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Thomas Sully's sketches of Robinson Crusoe in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

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THOMAS SULLY'S SKETCHES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE
IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

by

KRISTAL KIRKSEY

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston owns ten oil sketches by Thomas Sully (1783-1872) which depict episodes from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The ten paintings represent different events in Crusoe's twenty-eight year stay on an uninhabited island from the shipwreck which landed him there to his departure. He dated the first sketch 1856, and they were probably the preparatory studies for ten larger paintings of the same subjects which he completed in 1858. On the back of the first sketch Sully acknowledged his source for the sketches, illustrations by the English artist, Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) which were published in an 1820 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*.

In addition to the *Robinson Crusoe* series, Sully painted many other literary subjects which have never been studied in any detail. Although Sully is known as a portraitist, these examples of his subject paintings indicate that they should be studied further.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Sully (1783-1872) is best known as a portrait painter and was Philadelphia's leading portraitist during the first half of the nineteenth century. He painted many of the prominent men and women of his time, including Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, Edgar Allen Poe and Queen Victoria. In 1801 when Sully painted his first portrait, he began his Account of Pictures, usually referred to as the Register, in which he listed all of his finished paintings, the date a painting was begun and completed, its measurements and value. During his seventy-one year career, he listed about 2,000 portraits in the Register; however, many of these are lost. This seems like an amazing number, but Sully found it necessary to work ceaselessly to support his large family. Sully also listed 548 other works in his Register, copies of old masters, landscapes, and subject paintings with mythological, biblical, historical, genre and literary themes. He called these his fancy pictures. Unfortunately, many of these subject paintings also are lost. Although his portraits have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, little is known about his subject paintings, and they have yet to be studied in any detail. They have been ignored undoubtedly because there are so many more portraits to study and also because the best of the
subject paintings have had little exposure to the public. Many of Sully's known subject paintings are sentimental portrayals of idealized young women and children which were popular during the Victorian period, but they do not inspire much enthusiasm today. However, closer examination of his other types of subject paintings indicates that some possess the same drama, romantic feeling and beauty as his best portraits.

There are fine examples of Sully's literary painting in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, consisting of a group of ten oil sketches illustrating scenes from Daniel Defoe's eighteenth century novel *Robinson Crusoe* (Figs. 1-10). Sully painted these sketches in 1856 as preparatory studies for ten larger paintings of the same scenes which he completed in 1857-58.¹ He gave the sketches to his daughter Blanche who never married and was his constant companion until his death. Blanche then gave the sketches to her nephew, Dr. Albert Walter Sully, and The Museum of Fine Arts acquired them in 1928 from his wife, Mary Hariss Sully. The oil sketches have been exhibited at the Museum three times, in 1927, 1949, and 1974, and are currently in the Bayou Bend Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts.

Sully painted these sketches on thin board (approximately 1/8 inch) and each measures about ten by twelve inches. He covered their backs with thin coatings of
white enamel and numbered each sketch in black ink. He furthermore provided a title in pencil (Fig. 12). This method of identification is the same for each sketch except for number nine on which Sully painted a portrait of a man covering the title (Fig. 11). Number ten differs also in that the title is written in bold black ink. Paint pencil marks are visible beneath this inscription, suggesting that Sully relabelled it (Fig. 13). The inscriptions on the backs of the sketches read:

N 1, The Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe
   Vide Cadell and Davis' Edition. Printed in London
   Page 61
   TS 1856

N 2, Visit to the Wreck

N 3, Building a Shelter

N 4, In His Cave

N 5, Foot Impression in the Sand

N 6, Saving the Life of Friday

N 7, Boat Building by R. C. and Friday

N 8, Friday's Father Rescued

#9 (The title is covered. It depicts Crusoe and Friday in the Cave.)

N 10, Robinso(n) C. (unclear word, probably and) man
   Friday leave the Island

The date, 1856, on the back of the first sketch indicates that these sketches were the preparatory studies for ten larger paintings of the same subjects which Sully
listed in the Register. He began the series on May 20, 1857 and completed the tenth painting on October 9, 1858. They measured four feet by two feet, nine and one-half inches, and Sully valued them at $300 each. Under the heading in his Register "For whom painted," Sully wrote, "Robinson Crusoe shipwrecked. For Myself." He must have hoped to sell them at Earle's Gallery in Philadelphia because a one-page brochure from their exhibition at that Gallery accompanied the sketches when the Museum of Fine Arts acquired them (Fig. 14). Sully had become partners with James S. Earle, a framer and gallery owner from Philadelphia in April of 1819. Sully provided Earle with copies of popular paintings, usually by old masters, as well as with some of his original works to be sold. In return he received half the profits and utilized his portion of the admission fees for frames and canvas.2 Unfortunately the larger Robinson Crusoe series was destroyed in a fire at Earle's Gallery, leaving only the oil sketches in Houston as reminders of what they may have been like.

When the sketches arrived at the Museum of Fine Arts, they were wrapped in white paper on which Sully had written "Sketches for R. C." in brush, and in ink "The original pictures burnt at Earle's fire - 1871 - Thos. Sully."3 Determining the date of this fire at Earle's Gallery is difficult. The date, 1871, from Sully's inscription may refer to the date of the fire or to when Sully wrote it.
The latter seems more likely because Earle's Gallery was probably closed by that time.\(^4\)

It is safe to assume that the Houston sketches are the preparatory studies for the paintings burned at Earle's Gallery because of the date Sully painted them and their subject matter. According to the Register, he began the large paintings on May 20, 1857, and the first sketch is dated 1856. The subjects of the large paintings are known because the one-page brochure from Earle's Gallery lists their titles and a brief quotation from the novel which describes the action of the painting and the page number where the passage could be found (Fig. 14). The subjects of the large paintings are the same as those of the Houston sketches except for number nine which was titled Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday Rescue the English Captain and Companions from Their Distressed Situation instead of Crusoe and Friday in the Cave.

The inscription on the back of the first sketch, "The Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe, N 1, Vide Cadell & Davis' Edition, Printed in London, Page 61, TS 1856," at first appears to indicate that these were either issued in print form or were used to illustrate an edition of Robinson Crusoe; however, neither is likely. This inscription is Sully's acknowledgement of the edition of Robinson Crusoe he consulted while painting them. Cadell and Davis refers to Thomas Cadell and William Davies who were owners of a London
publishing firm in operation from about 1793 to 1836. They published a two volume edition of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1820 which was also brought out in Scotland. The page number 61 refers to the page of this 1820 edition where the passage describing the scene in the first sketch can be found. This edition was illustrated with designs by Thomas Stothard, R. A. which were engraved by C. Heath (Figs. 15-24). Sully borrowed the subject matter and compositional elements from six of Stothard's ten designs which were published in volume I of the Cadell and Davies edition (Figs. 15-24).

Stothard (1755-1834) worked in London as a painter and designer of illustrations for popular literature, including *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Canterbury Tales* and the works of Shakespeare. Stothard first made designs for *Robinson Crusoe* in 1790 which were engraved by Medland and published by John Stockdale, Piccadilly. The illustrations published in 1820 are almost identical to those of 1790 except for minor details which possibly resulted from the difference in engravers. Sully borrowed the subject matter and compositional elements for sketches one, two, four, five, six and seven from Stothard. He did not use four of Stothard's designs, *Robinson Crusoe in His Island Dress*, *Robinson Crusoe and Friday Alarmed at the Sight of a Lion*, *Robinson Crusoe Terrified at the Sight of a Dying Goat* and *Robinson Crusoe and Friday Making a Tent to Lodge Friday's Father and the Spaniard* (Figs. 21-24). Instead he
substituted Building a Shelter, Friday's Father Rescued, Crusoe and Friday in the cave (sketch nine), and Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday Leave the Island. It seems likely that Sully changed the subjects of these to create a more unified series.

Although Sully borrowed the subject matter and composition from some of Stothard's designs, his sketches are quite different. Sully's interpretation is romantic whereas Stothard's is neo-classical. This is to be expected because Stothard was older and was active in London during the peak of Neo-classicism. The intentions the artists had for their work also lends to their differences. Stothard's designs were to be engraved which in part accounts for their linear quality. Sully's on the other hand were oil sketches for larger paintings and are naturally more painterly.

On the back of the ninth sketch is a rough, bust-length portrait of an unknown man which does not appear to have any relation to the Robinson Crusoe series (Fig. 11). Sully inscribed this portrait in several places: in black ink across the top of the picture he wrote, "Property of my daughter;" in the top left corner in pencil, "#9"; in black ink beneath the bust, "21 June 1864"; and upside down in pencil along the bottom, "1864 June 21st painted this head 23rd June covered the painting with very, very thin covering of lard T. Sully." Faint marks are barely visible beneath the dark background paint behind the head, possibly the
title of the Crusoe sketch on the opposite side. The most likely is its number. The inscription, "Property of my daughter," confirms that Sully gave these sketches to his daughter, Blanche.

