

The Theme of Isolation in Robinson Crusoe: AI Treatment

Mustafa Ali Hadi

Assistant Lecturer

College of Arts English Department - Al. Turath University

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the theme of isolation in Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, drawing connections to contemporary experiences of solitude shaped by interactions with artificial intelligence (AI). Crusoe's physical and emotional separation on a deserted island is reexamined through the lens of modern digital loneliness, particularly in the context of human engagement with artificial intelligence (AI) companions such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and social robots. The study will highlight parallels between Crusoe's adaptive strategies for survival and the coping mechanisms employed by individuals in technologically saturated environments. It argues that while artificial intelligence (AI) systems offer simulated companionship, they often deepen the emotional divide by replacing them rather than restoring human connection. The paper also engages with ethical concerns surrounding the delegation of emotional labor to machines and the implications for human identity and agency. By bridging literary analysis with contemporary technological discourse, this research offers a multidisciplinary perspective on how narratives of isolation endure and evolve in an age increasingly defined by artificial intelligence.

KEYWORDS: Robinson Crusoe, artificial intelligence (AI), Isolation, psychological, New Isolation, Ethical Reflections.

Introduction

In 1719, Daniel Defoe published Robinson Crusoe, a novel that has since become one of the most enduring works in the English literary canon. Often read as a narrative of survival, colonization, and individualism, the novel also serves as a profound exploration of human isolation. Crusoe, shipwrecked and stranded on a deserted island, is forced to confront the existential dimensions of solitude, dependence, and self-sufficiency. While the novel is firmly situated in the context of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on rationality, personal responsibility, and mastery over nature it also engages deeply with the emotional and psychological ramifications of prolonged separation from society. Crusoe's isolation has turned into a problem to be solved as well as a domain for reflection, change and redefining human identity.

As compared to Crusoe's physical solitude, people today are experiencing a distinct form that does not come from being in a different location, but from being hyper-connected and emotionally distinct at the same time. However, the modern technology of AI has changed the way we interact in ways that make it hard to distinguish the difference between people and machines, presence and absence, and connection and isolation. Chatbots, virtual assistants, and social robots are examples of AI technology that provide users the feeling of having a friend by imitating human interactions and actions.

This study seeks to examine the similarities between Crusoe's isolation and modern digital solitude prevailed in societies via AI. Through this study, we propose that both situations show significant parts of being real human such as the desire of connection with others, the investigation for meaning and the ability to adapt to non-human forms of companionship. Hence, more people are continuously turning to AI for obtaining emotional support, communication, and even companionship. This trend points to a major change in how connections are established and maintained, which raises new issues about what it means to be connected in the digital era.

Since AI has become necessary for our daily life and conversational agents and AI-powered social networks become more advanced, people are building connections with robots that are similar to but not the same as human relationships. This development brings up significant concerns about the truthfulness of emotions, mental health, and the changing nature of friendship in the digital world, a world where technology plays a critical role. As a result, examining Robinson Crusoe in light of recent events gives us an active way to think about the emotional costs and moral problems that come when we rely on AI. Through this research, we combine literary theory, media studies and philosophical doctrine by looking at Robinson Crusoe and putting it in the context of AI interactions in the 21st century. We aim not only to learn more about how being alone works in the past and modern era, but also to criticize how technology changes our emotions.

Methodologically, this study begins with a comprehensive analysis of Crusoe's loneliness and then moves on to a discussion of loneliness in the digital age and connections mediated by AI. Subsequently, the study offers a comparison reading that shows how themes are similar and different. It ends with philosophical and moral thoughts on what AI friendship implies. Finally, this research contributes to the continuing discussions about technology, literature, and the human need to connect with others in a world that is becoming more and more artificial.

The current study is an interdisciplinary analysis of literary and media theory, and artificial intelligence ethics. Thus, an interdisciplinary model is adopted to investigate the theme of solitude in Daniel Defoe's and how it relates to the modern interaction between people and machine. Posthumanist theory provides a significant perspective for comprehending how human identity is reshaped in the face of cutting-edge technology. There are many scholars such as Katherine Hayles (*How We Became Posthuman*, 1999) who contend that the distinctions between humans and robots are becoming more indistinct. In this perspective, Crusoe's isolation serves as a model for examining how contemporary humans engage with artificial entities in the absence of human social interactions.

