KMC Journal
[A Peer-Reviewed, Open-Access Multidisciplinary Journal]
ISSN 2961-1709 (Print)
Published by the Research Management Cell
Kailali Multiple Campus, Dhangadhi
Far Western University, Nepal
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/kmcj.v8i1.90642

Between Colonizer and Colonized: An Exploration of Hybridity and Mimicry in *Robinson Crusoe*

Arjun Dev Bhatta, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of English, Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus
Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Email: abhatta44@gmail.com

Abstract

This research article critically examines the complex and ambivalent relationship between colonizers and the colonized in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* It aims to unravel the contradictions and anxieties embedded in colonial authority. To support this claim, the researcher draws on theoretical insights forwarded by postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha in his seminal text 'The Location of Culture'. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and 'The Third Space' are employed as key theoretical tools to show how colonial authority is disrupted and resisted. Focusing on Crusoe-Friday relationship, the article argues that Friday's mimicry and hybridity unsettle Crusoe's authority and open up a 'Third Space' for cultural negotiation and resistance. This article follows a qualitative research method, analyzing the text through primary and secondary resources available in the library and online resources. Using Bhabha's postcolonial theory, particularly his notions of hybridity and mimicry, this article seeks to fill up the gap left by earlier research. The findings of the study suggest that Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is not a monolithic narrative of European superiority but a text that reveals the fragility and complex colonial discourse.

Keywords: colonialism, hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, Robinson Crusoe

Introduction

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is widely celebrated as the foundational colonial text in the English literary canon. The novel reflects the time when British colonialism was underway, and Britain's profit-oriented colonial economy, dependent

on African slave labor, was thriving. It powerfully embodies Eighteenth-century colonial ideology, Eurocentric domination, and the cultural, religious, and linguistic subjugation of non-European peoples and spaces. The novel is regarded as a precursor to the colonial literary canon, highlighting its foundational role in shaping subsequent representations of empire and cultural hegemony. Chakraborty (2003) argues that *Robinson Crusoe* is a "foundational text for setting the pattern for colonial fiction" and "one of colonial literature's most influential texts, a text with which the modern novel can be said to begin" (pp. 51, 53). Thus, the novel sets the template for later colonial narratives by portraying themes of exploration, conquest, and domination of the "Other". Further, the novel foregrounds stereotypical "color binary and hierarchical structuring of colonial and racial relations and the eighteenth-century articulations of race and colonial power relations" (Wheeler, 1995, p. 821). In this sense, the novel is paradigmatic of colonial relations between Whites and non-Whites.

Set on a desolate island, the novel unveils the power dynamic between the European castaway protagonist, Robinson Crusoe and the indigenous, Friday, revealing the ambivalent relationship between colonizers and colonized during the age of Empire. Crusoe, as a prototype of colonizer, treats Friday as a savage, irrational, and inferior 'Other', while claiming himself as a civilized, rational, and enlightened European. To assert colonial superiority, Defoe presents Crusoe as ruling over the island, renaming Friday, teaching him English language and values, converting him to Christianity, and rendering him a servant or possession. Furthermore, the novel reinforces the stereotypical binary between colonizers and colonized, foregrounding the ideological underpinnings of European expansion, which justifies conquest of people and land, as natural, benevolent, and necessary.

Two key concepts of postcolonial theory – mimicry and hybridity as articulated by Homi K. Bhabha – help unpack this dynamic, showing that colonial authority operates not only through control, but also through cultural influence and identity formation. Friday's partial mimicry and the creation of a 'hybrid self' disrupt Crusoe's dominance and his sense of European superiority. Bhabha suggests that mimicry is not simply an imitation but a powerful form of resistance and hybrid identity unsettles colonial authority by blurring the boundaries between colonizers and colonized. Friday does not appear merely as a passive servant or companion of Crusoe, but as a complex figure, who resists Crusoe's colonial domination through the act of mimicry and hybridity. Thus, this article explores how mimicry and hybridity function as means of challenging colonial power and domination. It argues that while Crusoe tries to shape Friday into a European ideal, Friday's retention of native traits and partial mimicry counter Crusoe's absolute power. This paper analyzes key scenes in the novel through Bhabha's postcolonial framework, illuminating the instability of colonial identity and

the nuances of resistance, and argues that colonial authority is neither absolute nor immutable but can be contested and transformed.