The portrait is very rough, and the features are indistinct with brown smears for the eyes and nostrils and smudgy pink lips. The inscription and the fact that Sully painted it on the back of another work indicates that Sully painted it for experimental reasons to study the effects of coating an oil painting with lard without intending to execute a finished portrait. Throughout his Hints for Pictures, a short book of Sully's technical advice for beginning artists published in 1873, he mentions various experiments for preserving an oil painting.

Of the sixty paintings with literary subjects which Sully listed in his Register, twenty-one depict scenes from Robinson Crusoe, indicating that it was one of his favorite novels. These are the ten large paintings which burned at Earle's Gallery, a copy from Alexander Fraser in the collection of the Raydon Gallery, New York, and ten paintings from 1871 which were probably copies from memory of the burned paintings. On the reverse of Robinson Crusoe and Friday in the Raydon Gallery, Sully wrote, "copied from Fraser of London." He listed it in his Register and completed it on May 8,
1858. It's value was $100. Fraser probably refers to Alexander Fraser (1786-1865) who painted *Robinson Crusoe* Reading the Bible. He was born in Scotland and settled in London in 1813. Most of his paintings were of seascapes or literary subjects. Fraser's painting may have given Sully some ideas for his series, particularly the ninth sketch which is similar in subject matter.

In 1871 Sully listed ten more paintings of *Robinson Crusoe* in his register which he painted between February 2 and April 5 of that year. They were close in size to the Houston sketches, measuring 11" x 9", and Sully priced them at ten dollars each. These have the same subjects as the Houston sketches except for number nine. The register reads:

- Shipwreck of R. Crusoe A Sketch
- R. Crusoe Plundering the Wreck
- R. Crusoe No. 3 Building His Hut
- R. Crusoe in his Cave No. 4
- R. Crusoe observes a print of a foot No. 5
- R. Crusoe saves Fridays life No. 6
- R. C. and Friday building a Boat
- R. C. rescues Fridays father No. 8
- R. C. and the Captain & friend of the mutinous crew 9
- R. C. & his man Friday leave the Island No. 10

Sully died on November 5, 1872. During the last years of his life, he was primarily engaged in painting fancy
pictures and in copying his earlier works as well as paintings by other artists. Perhaps he used the Houston sketches as models for the 1871 paintings. The ninth painting from 1871, R.C. and the Captain & Friend of the Mutinous Crew 9, is nearer in subject to the ninth painting which burned at Earle's, Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday Rescue the English Captain and Companions from Their Distressed Situation, than it is to the ninth sketch from Houston.

The subjects of Sully's literary paintings listed in his Register usually were taken from Shakespeare, classic novels, children's books and poetry.10 As he did with Robinson Crusoe, Sully often painted several views from each work. Unfortunately, the majority of these either have been lost or are in private collections. Two examples with subjects taken from Shakespeare include Macbeth in the Witches Cave, 1840, and Portia and Shylock, 1835 (Figs. 26 and 27). Examples from classic children's stories are Cinderella at the Kitchen Fire from 1843 and The Pilot from 1841, a scene from James Fenimore Cooper's novel of that title (Figs. 28 and 29). Sully's illustrations of poetry include Pulling the Boat Ashore, a scene from Gertrude of Wyoming by Thomas Campbell and Lead me to Yonder Craggy Stoop from James Macpherson's Poems of Ossian, both pen and ink drawings from 1813 (Figs. 30 and 31).
Sully also made copies after the literary works of other artists, such as Musidora, a scene from James Thompson's Seasons. He copied it from Charles Robert Leslie's copy of Benjamin West's original, titled Arethusa which was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Fig. 32).

This interest in literary painting probably grew out of his family background as well as the artistic and intellectual climate of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He was the son of an actor and actress, Matthew and Sarah Chester Sully, and had three brothers and five sisters. He was born in Horncastle, Lincolnshire, England on June 19, 1783, and in 1792 the family immigrated to Charleston, South Carolina. Matthew Sully's brother-in-law, Thomas Wade West, had opened a theater in Charleston, and most of the Sully family became involved in it. Thomas on at least one occasion participated in an acrobatic performance after a play. His involvement with the theater probably stimulated both the themes and style of his literary paintings because he would have witnessed dramas firsthand, particularly the plays of Shakespeare, which he used for the subjects of several works. Sully also would have been familiar with stage sets which were sometimes designed by well-known, contemporary artists who borrowed ideas from famous paintings.
Sully's involvement with the theater continued throughout his life. One of his first patrons was an actor, Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, who encouraged Sully to come to New York where he was leasing the Park Theater. He advanced him funds until he began receiving portrait commissions and let him set up his studio in the theater.13

Several of Sully's friends who posed for him were among the most popular actors and actresses of his day. Some of his best-known portraits include William Burke Wood (1779-1861) in the Role of Charles de Moor, 1810, George Frederick Cooke (1750-1812) in the Role of Richard III, 1811, Frances Anne Kemble, 1832, and Mary Ann Wood (1802-1864) in the Role of Amina, 1836.14

Sully was not only part of the theatrical circle, but was also acquainted with contemporary writers. In "Recollections of an Old Painter," Sully discussed his friendship with Washington Irving whose books provided subjects for many American artists:

About this time (probably around 1814) I saw a great deal of Irving. When I had done with Decatur, Irving carried me up to West Point; thence we went to Livingstone and there parted. When I went out sketching he used to accompany me, and would employ his time in writing. He was in the habit of singing Mother Goose songs. . . .

Friendships between writers and artists were common during this time, and they sometimes advised one another on their work. An organization formed in London and New York which stimulated this relationship between literature and
painting was the Sketch Club, a group of artists and writers who met regularly at a member's home for discussion and refreshments. Usually, each member would draw a sketch from a topic proposed by the host, often a passage from literature. Sully does not mention the New York Sketch Club in his manuscripts, but it is likely that he was aware of its activities and perhaps visited one of its meetings during his trips to New York. Many of his friends were members, including William Dunlap, Washington Allston, Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant. He did, however, leave an account of a visit to the Sketch Club in London in his Journal on March 9, 1838:

My first visit to the evenings of the Sketching Club, at Leslie's. In his painting room was arranged a long table that accommodated 10 slights, desks and frames on which was sketched drawing paper, pencils of all kinds, charcoal - water colors, etc., were ready and after tea had been served, the numbers, 8 in number, and the guests, were invited to join the task of making a design from the story of Inkle and Yarco - during which, conversations went on, either a discussion of the story, costumes of the persons, etc. and at 10.30 Leslie took up all the designs and put them away until after supper; when they were shown at the head of the table and freely criticized and as the custom was, mine was inspected the last; as I have since that evening been honored by other invitations, I obtained the loan of their book of regulations, constitution and by-laws, which I here transcribe, in hope of being able to establish a similar association in Philadelphia.

Following this passage, Sully listed some of the topics selected from literature which were proposed for discussion and sketching: "The Reception of Duncan by Lady Macbeth," "Ophelia," "In the style of Cinderella," and "Rogers'
Treasures of Memory. It is uncertain whether Sully was able to establish a Sketching Club in Philadelphia, but undoubtedly those meetings in London gave him ideas for his literary paintings, such as the *Robinson Crusoe* series.20

Literary subjects were popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries among both English and American artists. Sully's ties to England were strong, for it was the place of his birth, even though he left there as a child of nine. By the age of twenty-one, Sully was hoping to visit and study in England; however, his brother Lawrence's death forced him to postpone his trip, so that he could take care of Lawrence's widow, Sarah Annis Sully and their three children. Two years later Sarah and Thomas were married and eventually had six children of their own. By 1809 Sully was able to make his trip to London with the assistance of his friend and patron, Benjamin Chew Wilcocks who devised a plan to finance the trip. He and four other patrons advanced Sully $200 each, and in return Sully was to paint a copy of a famous painting for each of them. He took a letter of introduction from Charles Willson Peale to Benjamin West who undertook Sully's artistic training and offered him advice on improving his portraiture. While in England, Sully worked diligently, copying the works of West, drawing from the live model for the first time, studying the paintings of old masters as well as his contemporaries, and visiting
private collections and exhibitions at the Royal Academy. He returned to Philadelphia in 1810. Sully made another visit to London with his daughter Blanche in 1837 that was financed by a commission from the Society of the Sons of Saint George, an association of British expatriots in Philadelphia. He was commissioned to paint the portrait of the recently crowned Queen Victoria.

