

English Department Assessment
2014-15

One member of the department scored three of a group of five literary criticism papers that had been entered into a campus competition for excellence in student research writing. The rubric used was developed by the English Department based upon its SLOs for majors and minors. Two papers scored in the middle range—demonstrating competence but well short of mastery—on both goals. A third scored at the mid-high range, “solid grasp” but requiring “some further development” to achieve mastery.

These papers were authored by some of the department’s strongest students. A broader cross-section of papers will be assessed next year.

Scores:

	Average Score
Sample 1	C
Sample 2	C
Sample 3	B

Reflection:

Improving Student Learning:

Examples of textual criticism—of books, films, art—might be shared with majors early in their careers, with majors given many opportunities to write critiques they could then jury in small groups.

A consistent weakness in papers written by English majors with strong language skills is wordiness. Exercises, again early and often, in leaving words out rather than larding them in as if paid to do so, could help with this issue.

Improving Assessment:

Revisit learning goals; some are difficult to assess based upon ordinary coursework.

Score larger sample of papers, selected randomly from work produced by all students in a given class.



2014-15

- Rubric:
- A. Student has mastered the standard.
 - B. Student has a solid grasp of the standard, but some further development is required to reach mastery.
 - C. Student demonstrates competence in the standard, but considerable growth is necessary to reach mastery.
 - D. Student demonstrates only minimal awareness of the standard, and growth is necessary to reach competence.
 - F. Student demonstrates no awareness of or competence in the standard.

1. An English major or minor will recognize and use with proficiency and skill the tools and methods of ^{literary?} literacy scholarship. _____
2. An English major or minor will analyze, interpret, and evaluate various forms of literary expression. _____
3. An English major or minor will promote and foster the creative expression of themes, ideas, and principles inherent in the liberal arts tradition. _____
4. An English major or minor will apply the training in oral and written communication skills to enhance personal and professional goals. _____

Evaluator #1 _____

Evaluator #2 _____

Margo Kimble

1

C

(2)

ENG 120

2

C

Dr. Hall

3

N/A

19 March 2015

4

N/A

Analyses of "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"

To begin somewhat informally, I adored this short story; there are so many deeper meanings in the simplest of sentences, and I truly enjoyed analyzing this piece and finding them. I was captivated by all the recurring themes, and the more times I read it, the more hidden imagery I found. One might even say I had fun analyzing this piece. Now, to be more formal:

To quickly summarize the story, a family in the south takes a trip. On the trip are a grandmother, her only son, his wife, and their three children. The grandmother does not want to go to Florida, as she wishes to ^{avoid} escape a possible encounter with an escaped criminal and his "gang," so to speak. The grandmother eventually convinces the family to travel to Tennessee instead in order to see a house that she remembered from her childhood. After it is much too late, the grandmother realizes that the house of which she was thinking was in Georgia rather than Tennessee, but does not bother to tell her family. While traveling down a dirt road to what the rest of the family thinks is the correct house, they get into a car accident. After the family emerges from the wrecked vehicle, they encounter three men, whom the grandmother eventually realizes are the escaped "Misfit" and his gang. Unfortunately, every member of the family is shot and killed. This is just a quick summary, though. The actual story is much more detailed and contains a plethora of symbolism.

The story begins by saying that the grandmother (the main character) does not want to go to Florida. She begs her son to take her to Tennessee instead. This could potentially represent the

old woman being at the end of her life and pleading with Jesus (she only has one son— similar to God only having one son) to not send her straight to Hell. In this case, Florida would represent Hell. Tennessee could represent purgatory, or perhaps there could be a reference to Dante's "Inferno," and Tennessee could represent one of the less severe levels of Hell.

A recurring theme in this story seems to be the disrespect of children toward their elders. From the very beginning, we see the old woman's own son and grandchildren being incredibly rude to her. Her granddaughter, June Star, mocks her grandmother by saying, "She wouldn't stay at home to be queen for a day," and "She wouldn't stay at home for a million bucks" (page 367).

There is a quite a bit of symbolism in the section in which June Star is introduced to the reader, such as the nomenclature of "June Star" and the color imagery of "her yellow head" (page 367). Without even looking into the meanings of "June" or "Star," one can see that it is not a very elegant or complex name. This could represent the members of the younger generation who do not have any elegance or class about them, as the old woman constantly proclaims throughout the story. Upon looking into the name "June," one can see that the American meaning is "young," which further solidifies June Star representing the younger generation as a whole (SheKnows). However, upon looking into the name "Star," one can see that people with this name tend to be very independent (SheKnows). This is not the case, as June Star needs the help of another person for something as simple as doing her hair (page 367). Upon researching the color yellow, one can see that it represents caution and danger, and it can also represent egoism (Color Matters). June Star also lies about her hair being naturally curly, so she may also represent deception (page 367).

