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*The Other Robinson*

Author(s): Elisina De Zulueta

Email: [elisinadezulueta@gmail.com](mailto:elisinadezulueta@gmail.com)

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## **The Other Robinson**

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**Elisina De Zulueta**

*The Other Robinson* is a piece of writing involved in Robinsonian protocols, logics and manifestations. To some extent it is a montage piece, a collection or genealogy of Robinsons – from his original appearance in the novel by Daniel Defoe, via Céline’s *Journey to the End of the Night*, into poetic manifestations in Rimbaud and Kees, fleeting appearances in the writing of Cortázar and Coetzee, a shifting performance in Michel Tournier’s *Friday or The Other Island*, an anagrammatic presence in Le Clézio’s *The Interrrogation*, and, finally, most recently haunting Patrick Keiller’s trio of films *Robinson in Ruins*, *Robinson in Space* and *London*. This cornucopia or rabble of Robinsons is set in motion not so much with the intention of providing a demarcated site of investigation or a mapping of lineages or historical narrative, but so as to unpeel or unmap Robinson. To understand him as the recursive production of existential territory. The interest is to consider Robinsonian techniques of worlding, an approach much influenced by Tournier and (via Tournier) Deleuze and Derrida’s post-structuralist reading of the original *Robinson Crusoe*. This approach is necessarily oblique and traverses multiple registers. What is important? How do we form skins and shorelines? Are other islands and other Robinsons possible? How can alterity produce itself and how might we experience it? Answers emerge as notes and non sequiturs. The writing is an attempt to inhabit different viewpoints (the view from a plane, birds-eye-view, YouTube search, cliff-top walk, the view from the top of the island) and different densely atmospheric environments (luxury residential yacht, a street in London, swimming towards the island). How do Robinsons and worlds move and circulate, how do these movements create labyrinthine paths with inbuilt traps and unidirectional flows, continuously redrawing perimeters and membranes. Travel as the foundational Robinsonian activity is considered as an ‘enacted trope’, is it possible to travel in time? Finally, meat as the critical material substrata of the island is considered, how does cannibalism short-circuit the Robinsonian protocol and threaten his structural integrity?

*Editor’s note:* The text which follows contains a non-standard citation format which has been retained because it is part of *The Other Robinsons*’ creative form. References are made to various ‘Robinsons’ with a superscript text, such as <sup>Foe<sup>5</sup></sup>. The corresponding work can be found in the bibliography under the subheading ‘Robinsons’; in this case, the citation refers to J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin Books, [1986] 2010), p. 5. Citations to other texts are inline and not noted in the foot of the page; see the bibliography for the full reference.

J. L. B.

## ***The Other Robinson***

- (0) *Travers*
- (1) *I of the storm*
- (2) *The skin the shore*
- (3) *The World (the world)*
- (4) *Swallow'd up*

*I swam towards the strange island, I swam with my long hair floating about me, like a flower of the sea, like an anemone,*<sup>Foe 5</sup> I swam like a dog with salt on my tongue and my keen ears perked up above the waves like the handlebars of a bike, I let the water carry me and hung my head and arms over in an arch so only my shoulders softly sloped above the water like a drifting sandbank. I swam on my back raising each arm in a shaky parabola benignly hailing the blue sky. I swam like a football with a face drawn on it and small surprised circles for eyes, floating above it all, flying across the stands like a winner, I swam like a crossbar organised with my arms spread wide rigid across and head moving above the water with a little 'O' mouth popping open like a trapdoor. I swam like a squid like a thick plastic bag with each contraction of gelatinous tissues creating a vortex propelling me forward.

**(0) Travers**

Beginning again: *Le coeur fou robinsonne à travers les romans*: the crazy heart robinsons across literature. <sup>Fou 35</sup> The heart fou-fof, the wild drunk crazy heart of Robinson re-wilded, traversing across the surface, traversing across literature like an oil slick, like the toxic legacy of a spillage creating a mirror line on the ocean. (*Travers*: a screen, an obstruction, or a zigzag course made by a ship; *travers de porc*: the ribs of the pig towards the belly where the bone becomes soft cartilage; *traversing*: a line curving like a rib or at an oblique angle to the summit, trying to reach the highest point of the island, oblique to the point, a line that softly describes the external perimeter.) A rib keeping what is inside in, Robinson follows this zigzag course or series of oblique angles and *the hunt is on!* He leaves us little clues along the way, names carved into a cactus, *Robinson 4 Robinson*.

~ ~ ~

**(1) I of the storm**

*And I stretch out and I sleep my back turned to the wall breathing air fffffff and some of the things I've said you're talking to yourself you're talking to yourself come back to me like pulling something back with effort a a spring the wind and I've got to shout other things to fall asleep me all alone on this island me all alone on this island the organised dream the organised life sleep all's well sleep like Wings wings of certain birds me all alone on this island Hallelujah snap birds movement Hallelujah snap movement and I sleep so deeply.*

