



Post Colonial Features: Dependency Complex, Choicelessness, and Colonial Mother in *Robinson Crusoe*

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the post-colonial elements of Frantz Fanon's theory in the novel, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. The text illustrates the relationship between a colonizer and a colonized with the help of the characters: 'Crusoe' and 'Friday'. Some aspects of Fanon's theory have been discussed with reference to the text that are perfectly relatable if we analyse Crusoe's relationship with Friday. In the essay *On National Culture*, Fanon talks about some postcolonial elements like the colonial mother, dependency complex and choicelessness. The two major characters of the text 'Crusoe' and 'Friday' show these features perfectly. The thematic analysis of the text proves that Crusoe is Friday's colonial mother who controls Friday's life. He has developed a dependency complex while living with his colonial mother 'Crusoe' and thinks that he cannot survive without his master's support. He has no choice of his own which shows his choicelessness as he likes to be controlled by his master.

Key Words: Post-colonialism, Fanon, Robinson Crusoe, Dependency Complex

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1. Introduction

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a representative novel which revolves around the theme of post colonialism. Since its publication, it has always been attracting the readers and the critics from a postcolonial perspective. This novel has certain themes in it that can be analysed with reference to post colonialism, especially Fanon's theory of post colonialism. Such ideologies can clearly be seen that are straightforwardly linked with colonialism. This text can be evaluated with reference to Fanon's theory which points out the relationship between Crusoe and Friday. Their relationship can be evaluated by applying certain aspects of his theory like colonial mother, choicelessness and dependency complex.

Frantz Fanon is a postcolonial theorist. He has worked a lot for the colonized people especially for the black. He has inspired many by his essay *On National Culture* in which he talks in detail about the colonizer and the colonized. His works present his struggles against colonialism and the status given to the black race. He presents his revolutionary thoughts in his works. Being a black and psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon was aware of the human psyche and the state of mind that the people can have while being colonized and also the impact of inferiority complex when the people treat you according to your skin colour. Louise Spence in his article *Colonialism, Racism and Representation: An Introduction* talks about the relationship of colonization and skin color in a convincing way. According to him, racism has always been an ally and a product of the colonisation process. In other words, it has been part and parcel of the task of colonization.

Fanon is particularly famous for his essay *On National Culture*. In this essay, he has described in detail the colonizers, their impact on colonization and the way by which the colonized can revive their culture. He has raised many new points about colonialism which had been previously neglected. According to Louise Spence, colonisation is a process which means economic, military, and cultural domination of the Europeans including the United States of America to subjugate and rule distant lands such as much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The same scene is seen in the case of Crusoe that he is a foreigner on the land he is living in but still due to his financial and cultural superiority, he makes Friday feel inferior. These things show extension of the process of colonization in the selected text.

Fanon is of the view that the colonizer and the colonized have a kind of mother-child relationship. The colonized depend on the colonizer like a child depends on his mother and as a child cannot live without his mother, similarly the colonized cannot live without the colonizer. A child can injure himself if he goes out of the sight of his mother. This relationship also relates itself with dependency complex along with choicelessness. The colonizers think that without their guidance and look after, the colonized cannot survive. They cannot look after themselves as they are barbarians and it is the duty of the colonizer to teach the colonized and make them civilized.

Fanon argues in the essay *On National Culture* that the colonizers present themselves as the colonial mother. They make the colonized believe that they are like their mother. If they do not look after the colonized, they can injure themselves like the children do. They make them realize





that they lack the understanding of good and bad. That is why they feel to assist them to keep them safe from the dangers.

The next aspect of the theory is about having no critical thinking and choice. Fanon states in his essay that the colonizers play with the minds of the colonized in such a way that the colonized stop thinking by themselves and start believing that the colonizers are right and they are really concerned about their life. The colonizers make them feel inferior so that they can act upon their advice without thinking. Fanon, in his essay, highlights the mentality of the colonizers. According to him, the colonizers make every effort to make the colonized realize that his culture is inferior to that of the colonizer. Such an attitude is inculcated in his behaviour in such a way that the colonized starts forgetting the importance of his own nation. The worst part of the scheme is that with the passage of time, the colonized develops a confused and blurred personality. He starts hating his biological structure, idealizing the white master's skin and character.

