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Clothing, Colonial Subjugation, and the Performance of Political Authority in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

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Abstract

This essay explores the role and representation of fashion in Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe* by examining, firstly, the intimate act of clothing that occurs between the characters of Crusoe and Friday, and secondly, the presence of fabrics, textiles, patterns, and wardrobes throughout the work. Despite being marooned on an uninhabited island, Robinson Crusoe repurposes his crude material culture to recreate a European fashionability through clothing on the periphery of the British empire. He subsequently deploys acts of clothing as an instrument for subjugation when faced with an Indigenous visual economy different from his own, transforming Friday into a European subject by dressing him in garments tailored to Crusoe's British sensibilities. I approach Crusoe's dressing of Friday from a postcolonial perspective, locating it along a continuum of colonial acts he pursues in attempting to secure the island under his authority. As such, I emphasize the political significance of fashion and in particular how fashion is represented in the novel as a mark of sophistication and as an important part of Crusoe's successful miming of monarchial power. I consider the presence of clothing in *Robinson Crusoe* as an interdisciplinary point of contact between fashion, literature, and political philosophy.

KEYWORDS:

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

FASHION

COLONIALISM

ROBINSON CRUSOE

THE NOVEL

FASHION STUDIES

> "… I gave [Friday] a Cap, which I had made of a Hare-skin, very convenient, and fashionable enough; and thus he was cloath'd for the present, tolerably well; and was mightly well pleas'd to see himself almost as well cloath'd as his Master."
>
> Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (222)

Robinson Crusoe's dressing of the character Friday while both are marooned on an uninhabited island off the coast of South America comprises an intriguing literary representation of how fashion facilitates the performance of political agency (or lack thereof).

Even though it is only briefly mentioned, the style of dress and the types of garments worn by characters in *Robinson Crusoe* functions as material pleasure, protective outerwear, and forms of subjugation.

For the first two decades of Crusoe's time on the island, he persists in an inescapably private world, fundamentally lacking what Joshua I. Miller calls the "intersubjective social world" (3) implied by the existence fashion. While few aspects of Crusoe's islanded existence fall outside the realm of utilitarian or religious purpose, clothing is not just functional, otherwise he would not assess the clothes he gives Friday as "fashionable enough" (222); and indeed, the context of their relationship and its ambiguities are key for reading the role of fashion into this work. Specifically, the dressing of Friday can be subsumed into Crusoe's overall attempt to erase the signatures of Friday's Indigeneity and assimilate him into an expanding British empire.

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Fashion in this context refers to Crusoe's conscious dressing of himself and others in garments that are not purely chosen or constructed to help him survive his marooned condition. Crusoe's clothing choices befit his stylistic preferences, his self-presentation as owner and governor of the island, and his attempts to transform Friday into his own personal colonial subject. Ostensibly, fashion *shouldn't* figure for Crusoe. Though fashion can certainly convey a political timbre, this seemingly requires far more than Crusoe's exceedingly lonely existence. Even the long-awaited arrival of Friday does not establish a cohesive community that would make fashion a comprehendible mode of expression or social norm. Yet Crusoe also contrives an extensive colonial fantasy in which his uninhabited island becomes the forefront of British imperial reach. As such, when Crusoe gives Friday some shirts and breeches he does so to define the parameters of Friday's self-expression within his intricate fantasy, which had begun several years before Friday's arrival and which becomes continuous with Crusoe's claim of king-like authority over the island. Friday's clothing heralds his coerced transformation from an Indigenous South American into a colonial subject. On an individual level, this moment establishes Crusoe's self-envisioned role as master; on a broader level, it epitomizes the forced assimilation of non-English persons into an English cultural hegemony.

Fashion's representation in *Robinson Crusoe,* however, is not exclusively embedded in Crusoe's attempt to transform Friday into an ideal subordinate. Owing to the desirability of textiles from the Middle East and Asia, European fashion in particular was implicated in systems of trade that exoticized Eastern goods and shaped British sensibilities around self-expression and décor (Lemire & Riello 2008). Additionally, because Europeans could not match the technology or technique of Asian textile manufactures until the mid-eighteenth century, fashion was implicated in broader concerns of national self-definition and prosperity (Lemire & Riello 2008). There was acute awareness in Defoe's time during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that fashion was essential for constituting the social and political world, especially within the reach of Great Britain, which had forced contacts with near and disparate peoples who presented their own linguistic and visual cultures.

As such, there is much to be gleaned from the emergence of fashion in *Robinson Crusoe,* to which this paper is dedicated, and the number of salient issues it touches on: the symbolic invocation of fashion to indicate social class or personal transformation, the relationship between fashion and colonial domination, and the extent to which political agency (in the case of Crusoe and Friday this is defined rather restrictively between master and subject) involves elements of mimicry or performance.

Here my postcolonial approach to *Robinson Crusoe* will involve linking Crusoe's clothing with the wider network of British imperial expansion that Crusoe's colonization of the island allegorizes or represents.