*Fugitif, 44*

*Robinson'n'Crusoe*

It is strange the way in the mouth 'Robinson Crusoe' often becomes 'Robinson'n'Crusoe', this sleight of tongue points towards the essence of a Robinson which is his doubleness: as a coin has two sides, Robinsons come as 'they' – 'they ate fried smelts, cream and cherries. They lay down upon the grass; they kissed behind the poplars; and they would fain, like two Robinsons, have lived forever in this little place' (Flaubert 1919, 267). Truly what is Robinsonian is the space that opens between one Robinson and the other, a kiss, a fold, a mirror, a folding of a mirror. Robinson is the I of the storm, the eye of the story, 'and all the crew perish'd save eye', what is there between eye and I? *You understand then THAT IT IS I WHO SPEAKS HERE and not you. I am on this island I am on this island it's my island it's I it's my island it's my island I am there I am on it I am on my island.*<sup>Fugitif, 59</sup>

*Sea-legs*

Our sea-legs find it is the land that rolls and heaves. The title page of the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe* sets out a claim of integrity between the eye and I. We read the declaration: 'The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner ... Written by Himself', but for less credulous readers this autobiographic affectation slices Robinson down the middle, suggesting the possibility of a multiplicity of Robinsons: Robinson as more than himself, aberrant and fugitive, Robinson as literary protocol. Later, Friday leads the mutineers around the island hiding in the woods and echoing their Halloos; *and then, keeping out of sight, take a round, always answering when the others hallooed, to draw them as far into the island and among the woods as possible, and then wheel about again to me by such ways as I directed them.*<sup>Crusoe, 422</sup> This game of call-and-answer with the seamen describes in miniature the Robinsonian protocol; the episode is framed like a small mirror in a painting, a play within the play, a *mise-en-abyme* (another classroom classic) within the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Beyond this, amongst other Robinsons, who on a wider stage perform a game of call-and-answer in which the answer mimics the call, (disguised and concealed), and the trajectory of the players wheels in a circle *à travers les romans* to return to where it began. Robinson is a mother culture, continuously dividing himself, fermenting, growing apart and returning to the fold, a recursive production of existential territory.

*Noircœur*

Intimations of doubleness haunt Robinson and echo around the island, but the game of call-and-answer produces the logic of a closed system, which cannot acknowledge what it does not contain. The island, then, is bounded by an ocean of incoherence, of which there is some evidence of seepage. Later, on a journey to the end of the night we meet Robinson again, emerging out of the darkness in Noircœur, a shifty character, on the run in no man's land, a 'sinister precedence ... as if he were the answer to an invocation rather than a contingent human presence' (Sturrock, 1990, 36). Our meeting is followed by

an encounter with his double: *a dead man stretched out on a mattress all alone ... actually he looked something like Robinson*. But standing over himself, Robinson cannot concede the likeness, *Well, you see, it's being so tired that makes us all look alike.*<sup>Journey, 37</sup> To assuage the horror of his own multiplicity Robinson trains Poll 'a quasi-technical or prosthetic apparatus' (Derrida 2011, 86) to call him by his name, 'Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe: poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been?';<sup>Crusoe, 226</sup> to echo his name back to him and remind him that *he* is Robinson, which is why Poll is his favourite and the *only person permitted to talk to me.*<sup>Crusoe, 236</sup>

### InterPollation

Parrot fans will find Poll reemerging on YouTube as Petra (genus *petrus*: a stone or rock, a chip off the old block), to find her Google search: 'parrot who can talk to Alexa'. An internet sensation with more than 12 000 followers, in her own words: *petraza superstahr*. Petra asks Alexa, *whatsa dog say?* Woof woof. Petra asks her owner *whatsa pig say?* Oink Oink, you're so cute! *Yourrrso cute*. Petra? *Hello*. Alexa? Hi there. *Iloveyou bye bye*. Beyond the vortex of inanity that this triangulation produces, the prosthetic apparatus of a parrot performs an interpellation par excellence. But structural integrity is difficult to maintain in montage sequences, is Petra/Poll always the same parrot? And also, yes yes, *I knew it*, did you notice, Petra and Alexa sound just the same? In fact we can find no difference between these Robinsonian prostheses, as they strive to maintain coherence *what's you name, what's your name, call me by my name*, shoring up against a tendency towards dissolution and perpetual doubling. (*Up next: 16 unreal animals that actually exist, funny bird videos awesome, Grieving Parrot, Up next: Remote village where people walk on all fours.*)

*According to certain archives the Robinson system is a very elaborate technique of automatic, autonomous, and perpetual doubling. All information is processed by this system is multiplied into parallel and irreconcilable series. For example if I say 'a blade of green grass'*

1. a a blade
2. blade of grass a blade of green grass
3. a blade of green green grass green grass
4. a blade blade of grass
5. green green
- etc.

*Fugitif, 109*

*But not in sleep.—Observant scholar, traveller,  
Or uncouth bearded figure squatting in a cave,  
A keen-eyed sniper on the barricades,  
A heretic in catacombs, a famed roué,  
A beggar on the streets, the confidant of Popes—  
All these are Robinson in sleep, who mumbles as he turns,  
'There is something in this madhouse that I symbolise—  
This city—nightmare—black—'*

*Relating To, 136*

### Alias Robinson

*Or on the beach, confronting a motionless sea. Being ubiquitous, he sometimes passed himself in the*

