

CRITICS ON DEFOE AND *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

Walter Allen: "Defoe dramatized the inescapable solitariness of each man in his relation to God and the universe."

Ballantine, John: "...society is for ever indebted to the memory of De Foe for his production of a work, in which the ways of Providence are simply and pleasingly vindicated, and a lasting and useful moral is conveyed through the channel of an interesting and delightful story" (1810).

James Beattie: "But Robinson Crusoe, though there is nothing of love in it, is one of the most interesting narratives that ever was written; at least in all that part which related to the desert island: being founded on a passion still more prevalent than love, the desire of self-preservation; and therefore likely to engage the curiosity of every class of readers, both old and young, both learned and unlearned" (1783).

Benjamin Boyce: "But the capture of Friday is the beginning of the end of the emotional power of *Robinson Crusoe*. Fear of danger, Crusoe says, "is ten thousand Times more terrifying than Danger it self, when apparent to the Eyes," and this book, in its central, famous part, is loaded with fear" (1953).

Chalmers, George: "... few books have ever so naturally mingled amusement and instruction. The attention is fixed by the simplicity of the narration, or by the variety of incidents; the heart is amended by a *vindication of the ways of God* to man; and the understanding is informed by various examples, how much utility ought to be preferred to ornament: the young are instructed, while the old are amused" (1790).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "Crusoe himself is a representative of humanity in general; neither his intellectual nor his moral qualities set him above the middle degree of mankind; his only prominent characteristic is the spirit of enterprise of wandering, which is, nevertheless, a very common disposition. You will observe that all that is wonderful in this tale is the result of external circumstances—of things which fortune brings to Crusoe's hand" 1818.

Crusoe is "the universal representative, the person for whom every reader could substitute himself. But now nothing is done, thought, or suffered, or desired, but what every man can imagine himself doing, thinking, feeling, or wishing for."

He rises only "in religion, in resignation, in dependence on, and thankful acknowledgement of the divine mercy and goodness" (1832).

Edward Gordon Craig: "... we secretly enjoy loneliness through him."

Laura A. Curtis: "The Narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* is the account of how a single man gradually masters his own compulsions and extends his control over a huge, indifferent, even potentially hostile environment, learning to harness its inhuman forces and to put them to use for his own benefit... this process.. is essentially that of rationalizing the unknown, the immeasurable, and the inexplicable" (1984).

Charles Dickens: *Robinson Crusoe* is "the only instance of an universally popular book that could make no one laugh and could make no one cry."

James O. Foster: "Crusoe's story becomes one of the earliest fictional narratives in prose to present and explore the conflicts within a divided self..." (1922).

J. Paul Hunter: "*Robinson Crusoe* is a guide for youth about to embark on Life's journey. It belongs to the puritan guide tradition" (1966).

"Viewed as an ordinary human being—an Everyman—in spiritual as well as physical and mental strength, Crusoe becomes, rather than a model of perfection, an example of human accomplishment made possible by

God's providence. Before conversion, Crusoe is preoccupied with things... After conversion, he transforms an emblem of human sacrifice into a Friday, a convert."

Dr. Johnson: "Was there ever yet any thing written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, excepting *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*?" (1776).

James Joyce: "The true symbol of British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who, cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman. He is the true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday (the trusty slave who arrives on an unlucky day) is the symbol of the subject races. The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity."

Arnold Kettle: "*Robinson Crusoe* is in one sense praise of the bourgeois virtues of individualism and private enterprise. But, more important, it celebrates the necessity of social living and the struggle of mankind through work to master nature."

Alan Dugald McKillop: "...a Defoe character on the make illustrates the mixed nature of man; the profit motive is natural, and yet when pushed far enough it comes into conflict with accepted standards of morality and religion" (1956).

Maximilian E. Novak: "The interaction between Crusoe and nature makes nature more productive and Crusoe/man purer" (1983).

Review, *Dublin University Magazine:* *Robinson Crusoe* is "a great religious poem, showing that God is found where men are absent" (1856).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Robinson Crusoe* is "the one book that teaches all that books can teach" (1762).

Sir Walter Scott: "Defoe seems to have written too rapidly to pay the least attention to his circumstance; the incidents are huddled together like paving-stones discharged from a cart, and as little connexion between the one and the other."

Leslie Stephen: "For this reason, the want of power in describing emotion as compared with the amazing power of describing facts, *Robinson Crusoe* is a book for boys rather than men, and... it falls short of any high intellectual interest."

James Sutherland: "Defoe achieved a drastic simplification of society and social relations, and by stripping life of its inessentials he got down to the roots of human experience" (1951).

"Defoe's hero never shows the least signs of becoming a saint—he remains a man like ourselves—but he ceases to be a mere sinner."

Ian Watt: "All Defoe's heroes pursue money, which he characteristically called 'the general denominating article in the world,' and they pursue it very methodically according to the profit and loss bookkeeping which Max Weber considered to be the distinctive technical feature of modern capitalism."

"...only money... is a proper cause of deep feeling."

Virginia Woolf: Defoe "takes the opposite way from the psychologist's—he describes the effect of emotion on the body, not on the mind" (1932).