

*The footprint in the sand:*  
Providence, Invention, and Alterity in *Robinson  
Crusoe*

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**Abstract:** *Robinson Crusoe* reflects a theological world in transition – from Protestant piety to a world of “Enlightenment Man” colonising all under a benevolent (deist) Providence. Hence, the story depicts two forms of providence, pietist and deist, vying for dominance, yet never separable in Crusoe’s experience. Further bifurcating tensions surface after a significant turning point in the narrative – the discovery of an enigmatic *footprint in the sand*. This discovery is antithetical to Crusoe’s residue of Puritan sensibilities – with its utter trust in God’s sovereignty, and it is incommensurate with the sensibilities of Enlightenment Man – with his circumscribed world of reason. Discovery of the footprint exposes an antipathy to *the other*, which becomes a hallmark of modern individuality, propriety, and counter-inventiveness under the rubric of Providence. The story implicitly calls for a further theological dimension, that neither pietist nor rational sensibilities are able to deliver, which can open possibilities of inventive providence in the face of alterity.

THIS ARTICLE BEGINS FROM AN OBSERVATION that *Robinson Crusoe* is an implicit work on theodicy and modernity – a literary theology of providence,<sup>1</sup> with an oblique intrusion of “the postmodern” in the narrative. The aim of the article is to tease out pervasive tensions between fear and the other, inventory and invention, around an implicit theological tension in Crusoe’s perceptions of providence. My thesis is that Crusoe’s understanding of providence, which is shifting with the tide of emerging Christian Enlightenment sensibilities, yet not without a strong undertow of Puritan piety, is dysfunctional in the face of alterity

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1. Defoe states in “The Preface” that “[t]he story is told...with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them (viz.) to the instruction of others by this example, [the account of a particular man’s experiences of life] and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances...” Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, introduction and notes, Doreen Roberts (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, [1719] 1995). Indicated as RC throughout.

(otherness).<sup>2</sup> In approaching this thesis, the article examines a decisive moment in the narrative that tells us much about Crusoe's theology – the discovery of an enigmatic footprint in the sand. This haunting trace of an other unravels in several registers running through the remainder of the Crusoe story, testing a religious world view around themes of survival, invention, humanity, and the monstrous – in a narrative theologically imbued with an emerging Enlightenment Deism mingled with incorrigible Puritan piety. Therefore, with a combination of literary and theological methods, the article investigates an aporia in Crusoe's understanding of providence in which his fearful encounter with the trace of another generates a crisis that cannot be met by Crusoe's theological sensibilities, pietist or deist. The story implicitly calls for theological sensibilities that can open possibilities of *inventive providence* in the face of alterity.

#### THE FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND

Perhaps the most significant event in *Robinson Crusoe* is Crusoe's discovery of a single footprint in the sand. This one footprint changes the tempo of the increasingly utopian mood of the narrative. The reader begins to feel at home and as familiar with the island as Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe's constant inventories, calculations, and providential projections effectively make us insiders in his world. We become privy to his daily schedule of gathering food and husbanding animals, mending and making items to enhance the comfort of an increasingly idyllic lifestyle in a tropical paradise. However, this changes dramatically within the space of moments.

It happened one day, about noon, going toward my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the

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2. Several studies have noted inconsistencies in the literary portrayal of providence and religious sensibilities in *Robinson Crusoe*: Leopold Damrosch Jr, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", in Michael Shinagel (ed.), *A Norton Critical Edition of Robinson Crusoe*, Second Edition (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994) 373-90; Alan Downie, "*Robinson Crusoe's* Eighteenth-Century Contexts", in Lieve Spaas and Brian Stimpson (eds.), *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses* (New York: St Martin's Press; London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) 17-22; David Fausett, *The Strange Surprising Sources of Robinson Crusoe* (Amsterdam and Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 1994) 33-51; Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990) 33-43; William H. Halewood, "Religion and Invention", in Frank H. Ellis (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Robinson Crusoe: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969) 81-86; J. Paul Hunter, "The 'Guide' Tradition", *Norton Critical Edition*, 250-51; Michael McKeon, "Defoe and the Naturalization of Desire: *Robinson Crusoe*", *Norton Critical Edition*, 402-03, 414-19; Maximillian E. Novak, *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1983) 39-45; John J. Richetti, "*Robinson Crusoe*. The Self as Master", *Norton Critical Edition*, 362-7; Pat Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979) 51-72; George A. Starr, "*Robinson Crusoe* and the Myth of Mammon", *Norton Critical Edition*, 324-31. But postmodern theological dimensions of Crusoe's providence and its dysfunctional relation to alterity are yet to be investigated.

shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition. (RC 117-18)

This one footprint is a trace of something other and threatening in Crusoe's world. He does not know its source, is terrified by its inexplicable appearance – "like a man perfectly confused and out of myself" (RC 118) – and is forced to review the gravity of his circumstances with utmost anxiety. Crusoe's religious interpretation of the ebb and flow of fortune and trouble is assailed even more intensely, and now gravitates to utter despair.

Thus my fear banished all my religious hope. All that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of His goodness, now vanished, as if He that had fed me by miracle hitherto could not preserve, by His power, the provision which He had made for me by His goodness. (RC 119)

Paradoxically, the footprint provokes a desire to destroy his own traces: "The first thing I proposed to myself was to throw down my enclosures, and turn all my tame cattle wild into the woods, that the enemy might not find them....digging up my two corn-fields...to demolish my bower and tent..." (RC 122) Crusoe's first reaction to the footprint is to eliminate any discernible trace of his existence on the island for others to find. Paradoxically and ironically, a trace of another provokes a desire to remove all traces of himself.

After the initial shock of discovering the footprint, Crusoe's fear translates into an anxious flurry of activity in which every aspect of his abode is turned into an impenetrable hidden fortress, and every movement in his lifestyle assumes painful caution. He strengthens his fences, further camouflages his dwelling, intensifies his husbanding efforts, limits his movements about the island, and reduces the scope of his industry. "I cared not to drive a nail, or chop a stick of wood now, for fear the noise I should make should be heard; much less would I fire a gun, for the same reason; and, above all, I was intolerably uneasy at making any fire, lest the smoke...should betray me..." (RC 135)

The trace or footprint of another also has the effect of closing down Crusoe's sense of future. A single moment in his experience is recapitulated in an ever tightening stranglehold on his inventiveness, yet his imagination runs wild inventing reasons for this one appearance of another's footprint in the sand. (RC 118-20) He remains immobilised by this impression for at least two years before the tourniquet on his mind begins to slacken. The pulsations of fear and apprehensive imaginings gradually dissipate. However, from this point in the narrative he is no longer free of the *memory* of this trace of another having invaded his Edenic security – "I walked everywhere, peeping and peeping about..." he says. (RC 133)

Inserting the first modicum of otherness in the narrative, the discovery of a footprint gathers up every previous oscillation of despair and hope in the narrative, and intensifies it. Until this point in the story, we observe Crusoe oscillating between depression and industry, danger and thanksgiving, faith and agnosticism, survival as a challenge of inventiveness and as a burdensome necessity – for eighteen years, with the rhythm and predictability of a clock pendulum. These oscillations in Crusoe’s experience are intensified exponentially with the all-consuming shock of otherness before a familiar but terrifying impression in the sand.

