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Landscape, Culture, and Education in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe

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Geert Vandermeersche and Ronald Soetaert,
"Landscape, Culture, and Education in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*"
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Ed. Sofie Verraest, Bart Keunen, and Katrien Bollen
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Abstract: In their article "Landscape, Culture, and Education in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*" Geert Vandermeersche and Ronald Soetaert discuss Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a narrative that translates nature and our dealings with it into a literary text. Vandeermeersche and Soetaert postulate that the novel can be read as a quintessential fable of humans' cultivation of nature and the creation of individuality, which, at the same time, provides its readers with strategies for describing processes such as education. *Robinson Crusoe* and its characters, metaphors, and scenarios function in the "auto-communication" of culture as an enduring equipment for living (Burke), a company readers keep (Booth), and a cognitive tool in modern Western culture.

Geert VANDERMEERSCHE and Ronald SOETAERT

Landscape, Culture, and Education in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

The representation of nature in cultural artifacts can be described, following Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics, as the "culturization of elements of the natural world [which] occurs by means of language, and more precisely through naming. Through this [first-order] process parts of the natural world are 'humanized' … landscape as an object of geography has no meaning on its own, unless it enters consciousness as (for example) an object of aesthetic contemplation" (Lotman qtd. in Zylko 394). The semiotic models we find in art, myth, religion, and science construct second-order representations of nature by "pick[ing] out the layer of culturally relevant phenomena in the surrounding world" (Lotman 58). As "the laws of construction of the artistic text are very largely the laws of the construction of culture as a whole" (Lotman 33), uncovering the ways in which artistic texts represent nature becomes an analysis of the larger cultural construction of human beings' place in nature. As Lotman suggests, culture can (metaphorically) be described "as a vast example of auto-communication" (33); culture addresses itself in/through aesthetic texts. Moreover, participants in this cultural conversation do more than transmit simple information (2): they engage in "an increase in information, its transformation, reformulation and with the introduction not of new messages but of new codes" (29). Thus, the engagement with "the artistic text, or culture seen as a shared and superindividual intellect" (Zylko 400) becomes a dialogue with "thinking objects" (Lotman 2), for instance with "a literary narrative [which] is the most flexible and effective modeling mechanism for describing extremely complex structures and situations in their entirety" (163). Literary texts can reveal both larger cultural practices of representing nature and the cultural techniques that human beings develop to see themselves and their (natural) surroundings.

Two new branches in the study of art, namely evolutionary criticism (Gottschall and Wilson; Carroll, Dutton, Boyd) and ecocriticism (Garrard; Glotfelty), have, in different ways, refocused attention on aspects of language, art, and the human preference for narrative meaning-making. While evolutionary criticism sees storytelling as a necessary tool in human beings' cognitive adaptation to their environment, ecocriticism focuses on our use of metaphors and texts as a way to control and understand nature. In other words, literary texts are an integral part of the civilization process, and they thematize the ways in which human beings have encountered and cultivated his/her surroundings, him/herself, and other human beings. Ecocriticism is described as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xix). Greg Garrard proposes to read texts "as the production, reproduction and transformation of large-scale metaphors" (7) for describing and controlling nature: for example "the literary genres of pastoral and apocalypse [show] pre-existing ways of imagining the place of humans in nature" (2). We must be aware that the use**s** of such stories and metaphors have "political effects or [serve] particular social interests" (7). Similarly, the goals of environmental education include "recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings" (Palmer and Neal 12). From an ecocritical perspective, this implies a reflection on stories that illustrate this interplay between culture and nature. Moreover, it has been stated that the conception of modern environmental literacy (Soetaert, Top; Eeckhout; Stables) is influenced by literary texts such as *Robinson Crusoe* (see Midgley).

Ideas on evolution have long influenced the humanities. Examples include the insight that, parallel to genetic transmission, narratives transfer cultural information: "The more people acquire freedom from the automatism of genetic planning, the more important it is for them to construct plots of events and behavior" (Lotman 170). Such insights are solidified in evolutionary criticism, where narratives and art are seen as adaptational strategies. Why not, as Brian Boyd suggests in *On the Origin of Stories*, explain the practice of storytelling through "the richest explanatory story of all, the theory of evolution by natural selection" (1)? One of narrative's possible evolutionary advantages is "its ability to provide scenarios or models that we can draw on in planning our own actions and making our own decisions" (Boyd 194). The question whether these scenarios should be (scientifically, objectively) truthful has little evolutionary salience as "fictional situations need be neither just the