Literature Review

Critics and scholars of *Robinson Crusoe* have explored multiple themes since its publication in 1719. Many readers consider the text as a tale of adventure, individual survival, and human resilience. Mcinelly (2003) argues, "In *Robinson Crusoe,* Defoe transforms colonialism through the power of fictional representation into the adventures of a single man who masters the island, his native companion, and himself" (p. 3). Likewise, Nforbin (2023) in the same line examines the novel as embodying "features of the adventure novel and the picaresque tradition", emphasizing its portrayal of "the oversea adventures of a white British man" (p. 5). These views highlight Crusoe's daring activities and his confrontation with both environmental challenges and the perils of transatlantic journeys to Africa, Brazil, and eventually the unknown Caribbean island.

Critics, who move beyond a surface reading of the novel as a tale of adventure and survival, interpret it as a reflection of early capitalism and colonial expansion. Bohm-Schnitker (2022) admits that *Robinson Crusoe* is a "central text in defining English identity as 'white' in the sense of the Anglo-Saxon genealogy of its main character that is closely tied to capitalist structures of mercantilism and processes of colonial expansion" (p. 174). The novel illustrates the emergence of British imperial power and the consolidation of global trade, foregrounding property-ownership, individualism, labor, and imperial aspiration as central values. Watt (1957) also regards the novel as a "landmark text emphasizing the rise of the modern capitalist subject" (p. 63). Crusoe's maritime ventures, his commercial success in Brazil, participation in the slave trade, and the conversion of the deserted island into a productive estate exemplifies Defoe's fictionalized articulation of capitalist and colonial ideology.

Some readings of the text identify individualism as a central theme in *Robinson Crusoe.* Noting Crusoe's individualism as one of the most distinctive features of the novel, Mcinelly (2003) affirms "In *Robinson Crusoe* we get, perhaps for the first time in English prose fiction, a work that asserts the primacy of the individual subject" (p. 4). He focuses Crusoe's determination to prioritize individual will over familial and social expectations. Crusoe, who gives up his middle-class status and his father's counsel, pursues plantation ownership, engages in the slave tradition, and ultimately masters both nature and human beings on the island through intellect and labor. His transformation from rebellious youth to self-sufficient "king" of the island reflects the spirit of modern individualism.

With the emergence of postcolonial theory, traditional critical perspectives on the novel have shifted, offering new interpretations and critiques of its colonial discourse. Mcinelly (2003) considers *Robinson Crusoe* as a pivotal colonial novel that dramatizes colonial expansion, conquest, and domination over non-European peoples and lands. He asserts, "British colonialism informs nearly every feature of Daniel Defoe's first novel. Spatially . . . religiously . . . economically, and psychologically . . . *Robinson Crusoe* owes many of its most characteristic traits to the colonial context (p. 1). He focuses on Crusoe's hegemonic role over Friday and his domination of the island, which parallels colonial practices of power, subjugation, and the imposition of European norms on indigenous populations, thereby endorsing Eurocentric values, culture, and system as superior and universally applicable. Said (1994) considers the novel "immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences" that symptomatically deals with "a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island (p. 9-10). He examines Crusoe's control and rule over the indigenous people and the island is similar to England's colonial expansion and conquest. He alludes to *Robinson Crusoe* as "a work whose protagonist is the founder of a new world, which he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England" (p. 70). Sharing with Said, Green (1979) describes the novel as "the prototype of literary imperialism" (p. 5). Crusoe is taken as a symbolic representation of European imperialist who usurps native land, acts as a sovereign, controls the natives, and imposes Christian values and customs, demonstrating that Crusoe's domestication of the island and his governance over Friday is a reproduction of the logic of colonial domination.

Some scholars such as Hutnyk (2023) view Crusoe's role on the island as an extension of colonial mission. He writes: "Crusoe appears as the embodiment of English cultural identity, reinforced with polemical strategy to invoke and generalize the axiomatic of colonial mission" (p. 3). Crusoe as an ideal and enlightened English man follows strategies to justify and universalize his colonial mission, control, and cultural superiority. Likewise, Novak (1997) affirms that the story of *Robinson Crusoe* "is not that of conquest but that of colonialism, of the advantages of exploiting foreign land and of a good relationship between colonizer and indigenous population" (p. 114). He sees the novel less about military conquest and more about colonial settlement, displaying the benefits of exploiting foreign land and portraying a seemingly cooperative relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Downey also observes the theme of colonialism and its domination in the novel. Downie (1983) argues that "*Robinson Crusoe* involves imperialistic propaganda to promote his schemes of trade and colonization" (p. 66). Each step of Crusoe's journey to the island and his imposition of authority over the natives, particularly Friday showcases the emerging colonialism and imperial power during Defoe's time.

