

Close Reading of William Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850) Book Fourteenth Conclusion

In this analytical commentary, I will be examining lines 1-145 of *Book Fourteenth Conclusion*, the final instalment of William Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*. The poem seeks to explore the growth and development of the poet's mind while conjunctively exploring his relationship with nature. The fourteen-part poem is dedicated to his lifelong friend and companion, Samuel Coleridge, who greatly influenced his poetic career. In this reading, I will specifically be focusing on the power of the imagination as explored within the aforementioned lines of the text. In order to do this, I will evaluate the past experience of Wordsworth that are illustrated throughout the text as he embarks on his climb of Mount Snowdon, the analysis of that experience as it relates to nature, and the reconciliation with nature that Wordsworth hopes to achieve within his life.

The poem opens by elaborating on one of the poet's many travels through the country of Wales. This particular 'excursion' brings Wordsworth to Mount Snowdon, a visual representation of the pinnacle of the expression of his mind in the natural world. His companions are a 'youthful friend', who is mentioned in *Book Six*, the shepherd and his dog, 'We came, and roused the shepherd who attends/ the adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;/ then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth' (xiv.8-10).¹ Wordsworth's use of the word, 'shepherd', presents an idea within the Romantic period of simplicity of life and pastoral care, both of which the poet sought to accomplish within his life. The imagery of the shepherd suggests harmony with nature and animals, as the shepherd not only nurtures, but also attends with loving attention those who are placed under his care. As this is Wordsworth's vision of a desirable life, it comes to no surprise that his writing of the trip presents it at the forefront of the poem.

According to Jerome McGann, in *Romantic Ideology*, one of the key components of Romantic poetry, is the ability to present contradictions beneath the surface of the ideas of the literary works.² In Wordsworth's poem, he encapsulates this by displaying the calmness of existence as he explores the Welsh mountain, yet that is in contrast to the reality of the poet's life, more specially, to his childhood. The mission then of the poet is to reconcile that contradiction to the harmony that can only be found in nature. Therefore, he regards himself as an 'adventurous stranger', who is in the care of a shepherd that will help him to escape his own diminished reality. And by the shepherd's own understanding of nature and animals, provide Wordsworth with the inspiration needed to reconcile the poet back to the thing that he loves the most—nature.³ Interestingly, though there is a shepherd present, it is Wordsworth who seems to be leading the journey.

In the following lines, the poet uses the sublime, which is a means of conveying the beauty and the terror of nature, 'It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night, / Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog/ Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;/ But, undiscouraged, we began to climb/The mountain-side'(xiv.11-15).⁴ This description provides an example of the power of the imagination and how it can be used to interpret nature. As Wordsworth treks up the mountain, he is blissfully aware of the intensity of the moon's 'face' hovering over him. This is interesting because

¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; an Autobiographical Poem* (1850), p. 213.

² Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 86.

³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 213.

⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 213.

the poet also states that the environment is covered with a fog that will impede any chances of him seeing the moon. However, this experience seems to be a part of the consciousness of Wordsworth with regards to the relationship that he has established with nature. Immanuel Kant states that, 'Sublimity, therefore, does not reside in any of the things of nature, but only in our own mind'.⁵ Wordsworth's depiction of the moon as 'glaring', highlights the dynamic relationship of the sublime which Kant sought to elaborate upon. It appears that Wordsworth is aware of his own power over nature, as well as the power it exudes over him.

Therefore, he presents himself to it in the hopes that nature will communicate with him as before and in doing so, Wordsworth hopes to be fully transformed by it. This is what I refer to as the epitome or the climax of his pursuits. Wordsworth is on a journey to reach the maximum potential of his mind, to harness the creative expressions of nature with the artistic capacity of the poet. It is in this quest that the poet seeks to immortalize not only his work, but also his mind within nature. Though the image of the night was daunting to the poet, he preserves through it, furthering Kant's explanation of the sublime that it is primarily concerned with the emotional experience within the individual as compared to the display of the might of nature.⁶

Another idea which frequents Romantic ideology is that of 'displacement', where the Romantic poet seeks to divert the reader from the factual events by disguising those events in a metaphorical sense within the natural world.⁷ During his ascent, Wordsworth describes this encounter: 'The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,/ Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased/ His coiled-up prey with barking's turbulent'(xiv.22-24).⁸ This experience further exemplifies the idea of animals being a part of nature. However, its occurrence after he has immersed himself within his private thoughts suggests that he is hinting at something else.

