



DOI: **10.5958/2249-7137.2020.01742.5**

DANIEL DEFOE'S "ROBINSON CRUSOE" AS THE PROTOTYPE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

Hikmatova Nargiza Ravshanovna*

*Teacher,

Bukhara State University,

UZBEKISTAN

Email id: mega.hikmatova@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Robinson Crusoe's experience is not only the adventure tale it seems at first, but a moral illustration of the virtues of solitude and reliance on one's own powers and resources. In the beginning, Crusoe can only comprehend his isolation as a punishment. Though, by the end of his adventure, when he turns an uninhabited island into a piece of civilized land, he reaches the inner peace of soul and mind. In the broad sense, "Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" marks the beginning of the history of European realistic novels and it was Defoe who pioneered this genre.

KEYWORDS: *Enlightenment, Adventure, Virtues, Realistic Novel.*

INTRODUCTION

At the time of the creation of the novel, Daniel Defoe had already had a great experience: he came from a lower-class family, was a member of the rebellion led by Duke of Monmouth, escaped execution, traveled through Europe and knew six languages, and experienced malevolence and beneficence of Fortune. However, the author of "Robinson Crusoe" is one of the most mysterious literary figures of the period. There are still many dark areas in his biography, to begin with, the date of his birth which is not yet certain. In his early years, Daniel Defoe was a witness of the two greatest calamities of the seventeenth century: a recurrence of the plague and the Great Fire of London in 1666. Such events could have shaped his high interest in catastrophes and survival in his works. Defoe acted as a publicist, political journalist, and pamphleteer for Harley and other politicians. Moreover, he worked as a spy reflecting his own changeable identity as a merchant, poet, journalist, and prisoner. This characteristic of variable personality would later be depicted in the life of Robinson Crusoe, who turns to be a merchant, slave, plantation owner, and even unofficial king.

Main body

The narrator of Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe, has a conspicuous style of relying on reason. Defoe, being a journalist, makes the work seem realistic not fiction by referring to many details. There are a number of objects and particular actions that impose this feeling on the reader making one think that whatever happens to Crusoe is true. The author creates this impression of absolute reality by three main methods, which are the use of details, the form of biography or the first-person narration, and the nautical language.

Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe, altered storytelling at the same period when philosophers revolutionized an "individual". The resemblance in both had led to a view of changing the value of society from protecting the common good to a high estimation of personal freedom. The main purpose of Enlightenment was to resolve conflicts by means of reason, thus Robinson Crusoe attempts to settle personal conflicts through experience.

Furthermore, the Enlightenment ideal presented by Crusoe is the right to seek happiness, the idea propagated by many Enlightenment philosophers: "...The highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness; so, the care of ourselves...is the necessary foundation of our liberty"¹. Crusoe pursues his ideal by leaving his father by becoming a sailor. Later he almost dies during his first voyage and attributes it to God's punishment for disobeying his father, but still returns to the sea. "That evil influence which carried me first away from my father's house which hurried me into the wild and chaotic notion of raising my fortune, and that impressed those conceits so forcibly upon me as to make me deaf to all good advice"². By leaving not only his father but God as well, Crusoe moves in the direction of the individual freedom proposed by several philosophers of the Enlightenment period. The plot of the novel is based on a real story told by Captain Woods Rogers in the report of his journey, which Defoe could read in the press. Thus, part of his narrative follows the story of the Scottish castaway. Alexander Selkirk, who spent four years and five months stranded in the Juan Fernandez Islands³. Captain Rogers described how his crew saved a man from that uninhabited island in the Atlantic. Alexander Selkirk, the mate on the English ship, was known for his wild temper, quarrelling with his captain, and was landed on the island with a gun, gunpowder, tobacco stock, and the Bible. When Rogers later found the sailor, the man was wearing a goatskin and "looked on the more savage the original owner of this garment." ⁴He had forgotten how to speak and on the way to England hid the biscuits in secret places, so it took some time for him to return to a civilized state. Unlike his prototype, Defoe's Crusoe did not lose his humanity even after twenty-eight years on a desert island and the narrative of Robinson Crusoe is permeated with enthusiasm and optimism.