The colonizers are superior only when they make the colonized feel inferior. If there is nobody to devalue his culture, the colonizers' aims cannot be fulfilled. So, they develop such mindset in the colonized people that they feel inferior and this is the origin of the colonizers' superiority. They dehumanize the people and make them believe that they are the well-wishers of the colonized and their intention is to bring reform to them. The colonized people can only achieve their identity back by valuing their culture and tradition. If they do not think critically, like Fanon has argued in his essay *On National Culture*, they would always be considered inferior creatures and barbarians. They can shed this effect of colonialism by thinking critically and by accepting their originality.

Similarly, Fanon talks about the dependency complex developed in the colonized by the colonizers. He argues that the colonizers make the colonized habitual of their rule to such an extent that they feel homely with them. They think that the colonizers are their well-wishers and only with their support they can stand. The colonized cannot imagine their life without the colonizers. They take them as their instructors and feel that without the colonizers, they cannot survive. The colonized think that their life is better with the colonizers as they are civilized and would help the colonized to become civilized. They are inspired from the colonizers and hope they would also help the colonized to become civilized and educated.

Fanon tries to awaken the colonial minds of the colonized people by his powerful arguments. He questions the mentality of the colonized and also talks about the tricks of the colonizers that they use to exploit the colonized. Fanon puts a lot of effort in awakening the colonial minds. He makes the colonizer think critically about their dependency complex and by doing so, he tries to awaken their sleeping consciousness. By reading Fanon's theory of post colonialism, one might change his perspective about the colonizers and start thinking critically to eliminate such effects from his mind.

Fanon's postcolonial theory initiates the mind's awakening process. By reading such theorists like Fanon, any colonized nation can start living on their own. They can develop their





critical thinking and start questioning the colonial thoughts in their minds. Such critical writers give life to the nations as they teach the colonized to live fully. They try to awake their sleeping self and make them conscious of their identity. Such theorists can really change the perspectives of the nations and make them get independence of thoughts.

This theory is quite suitable to be applied to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Three aspects of postcolonial theory are applied to certain plots and themes of the novel as we see racism in the novel which can be said to be the basic features of colonialism. In this novel, we find the mother-child relationship between Crusoe and his slave Friday. While living with the colonizer (Crusoe), Friday loses his identity. He loses his thinking and starts depending completely on the instructions and the teachings of Crusoe.

2. Literature Review

The colour of the skin is thought to be the main reason behind colonialism like we see in *Robinson Crusoe* that the relationship between the two starts just because of the difference of the colour of their skins. As per Albert Memmi (1965), racism comes into practice when someone assigns particular values to real or imaginary differences. In these differences, the accuser keeps himself at the upper hand and vice versa. In this way, the accuser gets benefit and enjoys privilege over the accused one and exercises aggression.

According to Memmi, the process of this violence of colonialism starts from the concept of race. Friday is a black man that is why he is being treated as a colonized in *Robinson Crusoe*. As the researcher has revealed in his paper that Memmi's point of view is very important as it builds up the foundation of racism. His view may be explained in an example as follows. If sexism gives rise to sexual abuse, racism incites the racist to inflict as much pain on the colonized as possible. Such an attitude leads to violence and exploitation of the coloured people.

While talking about the condition of the colonized, the researcher argues that the relationship of a colonizer and a colonized person is just oppression and it does not matter what kind of oppression the colonizer exercises. There is the concept of otherness that is why we cannot hope for any equality in their relationship. Their relationship shows the power in the hands of Crusoe. According to Louise Spence (1982), in all forms of violence and oppression i.e. sexism, subordination and anti-Semitism, difference of colour or physical features is transformed into otherness and exploitation. This difference becomes a source of exploitation of the lesser human beings. It becomes justification for penalty and exercise of power by those who accuse others of difference.