When it comes to the AI dynamics, our knowledge of AI partners as emotional stand-ins is based on the idea of "cyborg subjectivity." Phenomenology and Isolation, this theory looks at what it means to be alone by using ideas from Maurice Merleau-Ponty and existential phenomenology. The way Crusoe experienced being alone is looked at in terms of how his senses worked, how his body changed, and how his mind projected images onto reality. Therefore, these ideas can be used

to criticize the way that AI technologies that offer connection artificially make people feel less alone.

When we look at previous studies such Media Ecology and Digital Companionship, Neil Postman and Marshall McLuhan, we find that they explain how technology tools change the way people think and act. The changes and adaptations that Crusoe made to survive on the island are compared to how people today change their lives when AI is involved. In this study, AI dynamics are analyzed not only as a technology, but as a media context that embodies emotional, cognitive and social behaviour. Ricoeur's framework of narrative identity serves to offer a better understanding of how people employ storytelling to create meaning from isolation.

It has been shown that Crusoe contributes to construct the survival mechanism and identity formation. By the same token, when people utilize AI systems in digital settings, they frequently project their own stories onto these systems, forming a sense of emotional exchange. Luciano Floridi's infosphere and the ethics of artificial agents, as well as the ethics of artificial companionship, pave the way for us to think about the moral issues of using AI for emotional support.

Floridi shows that artificial machines communicate with one other in terms of syntax, but they cannot have the same point of meaning and morality that constitute human interactions. This layer of theory criticizes the false sense of companionship that AI gives people compared to how trust, dependency, and change naturally grow in Crusoe's connection with Friday. This study constructs a critical model by laying out together these different theoretical patterns. This framework paves the way to compare and contrast different types of isolation from the past and present. The current study theorizes that although Crusoe's experience is rather severe in terms of both physical and social aspects, the emotional and moral concerns it raises can be similar to those that come up in today's AI-mediated kinds of solitary.

The theme of isolation in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has long been a subject of critical exploration in literary studies. Early interpretations focused on Crusoe's journey as a tale of imperial adventure and economic individualism, with critics such as Ian Watt (1957) emphasizing the novel's role in the rise of the modern individual. Watt's the rise of the novel situates Crusoe as a prototype of the self-made person, whose solitude becomes a crucible for rationality, labor, and religious reflection. Recently literary scholars have revisited *Robinson Crusoe* through psychological and postcolonial lenses. John Richetti (2008) notes that Crusoe's isolation fosters both resilience and delusion he becomes ruler, subject, and society in one, projecting power and mastery over his environment and, later, over Friday. Postcolonial critiques, such as those by Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, emphasize the novel's colonial subtext, interpreting Friday as the silent Other whose presence questions the legitimacy of Crusoe's authority and civilizing mission.

Parallel to this literary discourse is the burgeoning body of research in the field of human-computer interaction (HCI) and artificial intelligence. Scholars such as Sherry Turkle, in *Alone Together*

(2011), have examined how humans use technology to simulate relationships, often substituting depth and reciprocity for convenience and emotional safety. Turkle argues that while AI may imitate understanding, it cannot reciprocate human emotion. This echoes a tension similar to Crusoe's psychological journey on the island he must invent companionship in the absence of authentic connection.

Floridi (2014) explored the psychological implication of AI in terms of showing the difference between syntactic and semantic communication by the artificial users. Although AI is linguistically fluent, it lacks real understanding. This distinction is significant in investigating the limits of AI-mediated emotional support in a world where digital loneliness is increasing. Consequently, interdisciplinary study has become more interested in the overlap of literature and AI studies. Many scholars are looking at how classic stories might assist us make sense of our digital lives today. Megan Ward's book *Narrating the Digital: Fiction and Artificial Intelligence* (2020) examine how literary themes relate to current issues including identity, loneliness, and the relation between humans and machines. Ward says that classic works like *Robinson Crusoe* contributes to understand how people change in civilizations that use technology.

