



FEAR AND REPULSION: THE ABJECT IN ROBINSON CRUSOE

KORKU VE İĞRENME: ROBINSON CRUSOE ROMANINDA ZELİL

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Makale Bilgisi

Türü: Araştırma makalesi
Gönderildiği tarih: 31 Ağustos 2022
Kabul edildiği tarih: 5 Ekim 2022
Yayınlanma tarihi: 20 Aralık 2022

Article Info

Type: Research article
Date submitted: 31 August 2022
Date accepted: 5 October 2022
Date published: 20 December 2022

Anahtar Sözcükler

Defoe; Robinson Crusoe; Kristeva;
Zelil

Keywords

Defoe; Robinson Crusoe; Kristeva;
Abject

DOI

10.33171/dtcfjournal.2022.62.2.28

Abstract

This paper aims to explore Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe from a Kristevan perspective. Kristeva's theory of abjection is employed to discuss the powers of horror and disgust in this novel. Fear and repulsion are so fundamental to the story of Crusoe, to the construction and disintegration of his Western self, a subject in process and on trial in the words of Kristeva. Therefore, this study deals with the abject and abjection in Robinson Crusoe and consists of two sections in accordance with Defoe's bifurcated text. The first section focuses on how Crusoe is haunted by the abject and how the abject becomes manifest in his tale. It explores Crusoe's banishment from humankind, expulsion from the symbolic domain of the knowable and nameable into the asymbolic realm of the incomprehensible, his fear of losing his human shape, of sinking into sheer animality, his constant terror of being devoured by beasts and savages, his obsession with cannibalism, his fear of death and his confrontation with the other. The other section concentrates on how Crusoe, a deviser of territories and an organiser of chaos, demarcates his universe, consolidates his boundaries to strive against the abject, and seeks to become a subject in his struggle against the abject. It discusses how the subject gives birth to himself by means of abjection. Since abjection sheds light on what is excluded or digested, this discussion of the novel is also intended to provide insights into what is dismissed from the confines of this novel.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Daniel Defoe'nun Robinson Crusoe romanını, Kristevacı bir bakış açısıyla incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kristeva'nın iğrenme/zelil kuramı, bu romanda korkunun ve iğrenmenin güçlerini tartışmak için işe koşulmaktadır. Korku ve iğrenme, Crusoe'nun hikayesi ve onun Batılı benliği, Kristeva'nın sözleriyle söylemek gerekirse, süreç halindeki bir öznenin kuruluşu ve dağılışı için son derece önemlidir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışmada Robinson Crusoe romanındaki iğrenme ve zelil kavramları araştırıldı ve Defoe'nun çatallanan metniyle de uyumlu olarak, iki bölüm olarak tartışıldı. İlk bölümde, zelil figürünün Robinson Crusoe'ya nasıl musallat olduğuna ve zelilin hikâyesinde nasıl görünür hale geldiğine odaklanıldı. Bu bölümde, Crusoe'nun insanlıktan uzakta, sürgünde olma, bilinenin ve adlandırılanın hüküm sürdüğü simgesel alandan kovulma, anlaşılmazlığın hakim olduğu imgesel alana düşme halleri, insan formunu kaybetme ve katıksız bir hayvaniliğe gömülme, vahşiler ve hayvanlar tarafından yutulma korkuları, yamyamlığa karşı olan takıntısı, ölüm korkusu ve ötekiyle karşılaşma anları irdelendi. Diğer bölümde ise, bölgelerin tasarlayıcısı ve karmaşanın düzenleyicisi olan Crusoe'nun kendi evrenini nasıl sınırlarla işaretlediğine, zelile karşı koymak için bu sınırları nasıl sağlamlaştırdığına, ve zelile karşı verdiği mücadele ile nasıl bir özne olmaya çalıştığına odaklanıldı. Bu bölümde, öznenin iğrenme süreci aracılığıyla nasıl kendini doğurduğu tartışıldı. İğrenme hariç kılınan, hazmedilip sindirilen şeylere ışık tuttuğu için, bu çalışmada aynı zamanda nelerin bu romanın sınırlarının dışına sürüldüğü de ele alındı.

Introduction

"There are no beautiful surfaces without a terrible depth," says Nietzsche (in Sallis, 1991, p. 37). In the context of Nietzsche's maxim, we may think that Defoe's narrative demonstrates the beautiful surface while the abject repressed in this novel shows the terrible depth. Defoe chooses to change this beautiful surface into

a foundational novel, make it public and acceptable; he states in his preface to the novel that the story of Robinson Crusoe's adventures is "worth making public" and "acceptable". He does not descend into the terrible depth to give an account of the abjected Robinson Crusoe on the abjected island. As Seidel (2008) argues, inside the novel "there are other unwritten fictions" (p. 183). Considering Seidel's deduction, this study aims to explore Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) from a Kristevan perspective in order to discuss the other Crusoe whose unwritten story is thought to be primarily marked by fear and repulsion.

Kristeva's theory of abjection is utilised to delve into the powers of horror and disgust in Defoe's narrative. It is argued that fear and repulsion are central to the story of Robinson Crusoe, to the construction and disintegration of his Western self, a subject in process and on trial in the words of Kristeva. Hence, this study focuses upon the abject and abjection in *Robinson Crusoe* and consists of two sections in accordance with Defoe's bivalent text. The first section focuses on how Crusoe is haunted by the abject. It explores Crusoe's banishment from humankind, expulsion from the symbolic domain of the knowable and nameable into the asymbolic realm of the incomprehensible, his fear of losing his human shape, of sinking into sheer animality, his constant terror of being devoured by beasts and savages, his obsession with cannibalism, his fear of death and his confrontation with the other. The other section concentrates on how Crusoe, a deviser of territories who seeks to organise chaos, demarcates his universe, consolidates his boundaries to strive against the abject, and seeks to become a subject in his struggle against the abject. It discusses how the subject gives birth to himself by means of abjection. Reading Defoe and Kristeva dialogically opens up a new space where one can explore the abject since abjection sheds light on what is rejected, excluded or digested. Putting *Robinson Crusoe* in dialogue with the Kristevan notion of abjection enables us to investigate what is expelled from Defoe's narrative, banished from the confines of this novel, and how defined boundaries are challenged by permeable boundaries as a result of the blurring of the civilized-savage binary.

Theory Background: Kristeva's Notion of Abjection

Kristeva's fundamental contribution to contemporary theory is the distinction she makes between the semiotic and the symbolic aspects of signification, and the dynamic interplay between the two. The symbolic refers to the structures of language whilst the semiotic points to what transgresses them. The interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic implies that the subject is also in process or

on trial (Kristeva, 1984, p. 22). Kristeva (1984), who aims to “decenter the closed set and elaborate the dialectic of a process within plural and heterogeneous universes,” contends that there is a perpetual dialectical interplay between the two elements of signification (p. 14).

The semiotic and the symbolic are the two components of the signifying process. The semiotic transgresses the denotative efficiency of the communicative aspect of language. The semiotic is related to the infantile pre-Oedipal; it is a realm associated with the maternal, the preverbal, the rhythmic and the poetic; it lacks structure and precedes sign and syntax (Kristeva, 1984, p. 34). The semiotic element corresponds to an ambiguous, condensed, poetic word, which is reminiscent of the undifferentiated realm of the pre-linguistic; therefore, the symbolic regards the semiotic as an aberration that spoils the clarity and the complete transparency of the word. The trans-verbal semiotic underlying the symbolic is “unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgement, but restrained by a single guarantee, syntax” (Kristeva, 1984, p. 29). On the other hand, the symbolic ensures that structure and law posit the subject; it is related to sign, syntax and other linguistic categories. As opposed to the semiotic, the symbolic is an “inevitable attribute of meaning, sign, and the signified object” for the consciousness of a transcendental ego (Kristeva, 1980, p. 134). Since it is closely associated with the pre-Oedipal body, the semiotic “logically and chronologically precedes the establishment of the symbolic” (Kristeva, 1984, p. 41).

Abjection is a fundamental process of the Kristevan subject in process and on trial. The abject is not only that which is rejected by, and disturbs social reason and order, but it is also considered a necessary precondition for the symbolic realm. Separation is necessary for the subject to construct a distinct subjectivity; this is the positive side of the dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic. On the other hand, the negative side of the dialectic is that the semiotic seems to threaten the symbolic realm.