Many critics have talked about the relationship of Crusoe and Friday with different perspectives but Edward Said's remarks about the text are worth mentioning which are relevant with the concept of Fanon's theory 'colonial mother' because that is one of the major concepts presented in the text. Brett C. Mcinelly, (2003) in his paper titled as *Expanding Empires, Expanding Selves: Colonialism, the Novel, and Robinson Crusoe* explores racism and colonialism by quoting Edward Said who considers Robinson Crusoe as founder of a new world of colonialism.





Propagating Christianity and English, the world of the protagonist is a true representation of imperialism. To rule the world as Edward Said claims, a colonizer needs to introduce his culture. This phenomenon, is found in the relationship of Crusoe with Friday and how like a mother, Crusoe thinks that Friday is a barbarian and he needs Crusoe's help to become civilized. That is why he teaches Friday his religion, his way of eating and dressing style. The same thing Frantz Fanon discusses in his postcolonial writing *On National Culture* while talking about the colonial mother that Crusoe makes Friday feel that the culture he belongs to, is worthless and barbarian and he needs to learn the way of living from Crusoe to look like a civilized person.

Brett C. Mcinelly (2003) further states that *Robinson Crusoe* is a metaphoric representation of colonialism. His character is not to exhibit this adventure of colonialism. The novelist had no direct experience of plantation, slave trade, exploitation, South America, or coastlines. He had no practical experience of geographies, travels and occupying techniques. The work is based on his imagination. There is strong evidence that he might have structured his novel on something he knew from random sources. His work is an imaginative journey through which one can travel to far off lands whose journey resembles that of actual happenings of colonialism.

The post-colonial elements in *Robinson Crusoe* are portrayed by some of the events mentioned in the text like Crusoe gives name to his slave, he teaches him his language 'English'. By doing so, he shows possession over Friday. While talking about such things, Brett C. Mcinelly quotes Novak (1963) who expresses his views about the power of the protagonist. According to him, Crusoe is a matchless person because he brings transformation to the occupied island through the agency of language. His narrative is strong enough to have a creative process of naming people and things that meet his eyes. He is an expert in naming people, places, and articles. His mastery over naming and assuming charge of the entire island makes him similar to Columbus who assumed possession of the land at his own name. Hence, an imaginary Robinson Crusoe enjoys similarity with historical figure Columbus.

3. Research Statement

Fanon's theory of post colonialism can perfectly be applied to the novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe as we find in it the elements of 'colonial mother, choicelessness, and dependency complex'.

4. Research Methodology

This paper aims to apply some aspects of Fanon's theory on *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe as this theory is considered to be perfect to discuss the text as a part of colonial literature. Daniel Defoe's description of colonialism can best be linked with Fanon's postcolonial theory. In order to gain a better insight into the themes, the aspects of the theory are linked with the novel by using thematic analysis as there are many themes of post colonialism. The mode of data is qualitative as it aims to analyse the themes of the text with reference to post colonialism. This paper aims to explore the themes with reference to choicelessness, parenting, dependency complexes that have not been explored before.





5. Research Questions

- i) What are the aspects of postcolonialism presented in *Robinson Crusoe*?
- ii) Why is Fanon's theory of post colonialism suitable to be applied to *Robinson Crusoe*?
- iii) How is *Robinson Crusoe* a post-colonial novel with reference to Fanon's theory?

6. Data Analysis

Robinson Crusoe is a story of a white protagonist who is the representative of colonisers in the text. Defoe deals with the theme of colonialism through the depiction of his protagonist. There are many aspects of colonialism portrayed in the novel. The author has highlighted the concept of superiority and inferiority on the basis of colour. There is another important aspect that the colonizer wants to propagate, the concept of religion. The colonizers do not let you feel comfortable in your own way, that is why they make you conscious about your language as well. When they are done with this task, they become the benefactor of the colonized. The same patterns are seen in Robinson Crusoe. The protagonist of the novel sets on a sea voyage. During his voyage, he makes an island as his colony. The act of colonization shows his superiority complex. He is not a native to that land but still changes the island and its people according to his choice. This is the attitude that is adopted by those who plan to enslave the people and think themselves superior. Besides being a story of Crusoe's adventure, the novel throws light on the process of colonization.