Some brief color symbolism is also shown when the grandmother's black valise is mentioned (page 367). It is common knowledge that black is the color of death and mourning. Having a black valise could symbolize the grandmother traveling toward her death.

In the back seat of the vehicle, the old woman sits between two of her three grandchildren, John Wesley and June Star. Upon simply googling the name "John Wesley," one can see that this is also the name of the man who founded Methodism. This could mean that the John Wesley in the story represents religious values. In the scenario of the old woman sitting between him and June Star, he could also represent good or even Heaven. Since the reader has seen how deceitful June Star is, she could represent bad or Hell. Their grandmother is the only thing separating them, and at one point the readers see the two children reaching over her to slap each other.

The reader gets a good depiction of the old woman when her clothing is described in comparison to what the rest of her family is wearing; while they are dressed in simple, comfortable clothing, the old woman is dressed somewhat to the nines in a dress with a straw hat and gloves. This could symbolize and further instill the theme of the vast difference between the younger and older generations. There is a bit of foreshadowing in this section as well: on page 368, the line reads, "In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the side of the highway would know at once that she was a lady." Little does she know, but the old woman does, unfortunately, face her death.

The reader sees the theme of the gap between the generations again when the old woman tries to point out what seems like beautiful scenery to her grandchildren. They are too immersed in their comic books to care. This is an occurrence that is still prevalent today; many elderly

people think young people are too immersed in their technology and themselves to care about what is going on in the world around them. We see another gap between the generations again when the old woman notices a young African-American boy along the side of the road. This time, however, the generation gap shown is not that of attentiveness and respect (or lack thereof), but rather of racism. The old woman uses terms like “pickaninny” and “n****r” to describe the young boy, and automatically assumes he is poor and has nothing better to do but stand along the side of the road (page 368). The tone she uses to describe the boy seems incredibly condescending. The old woman could represent the “old” South as a whole in this part, as it was known for its blatant racism.

Later on page 368, the old woman holds her youngest grandchild, a baby whose name the reader never learns. The old woman gives the baby her full attention, but only receives a few “faraway” smiles from him. This could symbolize the older generation giving the younger generation their full attention and only getting minimal response in return.

The family eventually decides to eat at a place called “The Tower,” which is owned by a man named Red Sammy Butts. There is a plethora of symbolism in his name alone. Red represents extremes (Color Matters). This story was also published in the 1950s—a time when Communism was causing serious conflict in the world. The color red in this story could represent the Red Scare, which was occurring in the United States. “Sammy” could symbolize Uncle Sam, who is a symbol of American pride and nationalism. “Butts” could be Flannery O’Connor’s way of less-harshly saying that American nationalism makes the country as a whole look like a bunch of asses.

We see more of the utter lack of respect of the younger generation on page 369 when June Star tells Red Sammy Butts that she “wouldn’t live in a broken-place like this for a million bucks.” Any person with even a miniscule amount of manners would know to never say something like this under any circumstance. This further instills the theme of the younger generation being disrespectful and inconsiderate. In fact, on page 370, the old woman directly says, “People are certainly not nice like they used to be.”

The reader can get more of an understanding for Red Sammy Butts representing American nationalist pride when he and the old woman have a discussion and both agree that Europe is to blame for the country being the way in currently is. Even today, Americans do not like to be put at fault for anything. Despite statistics that show the country is not number one in education or industry and that it is trillions of dollars in debt, a vast majority of people still think that America is the best country in the world and that everyone else should “bow down,” so to speak, to how “great” it is. Going back to the “Butts” portion of Red Sammy Butts’ name, this thought process really does make Americans seem like a bunch of asses, and people of many other countries dislike Americans because of it.

Once the family gets back on the road, the old woman tells her grandchildren about a house on an old plantation that has a secret panel in it somewhere. The children, being young and easily amused, of course want to see said house and immediately begin begging their father to visit it. Unfortunately, the old woman eventually realizes that they are in Tennessee and that the house of which she is thinking is in Georgia. This realization troubles her so much that she convulses, thus frightening her cat, Pitty Sing. The cat jumps onto the son’s shoulder, causing him to wreck the car. The family never learns that they were headed to the wrong place, though.

