



## DEFOE'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF REALISTIC NOVELS

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**Abstract.** This thesis aims to explore and analyze Defoe's role in shaping the genre of realistic fiction, examining the key elements and techniques he employed that revolutionized the novel-writing landscape.

**Key words:** Defoe, contribution, development, realistic novels, literary works genre, Robinson Crusoe, imaginative literature, first-person narrative, journal-like format, perspective, research, and authenticity.

Daniel Defoe made significant contributions to the development of realistic novels, establishing himself as one of the pioneering authors of the genre. His innovative storytelling techniques and meticulous attention to detail set a precedent for future writers. Defoe's works, including «Robinson Crusoe» and «Moll Flanders», showcase his distinct style and reflect the characteristics of realistic novels. One of Defoe's significant contributions is his use of detailed and authentic descriptions. His meticulous attention to detail brings characters, settings, and events to life, creating a sense of believability within the narratives. Whether it is the vivid portrayal of Robinson Crusoe's survival strategies on a deserted island or the intricate depiction of Moll Flanders navigating the complexities of 18th-century society, Defoe's attention to detail immerses readers in his realistic worlds.

Moreover, Defoe's works explore the complexities of human nature and society. His characters are multidimensional, grappling with moral dilemmas, societal expectations, and personal struggles. Through their experiences, Defoe offers insightful commentary on the human condition, shedding light on the intricacies of human behavior and the challenges individuals face within their social contexts.

“I observed that the expectation of the approaching captivity had still something else to do with it, namely, the dread of being carried away to the place and into the hands of savages, which, as I said, I knew not where, and





which I had heard nothing of, or any knowledge of their persons or their customs”.<sup>1</sup>

In this extract, Crusoe reflects on the fear and dread he experiences at the thought of being captured by savages. This passage highlights Defoe’s exploration of human nature, specifically the innate fear and apprehension that arise when faced with the unknown. It delves into the complexities of Crusoe’s emotions, as he grapples with the uncertainty of encountering a different society and the potential challenges it may present.

By portraying Crusoe’s fear and curiosity, Defoe delves into the intricacies of human nature and the way individuals navigate unfamiliar circumstances. This extract also alludes to the broader theme of societal differences and cultural encounters, providing a glimpse into the complexities and anxieties associated with interactions between diverse societies.

Through such passages, Defoe demonstrates his keen understanding of human psychology and society, addressing the complexities that arise when individuals are confronted with unfamiliar environments and cultural differences.

Another notable contribution is Defoe’s incorporation of real-life events and historical contexts. He seamlessly blends fact and fiction, drawing from his own experiences and historical records. In «Journal of the Plague Year», for example, Defoe creates a vivid and realistic account of the Great Plague of London in 1665, adding an extra layer of authenticity to the narrative. Daniel Defoe’s contribution to the development of realistic novels can be observed through various elements present in his works. One significant aspect is his skillful use of first-person narration. Defoe adeptly employs this technique in his novels, such as «Robinson Crusoe», where the story is recounted directly from the perspective of the protagonist. By immersing readers in the protagonist’s experiences and emotions, Defoe enhances the sense of realism, allowing readers to intimately connect with the narrative.

Furthermore, Defoe’s exploration of social issues showcases his commitment to portraying the realities of his time. In works like «Moll Flanders», he delves into themes such as social mobility, gender roles, and the consequences of one’s choices. Through these narratives, Defoe offers insightful commentary on societal norms and challenges, reflecting the realistic approach of his works and their relevance to contemporary readers.

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<sup>1</sup> Defoe D. Robinson Crusoe, 1974.





Drawing from his background as a journalist, Defoe incorporates journalistic techniques into his novels, adding to their realistic nature. In works like «Journal of the Plague Year», he pays meticulous attention to detail, ensuring factual accuracy and using specific dates and locations. This inclusion of authentic details provides the narrative with a journalistic feel, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality.

Defoe's works also reflect the economic realities of his time, emphasizing trade, commerce, and individual entrepreneurship. In «Robinson Crusoe», the protagonist engages in various economic activities to sustain himself on the deserted island. Defoe's depiction of practical skills and self-sufficiency underscores the importance of economic considerations, adding depth and authenticity to his narratives.<sup>2</sup>

A notable aspect of Defoe's contribution to realistic novels is his portrayal of realistic character development. His characters undergo growth, face challenges, and display a range of human emotions and flaws. For instance, in «Robinson Crusoe», readers witness the transformation of the protagonist from a reckless young man to a mature survivor. This realistic portrayal of characters allows readers to relate to and empathize with them, further enhancing the authenticity of Defoe's works.

