



Deconstructing Binaries in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe

Maryam Jehangir (MPhil) maryamjehangir@gmail.com

Nijat Ullah Khan (PhD) Qurtuba University, Peshawar, Pakistan. shahnijat@gmail.com

Dr. Abdul Karim Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Science & Technology Bannu, akarim.khan@yahoo.com

Abstract- The present paper intends to discuss binary opposition in the structure of Robinson Crusoe written by Daniel Defoe. The study is done through the structural theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The basic concept of Structuralism is binary opposition. The main focus of the theory based on the notion that meanings are derived out of relations. An element gets its meaning because of its relation to the other element within the same situation. The concept of binary opposition is taken from the theory of a Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Through Binary opposition, Ferdinand de Saussure explored different elements of language. Binary opposition is one of many of his thoughts. The novel has been keenly observed and read in order to explore the hidden structure of binarism. This study found out the traces of binarism in the novel. This study traces the cultural and social binarism, binarism between different classes and binarism within nature. The author tried in this study to grasp the main principals of binary opposition within structuralism and then to examine binary opposition in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.

Keywords: binary oppositions, structuralism, Daniel Defoe, Robin Crusoe

I. INTRODUCTION

Structuralism is fundamentally a way of thinking that the structure of the world is made up of relations rather than the things. It asserts that in any situation, elements get meaning and significance because of their relations to other elements. An element has no significance if it is not related to the other elements within the same situation. Most of the Structuralists' thinking rest upon the work of the Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. He was a professor of linguistics in Geneva. After his death, his lectures were recollected that he had delivered to his students at the University of Geneva between 1906 and 1911 which were published in 1915 under the title *Cours de linguistique générale* (Hawkes, 2003 6-8).

Ferdinand de Saussure used the concept of binary opposition in order to explore different elements of language but binarism is not limited to study language only. This conception came up from his theory, explaining the fact that human being derive conceptual meaning by distinguishing difference between things. The concept of binary opposition is common in many other fields like, philosophy, Christianity and literature. In literature binary opposition is adopted in order to have critical and significant reading. Binary opposition in a text is the way of grasping the intended meaning of literary work or to critically analyze the text. Binary opposition is the key through which children are introduced with the concepts and ideas in language. For example, in order to instill the concept of dark, we need to tell them about the concept of light also, the same goes for good and bad, beautiful and ugly, noisy and silent etc. Binary opposition gives the basis for understanding chaotic concepts easily by placing ideas into complementary pairs (Putri and Sarwoto, 2016 82-83).

De Saussure's theory of structuralism is based on binary opposition. De Saussure considers language as a system of signs. A single sign is made up of two things; Signifier and a Signified. Signifier and Signified are opposites in nature as one denotes sound image and the other Concept. The relationship between them is arbitrary as the word itself and the thing denoted by this word, has no connection. Like the word tree has no actual qualities of a real tree. One sign in isolation has no significance according to De Saussure. A sign gets its meaning, when it is compared and contrasted with the other signs within the same system (Hawkes 2003, 12-14). Saussure's most famous statement concerns how these signs are differentiated in themselves and are related to each other (Phillips, 2005 3).

Inside Saussurian model, signifier and signified together make a sign, and this bond is called Signification. Sign is incomplete without any one of the element. A signifier which has no meaning and/or a signified which has no form has nothing to do with a sign. Saussure gives more importance to spoken word than written (Chandler 2007, 21-22).

Levi Strauss divided the myth to its constituent parts, and according to the nature of these parts, arranged them. Sentences having the same number are bundled into the same category. He called them 'My themes'. After examined the 'My themes' and the relation between them, he came to the point that the base of these myths are binary opposition. Under the impact of Hegel, he was of the view that human being, in these Binary oppositions, and because of these binary oppositions, things become meaningful to them. Levi Strauss presented another notion of binary opposition. He explored binary pairs through the myth of

cooking. His investigation is based on opposition in cooking like, raw and the cooked. In his book *The Raw and the Cooked*, he has created the relationship between Raw and the cooked food in order to make a binary between nature and culture. Nature is somewhat related with emotions while culture represents intellect. This analysis of cooking myth is based on his notion that cooking is like language. He compared cooking with language, and like language, cooking also has some a hidden structure that is based on binary opposition (Elyda 2010, 2-3).

