
DIDACTIC LESSON IN THE SWISS: CONSTRUCTIVE STUDY OF SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON BY DAVID WYSS

Mr. Naresh Keshavrao Hallagade,

Research Scholar, (English), Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati, Dist. Amravati

Abstract:

The Swiss Family Robinson (1816) uses a didactic model of schooling to depict stranded children, influenced by Enlightenment pedagogy and essentialist contradiction. The work uses John Locke's empirical theory of child development and Daniel Defoe's castaway setting to create a didactic adult/child dichotomy, promoting fleeing from civilized society through the paradox of immunity. Gerard Genette examines the role of the preface in the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader, focusing on the original assumptive authorial preamble.

Keywords: epistemic discourse, enlightenment, microcosm, narrative omniscience, constructivism

Introduction

By concentrating on its narrative inspirations and techniques, *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1816) uses a didactic model of schooling to depict stranded children. The work honors the following three inspirations as a literary result of Enlightenment pedagogy and its essentialist contradiction, which is defined in the introduction in terms of the knowable child. According to John Locke's empirical theory of child development, which was laid forth in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), a kid is a homogenous tabula rasa who learns via firsthand experience and is free of original sin. Using Daniel Defoe's castaway setting and Locke's premise, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, Wyss creates a didactic adult/child dichotomy that promotes fleeing from the civilized society through the paradox of immunity.

Narrative Implications:

It is crucial to explore how the preamble itself operates by design in order to support this discourse before looking at the ideological implications that this preface sends on the story that will be recounted. According to his understanding, Gerard Genette examines the role that the preface plays in the "complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader," along with other textual components that "surround" and "extend" a literary work. Genette goes on to differentiate between different kinds of prefaces and their purposes. What Genette refers to as the original assumptive authorial preamble, which "has as its chief function to ensure that the text is read properly," is the one that is most pertinent to the discussion of *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

Genette claims that the opening role of a prelude like this gives authors a chance to describe why and how readers should read the work that comes after. Determine "who" the reader is, give an author's "statement of intent," and provide information on "the origin of the work, the circumstances in which it was written, the stages its creation" (Genette 210).

The preface to *TSF*, which aims to introduce the pedagogical ideology that permeates the text, contains all of these instructions, as 'I will explain'. However, more discussion regarding the relevance of Genette's phrase is necessary given the intricate history of the text's authorship, as mentioned in the introduction. Reiterating the foundation of this intricacy, it can be claimed that

TSFR has several authors because the text has undergone numerous translations, edits, and revisions since its initial German publication in 1812, leaving the issue of authorship up for discussion.

Additionally, although the title page names the Swiss pastor Johann Wyss as the original author, his son Johann Rudolf Wyss actually revised his father's work, which had been written twenty years before, in installments for his four sons' amusement. For the reasons already mentioned, this study makes reference to Godwin's 1816 English translation, which includes a translated introduction credited to Johann Wyss by critic John Seelye. But because of the events listed above, Rudolf Wyss, the text's editor, can also be credited with writing the preface.

Therefore, even while the preamble upholds the original authorial preface's functional requirements, He admits completely that the question of who wrote the preamble is still open. It is therefore difficult to be conclusive to what degree Wyss and his son may be considered "authors" or "associates," but it is obvious that they are both actively involved in this negotiation and were consulted for publication. This admission, along with Genette's definition, allows me to classify the following prelude as an original assumptive authorial preamble, which serves as a guide to explain the text's history, the author's intentions, and the identity of the supposed reader. In light of the complications discussed, I would also add that the preface sheds light on the implied author of the text. I agree with Marilyn Edelstein's remarks that as the preface is situated on a threshold between the introduction and the story, the author's 'prefatory voice seems to occupy a narrative level somewhere between that of the implied author and a "real" or historical author.' (Edelstein 29-43)

According to Wayne Booth, the implied author is the genuine author's second ego, existing "behind the scenes" as "a stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God" created via the practice of writing, whose opinions may or may not align with the narrator's. The inferred author is "the source of our sense of the fiction's underlying values and beliefs –its ideology," according to Seymour Chatman.

This leads us back to the topic of the preface's ideology and how it is upheld by introducing the reader, inferred author, and possible narrator. He was concerned that by imagining a single family from the civilized world and setting them in the middle of untamed nature, a book that was both amusing and beneficial could be created. No book has been read and accepted more widely than this one for the development of the young mind.

The work is situated within a method of education and civil activities, acknowledging the significance of experience-based knowledge. In keeping with Rousseau, Defoe's iconic castaway setting serves as a medium for the integration and mediation of education and amusement, producing a model composition that can be used to establish and maintain a perfectible society. Defoe's RC quickly became a literary sensation throughout Europe, and by 1726, it had been reprinted seven times in England alone.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Crusoe is mentioned with the familiarity that characterizes a household name. As O'Malley argues, Defoe's novel had already 'coincided extraordinarily well with the dominant pedagogical ideas of the age' and with the pressing

importance of education in the eighteenth century it 'quite easily found a place in the emerging children's literature and culture of the period. For example include Richard and Maria Edgeworth's *Practical Education* (1798) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories From Real Life: With Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections, and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness* (1788).

