who started are many. Virginia Woolf claims “The realist novel first developed in the nineteenth century and is the form we associate with the work of writers such as Austen, Balzac, George Eliot and Tolstoy” (Parmar, 2000). We can see many names in who started writing realistic novels back in their time. Since then, realistic novels have been more developed and being used more than the old-fashioned novels such as romanticist writings. They have been using this method to make the characters of their novels to more like a natural human who gains more wisdom or power as time goes by. It is clear that there are different ways of defining the word realism. The ways are defining it in dictionary and the idea of realism in novels. The first writer to use realism in his writings was Honoré de Balzac. He has used in the beginning of nineteenth century.

The concept of realism came to English literature since the middle of 19th Century. This perception was new and was advocated by a number of writers at that time. Nonetheless, the romantic genre of novel was dominant

compared to other genres of writings since the occurrence of novel in English literature. Then, other writings like the one of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* came to the field of novel which was a shift in changing the gear of novel genre in which it favored realistic type of story. The literature now is toward more realistic and less romantic features (Hasan 2015).

George Eliot in the manuscript of *Adam Bede* which was interpreted by many critics, she goes toward a realistic type of writing. John Ruskin argued that *realism* as the principle of truth and aesthetic are to be reached by a discreet and faithful study of nature (*The Westminster Review*, 1). Eliot was influential in her insistence on the modesty of true realism – its attention to what is 'ordinary'. In her first novel *Adam Bede*, she steps into her own story to liken the 'truthfulness', for which she aims, to the quality of 'many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise'. She finds 'delicious sympathy' in 'these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence'.

According to Ali Taghizadeh's article, "The Theory of Literary Realism", realism in English literature is 'multi-faceted' as he explains, "Realism is often multi-faceted. Literary academics often find it in relation with the rise of novel, and thus rightly claim that it is narrative. Another facet of realism is the relation between literature and reality, between what the word says and what the life is. This dimension is usually dealt with under –representation|| which is psychological, cognitive, as well as anthropological." Taghizadeh, 1629) Therefore, realism, according to him, is relating real life circumstances with literature. He also mentions in his article the factors that motivate realism in English Literature as he says, "The appearance of female society, the increase of wealth, the mandatory education, and the development of journalism had also significant roles in the rise and development of the English novel as a product of realism. (Taghizadeh, 1628)

Another literary critic named George P. Landow in his article "Realism" defines realism in English literature as a factor that lays in now and here. He further explains, dissimilar to "Platonism and Philosophical Realism", Realism considers that "reality inheres in the here and now". It therefore emphasizes accurate descriptions of specific setting, dress, and character in ways that would have appeared entirely inappropriate to Neoclassical and earlier authors. Realism, which emphasizes the importance of the ordinary the ordinary person and the ordinary situation, tends to reject the heroic and the aristocratic and embrace the pedestrian, the comic, and the middle class." (1). He also shows the strength of Realism in English literature compared to other nations realism by that in English literature, mostly the focus is on the plot rather than fiction aspects as he says, "Realism in England does not focus on certain traits of fiction, like description or dialogue, usually seem "more suited to Realism than do others, such as plot, whose beginning and ending reveals its artificiality. Take each novel you have read in the course and determine which elements seem adequately described by the terms "realist" or "realistic."" (Landow 1)

There were a number of studies been conducted about Daniel Defoe and *Robinson Crusoe*. Some of the critics studies Defoe as a pioneer of the English novel, merely. Seidel (2011) studies this novel in terms of theory of fiction and Novak (1963) as an "economic utopia". Also, Flint (1988) studies

kinship in *Robinson Crusoe*. Richetti (2003) adds that what Defoe has been after to seek the attention of the new generation of readers. However, he considered Defoe's approach very uncontroversial. However, if we make a survey of the past centuries, it cannot be denied that Defoe's works of fiction during the eighteenth century for more than ten years were masterpieces. It can also be depicted from earlier discussions on Defoe how his high desire and proficiency made him superior in writing lengthy narratives. Among those long narratives though, there are many less extended works too. A large portion of his journalistic works show spectacular personification alongside impressive storytelling. What is more is that from 1720 onwards, certain writing practices indicate Defoe was making himself ready for a new form of fictional work which was inventive and creative. That is pamphlets with political controversies based on simple storytelling of trivial importance yet sometimes pleasurable (Flint, 1988).

