

# *Postcolonial Identity In Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*

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## Abstract

The study focuses on postcolonial identity in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. It aims to reveal the problematic of postcolonial identity, including colonialist ideology in the work. This study applies postcolonial criticism, and in conducting the research, the researchers apply descriptive qualitative method. It focuses on analyzing and interpreting the information (data) that has been gathered. This research is significant to its readers especially Indonesian readers as an understanding of postcolonial identity concepts that include their understanding on the connections among all the domains of their experience: problematic of postcolonial identity, including colonialist ideology. The study results in the language in which colonialist thinking is expressed based on the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrast with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) peoples, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded

Keywords postcolonial identity, colonialist ideology, superiority, inferiority

## 1. The Background

Postcolonial identities are not static, they are continuously developing and culturally crossing nations (Tyson, 1999). Tyson claims that they encourage ex-colonials to embrace the multiple and often conflicting aspects of blended culture that is theirs and that is an ineradicable fact of history (Tyson, 1999).

Despite many critics draw examples from the literary works of African Americans as well as from literature of other former population (Tyson, 1999), the tendency of postcolonial criticism to focus on global issues, on comparisons and contrasts among various peoples, means that it is up to the individual members of specific populations to develop their own body of criticism on the history, traditions, and interpretations of their own literature (Tyson, 1999). Henceforth, Nordlund's states that the third world postcolonial writers prioritize social and cultural selfhood issues (Nordlund, 2010).

*Robinson Crusoe* was published under the considerably longer original title *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates* is a fictional autobiography of the title character - a castaway who spends years on a remote tropical island near Trinidad, encountering cannibals, captives, and mutineers before being rescued (Crusoe, 2014).

To understand cannibalism and animal slaughter in *Robinson Crusoe*, Mackintosh emphasizes on the political practices and on the difference between sovereign and disciplinary power. He explains that for political authority the novel reveals that effective management of humans requires a combination of sovereign and disciplinary power. Both types of power are shown to operate indiscriminately on the bodies and minds of humans and animals. As such,

colonial power is shown to replicate the logic of cannibalism itself, which shocks precisely because of its failure to distinguish between the two” (Mackintosh, 2011).

To enhance, Nordlund states that Defoe's polarized treatment of selfishness and unselfishness in *Robinson Crusoe* is a fictional response to two interconnected problems with personal autonomy: the extrinsic problem is dependent on other people, and the intrinsic

threat of relationships between the secular world, the sacred and the self: God relates to Crusoe as Crusoe relates to his own represented self, and this self, in turn, stands in the same relation to the surrounding world (Nordlund, 2010).

Given that a good deal of “postcolonial criticism addresses the problem of identity” (Tyson, 1999) as it is represented in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, the researchers take an analytical look at the issue of postcolonial identity in it.

The objective of the study is to analyze postcolonial identity in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. It aims to reveal the problematic of postcolonial identity including colonialist ideology in the work.

This Study applies postcolonial criticism. As a primary concern of theoretical framework, postcolonial criticism seeks to understand the operations politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies. A good deal of postcolonial criticism analyzes the ideological forces that, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizers’ values and in contrast, promoted the resistance of colonized peoples against their oppression, a resistance that is as old as colonialism itself. Since colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies can appear in any literary text, a work doesn’t have to be categorized as postcolonial text to be applicable to postcolonial criticism (Tyson, 1999).

### **Postcolonial identity**

Postcolonial cultures include both a merger of the culture of the colonized and that of the colonizer which are difficult to identify and separate ranging from the British intrusion into the government, education, cultural values, and daily lives of its colonial subjects (Tyson, 1999). Hence, to look at the issue of postcolonial identity, as Tyson says ...”one must first understand colonialist ideology, the reaction to which constitute the origin of postcolonial identity” (Tyson, 1999). Tyson claims that *colonialist ideology*, often referred to as *colonialist discourse* to mark its relationship to the language in which colonialist thinking was expressed, based on the colonizers’ assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native, the original inhabitants of the lands. The colonizers believed that only their own culture was civilized, or as postcolonial critics put it, *metropolitan*.