same as those we encounter in real life, nor realistic, in order to aid our thinking about action … to clarify our thinking about reality" (194; also see Austin). Some stories, such as parables, function through their simplicity while others rely on a reader's long-term identification with psychologically complex characters. Boyd illustrates the function of stories with the novel *Robinson Crusoe*: "we may never be shipwrecked on a desert island like Robinson Crusoe, but we can learn from the example of his fortitude, resolution, and ingenuity. The very unusualness of the situation catches our attention and animates our imaginations, and our engagement with Crusoe in his predicaments makes the lesson 'emotionally saturated'" (194). These literary scenarios are useful tools in a reader's education. Joseph Carroll uses the example of Dickens's David Copperfield, who reads *Robinson Crusoe*, but not to escape: "by nurturing and cultivating his own individual identity through his literary imagination, [the book] enables [him/her] to adapt successfully to this world … and in doing so he demonstrates the kind of adaptive advantage that can be conferred by literature" (68).

In what follows, we examine Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a narrative that translates nature and our dealings with it into a literary text. The novel can be read as a quintessential fable of humans' cultivation of nature and the creation of individuality, which, at the same time, provides its readers with strategies for describing processes such as education. Both the novel *Robinson Crusoe* and the characters, metaphors, and scenarios it provides have functioned in the "auto-communication" of culture as an enduring equipment for living (Burke 293), a conversational partner or a company readers keep (Booth), and a cognitive tool in modern Western culture. Kenneth Burke's essay "Literature as Equipment for Living" is a foundational text for the analysis of recurring patterns in narratives (see also Rutten, Soetaert, Vandermeersche). Like proverbs ("come rain, come shine"), Burke states, literature "name[s] typical recurrent situations" (293). Narratives deal with certain common characteristics of life, such as love and death. However, they do not only describe situations, but also provide "strategies for dealing with situations" (296). Stories provide human beings with "lessons," which inform ways of living. Before ecocritics suggested to focus on the patterns and models by means of which literature describes humanity's doings and situation in nature, Burke had already sought "to codify the various strategies which artists have developed with relation to the naming of situations" (301). Such an approach could result in a comparative history that describes the intertextual conversation as it appears in sources and adaptations of culturally significant stories and important literary "naming of situations" such as *Robinson Crusoe*.

Similarly, Wayne Booth describes literary interpretation as a process of co-duction, which means "experiencing [literary texts] in an immeasurably rich context of others that are both like and unlike them" (*The Company* 70). This leads Booth to re-describe literary culture as a conversation during which other stories and interpretations become the company we keep: "all stories [can be viewed] as companions, friends" (*The Company* 175). We never consume stories in isolation, separated from other readers or other stories. Booth also offers a theory of self-cultivation through literature. In general, readers can expand their character through identifying with fictional roles (*The Company* 250) and deciding "whether a proffered new role … is one that we … ought to take on" (*The Company* 260). In more specific terms, we acquire different metaphors to describe the world and ourselves. Before evolutionary criticism's suggestion that narratives provide possible scenarios for action, Booth had already described fiction as "the counterbalancing of cases … it is in stories that we learn to think about the 'virtual' cases that echo the cases we will meet when we return to the more disorderly, 'actual' world" ("The Ethics" 48). This relationship between life and fiction is complex, but cognitive approaches to narrative describe it as the evolving adaptation of schemata (see Schank). Examples of larger cultural schemata include "the journey" or "growing-up." When reading artistic texts, Peter Stockwell suggests that we "preserve a representation of those texts, comprising the gist of the meaning … together with a sense of what the literary work means for us" (122-23). Stockwell uses the notion of the parable, which is "a newly structured cognitive model that is the reader's representation of the meaningfulness of the literary work" (125). This model, which is "necessarily narrative in its conceptual organization" (132), consists of "key features [that] are picked out and foregrounded as being highly salient for the reader, or for the reading community" (125). In these parables, certain characters can become emblematic "as generically significant beyond the specifics of their world [such as] Robinson Crusoe [who] becomes an emblem of isolation and abandonment" (126; see also

Faulks). The notion of intertextuality is relevant because emblems are "metaphorically mapped back onto specific narratives again" (126) as in adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* and cognitive schemata. Parables can influence or change a reader's thinking, "potentially offer[ing] modifications of the original cognitive models" (127; on intertextuality see, e.g., Juvan).