The unnameable and the unknowable characterise the abject. The abject is not an object defined by the symbolic and positioned in relation to the subject in the symbolic domain. Kristeva (1982) states that once “[I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable *object*. The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine” (p. 1). Therefore, the abject refers to what transgresses the scope of the

symbolic. The abject does not permit the subject “to be more or less detached and autonomous” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1). Beset by abjection, the subject lacks individuation.

The abject is “the jettisoned object” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). What is abjected is that which is excluded from the subject; therefore, abjection is done to the part of ourselves that we cast off. The abject is “radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). Since the abject lies beyond the realm of the identifiable and nameable, it disturbs the symbolic law; as a result, meaning, identity, structure and discourse collapse where the abject looms. The abject lies outside the symbolic realm; however, it challenges the symbolic realm from where it is banished; unsignified, the abject “beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). The abject refers to what is rejected, but never banished entirely; it perpetually violates the tenuous borders of subjectivity.

Kristeva (1982) contends that the abject “simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject” (p. 5). Not only does the abject destabilise the subject, but also abjection allows the subject to be constructed by means of separating itself from others. As McAfee (2004) argues, the infant develops borders between self and other by “a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself” (p. 46). Therefore, Kristeva (1982) argues that “I abject *myself* within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*” (p. 3). On the one hand, abjection is “an extreme state of subjectivity” and a crisis in which the boundary between the self and the other radically collapses; on the other hand, it is also “a precondition of subjectivity itself, one of the key dynamics by which those borders of the self get established in the first place” (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 151).

The abject is what we spit out, reject from ourselves. As examples of what is expelled, Kristeva (1982) cites curdling milk, dung, excrement, vomit, and corpses; she states that one regurgitates at their presence:

When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of the milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea*

makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. (pp. 2-3)

As Kristeva argues, the abject, which is neither subject nor object, elicits such reactions as retching, convulsions, dizziness and nausea. The subject that confronts the abject suffers from the sense of dizziness that clouds his sight. The gagging sensation and the spasms in the stomach results from the elimination of the border between self and other, between inside and outside.

Death is of significance with regard to the abject. The presence of a corpse sets off abjection since it represents the collapse of the distinction between subject and object, life and death. The corpse is a direct reminder of one's materiality and the inevitability of death:

The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death [...] corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3)

The rotting corpse is an underground container where sewage is stored; one casts this corpse off in order to live. The corpse as a sickening waste violates the border between life and death; in Kristeva's words, death infects life (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). Death defiles life because the corpse is "both human and non-human, waste and filth which are neither entirely inside nor outside the socio-subjective order" (Lechte, 1990, p. 160). When we confront a corpse, we realize the fragility of our life; the presence of a cadaver is unsettling since it challenges the tenuous borders of our subjectivity.

The abjection of the maternal body that "gives life, but also death" (Lechte, 1990, p. 165) is essential in the process of the construction of subjectivity. Kristeva (1982) asserts that the abject confronts us "with our earliest attempts to release the hold of the *maternal* entity even before existing outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language" (p. 13). She also adds that abjection is "a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (p. 13). The maternal body must be symbolically murdered so that the child could enter language. The pre-symbolic symbiosis of mother and

child is to be denied in order for signification to start. The child's symbiotic identification with the mother is to be renounced for the speaking subject to emerge.

The abject mother is never entirely cast off; it is never completely submerged in consciousness. The fear of falling back into the maternal *chora* causes the feeling of uncanniness:

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2)

The uncanny evokes fear as the unnameable provokes anxiety. The uncanny is a movement towards that which transgresses the confines of signification or representation. Therefore, it threatens to annihilate the subject. The sense of uncanniness pushes the speaking subject to make a distinction between me and what is not me.

In brief, abjection is crucial in Kristeva's theory of subjectivity. Abjection is the process of differentiation, which marks the shift from the semiotic to the symbolic. The abject signifies the expulsion of the unrepresentable in order for a clean and proper body to be constructed. The abject never entirely vanishes, but it haunts the subject; it threatens the constitution of subjectivity.

Confronting the Abject and Embracing the Object

Robinson Crusoe is a tale of two persons, two lives, two perspectives, two voices. It is "a life of sorrow" and "a life of mercy" (Defoe, 2000, p. 101). Swenson (2018) argues that it is the tale of the damned rebel and the story of a soul that seeks to save himself; it is a narrative about imprisonment and a text about deliverance; it is the story of Prospero and it is the tale of Caliban (p. 24). It is written from the perspective of a modern secular individual, but this point of view also contemplates "the mysteries of providential ordering" (Richetti, 2018, pp. xiv-xv). Defoe's novel opens up a space for ambiguity, internal contradictions, as it records "the uneven state of human life" (Defoe, 2000, p. 120). Defoe cherishes diversity:

How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man! and by what secret differing springs are the affections hurried about as

differing circumstances present! Today we love what tomorrow we hate; today we seek what tomorrow we shun; today we desire what tomorrow we fear; nay, even tremble at the apprehensions of. (Defoe, 2000, p. 119)

This bifurcated narrative about “a fractured identity” (Borsing, 2017, p. 67) and “the duality of Crusoe’s inner life” (Seidel, 2008, p. 192) has two threads. Therefore, this paper discusses Defoe’s novel in two sections: the abject and abjection. The first section deals with how the abject haunts Crusoe while the second section explores how Crusoe struggles to expel the abject and to give birth to his symbolic self through abjection.

Kristeva (1982) argues that there “looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being [...] ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable (p. 1). Stranded on a desert island, “divided from mankind” and “banished from human society” (Defoe, 2000, p. 50), Crusoe confronts the abject as he is expelled beyond the realm of the thinkable. In the words of Kristeva, Crusoe is “the jettisoned object” as what is abject is “radically excluded and draws me where meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). *Robinson Crusoe* belongs to a textual tradition of wonder books, which depict “persons, circumstances, and events that seem to violate normal behaviours and natural laws, matters often going beyond the strange and surprising and sometimes crossing into the miraculous, eerie, bizarre, or supernatural” (Hunter, 2018, p. 9). This venture into the bizarre suggests that Defoe’s narrative has a subtext in which the narrator goes beyond the symbolic domain of the nameable into the asymbolic realm of the unrepresentable. He strays on “excluded ground” into “a land of oblivion” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 8).

Crusoe has this deep urge to go beyond the scope of the thinkable even when he is in England, before he embarks on a journey into the unknown. Crusoe’s mind “began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts,” and he had a “wandering inclination” that resonates with his rambling thoughts; even though his father “designed me [him] for the law,” he “would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my [his] inclination to this led me [him] so strongly against the will, nay, the commands of my father” (Defoe, 2000, p. 1). This urge to leave the paternal house and his native country, to go beyond the commanding father’s law renders him a character who desires to go out into the realm of the unfamiliar outside the confines of the symbolic order. Departing from the paternal house is equal to “a softening of the superego” which leads to “an ability to imagine the abject” (Kristeva,

1982, p. 16). He did not “settle at home” as his father commanded; he rejected “the middle state” of life which is described as a life of “temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions and all desirable pleasures” (Defoe, 2000, pp. 2-3). This description of the middle state of life conveys the idea that life beyond the domain of the father’s law is unhealthy, immoderate, filled with diseases, disagreeable diversions and undesirable pleasures. Life beyond the borders of the middle state is suggestive of the abject state defined by the symbolic order as morbid, corrupting and improper. The realm of the unidentifiable is revolting and sickening besides being alluring and fascinating. As if on a rambling path that winds irregularly in various directions and like rambling weeds, he is tempted by rambling thoughts and exiles himself into the unknown. In the words of Kristeva (1982), he is like “a *deject* who [...] *strays* instead of getting his [middle class] bearings” (p. 8). Bewitched by “the wild and indigested notion” (Defoe, 2000, p. 11), he breaks loose, leaves England, departing for “the space that engrosses the *deject*, the excluded” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 8).

Crusoe’s fear of sinking into sheer animality or relapsing into “a straightened primitivism of thought and feeling” (Watt, 1957, p. 88) is a reflection of the disgust and horror that he feels because of his confrontation with the abject. He fears regressing into a primordial state of nature since this regression obliterates the border between humans and animals. Therefore, this primeval state of nature is repulsive and frightening. He fears the collapse of the boundaries in the wilderness. Therefore, he “could not go quite naked, no, though I had been inclined to it” (Defoe, 2000, p. 102). He wants to preserve his human shape, clothed by the civilization; he rejects being claimed by the unidentifiable wilderness which he “firmly believed that no human shape had ever set foot upon” (p. 75). He knows that his dress, which gives him “a most barbarous shape,” and the “monstrous” and “frightful” shape of his (Turkish) whiskers would have frightened people in England (p. 114, 115).