*street, coming round the corner of a house.*<sup>Procès-Verbal, 138</sup> Consider a familiar scenario, a man walking down the street, there is nothing remarkable about the street or the man, let's call him Robinson, there follows a moment of drama when a voice behind Robinson calls 'Hey you!' and Robinson turns towards the caller and in turning there is a recognition and acknowledgement that it is *he* that has been called 'it really is he' who is meant (Althusser 2011, 33). The genre of this scene is uncertain at this point, possibly a police procedural or detective mystery (*yes yes, I like those best*)? Did you ever see *Girl Chewing Gum*? *Oh, it's a classic!* A camera on a tripod films an unremarkable street in East London, the street serves as a stage, as pedestrians move across the frame in black and white, a voice directs their movements, and the actors comply. *Right, now I want the old man with white hair and glasses to cross the road, come on quickly! Look this way, now walk off to the left, okay fine.* What's the trick? A small fold in time is all it takes to make people do exactly what you tell them, *I want the clock to move jerkily towards me, stop, now I want the long hand to move at a rate of one revolution every hour and the short hand to move at the rate of one revolution every 12 hours now, now two pigeons move across and everything comes up again until the girl chewing gum moves across from the left* (*The Girl Chewing Gum*, 1976). Audience or actor, the joke's on you ("written by himself"). Like Robinson on his island, *Girl* preludes something particular, it is a precursor for a now dominant mode of imaginative projection: the positive feedback loop. 'Say Robinson Crusoe was true to life', (Joyce 1922, 105) or say: what's real about reality TV?

### *Tropism*

*And, walking in the twilight towards the docks, / I thought I made out Robinson ahead of me.*<sup>Relating To, 148</sup> Back on the street, behind Robinson and out of frame a voice calls 'Hey you!' and Robinson, turning to meet the caller, *the funny part of it ... he looks something like you,*<sup>Journey, 37</sup> the screen cuts black slug before we see the. Now, take three, it is you, walking down the street, there is nothing remarkable, the street is familiar to you, a familiar voice unseen calls 'Robinson!' and you turn, and in turning there is a recognition and acknowledgement that it is you that has been called, it really is you. How strange to see yourself, to catch yourself unaware, to see yourself in black and white, walk awkwardly across the screen in strange new shoes, looking self-consciously over my shoulder hoping to glance a reflection, a girl chewing gum. *And yet, I almost called out, "Robinson!" / There was no chance. Just as I passed, / Turning my head to search his face, / His own head turned with mine / And fixed me with dilated, terrifying eyes / That stopped my blood. His voice / Came at me like an echo in the dark.*<sup>Relating To, 148</sup> The turning of Robinson, *his own head turned with mine*, this turning or tropism (the 'tendency of an animal or plant to turn or move in response to a stimulus') is a recurrent trope, a style, the manner, an internal integral to Robinson who is both the calling and the turning, the director and the extra, the footage and the filming, both the crime and the weapon.

### *A mere chimera*

Meanwhile, back on the island, we find in front of us a footprint in the sand, *for there was exactly the print of a foot - toes, heel, and every part of a foot.*<sup>Crusoe, 245</sup> The print is the archetypal Robinsonian motif, a physical imprint of the call-and-answer. This impresses on us the self-reverence of Robinson, *that this Foot might be the Print of my own Foot.*<sup>Crusoe, 251</sup> Or are there are ghosts on the island? Didn't you know *Robinson Crusoe* was a ghost story? Derrida's description: 'a vicious circle as a hermeneutic circle that consists in retracing one's steps, in always presupposing oneself, allowing oneself to be hallucinated by the specter of one's own tracks as tracks of the other man' (Derrida 2011, 57). When we found his body in Noireceur we had understood that Robinson must be both precursive and recursive, with him we must engage in a *pas de deux*, he is always just ahead of himself, of us, à *deux pas*. The finding of the footprint



is the dramatic apex of the novel, set against a meandering processual narrative (*I seem to be ceaselessly living the same day, Vendredi, 204*) the incident contains itself like a singular frame in a comic book, the frame contains the whole book in miniature. The footprint contains everything, every part of a foot, his own foot, it could be another's foot, a past that might have been, the future that must be, or to put it another way: in the past anything is possible but the future is for certain, we have seen it already returning to us along the circular path around the island. *Tomorrow night? There's no such thing. Journey, 38* The footprint is a hinge that folds him up entirely.

*That will release you, set you free, protect you more than you can possibly imagine. It will give you another self. There will be two of you.*

*Journey, 52*

### *Robinson in Reverse*

The novel is a double exposure, a double bluff, a duo-ble entendre. That the future is fixed but the past is shifting, uncertain terrain, a fluid space of possibility, this is the backwards nature of *Robinson Crusoe*, it's best read to start from finish – *the whole time he was walking backwards round the island like a mad man!* Robinson gives us an account of time travel in reverse. It is a murder mystery without a corpse, a prototype for forensic podiatry, a science fiction turned inside out like the skins of goats Robinson cures in the sun. *Robinson had once said he believed that, if he looked at the landscape hard enough, it would reveal to him the molecular basis of historical events, and in this way he hoped to see into the future. Ruins* It is impossible for things to follow one another as in the romantic ellipsis 'one thing led to another ...'. The things that populate the island, have no narrative sequentiality, but revolve on a carousel and each actor is preceded by himself, there is Friday *who I love* but also *Friday had formerly been among the savages who used to come on shore on the farther part of the island, on the same man-eating occasions he was now brought for.* And Robinson, *who is happy on my island, but also perhaps nothing but the brow of a hill, a great tree, or the casual approach of night, had been between me and the worst kind of destruction* (viz. I was not alone).<sup>Crusoe, 342, 313</sup> To put it simply: 'every Friday buries a Thursday' but what is buried is liable to re-emerge with every hebdomadal circuit (Joyce 1922, 105). Like a boat that cannot hold water the novel leaks possibilities for other Robinsons and other Fridays.