Through his skillful use of first-person narration, exploration of social issues, incorporation of journalistic techniques, representation of economic realities, and realistic character development, Daniel Defoe made significant contributions to the genre of realistic novels. His works continue to resonate with readers, capturing the essence of human experiences and solidifying his legacy as a trailblazing author in the realm of realistic fiction.

Defoe's influence on subsequent writers is evident. His innovative storytelling techniques and emphasis on authenticity laid the foundation for the development of realistic fiction. Writers such as Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot were inspired by Defoe's works and carried forward his legacy, expanding and refining the genre.

Furthermore, Defoe's use of first-person narration, exploration of social issues, inclusion of journalistic techniques, representation of economic realities, and realistic character development all contribute to his contributions to the genre of realistic novels.<sup>3</sup> These elements add depth, relatability, and a sense of

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<sup>2</sup> Novak, M. Realism. In *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture* (pp. 174-192). Wiley-Blackwell. 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Watt, I. *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*. Cambridge University Press. 1994.





realism to his narratives, captivating readers and solidifying his status as a trailblazer in the realm of realistic fiction.

Daniel Defoe's contributions to realistic novels have left an enduring impact on the literary world. His innovative techniques, insightful exploration of human nature and society, incorporation of real-life events, and influence on subsequent writers have firmly established him as a key figure in the development of realistic fiction. He shows his characters in confrontation with a cruel and soulless world. As a rule, these are people deprived of strong social ties - orphans, foundlings, pirates - forced to act according to the inhumane laws of the bourgeois world or become their victims.<sup>4</sup> Each one fights alone, relying on his own strength, his own cleverness, ingenuity, and ingenuity. People do not shy away from any means in order to achieve well-being. «Truly noble» Colonel Jack, who as a child was a homeless vagabond and thief, undergoes all kinds of vicissitudes of fate and becomes a slave trader. Accepted at court, the brilliant Roxanne has a dark past: for the sake of her career, she becomes an unspoken accomplice to the murder of her own daughter. By detailing the lives of his characters, Defoe shows that crime is spawned by a criminal society.

Defoe made a significant contribution to the development of journalism and the formation of the essay genre, but he entered the history of world literature as a novelist, and above all as the creator of the novel *The Life and Wonderful Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), followed by two more parts - *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Serious Thoughts in the Life and Wonderful Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, with his *Vision of the Angelic World* (1720). «*The Life and Wonderful Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*» (1719 - 1721) becomes the first Enlightenment novel, reflecting the ideology of the bourgeoisie and posing the main problems, which were further resolved by the Enlighteners, becomes. It makes extensive use of the traditions of adventure, adventure novels, educational novels, and contains elements of documentary prose. Telling the story of the adventures and stay of Robinson on a desert island, the writer, exploring the essence of human nature and identifying the initial instincts of man, tells in detail about the moral and physical development of the hero, shows his abilities, mental strength. In his conception of man, Defoe proceeded from the Enlightenment notion of his good nature, which is subject to the influence of the environment and the circumstances of life. The Enlightenment tendency manifested itself in the fact

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<sup>4</sup> Downie, J. A. "Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe." Cambridge University Press. 1994.





that Defoe deliberately isolates his character, however, not from civilization and its achievements, but from social relations: unaware of social contradictions, Robinson displays his own nature and individuality and relives human history, culture, civilization, falling into the position of a primitive man. The main problem of the novel is the resolution of the «natural man» hypothesis, but Defoe's innovation lies in the fact that he makes the hero a typical bourgeois, in everything obeying common sense, and gives his adventures a sober worldly explanation. Robinson is a true bourgeois who knows the price of everything and obeys common sense in everything. He is a religious man, but his attitude to God is rational: he does not believe in miracles, and everything that happens to him is explained in worldly terms, in terms of reason and logic. «Natural man» Robinson is thus endowed with bourgeois psychology, and therefore, but Defoe, the natural relations between people that correspond to their human nature are bourgeois relations.

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