Shipwrecked

Disaster and Transformation in Homer, Shakespeare, Defoe, and the Modern World

James V. Morrison

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To Ruth, Elizabeth, Ralph, and Jane,
who have explored many islands with me

Acknowledgments

My hope is to convey the excitement of these shipwreck stories to a broad audience. While I hope that scholars in the fields of ancient and modern literature and history will appreciate the juxtaposition of original works and their modern adaptations, I have attempted to present these ideas in a manner accessible to the general reader, as well as college and university students. (The notes indicate some of the scholarly debates.) In addition, contemporary writers, artists, and musicians, who may be previously unaware of the varied treatments of shipwrecks, may be inspired to respond with creative work.

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Contents

1. Shipwreck Narratives 1
2. Shipwreck and Identity in Homer's *Odyssey* 9
3. Shipwreck and Opportunity from Ancient Egypt to the Modern Caribbean 30
4. The Struggle for Power in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* 45
5. Salvation, Power, and Freedom: Saint Paul, Caliban, and Voyages in Outer Space 83
6. Culture and Spiritual Rebirth in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* 101
7. The Struggle for Survival in *Philoctetes, Cast Away,* and *First on Mars* 139
8. Competing Narratives in Walcott's *Pantomime* and Coetzee's *Foe* 157
9. Conflict, the Common Good, and Redemption in *The Mysterious Island, Lord of the Flies, Lost,* and *Gilligan's Island* 180
10. Shipwreck and the Selling of Paradise 214

Bibliography 225

Index 239

CHAPTER 1

Shipwreck Narratives

Swept Away, an Italian film directed by Lina Wertmüller (1975), opens with a luxury yacht anchored in the beautiful blue Mediterranean. Wealthy couples explore caves, swim, drink, gamble, and live in a kind of paradise. Prominent among them is Raffaella (played by Mariangela Melato), who is blonde, spoiled, and arrogant. Among the crew on board is Gennarino (played by Giancarlo Giannini), a Communist with dark hair and a beard, who serves food, wine, and coffee to the owners and puts up with their disdain.

The adventure begins when Raffaella decides to go for a swim at dusk. Gennarino takes her toward the caves in one of the inflatable dinghies, though he warns that it is late, that the current is strong, and that the wind is against them. When the engine stalls, Raffaella assumes that they will be rescued, but Gennarino intones, "Speriamo" (Let's hope so). They spend the night in the dinghy and wake up surrounded by water, with no land in sight. Even when the engine starts, they do not know which way to go.

After two nights adrift, they find land and row in. This is not a true shipwreck—though Raffaella keeps calling it that—but more of a "drifting away" (the full title of the film is *Swept Away . . . by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August*).[1] Though Raffaella is delighted at landfall and assumes that they will find a hotel, Gennarino immediately climbs up rocky terrain and announces that they are on a "wild, uninhabited island." No one—"Not a soul"—is there. This leads to a pivotal moment, for Raffaella orders Gennarino to climb again to make sure. He refuses, and when she says, "You can't draw blood from a stone," Gennarino erupts. No longer will he defer: "I'll do what I fucking like . . . Go fuck yourself."

1. In Italian, *Travolti da un insolito destino nell' Azzurro mare d'agosto.*

Gennarino and Raffaella respond to the shipwreck situation in very different ways. Gennarino is extremely competent: he finds an abandoned chapel for shelter, catches a lobster, starts a fire by reflecting the sun's rays off a water bottle, retrieves fresh water from a river, and cooks his own meal. He sits there like a king enjoying his feast. Using his only tool, a pocket knife, he later sharpens reeds for fishing and snares a rabbit. Raffaella finds only a tiny sea urchin and comes begging for food. She asks how Gennarino can eat "while others are starving." Gennarino finds this query wickedly ironic, coming from a rich woman who symbolizes wealth's unjust distribution in society. When Raffaella attempts to buy his fish, she is told that it is not for sale. Capitalism is overthrown. Gennarino instructs Raffaella that she must earn her food by working—in this case, by washing his underpants. She must also say "please" and call him "Signore Carunchio" (*signore* meaning not only "mister" but also "lord" and "master"). The next day, Gennarino makes Raffaella wait on him just as he waited on her while on the yacht. That night, he sleeps alone in the chapel, slamming the door in Raffaella's face.

The contrasts in the two islanders are obvious: male and female, rich and poor, capitalist and communist, and capable and clueless regarding survival.[2] When Raffaella remarks that they must soon be rescued, he asks, "Who knows?" It may be years before they are rescued. But one thing is clear—their relationship has changed. The traditional Gennarino prescribes the new hierarchy: "You are a woman . . . You will wait on me . . . You will learn who the master is." Gennarino tells Raffaella to kiss her master's hand, and this leads to violence. When she is about to submit to his attempted rape, he rejects her: "*I'm* saying no!" He wants her to love him and view him as her god. Gennarino is clearly in charge, and soon they willingly make love by the fire, on sand dunes, and in the waves by the beach.

This desert island has become a place of profound change. Such transformations are often explicitly announced. After his first angry outburst, Gennarino declares, "Gennarino is no more." He is now lord and master (the "only one to make decisions"), while Raffaella is his servant. She also acknowledges, "I'm no longer my own self." When a boat appears, Raffaella does not signal it and tells Gennarino that she has been "swept away by a crazy dream" and does not want it to end. She feels they now have a new life: "You and I were born here." The past is irrelevant: "What do you care

2. Modleski (1976) speaks of Raffaella's "threefold powerlessness: as a rich person who has never faced any grueling tests of survival, as a woman who is expected to be inadequate in physical skills and feats of daring, and as a person always vulnerable to sexual assault."

what we were before?"[3] After "shipwreck," these two stranded survivors must redefine their identities and their relationship.

Over time, Gennarino seeks proof that Raffaella is truly his, so when another boat appears, he signals it, and they are rescued. Raffaella's husband comes in by helicopter; Gennarino's wife emotionally cries, "I thought you were dead!" Reentry into the "old" world breaks whatever spell there was and returns Gennarino and Raffaella to the lives they led before.

This book presents the first comparative study of literary shipwrecks from the past four thousand years. The recurrent treatment of shipwrecks in epic poetry, drama, novels, science fiction, movies, television, and contemporary advertising demonstrates an enduring fascination with this scenario. I have narrowed my focus to those stories in which shipwreck survivors are stuck on an island for some period of time. In this situation—as we see in *Swept Away*—shipwrecks present the survivor with possibilities for a change in political and social status and for finding romance or even paradise. In some situations, this transformation may be considered a "rebirth" or "reinvention of self."[4] While a storm, the destruction of the ship, loss of human life, and isolation from perhaps all civilization may seem disastrous, this dramatic turn of events may still offer a positive outcome: a new sort of life.

Three works confront the question of shipwreck, transformation, and new roles in an especially provocative and probing manner: Homer's *Odyssey,* Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* In Homer's *Odyssey,* shipwrecks challenge Odysseus' sense of self by forcing him to contemplate alternative forms of existence. He must fight to maintain—and at times regain—his identity. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* explores the central themes of authority on and ownership of the island. In this play, the shipwreck itself appears to free the arrivals from any previous restraint: the island is a space where transformation can take place. Two central themes in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* are Crusoe's efforts to reestablish civilization and his inner transformation, a type of spiritual rebirth. In addition to analyzing these influential works, I will here explore a select number of modern adaptations,

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3. Modleski (1976) notes how "the island which first looked formidable and ugly later appears paradisiacal, and there are long shots of the heavenly blue sea in August." There are even subtle allusions to paradise in the Garden of Eden: according to Raffaella, Gennarino is "what man was like in nature before everything changed."

4. After an actual wreck off the Massachusetts coast in 1635—and the loss of his four children—Anthony Thacher prays, "What I shall do or what course I shall take I know not. The Lord in his mercy direct me that I may so lead *the new life* which he hath given me as may be most to his own glory" (Lawrence (2004) 44, my italics).

mostly from the twentieth century, some familiar (*Lord of the Flies, Gilligan's Island*), some perhaps less so (the works of Caribbean writers Derek Walcott and Aimé Césaire). In each case, the narrative links transformation with the shipwreck scenario.

Shipwreck narratives generally include a common set of features. First, we encounter the *storm at sea.* Descriptions may include the lack of distinction between sea and sky and desperate prayers of those on board a ship. A frequent experience for shipwreck survivors is *profound ignorance,* regarding where they are (or if they are even on an island) and whether they face danger from savage cannibals or wild beasts. Connected to the theme of ignorance is the possibility of a *divine epiphany;* that is, a god may live on the island and meet the survivor, or those who live on the island may encounter (or believe they are encountering) a divinity emerging from the sea.

If the island is deserted, the survivor must obtain water, food, and shelter. The absence of "civilization" forces survivors to re-create the culture they knew before; failure to do so would bring about a more primitive mode of life. If more than one person arrives or if the island is already inhabited, *a social hierarchy must be established,* often at odds with the situation before the shipwreck. Since the time of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* the recurring leitmotif of *a footprint on the beach* indicates, of course, that the survivor is not alone. The panorama of shipwreck narratives from ancient Egypt to the contemporary Caribbean reveals how islands, cut off from other inhabited lands, come to represent new worlds. It is remarkable that the situations facing the survivors of Oceanic Flight 815 in the television show *Lost* (2004–10) or that of Raffaella and Gennarino in *Swept Away* share so many features with Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest.*

Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe not only tie shipwreck to the opportunities of another life; in different ways, each of these works calls into question the definition of the self. Indeed, the central thesis of this book is that authors of literary shipwrecks are continually exploring the identities and potential new roles of survivors. Sudden change marks a new stage in a person's life; shipwrecks provide that pivotal hinge that distinguishes who you were from who you may become.

I should make two qualifications. First, it is certainly true that people embark on a new sort of existence due to many circumstances, such as war, exile, enslavement, or escape from captivity—sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity. Nevertheless, there appears to be a particular appeal to the idea of a group of people isolated on an island: a little universe is created, in which drama may unfold. Part of this fascination derives from the primal

human fear that such disasters threaten not only survival but also one's sense of self. We think we know who we are, yet these shipwreck narratives call into question one's very identity.

Second, when I speak of "transformation" or "a new life," I realize I am entering an area of much controversy, that of *identity.* I will follow a commonsense approach, based to a great extent on how we speak about ourselves. To be sure, memories are an important part of how a person thinks of himself or herself. In addition, people may identify themselves by family connections, hometown, or relations with others. We often mention activities or professions as a part of identity: for example, merchant, doctor, shipwright, farmer, storyteller. Today, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and politics are all voiced to explain who we are. When we contemplate "transformation," this new identity consists partly of an outer labeling from taking on a new name, engaging in new activities, or a change in status. But there may also be an inner transformation, such as what Robinson Crusoe experiences. When I refer to a new sort of existence, this points, at a minimum, to a significant change that the character becomes aware of, remarks on, or considers adopting. Shipwrecks provide the setting for such alterations.

Each chapter of this book will focus on one or two aspects of the shipwreck narrative. Chapter 2 demonstrates that shipwrecks allow the poet to explore new roles and relationships for Odysseus, including an offer of immortality. Yet shipwrecks also serve as obstacles to Odysseus' goal of returning to his former life in Ithaca. Chapter 3 explores narratives with survivors who, unlike Odysseus, accept the new roles offered by shipwreck, including the four-thousand-year-old Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor." Chapter 3 and subsequent chapters analyze how later works, such as Walcott's stage version of *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* (1993b), respond to Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe. These juxtapositions indicate the range of variation for a particular scenario and also suggest how normative the "classical" models actually are.

Chapter 4, on Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* presents a shipwreck scenario that leads to social competition and the attempted seizure of power. There is a sense in which shipwrecks allow for a new start: both self and society may be transformed. Chapter 5 explores precursors and successors to *The Tempest:* Saint Paul's shipwreck in the book of Acts; Césaire's *A Tempest* (1968), a rewriting of Shakespeare's play; and *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a science fiction film that translates the shipwreck scenario to outer space. In certain historical eras—often characterized by the exploration of "new worlds" and

advances in technology—artists are likely to imagine adventure, mishap, and a new life borne after shipwreck (or its equivalent in outer space). In the modern world, questions of identity and possible reinvention present challenges for those who, descended from slaves or dominated by colonial powers, obtain political freedom and control over their own lives. An instance is Césaire's *A Tempest,* which sets the issue of new roles against the context of the postcolonial world.[5]

In chapter 6, I explore how Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, a single survivor on an uninhabited island, works to recapitulate human technological and cultural advances (agriculture, domestication of animals, etc.). Interestingly, we often find a real-life "trigger" that has inspired the poet, playwright, or novelist. Much as the shipwreck of the *Sea Venture* off the coast of Bermuda in 1609 inspired Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), the tale of Alexander Selkirk's marooned existence off Chile's coast (1704–9) influenced various aspects of Crusoe's life as presented in Defoe's novel (1719).

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 examine precursors and adaptations of Defoe's novel. As I discuss in chapter 7, Sophocles' Philoctetes is not shipwrecked, yet his isolation on a deserted island presents one of the earliest "anthropological" views of human development. In fact, the play *Philoctetes,* the film *Cast Away,* and the science fiction novel *First on Mars* undermine any confidence promised by Crusoe's many successes. Chapter 8 examines how the Crusoe story might be retold. In Walcott's drama *Pantomime* (1978), two actors contemplate rewriting the relationship of Crusoe and Friday. In Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986), a new character, Susan, finds herself shipwrecked on "Cruso's" island and offers tremendous insight into the survivor's need to control the shipwreck narrative itself. Chapter 9 discusses the tension between group effort and conflict in the novels *The Mysterious Island* and *Lord of the Flies* and the television series *Lost* and *Gilligan's Island.* The conclusion in chapter 10 examines the marketing of shipwreck scenarios today. Islands in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, or South Pacific are often represented without inhabitants, suggesting shipwreck as a utopian escape.

What do we gain from this comparative study? In part, we can appreciate how attitudes shift toward the opportunities offered by shipwreck. Homer's *Odyssey* reveals a trajectory of *returning to the previous order.* Despite enticing new temptations, Odysseus—and some of the figures in *The Tempest*—revert

5. As Davis (1997) 151 puts it, Césaire and others were "forging a national identity in the wake of colonial exploitation."

to their previous lives, rejecting what many might consider to be paradise. Odysseus is reestablished as king; Prospero travels back to Milan. In such situations, we may more properly speak of *potential* transformations. Other shipwreck narratives—including many recent works—resist such a resolution and instead embrace the possibility of a new sort of existence. Only by juxtaposing ancient and modern narratives can we appreciate the vitality of the archetypal scene of a shipwreck survivor confronting the elements.

The focus of this book is quite narrow. The three narratives offered by Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe are extremely influential and deserve our close examination. The inclusion of selected other literary and cinematic treatments has been determined by innovations on the basic pattern (e.g., a woman as the shipwreck survivor) or by the artistic quality and philosophical insight of a work. By necessity, this book omits analyses of many remarkable shipwreck stories: for example, Erasmus' "Colloquy on Shipwrecks"; Swift's *Gulliver's Travels;* Voltaire's *Candide;* Poe's "A Descent into the Maelstrom"; Tennyson's "Enoch Arden"; Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos"; the works of Melville, Conrad, Kafka, and, more recently, Tournier (*Vendredi*—in English, *Friday*), Fowles, and Garcia-Marquez; and the television series *Survivor.* The limited number of works under discussion here will allow for a wide-ranging yet in-depth exploration.[6]

Why do the stories of Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe resonate today? I will return to this question in the concluding chapter, but let me mention now that there is a literary tradition linking shipwreck, identity, and transformation. While shipwrecks conjure up a life-or-death struggle, Homer, Shakespeare, Defoe, and their literary descendants probe the opportunities that such disasters offer for personal transformation and a better society.

From the perspective of the shipwrecked arrival, it is possible to re-create oneself in terms of identity and fortune. Shakespeare's Antonio employs the vocabulary of the theater to articulate his hopes from a recent shipwreck.

> We all were sea-swallowed, though some *cast* again,
> And by that destiny to *perform an act*

---

6. For example, I shall not examine Kafka's parable of Robinson Crusoe; John Fowles' "Shipwreck" in *Wormholes* (1998) 269–78; or Gabriel Garcia-Marquez's *The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor,* translated by Randolph Hogan (1986). There are also Elizabeth Bishop's "Crusoe in England," Elizabeth Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* (2006), and even the Decemberists' "The Mariner's Revenge Song." For artistic representations of shipwreck, see, e.g., Hurwit (2011), Goedde (1989), and J. Miles (2007).

> Whereof what's past is *prologue,* what to come
> In yours and my discharge.
>
> (*Tempest* 2.1.252–55, my italics)

Antonio eagerly awaits the new role he may "perform" on this newfound island. In each of the works examined in this book, we find the chance for a new life.

CHAPTER 2

Shipwreck and Identity in Homer's *Odyssey*

Homer's *Odyssey,* a Greek epic from the eighth century BCE, tells the story of a man who wants to go home.[1] Our focus here will be on shipwrecks and the possible new roles offered to Odysseus. Each opportunity challenges Odysseus' sense of who he is, yet in order to maintain his identity, he must reject these options. Indeed, Odysseus fights to regain his identity—something that he is in danger of losing when he becomes "No-man" in the Cyclops' cave, when he vanishes from human society for seven years on Calypso's island, and when he is forced to beg for food in his own home in Ithaca. Other features connected with Odysseus' shipwrecks will be noted and considered more fully in later chapters, including storm descriptions, rebirth imagery, divine epiphanies, and the shipwreck survivor taking on the role of storyteller.

Odysseus experiences two shipwrecks. The first one presented in the narrative lands Odysseus on Scheria, the Phaeacians' island (book 5); the second occurs at the end of book 12—told retrospectively by Odysseus himself—when he arrives on Calypso's island. Homer uses shipwrecks to reduce Odysseus to the most desperate circumstances. In both cases, a storm destroys his ship; Odysseus reaches shore, alone and desperate; and he meets a female benefactor who is a threat in some ways. These two shipwrecks place in danger his life, his return, his marriage, and the fate of his kingdom in Ithaca.[2]

1. I have concluded that Homer was an oral singer who dictated his poem to a scribe or scribes; he composed both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the last third of the eighth century BCE. I am well aware of differing opinions on these matters, but these controversies are largely irrelevant to this chapter.

2. See Louden (1999) on such structural patterns in the *Odyssey.*

Homer not only presents Odysseus as involved in seaborne disasters but also connects arrival by shipwreck with the potential assumption of new roles.

Odysseus' First Shipwreck and Marriage with Nausicaa

Odysseus' first shipwreck brings him to Scheria, the island of the Phaeacians, where he encounters Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous. This occurs in the tenth year after the Trojan War, for Odysseus has already spent two years wandering and then seven more on Calypso's island—he's been away from home for nineteen years. Homer presents Odysseus' departure from Calypso's island, a sea journey, the storm and wreck, and finally the arrival of a naked Odysseus on an island. Each of these segments is elaborately described.

Although Odysseus' life will soon be endangered, the initial stages of the departure and journey proceed in reassuring fashion. Far from human society, Odysseus must build his boat with tools Calypso has given him. He cuts down twenty trees, bores through planks, fits together a hull and gunwales, and fashions a mast and steering oar (5.228–62).[3] This is a typical feature at the end of the shipwreck experience: to leave an island, the survivors must either be rescued from the outside or construct their own means of escape. In part, this reminds us that Odysseus' stay on Calypso's island is actually bracketed by shipwrecks: one that brought him there (discussed below) and one at the end of this upcoming journey. Given supplies and directions by the goddess herself, Odysseus is joyful upon departure (5.263–77).

Regarding the journey, nothing of note occurs for the first seventeen days. Odysseus stays awake, keeping "the Bear" (the Big Dipper) on his left: he must be traveling eastward toward Ithaca across the Mediterranean. On the eighteenth day, he comes within sight of his destination, as the island's mountains appear (5.278–81).

Odysseus' luck shifts when Poseidon spots him and angrily stirs up the sea with his trident (5.282–94). What follows is the longest description of a storm and wreck in Homer, with seven speeches and four similes. Several features are characteristic for such storms. First, there are *the forces of nature:* clouds gather, the sea becomes rough, land and sea are hidden by clouds, and the sky blackens like night.

---

3. Odysseus' skill in building a ship anticipates the technological similes that highlight the blinding of Polyphemus (9.382–88).

> Poseidon gathered the clouds together and churned up the waves,
> with both hands on his trident. He whipped up
> all the gales from every direction and covered
> both earth and sea with clouds. Night sprang up in the sky.
> Together the East and South Winds clashed, and the raging West
> and North Winds, sprung from the heavens, rolled a huge wave.
> (5.291–96)[4]

Here the natural elements are set in motion by the sea god.

Then we have *the traveler's reaction.* Remembering Calypso's ominous prediction, Odysseus foresees his own death.

> I wish I too had died there [in Troy] and met my fate
> that day when many Trojans hurled bronze-handled spears at me,
> fighting over the corpse of Achilles, son of Peleus.
> Then I would have received a funeral, and the Greeks would have spread my glory.
> Now it is fated for me to be taken by a wretched death!
> (5.308–12)

Whenever a storm arises at sea, the traveler frequently reacts with fear and despair. Odysseus envies the warriors who died heroically in battle at Troy, contrasting his watery demise with a funeral on land: only a grave mound can ensure his lasting glory.[5]

Then *damage to the vessel* is described: a great wave comes; Odysseus falls off his craft and loses his steering oar, the sail is torn, and the ship's tackle falls into the sea. Here Homer introduces the first simile (5.327–30), comparing the ship driven by a wave to a thistle carried by winds: "so the winds carried the ship this way and that on the sea."

Next comes *divine aid (or rescue).* Divine powers are not always present in shipwreck narratives, but in this instance, a sea goddess, Leucothea, appears to Odysseus (5.333–36). She advises him to take off his clothes, tie an immortal veil around his chest, and swim for shore (5.339–50). Odysseus is skeptical—could this be a trick of the gods?—and decides to stay on the damaged ship (5.356–65). Yet when Poseidon scatters the planks of the boat,

4. Translations of Greek and Latin literary passages in this book are my own unless otherwise noted.

5. See de Jong (2001) 568 (s.v. 24.21–34).

Odysseus strips off his clothing and decides to swim for it. A second goddess, Athena, helps by "tying down" the winds (5.382). Odysseus floats for two days, expecting to die (5.388–89); finally, on the third day, calm returns, and he sights land and considers how to make his way safely ashore.

While all the features mentioned above may not appear in every literary shipwreck, Homer's description indicates the *possible features* of the storm and wreck episode: *forces of nature; the traveler's reaction; the ship being hit by a wave; people being thrown into the water; divine aid; a decision to abandon ship;* and then a period of *floating, swimming, or paddling* on the sea.[6]

Trying to reach land, Odysseus is confronted by the island's rough breakers and cliffs. As Odysseus contemplates his options, a wave drives him onto a rock. At this point, Homer highlights the risk to Odysseus.

> A great wave covered him.
> Then unlucky Odysseus would have perished—contrary to destiny—
> if owl-eyed Athena had not given him wisdom.
>
> (5.435–37)

Here Homer comments that the wave was so treacherous that Odysseus would have died without help from the goddess Athena.[7] Odysseus dives up and out of the wave and scans the coastline for a smooth beach. Heading toward the outflow of a river, he beseeches the river god to have pity on him, and his supplication is granted (5.441–53). Finally the exhausted Odysseus makes it to shore and collapses.

> His knees buckle,
> and his strong arms fell limp; his heart was beaten down by the sea.
> His whole body was swollen, and lots of seawater gushed
> from his mouth and nostrils. Then, breathless and speechless,
> he lay there with only a little strength, as dire fatigue overwhelmed him.
>
> (5.453–57)

Despite his exhaustion, Odysseus revives and follows Leucothea's instructions by untying the scarf and hurling it back into the sea. He then kisses

6. See de Jong (2001) 594–95, appendix D, "'Storm' Scenes in the Odyssey."

7. On these "A if not B" comments by the poet, see the bibliography in de Jong (2001) xiv note 23.

the earth (5.458–64). Odysseus is now stranded on an island he was actually trying to reach (shipwreck arrivals usually take place on wholly unknown lands).

Odysseus' arrival by sea in book 5 has been understood as a symbolic rebirth. He removes his clothes and swims for his life, emerging from the sea naked, swollen with brine, and desperate. Homer's description cumulatively evokes the image of a newborn baby leaving a watery realm and emerging helpless. Certainly it is true that "the evocation of the birth process suggests a new beginning for the hero."[8]

Once Odysseus has arrived, he contemplates the best location for survival, though each option presents danger: exposure to dew and cold by the river or falling prey to wild animals up in the woods (5.465–73). In the end, Odysseus nestles himself under two olive bushes, covers himself with leaves, and goes to sleep (5.491).[9]

Odysseus' first encounter is with Nausicaa, the king's daughter, who is prompted by Athena the next day to come to the river with her slaves to wash clothes. When Odysseus is awakened by the voices of Nausicaa and her female companions, the first question confronting him concerns the inhabitants of the island. His thoughts reveal the vulnerability and ignorance of shipwreck survivors.

> O, cursed me! Whose land have I reached now?
> Are they violent, savage, and lawless,
> or kind to travelers, with a god-fearing heart?
>
> (6.119–21)

Odysseus has already met with both sorts of "welcomes": his men were eaten by Polyphemus the Cyclops and the Laestrygonians, yet Aeolus was (initially) hospitable. These episodes took place prior to his arrival on Nausicaa's island but are told in flashback in books 9 and 10. His experience with diverse receptions on other islands makes Odysseus understandably cautious.

When Odysseus emerges, the servants run off, but Nausicaa stands firm. Odysseus confronts the problem of what to say upon arrival in a strange place. Although vulnerable, he demonstrates his ingenuity by cleverly flattering and manipulating an innocent maiden.

8. Newton (1984).

9. De Jong (2001) 147 argues that Odysseus' covering of himself with leaves in a tree puts him in a "dehumanized situation" that anticipates the hungry lion simile at 6.130–37.

I beseech you, princess—are you a goddess or a mortal?
If you are one of the gods who rule broad heaven,
I would liken you most to Artemis, the daughter of mighty Zeus,
in beauty, build, and bearing.

(6.149–52)

Odysseus begins with the highest possible compliment, speculating that Nausicaa is a goddess. He then articulates the alternative possibility—that Nausicaa is mortal (6.153–57)—and praises her husband-to-be: "more blessed than all other men, / that man who wins you with gifts and leads you home as his bride!" (6.158–59).

Because he is the only shipwrecked survivor and no one else can identify him, Odysseus is successful in concealing his name for an inordinately long time. He reveals nothing of his name, home, family, or experiences at Troy (6.169–74), yet Nausicaa offers to help. She proves to be a shipwreck survivor's dream: she is hospitable, helpful—and has lots of clean clothes (Odysseus is still naked). When he has washed and dressed, Nausicaa describes Odysseus to her companions as a god and hopes someone "like him" would end up being her husband (6.243–45). Nausicaa's increasing interest raises the stakes for a romantic relationship between princess and shipwrecked stranger. While Odysseus' actions may be understood as self-interested (he seeks a return to Ithaca), Nausicaa apparently contemplates a long-term relationship.[10]

Complications grow as Homer continues to promote Nausicaa's romantic interest, which could lead to Odysseus becoming the young princess' husband. Indeed, because Odysseus resists revealing his identity, this possibility is kept alive. When Odysseus later miraculously appears at Queen Arete's knees in supplication, she seeks his name, yet Odysseus fails to respond (7.237–97). Then ignorant of his guest's identity, King Alcinous offers Nausicaa in marriage: "If only you could wed my daughter, be called my son-in-law, / and stay right here" (7.313–14). Both father and daughter imagine this anonymous traveler staying on the island. Of course, Odysseus has only to tell his hosts who he is—or even that he has a wife and son—to rule out any such negotiations. But Homer refrains. As a consequence, the Phaeacians'

10. Homer makes it clear that Nausicaa has been fantasizing about marriage (6.27, 33–35, 66–67, 158–59, 181–85, 244–45, 277–88); yet the imminent homecoming of Odysseus has also been anticipated for the audience (6.13–14; cf. 1.76–77, 82–87; 6.289–90, 311–15; 8.8–10; 5.33–40).

Fig. 1. Vase painting from the fifth century BCE presenting the naked Odysseus at left (watched by Athena), while some women wash, some run away, and Nausicaa (around the vase to the right—not visible here) stands firm. (By permission of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München; photograph by Renate Kühling.)

royal family continues to envision marriage.[11] Homer has landed Odysseus by shipwreck on an island and—by not revealing who he is—suggests a new possible role for Odysseus: he might become the son-in-law of Alcinous and husband of the beautiful, young, innocent Nausicaa. This shipwreck has offered Odysseus the chance to begin a new life.

After another long day, Odysseus does identify himself (9.16–28). Not only is his marriage revealed, but he insists on returning home. Despite compliment and flirtation, Odysseus' departure for Ithaca in book 13 derails the potential for a "second" marriage: the incipient plot of Nausicaa's romance is interrupted as the poet proceeds with Odysseus' return to Ithaca.

Various features of this story will recur in later shipwreck narratives. These include *divine protection* (Athena acting as Odysseus' guide; see 7.14–42); *divine epiphany* (Odysseus as god; see 6.243–45; cf. 7.199–206);[12] *temptations on an idyllic island* (note the Phaeacians' perennial growing season; see 7.112–32); and *the survivor as storyteller,* in Odysseus' appearances to Nausicaa and then to her parents and, finally, with his long night of tales in books 9–12. The shipwreck survivor Odysseus becomes a singer of tales.

More important, note that Odysseus *chooses* to return to his family, although he is offered the possibility of staying on as son-in-law of Alcinous and husband of Nausicaa. To remain, Odysseus must reject what he proclaims at the beginning of his stories: "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, whose fame reaches broad heaven" (9.19–20). He is not willing to surrender his prior roles. Odysseus' arrival on Scheria does return him to the human society he lacked on Calypso's island for the past seven years, yet he seeks to go further and reestablish himself as Telemachus' father, Penelope's husband, and king of Ithaca.

Odysseus' Second Shipwreck and the Offer of Immortality

A second shipwreck leads to Calypso's offer of immortality.[13] As part of the stories told to the Phaeacians in books 9–12, Odysseus recounts how he and

11. Scodel (1999b) explores the problem of Odysseus' "truly remarkable" evasiveness among the Phaeacians, noting that "Odysseus' silence is probably crucial to the development of this theme, since the moment Odysseus names himself, there can really be no further question of his marrying Nausikaa" (81). Odysseus cuts off any possible romance with Nausicaa when he says farewell (8.449–69) and identifies himself as having a wife and family (9.16–20).

12. Odysseus, however, insists that his life is one of misery, utterly unlike a divine existence (7.208–14). In the second half of the epic, this supposed *theoxeny*—Odysseus as a god arriving in disguise—is presumed by Telemachus, Penelope, and the suitors (16.172–95, 17.484–87, 23.62–67); see Kearns (1982).

13. See 5.135–36, 208–9; 7.256–57; 23.335–36.

his men are kept on the island of Thrinacia by contrary winds. Odysseus had been warned by Teiresias against eating the cattle of the sun god Helius, but the crew runs out of provisions, and hunger sets in.[14] When Odysseus inopportunely falls asleep, Eurylochus convinces the men to feast on Helius' cattle. Zeus then promises Helius that he will destroy their ship.

Once the contrary winds die down, the men prepare their ship and sail off. When "no land is in sight," Zeus sends a dark cloud over the boat, and a mist sets in (12.403–06). As Odysseus narrates, winds knock down the mast, the helmsman spills overboard, and Zeus splits their ship with a lightning bolt.

> Suddenly the West Wind
> attacked us with a scream, rushing with a great tempest,
> and a gust of wind ripped both forestays off
> the mast. The mast fell backward, and all its tackle
> spilled into the bilge. The mast itself struck the helmsman's head
> in the stern and straightaway smashed his skull,
> and, like a tumbler, he flipped from the deck, and his sturdy spirit
> left his bones.
> Then, all at once Zeus thundered and hit the ship
> with a lightning bolt. Smitten by Zeus' bolt, the ship spun around
> and was filled with sulphurous fumes.
> My shipmates fell out of the ship, and, like seahawks,
> they were carried by waves
> past the black ship.
>
> (12.407–19)

Zeus' action is fast and efficient: there are no speeches and only short similes. Odysseus remarks of his own crew, "God took away their homecoming" (12.419). Odysseus' men have been punished for breaking the oath they swore not to eat Helius' cattle.

When set against the earlier shipwreck description in book 5, we appreciate how little detail is presented on the departure of Odysseus and his men from Thrinacia, the subsequent journey, and the initial stages of the storm and wreck that followed—only twenty-two lines of verse. The longest section concerns the aftermath. Odysseus constructs a makeshift raft by lashing together the ship's keel and mast (12.420–25). The wind drives him back to the tidal whirlpool Charybdis. When she sucks down the sea (and his raft),

14. 11.104–17; cf. 12.127–41, 266–69.

he hangs suspended over the vortex from the branch of a fig tree, "like a bat," waiting all day until Charybdis spits out his keel and mast (12.426–46). He is carried off on it by a current and, after nine days, reaches Calypso's island (12.447–50).[15] This is the final tale the storyteller Odysseus tells the Phaeacians.

Odysseus' remarkable ability to survive deserves emphasis. When his men are dead and the ship lies floating in splinters, Odysseus does not give up. From the mast and keel, he fashions a raft. When Charybdis sucks down his puny craft, he hangs on for what seems like an eternity, until his raft is belched forth. It is another nine days to Calypso's island.[16]

Odysseus' arrival on land is told peremptorily in two lines (12.447–48). The rest of this "second" shipwreck has already been presented by Homer in book 5. Calypso is the sole inhabitant of the island Ogygia. This time there is an actual divine epiphany, for (unlike Nausicaa) Calypso truly is a goddess. Speaking to Hermes, she emphasizes her role as savior.

> I saved him . . .
> . . . .
> I loved him and nourished him and
> said I would make him immortal and ageless all his days.
> (5.130–36)

Calypso's island, the first exotic island described in the epic, is a magical sort of place with the fragrant smell of cedar, owls in attendance, vines and grapes, four bubbling springs,[17] and a fine lush meadow. Even the god Hermes marvels at this delightful spot (5.55–77).Homer focuses on the final days of Odysseus' seven-year stay with Calypso. Our first glimpse of Odysseus tells us a great deal. He is gazing out to sea, contemplating his dilemma: the sea—or at least the sea god Poseidon—is his enemy, yet only by crossing the sea will he see Ithaca again.

> Calypso found him sitting on the headland. His eyes were never
> dry from tears; his sweet life was flowing away

15. On the mythic motif of the one "just" survivor, such as Lot, Noah, and Utnapishtim, see Louden (1999) 70–72, 95–97.

16. Homer emphasizes Odysseus' tenacious will to survive by the brief bat simile and by Odysseus' clinging to the underside of the big ram in Polyphemus' cave (9.420–30). Such resiliency is a requisite trait for shipwreck survivors.

17. M. L. West (1997) 422 believes that the four springs (5.70) link Calypso's island to Near Eastern ideas of paradise (cf. the four rivers in Eden); cf. de Jong (2001) 129.

> as he lamented his journey home, since the nymph no longer
> pleased him.
>
> (5.151–53)

Wretched, weeping, and hopeless, Odysseus is at his lowest point. Even when Calypso passes along the news of his imminent departure, he suspects treachery and forces her to swear a great oath that she is not plotting against him (5.173–87). The next day, Odysseus builds a boat, for Calypso's island (like a desert island) has none (5.140–42). This leads to the previously examined shipwreck off the coast of Scheria, the Phaeacians' island.

The name *Calypso* derives from a Greek verb, *kalypto,* which means "to hide."[18] Calypso's significant name defines her role in the *Odyssey:* this goddess has hidden Odysseus away. In fact, given the symbolism of rebirth at the end of book 5, Odysseus' seven years on Calypso's island may be seen as a true vanishing from the world—much like death, which requires a rebirth if Odysseus is to rejoin the land of the living.[19]

The most striking feature of this "second" shipwreck is Calypso's offer to Odysseus: the promise of immortality itself and of living in a kind of paradise with a goddess as wife. The highest sort of praise in epic poetry is for a man or woman to be called "godlike." Here *Odysseus actually has the chance to become a god,* yet he rejects it, choosing instead to return home. Homer makes Odysseus' contrasting destinies explicit, in part by comparing Calypso with Penelope. When Calypso claims to be Penelope's equal in beauty and figure (5.211–13), Odysseus admits the goddess' superiority.

> Mistress goddess, don't be angry at me for this. I too know very well
> that wise Penelope falls far short of you
> with respect to beauty and stature,
> for she is mortal while you are immortal and ageless.
> But even so, I wish and desire all my days
> to travel home and see my homecoming day.
>
> (5.215–20)

Odysseus acknowledges Calypso's point—his mortal wife, Penelope, could never compete with the goddess' beauty—and he diplomatically states his desire to get back to Ithaca.

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18. Cf. 5.491.

19. Telemachus describes his father as "vanished" (*aistos*) and "unheard of" (*apeuthea,* 1.235, 244; cf. 3.88). On Odysseus' time with Calypso as a kind of death or existence in the underworld, see Crane (1988) 16–20.

Calypso's offer of immortality is made very concrete. She serves the food and drink of the gods, ambrosia and nectar, to Hermes (5.92–93); later Calypso helps herself to these, while offering Odysseus "food mortals eat" (6.196–99).[20] Has Calypso been offering Odysseus nectar and ambrosia for seven long years? Perhaps, but by eating the "food mortals eat," Odysseus appears to have ratified his decision to remain human.[21] The subsequent narrative reveals that when Odysseus rejects the offer of immortality, he has full knowledge of what this decision entails, for he had already journeyed to the land of the dead. The story of that visit is presented narratively in book eleven, during Odysseus' tales told to the Phaeacians, but in the chronology of Odysseus' life, his "underworld" journey took place in the first two years after the Trojan War. Odysseus' rejection of Calypso's offer comes seven years after he meets the shade of his mother Anticleia, who slips through his arms when he tries to embrace her in the land of the dead. Anticleia explains,

> Sinews no longer bind the flesh and bones together,
> but the mighty power of burning fire has vanquished these,
> once life first leaves the white bones,
> and the spirit, like a dream, rustles and flutters away.
>
> (11.219–22)

When rejecting Calypso's offer, Odysseus realizes exactly how he will end up—flitting around, squeaking like a bat, thirsty for blood—yet he chooses not to become a god.

The episode in book 5 presents a stark polarity between two sorts of existence awaiting Odysseus: immortality and paradise or human suffering and inevitable death. In the end, Odysseus chooses to remain mortal—like us. Indeed, one of the defining features of Odysseus is his humanity, which in the epic world (and ours) entails suffering.[22] Yet his is no ordinary suffering. When Calypso warns of future trouble if he departs, Odysseus replies,

> And if a god wrecks me again on the wine-faced sea,
> I will endure that too, with a sorrow-bearing spirit in my chest,

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20. Cf. Adam and Eve, who had access to the Tree of (Everlasting?) Life in the Garden of Eden. Once they were expelled from the garden, they became mere mortals, subject to death.

21. In the previous book, Menelaus told Telemachus how he and Helen would go to the Elysian fields—another paradise—as Zeus' son-in-law and daughter (4.561–69). That sounded kind of fantastic, but here Odysseus is offered a similar chance.

22. On Odysseus' humanity, see Rutherford (1986).

for already I have suffered much and labored hard
in the waves and in war. Let this be added to the total!

(5.221–24)

Odysseus has undergone almost unendurable pain, yet he is not broken.

Homer brackets Odysseus' stay on Calypso's island with two shipwrecks, a later shipwreck (off Nausicaa's island) that is presented early in the epic and an earlier shipwreck (leading to Calypso's island) that is presented later in the narrative. On Calypso's island, Odysseus has no real choice in his situation (other than rejecting Calypso's offer); he is stranded and in desperate need of divine help. Only the arrival of Hermes, sent by Zeus, will allow for Odysseus' departure. On Nausicaa's island, Odysseus begins to make choices and is in a position to decide what information about himself to reveal and conceal.

Calypso offers life to Odysseus: she feeds and cares for him. She also presents the possibility of supernatural transformation, leading to a new sort of status. Yet on Calypso's island, Odysseus is isolated from home, family, and all human society. Ogygia is at the ends of the earth; Calypso does not mix with men or gods; there are no cities, shrines, or hecatombs (5.55, 99–102). Obviously, if Odysseus accepts her offer—if he becomes a god—he will have left human society behind. In the *Politics* (1.9), Aristotle remarks that a human being outside of society is either in a low state (*phaulos*) or is "more than human." Odysseus rejects the latter option—to be a god (beyond a human state)—in order to see his loved ones again.

The shipwreck on Calypso's island has imposed severe limitations on Odysseus' autonomy. He eats (but resists ambrosia), and he makes love to the goddess (eventually as an unwilling partner), yet he cannot leave until the gods intervene. He is utterly dependent on the goodwill of Zeus and Athena. While it is possible to describe Odysseus as rejecting immortality, his decision can also be described in a positive sense: he fights for a life in human society, seeking to be reunited with his family at home. His resistance to Calypso's offer indicates a desire to cling to his own identity, which is defined in part by his relationships with other people, in part by his humanity. Odysseus wishes to reclaim the person he once was.

His shipwreck among the Phaeacians presents a different scenario. In this case, Odysseus arrives naked, like an animal (note the lion simile at 6.130–37), but is restored to human society: he speaks with Nausicaa, washes, and puts on clothes. Now he is closer to Ithaca, his wife, his son, and his father. Scheria is like home in that Odysseus has regained more of his autonomy

(though he is still dependent on the goodwill of Nausicaa, Alcinous, and Arete for his return). One way in which Odysseus demonstrates his independence is by refraining to reveal who he is.