Defoe's 1719 *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* can be placed under many headings: a prototype of the novel, a dominant way of looking at the culture/nature divide (through its themes of the ethos of self-cultivation, the creation of landscape), a canonical novel, a book on religion and the place of man, an important instance of travel literature, a myth of the modern individual (see Watt, *Myths*; for a bibliography of travel studies, see Salzani and Tötösy de Zepetnek), an inspiration for educational, philosophical, social, and economic theories, and a convergence point for feminist, ecological, and postcolonial critiques. The novel is both a product of the political and economic reality of the early eighteenth century (when London was becoming a capital of trade in Europe and the British colonial empire), and a catalyst for new systems of thought, in the sense that *Robinson Crusoe* launched a new genre: the Robinsonade. This genre reveals "the literary imagination of … the origin myth of the bourgeois society. It is the report of the transformation of the state of nature into civilization, the struggle against nature and the savages: it is an ode to the civilian as creator of culture and controller of nature" (Lemaire 158; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are ours). In short, the book celebrates Western ideals such as rationality and utilitarianism. As Alasdair MacIntyre points out in *After Virtue*, "*Robinson Crusoe* becomes the bible of a generation which includes both Rousseau and Adam Smith. The novel with its stress on individual experience and its value is about to emerge as the dominant literary form" (151).

The influence of the novel's ideas has been amplified through a network of adaptations and references in stories and cultural practices. On the one hand, the novel is influenced by previous texts, mostly notably Ibn Tufail's *The Improvement of Human Reason* — a philosophical fable about a boy who has to survive on an island without any tools or education, examining *avant-la-lettre* the idea of the blank slate and the state of nature — and real-life stories of castaways, such as the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkrik. On the other hand, the retellings and references to *Robinson Crusoe* are innumerable: Johann David Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812), William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), Michel Tournier's *Vendredi*, *ou Les Limbes de Pacifique* (1967), and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). In terms of literary genres, the network that can be built around *Robinson Crusoe* also shows relations to the tradition of travel literature, the *Bildungsroman*, and children's literature. Defoe's novel is etched in the collective imagination of children and grown-ups as a collection of images: a sinking ship, an uninhabited island, a footprint in the sand, and cannibals by the fire (see Reckwitz). In addition to these cultural images, *Robinson Crusoe* also reflects shared practices in Western culture, including the way in which landscapes are constructed and perpetuated in other cultural practices such as painting, photographs, and even tourism through the lens of the "Robinson" tradition (Robinson 52). We suggest placing the novel in "the virtual space or cultural conversation that the text presupposes" (Graff 257).

Franco Moretti states that "the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, and of the modern novel, begin when a son no longer heeds his father's wise counsel" (24) and Moretti explains the birth of the novel in this tension between authority and a "new attitude towards life and history" (123). Robinson is "bent upon seeing the world" (Defoe 4), whereas his father advises him that in "the middle station of life," people "[slide] gently thro' the world" (3). However, on 1 September 1651, Robinson embarks on his first journey and spends a considerable time travelling the globe before and after he is shipwrecked on the island. Although the themes of the journey and parental conflict will reappear in much of the novelistic tradition, many have chosen to ignore the frame narrative in later adaptations. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, in his *Emile, ou L'Education* (1762), in which *Robinson Crusoe* is proposed as the only book worth reading as part of a child's education, "had no patience with Defoe's frame-story (how Crusoe found his way to the island and, twenty-eight years later, his way back to England); he was interested only in the episode on the island" (Dawson qtd. in Jones 55). However, the episode detailing Robinson's journey is relevant for the novel's construction of culture and landscape. *Robinson Crusoe* is the first literary work in which space is described relatively accurately (Davis 71) through either place names or geographical markers (latitude and longitude). Indeed, it is

on the first journey that Robinson acquires "a competent knowledge of mathematicks and the rules of navigation, learn'd how to keep an account of the ship's course, take an observation … for, as he took delight to introduce me, I took delight to learn; and, in a word, this voyage made me both a sailor and a merchant" (13). Travelling as a narrative scenario has often connoted the education of the protagonist. During his journey, Robinson Crusoe — the ideal of liberal ideology — is born as he learns to describe and control space.