Defoe, in *Robinson Crusoe's* viewpoint is more associated with aspects from the west cultures such as commercialism. Other parts of the world were vulnerable for attack, transformation of foreign culture lifestyles and belief system. There are cases that Robinson has the attempt of convincing people to convert to his religion; Christianity. For that, Robinson as usually recognized as a western colonist around the world (Hasan 2015).

Robinson believes that affluence is a good indication of nobility and authority. To give an example, he usually tends to mention his possessions such the large areas of land that he uses for farming, the amount of supply of drink and food, and equipment as well as the money and coins he happens to find and keep them. Additionally, he also mentions that where he is living is seemingly like a castle to him and, thus, he views himself a King of that castle. For that, Robinson thinks that in addition to belief and religion, wealth is also a significant factor in the novel. When he is preaching his son, Robinson does not listen to his father at first as he is interested in exploring the world, gaining new experiences, and becoming rich. When his ships sink at the sea, it seems like Robinson is punished for not being obedient. However, he still was able become affluent in addition to ending up a survivor in the novel. Therefore, Robinson's religious standpoint is made obvious when he is morally punished for his sin. Other writers' opinion of *Robinson Crusoe* suggests that he tends to indirectly represent the personal life Defoe. Clive Probyn (1987), for instance, claims that Robinson has used to storytelling, and he supports his claim with Charles Gildon's analysis of Defoe's *First Substantive Critic*. Yet, Leslie Stephan's opinion of Defoe is way different in that he reports that *Defoe's* writings are more popular and read among the teenage group age as compared to adults. The tales that are involving adventurous experiences are very entertaining for boys. However, it may not be very interesting for men as they prefer, most often, intellectuality over entertainment. In short, Defoe and novelists who received support from a large audience, printing, the emergence of the common-class, and exploring other parts of the world helped succeeding in writing a famous novel. Other writers have tried to produce novels. However, they failed at presenting a well-written work and a fancy style of narrative.

METHOD

The paper will look into the term of realism and its application in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. It will explore some definitions of realism as it is linked to the episodes of the novel. Then, Data will be gathered from the text of novel and will be interpreted through historical and analytical approaches. Moreover, the study will get benefit from the previous critical studies conducted on Daniel Defoe's works to highlight the reality of the events and the characters in *Robinson Crusoe*. A number of existing studies also was examined written around Defoe's novel although no paper has been conducted on this topic yet. Then, the meaning and definitions of realism will be presented and explained and its reflection in the text will be demonstrated, critically.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Robinson Crusoe who is a fictional character of the Daniel Defoe's novel starts his journey to see the world. The character is a rebellious kind of man. He seeks for new territory findings. His father on the other hand is against his journeys and warns him of curse that will be upon him which leads Robinson to leave his house and starts his journeys. At a point, Robinson ends up in a deserted lonely island. Here, his transformation starts in which he changes from a rebellious man to a religious man that transforms himself and others to Christianity. In this paper, I will demonstrate the religion and colonial aspects or themes of Daniel Defoe's novel concerning Robin Crusoe's life. The theme of colonialism in the Defoe's novel starts at the point where Robinson starts building his house so as called his "empire" in the island. This aspect comes to play in the novel when Robinson starts thinking of building and making new structures and life style in the island where he knew exactly that this place will be his home for a long period of time. Also, the fact that he believe that the life on this island is a kind of danger on his life due to existence of wild dangerous animals or maybe dangerous tribes of humans. Nonetheless, the fear of your life makes any human being to be a colonialist especially when having the feeling of loneliness and danger. We see this in the book where it says, "I cut down young trees and put them in the ground, in a half circle around the front of my tent. I used many of the ship's ropes too, and in the end my fence was as strong as stone wall. Nobody could get over it, through it, or round it."(Robinson Crusoe, 15)

Gradually, Robinson starts to make his house that he made in front a cave bigger and bigger. The life on the island was a threat to Robinson. The weather and the atmosphere were big barriers in a time or another for him. A new lifestyle and a new merge of sophistication for him. Robinson was aware of the fact that he needs to adapt to live on the lonely island. The island was a total new chapter in Crusoe's life where, he needed to learn new things to keep him alive. Robinson started to think logically of the new world he is living in. day by day, he learnt new and ambitious matters. For example he starts to know how to make a pot where he says, "I made some new pots and put them in a very hot fire. They changed colour, but did not break. I left them there for many hours, and when they were cold again, I found that they were

hard and strong." (*Robinson Crusoe* 23) Later on, he sees that the Island is more than a deserted Island where he can start his inventions and have a better location to live, but he did not rush in that. Step by step, he was introduced to new things like crops, hunt and explorations. One day, Crusoe starts to be frightened as he sees a man's footprint on the island after many years of living there. As he says, "I went over to look at it more carefully, and stopped in sudden surprise. It was a footprint - the footprint of a man! Who could this be? Afraid, I looked around me." (*Robinson Crusoe*, 23)