His fear of losing his human shape and sinking into bestiality is also reflected in his encounter with the African coast. As he sails down “the barbarian coast” of Africa, he fears being “devoured by savage beasts, or more merciless savages of human kind” (Defoe, 2000, p. 17). Crusoe is “in constant terror of being killed and eaten, or denuded of his property and left to starvation” (Roberts, 2000, p. xi). This terror of the exiled subject results from confronting “the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 5). Being disrobed of the Western

self, the jettisoned Crusoe is compelled to behold the nudity and the raw animality at the foundation of the subjectivity. In the Western construction of the self, being denuded of one's property equals being seen as the improper if we take into account of the etymological connection between property and propriety (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The beasts of the animal kingdom and the savages of the human kind merge into one category in the eyes of the Western self and they are seen as improper, repulsive and monstrous. Therefore, when he hears "dreadful noises of the barking, roaring, and howling of wild creatures, of we knew not what kinds," "hideous howlings and yellings," "a monstrous huge and furious beast," and "the horrible noises and hideous cries," he is horrified by the inhuman, the bestial, the monstrous; he is possessed by the fear of falling into "the hands of any of the savages" in "a waste, uninhabited country" where his Western self is threatened (Defoe, 2000, pp. 17-19). Crusoe is terrified of these beasts since the abject confronts us with "those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 12). Those horrible noises of animals represent an ineffable immensity that language cannot signify.

Crusoe compulsively expresses his fear of being devoured by beasts and savages (Defoe, 2000, p. 31, 35, 40, 53, 83, 119, 125, 127), of being swallowed up in the waves while at sea (p. 5), and "being swallowed up alive" in the cave because of the earthquake (p. 62). The fear of being devoured stems from the terror of losing the integrity of his self and his bodily unity. The constant terror of being devoured by ravenous beasts and inhuman savages throws him "into terrible agonies of mind, that for a while I ran about like a madman" (p. 35). It is his fear of death that marks his tale. When he lands on the shore of the island, he becomes overjoyed. He realises he is not drowned but alive. He says that "the animal spirits from the heart" are to overwhelm him; he feels that it is "impossible to express to the life what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are when it is saved [...] out of the very grave," from beyond life; his whole being is "wrapt up in the contemplation of my [his] deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe" (p. 34). His narrative partakes of his fear of death. For the abject, the border between life and death is very fragile; death infects life (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). On the Island of Despair, as he dubs it, he sees "nothing but death before me [him]; either that I [he] should be devoured by wild beasts, murdered by savages, or starved to death" (Defoe, 2000, p. 53). He fears being lost in the undefinable realm of the bizarre and the grotesque beyond the signified confines of the symbolic domain. He is horrified

of being devoured by the abject that “beckons to us and ends up engulfing us” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

Crusoe’s fear of being devoured marks his obsession with cannibalism, which should be seen as a concrete manifestation of his fear of the abject. He is obsessed with the cannibals because they sicken him (Starr, 2018, p. 70). Cannibalism is repulsive and sickening because it signifies the collapse of boundaries. Crusoe is obsessed with cannibalism since he is at the border of his condition as a speaking subject and his “entire body falls beyond the limit” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3). He goes through “an experience at the limits of the identifiable” (Kristeva, 1987, p. 339). He fears confronting the “cannibals or men-eaters [who] fail not to murder and devour all the human bodies that fall into their hands” (Defoe, 2000, p. 83). He lives “in the constant snare of the fear of man” and he is uneasy because of “the dread and terror of falling into the hands of savages and cannibals” (Defoe, 2000, p. 125). He is horrified when he sees the dismembered human bodies on the other side of the island: he “was perfectly confounded and amazed; nor is it possible for me [him] to express the horror of my [his] mind at seeing the shore spread with skulls, hands, feet, and other bones of human bodies” (p. 126). The dead human body “puts death in intolerable proximity to the subject” (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 34). Therefore, Kristeva (1982) argues that the corpse is “the utmost of abjection” (p. 4). The disjointed human body terrorises him since secure boundaries are dislocated; the symbolic world is shattered. His fear is incommunicable; his horror resists signification in the symbolic order of language; he is speechless as he confronts the abject. He is petrified as he sees “the savage wretches [who] had sat down to their inhuman feastings upon the bodies of their fellow-creatures” (Defoe, 2000, p. 126). He is repulsed by “such a pitch of inhuman, hellish brutality” and he is struck by “the horror of the degeneracy of human nature” (p. 126). Disgusted by the abject, he averts his eyes from “the horrid spectacle” (p. 126). This monstrous spectacle threatens to erase the borders of the symbolic world. Beset by the abject, his “stomach grew sick” and he “was just at the point of fainting, when Nature discharged the disorder from my [his] stomach” (p. 126). Facing the abject, he vomits: “The spasms and vomiting that protect me [me]. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). Resisting defilement, Crusoe vomits “with an uncommon violence” (Defoe, 2000, p. 126). He is horrified as he sees the collapse of boundaries between human and inhuman. Therefore, he “gave God thanks, that had cast my first lot in a part of the world where I was distinguished from such

dreadful creatures as these” (2000, p. 126). He strives to maintain the boundary between himself and the inhuman cannibals. A perpetual defence against non-differentiation marks his narrative. He strives to hold on to “a secure differentiation between subject and object” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7). He struggles to consolidate the borders between himself and the brutish cannibals. He “entertained such an abhorrence of the savage wretches [...] and of the wretched, inhuman custom of their devouring and eating one another up, that I [he] continued pensive and sad, and kept close within my own circle for almost two years after this” (Defoe, 2000, p. 127). Keeping away from them in his own territory, his settlement uninfected by the defilement of the cannibals, he seeks to purge himself of the abject: “for the aversion which Nature gave me [him] to these hellish wretches was such, that I [he] was fearful of seeing them as of seeing the devil himself” (p. 127). He thinks about how he could “destroy some of these monsters in their cruel, bloody entertainment” and he even thinks about blowing them up with gunpowder; thinking about killing them “pleased” his thoughts (p. 129). He believes that destroying the cannibals might free him from the horror that he “conceived at the unnatural custom of that people” since it may function as purification (p. 130).

Despite his attempts to defy the abject, he seems to have identified himself with the abject since he regards himself as socially dead. His civil death shows that his terror of being dismembered by the cannibals stems from the fact that he is already associated with the abject. He is fearful of cannibals not because their abjection will infect him, but because he sees himself as the abject reflected in their cannibalistic practice. That is why his imagination is haunted by the cannibals even before he literally sees them. Since the division between subject and object does not exist for him on the island, the abject threatens to disintegrate his identity.

Since there is no established difference between self and other for Crusoe on the island, he is “exceedingly surprised with the print of a man’s naked foot on the shore” (Defoe, 2000, pp. 117-8). The existence of another person would reintroduce the gap between self and other, and thus put an end to his abject condition. He has repeatedly likened his state of being on the island to an affliction, a disease or disorder. He says that his “only affliction was that I [he] seemed banished from human society, that I [he] was alone, circumscribed by the boundless ocean, cut off from mankind, and condemned to what I [he] called silent life” (p. 120). Exiled from the human society, he confronts the inhuman and fears that he has already become inhuman. Being cut off from humankind, he considers himself to be dead; he “was

as one whom Heaven thought not worthy to be numbered among the living, or to appear among the rest of His creatures; to have seen one of my own species would have seemed to me a raising me from death to life” (p. 120). He desperately needs another human being to resurrect him, to be among the living. In this state, he associates himself with the dead; being banished from human society equals being dead in his eyes. Being dead also associates him with the abject. Therefore, he thinks that the print of the foot must be “the devil” or the savages that will devour him (pp. 118-119). This explains why he is in constant terror of being devoured by the cannibals. He is horrified not because they will infect him, but because he has already been infected by the abject. These feelings of fear and disgust shed light on why he is obsessed with constructing “an impregnable self” (Borsing, 2017, p. 66). He is on the fragile border where identities “do not exist or only barely so – double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 207). He is disturbed by this fuzziness and resists metamorphosing into an animal.