The novel, despite the adventurous and improbable plot, is often considered one of the realistic novels. In this sense, Richette (2001) singles out the novel as a "pioneering work of modern novelistic realism" (p. xiv). The novel is not a heroic or romantic tale based on fantasy or nobility. Crusoe's obstacles and his physical and mental struggles for survival illuminate how human beings tackle the adverse situation in their real life. Richetti underscores the complex psychological and moral dimensions of human beings, moving beyond a simplistic interpretation of the novel as propaganda for British imperialism. He writes: "*Robinson Crusoe* is not simply propaganda for British imperial expansion but, also, a dramatization of the psychological origins and moral problems of the triumphant but troubling historical phenomena of Western individualism and imperialism that [Crusoe] comes to embody" (p. xxviii). He supports this claim by focusing Crusoe's status, anxiety, and fear on the island. Although Crusoe is a paradigmatic self-made individual who relies on his own effort, intelligence, and resourcefulness, his isolation and seclusion force him to confront multiple questions – such as his existence and position, his life and survival on the island without society, and, in doing so, he encounters contradictions as well as moral and ethical problems, notwithstanding his power and authority.

The existing critical discourses on the novel have predominantly underscored the operation of colonial power dynamics and authority. The critics have foregrounded the hierarchical structure that positions Crusoe as the dominant subject and Friday as the subordinated other, reinforcing the assumption of colonial domination as immutable and unchallenged. However, such traditional readings remain inadequate when examined through the lens of postcolonial theory, particularly Bhabha's conceptualizations of mimicry and hybridity. Previous scholarship has rarely addressed the ways in which Friday negotiates his subjectivity and destabilizes Crusoe's authority through acts of mimicry and the formation of hybrid self. Thus, this study seeks to fulfill that gap by demonstrating the instability of colonial identity, its inherent vulnerability, and ambivalent dynamics between colonizers and colonized as articulated by Bhabha.

Methods and Procedures

This study employs the qualitative research design, and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is selected as a primary text, focusing on the contradictory and ambivalent relationship between Crusoe and Friday. To address the research gap, it draws on secondary materials available in the library and online sources. The text is analyzed through the lens of Bhabha's postcolonial theory, as articulated in *The Location of Culture* (1984) to argue that colonial authority is never static, but can be negotiated, challenged, and resisted through performance of mimicry and creation of hybridity.

Bhabha presents a complex and nuanced concept that critiques essentialist views of culture, identity, and power. He contends that the stereotypical boundaries between colonizer and colonized are fluid and contested, reflecting a system that is itself fractured, shifting, and deeply embedded in power relations. Colonial authority, therefore, can be challenged and subverted through the performative acts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalent relationship, where meaning and identity emerge through negotiation and struggle. Hybridity refers to cultural amalgamation and fusion during the time when colonizer and colonized cultures interact. This cultural mixing, according to Bhabha, dismantles cultural purity and fixed identities, consequently, it undermines colonial authority by exposing that colonial power is not wholly imposed or imitated but transformed through cultural interaction. Bhaha postulates that colonial hybridity is the complex and contradictory in nature and it is a space where distinct powers, desires, and disciplines, intersect. Bhabha (1994) admits: "the colonial hybridity is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its object at once disciplinary and disseminatory . . . a negative transparency (p. 112). Colonial hybridity is not static; it exists in an 'ambivalent space' – a place of contradiction, where meaning and identity are always shifting.

Colonial authority desires its power to be visible, clear, and natural; however, hybridity exposes the contradictions and incoherence in that power. For Bhabha, hybridity is not merely mixing of one race, culture, and identity with another; rather, it is a complex, contradictory, and unstable intersection of cultures shaped by colonial power. Hybridity thus embodies ongoing power struggles and identity negotiations that cannot be simply resolved through cultural relativism. It serves as a means to subvert or destabilize colonial authority, exposing that identity is never fixed or unified, and that colonial discourse is fraught with contradictions and indeterminacy.