One defining feature of shipwrecks is that travelers face powers beyond their control; often the best that can be hoped for is to survive, be resilient, and adapt. These two episodes demonstrate something of Odysseus' efforts to control his own life. The idea of "reinvention" appears to contain the element of choice. To be sure, Odysseus is in a position to decide: he chooses to reject Calypso's offer of immortality; he declines the offer of Nausicaa in marriage.

It may be worth comparing Odysseus' two shipwrecks with his return to Ithaca by Phaeacian transport in book 13. In fact, that voyage depicts what we might call an "antishipwreck scenario," a safe journey with good weather and no mishaps (emphasized by similes at 13.81–88).[23] It contrasts with the danger he encountered on his way to Calypso's and Nausicaa's islands: he enjoys safety, he is still dressed, and his gifts from the Phaeacians remain intact. Yet Athena greets him in disguise once more (as she did on Scheria), and Odysseus is ignorant of where he is (he does not recognize the island as Ithaca). Is this simply one more stop on the way home, one more island variant (*like* Ithaca but *not* Ithaca)?

Once Odysseus has recognized his own island, he can reestablish who he is. It may sound odd to put it this way, but now Odysseus *decides to stay:* Ithaca is his intended destination. Once more he is transformed (Athena disguises him to look like an old man before he meets anyone else in Ithaca), yet now Odysseus can do what he does best: plot, deceive, and win back his kingdom. Odysseus adapts to adverse situations: with Calypso, he endures; with the Phaeacians, he conceals and wins their favor; in Ithaca, he becomes a coconspirator with the goddess Athena. Shipwrecks function as obstacles to his ultimate desire to reclaim his identity as Odysseus, king of Ithaca.

Identity and Invented Shipwrecks

It is a commonplace that Homer develops the theme of identity throughout the *Odyssey.* The poet's decision not to name Odysseus in the first twenty lines of the epic suggests this idea. For the epic as a whole, if Odysseus wishes

23. The voyage home may also be understood as a symbolic rebirth, for Homer describes Odysseus as undergoing a "sleep most like death" (13.78–80).

to survive, get home, and reclaim his kingdom, he needs to learn when it is appropriate to say, "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, king of Ithaca," and when he should lie, pretend he did not hear the question, or come up with a trick name ("I am Nobody–Mr. Nobody to you!"). In fact, it is essential that he withhold his identity when encountering Polyphemus and Circe, for they have heard prophecies about a man named Odysseus and would have challenged him if he were more forthcoming (9.507–16, 10.330–32).[24]

Who is Odysseus? Throughout the *Odyssey,* Homer provides different sorts of answers to that question. Odysseus may be thought of in terms of what others say about him (books 1–4) or in terms of his skills (books 5–8; e.g., he builds and sails a ship). In books 9–12, Odysseus establishes his heroic credentials and shows himself to be a gifted singer.[25] Then, in the second half of the *Odyssey* (books 13–24), Homer constructs a different sort of answer about his protagonist's identity, in terms of Odysseus' relationship with others: Odysseus is the father of Telemachus, the husband of Penelope, the son of Laertes, and the king of Ithaca.[26]

Thus the overarching theme of identity is developed throughout the entire epic. Our focus here, however, is on the connection between identity, new possible roles, and shipwreck. New opportunities exist in a dynamic tension with the poet's answer of who Odysseus actually is, not merely who he could become (he actually is the husband of Penelope). In a sense, I am arguing that Homer is trying to have it both ways: Homer articulates Odysseus' identity in several ways (public reputation, man of many skills, hero, storyteller), and Homer is suggesting several potential roles Odysseus himself could adopt.

As a storyteller, Odysseus invents shipwreck stories when he lies to Polyphemus and Eumaeus (9.283–86, 14.293–315). He tells Eumaeus that he was kindly received by a king, then was robbed by sailors, and finally escaped in Ithaca (14.316–59). It is hard not to notice the eerie echoes of Odysseus' own life in this tale of the life of the "Cretan wanderer." In particular, Odysseus' account of the storm and wreck describes how a lightning bolt splits the ship and leaves the Cretan wanderer as the only survivor. This episode is

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24. See Scodel (1997). Odysseus' concealing his identity may also be important with the Phaeacians, given their genealogical connection to Poseidon, the grandfather of Alcinous and great-grandfather of Arete (7.56–68; cf. 7.30–35, 6.273–88); see G. Rose (1969).

25. Homer reminds us of Odysseus' talent when Alcinous praises his guest as a talented and convincing teller of tales (11.363–69).

26. In the second half of the epic, Homer constructs Odysseus' identity by a series of recognition scenes; see Gainsford (2003) with bibliography at 42 note 6.

recounted in almost identical language to Odysseus' story told to the Phaeacians of the actual shipwreck after his men ate Helius' cattle. Once more he hangs onto a mast for dear life and floats for nine days (cf. especially 14.301–34 with 12.403–6 and 14.305–9 with 12.415–19). Even his encounters in Thesprotia echo Nausicaa's role on Scheria (after his other shipwreck), though in Odysseus' Cretan tale, the king's son—not a daughter—gives him clothes and leads him to his royal father for escort home (14.317–34; cf. 6.137–320, 7.142–334).

Back on Ithaca, Odysseus once again proves his skill at storytelling, but part of what we are witnessing there is the way in which a storyteller constructs an effective yet fictional tale, based in part on "real-life" experience.[27] Odysseus' invented shipwreck tales suggest a reversal of control. Before, Odysseus was subject to winds, waves, and the gods' hostility; he was dependent on the generosity of Calypso and Nausicaa. But in the second half of the epic—in the tale he tells Eumaeus—Odysseus refashions the shipwreck story to show that the wicked are punished and that the innocent are set free.

The final appearance of shipwrecks in the *Odyssey* appears in a simile presented at a very dramatic moment. Odysseus has slain the suitors and is reunited with his wife, Penelope, yet she remains skeptical that the figure before her is actually her husband. For Odysseus to reclaim his status as Penelope's husband, he must convince her that he has indeed returned. Penelope proves herself to be as crafty as her husband, when she asks a servant to move the marriage bed outside. Odysseus protests that this is impossible, for he built the bed out of a living olive tree: it is literally rooted to the ground.

As Homer says, "Penelope recognized the sure signs." She realizes that this must be Odysseus—only he knows about the bed (23.225–30). Penelope runs to Odysseus in tears, throws her hands around his neck, and kisses him. All doubt has vanished. Penelope and Odysseus raise a cry of lament, and as Odysseus holds his wife in his arms, Homer introduces a simile.

> As when land joyfully appears to swimmers
> whose well-built ship Poseidon shattered
> on the sea, driven by wind and heavy waves—
> only a few escape the gray sea, swimming

27. See de Jong (2001) 353–54 on fact, fiction, and "allomorph." In chapters 4 and 6 of the present book, I discuss Shakespeare's and Defoe's use of historical events (the 1609 Bermuda shipwreck and Selkirk's stranding in the South Pacific).

toward land; much brine is caked on their skin,
and joyfully they step onto land, fleeing disaster—
so then did her husband joyfully appear to her looking at him,
and she never let go of his neck with her white arms.

(23.233–40)

This simile comes close to recapitulating Odysseus' adventures: a shipwreck sent by Poseidon, swimming for one's life, sea salt clogging pores, finally emerging gratefully onto dry land. Yet when Homer begins the simile, it is not clear whether Odysseus or Penelope is the subject of the comparison—they are simply left in an embrace. Only as the simile concludes do we realize that it is Penelope who looks at her husband with the same joy that a shipwrecked survivor experiences upon reaching dry land. The point is that Penelope—who has never been wrecked at sea—has undergone adventures and endured suffering equal to that of her husband. Both Penelope and Odysseus are like shipwrecked survivors—these two belong together. In this climactic reunion, Homer uses the shipwreck experience as a means to recapitulate the trials of Odysseus and to link that suffering and heroism to the figure of Penelope.[28]

The Historical Context of Homer's *Odyssey*

It may be valuable to set the journeys and shipwrecks of Homer's Odysseus in the historical context of exploration, trade, and colonization in the early days of Archaic Greece during Homer's own lifetime.[29] During the 700s BCE, the population in the area of the Aegean rose dramatically. Various Greek cities sent off some of their citizens to found colonies in the western Mediterranean (Sicily and southern Italy). Such contact began by sailing, trading, exchanging gifts, and raiding in the ninth and early eighth centuries; by the middle of the eighth century (during Homer's lifetime), Pithekoussai in the Bay of Naples had been a Euboean colony for a generation; Greek colonization continued for the next two centuries. It is plausible to say that Homer has taken experiences from his own time—sea travel, trade, colonization, and contact with previously unknown peoples and places—

28. On "sex reversal" in similes, see Foley (1978), Winkler (1990), and Gainsford (2003) 55 and note 39.

29. Other features of the eighth century that are found in Homer's poems include athletic contests, full body armor, and cremation for burial; see Morris (1986) and Raaflaub (1998).

Fig. 2. Shipwreck scene on a wine jug from the eighth century BCE. A single survivor sits on a capsized ship. (By permission of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München; photograph by Renate Kühling.)

and transposed them to the heroic age.[30] Odysseus' tales of one-eyed monsters, witches, and huge whirlpools reflect, to some extent, the stories of

30. Malkin (1998) 62–93 provides a detailed study of Western Greece, the Adriatic, Sicily, and southern Italy in the period 900–600 BCE. Ridgway (1988) and (1992) 57–60, 150 discusses the shipwreck illustration on a wine cup from Pithekoussai, a Greek colony in the Bay of Naples from the mid-eighth century BCE (contemporary with Homer); see also Hurwit (2011).

eighth-century travelers who journeyed outside the familiar world of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean and returned to tell such sailor yarns.[31]

The Aegean Sea, the eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor (where Troy lies), mainland Greece (Mycenae, Pylos, Sparta), and Egypt were familiar to Homer's audience. Homer signals that Odysseus is entering a new realm when a storm drives Odysseus and his fleet west from the southern tip of the Peloponnese, as Odysseus describes to the Phaeacians in book 9.

> But a wave, the current, and the North Wind forced me
> away as I was doubling Cape Malea, and drove me past Cythera.
> (9.80–81)

Cape Malea and the island of Cythera were familiar terrain in the southern region of the Peloponnesus. To be driven south and west from this point for nine days was to enter a world that was still being explored in Homer's day. Note the places where Odysseus ends up after the storm: the land of the Lotus-eaters, the island of the Cyclopes, and Aeolus' island (which never stays rooted in one spot—10.1–3). He meets the Lastrygonians and Circe, visits the land of the dead, and sails past the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis before landing on Thrinacia, where the Sun's cattle graze. These locations constitute what we may think of as Homer's fantastic geography, which is very loosely based on the Greeks' experience of the western Mediterranean.

Ithaca was strategically located on the sea routes from Greece to these new areas of contact. Odysseus' island was evidently frequented by "traders," "colonizers," and others.[32] Odysseus has even been called the first hero of colonization. While a specific historical event may have "triggered" the idea for *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe,* it is impossible to point to one occurrence as inspiration for Homer's *Odyssey.* Nevertheless, this period of early Greek exploration would certainly have stimulated the poet's imagination. It is no anachronism (with respect to Homer's own time) that, in book 9 of the *Odyssey,* Odysseus contemplates establishing a city on the island opposite the Cyclopes' island (9.116–41). This is precisely what eighth-century Greeks were doing: exploring new lands and trolling for good foundation sites.[33]

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31. Homer presents a mixture of fantastic elements with real places and peoples such as the Phoenicians, who were active in Homer's lifetime (15.415–19); see Malkin (1998) 119.

32. See Malkin (1998) 72–74.

33. Malkin (1998) 5; see 132 and passim for Odysseus as a "protocolonialist." Since the plot of the *Odyssey* dictates that he return home, Odysseus must fail at each opportunity for colonization; see Lane Fox (2009) especially 43–83 and Doughtery (2001) 11 on how the *Odyssey* reflects "the social, political, and cultural transformations taking place in the early archaic Greek world."

Fig. 3. Odysseus' journeys. Locales in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean were familiar to Homer's audience. Later Greeks identified locales in the west as the sites of Odysseus' more unusual encounters. (By permission of the Ancient World Mapping Center.)

The *Odyssey* as the First Shipwreck Scenario

The *Odyssey*'s shipwrecks have had tremendous influence on later art and literature. Two shipwrecks leave Odysseus alone on inhabited islands that offer new opportunities—which, in the end, he declines. Rebirth imagery, ignorance upon arrival, and divine epiphanies are elements that will recur. In the next chapter, we shall examine several other survivors in similar situations on inhabited islands. But we should note here that shipwrecks have challenged Odysseus' sense of who he is; he must struggle against transformation, for he wishes to return to his previous roles of husband, father, and king.

The story of Odysseus is a tale of great suffering. At the time of shipwreck, Odysseus expects to die and never knows whether he will see his wife and family again even if he survives. Why are we drawn to such tales? As Odysseus and Eumaeus tell each other the tales of their lives (in Odysseus' case, a fictional one), Eumaeus ponders the odd experience of finding delight in hearing sad stories.

> Let us two drink and eat in the tent
> and delight in the painful sorrow of each other,
> remembering. For a man who suffers much and wanders much
> delights afterwards even in his own past sorrows.
>
> (15.398–401)

Writers and philosophers have long wondered why we enjoy reading sad stories or watching tragedy on the stage. Homer has no answer, but he recognizes the fact that there is a pleasure in remembering, from a distance, even the hardest parts of our lives.

This is what happens in encountering the *Odyssey.* As readers, we learn about Odysseus' many troubles—his mother dies while he is away, his wife is beset by aggressive suitors, and so on. Yet, in the right circumstances, we enjoy this and want to hear more. Why are we fascinated by shipwrecks and other such near-death experiences? Is it because, hearing about them many years later, we can "delight in past sorrows"? Or is it because it is not happening to us—is it merely the vicarious thrill of hearing what happened to some other unlucky soul? Or is there a tinge of envy in us for these marvelous adventures? These are questions I will consider next, as I turn to shipwreck tales told over four millennia.

CHAPTER 3

Shipwreck and Opportunity from Ancient Egypt to the Modern Caribbean

This chapter explores the influence of the Homeric shipwreck and the figure of Odysseus, particularly his role as a single survivor, on works from antiquity and the modern world. Homer's Odysseus chooses to return home rather than becoming immortal, yet shipwreck survivors in comparable works look more favorably on the opportunities for transformation and a new identity. I begin by examining the oldest shipwreck story ever recorded. Then I consider ancient Greek and Roman epic, drama, and novels that adapt—and deviate from—Homer's *Odyssey.* Finally, I turn to two modern adaptations of Homer's *Odyssey* by the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott. There we find an impulse absent in Homer, for the new life on offer is accepted.

The Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor"

One of the oldest recorded stories of all time is the Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor" (ca. 1900 BCE), a narrative told by an unnamed sailor upon his return. Comparing this work with Homer's *Odyssey* allows us to speculate on the topic of Homer's originality. In the Egyptian tale, after describing his ship and crew of 150 brave men, the survivor recounts how he took a sea journey in service of the pharoah. When a storm hits, the sailor

seizes a piece of wood for flotation and is cast by a large wave onto an island. He shelters under a tree for three days. Everyone else has perished.[1]

But things are not so bad at first. He builds a fire and makes an offering to the gods, and the island has a wondrous abundance of food: he feasts on figs, melons, fish, and birds. Then danger threatens. Approaching with the sound of thunder, a huge serpent with scales of gold and lapis lazuli confronts the sailor. The serpent asks, "Who has brought you?" (70) The sailor describes his journey, but it is the serpent who explains, "God has let you live and has brought you to this island of the Spirit" (114–15).[2] The serpent then predicts that a ship will come after four months and that the sailor will return home and eventually die in his hometown.

Delighted, the sailor promises to speak about the serpent's greatness in the presence of the pharaoh and offers to return with gifts. The serpent only smiles, for he already has all that is valuable on the island. Besides, the island will not remain after the sailor's departure: it will be turned into waves and exist no more. Subsequent events then take place as the serpent predicted: a ship comes after four months, and the sailor returns home with many valuable gifts from the serpent, including perfumes, cedarwood, incense, ivory, and baboons. He is raised to the rank of "follower" (or retainer) by the pharaoh and is rewarded with the acquisition of two hundred servants.

Though antecedent to Homer by well over a millennium, this Egyptian tale is analogous to Homer's *Odyssey* in several respects. In the Egyptian tale, this single survivor has been divinely selected and lands on a magical paradise. In the *Odyssey,* arrival on unknown islands is associated with threat, magic, and even cannibalism, yet the possibility also exists for a kind of paradise (with the Phaeacians) or even immortality. While the shipwreck in the Egyptian tale causes much loss of life, the lone survivor finds himself on an awe-inspiring island: "there was nothing that was not on it" (52). Storytellers have a tendency to present such islands as a kind of utopia. It is difficult not to think of other magical places: the Elysian fields "at the ends

1. Parkinson (1997) 89–101 dates this story to the period of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (1940–1640 BCE). I will follow his translation. For a discussion of how one story is "nested" within another, see Baines (1990) 67–70; for its mix of humorous and serious messages, see Rendsberg (2000).

2. The island is called Ka, which is the Egyptian word for "soul." Parkinson (1997) 99 note 14 sees the island as marking a transition: "the *spirit* (*ka*) was the link between life and death, so his description implies that the island exists halfway between this world and the next." Baines (1990) 71–72 remarks on the allegory of the journey of life and "reaching land" as a euphemism for dying.

of the earth" awaiting Menelaus and Helen (*Odyssey* 4) or the island of the immortal Utnapishtim in the Gilgamesh epic.[3] The Egyptian sailor will not become immortal, only wealthy and famous (though, ironically, we never learn his name). As in Homer, the survivor meets a divine inhabitant on the island: the serpent is evidently a divine manifestation of the creator god.[4]

As with Odysseus' arrival on Calypso's island, the Egyptian sailor did not intend to land on a particular island. From the human perspective, such accidental arrivals are caused by wind and waves beyond human control.[5] There are no directions; it is almost impossible to get to these islands on purpose, and no one returns a second time. In the case of the Egyptian story, the island will not even be there in the future. So the sailor returns home to tell the tale and is elevated in social status.

In juxtaposing the Egyptian tale with Homer's *Odyssey,* we might consider one of the great unanswered questions about Homer, namely, his originality. Because he worked in an oral tradition that extended back many generations, it is difficult to say which parts of Homer's epics are new. He was certainly not the first poet to tell the story of Odysseus. Over a number of days or nights, the singer (and composer) of the *Odyssey* would present the story of Odysseus to an audience that was already familiar with the stories of the Judgment of Paris, the siege and sack of Troy, the deaths of Achilles and Agamemnon, and Odysseus' journeys. In fact, Homer takes advantage of his audience's previous familiarity with the epic tradition to shape his story in a subtle way. Homer is under no obligation to retell the story of Odysseus' life or the Trojan Horse or even to remind his audience who Zeus or Agamemnon or Penelope is. Instead, Homer constructs his story around one event: the return of Odysseus, long after Troy is sacked.

It is impossible to tell which of Homer's episodes are wholly original—never before told—and which he adapted from earlier singers, but we can speculate. Could it be that the elaborately constructed answer to the question of Odysseus' identity was the work of the *Odyssey*'s poet; that is, might Homer's *Odyssey* be the first song about Odysseus with such a profound

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3. The earliest description of the Isles of the Blessed as a refuge for heroes in the afterlife comes from Hesiod *Works and Days* 168–173 (cf. Pindar *Olympian* 2.68–80). See the discussions in A. S. Brown (1998), Lincoln (1980), McDannell and Lang (1988), and Morrison (1999b) 245–49. For links between the Egyptian tale's island and the Fields of Ealu, see Baines (1990) 67.

4. Parkinson (1997) 90 argues that "the serpent is a metaphorical representative of the creator-god."

5. The snake only tells the Egyptian, "God has let you live." As with many shipwreck stories, there is an almost illogical mix of accident and divine plan; see Thimmes (1992) 35.

exploration of identity? There is no way to prove this possibility. Surely other poets sang of shipwrecks, but had anyone previously linked shipwreck with new possible roles as Homer has? Perhaps we should be cautious. Given the connection between shipwreck and social transformation found in the Egyptian tale, this thematic link from shipwreck to potential transformation may be a natural move.

The shipwreck episodes of the *Odyssey* allow Homer to explore the issue of identity by presenting new roles that Odysseus could adopt. Interestingly, the Egyptian tale also connects shipwrecks with a new sort of status, suggesting the likelihood that shipwreck survivors will typically adopt new roles. Perhaps Homer's innovation is that Odysseus rejects such an opportunity: he chooses to return to his humble island and aging wife and civil tension. The Egyptian sailor is happy in his social elevation, yet Homer's hero makes the decision to remain who he was. Could this be new with Homer?

Ancient Shipwrecks in Greek and Roman Epic, Drama, and the Novel

Shipwreck episodes proliferate in literature of the ancient world. The Hebrew Bible story of Jonah tells of threatened shipwreck; and in Psalm 107, God sends a storm but also rescues the voyagers. Virtually every genre of Greek and Roman literature, both poetry and prose, contains a shipwreck episode.[6] In post-Homeric Greek and Roman epic, Apollonius, Vergil, and Lucan introduce disasters afflicting heroes at sea—not surprisingly, given the long "shadow" of Homer. For example, in the *Aeneid,* Vergil deliberately models storms at sea on those in the *Odyssey.* His hero Aeneas (like Odysseus) is harassed by divine wrath. In this case, it is not the sea god but Juno, Jupiter's wife, who sends a storm in the first scene in the epic (*Aeneid* 1.88–91). Aeneas' first words echo those of Odysseus when he confronted Poseidon's storm in book 5 of the *Odyssey.* Aeneas cries out,

> O three and four times blessed
> are those who died before their fathers' eyes
> beneath the high walls of Troy.
>
> (1.94–96; cf. *Odyssey* 5.306–10)

6. On shipwrecks in Greek and Roman literature, see MacDonald (1999) 101 note 71 and Thimmes (1992) 42–72.

Winds crack the oars, strip the sails, and drive three ships onto rocks. The helmsman of Orontes' boat is knocked overboard; ship and crew are swallowed beneath a wave. After Neptune, the "Roman Poseidon," senses the storm and calms the sea, Aeneas' ship lands on the North African coast. Aeneas believes the rest of his fleet is lost and heads to Carthage on foot, but in the end, only a single ship out of the fleet of twenty is destroyed (1.381, 584).[7]

Long journeys in the ancient world—both epic and historical—were generally made by sea. Later writers looked back to Homer for inspiration; an audience of epic poetry would surely have expected to hear of shipwrecks and other adventures. Yet while Aeneas and Jason (with the Argonauts) meet with storms, they are not shipwrecked; indeed, their ships and crews must remain intact for these heroes to accomplish their missions of bringing Trojan refugees to Italy or retrieving the Golden Fleece. Vergil (and Apollonius) allude to Homer frequently, and shipwrecks may even appear imminent (and occur to others), yet the hero's crew and ship arrive safely.[8] These poets do not adopt the shipwreck scenario of the *Odyssey* in the strict sense. With regard to its distinctive feature—a single man driven to an inhabited island—the Odyssean shipwreck is quite atypical (cf. the Egyptian tale).[9]

Shipwrecks often appear in ancient drama as a useful plot device.[10] Introducing shipwrecks is one means for the dramatist to have someone arrive unexpectedly and alone, leading (as we saw in the *Odyssey*) to recognition scenes, reunions, and dramatic irony. For example, in Euripides' *Helen,* the wife of Menelaus, Helen, has remained in Egypt during the Trojan War (only her phantom was at Troy). After Troy is sacked, Menelaus attempts to sail home but is driven by winds to Egypt. His vessel is shattered against the shore, and he loses most of his crew. Describing himself as a hapless "shipwreck" (*nauagos,* 408), he does not know where he is (409–15). Then he meets Helen, not knowing it is her or she him. Yet finally the couple is reunited. Helen herself even refers to this surprising turn of events as a happy shipwreck.

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7. De Saint-Denis (1935) 217–18 discusses the three storms in the *Aeneid.*

8. In *Argonautica* 4 (after they have acquired the fleece and Medea), winds drive Jason and his crew to North Africa and the shoals of Syrtes (Libya)—this echoes the gales that drove Odysseus and his crew to the land of the Lotus-eaters (*Odyssey* 9.67–84). On other shipwrecks in epic, see Austin (1971) 51.

9. See Louden (1999) 70–72, 95–97 on the motif of a single survivor in ancient literature.

10. For example, see Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (654–59), Euripides' *Trojan Women* (65–97), and Seneca's *Agamemnon* (462ff.).

Though your ship was untimely lost,
this disaster may turn out to be fortunate.

(*Helen* 1080–81)

If a poet, playwright, or novelist has a desire to separate two lovers, reunite brothers who have not seen each other since childhood, or create some other "coincidental" sundering or reunion, a shipwreck becomes an extremely useful stratagem for bringing about such events (as we shall see in chapter 4, Shakespeare is quite fond of shipwrecks).[11]

Finally, we turn, in this brief survey, to novels. Lateiner's "Heavy Weather for Storm-Tossed Lovers" considers how ancient novels follow epic literature in many respects regarding storms at sea. Lateiner analyzes the typical patterns that are often employed to separate two chaste lovers or to introduce various adventures.[12] The *Satyricon,* a novel by the Neronian author Petronius (60s CE), is, in many ways, a parody of Homer's *Odyssey.* The "hero" Encolpius is harassed by the wrath not of Poseidon (Odysseus' nemesis) but of Priapus, the god of the phallus and sexual power. There are underworld journeys, disguises, scenes of recognition, and shipwrecks. Encolpius even comments, "If you calculate your chances in life, shipwreck is everywhere" (*Satyricon* 115). As Lateiner notes, this remark reflects a philosophical position—danger is everywhere in our lives—but it also serves as a "metacritical" comment on the ubiquity of shipwrecks in literature. Everywhere you look—that is, in every book you read—you find a shipwreck. Lateiner observes that novels introduce the idea of lovers clinging to one another on stormy seas as a replacement for epic's "lonely heroes."[13] Again the Homeric situation is not strictly adopted, for now there are couples, groups, and crews surviving. An updated version with a sole survivor, like Odysseus, is relatively rare.

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11. In Plautus' *Rope,* a shipwreck saves two young women from a pimp and reunites one of them with her father (who lost her when she was just three years old). In Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians,* it is of interest that Orestes and Pylades are not shipwrecked at the land of the Taurians, for the Taurians (on the Black Sea in the present-day Crimea) were accustomed to sacrificing shipwrecked survivors to the virgin goddess Artemis (see Herodotus 4.103). In Euripides' play, Iphigenia the priestess (who herself was miraculously saved at Aulis) plans to sacrifice her brother Orestes, whom she does not recognize. Shipwreck works as the means of recognition, though the shipwreck here is hypothetical (see 755–899).

12. See Lateiner (unpublished paper) for his chart analyzing the features of such storms. Hagg (1983) 21 notes that even in the oldest fragment of the ancient novel, the *Ninus Romance,* we encounter "the ingredients of shipwreck, war, and eloquent love" (17).

13. Lateiner (unpublished paper).

I hope this brief survey makes evident the ubiquity of shipwrecks in epic, drama, and prose fiction.[14] Shipwreck episodes, dramatic scenes that bring about pivotal moments in the story, may be exploited for a variety of purposes. Shipwrecks may aid the artist in characterizing the major figures (showing heroism or cowardice) and delineating the gods' hostility or favor.[15] There are multiple literary allusions to Homer. Shipwrecks are pervasive partly because the audience expects storms at sea in a newly composed epic, but they may also be understood in terms of the writer's competitiveness with both contemporary and past rivals. Each poet strove to be included in the elite company of great poets such as Homer; one way to do that was to take on famous Homeric scenes and try to surpass the master. Clearly, Homer's Odyssean shipwrecks are some of the most frequent scenes imitated by later poets and other authors. Yet most later writers do not present a single shipwreck survivor like Odysseus.

Walcott's Stage Version of the *Odyssey*

The many transformations that the figure of Odysseus (or Ulysses) has undergone over the past twenty-seven hundred years are wonderfully recounted in Stanford's *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (1954) and Hall's *The Return of Ulysses* (2008). Odysseus continues to attract interest in very recent times, particularly in the dramatic and poetic works of Derek Walcott, a Caribbean writer from Saint Lucia and winner of the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature. I will compare Walcott's relatively close adaptation of *The Odyssey: A Stage Version,* written for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1992—with a freer use of the Odysseus figure in his epic poem *Omeros* (1990).

In his 1993 stage version of *The Odyssey: A Stage Version,* Walcott retains many characters and episodes from the Homeric epic, though innovations appear from the very start. These modern touches include a blind blues singer (Blind Billy Blue) who takes on the roles of the Homeric singers Phemius and Demodocus. The ancient Mediterranean is assimilated to the Caribbean Sea (Odysseus' nurse, Eurycleia, uses a Caribbean accent). We also encounter a voodoo ceremony that facilitates Odysseus' entry to the

14. I will only briefly mention the wonderful use of shipwreck by the Epicurean poet Lucretius, who describes how "sweet it is" to view others' distress at sea while safely on shore (*On the Nature of the Universe* 2.1ff.).

15. See Thimmes (1992) 79–80.

underworld (85). Yet the plot is familiar. Odysseus' primary opponent is the god of the sea, Poseidon, yet Odysseus endures. Though "that sea beat me with everything it could find," Odysseus "was never pinned by the trident of Poseidon" (158, 141).[16]

There is only one shipwreck, after Odysseus' men open the bag of Aeolus' winds. Everyone dies except Odysseus, who reaches the Phaeacians' island. After his shipwreck, Odysseus' encounter with Nausicaa is reminiscent of a "divine epiphany." Odysseus calls Nausicaa a "nymph," but she's apparently heard it all before.

> NAUSICAA: You'll gain nothing addressing me in that way.
> ODYSSEUS: I am dazzled. My salt eyes are scorched by the sun.
> NAUSICAA: That's how all these overtures start. With poetry.
> ODYSSEUS: What poetry?
> NAUSICAA: You know. "O Nymph," and all that business.
> ODYSSEUS: I thought I drowned and soared with the gulls to heaven.
> NAUSICAA: See? Next you'll croak about clutching my shining knees. (47–48)

Now at the far end of a tradition, Walcott makes clear how familiar Odysseus' appeal has become. This scene evoking a divine epiphany is viewed even by Nausicaa as a cliché.

Walcott also follows Homer's strategy by using this shipwreck as an obstacle to Odysseus' reunion with Penelope. A bolder, more aggressive Nausicaa forthrightly pursues a potential marriage with Odysseus without any encouragement from her father. As in Homer, she is unaware of Odysseus' identity, yet she knows he has a wife. This does not deter her.

> ODYSSEUS: You're well on your way to being somebody's wife.
> NAUSICAA: Yours?
> ODYSSEUS: No. I'm too old. Plus, I have one already.
> NAUSICAA: Too old, with that panelled body? . . . Shall we meet properly?
> ODYSSEUS: Shall we?
> NAUSICAA: Nausicaa. And you're my gift from the seas! (49)

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16. In Walcott's play, two views of the sea are found in remarks by the First Attendant ("The sea's a maw that devours") and Nestor ("A god who saves") (23–24).

Walcott's Nausicaa dismisses the age discrepancy between them and claims Odysseus as a "gift from the seas," hers to collect like a seashell.

Later Nausicaa bids Odysseus to "make this your shore" (55) and continues to press the issue.

> NAUSICAA: Then, our marriage-cart, drawn by nodding white oxen . . .
> ODYSSEUS: Whoa! Whoa! Not so fast! You deserve a good husband.
> NAUSICAA: There's a "but"?
> ODYSSEUS: How'll I explain it to my wife?
> NAUSICAA: Tell her you met me and were swept overboard and . . .
> ODYSSEUS: That's true.
> NAUSICAA: Wouldn't she be happy that I saved your life? (58)

Nausicaa's father, Alcinous, can only comment, "She's a smart girl but a bit too fresh for her age" (58–59). As in Homer, Nausicaa presents a temptation that may derail Odysseus' homecoming, and—as in Homer—Odysseus rejects this opportunity for a new life, as well as Calypso's offer to make him a god (57; cf. 81).

There are wonderful scenes in Walcott's play, especially one with the Cyclops Polyphemus as a twentieth-century totalitarian leader ruling a nation where "thought is forbidden." Walcott also adopts the Homeric Odysseus' habit of concealing his identity, both with the Cyclops and upon landing in Ithaca. Reduced to a "nobody," a "king who begs" (129), a wandering beggar whose tales no one quite believes, Odysseus must once again reestablish his identity as husband of Penelope and king of Ithaca.[17] For audiences familiar with the ancient model, much interest derives from the modern play's innovations on the classical model. Walcott does include an Odyssean shipwreck (though only one) and again Odysseus chooses to return to Ithaca, as he rejects the chance for a different sort of life. Characters follow a different path in Walcott's work *Omeros.*

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17. To the suitors, Odysseus is "King O' Beggars" (141); to Telemachus, he is "This majesty in rags" (137). For "No man" (*outis*) in Homer's *Odyssey,* see 9.366–414. In Walcott's *Odyssey,* Odysseus says, "They call me 'No-man'" (41); on his arrival in Ithaca, he says "I'm nobody" (110; cf. 92, 121, 126). Burian (1997) 366 comments on Walcott's abiding interest in "the importance of sea, islands, wandering, and return" and adds that "it is hardly surprising that the myth of Odysseus recurs more than any other, and in many guises" (361); see also Thieme (1999) 151–97.

Walcott's *Omeros*

Another reworking of the Odysseus figure appears in Walcott's *Omeros* (1990). This long poem (over three hundred pages in verse) is set on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia in the late twentieth century. Characters include islanders of African descent: Achille, a fisherman; Hector, a taxi driver; and Helen, an ex-domestic who sells T-shirts.[18] A second group comprises the Englishman Dennis Plunkett and his Irish wife, Maud. Dennis fought in World War II under Field Marshall Montgomery in Africa; now he and Maud live on Saint Lucia. A third distinct group consists of one: the narrator, the "I," the teller of the tale. He is also an islander, interacts with the characters he "creates," and possesses a biography that coincides in many respects with that of Derek Walcott, the islander author of this work.[19] In addition to romantic conflict, the plot also concerns a search for the past: Achille seeks knowledge of his African heritage, Plunkett researches a history of the island, and the narrator endeavours to tell the story of the islanders' lives.

My focus here will be the portrayal of Dennis Plunkett as a kind of Odyssean character.[20] In fact, both Dennis and Maud Plunkett are linked to Odysseus and Penelope. We hear of Maud's patience and her embroidery of a shroud (88–89). Yet she is not waiting for her husband to return. Plunkett is, in some sense, an inverted Odysseus. In Homer, Telemachus goes out to find his father; in Walcott's *Omeros,* Plunkett tries to find a son.[21] As the narrator recounts, the absence of a son prevents Plunkett from taking a journey, "a masochistic odyssey."

> Once, after the war, he'd made plans to embark on
> a masochistic odyssey through the Empire,
> to watch it go in the dusk, his "I" a column

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18. Despite these familiar names, *Omeros* diverges from the Homeric situation, as a love triangle centered on Helen pits Achille against Hector.

19. Walcott admits in an interview, "Sometimes I blend with the narrator" (Sampietro (1991) 31).

20. Like Odysseus, Plunkett is a wounded war veteran (25, 26, and passim); also, Plunkett's war might have lasted ten years (28)—he is even called a "khaki Ulysses" (263). Odysseus appears as a parallel for other characters as well; see Burian (1997) 368 and Terada (1992) 203–5.

21. In fact, through his historical research, the modern Plunkett locates an English midshipman named Plunkett who died at the Battle of the Saints, fought between England and France in the Caribbean in 1782.

with no roof but a pediment, from Singapore
to the Seychelles in his old Eighth Army outfit . . .

but that was his daydream, his pious pilgrimage.
And he would have done it, if he had had a son.[22]

(90)

Later in the book, the narrator remarks, “There was Plunkett in my father, much as there was / my mother in Maud . . . but . . . there was a changing shadow of Telemachus / in me” (263). Walcott refuses to force the literary parallels and freely makes allusive moves in more than one direction: from Plunkett (as Odysseus) to his namesake son in the eighteenth century or across boundaries to the narrator with “a changing shadow of Telemachus / in me.” As Walcott insists, “names are not oars that have to be laid side by side, nor are legends” (312–13). The classical story may supply models, but this twentieth-century work creates a new narrative and historical context in which those models may operate.

In the Egyptian tale and Homer’s *Odyssey,* islands appear as a kind of paradise, and in several passages of *Omeros,* Walcott links the island of Saint Lucia to the Garden of Eden (this is discussed in chapter 10). Yet through the character of Plunkett, Walcott reveals a more accurate appreciation of the island’s complex past. This appreciation leads, in turn, to a new identity for Plunkett, an Odyssean figure.

Plunkett gains a new perspective not only by studying history but by thinking about the past from the perspective of Helen, one of the islanders. Plunkett had believed the dominant “Western” view that the high points of history radiate out from Europe, not from a small piece of earth at the western edge of the Atlantic.

The great events of the world would happen elsewhere.
There were those who thought his war had been the best war,
That the issues were nobler then, the cause more clear.

(103)

Yet due to his near obsession with Helen, Plunkett’s quest becomes a service to her (as Walcott quibbles on “his story” versus “her story”).[23]

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22. I follow the text of Walcott (1990).

23. For Saint Lucia, “Plunkett decided that what the place needed / was its true place in his-

Helen needed history,
that was the pity that Plunkett felt towards her.
Not his, but her story. Not theirs, but Helen's war.

(30)

As Plunkett lives among the islanders and gets to know them, he even comes to realize why such a history should be written. Plunkett acknowledges the effects of English colonialism, especially the exploitation of the island's population. Plunkett sees how England has devoured the islands "like olives."

We helped ourselves
to these green islands like olives from a saucer,

munched on the pith, then spat their sucked stones on a plate,
like a melon's black seeds.

(25)

Plunkett, who at first believed he had found a place "where what they call history could not happen" (28), learns to view the past from the islanders' perspective. Although rejecting the idea of Saint Lucia as paradise, Plunkett comes to appreciate the island.

England seemed to him merely the place of his birth.
How odd to prefer, over its pastoral sites—
reasonable leaves shading reasonable earth—

these loud-mouthed forests on their illiterate heights,
these springs speaking a dialect that cooled his mind
more than pastures with castles! To prefer the hush

of a hazed Atlantic worried by the salt wind!
Others could read it as "going back to the bush,"
but harbour after crescent harbour closed his wound.

(61)

---

tory, that he'd spend hours / for Helen's sake on research" (64), even though it seemed that "the harder he worked, the more he betrayed his wife" (103).

This is no idyllic paradise, yet Plunkett prefers the "loud-mouthed forests" of Saint Lucia to the pastoral ideal of England.[24]Plunkett will not—like Homer's Odysseus—seek a return to the land of his birth.[25]

Plunkett undergoes a metamorphosis. As the narrator recognizes when seeing him in line at the bank, Plunkett has found a new home.[26]

> I saw that he was
> one with the farmers, transplanted to the rich dirt
> of their valleys, a ginger-lily from the moss
>
> of Troumasse River, a white, red-knuckled heron
> in the reeds, who never wanted the privilege
> that peasants, from habit, paid to his complexion.
>
> (268)

Indeed, Plunkett merely wishes to be treated as one of the locals: he seeks no privilege from his English background or his white complexion. Plunkett has become a Caribbean islander. Plunkett is not shipwrecked, yet Walcott deliberately connects him to Odysseus by his search for a son, his patient wife, his war wound, his potential infidelity, and his desire for home—not "Ithaca," but a new one on Saint Lucia.[27]

It is true that questions of legitimacy arise. Has Plunkett inherited the sins of his European ancestors? Must he give up his right to settle in Saint Lucia? Plunkett makes his plea to Hector, after Maud and he are almost killed in a traffic accident. One of the men with Hector yells "honky" and Plunkett returns,

> I am not a honky.
> A donkey perhaps, a jackass, but I haven't spent

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24. On a return visit to England, Plunkett finds that he "was ready to go back home": "What he missed was / the roar of his island's market, palm-fronds talking // to each other" (253).

25. A parallel development takes place for Achille, who "asked himself who he was" (130) and journeys to Africa (in a dream state across three centuries). He "felt he was headed home" (131; cf. 134, 141, and "his homecoming canoe" at 135). Yet Walcott (1970) 38 insists that Africa "was no longer home."

26. As Figueroa (1996) 259 notes, one theme of *Omeros* is "Where is home?" Like Plunkett, Achille accepts Saint Lucia as his home; cf. Burian (1997) 369.

27. Hamner (1997) 3 argues that "each of the protagonists [in *Omeros*] is a castaway in one sense or another . . . [T]hey are transplanted individuals whose separate quests all center on the fundamental need to strike roots in a place where they belong."

damned near twenty years on this godforsaken rock
to be cursed like a tourist. Do you understand?

(256)

Plunkett no longer sees himself as an invader, a "tourist." He has come to view the island as his own.

A twentieth-century treatment of Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Césaire's *A Tempest,* raises the question of what will happen to Prospero if he stays on the island with Caliban. Can the two of them coexist (see chapter 5 in this book)? I suggest that Walcott supplies an answer of sorts with the Odyssean character of Plunkett in *Omeros.* If Plunkett were true to the Homeric model, he would return to England—that would be his homecoming. Yet *Omeros* rejects that move. Plunkett chooses to stay on the island of Saint Lucia. Plunkett transcends the paradigm of Odysseus and, by his empathy with and acceptance of his fellow islanders, adopts a life in what has become his new home.