several leaks and interviews with former contestants have called into question the actual amount of 'reality' that's included in this reality show. Let's take a look at some of the most damning evidence that Naked and Afraid is completely fake

Read More: <https://www.nickiswift.com/19882/reasons-naked-afraid-totally-fake/>

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## (2) *The skin the shore*

And there is no other for me, as any other world is part of it – between my world and any other world there is first the space and the time of an infinite difference, an interruption that is incommensurable with all attempts to make a passage, a bridge, an isthmus, all attempts at communication, translation, trope, and transfer that the desire for a world or the want of a world, the being wanting a world will try to pose, impose, propose, stabilize. There is no world, there are only islands.

(Derrida 2011, 9)

### *The shoreline*

The skin the shore, the shore, the shin, the score. Does an island float on water or is it the visible protrusion of a sunken land mass? Is it sinking or rising? The shoreline is the site of this uncertainty: ‘an island is a nervous duality’ (Baldacchino 2005, 248). An island is defined by its external perimeter, if I ask you to draw an island what will you draw? I draw a circle on a piece of paper. The island is always this line, the shoreline, a score line. ‘The shoreline, with its shifting pattern, is a powerful draw, a source of psychological malaise, and often a keenly contested terrain’ (Baldacchino 2005, 249).

### *I go to the beach*

A circle drawn on piece of paper is never a perfect circle (or it is a sign of madness if it is), perhaps it is more of an oval, like the silver portrait frame you have on your desk holding the smiling face of a loved one, which is a way to say the shore is the representational frame of island epistemology. What is a circle? A snake eating its tail or the circular path we walk around the edge of the island within which distance and proximity collapse into the same criteria as we return always to where we began which is to say: ‘a circular movement in which the step that distances us from our starting point is also the step that brings us closer to it: the step that seems farthest from my starting point, on an island where one goes around in circles, like a wheel, like the rotation or rather the wheeling of a wheel, can also be <the one> closest to it. My last footstep always might coincide with my first.’ (Derrida 2011, 74). As the psychiatrist says to his patient: ‘like a tape / playing over and over on an endless loop / I hope that what we’ve done will be enough / to stop it from happening again / I need to know ... that you have accepted the reality.’ (*Shutter Island*, 2010)

Possible activities on the island:

- Guided tour, (local knowledge)
- An unexpected turn of events
- The sea is blue like the beach
- The airport is shut or the ferry will not run
- A storm severs connection to the mainland
- The phones are down!
- Climbing on the rocks we find something strange
- A note pushed across the table says *RUN*
- ESCAPE
- Repeat

### *Watertight skins*

Robinson’s island is always shoring him up, maintaining the order of land and sea, sealing up skins, skinning

up, ensuring that skins remain watertight and that the sea and the island are distinctly described by these membranes, like the tape around a crime scene. Skin – the flexible continuous covering of human or other animal (*with a whole ~, unwounded*), the Old Norse skinn cognates with the German schinden, *to flay*. Skin is always already both the peel and the peeling, the way the waves move up and down the beach. *Immediately they fell to work with him; and though they had no knife, yet, with a sharpened piece of wood, they took off his skin as readily, and much more readily, than we could have done with a knife. They offered me some of the flesh, which I declined, pointing out that I would give it them; but made signs for the skin, which they gave me very freely.*<sup>Crusoe, 48</sup>

### *Pink umbrella*

The flaying of a carcass or the dressing is in fact an undressing, not only in that ‘it removes the animal’s external envelope but above all in that it strips the flesh of its animality, detaching the organic substance from its biological foundations’ (Vialles 1994, 51). If Robinson is anything he is a collector of skins, he tells us himself: *every creature that I killed I took of the skins and preserved them,*<sup>Crusoe, 113</sup> with all this collection he fashions clothes and an umbrella, which protect him and contain him. *I made me a suit of clothes wholly of these skins,*<sup>Crusoe, 214</sup> as much to say: in the skins I was whole, with a whole skin, the skins made me whole. In this we discover a Robinsonian truth, as a true circle drawn on a piece of paper reveals a madman, he seeks to become skin without flesh, a shore without a shore.

- *Did you know that the countryside you’re looking at was once under the sea!*

- (...)