At this point, we see that the feeling of fear makes a man more of a careful one which leads him to worry him at first, but later to be a colonizer that annexes other peoples that live in his location. Nonetheless, Robinson already made his 'empire' here and he lives in a place that he believes he has the total authority over it. Therefore, the ideas of colonization already started to grow in this man's mind. Also, he starts to have his gun wherever he goes on the island which means that he is able to face the dangers that will face him and his territory. In the chapter of 'Wild Friday', he rescues a prisoner from a thirty men group who came to his island to kill their two prisoners. At this point, Robinson calls this new found man his 'prisoner'. This is a thought of a colonizer in which you rescue prisoner but still stays as your belonging and jailbird. He names his prisoner 'Man Friday' as he found him on Friday and that he needed a name to call him by. The thoughts of naming a prisoner and keeping him for your concerns are total demonstration of colonialist. Then this man shows his total belonging to Robinson as Crusoe says, "When he woke up in the morning, he ran out to me. I was milking my goats in the field, and he got down on the ground and put his head near my foot. I understood that was thanking me, and I tried to show him that I was his friend." (*Robinson Crusoe*, 29) Soon after that, Crusoe starts to teach him English and Friday's first words are 'master', 'yes', and 'no'. It is clear that Robinson does not want this man to be at his level, but to be a kind of his slave that he has total power over him. Also, Robinson was still afraid of him that one day he might coup on him due to that he was wild man that he did not trust him much. Robinson's power on the island was very noticeable due to that he knew everything about the island in his period of life in there. Therefore, this made him a superior to anyone on the island if existed. He established his power and total authority over the island as he was the first to come to this island and renovate the place a better place for living especially for himself. His realism works to embrace the myths of economic and psychological self-sufficiency in a consistency of considerable detail.

In the novel Crusoe takes an importance as a character because he stands as a stable and understandable topic in the beginning of a rising territory. The attitude of a colonizer is his possession. "He is a fighter who struggles hard to establish his self-importance and dominance. On the island, Crusoe constantly faces physical peril, both real and imagined. He finds himself in a setting that could easily overpower him. But, Crusoe responds positively to confirm his self-importance. Surveying his circumstances on the island, Crusoe imagines himself "Lord of the whole Mannor; or if I please'd, I might call myself King, or Emperor over the whole Country which I had possession of". (1) (*Robinson Crusoe*) This shows that Robinson saw himself

as the originator of this island. Also, according to law in the eighteenth century, sea belonged islands to the first occupant. As the novel developments it's clear that Robinson flinches to think of himself as the complete ruler or legislator of the island. Robinson alters himself and also the island. His way of inaugurating regular control over the island and his management of Friday make him a model of colonization. He not only takes physical control of matters, but he also settles verbal and ethnical supremacy too. Crusoe brands laws for the island; he gives names to different locations and stuffs on the island. Consequently, he both generates and adopts control over his island which became his home. Robinson Crusoe's journey is more than just a simple story in which a man stranded on a lonely island. This island is only an inconsistent place because it instantaneously becomes a threat and a heaven. If he does not make it his paradise, it will devastate and defeat Crusoe. This novel shows us that by mastering his own self, Crusoe chiefs his destiny; and he masters others by mastering his destiny; consequently, he masters the economic possibilities of life by mastering these. Another aspect of Defoe's novel is religion. In this novel, Defoe shows the religion transformation of a mankind (whose character is Robinson Crusoe). He gives the message of humankind whom changes totally from rebellious man to a religious man due to that he is lonely on an island all by himself which consequently leads him to be nearer to God. Of course, when a person gets alone, that person's connection becomes stronger and stronger with God and that is because of his loneliness.