Almost all of the artists Sully studied or worked with in England painted works with literary subject matter. A look at the literary paintings of Sully's English friends and teachers reveals their influence on his choice of subjects as well as his style. Sully's first teacher in London, Benjamin West, painted a number of literary works, and was involved in a large project for the illustration of the works of Shakespeare, the Boydell Shakespeare Library. John Boydell devised a plan to commission paintings by England's leading artists depicting scenes from the plays of Shakespeare which would then be engraved and issued in print form. The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery was in operation from 1793 to 1803 and included paintings by many of the artists Sully admired, including Sir Joshua Reynolds. Sully's *Hints for Pictures* is filled with passages from Reynolds' *Discourses on Art* and notes on Reynolds' technique taken from James Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*, published in 1813.
While in England Sully also studied with Henry Fuseli and attended his lectures at the Royal Academy. Fuseli's romantic style and imaginative interpretation of literature clearly had more impact on Sully than did the formal styles of West or Reynolds whose literary works are more in the style of grand history painting. Of the great school of English portraitists, Sully was most influenced by Sir Thomas Lawrence and was sometimes referred to as the American Lawrence because the two artists' romantic, painterly styles were so similar. Perhaps he saw some of Lawrence's literary paintings, or even those of Thomas Gainsborough while in London. The artist most associated with literary painting of this period is of course William Blake whose illustrations of his writing convey a mood of spirituality rather than telling a dramatic narrative. Even the great English landscapists of the period delved into literary painting, including John Constable, Richard Wilson and J.M.W. Turner.

The affinity between literature and painting was an integral part of nineteenth century Romanticism in America. This relationship is portrayed in Asher B. Durand's Kindred Spirits which Durand painted after the death of Thomas Cole to commemorate Cole's friendship with William Cullen Bryant. The painting symbolizes the similarity between Cole and Bryant's philosophies, whose works celebrate the beauty of America. As in the case of Bryant and Cole, many of the
American authors and artists dealt specifically with the American people and landscape. Their work is more contemporary than that of the English artists, and they often incorporated literary themes into the American scene. The American painters were inspired by the writing of their fellow countrymen, particularly James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant. Washington Allston, whose work was an important influence on Sully, even wrote a collection of poetry and a gothic romance, Monaldi. One of Sully's American students, Charles Robert Leslie, is best known for his literary paintings, primarily illustrations of Shakespeare.

Sully's literary painting is a mixture of trends both in England and America. He was inspired by subjects popular in England - Shakespeare's plays, Thomas Campbell's poetry and James Thompson's Seasons, yet he also turned to the work of American writers like Cooper. The Robinson Crusoe series demonstrates this dual influence. He chose an eighteenth century novel by an English author, but one with great appeal for the American reader that deals with the rewards of hard work and faith. He does not try to elevate the story to the level of grand history painting; instead he closely follows the words of Defoe in the depiction of the narrative as well as Crusoe's dress and the setting.

Why Sully chose Robinson Crusoe as the subject for a large series of paintings is an interesting question.
Although literary painting was popular during his career, *Robinson Crusoe* was not one of the literary subjects chosen by his contemporaries. He spent a good deal of time painting the series, from 1856 when he painted the preparatory sketches to October of 1858 when he finished the last large painting. He wanted to sell them for $300 each and must have hoped the American public would be responsive, probably because of the popularity of the novel. In *The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century*, Amy Cruse said,

Take, for example, the case of *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The evidence that these two books were among the most widely read—of any books of the time is overwhelming. No matter what biographical account is taken up, there is almost certain to be a mention that *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe* were read by its subject.33

It was probably the most highly praised book of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was discussed at length by eminent scholars such as Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Edgar Allen Poe.34

Although Sully is one of the rare artists who left detailed accounts of his work in his *Register* and *Journal*, he rarely discussed his work except in technical or financial terms. Both the *Register* and the *Journal* seem to have been kept for business and accounting records to document the delivery of paintings and fees received. His concern with his financial state is understandable, for he struggled continually to support his family. In *Hints for
Pictures, published in 1873 after his death, he provided information on laying out the palette, preparing canvas, varnishing oil paintings, repairing and preserving a painting, and the anatomy and proportions of the figure and face. He also described the specific practices and techniques of his artist friends, such as Benjamin West and Rembrandt Peale. Although he tells the young artist how to execute a good painting, he does not give advice on style or on the selection of subject matter. Unfortunately, he does not leave clues to his philosophy of painting or to the meaning he hoped his work conveyed.

He stated in the Register that the large series was painted "For myself," indicating that the story of Robinson Crusoe held particular interest for him. His contemporaries who wrote about Sully highly praised him, for his integrity, courtesy, intelligence, kindness to young artists and devotion to his work. In addition to their opinions, a perusal of Sully's Journal and correspondence gives the reader an impression of a quite serious and moral man. It seems likely that the story of Crusoe would have appealed to him because it is about the metamorphosis of a man's character from a shallow, irresponsible wanderer into a deeply religious man. Although today we often think of Robinson Crusoe as a novel for young people, it is a serious work, stressing the necessity for personal industry and discipline and the rewards of Christianity.
Perhaps an even more important reason is that Robinson Crusoe would have appealed to Sully as an artist. The nature of the story is ideally suited to his romantic, painterly style. Painting episodes from this novel provided an opportunity to depict man struggling against nature, man and himself. Sully created ten dramatic narratives which when viewed consecutively tell Crusoe's story and convey the state of his emotions during the important events of his twenty-eight year stay on an uninhabited tropical island.
CHAPTER TWO

THE SKETCHES

The Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe

In the beginning of Robinson Crusoe, Crusoe is an irresponsible young man who deserts his home out of boredom to become a world traveller. After several years, he settles down to become a Brazilian planter, but once again grows restless and sets out on another voyage. Somewhere in the vicinity of the Carribean Islands, a terrible storm at sea causes his ship to be grounded in sand. Because the ship is damaged and leaking, Crusoe and his mates are forced to abandon it in a small boat in hopes of reaching an island visible in the distance. However, a huge wave overturns their boat, drowning everyone but Crusoe. The first sketch, The Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe, does not depict the actual wreck of Robinson Crusoe's ship, rather a moment soon afterwards as he tries to swim to the island and is hurled against a rock (Fig. 1):

The last time of these two (waves) had well near been fatal to me; for the sea, having hurried me along as before, landed me, or rather dashed me, against a piece of rock, and that with such force as it left me senseless, and indeed helpless, as to my own deliverance; for the blow, taking my side and breast, beat the breath as it were quite out of my body; and had it returned again immediately, I must have been strangled in the water; but I recovered a little before the return of the waves, and seeing I should be covered again with the water, I resolved to hold fast by a piece of the rock, and so to hold my breath, if possible, till the wave went back; now as the waves
were not so high as at first, being near land, I held my hold till the wave abated, and then fetched another run, which brought me so near the shore that the next wave, though it went over me, yet did not so swallow me up as to carry me away, and the next run I took, I got to the mainland, where to my great comfort, I clambored up the cliffs to the shore and sat me down upon the grass, free from danger, and quite out of the reach of the water.

Sully accurately follows Defoe's descriptions of events and Crusoe's appearance, telling the story visually. In the first sketch he is a healthy, young man, but unable to control his destiny, totally at the mercy of nature. As the sketches progress, Crusoe ages and the viewer follows not only what happens to him, but also the change in his character.

Because these are preparatory studies, Sully did not attempt a finished portrait of Crusoe. He filled in facial features with broad strokes of dark paint and did not delineate his fingers and toes or any small details of his clothing. Sully may have chosen to portray Crusoe in this manner because Defoe does not concentrate on Crusoe's physical traits, but on the inner man. Later in the novel Defoe describes Crusoe's costume in detail because it reveals the ingenuity with which he utilizes his available resources to insure his survival. It would be interesting to know if Sully attempted a more specific portrayal of Crusoe in the large painting.

This is the most powerful sketch in the group, effectively conveying Crusoe's terror and exhaustion. It
has the simplest composition, consisting only of the stormy sky, the sea and Crusoe. The round, dark shape behind him must be the rock described in the quotation he used for the Earle brochure. Crusoe leans against this rock slightly to the left of the center of the picture with his right hand raised to his chest, perhaps to still his beating heart. He gazes heavenward as if praying for his deliverance.

