Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*
Please Silence Cell Phones

Dr. Alan Haffa
Biography (1660-1731)

- Merchant family; candles; Dissenters
- Protestant Education
- "No man has tasted differing fortunes more,/ And thirteen times I have been rich or poor."
- Trade and Bankruptcy
- Secret Agent and Propagandist
- Fictional writing in 50s and 60s

Writing Career

- Pamphlet: "The Shortest way with Dissenters" 1703
- *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719
- *Moll Flanders*, 1722

Literary Sources and Influence

- Early Novel: Novel
- Aphra Benh's *Oroonoko*
- Journalistic accounts of journeys to new world
- Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) parodies Crusoe;
- Historical Memoirs
- Robert Louis Stevenson
- Johann Wyss, *Swiss Family Robinson*

Themes in *Robinson Crusoe*

- Enlightenment Reason used to survive and thrive in wilderness
- Man's Rebellious Will versus God's Providence
- In Good Times: Man's Unwillingness to be Satisfied
- In Bad Times: "It could be Worse": Guarded Optimism

- Colonialism Questioned
- Vanity of Money
- Exploration of Hobbes' 'State of Nature'

Plot Summary

- Crusoe and his Father's advice; shipwreck
- Second expedition: enslaved by Moors, Barbary Coast; escape in a boat with Xury, Moorish boy; Portuguese ship rescues him, Brazil; Builds a plantation; Back to sea on Slaving expedition, shipwrecked off of coast of Guyana
- Builds a "Castle"; Summer Home; Canoes; Discovers Cannibals; Captures "Friday"; Spanish Ship wrecks; Frees Friday's father and a Spaniard; English Ship and Mutiny;
- Voyage Home; Portuguese Captain and Widow; Back to visit Island and colonize it

Reason

- "I consulted several Things in my situation which I found would be proper for me; first, Health, and fresh water…; Second, Shelter from the heat of the Sun; thirdly, Security from ravenous Creatures; fourthly, a View to the Sea, that if God sent any Ship in sight, I might not lose advantage for my deliverance,…"
- In all things he uses his reason: Construction of "Castle"; domestication of Goats; Harvest of raisins;

God's Providence

- In disobeying Father, disobeys God; Man's sinful nature; Metaphor of Prodigal Son; Jonah and God's judgement
- P. preserves him to live while his companions perish in sea
- P. supplies him with necessary items from ship
- P. puts him on the island to convert Friday; to save the English Captain
- P. and the seeds of grain

Seeds: Providence of Luck? (68)

- "at last it occur'd to my thoughts, that I had shook a Bag of Chickens Meat out in that Place, and then the Wonder began to cease; and I must confess, my religious Thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the Discovering that all this was nothing but what was common; tho; I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really the work of Providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that 10 or 12 Grains of Corn should remain unspoil'd…as also, that I should throw it out in that particular Place, where it being in the Shade of a high

rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas if I had thrown it anywhere else, at that Time, it had been burnt up and destroy'd."

Religious Conversion of Friday

- Instructs Friday in Christianity; Concludes that Providence sent him there to save Friday's soul (186); Difficulty of teaching Friday Christian doctrine
- Friday: "If God is so strong and good, Why God no kill Devil?"
- God will cast Devil into Hell at last judgement
- Friday: 'Why him no kill devil now?'
- Crusoe: "Why doesn't God kill us? So we can repent."
- Friday: 'So you, I, Devil, all wicked, all preserve, repent, God pardon all."

Colonialism

- Should he kill the Cannibals?
- Concludes that he has no right to do so; they have not hurt him;
- Wonders if they can be condemned for a practice that their culture endorses; God has not taught them differently (Why does a Providential God not reveal himself to All?)
- Moral Pragmatism: He would end up murdering them and would be "no less a Murtherer than they were in being Man-eaters, and maybe more so." (155)
- Loyalty and Goodness of Friday

Exploration of Hobbes' State of Nature?

- Power of Fear: when he sees the footprint his while life changes from contentment to Fear; from using his ingenuity to enjoy life to fear of keeping what he has
- He is King of his island and free to do whatever he wants; "there was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among all my subjects." (125)
- As soon as he has others on the island he either subjugates them (Friday) or enters into Covenant with them (Spaniard); Not exactly the Social Compact Hobbes discusses, it does show the role of Law and Contract as a mean of protecting us from other's greed or ambition to take what we have

Contentment

- Be satisfied with what you have; things can be worse
- After Canoe expedition almost causes him to be pushed out to sea by current he appreciates his blessings on the island and wants nothing more than to get back to it
- "Now I saw how easy it was for the Providence of God to make the most miserable

Condition Mankind could be in worse. Now I look'd back upon my desolate, solitary island, as the most pleasant Place in the World, and all the Happiness my heart could wish for, was to be but there again." (118)

Friends Versus Money

- He goes on his adventures in pursuit of adventure and to make his Fortune
- Yet, he leaves his Brazilian plantation, which was sure to make him rich; desired to make more and get a better deal on slaves
- Money on wrecked ship does him no good; he would trade all the gold for a pair of shoes and a pipe
- More than anything what he comes to lack on island is friendship and conversation: Friday
- When he gets back he rewards the Portuguese Captain and old Widow who have looked after his financial interests

Summary

- Sin arises out of refusal to be content with our Lot given to us by God; we always want something else; Crusoe's Wanderlust
- Reason and Providence for Defoe appear to be in Harmony
- Shows how Hobbes' state of nature IS dominated by Fear; but yet human nature to him is more than fear and power and greed; Friendship and basic Human Goodness are part of human nature as well; Man IS a Social Animal