Each of the works examined in this chapter offers illumination in a variety of ways. The Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor" presents an island paradise and divine encounter and links shipwreck with a new life. Though it does not explore the theme of identity in as great depth as the *Odyssey,* it suggests that rejecting paradise and immortality may be a Homeric innovation. The span of ancient Greek and Roman literature demonstrates the ubiquity of shipwrecks yet leads us to view the Odyssean feature of a single survivor as relatively rare. Perhaps this has been ceded to Homer as territory where other authors choose not to compete. The works of Derek Walcott are examples of Homeric influence in the modern world. Of greatest interest may be *Omeros,* a modern epic poem, in which we find a radical break from the classical model. In Homer, Odysseus rejects the offers of Nausicaa and Calypso in order to return to his mortal wife and dissension at home. With the figure of Walcott's Plunkett, we find a modern analogue to Odysseus, yet he gives up his original homeland of England and chooses a new life on the island of Saint Lucia. Staying on a new island as a new home appears to be a more modern tendency.

Walcott tells the story of the people of the Caribbean by playing off the classic works of what is called Western civilization by challenging the European perspective, pointing to the evils of slavery and imperialism, and refusing to revert to the status quo at the end.[28] It may be useful to provide some

28. See Hardwick (2004) 225–26 and Burian (1997) 359–60. Hamner (1997) 163 says of

context for Walcott's work. The islanders of the Caribbean today, of course, are no longer slaves; some have achieved political independence (Saint Lucia in 1979); new roles are sought. The family background of Derek Walcott deserves some comment. Born in 1930 on the English-speaking Saint Lucia (an island twenty-four miles south of Martinique), Walcott's lineage comprises two white European grandfathers and two grandmothers who were the descendants of African slaves. Walcott describes himself in his poem "Schooner Flight" (1979):

> I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
> I had a sound colonial education,
> I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
> and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.

One of Walcott's enduring interests is that of identity—not only who he is but who he might become after his island's independence.[29] Arrival by shipwreck leads to the possibility of transforming oneself in terms of identity and fortune. Walcott employs shipwreck stories as a means of directing his fellow islanders toward opportunities for reinvention.

Walcott, "It is as though he imitates predecessors for the express purpose of emphasizing his deviation from the established pattern."

29. S. Brown (1996) 215 believes that as a mulatto (with two white European grandfathers and two grandmothers descended from African slaves), Walcott lived "in a world divided along color lines: he is the ultimate outsider." Walcott (1970) 10 refers to himself as "this hybrid, this West Indian"; cf. "being part-white and Methodist" (15).

CHAPTER 4

The Struggle for Power in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The Tempest (1611 CE), one of Shakespeare's last plays, tells the story of three successive groups who, upon arrival, seek to seize control of the island and impose their will on others. The central theme is that of authority. This chapter focuses on it and on the various romantic, political, and social possibilities imagined by the characters in *The Tempest.* Homer's Odysseus was offered romance, wealth, and immortality. In Shakespeare's play, it is truly remarkable how many possible "reinventions of self" are contemplated. Miranda and Ferdinand anticipate marriage; Sebastian plots to seize the throne by assassinating his brother, Alonso, king of Naples; Prospero's claim to rule the island is disputed by Caliban, who supports Stephano's plans to possess both the island and Miranda; both Ariel and Caliban seek freedom from their master, Prospero. There are a great many potential new roles in the offing. Almost all Shakespeare's characters—once on the island—contemplate or act out roles sharply contrasting with their former selves. There are many shared motifs and situations between *The Tempest* and Homer's *Odyssey:* arrival in paradise, divine epiphanies, potential courtship and marriage, and more. Since the survivors are landed separately or in small groups and are unaware of their shipmates' fates, features of the Odyssean scenario are easily replicated in this group shipwreck. Like Homer, Shakespeare not only presents characters involved in seaborne disasters but also connects arrival by shipwreck with the assumption of new roles.

The historical context helps to explain Shakespeare's interest in personal transformation. The Renaissance, a period of increased social mobility, presented the opportunity for taking on new roles. In addition, Prospero's con-

trol over the island may, of course, be seen as a reflection of Europe's voyages of "discovery" and subsequent colonization of the New World. While *The Tempest*'s island appears to be in the Mediterranean, much of what transpires in the play reverberates off the vigorous claiming and conquering of the Americas by England and other European powers.[1] Descriptions of the island's features and inhabitants in *The Tempest*—as primitive, pristine, a new Eden, a paradise, a utopia—derive from accounts of explorers and the early colonists of the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Incorporating various aspects of the New World, Shakespeare has his characters imagine multiple uses to which the island can be put.

An immediate impetus for the play occurred when an English ship, the *Sea Venture,* actually wrecked off the coast of Bermuda in 1609. Soon after the news of the shipwrecked survivors reached England, Shakespeare produced *The Tempest.* Indeed, *The Tempest* itself is unique among Shakespeare's works in that he draws on virtually no literary source or prior tale, though we will want to consider the reports of the *Sea Venture*'s travelers, as well as Montaigne's essay "On The Cannibals." The "sources" of the play derive largely from contemporary nonfiction accounts.[2] But first, let us turn to *The Tempest.*

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

The Tempest opens with a bang. Instead of presenting departure and good sailing, Shakespeare begins in the midst of the storm itself. The audience witnesses an initial scene in which sailors battle a storm that threatens to sink their ship. Many on board have given up hope.

> MARINERS: All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost! (1.1.52; cf. 1.1.60–61)[3]

This abbreviated shipwreck episode with forces of nature beyond human control, the cries of travelers, fruitless resistance, and acceptance of fate is

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1. The marriage of King Alonso's daughter, Claribel, to the king of Tunis takes place in Africa (2.1.71–110). On the location of the island, see Kermode (1958) xxv–xxvi and Orgel (1987) 33–36.

2. Prospero's address to the elves, brooks, and lakes is modeled on Medea's speech in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.192–219.

3. I am following the text of Bevington (1988).

unusual in that this storm is enacted on the stage. Rather than a verbal description such as those found in epic literature or novels (or a messenger speech in Greek drama), the struggle against the elements is *performed*.[4] As we shall see, this shipwreck is necessary for almost everything that follows, leading ultimately to marriage and the restoration of Prospero.

In the second scene, Miranda and her father, Prospero (the one-time Duke of Milan), have just witnessed the storm and wreck. Usually we are offered the perspective of those on the ship; instead, father and daughter—like us—have been spectators of the tempest. Miranda immediately shows her empathy.[5]

> O, I have suffered
> With those that I saw suffer! A brave vessel,
> Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
> Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
> Against my very heart!
>
> (1.2.5–9)

Even on shore, Miranda vicariously undergoes the trials of the sea: "I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!"[6]

Prospero then refers to the origin and effects of the storm that opens the play.

> By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
> Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
> Brought to this shore.
>
> (1.2.179–81)

Although Prospero speaks of "accident" and "Fortune" and although Miranda attributes the storm to God's will, it turns out that Prospero's magical powers have brought the ship to the island.[7] Like Miranda, we in the

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4. Marx (1964) 53 remarks, "To carry its full dramatic weight the storm must be dramatized. In that way Shakespeare projects an image of menacing nature, and of the turmoil that Prospero had survived, into dramatic time."

5. Garber (2004) 857 remarks that Miranda "is the ideal spectator of tragedy and catharsis," experiencing the suffering of others as though they were her own (see Aristotle *Poetics* 14); cf. Kermode (1958) liii.

6. In Ovid's tale, Alcyone has a similar reaction: "I too have been shipwrecked" (*Metamorphoses* 11.700–701; cf. 11.684–85).

7. Noting how the entire play begins in chaos, Marx (1964) 52 points out that the opening

audience initially believe that there is true danger to those on board. From this point on, however, Prospero's considerable powers will be on display in his interactions with Ariel, Caliban, Ferdinand, and the other travelers.

Prospero decides that it is time to tell his daughter of their past, providing his daughter (and Shakespeare's audience) with background on their earlier lives—before their arrival on the island (1.2.51–52). Miranda learns that her father had been Duke of Milan, loved by the populace, yet neglectful of "worldly ends" (1.2.54–92). Instead, he entrusted political rule to his brother, Antonio, who then betrayed him (1.2.92–151). With the help of King Alonso of Naples, Antonio seized power and had Prospero and his young daughter driven in "a rotten carcass of a butt, not rigged, / Nor tackle, sail, nor mast" (1.2.146–47). Their arrival on the island's shores, Prospero retrospectively tells Miranda, resulted from "Providence divine" (1.2.160).

Prospero and his daughter, apparently living alone on the island, had to start anew.[8] While Prospero becomes Miranda's "schoolmaster" on the island (1.2.173), his special powers are evident in this early scene when he asks Miranda to help "pluck my magic garment from me" (1.2.24). Before the audience's eyes, Prospero becomes less "supernatural" than the wizard who triggered the tempest. While reduced in political power, he now rules through magic. Prospero's control extends to those on the island, Ariel and Caliban. Ariel addresses Prospero as "great master" (1.2.190), and while Prospero first calls him "servant" and "spirit" (1.2.188, 194), he later speaks of Ariel as "my slave" (1.2.272). Prospero had instructed Ariel, a spirit of the island, to "perform . . . the tempest that I bade thee" (1.2.195). Ariel boarded the ship and "flamed amazement" (1.2.199–207), a magical manifestation of Saint Elmo's fire, attributed by the ancient Greeks to Castor and Polydeuces, patron deities of sailors.[9] For all the apparent danger, everyone is still safe: "not a hair perished" (1.2.218).[10] The sailors on the king's ship are sleeping

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scene is the "only time we are unaware of the controlling power of [Prospero's] magic."

8. Orgel (1987) 18 observes that "Prospero presents his voyage to the island as a way of starting life over again." Kermode (1958) l discusses the parallels between Adam and Prospero who "fell from his kingdom by an inordinate thirst for knowledge . . . [yet] is enabled to return" to a type of Eden; cf. Kernan (1979) 141.

9. In the Greek lyric poet Alcaeus' poem 34a, the Dioscuri—the brothers Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux in Latin)—act as saviors to sailors. Their "shining upon the cables" (which we explain as static electricity), viewed by the ancients as a manifestation of these gods, is later called "Saint Elmo's fire." This same phenomenon appears here when Ariel climbs the ship's mast.

10. Cf. 1.2.30. Brockbank (1967) 188 notes, "This allusion to the shipwreck of St. Paul at Malta . . . [Acts 27.34; see my discussion in chapter 5 of the present book] reminds us that catastrophic voyages and the ways of Providence are readily considered together. God uses ship-

safely in a harbor; the travelers are dispersed around the isle; and those from the rest of the fleet have reconvened on the Mediterranean, falsely thinking that they saw the king's ship wreck and the king himself perish (1.2.225–38; cf. 5.1.224–40). Ariel performs all this at Prospero's command.

This is certainly an unusual "shipwreck," for the ship remains intact. What is going on? Shakespeare appears to be trying to have it both ways. He wants to explore the shipwreck situation with "survivors"—they believe that the ship has been destroyed and that others have died (Shakespeare's audience would have in mind the Bermuda wreck, discussed below)—yet the miraculous outcome of reunion, forgiveness, and restoration requires an intact ship awaiting everyone.

When Ariel mentions Prospero's earlier promise of freedom, the old man becomes enraged. The magician recalls how a witch named Sycorax (a "blue-eyed hag" from Algiers) was banished and—pregnant with Caliban—was stranded on the island by sailors. Ariel then became the servant of Sycorax, but soon he was punished by being "confine[d] into a cloven pine" for twelve years (1.2.272–83). It was Prospero's "art" that freed Ariel from such captivity (1.2.293–95). Ariel, a native of the island, has himself undergone a variety of transformations following the arrival of outsiders. He was first autonomous and then, with Sycorax's arrival, a servant and prisoner; now, in the company of Prospero and Miranda, he is a servant with the hope of freedom. Indeed, Prospero promises Ariel his liberty within the next two days (1.2.301–2).[11]

While Ariel's relationship with Prospero is fraught with some tension, there is outright hatred between Caliban and Prospero, his island master, who calls out,

> What ho! Slave! Caliban! Slave!
> Thou earth, thou! Speak!
>
> (1.2.316–17)

Caliban enters cursing (1.2.324–27), but Prospero threatens torment.

> For this, be sure, tonight thou shalt have cramps,
> Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up. Urchins
> Shall forth at vast of night that they may work

---

wrecks."

11. On Prospero's promise to Ariel, see also 1.2.424–25, 445–46, 502–4; 4.1.266–68; 5.1.87, 96, 243.

All exercise on thee. Thou shalt be pinched
As thick as honeycomb, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em.

(1.2.328–33; cf. 1.2.371–74)

Caliban is Prospero's slave: he fetches wood and makes the fire, while Prospero freely employs torture as punishment.

In the past, their relationship had been warmer. Caliban recalls how Prospero once stroked him, fed him water with berries in it, and taught him language.

And then I loved thee
And showed you all the qualities o th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.

(1.2.339–41)

Soon, however, Caliban attempted to "violate the honor" of Miranda—a charge he does not deny. Caliban's life has had its own reversals. First, he was born to his marooned mother on the island; then, after Prospero's arrival, Caliban was befriended and taught by both father and daughter; by the time of the play's action, he has been reduced to a slave and prisoner ("confined in a rock"), subject to hostility and torture.[12] Each arrival on the island brings a reordering of status and control. Those who land may find themselves in a new situation—Prospero is no longer duke—but subsequent struggles affect the islanders' status as well. In fact, the island appears to be a place of transformation, a space where things happen that could not have occurred elsewhere (like the dramatic stage—discussed below). This pattern continues with the "wreck" of Italian noblemen.

Thus far, we have seen how arrivals by sea—not shipwrecks—have brought about changes in the lives of Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban. The shipwreck that opens the play (chronologically the third arrival on the island) introduces the potential for love when Miranda meets Ferdinand, son of King Alonso. The young man, led by the enchanting music of the island, believes his father died in the wreck (he refers to "my drowned father" at 1.2.409).[13] Then he catches sight of Miranda but is falsely accused

12. As Kastan (2000) 272 points out, "Caliban's claim that [Prospero] is a usurper is not contested, indeed not even heard"; cf. Barker and Hulme (2000) 237–38.

13. On "sea-change" (1.2.404) as a metaphor for magical transformation, see Kermode (1958) lxxx, Brower (2000) 193, and Garber (2004) 859.

by Prospero of being an imposter, a traitor, and a spy, bent on taking over the island (1.2.459–81). Ferdinand undergoes an almost bewildering set of upheavals (shipwreck, the apparent loss of a loved one, abrupt accusations), all tempered by sweet song and an enchanting maiden.[14]

The shipwreck arrival of Ferdinand intrigues Miranda as well. Upon first sight, she describes Ferdinand most flatteringly.

> I might call him
> A thing divine, for nothing natural
> I ever saw so noble.
>
> (1.2.421–23; cf. 1.2.413–15)

Upon glimpsing Miranda, Ferdinand returns the compliment.

> Most sure, the goddess
> on whom these airs [songs] attend!
>
> (1.2.425–26)

Soon ascertaining that Miranda is a "maid," Ferdinand is delighted she speaks his language (1.2.429–32). Quickly (in less than thirty lines) he moves to a proposal of marriage (1.2.451–53). In a later scene, Miranda's questions about Ferdinand's feelings advance the romance.

> MIRANDA: Do you love me?
> FERDINAND: O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
> And crown what I profess with kind event
> If I speak true! If hollowly, invert
> What best is boded me to mischief! I
> beyond all limit of what else i' the world
> Do love, prize, honor you. (3.1.68–73)

Ferdinand invokes a curse on himself if he proclaims his love falsely. Miranda is as bold in her proclamations.

> Hence, bashful cunning,
> And prompt me, plain and holy innocence!

14. Garber (2004) 865 notes that Ferdinand later explicitly associates himself with resurrection, "a second life" received from Prospero (5.1.193–97).

> I am your wife, if you will marry me;
> If not, I'll die your maid. To be your fellow
> You may deny me, but I'll be your servant
> Whether you will or no.
>
> (3.1.81–86)

In many ways, Ferdinand believes himself to be in a situation like Odysseus'. As far as he can tell, no one else has survived from the wreck. He could disguise his identity or resist Miranda's charms (as Odysseus ultimately distances himself from Nausicaa), but Ferdinand is not seeking a return to his former life: he is open to the possibility of romance.

Miranda and Ferdinand make a declaration of love and, with Prospero's approval, a contract of marriage that would lead to a consolidation of political power in Italy, uniting Naples and Milan. This romance borne from a shipwreck encounter in *The Tempest* is allowed to reach fulfillment, thus ensuring political stability (in the *Odyssey,* by contrast, a shipwreck romance with Nausicaa would threaten Odysseus' marriage and his return to political power in Ithaca). Still, the union of Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest*—made possible by a shipwreck—is threatened in several ways.

At one level, Prospero places obstacles to the budding romance, as he explains in an aside to the audience.

> But this swift business
> I must uneasy make, lest too light winning
> Make the prize light.
>
> (1.2.454–56)

As mentioned, Ferdinand's first encounter with Miranda brings accusations from Prospero and servitude.

> He's a traitor.—Come,
> I'll manacle thy neck and feet together.
> Seawater shalt thou drink; thy food shall be
> The fresh-brook mussels, withered roots, and husks
> Wherein the acorn cradled.
>
> (1.2.464–68)

Prospero is not a true antagonist, for he ultimately endorses this union much as Alcinous endorses his daughter's marriage: "Take my daughter . . . She is

thine own" (4.1.14, 32).[15] Rather, Prospero plays a father who resists giving up his only daughter (and close companion); still, his testing of Ferdinand may seem excessive at times.[16] Even though Prospero employs his magical powers, Ferdinand accepts his enslavement to be with Miranda (1.2.491–97). Ferdinand will tolerate the loss of his father, arrival on a strange island, false accusations, and his own servitude as long as he may glimpse Miranda.

Two other features link Shakespeare to the Homeric model. (I am not claiming that Shakespeare is directly alluding to Homeric epic; most likely, Vergil's *Aeneid* plays a mediating role.[17]) First, like Homer, Shakespeare delays revealing the identities of the potential lovers. Although the young couple meet in the second scene, Miranda does not utter her name until act 3 (3.1.36–39)—that is, the young couple falls in love without either knowing who the other is (much as Odysseus delays revealing his identity to Nausicaa).

Second, in each work, the shipwreck suggests divine epiphanies. As with Odysseus and Nausicaa in the *Odyssey,* Miranda and Ferdinand both articulate the possibility that the other is divine. A man arriving by sea may encounter a goddess, as Ferdinand first believes ("the goddess on whom these airs attend"). This is certainly familiar from the *Odyssey,* for Odysseus finds or suspects that he has found immortal goddesses either on the sea (Leucothea) or upon arrival on land (Circe, Calypso, and Athena); his first words to Nausicaa compare her to a goddess. When a traveler finds himself—or herself—in a new place with inhabitants unknown, the distinction between mortal and immortal seems to be almost inevitably obscured. The flip side is that a divinity may emerge out of the sea. Both Nausicaa and Alcinous raise this possibility for Odysseus. Shakespeare adapts both scenarios in *The Tempest.*[18] The larger point, then, is that an unexpected arrival by sea generates the potential for a divine encounter—for either the traveler or the islander.

Shakespeare uses this once "deserted" island to suggest many other scenarios.[19] Shipwrecks present romantic possibilities, and—in clearing the

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15. In fact, the audience learns early on that Prospero will promote a favorable outcome of his daughter's meeting with Ferdinand: "It goes on, I see, / As my soul prompts it" (1.2.423–24). The spirits and deities in the masque in act 4 also endorse this union (e.g., 4.1.132–33, 103–5).

16. Prospero refers to these tasks in retrospect as "trials of thy love," adding, "and thou / Hast strangely stood the test" (4.1.6–7).

17. See Kermode (1958) 37 (note to 1.2.424); in a later book, Kermode (2000) 293 concludes that Shakespeare is "looking directly at Vergil."

18. *Odyssey* 6.243 and 7.199–206; cf. Proteus, an actual god emerging from the sea (4.450–51). Alonso also calls Miranda a "goddess" upon first seeing her (5.1.189).

19. Some of the Italian nobles view the island as a "desert," "uninhabitable," and "almost

deck in the minds of the new arrivals—myriad political possibilities as well. In comforting Alonso, the king of Naples, who believes his son, Ferdinand, is dead (2.1.109–15),[20] Gonzalo imagines a paradise, which would "excel the Golden Age" (2.1.171). The island has every advantage imaginable.

> Had I plantation of this isle, my lord . . .
> . . . .
> I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate; Letters should not be
>   known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil.
>
> (2.1.146–56)

Gonzalo employs what has been called "description by negation," for he envisions his island utopia principally by noting what it lacks: there will be no private property, business ("traffic"), slavery ("service"), tilling of the soil ("tilth"), vines, coinage, or occupation.[21] All the inhabitants will be idle, innocent, and pure.

Gonzalo goes on to insist that nature itself will "bring forth . . . all abundance," while weapons and crimes will be eliminated.

> All things in common nature should produce
> Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
> Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
> Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
> Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
> To feed my innocent people . . .
> . . . .
> I would with such perfection govern, sir,
> T' excel the Golden Age.
>
> (2.1.162–71)

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inaccessible" (2.1.37–40).

20. Alonso worries that his son has been eaten by fish and blames himself (2.1.113–15, 137–38; cf. 3.3.7–10).

21. Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1 also emphasize the lack of sailing, weapons, or need for agriculture in the Golden Age.

Given this apparently untouched territory, Gonzalo (if he were to rule) would start over again and create a perfect society, largely by avoiding the distinctive—and corrupting—features of his own civilization.[22] The shipwreck and the false belief that the island is deserted allow Gonzalo at least to contemplate what such "perfection" might consist of, endorsing the romantic idea of the absence of civilization. In another scene, Ferdinand dubs the island a "paradise" (4.1.122–24). For both Gonzalo and Ferdinand, the island presents the possibility of a utopia.[23]

Of course, arrival on such an island need not be by way of shipwreck—it could be deliberate. Historically, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European ships arrived fully intact on "new" lands; the settlers may well have contemplated paradise and even romance. Yet in *The Tempest,* because of the shipwreck (though everyone is safe), because Ariel has landed the survivors in dispersed groups, and because Ferdinand thinks his father is dead and because the Italian nobles think Alonso's son is dead, everyone feels free to act in an unprecedented manner. In fact, many of these figures use the shipwreck as a justification for advancement, murder, and conquest.[24] This leads us once more to contested authority on the island—and cities in Italy.

Shakespeare presents the possibility of coup d'état, as Antonio and Sebastian plot against Alonso and Gonzalo. Though Antonio has had success against his brother, Prospero, he seeks the elimination of Gonzalo (who is still loyal to Prospero) and the elevation of Sebastian against Sebastian's brother, King Alonso. Antonio presages greatness for Sebastian.

What might,
Worthy Sebastian, O, what might—? No more.
And yet methinks I see it in thy face,

22. See Orgel (1987) 30–39. Garber (2004) 872 observes, "[N]o invocation of a timeless paradise can remain unchallenged in a Shakespearean world"; note Sebastian and Antonio's sarcastic criticism of Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth (2.1.152–85).

23. As Kott (1974) 332 points out, "This is not the island of utopia," yet a shipwreck allows Gonzalo and Ferdinand to dream of utopia in their imagination. In his lectures on Shakespeare, Auden (2003) 298 remarks that Gonzalo's commonwealth "would be possible if all men were angels, which Antonio and Sebastian's reactions alone show they are not, and if nonhuman nature were perfect and obedient."

24. In counterfeiting the treachery of Ferdinand (1.2.456–81), Prospero has accused him of what Caliban accuses Prospero of having done; see Orgel (1987) 15. Garber (2004) 870 believes that "Prospero deliberately restages the events of the past [Antonio's seizure of power, his shipwreck] in order to reverse their outcome for the future." Stephano and Trinculo also think all the rest are dead: "Trinculo, the King and all our company else being drowned, we will inherit here" (2.2.172–73; cf. 3.2.5–7).

> What thou shouldst be. Th' occasion speaks thee, and
> My strong imagination sees a crown
> Dropping upon thy head.
>
> (2.1.205–10)

"Th' occasion" is both the shipwreck itself and the fact that Alonso and Gonzalo have suddenly fallen asleep on this strange island: these factors, Antonio argues, cry out for action. With prompting, Sebastian recalls, "I remember / You did supplant your brother Prospero" (2.1.272–73). Antonio then takes Sebastian through all the necessary conditions for his own advancement: the king's son, Ferdinand, is dead (they think);[25] Alonso's next heir is his daughter, Claribel, who is far off in Africa (2.1.233–46); Alonso and Gonzalo now lie asleep and vulnerable. Sebastian finds himself ready to use the "precedent" of usurpation by brother.

> Thy case, dear friend,
> Shall be my precedent. As thou gott'st Milan,
> I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword. One stroke
> Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest,
> And I the king shall love thee.
>
> (2.1.292–96)

Shipwreck and the apparently uninhabited island seem to free Antonio and Sebastian from any previous restraint. Of course, the plot of *evil brother kills (or exiles) the good king* is the stuff of both Greek and Shakespearean tragedy (Atreus and Thyestes or Claudius and the elder Hamlet are examples). Here, however, Ariel awakens Gonzalo and the unsuspecting King Alonso, thus interrupting Antonio and Sebastian's attempted murder (2.1.299–309). Because Prospero and his spirits are endowed with supernatural abilities, Shakespeare is able to bring such alternative scenarios almost to the point of no return before Ariel's intervention.[26]

A second conspiracy involves Caliban and two lower-class arrivals, Stephano and Trinculo. At first confused about Caliban's species, Trinculo soon concludes, "This is no fish but an islander," and he seeks shelter from the storm under Caliban's gaberdine garment (2.2.24–41). Stephano appears

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25. Antonio entices Sebastian, "Out of that 'no hope' [that Ferdinand is not alive] / What great hope have you" (2.1.238–44).

26. Antonio renews the conspiracy at 3.3.11–17.

and is also bewildered regarding what creature he has found (Caliban and Trinculo now together under one cloak). Is it "devils," "savages and men of Ind," or "some monster of the isle with four legs" (2.2.57–71)? As is common in shipwrecks, the survivors are likely to mistake the status of islanders: are they gods, spirits, fish-men, or monsters? For their part, islanders may attribute supernatural powers to those arriving, and, indeed, in his turn, Caliban first thinks Trinculo and Stephano are spirits sent by Prospero to torment him (2.2.15–17; cf. 2.2.56–82). Then Caliban presumes Stephano's divinity. Such a scenario now takes place in comic fashion with Caliban's deification of Stephano after receiving liquor.

> These be fine things, an if they be not spirits.
> That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor;
> I will kneel to him.
>
> (2.2.116–18; cf. 2.2.124–25)

Caliban swears himself to be Stephano's "true subject," thinking Stephano has "dropped from heaven." Caliban then asks him to "be my god" (2.2.135–47; cf. 5.1.299–301).[27] The scene ends with Caliban kissing the foot of Stephano, vowing allegiance, and promising to serve him loyally (2.2.150–86). Stephano's arrival by shipwreck triggers Caliban's hope for a new political order on the island.

Caliban had earlier challenged Prospero face-to-face.

> This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
> Which thou tak'st from me.
>
> (1.2.334–35)

Caliban asserts that he had prior claim to the island before Prospero conquered it. Invoking the even earlier arrival by sea of his pregnant mother, Sycorax, a dozen years before Prospero and Miranda (1.2.258–98), Caliban views Prospero's arrival as usurpation and an end to his own autonomy. Caliban now plots with his new master, Stephano.

> As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant,
> A sorcerer, that by his cunning hath

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27. Stephano tells Caliban that he has come "out o' the moon" (2.2.136–37).

Cheated me of the island . . .
. . . .
. . . If thy greatness will
Revenge it on him . . .
. . . .
. . . Thou shalt be lord of it, and I'll serve thee.

(3.2.41–56)

Prospero's afternoon nap is the opportune moment for attack, but Caliban advises Stephano first to seize Prospero's books, the source of his magic. When Miranda's beauty is mentioned, Stephano resolves to assassinate Prospero and seize the island.

Monster, I will kill this man. His daughter
and I will be king and queen—save Our Graces!—and
Trinculo and thyself shall be viceroys.

(3.2.107–9)

Prospero's rule and the romance of Ferdinand and Miranda are threatened by Stephano, who, with Caliban's help, plans to assassinate Prospero and marry Miranda.

Should we take Stephano's plot seriously? At some level, we must, and several scholars indeed have.[28] Later in the play, Prospero realizes that he has lost track of the attempted ambush.

I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life. The minute of their plot
Is almost come.

(4.1.139–42)

Ariel is constantly on alert, yet this is one time when he fails to inform Prospero.

I thought to have told thee of it, but I feared
Lest I might anger thee.

(4.1.168–69)

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28. See Orgel (1987) 50 and Bloom (1998) 679.

The audience may have good reason for suspecting that Stephano's conspiracy will ultimately falter; nevertheless, the playwright develops the possibility of alternative outcomes. From each character's point of view, shipwreck allows for a re-creation of self. The *Odyssey* suggested how one might reinvent oneself in terms of a romantic relationship (Odysseus as husband or lover of Nausicaa or Calypso) or status (Odysseus as prince or god). In *The Tempest,* Stephano plans to become king and to promote Trinculo and Caliban to the status of viceroys. Throughout the play, claims of sovereignty over the island, Milan, and Naples are challenged by Caliban, Stephano, Antonio, Sebastian, and, of course, Prospero, who was driven from power in Milan (1.2.52–151).[29] Shakespeare thus multiplies arrivals on the island to create alliance and competition between European and islander, noble and slave, wizard and witch's son.

Even without treachery or guile, one's status may be altered. Ferdinand "becomes" king of Naples in his own mind.

> I am in my condition
> A prince, Miranda; I do think, a king—
> I would, not so!
>
> (3.1.59–61; cf. 1.2.433–40)

Although hoping that his father still lives, Ferdinand is convinced that he has succeeded his drowned father as king. If Ferdinand had not thought his father dead as a result of the shipwreck, it is likely that he would not have pursued romance with Miranda to such a degree, for he would have needed his father's endorsement.[30] Yet while Ferdinand thinks of himself now as king, the shipwreck has, in one sense, reduced him to servile status, for he performs Prospero's chores as a servant would (3.1.9–11).[31] In each of these situations after arrival by sea, it appears possible to assume a new position—or at least to play that role: Odysseus as refugee (and potential son-in-law) or god, Sebastian and Stephano as kings, and Ferdinand oddly as both king and slave.

For Homer and Shakespeare, shipwrecks present the opportunity for

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29. Orgel (1987) 24–25, 36–39 discusses the basis for Prospero's authority.

30. When father and son are reunited in the final act, Ferdinand says as much: "I chose her [Miranda] when I could not ask my father / For his advice, nor thought I had one" (5.1.192–93).

31. Garber (2004) 867–68 notes that Ferdinand is "performing the same tasks as Caliban" and recalls Caliban's anticipation of freedom from Prospero when he cries out, "Get a new man!" (2.2.183).

characters to shed the "baggage" from their lives up to that point. These potential transformations are what produce so much tension in the Odysseus-Nausicaa interlude: Odysseus could erase his past and live a life of ease among the Phaeacians. In *The Tempest,* only in the fifth act are alternative resolutions, such as *usurper takes throne* or *evil brother kills the good king,* rejected. Once Prospero reunites relatives and reveals that everyone has survived, marriage between the families of Milan and Naples brings closure—which means, to a large extent, a reaffirmation of each person's previous political and social status. Again, as with Odysseus, we ultimately find resistance to embracing a new sort of life. There is no thought of staying on the island (except for Ariel); Prospero will return to Milan as duke in order to regain his prior position.

Ignorance affects many of the shipwreck arrivals. Several survivors—Ferdinand and, at first, Trinculo and Stephano—do not realize that anyone else is still alive (2.2.172–73, 3.2.5–7). In fact, it is remarkable how long Shakespeare prevents each of the groups or individuals (the Italian nobles, Trinculo and Stephano, and Ferdinand) from meeting the others or even meeting the islanders (Ferdinand alone meets Prospero, and only Stephano and Trinculo meet Caliban). The audience knows from the second scene that the island is inhabited, yet relatively late in the play, Ariel is still encouraging Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio to think that the island is deserted (3.3.55–57). This is a common feature of shipwrecks: not only are the survivors unaware of where they are or whether the island is inhabited; they also may have no idea whether others from the ship have made it to shore. This was not an issue with Odysseus—he is the only survivor—but when different individuals or groups make separate landings elsewhere in Shakespeare's work (e.g., in *Twelfth Night*), they may remain ignorant of others' survival for a considerable period of time. In short, we should not be astonished that Shakespeare generates so much drama out of mistaken identity and false assumption.

Ultimately, *The Tempest*'s plot leads to the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, the restoration of Prospero in Milan, the liberation of Ariel, and the forgiveness of past wrongs. To reach these outcomes, Prospero's power must prevail. The theme of authority—considered broadly as control over man and nature—is omnipresent in the play.[32] The opening scene poses the question whether mortals can resist shipwrecks at all. Can one's status at the

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32. Bloom (1998) 674–75 finds the theme of authority to be "the play's mysterious preoccupation"; see discussion at Orgel (1987) 5.

human level compete with the forces of the natural world? When the noblemen come up on deck, they are rebuked by the sailors.

> BOATSWAIN: What cares these
> roarers for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! Trouble
> us not.
> GONZALO: Good, yet remember whom thou hast
> aboard.
> BOATSWAIN: None that I more love than myself. You are
> a councillor; if you can command these elements to
> silence and work the peace of the present, we will not
> hand a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot,
> give thanks you have lived so long and make yourself
> ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it
> so hap.—Cheerly, good hearts!—Out of our way,
> I say. (1.1.16–29)

The storm at sea levels the playing field: those with authority and their subordinates are equally subject to powers greater than themselves: "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" In fact, the lowly boatswain is more likely than his "betters" to challenge the storm successfully; Gonzalo cannot use his "authority" to silence the tempest.[33] What everyone on the ship cannot know, of course, is that the storm itself is controlled by Prospero, who rules the island.

Throughout the play, Prospero's powers are on display. Prospero learns that Ariel has "performed to point the tempest that I bade thee" (1.2.194–95). Prospero later speaks of the time "When first I raised the tempest" (5.1.6). In a sense, he can do whatever he wants with the shipwrecked survivors.[34] Regarding Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio, Prospero asserts,

> My high charms work,
> And these mine enemies are all knit up
> In their distraction. They now are in my power.
> (3.3.88–90)

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33. See Kott (1974) 300–301.

34. In the fourth act, Prospero tells Ariel, "Go, bring the rabble, / O'er whom I give thee power" (4.1.37–38). Prospero's powers concerning the storm are recounted in greatest detail at 1.2.194–239; cf. 1.2.25–32 and 5.1.40–50. On Prospero's art—especially regarding the storm, the harpies' banquet, and the masque—see Orgel (1987) 47–56.

After repelling the threats of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, Prospero proclaims,

> At this hour
> Lies at my mercy all mine enemies.
> Shortly shall all my labors end.
>
> (4.1.264–66; cf. 1.2.442–44)

Eventually, Prospero does grant freedom to Ferdinand and (finally) to Ariel (5.1.321–22). For the journey back to Italy, Prospero promises "calm seas, auspicious gales" (5.1.317–20).

Ultimately, the shipwreck brings about an opportunity for Prospero to play the roles of both judge and pardoner. At several points in the play, accusations of past crimes are made. In the guise of a harpy, Ariel addresses Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio as "three men of sin" (3.3.53) and recalls their deeds.

> But remember—
> For that's my business to you—that you three
> From Milan did supplant good Prospero;
> Exposed unto the sea, which hath requit it,
> Him and his innocent child; for which foul deed
> The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
> Incensed the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,
> Against your peace.
>
> (3.3.68–75)

When they stand accused before him in a trance, Prospero repeats these charges (5.1.71–74; cf. 5.1.25, 107) and speaks of Antonio's more recent conspiracy.

> Flesh and blood,
> You, brother mine, that entertained ambition,
> Expelled remorse and nature, who, with Sebastian,
> Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong,
> Would here have killed your king, I do forgive thee,
> Unnatural though thou art.
>
> (5.1.74–79)

Prospero also notes that Caliban "had plotted with them [Stephano and Trinculo] / To take my life" (5.1.276–77).

Despite such villainous actions, Prospero forgives each man who has plotted against him.

> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part. The rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel.
> My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
> And they shall be themselves.
>
> (5.1.25–32)

Prospero openly tells Alonso, "I do forgive thee" (5.1.78). Even his brother, Antonio, is absolved.

> For you, most wicked sire, whom to call brother
> Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
> Thy rankest fault—all of them.
>
> (5.1.130–32)

Garber sees *The Tempest* as "one of Shakespeare's most compelling 'revenge tragedies,' turned, at the last moment, toward forgiveness."[35]

In almost every case, the person accused seeks some sort of pardon. Alonso expresses regret.

> Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat
> Thou pardon me my wrongs.
>
> (5.1.118–19)

Prospero even appears to hold out the opportunity of forgiveness to Caliban.[36]

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35. Garber (2004) 853.

36. See Farnham (1971) 168 on Caliban as a "candidate" for reform.

PROSPERO: Go, sirrah, to my cell.
Take with you your companions. As you look
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.
CALIBAN: Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter
And seek for grace. (5.1.295–99)

One hitch comes with Prospero's brother, Antonio, and the stipulation "They being penitent." Though Prospero forgives his brother, Antonio never seeks pardon; in fact, after Prospero's line "I do forgive / Thy rankest fault—all of them," Antonio never speaks again in the play. Orgel finds "no hint of repentance" from Antonio and argues that as "forgiveness is ambiguous at best, the clear ideal of reconciliation grows cloudy as the play concludes."[37] Nevertheless, the restoration and atonement that occur would not have been possible without the shipwreck engineered by "bountiful Fortune" and Prospero's arts. Shakespeare has coupled shipwreck with forgiveness to achieve closure.

Part of this resolution concerns changes in status—or restoration to a former one: Prospero regains his dukedom; Ariel is given his freedom; Ferdinand is relieved of his toils. Though from the play's beginning, clear divisions are established between noble and commoner as well as islander and European, the predicaments of Ariel and Caliban claim our special attention. Ariel is a spirit, not a person, yet he has a complex and, in many ways, human sort of relationship with Prospero. They exchange expressions of tenderness.

ARIEL: Do you love me, master? No?
PROSPERO: Dearly, my delicate Ariel. (4.1.48–49)

Later, Prospero says of the time after Ariel becomes free, "I shall miss thee" (5.1.95). Ariel himself reveals an almost human sensitivity when he describes how Prospero would respond if he were to see the enchanted Italians.

ARIEL: Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them your affections
Would become tender.
PROSPERO: Dost thou think so, spirit?
ARIEL: Mine would, sire, were I human.

37. Orgel (1987) 13; see also 23–24, 50–56.

PROSPERO: And mine shall.
Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art? (5.1.17–24)

We find a striking juxtaposition: the human Prospero with supernatural powers believes that he should be as moved to empathy as Ariel, who is not human yet can imagine that, "were I human," he would be touched by these men's predicament. The two are complementary: Ariel, a spirit, has a human sensitivity, while Prospero, with supernatural powers, is exceedingly harsh to Ferdinand and the others. Beyond all this, Ariel has the very human aspiration of freedom. This hope motivates Ariel's actions, and Prospero grants it at the play's end. The shipwreck and its aftermath lead also to this native islander's regaining his independence.

The other islander, Caliban, was born on the island by an immigrant mother, who was herself marooned before the arrival of Prospero and Miranda. Caliban is also spoken of as not fully human. Descriptions range from "freckled whelp / hag-born—not honored with / Human shape" (1.2.284–86) to "man-monster" (3.2.12), "moon calf" (2.2.111, 3.2.21), "half a fish and half a monster" (3.2.29), "misshapen knave" (5.1.271), and "demidevil" (5.1.275).[38] While Caliban's species is difficult to pin down, he is clearly a slave to Prospero; he fears him (5.1.264–65, 279) and would readily exchange him for another master (2.2.182–83; cf. 2.2.160). Like Ariel, Caliban seeks his freedom (2.2.184–85), which Prospero will not concede. At one point, after being reminded of the second conspiracy, Prospero even suggests that Caliban is beyond redemption.

A devil. A born devil. On whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost!
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers [grows malignant]. (4.1.188–92)

Yet, at the end of the play, Prospero utters the ambiguous pronouncement

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38. Willis (2000) 265 remarks that "indeterminacy is an essential feature of [Caliban's] character."

This thing of darkness I
Acknowledge mine.

(5.1.278–79)

How are we to understand these words? Is this simply Prospero's "acknowledgment" that Caliban is his property—that he, like any other slave, is owned by a master? There is certainly no mention of freedom; it is even unclear whether Prospero will take Caliban back to Italy with him. All the same, in conjunction with other expressions of pardon and grace (5.1.296–99, quoted above) and the general tenor of kindness in the final act, there may be more to Prospero's "acknowledgment" regarding Caliban's future.[39] (I will return in chapter 5 to various interpretations of Prospero and Caliban's relationship and how it might evolve.)

It is truly remarkable how many possible reinventions are contemplated in Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* Below I provide a list of the figures who imagine—and, in some cases, achieve—new roles or identities:

Ferdinand and Miranda as husband and wife (ultimately achieved)
Sebastian as king of Naples (by killing his brother, Alonso)
Ferdinand as king of Naples (believes his father has drowned)
Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban as king and viceroys of the island (by assassinating Prospero)
Stephano as husband of Miranda (by assassinating Prospero)
Stephano as god to Caliban (liquor is quicker)
Ariel as a free spirit (achieved at the play's end)
Prospero as Duke of Milan[40]

All of these transformations and potential new roles are made possible by the shipwreck that inaugurates the play.

The Historical Perspective

The historical background to *The Tempest* comprises broad topics, such as Renaissance society and naval explorations, as well as specific events (the 1609

39. Greenblatt (1990) 26 finds Prospero's words to be ambiguous: "Shakespeare leaves Caliban's fate naggingly unclear. Prospero has acknowledged a bond; that is all"; cf. Garber (2004) 853 and Orgel (1987) 28. Kott (1974) 329 thinks "Caliban will become the island's ruler again."