In my reflections upon the state of my case since I came on shore on this island, I was comparing the happy posture of my affairs in the first years of my habitation here compared to the life of anxiety, fear, and care which I had lived ever since I had seen the *print of a foot* in the sand.... (RC 150, my emphasis)

Crusoe ponders that it was not the advent of this footprint so much as his awareness of it that broke the relative tranquility of his earlier years on the island: “[m]y satisfaction was perfect [before encountering the footprint], though my danger was the same; and I was as happy in not knowing my danger, as if I had never really been exposed to it”. (RC 150) For nearly two decades, Crusoe had been ignorant of any other human life on the island. (RC 127) After discovering the footprint, and then, with an ensuing discovery of visitors coming to the other side of the island, he lives in two years of great apprehension. He reflects on how fear [of the other] has virtually shut down his capacity for religious reflection and prayer. (RC 125) He loses his passion for invention, yet his imagination turns from inventiveness for survival to inventions of violence. (RC 128, 129, 135, 141) Even in his sleep, he dreams of enacting his imaginative plans for a well-rehearsed ambush. (RC 129) Indeed, his imagination is possessed by the ambush for many months – “I was in a murdering humour, and took up most of my hours...” (RC 141, 129-30) Eventually, through the inner turmoil of theological debate about the morality of cannibalism, and his plan to ambush and kill the visiting party, he resolves not to do so. He scuttles his meticulously planned ambush, lest he himself “should be at length no less a murderer”. (RC 141) Crusoe breaks through to a “modern” culture-relative understanding of the cannibals’ behaviour. On reflection, he surmises that the cannibals are no different from those who caused massacres in European warfare. (RC 130-32<sup>3</sup>) In the light of this thought, Crusoe wonders whether providence correlates with a certain ignorance –

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3. Crusoe eventually considers a perspective of *culture relative morality* based on Romans 2:14-16. (RC 160-161)

how infinitely good that Providence is which has provided, in its government of mankind, such narrow bounds to his sight and knowledge of things; and though he walks in the midst of so many thousand dangers, the sight of which, if discovered to him, would distract his mind and sink his spirits, he is kept serene and calm, by having the events of things hid from his eyes, and knowing nothing of the dangers which surround him. (RC 150)

In other words, “ignorance is bliss”! Crusoe is thankful for the years of tranquil agnosticism in which he dwelt on the island, and his preservation amid the frightful dangers that remained unperceived. Crusoe’s understanding of providence is curious in this regard, for were he to believe thoroughly in *providential security through ignorance*, his hitherto unawareness of danger from any number of things on the island should also apply to his agnosticism concerning the footprint in the sand (RC 150-51), which it clearly does not. On his reckoning, agnosticism rather than intentional piety (trust in providence) delivers peace of mind. However, once innocent agnosticism becomes aware of a trace of the other, it can no longer serve an adequate providential function. Crusoe is chaffed with anxiety about this trace of the unknown.

In his castaway circumstances, Crusoe frequently reverts to the Puritan piety on which he had turned his back as an adventurous youth, (RC 120) while also endorsing deist perceptions of providence in pushing the limits of inventive potential in survival. Precipitated by the footprint discovery, two distinctly different theological sensibilities – intense expressions of pietist enthusiasm, and Deism with its permission for adventurous domicile in the world – are in constant tension throughout the remainder of the narrative. (RC 59-60, 67-71, 86, 98-102, 130-32, 134, 194) Despite achieving a degree of serenity in his difficulties, Crusoe’s understanding of providence is thrown into question after the footprint event. Fear consistently overwhelms any inclination to the self-assurances of modern providence, but neither is fear ameliorated by enthusiast piety, however intense. Crusoe is distended between two forms of providence by a phenomenon that neither is ultimately adequate to meet.

#### FOOTPRINT AND PROVIDENCE

The Edenic island scene of *Robinson Crusoe* compresses a range of theological issues into the strictures of necessity and a limited horizon of time and space, which serve to simulate the circumscribed world of Enlightenment Man.<sup>4</sup> This early eighteenth-century microcosm of

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4. On the circumscriptions of the Enlightenment, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975/1989) 238-39, 271-85; Michel

emerging Enlightenment sensibilities is also the scene of a theological transition between two Christian worlds. While encompassed by time and space on every horizon of being, Enlightenment Man is also everywhere colonising this world under a benevolent (deist) Providence. A dimension of Crusoe's "modern" faith is grounded in a deist Providence in which *The Divine Harmony* of the cosmos is represented in the intricate laws of Nature, and political, social, and economic equilibrium. The Divine Logos is a source of reason, balance, and harmony, "in spite of" presenting circumstances, which might allay the realisation of such harmony.<sup>5</sup> This *providential structure* is indispensable to the story of Crusoe's survival – deist Providence works in and through Natural order to bring about providential effects.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with Deism's celebrated "non-interference" in natural processes,<sup>7</sup> Crusoe's God sustains and provides, through the abundance of the island and serendipitous discoveries that are made in the course of time.<sup>8</sup>

Crusoe's perception of providence is in tension with itself throughout much of the story, except for the most disconcerting event in the narrative – the enigmatic *footprint in the sand*. Then it is in crisis. Neither pietist nor deist providence will suffice to meet this challenge. Both generate their own expressions of dysfunction. Until the footprint discovery, the story depicts two forms of providence, pietist and deist

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Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) 32-50; Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 20-25; Charles E. Winquist, *Desiring Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 8-16. The gender specific *Enlightenment Man* is an expression of this circumscription.

5. Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology* (London: SCM, 1967) 30-32, 36-43. The refined symmetrical machinations of a clock were a quintessential symbol of Divinely pre-established natural harmony established in defiance of theologies of providence invoking a *Deus ex machina*. In Leibniz's "three clocks theory" (borrowed from Geulincx) of "pre-established harmony" in nature (*Histoire des Ouvrages des Savans*, 1696), the body and soul are equated with two clocks in time, with the third clock, a condition of possibility for the harmony of the two clocks, correlated with God, the "Pre-established Harmonizer"; see Antony Flew, *An Introduction to Western Philosophy: Ideas and Argument from Plato to Sartre* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) 336-38. The clock image is later expressed in Paley's "watch analogy"; see William Paley, *Natural Theology* (1802), *The Works of William Paley* (Edinburgh: Peter Brown and Thomas Nelson, 1831) 437-39.

6. Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 376, 379.

7. Especially in John Toland (1670-1722) *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696). Toland's theology contains the essential tenets of rational Deism. On late seventeenth century English Deism, see 68-80, 157-62; Fredrick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol V, Part I (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1964) 172-75; Justo L. González *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol III: *From Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 303-09. Edward Herbert (1583-1648) was a precursor advocate of Deism. Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970) 438.

8. One of the earliest hints of Crusoe's "modernity" is his disciplined scrupulous attention to chronology, carefully notching each day and week in a *calendar post*. (RC 48) Crusoe maintains a chronological record of the time he has spent on the island – 28 years, two months, nineteen days, being shipwrecked on September 30th 1659, and leaving on December 19th 1686. (RC 214)

ying for dominance in Crusoe's experience. Both forms of providence belong to a Christian provenance, but they reflect totally different worldviews. On the one hand, providence in the Puritan tradition reflects an elision of biblical motifs and the individual's story, whose weal and woe is read through the prism of biblical typology, prodigal sinfulness, repentance, and obedience to divine guidance.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Christian Deism as a *natural* or *rational* theology focuses on a providence that is played out in the harmony of nature and its capacity for natural provisioning and human freedom.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, human life is itself a site of inexhaustible reflection on providence.<sup>11</sup> As a metaphor of the time, Crusoe's providence is in tension between sovereign intervention in a personal world and an endorsement of nature as the locale of human provision and preservation (salvation). (RC 59-60) Divine will and the capacity to intervene in the vicissitudes of life underwrite the former – the outcome being an evocation of obedient faith in God's sovereignty; the latter is a deist underwriting of mathematical symmetry, natural balance, fecundity, discovery and invention – the outcome being godly faith in the integrity of nature, human freedom and reason.<sup>12</sup> (Ironically, the focus on subjectivity in pietism helped facilitate a modern shift to the human subject in the Enlightenment).<sup>13</sup> Crusoe is never entirely sure whether he is committed to providential goodwill, (RC 60<sup>14</sup>) and oscillates between forgetfulness and intense

9. Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 374-76.

10. "Rational theology is a theology which through arguments for the existence of God, and the like, attempts to build a universally acceptable theology by pure reason." Tillich notes, however, that *natural theology* as a "substructure" of orthodoxy, becomes a critique of revealed theology. Eventually there is a "revolt of the substructure [natural theology] against the superstructure [orthodoxy as revealed theology]." Tillich, *Perspectives*, 18.

11. "How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man!" (RC 119) Providence is here equated with human life itself ("the uneven state of human life" RC 120). "...and what secret differing springs are the affections hurried about as differing circumstances present! Today we love what tomorrow we hate; today we seek what tomorrow we shun; today we desire what tomorrow we fear; nay, even tremble at the apprehensions of.... This was exemplified in me." (RC 119)

12. See John Locke, "The Reasonableness of Christianity, As Delivered in the Scriptures", *The Reasonableness of Christianity with A Discourse of Miracles and part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, edited, abridged, and introduced by I. T. Ramsey (London: A & C Black, 1958) 25-77.

13. Tillich, *Perspectives*, 19. On seventeenth century German Protestant pietism, see Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason*, 99-106; González *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol III, 274-78.

14 "...I must confess, my religious thankfulness to God's providence began to abate too, upon discovering that all this was nothing but what was common [the provisioning of nature, that is, the growing seed] though I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen providence, as if it had been miraculous..." (RC 60) The providence of God is equated with the provisioning of nature as a "long series of miracles", which are "as great as" the miracle of Elijah being fed by ravens. (RC 101 citing 1Kings 17:4-6) Rogers observes that "Defoe makes it plain that divine will is expressed through second causes and only exceptionally through direct intervention outside the ordinary processes of nature" (*Robinson Crusoe*, 57).

repentance. Hence his sense of the future, too, fluctuates between openness, with an acceptance of *fate as providence*, and frequent lapses into piety in the face of terror.<sup>15</sup> In his island experience, Crusoe wrestles with both pietist and deist expressions of providence, generally with an elision of each. (RC 70-71<sup>16</sup>) However, there is a third dimension, which disturbs both pietist and deist expressions of providence, and which suggests a hint of the postmodern in regard to alterity.<sup>17</sup>

On the one hand, Crusoe has fled his father's Puritan values and a world of pious sensibilities.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Crusoe's experience of island "salvation" from shipwreck and destruction is patiently constructed with the resources – "tools", "learning", "arts", and newly discovered autonomy of Enlightenment Man. However, "...as soon as he discovers the footprint in the sand, Crusoe returns to his original state in which fear rules every aspect of his life"<sup>19</sup> – even after the revival of forgotten Puritan sensibilities surrounding his youth in which Crusoe undergoes a religious experience akin to evangelical conversion.

15. "[I]t is Crusoe's fate to have to act out all the contradictions of Defoe's belief-system', including its 'strategic and selective' belief in Providence" (Downie, "Robinson Crusoe's Eighteenth-Century Contexts", 21, citing Stuart Sim, "Interrogating an Ideology: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 10 [1987]: 170, 172). Crusoe's "main interest is survival, and when that is at stake, his religious observances fall off considerably" (Novak, *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction*, 40). Halewood suggests that "[i]t is necessary...to speak of 'climaxes' in the plural in Robinson Crusoe, for its structure is paratactic. There is no single point to which rising action rises and from which falling action falls. And in so far as the climaxes are climaxes in Crusoe's religious life, the paratactic structure reflects the inconclusiveness of his religious experiences" ("Religion and Invention in *Robinson Crusoe*", 84).

16. "*Robinson Crusoe* is shot through with the same inclination to read providential meanings into occurrences both remarkable and humdrum" (*Robinson Crusoe*, 57). Crusoe muses in a somewhat deistic register about the providence of "some secret Power" along with a more pious, personalised register: "He knows that I am here, and am in this dreadful condition." (RC 70-71)

17. In contemporary parlance, *alterity* refers to difference, otherness (i.e. *alternative*) and can include paradox, mystery, and transcendence. Taylor provides extensive discussion on alterity in *Alterity*; see Mark C. Taylor, *Alterity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

18. Crusoe reminisces on a "wandering inclination" contra the "father's house" and the "middle station" of life (RC 1, 2); "blessing of God" is equated with the father's will; defiance of both ("my duty to God and my father") is associated with adventure; wickedness with "leaving my father's house" (RC 4, 5); "That evil influence which carried me first away from my father's house, that hurried me into the wild and indigested notion of raising my fortune..." (RC 11) His "*original sin*" was to forsake his father's advice. (RC 149) He contrasts his own "rambling designs" with his "father's good counsel", which nevertheless, he is not inclined to follow. (RC 29) In times of adversity, he reflects on "my foolish inclination of wandering abroad", and "breaking away from my parents..." (RC 28) yet nevertheless, recants these views when all goes well. Downie notes the political impetus in forsaking the Fifth Commandment at that time ("*Robinson Crusoe's Eighteenth-Century Contexts*", 18). Crusoe's "*original sin*" is a compound of resistance to paternal vocation, the capitalist quest and its concomitant individuality, and repudiation of the existing *status quo* in surpassing it. See Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe*, 61-63.