In Part 1, I begin by laying some historical and conceptual groundwork while attempting to justify my use of a distinctly non-visual item (the prose novel) as a departure point for examining a distinctly visual medium. Part 2 features my analysis of Crusoe's clothing of Friday, which I contextualize within the broader representation of mimicry that attends a large portion of *Robinson Crusoe*. Finally, I conclude by summarizing how Crusoe's act of clothing constitutes a form of colonial subjugation that attempts to transform Friday into a European subject.

PART 1: GOOD ENGLISH IS LIKE GOOD TASTE IN CLOTHING

In *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, taken from unpublished student notebooks from the University of Glasgow in 1762–1763, Adam Smith likens good English to good taste in clothing. Smith's analogy of language and fashion was not accidental nor original but rather was embedded in the attending historical conditions of eighteenth-century Britain—most particularly for Smith the sorted relationship between Scotland and England in the decades following the Act of Union of 1707, which enjoined the two countries into the Kingdom of Great Britain, Wales, and Scotland. A Scotsman himself, Smith used the *Lectures* to assuage Scottish concerns regarding an internal colonialism that accompanied the union, seen for example in the coerced Anglicization of the Scottish. Lori Branch assesses the *Lectures* alongside his *Wealth of Nations* as marked by a "colonial subject's attempts to reconcile both colony and colonizer by the promises of the mutual advantage of peaceful economic interdependence and cultural exchange" (436). Even though Smith was born almost two decades after the union, by the mid-1700s the "social and economic incentives to enter British society mobilized an energetic educational movement in Scotland aimed squarely at helping Scots youth assimilate themselves and pass into the lucrative commerce of the British Empire" (Branch 439). Good English was therefore one of the many indispensable skills for Scots to acquire if their quest was to pass seamlessly into British society, and Smith, born and raised in the midst of this economic and cultural exchange, was in Glasgow in 1762 ready to help budding students learn to navigate these circumstances.

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Branch places Smith's analogy of language and fashion within the broader eighteenth-century trend towards conceiving of rhetoric as dressings for ideas. Words were suitable or "fitting" depending on what needed to be conveyed. However, Branch also points out that Smith's analogy conveys an intriguing subversiveness, for Smith was not simply suggesting that good English could be appropriated like a fashionable garment. In likening good (or proper) English to fashion—a learnable style, a matter of taste, a commodity, an exchangeable item—Smith conceived Englishness itself as a construct and "carefully tailored costume" (Branch 445). Just as students could "put on shoes and fashionable waistcoats the better to circulate in British Society," Branch continues, "so too with the same honest pragmatism they could put on standard English" (Brand 445). For Scots, the notion that English could be performed might have represented an extremely relieving prospect. Firstly, it suggested that receiving the potentially prosperous spoils of inclusion was accessible to those willing and able to acquire good English. Second, and just as significantly, it suggested that Englishness was not a "mysterious inner virtue that legitimated England's domination" (Branch 446)—quite the opposite, it was a contingent cultural mode susceptible to discursive negotiation, alteration, enactment, and resistance. "In one sense," Branch remarks, "the *Lectures* seem to create a potential space for resistance to English cultural hegemony by pointing to the performativity of Englishness and Britishness" (436). Performativity opened up opportunities for Scots to exploit the relationship between Scotland and England under the terms of the union not just for their own personal benefit but to also smuggle "Scotticisms" into the practice of Englishness and dislodge the potential uni-directional flow of cultural exchange. As Branch intriguingly puts it, a Scot who can "linguistically 'pass' as an Englishman becomes analogous to the disruptive figure of the cross-dresser whose success at passing points to the performativity of whatever social category (gender, class, nationality) of which he passes as a member" (446).

The symbolic and conceptual potential of this analogy between language and fashion is enticing.

Words as worn items—as things that adorn ideas rather than being innate to them—offers many avenues for interdisciplinary study of literature and fashion.

Smith's vision of Englishness as analogous to fashion portended a significant reframe of national affiliation while also emphasizing the logic of exchange value that he saw as underwriting both Englishness and empire. In dislodging what was taken as an essentialist category, Smith offers a brief glimpse of how other identity categories may similarly be socially and culturally contingent. Daniel Defoe, however, had he been Smith's contemporary, would have likely loathed the notion that good English and Englishness were like disposable skills. While Smith positioned them more fluidly within networks of exchange that reflected the growing commercialization and commodification of the period, to which fashion was prototypical, Defoe conceived good English as the "gold standard" (Branch 445).

