



Narrative Perspectives and Colonial Critiques: A Comparative Analysis of Robinson Crusoe and Heart of Darkness through Literary Theory

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Abstract: This research emphasizes their narrative stances and criticisms of colonialism. It compares and contrasts Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The study uses narratological and postcolonial theories to analyze how the characters' experiences mirror and challenge European imperial ideas.

Through *Robinson Crusoe*'s claim of dominance over the natural world and indigenous peoples, the story creates a colonial worldview that embodies the Enlightenment-era rationale for imperial expansion. *Heart of Darkness*, on the other hand, exposes the degrading impacts of colonization on both the colonizers and the colonized by dissecting the beliefs of European supremacy through a fractured narrative and an uncertain moral tone.

The study emphasizes how narrative tactics shape ideological underpinnings by tracing the development of colonial discourse from affirmation in *Robinson Crusoe* to critique in *Heart of Darkness*. By contrasting these writings, the study highlights their continuing significance in comprehending the intricacies of colonialism and how it is portrayed in literature, providing insights into the relationship between historical context and narrative form.

Keywords: Narrative stances, criticisms of colonialism, imperial expansion.

Introduction:

"General Overview"

Literary theory provides a refined framework for

examining and assessing literary works, uncovering the hidden ideologies and societal impacts of the works, as well as the stylistic methods employed by the writers. This comparative study analyzes the narrative structures of two prominent literary works: Examples of books that belong to the historical genre include Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe. On the other hand, Heart of Darkness is an example of a post-colonial fiction. Joseph Conrad. These novels, one that is over a hundred years old and the other a more modern novel offer wonderful insights into the themes of exploration, empire, and on the nature of human kind. It is the aim of this paper to compare the civilizational gaze turned colonial from Defoe to Conrad through the further sublimation of narrative perspectives and the critiques of colonialist discourse in both works to understand the various strategies that are taken by Defoe and Conrad as creative choices and the outcomes of those choices.

The critiques of colonialism and its effects on people and civilization are sharp in both books. These are the two particular elements of the narrative points of view employed in the novels Heart of Darkness and Robinson Crusoe that have a big impact on how the readers see the people and events that occur in the stories. In using the first person narrative approach, Defoe tells everyone about his lonely existence on a barren island as the hero, Robinson Crusoe. This sort of method makes it possible to assess ideas, feelings, and a character's development throughout the periods of solitude and survival more thoroughly. In Heart of Darkness, Conrad has selected a sophisticated narrative structure that includes a framing tale in which the reader or listener learns directly from the protagonist Marlow about his journey into the depths of the darkness. The reader is forced to consider the veracity and prejudice of the storyteller by the intricacy and ambiguity added by the usage of a multi-level structure in this narrative. (Leitch, 2001).

The novel lays out the typical colonialist plot of mindset that was prevalent during the colonial period. Crusoe as the strong ruler of the island changed the natives' behavior to European norms, and his thinking he was better than the natives is colonialism mentality. Still, the novel also provides the reader with the view of the interaction between the cultures and the races, which reflect all the complexities of colonization process (Defoe, 1972).

Through this novel Conrad makes use of the dark side of imperialism present in the Europe's conquest of Africa by portraying Marlow's trek to the center of the continent. It depicts the cruel and unchristian subordination and persecution of the African continent, reduction of the native people to savages

and the Europeans to immoral barbarians. As a source of social critique of the malefic effects of colonialism, the work of Joseph Conrad a compelling yet morally malignant character, Kurtz. The themes discussed in the novel mirror basic questions about the society and its inhabitants as they relate to dominance, consequences of greed, and evil within people (Adams, 1991)

To gain better understanding and interpretation of these stories, we apply various theories drawn from the domain of literature. It is for this reason that postcolonial criticism provides a framework through which we are able to discern and then judge power struggles, cultural tensions and representations of the 'other' in novels (Bhabha, 2006). This theoretical framework allows for considering how the authors engage colonial discourses and whether they occupy an oppositional or difficulties relationship with colonial thought.

Furthermore, the use of self-starting narrative theory helps in the understanding of the organization of the point of view and the techniques of narration used by both the authors, the Defoe as well as Conrad. By examining the voices in the narrative, the framework found in the textual works, and the changes of time and space within the works of these authors, the understanding of how these authors construct their story and the method they use to forward themes may be developed.