Mimicry, on the other hand, is the act of imitating the language, customs, and behavior of colonizer by the colonized subjects. However, it is not merely about coping and becoming identical; rather, it is about performing difference. Through mimicry, the colonized subjects imitate the colonizer, in a way that makes the difference visible and unsettling. Bhabha (1994) opines: "Mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (p. 86). He argues that mimicry is a strategy that creates ambivalence and instability within colonial authority. While the colonizer employs mimicry to impose control, it is disrupted through the partial imitation by the colonized, turning it into a form of mockery. This contradiction is an instance of disavowal that is never fully resolved. Consequently, colonial power remains ambiguous and fragile. The colonized subject's partial resemblance to the colonizer is both reassuring and menacing – a reminder that colonial identity can be limited, challenged, and even ridiculed. According to Bhabha, this partial imitation is not simple assimilation, but a complex, unstable process that

undermines colonial authority. Mimicry thus generates a site of ambivalence – a mix of compliance and subversion – that reveals the fragile foundations of empire. The colonized subject's resemblance to the colonizer undermines colonial authority by revealing its failure to fully dominate the colonized. Hence, mimicry becomes a form of resistance because it unsettles the image of the colonizer as superior.

Bhabah states that new cultural meanings and identities are formed in a liminal space what he calls 'Third Space' – an 'in-between' space. This is a contact zone where different cultures and identities are negotiated and compromised to create new identities that are not unique to one culture or the other. Consequently, colonial discourse is never fully authoritative because it is inherently ambivalent – a simultaneous attraction and repulsion, inclusion and exclusion, and desire and fear of the colonized subjects. According to Bhabha, this ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized generates the possibility for resistance within the very structures of colonial authority.

Hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalent relationships are the mechanisms of resistance to colonial authority. Bhabha's postcolonial theory envisions internal contradictions and instabilities within colonial discourse itself, where traditional binary opposition is always already compromised due to their internal contradictions. Based on Bhabha's postcolonial theoretical notion of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence, this paper seeks to critique the traditional reading of the text as colonial domination, hegemony, and authority. This article argues that colonial identity and authority is not monolithic or subtle but always fragmented and shaped through complex interactions within colonized subjects. Thus, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* unravels colonial tension and ambiguity where colonial power is simultaneously enacted and undone.

Results and Discussion

This section examines Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* through Bhabha's postcolonial theoretical framework, particularly his notion of mimicry and hybridity as central to the colonial encounter between Crusoe and Friday. The novel discloses the underlying instability and fluidity of colonial authority, even though it has often been read as a story of colonial and imperial adventure. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday depicted in the novel is characterized by ambivalence – a simultaneous assertion of dominance and fear of subversion. Bhabha's key concepts of mimicry and hybridity allow a re-reading of the novel that investigates how colonial authority, while striving for control, inadvertently creates spaces of resistance and negotiation. Thus, the analysis exposes how colonial authority is asserted yet simultaneously disrupted through the acts of imitation and cultural translation.

In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* the eponymous character epitomizes the European colonizer who seeks to control the island and its inhabitants. Crusoe proceeds to establish himself on the desolate island through the creative activities of domestication and cultivation, after being survived the shipwreck. In setting up his colony, he initiates the so-called "civilizing process" in the manner of a European colonizer, and proclaims himself "lord of the whole manor . . . king or emperor over the whole country" (Defoe, 1719, p. 103). This assertion indicates his sense of sovereign power and imperial control, typical of colonial rulers over foreign territories. Moreover, he saves Friday from the cannibals and enslaves him as his submissive and loyal servant, giving him a new English name, Friday. Crusoe initiates cultural, religious, and linguistic colonization by teaching Friday the English language, converting him from cannibalism to Christianity, and imposing European customs to make him conform to a European semblance.

Crusoe is essentially authoritative and oppressive, reinforcing stereotypical binary of superior/ inferior and self/other. His statement "I made him know his name should be *Friday,* which was the day I saved his life . . . . I likewise taught him to say *master,* and then let him know that was to be my name" (Defoe, 1719, p. 163) illuminates his assertion of colonial dominance and ownership over Friday. Novak (1997) comments Crusoe's act of renaming: "Crusoe assumes possession of him in the same way that Columbus assumed possession of the land by his naming" (p. 117). This indicates how colonialism nullifies the identities, cultures, and histories of indigenous people. In this sense, Crusoe represents a microcosm of colonial ideology, and the island becomes a manifestation of empire – a space where he exercises imperial control over both land and people.

Crusoe creates differentiation and establishes stereotypical hierarchies between himself and Friday, assuming him to be Christian, rational, and civilized, whereas Friday is depicted as pagan, emotional, and savage. This mirrors Bhabha's claim that colonial power produces "identity effect" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 3), a construction of subjects through representation. Bhabha argues that discrimination and differentiation are central to colonial discourse as colonial authority "requires modes of discrimination that disallow a suitable unitary assumption of collectivity" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 111). Thus, Colonial discourse is founded on divisions and differentiation rather than unity and assimilation in order to preserve its authority and power.