Through the book, the protagonist of the novel, Robinson, an exemplary English entrepreneur who embodies the ideology of the bourgeois class, grows to a monumental image of the creative and constructive abilities of a man. Robinson, the son of a merchant of York, from his early years, dreams of the sea. On the one hand, there is nothing unusual for a common Englishman of that period as long as England was the leading maritime power in the world; English sailors crossed all the oceans and a sailor was the most common and honorable profession. On the other hand, Robinson is neither attracted by the sea for its romantic nature, nor he is trying to master the skills of seamanship, and in all voyages, he is merely a passenger paying the fare. Robinson pursues a more prosaic reason: a reckless idea to make fortune roaming around the world. In fact,

outside Europe, it was easy to get rich quickly with a bit of luck, and Robinson runs out of his home ignoring the admonitions of his father. According to Franco Moretti who states that "the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, and the modern novel, begin when a son no longer heeds his father's wise counsel" ⁵and Moretti unfolds the appearance of the novel in this tension between authority and a "new attitude towards life and history". Although the topics of the journey and paternal disagreement reflect actual issues of all times reappearing in much of the novelistic traditions, many have chosen to ignore these parts of the book. Jean Jacques Rousseau, for instance, in his "Emile, ou L' Education" (1762), in which Robinson Crusoe is stated as the only book worth reading as part of a child's education, "had no patience with Defoe's frame-story (the way Crusoe sought his route to the island and twenty-eight years later, his journey back to England); he was interested only in the episodes on the island". ⁶

So this was the central point of the novel, namely an unprecedented experiment that the author puts on his hero. Robinson is a small representative of the bourgeois world, the one not seeing himself out of this system and treating everything around as a means to achieve his goals, the one who traveled through three continents purposefully following his way to great wealth. He is artificially taken out of society and placed in isolation face to face with nature. An experiment on a man was conducted in the "laboratory" conditions of a tropical desert island: the survival of an individual torn from civilization, individually confronted with the eternal problems of existence and interaction with nature was investigated. And Crusoe repeats the evolution of humanity as a whole: he starts to work so that the work becomes the main theme of the novel.

It is fair to say that it was the first time in Enlightenment history when labour was praised to such an extent. Since in the history of mankind labour was perceived as punishment or even evil: according to the Bible the need to work was entrusted to the descendants of Adam and Eve as a punishment for their original sin. However, Daniel Defoe depicts labour as the essence of human life as well as the main means of earning a living. Before Defoe puritan moralists had already claimed the work to be worthy and eminent. When Robinson lands on an island, he is rather unskilled and applies much force on any task, and only after a certain period and through much misfortune he learns to grow seeds, weave baskets, produce his own instruments, clay pots, clothes, umbrella, boat and breed cattle. Furthermore, it should be noted that the most difficult tasks Robinson comes across are those Daniel Defoe himself was well familiar with; as long as Defoe once owned a file producing company, the description of the pottery made by Robinson is described in great detail. However, there is a concession the author makes towards Crusoe: he soon finds means of survival and can feed as well as shelter himself. It should be noted that thorough analysis reveals that Robinson wasn't completely cut off the civilization; first of all, civilization is present in his skills, memory, and attitude towards life. Second, the plot of the novel presupposes favorable conditions for the survivor, every assistance being just on time. On the other hand, these conditions are merely circumscribed to consumer needs, thus, leaving his social demands unsatisfied. It is the loneliness that tortures him most, until the only relief, Friday, appears on the island. However, as it was mentioned above, Robinson embodies bourgeois psychology: it seems perfectly natural for him to appropriate everything and everyone on which no European has legal ownership and he immediately makes Friday his servant. Robinson Crusoe is a new image in the gallery of great individualists, and the absence of extremes makes him different from his Renaissance predecessors. No one would call Crusoe a dreamer like Don Quixote, either an intellectual or a philosopher like Hamlet; his scope of

actions is more practical involving management and commerce, in other words, he is living the life majority of mankind does. His selfishness is natural; it is aimed at a typical bourgeois ideal wealth.

Furthermore, a marked indifference to beauty is actually a significant feature of the novel. Intriguingly,

Crusoe concentrates little on the visual attractiveness of the Caribbean landscape, nor he does on more abstract forms of beauty, namely beauty of character or experience. Refusing preliminary views that the objective of art is to beautify and make charming what is ordinary, Daniel Defoe shows that novels can be absolute by focusing on the tedious, unattractive facts of everyday life that nevertheless are deeply meaningful to an individual.

CONCLUSION

The 18th century witnessed the development of the contemporary novel as a literary genre, indeed many candidates for the first novel in English come from this period, among which Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is presumably the best known. Daniel Defoe is considered the founder of the early realistic bourgeois novel. His work, "The Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe", arouses strong feelings in people of all ages and times. It is not just a work of fiction, a novel of adventures or biography; it is an exploration of human will and power concerning labour, harsh natural conditions and private property.

REFERENCES

1. Franco Moretti, Albert Sbragia. The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture. 2000.
2. Geert Vandermeersche and Ronald Soetaert, "Landscape, Culture, and Education in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe" page
3. John Locke "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" 1638.
4. Joseph Laurence Black, ed. (2006). The Broadview Anthology of Literature: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century. Toronto: Broadview Press.
5. The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe. 2012.
6. http://www.e-reading.club/chapter.php/86865/13/Urnov_-_Defo.html