The fact that these are preparatory studies lends to their success, for Sully's loose and rapid technique suits the stormy setting. He creates a sense of movement, accentuating the turbulent atmosphere with the curving sweep of his brush. The line of movement flows from the waves curling up behind Crusoe downward to the sand and back up around Crusoe, enforcing the unceasing return of the waves. The strong wind is blowing Crusoe's shirt and hair out to his right, again emphasizing the sense of movement. The viewer can almost feel the force of the winds and hear the roar of the waves and the clash of thunder.

The color scheme also adds to the drama of the painting, for Sully uses a dark palette for this sketch, consisting only of tans, deep browns and black with a few touches of pure white, gold and rust. The sky filling the upper half of the picture is almost totally black except for faint touches of rust pigment barely visible beneath the layer of black, hinting at light behind the dense storm clouds. The waves rising up behind Crusoe are muddy green
with dabs of white for the caps, and in the bottom of the painting the waves are receding, revealing the gold sand of the ocean floor. Crusoe's face is pale from fright and exhaustion, and he wears only dark tan, knee-length pants and a long beige shirt. His shoes, stockings and cap must have been torn away by the fierce waves.

Sully borrowed the subject matter of his first sketch directly from Stothard's, *Robinson Crusoe Shipwrecked and Clinging to a Rock* (Fig. 15). The composition is basically the same in these two views of Crusoe shipwrecked. Crusoe rests against a rock in the middle of the picture plane, a large wave looms up behind him, and the waves recede beneath his feet, revealing the sea bottom. Sully also borrowed the appearance of Crusoe. In both works he wears a loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirt and short pants and his long, dark hair and shirt blow in the wind. On the other hand, Sully made some important changes. In Stothard's design the rock is much larger than Crusoe, framing the figure and giving a sense of security. Sully reduced it by half. The smaller rock does not provide the same sense of security as the larger one does. The raging sky and sea fill most of Sully's painting. Crusoe looks lost amidst their vastness. In addition, Sully altered Crusoe's stance. In Stothard's design Crusoe stands with his feet firmly on the ground and clings to the rock behind him with both arms, looking at the viewer over his shoulder. The stance of
Crusoe in Sully's painting is less awkward, for he faces the viewer from a frontal position, yet at the same time his hold is more tenuous. His feet barely touch the ground, his grip is slipping, and the angle of his body suggests that he is about to be swept away by the waves. Stothard's Crusoe is stouter and more confident of his ability to overcome his situation. Sully's work is much more effective because of these changes, more accurately conveying Crusoe's condition as Defoe described it.

Since its first publication in 1719, Robinson Crusoe has been republished numerous times with illustrations by many different artists. Often these illustrators chose to depict many of the same episodes from the novel as did Sully and Stothard. Artists probably chose these episodes because they are the most important and exciting events in the novel, which for the most part is a detailed accounting of Crusoe's daily activities - building a home, growing crops, raising animals, making tools and reading the Bible. The illustrators seem to have relied heavily on previous editions for inspiration, and Stothard surely looked at prior publications for ideas. Because there are so many editions of Robinson Crusoe which Stothard and Sully may have seen, it is difficult to examine all of them for similarities to their work. From looking at a few of those illustrated editions, it is evident that Stothard and Sully were familiar with the traditional depictions of the novel.
Depictions of Crusoe's shipwreck appear to have slowly evolved into the format designed by Stothard. He probably took the subject from one of the early illustrations of the shipwreck such as Figure 33 from 1748 which depicts the seamen drowning, the ship in the background and a man, possibly Crusoe standing on the shore (Fig. 33). Another example from 1780 does include the figure of Crusoe clinging to a rock, but mainly focuses attention on the floundering ship and boat (Fig. 34). Stothard's design for this episode seems to have become the standard with illustrators. An illustration from an 1805 edition, titled Robinson Crusoe's Dangerous Escape up the Cliff is basically the same as his with Crusoe clinging to a large rock behind him (Fig. 35).

Visit to the Wreck

The second sketch, Visit to the Wreck, depicts Crusoe's activities soon after he has reached the island and realized that he probably will not be rescued for a long time (Fig. 2). He swam to the ship which was grounded about a mile off-shore to see if any food or supplies were left on board. While aboard ship, he gathered loose pieces of lumber and tied them together, forming a raft to carry his provisions back to the island:

My raft was now strong enough to bear any reasonable weight; my next care was what to load it with and how to preserve what I laid upon it from the surf of the sea; but I was not long considering this; I first laid all the planks or boards upon it that I could get, and having considered well what I most wanted, I first got
three of the seamen's chests, which I had broken open and emptied, and lowered them down upon my raft; the first of these I filled with provisions, viz., bread, rice, three Dutch cheeses, five pieces of dried goat's flesh, which we lived much upon, and a little remainder of European corn. . . . My next care was for some ammunition and arms; there were two very good fowling pieces in the great cabin, and two pistols; these I secured first, with some powder horns, and a small bag of shot, and two old rusty swords. . . . And now I thought myself pretty well freighted, and began to think how I should get to shore with them, having neither sail, oar, or rudder; and the least capful of wind would have overset all my navigation.

Already the metamorphosis of Crusoe's character is beginning. For the first time in his life, he cannot be an irresponsible drifter content to let events occur as fate dictates. He is forced to use all of his creativity and physical and mental strength to fight for survival. Sully has portrayed Crusoe as a more powerful character in the second sketch, forcefully pushing away from the side of the ship with a pole. His raft is loaded with tools, boxes and a sack of grain, evidence of his will to survive. Crusoe has changed clothes and is now wearing a dark waist-length shirt and long, white pants.

Crusoe and the raft are dominated by the side of the ship which fills the left third of the painting and by the massive forms in the background. Two indistinct objects in the right distance appear to be either palm trees or seagulls. The peaked mass rising up behind Crusoe is beige and gold, and could be either a hill on the island or a tidal wave. Details become a little clearer in the
foreground, but Sully roughly filled in the objects on the raft and Crusoe's features. Like the first sketch, this painting also possesses a sense of movement due to the strong horizontal line created by Crusoe's pole and the diagonal formed by his straining body. The viewer can feel Crusoe's effort as he tries to launch his raft; he is precariously poised on his toes and looks as if he might pitch headlong into the ocean if he were to lose his balance. Sully involves the viewer by projecting the wooden rudder on the side of the ship into his space.

Again Sully chose to use a palette of mainly tans and browns with the only additional touches of color being white and aqua. However, this painting is more light-filled than number one, for blue-white sky is now visible. Light falls across Crusoe's white pants and the floor of his raft, forming a shadow behind him. The ship and the mass behind it overpower Crusoe, shadowing the upper half of his body. The dark colors and massive shapes give the painting a gloomy atmosphere, suggesting that all is still not safe with Crusoe.

Sully borrowed the subject matter and composition for his second sketch from Stothard's, *Robinson Crusoe Upon His Raft* (Fig. 16); however, he made important changes which give his painting greater impact. He reverses Stothard's composition, placing the ship on the left side of the painting which is how it originally appeared in the 1790
edition. In Stothard's design the shady, tree-filled island is clearly seen in the background with Crusoe's habitat already set up. The sea is calm and the sun is shining, clearly the storm is over. Crusoe stands firmly upon his raft and lightly shoves off, and has changed into a clean, untattered outfit with a dashing scarf tied about his neck. Crusoe looks as if he is engaged in an ordinary trip upon his raft and does not have to strain to launch it. Stothard's raft is fully visible to the viewer; whereas Sully allows the raft to enter the viewer's space. Because of these changes, Sully's interpretation of this subject is much more dramatic.

This episode was popular with the illustrators of Robinson Crusoe and was included in a number of editions. One example is from the 1722 edition published in London by W. Taylor who was the first publisher of the novel (Fig. 36). Here, Crusoe has loaded his raft and is floating away from the ship toward the island in the background. The major difference between this illustration and Stothard's is that in this example the action takes place in the middle ground, giving a clear view of the ship and raft. In a 1780 illustration Crusoe nears the shore, and the ship is sinking in the far distance (Fig. 37).

**Building a Shelter**

For the site of his island home, Crusoe chose a flat plain located on the side of a hill so that the hill would
provide protection from behind. In sketch number three, 

**Building a Shelter,** Crusoe is hard at work constructing his new habitat (Fig. 3):

Before I set up my tent, I drew a half circle before the hollow place, which took in about ten yards in its semi-diameter from the rock, and twenty yards in its diameter, from its beginning and ending.

In this half circle I pitched two rows of strong stakes, driving them into the ground till they stood very firm like piles, the biggest end being out of the ground about five foot and a half, and sharpened on the top. The two rows did not stand above six inches from one another.