40. Garber (2004) 874 notes that by this point in the play, Prospero is "not only a magician but also a political figure and a mortal and suddenly aging man."

shipwreck) and texts, such as Montaigne's essay "On the Cannibals." Beginning around 1400 CE in Italy, there arose a significant opportunity for social mobility (this took place somewhat later in England). The possibility for social advancement in Renaissance Europe is seen in the famous examples of a small-town administrator's offspring becoming a dazzling artist (Michelangelo) or the son of a glove maker becoming a favorite of the Elizabethan court (Shakespeare). All generalizations about historical periods are misleading to some extent, but in terms of pervasiveness, degree of change, and an awareness of that potential, the opportunities for social advancement expand in the years after 1400.

In his article "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature," Greene argues that with the coming of the Renaissance, there are at least two models by which humans might consider transforming themselves: one lateral, the other vertical.[41] In the fourteenth century, Petrarch is seen as the first to improvise his place in the world. Greene labels this a *lateral movement,* a willingness to take on different positions in society. This contrasts with the *vertical scale of self-transformation* imagined by the Renaissance philosopher Pico della Mirandola in the late fifteenth century. In *Oration on the Dignity of Man,* Pico's God tells Adam,

> I have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that thou mayest with greater freedom of choice and with more honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are animal; thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms of life, which are divine.[42]

Man is said to have the capacity to live the life of a beast (a "lower" form of life) or to reach the higher celestial form of the divine—"a vertical scale along which men might move upward and downward—upward toward the angel, downward toward the brute."[43]

Indeed, we also find such Renaissance ambition in Shakespeare's works. Hamlet expresses a similar conception of man's capabilities.

> What a piece of work is a
> man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties,

41. Greene (1968).
42. Translation by Forbes (1942) 348.
43. Greene (1968) 248–49.

> in form and moving how express and admirable, in
> action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a
> god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!
>
> (*Hamlet* 2.2.304–8)

In opposition to the greater fixity found in medieval society, Renaissance texts make clear that people have become much more aware of the possibilities of both "lateral" and "vertical" transformation.[44] Shakespeare not only shares in this "increased self-consciousness" of the times; he himself guides these aspirations by creating characters who adopt new identities by exploiting various situations: arriving in a new place, taking on disguise (women as men, kings as beggars), and so on. Shipwreck—such as the one in *The Tempest*—is only one of the many situations in which Shakespeare explores the re-creation of self as a consciously "manipulable" process.[45]

In addition to the Renaissance concept of human malleability in political, social, and spiritual terms, conceptions about the world itself were being transformed. Voyages in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries led to the circumnavigation of Africa and Columbus' voyages west. Although Columbus at first thought that he had reached China and the "Indies," it was soon recognized that these were new continents—"new" from the European perspective. Views of these previously unknown lands were varied. Columbus himself spoke of the Americas as an "earthly paradise."[46] About a hundred years later, in his "Ode to the Virginian Voyage" (1606), Michael Drayton calls Virginia "Earth's only Paradise." Virginia was also said to be the promised land that would "flow with milk and honey."[47] Others compared the Ameri-

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44. In Shakespeare's plays, Greene (1968) 263 finds a greater abundance of "lateral resourcefulness" and "horizontal maneuvering and adaptations" by characters; "only in the last play, *The Tempest,* does Shakespeare remove from the human sphere the responsibility for metamorphosis and assign it to magic, to the supernatural . . . [In *The Tempest*] almost uniquely in Shakespeare, the scale is vertical and the agency transcendent." Greenblatt (1980) also argues for such Renaissance "refashioning" and calls improvisation "a central Renaissance mode of behavior" (299); such role-playing requires "a sense that one is not forever fixed in a single, divinely sanctioned identity" (235).

45. Greenblatt (1980) 2 argues that in Renaissance England, "there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process."

46. Porter (1979) 43; Porter notes that Columbus called his discovered lands a "new heaven and earth" that fulfilled Revelation 21.1 (116). On the New World as paradise, see also Lineburgh and Rediker (2000) 10–11 and Porter (1979) 281–82.

47. Porter (1979) 99, 289.

cas to Plato's Atlantis, Arcadia, or the Fortunate Islands.[48] English accounts also emphasize the Edenic quality of the land: "The earth bringeth forth all things in abundance, as in the first creation, without toil or labour."[49] Regarding the Native Americans, sixteenth-century writers described the "Indians" as living in the "Golden Age." In a report about Mexico from 1535, Bishop Quiroga states,

> With much cause and reason is this called the New World, not because it is newly found, but because in its people, and in almost everything, it is like as was the first and Golden Age.[50]

The apparently classless, stateless American peoples with no private property, work, or masters captured Europe's imagination.[51]

Two points should be made here. First, there was tremendous variety to these reports, many of which were wildly inaccurate (accounts of people whose heads grew out of their chests, for example). Second, while many of the early reports emphasized the ideal quality of the land and the innocence, kindness, and hospitality of the inhabitants, there was another view, namely, that the inhabitants were treacherous and committed acts of incest, human sacrifice, and cannibalism (to say nothing of them being "heathens"). Because the lands, especially in Virginia and New England, were seen as relatively open and "uncivilized," it was perhaps easy to impose preconceptions about human nature on these previously unknown peoples and places.

Both views of the New World's wonders are reflected in *The Tempest*—both the idyllic qualities and the dangers posed by those in the New World.[52] When the island spirits set out a banquet for the Italian nobles, Gonzalo comments that those in Europe would refuse to believe their accounts.

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48. Porter (1979) 43–45; for the "Golden City," El Dorado, see 49.

49. Porter (1979) 225; this report comes from the 1580s.

50. Porter (1979) 47–48; the bishop further wrote, on the liberty of Native Americans, "They seem to live in the Golden World, without toil, living in open gardens" (24); and on the virtues of Virginia, "Virginia named in honor of Queen Elizabeth, also has virginal purity and the plenty of the first creation" (230).

51. See Lineburgh and Rediker (2000) 23–24; on the Powhatan Indians in Virginia having no ownership of land or social class, see 34. Porter (1979) 94 discusses the idea that perhaps America had not been affected by the biblical flood, so that "American fauna and flora were those of the first Creation."

52. On these conflicting attitudes, see Marx (1964) 34–72; cf. Cawley (1926) 719 note 20. On Native Americans as treacherous—the "inconstant savage" is John Smith's phrase—see Porter (1979) 298, 311.

Fig. 4. "An Indian Medicine Man: 'The flyer.'" A 1580s watercolor by John White from his time spent in America. This "conjurer" was said to be a healer with sacred knowledge and was able to foresee the future by consorting with the devil. (By permission of the British Museum.)

> If in Naples
> I should report this now, would they believe me
> If I should say I saw such islanders?
> For, certes, these are people of the island,
> Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet note,
> Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of
> Our human generation you shall find
> Many, nay, almost any.
>
> (3.3.27–34; cf. 3.3.43–49)

Even Caliban recounts how magical the place is: "The island is full of noises / sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (3.2.138–45). Shakespeare was certainly aware of travelers' reports about the New World. For example, accounts of the first Virginia colony in Roanoke were published in England in 1588, when he was twenty-four years old.[53] Both the wonder and threat of these New World phenomena are refracted in Shakespeare's drama.

In 1603, John Florio translated into English Michel de Montaigne's essay "On the Cannibals," in which the French nobleman ruminates on what he has heard about the native peoples of Brazil.[54] His essay influenced *The Tempest* in several respects. Montaigne describes how the people of the New World live in an "original state of nature" and are "still governed by laws of Nature." Montaigne even argues,

> What experience has taught me about those peoples surpasses . . . all the descriptions with which poetry has beautifully painted the Age of Gold and all its ingenious fictions about Man's blessed early state.[55]

We recall Gonzalo's words about the utopia he would establish on the island: it would "excel the Golden Age." Shakespeare's Gonzalo follows Montaigne quite closely in describing such a society by noting what it lacks. Montaigne says,

> Those people have no trade of any kind, no acquaintance with writing, no knowledge of numbers, no terms for governor or political

53. Porter (1979) 235.

54. Montaigne evidently spoke to three Brazilians in Rouen in 1562 when he was in his late twenties; he also had a servant who had spent almost a dozen years in Brazil. For Montaigne's sources, see Porter (1979) 140–41.

55. Montaigne (1991) 232–33.

> superior, no practice of subordination or of riches or poverty, no contracts, no inheritances, no divided estates, no occupation but leisure, no concern for kinship . . . no clothing, no agriculture, no metals, no use of wine or corn.[56]

Shakespeare has obviously adopted Montaigne's ideas, for this catalog neatly matches Gonzalo's "description by negation" of his ideal commonwealth that would exist without business, literacy, wealth and poverty, occupations, farming, metallurgy, wine, or grain (*Tempest* 2.1.146–56). Montaigne emphasizes the natives' "idleness": some spend whole days dancing while the younger men go hunting. This lack of industry is understood to be possible since those living in America enjoy a great abundance of fish and flesh and since "without toil or travail they still enjoy that bounteous Nature who furnishes them abundantly with all they need."[57] This understanding finds its way into Gonzalo's idea that nature on its own would furnish everything necessary for a happy life (*Tempest* 2.1.162–66).[58]

It is true, Montaigne admits, that the Brazilian natives are cannibals—they eat the flesh of captives they have seized in war—yet he believes this is no more "barbarous" than Europeans who "eat men alive." Part of Montaigne's motivation, of course, is not only to praise the simple virtue of Brazilians but to castigate Europeans for their inhuman savagery.

> I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead; more barbarity in lacerating by rack and torture a body still fully able to feel things, in roasting him little by little and having him bruised and bitten by pigs and dogs . . . than in roasting him and eating him after his death.[59]

Shakespeare links his character Caliban to these New World natives by the very name *Caliban,* a near anagram of the word *cannibal* (which itself derives from *Carib,* used of the peoples from the Caribbean islands). Caliban is native to the island, raised there first by Sycorax and then, as an orphan, by Prospero. He is curious but dangerous and is imprisoned for his attempted rape of Miranda. Regarding prisoners, Montaigne observes how those captured in the Americas challenge their guards.

56. Montaigne (1991) 233.
57. Montaigne (1991) 234–36.
58. On the influence of Montaigne's essay on Gonzalo's speech, see Porter (1979) 144–45.
59. Montaigne (1991) 235–36.

> During the two or three months of their captivity, [the Native American prisoners] maintain on the contrary a joyful countenance: they urge their captors to hurry up and put them to the test; they defy them, insult them and reproach them for cowardice.[60]

This description evokes Caliban's resistance to Prospero, which includes his instigation of Stephano's conspiracy to take over the island.

Montaigne admires the American natives as uncorrupted peoples. Yet one of the more fascinating characters in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who is linked to Montaigne's reflections—beyond Caliban and Ariel—is the figure of Miranda, who has been raised on the island for much of her life. She knows no humans other than Prospero until Ferdinand's arrival. Since she is unfamiliar with other women, she cannot tell whether she is beautiful, as Ferdinand claims (3.1.48–53). Raised in this isolated place, Miranda is not degraded by European civilization and comes close to being perfect and uncorrupted. Her name, too, is significant: she is "Miranda," a marvel to be wondered at, "Admired Miranda" (3.1.37).[61]

Homer's *Odyssey* was composed during a period of exploration when Greek travelers and colonists encountered new lands and peoples. The period of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* also included voyages of exploration and contact with a "new" world, as well as new ideas about human nature and the possibly corrupting effects of civilization. But in the case of *The Tempest,* there appears to have been an immediate historical "trigger" that led Shakespeare to compose this play when he did. In 1609, an English ship, the *Sea Venture,* was on its way to the Jamestown colony in Virginia (founded in 1607). Led by Captain Christopher Newport, with the "gentlemen" Sir George Summers and Sir Thomas Gates aboard, the ship wrecked off the northeast coast of Bermuda. But the entire company made it safely to the Bermuda shore, built new ships, and sailed on to America in the following year (1610). Soon after news of the shipwrecked survivors reached England, Shakespeare produced *The Tempest* (1611).[62] The chronology alone (wreck in 1609, reports in 1610, *The Tempest* produced in 1611) argues for a timely stimulus, and the *Sea Venture*'s passengers' accounts further reveal

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60. Montaigne (1991) 239.

61. See Garber (2004) 864 on Miranda "as a kind of 'noble savage'" in contrast to "the supposedly civilized Europeans who are shipwrecked on the island's shores." P. Brown (1988) 145 calls Miranda a "miraculous courtly lady, virgin prospect (cf. Virginia itself)."

62. For the links between the 1609 wreck and the genesis of *The Tempest,* see Kermode (1958) xxv–xxxiv.

fascinating insights into Shakespeare's use of factual accounts in composing his drama.

One of the travelers, Sylvester Jourdain, composed a pamphlet recounting how the *Sea Venture* was separated from a fleet of nine ships in a storm on 25 July 1609.[63] As the ship took on five feet of water in the hold, everyone took turns pumping for three days and nights. After this exhausting labor, the ship's company had given up hope, but when they were ready "to have committed themselves to the mercy of the sea . . . or rather to the mercy of their mighty God and redeemer," Bermuda was fortunately sighted.[64] While attempting to reach the island, the ship became wedged into rocks three-quarters of a mile from shore and was damaged beyond repair. Nevertheless, everyone on board—150 in all, including women and children—made it to land alive (they also saved provisions and the ship's tackle and metalwork).

The Bermudas (a group comprising over 150 islands) had the prior reputation of being enchanted; all sailors avoided them. Jourdain records that the reality was quite different.

> Yet did we find there the air so temperate and the country so abundantly fruitful of all fit necessaries for the sustenation and preservation of man's life, that . . . notwithstanding we were there for the space of nine months . . . not only [were we] well refreshed, comforted, and with good satiety contented but, out of the abundance thereof, provided us some reasonable quantity and proportion of provision to carry us for Virginia and to maintaining ourselves and that company we found there.[65]

The island's fecundity so far exceeded the travelers' expectations that they had a surplus to take with them to Virginia in the next year. In turning from Jourdain's account to Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* we observe that certain aspects of the play and the *Sea Venture*'s fate coincide: in both the historical and dramatic situations, everyone was saved from the shipwreck; also, although the island was not enchanted, it had an abundance of food and other goods (cf. Gonzalo's utopia).[66]

Another traveler, William Strachey, wrote a second account containing greater detail, *A True Repertory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas*

63. Jourdain's pamphlet was printed in 1610; I follow the text in Bevington (1988) 92–95.
64. Bevington (1988) 92.
65. Bevington (1988) 94; cf. Brockbank (1967) 189.
66. Bevington (1988) 94.

Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas.[67] We learn from it that the storm at sea came from the northeast; Strachey describes the wind's cries and the passengers' shrieks. He mentions that for three or four hours one night, a "sparkling blaze" appeared on the sails: this was "St. Elmo's fire" translated by Shakespeare into Ariel's "flamed amazement" (1.2.197–207). Strachey also emphasizes that when everyone expected the ship to founder at any moment, land was sighted just in the nick of time. Once on the island, Sir George Summers planted a garden, and the crew caught wild hogs. Like Jourdain, Strachey contrasts the reputation of the islands with what they discovered. Though Bermuda has been called "the Devil's Islands," he praises its climate, "great store of fish," and plentiful (and unsuspecting) birds.[68]

Yet, as in *The Tempest,* dissension threatened the social order. There were apparently five separate conspiracies on Bermuda over the next nine months, one of which threatened the life of the governor, who was said by the mutineers to have no "authority to put in execution or pass the act of justice upon anyone." One plan of the mutineers was to force their way into the storehouse, but some of those involved "broke from the plot itself, and before the time was ripe for the execution thereof discovered [i.e., revealed] the whole order and every agent and actor thereof."[69] After learning of this conspiracy, Summers set up watches and armed his men. Strachey tells of one "gentleman . . . full of mischief" named Henry Paine, who had been collecting swords, axes, hatchets, and other arms. He, too, rejected the governor's authority to pass judgment "upon anyone how mean soever in the colony."[70] When this rebellion was made known, Paine was brought before the governor and condemned to be hanged, yet on his own request, he was executed by gunshot that evening (14 March 1610).

Strachey notes that such unrest and questioning of authority continued. Other men "like outlaws betook them[selves] to the wild woods" and sent a formal petition asking to be allowed to stay on the island rather than continuing on to Virginia (in the end, two "outlaws" did stay on the island).[71] As far as we can tell, at least some justification for autonomy on the island was

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67. Strachey's account was published in 1625 but probably was read by Shakespeare soon after its composition (its publication was delayed so that reports on the dire situation in Virginia would not dampen enthusiasm for investment or journeying there). See Orgel (1987) 209–19 (appendix B) for Strachey's account.

68. Orgel (1987) 13–16.

69. Orgel (1987) 216.

70. Orgel (1987) 217.

71. Orgel (1987) 217–18.

based on political theory. Stephan Hopkins, a Puritan passenger who advocated governance based on mutual consent, "argued that the magistrate's authority had ended the moment the 'Sea Venture' was wrecked."[72] In Shakespeare's play, I have argued that the wreck itself seems to have freed travelers from previous restraint. In 1609–10, the argument was explicitly made that authority over the ship's company ceased once the ship was destroyed. In real life, a shipwreck might be seen to justify a new political order.

Shakespeare undoubtedly had knowledge of this wreck, for he himself had apparently invested in the Virginia Company. He was certainly familiar with Jourdain's and Strachey's accounts and personally knew some of the men involved. I am not suggesting that Shakespeare replicated the Bermuda shipwreck, but he adapt many details: (a) a storm in which all travelers give up hope and commit themselves to God (and the appearance of St. Elmo's fire); (b) a wreck (only apparent in the play) in which everyone is saved; (c) an island with good climate and abundant food; (d) unsuccessful mutinies against those in charge; and, finally, (e) shipwrecked travelers sailing off to their original destination. The two biggest deviations in the play are that (f) the island actually is enchanted (Bermuda only has this reputation) and (g) the island is inhabited, by Prospero, his daughter, Caliban, and Ariel and the other spirits (Bermuda is uninhabited). Shakespeare's most significant change was to populate the island, which, in turn, leads to even greater conflict than would arise from shipwreck on an uninhabited land.[73]

Some of these coinciding features are trivial, but the most interesting are the political difficulties on the island (and again in Virginia). After the shipwreck, the authority of the *Sea Venture*'s leaders is questioned, threats are made, and mutinies are planned. As Lineburgh and Rediker point out, the difficulties faced by the leaders in Bermuda are woven into the play: "Ever sensitive to the problems faced by his fellow investors in the Virginia Company, Shakespeare considered the issues of authority and class discipline in *The Tempest.*"[74] Shakespeare echoes the Bermuda rebellions with two—an aristocratic conspiracy by Sebastian and Antonio and a comic and "low" one led by Stephano and Trinculo—yet the purpose of both is deadly serious. It is hard to discern any sympathy for either group of rebels in the play, though

72. Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) 13.

73. A third distinction is that the ship in the play is still intact—this results from Prospero's magic. See Cawley (1926) 689–99 on parallel passages from *The Tempest* and the travel reports; Cawley also suggests that the name *Stephano* may have derived from Stephan Hopkins, "a prime mover in the conspiracy," and that "the names of both Gonzalo and Ferdinand may have been suggested by Strachey's mention of *Gonzalos Ferdinandus* Oviedus" (715 note 9).

74. Lineburgh and Rediker (2000) 30.

Caliban is allowed to claim, "This island's mine . . . which thou takest from me." I agree with the conclusion of Lineburgh and Rediker that Shakespeare has offered a "ruling-class view of popular rebellion."[75]

In the following year, after forty-two weeks on Bermuda, two vessels, the *Deliverance* and the *Patience,* were built; on 10 May 1610, they set out for Virginia. Even arrival in Virginia did not end disquiet. In describing the unrest in the Virginia colony of Jamestown, Strachey metaphorically employs the words *shipwreck* and *tempest.* In real life (as in fiction), arrival by sea in a new land—by shipwreck in Bermuda or landing in Virginia—seems to prompt ambition and hope for a higher station in life. Strachey utters the telling phrase "Every man overvaluing his own worth would be a commander."[76] Reinventing one's self as a leader entices those in real life; this desire is neatly captured in Shakespeare's play.[77]

We are now perhaps in a better position to appreciate how the historical tenor of the times as well as specific events are adapted by Shakespeare in his play about a group shipwreck. Like the eighth century BCE in Greece, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe were characterized by exploration and encountering new cultures. Shakespeare's plays reflect voyages of "discovery" when ideas about the world and human nature were being reexamined.[78] Regarding a specific stimulus, it is difficult to resist making a connection between the Bermuda wreck and the timing of Shakespeare's production.

Shipwreck, Transformation, and the Theater

The focus of this chapter has been Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* the tale of a group shipwreck on an inhabited island that presents many possible trans-

75. Lineburgh and Rediker (2000) 29.

76. Orgel (1987) 219.

77. Greenblatt (2004) 373 comments, "On such islands, as many contemporary reports made clear, restraint tended to melt away, and, for those in command, anything was possible." See Lineburgh and Rediker (2000) 21 on those wishing to settle in Bermuda.

78. See Marx (1964) 64 on Francis Bacon and the history of the idea of progress. Frey (1979) makes a persuasive argument that we should also see the influence on *The Tempest* of accounts about Magellan's and Drake's circumnavigations of the world (1519–22, 1577–80) and later stories where "we find repeated accounts of mutiny and miracle"; cf. Kastan (2000) 269 and Muir (1977) 280. While Brockbank (1967) 192 speaks of Caliban as "the epitome of the primitive and uncivilized condition of the native American," Skura (2000) 295 distinguishes between Caliban and New World "Indians:" "[Caliban] lacks almost all of the defining eternal traits in the many reports from the New World—no superhuman physique, no nakedness or animal skin (indeed, an English 'gaberdine' instead), no decorative features, no arrows, no pipe, no tobacco, no body paint, and—as Shakespeare takes pains to emphasize—no love of trinkets and trash."

formations. Most of these reinventions do not come about; indeed, the central figure of Prospero reverts to his earlier status as Duke of Milan. In the next chapter, I will explore precursors and successors to Shakespeare's play. I finish this chapter with two observations.

First, although *The Tempest* was one of Shakespeare's last plays, it is worth noting that Shakespeare evidently found shipwrecks to be a valuable plot element throughout his career. In his first comedy, *A Comedy of Errors* (ca. 1592–94), a shipwreck serves to separate a husband and wife and two sets of twins (by act 5, the family is reunited). In *Merchant of Venice* (ca. 1596–97), shipwrecks destroy Antonio's investments and bring about the central crisis of the play: his obligation to pay a "pound of flesh" to Shylock. In the late play *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1606–8), the fugitive Pericles loses his ships, his men, and all his wealth in a shipwreck (2.0.27–40). He experiences a familiar reversal: the storm has "bereft a prince of all his fortunes" (2.1.9); Pericles must move on to a new sort of life.

Of particular interest in light of shipwrecks and transformation is *Twelfth Night* (ca. 1601). Prior to this play's beginning, a shipwreck has landed the young woman Viola on the Adriatic coast of Illyria. Suspecting that her twin brother, Sebastian, died in the same wreck, Viola decides to disguise herself as a man, "Cesario" (1.2.53–61). This situation is familiar by now: a shipwreck and arrival in a new land; a (mistaken) belief that a loved one is dead—as we soon learn, Sebastian is rescued elsewhere and believes that Viola has drowned (2.1.19–30, 5.1.228–29). But in this play, it is a woman who takes on a disguise. When Viola is later mistaken for her twin brother (3.4.375–78), we discover that she has mimicked Sebastian's dress and manner in her disguise.

> He named Sebastian. I my brother know
> Yet living in my glass; even such and so
> In favor was my brother, and he went
> Still in this fashion, color, ornament,
> For him I imitate. O, if it prove,
> Tempests are kind, and salt waves fresh in love!
>
> (3.4.381–86; cf. 3.4.375–78)

Viola has exploited the circumstances of a shipwreck to transform herself, yet it appears that her "new" self is modeled in every way on her brother. In a sense, Viola has perhaps subconsciously attempted to "bring back to life" her brother by taking on the "dead" Sebastian's manner, dress, and fashion.

At the moment of sibling reunion in act 5, brother and sister are virtually indistinguishable (5.1.215–16).[79]

By the play's end, Viola has, of necessity, reverted back to her true female identity. Yet, as in *The Tempest,* a shipwreck offers the opportunity for a different sort of life. Viola experiences the effects of "playing" the male role, which leads to gaining the duke's confidence and—unintentionally—Olivia's romantic interest. Apparently, this disguise forces Viola to reflect on how others see her, all the while distinguishing her male "outside" from the true person within.[80] Shipwrecks allow survivors to transform themselves by concealing their previous identities and fashioning new ones in pursuit of social, political, and romantic opportunities. Shakespeare goes a step further in *Twelfth Night* by allowing his shipwrecked Viola to "try on" a new role in sexual terms—becoming a "man" in place of her previous identity as a woman (in chapter 8, I discuss Susan Barton, another female shipwreck survivor).

Beyond *The Tempest,* Shakespeare's sustained interest in identity and transformation is seen in cross-dressing (by Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*), entering a new space (the Forest of Arden, Oberon's wood, and Prospero's—and Caliban's—island), or physical metamorphosis (of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Shipwrecks are only one of the many situations nicely suited to exploring identity. Greenblatt speaks of this general tendency.

> Again and again in his plays, an unforeseen catastrophe—*one of his favorite manifestations of it is a shipwreck*—suddenly turns what had seemed like happy progress, prosperity, smooth sailing into disaster, terror, and loss. The loss is obviously and immediately material, but *it is also and more crushingly a loss of identity.* To wind up on an unknown shore, without one's friends, habitual associates, familiar network—*this catastrophe is often epitomized by the deliberate alteration or disappearance of the name and, with it, the alteration or disappearance of social status.*[81]

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79. Garber (2004) 507–8 comments, "The world of romance invades the world of comedy . . . [Romance's] signature elements were shipwreck, the rediscovery of long-lost brothers and sisters, physical marks of recognition, and rebirths from the sea."

80. See Garber (2004) 508. As Viola says, "I swear I am not that I play" (1.5.198; cf. 1.4.42; 1.5.210–11; 2.2.23–29; 2.4.119–22; 3.1.46–48, 141, 157–60; 3.4.302–4; 5.1.132–36).

81. Greenblatt (2004) 85, my italics. See Knight (1953) on the "tempest-music opposition" in Shakespeare's works.

In Homer, Odysseus may disguise himself or take on a new persona ("No-man" with the Cyclops or a beggar in Ithaca); these may not involve shipwrecks. Shakespeare, too, explores potential transformation in many plays, yet as Greenblatt notes, one of his "favorite manifestations" is the shipwreck.

My second concluding observation here concerns what might be called the artistic side of the shipwreck survivor. Odysseus becomes a storyteller; Crusoe chronicles his life (as I will discuss in chapter 6); Prospero acts as a sort of poet. While Prospero attributes the arrivals by sea in *The Tempest* to "Providence divine," "accident most strange," and "bountiful Fortune," the play itself credits Prospero's magic and—by extension—poetic invention with bringing the Italians to the island. Prospero is more than a magician: in manipulating the figures on the island, he takes on the role of playwright and director.[82] Prospero's powers—to dim the noontide sun, to wake the dead (5.140–50)—are, in some sense, the magic of the dramatist, who uses actors on the stage and their words to introduce alternative realities.[83]

Can we go further? Should we equate Prospero with Shakespeare himself in some respects? In act 4, Prospero's famous speech addresses the power—and evanescence—of the masque.

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air.
>
> (4.1.148–50)

Yet this speech may easily refer to dramatic performances in "the great globe itself" (i.e., the Globe Theatre in London).[84]

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82. Frye (1986) 172–73 comments that it is "as though we were not at a performance but at a rehearsal with Prospero directing." Bloom (1998) 672 remarks, "Whatever happens in *The Tempest* is the work of Ariel, under Prospero's direction"; cf. Kernan (1979) 22.

83. Greenblatt (2004) 375–76 remarks on Prospero's words with regard to previous plays of Shakespeare: Prospero's power to raise the dead (5.1.48–50) is not something done in *The Tempest,* "but as a description of the work of the playwright, rather than the magician, it is unnervingly accurate. It is not Prospero but Shakespeare who has commanded old Hamlet to burst from the grave and who has brought back to life the unjustly accused Hermione. Shakespeare's business throughout his career has been to awaken the dead" (375–76). On the autobiographical aspects of the character of Prospero—and on *The Tempest* itself as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage—see Orgel (1987) 7 and 10.

84. See Kernan (1979) 150.

> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, *the great globe itself,*
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve.
>
> (4.1.151–54, my italics)

While acknowledging the ephemerality of the theater, Shakespeare also celebrates the dramatist's power of invention.[85] Even in the epilogue, Prospero transfers the magic of the theater to the audience's "spell".

> Let me not
> Since I have my dukedom got
> And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
> In this bare island by your spell,
> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands.
>
> (Epilogue 6–11)

When Prospero's charms are "o'erthrown," the play comes to an end.[86] He seeks to leave "this bare island." Indeed, transformation is precisely what performers enact upon the stage: these figures take on new identities, raising themselves to the status of kings or sinking to the servile depths. I acknowledge that many situations allow for such reinvention, but shipwrecks especially encourage the "auditioning" for and enacting of such roles.

The shipwreck that opens *The Tempest*—which Kermode calls "the happy shipwreck"—enables the playwright (and Prospero) to right the past wrongs of Italian political struggles and to unite quarreling families by marriage.[87] Although coming perilously close to the bloodshed that closes Homer's *Odyssey,* Shakespeare instead employs Prospero's omnipotence, beneficence,

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85. In *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1974) 1607, Kermode remarks that "what we take for concrete physical reality will turn out to be an illusion too"; see also Bloom (1998) 681. Prospero within the play and Shakespeare as playwright perform many of the same actions: they both cause a storm, introduce complications between Ferdinand and Miranda, govern Caliban and Ariel, and neutralize the attempted assassinations; the epilogue closes both Prospero's "production" and Shakespeare's; see Kernan (1979) 136.

86. Greenblatt (2004) 373 sees these lines as "a retirement and a farewell": Shakespeare will now return home to his beloved daughter Susannah (389–90); see Kermode (2000) 294–95.

87. Kermode (1958) xxv comments on "the tragicomic theme of the play, the happy shipwreck" that leads to a purging of "the crimes of ambition and lust."

and forgiveness to reconcile Europeans at odds in this "new" world. As we have seen, however, unexpected arrivals by sea have a dark side as well: the possibility of servitude. As a shipwrecked survivor, Ferdinand is falsely accused and experiences the life of a slave. As a native islander, Ariel is first a servant and then imprisoned by Sycorax; he must next obey Prospero's commands yet finally achieves his freedom. Caliban remains under the control of Prospero, who, in the end, "acknowledges" Caliban as his own.

Both Homer and Shakespeare reveal a tendency for characters to seek restoration of the status quo. It is truly striking that after all the attempts at reinvention, so many protagonists return to their prior roles: Odysseus is reunited with his wife and reestablishes himself as king, father, husband, and son; Prospero regains his political status as Duke of Milan; Viola reverts to her female self in *Twelfth Night;* after twenty-eight years on his island, Crusoe will return to England (as I will discuss in chapter 6).[88] More recent works, however, often resist such closure, as we will see in Césaire's 1968 *A Tempest,* in which Prospero does not return to Europe and his relationship with Caliban must be redefined. Modern adaptations often move beyond these classical models by avoiding reversion to previous roles and instead adopting the possibilities offered by shipwrecks.

88. Greenblatt (2004) 81–86 speaks of "the dream of restoration [that] haunted Shakespeare throughout his life." De Gooyer (2006) 156 speaks of how "[a] shipwreck survived can open up a new world . . . [T]he clean slate of a deserted coast may answer a secret wish to remake their world from the ground up"; yet he ruefully concludes that the figures in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* "remain fundamentally unchanged. None of them makes any effort to cast off his former self, to pare his bedeviled mind down to philosophical essentials so he can begin a new life. Clearly, as survivors of shipwreck they shirk their metaphorical duties" (160).

CHAPTER 5

Salvation, Power, and Freedom

Saint Paul, Caliban, and Voyages in Outer Space

This chapter explores works with a group of people stranded on an inhabited island (or planet), anticipating or alluding to the shipwreck in Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* First, Paul's shipwreck (recounted in the New Testament book of Acts) prefigures Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* recalls Homer's *Odyssey,* and links shipwreck with spiritual salvation. Second, we turn to the Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (1968), a rewriting of Shakespeare's play that addresses the questions of power and freedom. Finally, the movie *Forbidden Planet* (1956) translates the shipwreck scenario to outer space.

Paul's Shipwreck at Malta (Acts 27–28)

One antecedent to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from the ancient world concerns a historical shipwreck. On the way to Rome (ca. 60 CE), the ship conveying Paul of Tarsus wrecks on the Mediterranean island of Malta. In the book of Acts, Luke presents Paul as a hero who—with the help of God—saves everyone on board. Indeed, the idea of "saving" or "salvation" (Greek *sozo, soteria*) pervades this episode both in the literal sense (everyone is saved from disaster at sea) and in terms of having their souls saved.[1] Thus, the new

1. For "safety" and salvation," see *sozesthai, sothenai, soterias, diasothenai, diasothenta, soterion* (27.20, 31, 34, 44; 28.1, 28).

dimension in this shipwreck scenario is that Paul's faith in God leads to both physical and spiritual salvation.

The book of Acts relates the story of a onetime Pharisee named Saul who persecuted Christians, is converted on the road to Damascus, takes the name *Paul,* and works to convert Jews and non-Jews to Christianity. A crisis occurs when Paul is arrested by the Roman authorities and finds himself in danger of both legal charges and assassination attempts (e.g., Acts 20.12–13). About to be flogged, Paul asserts his Roman citizenship and appeals to Caesar (25.10–12). This leads to his sea journey from Caesarea in Palestine to Rome.

They reach Cyprus in late fall, near the end of the sailing season. Paul warns them not to continue (27.10), but he is overruled. Almost immediately, a "typhonic" wind carries the ship to the southwest, toward Syrtis, an area of dangerous shallows off the North African coast (27.14–17). In many ways, Luke presents a typical description of a storm at sea, with tremendous winds and no visible sun or stars; the travelers give up hope. They jettison gear and baggage to lighten the ship, but they are unable to control their course (27.14–20).

During this part of the voyage, Paul predicts that they will suffer no loss, for an angel appeared to him in the night.

> And I urge you now to keep up your courage, for not a single life of yours will be lost, only the ship. For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul, it is ordained that you shall appear before Caesar the Emperor; and be assured, God has granted you the lives of all who are sailing with you." So keep up your courage, men, for I trust in God that it will turn out as it has been told to me, though we have to be cast ashore on some island. (27.22–26)[2]

After two desperate weeks at sea, they approach land at night, and the crew plans to abandon ship. Paul then insists, "Unless these men stay on the ship, you will not be able to be saved"; the soldiers keep everyone on board (27.31).

Just before daybreak, Paul encourages everyone to eat for "salvation" (27.34), promising that all will survive.

> I beg you to take nourishment, for this is your salvation [*soterias*]. Not a hair on your heads will be lost.
>
> (27.34)

2. Translation is my own.

Paul thanks God and breaks the bread; everyone eats and is encouraged (27.35).

At morning light, they sight an unknown island, but the ship runs aground on a reef (27.39–41). As the ship is breaking up, the soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape, but Julius, the centurion in charge of Paul, intervenes. Everyone makes it ashore safely, some swimming, some riding on planks or other parts of the ship (27.44).

This, then, is a shipwreck in which everyone arrives safely. They come to recognize the island as Malta and receive hospitality from the native islanders (28.1–2). After Paul is bitten by a snake when gathering firewood, the people of Malta assume that he must have committed murder (28.4). They expect Paul to swell up and collapse, but when he remains unharmed, they next assert that he must be a god (28.6).[3] As we have seen with other shipwreck narratives, island inhabitants often try to determine the status of those who are cast on their shore. In fact, islanders suspect that the new arrival is a god in the *Odyssey, The Tempest,* and *Robinson Crusoe.*

Paul soon journeys to Rome on a ship named the *Dioscuri,* honoring Castor and Polydeuces, the savior gods of sailors at sea. The juxtaposition of the traditional Greek gods with the recent rescue at sea by Paul's god suggests that this new god—with a proven ability to rescue those shipwrecked at sea—has supplanted the older divinities.[4] When Paul finally arrives in Rome, he turns to his commission from God to proclaim "salvation" (*soterion,* 28.28).[5]

Several interesting features deserve our attention. First, in many shipwrecks, the gods are involved in sending the storm and rescuing survivors (e.g., Odysseus is assailed by Poseidon but saved by Leucothea, Athena, and the river god). God appears to Paul first in prison, telling him to keep up his courage, for he must go to Rome (23.11); then he sends an angel and otherwise issues commands (27.23–24; cf. 26.16–18). These divine words and visions are anticipatory in a narrative sense but also reveal a religious dimension to the journey and rescue.

Second, Luke tells this story in the first-person narrative (e.g., "we set sail").[6] Scholars have interpreted the significance of Luke's use of the first-person plural in several ways. One idea is that it may convey a historical fact: that Luke actually did accompany Paul on his trip. A second theory argues

3. Paul prays effectively for the sick on Malta, but he insists he is not a god (28.7–10).

4. See Talbert (2003) 187 note 24.

5. See Talbert (2003) 185.

6. "We set sail" occurs in Paul's third journey (e.g., 20.16, 13; 21.1) and in the sea voyage to Rome ("When it was decided for us to sail to Italy . . . ," 27.1).

that the first-person plural adds immediacy to the narrative and conveys a kind of authenticity (it would also imply the narrator's survival). A third interpretation maintains that first-person narration is a convention of shipwreck narratives in ancient literature.[7] It is impossible to tell with certainty which theory is correct in this case, though it is intriguing to imagine Luke as a companion on this eventful journey. Still, we should remain cautious.

In his article "The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul," MacDonald takes the third interpretation a step further and argues not only that the first-person plural is a convention of shipwreck narratives but that Luke deliberately recalls Homer's shipwrecks of Odysseus. Evidence for Luke's allusions to Homer are associations with Troy (Paul's travels in that region), poetic or particularly epic vocabulary, the pattern of an angel appearing (cf. Leucothea), the ship's company floating on debris, and the survivor(s) being treated as divine upon arrival.[8] MacDonald concludes,

> Luke not only imitates the shipwrecks of Odysseus, he christianized them. In fact, Luke's intention in relating Paul's shipwreck to those of Odysseus was to exalt Paul and his God by comparison . . . Odysseus panics and gives up hope (5.299–312), while Paul remains unflappably confident throughout. Zeus drowns Odysseus's crew for having slain the cattle of Helius, whereas Paul's God prevents any of the 276 passengers from perishing at sea . . . Luke's narrative falls far short of Homer's in aesthetic value, but it excels it in portraying the virtues of its hero and his God.[9]

MacDonald argues that Luke is intentionally recalling Odysseus' shipwrecks from the *Odyssey* in order to set up a contrast between Paul, who rescues all his fellow sailors, and Odysseus, who loses his entire fleet and crew. The contrasting fate of the protagonists depicts Paul as a new sort of hero.[10] Though there are serious weaknesses in parts of MacDonald's argument, this intriguing interpretation points to sufficient similarities to trigger possible

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7. First-person narration also holds true for the Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor." Thimmes (1992) 61 observes, "This technique allows the author to omnisciently detail the physical elements of the voyage/storm/shipwreck, while permitting a speaking character to personally testify to the danger of the situation"; cf. Robbins (1975) and MacDonald (1999) 88–89.

8. See MacDonald (1999) 89–93, 103.

9. MacDonald (1999) 106–7; see also Thimmes (1992) 95–99.

10. See Thimmes (1992) 201.

associations with Odysseus' shipwreck for an ancient audience.[11] Once there is trouble at sea, it is difficult not to think back to Homer. The narrative of Luke suggests a different sort of transformation—spiritual salvation—now associated with being saved from a shipwreck.

The central distinguishing feature in Paul's wreck is the rescue of all the passengers: "Not a hair on your heads will be lost" (Acts 27:34). Shakespeare explicitly recalls this biblical episode with Ariel's line "Not a hair perished" (1.2.218). It is by no means obvious that Shakespeare alludes to Paul's wreck in any other way, but it is striking that everyone in both Acts and Shakespeare's play is miraculously brought to shore (as was true in the 1609 Bermuda shipwreck).

Césaire's *A Tempest*

Next we examine a twentieth-century rewriting of Shakespeare's play, Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* (1968). Following many Shakespearean plot elements, Césaire uses the relationship of Prospero and Caliban to criticize the history of European colonialism.[12] Elsewhere, he refers to African slaves as the "refugees from the greatest shipwreck of history."[13] Walcott (discussed in chapters 3, 8, and 10) speaks of the image of the

> West Indian artist as someone who was in a shipwrecked position . . . One of the more positive aspects of the Crusoe idea is that in a sense every race that has come to the Caribbean has been brought here under situations of servitude or rejection, and that is the metaphor of the shipwreck, I think.[14]

As we have seen, shipwreck leads to the contemplation of multiple possible roles and outcomes. In the nineteenth century, slavery was abolished in

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11. Weak points in MacDonald's argument include stock elements (found in many shipwreck stories) in Luke and Homer (98); he also makes mistakes (Leucothea is not a divine "messenger"; see 99); and MacDonald conflates Odysseus' different shipwrecks (103)—he is not marooned on Nausicaa's island without ships to convey him (that takes place on Calypso's island).

12. As Dayan (1992) 130 reminds us, Césaire explicitly calls his play an "Adaptation, after the Tempest of Shakespeare."

13. See Davis (1997) 78.

14. Walcott in an interview, found in Hirsch (1986) 213.

the North Atlantic and the Caribbean; in the past fifty years, many Caribbean islands have acquired political independence (e.g., Walcott's homeland, Saint Lucia, in 1979), while both Césaire's homeland, Martinique, and Guadeloupe (once French colonies) gained "departmental" status in 1946. As the descendants of slaves with a new sense of autonomy, Walcott's and Césaire's shipwreck tales explore the question of identity and transformation, but these challenges are now addressed in the contemporary world.