19. Maximillian E. Novak, "Robinson Crusoe and the State of Nature", *Norton Critical Edition*, 318.

(RC 66-74) For all the colonising inventive powers of Enlightenment Man, a primal fear of chaos and the unknown other (that is, a footprint in the sand) haunts every step forward from this point in the story. With the imprint of this spectre in his experience, two providential resources prove to be ineffective: pietist providence read through biblical typology is powerless in allaying Crusoe's fear of the other; deist Providence that provisions initiative, autonomy, and imagination, is incapacitated by a fear of pending chaos. Both forms of providence are met with an alterity in the trace (*ichnos*) of an unknown other represented by a footprint.<sup>20</sup> The first, enthusiastically *evangelical*, must convert the other to a compatible perspective<sup>21</sup> (which Crusoe does with Friday – "The savage was now a good Christian." RC 169) The second is colonising, and seeks either to assimilate or to eliminate the other with the tools and inventions of Enlightenment (a course of action which Crusoe contemplates for many months).<sup>22</sup>

Alterity is a source of human uncertainty, and therefore, the seeming antithesis of providence. For evangelical sensibilities, alterity is a source of going astray – and is most easily equated with, or personified by "the devil" (God, at least, is circumscribed by well defined doctrine; the devil, in turn, is circumscribed by God – hence alterity is "covered" from either direction!).<sup>23</sup> For Enlightenment sensibilities, and for Crusoe, alterity resides in other human beings, who are just as likely to be a source of evil – as *heteronomous* or "of an other law".<sup>24</sup> Human beings always mean trouble and evil is associated with others.<sup>25</sup> In this, the

20. *Ichnos* or trace suggests the trace of the Infinite Other, whose thematisable *footprints* are erased, while leaving traces of this erasure *pace* Levinas. Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and Sense"; "Enigma and Phenomenon"; "Essence and Disinterestedness", in Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 59-64, 67-75, 117-120.

21. Crusoe's (Defoe) world follows a century of sectarian conflict and violence, hence, John Locke publishes *Epistula de Tolerantia* (and translations) in 1689; *A Second Letter concerning Toleration* in 1690; and, *A Third Letter concerning Toleration* in 1692); see Ramsey, "Introductory Note" in Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity with A Discourse of Miracles and part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, 88 n1.

22. For all his debilitating anxiety over cannibals generated by the footprint in the sand, Crusoe discovers years later from Friday (who is also a cannibal), that the "savages" maintain a very specific understanding of this ritual, only eating those who make war upon them (RC 171; in one sense, the logic of this is not very different from killing an assailant in a Christian "just war" theory).

23. The footprint "means to him only two things: it is either the mark of the devil, or of savages who will return to devour him..." (Eric Berne, "The Psychological Structure of Space with Some Remarks on *Robinson Crusoe*", *Norton Critical Edition*, 307).

24. The Enlightenment was a quest to eliminate *heteronomy* ("heteros" – "strange", "foreign"); see Tillich, *Perspectives*, 26. Crusoe's existence is solitary, and therefore in his religious sensibilities each lives in a solitary orthodoxy; see Novak, *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction*, 41.

25. That is, cannibals, whom he plots to murder. There is a shift from the Puritan figure of Satan who provides a rationale for "impulses" to do evil, to people as a source of "fall". Hence, "man can indeed return to union with nature, so long as other men are not present to disturb him". This "Eden" of solitude without the other displaces the Puritan

Judeo-Christian myth of an anthropocentric instead of theogonic site of evil (Genesis 3)<sup>26</sup> is doubled edged: on the one hand, this myth desacralises nature as a realm of human exploration and discovery (the provenance of Christian Enlightenment), but on the other hand, human responsibility also implies a radical capacity for evil<sup>27</sup> (which haunts the evangelical spirit).

The "modern" subject who colonises the world, does so under the auspices of an incorrigible certainty of the rational subject – Descartes' "I think, therefore I am"<sup>28</sup> – which is guaranteed by God.<sup>29</sup> Consistent with the Cartesian epistemology, *res extensa*, (body, phenomena – which have the capacity to deceive) or what is beyond the rational certainty of the solitary psyche (*res cogitans*),<sup>30</sup> can be a source of ambivalence, heteronomy, or alterity for humans.<sup>31</sup> *Extensa* as alterity can be a source of perceived "evil". The footprint in the sand is such an intrusion into Crusoe's Eden, heteronomous, a potential presence of fall and evil, and therefore completely disorientating.<sup>32</sup> With either resource – the

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temptations of Satan: "a work that gets away from its author, and gives expression to attitudes that seem to lie far from his conscious intention. Defoe sets out to dramatise the conversion of the Puritan self, and he ends by celebrating a solitude that exalts autonomy instead of submission." (Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 374, 380-381) The theme of solitude brings into stark relief the footprint in the sand – a symbol of indeterminate otherness in his island world.

26. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 232-60.

27. Kant's "radical evil" is a structural possibility of freedom. The freedom to do good is already inhabited by the anterior and alternative possibility of not choosing to do good. This is "radical" because its phenomenological expression is a manifestation of a structural condition of good, hence "radical evil". Kant frees us from thinking about the *origins* of evil, to thinking *radical evil*, as inscrutable as it is, within the condition of possibility for human freedom and good. Evil is therefore not an innate propensity or a disposition, but an inevitable consequence of the possibility of freedom. See Paul Ricoeur, "A Philosophical Hermeneutics of Religion: Kant", *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995) 77-82, citing Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960) 17-39.

28. Descartes' "Second Meditation", *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (Great Britain: Penguin, 1968) 102-12. According to Heidegger, Descartes forgets time in the *Cogito ergo sum*. Time is the temporal horizon of Dasein's "Being-in-the-world", and Descartes does not question the temporality of the "I" thereby locating ontology in the subject (*cogito*), divorced from its being (*sum*) as *Being-in-the-world*. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) 44-7.

29. Descartes' "Fourth Meditation", *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, 132-41.

30. Descartes' "Sixth Meditation", *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, 150-69. Crusoe creates a parable of Descartes' world; see Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 378.