Therefore, native people were defined as savaged, backward, undeveloped (Tyson, 1999). She continuously claiming that the colonizer saw themselves at the center of the world and the colonized were at the margins. They saw themselves as the picture of what a human being should be, the proper ‘self’ while the natives were “other,” different and therefore inferior (Tyson, 1999).

To clarify the place of European Western experience, Said states that the “orient” (a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, and landscapes) is not adjacent to Europe; it is the place of Europe’s greatest, richest, and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other (Said, 1994).

The attitude that uses European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted is called Eurocentrism. A common example of Eurocentrism in literary studies is the established philosophy called *universalism*. British, European, and American culture standard-bearers judge all literature in terms of its “universality”. Thus, a great work is considered “universal” when it resembles the characters and themes of standard-bearer literature. Therefore, European ideas, ideals, and experience are universal and the standard for all humankind (Tyson, 1999).

The colonialist ideology, which is fundamentally Eurocentric, is a universal force in the British schools established in the colonies to indoctrinate British culture and values in the native peoples and thereby anticipate revolution. Many colonized individuals tried to imitate the colonizers in outfit, discourse, manners, and lifestyle that postcolonial critics refer to as mimicry. Postcolonial theorists often describe the colonial subject as having double consciousness or double vision - a consciousness or a way of perceiving the world is between two antagonistic cultures: that of the colonizer and that of the native (Tyson, 1999).

The feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within one lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha and others as unhomeliness (Tyson, 1999).

Efforts to reject colonialist ideology and the reclamation of the pre-colonial past involve complex problems (Tyson, 1999). Many postcolonial theorists argue that no culture stands still, frozen in time. For example, Picasso’s art was greatly influenced by his study of African masks. Hybridity, or syncretism, as it is sometimes called, does not consist of a deadlock between two warring cultures but is, rather, a productive, exciting, positive force in a shrinking world that is itself becoming more and more culturally hybrid. This view encourages ex-colonials to embrace the multiple and often conflicting aspects of the blended culture than theirs and that is an ineradicable fact of history (Tyson, 1999).

### **Postcolonial text /discourse**

According to John McLeod, postcolonialism involves texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism in either the past or the present; or texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences; or texts produced during colonialism that directly address the experiences of Empire, and those that seem not to (McLeod, 2000).

McLeod furthermore states that a central term in each is ‘reading’. The act of reading in postcolonial contexts is by no means a neutral activity. How we read is just as important as what we read. The ideas we encounter within postcolonialism and the issues they raise

demand that conventional reading methods and models of interpretation need to be rethought if our reading practices are to contribute to the contestation of colonial discourses to which postcolonialism aspires. Rethinking conventional modes of reading is fundamental to postcolonialism (McLeod, 2000).

Similarly, Madison implies that in the postcolonial text, writers embody the complex tensions and weavings together of two cultures and two symbol systems: the American and the indigenous cultures of color (Madison, 1994). Or as Plasa points out about the political narrative of Olaudah Equiano's that Equiano unravels the oppositions which ordinarily sustain and legitimate the hierarchies of the race- white/black, civilized/savaged, human/subhuman (Madison, 1994). Or then as Kumar concludes that the notion of postcolonial theory inherent the postcolonial text that crosses the ideology and thought that "culture is never static and the very means by which crossing occurs is through systems of discourse" (Kumar, 2000).

However, as Tyson states, most postcolonial critics analyze the ways in which a literary text, whatever its theme, is colonialist or anti-colonialist, that is the way in which the text reinforces or resists colonialism's oppressive ideology (Tyson, 1999). Accordingly, *Robinson Crusoe* is considered a postcolonial text for Crusoe's castaway on a remote tropical island near Trinidad, encountering cannibals, captives, and mutineers before being rescued as seen in his writing below.