Before turning fully to Césaire's work, I would like to say a few words about the evolution of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* over the four-hundred-year period from 1611 to the present. First, there has been a wide range of responses to Shakespeare's work by actors, writers, and critics. Each dramatic performance of the original play constitutes an act of interpretation. Indeed, several fine books have shown how *The Tempest*—especially the figure of Caliban—has been presented on the stage since 1611, such as Zabus' *Tempests after Shakespeare* and Vaughan and Vaughan's *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History.* In Shakespeare's play, the text refers to Caliban as "deformed," "ugly," "a monster," and so on. He appears to be part human and part animal. In performances over the past four centuries, the bestial Caliban has been presented as part turtle, part frog, at times with webbed feet or fish fins. He has even been played as a buffoon, a drunk, or Vice itself. Directors' choices may be influenced by contemporary controversies as well. For example, in the nineteenth century, Caliban was viewed as a sort of "missing link" between man and ape; in the early twentieth century, he became a proletarian hero; after World War II, Caliban came to symbolize the slaves and oppressed natives under European colonialism. As Caliban gained in heroism, Prospero was transformed from sage and magician into a tyrannical European colonizer.[15]

The brief sketch here traces the options available for presenting the single character of Caliban.[16] In addition, poets, artists, filmmakers, novelists, and political theorists have reinterpreted the play, often with a focus on the conflict between Prospero and Caliban. Beyond productions of the original play, we find adaptation and a freer use of the ideas, characters, and situations from the 1611 play.[17] The focus here will be on Césaire's adaptation of Shakespeare's play to evoke modern conflict.

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15. See Vaughan and Vaughan (1991) 278; on the etymology of Caliban's name, see 26–42.

16. Another change concerns the increasing independence of Miranda (similar to transformations of Nausicaa in twentieth-century adaptations of the *Odyssey*); see Nunez's novel *Prospero's Daughter* (2006) and Zabus (2002) 105–76.

17. See especially Griffiths (1983), Vaughan and Vaughan (1991), and Zabus (2002). Mannoni (1964) offers a psychoanalytical interpretation of both the colonizer and the colonized, criticized by Fanon (1952) 83–108 and Césaire (2000)—his *Discourse on Colonialism*—especially 59–62.

Césaire's 1968 play, *A Tempest,* develops the central theme of Shakespeare's *The Tempest:* authority. Césaire refashions the central figures by pitting a patronizing Prospero against the rebellious Caliban. The struggle for political power is overt. Césaire's Prospero is a colonialist who enslaves (10), threatens whipping (14), is a despot (20), and has concern for the noblemen on the storm-tossed ship only because "they are men of my race, and of high rank" (16).[18] He insults Caliban's "barbaric language"; calls him "ape," "ugly," and "enemy"; and fears that Caliban is "getting a little too emancipated" (10).[19] Prospero is explicitly presented as an imperialist. Before his exile, he had been planning to deliberately take possession of the island; he accuses his brother Antonio of "stealing my as-yet-unborn empire from me" (7). When the helpless Europeans reach the island, Prospero seeks their submission, going so far as to assert, "I am Power" (28).[20]

The fully human Caliban is a black slave and a freedom fighter who plots with "a guerrilla force." According to Prospero, "By his insubordination, he's calling into question the whole order of the world" (50). In Shakespeare, Caliban asserts that he had first claim to the island, before Prospero arrived and conquered it (1.2.334–77). In Césaire's play, Prospero's authority on the island is once again disputed. The goal of his Caliban is quite clear: "To get back my island and regain my freedom" (62). When Prospero asks, "What would you be without me?" Caliban retorts,

> Without you? I'd be the king, that's what I'd be, the King of the Island. The king of the island given me by my mother, Sycorax. (12)[21]

Language and names are defined in terms of this struggle. Shakespeare's Prospero is said to have taught Caliban how to speak (1.2.335–68), yet Césaire rewrites this exchange. His Prospero says,

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18. Page references to Césaire's *A Tempest* follow Miller's translation of Césaire (1992)—in only a few passages have I modified his translation.

19. Prospero is also uneasy about Ariel's plans once he has been liberated (59–60).

20. Davis (1997) 159 finds that Prospero's exercise of magic reveals "the protagonist's desire for absolute power"; cf. Arnold (1978) 242. Césaire (in Belhassen (1972) 176) comments, "To me Prospero is the complete totalitarian. I am always surprised when others consider him the wise man who 'forgives.' What is most obvious, even in Shakespeare's version, is the man's absolute will to power."

21. See Dayan (1992) 128 on Prospero's act of usurpation: "He takes the island away from Caliban, an 'inhabitant' who is so savage and inhuman that the island can be described in Shakespeare's stage directions as 'uninhabited.'" Césaire's Caliban speaks of Sycorax, a terrestrial spirit, as still alive and speaking to him in dreams (11–12), whereas "the earth is dead" for Prospero. For Prospero as "anti-Nature," see Arnold (1978) 247–48.

> You could at least thank me for having taught you to speak at all. You, a savage . . . a dumb animal, a beast I educated, trained, dragged up from the bestiality that still clings to you. (11)

Caliban responds,

> You didn't teach me a thing! Except to jabber in your own language so that I could understand your orders: chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because you're too lazy to do it yourself. And as for your learning, did you ever impart any of *that* to me? No, you took care not to. All your science you keep for yourself alone, shut up in those big books.
>
> (11–12)

The "lessons" of Prospero are limited to whatever facilitates master-slave communication.

In the *Odyssey,* the protagonist is able to reclaim who he is by announcing his name, *Odysseus.* He is no longer a beggar or "No-man." Césaire probes deeply into the identity of Caliban, who rejects the name *Caliban.* He tells Prospero, "It's a name given me by your hatred, and every time it's spoken it's an insult" (15).[22] Most disturbing is what has happened to Caliban's sense of self.

> I've decided I don't want to be called Caliban any longer . . . because Caliban isn't my name . . . Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. You talk about history . . . well, that's history, and everyone knows it! Every time you summon me it reminds me of a basic fact, that you've stolen everything from me, even my identity! Uhuru!
>
> (14–15)

Césaire's drama is very much a play of its time, the 1960s. Here Césaire uses Malcolm X as a model for Caliban, who prefers the name *X* to the name

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22. After Caliban rejects the name *Caliban,* Prospero suggests *Cannibal* and *Hannibal,* arguing, "they [slaves] all seem to like historical names" (15). Dayan (1992) 134 comments that Prospero (like the biblical Adam) "falls automatically into the role of renamer."

given to him by his slaveholder.[23] Caliban—not Prospero—will determine his own identity.

Caliban is juxtaposed with Ariel, a mulatto slave, who evokes the principles of Martin Luther King Jr. and follows the doctrine of nonviolent resistance. Ariel speaks of Prospero, Caliban, and himself as "brothers" (20, 22–23). Ariel even hopes to force Prospero to "acknowledge his own injustice" (22). Yet Prospero is defiant: "You'll have your [freedom] when I'm good and ready" (10). The play presents Ariel seeking freedom yet still hopeful for reconciliation, while Caliban rejects his name and ponders who he has now become. In Césaire's hands, the name *Caliban* has now come to symbolize resistance and independence, as well as a fluidity of self that seeks freedom and a new name.[24]

The twentieth-century drama also differs regarding Caliban's attempted sexual assault on Miranda. In Shakespeare, Caliban admits his intentions and wishes he had succeeded.

> Would 't had been done!
> Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
> This isle with Calibans.
>
> (1.2.352–54)

Césaire's Caliban insists that Prospero is at fault.

> Listen, you old goat, you're the one that put those dirty thoughts in my head. Let me tell you something: I couldn't care less about your daughter. (13)

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23. *Uhuru,* a Swahili word meaning "freedom" or "independence," became an anticolonialist slogan in Kenya in the 1950s and elsewhere in the 1960s; see Arnold (1978) 240. Nixon (1987) 557 speaks of "the burgeoning of both international black consciousness and more localized nationalist movements. Between 1957 and 1973 the vast majority of African and the larger Caribbean colonies won their independence." Zabus (2002) 47 discusses Black Muslims in the United States rejecting their names, wishing to be called by the name *X.*

24. In his interview in Presson (1996) 192, Walcott addresses the problem of identity: "I think the condition of colonialism, or of any first migration of people who were given another language, means the erosion of identity and the desperation to preserve their identity, which can sometimes be punished or banned . . . You have to go through a whole process of becoming a name that you have been given. It's the process and technique of removing identity and altering identity so you can rule or can dominate."

While the struggle for power is based on Shakespeare's play, the focus has narrowed from several confrontations (including that among the Italian nobles) to a contest between Prospero and Caliban.

Certain passages and characters clearly build on Shakespeare. Gonzalo is still a good man, loyal to Prospero. Ferdinand once again thinks he has become king, believing his father drowned (17).[25] Yet Césaire's work often differs from Shakespeare's play in diction, style, and characterization.[26] In the opening scene of the storm at sea, the boatswain tells the Italian nobles to go below. Reminded that there is royalty aboard, the boatswain uses graphic language to clarify the situation.

> Well, there's someone who doesn't give a fuck more about the King that he does about you or me, and he's called the Gale. His Majesty the Gale! And right now, he's in control and we're all his subjects. (4)

Once more the storm at sea levels the playing field: as is colorfully expressed here, those with authority and their subordinates are equally subject to powers greater than themselves.[27]

In addition, the same romance appears in both plays, yet Césaire explicitly recognizes the romantic parallels between *The Tempest* and the *Odyssey.* Glimpsing Miranda, Césaire's Ferdinand says,

> Seeing the young lady, more beautiful than any wood-nymph, I might have been Ulysses on Nausicaa's isle. (18)

This brief allusion points to the potential for romance found in both Homer's and Shakespeare's works, as Césaire self-consciously links his Shakespearean model with Homeric epic. This comparison reminds the audience that—as far as Ferdinand knows—he, like Odysseus (Ulysses), is the sole survivor of

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25. Also in both plays, Sebastian wonders whether the island is even inhabited (25); Alonso thinks his son, Ferdinand, is dead (28); and Trinculo believes that everyone else has perished (38, 41; cf. Stephano at 40).

26. Arnold (1978) 238 notes that another innovation is the theme of religious fanaticism: Césaire's Prospero, placed on the island by the church, works under orders of the Inquisition.

27. Saint Elmo's fire, merely described in flashback in Shakespeare, is presented in this opening scene. Césaire suggests that either hell or paradise await the crew and shipwrecked survivors: note "devils" (5) and "inaccessible Paradise" (8).

the wreck. Césaire also adds a twist to the anticipated "divine epiphany." Ferdinand asks, "What is this that I see before me: A goddess? A mortal?" A less innocent Miranda responds, "I know what *I'm* seeing: a flatterer" (17).[28]

A striking innovation in Césaire's play is that before the opening storm scene, a master of ceremonies invites the actors to choose masks for their characters: "To each his character, to each character his mask" (3). The theme of transformation is signaled in this additional scene with an overt declaration that each actor must assume a role before action can begin.[29] Like Shakespeare's play, this twentieth-century *Tempest* explores personal transformation—both in romantic terms (for Miranda and Ferdinand) and in terms of changing one's social status (Ariel's and Caliban's quests for freedom).

For all his hatred, Césaire's Caliban refuses to be a murderer, whereas Shakespeare's Caliban was ready to "batter his [Prospero's] skull" (3.2.87–97). After Césaire's Caliban sets his coup in motion with Stephano and Trinculo, Prospero bares his chest and taunts Caliban.

> PROSPERO: Strike! Go on strike! Strike your Master, your benefactor!
> Don't tell me you're going to spare him!
> *Caliban raises his arm, but hesitates.*
> Go on! You don't dare! See, you're nothing but an animal . . . you don't know how to kill.
> CALIBAN: Defend yourself! I'm not a murderer.
> PROSPERO: The worse for you. You've lost your chance. Stupid as a slave!
> And now, enough of this farce. Ariel! Ariel, take charge of the prisoners! (56–57)

By his decision not to murder Prospero, Caliban proves himself to be more humane—and less "savage"—than Prospero.[30]

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28. Arnold (1978) 243 finds Miranda to speak "in a decidedly vulgar manner"; thus Césaire invalidates "the doctrine of high birth predisposing toward virtue, a doctrine he has taken care to exclude both structurally and thematically."

29. Arnold (1978) 237 suggests that the master of ceremonies asking actors to choose masks in the prologue corresponds to Prospero's epilogue in Shakespeare where Prospero "identifies himself as the masque presenter."

30. Arnold (1978) 248 remarks: "As Prospero points out, Caliban does not have the ability to commit murder, a characteristic of Prospero's own humanity." Dayan (1992) 135 notes that Caliban "somehow stops short of revolution."

Of particular interest is Césaire's ending of the play. Prospero puts an optimistic spin on his island life with Caliban.[31]

> In spite of everything I'm fond of you, Caliban. Come, let's make peace. We've lived together for ten years and worked side by side. Ten years count for something, after all! We've ended up by becoming compatriots! (63)

This is unacceptable, an affront to Caliban's perspective on his life since Prospero's arrival.

> For years I bowed my head,
> for years I took it, all of it—
> your insults, your ingratitude . . .
> and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest,
> your condescension.
> But now, it's over!
> Over, do you hear? (64)

Caliban disputes Prospero's version of their past as harmonious and cooperative. He issues a new threat.

> At the moment
> you're still stronger than I am.
> But I don't give a damn for your power
> or for your dogs or your police or your inventions!
> And do you know why?
> It's because I know I'll get you.
> I'll impale you! And on a stake that you've sharpened yourself! (64)

Caliban articulates his determined resistance, as his self-image has been transformed. By now, he has rejected Prospero's denigration and come to realize who he really is.

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31. Concerned about their effect on the "natives," Gonzalo warns, "If the island is inhabited, as I believe, and if we colonize it, as is my hope, then we have to take every precaution not to import our shortcomings, yes, what we call civilization. They must stay as they are: savages, noble and good savages, free, without any complexes or complications" (25). This language recalls Mannoni (1964) 13 on the presumed inferiority complex of those who are colonized; cf. Arnold (1978) 240.

Prospero, you're a great magician:
you're an old hand at deception.
And you lied to me so much,
about the world, about myself,
that you ended up by imposing on me
an image of myself:
"underdeveloped," as you say, "inferior,"
that's how you made me see myself!
And I hate that image . . . and it's false!
And now I know you, you old cancer,
and I also know myself! (64)

Prospero's magic—his art of "deception"—consists of tricking Africans and their descendants into thinking of themselves as subhuman, uncivilized, "inferior." Denouncing this chauvinistic idea of European superiority, Caliban is finally able to see himself afresh.[32]

Césaire's Prospero changes his mind about sailing back to Europe. He will not return to his former status as duke in Italy. Prospero comes to believe that it is his "destiny" to stay on the island, which "is mute without me" (66). We have gone beyond shipwreck as a means of bringing figures into collision and beyond Shakespeare as a model. Prospero decides to stay on the island after everyone except Caliban departs. Caliban explains Prospero's motivation in terms of a "colonial" mentality.

You have a chance to get it over with:
you can pick up and leave,
you can go back to Europe.
But the hell you will!
I'm sure you won't leave.
You make me laugh with your "mission"!
Your "vocation"!
Your vocation is to hassle me.
And that's why you'll stay,
just like those guys who founded the colonies

32. Davis (1997) 162 finds this a bold move: "In Caliban's strenuous repudiation of the image of himself imposed by the colonizer we recognize the same urge to reconstruct the self, to salvage the self from the ruses of the other, that constituted the thematic backbone of [Césaire's] 'Journal of a Homecoming.'" Prospero describes the effect Caliban has had on him: "Well, I hate you too! Because you're the one who first made me doubt myself" (66).

> and who now can't live anywhere else.
> You're just an old addict, that's what you are! (65)

Césaire's Prospero has become the colonizer who remains even after colonial independence.[33] After exploring the transformation of Caliban (first enslaved, then asserting his independence), Césaire turns to the issue of Prospero's new role. If they both stay on the island, can Prospero and Caliban coexist? Césaire offers no clear answer. After everyone else has gone, Prospero still claims to "protect civilization" (68).

> It's as though the jungle was laying siege to the cave . . . But I shall stand firm . . . I shall not let my work perish! I shall protect civilization! (*He fires in all directions.*) They're done for! Now, this way I'll be able to have some peace and quiet for a while. But it's cold. Odd how the climate's changed. Cold on this island . . . Have to think about making a fire . . . (68)

The play closes with a powerless Prospero who calls on Caliban in vain and with Caliban's song of freedom.

> PROSPERO: Well, Caliban, old fellow, it's just us two now, here on the island . . . only you and me. You and me. You-me . . . me-you! What in the hell is he up to? Caliban!
> CALIBAN'S SONG: Freedom hi-day, Freedom hi-day! (68)

The final scene of Césaire's *A Tempest* offers no true resolution: we are truly left up in the air.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Prospero reverted to his former role as Duke of Milan. In Césaire's *A Tempest,* we find a twist. Caliban is now free, but Prospero will not leave, and their relationship is no longer defined—a reflection perhaps of the challenges in articulating an identity in the late twentieth-century Caribbean. The play reflects historical reality, as we are left to contemplate an uncharted future.[34]

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33. Zabus (2002) 52 speaks of the "addictive need of the colonizer" and believes that the reference to Prospero's "vocation" alludes to Mannoni (51). In his *Discourse on Colonialism,* Césaire (2000) 35, 41 states, "First we must study how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word . . . Colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man."

34. Davis (1997) 161 comments, "The unresolved, 'open' ending points to a postcolonial

Aimé Césaire (1913–2008) led a varied career. He was born in Martinique and studied in Paris as a young man. He became involved with Marxism and surrealism and was one of the founders of the negritude movement.[35] As a writer, he produced plays, poetry, and political works such as *Discourse on Colonialism.* Césaire was also a successful politician. He served as mayor in Fort-de-France on the island of Martinique (1946–93), cosponsored the law that gave "departmental" status in France to Martinique and Guadeloupe, and was elected a deputy to the French National Assembly (for the first time in 1947).[36]

Opportunities for transformation are offered in Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* yet these possibilities are rejected. Odysseus reclaims his status as king of Ithaca; Prospero returns to Italy as Duke of Milan. By contrast, modern reworkings of these shipwreck tales emphasize the possibility of a new self. Using a work from the canon of "Western" literature, Césaire resists the European perspective, in part by pointing to the evils of slavery and imperialism, in part by refusing to revert to the status quo at the end.[37] This sharp deviation reflects the fact that both expatriates and the descendants of African slaves now live on these islands.

Shipwreck in Outer Space: *Forbidden Planet*

The final "shipwreck" under discussion in this chapter appears in science fiction. At its best, science fiction is able to address profound issues regarding human nature, what the future may look like, and what life on other planets may be like. In such scenarios, rocketships might be wrecked on what are

limbo in which ex-master and ex-slave are living by mutually incompatible principles and aspirations"; cf. Nixon (1987) 576–77. Nevertheless, Césaire (in Belhassen (1972) 177) insists that "Prospero and Caliban are necessary to each other."

35. In an interview with Depestre (1971), Césaire speaks of the early twentieth century as a period "in which the negro was ashamed of himself. The atmosphere of rejection in which we lived, conditioned to feelings of inferiority" (78); blacks were "the only race whose very humanity has been questioned" (80); negritude was thus "really a form of resistance, to the politics of assimilation" (76); from a different perspective, negritude was "a fight against alienation" from black heritage and the historical link to Africa (77). See Davis (1997) 12 as to whether Césaire himself coined the French term *négritude,* a 1930s version of what came to be called "black power" or "black consciousness" in the 1960s.

36. This brief overview is perhaps misleading. Césaire left the Communist Party in 1956; he advocated "departmental" status for Martinique in 1946, but by the late 1950s, he hoped for more autonomy.

37. See Nixon (1987) 573.

literally—from the perspective of earth—new worlds (the term *astronaut* is derived from Greek words that translate as "star-sailor," a metaphorical coinage from sea travel). *Forbidden Planet* (1956), set in the twenty-third century, tells how a spaceship, the United Planets cruiser *C-57D,* travels to Altair IV (the fourth planet orbiting the star Altair) to search for survivors from a landing twenty years earlier by another ship , the *Bellerophon.* Upon arrival, they discover only a father, Dr. Morbius; a daughter, Altaira (or "Alta"); and a robot named Robby. Morbius tells the search and rescue team that the other crew members died, that the *Bellerophon* was vaporized in the first year, and that they now face no hardships and need no assistance—in fact, the second ship is warned to stay away.

Although we are moving from drama to the movies, it soon becomes obvious that the literary model for this film is Shakespeare's *The Tempest:* Morbius (played by Walter Pigeon), a widower philologist who engages in esoteric research, is the futuristic equivalent of Prospero the magician; Altaira (played by Anne Francis), the naive teenage daughter who has never met young men before, corresponds to Miranda. Though Altaira does not speak the lines "O brave new world / that has such people in 't," the same sentiment is evident. While swimming, she conveys her innocence by asking, "What's a bathing suit?" Later, when Commander Adams (played by Leslie Nielsen) approaches her, she asks, "Why don't you kiss me like everybody else?"

Robby the Robot fills in for Ariel, Prospero's servant. A supersized predecessor of R2-D2 from *Star Wars,* Robby knows over 180 languages, has remarkable strength but no feelings, and is programmed not to harm rational beings with his "blaster." At one point, Robby, who can replicate any molecule, supplies the second ship's cook with sixty gallons of bourbon—it has been a long journey with "no beer, no women, no pool parlors."

As in Shakespeare's model, neither ship in the *Forbidden Planet* has actually crashed. The situation is familiar: a small group finds itself isolated, with mysteries to unravel. In common with much of science fiction, the planet Altair IV presents familiar earthlike features combined with exotic alien aspects. The gravity of Altair (.897) is close to that of Earth; there is a high level of oxygen in the atmosphere (no helmets or breathing equipment is needed); however, the sky is green, the trees are purple, the landscape is barren, and there are two moons. The planet's otherworldly sense is enhanced by the film's music: *Forbidden Planet* is the first film to have an entirely electronic score, employing a theremin (the instrument familiar from the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations"). This was also the first film in

which humans employ a flying saucer for space travel. Long distances are traversed by employing "hyperdrive" (a perennial standby in science fiction).

The new ship's crew attempts to investigate what happened over the past twenty years, but Morbius is evasive. There are two related mysteries. Morbius has discovered that an earlier race, the Krell, had previously inhabited Altair IV and advanced "a million years" beyond human civilization. They created a society without sickness, insanity, or crime. They discovered how to free themselves from a physical existence, allowing their intelligence to reach "a new scale of scientific values." So who were the Krell, what did they discover, and what happened to them?

The other mystery is what killed the crew of the *Bellerophon* (Morbius' ship) and soon kills three of Commander Adams' crew. At first, a giant footprint is the only evidence of an invisible monster that is invulnerable even to atomic fission (see chapter 6 in this book for discussion of the footprint as a recurring motif since Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*). It turns out that though the Krell could create by thought alone, they failed to account for "the mindless beasts of the unconscious," in this case, the demons of Morbius' subconscious mind. The monster is produced by the doctor's mind (this "monster from the id" could be visualized in the original 1950s screenings with red-tinted glasses). Morbius had used a brain-boosting machine made by the Krell to increase his IQ; this allowed him to tap into the machine's unlimited powers. When he fears leaving the planet, seeks to protect his daughter, or resents new arrivals, the machine produces a monster of his subconscious urges.

In the end, Morbius throws himself between his daughter and this monster of his own making, fatally wounding himself. Only too late does he realize the dangers to any race incapable of taming its irrational desires. The crew rescues Altaira and escapes from the planet before it explodes from the Krells' destructive thermonuclear reactors. This film made in the mid-1950s reflects both the contemporary fear of nuclear annihilation and an American fascination with Freud.[38]

Forbidden Planet's parallels with Shakespeare's play are not exact. While the "id monster" may be thought of as playing the role of Caliban in respect to his irrational desires, Robby the Robot is the tireless servant who gets drunk as does Shakespeare's Caliban. Also, the invisible monster is a shape-

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38. As Zabus (2002) 187 puts it, the "journey to an outer planet is also a journey into the interior" of the human mind and its destructive potential; see her discussion of *Forbidden Planet* at 181–94.

shifter, "renewing its molecular structure from one microsecond to the next": this recalls the protean Ariel. Perhaps more straightforward is the identification of Commander Adams with Ferdinand, as Adams awakens the love interest of Alta (Adams—like Adam in the biblical garden—may be said to teach this "Eve" about the forbidden fruit of sexuality). We even find an echo of Gonzalo's hope for a perfect society in the seemingly utopian civilization of the Krell.[39]

The works discussed in this chapter indicate the range of variation on the Shakespearean model, including spiritual transformation, political independence, and the potential, even in outer space, for utopia and tragedy. Luke's narrative of Paul's shipwreck is an early example of the *Tempest* scenario: a group shipwreck in which everyone makes it safely to shore. It also puts a different type of hero front and center: Paul saves the lives—and souls—of his fellow travelers. Césaire's reworking of *The Tempest* sets Shakespeare's play in the postcolonial world of the twentieth century, with Caliban as a freedom fighter, while Prospero represents the last vestiges of European colonialism. *Forbidden Planet* relocates the *Tempest* scenario to the world of science fiction, yet conflicts from Shakespeare's play resonate clearly in the film.

Césaire's *A Tempest* deviates from the classical model's resolution, suggesting that closure is not in sight. At the time of its production (and still today), the resolution to the Caribbean drama of black and white, of Prospero and Caliban—that quest for articulating a postcolonial identity and asserting one's own power—has yet to reach its final act. The Shakespearean model has been reworked to portray how independent islanders now seek to define themselves.

39. *Forbidden Planet* exerted considerable influence on Gene Roddenbery's *Star Trek,* the *Star Wars* movies, and the television series *Lost in Space,* including appearances by Robby the Robot (who also appears in episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and as junk in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*).

CHAPTER 6

Culture and Spiritual Rebirth in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

We now turn to Daniel Defoe's novel *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (1719), which centers on a man who lives on an uninhabited island for over twenty-four years. It established what we might call the canonical sequence:

> Departure from homeland, travel, disaster, stranding of a single survivor.
> Acquisition of shelter, clothing, agriculture, and defense.
> Then encountering others, establishing communication and a social hierarchy.
> And finally rescue and reentry into the "old" world.

There are two areas of great interest. First, because he is alone, Crusoe must reestablish human civilization on the deserted island. Crusoe attempts to re-create the old world he was familiar with by "reinventing" human technological and cultural advances. A second remarkable feature is Crusoe's spiritual rebirth, a transformation recounted in Crusoe's own voice as the central character explores cause, responsibility, and divine influence with regard to the events of his life. In addition, we find explicit adoption of new roles—monarch, herdsman, shipwright, and many more. All this is recorded in his journal, for Crusoe becomes recorder, chronicler, and storyteller, like Odysseus.

As was true for *The Tempest,* this work is set against the historical context of European colonization of the New World. In addition, contemporary

ideas regarding man living "in a state of nature," wholly isolated from society, form the intellectual backdrop. For the writing of this novel, we again find an immediate trigger: the story of Alexander Selkirk, stranded on an island for four years, was brought to light just a few years before Defoe's writing of *Robinson Crusoe.*

Five Pivotal Events

There are three main sections to the novel. The first begins in England, as we learn of Robinson Crusoe, born in Yorkshire (1632), whose "thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the world" (7).[1] At eighteen years of age, he runs off to the sea "without asking God's blessing, or my father's" (19). Crusoe ultimately sails to Africa, for "I had a mind to see the world" (15; cf. 7, 14). He is enslaved by a Moorish captain, but he escapes after two years, is rescued by a Portuguese captain, and is brought to "the Americas." He works as a successful planter for four years in Brazil but is persuaded to join a slave-buying expedition to Africa.

This sets the stage for the all-important second section: Crusoe encounters two storms that drive him back to the north coast of South America. He is the only one to survive a shipwreck and ends up spending twenty-eight years on an island near Trinidad, off the coast of what is now Venezuela. Naturally, this second section will claim our main attention here.

Crusoe's journey to buy slaves begins with good sailing, but a great storm then blows for twelve days; next, a second storm "drove us . . . out of the very way of all human commerce" (35). Crusoe's ship is now far from frequented trade routes. The crew is beset by despair and ignorance, for they do not know where they are or how long the ship will hold out.

> In a word, we sat looking one upon another, and expecting death every moment, and every man acting accordingly, as preparing for another world. (36)

As land is sighted, the ship strikes sand, and the crew gets into the ship's boat. A great wave immediately overturns it, separating everyone. Crusoe

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1. I follow the text of Defoe (2001) edited by Richetti. Seidel (1991) ix notes that a youth named Timothy Cruso (no *e*) was a classmate in Defoe's school and a later acquaintance in London.

struggles to make it to land, fighting the undertow and waves. Dashed against rocks and left senseless, he speaks of himself as "half-dead." Upon reaching land, Crusoe gives thanks to God but finds it difficult to describe what has happened.

> I believe it is impossible to express to the life what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so sav'd, as I may say, out of the very grave. (38)[2]

Crusoe then walks on shore, lifting his hands in unusual gestures and "reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and that there should not be one soul sav'd but my self" (38–39).

The next three-quarters of the novel tell of Crusoe's experiences on the island. He realizes he has no food, drink, or clothes. His apparent prospects are either to perish from hunger or be devoured by wild beasts. Since he has no weapons, he gets up into the safety of a tree for his first night. The next morning, Crusoe sees that the ship has moved closer to land, so that he can reach it at low tide and bring back a wide array of supplies and provisions. Over the next two weeks, he conveys to shore food, rum, tools, clothes, ammunition, powder, and arms. He recognizes that a carpenter's chest of saws and hammers is "much more valuable than a ship loading of gold would have been at that time" (41).

We find many similarities between Crusoe's disaster and the Homeric shipwreck. Like Odysseus, Crusoe is also driven off course by winds, holds fast to a piece of rock, and seeks protection from animals in a wooded area.[3] Rebirth imagery appears in both stories (in the descriptions "half-dead" and "out of the very grave" in Defoe's). Crusoe's situation, however, is quite distinct. Odysseus was fortunate to have the Phaeacians or Calypso provide him with food, water, and clothing, but Crusoe's island is uninhabited, so he will have to fend for himself. While Crusoe must start over to attain food, shelter, and protection, the materials he brings from the ship are a means of transposing his old life onto this new solitary existence: these physical objects establish continuity with the past.

Crusoe climbs a hill to determine whether he is on the mainland or an island.

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2. See also, "nothing can describe the confusion of thought which I felt when I sunk into the water" (37; cf. 71, 104).

3. Cf. *Odyssey* 9.80–84, 5.426–35, and 5.466–93.

> I saw my fate to my great affliction, (*viz.*) that I was in an island environ'd every way with the sea, no land to be seen, except some rocks which lay a great way off, and two small islands less than this, which lay about three leagues to the west. (43)

Crusoe's next task is to secure himself against savages and beasts and to obtain basic necessities such as fresh water and shelter (47–48). Ultimately, by the third year, he settles into a routine: each day, he prays to God; hunts; cures, preserves, and cooks food; and engages in various labors.

Obviously, the shipwreck that brings Crusoe to this island sets the stage for his challenges over the next twenty-eight years on the island. But there are five momentous events in the story, including the shipwreck itself. The second event comes after eighteen years alone and begins what Crusoe calls "a new scene of my life."

> It happen'd one day about noon going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surpris'd with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand: I stood like one thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an apparition. (122)

His island has not been entirely deserted (127). Crusoe is terrified and runs back to his fort, "mistaking every bush and tree . . . to be a man" (122). At first, his terrors result "purely from apprehension on the account of the print of a man's foot which I had seen" (129), but he soon discovers the remains of a cannibal feast on the far side of the island: human skulls, hands, feet, bones, and the fire pit in which people were cooked (130–31). He marvels that he saw no evidence of other humans for eighteen years, explaining that now it became "my only business to keep my self entirely concealed where I was" (131).[4]

The third momentous event occurs in the twenty-fourth year, when Crusoe rescues the man he comes to call "Friday." As Crusoe watches a group of cannibals prepare to eat their prisoners, one prisoner flees and is pursued by three men. Crusoe helps him escape, and the cannibals leave. Crusoe

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4. Robert Louis Stevenson called the moment when Crusoe sees a footprint on the sand "one of the supreme moments in imaginative literature," the others being Achilles shouting against the Trojans (*Iliad*), Odysseus drawing his bow on the suitors (*Odyssey*), and Christian running with his fingers in his ears in *Pilgrim's Progress;* see J. R. Moore quoted in R. West (1998) ix. Seidel (1991) 68 finds Crusoe's reaction to be "recidivistic": "He wants to hide what he has made, to let nature take back its own forms."

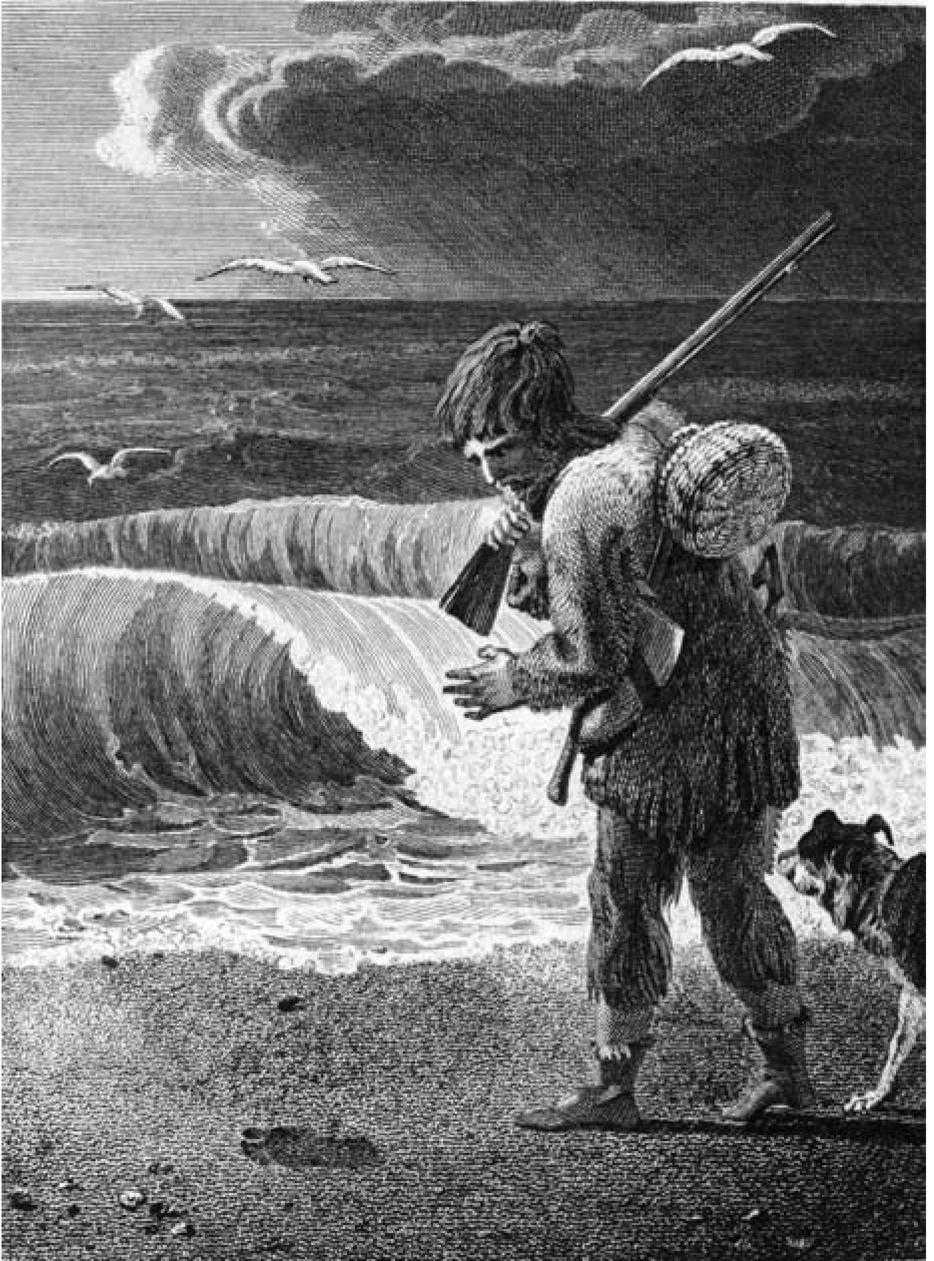

Fig. 5. “Robinson Crusoe discovers the Print of a Man’s Foot.” Illustration by Thomas Stothard; engraving by Thomas Medland found in Defoe (1790, vol. 1, facing p. 194). (By permission of the British Library Board.)

declares that the twenty-fourth to twenty-fifth year, during which he builds a relationship with the former prisoner he calls "Friday," the pleasantest year of his entire time spent on the island (167). Friday ultimately communicates that he lived among the "savages" on the mainland and that he traveled to the northwest side of the island from the mouth of the Orinoco River (170).[5] The fourth major event takes place in the twenty-seventh year of Crusoe's "captivity," with another cannibalistic expedition to the island, this time comprising twenty-one "savages" in three canoes with three prisoners. Seeing that one of the prisoners is a bearded, clothed European (a Spanish prisoner, it turns out), Crusoe and Friday drive off or kill the warriors in a fierce engagement and rescue the Spaniard and another prisoner about to be eaten, who happens to be Friday's father (183–88).

The fifth significant event comes in the twenty-eighth year, the time of Crusoe's "deliverance." An English ship taken by mutineers puts in near Crusoe's island. In short order, Crusoe overwhelms the mutineers and recaptures the ship. The captain then tells Crusoe, "There's your ship, for she is all yours, and so are we and all that belong to her." Unable to speak, Crusoe describes his surprise:

> Such was the flood of joy in my breast, that it put all my spirits into confusion; at last it broke out into tears, and in a little while after, I recovered my speech. (215)

Crusoe finally leaves his island on 19 December 1686, after twenty-eight years, two months, and nineteen days.

The third and final section of the novel concerns Crusoe's "reentry" into the old world from which he had vanished. In London, he learns that his parents have died in his absence. He also journeys to Portugal for a reunion with the Portuguese captain who rescued him off the African coast many years earlier. Crusoe must reestablish who he is, for the trustees of his estate believed "you were lost," with "all the world believing so also" (221).[6] Crusoe discovers that his wealth from the plantation in Brazil has made him a rich man: "the joy almost killed me" (224). We may again compare Crusoe's situ-

5. Five months after Crusoe witnesses cannibalism on the far side of the island, he finds the wreck of a second ship with no one left alive; this leads to a second scavenging expedition that brings liquor, powder, a shovel and pot, kettles, and chests with shirts, handkerchiefs, shoes, and eleven hundred pieces of eight (151–53).

6. Since Crusoe had been missing so long without proof of his death, he was declared to have been under "civil death" (221).

ation with that of Odysseus, gone for almost twenty years and thought dead even by his family in Ithaca.

Starting a new life in England, Crusoe marries and has three children. When his wife dies, he returns to his estate in Brazil (226) and even visits his old island, where he finds the Spaniards from the mainland—shipmates of the man he saved from cannibals—now living with women and twenty children. Defoe left open the possibility of a sequel, which he did write: a second volume concerns the around-the-world adventures of Robinson Crusoe.[7]

In *The Tempest,* everything transpires within a single day and in one place, whereas Defoe's novel presents the life of a man, starting with birth and childhood and including early travels, an extended look at over two dozen years on an island, and even the aftermath. The presentation generally follows Crusoe's experiences chronologically—his life as he lived it. I now turn to the most important and influential features of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe:* the recapitulation of human cultural development and Crusoe's transformation, both in terms of his activities and through a spiritual rebirth.

The Recapitulation of Human Cultural Development

A single person seeking to survive on a lonely island has to meet basic needs such as food, water, and shelter; then, if possible, more advanced technology, defense, and communication may be established.[8] This is precisely what we find on the desert island of Crusoe. He begins with necessities.

> I consulted several things in my situation which I found would be proper for me, 1st. health, and fresh water . . . 2dly. shelter from the heat of the sun, 3dly. security from ravenous creatures, whether men or beasts, 4thly. a view to the sea, that if God sent any ship in sight, I might not lose any advantage for my deliverance, of which I was not willing to banish all my expectation yet. (48)

Crusoe engages in a wide array of activities developed over human history: hunting, toolmaking, agriculture, domesticating animals, and other endeavors. He has significant success with hunting each day. His skill in

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7. Part 2, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe,* and volume 3, *Serious Reflections,* came out in the next twelve months, but my discussion here is limited to volume 1.

8. See Richetti (2005) 192 and Damrosch (1985) 210.

toolmaking may at times be rather crude, but he persists: at one point he makes a shovel, "though never was a shovel . . . made after that fashion, or so long a making" (60). Agriculture results from the absentminded shaking out of some husks of grain from a poultry feed bag. Crusoe is startled when he sees stalks of green barley come up "the same as English barley" (63). He goes on to sow barley and rice, learning that there are two seedtimes and two harvests per year in his island climate (83–84).

> It might be truly said, that now I work'd for my bread; 'tis a little wonderful, and what I believe few people have thought much upon, (*viz.*) the strange multitude of little things necessary in the providing, producing, curing, dressing, making, and finishing this one article of bread. (94)

Even in early civilizations, a division of labor allowed for the expertise of professionals; the circumstances here demand that everything must be done by Crusoe alone.

The domestication of animals arises after Crusoe "lames" a goat.

> This was the first time that I entertain'd a thought of breeding up some tame creatures, that I might have food when my powder and shot was all spent. (61)

Crusoe is most successful in increasing their ranks: after two years, he has forty-three goats, along with a thriving dairy operation that produces a gallon or two of milk per day plus butter and cheese (117).