One theory that I would like to suggest is that Wordsworth is applying this technique as to reflect on the fickle distractions that sought to pervade his life, mainly that of the French Revolution. The suddenness and almost randomized occurrence support this idea. Furthermore, the point at which Wordsworth is on his journey— the lower level of Mount Snowdon— and the fact that this is the conclusion to his work, can leave the reader to speculate that its position is correlated to the times of his youth when he was preoccupied with the notions of the revolution. In some ways, Wordsworth is trying to illustrate the untamedness of his mind through the natural world.

The animals are used to represent the belligerent foe or the cruelty that exist not only in nature, but also in his reality. In addition, it suggests that one will always be able to overpower the lesser power because it is in its nature to do so. The dog 'unearths' the hedgehog but does not harm it, but resorts to scaring the animal 'teased his coiled-up prey'. This is a depiction of the French Revolution and the role of the British government in it. Moreover, as his views on the Revolution changed later in his life, Wordsworth perceives the land and its degrading morality as a 'wild place'.⁹ Since that experience was brief, it no longer interests the travellers and hence Wordsworth returns to his musings.

⁵ Kant, Immanuel, "First Section, Second Book: Analytic of the Sublime," in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. by Paul Guyer, trans. by Eric Matthews, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 128–59

⁶ Kant, Immanuel, "First Section, Second Book, pp. 128-59

⁷ Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*, p. 86.

⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 213.

⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 213.

Wordsworth's bent forehead is in sync with nature as he treks up the mountain, adamant that his enemy—distraction— will not be gratified above him. He is rewarded by nature, as the thick blankets of fog dissipate, and the light appears as if to guide his path 'When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten/ And with a step or two seemed brighter still' (xiv.35-36).¹⁰ The 'glaring moon' of line 12 is now exposed to the poet, 'as I looked up,/ The Moon hung naked in a firmament', signalling that nature is being revealed to him in the manner which he so desired.¹¹ Wordsworth continues on the idea of Kant that nature is subjecting itself to him 'at my feet/Rested a silent sea of hoary mist' (xiv.41-42).¹² While that may be the case, Wordsworth establishes the distinction in the levels of authority being commanded by nature. While the thick fogs encompass him and stretches out to the sea, it has no authority over the 'ethereal vault' or heavens.¹³ He deifies the Moon, rendering to it more glory than its celestial counterparts, 'only the inferior stars/ Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light/ In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon' (xiv.53-54).¹⁴

Nature communicates with Wordsworth from an opening within the abyss, 'Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay/ All meek and silent, save that through a rift' (xiv.55-56).¹⁵ The significance of this line is expanded in the lines that follow, 'A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place' (xiv.58). The use of the sublime within the text illustrates not only the might of nature, but also that the mind is an abyss that houses the power of imagination for Wordsworth. Just as Nature is a fixed, deep, frightening and a living thing, so too is the mind of poet. In this visual representation, the Romantic poet is translating his mind into nature. Additionally, just as nature replenishes itself, so too can the mind of the poet be regenerated. This is perhaps the greatest sign of the growth and development of the poet's mind.

Another key concept of Romanticism is the fulfilling of the heart and mind's desire over the doctrinal ideas of the period. The poet's desire is to fulfil within the scope of British Romanticism stability and order in face of the prevalent ideas of the revolution.¹⁶ Hence, to achieve this in his analysis of the experience, the poet utilizes the dreary night as a symbolic reference to the conscious mind. Selected as a worthy delegate by the glaring moon, Wordsworth has a spiritual experience that gives him supernatural revelation concerning the 'majestic intellect'. Just as the moon broods over the expanse of the sea from its heavenly realm, in like manner, is his conscious mind— which contains the imagination and creative powers— broods over the 'dark abyss', providing a revelation of the infinite source of wisdom the power has obtained from nature.¹⁷

As is common within the Romantic period, Wordsworth is drawing similarities between Nature and the Imagination. Wisdom is sustained by a conscious stream that flows from the power of the Divine in nature, 'a mind sustained/ By recognitions of transcendent power' (xiv.75).¹⁸ In lines 76-92, Wordsworth proposes the idea that the purpose of this is so through the displays of 'awful and sublime', the Nature can exert authority in a parent like fashion to mould the mind of the poet above the sensory organs that he would ordinarily rely, insomuch that the poet will receive a true

¹⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 214.