*The fossils in this piece of stone prove it. NO not there! up there ... look that’s it. 2 million B.C.E. And it is, the sea! Yep in this little bit of shell! The sound of incessant leaves—What? What’s that you said (...) what nothing?*

*But I heard you say something the sound of incessant leaves.*

*Fugitif, 29*

Indeed, islandness is constituted through relationships of difference, including those that arise between a body of land and a body of water, but differentiation is not bound to fixity or limited by containment. Rather, it is the potential for always becoming-other that is immanent to these bodies

(Williams 2012, 227)

### *Mise-en-abyss*

*The island boasts beautiful vistas, we climb to the highest place, from this vantage point we can exhale with relief and take-it-all-in. What we discover from this perspective is water not land, in seeing the ocean that surrounds it we have discovered the island. My vision of the island is reduced to that of my own eyes, and what I do not see of it is to me a total unknown. Everywhere I am not total darkness reigns.*<sup>Vendredi, 55</sup>

What surrounds Robinson is not the ocean but darkness, *this city-nightmare-black*, he has been mise-en-abyss, mise-en-abyss, he is placed in an abyss in which he must constitute a way of seeing without others. *He might have been drawn down quietly through the ground, the sand, water and slime; everything would have crumbled together, as though into an abyss and have vanished into blackness.*<sup>Procés-Verbal, 176</sup> Robinson is a site of resistance to dissolution, constantly regrouping, producing himself as a *substantial being*,<sup>Foe, 137</sup> producing his own ubiquity which is as much to say: *there is no outside*. Like the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (*you won’t believe this, follow link to view aerial footage*) his island spreads like a web of ectoplasm

encompassing all alterity. *The glass is black / Robinson alone provides the image Robinsonian.*<sup>Relating To, 59</sup> But below, beyond, beneath, other Robinsons are possible at the end of the night, *it must be at the end of the night, that's why they are so dead set against going to the end of the night.*<sup>Journey, 189</sup> Possible Robinsons and the possibility of 'a double of the world', the *other island*,<sup>Vendredi</sup> the discovery of an 'otherwise-Other' (Deleuze 1990, 319). This beyond is not simply beyond the shoreline, *the other island* is not described by a circle on a piece of paper but a skin worn inside out.

Notes on an other island (sonic loops):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df0PmCQLago>

Eliane Radigue's *L'île resonante*: the water washing the sand clean, the island is becoming solar and the Aeolian tide washes the flesh from my bones and I am shining white, a clavicle washed up on beach. Liner notes: 'For *L'île re-sonante*, Eliane Radigue drew her inspiration from an image: an island in the waters of a lake that reflect her face. It is both a 'real' image and an optical illusion'. (Caux, 2005). A continuous oscillation and tape loops looping back returning back to our first steps and recognising an optical illusion, ourselves arriving again.

*They circled in opposite directions, two one way and one the other; after a certain number of turns, let's say ten or eleven, for some unaccountable reason, as though at the snap of someone's fingers, they wheeled about and went on again in the other direction. They were mangy beasts, grey with dust, mauve round the jaws; but they never stopped circling their den and the steely glint of their eyes was reflected all over their bodies--they looked as though they were covered in metal plates, violent, full to vomiting with hatred and ferocity. The circular movement they were making inside the cage became owing to its regularity, the one really mobile point in the surrounding space. All the rest of the park with its human beings and its other cages, sank into a kind of motionless ecstasy. One was suddenly frozen, fixed in an unbearable rigidity that spread all round as far as that bell-shaped structure of iron and wood, the wolves' cage; one was like a luminous circle seen through a microscope and containing stained in bright colours, the basic elements of life, such as chromosomes, globules, trypanosomes, hexagonal molecules, microbes and fragments of bacteria. A structural geometry of the microcosmic universe, photographed through dozens of lenses; you know, that white disc, dazzling as a moon, coloured by chemical products, which is true life, without movement, without duration that nothing is animal any longer, nothing is apparent; nothing remains but silence, fixity, eternity; for all is slow, slow, slow.*

Procès-Verbal, 60

### Helical coil

Returning to the path encircling the island and to the steps that we trace and retrace. *Outside, the birds circle continuously / Where trees are actual and take no holiday.*<sup>Relating To, 59</sup> What more is there to say about this continuous circumlocution? It is the repetition of the path taken around the island that allows it to

acquire an appearance of fixity, a technique of periphrasis. ‘For example, the boundaries of an animal’s territory come from repeated prowling and marking of its perimeter’ (Williams 2003, 12), or for example: the circling eyes of a security guard wheeling around a grainy split feed CCTV monitor. Or the air steward who sees the intense blue and petrified white of the island at noon from the window of a plane. *Everything was falsified in the futile and recurrent vision; except perhaps the desire to repeat it, the consulting of the wristwatch before noon, the brief pricking contact with the dazzling white band at the edge of an almost black blue.*<sup>Noon, 92</sup> The island does not exist prior to this repetition, a *structural geometry.*<sup>Procès-Verbal, 60</sup> A birds-eye-view cannot describe an island the way the shadow of a bird on the ground does not describe the way it moves through the air. Take another piece of paper and draw the island sideways on. It is helical coil, a coil spring, a parametric curve that follows the path of an orbit through time, time is the axis than runs through the centre of the coil, each loop drawn like a fish describes a fold in time, the fish is a fold (Google search: Philip K Dick ‘gold fish time tunnel’). When compressed the coil spring (island) stores energy or maintains the force between two structures. Robinson himself is a spiral, something like the red and white whirl-a-wish coin vortex you find by the seaside and drop in pennies for the sake of nostalgia (*I just can’t resist, remember these?*), they chase each other with increasing velocity and are inevitably swallowed down the funnel. Played backwards (*who has bothered to put this video online?*) they emerge spinning madly out of the hole and describe increasingly large circles spreading outwards with a wide roving gait it seems he will escape the well, defy gravity and spin off into an orbit that encircles the whole world.