According to Derrida, we reject or accept a word by its difference, as it has traces of those that it is not. This happening is called Difference by Derrida. Difference postulates that knowledge comes from dissimilarity and absence. By taking the concept from structuralism, Derrida developed the concept by saying that in such pair one member is blessed with privileges over the other like good over evil or truth over lie. The blessed one praises itself by what it is not (Dobie 2011, 141-145).

II. METHODOLOGY

In this study, qualitative method is applied using De Saussure's theory of binary opposition. According to De Saussure, language as a system of signs is made up of two things; the signifier and the signified. It is Structuralist approach which examines how differences suggest that knowledge comes from dissimilarity and absence. These are the means by which the elements of language have meaning; each component works in reciprocal purpose with another term, as in binary code. It is not a contradictory relation but, a structural, complementary one (Hawkes, 2003). This part of the study is particularly being influenced by work De Saussure and Derrida, examining the role of binaries in making meanings. This approach, developed by De Saussure, proposes two interconnected levels to describe the reception of narrative texts; these are the signified and the signifier; the difference and the similar which show how binaries are important to understand the characters' points of view in texts. This study aims at examining how meanings emerge as resulting from three interacting phases of thought including Pre-voyage life of Robinson Crusoe, Robinson Crusoe's isolation on a deserted island and Robinson Crusoe, after he saved a cannibal and named him Friday. These are the stages producing Robinson's ideas with creative prospective; and an investigative level of selecting some of those ideas to develop further into insights. The three stages are also used as tools for collecting data.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The novel of Robinson Crusoe has been divided into three stages i.e. Pre-voyage life of Robinson Crusoe; Robinson Crusoe's isolation on a deserted island; and Robinson Crusoe, after he saved a cannibal and named him Friday. Following is the detail.

1. Pre-voyage life of Robinson Crusoe.

At the very start of the story we see that protagonist Robinson Crusoe indulges into an argument with his father. Robinson Crusoe has earnest desire to go on voyages and to explore sea. His father warned him to go on sea but Robinson refuses to obey his father and go to sea.

Upper vs. lower class opposition

Robinson's father makes a binary between upper and lower class in order to convince Robinson to remain under the middle station of life. He tells him that lower station is exposed to hardships, sufferings, labor of hands and miseries, hence, not suitable for him, but at the same time, he does not recommend the upper class as nobles and kings always lament for miseries faced by being born to a noble family. "... middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low class, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world" (2).

Robinson's father tells him that Middle state is ".....not exposed to miseries and hardship, and the labor and sufferings...not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind.....not subjected to so many distempers and easiness either of body or mind as those were who, by vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on one hand, or by hard labour, want of necessities, and mean or insufficient diet on the other hand peace and plenty were the handmaids of a middle fortune...." (2-4). He made a social binary division through his words.

Good vs. bad aspects of Nature

During Robinson's first voyage, he experienced a storm. As he has never exposed to sea storms before, he got horrified and expected every wave to swallow them up. As the wind blew, the wave rose to the most frightful manner and the sea became very high. At every moment, Robinson thought that the ship would disappear in the hollows of sea (7-8).

The description of the sea as when it gets savage and when it gets clear is beautifully visualized in words by the author to describe binary aspects of nature. During the storm he said " The wind began to blow, and

the waves to rise in a most frightful manner;...and the sea, which I had never been upon before, went very high...I expected every wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought, in the trough or hollow of the sea....(7-8). "the weather cleared up, the wind was quite over, and a charming fine evening followed; the sun went down perfectly clear, ...having little or no wind, and a smooth sea, the sun shining upon it, the sight was, as I thought, the most delightful that ever I saw" (8). "...that was so rough and terrible the day before, and could be so calm and so pleasant in so little time after" (9).