The novel depicts Crusoe as the coloniser and Friday as the colonised. The author presents Crusoe as a saviour. He rescues Friday from the cannibals and becomes his master. Friday is the only native to the island and Crusoe becomes his rescuer. The plot gives a strong message of imperialism. Crusoe, who is new on the island and himself is from another land, starts ruling the naive just because of his white colour. After saving Friday, he starts changing his way of living. He does not like Friday's way of living, that's why he starts interfering in his life. Crusoe's attitude became the reason for Friday's inferiority complex. One of the most important changes that the colonizers bring in their colony is to make the colonized feel inferior. After that they reveal to the colonized what is ideal. The same we see here that Crusoe makes Friday feel inferior for his colour, language and religion. Later, he becomes Friday's master. This is the technique that the colonizers use to colonize a nation. If the colonized do not feel inferior, the colonized can never rule them. To develop a superiority complex in the colonized is the crucial thing that the colonizers do.

Robinson Crusoe thinks it his duty to make Friday civilized because according to the colonizers, everybody except them uncivilized and ignorant. It shows that Crusoe takes pity on Friday and his way of living. He wants to improve his life by preaching the so-called ideal teachings. Crusoe is on Friday's land but still Friday has to be changed for Crusoe because he is a white man. First of all, Crusoe gives him a name that shows the concept of superiority and inferiority complex. Crusoe starts teaching his language. The initial words that Crusoe teaches to Friday are 'yes' and 'no' which shows a typical mindset of the colonizers. These 'yes' and 'no' shows the mindset of the colonizers that they do not expect anything else from the colonized except





these short words. They don't communicate with them which is a sign of good relationship rather they treat the colonized as their slaves who don't have any right to argue with the colonizer. When Friday successfully learns to say 'master', the colonizer's aim is fulfilled because this is the status that he ultimately demands from his slave.

Crusoe not only teaches his language but also his religion. He preaches his religion to Friday thinking that his own religion is not worthy enough to make him civilized. Friday has been submissive to his master and he learns his master's teachings without any hesitation. As he has developed an inferiority complex, it's not difficult for him to accept Crusoe, his master. Friday proves to be a faithful and submissive slave who never wants to be separated from his master. Crusoe also becomes successful in preaching his religion to Friday. He listens to his master and soon becomes a 'good Christian'. This shows the victory of the colonizer that how fast he becomes able to shatter Friday's own identity. The colonizers do not leave any sphere of the colonized life untouched. They want a thorough change in their lives as is seen in the case of Friday. Crusoe brings change in everything he observes in Friday. For example, he teaches Friday how to eat and what to eat. Friday is completely changed after his training. Crusoe changes everything in him. He teaches Friday not to eat human flesh and Friday follows. The colonizers get such submissiveness after a long process of imperialism. They show to the colonized that they are their wee wisher and when the colonized believe in them, they can fulfil their purpose of colonization.

Crusoe saves Friday's life to get some company on the island. He gives Friday a new life and a land to live but in return he expects Friday's slavery. It means that he has not done anything without any purpose. If he has saved Friday's life, it is not for Friday's betterment for him as he gets a slave. He makes himself master by saving a cannibal and making him his slave. He has got somebody to rule on. Friday is so impressed by his white master that he submits himself to Crusoe. At last, Friday becomes an image with Crusoe's identity. He loses his true identity and starts imitating his master. Crusoe's authority erases Friday's own identity and gives him his English identity. The colonizer successfully controls the colonized mind and changes him according to his desires.