~ ~ ~

### (3) *The World (the world)*

Rating: 3.8 – 55 votes

... To ask other readers questions about *Robinson*, please sign up. ... The first 100 pages were kind of slow, but then the next 75 seemed to progress nicely, but the last portion of the book just left me feeling hallow. [sic]

#### *Looking for Robinson*

Walking with my niece she says, oh! *that's* a nice place, points to a little dell beneath the bushes, protected from the sight of passers-by, perched above the sea breaking on the violent rocks below, a hallow-hole, she calls my attention to all the secluded denning spots along this path along the coast, an idea in mind of one day needing a hideout in case of unimaginable disaster or a little place to eat fried smelts, cream and cherries, nestled in this nice den, with little clevernesses and all her things arranged so smartly and just the right size for a Robinson to curl up safe and warm, at home, home alone, alone in the world, alone at home in all the world.

To be at home everywhere – what does that mean? Not merely here or there, nor even simply in every place, in all places taken together one after the other. Rather, to be at home everywhere means to be at once and at all times within the whole. We name this ‘within the whole’ and its character of wholeness the world. We are, and to the extent that we are, we are always waiting for something. We are always called upon by something as a whole. This ‘as a whole’ is the world. We are asking: What is that – world?

(Heidegger 1995, 5)

#### *The world inside the world*

Looking for Robinson on the internet, we find him on the World. What is the World? ‘The World, beyond its physical description as a ship, is something much more than that. In fact, it is the largest privately owned residential yacht on the planet. Constantly circumnavigating the globe, she explores the most exotic and well known destinations.’

Are you trying to imagine now what it would be like to live on a ship?

It's amazing.

(*The World*, n.d.)

The naming of The World demonstrates a particular refinement in the exercise of Robinsonian appellation, the two Worlds, one calling to the other with deep blasts as it comes out of port sending birds screaming and children chattering along coastlines everywhere. Constantly circumnavigating the globe The World continuously draws the silhouette of the world. ‘It worlds [it makes world, it worldifies, becomes world, globalizes itself]’ (Derrida 2011, 12). The World worlds, there is nothing outside the world. ‘The most exotic’ ‘the most well known’, the distinction between these categories disintegrates in the grip of the ‘wholeness’ of the world, a ‘recumbent organization’, (Deleuze 1990, 313) a lounging horizontal wholeness.

#### *Only islands*

The World is a mobile island that turns the whole world into an island whose circular perimeter it draws over and over. ‘As much fun as it was,’ said Mr Sabes, a restaurant developer, ‘there are only so many places a cruise ship can go. Once you've been there you start repeating.’ (Lieberman, 2018). And Robinson? *Happy to be living in a scale model of the universe, all his own, a gentle place with a thousand different*

*ploy to occupy it.*<sup>Procès-Verbal, 104</sup> What else is there to say? Unique Enrichment Program (metonym: ‘you can have it all’), meaningful discussions on the culture, natural environment, history, and flora and fauna armed with knowledge explore some of the most fascinating, often participating in local customs, indigenous ingredients, immerse themselves in numerous lounges, fabulous crew members hands you a cold towel or Peruvian trout because it’s your table you look back at the sacred fire dance in New Guinea unmatched passion, creativity, and enthusiasm enrich specific needs, ‘And you’ve got all your stuff around you that really makes it home’ (*The World*, n.d.). The World, cruising towards the realisation of the Robinsonian project: the expansion of the island, *no parcel of land or sea but was divided with great precision and could be reduced to a projection or diagram the shore without a shore, to be everywhere at home, alone at home in all the world.*<sup>Procès-Verbal, 203</sup>

We think we know what the world is, what we mean when we say “world,” and that everything is the world, everything is in the world or of the world, that there is nothing outside the world, and therefore we are unable to specify, to determine a question bearing on the world, as it would bear on this or that, on a determinable being. A question about the world is a question about everything and nothing.

(Derrida 2011, 58)

### *Blue Earth Orange*

*The earth is blue like an orange, the orange is yours, it is the peel and the peeling, the earth is for eating. It’s beautiful. Whatever you like.*<sup>Procès-Verbal, 235</sup> Every journey is a circular path that encircles itself, an attempt to ascend to the highest point of the island to take-it-all-in. Robinson Crusoe is to be read as a travelogue: a travel guidebook, or manual of sensibility, a construction of the ‘molecular domains of sensibility, intelligence and desire’, the production of its meanings and images contain all the ‘redundancies of a journey made on the spot’ (Guattari 1989, 28). *Travel – Find yourself.* Within the ‘enacted trope’ of travel we find a Robinsonian tropism, a turning towards oneself, pivoting on the spot, a play of call and answer, the continuous surfacing of a mirror image (Adler 1989, 1375). ‘Typically, the aim of the play is the internalization and retention, through symbolic representation, of relationship to a real place that, having once been glimpsed and identified with cherished values, must be relinquished. In a double movement of projection and reinternalization, values are emblematically fixed in landscape and reappropriated through encounter with literal geography.’ (Adler 1989, 1376)

*Outside, the birds circle continuously / Where trees are actual and take no holiday.*