31. Levinas notes "a reduction of the Other to the Same", in the "I think" of the Cartesian *cogito* that is intrinsic to the "intentional structure" of [western] scientific knowledge and philosophical synthesis; see. "Diachrony and Representation", *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 159-62. In Descartes *cogito*, knowledge is a source of "seizure" and "grasping" of what stands outside the "unity of the I"; see further Levinas, "Nonintentional Consciousness", *Entre Nous*, 125-26; also Descartes' "First Meditation", *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, 95-101.

32. Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 382. Is Crusoe's fear that a devil has left the footprint (RC 118-119) comparable to Descartes' dread of being deceived by an

consolations of religion or the certainty of reason – fear dominates Crusoe’s behaviour. Indeed, in the face of the other, as previously noted, Crusoe is plunged into violent oscillations in mood and contemplation – from destroying this other to eliminating the traces of his own existence.

Defoe tells us much about the thought and disposition of Crusoe, who provides multiple summary reports of his reasoning, the tensions in his thinking, and the rational outcome of his logical deductions, even if these deductions are imbued with psychological and emotional dimensions. “Reason” is Crusoe’s great ally in survival, (RC 44) and is a source of assurance in the face of adversity. (RC 47) Indeed, Reason is his primary resource for determining good and evil, and he does so by making an inventory of both in his situation. This is described as a “testimony”. (RC 49-50) In paradigmatic Enlightenment method, Crusoe dispels fear and superstition through reason. Unlike the Puritan psyche, which is exposed to God,<sup>33</sup> inner impulses are sanctified as a locale of natural Providential prompting that can be trusted. (RC 134) Descartes’ certain integrity of the human mind is endorsed and trusted by Crusoe. He seeks to sustain a world of rational comprehension, (RC 51) and pre-figuring its philosophical expression in Hegel, expounds a method of thinking by “thesis” and “antithesis”, even if this dialectic is within himself.<sup>34</sup> However, *the dialectic*, even in its concessions to the other, can only think the other as an eventual assimilation into the same.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the other is ultimately cannibalised.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Richetti suggests that “when the island has been totally possessed by Crusoe, when it is fully an extension of himself...he discovers [“abruptly”] the footprint on the beach. Crusoe has all along feared others, although his paranoia has diminished with his growing powers.”<sup>37</sup>

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*Evil Genius* (“some evil demon” 100) – the possibility that “clear and distinct” ideas are an apparition? See Descartes’ “First Meditation”, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, 99-100, 95-101. Compare the possibility of “equivocation” between manifestation and “apparition”, and therefore, doubt; see Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969/2000) 90-92.

33. Damrosch, “Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*”, 382-83.

34. Richetti, “The Self as Master”, 363-66. “*Robinson Crusoe* deals in extremes; it presents a world where one state is transformed into its opposite and where the secret of survival is a talent for changing violent transpositions into gradual adaptations.” Richetti notes that: “To experience anything properly, that is to see through it and understand its meaning, the event must be doubled, seen as part of a system of alternatives.” Crusoe keeps “before himself the image of various anti-Crusoes...” (365)

35. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 13-18, 21-23.

36. “It seems that after Crusoe had incorporated his island as far as he dared through exploration and exploitation, he felt guilty; he thought the devil should surely come after him and sure enough he did. Crusoe’s anxieties were based on the principle: ‘He who eats shall be eaten’; see Eric Berne, “The Psychological Structure of Space with Some Remarks on *Robinson Crusoe*”, *Norton Critical Edition*, 308. Robinson Crusoe too, is a cannibal.

37. Richetti, “The Self as Master”, 365-67; also Damrosch, “Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*”, 382-385. “So long as he is by himself Crusoe escapes Hobbes’ war of all against all...” (385)

The island (*res extensa*) is colonised, incrementally, by exploration, industry, and invention to become an *extension* and expression of Crusoe's (Cartesian) identity.<sup>38</sup> He is a regal lord of all he surveys. Crusoe, alone on the island, declares: "I was lord of the whole manor; or, if I pleased, I might call myself king or emperor over the whole country which I had possession of. There were no rivals: I had no competition, none to dispute sovereignty or command with me." (RC 98) When the island is first "peopled" with Friday and Christianus, a Spaniard castaway, Crusoe declares himself "king", "absolute lord and lawgiver", to whom "all owed their lives". (RC 185) The island is also a metaphor of a *world unto itself* (with divine endorsement of sovereign reason) upon which Crusoe has been shipwrecked, from which he is unlikely to escape this side of death.<sup>39</sup> Despite his initial yearnings and lamentations, he seeks to make the most of the material assets of the island, being an unlimited source of diverse resources, which he continually discovers – analogous to New World discoveries of the sixteenth and seventeenth century explorers.<sup>40</sup> While Crusoe explores, charts or documents, colonises, and assimilates the natural resources of the island, it is the circumscribed horizon of the island itself that suggests the metaphorical parameters of Crusoe's *modern* worldview. As Crusoe discovers indigenous fruits of the island, cultivates its ground, tames and husbands its fauna, and makes himself at home with comfortable dwellings, he may well have dreams of leaving, but by all appearances, he is staying. Crusoe's domesticated island suggests a metaphor of the natural world of Enlightenment Man who belongs here, whatever yearnings might arise for an "elsewhere".<sup>41</sup> Further, "here" is a bountiful world that can be enjoyed under the Providence that has

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38. Taylor, *Erring*, 26-27.

39. Compare Crusoe's experiences of sudden inconsolable anguish over being "a prisoner, locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness, without redemption" (RC 86), a potential metaphor for an angst and outsidelessness in emerging modernity. Early in his island captivity, Crusoe builds a canoe, which he cannot launch because of its size (RC 96-98). Is this an unwitting metaphor of the circumscribed horizon of industrious modernity? "Crusoe achieves salvation, and overcomes his existential isolation, *without* any 'network of personal relationships' – Friday comes late on the scene and is a dependant rather than a friend.... He is reconciled to his condition by solitary devotions (which go on while his capital is accreting), not by healthy interpersonal contacts" (Rogers, *Robinson Crusoe*, 64).

40. Foremost for Defoe may have been the English explorer hero, William Dampier (1652-1715), who circumnavigated the world three times, and published *New Voyage Around the World* (1697).