Binary between reason and emotion

When Robinson landed safely on shore, there was a strange war going on within his mind. The war is between reason and emotion. He receives calls from reason and judgment to go home, admits his mistake as he has learnt his lesson after persuaded his own desires and gets nothing. At the same time, he thinks about the shame and the sense of failure to admit his fault. He has no courage to accept his fault. He has been feeling ashamed of facing his parents but also his neighbors. He thinks that he would be humiliated by his friends and neighbors. "I had several times loud calls from my reason and my more composed judgments to go home, yet I had no power to do it."(15). "As to going home, shame opposed the best motion that offered to my thoughts; and it immediately occurred to me how I should be laughed at among the neighbors, and should be ashamed to see, not my father and mother only, but even everybody else;....that they are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action....but are ashamed of the returning, which only can make them be esteemed wise men" (18).

Table No 1: Binary oppositions during the first stage

upper vs. lower class page no 1-3		Good vs. bad. Page no 9-10		Reason vs. Emotions Page no 15-18	
Upper class	Low class	When weather got worse	When weather cleared up	Reason	Emotion
Vicious living	Embarrassed with the labor of hand	Wind blew	Wind abated	To be brave to accept his fault	Fear of humiliation
Luxury	Hard labor	Waves rouse high	Sea calmed	To repent	Feeling ashamed to repent
Extravagance	Want of necessities	Hollow of the sea	Charming fine weather	To start a new life	Guilty
Enraged with passion of envy	Harassed with perplexed circumstances	Terrible	Calm and pleasant		Live in fancy
Lust	Insufficient diet	Rough	Smoothness		
Ambition for great thing	Struggle hard for his bread	Made vows and resolution to God	Drowned all his repentance		
Lamented	Unthankful	Remembering his past to be so easy	Sight was delightful		
Miserable consequences	Rob the soul of peace				
Pride	Inferiority complex				

Civilized vs. uncivilized binary opposition

Robinson's ship has been attacked during one of the voyage, and he has been taken to Salee, a port belonging to Moors. Robinson along with another slave boy, Xury managed to escape and reached about Cape de Verde. They meet with Negroes there. We can trace another binary between Robinson and the Negroes after the description of Robinson. The binary is indirectly between civilized and primitive, Negroes are uncivilized while Robinson is educated and civilized. "People sand upon the shore to look at us; we could also perceive they were quite black, and stark naked....they had no weapon, except one...Xury said was Lance" (35-36) as "It is impossible to express the astonishment of these poor creatures, at the noise and the fire of my gun" (37).

Binary opposition between Robinson and Xury

Robinson Crusoe and Xury represent two different cultures. Robinson represents the civilized world and the Xury primitive and uncivilized. In binarism, one class is dominant over the other. So Robinson in his

case dominates Xury. Robinson has knowledge, education, modern defensive tools, his own language and white skin. On the other hand Xury has no education, no modern defensive tool and have black skin (39-43).

Reason vs. Emotion binary opposition

Robinson reflects upon his decision and come to the point that he has taken a wrong decision of leaving his house without telling anyone, to pursue his dream. He under the influence of his emotion took wrong decision. He makes a binary by comparing the situation He thinks what if he has started this plantation there with his father. If he had been living there, he would have peace of mind. He would be living with his family and friends where he is well known. He would have the support of his family. And now he is living among barbarian whom he does not know. "I had nobody to converse with" as they does not know his language. "...no work to be done, but by the labour of my hands(44). He compares the situation as said "I could have done this as well in England among my friends, as have gone 5000 miles off to do it among strangers and savages, in wilderness" (43).

Table No 2: Binary oppositions during the first stage

Civilized vs. uncivilized page no 37		Robinson vs. Xury Page no 39-43		Reason vs. Emotions page no 44	
Robinson (representing civilized world)	Negroes (representing the uncivilized)	Robinson	Xury	If he has followed reason	After following his emotions
Educated	Uneducated	White European	Brown Arab	Have peace of mind	Guilty conscious
Advanced	Primitive	Authoritative	Submissive	Have friends and family	Strangers and savages
Having gun as a defensive tool	Having a stick called Lance as a tool to defend	Master	Slave	Got help	Do work with the labor of his hands
Speaks languages	Make signs	Gives Orders	Obeys orders	Well known	Least knowledge of him
Eats only cooked	Ate flesh	Selfish	Loyal	Busy life	Boring life
Sophisticated	Uncivilized	Use words for Xury like foolish and poor creature	Give respect	Familiar places	on a place unknown to the world
		Assumed high status	At low status		

2. Robinson Crusoe's isolation on a deserted island.

He undertook another trip to Africa in order to buy slaves to increase his wealth. That is the worst decision he has made at that time as he himself considers himself to be his own destroyer. And by making this decision, he thinks that he follows "fancy rather than my reason" (50). Robinson and other were shipwrecked. Robinson was the sole survivor of the wreck.