His desire to distinguish his self from another human being and thus to establish his symbolic self is so strong that he, seeing the print of the foot, stands “like one thunderstruck, or as if [he] had seen an apparition” (Defoe, 2000, p. 118). He goes on to say that he “listened,” he “looked round” him, but he “could hear nothing, nor see anything” (p. 118). The other is like an apparition as he thinks it may be his “fancy” (p. 118). Beset by abjection, he is dreadful as he fails to divide a line between the external reality and his imagination. He explains his fear as follows:

But after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man; nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes affrighted imagination represented things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange, unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way. (p. 118)

The confrontation with the other petrifies him. He is possessed by fluttering thoughts like the rambling thoughts he has when he desires to leave the paternal realm. Therefore, he wants to retreat into his fortification, his stronghold, which he calls his “castle” after this incident (p. 118), to feel secure, to feel moored, anchored. He fears that he is sinking into the mire of his mindscape, where he is claimed by

the demons of his mind, by the unaccountable whimsies and shapes in other words. He says that he is out of himself; he is actually in his mind when he says that he is out of his mind. Therefore, he feels that “this might be a mere chimera” of his own and “this foot might be the print” of his foot (p. 121). His seeing the print of the foot as a mirage shows that there is no gap between self and other; he does not want his self to be imprinted by the other in other words. He is terrified of the confrontation with the other that he may fail to assimilate. He withdraws into his fortification where there is no differentiation between self and other, and does not stir out of his “castle for three days and nights” (p. 121); he is enwombed in his castle. He begins to persuade himself that it was “all a delusion” and “nothing else but my [his] own foot” (p. 121). He observes that “if, at last, this was only the print of my [his] own foot, I [he] had played the part of those fools who strive to make stories of spectres and apparitions, and then are frightened at them more than anybody” (p. 121). The point he makes about himself sums up the discussion: humans make up stories about ghosts because they are frightened; through stories, they purify themselves and expel the abject. Therefore, Kristeva (1982) says that literature is the “privileged signifier” of abjection (p. 208). Seeing it as the print of his own foot, he says that he “might be truly said to start” at his own shadow and he “began to go abroad” (Defoe, 2000, p. 121). Reducing the print of the other to a delusion of his mind, to his own shadow, to his alter ego, he goes abroad, out of the castle that enwombs him; he thus incorporates the other. Assimilating the other is suggestive of his cannibalistic imagination. The verbs “assimilate” and “incorporate” signify that Crusoe, who fears being devoured by the cannibals, turns out to be the cannibal who absorbs and digests the other. That is the reason why he feels repulsed by the cannibals. Kristeva contends the abject is about ambiguity; there is no secure differentiation between Crusoe and the cannibals. Incorporating and thus eradicating the mark of the other, Crusoe becomes “a skilled assimilator of Otherness both within and without himself” (Swenson, 2018, p. 22). This assimilator is always haunted by that shadow, chimera; he notes that he “was haunted with an evil conscience” (Defoe, 2000, p. 121). The emergence of the other terrifies him since it notifies him of the fact that he is inhuman, that is beyond the boundaries of the human society. His confrontation with the other is actually his confrontation with the abject. Therefore, the “intermixture, erasing of differences” horrifies him (Kristeva, 1982, p. 101).

The malformed grammar and corruption of language is the manifestation of the confrontation with the abject. Fascinated by the abject, the writer projects himself into it, intro-jects it and consequently “perverts language” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 16). Accordingly, Defoe, who changed his surname from Foe into Defoe, adding a French prefix, thus playing with the language, shows an awareness about the corruption of language. This is revealed in Crusoe’s remarks about his family name changing from a foreign-sounding (Germanic) one into an English word: he “was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe” (Defoe, 2000, p. 1). The very first paragraph of his narrative shows that corruption lies in his family name as an important indicator of identity. The shift from the passive form as in “we are called” to the active form as in “we call ourselves” may also imply that this corruption is a matter of choice. The corruption of the surname from Kreutznaer into Crusoe shows and conceals at once that he has a “mixed ethnic heritage” and “half-German, a first-generation Englishman” (Richetti, 2005, pp. 187-8). This alteration in the surname also suggests that Crusoe’s identity is composed of homely and unhomely at once. This debasement in language fits within the discussion of the abject as it refers to the unhomely, the unfamiliar. Besides this corruption of language, Crusoe’s “malformed grammar within the journal” (Swenson, 2018, p. 21) can be viewed as the effect of the encounter with the abject. In the journal, the “two voices” of the protagonist “overlap awkwardly” (Swenson, 2018, p. 21). The co-existence of these two voices introduces the idea of “two Crusoes” (Swenson, 2018, p. 21). Despite his attempt to teach Friday proper English, he sometimes uses Friday’s broken English; he uses Friday’s phrase “any white mans” to refer to the Spaniards on Friday’s native island (Defoe, 2000, p. 174). There are many other examples, which evince that the line between proper and improper language becomes blurred.

Robinson Crusoe’s Expulsion of the Abject

Crusoe seems to prove Kristeva’s argument of playing the role of the symbolic subject as he becomes “a tireless builder” and a “deviser of territories, languages, works” and he “never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid boundaries [...] constantly question his solidity” (1982, p. 8). This paper regards Crusoe as not only an abject figure, but also views his narrative as a manifestation of abjection through which he seeks to build his world and his narrative, and thus to give symbolic birth to himself. Kristeva argues that the “subject of abjection is eminently

productive of culture” (p. 45). Striving to repress the abject, Crusoe becomes a subject in process and on trial, striving to maintain his ties with the symbolic order and build a civilization founded on the exclusion of the abject.

The usage of a retrospective narrator is an indication of an attempt to dismiss the abject. Looking back and re-writing in retrospect, the narrator omits, excludes what threatens the integrity of the subject. It is a form of digestion designed to abject what shatters the unity of the subject. Hunter (2018) argues that Crusoe’s narrative has “the tripartite observation/digestion/reflection tension” (p. 11). Similarly, Swenson (2018) maintains that *Robinson Crusoe* is marked by “a self-avowed selective accounting that seeks to master the chaos of misshapen pots, misremembered days, mismatched shoes into a unified whole” (p. 18). In conformity with these interpretations, this paper suggests that his reflections are upon the digestion of the abject. The retrospective narrator reflects on his experience and leaves out the things he does not like. This attempt to omit certain things is a form of abjection since it allows the narrator to be in command of his writing, and thus purge the narrative of the abject. Therefore, Crusoe’s narrative is full of references to omissions. For instance, he says that he could not start writing his journal because of “too much discomposure of mind” when he first landed on the island. He adds that “having gotten over these things in some measure, and having settled, I [he] began to keep my journal” (Defoe, 2000, p. 52). He notes that if he had started writing his journal right away, it would have been “full of many dull things.” For example, he would have written this:

After I got to shore, and had escaped drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my deliverance, having first vomited with the great quantity of salt water which was gotten into my stomach, and recovering myself a little, I ran about the shore, wringing my hands, and beating my head and face, exclaiming at my misery, and crying out. (p. 52)

He may have omitted certain things. Revising the material, he wants to omit the abject scene in which he may be embarrassed of himself as he vomits and runs like a mad man, the image of which evokes, in his psyche, the savages destitute of divine knowledge or the abject in general. He also knows how to keep his thoughts in check; he thinks that “it could be hardly rational to be thankful” while “Providence should thus completely ruin its creatures” and he adds that “something always returned swift upon me [him] to check these thoughts, and to reprove” him (p. 47). He also notes that he knows how to master “the return of those fits” when

he regrets disobeying his father's advice during the terrible storm at sea; first, he repents because of his fear of death, but later on, he gets his repentance drowned in "that one night's wickedness" and gets "a victory over conscience" (p. 6). This also evinces that he represses the return of fits, which is suggestive of his tendency to master the return of the repressed in his narrative. Later on, he also says that he "purposely omit[s] what was said in the journal" (p. 58). Although there is a practical reason for this in this case (to avoid repetition), this points to the retrospective narrator's tendency to omit things and to revise his material. Because of these references to his efforts to repress fits, omit things, Swenson (2018) argues that his journal is "a copy of the original" (p. 20). The narrator composes and revises his composition, shaping his story by hindsight. Swenson (2018) points to "the clarifying benefits of hindsight" (p. 20). This method of revising and selecting allows the narrator to employ the cleansing effects of hindsight. Writing retrospectively, he purges his story, aspiring to expel the abject. He frames the story, which is an attempt to hold the narrative within the confines of the symbolic, not to let it stray into the realm of the asymbolia. This effort to protect the tenuous borders of textuality (the textual border between the journal and the memoir) is an extension of the attempt to consolidate the tenuous borders of subjectivity.