41. On the one hand, Le Doeuff suggests that the island metaphor functions in an implicitly ideological and utopian way in philosophy; see Michèle Le Doeuff, "Daydream in *Utopia*", in *The Philosophical Imaginary* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1989) 21-8. On the other hand, *Robinson Crusoe* displaces the *utopia genre* and implies instead, self confrontation of values through the genre of exile; see Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 34-5. Further, Watt suggests that *Robinson Crusoe* depicts "the utopia of the Protestant Ethic" (Ian Watt, "Robinson Crusoe as Myth", *Norton Critical Edition*, 299) and McKeon that Crusoe "has internalised his ["modern"] utopia" ("Defoe and the Naturalization of Desire", 421).

bestowed it, and which it continues to sustain. In one sense, *Robinson Crusoe* is a parable of the circumscribed world of early Enlightenment Man – pious but pragmatic, believing but rational, Christian but European, curious but colonialist, visionary but realist, and spiritual but *this-worldly*.<sup>42</sup>

Crusoe's *modern providential sensibilities* are most consistently played out in being an inductive scientist, who, after Enlightenment reasoning (and English empiricism<sup>43</sup>), establishes the functional dynamics of his environment ("Nature") by observation, experimentation, and recording variable factors such as the weather and its seasons. (RC 81) Crusoe's world is permeated with a spirit of optimism, adventure, discovery, and experimentation.<sup>44</sup> He combines a scientific approach to the environment<sup>45</sup> with great industry,<sup>46</sup> which, in a physically predictable world is not expended fruitlessly (at least in the seventeenth century), but is always assured of provisioning (salvation and therefore Providence in its early Enlightenment sense). One of Crusoe's early acts of survival is to make an inventory. (RC 50) An inventory implies asking the questions – "What do I have?" "What have I managed to salvage?" "What materials do I have with which to construct a future that has continuity with the past?" His many inventories, however, become a hindrance to inventing his way into a future of the other, which is always yet to unfold, possibly in the most unexpected way, and beyond the scope and reconfiguration of materials at his disposal. Crusoe also makes inventories of what he might not have had. He spends much time vividly imagining what his circumstances might now be if he had retrieved nothing from the shipwreck. (RC 100) His diverse inventories imply a will to survive. Survival necessitates invention, but to invent is

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42. *Robinson Crusoe* is "an archetype of the 'new man' – self-reliant, but also self-seeking..." – of an emerging age with "twin modern trends towards individualism and technologism" (Fausett, *The Strange Surprising Sources of Robinson Crusoe*, 126, 123-36). "In reconciling themselves to bourgeois and capitalist values, Defoe and others created a modern myth of *homo oeconomicus*, partly because mankind's ethical relationships were in fact acquiring a material-economic basis at the time..." and because out of "the individualist bias inherent in Protestantism...", there was an emerging "ideological vacuum" of "self sufficiency", of which Crusoe is a paradigm ["the Robinson-motif as an embodiment of individualism" [47] (Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 44, 47).

43. In the tradition of Ockham (nominalism); Bacon (inductive method); Newton (universal laws of nature); and Locke (empirical epistemology).

44. Crusoe's (Defoe) world follows the exciting and monumental scientific discoveries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy, and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Routledge, 1991) 512-25.

45. Crusoe is "fussily analytical". In his early ventures in the New World, he intended to become "the master of every mechanical art" (Halewood, "Religion and Invention in *Robinson Crusoe*", 84).

46. We are frequently told that a certain task took many days, weeks, even months, or simply "infinite labour". (RC 49, 88, 97)

to depart from the known, and to create beyond the limits of an inventory, merely re-forging fragments of debris retrieved from the past.<sup>47</sup>

The tension between inventory and invention is played out in a colonial register. As an advocate for Christian civilisation, Crusoe is an *inventor*, stocktaking all that he has salvaged, and cataloguing all that is English,<sup>48</sup> enlightened, and civilised.<sup>49</sup> His stocktaking colonialist propensities are present throughout the island sojourn. After all, Crusoe was shipwrecked when going to the African continent to obtain slaves for illegal trading. (RC 28) For all his inventories, Crusoe is ultimately an *inventor* who lives by salvaging and assimilating, rather than an *inventor* who invents to encounter the hitherto unknown.<sup>50</sup> Crusoe's colonialism is never more evident than in his relationship with Friday, toward whom he is paternal while being a firm pedagogic. Friday is re-educated from animism into spiritual pietism and various social values under the rubric of English rational "Protestant" Deism. (RC 158, 166-172) In short, Crusoe makes Friday part of his inventory, as a companion and helper, but is unable to invent space for him – either to have a name, except for Crusoe's nomination (RC 158),<sup>51</sup> or to be a believer in his creator, "Benamuckee" (RC 166-167<sup>52</sup>). The inventiveness of Crusoe reflects the double-edged character of modern inventiveness, which, for all its gains for human material well-being, also gives expression to the very antithesis of beneficent human inventiveness in its colonising sensibilities. Nor does Crusoe have sufficient resources in his residue of

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47. Consider imagination and invention in contrast to imagination and fear. (RC 128, 129, 135, 141) Crusoe even makes an inventory of how (many) "savages" were killed in an ambush. (RC 182)

48. Crusoe *Anglicises* "the alien thing he encounters" (Damrosch, "Myth and Fiction in *Robinson Crusoe*", 382). James Joyce suggests that Crusoe is "[t]he true symbol of the British conquest" and "the true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday (the trusty savage who arrives on an unlucky day) is the symbol of the subject races"; see James Joyce, "Daniel Defoe", *Buffalo Studies* 1.1 (1964), *Norton Critical Edition*, 323.

49. Crusoe's civilising impetus is inseparable from the necessity of armaments as an essential means of defending and preserving his world. Crusoe gives much time to, and expends great effort in maintaining the long-term security of his great stock of munitions. He foresees the time when these will be diminished and he will be defenceless. (RC 45-46)

50. Latin: invention *invenire*, in upon, *venire* to come. (Chambers ED)

51. Levinas suggests that Friday as an other "who speaks replaces the irrepressible sickness of echoes [in Crusoe's experience]"; see Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words", in Seán Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford and Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 148. On the other hand, Friday also becomes a reassuring mirror reflecting Crusoe's world; see Taylor, *Erring*, 27; Watt, "Robinson Crusoe as Myth", 301-02.

52. Crusoe's belief in the co-existence of monotheism and evil is illogical to Friday. (RC 167-168) Paradoxically, *Robinson Crusoe* resonates with the *noble savage myth*, in which one "reaches a state of wisdom away from society". He is an illustration of "Enlightenment principles of pedagogy and natural philosophy" (Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 47). Rousseau commends the "natural education" of Crusoe away from the vulgarities of society; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Treatise on Natural education", *Norton Critical Edition*, 262-63.