Good vs. bad happenings

After a horrible shipwreck, he finds himself on a deserted island. He gets excited and starts thanking God for his life. "I was now landed and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved" (57). When he starts reflecting upon his situation, he finds himself alone and starts complaining. "I had a dreadful deliverance; for I was wet, had no clothes to shift me, nor anything either to eat or drink to comfort him, neither did I see any prospect before me...no weapon either to hunt and kill any creature"(58-59). On the other hand nature is assisting him. He finds fresh water, "to see if I could find any fresh water to drink, which I did, to my great joy...I fell fast asleep" (59). He notices that the ship rose from the sand at night. "And first I found that all the ship's provisions were dry and untouched by the water" (61). He manages to collect food, rum, bread, rice, three Dutch cheeses, five pieces of dried goat's flesh, European corn, barley and wheat, several bottles of skipper, carpenter's chest, ammunition, and arms, pistols, etc.

Negative vs. positive thoughts

On one hand, Robinson is remorseful and depressed. Under the influence of negative emotion he complains about his life." In this desolate place , and in this desolate manner, I should end my life"why Providence should thus completely ruin its creatures, and render them so absolutely miserable, so without help abandoned, so entirely depressed, that it could hardly be rational to be thankful for such a life"(79). But on other side he is totally positive one and opposed to the previous one. As he thinks, "Well, you are in a desolate condition it is true, but pray remember, where are the rest of you?"(79). He also thinks about the ship which miraculously rouses to the level from where he can get almost everything necessary for his survival and furnishes a place for himself.

Negative vs. good things happened written by Robinson

Robinson has some fears and doubts about the place as he knows nothing about the place. He does not know whether the place is an island or a continent, inhabited or not, are there any wild beasts or not. Two opposing thoughts have occurred into his mind, one positive and the other negative, "

All that he thinks is in the form of binary opposition. He has two sides; positive and negative. He starts comparing what he has not and what he has lost, hence, making a binary between good and bad happenings. This binary keeps him from getting depressed and to be thankful to God. "I am cast upon a horrible desolate island" ...but I am alive...I am divided from mankind....but I am not starved...I have not clothes...but I am in a hot climate... I am without any defense... I see no wild beasts... I have no soul to speak to...but God wonderfully sent the ship in near..." (83-84).

He also thinks about the ship which miraculously rouses to the level from where he can get almost everything necessary for his survival and furnishes a place for himself. He is also thankful for the gun and ammunition. He can hardly think about such fortune as when he first comes to the island (80).

Constantly reflecting upon his survival, gradually, he starts realizing his survival to be God's punishment. He comes to the point where he finds that his life is saved not by chance but it is saved for a reason known by God. He has been chosen by God for repentance. This thought makes him to be patient and to wait for His mercy. This thought revives his spirit and he decides to wait for God's mercy with peace. He regains hope and accepts the situation.

Table No 3: Binary oppositions during the second stage

Good vs. bad happenings Page no 59-64		Negative vs. positive thoughts page no 80		Negative vs. good things happened page no 83-84	
Good things happened to Robinson	Bad things happened to Robinson	Negative thoughts	Positive thoughts	Negative things	Positive things
He survived	All the crew perished away	Lonely	Survived	Other drowned	Survived
With nature	He was alone	Miserable	Got new life	Loneliness	Assistance by nature
Found a bush and sleep well	Wet and yet no clothes	Nothing for survival	Boat roused to the level	Hopeless	Hope of survival
Boat rose to the level and he saw the provisions dry	Nothing to eat	Unthankful	Got things for survival	He had nothing	But got almost everything
Found fresh water	Nothing to drink	Depressed	Prospects of life	Unlucky	Prospects of life
Had to start a new life there	No purpose of life			Inhabited island	No threat to life
				No one to speak	Within nature
				Excluded from human society	Have his own kingdom
				Solitary place	Peace of mind