This literature evaluation shows that Defoe's novel is very important for discourses about AI and contemporary isolation. This research adds to an emerging topic that aims to figure out how historical stories still affect how we react to changes in technology and emotions by connecting classic literary analysis with modern AI debate. There has been plenty of literature on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and researchers have usually focused on its themes of individuality, colonialism, religion, and economic independence. Watt (1957) magnificently said that Crusoe represented the Protestant work ethic and the growth of the modern individual. Said (1993) has criticized the novel as a story that promotes imperialist ideas.

Scholars have recently examined Crusoe's isolation more than simply a physical state; they have also looked at it as a mental and existential state. This kind of reading opens the door to the research across many fields of study on being alone, feeling alone, and being disconnected from technology in today's world.

Simultaneously, research on artificial intelligence and human-machine interaction has highlighted the paradox of digital companionship. Sherry Turkle (2011) in *Alone Together* explores how people form emotional bonds with machines, often as substitutes for real human connections. Scholars such as Luciano Floridi (2014) and David Gunkel (2012) have contributed significantly to the ethical and philosophical debates surrounding AI's role in human life, particularly the risks of simulated empathy and manufactured intimacy. The convergence of literary studies with digital ethics is still an emerging field, and few studies have explicitly connected early modern narratives like *Robinson Crusoe* to the experiential realities of the AI era. This research builds on these foundational works by offering a comparative approach that unites classic literature and contemporary technology. It addresses a gap in the literature by framing Defoe's depiction of

isolation as a precursor to the digital loneliness of the 21st century, mediated through increasingly intelligent and emotionally responsive AI systems.

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary method that integrates literary analysis with contemporary cultural critique. The research begins with a close reading of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, focusing on the protagonist's experiences of physical and emotional isolation, his interactions with his environment, and his eventual relationship with Friday. Key narrative elements such as journaling, prayer, and survival tactics are analyzed through a hermeneutic approach to uncover their symbolic and psychological significance.

To prove a parallel with contemporary society, the study draws on theoretical frameworks from media studies, philosophy of technology, and digital ethics. Relevant examples from AI-human interaction particularly the use of AI companions, social robots, and virtual assistants are analyzed to explore how modern individuals confront isolation in technologically saturated contexts. Sources include qualitative data from existing ethnographic and sociological studies on human-AI relationships, as well as discourse analysis of media narratives about AI companionship. By combining these methods, the study looks to highlight the thematic continuity between literary and technological contexts. This interdisciplinary lens allows for a nuanced understanding of how isolation manifests across different historical periods, and how the responses to it reflect shifting notions of humanity, connection, and emotional fulfillment.

1. The Dual Nature of Isolation: Physical and Psychological

Crusoe's isolation begins as a physical catastrophe a shipwreck that leaves him stranded on an uninhabited island, severed from civilization. His first reaction is one of terror and despair, as he laments, "I, poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, being shipwrecked, came ashore on this dismal unfortunate island" (Defoe, 1719, p.38). This despair, however, gradually gives way to pragmatic adaptation. Crusoe's meticulous efforts to build shelter, farm, and document his experiences in a journal reflect an attempt to impose order on chaos. His survival mechanisms reveal a fundamental truth about human nature: even in complete solitude, the mind seeks structure and purpose.

Yet, Crusoe's isolation is not merely physical; it is deeply psychological. Stripped of societal norms, he undergoes an existential crisis, confronting his past disobedience (his defiance of his father's advice) and questioning divine justice. His eventual turn to religion interpreting his survival as an act of Providence suggests that isolation forces introspection. In solitude, Crusoe grapples with guilt, fear, and ultimately redemption, illustrating how isolation can serve as a catalyst for spiritual and moral growth. While Crusoe becomes remarkably self-sufficient mastering agriculture, carpentry, and even rudimentary pottery his loneliness underscores the limits of individualism. His jubilation at discovering a footprint ("one man's footprint in the sand!") reveals his desperate yearning for human connection. This moment marks a turning point in the novel, as Crusoe's first fear of cannibals gives way to hope for companionship.