This paper study employed the literary theory approach together with the comparative method to analyze Robinson Crusoe and Heart of Darkness as well as to discover the relative difference on the perceptive and colonialist feelings expressed in these two books. Analyzing the books using the colonial criticism and focusing on the particular aspects of the colonial scheme and the colonial involvement of the authors, one can discern the relation of colonial power and the chorused look for the humanness in the works of the authors. The maturity that The Trial and Kindred brings on recognizing the topics of these books as timeless makes this understanding more overriding, thus enabling a reader to appreciate these texts as works of literature (Bhabha, 2006).

The Statement of the Problem

One can precisely find much food for critical analysis in narrative viewpoints and colonial criticisms in both novels. This aspect of a first person teller in the novel "Robinson Crusoe" is very effective as it allows readers to examine the mind of the protagonist as he struggles to survive on an isolated island. The detailed near-monologic narration by Crusoe allows the reader to understand the nature of his transformation, critical view on the authority, and relations with native people

of the island. On the other hand, in *Heart of Darkness* a complicated double focus is employed, and the reader follows the journey into the very heart of a continent only through the reports of the protagonist, Marlow. This kind of writing creates an illusion of confusion and contributes to the fact that readers are question the validity and prejudice of the storyteller. Uncertainty arises when we consider the fact and ask how these aspects of the novels' construction relate to the reader's understanding of the events, characters, and ideas that are unfolded in both narratives.

As for criticisms of colonialism, *Robinson Crusoe* reflects the colonizers' colonialist worldview and the colonialist values of the period. Crusoe DOMINION over the island, the subjugation of indigenous people and his Junoesque mission to shape their society in accordance with his European/Christian standards are a true reflection of eighteenth-century imperialism. However, it does offer occasional glimpses into empathy – into knowing how someone else feels – and into the process of imitation, diffusion of ideas and borrowings of customs from other societies. It brings the complexity and elaboration of the trials and difficulties that follow colonial encounters even closer to reality for a more realistic approach. Conversely, *Heart of Darkness* provides his quill to give a critique on imperialism on the side of the Europeans. The heart of darkness is a novel which shows the evil, cruelty, and vices of the European empire and the native Africans. Kurtz who is one of the main characters of the story of represents the vices that colonialism unleashes or brings to the native societies. Of all the characters in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad has created a character that challenges the European imperialism and goes to the core of human character. Overall, it is possible to examine how the authors engaging with the colonial discourse and employing colonial criticisms in their writing tried to either conform or subvert the colonial discourse

In this regard, this paper seeks to enhance the above conceptions of travel and imperialism, and the notion of existence as Fromm depicted in the texts of "Robinson Crusoe" and "Heart of Darkness" in relation to the narrators and the colonialistic worldviews found in both works. Also, it aims at demonstrating how taking a particular critical approach, for example, postcolonial criticism helps in the explanation of a particular subject area. Thus, assembling the kernels of these tales, one can find out how the texts open up the deep structure, contradiction, and indoctrination of beliefs for the analysis of motives of the writers and context of the social and cultural cultures where these novel were produced.

"The Significance of the Study"

From a literary theory perspective, both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Heart of Darkness* are highly deserving of examination in terms of their academic and intellectual value. This collection delves into the intricacies of narrative perspectives and critiques of colonialism, so enriching the field of literary studies with novel interpretations of these important works. The research extensively examines how writers deal with colonial ideology, power relations, and the image of the "other" through their depiction of exploration, imperialism, and the human condition. In addition, it demonstrates how significant and useful literary theory is for revealing deeper layers of meaning in works such as narrative theory and post colonial criticism. It also attests to the significance of this book beyond literature because it provides a historical framework and foundation for contemporary discourses on power relations, intercultural relationships and the lasting effects of imperialism. Finally, through this study, we will be able to understand these works better; besides this; it provides more inclusive approaches to identifying the complexities of imperialism, exploration and human condition in literature as well as life in general.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to dive into the narrative issues of point of view and imperialist objections expressed by authors in both novels through a thorough textual analysis. In close reading, the novels are examined, particularly with reference to narrative structures and styles. The study aims at identifying defining moments, intellectual exchanges, and narrative techniques that perpetuate empire, exploration, and human existence. It also applies a theoretical framework—mainly postcolonial critique—to assess these writings. This method allows writers to reflect on their engagement with colonial ideology as it relates to power dynamics and the representation of otherness in general. Furthermore, the essay uses other secondary sources like books, academic publications and critical essays to enhance analysis providing a wider understanding regarding how the two works have been written about in scholarly circles. Its rigorous approach involves appraising *Heart of Darkness* and *Robinson Crusoe* through deep textual analysis theoretical frameworks as well as secondary sources among others in order to examine colonial critiques and narrative points of view. Lastly this work seeks to interrogate these topics thoroughly.