Once again, the reader sees the utter disrespect of the younger generation after the accident. On page 372, the old woman wishes that she would have been injured by the crash so her son would not become so angry upon hearing that they were headed to the wrong place. Any person with some respect for his mother would be more understanding, especially knowing his mother was elderly. June Star also says, "But nobody's killed," and her disappointment is noted as she looks at her grandmother. How rude! What kind of child wishes her own grandmother would die? The accident as a whole could also represent the turmoil within the family.

The reader sees more foreshadowing of the impending death when a "hearse-like automobile" arrives at the scene (page 372). There is also religious symbolism in this section, as there are three men in the car. This could represent the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Or, looking at it from a mythological perspective, the three men could also represent the three Parçae sisters, as the family is later killed by these men. The gunshots could symbolize the Parçae sisters cutting the "life threads" of the individual family members.

As soon as the men begin to speak (page 373), the reader almost immediately notices their poor grammar. Poor grammar can indicate poverty or trouble at home when one is growing up, as someone who could afford to stay in school typically would not speak in such a way. Perhaps that is why the men bonded with each other.

The reader sees more of the old woman representing the "old" South when she addresses The Misfit on page 373. She says, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from good people!" In the old South (and even still in some parts of the South and the Northeast today), pedigree mattered. When one came from a wealthy family, he/she could not marry someone who was not of "good breeding." (For example,

in the movie production of "The Great Gatsby," Daisy tells Gatsby that "rich girls don't marry poor boys.") This practice was (and still is) incredibly elitist and it is shown through the old woman's words. This is a good portrayal of her, though, as she tries to make herself seem like a lady of utmost class throughout the entire story.

When The Misfit answers her, the reader almost feels a sense of sarcasm; he replies, "Finest people in the world. God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold." If he is truly being sarcastic and his parents were quite the opposite, it may explain his criminal behavior, psychologically speaking. It almost sounds as if he is defending his parents, which is something that people who are abused tend to do of their abusers. On page 374, he goes on to say, "...my daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters." This indicates that his father probably did not think highly of him. No loving parent would ever call his/her child a "dog," or say that their child was the outcast.

On page 375 when The Misfit begins to talk more about his past, the reader may even suspect that he suffers from some sort of mental illness. The Misfit says, "It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I know that for a lie. My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it." Perhaps The Misfit killed his father in a fit of rage or an altered (or non-existent) sense of morality brought on by a mental illness, and his mind created the story of his father dying of the flu. This would also explain why he has no problems with killing an entire family or with the murders of his past victims.

In the end, the reader sees a theme of "dropping an act," so to speak, when one is in a crisis or realizes that he/she is in extreme danger. The old woman no longer speaks of "being a

lady” when she realizes that she is going to die, and at one point she even says that The Misfit is one of her own children (page 377). It is almost as if she is being “shot” into reality when she is about to die and is finally killed. The Misfit goes on to say, “She would of been a good woman... if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life.” Though he may be mentally ill, even The Misfit realizes that the old woman had been living a lie. He even feels some remorse in having to be the person who shot her into reality (page 377). “It’s no real pleasure in life,” he says. No one wants to be the bearer of bad news or harsh reality, but sometimes it must happen in order for a person to grow.

Looking at the piece with attention to the old woman, one might say that she could represent America and its large sense of pride in itself. Throughout the story, the old woman (America) thinks that she is “above” some things and people (which could represent other countries), and that other people (other countries) are to blame for the state of things. This piece was published not long after World War Two, so when the old woman talks about “the way things are,” she could be referring to the state of the world at the time. The Misfit could represent the rest of the world at least attempting to “shoot” America into reality and have it realize that it is not number one or “above” any other nation. The son and grandchildren could represent the disrespect of the younger generation as a whole, and The Misfit could be “shooting” them into the reality that they are no better than anyone else and that they should have some respect for their elders.

There is so, so much more imagery and symbolism in this piece, and I know there is so much that I missed. To be honest, I could probably fill up another nine pages with theories on the symbolism and imagery in this piece alone, and I would probably enjoy every second of it. Flannery O’Connor does an exceptional job of calling attention to social and political issues

without ever having to directly mention them. The color imagery is extremely well done, and even the nomenclature speaks volumes about the recurring themes within the story. I think this piece is an excellent one for anyone who wishes to work on his/her literary analysis skills, as there are a multitude of themes, images, and symbols within this. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is probably my favorite piece that we have studied in class so far. I can only hope to enjoy another piece this much.