Then I took pieces of cable which I had cut in the ship, and laid them in rows one upon another, within the circle between these two rows of stakes, up to the top, placing other stakes in the inside, leaning against them about two foot and a half high, like a spur to a post; and this fence was so strong that neither man nor beast could get into it or over it. This cost me a great deal of time and labour, especially to cut the piles in the woods, bring them to the place, and drive them into the earth.

The entrance into this place I made to be, not by a door, but by a short ladder to go over the top, which ladder, when I was in, I lifted over after me, and so I was completely fenced in and fortified, as I thought from all the world. . .

Crusoe is engaged in raising one of the poles for his fence, an activity which allows Sully to create a sense of movement. Three diagonal lines are formed: by the angle of Crusoe's body as he strains to lift the post, by the post itself and by the line of the tent entering the picture from the left. The side of the tent crosses Crusoe's body near his waist, forming an angle which focuses attention in the center of the painting. The dark crates and barrels in the left foreground jut out of the picture plane, so that the
eye of the viewer is forced to travel around them, across
the ground scattered with tools to the figure of Crusoe.

This sketch has a much lighter atmosphere than the
first two. Sully's technique is painterly, blending the
objects and figure with soft edges to create a peaceful
aura. An orange glow emanates from the sky, and he repeated
touches of orange in the sky, fence posts, tent and body of
Crusoe. Crusoe's black pet dog, who will appear throughout
the series, sits behind him, quietly watching him work.
Crusoe is still a muscular young man, wearing the same
clothing, a blue shirt and off-white pants.

None of Stoithard's designs depict this scene, nor do
any of the other illustrations I have seen from early
ditions, but again because there are literally hundreds of
them, it is impossible to state for certain that Sully was
the first to depict this episode.

In His Cave

In the fourth sketch, Crusoe has completed his living
quarters that he was working on in the third. He hollowed
out a cave in the cliff behind his fence and made it as
comfortable as possible by adding shelves and handmade
furniture. In His Cave depicts Crusoe seated in his new
home busily at work (Fig. 4):

And now I began to apply myself to make such necessary
things as I found I most wanted, particularly a chair
and table; for without these I was not able to enjoy
the few comforts I had in the world; I could not write
or eat, or do several things, with so much pleasure
without a table.

So I went to work; and here I must needs observe that
as reason is the substance and original of the
mathematics, so by stating and squaring everything by
reason, and by making the most rational judgment of
things, every man may be in time master of every
mechanic art. I had never handled a tool in my life,
and yet in time, by labour, application, and
contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but
I could have made it, especially if I had had tools;
however, I made abundance of things even without tools,
and some with no more tools than an adze and a hatchet,
which perhaps were never made that way before, and that
with infinite labour. For example, if I wanted a
board, I had no other way but to cut down a tree, set
it on an edge before me, and hew it flat on either side
with my axe, till I had brought it to be thin as a
plank, and then dub it smooth with my adze. It is
true, by this method I could make but one board out of
a whole tree, but this I had no remedy for but
patience, any more than I had for the prodigious deal
of time and labour which it took me up to make a plank
or board. But my time or labour was little worth, and
so it was as well employed one way as another.

Crusoe is seated on a crate surrounded by his pets, the
black dog, a cat and a bird, probably Poll, the parrot he
adopted who soon became very dear to him. Because he wanted
to survive, he became quite industrious after his shipwreck.
He is chopping at a piece of wood with his hatchet, forming
one of the boards described in the passage above. Crusoe
has changed so much by this point that nothing bores him,
not even spending weeks making one board. Crusoe is better
groomed, but the bottoms of his pants have frayed.

The mood of this sketch is much quieter than the
previous three because it is an interior scene with little
movement. It has a peaceful feeling, for the cave is bathed
in a golden glow. The shadows falling off Crusoe's leg indicate that the light source is the mouth of the cave behind him. The whole picture is painted in tans, browns and beiges with faint touches of turquoise in the walls of the cave. Poll adds a splash of color with her red head and green wings.

Sully borrowed the basic idea and several small details from Stothard's, **Robinson Crusoe at Work in His Cave**, but he made many changes (Fig. 17). In Stothard's rendering Crusoe is seated in profile on a box in his cave, carving a tool, with his animals lounging near him as in Sully's sketch; however, the mouth of the cave is visible and opens to a view of Crusoe's fence and the forest beyond it. Stothard's view is much more detailed, the cave is filled with tools and supplies which do not look as if they were roughly fashioned by hand. Sully has followed Defoe's text more closely, attempting to depict the primitive conditions Crusoe was forced to endure. His work is also more successful because he has painted a more enclosed and darker setting which imparts a sense of the loneliness of Crusoe's situation.

Stothard could have been one of the first illustrators to depict this scene, but his design undoubtedly influenced other illustrators prior to Sully. **Robinson Crusoe Contemplating on the Happiness of His Situation** from 1793 is a similar cave scene with Crusoe seated at his table,
surrounded by his pets and making something, but the title suggests the artist intended it to be a happy scene illustrating one of the passages where Crusoe contemplates his many blessings (Fig. 38).

**Foot Impression in the Sand**

The fifth sketch, *Foot Impression in the Sand*, illustrates an event which occurs many years after those portrayed in the previous four sketches (Fig. 5). Although he often dreamed of having a companion, Crusoe had reconciled himself to his complete isolation. Then one day as he walks along the shoreline, he discovers the sign of another human, a footprint in the sand (Fig. 5):

> It happened one day about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprized with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition; I listened, I looked round me, I could hear nothing, nor see anything; I went up to a rising ground to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one, I could see no other impression but that one; I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the very print of a foot, toes, heel, and every part of a foot; how it came thither I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man; nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes a frightened imagination represented things to me in; how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange, unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way.
This is one of the most dramatic sketches in the series. Sully effectively captured Crusoe's overwhelming surprise in his stance; his legs are stretched wide, his right hand is raised with the fingers spread as if to ward off the unknown, and he hunches over slightly to stare fixedly at the footprint. Crusoe has a beard and is wearing his island costume which he carefully contrived for the most comfort and protection. It consisted of a goatskin cap, pants and jacket with his tools, pouches and weapons attached. He made a large umbrella for protection from the glaring sun, and in his surprise at sight of the print, he has dropped it behind him. The line of Crusoe's body and gun coupled with the direction of his gaze lead the viewer's eye straight to the footprint.

As in the first sketch, the setting is stark, dominated by the cloudy sky and the rough sea. Three faint seagulls fly overhead and Crusoe's black dog is a dark shadow behind him. It is daytime, but the atmosphere is hazy, enhancing the frightening mood. Sully painted this sketch predominantly in shades of dull blue. The sky is composed of patches of smoky blues and aqua with touches of white light filtering through. The blue and white paint of the sky overlaps that of the deeper blue sea which turns golden in the waves. The caps of the waves are quick dabs of pure white pigment.
Sully took Stothard's conception of this scene, 
*Robinson Crusoe Discovers the Print of a Man's Foot*, and altered it to create a more expressive, romantic painting (Fig. 18). Stothard depicted Crusoe walking along the shore with his dog in his improvised costume and carrying his gun on his shoulder just as Sully did; however, he positioned Crusoe with his side and back to the viewer, and does not as effectively convey Crusoe's state of mind. Stothard's Crusoe enters the picture from the right and is merely pausing to look at the print, for his right foot is raised to continue walking. In contrast, Sully's Crusoe is reacting with shock and horror.

This subject and basic composition appeared in earlier illustrations of *Robinson Crusoe* (Figs. 39 and 40). The latter illustration from 1805 is closer to Sully's interpretation of this scene than Stothard's, for Crusoe recoils in surprise, flings out his arm and has dropped his umbrella behind him. It seems likely that Sully would have seen other illustrations such as this which portrayed Crusoe's shock and included such minor details as the fallen umbrella.