¹⁶ Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology*, p. 67.

¹⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 215.

¹⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 215.

emotional experience in Nature.¹⁹ The ultimate goal of Nature is to engrave within the poet a 'higher mind', that will possess creativity as influenced by the Divine. The lines that follow, 93-99, explains the relationship that the poet establishes with nature on behalf of this experience. Wordsworth is able to construct one for himself or allow nature to illuminate his imagination. The latter idea is conveyed through 'Them the enduring and the transient both/ Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things/From least suggestions' (xiv.100-102).²⁰ For Wordsworth, the inspiration he receives from nature comes through both its simplistic and mighty aspect. The poet learns from every facet of Nature and therefore possesses the ability to harness the fullest potential of his creativity ability. Not only does this qualify Wordsworth as an example of the highest minds which he elaborated on, but it synchronizes the idea of reconciling contradictory relationships within Romantic poetry. Wordsworth's mind in Nature formulates a tangible element of the ability of Romanticisms' element of understanding the landscape through the personal experiences of the individual.

The poet, still drawing on his spiritual renewal, finds that he does not have to be beckoned profusely to his role as a Romantic writer, but rather lives in the simplicity of his desire to be in communication with the Divine as displayed through the natural landscape. Drawing from conclusions of the poet's history, his faith towards the latter end of his life has greatly influenced the 1850 version of *The Prelude*. The extent can be considered in the way in which Wordsworth considers time, 'Spread over time, past, present, and to come/Age after age, till Time shall be no more' (xiv. 110-11).²¹ His references seem to be symbolic of Eternity, which is attributed to Divinity. The power of the poet's imagination is held within the eternal landscape of the divine plan that exist prior to and henceforth his own existence. He recognizes that the power which he has been granted and which is being displayed in the scenery before him are 'truly from the Deity' (xiv.112).²² He further goes on in line 113 to view his mind as a form of the Spirit, infused with the triune God, and as a result is in fellowship with God. The usage of the phrase, 'habitually infused', presents the idea that this communion is similar to a cycle that regularly repeats itself. Such a process is a part of nature and is being displayed in every image in nature 'Through every image and through every thought/ And all affections by communion raised/From earth to heaven, from human to divine' (xiv.116-118).²³ Furthermore, his explanation can be viewed as a reasoning as to why the poet frequently visited numerous landscapes throughout his lifetime.

In those excursions, the poet realizes that he can have a deeper communication of wit with Nature thus enabling him to fill—and even overflow— his conscious mind 'Having endless occupation of the Soul/Whether discursive or intuitive' (xiv. 119-120).²⁴ This also illustrates the image of a regenerative mind that is constantly being immersed in the creative powers of the imagination to the point that it oscillates between the beauty and terror of the emotional experiences which it transitions through each day. Yet, being unfazed by its own lack of mental capacity as the level of the creativity produced sets bounds for mutual trust between Wordsworth and Nature. The lines 123-129 suggests that amidst the errors, distractions and fickle passions which the poet once pursued, as well as, the challenges that pervaded his childhood, his relationship with Nature is intertwined with the peace—and the rest—that he has found within his faith in God. Wordsworth now sees that his pursuits as a

¹⁹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 215.

²⁰ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 215-216.

²¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 216.

²² William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 216.

²³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 216.

²⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 216.

young poet would have never been satisfied as it was devoid of God. The true or 'pure source' of imagination which he had so longed for could only be found in the Divine.