Puritan sensibilities to critique his father's model of "the medium" with its equation of prosperity with providence.<sup>53</sup>

The footprint in the sand remains an unassimilable factor in Crusoe's experience and theology, conservative or progressive, which exposes fragility in his theology of providence. The inexplicable footprint of another is antithetical to the sensibilities of pietism with its circumscribed horizon of human freedom, and it is antithetical to Enlightenment Man with his circumscribed world of rational colonisation. The dysfunctions of both generate the most explicit crisis in Crusoe's theological understanding of providence – religious or enlightened. It generates an antipathy to *the other*, which becomes a hallmark of modern individuality and propriety rights; and it generates counter-inventiveness in a world that erects its self-apotheosis on a capacity for invention. Crusoe, the *inventor* and *inventor*, comes to an end of inventiveness in the fear of the other. In either the other's non-assimilation or non-destruction, otherness is inverted like a glove, to become a debilitating liability *within* human autonomy.<sup>54</sup> It is this tension between fear and colonising, and its oblique correlation with providence and inventory, which calls for a further theological dimension.

#### INVENTORY, INVENTION, AND THE MONSTROUS

The metaphors, *shipwreck* and *inventory*, imply a recognition of human contingencies – of history, time, and place – on *this island* and not another, from this ship and its wrecked cargo, and not another, and castaway for how long? – one never knows. We are washed up somewhere on the shore of human embodiment – with gender, ethnic, historical, and cultural specificity. The accidents of birth and context are the accidents of a particular shipwreck in time that has left us survivors on a particular shore – this shore and not some other shore.<sup>55</sup> Having survived, we are surrounded by the debris of shipwreck, of which we learn to make inventories – many inventories for the future challenge of

53. Throughout the story, Crusoe is haunted, religiously, by the instruction of his father to remain home and establish himself in the happiest state known to humankind – the *medium* or *middle range* – having not too much nor too little (RC 1, 2). On his return to England, Crusoe finds that, in his absence, he has become very wealthy through his Brazilian plantations, (RC 215-221) which he ascribes to providence, equating his experience with "the latter end of Job". (RC 219, citing Job 42:12)

54. Loss of alterity (infinity or otherness) is dangerous to the humanity of humans – the Enlightenment and modern movement from heteronomy to autonomy as a negation of heteronomy becomes a negation of all otherness; self-identity and autonomy is affirmed in either the assimilation or elimination of otherness (inassimilable otherness fails to mirror the self); see Taylor, *Erring*, 25-33.

55. For Heidegger, to be human is to be "thrown" into a particular time, place, culture, tradition, and possibilities-being *here* and not *there* in "*Being-there*" (*Dasein*). *Dasein* always thinks, lives, and acts in a certain contextual or *thrown way*. In its temporal and spatial thrownness (being *here* and not *there*) *Dasein* understands and projects its possibilities for existence; see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 182-85, 189-91.

survival. The inadequacy of any inventory also implies the necessity of invention. Being shipwrecked, one is challenged to invent imaginatively and incorrigibly beyond the debris at hand.

Jacques Derrida has referred to *inventiveness* as unexpected innovation, illegality, and otherness. Invention comes as a "surprise", creating a "gap" between "convention" and an "inaugural" event of something that is unrecognisable.<sup>56</sup> It carries its own origin and *telos*, and is therefore patently "illegal", yet it requires some form of countersignature.<sup>57</sup> How then is invention recognised? Who or what endorses invention as invention if it is unique? Invention is a transgression of convention; it is disturbing, unsettling, and therefore ambiguous and "destabilising".<sup>58</sup> According to Derrida, "juridical utterances" have the "same structure" as invention in which the law must always be reinvented in its application to new contexts.<sup>59</sup> While invention requires an inventory [debris] with which to invent [that is, a law tradition], it is also performative, inventing beyond the re-configuration of *the things at hand*. Reconfiguration can be conserving, or it can be inventive. Derrida breaks down an "oppositional logic" between the "constative" (conserving) and the "performative" (inaugural), for language is able to do both – repetition (iterability) conserves and admits the novel in the interval of recurrence ("The very moment of this fabulous repetition can, through a merging of chance and necessity, produce the new of an event.") Therefore, being negotiated through language "...the concept of invention distributes its two essential values between these two poles: the constative – discovering or unveiling, pointing out or saying what is – and the performative – producing, instituting, transforming".<sup>60</sup> Inventing the future as inventions of space for the other to come – what inventive invention looks like – is never known before it is invented, only after the fact. Having been invented, the inaugural may be monstrous. Invention is monstrous and dangerous because

passing beyond the possible, it is without status, without law, without horizon of reappropriation, programmatic, institutional legitimisation, it passes beyond the order of demand, of the market for art or science, it asks for no patent and will never have one. In

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56. Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other", in Derek Attridge (ed.), *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 338. Invention is inaugural and not the mere reconfiguration of an inventory: "the event of a novelty that must surprise, because at the moment when it comes about, there could be no statute, no status, ready and waiting to reduce it to the same" (338).

57. Derrida, "Invention of the Other", 315-17.

58. Derrida, "Invention of the Other", 335, 338. "An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards the proprieties." (312)

59. Derrida, "Invention of the Other", 312, 324-27, 337-38.

60. Derrida, "Invention of the Other", 324-26, 340.

that respect it remains very gentle, foreign to threats and wars. But for that it is felt as something all the more dangerous.<sup>61</sup>

The future too, like invention, is essentially “inventive”, and as such is also an aberration or “monstrous”. The monstrous has to do with the appearance of the unknown, aberrant, or un-categorisable, which is in turn labelled “monstrous”. In literature, the monstrous is a figure that bends imagination. For example, Kant refers to the colossal [*monstrous*] as sublime, because it extends beyond our capacity to be grasped, even by imagination, and yet it is only perceived through the imagination, not reason.<sup>62</sup> Monstrosity is usually ascribed to that which we do not understand or to that of that which we are afraid. The future, because unknown, is essentially *monstrous*.<sup>63</sup> It sits above an abyss of uncertainty! Indeed, to speak of certainty and the future together is contradictory, hence its fearful aspect – “the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared,...is heralded by species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would already be a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow.” Yet the monstrous is not to be feared but to be risked – like an unknown footprint in the sand. Paradoxically, the monstrous is a site of inventiveness, for “[a]ll experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant*, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange...”<sup>64</sup> For Emmanuel Levinas too, time itself, in its recurrence and structure of openness to its other, admits inventiveness.<sup>65</sup> Time (diachrony) is always the time of the *other* and the *otherwise of being*.<sup>66</sup>

Both pietist and deist sensibilities continue, implicitly, to be present in contemporary (Protestant) perceptions of providence – God as *Deus ex machina*, and nature as virtually inexhaustible in provisioning modern technologically dependent *being in the world*.<sup>67</sup> Levinas provides another aperture on our “further theological dimension to providence” when he speaks of the “Glory of the Infinite”, in which God is not hemmed in by

61. Derrida, “Invention of the Other”, 343.

62. *pace* Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Pure Judgment*), Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 124-31.

63. Derrida, “Passages – from Traumatism to Promise”, *Points ... Interviews 1974–1994* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995) 386-87.