Web scene: 2	Urgency
<p><i>"More years pass and Crusoe discovers native cannibals, who occasionally visit the island to kill and eat prisoners. At first he plans to kill them for committing an abomination but later realizes he has no right to do so, as the cannibals do not knowingly commit a crime. He dreams of obtaining one or two servants by freeing some prisoners; when a prisoner escapes, Crusoe helps him, naming his new companion "Friday" after the day of the week he appeared. Crusoe then teaches him English and converts him to Christianity".</i></p>	<p>Postcolonial text/discourse in the novel emphasizes on the cannibalism and prisoners</p>

As added by David Marshall, for Crusoe, the novel is his slavery, escape, and the way he met the Portugal captain at Sea, the humanity of his behavior (Marshall, 2004).

## 2. Methodology

In conducting the research, the researchers apply descriptive qualitative method. The study focuses on analyzing and interpreting the information (data) that has been gathered from the novel. The actual analysis depends on the data gathering. As mentioned by Berg that "...the overall effort will be to create descriptive accounts based on the information captured by data-collection technologies" (Berg, 2004). Therefore, the data is text that covers the problematic of postcolonial identity, including colonialist ideology in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The research breaks into five chapters, starting from the introduction, the theoretical approach, methodology, data analysis, and conclusions.

### 3. Data A nalysis: Postcolonial Identity In Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*

Refers to Tyson’s theory of postcolonial identity, the data analysis meant to reveal the problematic of postcolonial identity, including colonialist ideology in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*.

#### Colonialist Ideology

As proposed by Tyson, in order to look at the issue of postcolonial identity, one must first understand “colonialist ideology, the reaction to which constitute the origin of postcolonial identity” (Tyson, 1999). Tyson claims that *colonialist ideology*, often referred to as *colonialist discourse* to mark its relationship to the language in which colonialist thinking was expressed, was based on the colonizers’ assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) peoples, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded (Tyson, 1999). Therefore, the opening of *Robinson Crusoe* includes the introduction to the idea of this superiority that Crusoe’s father obliges him to do the mainstream’s standard of life, being educated at the formal institution and become a lawyer as many parents proud of that title. Crusoe’s father denies Crusoe’s dream, thinking that he knows better what is good for Crusoe because he is the father then the superior. Crusoe’s attitude to his father’s rule represents a dissatisfaction of the superior’s assumption on the inferior (other) as seen next:

Table 1: Data 1

Page 2-3	Point of analysis
Being the third son of the family and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free school generally go, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasion of my mother and other friends”	Father is the superior of the son, that the son should oblige father’s command.

Crusoe mentions his father’s word as a command instead of a will, emphasizing his father’s superiority and his and other family member’s inferiority. Crusoe’s family are afraid of his father since everyone ‘persuades’ Crusoe to follow his father’s command rather than to understand Crusoe’s will.

Another quote of inferiority and superiority experienced by Crusoe from his master is when he was taken a long sea journey as a slave as seen next:

Table 2: Data 2

Page 23	Point of analysis
As my new patron, or master, had taken me home to his house, so I was in hopes that he would take me with him when he went to sea again, believing that it would some time or other be taken by a Spanish or Portugal man-of-war; and that then I should be set at	As the superior, the father decides where and when to go to the sea.

liberty. But this hope of mine was soon taken away; for when he went to sea, he left me on shore to look after his little garden, and do the common drudgery of slaves about his house; and when he came home again from his cruise, he ordered me to lie in the cabin to look after the ship.	
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Next, Tyson defines that the colonizers believed that only their own Anglo-European culture was civilized, or as postcolonial critics put it, *metropolitan*. Therefore, native people were defined as savaged, backward, undeveloped (Tyson, 1999). The civilization of “metropolitan” shapes the mindset of the Anglo-European that affected not only the language and lifestyle but also in naming and knowing plants.