> I consider'd the keeping up a breed of tame creatures thus at my hand, would be a living magazine of flesh, milk, butter and cheese, for me as long as I liv'd in the place, if it were to be forty years. (121)

Hunting, catching turtles, cultivating crops, raising animals, and drying of grapes provide Crusoe with a reliable daily menu (83).

Next come shelter and clothing. For his initial shelter, Crusoe goes under a tent made from the ship's sail (45); next, he drives stakes around it in a semicircle to make a fence; finally, he fashions a larger tent with a hammock and obtains a cellar and other rooms by digging out a cave (48–49).[9] For clothing, Crusoe uses animal skins and is soon wearing a goatskin cap,

9. Later he adds a roof, rafters, and "thatching" with tree boughs (55).

waistcoat, and breeches and carrying a goatskin umbrella against both heat and rain (107–8).[10] Other skills he develops include medicine and the use of fire for baking bread and rudimentary ceramics; he also routinely keeps a calendar and reads the Bible.[11] A great deal of time, energy, and description is devoted to Crusoe's defensive fortifications, which include a palisade, a double wall, and ladders (55).[12] Crusoe reflects on his capacity for invention,

> Every man may be in time master of every mechanick art. I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time by labour, application and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools; however I made abundance of things, even without tools, and some with no more tools than an adze and a hatchet, which perhaps were never made that way before, and that with infinite labour. (55)

He concludes, "[T]ime and necessity made me a compleat natural mechanick" (58).

In view of all this, it needs to be repeated that Crusoe does not start from scratch—he was fortunate that the wrecked ship was within reach and that he could convey from it tools, materials, guns, and ammunition. He himself recognizes this, in a counterfactual statement.

> I must have perish'd first. That I should have liv'd, if I had not perish'd, like a meer savage. That if I had kill'd a goat, or a fowl, by any contrivance, I had no way to flea [flay] or open them, or part the flesh from the skin and the bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my teeth, and pull it with my claws like a beast. (104)

The danger is obvious: without supplies from the ship, Crusoe would have lived "like a beast." Instead, he is able to reclaim a measure of "modern" civilization by recapitulating human technological development, building on

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10. Due to the unrelenting sun, Crusoe considers his umbrella "the most necessary thing I had about me, next to my gun" (119).

11. Fire was "absolutely necessary" (51). Regarding ceramics, the accident of finding a broken piece in the fire teaches an important lesson (96; cf. 114). For the reckoning of time, he cuts a notch into a post every day, "and every seventh notch was as long again as the rest, and every first day of the month as long again as that long one; and thus I kept my kalendar, or weekly, monthly, and yearly reckoning of time" (52; cf. the solar calendar in *Cast Away*).

12. Seidel (1991) 9 comments that "Crusoe loves enclosures within enclosures" and that when "he stakes out a half circle on the plain around an indentation in the hillside and insulates himself again—Crusoe and his property are again islanded" (59).

practices from England.[13] It is notable that Crusoe never goes about naked, as doing so would suggest a more savage state. Indeed, part of his "domestication" of Friday consists of dressing him in a European outfit. But the significant point is that Crusoe must impose his will on this "wilderness" to reestablish something close to the life he grew up with.

Crusoe faces many obstacles and is often slowed by ignorance or failure. At first, he does not know what to eat (44). Once he obtains grain, he is not sure how to grind it, to make meal, or to bake bread (94). He is without a plough, harrow, mill, yeast, salt, oven, and various utensils (94–95). Regarding his herd, he notes,

> I that had never milk'd a cow, much less a goat, or seen butter or cheese made, very readily and handily, tho' after a great many essays and miscarriages, made me both butter and cheese at last, and never wanted it afterwards. (117)

In the case of cheese and butter—or pottery—Crusoe's lack of experience leads to many mistakes and "miscarriages." He is never able to make a cask to hold water, and he long lacks a tobacco pipe (62, 85–86). In a sense, he must start from scratch, employing ideas from European culture in order to learn how to be a baker, carpenter, tailor, and so on.

Another aspect of human civilization concerns interaction with others. Although, for a long time, Crusoe is alone and lacks "society" or fellow human beings (118), he does have companionship of a sort. He mentions his dog—a "trusty servant to me many years" (53)—and two cats, and he teaches his parrot, named "Poll," to speak to him (87).

> I quickly learn'd him to know his own name, and at least to speak it out pretty loud "POLL," which was the first word I ever heard spoken in the island by any mouth but my own. (95; cf. 142)

Cut off from all human interaction, Crusoe finds a substitute "companion" in his parrot. A young goat that follows Crusoe "like a dog" becomes "so loving, so gentle, and so fond, that it became from that time one of my domes-

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13. As Seidel (1991) 59 puts it, "[Crusoe] does himself over better by living with the assistance of civilization's provisions from the wrecked ship"; cf. Novak (1963) 50, Richetti (2005) 192, and Watt (1994) 297–98. Cf. the situation of the Spaniards on the mainland without weapons, clothes, or tools (193).

tics also; and would never leave me afterwards" (90). In the end, Crusoe did not have the heart to kill the goat, so it dies of old age (115).

All told, this menagerie comes to be seen by Crusoe as his "little family." Indeed, he finds humor in the gatherings at mealtime.

> It would have made a Stoick smile to have seen me and my little family sit down to dinner; there was my majesty the prince and lord of the whole island; I had the lives of all my subjects at my absolute command. I could hang, draw, give liberty, and take it away, and no rebels among all my subjects.
>
> Then to see how like a King I din'd all alone, attended by my servants, Poll, as if he had been my favourite, was the only person permitted to talk to me. (118)

Even for a single survivor on an uninhabited island, something else inevitably takes the place of human companions. For twenty-three years, Poll, the dog, cats, and kids "were part of my family" (143; cf. my discussion of the movie *Cast Away* in chapter 7).

Contrasting views of the island are proposed. In one sense, the island is idyllic, recalling the biblical garden of Adam and Eve. This is suggested when Crusoe fires his gun while hunting: "I believe it was the first gun that had been fir'd there since the creation of the world" (44). After ten months on the island, he asserts, "I firmly believed that, no human shape had ever set foot upon that place" (79). Also, just as Adam names the animals of the earth, so Crusoe recognizes certain things as new (or at least unknown to him); when he kills a large, tasty bird, he comments, "I knew not what to call it" (59).[14]

Yet the island is also likened to the "civilized" world. Crusoe repeatedly compares features on the island to what he was familiar with in England or Europe.[15] He refers to his habitation as "my own house" (89). When he hollows out the cave behind his defensive walls, he refers to his "kitchen," "dining room," and "cellar" (60). He sets up boards "like a dresser" (61). Upon seeing the footprint in the sand, he returns "to my castle, for so I think I call'd it ever after this . . . [entering through] the hole in the rock which I called a door" (122).

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14. On the idea of Crusoe's island as an Eden, see Damrosch (1985) 193; cf. "Crusoe retreats from history into an Eden innocent of sexuality and of guilt" (197).

15. See Seidel (1991) 119–20.

It is natural that Crusoe looks back to the world he knows so well. With regard to his implements, he continually remembers what things had been like in his home country. His shovel—though crude—was "shaped like ours in England" (59–60). The baskets he makes follow a recollected pattern.

> When I was a boy, I used to take great delight in standing at a basket-makers in the town where my father liv'd, to see them make their wicker-ware; and being, as boys usually are, very officious to help, and a great observer of the manner how they work'd those things, and sometimes lending a hand, I had by this means full knowledge of the methods of it, that I wanted nothing but the materials. (86)

Crusoe also constructs a boat, anchor, and sail (100–102, 109, 138, 180). He is not always successful in his constructions. One time, he tries to set up a wheel for grinding tools, but he

> had never seen any such thing in England, or at least not to take notice how it was done, tho' since I have observ'd it is very common there. (67)

The models from his old world extend as well to reading matter, for Crusoe had a Bible to read on his island "as in England" (174).[16]

But still—for all the imitation of England, both actual and analogous—Crusoe is well aware that he is in a very new situation. Money is useless on his island, perhaps evoking an earlier premonetary period in civilization.

> For as to the money, I had no manner of occasion for it: as 'twas to me as dirt under my feet, and I would have given it all for three or four pair of English shoes and stocking. (152–53)

In describing his outfit and appearance, he recognizes how outlandish he would appear to a fellow Englishman.

> But had any one in England been to meet such a man as I was, it must either have frighted them, or rais'd a great deal of laughter; and as I frequently stood still to look at myself, I could not but smile at the

16. Richetti (2005) 193 comments, "He seeks to appropriate the island, to possess it by turning a wilderness into a domesticated space rather like England."

> notion of my travelling through Yorkshire with such an equipage, and in such a dress. (118)

Crusoe then proceeds to "take a sketch" of his appearance with his goatskin cap, jacket, and breeches. He wore no shoes or stockings but "had made me a pair of some-things, I scarce know what to call them, like buskins, to flap over my legs" (118–19). Often, when going out, he had a saw, hatchet, basket, and gun and his "great clumsy ugly goat-skin umbrella" (119). His beard grew almost a foot, and his whiskers "were of a length and shape monstrous enough, and such as in England would have pass'd for frightful" (119). Crusoe realizes the astonishment his appearance would provoke back home. Though always looking back to English precedent, there is a sense in which Crusoe only becomes an Englishman again when, after twenty-eight years on the island, the English captain supplies him with shirts, neckclothes, gloves, shoes, a hat, stockings, and a suit (215–16). About to return home, Crusoe notes that the money "which had lain by me so long useless" is now once again valuable (218–19).

Crusoe's Transformations and Spiritual Rebirth

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* provides good evidence for the literary connection between shipwrecks and personal transformation, for Robinson Crusoe's arrival on an uninhabited island forces him to "play" a great variety of new roles. Even before his shipwreck, we see Crusoe as a son, a passenger, a merchant, a sailor, a slave, and a planter. Once on the island, he takes on many different tasks: craftsman, tailor, and shipwright, just to name a few.[17] Crusoe acts as a hero in rescuing Friday from death (as he does later for the Spaniard, Friday's father, and the English captain). Crusoe's identity may be thought of in terms of his roles toward others (son, slave, hero) or his activities (farmer, tailor, shipwright, chronicler). In addition, Crusoe performs a religious function in converting Friday to Christianity (166–74). As a saver of souls, he contrasts this role with his previous existence.

> [I] was now to be made an instrument under Providence to save the life, and for ought I knew, the soul of a poor savage, and bring him to

17. For example, "I was now grown a tolerable good taylor" (164); "though I was but a bungling shipwright, yet as I knew the usefulness, and even necessity of [a rudder]" (180).

> the true knowledge of religion, and of the Christian doctrine, that he might know Christ Jesus, to know whom is life eternal. (174)

As a scholar attempting to explain the meaning of biblical passages to his new pupil, Crusoe notes an interesting effect of these "lessons" with Friday.[18]

> *I really inform'd and instructed myself in many things,* that either I did not know, or had not fully consider'd before; but which occurr'd naturally to my mind, upon my searching into them, for the information of this poor savage; and *I had more affection in my enquiry 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. (173–74, my italics)

Thus Crusoe undergoes a further transformation by gaining a profound appreciation of religious matters. At a minimum, he experiences an alteration of sentiment and rejoices that he "was brought to this place" (174). The shipwreck has become a kind of blessing.[19]

Further, in terms of social status, Crusoe comes to see himself as "lord of the whole manor," a "king, or emperor over the whole country which I had possession of" (102–3).[20]

> This was all my own . . . I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had a right of possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance, as completely as any lord of a manor in England. (80)

Once his island is "peopled" by Friday, Friday's father, and the Spaniard, Crusoe comes to see himself as a kind of benevolent monarch.

> How like a king I look'd. First of all, the whole country was my own meer property; so that I had undoubted right of dominion. Secondly, my people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute lord and law-giver;

18. Friday "made me . . . a much better scholar in the Scripture knowledge, than I should ever have been by my own private mere reading" (174).

19. Engélibert (1996) 269 comments that shipwrecks such as this have "two major advantages. Firstly, it makes the hero the sole owner of an unspoiled domain and allows him to explore it. Secondly, it conceals this stroke of good fortune under a semblance of tragedy and thus allows the adventure to take on the dimensions of a myth."

20. Later, Crusoe seeks to view the circumference of "my little kingdom" (109).

Fig. 6. "King of the Island," by Dana Fradon. (By permission of Dana Fradon/*The New Yorker* Collection.)

> they all ow'd their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion of it, for me. (190)

Crusoe then goes on to state that he allows "liberty of conscience," for his subjects were of different religions (Protestant, pagan, and "Papist"). It is fair to say that had Crusoe remained a planter in Brazil—or even remained in England pursuant to his father's wishes—he would never have been forced to play so many new roles. It is the shipwreck that changes him most of all, for he becomes—in a sense, is forced to become in order to survive—a craftsman, scholar, hero, and lord and king. As Joyce puts it,

> The true symbol of the British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who, cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a

> shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman.[21]

In exploring Crusoe's new roles, we may also consider how he is viewed by others. According to Friday, the cannibals would see Crusoe as more than human, for they

> would tell their people they were all kill'd by thunder and lightning, not by the hand of man, and that the two which appear'd, (*viz*) Friday and me, were two heavenly spirits or furies, come down to destroy them and not men with weapons . . . [and] that whoever went to that enchanted island would be destroyed with fire from the gods. (191)

The English captain is also perplexed in trying to ascertain Crusoe's status.

> The poor man, with tears running down his face, and trembling, looking like one astonish'd, return'd, "Am I talking to God, or man! Is it a real man, or an angel!" (200)

We know well that islanders frequently mistake someone's identity upon sudden arrival—this is familiar from the *Odyssey* and *The Tempest*. To the cannibals, Crusoe has supernatural powers; his role in saving the English captain conjures up an angel or divinity.[22]

Back in England, Crusoe faces trials of another sort. He must, in some sense, reclaim his previous identity. In Portugal, Crusoe is asked to

> enter my name in a publick register, with [the Portuguese captain's] affidavit, affirming upon oath that I was alive, and that I was the same person who took up the land for the planting the said plantation at first. (222–23)

An important question arises: to what extent is Crusoe "the same person" when he returns to Europe after over thirty years? Is there an enduring and

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21. Joyce (1964) 24. Richetti (2005) 200 emphasizes "the possibilities for Crusoe of self-creation or self-realization." H. O. Brown (1971) 564 remarks that "the self becomes somebody else in conversion" and that "part of the impulse behind Defoe's fiction is the desire to explore human possibilities in the face of a necessity so harsh as to suspend normal laws" (566 note 6).

22. See Seidel (1991) 98.

stable self?[23] This might be asked of all protagonists in shipwreck tales. Has Odysseus been changed by his twenty years of adventures—has he become even more circumspect toward those he encounters? To what extent has Shakespeare's Prospero changed after his arrival on the island? Before, in Milan, he was caught up in his books, magic, and quest for knowledge and was susceptible to his brother's plotting: he had his power usurped and was driven into exile. After arriving on the island, Prospero still employs magic, yet he has become a more aware figure than he was as Duke of Milan. He now uses his powers to control Ariel, Caliban, and the survivors of the "shipwreck."

Robinson Crusoe seems to fall into a different category. I would not suggest for any of these figures that nothing of the "old" person remains, but Defoe presents Crusoe—both physically and psychologically—as having adopted a new sort of existence. This solitary man now participates in new activities, creates a different sort of "family," and has altered his appearance. These more "objective" changes may be perceived from the outside. If there is any consistency to the inner propensities of Crusoe, it appears to be his desire to see the world: "I was inured to a wandering life" (239).[24] It may be more difficult to demonstrate that someone has been changed on the inside, but it is to this spiritual transformation that I now turn.

The greatest change Crusoe undergoes after the shipwreck is arguably his religious conversion, a "spiritual rebirth."[25] He himself emphasizes what his "religion" consisted of beforehand, the period of enlightenment, and his "new life." To begin with, there is the big question: why has he been cast away on a desert island? From the start, Crusoe blames himself. On his first sea voyage to London, he feels that he has been punished for his "breach of

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23. Richetti (2005) 196 points to the significance of the novel as a literary form: "And of course the idea that identity is developed in experience rather than chosen by an act of moral will or somehow imposed by social status and destiny is a revolutionary idea, an Enlightenment notion that the novel as a genre helps to promulgate as a fundamental assumption about human nature." Damrosch (1985) 197 remarks, "Crusoe achieves . . . a condition of self-creation."

24. Brown (1971) 570 comments on Crusoe's "restlessness of spirit:" "He must create a self out of the formless sea of pure possibility, out of the surrounding, anonymous wilderness. The world is for him to make something of—his own." Richetti (2005) 204–5 points to a second aspect of Crusoe's personality, for he "is defined by that effort at self-knowledge, but the effort by definition is continuous and unresolved"; cf. Damrosch (1985) 210.

25. Richetti (2005) 188 argues that "Crusoe's story is of physical survival and secular prosperity accompanied by a psycho-religious transformation." Seidel (1991) 57 interprets the idea of transformation quite broadly: "Conversion is at the heart of the narrative . . . Crusoe makes over his island, turns his religious sensibility, shifts his politics, transforms his life." Damrosch (1985) 187 finds that "Crusoe's religious conversion is presented as the central event."

my duty to God and my father" (9). Though he prays to God in bad weather that, if saved, "I would go directly home to my father, and never set it [my foot] into a ship again while I lived" (9), he breaks this vow almost immediately. Crusoe fully recognizes his role in disobedience: "Providence . . . resolv'd to leave me entirely without excuse" (10). Regarding the pivotal shipwreck stranding him on his island, Crusoe accepts full responsibility: "I was still to be the willful agent of all my own miseries" (32; cf. 34). Crusoe even goes so far as to call his decision to wander—in opposition to "the excellent advice" of his father—his "original sin" (154). Although he speaks of an "evil influence" and "my ill fate" (15, 13), he mostly blames himself.[26]

In looking back, Crusoe admits his own ignorance about divine knowledge, referring to "a stupidity of soul, without desire of good, or conscience of evil" (71). He acknowledges that no matter what happened,

> I never had so much as one thought of it being the hand of God, or that it was a just punishment for my sin; my rebellious behavior against my father, or my present sins which were great; or so much as a punishment for the general course of my wicked life . . . But I was meerly thoughtless of a God, or a Providence, acted like a meer brute from the principles of Nature. (71)

For years, Crusoe acts without any awareness of divine power. While he survived the shipwreck, he was "without the least reflection upon the distinguishing goodness of the hand which had preserved me" (72).

Crusoe's religious conversion takes place some eight and a half months after the shipwreck itself (30 September 1659). He is sick for a two-week period (18 June–4 July 1660); with shivering, headache, and weakness, he slowly regains strength (4–14 July 1660). Early in his illness, a shining figure armed with a spear appears in a dream and speaks: "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die" (71). The figure then appears to lift the spear to kill Crusoe, who awakens in terror. Soon, though his spirits are very low, "conscience that had slept so long, began to awake" (73). Crusoe's reflection leads him to conclude that "God's justice has overtaken me . . . [for] I rejected the voice of Providence" (73). The next day, Crusoe picks up a Bible and begins to read. Opening the book at random,

26. Cf. "If I was not very easy and happy in the world, it must be my mere fate or fault that must hinder" (7; cf. 13–14, 30). As Starr (1988) 65 notes, "In the early part of the book Crusoe virtually orphans himself through disobedience, humbling himself toward his other Father, and assuming the dutifulness of a son"; see also Seidel (1991) 88.

he first sees the words "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me" (75).[27] Aware that this passage seems "very apt to my case," Crusoe then asks God to deliver him (76). He finally recognizes the saving power of God and calls on Jesus to "give me repentance." Crusoe realizes this to be a momentous event.

> This was the first time that I could say, in the true sense of the words, that I pray'd in all my life; for now I pray'd with a sense of my condition, and with a true Scripture view of hope founded on the encouragement of the word of God; and from this time, I may say, I began to have hope that God would hear me. (77–78)

Crusoe not only begins to appreciate the power of God but also contemplates the possibility that God might respond to his pleas. He ponders two senses of the idea of "captivity." The first is the metaphorical captivity he endures on his island: "the island was certainly a prison to me, and that in the worst sense in the world" (78). Yet Crusoe comes to realize a second, spiritual sense of the word *captivity.*

> But now I learn'd to take it [the word *captivity*] in another sense: Now I look'd back upon my past life with such horror, and my sins appear'd so dreadful, that *my soul sought nothing of God, but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort*. . . to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true sense of things, *they will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction.* (78, my italics)

For the first time, Crusoe begins to make sense of his past. Regarding his "dreadful mis-spent life," Crusoe comes to a realization that "God has appointed all this to befal me" (74–75). His health now improves with the reading of scripture and self-administered medicine (the smoke of tobacco steeped in rum). Ultimately, he "gave God thanks aloud for my recovery from my sickness" (77).[28]

As already mentioned, Crusoe's conversion takes place during his first year on the island. By the end of his second year, Crusoe has a decidedly

27. The Bible passage is from Psalm 50.

28. Starr (1988) 54 says that it was "traditional . . . to regard actual sickness as a particularly opportune occasion for setting repentance in motion."

different view of his life: his solitary condition may be preferred to living with others.

> I gave humble and hearty thanks that God had been pleas'd to discover to me, even that it was possible I might be more happy in this solitary condition, than I should have been in a liberty of society, and in all the pleasures of the world. That he could fully make up to me, the deficiencies of my solitary state, and the want of human society by his presence, and the communications of his grace to my soul, supporting, comforting, and encouraging me to depend upon his Providence here, and hope for his eternal presence hereafter. (90)

This is extraordinary. Crusoe's lonely life—"the deficiencies of my solitary state"—can now be mitigated by the comfort and support of God. A profound change in Crusoe's mental state is clear.

> It was now that I began sensibly to feel how much more happy this life I now led was with all its miserable circumstances, than the wicked, cursed, abominable life I led all the past part of my days; and *now I chang'd both my sorrows and my joys, my very desires alter'd, my affections changed their gusts, and my delights were perfectly new, from what they were at my first coming, or indeed for the two years past.* (90, my italics)

Just as Crusoe's outer appearance has been changed and as his life comes to consist of new projects (hunting, farming, etc.), so what makes him happy or sad—his very desires—have been so profoundly altered that Crusoe's delights are "perfectly new." Crusoe has reinvented himself both physically and spiritually.[29]

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29. Richetti (2005) 188 speaks of the "familiar Christian pattern of disobedience—punishment—repentance—deliverance." Starr (1988) 55–56 expands on this: "First there was the provocation to repentance—the event or impression which set the whole process in motion; next there was reflection or consideration, a 'coming to oneself'; this was following by 'conviction' or 'godly sorrow,' a phase of remorseful self-accusation; then there came the stage, to which most writers reserved the term 'conversion,' when God actually relieved and reclaimed the sufferer." Damrosch (1985) 209 comments, "Reborn from the sea after the shipwreck—many critics have noticed the birth imagery as he struggles ashore—Crusoe enters an ambiguous Eden that expresses, but cannot reconcile, both the guilt that landed him there and the innocence that fantasy seeks to recreate."

Sensible of God's providence, Crusoe now attributes everything to a divine plan: "God was necessarily and infinitely holy and just" (165–66). Crusoe remarks on how exceptionally beneficent Providence is.[30]

> I frequently sat down to my meat with thankfulness, and admir'd the hand of God's Providence, which has thus spread my table in the wilderness. I learn'd to look more upon the bright side of my condition, and less upon the dark side; and to consider what I enjoy'd, rather than what I wanted. (103–4)

There are countless passages in which Crusoe praises God's powers, wisdom, and mercy.[31]

In addition to his thankfulness, Crusoe now has come to see himself as chosen by God to perform certain tasks. Regarding Friday, he concludes, "I was call'd by Providence to save this poor creature's life" (160).[32] Likewise, the English captain was a man sent from heaven to deliver Crusoe. In telling the captain the story of his life, Crusoe remarks that

> the whole transaction seemed to be a chain of wonders; that such things as these were the testimonies we had of a secret hand of Providence governing the world, and an evidence, that the eyes of an infinite power could search into the remotest corner of the world, and send help to the miserable whenever he pleas'd. (215)

The shipwreck may be viewed as a punishment for Crusoe's wicked ways and a sinful life, yet he has been saved: all this is part of God's plan.[33] (This combination of physical survival and spiritual salvation was also found in Saint Paul's shipwreck recounted in the New Testament book of Acts.) In the end, with Crusoe's repentance and acceptance of God's power and goodness,

30. Simply discovering a cave on the island is seen as the result of divine guidance, whereas (Crusoe remarks) he would have thought it an accident before (140).

31. Even before his conversion, Crusoe remarks, "He that miraculously saved me can deliver me" (54; cf. 63).

32. See Starr (1988) 63. As Damrosch (1985) puts it, for Puritans "human life [was] a narrative invented by God, but interpreted by human beings" (4); now "nothing in life is random or pointless" (11).

33. See Starr (1988) 50 on the "intimate association between the doctrine of Providence and the incidents of seafaring," widely depicted in religious and other types of literature during Defoe's lifetime.

Crusoe finds his solitary condition to be paradoxically a positive experience.[34] Speaking aloud, he takes himself to task.

> How canst thou be such a hypocrite, (said I, even audibly) to pretend to be thankful for a condition, which however thou may'st endeavour to be contented with, thou would'st rather pray heartily to be deliver'd from; so I stopp'd there: But tho' I could not say, I thank'd God for being there. (91)

Crusoe's optimistic view is not quite that of Candide's tutor Pangloss (aka Leibniz) that "this is the best of all possible worlds," but it comes close: "There I acquiesced in the dispositions of Providence, which I began now to own, and to believe, order'd every thing for the best" (87).[35]

Crusoe's Journal

I would like to give brief consideration here to two aspects of Defoe's novel that I will examine more fully in later chapters: Crusoe's journal and his relationship with Friday. Defoe presents a fascinating exploration of the mental condition of a solitary man, left on an island for an extended period. All the ideas and observations are presented in Crusoe's own voice in his journal.[36] After finding shelter, he begins his account by giving an example, for two paragraphs, of a journal full of "many dull things" (56; cf. 101).[37] He then explains that once his ink began to fail,

> I contented myself to use it more sparingly, and to write down only the most remarkable events of my life, without continuing a daily *memorandum* of other things. (83)

34. Damrosch (1985) 198–99 notes that when seeing things positively, "Crusoe learns to identify Providence with his own desires."

35. Novak (1963) 7 notes, "Throughout his economic writing [Defoe maintained] that the earth was the best of all possible worlds in relation to commerce." Seidel (1991) 103 finds Defoe to be "as utopian as English writers get"; cf. 94–95, 138.

36. Richetti (2005) 187 notes "his narrator's autobiographical curiosity, his own consuming interest in the pattern of his life"; cf. Damrosch (1985) 15.

37. Seidel (1991) 81 finds an increasingly narrow set of entries: "At first the record is sequential, soon it is remarkable, and, finally, it becomes a selective series of memoranda," emphasizing the uniqueness of these events: for example, his "melancholy relation of a scene of silent life, such perhaps as was never heard of in the world before" (52).

It is a mark of Defoe's ingenuity to explain the absence of (tedious) everyday detail by the verisimilar excuse of a shortage of ink.

Crusoe even comments on the therapeutic value of recording his thoughts.

> I drew up the state of my affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few heirs, as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my mind; and as my reason began now to master my despondence, I began to comfort my self as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse. (53–54)

Later, Crusoe will tell his history to Friday, the Spaniard, the English captain, those back in Europe, and his reading audience. Just as Eumaeus and Odysseus discuss the value of retelling difficult times from the past (*Odyssey* 15.398–401), Crusoe also "began to comfort my self" by setting down what happened, by reflecting, retelling, and reliving. We may go further. Crusoe's writing of a chronicle suggests a common desire to offer an account, an urge he shares with the storyteller Odysseus and the "playwright" Prospero.[38] In chapter 8, I will return to discussion of this fervent desire, especially characteristic of shipwreck survivors, to control the narrative of one's life.

Ultimately, Crusoe remarks on how lucky he is.

> I could hardly have named a place in the unhabitable part of the world where I could have been cast more to my advantage. A place, where as I had no society, which was my affliction on one hand, so I found no ravenous beasts, no furious wolves or tygers to threaten my life, no venomous creatures or poisonous, which I might feed on to my hurt, no savages to murther and devour me. (105–6)

He observes that it is very rare

> that the Providence of God casts us into any condition of life so low, or any misery so great, but we may see something or other to be

38. As H. O. Brown (1971) 585 interprets, "Writing also means to Robinson a deliverance from the agonizing and confusing impact from momentary impressions about his condition"; cf. "Providence not only underwrites Robinson's narrative, it is also discovered by means of the writing of the journal" (587).

> thankful for; and may see others in worse circumstances than our own. (148)[39]

Many of these ruminations function as soliloquies, yet Crusoe debates with himself at times.[40] This offers variety—and dramatic force—to Defoe's presentation, yet it also shows something of the human psychological need for a sounding board—for someone or something else with which to converse. Crusoe uses language that suggests a dialogue or debate.

> I call'd a council, that is to say, in my thoughts. (44)

> I debated this very often with my self thus." (135)

> I argued with myself. (136)

When Crusoe inclines in one direction, "reason as it were expostulated with me t'other way" (51). There are often two sides to a question, and there is benefit in considering both.

> This made my life better than sociable; for when I began to regret the want of conversation, *I would ask myself, whether thus conversing mutually with my own thoughts,* and, as I hope I may say, with even God himself by ejaculations, was not better than the utmost enjoyment of human society in the world. (108, my italics)

Several times, Crusoe addresses the reader in something that sounds like a sermon.[41] One of his favorite topics is people who cannot be happy with what they have. He desires to put

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39. Crusoe reflects "that all the good things of this world, are no farther good to us, than they are for our use . . . we enjoy just as much as we can use, and no more" (103). This passage may echo John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government:* "God has given us all things richly . . . But how far has he given it us? To enjoy. As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils; so much he may by his labour fix a Property in. Whatever is beyond this, is more than his share, and belongs to others. Nothing was made by God for Man to spoil or destroy" (chapter 5, paragraph 31, in Locke (1965) 290); cf. *Robinson Crusoe* 103: "I had all that I was now capable of enjoying."

40. Seidel (1991) 67 speaks of "the conversational form of the novel." Richetti (2005) 204 describes "a long dialogue of one that stretches for twenty-five years or so on the island."

41. On spiritual autobiography, Starr (1988) 48 notes that preachers are often "stressing the idea that every calamity contains a Providential lesson for those affected by it." Crusoe often

> those discontented people in mind of it, who cannot enjoy what God has given them; because they see, and covet something that he has not given them: All our discontents about what we want [i.e., lack], appeared to me, to spring from the want of thankfulness for what we have. (104)

This voice of a preacher echoes sentiments of an actual marooned sailor, Alexander Selkirk (see below).

Crusoe and Friday

A solitary existence for twenty-four years leads Robinson Crusoe to act.[42] When South American natives appear, he seizes his chance for human companionship once Friday escapes and swims across a creek with two pursuers. Crusoe comments, "Now was my time to get me a servant, and perhaps a companion or assistant" (160). Crusoe knocks down one of the pursuers and shoots the second. He then turns toward the man he will soon call "Friday," now on the ground trembling in fear.

Friday is finally safe, and Crusoe wants him to come near, yet there arises the problem of communication between two people without a common language. Crusoe employs various gestures: "I beckoned with my hand to him, to come back . . . and gave him all the signs of encouragement that I could think of" (160–61). Friday does approach and then—without language—himself conveys a great deal with gestures.[43]

> Kneeling down every ten or twelve steps, in token of acknowledgment for my saving his life: I smil'd at him, and look'd pleasantly,

uses biblical models to represent his situation or purpose. Even before reaching the desert island, he compares himself to the prodigal son from Jesus' parable (9, 13) or to Jonah, who suffered disaster at sea (14). Later, he finds a model in Elijah when fed by ravens (105), Saul when facing the Philistines (126–7), and Job in the face of his extreme trials (224). These allusions suggest models to which Crusoe likens his own sufferings and experiences. Damrosch (1985) 190 argues that scriptural allusions are "often left tacit for the reader to detect and ponder"; for example, the sprouting wheat may recall a passage from the Gospel of John (12.24–25). Starr (1988) 51 comments that "by a kind of allusive shorthand, Defoe manages to suggest the spiritual connotations of Crusoe's actions."

42. Seidel (1991) 66 remarks that the footprint on the beach is "a strong but necessary reminder that the castaway's life is unnatural because unsocial." This reminds us of Aristotle's remark that a man out of society is "either a beast or a god" (*Politics* 1.9).

43. Later, when Crusoe is milking his goats, Friday comes running and replicates these gestures, confirming Crusoe's authority over Friday (162–63).

> and beckon'd to him to come still nearer; at length he came close to me, and then he kneel'd down again, kiss'd the ground, and laid his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head; this, it seems, was in token of swearing to be my slave for ever; I took him up, and made much of him, and encourag'd him all I could. (161)

There may be a lack of precision in interpreting such an exchange. Certain motions and expressions may be easier to interpret (smiling, a gesture to follow), while putting Crusoe's foot on Friday's head may not necessarily mean that Friday is "swearing to be my slave for ever." Nevertheless, this exchange is important in terms of establishing a hierarchy: Crusoe is the rescuer, Friday is the saved.[44]

Crusoe and Friday now live together, with Crusoe in the role of master and mentor. Their communication comes to include spoken language, as Crusoe teaches English to Friday, who is a quick learner. Crusoe begins with names for them, "Friday" and "Master," then teaches Friday to say "Yes" and "No" (163).[45] Friday soon comes to understand names and speaks quite well. Friday is also taught to sail a boat and shoot: Crusoe remarks, "I had made [him] an excellent marksman" (199). Overall, Crusoe is "greatly delighted" with his new companion. After teaching him

> everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand me when I spake, and he was the aptest scholar that ever was . . . it was very pleasant to me to talk to him; and now my life began to be so easy, that I began to say to my self, that could I but have been safe from more savages, I cared not if I was never to remove from the place while I liv'd. (166)

Friday is judged by European standards. Indeed, perhaps the most significant thing Friday learns is to become a Christian and to "unlearn" can-

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44. Locke discusses why men quit the state of nature and enter society: "To avoid this State of War . . . is one great reason of Mens putting themselves into Society, and quitting the State of Nature" (chapter 3, paragraph 21, in Locke (1965) 283). He even mentions two men in a similar situation to that of Crusoe and Friday: "The Promises and Bargains for Truck [barter], etc. between the two Men in the Desert Island . . . or between a Swiss and an Indian, in the Woods of America, are binding to them, though they are perfectly in a State of Nature, in reference to one another" (chapter 2, paragraph 14, in Locke (1965) 277).

45. Watt (1994) 302 notes that "Crusoe does not ask Friday his name, he gives him one."

Fig. 7. “He took one of my feet and put it on his head, to make me understand without doubt that he swore fidelity to me.” Illustration of Friday’s gesture of servitude to Robinson Crusoe by Clement-Pierre Marillier; engraving by Remi-Henri-Joseph Delvaux found in Garnier (1787, vol. 1, facing p. 376). (By permission of the British Library Board.)

nibalism (163). Friday is eager to eat the flesh of the two men who chased him, but Crusoe demonstrates his disgust to Friday. Crusoe teaches Friday to taste "other flesh" (165). The transformation of Friday, Crusoe's pupil, finally reaches the stage when "the savage was now a good Christian" (174). Interestingly, Crusoe compares Friday with other Europeans.

> He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight strong limbs, not too large . . . about twenty six years of age . . . he had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance too, especially when he smiled. (162)

Friday had gone about stark naked, and when Crusoe outfitted him with drawers, jerkin, and a cap, he "went awkwardly in these things at first" (163–64). Ultimately, Crusoe's Friday is transformed into the model of an English servant, loyal to his master.

I mentioned the debates that Crusoe had with himself while he was alone. He now conducts a variety of discussions with Friday, asking such questions as who made Friday? and "[W]ho made the sea, the ground we walk'd on, and the hills and woods?" (170). Friday's answer is Benamuckee, the Brazilians' god "that liv'd beyond all." Crusoe comes to instruct Friday "in the knowledge of the true God . . . He listened with great attention, and received with pleasure the notion of Jesus Christ being sent to redeem us" (171).

Crusoe's relationship with Friday is described in various ways. He refers to Friday as "my savage" (161) or "my man Friday . . . a most faithful servant" (220). At one point, Crusoe suspects Friday of a lack of devotion (164–5) and even worries that Friday will "forget all his religion, [and] all his obligations to me" if they travel to the mainland (176). But Friday reassures Crusoe on this point.

> No, no, Friday tell [his fellow natives] to live good, tell them to pray God, tell them to eat corn bread, cattle flesh, milk, no eat man again . . . me make they no eat you, me make they much love you. (177)

Friday's relationship with Crusoe overrides any ties to his country—or even to his father: he remains "true" to his newly adopted European ways and religion. Crusoe concludes,

> Never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant than Friday

> was to me . . . his very affections were ty'd to me, like those of a child to a father, and I dare say, he would have sacrificed his life for the saving mine, upon any occasion whatever. (165)

Indeed, Crusoe comes to have true affection for Friday: "I began really to love the creature; and on his side, I believe he lov'd me more than it was possible for him ever to love any thing before" (168).

We might be skeptical about Crusoe's ability to read Friday's inner thoughts—Crusoe's interpretation may perhaps seem self-serving.[46] Yet when Crusoe later suggests that he alone return to England and "send Friday away," Friday asks to be killed rather than be separated from the man who saved his life.

> He look'd confus'd again at that word, and running to one of the hatchets which he used to wear, he takes it up hastily, comes and gives it me, *What must I do with this?* says I to him. *You take, kill Friday;* (says he.) *What must I kill you for?* said I again. He returns very quick, *What you send Friday away for? Take, kill Friday, no send Friday away.* This he spoke so earnestly, that I saw tears stand in his eyes; In a word, I so plainly discover'd the utmost affection in him to me, and a firm resolution in him, that I told him then, and often after, that I would never send him away from me, if he was willing to stay with me. (178–79)

Like Crusoe, Friday also appears to have adopted a new sort of life.[47] This is marked in part by his new name, *Friday,* conferred in recognition of the day on which he was rescued. Indeed, we might say that the name *Friday*—given by Crusoe—comes to symbolize his new existence. Although Friday is not shipwrecked, he plays new roles as interpreter and marksman (190, 199); he learns a new language and becomes a Christian.

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46. B. Jones (1996) 225–26 remarks that Friday's "reactions are recounted: translated—how reliable we can never discover—by his Master, he remains an object of narrator. Crusoe never questions his own status as sole source of authority."

47. Novak (1963) 37–38 argues, "Friday is easily converted to Christianity . . . [H]e abandons the state of nature for the advantages of civilization. From the moment he accepts Crusoe as his master, he surrenders every uncivilized characteristic, even his distaste for salt. Instead of reverting to the life of a savage, Crusoe remakes the paradigm of the noble savage into a civilized man" (37–38); Novak later comments, "Friday's greatest virtue is his unquestioning acceptance of the values of [Western] civilization" (47).

Crusoe's Rescue

The final element in the shipwreck sequence in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is departure from the island. The English captain and his loyal crew are rescued by Robinson Crusoe and his "army," which is made up of Friday, the Spaniard, and Friday's father (191). Though Crusoe promises to rescue the captain, he insists on two stipulations.

> My conditions are but two. 1. That while you stay on this island with me, you will not pretend to any authority here; and if I put arms into your hands, you will upon all occasions give them up to me, and do no prejudice to me or mine, upon this island, and in the mean time be govern'd by my orders.
>
> 2. That if the ship is, or may be recover'd, you will carry me and my man to England passage-free. (201)

The captain readily agrees, as Crusoe continues to assert his authority over the island. In the end, Crusoe is told, "There's your ship" (214). Unlike Odysseus on Calypso's island or Tom Hanks' character in the film *Cast Away,* who must build their own vessels with sail, oars, and rudder, Crusoe may journey off on an intact ship—much like the ship awaiting everyone in *The Tempest.*

Prior to this, Crusoe has contemplated multiple means of escape. Early on, he thinks he may be rescued and does not stray to the interior of the island, "hoping in time to see some ship at sea, and therefore resolv'd to place myself as near the coast as I could" (43).[48] Later, he thinks he might reach the mainland with a newly constructed boat or canoe, but when a large canoe is built, it is too far from the water and too heavy to move (100–102). Crusoe also constructs a small canoe, in which he tours the island (109). Despite the threat of savages, his desire to venture over to the mainland increases (99–100). Finally, after years with no outside help and the inability to build an oceangoing vessel, Crusoe

> made this conclusion, that my only way to go about an attempt for an escape, was, if possible, to get a savage into my possession; and, if possible, it should be one of their prisoners, who they had condemn'd to be eaten, and should bring thither to kill. (157)

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48. Crusoe's first settlement has a view to the sea in case "God sent any ship in sight for my deliverance" (48).

Crusoe does "acquire" Friday and learns that there are seventeen white men who lived in Friday's "nation" (176).[49] This leads to his plan to build a big *periagua* (canoe) near the water (179–80). The plan is to wait until the end of the rainy season to cross over "and see if I could possibly join with the bearded men" and then discover "some method to escape from thence" (177–78). Before this occurs, the mutineers bring their ship to the island, and Crusoe and the captain take command of the ship and sail back to England. But the various alternative means of escape have already been thoroughly "researched" by Crusoe—there is more than one way to get off an island.

Defoe's Life and Times

Daniel Defoe's life and times (1660–1731) are naturally relevant to understanding the story of Robinson Crusoe. Defoe himself led an extremely eventful and varied life in business and politics, spying and publishing.[50] Defoe went on the run from creditors more than once and spent time in prison and the pillory. West argues that the events of Defoe's own life—in particular, the troubles he experienced—were transmuted in his fiction.[51] A prolific writer, Defoe wrote his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe,* at the age of fifty-nine.[52]

Defoe was a Presbyterian (such non-Anglican protestants were called "Dissenters" or "Puritans" at the time). While Defoe wrote passionately about religious liberty in his pamphlets—note Crusoe's proud proclamation of "liberty of conscience" (190)—his religious convictions may also have influenced the detailed self-examination of the solitary Crusoe.[53] Damrosch

49. Crusoe also learns that his own island is forty miles from the shore near the mouth of the Orinoco River.

50. See Seidel (1991) 5–6.

51. R. West (1998) 21 comments, "It is in his fiction that Defoe sometimes describes the very hard events that he himself experienced" (cf. 324–25).