According to Lennard Davis, the descriptions in the travel-episode do not yet show the concrete, experienced, ideologically charged space that is characteristic of the novel. It is not until after the shipwreck, when Robinson has to get settled in a new environment, that realistic descriptions of spaces appear. We can find some counter-evidence to this statement, when Robinson is confronted with the wilderness of the West-African coast: "for who would ha' suppos'd we were saild to the southward to the truly Barbarian coast, where whole nations of negroes were sure to surround us with their canoes, and destroy us; where we could ne'er once go on shoar but we should be devour'd by savage beast?" (18). In this passage, Robinson's description of the landscape is determined by projections of his expectations, and therefore becomes morally charged: the shore itself is "Barbarian." He describes the land as "wast and uninhabited, except by wild beasts" (21). Often prefaced by phrases such as "it is impossible to describe" (20), these descriptions are also part of "a novelistic frustration about creating a space out of nothing, especially a nothing which is so terribly 'other' as to be outside the discourse of a reasonable Englishman" (Davis 70). The Western vision of the African (uncultivated) land is personified in Robinson Crusoe. According to Marzec, "uncontrollably thrown into the space of uncultivated land, he is unable to immediately establish a frame of reference, which triggers a response of dread" (130). Moreover, Robinson's way of describing the landscape stands in for "a more global structure of feeling … a formal diagram for future colonial developments" (Marzec 131). It is a cultural practice that reappears in later narratives, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), in which the maps show "blank spaces on the earth" (52).

In Defoe's *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1727), the same way of looking at landscapes is discernable. As Matthew Johnson points out in *Ideas of Landscape*, Defoe "explicitly linked the inhospitable, uncultivated nature of the Scottish landscape with what he saw as the unreformed nature of Scottish society and culture" (23). Descriptions of the landscape are explicitly linked to visions of economic and cultural progress: Defoe "advocates the scientific and market-driven normalization of the land, valorizing enclosures as 'islands of improvement in a sea of open-field'" (Marzec 130). It is ironic that references to Robinson are used metaphorically to describe humans in peaceful natural scenes. For instance, in her literary sketches *Our Village*, Mary Russell Mitford presents Robinson as the personification of humanity in an English landscape: "And here we are in the meadows, and out of the world. Robinson Crusoe, in his lonely island, had scarcely a more complete, or a more beautiful solitude" (92). As Patrick Parrinder writes in *Nation and the Novel*: "The landscape is experienced as if it were already a text from English fiction" (150). Robison Crusoe is also used as a script to describe the landscape in Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*: "I walked an hour or two, or laid myself down on the grass on the summit of the hill, there to satiate myself with the pleasure of admiring the lake and its environs … like another Robinson Crusoe, built myself an imaginary place of residence in the island" (630). The island, as a narrative scene, should not be analyzed as a passive container of the action of a story, but as an element that actively shapes what happens and how we think. The island is "a figure of thought, working at the level of the concept and ideology" (Cohen 647). Within the capitalist and liberal ideology, Robinson's island will be utilized as "a prime 'empty' space of orientalist discourse, a fresh, untouched realm that can be shaped … to be conquered and cultivated to further its aims" (659). The island also stands strategically opposed to the over-civilized sociality of the city, where everything is connected. On the island, it is as if "nothing comes from outside" (660). The schemata associated with the island as a metaphor — including "civilization as filling empty uncivilized places" and "the isolation of the island" — have influenced many disciplines.

In educational philosophy the island schema has been an influential but distorting way of thinking about the essentially social process of education. This started with the twelfth-century Arabic fable, Tufail's *The Improvement of Human Reason* which "lays the Scene in some Fortunate Island … only

having design'd to contrive a convenient place … so as to leave [the child] to Reason by himself, and make his Observations without any Guide" (Translator's Foreword n.p.). This is the myth of the completely isolated individual's growth. In 1762, forty-three years after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published *Emile, ou de l'éducation* about a young boy's ideal education. Rousseau attempts to "find a way of resolving the contradictions between the natural man who is 'all for himself' and the implications of life in society" (Jimack 33). Rousseau's emphasis on the island episode of Robinson Crusoe reveals his construal of "natural education." Similar to how Robinson was supposedly isolated from outside influences, Rousseau's tutor tries to isolate Emile from unwanted influences. As McDonald and Hoffman put it, "Robinson's island (or, more precisely, Rousseau's version of Robinson's island) is an apt metaphor for the spatial dimensions of Emile's existence, as it is circumscribed and unhampered by the contamination of outside elements. He may roam anywhere on the 'island' that is his scene of instruction, but he is unable to leave or receive anything from any realm beyond the island's borders" (165). Rousseau proposed Robinson's condition to Emile, because "it is with reference to this state that we are to appreciate all the others" (163) and the story becomes Emile's prime equipment for living. The student should take up Robinson's role of "the solitary man" (McDonald and Hoffman 140), so as to arrive at clear judgments devoid of social constraints. However, this use of *Robinson Crusoe* ignores that "It is not the state of nature that makes Crusoe what he is and the island experience what it is, but the remnants of the material world from which Crusoe comes" (Seidel 59). In Rousseau's description of education, this myth of the free agent is perpetuated, but inadvertently contradicted, because "Emile is never alone, isolated, or away from the guiding hand of his tutor" (McDonald and Hoffman 165).