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Sean Oros
Dr. Hall
Development of the Novel
April 14, 2015

1. B
2. B
3. NA
4. NA

(3) Oros 1

Out with the Old and in with the Novel: +

A Comparative Study of Cervantes and Defoe

Miguel Cervantes and Daniel Defoe are recognized as early contributors to the genre of the novel and character development. Their works, especially *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe*, respectively, helped to define a new literary tradition: the novel. Both, but certainly *Don Quixote*, portray picaresque qualities, especially various adventures and secondary characters. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* served as a bridge between older literary traditions and the development of the aptly-named novel. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* borrowed from this Spanish tradition of Cervantes. These two works can be compared in order to examine how the novel as a genre was developed in its earliest manifestations, especially with regard to verisimilitude, or life-like feasibility, and character development. Through this, one may see how Cervantes and Defoe both made major contributions to the genre of the novel and helped to shape its future and, especially, its characters.

The novel was a new literary trend for both Cervantes and Defoe, writing in 1605 and 1719, respectively. The picaresque novel, or novel of roguery, was just beginning in Spain. As Cervantes skillfully portrays, humor and irony can be used to both instruct and delight, not to merely fabricate fantastic tales with no moral. Defoe, meanwhile, grounds his story on the "possibility" that it could be true, as there is chance that his adventures were, at least, plausible (Gavin 319). The novels of Cervantes and Defoe are not set, as are the *chanson de geste* or medieval romances, in a place of fantastic adventure beyond the bounds of possibility. Rather, novels are set in a real world with real problems. Both *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe* show

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how real-world settings, historical context, and actual societal concerns were all new developments in literature that could be used for societal critique. Consequently, the characters of the novels reflect this “real world” emphasis, calling for increased character development through verisimilitude.

The role of the primary characters differs greatly between the two novels. Spain’s novel focuses more on the rapidly changing social classes as old chivalric ways give place, ever so slowly, to a growing middle and lower class. England’s novel, reflective of the power of the European over the environment native inhabitants, reflects Crusoe’s control over land and subjects. The two novels can be examined as vehicles for societal critique, especially by comparing their primary and secondary characters. Don Quixote, based in tradition, is an eccentric old landlord who takes a much more practical, if equally gullible, peasant with him on adventure. By contrast, Robinson Crusoe has few companions, and the eventual secondary character, Friday, is clearly subordinate. Friday, rather than the picaresque “sidekick” of Cervantes, is more akin to the depiction of the “noble savage” of Montaigne or Aphra Behn (Seeber 287). Both, however, are proof of the development of literature and the inclusion of developed secondary characters.

Spain’s “golden age” of literature lasted from roughly the middle of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth century, due to its “enormous productivity in the novel, poetry, and theater” (Stamm 112). Novels were already a common literary form in Spain, but its trends were quickly changing. During this time, the pastoral novel and novel of chivalry slowly gave way to the picaresque novel. Cervantes’ *Don Quixote de la Mancha* combined elements of all three, using them to satirize both literature and society (112). As James Stamm states, “The greatness of the book lies partly in Cervantes’ enormous understanding of the society of his times, partly in the

grandeur of his concept of pitting an insane idealism against the crudities and vulgarities of everyday life, partly in his mastery of language and construction of the novel" (102). One of the crucial developments of Cervantes in literature, and a hallmark of the picaresque tale, was the "rich gallery" of "secondary characters, all revealing the dexterous touch of the consummate craftsman" (Fitzmaurice-Kelly 279). His picaresque style is regarded as the "world's greatest" parody of chivalric literature (Adams 95). He uses this style as a method for societal critique, but *Don Quixote* primarily serves as a form of satire on past literary traditions.