**Saving the Life of Friday**

Not long after the discovery of the footprint, Crusoe finds out that natives are periodically invading his island by canoe to engage in cannibalism. He was terrified of
being discovered by the cannibals, yet at the same time hungered for human companionship. One day while he was secretly watching them, the prisoner who was about to be eaten, broke away, and Crusoe helped him to escape. In *Saving the Life of Friday* Crusoe is about to shoot one of the cannibals (Fig. 6). He names the prisoner Friday, and he soon becomes Crusoe's helper and dearest friend:

> It came now very warmly upon my thoughts, and indeed irresistibly, that now was my time to get me a servant, and perhaps a companion, or assistant; and that I was called plainly by Providence to save this poor creature's life; I immediately ran down the ladders with all possible expedition, for they (his guns) were both but at the foot of the ladders, as I observed above; and getting up again, with the same haste, to the top of the hill, I crossed towards the sea; and having a very short cut, and all down hill, clapped myself in the way between the pursuers and the pursued, hollering aloud to him that fled, who, looking back, was at first perhaps as much frightened at me as at them; but I beckoned with my hand to him to come back, and in the meantime I slowly advanced towards the two that followed; then rushing at once upon the foremost, I knocked him down with the stock of my piece; I was loath to fire, because I would not have the rest hear; though at that distance, it would not have been easily heard; and being out of sight of the smoke too, they would not have easily known what to make of it. Having knocked this fellow down, the other who pursued him stopped, as if he had been frightened; and I advanced apace towards him; but as I came nearer, I perceived presently he had a bow and arrow, and was fitting it to shoot at me; so I was then necessitated to shoot at him first; which I did, and killed him at the first shoot.41

In Sully's sketch, the cannibals have chased Friday into the lush forest. The pursuer Crusoe hit in the head lies dead at his feet, and the other villain seen in the distance is reaching into his quiver for an arrow. Friday
stands helpless in a state of shock with his hand raised to his mouth. Sully creates tension by depicting the moment just before Crusoe kills the second native. Crusoe lunges forward to shoot him before he can release another arrow. The branches of the trees are wild and twisted, accentuating the threatening mood of the painting.

Sully's application of paint is most expressive in this sketch. He used a predominately green palette combined with deep brown and touches of rust, and built up the dense foliage with rapid, short brushstrokes. Very little light is able to filter through the trees, except for a small patch of deep acquamarine sky in the upper left corner. Friday's skin is dark, chocolate brown, contrasting with Crusoe's white costume and pink legs. In the lower left corner is peach-colored sand which fades into green grass under the trees.

Sully adapted the composition of Stothard's, Robinson Crusoe First Sees and Rescues His Man Friday, for this sketch (Fig. 19). In both compositions Crusoe and Friday stand in the right foreground with a fallen man at their feet, and Crusoe fires at the second man who stands under a tall tree in the middle distance, preparing to shoot an arrow. Sully's painting is, however, much more dramatic and expressive. In his sketch Crusoe's back is to the viewer, and the only evidence of the fallen native is his foot sticking out to the left of Crusoe's feet. Stothard's trees
are pleasing, whereas, Sully's enhance the menacing atmosphere. He retained the use of one predominant tree in the left distance, a device which draws attention to the second pursuer standing under it, threatening our hero. However, instead of Stothard's tall, thin palm tree, Sully's tree is shorter with limbs reaching out over the pursuer's head. The tree on the right behind Friday curves inward, whereas, Stothard's trees are well-ordered and straight. In both works Crusoe wears his familiar island dress, but it is the figure of Friday who Sully changed. Although Stothard's Friday wears a loin cloth, he looks like a Greek athlete. Sully retained the loin cloth, but made his Friday look more like an uncivilized native with dark brown skin and long, unruly hair.

This was a favorite subject with illustrators of *Robinson Crusoe*, probably because besides the shipwreck, it is the most important event in Crusoe's story. In an early illustration from 1722 the illustrator depicted a panoramic view of the landscape with the action taking place near the sea instead of amidst the forest. In the right middle distance Crusoe is firing his gun at a native who is aiming an arrow at him (Fig. 41). Three other natives appear to be pleading for their lives in the foreground, one may be Friday, and others dance around a fire in the background. By 1780 an illustrator was much closer to Stothard's design by focusing on the scene to the right of the stream.
involving the exchange of fire between Crusoe and the cannibal (Fig. 42). The illustrator of *Friday's Rescue* extracted this section of the illustration and enlarged it; however, he retained the setting near the shore line with hills in the distance.

**Boat Building by Robinson Crusoe and Friday**

Thoughts of leaving the island were never far from Crusoe's mind, and he made several attempts to build a boat, but was unsuccessful until he obtained Friday's help. In the seventh sketch, *Boat Building by Robinson Crusoe and Friday*, the two characters are busily constructing a boat, hoping to voyage to Friday's home where other Europeans had landed (Fig. 7):

> There were trees enough in the island to have built a little fleet, not piraguas and canoes, but even of good large vessels. But the main thing I looked at was to get one so near the water that we might launch it when it was made, to avoid the mistake I committed at first.

> At last, Friday pitched upon a tree, for I found he knew much better than I what kind of wood was fittest for it; nor can I tell to this day, what wood to call the tree we cut down, except that it was very like the tree we call fustic, or between that and the Nicaragua wood, for it was much of the same color and smell. Friday was for burning the hollow or cavity of this tree out, to make it for a boat. But I showed him how rather to cut it out with tools, which after I showed him how to use, he did very handily; and in about a month's labour, we finished it and made it very handsome, especially when with our axes, which I showed him how to handle, we cut and hewed the outside into the true shape of a boat; after this, however, it cost us near a fortnight's time to get her along, as it were inch by inch, upon great rollers into the water.
By this point in the story, Crusoe had taught Friday not only to speak English, but also about the civilized world of the white man. Through these conversations as well as their work together, they formed a very close friendship. This scene exhibits the harmony between the two men; Friday is at work in the canoe hollowing it out, while Crusoe stands beside the boat ready to come to his assistance. The tools of their labour have been scattered on the ground around them. *Robinson Crusoe* is not only the story of the metamorphosis of Crusoe's character, but also of Friday's. He was an ignorant pagan when Crusoe rescued him, but through Crusoe's teaching becomes a questioning thinker and a deeply religious man. Friday looks more civilized in Sully's second rendering of him; now conscious of nudity, he wears a pair of Crusoe's breeches, and his skin is a lighter shade of brown.

All of the compositional elements in the sketch direct the viewer's gaze to the center of the picture where Sully placed the heads and joined hands of the figures, emphasizing the friendship they shared. Friday's gaze directs the viewer's attention to Crusoe who in turn looks back up at him. The tall palm tree on the left forms a c-curve around the boat and figures, while the pair of trees on the right branch out over their heads. The saw on the ground points toward the palm tree, and the rifle leads the eye up to the pair of trees. At the same time the boards
supporting the side of the boat lead to the ax which in turn directs the gaze to the hands of Crusoe and Friday. The lines of Friday's belt and Crusoe's suspenders also direct attention to their clasped hands.

Sully's technique is vigorously painterly in this sketch, building up the foliage as he did in figure six by dabbing touches of pure green over a rust and tan background, giving it an impressionistic feeling. The background and figures are painted loosely while his touch sharpens for the boat and tools. The dark foliage serves as a background for the beige and white figures and the light tan boat and sand.

Again, Sully utilized Stothard's subject and basic design for this sketch, borrowing from his Robinson Crusoe and Friday Making a Boat (Fig. 20). Although Sully retained the major elements of Stothard's design, he gives his composition more unity by changing the position of the figures so that they face each other to convey the impression that they are working together. By diminishing the size of the boat and enlarging the figures, he focusses attention on the characters. Stothard's design is more mundane, lacking the dramatic narrative of Sully's sketch.

Friday's Father Rescued

Later in the novel, Crusoe once again valiantly rescues two natives from the cannibals. He and Friday spied a large
group of the cannibals bringing prisoners to the island to be devoured. They rushed at them, firing shot after shot to give the impression that they were much greater in number than two, and succeeded in either killing or scaring them all away. When several cannibals tried to escape in one of the canoes, Crusoe and Friday jumped into another canoe in pursuit. There they discovered one of the prisoners huddled in its bottom. This prisoner turns out to be Friday's father, and the eighth sketch depicts his joyous reunion with his son (Fig. 8):

Friday would fain have had me take one of their canoes and pursue them; and indeed I was very anxious about their escape, lest, carrying the news home to their people, they should come back perhaps with two or three hundred of their canoes and devour us by mere multitude; so I consented to pursue them by sea, and running to one of their canoes, I jumped in and bade Friday follow me; but when I was in the canoe, I was surprised to find another poor creature lie there alive, bound hand and foot, as the Spaniard was, for the slaughter, and almost dead with fear, not knowing what the matter was; for he had not been able to look up over the side of the boat, he was tied so hard, neck and heels, and had been tied so long that he had really but little life in him.

I immediately cut the twisted flags, or rushes, which they had bound him with, and would have helped him up; but he could not stand or speak, but groaned most piteously, believing, it seems, still that he was only unbound in order to be killed.

When Friday came to him, I bade him speak to him and tell him of his deliverance, and pulling out my bottle, made him give the poor wretch a dram, which, with the news of his being delivered, revived him, and he sat up in the boat; but when Friday came to hear him speak, and looked in his face, it would have moved anyone to
tears, to have seen how Friday kissed him, embraced him, hugged him, cried, laughed, holloed, jumped about, danced, sang, then cried again, wrung his hands, beat his own face and head, and then sang and jumped about again, like a distracted creature. It was a good while before I could make him speak to me, or tell me what was the matter; but when he came a little to himself he told me that it was his father.