Kristeva (1982) argues that an "unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside" (p. 16). Therefore, beset by the abject, the narrator holds on to the paternal figure as an anchoring point. The retrospective narrator identifies with the father's perspective and thinks that the young son's original sin is the *hubris* with which he defied his father. He says that his opposition to his father's "excellent advice" is his "*original sin*" and he thinks he is infected with "the general plague of mankind" (Defoe, 2000, p. 149). He describes his rebellion against the paternal authority as an infection of a disease. Therefore, he believes that his life on the island is "a just punishment" for his sin and his "rebellious behaviour" against his father (p. 67). He repeatedly refers to his father's "discourse" that he deems "prophetic" and "the good advice" of his father (p. 3, 26, 29, 69, 149). For instance, when he was taken as a prisoner, this reminded him of his father's "prophetic discourse" (p. 13). He does not describe his father as a despotic patriarch; in contrast, he is defined as affectionate, kind and tender (p. 2, 4). He makes peace with the paternal authority. Identifying with the paternal perspective, he regrets breaking "loose," going on board a ship "without asking God's blessing" or his father's (p. 4). Once he comes across a terrible storm at sea, he feels this is a divine retribution owing to the

violation of his “duty to God” and his father (p. 5). His account becomes dominated by his tremendous fear; he is “most inexpressibly sick in body, and terrified” in his mind (p. 4). His sickness results from his venture into the unidentifiable. He is possessed by the fear of being swallowed up by the waves in “the hollow of the sea.” In “this agony of mind,” he says that he “would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home” to his father (p. 5). During another storm at sea, he sees “terror and amazement in the faces” and he is “dreadfully frightened” (p. 7). He says he is in “tenfold more horror of mind” because of “such a dismal sight” (p. 7). All of these remarks demonstrate that his account of fear suggests that he is visited by the powers of horror in the words of Kristeva. The powers of horror capture him; the subject of abjection is possessed by fear once he strays out of the paternal realm. He utters that his heart “died within” him, his heart “was dead as it were dead” within him, “partly with fright, partly with horror of mind” and he “fell down in a swoon” (p. 8-9). Death threatens the jettisoned subject. Deprived of the symbolic world, he falls in a faint; the stray beholds “the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). Crusoe sees himself as a “misguided, young fellow” and regards his father’s prophetic discourse as an anchoring point (Defoe, 2000, p.11). This oedipal narrative evinces that the narrator clings to the paternal symbolic to get rid of the abject. The narrator deposits the abject “to the father’s account” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). This identification with the paternal suggests that Crusoe is “[a] certain ‘ego’ that merged with its master, a superego” and “has flatly driven” the abject away (p. 2). The narrator submits to the paternal authority, merges with the superego, and thus struggles to expel the abject. The abject is jettisoned to reduce the overall weight that threatens to crush the subject or to sink the ship if we proceed with the marine metaphor. Crusoe’s likeness to a child is stressed. This “regression to epistemological childhood” (Thompson, 2018, p. 115) is the reason why he holds on to the paternal authority. Crusoe infantilizes himself, submitting to the authority of the prophetic father. Kristeva argues that the stray through which the abject exists “considers himself as equivalent to a Third Party” and he “secures the latter’s judgement, he acts on the strength of its power in order to condemn, he grounds himself on its law” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). In Kristeva’s theory, the third party refers to the paternal function that breaks up the symbiotic unity of the mother and the infant. Hence, Crusoe secures his father’s judgement, grounds himself on the paternal law.

Keeping a journal enables Crusoe to strive against the abject since keeping a diary imposes a sense of temporality on the character, situating him in an allocated time. As the master of the island, he husbands “pen, ink, and paper” to the utmost and writes about his days to keep things exact (Defoe, 2000, p. 49). In the midst of the unnameable wilderness, he strives to achieve certainty and exactness. He was “in too much discomposure of mind” when he first landed on the shore; he was “undone, undone, till, tired and faint,” but having settled, he “began to keep my journal” (p. 52). Keeping a journal allows Crusoe to follow “a time line that orders events and feeds his rage for order in his unfamiliar and puzzling new world” (Hunter, 2018, p. 10). He marks time, regarding his landing on the island as his rebirth; he decides to keep this day, “the unhappy anniversary of” his landing as “a solemn fast, setting it apart to religious exercise” (Defoe, 2000, p. 79). He imposes patterns on time. This sense of time and order renders his writing coherent. Keeping a record of himself allows him to sort out climate, to divide the rainy season from the dry season. Following growth cycles and seasonal patterns enables him to figure out when to sow and harvest. Observing the natural cycles, the rainy season and the dry season begin to “appear regular” to him (p. 79). Finding these cycles and patterns gives him a sense of orderliness, positioning him in a certain space on Earth. Keeping a journal “provides an anchor and authority for time and for order itself” (Hunter, 2018, p. 11). He also keeps a calendar. He tries not to lose his “reckoning of time” and therefore he keeps his calendar, “weekly, monthly, and yearly reckoning of time” (Defoe, 2000, p. 48).

Crusoe’s imposing order on the island and holding on to the empowering virtues and ideals such as rationality and self-restraint should be seen in the context of his fight against the abject. The island signifies a primordial state of nature. The Atlantic was seen at the time as “a violent, unregulated, largely unpoliceable ocean” (Bannet, 2018, p. 130). Seeking to master this defiant nature, he imposes order on his life on the island by means of recreating familiar routines in an unfamiliar terrain. For instance, he finds a parrot and teaches it to call him by his name “very familiarly” (Defoe, 2000, p. 83). When he makes a canoe and is unable to use it, he decides to let it lie where it is as “a memorandum to teach” him “to be wiser next time” (p. 104). Thus, in the wilderness that resists signification, he creates signifiers to be represented in the symbolic realm. Through these signifiers, he aims to domesticate the untamed land. For this reason, Rogers (2018) states that Crusoe’s narrative is “the story of *Homo domesticus*” (p. 63).

Kristeva (1982) argues that through abjection “I claim to establish *myself*” and “I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit” (p. 3). Beset by abjection, Crusoe starts rebuilding the Western civilization. The construction of the story suggests that he follows the anthropological account of cultural human evolution. His life is “a kind of fast forward-wind vision of human evolution, through the stages of hunter-gatherer, toolmaker, herder, agriculturalist and so on” (Roberts, 2000, p. xi). Defoe employs this narrative so that the abject cannot claim the character. The first stage of this narrative is seeking “a proper place for habitation” (Defoe, 2000, p. 39). He needs to secure himself against “savages or wild beasts” and he decides to make a dwelling, “a cave in the earth or a tent upon the earth” (p. 43). He decides not to build his settlement “upon a low moorish ground” which he believes “would not be wholesome” (p. 43). Therefore, he is resolved to seek for “a more healthy and more convenient spot of ground” where he can find “fresh water” (p. 44). Haunted by the abject, Crusoe keeps away from the low uncultivated places near the shore. He describes the low ground near the sea as unhealthy, morbid. Hence, he draws a boundary between a healthy spot for habitation and an unhealthy place outside the confines of his settlement; he does not want the morbidity of the low grounds to infect his settlement, to defile his habitation. There being no fresh water in the unwholesome place also suggests that a line is drawn between proper and improper, fresh and foul, pure and impure, defiled and uncontaminated. In accordance with this tendency to draw boundaries, before he puts up his tent, he draws a semi-circle and builds a fence, which is “so strong, that neither man or beast could get into it” (p. 44). The circle and the fence allow him to distinguish his home from the unhomely; he says that he is “completely fenced in, and fortified” (p. 44). Marking out his territory, converting the unfamiliar into the familiar, drawing borders and feeling safe within the confines of his shelter, he “slept secure” and safe from “the enemies” which he “apprehended danger from” (p. 45). Crusoe marks out a territory where identity, order and system is not disturbed but clearly defined, and borders are established and respected. This helps him strive against ambiguity, the first sign of abjection. Fixing his habitation and making a fire, he moors his jettisoned self to the first stage of human evolution. He thus draws boundaries between the hostile and the hospitable, between friends and enemies, and between inside and outside. Although he later on discovers that the other side of the island is more beautiful, he does not move there; he notes that he “was fixed in my habitation, it became natural” to him (p. 84). His home becomes a point of reference in the darkness that threatens to

overwhelm him. He defines the island according to this vantage point; he is anchored in his home which he describes as “a perfect settlement” (p. 85).