In the novel, Crusoe adopts a similar approach in his treatment of Friday. He attempts to erase Friday's cultural, religious, and indigenous identity by imposing European ideals and compelling him to imitate his ways. Crusoe manifests colonizer's "desire for fixity and order" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66) to reinforce fixed hierarchies between self and other, master and slave, and civilized and savage. However, Bhabha (1994) considers that fixity in the discourse of colonialism "is a paradoxical mode of

representation" (p. 66) because it seems to introduce contradictions and instability. Crusoe, for instant, defines Friday as naturally inferior, submissive, and savage; yet Friday's partial mimicry of Crusoe's language and religion is imperfect being shaped by his own culture. Consequently, Friday's hybrid presence undermines Crusoe's desire for order and exposes the fragility of colonial authority.

Bahbha sees the colonial relationship as inherently ambivalent, performative, and dependent on the colonized subject it seeks to dominate. Mimicry and hybridity are key mechanisms that serve to subvert colonial authority and superiority. Thus, Bhabha's notion of mimicry "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86) becomes a key takeaway to perceive the dynamic between Crusoe and Friday. Crusoe tries to recreate Friday in his own image, turning him into a faithful servant and a reflection of colonial civility through the strategic procedure of teaching, conversion, and imitation. He attempts to transform Friday's perceived savagery to English civility by teaching him the civilized manner of dressing, eating, and behaving. Moreover, Crusoe wants Friday to renounce cannibalism and correct his horrid way of eating. He becomes a fully civilized human being after embracing European norms and values. Crusoe's civilizing process becomes complete as Hulme (1986) argues that "The native's 'subjection', that is his self-interpellation as a subject with no will brings Crusoe's civilizing mission to an end" (p. 206). Friday mimics every aspect of Crusoe's behavior; however, his imitation remains imperfect, revealing traces of his indigenous identity. He is marked by both difference and dependency. His partial mimicry sustains Crusoe's authority yet simultaneously challenges Crusoe's absolute colonial control. In this sense, Friday's mimicry is not mere carbon copy; it becomes the "most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 85), exposing the partiality, incompleteness, and instability of colonial discourse.

Friday imitates Crusoe's language, behavior, and religion and customs in order to survive and win Crusoe's favor. Yet he remains both distinct and dependent; showing how his mimicry sustains Crusoe's dominance while simultaneously disrupting his supposedly fixed colonial authority. Thus, Friday's mimicry "represents an ironic compromise" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86) because his imperfect imitation inadvertently mocks or parodies Crusoe's power. Here, Friday's mimicry functions as a double-edged sword – a tool of colonial control and, at the same time a means of resistance. This dual nature of mimicry is what Bhabha (1994) calls "the sign of double articulation" (p. 86) indicating that mimicry operates as a strategy of both domination and subversion.

Crusoe foregrounds colonial authority through his civilizing acts of teaching, turning Friday a 'reformed' native; however, Friday never becomes truly equal to Crusoe because of his racial and cultural difference. Bhabha's well-known phrase "almost the same but not quite" encapsulates this dynamic: it preserves Crusoe's authority on the one hand, while Friday's flawed mimicry simultaneously challenges Crusoe's sense

of superiority and control. This polarity creates ambivalence and tensions inherent in colonial mimicry. As Bhabha (1994) argues the colonized subject's fragmentary resemblance "leads to ambivalence, uncertainty, and anxiety within colonial discourse, making the mimicry at once resemblance and menace" (p. 86). Although Friday appears almost similar to Crusoe, he nevertheless remains different in his accent, thought, knowledge, and appearance. Crusoe desires to see his own reflection in Friday, but, ironically, he encounters a distorted reflection that threatens Crusoe's confidence and reveals the fragility and artificiality of his power. Friday's expression of his indigenous self – his racial and cultural hybridity – creates in Crusoe a sense of paranoia, a fear of losing control or being mocked by the very 'copy' he has produced. Bhabha suggests that mimicry is not merely a tool of colonial control but also a threat to it. It does not create a complete colonial subject, but only imperfect representations, what he calls "metonymy of presence" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 90), exposing the artificiality, absurdity, and hollowness of the colonizer.