It is not easy for me to express how it moved me to see what ecstasy and filial affection had worked in this poor savage, at the sight of his father and of his being delivered from death; nor indeed can I describe half the extravagances of his affection after this; for he went into the boat and out of the boat a great many times. When he went in to him, he would sit down by him, open his breast, and hold his father's head close to his bosom, half an hour together, to nourish it; then he took his arm and ankles, which were numbed and stiff with the binding, and chafed and rubbed them with his hands; and I, perceiving what the case was, gave him some rum out of my bottle to rub them with, which did them a great deal of good.

This is a tender scene with Friday clutching his father to his breast in the canoe. Crusoe stands apart in the center of the picture, giving them a moment of privacy, yet watching them over his right shoulder. Although Crusoe is the largest and the central figure, the direction of his gaze combined with the lines of the tree leaning to the left and the horizon direct attention to the figures in the boat. Because this is a preparatory sketch, the composition is somewhat unresolved. The tall tree behind Crusoe appears to be shooting out of his shoulder, and the Spaniard, who was rescued along with Friday's father, seated in the background looks as though he were floating on top of the fire. The canoe is rolling on the crest of a wave and looks as if it is about to pitch Friday and his father into the sea.
Although this is a quiet, emotional scene, signs of the battle which just took place are evident. Crusoe is holding a rifle while other guns are scattered on the ground, a red and yellow fire is burning behind him, and the sky is filled with brownish-gray smoke from the gunfire.

The coloring of this sketch is similar to the others, consisting primarily of muted tans, browns and greens with touches of blue. Friday's father is a dark, chocolate brown nude, contrasting with his lighter-skinned son. Crusoe still wears his white island costume.

Sully did not use a design of Stothard's for this work, but perhaps took the idea for the subject from one of the earlier illustrated editions of the novel, such as an example from 1748 also titled Friday's Father Rescued (Fig. 43). In this illustration, Crusoe and Friday run at the natives from the right of the picture, firing their guns, while a group of the cannibals dance around the fire in the background. Several others try to escape in a canoe. The prisoners are tied up in the lower left corner. Sully's depiction of this episode is very different, for he chose to depict the moment after the battle is over. His sketch tells a more romantic story because he portrays the happiness of Friday and his father after they discover each other.
Sketch Nine

Sully painted the portrait of a man's head on the back of the ninth sketch, making it impossible to read its title. However, it is not the preparatory study for the ninth painting burned at Earle's Gallery titled Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday Rescue the English Captain and Companions from Their Distressed Situation. In sketch nine Crusoe and Friday are seated on crates inside the cave, and Crusoe holds an open book, which must be his Bible since it was the only book he possessed (Fig. 9). He often read to Friday from the Bible to teach him to read and about Christianity. As Crusoe's character develops he becomes a devout Christian and feels compelled to convert Friday:

My grief sat lighter upon me, my habitation grew comfortable to me beyond measure; and when I reflected that in this solitary life which I had been confined to, I had not only been moved myself to look up to Heaven and to seek to the Hand that had brought me there, but was now to be made an instrument under Providence to save the life and, for aught I knew, the soul of a poor savage, and bring him to the true knowledge of religion, and of the Christian doctrine, that he might know Christ Jesus, to know whom is life eternal; I say, when I reflected upon all these things, a secret joy ran through every part of my soul, and I frequently rejoiced that ever I was brought to this place, which I had so often thought the most dreadful of all afflictions that could possibly have befallen me.

In this thankful frame I continued all the remainder of my time, and the conversation which employed the hours between Friday and I was such as made the three years which we lived there together perfectly and completely happy, if any such thing as complete happiness can be formed in a sublunary state. The savage was now a good Christian, a much better than I; though I have reason to hope, and bless God for it, that we were equally penitent, and comforted, restored penitents; we had
here the Word of God to read and no farther off from His Spirit to instruct than if we had been in England.

I always applied myself to reading the Scripture to let him know, as well as I could, the meaning of what I read; and he again, by his serious inquiries and questions, made me, as I said before, a much better scholar in the Scripture knowledge than I should ever have been by my own private mere reading. Another thing I cannot refrain from observing here also, viz., how infinite and inexpressible a blessing it is that the knowledge of God and of the doctrine of salvation by Christ Jesus is so plainly laid down in the Word of God, so easy to be received and understood, that as the bare reading the Scripture made me capable of understanding enough of my duty to carry me directly on to the great work of sincere repentance for my sins, and laying hold of a Saviour for life and salvation, to a stated reformation in practice, and obedience to all God's commands, and this without any teacher or instructor (I mean, human), so the same plain instruction sufficiently served to the enlightening this savage creature and bringing him to be such a Christian as I have known few equal to him in my life.44

The setting of this scene is the same as that of figure four, In His Cave (Fig. 4). Crusoe sits with his back to the viewer facing Friday who sits on a crate. Sully makes it obvious that Crusoe is the teacher by seating him at a higher level. Crusoe gestures with his raised left hand, emphasizing a point from his reading, and Friday listens with rapt attention.

The coloring of this sketch is similar to that of the others, consisting primarily of tans and browns with spots of bright color, particularly the parrot's blue breast and red head. Crusoe's hair has turned gray, adding to the impression of his wisdom. The light source must be the mouth of the cave which the viewer cannot see located behind
Friday. The brighter colors, blue and yellow, appear in the wall of the cave behind him, and the colors darken towards Crusoe who sits further back in the cave.

This is the only instance in which Sully did not depict events chronologically as they occurred in the novel. Defoe describes this episode before those portrayed in sketches seven and eight. It seems that Sully wanted this series to be viewed sequentially, so that the story of Robinson Crusoe could be read visually. He changed the subject matter of the ninth large painting to the rescue of the English captain which fits chronologically in Sully's series. Without knowledge of the arrival of the English ship, Crusoe's departure in the tenth painting would not make sense to the viewer. Sully did not borrow from Stothard for the ninth sketch nor have I found one of the earlier illustrations with the subject of Crusoe reading to Friday in the cave.

He possibly took the idea for this subject from Alexander Fraser's painting, *Robinson Crusoe Reading the Bible*, which he copied in 1858 (Fig. 25). Although Sully probably painted the ninth sketch prior to the copy of Fraser's painting, he may have been familiar with Fraser's work at that time. In both the copy and the sketch Crusoe and Friday are seated in the cave, and Crusoe is reading the Bible. Sully, like Fraser, seated Crusoe at the table, but turned him to face Friday directly. He also used a crate
for Friday's chair and retained several of the minor
details, the parrot, barrel, coiled rope and horn hanging on
the wooden beam. Sully's view of the cave is narrower than
Fraser's, creating a more intimate atmosphere. He also
changed Crusoe's position. In Fraser's painting Crusoe
casually lounges in his chair, and in Sully's depiction he
sits up straight and is more intent on his reading.

Robinson Crusoe and His Man
Friday Leave the Island

The final sketch, Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday
Leave the Island, serves as an appropriate ending to Sully's
series which began with the shipwreck that landed Crusoe on
the island (Fig. 10). Crusoe is finally able to leave after
twenty-eight years because an English ship had accidentally
landed there. Some of its crewmembers had mutineed and
brought their captive captain to Crusoe's shore. Crusoe
with the aid of Friday, his father and the Spaniard was able
to rescue the captain. In return the captain offered them
passage home. Crusoe and Friday, assisted by three sailors,
walk up a plank to board a small canoe which will carry them
to the ship anchored in the distance. Three others,
possibly the disgruntled mutineers who were to be left
behind, stand off to the left. Crusoe turns around and
raises his hat, perhaps in farewell to his island, which had
supported and sustained him for so long:
When I took leave of this island, I carried on board for relics the great goatskin cap I made, my umbrella, and one of my parrots; also I forgot not to take the money I formerly mentioned, which had lain by me so long useless that it was grown rusty, or tarnished, and could hardly pass for silver, till it had been a little rubbed and handled; as also the money I found in the wreck of the Spanish ship.

And thus I left the island, the 19th of December, as I found by the ship's account, in the year 1686, after I had been upon it eight-and twenty-years, two months, and nineteen days; being delivered from this second captivity the same day of the month that I first made my escape in the barco-longo, from among the Moors of Saltee.

In this vessel, after a long voyage, I arrived in England, the 11th of June, in the year 1687, having been thirty-and-five years absent.