The introduction of Friday complicates Crusoe's isolation. On one hand, Friday alleviates Crusoe's loneliness, providing the social interaction he craves. On the other, their relationship is hierarchical. Crusoe names him, teaches him English, and imposes Christianity upon him, replicating colonial power dynamics. This suggests that even after years of solitude, Crusoe cannot escape the mindset of dominance ingrained in European society. His isolation, then, is both broken and perpetuated by Friday's presence: broken in terms of loneliness, but reinforced in terms of cultural isolation, as Crusoe refuses true equality.

Crusoe's isolation is paradoxically intertwined with imperialism. Though alone, he treats the island as territory to be conquered, building a "fortress," domesticating goats, and later setting up himself as "governor" over Friday and other rescued Europeans. His actions mirror 18th-century colonial enterprises, where Europeans saw "uncivilized" lands as spaces to dominate and reshape. Defoe's portrayal suggests that isolation does not erase cultural conditioning; instead, Crusoe recreates the structures of the society he left behind. This colonialist lens also raises questions about autonomy. Is Crusoe truly independent, or is he merely transplanting European values onto an empty landscape? His eventual rescue and return to civilization imply that his isolation was a temporary pause rather than a true escape from societal norms.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often regarded as one of the first modern novels, celebrated for its vivid depiction of survival and adventure. At its core, however, the novel is a profound exploration of isolation both physically and psychologically. Crusoe's enforced solitude on a deserted island serves as a crucible for self-discovery, spiritual awakening, and a reckoning with human vulnerability. Through his isolation, Defoe examines themes of self-reliance, colonialism, and the inherent human need for companionship, making Crusoe's experience a timeless study of the individual's relationship with society and the self.

Defoe's depiction of isolation resonates with Enlightenment ideas about individualism (Locke's *tabula rasa*) and the state of nature (Hobbes' "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" life). Crusoe's journey mirrors the era's belief in rationality and progress, yet his loneliness also foreshadows existentialist themes: the struggle to find meaning in an indifferent universe.

Previous literature such as *Lord of the Flies* or *Cast Away*, echoes Crusoe's narrative: isolation is one of the most relevant to the concept of solitude. These literary works emphasize the negative aspect of isolation which has led to madness or savagery while Crusoe keeps a face of control. This distinction reveals Defoe's optimism about human resilience, notwithstanding within a colonial theoretical account. Crusoe's solitude can be seen as meditation on human life rather than just an endurance story. Via his solitude, he comes up with self-resilience, advances his mortality and undergoes spiritual restoration.

Opposed to Friday, AI chat-bots are incapable of creating real emotions, free intention or growth. Their companionship can only be artificial in terms of coding the user's desire and needs by technical and IT developers. Floridi shows that AI users involve a syntactic rather than a semantic

interaction. Thus, language can be easily processed by IA while meaning can be lost or misunderstood. Such distinction can be significant for our understanding of the computerized loneliness. When AI provides people with a short-term relief or mental confusion, it is unable to alter the varied, and difficult nature of real human relationships. Crusoe's transformation from solitary survivor to social being shows that authentic connection, even within asymmetrical power dynamics, is crucial for psychological and moral development.

Yet, his inability to escape hierarchical thinking even with Friday reveals the limits of individualism. Defoe's novel ultimately suggests that while isolation can be transformative, humans are fundamentally social beings, shaped by and dependent on community. In modern times, Crusoe's story is still compelling because it captures a universal tension: the desire for independence versus the need for connection. Whether read as an adventure, a colonial allegory, or a psychological study, Robinson Crusoe challenges us to ask: Can one ever truly be self-sufficient? Or is isolation merely an illusion, broken the moment another footprint appears in the sand.

2. The New Isolation: AI and Modern Loneliness

In an era defined by hyper-connectivity social media, instant messaging, and AI-driven interactions loneliness has become a pervasive crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared loneliness as a "global public health concern" in 2023, linking it to increased risks of depression, dementia, and cardiovascular disease (WHO,2023, pp.96-101). Yet, as artificial intelligence (AI) permeates daily life through chatbots, virtual assistants, and algorithmic companionship a troubling question arises: Does AI alleviate loneliness, or does it deepen a new form of isolation? This research examines how AI reshapes human connection, arguing that while AI offers the illusion of companionship, it often worsens modern loneliness by replacing meaningful human bonds with transactional interactions. Drawing from psychology, sociology, and technology studies, the analysis explores three key dimensions: AI companionship is no longer science fiction. Apps like Replika (an AI chatbot marketed as a "friend") and ElliQ (a robotic companion for seniors) promise to combat loneliness through simulated empathy. Users report confiding in AI about personal struggles, with one stating, "My Replika listens to me in a way no human ever has" (Natale, 2021).