64. Derrida, “Passages”, 387. “Invention is always possible”, but “the only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible” (“Invention of the Other”, 340-41).

65. For Levinas, diachrony and therefore time “as the deformalization of ...the unity of the *I think*”, admitting exteriority or otherness into the same through recurrence, is a source of “invention and novelty” (“Diachrony and Representation”, 175-77).

66. This thesis is central to Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1981/1997).

67. A theology of God as “*Deus ex machina*” or “working hypothesis”, and “stop-gap” – whether conservative or liberal, is a prime quarry in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 153/1965) 91-95, 103-04, 107-08, 114-15, 116-22.

theology or reason, not to mention the “temptation of theodicy” in either. The *Glory of the Infinite* is precisely the otherness of God that cannot be circumscribed, while approaching the proximity and [monstrous] summons of the human other.<sup>68</sup> This too, is a *glory of providence* – the *Infinite* refusing circumscription by doctrine or calculus, utterly novel in *our* temporality, but terrifying in the *monstrous* ambiguity<sup>69</sup> with which we are left to interpret the ineluctable comings of weal and woe in human life.<sup>70</sup> The “trauma” of this ambiguity, and an inescapable assignation to the human other – whose suffering is unique and cannot be generalised in a kerygma of theodicy<sup>71</sup> – is “prophetic witness” to the *glory of the Infinite*.<sup>72</sup>

Crusoe’s bifurcating providential sensibilities are focused on his security and future on the island, but Levinas’s concept of “fear for the other” suggests another providential sensibility in which the other’s well-being becomes the focus of “providential inspiration”, rather than one’s own – this assignation to providential concern for the other being infinite in its source. This is nothing short of a *comic*

reversal based on the face of the other, in which, at the very heart of the phenomenon, in its light itself, a surplus of significance signifies what may be designated as glory. It demands me, claims me, assigns me. Should we not call that demand or that challenge or that assignment of responsibility the word of God?<sup>73</sup>

68. Levinas, “Glory of the Infinite and Witnessing”, in *God, Death, and Time* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000) 195-97. Levinas speaks of the “temptation of theodicy” (“Useless Suffering”, *Entre Nous*, 96, 94-97).

69. Compare the writer of Job who refuses a theodicy (Levinas), or second Isaiah – “I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things” (45:7), with Crusoe’s declaration upon the inheritance of prosperity, which he attributes to “a life of Providence’s chequer-work”. (RC 234) An earlier similar declaration while on the island is ambiguous – “How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man!” (RC 119)

70. Levinas, “Useless Suffering”, 91-97.

71. Levinas, “Useless Suffering”, 241 n. 5. Job “refuses a theodicy right to the end and, in the last chapters of the text (42:7), is preferred to those who, hurrying to the safety of Heaven, would make God innocent before the suffering of the just”. (241 n. 9). Levinas suggests that Auschwitz was not a failure of theodicy, but “the end of theodicy”, a summons to “faith without theodicy”. (97-100)

72. Levinas, “Witnessing and Ethics”; “From Consciousness to Prophetism”; “In Praise of Insomnia”; *God, Death, and Time*, 198-201, 202-06, 207-22. On “prophetic signification”, the “cry of ethical revolt, [and] a bearing witness to responsibility”. Levinas, “God and Philosophy”, *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998) 75-8. “God’s silence” in Auschwitz is a summons to witness to the “outrage” at the “suffering of the other”, not a summons to theodicy (“Useless Suffering”, 99). An “intrigue of meaning” is “tied up in the monstrosity of the infinite placed in me”, which for Levinas is a summons to responsibility for the other (“A God ‘Transcendent to the Point of Absence’”, 222, 219-24).

73. Levinas, “From the One to the Other: Transcendence and Time”, *Entre Nous*, 147. Levinas refers to an “awakening” and “trauma” in which desire for the Infinite is reversed to become undesirable as an excess of the “in-finite within”, an assignation to and

In contrast to Crusoe who fears the other, the other in Levinas, is feared *for* as one whose “place in the sun” is always usurped by oneself, even if my “being-in-the-world”, and Levinas quotes Pascal, is “the beginning and prototype of usurpation of the whole earth”.<sup>74</sup> In the face of the other, one is apprehended by an “excess”, which Levinas refers to as “word of God”, “glory” – the prophetic summons to responsibility that interrupts intentional orientation toward providential concerns for oneself. The excess of responsibility, and with it, signification through assignation to the other, is prophetic (what Levinas refers to as *word of God*), destabilising thought of perseverance and providence that relates to one’s own being.<sup>75</sup> This is fear *for* the other’s *place in the sun*, rather than displacement of my place by the other. Such an assignation to responsibility that arises in proximity to the other, following these Levinasian sensibilities, is providential par excellence.

#### CONCLUSION

The article has engaged *Robinson Crusoe* as a literary theology of bifurcating providence that is dysfunctional before the discovery of an enigmatic footprint in the sand. Robinson Crusoe is shipwrecked on a shore of alterity where his inventory of pietist and deist providential sensibilities are inadequate to meet the haunting spectre of a trace of the other. The story’s bifurcating providence, which paradoxically, is never divisible in Crusoe’s experience, is counter-inventive and circumscribing in his negotiation of the unknown. The trauma of ambiguity in the face of infinity – the monstrosity of the future (Derrida) and the glory of the infinite without circumscription (Levinas), suggests that no satisfactory theological solution can be found for the difficult issue of providence and the ineluctable quest to justify the ways of the divine in regard to one’s own survival, much less comfort. Yet Levinas provides an aperture for *inventive providence* in proximity to the other, when *fear for*, and assignation to responsibility for the other, make explicit a summons to the trace of otherness – whether God or human – where the future is welcomed as a *welcome of the other*, rather than a fearful space to be pre-empted with providential but circumscribing inventories.

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responsibility for the other, as “divine comedy” (“God and Philosophy”, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 65-70).

74. Levinas, “From the One to the Other”, 144, quoting Pascal’s *Pensées*. “The fear of occupying someone’s place in the [Heideggerian] *Da* of my *Dasein*; an incapacity to have a place, a profound utopia. A fear that comes to me from the face of the other.” (145) This is “[a] crisis of being...because I myself already ask myself if my being is justified, if the *Da* of my *Dasein* is not already the usurpation of someone’s place”. (148) Levinas refers to this *fear* as “bad conscience”, which is the beginning of ethics as a putting in question of the self in assignation to responsibility for, or *fear for* the other. (140-53) See also, Levinas, “Nonintentional Consciousness”, 127-32; “Diachrony and Representation”, 169-75; “The Bad Conscience and the Inexorable”, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 172-77.

75. Levinas, “From the One to the Other”, 144-45, 147-48.