Table: 3 Data 3

Page 99	Point of analysis
<i>“... when, about a month after, or thereabouts, I saw some few stalks of something green shooting out of the ground, which I fancied might be some plant I had not seen; but I was surprised, and perfectly astonished, when, after a little longer time, I saw about ten or twelve ears come out, which were perfect green barley, of the same kind as our European – nay, as our English barley.”</i>	Crusoe is amazed by the English name of the plant “barley” as English is the standard of lifestyle,

Colonialist ideology strongly affects the Anglo-European eyes on the Barbarian people that they are savages, cruel, and inhuman:

Table 4: Data 4

Page 28	Point of analysis
<i>“...for who would have supposed we were sailed on to the Southward, to the truly Barbarian coast, where whole nations of negroes were sure to surround us with their canoes and destroy us; where we could not go on shore but we should be devoured by savage beast, or more merciless savages of human kind.”</i>	The negroes of Barbarian coast are considered savages.

To make the concept of inferior worse, Defoe creates terms of cannibals to characterize the Caribbean people that they are harmful to any visitors of the island. Crusoe thinks of them as undefeated predators to human beings as described next:

Table 5: Data 5

Page 160	Point of analysis
<i>...for I heard that people of the Caribbean coast were cannibals or man-eaters, and I knew by the latitude that I could not be far from that shore. Then supposing they were not cannibals, yet they might kill me, as many Europeans who had fallen into their hands had been served, even when they had been ten or twenty together – much more</i>	The natives of Caribbean coast are called cannibals

I, that was but one, and could make little or no defence; ...	
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She continuously claiming that the colonizer saw themselves at the center of the world; the colonized were at the margins. The colonizers saw themselves as the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper 'self'; native people were "other," different and therefore inferior (Tyson, 366). The two following quotations emphasize on colonizer's ideology on seeing 'others' who are living under the standard of lifestyle.

Table 6: Data 6

Page 156	Point of analysis
I need not say that I wanted no sort of earthenware for my use, but I must needs say as to the shapes of them, they were very indifferent, as any one may suppose, when I had no way of making them but as the children make pies, or as a woman would make pies that never learned to raise paste."	Colonizers see the colonized as "others" who are living under the standard of lifestyle.

Subsequently, Crusoe proposes that certain kinds of jobs are better than those of others

Table 7: Data 7

Page 156	Point of analysis
"... I was perfectly unqualified for a stone-cutter as for any whatever; neither had I any tools to go about it with."	Even a stone-cutter positionis too qualified for others.

Lifestyle covers everything attached to human life including meals that to the idea of superior, bread is better than corn or rice.

Table 8: Data 8

Page 157	Point of analysis
"After this, I made a great heavy pestle or beater of the wood called the iron-wood; and this I prepared and laid by against I had my next crop of corn, which I proposed to myself to grind, or rather pound into meal to make bread."	Bread is better than corn or rice because the superiors eat bread.

The idea of placing Western meal is better than others is by comparing bushel of barley to bread

Table: 9 Data: 9

Page 159	Point of analysis
Upon the whole, I found that the forty bushels of barley and rice were much more than I consume in a year; so I resolved to sow just the same quantity every year that I sowed the last, in hopes that such	The western meal is better than that of the "others."

a quantity would fully provide me with bread, &c.	
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The idea of looking at nonwestern people lower compare to the Westerns are pictured by Crusoe's attitude in always admiring and never- ending proud of eating bread instead of rice. Bread is processed in a more modern machine and placed in a better dinner set than that of corn or rice.

#### 4. Conclusion

Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe reveals postcolonial identity that covers the problematic of it, including colonialist ideology. The colonialist ideology in the novel marks its relationship to the language in which colonialist thinking is expressed, is based on the colonizers' assumption of their own superiority, which they contrast with the alleged inferiority of native (indigenous) peoples, the original inhabitants of the lands they invaded. The language covers everything attached to the human being including name of plants, meals, professions, and the people. The colonialist ideology remains in postcolonial people for the doctrine is accepted as a better ideology of life standard.

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## **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all parties that enable them to complete this article, they are: Simlitabmas-RistekDikti for funding the research on PDP scheme entitle *Postcolonial Identity in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*, which the article is fragmented from; LP3M, The Methodist University of Indonesia that facilitates the researchers an access to SimlitabmasRistekDikti and continuously monitors the research progress.