				Isolation	Away from the wickedness of human
				Fear	No wild beasts
				No clothes	Such a hot weather that he could hardly wear

Life before vs. life on island

Robinson recalls his past days and contrasts it with his present situation. He thinks that previously he has been privileged with all the luxuries of life but he was not happy. He remained disturbed. Although he has been surrounded by relatives and friends, but he felt incomplete. On the other hand, on the island, he has nothing to be thankful apparently but he feels happy and contented inside. He has no one to talk to but he feels complete. At that he thinks that his previous joys become a source of shame and guilt and what he considered wicked has become source of healing his soul (143).

Robinson is thinking upon the place and nature and its opposition. He thinks about, "What is this earth and sea, wild and tame, human and brutal" (117). Robinson makes binary through his words when he speculated upon two situations. In each, he finds himself totally different from the other. He feels contented and completed. Despite of all its negativities he is happy "the wicked, cursed, abominable life I led all the past part of my days" (143).

Material vs. spiritual

Robinson feels spiritually enlightened after reading the bible. Now, he considers himself to be able to distinguish between good and bad. He is happy that God has made him mourn upon his wicked life and to repent on his doing. "... I sincerely gave thanks to God for opening my eyes...to see the former condition of my life, and to mourn for my wickedness, and repent. I never opened the Bible..." (145).

Material world vs. Mother Nature

He feels happy on the island as he considers himself to be away from all the wickedness of the world as he says "...I was removed from all the wickedness of the world here. I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life... No rivals...no competitor, none to dispute sovereignty or command with me" (164). He said, "... nature and experience of things dictated to me, upon just reflections, that all the good things of this world are no farther good to us than they are for our use"(165).

It has revealed upon Robinson that the most valuable things in our life lost its meaning and value when it is no more useful to us (165). Robinson states that although the material and spiritual are two opposing things but both seek happiness. Spirituality seeks happiness within heart and Material in the outside. Spirituality demands to be thankful and contented for whatever you have. Materialism demands more wealth and all the worldly things for its satisfaction. Robinson learnt the art to be happy by focusing on the bright side of the situation (166).

Mostly, a condition has two sides to think upon. One is negative and one is positive. In the case of Robinson, he too has two sides of his present condition. One is depressing and the other is quite bright. Now Robinson has known the art to be positive and thankful. He learnt to look at the bright side of his condition. He is no longer thinking of what he actually wants in life instead he starts thinking upon what he enjoys and blessed with. He remains content and thankful by focusing on its bright side, "I learned to look more upon the bright side of my condition, and less upon the dark side...." (166).

Table no 4: Binary oppositions during second stage

Life before vs. life on island Page no 143		Material vs. spiritual page no 145		Material world vs. mother nature page no 164-167	
Previous life	On island	Material	Spiritual	Worldly things	Mother nature
Luxuries of life	Felt happy inside	Never close to God	Spiritually enlighten	Was a materialist	Away from all the wickedness of world
Privileged	Blessings of God	Never opened Bible	Found all of his answers in Bible	Desires	No temptation

Having all the necessities of life	Need to provide himself all the things for survival	Depressed	Satisfied	Wanted physical pleasure	No lust
Shame	Hope	Unthankful	Thankful	Wanted to get more	No greed
Guilt	Repentance			Desire for gaining power	No competition
Disturbed	Source to heal his soul			Fear	No rivals
No peace of mind	Peaceful			Not Happy inside	No disputes
				No Peace	No Bloodshed
				He deserved to be left alone	Away from artificiality of life
				Not given heed to parents advice	No materialism
				No fear of God	Assisted by God
				Has fleshy knowledge	Insight
				Unthankful	Enjoyed escape from Sallee
				Burning with the desire to get more	Planted well in Brazil

3. Robinson Crusoe, after he saved a cannibal and named him Friday Robinson encounters a cannibal later he gives him a name; Friday. Friday and Robinson made a binary apparently between two people but actually between two civilization.