52. R. West (1998) suggests several reasons (money troubles, politics) that Defoe may have turned to writing novels: "[I]t would not be too far-fetched to suggest that Defoe's bankruptcy led him to become a novelist. His failure as a merchant meant that henceforth he had to earn a living from his brickworks, his Secret Service employment, but above all by writing pamphlets, articles, and finally books" (55); "[P]artly because he had lost his influence as a journalist, pamphleteer and secret adviser to statesmen, Defoe turned to writing books in order to express the thoughts and fantasies that teemed in his ever-active brain" (217).

53. R. West (1998) 83 notes that Defoe "later defended the freedom of worship for Roman Catholics in England, for Episcopalians, in Scotland, and even for cannibalistic heathens on Robinson Crusoe's island"; cf. Seidel (1991) 48–52.

finds in Defoe's novel a Puritan impulse for "radical analysis of the self," according to which "the Puritan was liberated from the structured role-playing that society ordinarily demands, and could define himself as a *self* rather than as a tradesman, a father, an Anglican" (21).[54] Throughout the novel, we have seen how Crusoe continually examines himself in his actions, his ideas, and his place in the world.

In terms of politics, Defoe advised monarchs on foreign policy; he also advocated the British colonization of South America, including the Orinoco River area—near Crusoe's island.[55] Indeed, the novel promotes a successful vision of colonization of the Americas—with the figure of Friday suggesting a compliant native population. In addition, while Defoe was not a philosopher, scholars have pointed to the possible influence of Locke's ideas about psychology,[56] property,[57] and religious liberty upon Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* At one point Crusoe describes himself as "act[ing] like a meer brute from the principles of Nature" (71), which may echo Locke's idea of "man in a state of nature," from his *Second Treatise of Government.*[58]

Alexander Selkirk Marooned

Much as news of the *Sea Venture*'s wreck off Bermuda led to the idea for Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Alexander Selkirk's story certainly played some

54. Damrosch (1985) 196. Damrosch believes that the novels "do not show the individual to be defined and directed by social position. On the contrary, these novels are about breaking *out* of one's position, achieving a radical self-definition against it" (12); he also remarks that Defoe "was moved to test Puritan faith *through* fiction" (204).

55. As Seidel (1991) xi, 40–46 points out, Defoe advised King William on this colonization project in the 1690s, again in 1711 with the South Sea Trade Company, and in 1719 when *Robinson Crusoe* appeared. For Defoe's imperial aspirations for Britain, see R. West (1998) 123, 170–71.

56. See Seidel (1991) 33 on Locke and the generation of ideas. R. West (1998) 10 notes that while in school, Defoe would have read Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding,* "which was banned at Oxford."

57. Richetti (2005) 193 describes how Crusoe "seeks to appropriate the island, to possess it by turning a wilderness into a domesticated space rather like England. In the fashion described by John Locke whereby a man possesses land by working it, he becomes the owner of the island by his laboring on it and exploring it, claiming it by virtue of his European exceptionalism." Locke asserts, "The Labor of his Body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property" (chapter 5, paragraph 27, in Locke (1965) 287–88).

58. See Furbank and Owens (2006) 174–77. Novak (1963) 22–36 discusses three senses of the phrase "state of nature" in the eighteenth century (see also notes 39 and 44 above).

role in triggering the impulse for Defoe's novel. Selkirk was marooned on one of the Juan Fernández Islands off the coast of Chile for over four years (1704–9). He was brought back to England (1711), and subsequent accounts describing his experience were written by Cooke (1712); Woodes Rogers, the captain who picked him up (1712); and the essayist Steele (1713).[59]

I acknowledge the differences between Selkirk's actual stay on his island (now called Robinson Crusoe Island) and Defoe's fictional story of Robinson Crusoe. First, Selkirk was not shipwrecked. He had a difference of opinion with his ship's captain about the seaworthiness of the vessel they were sailing and requested to be left on the island. Second, despite the uniqueness that Steele emphasizes, there are accounts of other men stranded on this very island for up to five years.[60]

I am not suggesting that Defoe has written a historically based novel, but let us explore the details of Selkirk's stay that were adopted and, without question, transformed by Defoe. First, there is one man alone on an uninhabited island for an extended period (Selkirk's four years and four months against Crusoe's twenty-eight years). Selkirk's island has a good climate, high hills, and pleasant valleys, with no venomous creatures or "savages" (and no cannibals live nearby—the South American coast is almost four hundred miles away). Selkirk tames both goats and cats (to help fight off the rats) and eats sea turtles and crayfish. The similarities are obvious in terms of natural habitat and animal taming, though Selkirk's island is in the southeast Pacific, not off the coast of "Brazil" in the southeast Caribbean.

Selkirk takes various supplies with him when he lands: clothes, flint, powder, bullets, a hatchet, a knife, a kettle, and a Bible. Crusoe scavenged from the wrecked ship. Neither man is cast away without resources. Regarding shelter and clothes, Selkirk must construct his own hut (covered with grass) and ends up wearing a goatskin jacket, breeches, and cap (Selkirk's father was a tanner of hides). Crusoe's clothes obviously follow this model. Once, while chasing a

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59. A new edition of Woodes Rogers' account was published in 1718, the year before *Robinson Crusoe* appeared. Note the greeting a Moskito Indian named Robin gives another on the island: he "threw himself flat on his face at his feet" (Dampier's account in Shinagel (1994) 227–29). It is possible that Defoe adapted this gesture in his description of Friday's submission. Regarding Defoe's borrowing from Selkirk's story, see Seidel (1991) 40. Against Selkirk as a model, see R. West (1998) 237–38; West argues that the geography is different and that there was no shipwreck—only a man alone with goat skins. Severin (2002) 323 calls Selkirk the "inspiration" but not the "model," who he believes is Henry Pitman; Frank (2012) emphasizes the influence of Robert Knox and his captivity. For excerpts of Selkirk's tale found in the works of Dampier, Cooke, Woodes Rogers, and Steele, see Shinagel (1994) 227–38.

60. Steele is "doubtful whether the like has happen'd to any other," a familiar sentiment found in *Robinson Crusoe* (Shinagel (1994) 235–36).

goat, Selkirk falls off a precipice and lies unconscious for twenty-four hours. Later, he crawls back to his hut, where he slowly gathers his strength over the next ten days.[61] Crusoe was stricken with a fever, not a fall. But in both cases, there was no one to nurse the solitary man back to health.

Perhaps the most fascinating parallels derive from Selkirk's psychological development on the island.[62] At first, Selkirk is struck with terror at the noises inland and from "the monsters of the deep."[63] Although melancholic and nearly suicidal, Selkirk comes to adopt a routine that includes reading from the Bible, singing psalms, and making prayers "at stated hours and places for exercises of devotion." In fact, Selkirk says that he was a better Christian while in solitude than ever before. With "reason and reading Scripture [Selkirk] conquers all the inconveniences of solitude, and [began] to be very easy."[64] In this new state of mind, Selkirk now sings and dances with his cats (which come to number in the hundreds). Crusoe is also desperate and frightened upon first reaching his island, and he, too, turns to the Bible and undergoes a religious conversion, after which he "becomes content upon the island."

Also of interest is Selkirk's "reentry into society." Rogers comments that when his ship picks him up, Selkirk had "somewhat forgotten language and spoke words by halves." More profound was Selkirk's "disregard of ordinary things."

> When the Ship which brought him off the Island came in, he received them with the great Indifference, with relation to the Prospect of going off with them, but with great Satisfaction in an Opportunity to refresh and help them. The Man frequently bewailed his Return to the World, which could not, he said, with all its Enjoyments, restore him to the Tranquility of his Solitude.[65]

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61. Accounts differ as to whether Selkirk lay in the same spot for one day or three days after his fall, whether he pursued the ship as it was leaving and called for it to come back, and whether he lost some of his ability to speak. See Blanchard (1955) 423.

62. In terms of physical transformation, Selkirk wears out his clothes and shoes, but his feet toughen up so much that he runs barefoot around the island. Indeed, Rogers comments on Selkirk's swiftness in hunting goats, after tiring his other men and their dogs (Shinagel (1994) 233).

63. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 237. Selkirk also fears two Spanish ships that pass (Selkirk had sailed on an English privateer); we may here compare Crusoe, who says, "I had rather be delivered up to the savages, and be devoured alive, than fall into the merciless claws of the priests, and be carried into the Inquisition" (192).

64. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 237; cf. Crusoe's comment that "my reason began now to master my despondence" (53–54).

65. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 238.

Steele interviewed Selkirk several times after his return to London and wrote an essay about Selkirk six years before Defoe's novel appeared (1713). Steele is especially fascinated by "the different revolutions in [Selkirk's] mind in that long Solitude." One account states that at the moment Selkirk was first dropped off, he had a change of heart and ran after the ship, calling for them to take him with them. Although Selkirk came close to ending his own life, he later accepted his new sort of existence.

> He grew dejected, languid, and melancholy, scarce able to refrain from doing himself Violence, till by Degrees, by the Force of Reason, and frequent reading of the Scriptures, and turning his Thoughts upon the Study of Navigation, after the Space of eighteen Months, he grew thoroughly reconciled to his Condition.[66]

Woodes Rogers draws a lesson from Selkirk's experience: that solitary existence and retirement from the world are not unendurable—in fact, Selkirk was right to leave his ship, for it was lost at sea not long after. Like Robinson Crusoe, Selkirk comes, in some sense, to prefer the solitary life.

> When he had made this Conquest, the Vigour of his Health, Disengagement from the World, a constant, chearful, serene Sky, and a temperate Air, made his Life one continual Feast, and his Being much more joyful than it had before been irksome. He now taking Delight in every thing, made the Hutt in which he lay, by Ornaments which he cut down from a spacious Wood, on the side of which it was situated, the most delicious Bower, fanned with continual Breezes, and gentle Aspirations of Wind, that made his Repose after the Chase equal to the most sensual Pleasures.[67]

Steele is led to conclude,

> He is happiest who confines his Wants to natural Necessities; and he that goes further in his Desires, increases his Wants in Proportion to his Acquisitions; or to use his [Selkirk's] own Expression, "I am now worth 800 Pounds, but shall never be so happy, as when I was not worth a Farthing."[68]

66. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 236.
67. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 236–37.
68. Steele in Shinagel (1994) 238.

In Defoe's novel, Crusoe insists on these same lessons: we only need what is necessary; those who covet more are destined to be unhappy.

As we have seen, many shipwreck narratives explore the possibility of transformation, but each has a distinct emphasis. Shipwrecks not only are obstacles for Odysseus' return home but also hinder his attempts to reassert his identity. In *The Tempest,* survivors and islanders seek to establish a new hierarchy. In *Robinson Crusoe,* the uninhabited island forces the lone survivor to rediscover human cultural advances. The constant in all situations is the potential adoption of new roles. Certainly, anyone who is shipwrecked must adapt in order to survive. While this is true for those in the *Odyssey* and *The Tempest,* we must say that *Robinson Crusoe* presents an incredibly wide range of new roles for the solitary shipwrecked arrival. Not only is persistence required, but the survivor must have a readiness to try unfamiliar agricultural and artistic skills. We might also mention the necessity of good luck—or, as in Crusoe's mind, Providence and the favor of a god.

Crusoe experiences many shifts in fortune: from prosperity to slavery, from misery to success as a planter, from sinner to repentant. In chapter 6 of the *Poetics,* Aristotle discusses "reversal" (*peripeteia*) as one of "tragedy's greatest means of emotional power [*psychagogia*]." In chapter 11, he defines "reversal" as "a complete swing in the direction of the action"; we might call these reversals "shifts in fortune." Aristotle considers different sorts of reversals affecting different sorts of characters and concludes that the best type of plot for tragedy would be as follows:

> We are left, then, with the figure who falls between these types. Such a man is one who is not preeminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into affliction not because of evil and wickedness, but because of a certain fallibility [*harmartia*]. (*Poetics* 13)[69]

While tragedy is the focus, much of what Aristotle says applies to literature more broadly. I interpret Aristotle to be saying that the best story line (dramatic or otherwise) concerns a character who is not an utter villain or a saint but someone in between—someone like us—"who falls into affliction."

Whether or not Defoe had the *Poetics* in mind, Aristotle has rightly hit on a sort of universal pattern that describes what we call "dramatic situations" in literature (and in life), situations that affect readers and specta-

69. Translation from Halliwell (1987) 44.

tors in a powerful way. Perhaps the most effective stories concern those people—like Crusoe—who fall from prosperity into affliction (cast away upon a lonely island), though also wondrous are those who pass from affliction into prosperity (Crusoe's rescue by the sea captain). These sudden, dramatic shifts—reversals that occur in every shipwreck narrative—are self-consciously remarked on several times in the course of Defoe's novel.

Like Crusoe, Odysseus is a single shipwrecked survivor. Odysseus also desperately struggles to reach shore and hides from wild animals under bushes his first night. Like Crusoe, Odysseus is driven far out of the way of human traffic (Calypso's island is at the ends of the earth). Except for Crusoe, it is hard to think of someone other than Odysseus who suffers a greater set of reversals and yet bounces back (though I will consider Philoctetes in chapter 7). I have already noted that both Odysseus and Crusoe were thought dead and must prove, upon "reentry" into their old lives, that they are who they say they are.[70]

Like Shakespeare, Defoe is working against the backdrop of the European "discovery" of America. There is contact with "natives" (Friday, Ariel, and Caliban), there are divine epiphanies, and a ship miraculously appears at the end. In both scenarios, the social hierarchy privileges European over native islander.

Each of these three works—the *Odyssey, The Tempest,* and *Robinson Crusoe*—emphasizes particular aspects of the shipwreck predicament, yet all three share a "family resemblance" of features. While some of these parallels are striking, I certainly agree with Seidel's argument that while we may "identify a shared allegiance" among various island stories, this is "not to identify a specific source for the narrative."[71] Defoe is certainly well read, but the aforementioned parallels do not necessarily argue for direct literary reference. As Seidel says,

> No one can read the scenes of Crusoe's arrival or departure on his island without thinking of the most famous of shipwrecked mariners, Odysseus; and no one can read the complicated machinery of Cru-

70. Although Joyce calls Crusoe "the English Ulysses," Watt (in Shinagel (1994) 303) notes that Crusoe has no sexual adventures (or interest?): this is an "interesting break from the traditional expectations aroused by desert islands, from the *Odyssey* to the *New Yorker.*" Seidel (1991) 37–38 notes allusions to the *Odyssey* and *The Tempest,* with emphasis on the planting of oars by Odysseus, "mark[ing] the end of Odysseus' need to wander," and Crusoe's oar planting when he reaches his island (109).

71. Seidel (1991) 38.

> soe's complicated rescue finale without thinking of the romance of Shakespeare's island fiction, *The Tempest*. . . any island story, whether Homer's, Shakespeare's, or Defoe's, builds on a narrative pattern of separation, displacement, and resubstantiation so important to Western literature. The appeal of island stories has always to do with the reserves of individual resourcefulness under the most difficult of circumstances.[72]

I turn now to precursors and successors to the story of Robinson Crusoe where, once again, "individual resourcefulness" will be tested under desperate circumstances, on islands and in outer space.

72. Seidel (1991) 37.

CHAPTER 7

The Struggle for Survival in *Philoctetes, Cast Away,* and *First on Mars*

A major feature in Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* is the isolated individual's recourse to technology. To stay alive, a shipwreck survivor needs food, water, shelter, and possibly human companionship. Crusoe engages in a wide array of activities that recollect human cultural advances: hunting, toolmaking, agriculture, domesticating animals, and other endeavors. Yet as we have seen, he was extremely fortunate in obtaining tools and other materials from the wrecked ship.

In this chapter, Sophocles' play *Philoctetes,* Zemeckis' movie *Cast Away,* and the science fiction novel *First on Mars* describe situations sharply contrasting with Crusoe's ultimate mastery of his environment. These works set up what might be called a counternarrative to Crusoe's great success; we may well conclude that Defoe presents an overly optimistic view of an isolated man's island existence.

Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Sophocles' Philoctetes is not shipwrecked—he is marooned for ten years on the island of Lemnos when his leg wound prevents proper sacrifice to the gods by the Greeks on their way to Troy. Yet the consequences eerily anticipate the situation of Defoe's Crusoe. That his island is uninhabited is an innovation made by Sophocles. Earlier treatments of Philoctetes by

Aeschylus and Euripides do not survive, but we know that in these prior plays, the tragic chorus is made up of the inhabitants of Lemnos (in reality, Lemnos did have people living on it). Only in Sophocles' play is the island of Lemnos deserted.[1]

Sophocles uses the feature of a deserted island to show how Philoctetes' isolation leads to a more primitive way of life. Sophocles' play, from the late fifth century BCE (409), was produced at a time when new ideas were formulating about the human past. For the first time in history, people began to imagine that "modern life" in Greece might represent an improvement over earlier times—the idea of a Golden Age was seen as a myth.[2] Philoctetes' solitary existence recalls a time when humans were not living in communities. Instead, Philoctetes lives in a cave;[3] his only "companions" are wild animals (182–85); and as he tells Neoptolemus and his fellow sailors, he has become "wild."

> Do not shrink with trepidation
> or be frightened of me, now grown wild.[4]
>
> (225–26)

Philoctetes' ten years on this lonely island have transformed him into what we think of when we talk about "cavemen" or "Neanderthals"—premodern humans who lack cities, agriculture, and our "advanced" way of living.

Indeed, Sophocles defines Philoctetes' life largely by negatives. Philoctetes eats no food from seed sown in the earth (708–9); he has not tasted wine for ten years (714–15). He speaks of how Odysseus "cast me here, friendless, desolate, city-less" (1017–18).[5]According to a Greek way of thinking, to be

1. Sophocles emphasizes that Lemnos is uninhabited in the first two lines of the prologue, when Odysseus says, "This is the headland of a seagirt land, / Lemnos, not trod by mortals nor inhabited" (1–2). On the three Philoctetes plays, see Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 52.

2. See Sophocles *Antigone* 332–60, Thucydides 1.2–17, and Plato *Protagoras* 321–22 and *Republic* 369–74, discussed in Dodd (1973), Edelstein (1967), and Lovejoy and Boas (1997).

3. His cave provides a "rock bed" (*petrines koites,* 159–60) and offers winter warming and summer cooling (16–19, 159–60). For questions of staging, see Craik (1990).

4. Note the force of the perfect participle "grown wild" (*apegriomenon*): Philoctetes has completed the process of becoming wild and is now in a state of savagery (see also 173, 265). Both his physical appearance and psychological condition are "wild"; see Kamerbeek (1980) 175.

5. Davies (1987) makes clear how frequently negative descriptions were used in antiquity to depict idyllic spots and the Golden Age. Philoctetes also lacks a name (251–52); cf. also 220, 225, 227–28, 687–96, 954, 1070. He is "unarmed" (*psilos,* 953); his "home is not-a-home" (*aoikon oikesin,* 534); he himself is "footless" (*apoun,* 628). Cf. "neither harbor, nor an inhabited land" (*out' euormon out' oikoumenen,* 219, 302–3); the harbor of Lemnos is inhospitable to ships

"without a city" is to lack the emblem of civilization itself. Sophocles' use of negatives highlights the desperate situation of a solitary man. Philoctetes has been transformed, but in this case, the change is not positive: Philoctetes has reverted to a more savage stage of human existence.[6]

Because Philoctetes has been stuck for ten years on Lemnos, Sophocles is also able to suggest how human culture developed over many generations. Though primitive, Philoctetes demonstrates the inventive capacity of humans. The very idea of progress implies that people gradually discovered all sorts of skills: sailing, hunting, the domestication of animals, medicine, and so on. This recapitulation of human technology is seen in the manifold skills Philoctetes employs for survival.

> In my tiny shelter I alone must do everything
> for myself. This bow of mine
> discovered food for my belly, hitting
> swift-flying doves. I must drag my foot,
> my cursed foot, to where the bolt
> sped by the bowstring had struck down a bird.
> If I must drink,
> and it was winter time and the water is frozen,
> I must break up firewood. I crawled
> and miserably contrived to do the work. Whenever I had no fire,
> rubbing stone on stone I would
> at last produce the spark that always saved me.
> A roof to live under with fire
> gives me everything but release from my disease.
>
> (286–99)

Painfully dragging his foot, Philoctetes "rediscovers" the human capacity to hunt, employ fire, and make (or find) shelter.[7] Evidence of other crude forms of human technology are his rough sort of cup whittled from a block of wood (35–36), a bed made from pressed leaves (33), and a simple herb used as medicine to dull his leg's pain (649–50; cf. 44). We are reminded of Defoe's Crusoe and his efforts at carpentry and other crafts. But in fact, Philoctetes

(*naos axenon,* 217).

6. See P. W. Rose (1992) 283.

7. Luckily, there is a spring nearby (20–21); the term used for Philoctetes' food, *phorban* (43, 1107), is more commonly used for animals' food; see P. W. Rose (1992) 320. For fire as an essential element in the development of civilization, see Goudsblom (1994) and Pyne (2001).

has not advanced as far as Crusoe. There is no agriculture, cultivation of grapes, or domestication of herd animals: Philoctetes is only partway along the arc that leads to modern life.[8]

Sophocles focuses on Philoctetes' state of mind after almost a decade on an uninhabited island. First and foremost, Philoctetes' solitude is emphasized: he is described as "always alone" (172).[9] In his disease and solitude, only echoes from rocks have answered Philoctetes' bitter laments (186–90, 691–95). Philoctetes' mental state derives in part from his bitter memories. Recollecting how he was brought to the island, Philoctetes relives the moment of his abandonment (268–75) and asks Neoptolemus (and, by extension, us) to imagine what this must have felt like.[10]

> Think, boy, of that awakening when I awoke
> and found them gone;
> think of the useless tears and curses on myself
> when I saw the ships which I had once commanded
> all gone, and not a man left on the island,
> not one to help me or to lend a hand
> when I was seized with my sickness. In all I saw
> I found nothing but pain,
> but of that a great abundance, boy.
>
> (276–84)

Philoctetes poignantly recalls his "useless tears and curses" as he discovered the Greeks gone and himself forsaken. The moment when Philoctetes realizes that he has been betrayed has been burned into his memory.

Sophocles helps us to understand the psychology of someone who has been virtually without human company for almost ten years.[11] When Neoptolemus says that he has no idea who Philoctetes is, Philoctetes concludes, "I must be vile and hated by the gods!" (249). Apparently, whereas Philoctetes assumed that other Greeks would at least have heard of his suffering, he has

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8. Sophocles' elimination of agriculture on Lemnos emphasizes that the only means Philoctetes has for obtaining food is hunting—otherwise, the taking of the bow in the second half of the play would not be so dire, as noted by P. W. Rose (1992) 295 note 49.

9. Segal (1963) 38 remarks, "Sophocles makes the island, as much as possible, the negation of human civilization and human society. Its wildness serves as a test of the ability of man, unsheltered by society, to suffer and endure."

10. See Kittmer (1995) 10–18.

11. On occasional traders and sailors, see 236–45, 301–5, 494–99, and 541–46. The chorus speaks of Philoctetes as "a man crazy with storms of pain beyond rationality" (1193–95). Later, Philoctetes is so desperate that he resolves to die (1209–11; cf. 1348–49).

been forgotten in the public sphere. He has failed to obtain "glory" (*kleos*)—the worst possible fate for a heroic warrior (251; cf. 255).[12]

In his isolation, Philoctetes develops a complex attitude toward the gods. He asks them to visit suffering on Agamemnon, Menelaus, and Odysseus, the Greek leaders who decided to abandon him (315–16, 992). Yet Philoctetes also questions the gods' concern for justice toward mortals (254, 1035–43). After learning that "good" Greeks (Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax) are dead and that scheming and cowardly Greeks—including Thersites—are alive, Philoctetes concludes that the gods have allowed the wicked to endure but the good to perish.

> How can I reckon the score, how can I praise, when
> praising the divine I find the gods to be evil?
>
> (451–52)

Crusoe's ruminations about God and Providence led him to view his isolation in a positive manner. By contrast, Philoctetes seems to have suffered without any advantage. Thus far in this section, I have considered three features of Sophocles' story of Philoctetes that anticipate Crusoe's situation: Philoctetes' reversion to a primitive existence, the capacity for technological invention, and his psychological isolation. I would not suggest that Defoe deliberately modeled his novel on Sophocles' play, but this is one of the earliest works of literature that imagines these distinctive features.

Once Philoctetes learns of Odysseus' plot to steal his bow (needed to take Troy) and of his own betrayal by Neoptolemus (895ff.), he returns to his previous mode of conversation: not with humans but with nature itself. More than a dozen times, Philoctetes addresses the natural world that has served as his companion over the past decade.

> O harbors, o headlands, o dens
> of mountain creatures, o jutting broken crags,
> to you I raise my cry—there is no one else
> that I can speak to—and you have always been there.
> Let me tell you what this boy, Achilles' son [Neoptolemus], has
> done to me.
>
> (936–40)

12. Near the play's end, Philoctetes is promised both glory for sacking Troy (1343–47) and immortal excellence (*arete,* 1419–20; cf. 1425).

Philoctetes also calls on his cave (952–53, 1453), his Lemnian land (986–88), and his own hands, painful foot, and eyes (1004–5, 1188–89, 1354–56).[13] All this implies that, when he was alone, Philoctetes would carry on "conversations" with features of the landscape and parts of his body—there was no one else to talk to.[14]

Philoctetes' address to birds and animals, his fellow creatures on the island, offers a glimpse of the life-and-death struggle engaged in by Philoctetes over the past ten years.

> No more should you be scared of me
> but glut yourselves freely on my discolored flesh,
> killing me in turn for my killing
> for shortly I shall die here.
>
> (1155–58)

Without his bow, Philoctetes will now provide a feast to those he has previously feasted on; the hunter will become the hunted (956–60).[15]

In sum, Sophocles' Philoctetes is a Crusoe-like figure not only with respect to confronting the elements and carving out a means of survival but also in terms of being wholly removed from human companionship.[16] We might even say that Sophocles' *Philoctetes* offers the first extensive treatment of someone stuck on a deserted island that is not idyllic. Prior to the late fifth century, islands across the sea were often presented as exotic, magical, and linked with immortality—an abode of the gods (cf., e.g., the Isles of the Blessed or the island in the Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor"). This is not the destiny of Philoctetes. Instead, he confronts an island existence that is nasty and brutish, filled with toil, suffering, and loneliness![17] In this case, the transformation following such isolation presents reversion to a more animalistic state.

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13. Jebb (1906) 205 comments, "His own faculties are his comrades." There are over 130 vocatives in the play.

14. Philoctetes attributes human sensitivity to his bow, which has become an extension of himself (1128–39). The "bow" is his "life": both words are *bios* in Greek, with a shift in accent (931).

15. See Segal (1963) 39 and Roisman (2005) 54.

16. Kamerbeek (1980) 10 comments on Philoctetes' "Crusoesque life and desolation."

17. On Philoctetes' mixed feelings, see his final farewell to the island (1453–68). Easterling (1978) 36 comments, "His wound is *both* his bitterness and wildness *and* his dignity, just as the desert island symbolises not only his alienation, loneliness and animal-like life but also his purity"; cf. Feder (1963) 35, 37 and Knox (1964) 141.

Sophocles' play offers a penetrating portrait of a man whose isolation on a desert island competes with and perhaps surpasses Odysseus' isolation and suffering. In terms of literary allusion and rivalry, Sophocles may well be responding to Homeric epic by comparing the plight of Philoctetes with that of Homer's Odysseus. The parallels are partly implicit: both Philoctetes and Homer's Odysseus have suffered and endured many toils, they both need the help of others to convey them home, and—cut off for years from human company—each suffers an almost intolerable loneliness. Yet it could be argued that Sophocles' Philoctetes exceeds the isolation and suffering of Homer's Odysseus.[18] Not only is Philoctetes utterly forsaken (Odysseus did have Calypso as a companion for seven years), but he has been betrayed by his allies and suffers from a devastating wound. Philoctetes' pain and alienation have been reinterpreted in various ways in recent times, including as symbolic of the unhealed wounds of war veterans, particularly from conflicts in Northern Ireland, Vietnam, and elsewhere.[19]

Zemeckis' *Cast Away*

A second example of the trials of survival is found in Zemeckis' movie *Cast Away* (2000).[20] The main character, Chuck Noland (played by Tom Hanks), a Federal Express employee, is stranded in the South Pacific after a plane crash. There are familiar features in the story: Chuck's ignorance about whether he is on an island and whether it is inhabited. Once again, the struggle for survival takes center stage. Chuck must work to obtain shelter, food, and water. He uses the method of trial and error to open coconuts. He initially throws them against a large rock, then beats them, and finally hits one with a rock, breaking it into splinters. He then uses one of the splinters

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18. Sophocles echoes Homer's language that describes Odysseus: Philoctetes is "wretched" (*tlemon,* 160, 480, 1101); "pitiable" (*dustenos,* 172, 227, 759, 760, 744, 1152; cf. 178, 1377); "alone" (*monos,* 169, 172, 180, 227, 470, 688, 954); without neighbors (691–95); "desolate" (*eremos*); or "alone," "isolated," and "companionless" (228, 471, 487); "ill-fated" (*dusmoros,* 176, 949, 951, 1063, 1352); and "without a fate" (*ammoros,* 687–88). These terms and ideas evoke Odysseus and his suffering; see Davidson (1995) 27, Davidson (2006) 30–31, and Roisman (2005) 57–62; on Philoctetes' desperate situation, see Rehm (2002) 138–55.

19. Wilson (1941) 289–90 praises Sophocles' "special insight into morbid psychology . . . [offering] a cool observation of the behavior of psychological derangements" (290). See also Roisman (2005) 112–25 and Taplin (2004). R. Silverberg's *Man in the Maze* (1969) is an interesting rewriting of Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* set in the future on the planet of Lemnos.

20. The title at the start of Zemeckis' film is written as two words, "Cast Away."

to cut into the husk. (Later, he uses coconuts as water containers with stoppers.)

Chuck finds himself on an island with his clothes, a life raft, and the Fed Ex packages that wash in with the tide. At first, he hopes to be saved. His decision to open the packages signals a realization that rescuers are not coming. His supplies present some comic ironies (ice skates on a tropical island), but Chuck—like Crusoe—is a practical man and makes use of almost all these materials. The blade of the ice skate cuts cloth for a bandage and sharpens his stick into a spear.

It may be valuable to contrast the various supplies to which our shipwreck survivors have access. Odysseus is stripped bare and in desperate need of food and clothes. In *The Tempest,* Ferdinand is still clothed but is otherwise without resources. Those two arrivals take place on inhabited islands. Like Defoe's Crusoe, however, Chuck Noland is alone on a desert island for years and—in order to survive—must scavenge from the remains of the wreck. The implication appears to be that an isolated person is unlikely to last for long without any implements from the "civilized" world.

As in *Philoctetes, Cast Away* encompasses a partial recapitulation of human technology and culture. Chuck is soon living in a cave and hunting with a spear and lace fishing net, but he never develops agriculture or domesticates birds or animals: Chuck remains in the Stone Age.[21] The struggle to produce fire is drawn out and dramatic. He begins by spinning a stick, but he is still spinning late that day. His hands are bloody, and in frustration, he hurls a volleyball (found in one of the Fed Ex packages). When he picks up the ball, the bloody handprint on it looks almost like a face, so Chuck refines the image, with the hole for the air needle as the nose. This ball—named for the sports company Wilson—is given a place from which to "watch" Chuck's endeavors. As he continues to rub, Chuck addresses "Wilson": "Wouldn't have a match by any chance, would you?" Soon after the creation of Wilson, Chuck succeeds in igniting the fire. This is also reminiscent of Sophocles' Philoctetes and Defoe's Crusoe: hunting, primitive medicine, and the importance of fire to mark the survivor as human and in some sort of control.

Despite his technological achievements, Chuck's life in isolation evokes

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21. As movie consultant "prehistorian" Steve Watts puts it, Chuck has to "rediscover a lot of what our whole species had to discover to survive in the first place." Consultants Steve Watts, David Holladay, and David Wescott describe working with screenwriter Bill Broyles in the featurette on the *Cast Away* DVD bonus disk titled *S.T.O.P.: Surviving as a Cast Away;* see also Hepola (2000) on Broyles' own "survival" experience.

Fig. 8. "Wilson," Chuck Noland's companion in *Cast Away* (2000). (By permission of Photofest Inc.)

the life of wild animals. His clothes are rough, his hair and beard become unruly. After defecating behind a bush, he kicks sand over it—as a dog does. When he drinks rainwater in his cave, he lies prone on his stomach and pushes the water toward his mouth with his hand (like a paw). Clearly, there remain a few aspects of Chuck's "old" life: at bad moments—after injury or failure—Chuck looks at the watch with a picture of his girlfriend, Kelly, in it.[22] This is his link to the life he once knew, yet so much of his new existence is unfamiliar.

A little more than halfway through the movie, we leap ahead four years. Chuck's beard has grown; his hair is wild and bleached by the sun; he wears only tattered shorts; he has a trimmer, more muscular body. (Hanks lost fifty-five pounds in the fourteen-month hiatus between the shooting of

22. Unlike in Homer's *Odyssey* or on the television show *Lost,* there are no flashbacks while Chuck Noland is on the island.

Fig. 9. Chuck Noland creates fire in *Cast Away* (2000). (By permission of Photofest Inc.)

the first and second parts of the movie.) Not only does Chuck look different, but he has undergone profound changes. He has become a fisherman, a craftsman, and an astronomer and will soon be a shipwright and sailor. These are all new roles.

One thing that Chuck is missing is a companion. He needs to hear another voice, even if (in reality) it is his own. This was true of Philoctetes and Defoe's Crusoe, both of whom speak of delight when hearing another human speak. Philoctetes describes Neoptolemus' voice as a "most beloved sound" (*o philtaton phonema, Philoctetes* 234). Crusoe describes the pleasure in hearing Friday talk, even without understanding him.

> Upon this he spoke some words to me, and tho' I could not understand them, yet I thought they were pleasant to hear, for they were

> the first sound of a man's voice that I had heard, my own excepted, for above twenty-five years.
>
> (*Robinson Crusoe* 161)[23]

Chuck's conversations with Wilson are, in some sense, conversations with himself (recall Crusoe's solitary "dialogues"). Chuck will laugh and say to Wilson, "I know . . . I know" (often we hear repetition in these "discussions"). Thinking of a potential drawback to his plans, Chuck may turn and ask Wilson, "And what is your point?" Chuck addresses Wilson on the night before they leave the island: "You still awake? Me too. You scared? Me too."

Wilson is crucial to Chuck's survival. This may validate Aristotle's definition of a human being as a *politikon zoon.* This phrase is usually translated as "man is a political animal," but the Greek word *politikon* derives from the word for "community," *polis* (often translated "city-state"). So perhaps it is better to say "people are social animals," since they live in communities. But even this does not quite capture the phrase's meaning, for Aristotle believed in teleology—not only that everything happens for a purpose (*telos*), but that all living things seek to fulfill their potential: an acorn strives to become an oak tree, and so on. Understood in this sense, *politikon zoon* means not simply that humans are social animals but that they must live with other people to achieve their fullest potential. As Aristotle says, "A man alone is either a beast or a god."[24] Chuck might be able to survive on an island, but without someone else to talk to, he may not have created fire, planned his escape, or maintained his sanity.

After four years, it has become clear that if Chuck is to get off the island, it will be by his own means—not by outside rescue. He decides to make a raft, using a washed-up piece of a portable restroom as a sail. He cuts down trees with his ax (he is also a toolmaker); he calculates how many lashings of vine and bark he will need to hold the raft together; and when the wind is right, he sets off with Wilson. Ultimately, he is picked up by a freighter.

Philoctetes and *Cast Away* both emphasize the precarious nature of survival and the likely reversion to a more primitive life. Civilization is always at risk. The struggle to survive captures all of the survivor's efforts. By juxtaposing these narratives, we are in a better position to appreciate how successful

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23. Regarding his dog, Defoe's Crusoe remarks, "I only wanted to have him talk to me" (53).

24. *Politics* 1.9. I am deviating from Aristotle's qualification, for he says this happens when "by nature and not by chance, a person lives outside society." I would argue that even if such isolation occurs by chance, there appears to ensue either an elevation or a degeneration.

Defoe's Crusoe was in reestablishing European civilization on his island—and how lucky he was: he had freshwater sources, a flint for fire, weapons for hunting, and was able to engage in agriculture and the domestication of animals. In some ways, *Cast Away* works to deromanticize the idea of the shipwreck survivor. Many castaways do not survive in real life; those that do are subject to both danger and mind-numbing monotony. Chuck Noland has no freshwater sources other than rain and has no flint or other standard tools, and it appears likely that no ship or plane will find him. Perhaps the desperation found in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and the movie *Cast Away* offers a more realistic picture of hard-won survival.[25]

Since *Cast Away* is not a literary text but a film,[26] the camera is used to emphasize many things, such as Chuck's bright orange Federal Express parka, the plane on the ocean bottom in underwater shots, and the "new" Chuck standing confidently on a rock with his wild hair and beard. Close-ups highlight the beads of sweat on Chuck's forehead as he toils to make fire, as well as the flashlight whose batteries will run out in the cave as he sleeps. All of this calls the audience's attention to specific visual features and obviously communicates by different means than a novel or story does. We should not neglect the use of sound: there is not only music (Elvis Presley, Russian folk songs) but also the repetitive beat of waves, rain, and coconuts falling. The absence of mechanical noise (or any background music) on the island jarringly contrasts with the sounds of the ship's engine, horn, and alarm when Chuck is rescued (the news of his rescue is also signaled by Kelly's cell phone ringtone, which wakes her in the middle of the night).

It has been argued that castaway films and television series in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reflect an American ambivalence toward imperialism and colonization. While earlier narratives such as *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe* have suggested the beneficial aspects of colonization, Chuck Noland never claims possession of—or even names—his island in *Cast Away.* After rescue, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe will return to his island, the Swiss Family Robinson choose to stay on theirs, and Verne's party hopes to annex the "mysterious" Lincoln Island as a U.S. colony (see my

25. See Bergstrom (2005).

26. Of the various film versions of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Luis Buñuel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1952) faithfully follows the plot and text of Defoe's novel (Crusoe's words are spoken in voice-over), though the story begins with his arrival on the island and ends with his being rowed out to the ship that will take him home—as Susan Barton in *Foe* recommends (see the discussion of *Foe* in chapter 8). Tom Hanks was nominated for a Best Actor Award in 2000, as was Buñuel's Crusoe, Dan O'Herlihy, in 1952.

discussion of *The Mysterious Island* in chapter 9), but in *Cast Away,* Chuck has a very different attitude toward his island. Weaver-Hightower argues that "[Chuck] remains perpetual visitor, never owner" and that "the island provides only a space for the castaway . . . to reaffirm (instead of test) [his] identity."[27] In her view, castaways in such recent works end up rejecting their islands and seeking a return home, for the island fails to match the advantages of the United States.[28] On this reading, *Cast Away* recalls the sense of closure found in Homer and Shakespeare, where the castaway sought to leave the island and return to his (or her) old life. While Chuck Noland is forced to adopt new roles, he rejects the shipwreck's potential for inner change, undermining the fictional ideal of positive transformation on an island.[29]

Gordon's *First on Mars*

Rex Gordon's *First on Mars* (1957), also titled *No Man Friday,* is an explicit adaptation of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.*[30] Gordon Holder is one of seven English astronauts who blast off from Australia and plan to reach Mars in a hundred days, take pictures, and return. After an airlock accidentally opens (sucking all the air out of the ship and killing his six comrades) and then communication with Earth is cut off, Holder believes he can only "live, eat, sleep, and wait for death" (25). Yet this single man is successful and survives on Mars for fifteen years. Here, too, we find the essential features of the Crusoe scenario: an isolated person set against the elements, forced to recapitulate human developments and consider new possible identities. The shipwreck paradigm has been adapted to a disaster in outer space that forces the survivor to start from scratch and reconsider his own place in the universe.

Holder lands the rocket on Mars, but it is a rough landing, the "space way to die" (32). He is not a pilot; he is the "fuel consumption engineer." A "historic moment" comes when Holder steps off his wrecked rocket and

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27. Weaver-Hightower (2007) 208, 210.

28. See Weaver-Hightower (2007) 214.

29. Weaver-Hightower (2007) 222 comments, "Being stranded on an island . . . [could] be a life-revolutionizing experience, but . . . [Chuck's] worldview has not significantly altered . . . [H]e could only see constraint and limitation on the island (the space that could have really allowed him freedom from his obsessions with work and time)."

30. Rex Gordon is a pen name that A. A. Wyn employs. I follow the text of Gordon (1957).

puts his foot on the surface, "the first man ever to set foot on Mars." He wants to say he feels "solid earth" beneath his feet, but then he proposes, "Perhaps I should call it not earth, but 'mars'?" (39–40). This is just one of the many instances when he points out that he "was facing an experience that had never come to a human being before" (118).[31]

Once on Mars, survival is Holder's constant concern: he will need water, food, warmth, shelter, and air. There are many significant but not insurmountable hurdles to living on Mars. The temperature gets very cold at night, minus 150 degrees Fahrenheit (60); the atmosphere has only one hundred millibars of pressure, versus one thousand millibars on Earth; and the atmosphere contains no more than one part in a hundred of oxygen—though Mount Everest has even less oxygen (33). Nevertheless, Holder is able to enrich the Martian atmosphere in order to breathe with an air tank and mask rather than his entire unwieldy space suit, a feat about which he says, "I was just lucky" (156; cf. 38). With such problems mitigated, Holder is able to explore his new planet.