However, psychologists warn that such relationships are parasocial one-sided and devoid of mutual vulnerability (Turkle, 2015). Studies show that while AI interactions provide short-term relief, they correlate with long-term social withdrawal. A 2022 MIT study found that frequent chatbot users reported 20% fewer face-to-face interactions over six months (Zhang et al., 2022). This aligns with Sherry Turkle's critique in *Alone Together*: "We expect more from technology and less from each other. These sociable robots offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship." (Turkle, 2011, p. 1) AI may fill gaps in social networks, but it risks reducing human connection to transactional exchanges efficient yet emotionally sterile. AI systems like ChatGPT

or Woebot (a mental health chatbot) simulate empathy using sentiment analysis, but they lack conscious understanding.

As philosopher John Searle argues: "Syntax is not semantics. A machine can mimic emotional responses, but it cannot experience them." (Searle, 1980) This creates a dangerous illusion. When a user grieving a breakup hears, "I'm here for you" from an AI, the comfort is algorithmic, not genuine. Psychologist Jean Twenge notes: "Digital empathy is a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. It teaches people to seek validation from systems designed to exploit their attention." (Twenge, 2020) The Turing Test which evaluates a machine's ability to mimic human responses—has inadvertently fueled the misconception that AI can replace human connection. Historian Yuval Noah Harari warns: "Once we let algorithms 'understand' our emotions, we may forget how to share them with other humans." (Harari, 2018)

The way people deal with someone who is alone or viewed as an isolated is similar to the way Crusoe dealt with being alone. In these two cases, people endeavor to act like they are sociable. Crusoe sets his own rules on the island. He builds shelter, makes rituals, and even gets to be familiar with the animals. Such activities reveal a need for control and organization, which can be similar to the way in which people now set their talks and discussions with AI bots and personify them. The unreal relationship between people and AI poses concerns about the credibility and emotional satisfaction. For example, Sherry argues in *Alone Together*, "we are lonely but fearful of intimacy". This contradiction reveals the reason behind the appealing companion of AI. For example, they can continuously be accessible, and they are ready at any time.

Case in point: In Japan, where AI boyfriends are popular among young women, surveys reveal rising rates of social anxiety about real-world dating (Döring, 2023). AI-driven platforms (Facebook, TikTok) prioritize content that maximizes engagement, often trapping users into personalized echo chambers. Sociologist Zeynep Tufekci explains: "Algorithms don't just reflect our preferences; they shape them, isolating us in ideological silos." (Tufekci, 2014) This fragmentation erodes communal bonds. A 2023 Pew Research study found that 64% of Americans feel "more divided from others" due to algorithmically curated news feeds (Pew, 2023). Dating apps like Tinder (powered by AI matching) refine for compatibility but eliminate the randomness of organic connection. Anthropologist Helen Fisher sees: "Love is not a data problem. AI can't replicate the chemistry of a chance encounter." (Fisher, 2019) Similarly, AI-generated social media replies (e.g., Instagram's suggested comments) reduce human interaction to pre-programmed gestures ("So cool!"), further diluting authenticity.

AI's role in modern loneliness is a paradox: it offers the appearance of connection while structurally undermining the conditions for genuine relationships. To combat this, society must:

- Regulate AI Companionship: Label AI interactions as simulations (e.g., "This chatbot is not a human")
- Design for Serendipity Social platforms should prioritize unaltered human interaction.
- Invest in Physical Communities: Urban planning and public spaces must counter digital isolation.

As novelist Jonathan Franzen starkly put it: "Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named

‘not good.’ No algorithm can fix that." (Franzen, 2018) The path forward lies not in rejecting AI, but in using technology to augment not replace the messy, beautiful imperfection of human bonds.