In his *An Essay Upon Projects* (1697), Defoe envisions a central academy for the English nation—in the same manner as the Académie Française for the French—that would, among other things, correct "Erroneous Customs in Words" (237), "polish and refine the *English* tongue," establish "Purity and Propriety of Stile," and ultimately "purge it from all the Irregular Additions that Ignorance and Affectation have introduc'd" (233). Such an academy would readily police the "Impudence and Impertinence of Young Authors, whose Ambition is to be known, tho' it be by their Folly" (237). In contradistinction to Smith's positive assessment of sentiment and cross-cultural exchange, Defoe explicitly condemns custom and "Affectation" which threaten to corrupt both good manners and the purity of the English language. Indeed, Defoe writes there "shou'd be no more occasion to search for Derivations and Constructions, and 'twou'd be as Criminal then to *Coin Words, as Money*" (236-237). The operative analogy for Defoe is not between language and fashion but with language and printing money, which makes coining words equivalent to counterfeiting (a criminal offense). Defoe's commitment to be-

ing a sort of English language purist fits somewhat snuggly with Defoe's larger belief that the "English Gentleman can take possession of the world through reading" (McInelly 3). Literacy and language comprehension are key tools for the English to survey the extent of the world and to transform that surveil into the concrete exercise of control.

Defoe's view of English as an immutable standard threatened by shifts in custom clarifies the colonial mindset of his protagonist in *Robinson Crusoe,* who does not hesitate in subjugating Friday to the language, religion, and social norms of Britain the moment they make contact with one another. Yet Crusoe, in literally dressing Friday, potentially undermines Defoe's analogy of the "gold standard" by having him perform as an Englishman or indistinct European. In the next section, I elaborate the extensive amount of mimicry that constitutes Crusoe's colonial fantasy and how particular sartorial customs inform this mimicry.

PART 2: DESERT ISLAND FASHION

Crusoe has been shipwrecked alone on an island off the coast of South America for over twenty years when he rescues Friday, an Indigenous man from the mainland, from being killed and cannibalized. Crusoe initially gives Friday "some Cloathes, at which he seem'd very glad, for he was stark naked" (220)— although given that Crusoe is our only source, we may readily doubt whether Friday was "very glad" to be forced to put on clothes. Crusoe's comment suggests that being "stark naked" is a deficiency of character or sophistication, or as a sign of barbarity. Having rescued Friday from death, Crusoe now seeks to rescue Friday from perceived primitiveness by dressing him in European-style garments. A year after Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe,* Adam Petrie released his conduct book *Rules of Good Deportment* (1720), in which he remarks that clothes were, firstly, "invented for to screen Nakedness, and a Defence of Decency; they are Badges of our Infamy and Shame" and, secondly, "should put us in mind of our miserable State by Nature, and of the need we have to be cloathed with Christ's Righteousness, and the Graces of the Spirit" (6). Clothing is an important virtue that protects modesty and conveys good deportment, but clothing also distinguishes religious righteousness and ascendency from a "miserable" state of nature.

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As such, in clothing himself, Crusoe validates his own ascendency from the ostensible state of nature that was forced upon him in being shipwrecked on the island, and in tailoring his own clothes in a style that mimics European garments, he signals his self-mastery and sophistication as a self-sufficient gentlemen. In clothing Friday, however, Crusoe robs him of the opportunity to express an identical level of self-mastery by disallowing him from choosing what to wear, including the choice to wear nothing.

In having Friday cover his nakedness, he is being "rescued" from the unrighteous, crude, and miserable circumstances that attends life in his current state.

These initial clothing items are apparently insufficient, though, and merely temporary until another outfit can be procured. Eventually, Crusoe leads Friday to his makeshift home—which Crusoe calls his "castle" or "fortification" but is in fact a cave—and begins clothing Friday in additional threads:

> I gave him a pair of Linnen Drawers, which I had out of the poor Gunner's Chest I mention'd, and which I found in the Wreck and which with a little alteration fitted him very well; then I made him a Jerkin [a jacket or waistcoat] of Goat's-skin, as well as my Skill would allow; and I was now grown a tolerable good Taylor; and I gave him a Cap, which I had made of a Hare-skin, very convenient, and fashionable enough; and thus he was cloath'd for the present, tolerably well; and was mightly well pleas'd to see himself almost as well cloath'd as his Master (221-222)

The circumstances of Crusoe's time on the island, for which he has already suffered two decades in complete isolation, apparently does not disrupt his eye for "fashionable enough" clothing that fit Friday "tolerably well"—a seemingly frivolous virtue to identify given that it is only Crusoe and Friday who now inhabit the island. Yet Crusoe nonetheless thinks that Friday enjoys his new clothing in part because it makes him appear "almost as well cloath'd" as Crusoe himself. Here the extent of what Crusoe means by "fashionable enough" refers minimally to his preference for a specific style of garment, namely breeches and a shirt. Crusoe does not merely ensconce his new companion in fabric but dresses Friday in his own style preferences, subsuming him into the particular conventions of clothing that Crusoe is familiar with and in turn allegorizing an act of colonialism in which Indigenous persons are rendered as colonial subjects.