The final section of this close reading focuses on lines 130-145. The context of Romantic ideology to reconcile two contradictory elements, in this case Nature and the mind, has been intertwined by the poet. He begins the stanzas by posing a rhetorical question; seeking to know who has sought after the same desire that he has. The answers are his lifelong friend Coleridge to whom the work is dedicated and his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. He explains that true freedom is the pursuit of the 'course unchecked, unerring and untired/In one perpetual progress smooth and bright' (xiv. 134-135). The poet is presenting a roadmap to others who wish to follow the Romantics desire and experience the bliss which he now enjoys. He views *The Prelude* as 'a humbler destiny.... retraced', and overall suggests that his work was almost hindered by 'lapse and hesitating choice, And backward wanderings along thorny ways' (xiv.136-138).²⁵ Though the journey was not smooth and coupled with distractions, Wordsworth recognizes the fact that he always kept himself from the vain pursuits of other poets, trivialities and the desire for power. His reference to 'thorny ways', in light of his spiritual revelation, can be deduced as a reference to the hindrances that would try to ensnare him from achieving his ultimate desire.

In the quietness of the mountain, Wordsworth likens his experience on the mountain top of that of a religious figure having a spiritual or supernature revelation within a temple, 'Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes/Within whose solemn temple I received/My earliest visitations' (xiv. 139-141)²⁶. While the mountain, as described in earlier paragraphs is profound, the poet laments that the labour for the mind was once almost thwarted by his inability to receive or perhaps steward what Nature was offering to him, 'careless then Of what was given me' (xiv.142).²⁷ In a second chance moment, he now sees the fullness of what he almost missed—his own desire and heart's content and reflects upon it thoughtfully, 'and which now I range, A meditative, oft a suffering, man— Do I declare—in accents which, from truth Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend' (xiv.143-145).²⁸ Wordsworth meditates on the beauty of the reconciled imagery of the nature and his mind, the harmony of nature and the calm existence he now beholds the beauty in the majesty of Nature. The moment however is not overshadowed by the glory of the experience only, but also of Wordsworth's shortcomings within his life. Amidst this, the poet groups these contradictory elements together, in conjunction with the fullness of God, to display the power of the imagination.

²⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 216.

²⁶ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 217.

²⁷ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 217.

²⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, p. 217.

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Green to the very door: Ecocriticism and Romanticism (HPEN6035)

Portfolio

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How is the relationship between human nature and the natural world presented in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*?

In this essay, I will be analysing the relationship between human nature and the natural world as portrayed in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. To supplement this analysis, I will also be considering the role of Christianity in ecological studies in order to deduce its influence upon man's perception of the environment. In order to achieve this, I will firstly consider the ecocritical debate of Lynn White Jr. Secondly, I will address Crusoe's state of nature as he moves through the natural world before his conversion. Thirdly, I will analyse how Crusoe's state of nature evolves after his conversion. Fourthly, I will provide a counterargument on the ecocritical debate of the exploitation of Nature due to the Christian influence. And lastly, I will conclude this essay.

Ecocriticism can be defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.²⁹ The movement seeks to justify the interwoven relationship between nature and culture, humans and non-humans and the ecological implications that results as a consequence of such relationships. The theological framework which underpins this essay is an anthropocentric one, which establishes the ideology of mankind's pre-eminence in the natural world. According to this view, God created the natural world and instituted that man, though he is a part of Nature, has been placed at a higher rank and thus will have total dominion over it. Man's domination over nature forms the basis of God's sovereign plan for creation.

However, one ecocritic, Lynn White Jr, challenges this basis and suggests that that has formed the basis of our ecological crisis. Since man has been given dominion over all of the natural world, it presupposes that man will also be able to exploit its natural resources, destroy the landscape and alter the cohesive structure of the natural environment.³⁰ Can human influence over nature be based solely on Christian doctrine alone, or do the ideologies of Humanism play a role in how man perceives, interacts and engages with his environment? Does man's view of nature from Christianity substitute to exploitation and dominance? I will now be considering Robinson Crusoe's view of the environment, prior to his conversion to Christianity.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* tells the story of a prodigal son, who leaves his middle-class life and advice of his Father, to pursue a life at sea. After embarking on his journey, Crusoe encounters a series of misfortunes—shipwrecks and slavery and brief season of prosperity. On another excursion at sea, Crusoe is shipwrecked on an uninhabited tropical island, which he subsequently names, 'The Island of Despair'. He spends a total of twenty-eight years living on the island before being reconciled with civilization.