In Marxist theory, in particular, the myth of the isolated individual in *Robinson Crusoe* was criticized, because it was a source of inspiration for eighteenth-century economics, including the idea of the so-called Robinson Crusoe economy (see Rutherford). In his *Grundrisse*, Karl Marx critiques writers who consider the individual without social bonds instead of understanding him as a social and historical product: "The individual and isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, belongs among the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth-century Robinsonades. … In this society of free competition, the individual appears detached from the natural bonds" (83). The Marxist critique of the "nature-state" as a construction still appears today. In *Archaeologies of the Future,* Fredric Jameson points out that "its mythical status of origins, of an absolute new beginning and the philosophical blank state of human culture and civilization, depended on some initial prestidigitation: not only is the island occasionally visited by other people and cultures, but above all Crusoe himself is able to salvage a good deal of Europe from the shipwreck, and to stock his island refuge in advance with a variety of tools and materials, in other words with stored human labor" (402). "Surviving on a previously uninhabited island" becomes a schema that figures as "the primary stuff of colonialist ideology — the European hero's lonely first steps into the void of savagery" (Hulme 186). Out of nothing Robinson creates something; with the wilderness as his starting-point, he cultivates something resembling his own European culture. Moreover, the schema is a constitutive metaphor in educational philosophy: the individual himself is essentially an island, cultivating his identity without outside influences.

The central part of our analysis of *Robinson Crusoe* is about the many aspects of culture the novel can be said to contain. Before culture became "the master term for the new mechanisms of social reproduction — both designed and centrally operated" (Bauman 94), it denoted the activity of farming. This shift in terminology occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. Before, social values and behavior reproduced itself through seemingly self-evident mechanisms, either following "the nature of things" or a "divine order" (Bauman 94). When this failed, due to the diversification of the population, the idea arose that society "needed to be formed, lest it should take shapes unacceptable and damaging to social order, much like an unattended field is swamped with weeds" and culture, by analogy, came to stand "for the intention and the practice of 'gardening' as a method of ruling society" (Baumann 94). For Robinson, farming the land (cultivation) is represented as a learning process. Ian Watt argues that Defoe's novel demonstrates "that labor is both the most valuable form of human activity in itself, and at the same time the only reliable way of developing one's spiritual biceps" (*Myths* 107). Robinson succeeds in salvaging tools from the shipwreck, and, in

the course of several years, he transforms the wilderness into cultivated land. The first act of agriculture, however, is accidental: "it was a little before the great rains … I saw some few stalks of something green shooting out of the ground, which I fancy'd might be some plant I had not seen; but I was surpriz'd and perfectly astonished" (Defoe 64-65). At first, Robinson believes "that God had miraculously caus'd this grain to grow" (65), but later he will realize that he had accidently spilled a bag, and "that all this was nothing but what was common" (65). Robinson realizes that he can direct the cultivation: "I resolv'd to sow them all again" (66). The evolution here goes from the belief in a divine order, then natural order, to man-directed design, similar to the evolution of "culture" as sketched by Bauman.

Defoe's descriptions of the island become a sign of his utilitarian spirit: "Defoe's 'nature' appeals not for adoration but for exploitation" (Watt, *Myths* 102), or, in Defoe's words, "all things of this world are no farther good to us than they are for our use" (108). After a first act of exploration, Robinson can begin to settle in a shelter; "by creating a refuge, Crusoe is in effect transforming his island into landscape" (Davis 74). On a linguistic level, the act of description "literally drawing or enclosing the plot of land — claims the area" (83), as colonialist ideology had depended on narrativity: "The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decide in narrative" (Said xiii). Robinson's descriptions also counter symbolic instability, because he feels that the land "stands in opposition to the necessary establishment of his true self … cultivation concerns more than the domination of land; it is part and parcel of British and Western identity formation" (Marzec 143).