The presence of colonialism in *Robinson Crusoe* is unambiguous but scholarly disagreement revolves around how central or peripheral it should figure for interpreting the text. Brett C. McInelly argues that the entire work of *Robinson Crusoe* "stands as an allegory or figure of colonialism, not an exhibit of it" (3) and that Crusoe "takes on significance as a character because he stands as a seemingly stable and coherent subject in the wake of, what is for him, an expanding empire" (5). Bill Overton frames the novel as partially an "ideological blueprint for establishing colonies" (302) and notes that its narrative form naturalizes Crusoe's enslavement of Friday, necessitating a critical reading practice to identify the deficient and amoral nature of Crusoe's treatment of others. Daniel Carey suggested in 2009 that postcolonial scholars have "re-established the centrality of colonialism for understanding Crusoe's aspirations" (107), yet nonetheless warns against simplified readings of seemingly straightforward representations of colonialism. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday in particular has received a divided critical response. W.R. Owens, for example, suggests that Friday is "not a 'slave' in any meaningful sense of term, but is instead Crusoe's faithful servant and friend" (42), while Hugh Ridley, conversely, sees "no actual relationship" (4) in the contact between the two, just a pure expression of subordination.

In truth, Crusoe appears just as indecisive. A full year before meeting Friday, he expressed a desire "to get a Savage into my possession" (214)—language with obvious overtures to both racism and slavery, especially for Crusoe who had already owned and sold human beings prior to being shipwrecked. Crusoe's language later both softens and fractures as he recognizes that "now was my Time to get me a Servant, and perhaps a Companion, or Assistant" (217). Crusoe is uncertain how this individual will relate to him. A group of people from the mainland subsequently arrive to the island to consume one of their prisoners. Crusoe rescues one of these prisoners who in response kneels before Crusoe and takes his foot and puts it atop his ahead, which Crusoe understands as a "token of swearing to be my Slave for ever" (218). Crusoe subsequently begins calling the man "my Savage." Within a short timeframe, Crusoe has envisioned this individual in nearly every role of subservience, and his choice of language is not incidental. Before bestowing the man with the name "Friday," Crusoe identifies traces of "*European* in his Countenance" (219) and describes his complexion as a "bright kind of a dun olive Colour" (220). Moreover, he describes the man as possessing "a very good Mouth, thin Lips, and his fine Teeth well set, and white as Ivory" (220).

The man is intelligible to Crusoe through the prism of commercial goods, almost like a fashionable textile free to be worn. Crusoe's crude racial politics manifests in his objectification of the man as a consumer item and a fashionable accessory to his islanded existence. In the initial moments of their companionship, Crusoe apprehends Friday purely within a framework of property ownership. Yet, only days after meeting for the first time, and still largely unintelligible to one another aside from the simplest of gestures, Crusoe suggests that Friday's "Affections" for him were "like those of a Child to a Father" (222), explicitly paternalizing their relationship and affixing a new set of meanings to Crusoe's act of clothing. Friday is infantilized as a child who cannot dress himself, relying on a fatherly figure with a material supply of garments to ensure he is presentable for the world.