In the novel, Defoe constantly oscillates between the two ideas of being a part of nature and being a ruler over nature. The initial reactions to the natural world that Crusoe has can be described as being a part of a natural order, yet unable to dominate it. The warning is reiterated by his Father as he considers his son's irrational desire to subdue the natural world. He is advised 'not to play the young man, not to precipitate [himself] into Miseries which Nature and the station of life that [he] was born in, seemed to have provided against'.³¹ Crusoe is reluctant to listen to reason or the voice of

²⁹ Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. vxiii.

³⁰ Glotfelty and Fromm, *Ecocriticism Reader*, p. 9.

³¹ Daniel Defoe and J. Donald Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 5.

conscience from his Father and pursues his desires regardless. He is governed by his own laws of nature; following those desires results in Crusoe being shipwrecked on multiple occasions.

When in the untamed natural world, Crusoe is intimidated by its power. For instance, after the shipwreck off of the coast of the island, Crusoe is left battling against the 'fury of the sea [which] carries [him] forward as before'.³² He is helpless in this condition, relying entirely upon God for mercy and intervention. Similarly, following the first incident of his shipwreck, Crusoe encountered the 'terror of a storm', which 'put him in such a condition that [he] had no power to describe it'.³³ In these instances, Crusoe realizes that he has no control over certain elements of the natural world. He is fearful of it and its ability to exploit his weaknesses. Crusoe's desires are in conflict with the natural world.

Irrespective of this, humanists view him as a 'natural man, separated from society, who must struggle for survival within the natural environment'.³⁴ Crusoe follows this notion in two ways. Firstly, he recognizes that there are elements beyond his control. And secondly, this recognition births within him a desire to control as much of the natural world that he can. In the first instance, when Crusoe comes to shore on the isolated island, he decides to 'look around [me] to see what kind of place [I] was in, and what was next to be done'. When he recognizes that he is unequipped for life in the natural world, and possess no proper defence against it, he is thrown into 'terrible agonies of the mind' that causes him to 'run about like a madman'.³⁵ Crusoe resorts to the emotional state of fear when he is alone in the natural world.

Crusoe fears are not irrational, but predominantly appear in the instances when he has to fend for himself. For example, after his first excursion and subsequent shipwreck, though he was fearful in the moment of the experience, afterwards however, his rational is debased. He recognizes and admits that he 'had several times loud calls from [his] reason and [his] more composed judgement to go home but had no power to do it'.³⁶ This is attributed to the fact that Crusoe considers himself to be a part of a social culture and hierarchical construct. Within that setting, Crusoe is afforded some level of co-dependence and protection as he is assimilated into the natural order of society. In my view, within such a setting Crusoe operates from the exploitative and profitability mentality. Defoe manipulates Crusoe's desires when he placed within one of two extremes— isolation from society or immersion in society. Moreover, he subjects Crusoe to different levels of fearful situations to expose what is driving his nature in the natural landscape. Interestingly, at sea or in the face of turbulent storms, Crusoe seeks for the mercy of God, but once on land where he can control the elements— with his weaponry— he seems more self-reliant.

As Crusoe experiences fear in the natural world, he is driven to focus on control. He does this by seeking different measures by which he can preserve his own life.³⁷ Being the only one of his kind on the island, Crusoe values human life. He ravages the wreckage of the ship and collects items that he deems not only for his survival, but also for his comfort. In this state of nature, prior to his conversion, Crusoe recognizes that it was 'vain to sit still and wish for what was not to be had' and proceeds to put his hands to work to ensure his survival. He builds a raft which he loads with

³² Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 45.

³³ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 12.

³⁴ Maxamillian E. Novak, *Defoe, and the Nature of Man* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 27.

³⁵ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 47.

³⁶ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 14.