Bhabha develops the concept of hybridity – the mixing of languages, cultures, identities, and meanings within the contact zone between the colonizer and the colonized – as a means of challenging, transforming, and disrupting fixed colonial discourse. Bhabha admits that colonial identity is invariably contingent, impure, and formed through interactions, contradictions, and negotiation. Bhabha conceives of a 'Third Space', a liminal zone where heterogeneous identities, meanings, and power relations are negotiated. It is a creative in-between space in which new meanings, hybrid identities, and subversive expressions interact. Bhabha (1994) writes: "In the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of dominations of difference – that the inter subjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural values are negotiated", and that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read a new" (pp. 2, 37). This is the space where different systems, ideologies, and cultures interact and influence one another, and where meanings, power structures and dominant narratives are challenged or undone. Thus, the creation of a hybrid or in-between identity renounces stereotypical binaries, allowing the colonized subject to dismantle the colonizer's discourse through differential use of language, thereby undermining colonial control over meaning.

In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the island becomes a vivid example of the 'Third Space' where Crusoe's European culture and Friday's indigenous culture come into contact, negotiating and influencing each other. When Friday adopts Crusoe's language, religion, and values, he becomes neither fully pagan nor fully Christian; he is no longer simply the "Other" nor entirely the "Self." His actions and identity remain indeterminate, as he exists in a hybrid space – in-between Crusoe and himself.

Likewise, Friday's role as a loyal and faithful servant is also hybrid, as he obeys Crusoe while simultaneously retaining his own agency through self-expression. As Bhabha (1994) suggests, hybridity "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power" (p. 112), Friday's hybrid cultural belonging, unsettles Crusoe's domination and subverts his authority, dismantling the binary between the colonizer and the colonized on which Crusoe's dominance rests.

Bhabha also affirms that the colonizer's language, as a site of power, becomes contaminated and transformed through hybridity. Although colonialism defines, classifies and controls meanings through its language as a discourse of domination, that very language becomes fluid, impure, and contradictory. Bhabha (1994) observes: "In the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other" (p. 33). He suggests that the language of the colonizer is altered when it is blended with the local culture, expressions, accents, rendering it unstable, ambiguous, and unreliable. As the colonized mimics the colonizer's language in a distinctive and resistant way, meanings, words, and symbols are reinterpreted, thereby unsettling the colonizer's authority over meaning. The negotiation of heterogeneous linguistic and cultural signs in the 'Third Space' produces hybrid form that resists any clear-cut image of either language or culture. In the novel, Friday cannot become a perfect English speaker in his imitation of Crusoe's language. His speech is partial, accented, and grammatically broken, as it is disturbed by his own indigenous background. He can neither fully understand nor completely accept Crusoe's worldview. This hybridity, according to Bhabha, disrupts colonial authority because the 'language of the master' becomes unstable – it is neither wholly Crusoe's nor Friday's. Thus, Crusoe's authority through language remains uncertain, and the very tool he applies to dominate Friday is transformed by Friday's hybridity.

In Bhabha's view, the colonial relationship is inherently suspicious, ambivalent, and anxious. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday in the novel is marked by contradiction, ambiguity, and ambivalence—a fusion of domination and devotion, intimacy and hierarchy, affection and control, and power and dependence. From the moment Crusoe rescues Friday from the cannibals, he begins transforming him from a state of savagery and instinct into so-called civilization through acts of teaching moral values and proper manners, calling him "aptest scholar" (Defoe, 1719, p. 166). Crusoe offers protection to Friday to fulfill his own purpose and assert his authority, as he narrates, "that now was my time to get me a servant, and perhaps a companion or assistant" (Defoe, 1719, p. 160). He saves Friday for his self-interest, seeking to end his long years of solitude on the island. His education of Friday and the imposition of European religion and culture reflect his cultural imperialism, as he claims Christianity to be universal and superior.

Friday, on the other hand, submits himself to Crusoe and follows his teaching fanatically, considering Crusoe as his 'master'. Friday seemingly exposes humility, subservience, and servitude to Crusoe out of gratitude for being rescued from cannibals. Crusoe explains Friday's submissiveness and his gesture of acknowledgement: "He came close to me, and then kneel'd down again, kissed the ground, and led his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head . . . to be my slave forever" (Defoe, 1719, p. 161). Friday's symbolic act of submission and gratitude reinforces Crusoe's sense of superiority.