In a manner conforming to the impulse to draw boundaries between fresh and foul, pure and impure, Crusoe also pays attention to the boundary between what is fit for food and what is unfit. He shoots a bird and finds out that “its flesh was carrion, and fit for nothing” (Defoe, 2000, pp. 39-40). As the rotting flesh can be considered the concrete manifestation of the abject, carrion notifies Crusoe of the limits of what is fit for food. Carrion signals the presence of death and decomposition; therefore, he keeps away from it. Crusoe as the hunter and gatherer distinguishes between clean and unclean.

Domesticating animals is another stage of the human evolution story that Defoe employs in this narrative about the struggle against the abject. As the Latin etymology of the word “domestication” suggests, taming animals is an attempt to turn the ravenous beasts into homely, familiar creatures. Hence, it is an attempt to convert the abject into the symbolically invested creatures that the symbolic order assigns meaning to. He keeps the dog and the cats from the ship as company; he remembers the dog as “a trusty servant” to him (Defoe, 2000, pp. 48-9). He entertains “a thought of breeding up some tame creatures” (p. 57). He domesticates a goat and the creature becomes “so loving, so gentle, and so fond” (p. 86). Taming goats, he says he must “keep the tame from the wild” and decides to have “some enclosed piece of ground” (p. 112). In his struggle against the sickening collapse of boundaries, he draws boundaries between the domesticated and the wild.

Agriculture is another stage of human evolution that Crusoe holds on to in order to expel the abject that threatens to disintegrate his Western self. When he settles in the Brazils, he purchases some land, which is “uncured” and forms a plan for his “plantation and settlement” (Defoe, 2000, p. 25). Even in the Brazils, he makes a difference between the cultivated and the uncultivated. This is in accordance with his impulse to distinguish pure from impure. For him, the uncured land is unhealthy. Likewise, when he finds grapes and melons on his island, he decides to “cure or dry them in the sun” (p. 76). Curing the crops is an attempt at purification; he needs to purge the land of the morbid. Similarly, he finds the sugarcanes on his island to be “wild, and, for want of cultivation, imperfect” (p. 75). He seeks to tame the wild nature, and thereby distinguish himself from the brutes and associate himself with the culture he left behind in England. He also makes an enclosure around his crops “with a hedge” and gets his “arable land fenced in”

because of the enemies, the untamed goats and hares that eat his crops (p. 88). Making an enclosure and fencing in land is linked with drawing borders between foes and friends. Similarly, when the birds that he calls “the thieves” start eating his crops, he kills them, hangs them “in chains, for a terror to others” and he says that the idea of scarecrows works (p. 89). This also demonstrates that he needs to distinguish himself from others and to fence himself in so that he could feel safe and uninfected by the morbid wilderness.

Crusoe’s mastery of mechanical arts is also significant in terms of dismissing the abject. He improves himself “in the mechanic exercises” (Defoe, 2000, p. 110). He makes use of his reason as well as his hands as he executes mechanical exercises. As he makes a table and a chair, he observes that “reason is the substance and original of the mathematics, so by stating and squaring everything by reason, and by making the most rational judgement of things, every man may be in time master of every mechanic art” (p. 51). Mathematics is discovering patterns such as squares and ordering what seems to be chaotic. One can master things by squaring them, making them straight and even, smoothing the curves. Likewise, thanks to these mechanical exercises, he makes shelves to store his goods. He remarks that it is “a great pleasure” to him “to see all my goods in such order” and “to separate everything at large in their places” (p. 52). Separating things corresponds to the urge to draw boundaries. He employs his reason to cope with his “despondency” and to ease his mind afflicted with the chaotic state of things:

As my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse; and I stated very impartially, like debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered. (p. 49)

This deep urge to differentiate things and categorise them stems from his impulse to draw boundaries between the wild and the tame, the self and the other.

Crusoe clings to Providence. As Richetti (2008) argues, he holds on to “a belief in the traditional world of providential arrangements and spiritual, non-material forces” (p. 122). Crusoe holds on to the providing, protective care of God as a spiritual power to struggle against the abject, to keep it in check. First, he tends to believe that his being cast away is “a determination of Heaven” (Defoe, 2000, p. 47). He observes that he “had hitherto acted upon no religious foundation at all” and he “had very few notions of religion” in his head (p. 59). When he sees the green stalks

shoot out of the ground, he thinks that “God had miraculously caused this grain to grow without any help of seed sown” and he believes that “it was so directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable place” (p. 59). This makes him cry when he feels that God provides and cares for him. Believing that a divine blessing is bestowed upon him enables him to draw a boundary between himself and the brutes. He starts reflecting on his place in the order of the universe: “What am I, and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal, whence are we?” (p. 70). Contemplating the origin of the universe, of all creatures, he draws a line between the human and the inhuman. He takes up the Bible and starts reading God’s Word (p. 72). He prays in “a kind of ecstasy of joy” and begins to hope that “God would hear me” (p. 74).

Crusoe also draws a boundary between his previous self and his new self on the island. He says that he had “no divine knowledge” and he had never looked upward toward God, adding that he was wicked and profane: “a certain stupidity of soul, without desire of good, or conscience of evil, had entirely overwhelmed me; and I was all that the most hardened, unthinking, wicked creature” (Defoe, 2000, p. 67). He furthermore observes that he “was merely thoughtless of a God or a Providence; acted like a mere brute from the principles of Nature, and by the dictates of common sense only, and indeed hardly that” (p. 68). In his previous life, he realises that he was not distinguished from the brutes of the untamed nature. Now that he is enclosed by the uncultivated wilderness, he has a deep yearning to distinguish himself from the brutes. When he becomes sick and death starts haunting him, his spirits sink under “the burthen of a strong distemper” and “the horror of dying” raises “vapours into” his head “with the mere apprehensions” (p. 69). He repents his previous wicked life: “conscience, that had slept so long, began to awake, and I began to reproach myself with my past life” (p. 69). Beset by abjection that haunts him through the horror of dying, he dismisses his previous self, regards his past life as abject, abominable, and thereby purges his new self of the abject.

Kristeva (1982) maintains that the subject haunted by the abject jettisons some of the weight that crushes him in order to demarcate “a space out of which signs and objects arise” (p. 10). Therefore, Crusoe regards his old self as abominable in order to get rid of the abject and to establish his new self. The difference between his previous repulsive self and his new self that is enlightened by God’s Word is made prominent through the metaphor of rebirth. He designates

his birthday, 30 September, as his rebirth: “my wicked life and my solitary life began both on a day” (Defoe, 2000, p. 102). He imposes a pattern on his life, breaking it into two parts, and thus attributing meaning to his destiny. When he first lands on the island, before he reads the Bible and repents, he wants his habitation to have a view to the sea to be able to see any ship for “my deliverance” (p. 44). He has this impulse to be delivered from the dark womb of the primordial nature and return to the civilized land of the paternal home. Later on, this narrative of deliverance alters and it becomes a tale of deliverance from his former self and his wicked life. In accordance with this metaphor of deliverance and rebirth, we should keep in mind Kristeva asserts that the subject gives birth to himself through abjection. To establish his new self, he regards his being on the island as an opportunity to be delivered from the “wicked, cursed, abominable life” that he led (p. 86). Reading “the Word of God” comforts him and saves him from being “a prisoner, locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness” (p. 86). Thus, the uncultivated wilderness on the island becomes associated with his former despicable, abhorrent life. By drawing a boundary between his former foul, disgusting self and his new self that is inspired by the Word of God, he also delivers himself from the wild, uninhabited island, from the uterine night of the island, from the cave that is enwombed by the island. He becomes a “Platonic form” and he feels he is released from the darkness of the cave (Swenson, 2018, p. 19). Delivered from the life of repulsion and abomination, he feels he is “removed from all the wickedness of the world” and he says that he has “neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life” (Defoe, 2000, p. 98). The lust of the flesh is rendered abominable; thus, sexual desire is abjected. He becomes sexually apathetic as Joyce points out (in Rogers, 2018, p. 57). The desiring body is associated with the abject. Thus, he gives birth to this new self by means of the Word of the God.