Cervantes drew his characters from the people of Spain, both high and low classes. Altogether, nearly seven hundred characters are used in *Don Quixote*, making exceptional use of the short story within the framework of a novel as a satirical evaluation of humanity (Adams 96). Sancho Panza stands preeminent among these characters as the lowly, practical peasant who accompanies Don Quixote as a squire. Pancho, an illiterate peasant, becomes Cervantes' most consistent secondary foil character. As one critic writes, "Cervantes makes use of Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote* to expose for the reader... the often absurd nature of the literary conventions of his day" (Worden 499). This allows Sancho to play a critical role in the novel, as his consistent commentary and repeated pleas to his master contrast Quixote's idealistic dreams and keep the "novel of chivalry" parts of *Don Quixote* grounded in the picaresque tradition. Sancho also counters the pastoral novel. In one idyllic scene, when the goatherds, Quixote, and Sancho are gathered around a campfire, Sancho brusquely breaks the pastoral tranquility. Although the pastoral operated on the idea that shepherds had all the time in the world to sing long songs, "Sancho points out that the real world is a different story altogether" by stating that shepherds cannot sing all night because hard work needs sleep (Worden 505-6). In Sancho's own words, he says, "Your worship had better arrange now where you are going to-night. These men work

too hard all day long to be able to spend their nights in singing” (Cervantes 89). Again, Sancho’s practicality offsets Quixote’s chivalric dreams and fantasies.

Sancho continues to play the role of the voice of reason. At one point, Sancho points out the absurdity of their adventures and that Don Quixote must be speaking madness. For example, he directly challenges one of Quixote’s claims in the following: “For to hear your worship say that a barber’s basin is Mambrino’s helmet, and persist in that error for more than four days, what can one think? ... I have the basin in the bag, all dented, and I’m taking it home to mend it and to use it for shaving” (204). Sancho continues to provide comedic commentary that points out the overdone irony of the story. For instance, in the events of “Comacho’s Wedding,” Basilio fakes a death and asks that the soon-to-be-bride, Quiteria, agree to marry him on his supposed deathbed. This is carried out, the priest officiating, as Basilio slowly fades away into death; all the while, Basilio and Quiteria exchange loving remarks. Sancho, at one point, comments, “The lad talks a great deal for one so gravely wounded. They should make him stop his love-talk and attend to his soul” (605). Sancho, in his simple manner, is accurate. No sooner is the marriage official than Basilio leaps to his feet, showing that his wound is fake. Basilio and Quiteria, the plot completed, live happily ever after.

This incident, among many others, points out the absurdity of including unbelievable events in literature, something in which the novel, based in a real world, does not partake. Some critics have even dubbed Sancho an “illiterate literary critic,” as “His interest in sleep and food, traits not shared by the shepherds of pastoral novels, makes the squire a less literary and more real-world presence” (Worden 507). Through Sancho, *Don Quixote* becomes a “self-conscious” novel (509). This development of secondary characters would have a large influence upon

subsequent authors, including Defoe, enriching literature with larger casts of developed characters.

Daniel Defoe was the “first great English novelist” and the culmination of seventeenth-century appreciation for scientific observation and moralistic reflection, serving as a bridge from the past to the future of English literature (Lovett 40-2). Defoe’s first novel, and possibly his most famous, is *Robinson Crusoe*, which imitated the picaresque style in that it was “episodic... veering from incident to incident without too much of a story line” (Cope 160). His role as a bridge author was further reinforced as his later works, such as *Moll Flanders*, became more “typically picaresque” and took increasingly more elements from Spanish literature (Lovett 45). Even the attention to detail, which Defoe’s Puritan readers expected and wanted, was a feature of picaresque tradition in that it is clearly set in the real world. Defoe spares “no pains to convince us that he is telling the truth” and describing details to the point that they may become “real to the reader” (Holt 34-5). Defoe relied upon appealing to Puritan sensibility, but, in doing so, also applied Spanish techniques.

Although *Robinson Crusoe* has slightly fewer picaresque qualities, it is neither a pastoral or chivalric novel. Some critics, instead, classify it as an “adventure” or “travel” novel (Cope 151). Although later works of Defoe would continue to introduce elements of the picaresque style, *Robinson Crusoe* is still a spiritual biographical account that appealed to a Puritan market (160). As such, Defoe paved the way for later authors, such as Henry Fielding, who would more specifically copy the Spanish picaresque tradition of Cervantes, to whom the title page of *Joseph Andrews* gives credit (Lovett 64-5). However, a clue of Spanish influence is evident even in the text of *Robinson Crusoe* itself, as Crusoe reconciles himself to the feared Spanish and even establishes a colony of Spanish men on his island (Defoe 220). Based on this, it may seem as if

both Crusoe and Defoe were both capable of overcoming their English distrust and even dislike of the Spanish to adopt Spanish material. Defoe's early work helped to prepare the English literary market for this development from which the English novel would benefit.