*Relating To, 59*

### *First contact*

*Feel like taking a holiday?* Websites offer ‘First Contact’ expeditions, ‘the real Robinson Crusoe experience!’ *Do you want to travel in time?* In the jungle of West Papua there are tribes who have never had any contact with the outside world. (Watch out, plastic beads or metal tools, indicate contact *has* been made, other signs: thumbs up, posing for cameras, full ceremonial dress would be not realistic or practical for hunting, a warm welcome is unlikely in a genuine first contact scenario). Aggression and fear are positive signals that findings are authentic first contact – *I could then perceive that he stood trembling.*<sup>Crusoe, 324</sup> *They were seriously freaked out, I started to feel bad.* Again, a miniature, like those tiny bottles of carry-on shampoo, the play within a play: ‘in the microcosm of their face-to-face meetings, to incarnate the macrocosm of all human time and all human diversity, in a marvellous ritual of time travel’

(Stasch 2016, 11). A very Robinsonian recursion: an encounter between the acme of civilisation and its origin, within the projection of epiphanic fusion the image contains a smaller copy of itself, a self-reflexive embedding, 'a tour leader recalling past events to me remarked, 'It was like getting into the TV screen' (Stasch 2016, 11). Our perception is thickened, like the millefeuille of a makeover montage, meanings are emulsified and spread to saturate surfaces, under these conditions 'Otherness (l'altérité) tends to lose all its asperity.' (Guattari 1989, 27)

*Lotus-seed-head*

What I see is perforated, punctured like a lotus seed head, with so many rabbit holes sinking away from the surface my eyes are always entering into things, slipping into screens like hands slung in deep pockets, a visual finger flexion eyes bending like fibre optics, wheeling into revolving doors that swing me round the backs of things, always climbing across the table with a face lit up blue like a brick wall shouting LIKELIKELIKE. But also all this is so soft, soft pixels, bevelled pastel tones, my eyes can run across the surface of things like a hand run along the back of the sofa. *'I'm trypophobic, but people won't take my condition seriously!'* A growing fear of clustered holes and perforated membranes of organic matter indicates incoherent anxieties regarding depth and surface. When we meet a surface that is dense and impermeable our eyes bounce all over it like neutrons fired at a deflector, or like a pinball sprung with a flipper but rather than hearing PING PING FZZZZZZZ the message comes back blank black ~~~. Opacity relieves transparency, wouldn't that be such a relief? To take out your eyes, looking with arms and legs, tongue and tibia, for the echo of something in the sonic material of bones and tissues.

*The island had vanished from the window; only the sea was left, an endless green horizon.*

Noon, 91

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#### (4) *Swallow'd up*

##### *Relaxing on the island*

Do you know how to relax? On a swaying plane of olive green, hovering above a pool of dirty orange that laps gently as your hair hangs down swinging softly, your body feels so comfortable, the organs warmly curled up together, the skin slack and roomy enough, your right arm lolling out like an idle oar. Do you know how to recline? To lie back and allow the meat to slide along your bones and spool out around you in undulating pink and purple waves. To raise one leg out into space with a beckoning curve like the crisp white of a trimmed chop in a vitrine, but nothing else is so neat and the rest of you hangs from the hook of this curve, cracked like an egg on the back of a chair. The rest of you is pooled and fermenting below, with shoulders smearing into a head set down into collar bones that bend inward like soft cartilage carrying your face deep inside like a pushed in football, and eyes like bashed out windows.

##### *Fruit machine*

*Robinson Crusoe* can be read like a fruit machine, pull the lever a final time and the wheels spin and land solidly on three pink hams in a row. Meat-meat-meat. *I need not say that I expected every day to be swallowed up.*<sup>Crusoe, 64</sup> Everything threatens to swallow up Robinson, the sea, the island, the cannibals, the novel is a record of his vigilance against this threat, its foundational premise rests on his escape from the swallowing of the ocean *I expected every wave would have swallowed us up*, then the island itself tries to engulf him, nearly *buries him alive*; but equally as elemental a threat is posed by the other visitors to the island, *the fear of being swallowed up alive made me that I never slept in quiet.*<sup>Crusoe, 130</sup> The concern is with the organisation of meat, skin and flesh, spaces of interiority and external membranes. An abatteur can tell you there is no such thing as a space of interiority, when you open up any animal you find it is full-up, skinful, the flaying of the carcass is more like unpacking a suitcase than removing a nut from its shell. Meat is flesh without skin, so we read it as a substance without a surface available to description, there is no organised ideological patina specific to its superficial appearance, it is always both exterior and interior. So it cannot be contained, it is always in excess and volatile and so both threatens and attracts the well-ordered Robinsonian mind.

Meat is not dead flesh; it retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics.

(Deleuze 2003, 44)

Instructions for cooking meat:

‘We made a large hole in one side of an empty cask, and placed at the bottom of it several things which we wetted, and on this kind of scaffolding we made our fire: we placed it on a barrel that the seawater might not put out our fire. We dressed some fish, which we devoured with extreme avidity; but our hunger was so great and our portion of fish so small, that we added to it some human flesh, which dressing rendered less disgusting.’