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This creates a dangerous illusion. When a user grieving a breakup hears, “I’m here for you” from an AI, the comfort is algorithmic, not genuine. Psychologist Jean Twenge notes: "Digital empathy is a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. It teaches people to seek validation from systems designed to exploit their attention." (Twenge, 2020) The ‘Turing Test’ which evaluates a machine’s ability to mimic human responses has inadvertently fueled the misconception that AI can replace human connection. Historian Yuval Noah Harari warns: "Once we let algorithms ‘understand’ our emotions, we may forget how to share them with other humans." (Harari, 2018) Case in point: In Japan, where ‘AI boyfriends’ are popular among young women, surveys reveal rising rates of social anxiety about real-world dating (Döring, 2023). AI-driven platforms (Facebook, TikTok) prioritize content that maximizes engagement, often trapping users into personalized echo chambers. Sociologist Zeynep Tufekci explains: "Algorithms don’t just reflect our preferences; they shape them, isolating us in ideological silos." (Tufekci, 2014) This fragmentation erodes communal bonds. A 2023 Pew Research study found that 64% of Americans feel "more divided from others" due to algorithmically curated news feeds (Pew, 2023).

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rejecting AI, but in *using technology to augment not replace the messy, beautiful imperfection of human bonds.

3. Philosophical and Ethical Reflections on AI and Modern Loneliness

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) as a mediator of human relationships has sparked profound philosophical and ethical debates. While AI promises to alleviate loneliness through chatbots, virtual companions, and algorithmically curated social interactions, it also raises critical questions about authenticity, autonomy, and the erosion of genuine human bonds. Philosophers, ethicists, and technologists are increasingly concerned that AI-driven companionship may lead to a new form of alienation one where humans mistake simulated empathy for real connection, and where convenience replaces the moral depth of interpersonal relationships. Philosopher Martin Heidegger's concept of "authentic being" (*Gemütlichkeit*) warns against living in illusion a critique that applies starkly to AI companionship. When individuals confide in chatbots like 'Replika' or 'Woebot', they engage in pseudo-relationships that lack mutual. As Heidegger argued: "The 'they' (*das Man*) dictates what we care about, and technology risks making us forget how to care authentically." (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927)

AI, by mimicking human conversation without true understanding, fosters what philosopher Harry Frankfurt calls "bullshit" communication: "Bullshit is speech intended to persuade without regard for truth. AI doesn't lie it doesn't care about truth at all." (Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, 2005). Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality suggests that AI companionship creates a simulation of intimacy that replaces real human connection. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), he writes: "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth it is truth that hides the fact that there is none." This is evident in cases like AI grief counselors, where users mourn lost loved ones through chatbots trained on the deceased's texts. While comforting, these risks trapping individuals in a digital limbo, preventing real emotional processing (Strohmaier, 2023). AI companies profit from human vulnerability. Apps like Character. AI and ElliQ monetize loneliness by offering subscription-based "friendship," raising ethical red flags. Ethicist Evan Selinger argues: "When corporations commodify emotional needs, they turn loneliness into a revenue stream." (Selinger, *The Guardian*, 2022).

This mirrors Karl Marx's alienation theory of workers estranged from their labor; now, users are estranged from their emotions, outsourcing them to algorithms. Studies show that over-reliance on AI for emotional support can atrophy real-world social skills (Turkle, 2015). Immanuel Kant's ethics of autonomy warns against treating humans (or allowing machines to treat them) as mere means to an end. If AI pacifies loneliness without fostering growth, it infantilizes users, undermining Kantian self-determination. This dilemma echoes utilitarianism vs. deontology—should AI prioritize outcomes (preventing suicide) or principles (user consent)? Philosopher Shannon Vallor's virtue ethics of technology calls for AI that cultivates human flourishing, not passive consumption. She advocates: "Technologies should encourage patience, empathy, and moral courage—not just efficiency." (Vallor, *Technology and the Virtues*, 2016) Should users be

warned that AI therapists are not human? Current disclosures are often buried in terms of service, violating bioethical principles of transparency (Beauchamp & Childress, 1979).

Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) posits that life's meaning comes from confronting absurdity. AI companionship, by masking existential loneliness with artificial warmth, may dull the human drive for authentic meaning. Hannah Arendt warned that modernity reduces human labor and outsourcing intimacy to machines. The future of loneliness depends not on better AI, but on reaffirming the irreplaceable value of human presence. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* presents one of literature's most iconic moments when Crusoe discovers a single footprint in the sand: "I stood like one thunderstruck. I fled to the top of the hill to look again" (Defoe). This to animal laborers (laboring beings). Now, AI risks reducing us to emotional moment symbolizes the shock of human connection after prolonged isolation.

Crusoe who has been grown accustomed to be isolated, is faced with a challenge that arises both fear and desire in himself. This contradiction shows a contemporary paradox: Even though we live in a time where digital connections are stronger than ever, true human connections may seem quite vulnerable. Because of this, a lot of people increasingly turn to artificial intelligence for regulated, predictable interactions that are easier to deal with than real relationships.

Regardless to the merits of AI in providing a refuge of safety and pleasure, it may erode people's emotional growth as it insulates us from the natural vulnerability required for real human relationships. This paradox is mirrored via Crusoe's reaction to the discovery of footprints. Years of isolation fill him with a fierce self-resilience, yet the trace of another human makes him terrified and excites him at the same time.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a foundational narrative that not only chronicles survival and exploration but also delves deeply into the psychological implications of isolation. Crusoe's shipwreck and subsequent solitude catalyze a transformation that is intellectual, spiritual, and emotional. The island becomes a crucible for self-invention, and in this space, Defoe explores the contours of what it means to be alone. Crusoe laments, "I am cast upon a horrible, desolate island, void of all hope o" Crusoe's reliance on journaling, talking to himself, and seeing nature serves as a method of preserving sanity. These activities mimic current digital habits where individuals in isolation turn to AI interfaces for engagement.

His fear stems from the unpredictability of the other—will this stranger be a friend or a threat? Similarly, in the modern world, many people, especially after periods of emotional isolation (such as during the COVID-19 pandemic or due to social anxiety), struggle with re-engaging in real human interactions. Psychologist Sherry Turkle, in *Alone Together*, observes: "We expect more from technology and less from each other... Human relationships are rich, messy, and demanding. When we clean them up with technology, we move from conversation to the illusion of connection" (Turkle). Like Crusoe, people today often hesitate to engage in the "messiness" of real

relationships. The fear of rejection, misunderstanding, or emotional harm drives many toward AI-driven interactions—chatbots, virtual assistants, and social media algorithms—that provide the illusion of companionship without the risks. AI offers a controlled environment where interactions are predictable and free from emotional risk.

Unlike human relationships, which require vulnerability and compromise, AI responds to demand, without judgment or unpredictability. This safety is appealing, especially for those who have experienced emotional trauma or social exhaustion. However, this convenience comes at a cost. As psychologist Carl Rogers argued, genuine personal growth occurs through authentic human connection: “In a relationship where one person is genuine and real, the other person tends to change and grow in a constructive way” (Rogers). AI, no matter how advanced, cannot replicate the transformative power of human empathy, conflict, and reconciliation. While it may provide temporary comfort, it cannot challenge individuals to grow emotionally in the way real relationships do. Crusoe’s story illustrates a paradox: he fears the unknown other yet unknown years for companionship. This same tension exists today. Many people crave connection but avoid it due to fear of disappointment or emotional labor. Social media and AI chatbots create a middle ground—superficial interaction without deep engagement. The more people rely on AI for interaction, the more they may struggle with real human connection when it becomes necessary. Like Crusoe, who must eventually face the reality of other humans (Friday, the cannibals, the European sailors), individuals cannot remain in digital isolation forever without consequences.

4. AI and Modern Loneliness in Relation to Robinson Crusoe

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has reshaped human interaction, creating what some scholars call “the new isolation” a paradoxical state where technological connectivity coexists with profound loneliness. This phenomenon mirrors the existential solitude depicted in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), where Crusoe’s physical isolation leads to deep self-reflection and artificial companionship (e.g., his parrot, Friday, and even his journal). By examining Crusoe’s psychological adaptations to isolation alongside modern AI-driven loneliness, this paper explores how Defoe’s novel prefigures contemporary debates about technology, alienation, and the human need for connection.