As it deals with Western culture so explicitly, it is no surprise that *Robinson Crusoe* was popular reading material, although its history in education has a few ironic twists. In *Emile*, Rousseau argues for a "natural education," which would entail less emphasis on books. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that the tutor gives Emile one specific novel: "Since we must necessarily have books, there exists one book which, to my way of thinking, furnishes the happiest treatise on an education according to nature. … What, then, is this wonderful book? Is it Aristotle? Pliny? Buffon? No; it is *Robinson Crusoe*" (163). According to Rousseau, Emile will learn from *Robinson Crusoe* by immersing himself in the condition of the castaway. Through the examination of this role, the novel becomes, in Booth's terms, "a company" Emile "keeps": "I would have him think he is Robinson himself … I would have him attentively note his faults and profit by them, so as not to fall into them himself under similar circumstances" (164). Rousseau's inclusion of the novel in Emile's education is self-defeating. Robinson is not a "naturally educated" man, as his methods for cultivating nature are determined by the upbringing he received before he came to the island — an element that Rousseau chooses to ignore. Robinson had received "a competent share of learning" (1). As novelist Sebastian Faulks notes, "there is more than pride and practicality … in the way he cleaves to the standards of the world he has left" (26). Robinson's prior education determines his behavior on the island, and the question as to whether Defoe's novel is the best treatise on a natural education is up for debate.

While, as in *Robinson Crusoe*, the meaning of "cultivation" began to encompass more than the purely agricultural, the metaphor of "gardening" has had explanatory power in the sociologies of Ernest Gellner and Zygmunt Bauman. The former studied the role of nationalism by differentiating between "savage" and "garden" cultures. Savage cultures "reproduce themselves from generation to generation without conscious design, supervision, surveillance or special nutrition" (Gellner 50). The "garden" variety of culture is "most usually sustained by literacy and by specialized personnel, and would perish if deprived of their distinctive nourishment in the form of specialized institutions of learning" (50). In the sociological theory of Bauman "gardening" is elaborated on "to explain the role of education in preparing young people for 'planting out' as dutiful workers, keen consumers, and patriotic citizens" (Smith 138). The "gardener" becomes "an instrumental and utilitarian manager of order" (Tester 116): the teacher begins to resemble Robinson. In postmodern rewritings of *Robinson Crusoe*, these acts of cultivation, and, more broadly, the functions of the state and the school, are ridiculed as meaningless, amounting to an anti-pedagogical attack. In J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Cruso and Friday only engage in the futile labor of dragging stones for the construction of terraces with no seeds to plant: "and what will you be planting, when you plant? I asked. 'The planting is not for us,' said he.

'We have nothing to plant — that is our misfortune. … 'The planting is reserved for those who come after us and have the foresight to bring seed. I only clear the ground for them'" (34). It is a commentary on the failed effects of culture in an exhausted, postmodern society: whereas Robinson was able to recreate European civilization on the island with the tools at his disposal, Coetzee's Cruso brings forth nothing new.