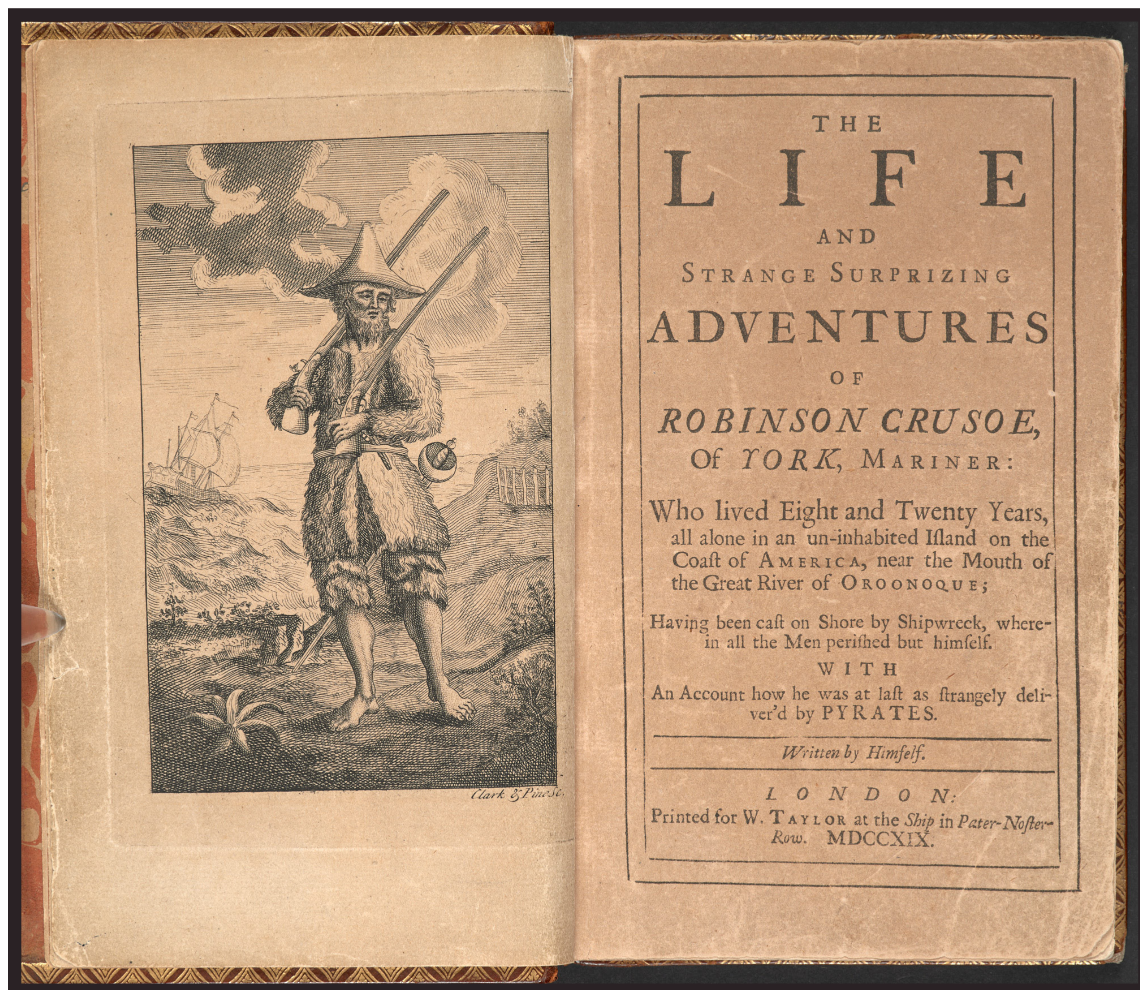
Fashion is in part a material pleasure, and yet Crusoe has maintained a sense of that pleasure in an environment where the practical nature of clothing seems to outweigh the need to be fashionable.

Here Crusoe's garment preferences merge with the necessities of his predicament. Shortly after arriving on the island, his clothes consist of little else than a "Chequer'd Shirt, and a Pair of Linen Drawers, and Pair of Pumps on my Feet" (91).

Within the narrative, Crusoe uses both senses of the term "chequer" to mean either the chessboard pattern or the tribulations he faces in surviving on the island. After finding a footprint in the sand, for example, he describes "How strange a Chequer Work of Providence is the life of Man" (178). It is therefore intriguing that at the point in which he is most despotic—recently shipwrecked, hopeless, fighting for his life—Crusoe is wearing a "Chequer'd shirt." The otherwise insignificant pattern of his shirt mirrors his existential condition.

As he becomes more secure on the island and more hopeful in God's providence, he dispenses with the chequered shirt in favour of tailoring his own clothes from animal skins he had accrued after hunting, which admit of far simpler designs. Though the insufferably hot weather more or less dictates no clothing (hence why the Indigenous persons Crusoe encounters are naked or nearly naked) Crusoe crafts garments to protect his skin from the sun and heat.

The results were "Breeches open at the Knees" and a "Wastcoat and Cap" (160) for when it rained, including an umbrella. By the twenty-year mark of his stay, Crusoe's wardrobe comes to reflect his established life on the island but still modelled on the style of garments he would have encountered back in England, such as shirts, waistcoats, and drawers (Figure 1).



THE

LIFE

AND

STRANGE SURPRIZING

ADVENTURES

OF

ROBINSON CRUSOE,

Of *YORK*, MARINER:

Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Iſland on the Coaſt of AMERICA, near the Mouth of the Great River of OROONOQUE;

Having been caſt on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men periſhed but himſelf.

WITH

An Account how he was at laſt as ſtrangely deliver'd by PYRATES.

Written by Himſelf.

LONDON:

Printed for W. TAYLOR at the *Ship* in *Pater-Noſter-Row*. MDCCXIX.

FIGURE 1 Anonymous. Frontispiece to the First Edition of *Robinson Crusoe,* London: W. Taylor, 1719. Courtesy the British Library (General Reference Collection C.30.f.6.).

More broadly, the slow development of Crusoe's clothing choices over the course of his islanded captivity signify both a "social dynamism" (Lemire and Riello, 890) synonymous with fashion and an expectation that identity can be negotiated through changes in dress. Crusoe, in moving from ruination to relative prosperity, thus enacts forms of social mobility that had for centuries been impossible and which are then reflected in the confidence of garment making. As Crusoe becomes more comfortable and established on the island, he comes to focus more attention on producing his own clothes not simply out of necessity but as a reflection of his status. He has acquired the means to produce his own garments and to thus enrich his material life while marooned. Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello, remarking on the historical circumstances of Italian city states in the early modern period, note how these urban centres "brought opportunities for middle ranked men and women to construct their own material lives in new forms which produced an imbalance in a symbolic order that for centuries had equated status with birth" (890). Crusoe becomes in many ways the paradigmatic middle-class Englishman who, like his urban counterparts, repurposes his material culture into a robust visual economy that communicates his earned status and fortune.