Table no 5: Binary oppositions during third stage

Robinson vs. Friday page no 258-282		Robinson vs. Friday's nature Page no 287	
Robinson	Friday	Robinson's nature	Friday's nature
European	Negro	Selfish	Honest
Dominant	Subordinate	Not	Sincere
Superior	Inferior	Only wanted his survival	Faithful
Master	Servant	Not moved by any emotion	Loving
Civilized	Uncivilized	Clever	Innocent
White	Black	Unthankful	Grateful or thankful
Clear skin	Yellow	Strategic	Kind
Dressed	Naked	Has reason to be a good Christian	Good Christian
Ate cooked meal	Human eater		
Had learnt more about world	Foolish creature		
Self sufficient	Poor fellow		
Independent	My man		
A true Christian	Worship Benamuckee		
Know the fraud of priest ship	Have his priest Oowokake		

Robinson vs. Friday

Robinson at a point saves a cannibal from the other two,"... he came closer to me, and then he kneeled

down....it seems, was in token of swearing to be my slave forever" (261). Later, Robinson gives him a name Friday. The relationship between them is like the one in which one dominates the other. Friday's subordinate level is very much evident through the words and action of Robinson hence making the binary in which Robinson has superiority over Friday.

Robinson describes Friday as if he is an unusual thing. He tells the reader that Friday was tawny but not black. He prejudicially says that he was not looking ugly like Brazilians and Virginians. And while describing Friday's good features, he says that he has all the sweetness of European. Instead of asking his real name Robinson gave him a name "Friday" and asks him to call him Master. Friday was naked as he has no sense of covering himself. Robinson gave him some English clothes to wear. Friday was a cannibal but Robinson insisted him to eat cooked meal (265-266). Friday tells Robinson about his religion. Being living away from civilized society they developed their own religion. Friday tells Robinson that they worship Benamuckee as their god and all the things are created by Him. Friday tells him that their God is not approachable. They cannot approach him directly unless Oowokake; an old man went to the mountains to talk to Benamuckee and came back with the words of God. Robinson tries to infuse some of Christian beliefs in the mind of Friday. Friday likes Christian beliefs more than his own (279).

Robinson used to call him poor creature, my savage, my man etc. He describes him in way as if he is describing an unusual thing (263). "I made him know his name should be Friday...likewise taught him to say master". "... I would give him some clothes..." as he was naked (265). "Friday had still a hankering stomach after some of the flesh" because he was a cannibal. "... I ought to let him taste other flesh...killed a kid out of my own flock" (270). Friday told Robinson about their God called Benamuckee (278). Robinson teaches Friday about the Christianity and later, "The savage was now a good Christian, a much better than I" (284). Robinson taught him English, he could speak, "fluently, though in broken language..." (285).

Robinson vs. Friday's nature

When Robinson sees an extraordinary happiness and eagerness on the face of Friday after seeing the main land, it invited many strange thoughts and fears into the mind of Robinson. Robinson here proves himself to be so selfish that he thought that when Friday goes back to his own clan he would not only forget about Christianity but also his respect and love towards him. And that he would come back with his tribe to make a feat upon him. Robinson remains no kind towards him as he used to be in the past. But later, he admits that he has wronged the poor Friday. He remains so innocent, honest, grateful and kind. Friday proved to be a great friend and a religious Christian (287-288).

Robinson asks many question showed his inner fears. He asks Friday when he would find his own nation what would he do. Friday tells him that he would not eat man any more instead he would tell his nation to be good things, to worship real God, to eat bread, cattle flesh and milk. He tells Robinson that they would be happy to learn many things from him and ensured him that they would do no harm to him. Here, we can see a change in the character of Friday (289).

IV. CONCLUSION

Through close examination of the structure of the novel Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe, we can realize that Defoe has used the technique of binary opposition to convey to the reader its intended meaning. Robinson precedes his story with the help of binary opposition as he has two choices at every stage. The concept of binary opposition is very common as it is in the very nature and instinct of human beings to distinguish between good and evil, upper and lower, material and spiritual, beautiful and ugly, peaceful and irritating etc. The binary opposition such as positive/ negative, good/bad, reason/emotions, upper/lower class and spiritual/material are very much evident in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. It can be concluded that the main structure of the novel is based on binary opposition. Lastly, it is recommended for other researchers to conduct research on the same novel from other perspectives such as foregrounding or CDA etc.

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