The progression in mankind's mind goes more toward a religious perspective. On the island, he always tries to make others fall for his religion (which is Christianity). The first person that he transforms him from another religion is Friday. The progression of Crusoe's religion adaptation starts at the point when he goes on a voyage with a friend of him. There was a bad storm while they were on the ship in the middle of the sea. It is at that moment when he bows to God and makes his promise to God that he will be a believer and follow God's path. The promise that he tells his God that he will never go on ship voyages anymore. Therefore, we can take that as the very first step for rebellion guy to become religious although later when he comes back, he breaks his promise that he made with his God by planning for another journey. This time, their ship breaks down and all of his crew die except he stays alive, but left out alone on a lonely island where he does not have any idea where it is. This becomes a turnover point for Crusoe's religious ideology in which he turns to a total Christian. He thanks God for saving him while all others are dead, but he survived. We can say at this point, he realizes that God has given him another life chance so that he learns and do not break promises with his God. Also, he realizes the powers of God and what he is capable of. He also disobeyed his dad for the same matter of religion as he says, " THAT evil influence which carried me first away from my father's house - which hurried me into the wild and indigested notion of raising my fortune, and that impressed those conceits so forcibly upon me as to make me deaf to all good advice, and to the entreaties and even the commands of my father." (Robinson Crusoe, 23). When he was landed on the shore of an unknown island, he realized that God saved him and said, " I was

now landed and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved, in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope."(Robinson Crusoe, 17) This shows Robinson's regression to what he did and his disobedient to God and his father.

At this point the protestant ideology in his mind starts to grow which later he becomes a total protestant. He believes in God and starts turning other to God's religion. With the redeeming structure of Robinson Crusoe story, we can notice many Biblical aspects established in the Defoe's novel. For Instance, Crusoe's own story looks like the parable of the prodigal son. The character of Crusoe is also pretty similar to such Biblical figures as Jonah (the one that the whale swallowed him) or Job (whom loses everyone and everything he loved). These peoples' faiths tested through many prosecutions and a marvelous quantity of sorrow. Later on, the novel becomes more like a collection of observations concerning religion. To sum up, the two perspectives of the Defoe's novel give us two different aspects that happen in any man's life. First, a man who was a colonizer that annexes the territories he goes to. Second, the same man that transforms from a rebellious man to a religious man that totally believes in God and Christianity. In these two themes, Defoe spreads the message of how a man's life changes under different circumstances and conditions.

Robinson Crusoe, or The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe is a romance which has a claim to be the first English novel. But the book is rich enough to contain a number of overlapping meanings, and it would be rash to discount many of the religious, economic, social, or philosophic ideas which have been discovered. The heart of the book is to be found in Crusoe's stay on the island, particularly his early years of solitude and self-communion, and it can be analyzed down to component parts which look like the ingredients of minor art. It draws on many traditions: the narratives of voyages and discoveries which were then so popular, the biographies of puritan converts, the tales of providential escape from natural hazards. Defoe was probably familiar with several versions of this tale, and added many incidents from his own imagination to his account of Crusoe, presenting it as a true story. The extraordinarily convincing account of the shipwrecked Crusoe's successful efforts to make himself a tolerable existence in his solitude first revealed Defoe's genius of vivid fiction. The author tells how, with the help of a few stores and utensils saved from the wreck and the exercise of infinite ingenuity, Crusoe built himself a house, domesticated goats, and made himself a boat. The author describes the perturbation of Crusoe's mind caused by a visit of cannibals, his rescue from death of an indigenous native he later names Friday, and finally the coming of an English ship whose crew are in a state of mutiny, the subduing of the mutineers, and Crusoe's rescue. Crusoe may be plausibly interpreted as a social misfit, unwisely rebelling against the safe "middle station" to which he was born. He can equally be seen as alone colonist, improving his state by well-planned industry and prudent measures of self-help. He has been viewed as the embodiment of capitalism, as a figure symbolizing the isolation of puritan spirituality, as the forerunner of nineteenth-century imperialism, as a type of the prodigal son. Not all these conflicting interpretations can be

wholly correct, since they involve different readings of crucial episodes, such as the "original sin" of running away to sea, on Friday.

Defoe continued to compose consequence which was not quite known to people; *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. His purpose was to make it the culmination of his stories, agreeing to the original title-page of its first edition but the third part, *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* was written; it is mostly forgotten series of moral essays with Crusoe's name attached to give interest (*Robinson Crusoe* 265-78).

CONCLUSIONS

In this research paper we analyzed the first English novel in order to reveal the truthful treatment of the English literature and to show the relationship between representation and the subject. In order to analyze the reality of realism in the novels, I studied *Robinson Crusoe* novel which was written by Daniel Defoe, which deals with a young boy who does not consider his father's commands. The young boy likes to become a sailor and he takes a trip across ocean however he faced many troubles during his journey. After all challenges, he could solve all problems faced him. Finally, he becomes the famous person after discovering a new island and new life, so his life was completely close to reality in the novel. From the analysis, we conclude that, the realism had a great impact on people's thought because deployment of realism made all people to have interest in reading genres.

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