Comparative Analysis

"Narrative Perspective and structure in Heart of Darkness"

A narrative within a story is told in Charles Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*. Start with sailor Charlie

Marlow as he recounts an adventure down the African Congo River. The Belgian Congo-based colonial corporation known as the Company appoints him captain of a river boat. The story of Kurtz, a colonial spy who has become sick and may be insane, introduces Marlow to the horrors of imperialism.

The jungle has a profound effect on Marlow's psyche, both on his own and, perhaps, on the distorted psyche of Western society as a whole. Marlow recovers after Kurtz's death on the trek up the river, and characters from Kurtz's past pay him a visit while he gets well.

In 1902, alongside two other works by Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* was published as a novel in *Youth: And Two Further works*. Nevertheless, it was not well-received by the public. In the 1940s and 1950s, the story was well-received by academics, but its message about colonialism and its use of Africa as a vague backdrop to examine the white mind were not thoroughly examined.

Heart of Darkness was addicted to additional postcolonial criticism and feminist interpretations in the 1970s as Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe criticized it for dehumanizing African people. Although its continued inclusion on a course syllabus since the 1970s, *Heart of Darkness* is currently seen as a more contentious work within the Western canon due to its firmly embedded white male viewpoint (Aziz, et al, 2015).

The intricacy of the colonial encounter and the power relations are crucially shown in *Heart of Darkness* via its narrative viewpoint and structure. Readers are able to closely examine Marlow's moral and psychological difficulties because of the first-person perspective. The fragmented and non-linear structure effectively conveys the chaos and bewilderment caused by colonialism, as well as the intertwined and chaotic nature of memory and reality. The unreliable narrator enriches the narrative by bringing intricacy and forcing readers to engage in a discerning analysis of the colonial themes and criticisms. *Heart of Darkness* challenges readers to examine colonialism, the construction of narratives, and power relations within the colonial encounter by utilizing specific narrative choices and structure.

"The narrative structure and perspectives in Robinson Crusoe"

Among the most famous and consequential works written in the eighteenth century, you will find Daniel Defoe's works. Even now, Defoe's works have a profound effect on other writers. He checked and rechecked everything.

He painstakingly culled the material down to the

essentials, leaving only what was necessary for the plot. His writing was straightforward and uncomplicated. Daniel Defoe's style, which he achieved through the use of straightforward language, nautical jargon, short sentences, and a new approach to producing English literature, is just one of many traits that make him one of the most significant writers of the eighteenth century. Defoe immerses readers in the novel's world, allowing them to experience the sights and sounds as the characters do.

This research checks Daniel Defoe's usage of style in *Robinson Crusoe*. Additional insights on the story's storyline, topics, and the reader's perspective can be gained from the research (Bhabha, 2006)

Storywise, *Robinson Crusoe* mostly follows his trip from the island shipwreck until his rescue. Crusoe tells the events in chronological sequence, hence the plot advances in that way. The story gains credibility and believability as the linear structure follows the historical flow of time. The way Crusoe adapts to his new environment, overcomes challenges with inventiveness, and finally seizes control of the island is all visible to readers.

The narrative viewpoint of *Robinson Crusoe* is distinguished by the detailed and comprehensive character of his story. Crusoe keeps thorough diaries of his thoughts, views, and deeds. He goes into great length on how he grows crops, builds shelter and tools, and survives. The book's meticulous focus on detail enhances its authenticity and substantiates Crusoe's encounters.

The narrative perspective of *Robinson Crusoe* embodies a colonial mindset and the exploration of uncharted territories. Crusoe is a colonizer who perceives the island as a vacant canvas to subjugate and dominate. The tale exhibits a prominent inclination for authority and a sense of entitlement towards the territory and its assets. Crusoe's colonial perspective is evident in his transformation of the island into a miniature European society, assuming the roles of a farmer, carpenter, and governor. The narrative perspective reflects the colonial attitudes prevalent during the historical period in which the story is set.

(Pawar, 2016)

Sincerity and uniqueness of the writing. Defoe manages, unusually, to give his narrative colour and authenticity. The painstaking and realistic depiction of the people and natural setting of the book is especially important as it is necessary to create the right atmosphere. The way the book clearly captures and brings to life for the reader the unique English character of the time is its strength. Crusoe's moral rectitude lends a genuineness and reliability to the entire work. Though the book uses

direct, honest, precise, and upbeat language, a cold, introspective, and depressing perspective with great dramatic impact penetrates the primary mental image. This is the kind of life view that an Enlightenment man would really have.