Friday's portrayal is very much that of a colonial, native subject in the service to his Anglo master. Crusoe even teaches Friday to refer to him only as "Master" (149). What this creates is possibly a critique of British early colonial strategies, both as to how natives were treated and the growing issue of race policies. There is some evidence for this: Crusoe shows personal development in how he views Friday and the other Caribs, over time. As expressed by one critic, "Crusoe most clearly disavows the violence of imperial conquest when he recognizes the madness of his panicked genocidal fantasies of slaughtering Caribs," realizing that they, too, were human beings and possessing of rights (Loar 14). Crusoe begins to reflect that the Caribs may not be as savage as he had first supposed them: in his own words, he states "these people were not the murderers, in the sense that I had before condemn'd them, in my thoughts; any more than those Christians were murderers, who often put to death the prisoners taken in battle" (Defoe 124). Crusoe even reflects that, were he to wipe out the savages without cause, that "would justify the conduct of the *Spaniards* in all their barbarities practis'd in *America*, when they destroy'd millions of these people" (124). Crusoe begins to rethink his beliefs about the "savages" of whom he lives in fear.

With this new revelation, Crusoe turns his attention towards a growing desire to convert and civilize the savage, a desire that "eventually finds its object in Friday" (Loar 15). However, Crusoe's racism remains; even though he states, "I began really to love the creature," he speaks of Friday as property and calls him a "creature," still a derogatory term no matter how much love was behind it (Defoe 154). Crusoe, indeed, fancies himself a colonial governor, of sorts—the

same title he is given by the rescued English crewmembers (195). Crusoe, in his own way, creates an English model of colonial power. That said, Friday is given some status.

Surprisingly, during the time of battle, he names Friday his "Lieutenant-General" over the other white English men then in his command (192). Although Friday remains subservient to Crusoe, he achieves, at least for a little while, a place of rank in a suddenly non-racial society. This is not entirely unreasonable: Defoe was, after all, known for social criticism (Holt 39). Perhaps Defoe wishes to illustrate that "savages" really are the same as white people and to show his fellow British an alternative model to colonization.

Thanks in no small part to the work of Cervantes and Defoe, the novel continued as a widely successful literary form. *Robinson Crusoe* ends with the ever-rambling hero setting off on "ten years more" of "adventures of my own," showing a sense of continuation and future accounts (Defoe 220). Ironically, Friday quietly disappears, last being seen taking part in the desperate defense against the wolves of the Pyrenees, still loyal to his master (216). *Don Quixote*, by comparison, ends with Quixote dying at home, renouncing the foolishness of tales of chivalry he has followed throughout the entire book (Cervantes 936). Don Quixote, then, represents the passing of the medieval romance and the beginning of the novel. Old Quixote's symbolic death allows for the birth of something new—the novel. Sancho, the common man, is at his bedside, weeping, but he symbolically lives to carry forward the lesson of *Don Quixote*. Like Sancho, readers had lost taste for "all fabulous and absurd stories of knight errantry," the literature of medieval courts (940). Crusoe and Sancho, both heroes of a new type of literature, the novel, live on to symbolize the boundless possibilities that the new genre of the novel gave literature. Many old styles had died, but the life of the novel was only beginning.

Slowly but steadily, the development of picaresque adventures and characters began in Spain and slowly transitioned to England. Cervantes' masterful *Don Quixote* created a rich tradition of detailed secondary characters and picaresque adventure. Defoe's work bridged the gap between Spanish and English literary traditions, bringing these characters and adventures to the English novel. Cervantes laid the foundation of the development of the novel in the West; Defoe helped to solidify its tradition in England. Both also portrayed social issues of their day, from Sancho's practical common-sense in the face of supposed fantasy to Friday's role as the servant, or even colonial slave, of Crusoe's. They were words of fiction, but based in the real world and with real, lifelike characters. Both *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe* have contributed significantly to the genre of the novel as a whole. Their two authors dramatically shaped the development of the novel and established a rich literary tradition that continues to this day.

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Austin Hall
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1

Examining Daniel Defoe and the Early English Novel

Literary criticism, a device utilized in order to ascertain academic evaluations of respective works, allows the reader to formulate new perspectives and viewpoints on a variety of different genres and authors alike. Daniel Defoe's works are no exception. Two of his most famous novels, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, have been examined by many critics, none of whom have precisely the same perspective. By analyzing these divergent interpretations, a reader becomes more enlightened to the possibilities of these novels' messages. In order to fully evaluate these two novels, I utilized several criticisms from a variety of scholars. Each critic allows for new interpretations on *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and their author, Daniel Defoe, thereby adding original viewpoints on the development of the early novel.