Crusoe shows genuine sign of affection toward Friday, speaking warmly and praising his loyalty and intelligence. He esteems Friday: "never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant than *Friday* was to me . . . his very affections were tied to me, like those of a child to a father" (Defoe, 1719, p. 165). However, Crusoe constructs a hierarchy between father/child and master/servant as a form of dominance within his so-called paternalistic love. Likewise, Crusoe fascinates and idealizes Friday's body as a form of colonial domination: "He was a comely handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight strong limbs . . . tall and well shap'd . . . . He had a very good countenance . . . he had all the sweetness and softness of a *European* in his countenance . . . (Defoe, 1719, p. 162). Crusoe's fascination of Friday's body exemplifies the colonial gaze – a dominating tendency of colonizers to perceive the colonized body in terms of physical beauty rather than intellect or individuality. Crusoe admires Friday for his natural beauty, purity, and vitality, as a symbol of "noble savage", not as a human being capable of reason, emotion, and equal thought. Thus, Crusoe-Friday relationship is founded on domination and control within so-called affection.

Crusoe's domination of Friday through the act of fascination echoes Bhabha's assumption that the colonial fetish is a site of contradictory desire, in which the colonizer both idealizes and condemns the colonized subject—as an object of fascination and fear, and as primitive yet inferior. Bhabha (1994) suggests that "the fetish is a substitute for that which is both desired and feared . . . the colonial subject is fixed as an object of fascination and disavowal" (p. 82). The colonizer needs to believe in the colonized subject's inferiority to maintain domination, but simultaneously desires, or even envies, the vitality embodied by the colonized. Thus, Crusoe's fixation on Friday's physique perfectly enacts the colonial fetish that Bhabha describes as a projection of contradictory impulses of admiration, desire, and control.

Although Crusoe appears self-sufficient and dominant, he depends on Friday for assistance, companionship, and emotional support, as Friday's presence on the island alleviates his twenty-five years of isolation. Likewise, Friday relies on Crusoe for survival and protection. Crusoe provides Friday with clothes, making him "pleased to see himself almost as well cloth'd as his master" (Defoe, 1719, p. 164), and introduces him to the mystery of gunpowder and bullets. He also trains Friday how to

shoot, provides him with more useful weapons, and describes to him the story of his country—the way English people live, worship God, and behave toward one another. However, their intimacy and mutual dependence are contradictory, for Crusoe still regards Friday as inherently savage, inferior, and childlike, assuming himself to be superior and rational. In Crusoe's world, Friday's identity remains blurred, and he is seen merely as a domesticated version of the "savage." Crusoe speaks in a derogatory tone, calling Friday "my savage" and "my man." Even at the end of the novel, when the Spaniards and mutineers appear on the island, Crusoe immediately reverts to colonial hierarchy, referring to Friday as a "faithful servant." He identifies with the Europeans, distancing himself from Friday's so-called savage origin. This dynamic discloses the limits of Defoe's insight—that although friendship and loyalty coexist within the colonial hierarchy, signs of contradiction and ambivalence never disappear.

Bhabha believes that colonial power is sustained by a constant fear and anxiety that its authority and control may be resisted or subverted at any time by the colonized, who seek agency and equality. This dynamic is evident in the novel when Crusoe perceives Friday's longing for his native land and his connection to the Caribbean peoples. Consequently, Crusoe keeps Friday in a separate tent and blocks his door to prevent Friday's sudden entrance, and he carefully stores his weapons in his room. Crusoe expresses his terror:

> If *Friday* could get back to his own nation again, he would not only forget all his religion, but all his obligation to me; and would be forward enough to give his countrymen an account of me, and come back perhaps, with a hundred or two of them, and make a feast upon me, at which he might be as merry as he used to be with those of his enemies. (Defoe, 1719, pp. 176-177)

This episode reveals Crusoe's anxiety about his colonial authority and even his own life. He becomes more circumspect and alert to Friday's new thoughts and possible deceit when he notices Friday's strong inclination toward his native deity, Benamuckee—a primordial mountain god. Friday compares his deity to Crusoe's Christian God, Christ, asking several theological questions concerning the nature of God, evil, and salvation. Crusoe finds himself confounded when Friday asks why the omnipotent Christ does not kill the Devil, and his equivocal answer fails to satisfy Friday's curiosity. This exchange reflects the complexity and contradictions in Crusoe's own belief, undermining his confidence in his mission to enlighten Friday. Crusoe then begins to reverberate multiple questions within himself – can Friday be trusted? Might he return to his own people and country? Is his loyalty genuine? – as he becomes increasingly haunted by psychological fear.