The novel presents the power structure of the world. Crusoe is living on the land he says his but Friday doesn't have any kind of land. He is deprived of the necessities that is why Crusoe becomes able to colonize him. This is also a way to colonize the people. If you are superior to them with respect of economy, it is easy to make them feel inferior. They idealize you and start listening to you. The same we see in the case of Crusoe and Friday that Crusoe possess land but on the other hand, Friday is penniless. It is also one of the reasons that Crusoe dominates and Friday behaves in front of him like a slave.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, post-colonial aspects are found which can be discussed with reference to many post-colonial theories, however, Fanon's theory of post colonialism is applied to this piece of literature as it portrays clear evidence about these aspects of Fanon's postcolonial theory. In this novel, we can examine the mother-child relationship between Crusoe and Friday, Friday's dependency complex and his choicelessness that symbolize colonialism. The relationship





between Crusoe and Friday is very important because it revolves around the idea of postcolonialism.

The relationship of Crusoe and Friday is certainly complex and open to interpretation. At times, it looks to be a father-son type of intimacy, but there is a clear master-slave element in their relationship. This latter perspective is reinforced throughout the text. Their communication gives a strong impression of master and slave relationship. Crusoe's tone is authoritative because he expresses his superiority and claims to be Friday's master and well-wisher. The naming of slaves by their masters was tradition in Defoe's times. The same happens here because Friday never knows the true name of his master. It indicates an attitude of extreme superiority.

We can figure out here the mother child relationship which is one of the major aspects of Fanon's theory. Like a parent, Crusoe gives name to his slave and starts teaching him many things which are considered to be the duty of a mother. Crusoe teaches him how to eat and what to eat. As it is the habit of the colonizers that they make you realize that you are wrong and they need to train you and educate you. The colonizers think that if they do not guide or instruct the colonizers, they can bring harm to themselves as the children do because they do not have knowledge of what is good for them and what is bad. According to Fanon, the process of colonization was not merely an accidental adventure. The colonizer convinced the colonized that their domination was aimed at sharing their burden and lightening their darkness.

As Fanon talks about the colonial mother, it is quite relatable with the theme of teaching Friday. We see that Crusoe teaches Friday his own language. Crusoe further gives him knowledge about Christianity, about his own religion which is one of the main characteristics of the colonizers that they start imposing their ideas on the colonized like colonial mothers. So, we can say that Fanon's concept of a colonial mother is quite applicable here in the relationship between Crusoe and Friday. The natives develop a good opinion of colonialism as a gentle and loving mother who tries her best to protect her children from an adverse environment. On the contrary, the colonized believed that the colonizer was like a mother who forced her children to commit evil acts. Colonialism forced people to commit suicide against their will and wish. The colonial mother snatches self from her child. It makes them submissive and confused. It makes them unhappy.

The second aspect of the theory that this paper documents is the dependency complex. In the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, we see that Friday becomes habitual of Crusoe's company like Fanon talks in his essay *On National culture* that the colonized people become habitual of the colonized. They develop dependency complexes to such an extent that they are afraid to be abandoned. Similarly, we see in this novel that Friday is afraid of being abandoned. He expresses that he wants to live with Crusoe throughout his life. He has developed a strong mother-child relationship with Crusoe that he never wants him to go. Fanon talks about this dependency complex in such words that the colonizer imposed the idea in the mind of the colonized that the Western imperialists were necessary for the natives' existence. Their return to Europe would mean that the natives would return to barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.

If we talk about the choicelessness of Friday, which is another aspect of Fanon's theory,





we see that Friday completely depends on Crusoe for everything. He does whatever Crusoe asks him to do and learns whatever Crusoe teaches him. He is so much influenced by the colonizer that he accepts whatever they want to give him. Friday understands Crusoe's culture. He is learning the colonizer's language and religion without thinking about his own culture, religion etc. Fanon says in his essay that the colonizers 'make him a stranger in his own land.' The same case we see with Friday that Crusoe is a stranger there but he is behaving as if Friday is the stranger and he is teaching him how to live on that piece of land which is not of Crusoe at all.