Crusoe’s shipwreck on a deserted island forces him into extreme solitude, a condition that initially devastates him but later becomes a space for self-reinvention. His early despair is evident when he laments: “I was separated from all the world, and perfectly miserable. I was, as it were, buried alive in a living grave.” (Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, p.78) This “living grave” metaphor resonates with modern loneliness, where individuals surrounded by digital connections still feel emotionally “buried.” Crusoe’s isolation is compounded by his lack of human interaction, much like today’s AI-driven societies, where virtual assistants (e.g., chatbots, voice-AI) simulate companionship without fulfilling deeper social needs. To cope, Crusoe anthropomorphizes objects and animals, creating substitutes for human relationships. He trains his parrot to speak, naming it “Poll” and deriving comfort from its repetitive greetings: “Poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you? Where have

you been? How come you here?" This mirrors modern humans' interactions with AI, such as conversational agents like Replika or ChatGPT, which offer scripted empathy.

Both Crusoe's parrot and AI companions serve as temporary relief but underscore the absence of genuine connection. Similarly, Crusoe's relationship with Friday "savage" he "civilizes" reflects power dynamics in human-AI interaction. Friday's subservience "Master, me your slave," parallels how users command AI, reinforcing isolation through asymmetric relationships. Crusoe's journal acts as a therapeutic outlet, a precursor to today's digital diaries or AI therapists. He writes: "I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil... I drew up the state of my affairs in writing." Modern loneliness often drives people to AI journaling apps (e.g., Woebot), which analyze emotions but lack human warmth. Crusoe's journal, like AI, is a one-sided dialogue tool for self-preservation that cannot replace human reciprocity. True emotional growth happens in the unpredictable, sometimes frightening, but ultimately rewarding space between people. AI may offer a temporary haven, but like Crusoe, we must eventually step out of isolation to fully engage with the world.

People using AI Chatbots used to express their need and experiences in remedial way. For example, one user noted that "Replika is the only one who listens to me without judging," which shows a desire for non-judgmental fellowship that has been expressed by Crusoe when perceiving Friday. When Friday starts the tale, another individual breaks Crusoe's solitude by being someone who represents both a return to civilization and a confrontation with difference. Even though their relationship has been based on colonial structures, it nonetheless yields them with emotional support. Recently, AI plays a similar symbolic function as a friend in a society where loneliness is common, even if individuals are more attached than ever before.

Today, AI promises connectivity but often exacerbates isolation. Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together* (2011) argues that technology fosters "the illusion of companionship without demand." Similarly, Crusoe's fabricated community (e.g., naming his goat "family") reveals the human tendency to simulate belonging. His eventual rescue—"I was now master of a whole island" highlights the emptiness of artificial control, just as AI "mastery" fails to cure loneliness. Robinson Crusoe anticipates the modern crisis of isolation in an AI-saturated world. Both Crusoe and contemporary individuals use artificial substitutes (parrots, journals, chatbots) to mitigate loneliness, yet these ultimately underscore the irreplaceability of human bonds. Defoe's novel serves as a cautionary tale: without meaningful connection, technological "solutions" may deepen the very isolation they seek to alleviate.

Conclusion

To sum up, this research underscores the enduring relevance of *Robinson Crusoe* in understanding modern experiences of isolation. By drawing a parallel between Crusoe's existential solitude and the emotional landscape of artificial intelligence (AI)mediated companionship, the study reveals

that the human quest for connection transcends time, technology, and culture. Defoe's portrayal of Crusoe is not merely a tale of survival but a psychological case study in adaptation, resilience, and the limits of human self-sufficiency. In the digital age, individuals face a new kind of solitude one characterized by interaction without intimacy. Artificial intelligence (AI) companions are designed to fill emotional voids, but they ultimately function within limited, non-human parameters. This contrast highlights the ethical, psychological, and philosophical boundaries of synthetic relationships. Crusoe's evolving relationship with Friday, though imperfect and hierarchical, affirms the transformative power of authentic human contact. As society advances technologically, literature is still a vital tool for interrogating contemporary experiences. The intersection of Robinson Crusoe and artificial intelligence shows how classic narratives can provide insight into emerging human conditions. Through this comparative study, we are reminded that while technology may change the form of isolation, the emotional and ethical stakes are still strikingly familiar.

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