Cross, Wilbur L. *The Development of the English Novel*. (pp. 27-30)

Wilbur Cross, former professor of English at Yale University, discusses Daniel Defoe's role within the development of the novel through his criticism of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. He defines *Robinson Crusoe* as "the earliest English novel of incident" (Cross 27). This theme, he argues, permeates throughout much of the novel and Daniel Defoe's other literary works as well. As far as developing this particular genre, Cross iterates that Defoe was revolutionary in his attempt to capture naturalistic human experience in novel form. He states, "The aim of Defoe was to invest his narrative with a sense of reality; to this end, he made use of every device at his command.... reader. He took as a model for his narrative the form that best produces the illusion of truth—that of current memoirs with the accompaniment of a diary" (28).

Before Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, narratives had been picaresque in order to entertain their respective audiences. *Robinson Crusoe*, Cross argues, teaches the reader a moral lesson rather than simply entertaining an audience. This lesson is, in Cross's interpretation, is to "be patient, be industrious, be honest, and you will at last be rewarded for your labor" (29). This message lines up perfectly with Cross's belief that Crusoe was the master of naturalism, that is, capturing humanity's and society's behaviors without embellishment. Critiquing both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, Cross states, "To put it briefly, Defoe humanized adventure" (29). This statement is pivotal in representing a change in the novel. Before, as this work states, novels were viewed as entertainment, whereas Defoe's novels captured human existence. Cross also includes *Moll Flanders* into the critique in stating, "In 'Moll Flanders' is gathered together a mass of material concerning the dregs of London—thieves and courtesans—that remains unequalled even among modern naturalists" (29). True events and the capturing of human nature is, as Cross reiterates, "Defoe's great distinction" (29). According to Cross, naturalism, verisimilitude, and realism are the basis of Defoe's works and are key developments within the genre of the English novel.

As far as adding to the development of the novel, Cross's criticism is effective in that it provides a basis for a naturalistic and realistic interpretation of both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. At the onset of both novels, the narrator, idiosyncratically the title character, relates to the audience that this is a story of truth or verisimilitude. *Robinson Crusoe* begins his novel by stating, "I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of *York*, of a good Family, tho' not settled first at *Hull*. . . . I was called *Robinson Kreutznaer*; but the usual Corruption of Words in *England*, we are now called, nay we call ourselves, and write our name *Crusoe*, and so my Companions always call'd me" (1). By beginning the narrative with a first-person account of family history,

1 - C

2 - C

3 N/A

4 N/A

Defoe is able to show the reader that this novel is going to consist of real-life events. Defoe repeats this pattern in *Moll Flanders*. The full title itself adds to the realism of the novel: *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, &c Who was Born in Newgate, and during a Life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and dies a Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums*. The titles of these early novels provided background information to the reader in order to entice him or her into purchasing the novel; however, in this case, it also adds credibility to the narrator of the story, Moll Flanders, by providing factual evidence of her life and stating that the novel was "written from her own memorandums." These elements of truth, realism, and naturalism, illuminated throughout Cross's criticism, allow for one to see how these Defoe novels revolutionized the genre of the English novel.

Phelps, William Lyon. *The Advance of the English Novel*. (pp. 27-52)

Although this criticism is written in a rather subjective tone, its comparative structure allows for much insight into Daniel Defoe's influence on the development of the English novel. This criticism focuses mainly upon the verisimilitude of the novel, that is, the realistic representation of societal life. According to Phelps, "The novel...is a critical analysis of life" (44). Phelps compares *Robinson Crusoe* to other novels of realism such as *Gulliver's Travels*, written by Jonathan Swift, and *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson; however, he focuses mainly on Defoe's work in order to display the evolution of realism within the literary doctrine. As Phelps states, "It is true that if Defoe had never written his island story, he would still rank as the first English novelist, and as a realistic author of genius" (37). In stating this, Phelps also points out that Defoe added naturalism to the genre of the English novel. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll*

Flanders both authenticate this viewpoint. Phelps writes, “In subject-matter, *Robinson Crusoe* is wildly romantic; in method and in style, it is studiously realistic....*Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) [another of Defoe’s naturalistic works] are shining examples of absolute realism” (36-7). Phelps’s interpretation of Defoe’s works is that of a combination of naturalistic realism and verisimilitude, thereby allowing a reader to relate thoroughly to the moral lesson discussed in the novel.