With the arrival of Friday, Crusoe returns to tailoring and this time has another person's body to configure through dress:

> It is true, he went awkwardly in these Things at first; wearing the Drawers was very awkward to him, and the Sleeves of the Wastcoat gall'd his Shoulders, and the inside of his Arms; but a little easing them where he complain'd they hurt him, and using himself to them, at length he took to them very well. (Defoe 222)

Far from Friday's new cloths being well fitted, however, and despite Crusoe's self-assessment as a "tollerable good Taylor" (Defoe 222), Friday suffers evident pain wearing this clothing for the first time and only overcomes it through sheer endurance.

Though it is only mentioned briefly, Crusoe's fashion serves as an integral part in transforming his fantasy of colonial rule into actual, legitimated authority over the island, which includes the appropriation of Friday into his quasi-dictatorship (Figure 2). Crusoe is alienated from all sorts of economies and social norms when he becomes marooned on the island—money, labour, agriculture, class—and this includes the complex visual economy buttressed by networks of trans-Atlantic and transoceanic trade. Over the course of his stay on the island, Crusoe methodically reconstructs many of the features of society he was familiar with, including the domestication of animals, agricultural production, and of course fashion and tailoring. A new visual economy is recreated by Crusoe as part of his broader practice of colonization but also as a reflection of his naturalization to the island. His clothing and fashion become imbued with political significance as a result, and an essential technology for transforming his fantasy of power into actual power, and his despotic appearance into a composed self-presentation. "Never just a folly," Lemire and Riello write, "fashion was integral to the expression of consumer preference, structuring of markets and the reordering of society" beginning in the sixteenth century (887). Though Crusoe's descriptions of his clothes are quite bare, he still demonstrates some knowledge of fabrics and his adventures are along the same networks of trade that underwrote the development of European fashionability.

FIGURE 2 Anonymous. "Le Sauvage apres sa deliverance se prosterna aux pieds de Robinson." From the first French translation of *Robinson Crusoe*, Amsterdam: L'Honore & Chatelain, 1720. Courtesy the British Library (General Reference Collection Cup.403.c.23.).

In a sense, Crusoe styles for his eighteenth-century reader the epitome of middle-class consumption.

Crusoe at one point mentions the specific types of textiles he possesses. Still in the process of securing a comfortable lifestyle on the island and many years before he will encounter Friday, Crusoe requires a woven material or canvas to sieve ground corn to make bread. Initially stumped by the challenge, he eventually recalls having "Seamens Cloathes which were sav'd out of the Ship, some Neckcloths of Callicoe, or Muslin" (150), from which he repurposed into sieves. Though not for fashion, and more as an indication of Crusoe's ingenuity, his access to "Callicoe, or Muslin" is a result of European contact with textile markets in the Middle East and Indian subcontinent. At the time of Crusoe's shipwrecking in the seventeenth century, Indian cotton like calico constituted "one of the most revolutionary commodities to appear in western markets […] a product widely consumed and ultimately a source of inspiration for European manufacturers" (Lemire and Riello, 887). Indian cotton in particular shaped consumer habits and the development of fashion as a cultural phenomenon—a phenomenon configured by the importation of goods exoticized as alluring and desirable commodities. The presence of "Callicoe, or Muslin" in *Robinson Crusoe* and represented on the very periphery of the British empire reflects the impact of India's textile production on British sensibilities. In fact, the so-called "Calico Craze" of the 1660s and 1670s aligns with Crusoe's arrival on the island (Parthasarathi and Riello, 5). The fact that Crusoe cannot tell the difference between the two textiles despite their different source locations (calico originated in Calcutta, India and muslin in Mosul, Iraq) may be attributed to his desperate circumstances, or to the deficient knowledge of the average middle-class Englishmen on the extent of the British empire, or perhaps even a conscious rejection of their desirability.

Crusoe ignores the influence of Asian subregions on his manners of dress, and his repurposing of these desirable textiles into purely functional tools for breadmaking signifies either desperation, obliviousness, or distaste. Intriguingly, as Lemire and Riello note, the "most politically contested commodities in European societies were those goods imbued with an exotic allure"—an allure that in part derived from the "stimulus of desires" (891) that these goods invoked. Europeans were "drawn to the brilliant colours of Indian cottons and the precision of their designs" (Lemire and Riello 893). By the time of Crusoe's birth in 1632, Indian cotton had been in England for at least a century (Lemire 67), but Crusoe's solitary circumstances and renewed religious fanaticism resulting from his miraculous survival have evacuated these significations from the calico or muslin fabrics he possesses. Indeed, his repurposing of sensuous cotton textiles meant for self-expression into a crude technology for sieving ground corn reflects the severity of his puritanical Protestantism and a rejection of frivolity. It may also signify national pride. Maximillian E. Novak notes that the importation of foreign textiles personally upset Defoe, who saw their fashionability as the "destruction of a native clothing industry that employed large numbers of the labouring poor" (577). Even though he was a proponent of economic trade, Defoe thought protecting the declining English wool industry more important. Yet, regardless of Crusoe's or Defoe's feelings towards Asian textiles, English identity was shaped by the influence of these textiles on desire and self-presentation.