(Corréard and Savigny, 1818)

##### *The Raft of Medusa [Scène de Naufrage], Théodore Géricault, 1818*

A man's head arms and upper torso have been severed from the rest of his body, the flesh folds softly

round his ribs which enclose an empty space, a chest like a pirate's chest, red like moss runs up his breast bone, his eyes look up at the sky, do bodies break apart this way, leaving a torso like an empty lamp shade, if they ate his legs why not his arms which are two nice muscular bundles of fibres, the centre of gravity of what remains is now in the head which is poised like a stone. *Why did The Raft cause such a splash?* Shipwreck! Cannibalism! Heroism! Betrayal! To research the painting the painter visits local morgues and hospitals collecting anonymous body parts, which assemble themselves in the painting in a strange reverse butchery, de-anonymising, the dressing is also an undressing. To say *faire la bête* or to dress a carcass, the *faire* means both to do and to make, it is a process of assembly, the constitution of meat from unstructured matter, which is an act of encoded substantiation. Reporters ask survivors – 'Is it better to live a monster or die a good man?' *The Raft* reiterates the logic of the slaughterhouse but cannot contain its own ambiguity, allowing for drifts of meaning along a hazy horizon line, dappled in luminous beige, haunted by figures of uncoded ambiguity.

### Shortcut

*When he came to taste the flesh, he took so many ways to tell me how well he liked it, that I could not but understand him: and at last he told me, as well as he could, he would never eat man's flesh any more, which I was very glad to hear.*<sup>Crusoe, 339</sup> Robinson disapproves of Friday's cannibalism but far more serious is the possibility that Friday would offer *him* a share of the abundance of bodies, *I had, by some means, let him know that I would kill him if he offered it.*<sup>Crusoe, 331</sup> The cannibal is a short-circuit transgressing the rigorous coding of bodies. For Robinson it endangers the rigid taxonomic distinctions of the island and by extension his world, because the cannibals to his eyes are without discernment and think it no more to eat human flesh than we do to eat mutton.<sup>Crusoe, 27</sup> 'The texture of raw meat is a kind of slick, resistant mushiness. The meat is chewy yet soft, so that chewing compresses instead of cutting through it. And it's moisture manifests in slipperiness, chewing doesn't manage to liberate much juice.' (McGee 2004, 149) It is not the biting, butchery, or tearing apart that is the primary concern or the point of revulsion but the idea of being swallowed *alive* or buried *alive*, a living death entombed inside another body like a Russian doll, mixed up inside another person's organs, merging and metabolising. This is a kind of limbo that underwrites the novel throughout, by which I mean limbo in the sense of a multiplicity of limbs; the porosity of a membrane, a metabolic intimacy. The substratum of the island is meat. *I considered the keeping up a breed of tame creatures thus at my hand would be a living magazine of flesh.*<sup>Crusoe, 234</sup> The cannibals are the avatars of a universal meat, 'the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernability' (Deleuze 2003, 23). What is the horror of the kebab shop's rotating stump? We see ourselves oiled and compressed twisting in the window. In the practice of cannibalism Robinson sees his own recursive logic carried to its limit, *the horror, the horror.*

### *I seem to have disintegrated*

Voyage, 175

### *The flesh line*

*I'd have vomited up the whole globe.*<sup>Voyage, 149</sup> That is to say: at the outer limit of a system of violence there exists a flesh line, this periphery is populated by highly processed meat products of obscured carnality. An anonymous and disembodied kind of dead end, we had not expected *Robinson Crusoe* to be a zombie novel. Imagine another Robinson: subject to a pervasive dysmorphic apprehension, failing to be a substantial being. His loneliness is oceanic, enveloped and suffocated by his own skin, he is simultaneously lost within it, floundering deep below its surface, the skin is a floating layer of scum, a kind of subdigital scrim. His body threatens to flatten itself and stretch itself into a thick mirror, 'lodging

its entirety into this width until it separates and dissipates like a lump of fat in a bowl of soup' (Deleuze 2003, 54). This mirror is the mirror of incoherence, the thick incoherence of meat, the incoherence of myself to you of myself to myself.

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*Everything is changed into something else in my imagination then the dead weight of things changes it back into what it was in the first place.*<sup>Ruins</sup> Everything might be different but everything stays the same. The structural integrity of a Robinson is the tense density of the cooked egg of the island, it is its self-sameness. I = eye. Robinson  $\equiv$  robinson. This triple bar which I know you will say I have used incorrectly, is three soft ribs, it is a shared identity of material and logical equivalence, 'if and only if', ifffffff. Or, for instance, to illustrate: have you seen Brancusi's sculpture *The Kiss*? A tidy little compressed cube of two pale faces wadded together in rigid romantic fixity, a violent embrace in which we cannot tell one from the other, plaster cast castaways, the same faces, the line between them is the mirror line, an oily horizon line that reflects the sky on the sky and the sea on the sea, exactly, exactly, *they kissed behind the poplars; and they would fain, like two Robinsons, have lived forever in this little place* (Flaubert 1919, 267). 'Viz.' is found on 42 pages of the novel *Robinson Crusoe* meaning 'namely', or in other words, 'that is to say'. *Videre + licet*: to see, it is permitted to see, to confirm and complete what precedes, evident, clearly, plainly, manifestly. These sentences fold in upon themselves, snapping shut on probing fingers. 'Viz.' like a hinge ( $\equiv$ ) that folds the sentence up like a deckchair on the beach. *Robinson Crusoe* is collapsing in, a collapsible novel, it folds itself up entirely between its covers and Robinson curled up so nicely inside this little place.

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