In the novel, Defoe presents the footprint scene to dramatize deep-seated colonial anxiety and fear. Before Friday is introduced, Crusoe discovers a human footprint in the sand, which creates terror and threat in him. His panic symbolizes

not just a personal fear of danger, but also anxiety about losing his dominance and authority. Crusoe, who once conceived of himself as "lord of the whole manor", "king or emperor over the whole country", where were no "rivals" or "competitor" (Defoe, 1719, pp.102-103) to dispute his sovereignty or command is suddenly lost. His sense of self-perception is completely shattered: "I stood like one thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an apparition" (Defoe, 1719, p. 122). The unknown footprint, as a presence of the "Other" makes him alert to the possibility that his authority might be challenged and contested. Moreover, his narcissism turns into neurotic paranoia – a fear of losing control, displaced, and distorted – as he encounters the footprint.

Crusoe faces recurrent nightmares; anxiety strikes his mind; and every unusual sound startles him. He explains: "I should now tremble at the very apprehensions of seeing a man, and was ready to sink into the ground at but the shadow, or silent appearance of a man's having set his foot in the island" (Defoe, 1719, p. 124). His terror at the footprint indicates the loss of mastery and his fragility of his supposed self-image. Mcinelly (2003) explains: "Crusoe's authority – indeed, his internalized image of himself – is threatened by the mere prospects of an encounter with the Other" (p. 17). Mcinelly interprets the image of footprint as colonizer's insecurity, vulnerability, and possibility of threat on another's land.

Conclusion

The analysis of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* through the lens of Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of hybridity and mimicry seemingly proves the instability and vulnerability of colonial authority. The colonial relationship between Crusoe and Friday is not simply a colonial domination and submission, but an inherent contradiction and ambivalence, where imitation and difference coexist. Friday's hybrid existence and his partial imitation of Crusoe's cultural norms challenge Crusoe's sense of superiority and authority, and it reveals the inherent unreliability of colonial discourse. Thus, the novel is not merely a celebration of colonial conquest; rather, it is an exposition of fluidity and unpredictability of colonial authority in which the stereotypical boundaries between master/slave, self/other never remain fixed.

The implications of this study extend beyond the novel itself, suggesting that the colonizer's domination of the colonized often carries within it the seed of its own subversion. Although this study has focused on European colonial and imperial domination in Defoe's time, the concept of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalent relationships can be applied to later colonial and postcolonial texts. Ultimately, this study concludes that Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* dramatizes the complex negotiation between the colonizer and the colonized, demonstrating that colonial power is not

monolithic; rather, it is unstable, contradictory, and ambivalent, and can be continually subverted by the very mechanisms it employs to assert control.

References

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture.* Routledge.

Bohm-Schnitker, N. (2022). Articulating differences: practices of comparing in British travel writing of the long eighteenth-century. *Comparative Practices,* 149-178. https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.18011422.9

Chakraborty, C. (2003). Interrupting the canon: Samuel Selvon's postcolonial revision of Robinson Crusoe. *A Review International English Literature, 34*(4), 51-72

Downie, J. A. (1983). Defoe, imperialism and travel books reconsidered. *Yearbook of English Studies,* 1, 66-83.

Defoe, D. (1719). *Robinson Crusoe.* Penguin Books.

Green, M.B. (1979). *Dreams of adventure, deeds of empire.* Basic Books.

Hutnyk, J. (2023). Robinson Crusoe. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing,* 1-17. https://www.tandfenline.com. Doi 10.1080/17449855.2023.2244204

Hulme, P. (1986). *Colonial encounters.* Methuen.

Mcinelly, B. (2003). Expanding empire, expending selves: colonialism, the novel, and Robinson Crusoe. *Studies in the Novel, 35*(1), 1-21. https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533546

Nforbin, G. N. (2023). Identity, power, and otherness: A postcolonial-oriental reading of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. *Advances in Social Science Research Journal, 10*(7), 1-20. https://doi.org/10. 14738/assrj.107.15028

Novak, M. E. (1997). Friday: or, the power of naming. In Albert J. Rivero (Ed.), *Augustan Subjects: Essays in Honor of Martin C. Battestin.* University of Delaware*,* 110-122.

Richetti, J. (Ed.) (2001). Introduction. *Robinson Crusoe.* Penguin Books, IX-XXVIII

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and imperialism.* Knopf.

Wheeler, R. (1995). My savage, my man: racial multiplicity in Robinson Crusoe. *ELH, 62,* 821-861.

Watt, I. (1957). *The rise of the novel.* University of California Press.