The contact between *Robinson Crusoe* and fashion extends to the shared emphasis on printing as a means of production. As Lemire and Riello explain:

> Fashion was not just created through the adoption of Asian goods; it was also shaped by a culture in which print was central, and it was the printing of information—visual, as well as literate—along with printing as a manufacturing process that produced a fashionability that could be fully communicated. The rise of the European calico printing industry in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries illustrates the importance of this commodity in the evolution of the fashion system. (888)

Both novels and textiles were expressions of print culture, and the advent of printing on cloth as a technology eventually allowed European manufactures to copy in-demand patterns and designs of Asian textiles after years of crude reproductions.

Calicos with printed designs, usually of flora, constituted a "non-literate print media" that conveyed "uniquely stylized or densely rich imagery into new markets" (Lemire and Riello, 906), functioning as a medium for cross-cultural exchange of ideas. Interestingly, Crusoe's emphasis on the written word over and above the visual—most evident in his demand that others recognize his authority "in Writing" (256)—appears to be reflected in his sparse description of the calico or muslin. If it is calico and if it does have printed flora, then Crusoe fails to mention this, an absence that seems more significant in the context of Defoe's opposition to their desirability among the English.

Of course, a material culture embedded in Crusoe's access to desirable Asian textiles is just one part of the fashion equation. The other part involves the body that wears them. Wendy Parkins remarks that the "body is never simply a neutral clothes horse on which items of clothing are placed to signal political affiliation, like sandwich-board advertising or the wearing of team colours" (5). As such, not all bodies can represent or "corporealize" (as Parkins frames it) the political, cultural, or social significance of clothing. A proficiency in dressing affords legitimacy and a right

to govern, and since Friday has trouble fitting the clothes Crusoe gives him, his servitude becomes validated by his inability to functionally dress as a European subject. He can only mimic the fashionable sensibilities of a European gentlemen. Crusoe, on the other hand, wears his clothes with the expectation of wielding their cultural and political significance. The clothes are not mere packaging of the body but put a capstone on Crusoe's grand act of mimicry—a performance he had begun years before Friday's arrival—that eventually leads him to successfully convince others that he is the ruling sovereign of the island. He performs as king or governor, and this performance is sufficient to portray political legitimacy. Part of this performance is an act of necessity. Crusoe had run out of ink relatively quickly and had no written documentation (outside of a journal) that could be used to affirm his claim to the island. In the absence of writing, Crusoe must rely on rhetorical exercises, orality, and crafted items to authentic his presence, one of which involves tailoring clothes. Though he admits to be a "worse *Taylor*" than he was a carpenter (160), he produces his own garments in familiar styles and designs. Significantly, he does not wear rags (contra other popular depictions of marooning) but consciously dresses in cloths that require extensive labour and that are sourced from materials natural to the island. Crusoe has access to pre-made shirts but does not wear them in part because "they were too hot to wear" (160). Though he was also inclined to go naked, he "could not bear the heat of the Sun" (160) and therefore wears shirts and a hat to protect himself. The self-sufficient ideology that guides his survival obliges him to make use of the materials providence has supposedly supplied.

Crusoe's authority over the island and over Friday is embedded in his mimicry of a European-esque visual economy, which includes dressing in attire that enacts Westernized social behaviour or reflects political status and religious commitment. The overlap between Crusoe's clothing and his attempt to monopolize authority over the island becomes more apparent when we consider the enduring medieval doctrine of the "body politic." As J.D. Peter summarizes, in this doctrine the "king has both a 'body natural' and a 'body politic', the one being his physical, mortal body, the other being the state as a metaphysical, immortal corporation," and as a result the "natural body of the king thus *represented* the body politic" (545). Literal garments were used to symbolize the state power the king embodied, and as such publicity of the king's authority "was enacted in the dress, speech, hairstyles, gestures—the code of chivalrous behaviour—of lords and ladies"—what Jurgen Habermas calls "representative publicity," which, as Peter explains, harkens back to premodern Europe and the "publicly displayed status of the feudal lord" (545). As an act of clothing, the king's garments were an essential instrument for establishing the legitimacy of the body politic that he personified. In this circumstance, fashion was not simply perfunctory but embedded in the performative and public phases of state power.