Sketch ten is stylistically different from the first nine. It is busier with eight figures instead of one to four as in the others. The figures also are much larger and set closer to the foreground plane. Although Sully's technique is loose and painterly throughout the whole series, this last sketch has a more hard-edged appearance because the objects and figures are roughly outlined in black. The features of the men are darker and bolder, created from broad strokes of the brush. Perhaps when Sully painted the title on the back, he retouched the figures, adding the black outlines.

Sully arranged the figures into a pyramidal composition with Crusoe's face at the apex to focus attention on him. The sailor lying on his stomach in the lower right also directs the gaze towards Crusoe's face because the line of
his body points right to him. The sailor helping Crusoe into the boat looks up at him with admiration. In addition, Sully placed Crusoe's face above the horizon with the open sky serving as his frame. Again, because this is a preparatory study, some compositional elements are unresolved. The crewman supporting Crusoe from behind and the man next to him should be kneeling in the boat, but appear to be standing in the sea.

This is the most colorful of the sketches, particularly the figures of Crusoe and Friday who are wearing suits given to them by the captain. Instead of his goatskins, Crusoe now wears an orange coat over a white shirt and gold pants, with white hose, brown shoes and a hat. Friday, now a civilized man, wears an orange and beige striped coat with hose and shoes, and carries one of Crusoe's parrots which has a bright blue head and a green wing. A green, yellow and red rainbow arches overhead against the tan sky, symbolizing the happy occasion.

Although Stothard did not make a design of this episode, Sully may have seen another illustration such as the one published in London by Hitch in 1748 (Fig. 44). This illustration is quite different from Sully's, for in it the ship is the dominate feature and two small canoes head towards it. This illustrator did not concentrate on the
characters as Sully did. As he did so often Sully took the idea for the subject matter from tradition and enhanced it to create a more romantic and exciting work.
CONCLUSION

Sully painted many literary subjects and often represented several views from a play or novel, but the Robinson Crusoe paintings are the only example of an extended series on a single theme in his oeuvre. Even though literary painting was popular during his life, the idea of painting a large series based on one work was unique for other artists as well. Perhaps Sully felt that the illustrator's art had not done justice to such an important novel. Sully clearly admired the designs of Thomas Stothard, as did most of the other illustrators of Robinson Crusoe, but he must have felt changes were needed. He maintained Stothard's choice for ten episodes and the subjects and basic elements of six of those, but altered four of his sketches to tell a more complete narrative.

Because of the tremendous popularity of Robinson Crusoe, Sully would have been confident that the nineteenth century viewer would have understood the events taking place in the series. Sully takes the viewer step-by-step through Crusoe's story. He also uses the sketches to portray a wide range of emotions. In the first sketch the viewer sees Crusoe prostrate with fear and exhaustion. The next three sketches show Crusoe overcoming adversity and working to improve his circumstances. With sketch five Sully had the opportunity to depict Crusoe's shock and terror at the
discovery of a footprint. Sully added action and excitement to the series when Crusoe saves Friday's life in the sixth sketch. Throughout the series Sully portrays the development in Crusoe's character, and in the seventh sketch, he depicts his growing friendship with Friday. Sketch eight is the most touching in the series, almost sentimental, in which Friday and his father embrace. Christianity is the most important theme in the novel, and Sully is able to touch on it in sketch nine, Crusoe reading the Bible. The final sketch is the most lighthearted, and leaves the viewer with a sense of satisfaction, for we know that Crusoe's long struggle is over.

As is the case with his portraiture, Sully's sketches are valuable because of how clearly they represent Romanticism in nineteenth century America, and for what they tell us about the close relationship between literature and painting during this period. Sully was not influenced by the realism of the later nineteenth century, but preferred to depict what was beautiful in human nature and in the world with as much drama and feeling as possible. Even though *Robinson Crusoe* deals with death, isolation and slavery, Sully's interpretation of the novel is entertaining and exciting rather than frighteningly realistic. *Robinson Crusoe* was an ideal subject for transporting the viewer to another time and place.
NOTES

1 Only the first sketch is signed and dated, but it seems likely that all the sketches date from this time.


3 The Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston, Texas, 14, No. 1 (Spring 1952), n. pag.

4 The Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston from the Spring of 1952 states that "the fire in Earl's Gallery, Philadelphia, occurred much earlier (than 1871), probably in the last part of 1858 or during 1859," but the author does not cite a source for this information. David Robb noted that Sully's last entry in his Register of a work painted for Earle's was made in 1860 (Robb, p. 75). Sully may not have provided Earle with any more paintings after 1860, but that is not conclusive proof that the gallery closed that year. However, this is a more feasible date for the fire which may have led to the closing of the gallery.


7 Most of Stothard's designs were in the neo-classical style, influenced by the linear manner of Flaxman. Hanns Hammelmann, Book Illustrators in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 68-72.

8 I have been unable to locate these, but Biddle and Fielding state that "a number of the sketches are owned by Mrs. Albert Sully, New York. Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, The Life and Works of Thomas Sully (1783-1872) (Lancaster, PA: Wickersham Press, 1921), p. 383. However, it seems likely that they assumed the Houston sketches were the 1871 group because of their similar subject matter.


10 Sully's paintings taken from Shakespeare include Isabella in Measure for Measure, Prospero and Miranda and
Romeo and Juliet. Subjects taken from classic novels include Little Nell Asleep from the Old Curiosity Shop, Red Riding Hood, The Sentry Box from Tristam Shandy, Long Tom Coffin and The Pilot. Other examples from classic literature include Faust and Scott's Lady of the Lake.

11 Fabian, p. 10.

12 Beth N. Rossheim, Thomas Sully (1783-1872): Beginning Portraitist in Norfolk (M. A. thesis, Old Dominion University, 1981), p. 13. She discusses the stage sets of some of the plays in which the Sully family performed.

13 Fabian, p. 11.

14 William Burke Wood (1779-1861) in the Role of Charles de Moor, 1810, oil on canvas, 42 1/4 x 30 1/8 in., The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Anna E. Clark Fund Purchase, 1949; George Frederick Cooke (1750-1812) in the Role of Richard III, 1811, oil on canvas, 92 1/8 x 58 1/2 in., The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Frances Anne Kemble, 1832, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in., Mr. and Mrs. Fred D. Bentley, Sr. and Mr. and Mrs. J. Alan Sellars.

15 Thomas Sully, "Recollections of an Old Painter," Hours at Home, 10 (November 1869), 72.

16 I have been unable to determine if the Sketch Clubs of London and New York were related in any way.


18 Thomas Sully, Journal, The New York Public Library Manuscript Division, entries dated from 1792-93 and 1799-1846, pp. 79-80. This is a typewritten copy made in 1921 from the original in the possession of a descendent of Thomas Sully.

19 Ibid., p. 80.

20 A brochure from a sale of a group of Sully's watercolors in September of 1985 at Christi's states that Sully, Rembrandt Peale, Charles Bird King and John Lewis Krimmel formed a club in Philadelphia to discuss their ideas on art and literature, but I have not found the source for this information.
Examples of Benjamin West's paintings with literary subjects are The Stolen Kiss (from Guarini's Pastor Fido), 1819, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and King, Queen, Laertes, Ophelia, & c., 1805, The Boydell Shakespeare Library, London.


Sully makes reference in his Journal on several occasions to Fuseli.

An example of Henry Fuseli's literary painting is Macbeth and the Witches, 1793-94, H.M. Treasury and the National Trust, Collection of Lord Egremont, Petworth House.

A sample of Sir Thomas Lawrence's painting of a literary subject is Satan as a Fallen Angel with Beezlebub, c. 1797, Collection of Colonel Michael Barne. A painting by Thomas Gainsborough with a literary theme is Musidora from Summer by James Thompson, n. date, The Tate Gallery, London.

One example by William Blake is Illustration to Milton's Paradise Lost: The Fall, 1808, Harvard College Library.

Several artists besides Sully illustrated Cooper's work (Fig. 28), including Thomas Cole who painted a scene from The Last of the Mohicans, 1827, The Wordsworth Atheneum, Hartford. Asher B. Durand's Imaginary Landscape: Scene from "Thanatopsis," 1850, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, depicts Bryant's famous poem. Many of John Quidor's paintings are of subjects taken from the novels of Washington Irving, such as Rip Van Winkle at Nicholas Vedder's Tavern, 1839, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.


36 Defoe, pp. 53-4.


38 Defoe, pp. 62-3.

39 Ibid., pp. 70-1.

40 Ibid., pp. 152-53.

41 Ibid., p. 199.

42 Ibid., p. 223.

43 Ibid., pp. 232-34.

44 Ibid., pp. 216-17.

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