The same conflict between freedom and the knowable child that defines Rousseau's pedagogy is finally both fore-grounded and defused after claiming the "universal" significance of Defoe's story in the "opening" of the infant mind.

Other aspects of the current work are completely different, such as the way the family scene is painted, the way the various characters that make up the family are developed, and the constant attention that the father gives to teaching his children various arts and sciences as well as to advancing and maturing their moral and intellectual natures. Thus, *The Swiss Family Robinson* differs from its literary counterpart in that it eliminates the possibility of giving these young castaways total autonomy. The development of individual selves, who are independent in 'character,' is paradoxically set against the children's status as 'members' who 'compose' the 'family scene.'

This act of neutralization highlights what O'Malley summarises as Enlightenment Pedagogy's dichotomy, which frames the 'benefits of a pedagogical scene's illusion of a real experience' whilst safeguarding against 'the pitfalls of succumbing too far to that illusion.' 194! From the outset, Father Robinson, is presented as the main protagonist and narrator capable of managing this tension between freedom and guardianship, therefore, fulfilling the conditions of this dichotomy and as such advocating the pedagogical ideology of which the implied author ascribes. Thus what is introduced here is the relationship between Father Robinson's narrative omniscience and the 'knowable child' body that will permeate the novel throughout.

It is a relationship fuelled by his ability to construct this 'scene' of pseudo-isolation as a space in which a didactic tutor/parent, well-schooled in science, art and morality, can speak and be spoken of via the achievements of his pupils/children. What this preface also introduces is the implied reader, which in turn further bolsters the pedagogical premise of the implied author. The text is directed towards 'friends of children' emphasis author's own identified as parents and teachers who are likely to 'put this book into the hands of the children under their care, or shall read it with them.

The child reader is expected to be between the age of 'eight to fourteen' possessing general knowledge about history and geography acquired through a primary school education. These reading suggestions serve two purposes, the first of which relates to what John Stephens describes as the blending of the implied reader into the ideal reader 'who will best actualize a book's potential meanings.' The second purpose relates to what Barbara Wall describes in her analysis on the evolutionary mode of narrative address in children's literature as establishing a dual audience, referring to an author's awareness 'that adults too might read their work.' (Barbara 35)

. When adult readers are "comfortably" positioned in texts as either "observer-listener" or "teller-surrogate," Wall claims that this style of address is improved. 199! In the instance of TSFR, their position of authority is established right away in the preface and is upheld throughout the narrative by Father Robinson's didactic style. Thus, pedagogy creates a "conjunction of interests" that links these recognizable adult and kid readers with the inferred author's worldview while serving as a prelude to the narrative voice and child character that will follow.

Supporting any such ideology in children's literature implies that it is intended to "socialize the child" and educate them how to function in various socio-cultural discourses that create "subject positions"²⁰¹ for them to adopt, as Stephens puts it. Through the explicit identification of both adult and child inferred readers, this prelude emphasizes these positions and their unequal power structures in light of the adult/child dichotomy.

Therefore, chapter one goes into great length about how these interests influence character development and subjective representation, two topics that Father Robinson emphasizes as he instills the value of Enlightenment ideals in his shipwrecked kids Fritz, Ernest, Jack, and Francis. Virtues are demonstrated by a family of castaways who strive to uphold their religious beliefs and work ethic while transforming the island into an independent microcosm of Western civilization.

In light of this narrative method, the subject of why and how a "enemy" appears in TSFR as a partial danger rather than an actual one will be examined. It is about how much this kind of adversary represents the literary transition between the age of discovery and colonial discourse. In keeping with early eighteenth-century views to natural history, the text is mostly concerned with portraying its European castaways as attempting to maintain a productive passivity on their island Arcadia rather than interacting with aggressive invaders. Furthermore, the contend that this emphasis embodies the novel's educational and Christian ethos of a teleological subjectivity that fosters the notion of the secure subject, impervious to rejection. Colonialist interpretations are not completely disproved by my attempt in this chapter to trace the relationship between TSFR, Enlightenment pedagogy, and the dialogically epistemological shipwrecked.

Conclusion

By comprehending how the castaway body is portrayed as a subjectively luminal construct that articulates a dialogic rather than a fixed, epistemic discourse, it is actually possible to broaden and reevaluate ways of interpreting the genre. When we discovered that we were safe on Earth, we immediately went to our knees, thanked the Almighty for saving our lives, and resignedly offered ourselves up to his paternal kindness.

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