



PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING METHODS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

2025

ISBN 978-955-3605-86-4

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PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING METHODS: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference (17 February, 2025) - Copenhagen:2025. Part 42 – **176 p.**

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The compilation consists of scientific researches of scientists, post-graduate students and students who participated International Scientific Conference "PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING METHODS". Which took place in COPENHAGEN on 17 February, 2025.

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PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING METHODS

Part 42
February 2025

Collection of Scientific Works

Copenhagen "Science Edition" 17 February 2025

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ROBINSON CRUSOE AND ENVIRONMENTALISM: A STUDY OF HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

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Abstract: Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is examined in this article from an eco-critical viewpoint, which allows for an in-depth analysis of the intricate and evolving relationship between the central character and the natural environment. Through close readings of Crusoe's initial exploitation of the island, his developing comprehension of its ecological interdependencies, and his eventual acceptance of a stewardship ethic, this study illuminates the novel's sophisticated commentary on both ecological sustainability and human responsibility. Utilizing textual analysis, contextual understanding, and a framework of eco-critical theory, this article reveals that Robinson Crusoe goes beyond a simplistic representation of individual triumph or imperial ambition. Instead, the study shows it offers an insightful and remarkably modern perspective on humanity's place in the natural world.

Keywords: **Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe, Eco-Criticism, Environmentalism, Human-Nature Relationship, Sustainability, Stewardship, 18th-Century Literature*

I. INTRODUCTION

Often viewed as a quintessential work of English literature, Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe is frequently interpreted through the themes of individualism, colonialism, and spiritual development. This study, instead, proposes an eco-critical reading of the novel, arguing that it offers crucial insights into the complex interactions between humans and the natural world. While the themes of self-reliance and survival are prominent, the novel's engagement with ecological issues has been frequently overlooked. Therefore, this article endeavors to address this gap by investigating how Defoe's representation of Crusoe's engagement with the island both reflects and informs the developing 18th-century perspectives regarding the human role within the environment. The main claim of this analysis is that through the narrative, the protagonist's actions on the island highlight a trajectory from an exploitative attitude to a more environmentally aware position, subtly challenging anthropocentric views and emphasizing the necessity of a responsible connection with nature.

II. METHODS

To conduct this research, a multifaceted approach was employed, integrating textual analysis, historical background, and eco-critical theory. The study undertakes an in-depth investigation of the novel's portrayal of Crusoe's actions toward the natural environment, while historical context is used to position the novel within the intellectual and societal changes of the 18th century. The theoretical approach is

rooted in ecocritical theory, particularly as outlined by scholars Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell, which provides the basis for this investigation. A detailed review was made of specific passages in the novel that describe Crusoe's interaction with the island's flora, fauna, and geography. This scrutiny paid particular attention to how his beliefs and actions evolved over time. Scholarly sources exploring 18th-century European perceptions of nature, colonialism, and the rise of capitalist viewpoints are drawn upon to construct a detailed historical context for the analysis.

III. RESULTS

Robinson Crusoe's initial behavior on the island unequivocally reflects a utilitarian and exploitative approach towards nature. He treats the island primarily as a repository of resources for his personal survival and advancement. Concrete instances, such as his immediate deforestation for cultivation, his hunting of wildlife for sustenance and apparel, and his fabrication of tools from readily available materials, underscore his initial perspective that nature is an entity to be dominated for human ease. As Crusoe's familiarity with the island's ecosystem deepens, his attitude undergoes a notable shift. He begins to demonstrate an increased respect for the natural world and an evolving grasp of its delicate equilibrium. This alteration is evidenced by his adapted agricultural practices, which reveal a growing awareness of the constraints imposed by the island's resources, and by his journal entries, which manifest a more thoughtful and appreciative perspective on nature. Crusoe's subsequent actions on the island indicate a transition toward ecological stewardship and an understanding of his place within a more intricate ecological network. This significant development is showcased by his endeavors to ensure the longevity of resources, his meticulous planning for future needs, and his more conscientious treatment of the island environment.

IV. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

In "Robinson Crusoe", Defoe presents a critique of purely human-centered perspectives on nature, using Crusoe's evolution from an exploitative mindset to one of environmental stewardship to reveal the inherent limits and moral issues that stem from treating nature solely as a means for human gain. His narrative underscores the need to appreciate the intrinsic worth of the natural world, independent of its utility for humankind. The novel's portrayal of the relationship between humans and nature effectively mirrors the dualities and tensions in 18th-century thought, encapsulating both utilitarian impulses and a growing awareness of the natural world's own importance. This duality is mirrored in Crusoe's personal journey, which runs parallel to the wider shift toward perceiving nature's value beyond its mere usefulness for people. The ideas of environmental responsibility, sustainable practices, and a move away from anthropocentric worldviews in *Robinson Crusoe* continue to be highly relevant in our current era. Robinson's experience provides readers with insights into how to rethink their own interactions with nature, and offers valuable lessons for

today's environmental problems. Especially his emphasis on responsible stewardship is important in addressing today's major ecological concerns including climate change, losses in biodiversity, and resource depletion. It is essential to acknowledge the colonial context within which "Robinson Crusoe" is set, even as it delivers a compelling story of environmental responsibility. Crusoe's transformation is incomplete, and the ongoing debates around the impacts of colonialism and the novel's representation of marginalized groups such as Friday require further consideration.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, this article asserts that Robinson Crusoe, while commonly perceived as a simple narrative of individual achievement, offers a multifaceted and dynamic reflection on humanity's connection with the natural environment. Through his progression from an initial period of exploitation to an eventual understanding of ecological interdependence, the protagonist demonstrates how a shift in perspective can lead to the adoption of a responsible stewardship approach towards nature. The novel advocates for a departure from anthropocentric worldviews and underscores the imperative for modern readers to embrace a harmonious relationship with the natural world. This study emphasizes the enduring relevance of Defoe's narrative, particularly in the context of understanding and addressing the critical environmental issues that confront us today.

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DENMARK, COPENHAGEN

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of conference participant

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for participation in the scientific-online conference
<<PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES AND TEACHING
METHODS>> with an article entitled

**ROBINSON CRUSOE AND ENVIRONMENTALISM:
A STUDY OF HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE**



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17.02.2025

Candra Zonyfa
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