According to Abir (2016:15), Defoe's detractors viewed his fiction as an unintended consequence of his urgent desire to support his family and avoid his creditors. This viewpoint is supported by Maximillian E. Novak (2004). According to Watt (2001) in *The Rise of the Novel*, Defoe might be considered an exceptional case of a renowned writer who shows minimal interest in writing and does not provide any noteworthy insights on it as a form of literature. According to Hammond, the novel's lasting importance might be attributed to its skillful integration of many literary styles and its effectiveness as a mythological reference. Furthermore, he asserts that a narrative that has achieved the status of a fable must have substantial literary and imaginative attributes, while also addressing a deep psychological need in humans.

Watt (1957) argues that Defoe's fiction is the first to depict both the broader scope of human life as a historical narrative and the more immediate portrayal of fleeting thoughts and deeds.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a thrilling tale of adventure.

Pirates kidnap Crusoe and leave him for dead on a desolate island off the coast of South America. He is resourceful and determined, constructing housing, growing his own food, and salvaging useful objects from the disaster.

A human footprint is discovered on the sand after eighteen years of solitude. In the twenty-fourth year of his imposed seclusion, Jesus saves a man named Friday from the cannibals. An obedient servant emerges from the native until the (Alba. 1918).

"Comparison of the narrative perspectives in both novels"

"*Heart of Darkness* and *Robinson Crusoe* are separate pieces of literature that explore themes of exploration, colonialism, and the human mind. Both works utilize first-person narrative perspectives, but they differ in how they exploit these viewpoints to communicate their plots and concepts. The protagonist of the novel *Heart of Darkness*, named Marlow, narrates his journey into the depths of Africa from a subjective perspective. Marlow assumes the role of both the protagonist and narrator, offering readers a very personal and subjective portrayal of his experiences. Marlow's perspective provides readers with a thorough understanding of his thoughts, feelings, and

ethical dilemmas, enabling a detailed exploration of the psychological and moral intricacies of the colonial experience".

There is a radical shift in the relationship between voices in a polyphonic book. The various narratological entities may present their worldviews in the expected manner. According to Lodge, a polyphonic novel is novel in which a variety of competing views are given a voice and put in play between and among individual talking subjects, without being assigned and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (1990, p. 86) Consequently, the authorial voice's authority is called into doubt in the polyphonic novel since characters with multiple worldviews are presented. The novel "writes itself" in a polyphonic work because each of the narrators, in violation of the author's authority, uses a distinct narrative voice to write the story. As a democratic work, the polyphonic novel typically features multiple voices that are at odds with one another, including the authorial voice, which naturally leads to questions about authorial power

Regarding loneliness and isolation, the two works couldn't be more different. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's isolation is mostly felt on a psychological level as he deals with the deep effects of colonialism and his personal conflicts. The narrative point of view highlights the solitary nature of the human mind by focusing on Marlow's philosophical and mental conflicts.

Colonialism of his day is reflected in Crusoe's power and the idea of caring for the island's people and environment. Instead of being sorrowful for his family or trying to leave on the isolated island, Crusoe is focused on establishing his kingdom and imposing his "own culture." Rather than being a carefree romantic or naive idiot, he comes out as more reserved, analytical, and logical. The perspective reflected in *Robinson Crusoe* is Eurocentric. Defoe uses the story of one man, *Robinson Crusoe*, to paint a picture of the history of the British Empires. "Truly, he exemplifies the stereotypical English imperialist—a model planter-setter, explorer, courageous protector of his realm, and benevolent ruler of an ever-growing number of subjects for the benefit of his king and nation. "According to Alam, establishing his sense of identity is central to Crusoe's civilized purpose on a lonely island. Crusoe asserts his kingship over the island and its inhabitants, natural resources, and commerce in the absence of any challengers or contestants. He sets out to create a new civilization on that planet. Colonizers distinguish themselves from colonized and give themselves a distinct identity by centering their attention on the self. In establishing his colonizers' identity, Crusoe benefits from his remoteness from his culture. He used the ship's cargo to seize the entire island, demonstrating his capitalist

nature.

Comparative Analysis: Colonial Critiques

"The historical progression of geographical exploitation is shown in Heart of Darkness. Most Europeans saw Africa as an ideal continent for establishing political and cultural hegemony. The Thames River, as portrayed in the novel, serves as a metaphor of imperialism. The Thames, like any other river, enables the flow of material, intellectual, and emotional aspects between Europeans and Africans. The proximity between Africa and Europe was strengthened as a result of the demand for ivory and financial resources".