In many rewritings, *Robinson Crusoe* is criticized for being a colonial romance because it reduces the complex realities of Western expansion to a "natural" fact (Hulme 211). Colonial critiques of *Robinson Crusoe* have focused on Robinson's (re-)education of Friday by means of the Bible — a process that will make him European. Similar to how Robinson turns the wilderness into a livable, meaningful place, he transforms the nameless savage into the "human being" Friday. However, the categorization of Friday tells us more about the West, as "noble, savage or evil savages … are 'white' images … created to delineate Europe's own identity" (Holsbeke 12). Friday is seen as an empty vessel, like the landscape. Robinson suppresses the language and culture of the other: "Friday as a savage is considered to have no culture and is treated as an unwritten page: he cannot keep his name, he gets a new name, which subsumes him under Robinson's calendar" (Nederveen 108). These same ideas reappear in the retellings. In Tournier's novel *Vendredi*, the cultural identity of Friday remains a mystery. He is presented as "culture-less." In Coetzee's *Foe*, Friday has even less of an identity. The black man does not get a language ("tongue") with which he can tell his history. He is a void and a "hole in the story" (Coetzee 121). However, in *Robinson Crusoe*, there are instances of reciprocal learning between Robinson and Friday. Most often, Robinson holds a "pedagogical monologue," but he also reports a certain give-and-take in teaching Friday: "I had, God knows, more sincerity than knowledge in all the methods I took for this poor creature's instruction, and must acknowledge, what I believe all that act upon the same principle will find, that in laying things open to him, I really informed and instructed myself in many things that either 1 did not know, or had not fully consider'd before, but which occurr'd naturally to my mind upon searching into them for the information of this poor savage; and I had more affection in my inquiry after things upon this occasion than ever I felt before; so that whether this poor wild wretch was the better for me or no, I had great reason to be thankful that ever he came to me" (185). The teacher learns through teaching. Robinson's encounters even lead to a momentary feeling of relativism: "what authority or call I had, to pretend to be judge and executioner up on these men" (143). The insight is short-lived, as Robinson quickly returns to his own ideology and fears Friday will forget everything he has learned, "and make a feast upon me" (189). At the same time, Robinson calls into question the lasting effect of Western education, while relying on many Western tools to survive. "Particularly, said I aloud (tho' to my self), what should I ha' done without a gun, without ammunition, without any tools to make anything, or to work with" (52). The question highlights how Robinson is dependent on his own culture's tools and "a great many things out of the ship, which would be useful to me" (44). Only through such tools does Robinson get control on nature. He transforms the wild (unwritten) nature into an ordered (written) space. He initially does forget to mention the books and other writing material he gets from the ship: "among the many things which I brought out of the ship … which I omitted setting down before; as, in particular, pens, ink, and paper" (53). It is with these writing tools that Robinson "began to consider seriously my condition, and the circumstance I was reduc'd to, and I drew up the state of my affairs in writing … as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my mind; and as my reason began now to master my despondency" (54). He starts a diary, in which he not only describes his experiences and wrestles with certain problems, but also reflects and creates a "composition of the self" (Hulme 196), or, in other words, cultivates himself. From a moral perspective, Robinson uses his diary to draw up a balance sheet of good and evil on the island (54-55). The written list emphasizes that Robinson is introducing order (civilization) into the chaos. As Watt argues, Robinson Crusoe does not observe the island with the eye of a lover of nature, but "wherever he looks he sees acres that cry out for improvement" (*Rise* 102). Thus, the novel can be read as a "fable of controlling physical space, of organizing time, of making, crafting, fabricating, of fearing and mastering" (Seidel 10). These cultural actions are supported by the traditional tools of culture, such as writing and calculation.

Which tools are most productive for Robinson's activities on the island? The common opposition is often between cultural tools (such as books and pens) and natural education (away from culture's

negative effects). When *Robinson Crusoe* appears in educational argumentation, the book is used as support for "natural education." Rousseau's reason for opposing "an education through books" had been his emphasis on the child's own imagination in learning: "Books express the imagination of their author, not the child. For this reason, all books should be avoided, with one celebrated exception: Robinson Crusoe or, more accurately, the central section" (Jones 55). As we have argued above, the use of *Robinson Crusoe,* which shows a man who is dependent on cultural tools to survive, to argue against the effects of culture in education, is contradictory.

Another adaptation of *Robinson Crusoe* underlines this irony. In his *The Swiss Family Robinson*, Wyss disapproves of books, but dispenses that knowledge in a book (see Hillis Miller 140-41). *The Swiss Family Robinson*, which had a pronounced educational impact — partly due to its national (Swiss) and social (family) corrections to Robinson Crusoe's individualist ideal — had to deal with a discrepancy between intent and medium. As J. Hillis Miller points out, "Wyss was teaching … through words and pictures, not through things. The reader of *The Swiss Family Robinson* also learns through reading, not through direct encounters with nature" (140-141). The medium of the book and narrative directly contradict the belief in a purely natural education.

An analysis of *Robinson Crusoe* through the lens of the relationship between narrativity and cultivation (of nature) demonstrates that the book provides one of the foundational myths that determine the relationship between "man, his culture, and his biophysical surroundings" (Palmer and Neil 12). Its influence is visible in diverse disciplines, above all educational theory. We have focused on the importance of the journey for the construction of the landscape and Robison's education; the island as a metaphor that influences Rousseau's educational theory; the metamorphosis of the term "culture"; the teaching of Friday; and the use of cultural tools. To conceptualize how narrative insights are transferred to and used in other domains of life, we have proposed the concepts of Kenneth Burke's equipment for living, Wayne Booth's the company we keep, and literature as a cognitive tool.

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