³⁷ Novak, *Defoe and the Nature of Man*, p. 34-35

clothing, tools, tobacco, gunpowder and every other valuable thing he could find, which he perceived would be of use to him.³⁸ The fact that Crusoe brings these items signifies that he has intentions of not constructing a fortress, but also of creating some form of life that will resemble his cultural way of living and thinking. It can be deduced that in the quest for Crusoe's survival, he is concerned with subduing the natural world. He is determined and begins to 'apply [myself] to accommodate my way of living, and to make things easy to me as I could'.³⁹ It is at this point that Crusoe is shifting from being a part of nature to becoming a ruler of nature. The future landscape reflects this state of human nature view.

Crusoe converts to Christianity following his recovery from an ill health and near-death experience. He prays for deliverance from his condition of desolation upon the island, 'but before I lay down, I did what I never had done in all my life, I kneeled and prayed to Go to fulfil the promise to me, that if I called upon him the day of trouble, he would deliver me'.⁴⁰ Crusoe's interactions with God and his sovereignty in light of nature as follows from this episode does not necessarily deviate from his past interactions with nature. In light of the experiences that Crusoe has had in nature, his post-Christian values causes him to translate from fear into faith. As he relies on the divine providence of God to supply, guide and assist him, Crusoe's navigates the natural world by organizing his ecosystem⁴¹.

The Crusoe world is divided into three subsections, primarily farming, manufacturing and governance. The interplay between Crusoe and his newfound faith is established through how he interacts with nature. He finds meaning about his situation and spirituality on the island through the construction of each of his projects while on the island. His concern with accommodating himself is both spiritual and physical⁴². Defoe's paints an image of human nature being dominant over ecology by relying on the principle ideas that Crusoe had when he was a part of a social structure. As his first enterprise, Crusoe embarks on farming providing for himself 'forty bushels of barley and rice' which was just enough for him to consume within an entire year.⁴³ Though he recognizes God's providence in his situation, his transitions between his fears of being attacked by a wild animal or killed by savages. It seems that while he is altering the landscape to his advantage, he is also in fear of the elements which he still has no control.

Nevertheless, though he experiences the emotional state of fear, he is able to preserve and triumph over his own inhibitions through his increasing believe and faith in God that he has been preserved for a reason. As he navigates through the natural world, his state of nature in alignment with God evolves into the stage of manufacturing. Crusoe starts the process off by constructing a canoe for the purposes of touring his place of abode. He recalls how 'it was not without infinite labour that [he] felled this tree: [I] was twenty days hacking and hewing it at the bottom'. To consider whether this can be considered as exploitation of the natural world is based upon considering the motives behind Crusoe's pursuits. Crusoe recognizes that his life has been preserved for some purpose which he does not know as yet and seeks to adapt to his environment by bringing his culture, way of life and norms to the untamed environment.

³⁸ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 54

³⁹ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 67.

⁴⁰ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 94.

⁴¹ Janet Bertsch, *Storytelling in the Works of Bunyan, Grimmshausen, Defoe, and Schnabel* (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), p. 97.

⁴² Pat Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 53.

⁴³ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 124.

As he builds this canoe, he slowly transitions towards the state of a master builder thought it is not without hard work. His laborious efforts are sometimes successful. He recounts the times which he spent planting barley and rice, as well as, curing raising. In addition to this, he perceives that his labour must yield successful results to curate the life which he desires. Crusoe accomplishes his tasks through trial and error and rather than forsake his endeavours, he continues to preserve. For example, Crusoe recognizes that the first attempt of the canoe was not to the standard for use, and leaves it as a 'memorandum, to teach [me] to be wiser next time... though [I] could not get a tree proper for it'.⁴⁴ His continual perseverance allows him to improve in his trade of a builder, to the point that he even embarks on new projects, such as pottery, 'besides this, I arrived at an unexpected perfection in my earthen ware and contrived well enough to make them with a wheel'.⁴⁵ Crusoe learns from his exploits in nature to become better not only at his trade, but also in his consideration of how he approaches the natural world. His efforts are underpinned by fear continuously, which can be attributed to the fact that he is in constant fear of destruction.