Fanon says that it is all in the hands of the colonized that if they value themselves, nobody can make them feel inferior. They should maintain their individuality. The moment the Negro thinks that the Whites are superior, their downfall starts. Fanon argues that a Negro has not been the same Negro since he has been dominated by the whites. Fanon believes that when a Negro decides to prove himself a cultured man and starts behaving like a cultured person, no one can stop him from believing that he has his own culture. It is the responsibility of the Negro to believe and demonstrate that Negro culture exists and is worthy of attention.

Robinson Crusoe is a post-colonial novel having the features of Fanon's postcolonial theory. Fanon has portrayed the psyche of the colonized and the colonizers clearly in his essay. The theory presents a broad view of colonialism in the novel. It throws light on certain plots of the novel to demonstrate that Robinson Crusoe is a post-colonial novel with many striking colonial aspects. Crusoe's relationship with Friday is of great significance in this regard. His theory helps us to study the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized minutely. How the colonizers enjoy colonialism is seen in Crusoe's words when he talks about the people coming to his island. He feels like a king having people around who would serve him and follow his footsteps like Friday. This is the case with all the colonizers that they want to own everything. They want to control the world and rule it. They want to keep them superior and make the colonized people feel that they are inferior. That is why the colonizers are there to educate them and to guide them. He wants to make the colonized admit that he has all the authority to control the lives of the colonized and he is their 'absolute lord'.

In one of his speeches, Crusoe states that his land was much populated. He believed that he was very rich among his own subjects. He behaved like a king because he could enjoy happiness all around him. First of all, he was the owner of the entire country and its people. He enjoyed absolute power and domination like a king. Secondly, his people were under his control. He has a complete grip over their lives. He could kill anybody he liked. Being a lawgiver and authority, he was all powerful. All these things show the elements of superiority complex of the colonizers that they adopt to enslave the nations.

We see in *Robinson Crusoe* that Crusoe is presenting himself superior in front of the colonized 'Friday', Fanon talks about such issues in his essay *On National Culture* in such words that colonial situation blocks path to national culture. According to him, the poverty of the people, national oppression, and negation of culture are one and the same thing for the colonizers.





Fanon states that the colonizers take away every natural thing of the colonized people. They exploit their indigenous culture, language and religion and replace everything with theirs. The same practices are noticed happening in the relationship of Crusoe and Friday that Friday is unable to maintain his own culture. He is completely influenced by the colonizer. His life is completely changed by the influence of the colonizers and he is unable to maintain his identity.

7. Conclusion

The paper can be concluded with the words that the novel *Robinson Crusoe* is full of post colonial elements which have been discussed with reference to Fanon's postcolonial theory. It can clearly be stated that the colonizers make the colonized people dependent to such an extent that they can no longer think by themselves. The colonizers play with the life of the colonized in such a way that they stop thinking by themselves and start idealizing the colonizers. The same thing we notice in the relationship of Robinson Crusoe and Friday that Friday forgets about his natural way of living and starts depending fully on Crusoe. He abandons his language, his way of living and his concepts of religion as well in order to adopt the colonizer's way of living. This is the colonizer, 'Crusoe' who made him realize that he is a barbarian and like a child he is spoiling himself. Crusoe put such things in the mind of the colonized that he had to learn from the colonizer to become civilized. The colonizers take away the ability of critical thinking and make them follow their instructions like a puppet. They make them believe that their culture has nothing worthy and the colonizer's culture is civilized. If they want to improve their lives, they have to learn from their colonial mother without thinking critically and have a strong dependency complex with their colonial mother. Fanon's theory perfectly depicts the elements of post colonialism in Robinson Crusoe. It is the dependency complex of Friday which makes him Crusoe's slave for the rest of his life that Crusoe is his saviour and master. Friday diminishes his will or choice in front of his master's orders and stops thinking by himself. He has admitted that Crusoe is his colonial mother whom he cannot disobey. Friday's life is completely changed while living with his master but he does not have any regret as he has lost his critical thinking.

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