Phelps’s elucidation of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* shows Defoe’s contribution to the development of the English novel as it puts Defoe’s work into context with other works. By displaying characteristics of these novels—verisimilitude, realism, naturalism—Phelps shows how Defoe influenced subsequent authors who wrote in the tradition of travel literature. He shows how Defoe’s works were the foundation upon which many ensuing novelists built. Rather than providing a summary and analysis of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, Phelps focuses on how these novels add three key components—verisimilitude, realism and naturalism—to the genre.

Watt, Ian. “‘Robinson Crusoe’, Individualism and the Novel.” *The Rise of the Novel*. (pp. 60- 92)

In contrast to the previous interpretations, Ian Watt’s evaluation of *Robinson Crusoe* displays new terminology and interpretive license of the literary critic. This criticism focuses on the influence that the English economic system had on Defoe and, inherently, the title character Robinson Crusoe. As Watt states, “Robinson Crusoe has been very appropriately used by many economic theorists as their illustration of *homo economicus*” (63). Homo economicus, or the economic human, represents individualism in Watt’s interpretation. Money and economics were so engrained in English society that Watt is able to argue that individual monetary wealth influenced Robinson Crusoe. Watt states, “That Robinson Crusoe...is an embodiment of

economic individualism hardly needs demonstration. All Defoe's heroes pursue money, which he characteristically called 'the general denominating article of the world'" (63). The pursuit of money is what foreshadows Robinson Crusoe's eventual demise. The quest for money or economic individualism causes Crusoe to be stranded on a deserted island and forces him to live without money. Watt argues that, perhaps, Defoe created *Robinson Crusoe* in order to permeate a societal critique of the English economic system: money may not be central to life, but individual beliefs and strong work ethic are life's most important assets.

Watt, Ian. "Defoe as Novelist: 'Moll Flanders.'" *The Rise of the Novel*. (pp. 93-134)

Although reiterating many traditional critiques of Daniel Defoe's novel, this criticism adds new elucidations to the accepted interpretations of *Moll Flanders*. Like the critique of *Robinson Crusoe*, Watt's interpretation of *Moll Flanders* is based on individualism. He argues that, although the title character is a criminal and not a prototypical hero like Robinson Crusoe, *Moll Flanders* still presents much of the same elements of economic individualism throughout her antics. He states, "It is because her crimes, like the travels of Robinson Crusoe, are rooted in the dynamics of economic individualism that *Moll Flanders* is essentially different from the protagonists of the picaresque novel" (94). He continues to stress that the idea of wealth and money are essential to interpreting Defoe's novels. However, in his evaluation of *Moll Flanders*, Watts iterates that Defoe not only revolutionized the genre through the addition of verisimilitude, realism, and naturalism, but that he also redefines the picaresque novel as one of criminal individualism. Watts states, "The criminal individualism which Moll pursues in her later days tends to minimise the importance of personal relationships" (111). This allows for a new interpretation of the criminal: rather than comedic, the villain, Moll Flanders, is realistically represented through her individual actions whereby the author can teach a moral lesson to the

reader. Watt displays that isolationism, individualism, and realism, are Defoe's key contributions in the development of the English novel.

Watt's interpretation of both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* allow for new facets of the English novel to emerge. In both criticisms, Watts focuses on the individualism present within these two early works. His interpretation sets both novels in a historical context and allows the reader the chance to delve into comparisons of different styles which Defoe revolutionized, that is, economic and criminal individualism. Economic individualism is displayed in both novels and can, perhaps, be interpreted as Defoe's own perception on the new economic system that was arising in England in the eighteenth century: capitalism. Criminal individualism becomes prevalent within *Moll Flanders* throughout her many escapades in criminal activity. This criticism allows the reader to see how revolutionary are the concepts presented within Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*.

Valuable contemplations are displayed in the differing interpretations of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. Whether discussing Daniel Defoe's revolutionary literary contributions, that is, the inclusion of realism, naturalism, and individualism, or the title character's representations of verisimilitude and societal stratifications, these critics all offer different insight into the onset of the genre of the English novel. By writing these two revolutionary novels, Daniel Defoe created the foundation upon which subsequent novelists expanded and advanced the novel. These aforementioned facets of the novel which Defoe introduces are effectively part of the doctrine of this type of literature today. Without Daniel Defoe's novels, contemporary characters and naturalistic tales may have never been created.

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