Defoe's novel considers Crusoe's respect for the providence of God. As God guides and provides for Crusoe, he must be diligent in stewarding what he has been given. Crusoe navigates through this by creating items necessary for his comfort and desire. In some ways, it can be deduced that God wants Crusoe to accommodate his way of living and subdue the natural world that he has been giving. As a foreigner to the natural world which he is now experiencing, Crusoe must transit his thinking from a primitive one to an intellectual thinker who is a charge of establishing God's will for the uninhabited island. He draws from memories of what he had seen in England and Portugal in order to create coals, for instance to bake bread⁴⁶. His trust in the providence of God allows him to restructure the elements of nature necessary for his survival.

Crusoe relies on 'reason and his natural imagination' to mimic the 'divine activities of creating and ordering the world'. Whether he is making the canoe, farming or just arranging his natural environment, Crusoe 'must proceed from observing individual, empirical objects to understanding the rational principle that governs their nature'⁴⁷. He deviates from this only when his emotional state superimposes his ability to think clearly. Crusoe approaches a cave while burning wood to make charcoal and is thrown into a fit of fear. While he believes that there is nothing more terrifying in the cave than him, he is afraid that he will be met by a wild beast⁴⁸. His rationalized thinking correlates to his state of nature. Crusoe can dominate only the aspects of the natural world that he can, but what he cannot control or what is unknown to Crusoe poses a threat to his rational thinking.

While the organization which Crusoe establishes are in some ways considered by ecological debaters as over exploitative, it can be assumed that in light of the Spaniards who will later come to live on the land, Crusoe's organizational system was crucial not only to his survival, but also to the preservation of the lives of those men as well.

Crusoe's last mode of operation develops into a system of governance. The arrival of Friday upon the island not only brings companionship for Crusoe, but also allows him to fill into the role of a master on the island. Crusoe learns from Friday, but his primary motive for doing so is to test how much he knows about the world. Crusoe gleans from Friday's wisdom and understanding of the natural world

⁴⁴ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures*, p. 136.

⁴⁵ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures*, p. 144.

⁴⁶ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures*, p. 177.

⁴⁷ Janet Bertsch, *Storytelling in the Works*, p. 96.

⁴⁸ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures*, p. 177.

but places himself in a different social rank from him. It is here that Crusoe's rational thinking about the natural world becomes more evident. He is a part of nature, but just not a part of the natural world, which Friday belongs to. Crusoe sees his social standing as above what can be noted as primitive. Though he too is primitive in some regards, he possesses more intellect than the man whom he has saved, 'I made it my business to teach him everything that was proper and to make him useful, handy and helpful', to which Friday was receptive and commended by Crusoe as the 'aptest scholar'.⁴⁹ Crusoe's system of governance over the land operates in the following ways: firstly, God is sovereign and Crusoe is the one who interprets God's divine plan and power for their lives, Friday follows Crusoe's interpretations and then Friday's father and the Spaniard are secondary followers⁵⁰. This hierarchical system is observed when the Spaniard is rescued by Crusoe and Friday. As the duo posed the difficulty of saving the weakened man, Friday takes all of his instructions from Crusoe and his interpretation what they ought to do. In addition to this, Crusoe informs the Spaniard of his decision and encourages him to follow his leadership. He institutes work for the trio within his society to perform, 'I set Friday and his Father to cutting them down; and then I caused the Spaniard, to whom I imparted my thought on that affair, to oversee and direct their work'.⁵¹

The ecocritical debate that mankind's domination of the natural world is exploitive in nature can be counterargued. The establishment of Crusoe's cultural system on the island proved to be fruitful for the purposes of the survival of those people who have now been joined to him. The dominant culture of the newly established island was produced in alignment with the Providence of God. And thus, cannot be considered as exploitive. The natural world allows for man to be able to subdue it, and in so doing develop skills and trades necessary for his survival and comfort.

In conclusion, I have presented my analysis of the relationship between human nature and the natural world in *Robinson Crusoe*. I have considered how Christianity has influenced that relationship through analysing the pre and post conversion states of Crusoe within the novel. And lastly, I have provided a brief counterargument on the ecocritical debate of human influence on nature.

⁴⁹ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 210.

⁵⁰ Janet Bertsch, *Storytelling in the Works*, p. 102.

⁵¹ Defoe and Crowley, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures*, p. 247.

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Portfolio

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