His narrative of deliverance and redemption is followed by an account of his thankfulness. He is grateful as he is given the opportunity to repent his “dreadful life, perfectly destitute of the knowledge and fear of God” (Defoe, 2000, p. 100). He is also thankful since there are “no ravenous beasts, no furious wolves or tigers, to threaten” his life and there are “no venomous creatures or poisonous, which I [he] might feed on to my hurt; no savages to murder and devour” him (p. 101). He is content that God has mercy upon him. He is thankful since he believes that the Word of God saves him from the abject, from the fear and disgust, from the abhorrent “dungeons and prisons” (p. 113). It seems that a covenant is established

between his new self and God. He finds comfort as he fully submits himself to the Will of God; he resigns himself “to the dispositions of Providence” (p. 104, 110). Resignation to the Will of God helps him to dismiss the abject of the wilderness that threatens the integrity of his self.

Crusoe’s focus on labour is of importance in terms of abjection. Among many other things, “the nobility of the labour” is one of the notions that characterise *Robinson Crusoe* (Novak, 2018, p. 32). Defoe was influenced by Locke, who “affirms that the natural world becomes valuable property only through human labour” (Bullard, 2018, p. 90). Human labour turns the incomprehensible wilderness into a meaningful entity. Rogers (2018) points out that the Protestant ethic refers to the spiritual regeneration that “brings with it an increasing impulse to master his environment and reassert his agency as an autonomous performer on his limited stage” (p. 55). In the wilderness that threatens to disintegrate his Western self, the “compulsively labouring hero” (Eagleton, 2005, p. 34) seeks to forge an identity through religious sense, and “infinite” and “inexpressible labour” (Defoe, 2000, p. 97). To avoid falling into the abyss of the abject, he constantly finds himself “employment” and furnishes himself with “hard labour and constant application” (p. 81-2). Sinking into the abyss of the abject horrifies the subject because it is “a challenge to symbolization” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 51). Similarly, he observes that he has gone through many things “with patience and labour” (Defoe, 2000, p. 88). We should discuss the notion of the nobility of labour in relation to the dread of apathy or inertia. Starr (2018) argues that for Defoe, “idleness is perhaps the deadliest of sins” (p. 71). This fear of idleness or being locked up in a state of ennui or lethargy is associated with the dread of being reclaimed by the demon of the abject that seeks to ambush the subject. The terrible depth beneath the beautiful surface threatens to shake the ground where the self is not firmly posited.

Crusoe’s fear of the abject and his yearning for human company mark his confrontation with the local people and Friday. Looking through his “perspective-glass,” he sees “nine naked savages sitting round a small fire” and trying to “dress some of their barbarous diet of human flesh” (Defoe, 2000, p. 140). He also adds that they are “stark naked” and dancing as he “could easily discern their postures and gestures” through his glasses (p. 140). It is “a dreadful sight” to Crusoe because their diet of human flesh repulses him:

I could see the marks of horror which the dismal work they had been about had left behind it, viz., the blood, the bones, and part of the

flesh of human bodies, eaten and devoured by those wretches with merriment and sport. I was so filled with indignation at the sight, that I began now to premeditate the destruction of the next that I saw there, let them be who or how many soever. (p. 140)

The dismemberment of the human body disgusts Crusoe. Repelled by the cannibals, he spends his days “in great perplexity and anxiety of mind” and he is “in a murdering humour” (p. 141). Encountering the abject, he wants to eradicate it. Yet, he gives up on this impulse to annihilate them as he starts thinking that he “should be at length no less murderer than they were in being men-eaters, and perhaps much more so” (p. 141). Horrified by the blurring of the line between himself and the savages, he seeks to consolidate the boundaries. Horrified, Crusoe experiences what he calls the “perturbation” of his mind and he says that he “slept unquiet, dreamed always frightful dreams, and often started out of my [his] sleep in the night” (p. 141).

Defoe puts in “this fifteen or sixteen months’ interval” between Crusoe’s first sighting of the savages and his next “very strange encounter with them” (Defoe, 2000, p. 141). During this time, Crusoe keeps away from the other side of the island where he first saw them. Meanwhile he is “surprised with a noise of a gun,” assumes that it is “a ship at an anchor” and understands that it is “the wreck of a ship, cast away in the night” (pp. 142-3). This interval is marked by the possibility of meeting someone from the ship and by how this exhilarates Crusoe:

I cannot explain, by any possible energy of words, what a strange longing or hankering of desires I felt in my soul upon this sight, breaking out sometimes thus: ‘Oh that there had been but one or two, nay, but one soul, saved out of this ship, to have escaped to me, that I might but have had one companion, one fellow-creature, to have spoken to me, and to have conversed with!’ In all the time of my solitary life, I never felt so earnest, so strong a desire after the society of my fellow-creatures, or so deep a regret at the want of it. (p. 144)

This interval between his first sighting of the savages and his next encounter, which leads to his new life with Friday, is characterised by a narrative of desire. It may seem paradoxical that the narrative of fear and disgust is interrupted by such an interval, yet, thinking about the likelihood of his voyage out of this island, out of the wilderness, Crusoe observes that he feels “very pensive and anxious” and that his mind oscillates “between fear and desire” about his voyage (p. 145). His mind is oppressed by the vacillation between his desire to have another human being as

company on the island and his fear to lose his solitude. His deep yearning for human company points to the lack of an object in his life on the island, or his object-less abject state in the wilderness in other words. That is why his account of “earnest wishings” and “ardent wishes” is marked by the desired existence of the other, of an object:

There are some secret moving springs in the affectations which, when they are set agoing by some object in view, be it some object, though not in view, yet rendered present to the mind by the power of imagination, that motion carries out the soul by its impetuosity to such violent, eager embracings of the object, that the absence of it is insupportable. (p. 144)

As Butler (1999) says in *Subjects of Desire*, “in desiring something else, we lose ourselves, and in desiring ourselves, we lose the world” (p. 34). Therefore, Crusoe oscillates between these two forms of desire. He cannot decide to “venture or not to venture,” to be or not to be out of his “reach, or sight of the island again” (Defoe, 2000, p. 145). From a Kristevan perspective, he oscillates between embracing the object and embracing the abject, between the world of boundaries between self and other, subject and object, and the world of undifferentiation between inside and outside. After a while, he longs for human company, to go out of his island and reach the mainland. He has “a disturbed mind, an impatient temper,” and his yearning for “somebody to speak to” is rekindled; he is “agitated wholly” by his strong desire: “All my calm of mind, in my resignation to Providence, and waiting the issues of the dispositions of Heaven, seemed to be suspended” (pp. 151-152). He feels he cannot resist “the project of a voyage to the main, which came upon me (him) with such force, and such an impetuosity” and this idea sets his “very blood into a ferment” and his “pulse beat as high as if I [he] had been in a fever, merely with the extraordinary fervour of mind” (p. 152). Possessed by this double thread of fear and desire, he is resolved, “after many secret disputes” with himself to “get a savage” into his possession which, he believes, will deliver him “from this death of a life” (pp. 152-153). He believes that it is time to get himself “a servant, and perhaps a companion or assistant” (p. 155). This narrative of desire and passion becomes prominent in the sexualised description of Friday’s body:

He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight strong limbs, not too large, tall, and well-shaped, and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in

his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory. (pp. 157-158)

This description of Friday's "colourful, texturized, particularized body, shimmering anomalously in the cave's crucible" (Swenson, 2018, p. 17) shows that the narrative of desire is heightened by "the vibrant inscription of Friday's body upon the formerly dark cave of Crusoe's consciousness [that] stands in stark contrast to the narrative's otherwise typical colourlessness" (Swenson, 2018, p. 18). This tactile and voluptuous description of Friday's body demonstrates that Crusoe voyages out of the cave and embraces the object. Friday is described as an object of desire from the gaze of the desiring subject who has a cannibalistic imagination and gives an "anomalously vivid portrait [which] is practically edible" (Swenson, 2018, p. 19).