It is not incidental that Crusoe calls himself a king while on the island. In fact, he cycles through a number of titles alongside king, including lord and governor, all of which would accompany manners of dress as a way of publicly representing one's authority. Crusoe's remark to the reader of "How

like a King I look'd" (250) serves to naturalize his authority over the island. Lacking the conventional methods of representative publicity, owing to his solitary condition on the island, he can merely convey discursively that he had the "look" of authority—a statement which recognizes the political significance of his visual self-presentation. Significantly, Crusoe does not distinguish between the mere appearance and the actual possession of king-like authority. Unable to justify his sovereignty over the island and fearful that his power has no foundation, he clings to any sense of legitimacy. The point of Crusoe dressing both himself and Friday in relatively fashionable clothes assumes a far deeper significance in this context of Crusoe inviting the reader to imagine his appearance as evincing an authority akin to a king.

Clothing within the solitary space of the island thus takes on several political purposes.

Firstly, it represents Crusoe as embodying the crude body politic on the island, namely his kingly status and political authority. Secondly, it represents his ascension from a primitive state of nature to a level of sophistication, owing to both the fact that Crusoe *can* produce his own clothing and that the resulting garments resemble European norms of dress. Lastly, it establishes Crusoe's subjugation of his companion by dressing him in clothes which he cannot voluntarily dispense with, in turn buttressing Friday's new status as a colonial subject.

The intricacies of Crusoe's clothing of Friday as an act of subjugation become more apparent when we consider Crusoe's behaviour prior to Friday's arrival. Friday's arrival comes after a lengthy period of anxiety for Crusoe that began when he encountered a single footprint in the sand (176). Prior to this moment, Crusoe had become relatively comfortable with his solitary existence, having secured the means of self-sufficient living. He had acquired a robust confidence in his mastery over the island, but the footprint shattered that conviction and casted the island as dangerous and untamed. In turn, the sense of self Crusoe had so methodically constructed over several years likewise shattered, and a fresh round of despondency returned, not experienced since he initially became shipwrecked. His thoughts migrated from that of invention and prosperity to self-preservation, physical defenses, and violence. Crusoe in these moments expresses some

of colonialism's most trenchant anxieties about an expanded world: contact with new, unknown persons creates situations of mutual unintelligibility, hence why Crusoe so fervently demands that Friday and the other visitors to the island swear allegiance to him and recognize his authority as indisputable. An obsession with marking out his authority would not arise if Crusoe did not on some level fear that he had no concrete basis for claiming such authority. The visual, rather than the rhetorical or linguistic, assumes added importance as one of the few means by which Crusoe can communicate with Friday in the initial days of their companionship, and since one of the earliest messages that Crusoe wishes to impart to Friday is himself as master, the act of clothing or dressing becomes a means of conveying that message. As such, the intimate act of clothing that transpires between Crusoe and Friday can be linked to the larger forces of colonialism that facilitated their contact in the first place.

Initially, Crusoe's pretending to authority serves as an attempt to overcome his feelings of erasure. Having been casted to the periphery of the British empire, he imaginatively re-centres himself by envisioning his island captivity as an act of colonialism, going so far as to name himself governor at a time when such a pronouncement can really only amount to wishful thinking, if not pure delusion. Nonetheless, this early imagining of his own self-importance comes to prefigure his later, actual importance upon the arrival of other human beings. Crusoe affirms the performative and rhetorical aspects of political agency by, firstly, pretending kingship or governorship over the island and, secondly, by literally dressing Friday in the garments of a European. Part of Crusoe's attempt to convert Friday from a man of South American Indigeneity to a Westernized subject involves not just the indoctrination of particular values but also of material clothing and fashion.

CONCLUSION

Dress is essential to both presentation of the self and participation in a polity. With Crusoe and Friday we find a fictionalized example of dress instrumentalized for precisely the opposite effect: the robbing of self-expression and the alienation from the levers of one's political destiny.

The moments I've explored in this article are episodes of mimicry and domination. The early components of a regime constituted by a specific idea of political subjecthood are planted by Crusoe, first for when he imagines his animals as subordinates and later for when he subjugates Friday, using clothing as a means for that subjugation. In attempting to reinscribe the trappings of a society, Crusoe reinvigorates the need for fashion as a performative social behaviour by dressing Friday in clothing that part-way disguises his Indigeneity. Crusoe mimics a British culture of fashionability that is not merely ancillary to his new society but an organic expression of its development from an ostensible state of nature, absent any social trappings, to a functioning community that subtends civilization. When more persons do eventually come, Crusoe successfully convinces them of his governorship in part because his authority mimics a colonial structure of overseas domination. Crusoe has fostered an infrastructure that can easily slot the island into the transatlantic economic network that led him to be shipwrecked in the first place. At the same time, however, Defoe depicts what's at stake in the performative exercise of political subjecthood and potentially undermines the notion of Englishness or national affiliation as innate or endowed. In enacting the fantasy of colonial governorship and using fashion as a means of making the fantasy a reality, *Robinson Crusoe* offers a fictionalized portrayal of the performative extent of political power and, in turn, the fragility of Crusoe's own authority.

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