"The Europeans had the intention of collecting ivory from the Congo. Conrad portrays the master-slave relationship through the Europeans' treatment of the colonies, resulting in the colonists perceiving themselves as "others." Heart of Darkness reveals the deceitful actions of King Leopold II of Belgium, who exploited his claimed purpose of civilizing to exploit the Congo for his own gain. Ivory plays a vital role in the Congo setting that Conrad has meticulously crafted in this novel. The characters, such as Kurtz, the brick builder, and the manager of the Central Station, are captivated by the allure of ivory's power. The novel Heart of Darkness depicts the contrast between the Western concept of "self" and the notion of "others." By focusing on European actions, Conrad reveals the true goal of the white conquerors. While claiming to be on a civilizing mission, they have abused their power and the colony to their fullest extent. The goal of Leopold II's imperialism in this book is to consolidate power. Agents were being dispatched by the Belgian businesses that traded for commerce. Companies headquartered in Belgium discovered the ivory trade to be highly profitable. By consolidating their control over the area, they were able to turn ivory into currency. King demonstrates the evils of imperialism in the Congo.

"Comparison of the Colonial Critiques Presented in Both Novels"

Both works provoke a careful analysis of colonialism, but they do so from different viewpoints and with unique focuses. Robinson Crusoe depicts colonialism as a method of asserting control and imposing European ideals on a foreign territory, but Heart of Darkness explores the psychological and ethical aftermath of the colonial interaction in greater depth.

The novel Robinson Crusoe adeptly integrates a critique of colonialism into its narrative framework and worldview. Crusoe's efforts to recreate a miniature version of European society on the island exemplify the colonial mentality of asserting power and authority.

The book reinforces the concept of colonial dominance and the belief in the superiority of European culture over other civilizations. Crusoe's actions might be interpreted as a reflection of colonial ideology, since he forcefully imposes his own customs, religion, and beliefs on the island and its inhabitants. Marlow, as the narrator, effectively depicts the harsh truth of imperialism by drawing parallels to the historical Roman invasions of Britain. He emphasizes the avarice of the Belgian invaders. The notion of ivory has sway over the Manager, the Brick-maker, and several other Caucasian persons in the story. Marlow used the term "plundering of Britain" to describe the act of conquering. The Caucasians perpetrated the exploitation and brutalization of the indigenous inhabitants with the aim of unlawfully seizing their ivory. Some see Heart of Darkness as a spiritual odyssey in which a protagonist undergoes a transformation from naivety to enlightenment while pursuing a capitalist mindset. Human solidarity is completely lacking. There is a dearth of mutual understanding between those who are dominated and those who are in power.

The title plays a pivotal role in the majority of literary works, providing the reader with a clue about the subject matter or the objectives of the authors. The title of the novel, "Heart of Darkness," is ambiguous and challenging to interpret. In addition to its literal meaning, the term "Darkness" also carries symbolic and political implications. The author has depicted the Congo as a realm of "obscurity" to emphasize the indigenous population's ignorance and superstitious beliefs. Heart of Darkness suggests that Africa is an enigmatic and ominous continent. Furthermore, the term "heart of darkness" denotes a previously unexplored region that is currently undergoing colonization by its residents. (Pawar, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Daniel Defoe's literary works, including Heart of Darkness and Robinson Crusoe, has provided view into the idea of colonialism in literature. These works explain the interconnectedness of power, agency, and morality in the colonial setting through their narrative viewpoints, which exhibit both similarity and differences. Robinson Crusoe, a representative of the dominant imperialistic ideas of his era, embodies the heroic archetype of the European adventurer who inter his perspectives and control over the indigenous inhabitants of the island. The Eurocentric perspective of colonial speech is reinforced by portraying indigenous populations as uncivilized and inferior, perpetuating innate biases. Joseph Conrad's novel, Heart of Darkness, includes a sophisticated narrative technique by tracing the journey of Marlow as he tips with the intricate ethical and psychological aspects of colonialism.

Examining literature from diverse perspectives is essential, and this research also investigates how various cultures and historical eras have influenced the reception and influence of different literary genres. Future research may focus on the examination of language and linguistic methods employed in depictions of colonialism, as well as the impact of literary theories such as postcolonial theory and feminist theory on these narratives. Through the usage of literary theory, we have acquired a comprehensive understanding of the representation of colonialism in literature by analyzing Robinson Crusoe and Heart of Darkness. It is an essential to question and challenge prevailing narratives, give more prominence to marginalized voices, and critically analyze the

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