As a subject of desire, Crusoe is now relocated into the symbolic realm of signs and signifiers, where Crusoe names the Caribbean islander as Friday and teaches him to call him master, gets him clothed as his master, and Friday makes to him all the signs of "subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable" (Defoe, 2000, p. 158). In the symbolic domain of signs, being desired by the subject as an object of desire might lead to subjection. Subjected, Friday becomes an object in Crusoe's territory. Thus, he is able to keep the abject at bay by means of establishing the difference between subject and object. Owing to his impulse to differentiate himself from the other, Friday's suggestion that they should eat the men they killed arouses horror and disgust in Crusoe: "At this I appeared very angry, expressed my abhorrence of it, made as if I would vomit at the thoughts of it" (p. 158). Crusoe dismisses the threat of the cannibalistic practice. He strives to preserve the boundary between human and inhuman, pure and impure:

When I came to the place [where they dismembered and ate the human bodies], my very blood ran chill in my veins, and my heart sunk within me, at the horror of the spectacle. Indeed, it was a

dreadful sight, at least it was so to me, though Friday made nothing of it. The place was covered with human bones, the ground dyed with their blood, great pieces of flesh left here and there, half-eaten, mangled and scorched; and, in short, all the tokens of the triumphant feast they had been making there, after a victory over their enemies. I saw three skulls, five hands, and the bones of the three or four legs and feet, and abundance of other parts of the bodies. (p. 159)

This abject account of the dismembered bodies and this particularised description of bones, legs, feet, pieces of flesh undercut the narrative of desire which also describes the particularized body but in a colourful, tactile, sensational way; the abject strikes back. The “limbs of a fragmented body” is a challenge to human beings’ capacity for symbolization and signification (Kristeva, 1982, p. 49). Therefore, in order to expel the abject, Crusoe tells Friday to set up a fire and burn the dismembered bodies:

I caused Friday to gather all the skulls, bones, flesh, and whatever remained, and lay them together on a heap, and make a great fire upon it, and burn them all to ashes. I found Friday had still a hankering stomach after some of the flesh, and was still a cannibal in his nature; but I discovered so much abhorrence at the very thoughts of it, and at the least appearance of it, that he durst not discover it; for I had, by some means, let him know that I would kill him if he offered it. (Defoe, 2000, p. 159)

As an important stage in the narrative of the cultural human evolution, fire serves to dismiss the abject and thus purify the subject. Fire burns the sense of defilement down to ashes and thus helps to maintain the boundary between fair and foul, pure and impure, proper and improper.

Crusoe’s mastery of Friday as a cannibal that threatens the integrity of the Western subject should be discussed in relation to abjection. Kristeva (1982) argues that the abject is not “an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine” (p. 1). Therefore, by means of naming the Caribbean islander as Friday and civilizing him, Crusoe transforms him into an object. Crusoe weans Friday from his savage ways and converts him. Crusoe’s likeness to a child wanes as he assumes paternity since Friday has feelings for his master “like those of a child to a father” (Defoe, 2000, p. 160). In this colonial narrative, the paternal master teaches the infantilized “companion” to speak English, to bring him “off from his horrid way of feeding, and

from the relish of a cannibal's stomach" (p. 161), instructs him "in the knowledge of the true God" and "imprint[s] right notions in his mind" (pp. 166-167). Crusoe remarks that he is content that Providence has chosen him, made him "an instrument" in order to "save the life [...] the soul of a poor savage, and bring him to the true knowledge of religion" (p. 169). The narrative of desire is overshadowed by the return of Providence into the main narrative that is built on the exclusion of the abject. By means of abjecting the Caribbean islander, Crusoe dismisses his own abjectness.

Conclusion

From the print of the foot on the shore, which horrifies Crusoe to the imprint of his own notions of culture and civilization in the mind of Friday, this narrative swings back and forth between the abject and the object/subject. It is arguable that a relationship based upon the difference between subject and object is established. However, Crusoe's colonial narrative eradicates this difference, annihilates Friday's difference. Friday's otherness is assimilated; the master recreates his own image in the slave. Therefore, the difference between self and other is cancelled, which threatens to blur the boundary between the subject and the object. Friday is not "some object in view," but "some object, though not in view, yet rendered present to the mind by the power of imagination" (Defoe, 2000, p. 144). Friday and Crusoe become "intimately acquainted" (p. 170). The etymology of the word "quaint" shows that it is suggestive of both familiarity and unfamiliarity (Merriam-Webster, 2022), which is similar to the uncanny as it also evokes both homely and unhomely. Likewise, Kristeva argues that the abject is both familiar/homely and unfamiliar/unhomely since what is abjected is what we cast off from the subject. Therefore, Friday represents the abject that Crusoe seeks to cast off from himself. The shadow that Crusoe fears is Friday. Friday is a spectre, an apparition that haunts Crusoe, the master, the coloniser. Friday as the abject hovers at the periphery of Crusoe's selfhood, constantly challenging the fragile border between self and other. Since Friday is a chimera, a delusion of his fancy, Crusoe cannot "keep the country" out of his head when he gets back to England at the end of the novel (p. 234) because that country is already in his mind. Crusoe's "brain breeds islands" as Elizabeth Bishop (2008) remarks in her poem (p. 151). Despite the brief interval that introduces the narrative of desire, Crusoe's deep yearning to embrace the object, his strong impulse to consolidate and preserve the boundaries between self and other, the line between the civilized and the savage is blurred. Nonetheless,

Crusoe struggles to keep the abject in check even though he knows that he “was born to be my [his] own destroyer” (Defoe, 2000, p. 29). Therefore, *Robinson Crusoe* is about both a state of crisis in which borders break down and a constitutive process of rejection in which borders are established. Crusoe abjects himself within the same motion through which he claims to establish himself. On the one hand, Defoe’s novel is about “venturing over to the *terra firma*” (p. 104). On the other hand, it is a narrative about voyaging out into the *terra incognita*. An “Enlightenment Crusoe” (Roberts, 2000, p. x), as “a spokesperson for the new world order of the English Enlightenment” (Aravamudan, 2008, p. 45) is challenged by the abject that defies the textual boundaries of the novel and the tenuous borders of subjectivity.

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Summary

This study intends to discuss Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from a Kristevan perspective. Kristeva's notions of abjection and the abject are employed to explore the powers of horror and repulsion in this novel. Fear and disgust are so essential to the story of *Robinson Crusoe*, to the construction and disintegration of his Western self, a subject in process and on trial in the words of Kristeva. Hence, this paper looks into the abject and abjection in *Robinson Crusoe* and has two sections in tandem with Defoe's bifurcated text.

The first section deals with the abject and draws on Kristeva's definition and interpretations of the abject. According to Kristeva, the abject is not only that which is rejected by, and disturbs social reason and order, but it is also a necessary precondition for the symbolic realm. Separation is necessary for the subject to construct a distinct subjectivity. The abject is marked by the unnameable and the unknowable. The abject is not an object defined by the symbolic and positioned in relation to the subject in the symbolic domain. Kristeva (1982) states that "[w]hen I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable object. The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine" (p. 1). Therefore, the abject refers to what lies beyond the scope of the symbolic. What is abject does not allow the subject "to be more or less detached and autonomous" (p. 1). Beset by abjection, the subject cannot achieve individuation. The first section of this paper, therefore, concentrates on how *Crusoe* is haunted by the abject and how the abject becomes manifest in his tale. It explores *Crusoe*'s banishment from humankind, expulsion from the symbolic domain of the knowable and nameable into the semiotic realm of the incomprehensible, his horror of losing his human shape, of sinking into sheer animality, his constant fear of being devoured

by beasts and savages, his obsession with cannibalism, his fear of death and his confrontation with the other.

The other section concentrates on how Crusoe, a deviser of territories and an organiser of chaos, demarcates his universe, consolidates his boundaries to strive against the abject, and seeks to become a subject in his struggle against the abject. Kristeva contends that the abject “simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject” (p. 5). Not only does the abject unsettle the subject, but also abjection enables the subject to be constituted by means of separating itself from others. The infant develops borders between self and other by “a process of abjection, a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself” (McAfee, 2004, p. 46). Therefore, Kristeva (1982) argues that “I abject myself within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself” (p. 3). On the one hand, abjection is “an extreme state of subjectivity - a crisis in which the borders of the self and other radically break down”; on the other hand, it is also “a precondition of subjectivity itself, one of the key dynamics by which those borders of the self get established in the first place” (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 151). Therefore, the second section of this study explores how the subject gives birth to himself by means of the process of abjection.

Since abjection sheds light on what is jettisoned, excluded or digested, this discussion of the novel also aims to provide insights into what is rejected from Defoe’s narrative, expelled from the confines of this novel. Kristeva argues that the abject is both homely and unhomely because what is abjected is what we jettison from the subject. Therefore, Friday embodies the abject that Crusoe attempts to cast off from himself. The shadow that horrifies Crusoe is Friday. Friday is a spectre that haunts Crusoe, the master, the deviser of territories. Friday as the abject hovers at the periphery of Crusoe’s Western selfhood, perpetually violating the delicate boundary between self and other. Because Friday is a chimera, a delusion of his imagination, Crusoe is unable to “keep the country out of my head” when he gets back to England at the end of the novel (Defoe, 2000, p. 234) because that country is already in his mind.