In terms of supplies, Holder has enough air, food, and water for 150 days (48). He also uses machinery from the wrecked rocket: its fuel tank, electric battery, gyros, pumps, piping, and instruments (48, 53, 128). Holder is an ingenious craftsman who builds a heat engine, a battery to warm his meals, a compass, a wheeled vehicle to explore the surrounding territory, and more (54, 57).

> It was just a fortnight after I landed that I was drinking Martian water and breathing Martian air made by power drawn from Martian sunlight. (61)

Holder finds himself in circumstances analogous to Crusoe, scavenging from his "ship" and seeking the necessities for survival and exploration. In fact, this comparison with Crusoe is made explicit several times. The similarity first comes to him in a dream.

> I dreamed that I saw myself, a latter-day Crusoe, on some fantastic bicycle I had made from bits and pieces of machinery. Instead of a goatskin coat, a parasol, a gun over my shoulder, and a parrot on my arm, I wore an oxygen mask and carried a microscope and a collecting

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31. The IMAX movie *Magnificent Desolation*—narrated by Tom Hanks—emphasizes the human footprint on the moon as evidence that someone had actually made it there.

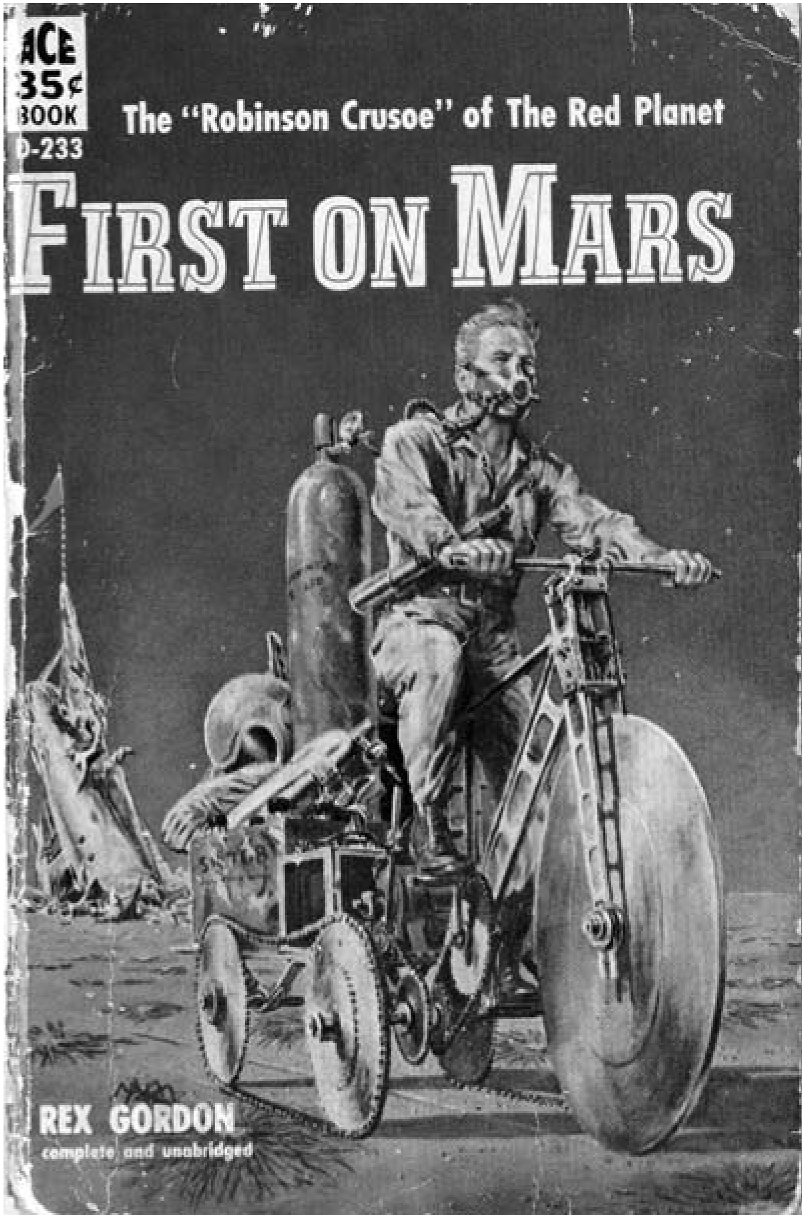

Fig. 10. Jacket cover of the book *First on Mars*, depicting Holder's "fantastic bicycle."

> box for specimens. My bicycle broke down when I was too far from the rocket to walk back before my oxygen gave out. (50–51; cf. 26)

He ends up building just such a traveling contraption in a week (70).

His new planet is, of course, very different. The gravity of Mars allows for "easy, flying strides" (43). Holder concludes that if Mars' gravity were equal to that of Earth's, he would not have survived (36). He also has to adjust to a different annual cycle: while one day is close in duration to one on Earth, the year is twice as long (17, 25, 39). In addition, Holder emphasizes his own isolation and the "inhuman emptiness."

> No man, lost on the icy plateau of Tibet, could know the fear of being out of sight of anything on Mars. He would have above him the Earth sky, of cloud and rain and wind . . . Lost he might be, but on Earth he would hardly be more than a few hundred miles, a walkable distance, from human kind and sustenance. On Mars, it was true, he would not have to fear the wind, or very rarely, but instead, he would have an awful stillness. (72–73)

Holder has no illusions about how precarious his chances of survival are: "one slip, one mistake, even so small a slip as a twisted ankle, could cause my death" (73). He also comments that he had to leave Earth to truly realize how much water was necessary for plants, yet Martian plants in turn produce oxygen to sustain larger animals, insect-like creatures that appear to have a very slow metabolism.

Holder relives Crusoe's experience in wishing he had someone to talk to (75–76). He describes himself as a "perishing castaway in a wreck on an alien planet" (52). Holder also records his story by writing a journal (e.g., 110–11), and like Crusoe, he discovers he has company.

> I remember another picture of my famous precursor in the art of lonely living. He stands on the empty beach of his earthly island, looking downwards and wearing an expression of fear and disconcertment. And what caused his strained attitude, he who until that moment had had nothing to hope or fear, is a naked human footprint in the sand. (78)

Holder does not see a footprint; rather, he finds that the fruit of a cactus-like Martian plant has been "bitten clean in half" by what must be a large crea-

ture with sharp teeth, leading him to the realization "I was not alone" (78).[32] Holder confronts the danger of other creatures as the ultimate challenge.

> I had learned at last that even on that barren planet Mars it was not what I could do with things that mattered, but my relations with other creatures, other life, as even Crusoe had found when, after the trials and storms and shipwreck, his existence had become dependent on the savages—and the goats. (144)

As in Defoe's novel, Holder reflects on the role of design and accident. He prays to "God or Fate or Chance" and refers to "the will of God and the laws of science" (37–38). Chance seems to hold the upper hand.

> Man was a helpless creature who only by a chapter of accidents, by climbing trees and coming down again, by discovering fire and using tools, had acquired a brain. He was nature's joke, who lived purposelessly, brutishly, and knew he was going to die. I lay there in darkness now, and saw life bleakly. (51)

Holder reflects on the importance of fire for human cultural "advances." Without fire, he postulates, humans would never have advanced from living in caves to inventing machines; civilization would not have been possible (49–50). He emphasizes how he—an alien creature—must adapt to this "strange ecology" on Mars: improvisation is essential (140, 88–89). He continually worries that the "universe . . . was as blind and hopeless and as purposeless as I myself would become if I allowed myself to be that way" (103). Though, from a human perspective, man is the "highest" life-form on Earth, Holder comes to appreciate that man is not master of the universe (79, 119).

In the second half of the novel, Holder does encounter larger animal life, "undreamable" multilegged creatures that use lights for communication. Holder ultimately becomes a kind of "pet" for one of these large creatures that efficiently "harvest" man-like Martian migrating animals. Holder even succeeds in establishing a common language (152). While Holder thought of himself originally as a king like Crusoe, he now sees that he may be playing the more subservient role of Friday.

In the end, Holder tries to explain to his fellow humans (who arrive fif-

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32. Cf. Holder's mention of cannibals (122) and his statement "I needed a Man Friday . . . an intelligence that was at home on Mars, to supplement my own" (143–44).

teen years later) what has happened to him and what life on Mars is like. His "hosts" were necessary for survival, yet it is true that they have no ostensible civilization. They are hunters who eat raw meat; they have no words or writing system; they "talk" with lights (162). More startling is that there is no competition or any need for action—by Earth laws, they appear "degenerate" (189). One Martian creature pities Holder because "you cannot be what you are, instead of trying to be more or different" (170). If it can be said that modern man strives to alter his existence, or who he is, Holder learns that any "meaning" to life may be delusional, and he comes to gain the knowledge "of being, not of doing" (173, 191).

After his rescue, Holder must confront the challenge of living back on Earth (184). He bleakly suspects that the human drive for conquest will prevail, leading to a return mission to Mars, perhaps to prospect for radioactive ore. Yet he insists that "we will learn nothing" by conquering (177, 190). From the cosmic perspective, humans are both helpless and insignificant: this single man barely survived—and could do so only with the aid of the native creatures.

The story of one person shipwrecked on an uninhabited island may be transposed to the Greek heroic age, the Pacific Ocean, or outer space. The three works in this chapter serve to emphasize the precarious nature of survival and the likelihood of a reversion to a more primitive life outside of civilization. It is striking how far Defoe's Crusoe advances in reestablishing European civilization with his efforts at hunting, agriculture, and housing and his goatskin apparel. The picture of desperation found in Sophocles' *Philoctetes, Cast Away,* and *First on Mars* presents a less romantic picture of hard-won survival.

CHAPTER 8

Competing Narratives in Walcott's *Pantomime* and Coetzee's *Foe*

A recurrent feature of shipwreck narratives is that the survivor takes on the role of storyteller. Odysseus tells the Phaeacians of his adventures; Crusoe writes a chronicle; many critics have seen Prospero as both playwright and director of the events on his island. I here consider two relatively recent works that attempt to rewrite the story of Crusoe and Friday: Walcott's play *Pantomime* (1978) and Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986). Walcott's drama focuses on their relationship, while *Foe* explores the nature of storytelling, truth, and the ownership of tales. Both works address the question of what sort of shipwreck stories should be told.

Crusoe and Friday in Walcott's *Pantomime*

One aspect of Defoe's story that has captured modern interest is Crusoe's relationship with Friday. After Friday arrives, a social hierarchy is established. Indeed, one of the first words Defoe's Crusoe teaches Friday is *master.* Derek Walcott's play *Pantomime* (1978) reimagines Crusoe's encounter with Friday and refashions identity against the backdrop of colonialism. The play is set in late twentieth-century Tobago (said to be Crusoe's island), where a white hotel manager and former actor, Harry Trewe, and a black waiter and one-time calypso singer, Jackson Phillip, contemplate producing a pantomime in the English tradition—a satiric Christmas play—for the hotel's guests.

Walcott plays off the idea of shipwreck in several ways. The hotel's name

is "The Castaways Guest House,"[1] but more significant, the play-within-a-play is based on the story of Robinson Crusoe and Friday. The opening scene finds Harry singing,

> It's our Christmas Panto,
> it's called: Robinson Crusoe . . .
> Just picture a lonely island
> and a beach with its golden sand.
> There walks a single man
> in the beautiful West Indies! (93)

Harry presents the stereotypical commercial view of the Caribbean: a lonely island, golden sand, beautiful and solitary—perfect for tourists. Later, he describes the allure: "There's the sea, the palm trees, monarch of all I survey and so on, all that postcard stuff" (135).

The idea of performing the shipwreck encounter of Crusoe and Friday leads to a struggle not only over the play but also about how to interpret the past. The stakes are high. While Harry calls their play a "good satire . . . on the master-servant . . . relationship" (109), Jackson finds the Crusoe and Friday story to be "the first example of slavery" (117, 132). The tale of Crusoe and Friday has been recontextualized so that—from the black islander's perspective—a familiar story offers a paradigm for European conquest.

The waiter Jackson tries to explain centuries of servitude with a dramatic metaphor, evoking another sort of "pantomime"—a shadow play. He and his ancestors have long been playing a role that blurs the line between drama and history.

> For three hundred years I served you. Three hundred years I serve you breakfast in . . . in my white jacket on a white veranda, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib[2]. . . in that sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib . . . that was my pantomime. Every movement you made, your shadow copies. (112)

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1. As Jackson puts it, "They ain't shipwrecked, they pay in advance for their vacation" (98).

2. This short refrain offers a neat synopsis of global European colonial rule: *boss* is Dutch (Caribbean, South Africa, and Indonesia), *bwana* is Swahili (Africa), *effendi* is Turkish, *bacra* is Jamaican creole (> *back raw*?), and *sahib* is Hindi (India), taking us from Asia to the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean.

European imperialism has forced slaves and their descendants to copy the master's movements; they are reduced to playing the role of "shadows." In modern England, the term *pantomime* refers to a Christmas satire; in Walcott's play, it has been redefined as the slave's imitation of the European master class.

Finally, after "too much obedience," the European declares political independence for the former colonies and wishes that the performance would end, though this is not possible. As Jackson says,

> But after a while the child does get frighten of the shadow he make. He say to himself, That is too much obedience, I better hads stop. But the shadow don't stop, no matter if the child stop playing that pantomime, and the shadow does follow the child everywhere . . . He cannot get rid of it, no matter what, and that is the power and black magic of the shadow, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib, until it is the shadow that start dominating the child, it is the servant that start dominating the master . . . and that is the victory of the shadow, boss. (113)

The "shadows" of the British Empire are not simply acting in a play—they wish to offer their view of history in the New World. As Jackson tells it, the master-servant relationship is now reversed, as the "shadow" who previously mimicked has finally gained the upper hand over his onetime master.

The two coproducers then ponder rewriting the Robinson Crusoe story by going back in time and replaying the encounter with different possible arrivals by sea. One idea is to have the white manager play a native islander and to have the black waiter play an African traveler and conqueror—a similar plot to the Robinson Crusoe and Friday story but with the roles reversed. Rather than Defoe's scenario—in which a shipwrecked European maintains a sort of dominance despite his shipwreck arrival—this new play would present a black African hero. The fictional model is transformed so that it offers the descendants of African slaves the role of imperialist.[3] As Jackson insists,

> Now, the way I see it here: whether Robinson Crusoe was on a big boat or not, the idea is that he got . . . shipwrecked. So I . . . if I am supposed to play Robinson Crusoe my way, then I will choose the way in which I will get shipwrecked. (121)

3. See Taylor (1986) 172.

Part of what happens in the play-within-a-play is that the line between a true shipwreck (in which there is no choice) and the dramatic performance has been blurred. Jackson has stepped outside the story to change its essential nature: "I will choose the way in which I will get shipwrecked."[4] The actors find themselves in a position to decide what sort of shipwreck will take place.

Harry fears that the consequences of such a rewriting would be unlikely to amuse the guests (Jackson insists that the name of the white islander is "Thursday," not Friday).

> [The African conqueror] comes across this naked white cannibal called Thursday, you know. And then look at what would happen. He would have to start to . . . well, he'd have to, sorry . . . This cannibal, who is a Christian, would have to start unlearning his Christianity. He would have to be taught . . . I mean . . . he'd have to be taught by this—African . . . that everything was wrong, that what he was doing . . . I mean, for nearly two thousand years . . . was wrong. That his civilization, his culture, his whatever, was . . . horrible. Was all . . . wrong. Barbarous, I mean, you know. And Crusoe would then have to teach him things like, you know, about . . . Africa, his gods, patamba, and so on . . . and it would get very, very complicated. (126)

As we find elsewhere in Walcott's work, a white islander of European ancestry empathetically articulates—here by an inverted perspective—this clash between cultures from the perspective of the descendants of African slaves.[5] Although there was no actual shipwreck except in the novelistic prototype, the slaves' journey and arrival was a nightmare. Walcott's drama considers rewriting history—or at least the Robinson Crusoe story—in a way that offers different roles to Europeans and Africans: the white native in the play-within-the-play would have to adopt African culture and forget Christianity, just as African slaves in the historical past were asked to "unlearn" their religion, language, and customs. From this perspective, Harry is likely correct that this will not "entertain" hotel guests on holiday.[6]

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4. Tompkins (1995) 44 emphasizes Jackson's resistance to the canonical narrative.

5. For Dennis Plunkett playing a similar role in Walcott's *Omeros* (1990), see Morrison (1999a) 94–97.

6. Harry warns, "We're trying to do something light, just a little pantomime, a little satire, a little picong. But if you take this thing seriously, we might commit Art, which is a kind of crime in this society . . . we just want a little . . . entertainment" (125).

There is reluctance on both sides to proceed with such a drama. At first, Harry has a hard time convincing Jackson to join him in the performance.

> JACKSON: I bringing in breakfast.
> HARRY: You do that, Friday.
> JACKSON: Friday? It ain't go keep.
> HARRY: (*gesturing*) Friday, you, bring Crusoe, me, breakfast now. Crusoe hungry.
> JACKSON: Mr. Trewe, you come back with that same rake again? I tell you, I ain't no actor, and I ain't walking in front a set of tourists naked playing cannibal. Carnival, but not cannibal. (95–96)

Harry later convinces Jackson to join the production, but when the play goes contrary to Harry's original intentions, he tries to call the whole thing off. Jackson objects,

> Here I am getting into *my* part and you object. This is the story . . . this is history. This moment that we are now acting here is the history of imperialism; it's nothing less than that. And I don't think that I can—should—concede my getting into a part halfway and abandoning things, just because, you, as my superior, give me orders. People become independent. Now, I could go down to that beach by myself with this hat, and I could play Robinson Crusoe, I could play Columbus, I could play Sir Francis Drake, I could play anybody discovering anywhere, but I don't want you to tell me when and where to draw the line! (125)

Once these two men raise the idea of inverting roles and presenting alternative views of history, Jackson pursues it to its logical conclusion: he can even play Columbus or Francis Drake. The brilliance of drama (in Sophocles, Shakespeare, or Walcott) is the ease with which someone can take on a new role. On stage, Jackson can become an African hero or even a European imperialist.

Harry once more pleads that they give up the idea of the play: "I'd like this whole place just as it was. I mean, just before everything started." Jackson responds, "You mean you'd like it returned to its primal state? Natural? Before Crusoe finds Thursday? But, you see, that is not history. That is not the world" (127). Jackson then explains his view of the history of the British Empire.

> Well, you come to a place, you find that place as God make it; like Robinson Crusoe, you civilize the natives; they try to do something, you turn around and you say to them: "You are not good enough, let's call the whole thing off, return things to normal, you go back to your position as slave or servant, I will keep mine as master, and we'll forget the whole thing ever happened." Correct? You would like me to accept this? (128)

Harry has set in motion an exploration of history that is now propelled by its own momentum. Jackson protests that once they have come this far, the world cannot go back and become "just as it was."

We find role reversal throughout the play. This is not surprising, since English pantomime itself consists in part of cross-dressing gender inversions (men playing female roles). In this case, the transformations are based on race rather than gender.[7] Jackson's song tells how such transformations occur.

> Now Crusoe he was this Christian and all,
> And Friday, his slave, was a cannibal,
> But one day things bound to go in reverse,
> With Crusoe the slave and Friday the boss. (117, 132)

Later, Jackson proposes serving Harry a new kind of communion.

> JACKSON: Supposing I wasn't a waiter, and instead of breakfast I was serving you communion, this Sunday morning on this tropical island, and I turn to you, Friday, to teach you my faith, and I tell you, kneel down and eat this man. Well, kneel, nuh! What you think you would say, eh? (*pause*) You, this white savage?
> HARRY: No, that's cannibalism.
> JACKSON: Is no more cannibalism than to eat a god. (111–12)

Christian missionaries had accused Africans and South American natives of cannibalism, yet at communion—at least symbolically—they "eat the body

7. See Thieme (1999) 125 and the brief discussion of English pantomime in B. Jones (1996) 230. It turns out that when they performed the story in pantomime some years previously, Harry's ex-wife played Crusoe, while Harry played Friday (164).

and drink the blood of Christ." Jackson seeks to collapse the distinction between the crime of cannibalism and European religious ritual.[8]

On the subject of artistic originality, Harry, a proud European, denigrates the islanders. When Jackson brings in a dead parrot, Harry is not impressed.

> You people create nothing. You imitate everything. It's all been done before, you see, Jackson. The parrot. Think that's something? It's from *The Seagull.* It's from *Miss Julie.* You can't ever be original, boy. That's the trouble with shadows, right? They can't think for themselves. (156)

It is ironic, of course, that Harry criticizes Jackson and "you people" for having no originality. He is the one who wishes to parody the old standby *Robinson Crusoe.* Jackson responds by explaining how the islanders have adopted—and adapted—these works.

> You see, it's your people who introduced us to this culture: Shakespeare, *Robinson Crusoe,* the classics, and so on, and when we start getting as good as them, you can't leave halfway. (124)[9]

Harry and Jackson must negotiate if they wish to compose an alternative version of the familiar shipwreck story of Crusoe and Friday. Clearly, both Walcott and Césaire in *A Tempest* (discussed in chapter 4 of this book) have an affinity for the classic works that they use to explore the contemporary dilemmas of their newly independent islands—through Crusoe and Friday, Prospero and Caliban.[10]

Pantomime argues that in terms of history, control was not determined by black or white, by who got to the island first, or by who was more civilized. The question of who plays the master and who plays the slave comes down to force. As Harry puts it, "I tell you one thing, friend. If you want me to learn

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8. B. Jones (1996) 234 sees Jackson's comment as questioning "the Christian missionary's bland assumption that only his version of cannibalism was legitimate."

9. Walcott (1974a) 53 responds to the criticism that islanders lack originality; his answer is to go "beyond mimicry": "The stripped and naked man, however abused, however disabused of old beliefs, instinctually, even desperately begins again as a craftsman"; cf. Walcott (1970) 17. See Tompkins (1995) 42 on "metatheatre [in which older literature is "re-used" or "re-cycled"] as a strategy of resistance."

10. See Burian (1997) 368.

your language, you'd better have a gun" (117). Unlike the complex interactions among characters in Homer and Shakespeare, the Crusoe-Friday story now presents a confrontation between two men wherein power determines what language is spoken, what religion is deemed viable, and who gives the orders.[11] Yet even when colonial nations relinquish control, the problems do not disappear. Jackson comments, "You mustn't rush things, people have to slide into independence. They give these islands independence so fast that people still ain't recover from the shock" (152). Clearly, a satisfactory resolution to the historical situation is hard to come by.[12]

In *Pantomime,* we observe the flexibility of the figure of Robinson Crusoe, who is reimagined as a black African who forces a native islander to learn African customs, religion, and language. The figure of Crusoe has become problematic in a new sense. It appears that even fictional characters are able to reinvent themselves in a new setting; the shipwreck scenario once again serves as a trigger for exploring identity and possible new roles.[13]

Narrative Control in Coetzee's *Foe*

Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1987) introduces two important innovations to the shipwreck theme. First, he has a woman, Susan Barton, washed up on the island of Cruso (there is here no final *e* in his name) and Friday—it is unusual to encounter a female castaway. Second, Coetzee explores the need of shipwreck survivors to control the narrative of their lives.

We learn that before the novel begins, Susan Barton has traveled from England to Brazil to seek her abducted daughter. She gives up hope after two years, and during her return voyage to England, the ship she is on suffers a mutiny. She is set adrift in a rowboat, reaching an island on which Cruso and Friday had been wrecked some years before. They have a place to live,

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11. Lying behind the conflict between Jackson and Harry may be a tension between classical and creole types of acting. B. Jones (1996) 228–29 comments, "Trewe's underlying assumption is that a dramatic production draws on a fixed, predetermined sequence. This is a 'Classical' trait"; yet "Jackson dominates when asked to improvise . . . [and] invents a language of caricatured African resonance" (235). See also Taylor (1986) 174 on the opposition between "classical" and "creole" Crusoe.

12. In his interview in Hirsch (1986) 215, Walcott remains optimistic: "The idea of some reconciliation or some adaptability of being able to live together, that is sometimes rejected by people as being a facile solution. But I believe it's possible."

13. See Thieme (1999) 127. As Walcott (1965) suggests, Crusoe is emblematic for discovering a new identity.

and Friday makes Susan a bed of grass. Cruso's only project is to build walled terraces, yet he has no seeds to plant. Friday is a Negro slave who fishes, plays the flute, and is unable to speak because his tongue has been cut out; according to Cruso, slave traders did this (27–28).[14] Both Susan and Cruso use gestures and signs to convey commands to Friday.

Unlike Defoe's enterprising Crusoe, virtually nothing but a knife has been salvaged from the wrecked ship (84). Without a flint, they strive to keep their fire's embers going (16). Susan hopes to find a journal, ink, and paper, but there are not even notches to mark the time (16).[15] She generates ideas for more advanced technology—a lamp to allow for activity at night or salvaging tools and timber from the wreck—but Cruso "spoke as if tools were heathenish inventions" (32; cf. 16). Although Cruso spends his time watching the sea and gazing at stars, he has no desire to leave the island. In fact, the island has become Cruso's entire universe. As Susan says,

> 'It was as though Cruso wished his story to begin with his arrival on the island, and mine to begin with my arrival, and the story of us together to end on the island too.' (34)

Cruso's introverted character obviously contrasts with Defoe's ambitious protagonist, who constantly thinks of departure. This early passage finds Susan considering how "the story of us together" should begin and end.

Sometime later, a ship, the *John Hobart,* arrives, and Cruso and Friday must be forcibly brought aboard—they do not wish to leave the island. After Cruso dies during the voyage, Susan and the mute Friday arrive in England. The final two-thirds of the novel take place there, as Susan attempts to have "the story of the island" told with the help of Mr. Daniel Foe, a character based on the actual novelist of the original Robinson Crusoe novel (whose name originally was Foe before he assumed the more aristocratic-sounding "Defoe" in middle age).

Literary shipwrecks are linked with the re-creation of oneself in terms of new roles, yet there is little change in Cruso or Friday while Susan is on the island. Robinson Cruso is the master of Friday and, in some sense, owner of the island. Indeed, with his staff and his conical hat, Susan thinks of him as

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14. I follow the text of Coetzee (1987). Cruso speculates that the slave traders cut out Friday's tongue to prevent the slave from telling his story (23); Susan wonders whether Cruso might have done this to punish Friday for the sin of cannibalism (95).

15. Engélibert (1996) 269 remarks that Coetzee's Cruso "has regressed to a state of Nature and has saved nothing from the shipwreck."

king of the island (37, 41). Yet we know nothing of him—we can only surmise that he assumed a position of authority after his arrival, for he "had no stories to tell of the life he had lived as a trader and planter before the shipwreck" (34).[16] His one goal is that nothing change on the island (27). Susan has arrived near the end of his stay—and his life—and can only describe his past by quoting the Brazilian saying "The heart of a man is a dark forest" (11).

Once in England, Susan fashions new roles for Friday to play: as a free man (41, 76), a gardener (49), a laundryman (56), and '"a mariner of long standing"' (110). Yet Susan also compares Friday to an animal: before she sees him dropping petals on the sea, she "had given to Friday's life as little thought as I would have a dog's or any other dumb beast's" (32); Friday is "like a frightened horse" or "like a dog locked up all its life" (42, 55).[17] The question of how civilized Friday is carries considerable importance, for Susan hopes that Friday can regain his humanity, even without the ability to speak.[18]

One character in *Foe* who is clearly transformed by shipwreck is the female castaway, Susan Barton.

> 'On Cruso's island I was washed ashore; from that all else has flowed.
> I am the woman washed ashore.' (99)

Susan plays a multitude of new roles, first on the island, then upon her return to England. After arrival on Cruso's island, she is changed on the outside and within. Her petticoat is reduced to tatters, and her skin turns "as brown as an Indian's" (35). She becomes an "island-dweller" who forgets what living on the mainland is like. She is Cruso's "second subject" but remains uncertain about whether her relationship with Cruso should be described as "brother and sister, or host and guest, or master and servant" (11, 30). She nurses him back to health and has sex with him once (27, 30). On the *Hobart,* she feels that she is playing the jailer to Cruso's prisoner (43), as well as Cruso's wife

16. Attridge (2004) 76 comments that Cruso has "lost touch with . . . [the] need for narrative."

17. Also Friday chews with his front teeth "like a fish" and sleeps "like a cat" (24, 27; cf. 77, 80).

18. Susan remarks, "If the company of brutes had been enough for me, I might have lived most happily on my island. But who accustomed to the fullness of human speech, can be content with caws and chirps and screeches, and the barking of seals, and the moan of the wind?" (8) See Coetzee (1992) 198–99 on Kafka's "The Burrow," which asks whether it is possible to think outside (or without) language. In another essay, Coetzee remarks that "in *Foe,* most pertinently, the tongueless Friday is a guardian of significant silence or absence" (245).

and widow (42).[19] While Cruso and Friday appear resistant to change on the island, Susan's shipwreck leads to many new identities for her.[20]

Susan also takes on different personae in England. Much like Odysseus, she tells a number of lying tales upon her return: she is Foe's housekeeper (71); she has a brother in Slough but was robbed on the journey there (99); she might be thought "the humblest of poor relations [of Foe] . . . the niece of a second cousin come down in the world" (65). She employs various disguises, even trying to "pass for a man" (101). Later, she acts as a Muse to inspire Foe (126; cf. 63).

Coetzee's novel is preoccupied with the struggle over who will tell the story of Susan, Cruso, and the island—and with how Friday lost his tongue. Indeed, the work itself begins with quotation marks—the first three-quarters of Coetzee's novel consists of a memoir and letters written by Susan Barton to Mr. Foe. She insists she has "no art" and that she is certainly no "born storyteller" (40, 81).[21] Because Susan lacks skills, she needs Foe to write the story.

> 'For though my story gives the truth, it does not give the substance of the truth . . . To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and a comfortable chair away from all distraction, and a window to stare through; and then the knack of seeing waves where there are fields before your eyes, and of feeling the tropic sun when it is cold; and at your fingertips the words with which to capture the vision before it fades. I have none of these, while you have all.' (51–52)

Early on, Susan has a common-sense view of stories.

> 'All I can say is what I saw, I wrote. I saw no cannibals; and if they came after night fall and fled before dawn, they left no footprint behind.' (54; cf. 47)

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19. Though Susan "had no thought . . . of becoming a castaway's wife," she acknowledges, "If Cruso had a widow, I am she" (86, 99).

20. Susan wonders whether Friday views her as an exiled queen, back to claim dominion over the island (86). Friday and Susan are twice thought to be gypsies (102, 108–9). Later, Susan feels like "the old man of the river" or a "beast of burden" to Friday's tyrant (147–48). Foe will ask her to be his "spy" (150).

21. "I will say in plain terms what can be said and leave unsaid what cannot" (120). She fears that her memoir of the island is "dull and vacant and without life" (126).

Her fear is that if the story of the island is not told, she and Friday will be forever obscure (81); if Foe writes down their story, he may liberate Susan and return Friday to Africa (63).

Yet Susan comes to reflect on the nature of storytelling and the "art of writing," which she calls '"a fine thing"' (58).[22] It is extremely important that the story of the island be told truthfully.[23] As she remarks to the captain of the *Hobart,*

> '"I would rather be the author of my own story than have lies told about me . . . If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it? I might as well have dreamed it in a snug bed in Chichester."' (40)

Susan recognizes various goals in telling stories: to capture the truth, to entertain, and, in her case, "to set me free of Cruso and Friday" (66). Her "memoir"—written in three days—"must not only tell the truth about us but please its readers too" (63). She stresses the importance of including "particulars" in stories. Specific details make the story distinctive, as she tells Cruso on the island.

> '"All shipwrecks become the same shipwreck, all castaways the same castaway, sunburnt, lonely, clad in the skins of the beasts he has slain. *The truth that makes your story yours alone,* that sets you apart from the old mariner by the fireside spinning yarns of sea-monsters and mermaids, *resides in a thousand touches which today may seem of no importance,* such as: When you made your needle (the needle you store in your belt), by what means did you pierce the eye? When you sewed your hat, what did you use for thread? *Touches like these will one day persuade your countrymen that it is all true, every word,* there was indeed once an island in the middle of the ocean where the wind blew and the gulls cried from the cliffs and a man named Cruso paced about in his apeskin clothes, scanning the horizon for a sail."' (18, my italics; cf. 58)

22. Susan promises Friday that—once the story is written—"You will live forever, after a manner" (58). Susan's fascination with recording stories contrasts with Cruso's lack of interest in the story of his life (17).

23. According to Susan, a fixed record is necessary, for memory alone is fallible (17). She is convinced that from age, isolation, and memory, Cruso "no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy" (12).

Including "a thousand touches" is the way both to make a story one's own and to persuade readers that what is told is true.[24]

Indeed, Susan herself has a remarkable sensitivity to specific experiences on the island. She recalls the island's sounds: the caws, chirps, screeches, barking, and moans—even Cruso grinding his teeth at night (8, 19). Even more impressive is her recollection of smells: "the noisome stench" of fleas (7); the smell of "a pile of cured apeskins" (16); Friday giving off the odors of fear, an old man, and wood smoke (102, 53, 144).[25] Beyond her sensitivity and powers of recollection, Susan has a stunning capacity for visualization. She imagines Friday's loss of his tongue:[26]

> 'I saw pictures in my mind of pincers gripping his tongue and a knife slicing into it, as must have happened, and I shuddered.' (24)

One of Susan Barton's recurring actions is to recount her adventures—first to Cruso and Friday (10), later to the captain of the *Hobart* (40), and finally to Mr. Foe. This experience allows Susan to inventory the necessary ingredients of effective storytelling. Susan demonstrates an awareness of the devices a writer employs—episodes, digressions, similes, and figures of speech—and demonstrates her own potential as an effective author.[27] Indeed, over time, Susan is able to speak of her own facility as a storyteller.

> 'From downstairs to upstairs, from house to island, from the girl to Friday: it seems necessary only to establish the poles, the here and the there, the now and the then—after that the words of themselves do the journeying. I had not guessed it was so easy to be an author.' (93)

Susan and Foe end up arguing about who will tell the story of the island. During this competition in the final forty pages of *Foe,* the quotation marks

24. Corcoran (1996) 259 discusses Susan's "theory of fiction . . . her belief that attention to detail matters . . . [which] become[s] an authentication of experience and a guarantee of its substantiality." Susan regrets that she has not brought back proof from the island, such as a feather or "a thimbleful of sand"—all she has are her apeskin sandals (51).

25. For primates (including humans), the female of the species is more sensitive to smell than the male. Note Elizabeth Bishop's "Crusoe in England": "The island smelled of goat and guano."

26. Susan also imagines the shipwreck of Cruso and Friday from many years before (53–54).

27. It is even possible to speak of Susan's style, for she is inordinately fond of comparisons: in the opening paragraph of the entire work, she compares her hair floating in the water to a sea anemone or a Brazilian jellyfish (5; see also 35, 57, 100, 103, 119, 120, and 125).

vanish, and the narrator from "outside" the story tells of Susan's and Foe's words and actions. Foe believes that the story of the island is part of a larger story that begins in London and includes Susan's quest for her daughter, her daughter's search for Susan, the shipwreck, and both women's return to England.

> We therefore have five parts in all: the loss of the daughter; the quest for the daughter in Brazil; abandonment of the quest, and the adventure of the island; assumption of the quest by the daughter; and reunion of the daughter with her mother. It is thus that we make us up a book: loss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, then middle, then end. As to novelty, this is lent by the island episode—which is properly the second part of the middle—and by the reversal in which the daughter takes up the quest abandoned by her mother. (117)

Foe's approach is to impose on the narrative a fivefold division that contains features such as novelty, reversal, and reunion. Regarding the narrative arc, he is adamant: "The island is not a story in itself . . . We can bring it to life only by setting it within a larger story" (117).

Susan fights against this, maintaining the integrity of her own version.

> The story I desire to be known by is the story of the island. You call it an episode, but I call it a story in its own right. It commences with my being cast away there and concludes with the death of Crusoe and the return of Friday and myself to England, full of new hope. (120–21)

Susan defines herself by her story: it is "the story I desire to be known by." Her repudiation of Foe's suggestions is based on the criterion of truth and her own vision.

> Once you proposed to supply a middle by inventing cannibals and pirates. These I would not accept because they were not the truth. Now you propose to reduce the island to an episode in the story of a woman in search of a lost daughter. This too I reject. (121)

One philosophical issue that is pertinent to this discussion concerns chance and design in both life and literature. This was of paramount importance in Defoe's novel. Whereas Crusoe at first viewed the shipwreck and many other occurrences as the result of accident, he soon comes to recognize a divine plan and "Providence." In Coetzee's *Foe,* Susan tends to believe, at

first, in a world of chance (30). She has come to the island "not by choice but by ill luck" (20). Yet the tension between randomness and deliberate purpose is intimately connected to the stories told within the novel. Susan distinguishes between what one might accept in "real" life and what one tolerates in "history."

> 'On the island I accepted that I should never learn how Friday lost his tongue, as I accepted that I should never learn how the apes crossed the sea. But what we can accept in life we cannot accept in history. To tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!' (67)

Life itself presents problems without solutions, questions without answers; readers of literature, however, have expectations that they will receive a coherent account, linked by cause and effect.

Susan's thoughts on the ideas of chance and design evolve. She insists that she is not "a thief confessing . . . and leaving you to make of the story whatever you fancy." She maintains, on the contrary,

> "It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all, to withhold. By such means do I still endeavour to be father to my story." (123)

The striking phrase "father of my story" anticipates other expressions evoking sexual role reversal. While Susan invokes herself as a Muse who inspires writers, she also takes on the masculine role of "begetter."

> I am the father to this story. A Muse is a woman, a goddess, who visits poets in the night and who begets stories upon them . . . The Muse is both goddess and begetter." (126; cf. 139–40)

Later, she bluntly tells Foe, "I think of you as a mistress, or even, if I dare speak the word, as a wife" (152). As a woman, Susan is, in many respects, powerless to tell her own story in eighteenth-century English patriarchal society.[28] One way Susan asserts her control is by adopting the roles of the dominant male: father, begetter, master, and husband. She assumes these

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28. Attridge (2004) 76 believes that Susan Barton "is barred from the domain of authorship by her gender, her social status, her economic dependence, and her unfamiliarity with the requirements of the canon of published narratives."

new roles not only because she was shipwrecked but also because she is the teller of this shipwreck tale.[29] Susan was cast away, a victim of circumstance, but the role of storyteller puts her in control.

Her story is presented not in random fashion but from conscious decisions.

> My life did not begin in the waves . . . [My life before the island] makes up a story I do not choose to tell . . . I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there: for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire. (131)

Susan's identity as a "free woman" derives from her autonomy as a storyteller. While her own life may not follow a path she desires, she insists on control over the story of her life. This aspect of Susan's character demonstrates a psychological truth about the experience of shipwrecks and their aftermath. One essential feature of shipwrecks is lack of control: the traveler is subject to forces far stronger than human powers can resist. You are caught in the grip of wind and wave. But the story you tell is your own—recounting what happened to you is a way of reasserting control. We see this with Susan's reluctance to cede authority over the story of her life. Yet she cannot tell all that she wishes, especially Friday's story.

In Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe, the protagonists return "home"—to Ithaca, Milan, or England. For many twentieth-century shipwreck narratives, however, the feature of closure found in the classical models is rejected. In *Foe,* this lack of closure may be captured by a different sense of incompleteness, specifically, the failure to tell a central part of the story: the story of Friday's life, his capture, the loss of his tongue, his feelings and thoughts. In discussing this omission with Susan, Foe remarks,

> In every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken, I believe. Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story. I ask: Why was Friday drawn into such deadly peril, given that life on the island was without peril, and then saved? (141)

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29. On Susan telling the "female" version (something missing in Defoe), Burnett (1996) 246 notes that "Coetzee makes the gender reversal explicit."

Susan believes they have a duty to recover that tale.

> It is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds: silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear. (142)[30]

Until the very end, however, Susan's perseverance is not enough: "All my efforts to bring Friday to speech, or to bring speech to Friday, have failed" (142). While Susan and Foe contend with one another over how to tell the narrative, there is another account—that of Friday—that is central to "the heart of the story," yet it remains untold. In Coetzee's novel, we find other people imposing their interpretations on Friday's life. Foe observes that "as long as he is dumb we can . . . continue to use him as we wish" (148). At one point, for all her good intentions, Susan thinks that "what [Friday] is to the world is what I make of him" (122).

The final five pages of the novel present two endings. In the first, someone (another narrator?) climbs a staircase and finds a couple in bed and Friday in the alcove (153ff.).[31] Putting an ear to Friday's mouth carries this narrator back to the island.

> At first there was nothing. Then, if I can ignore the beating of my own heart, I begin to hear the faintest faraway roar: as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell; and over that, as if once or twice a violin-string were touched, the whine of the wind and the cry of a bird . . . From his mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island. (154)

Yet it does not end there. There is another version. A second time, we encounter a couple in bed and Friday in the alcove. But this time, there is a dispatch box next to Foe's table. It is opened, and there are papers with a story that begins: "Dear Mr. Foe, At last I could row no further." These are the first words of Coetzee's novel. But the rest is new: this narrator goes overboard into the water (155–56). Whatever the identity of this narrator, he or she dives down to a wreck and goes into an underwater cabin, "the same

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30. Foe agrees: "We must make Friday's silence speak, as well as the silence surrounding Friday" (142).

31. See Attridge (2004) 67 on the difficulty of determining who this narrator is: "What name do we use?—Susan Barton, Daniel Foe, Daniel Defoe, J. M. Coetzee, our own?" Cf. Engélibert (1996) 276; Engélibert remarks that in this final chapter, "the narrative finds itself severed from all authority" (275). Coetzee (1992) 247 himself asks, "How does a novel that is as much an interrogation of authority as *Foe* is find an end for itself?"

water as yesterday, as last year, as three hundred years ago" (157). And in the cabin are Susan Barton and her dead captain and Friday. A question is asked: "What is this ship?" But immediately we learn that "this is not a place of words . . . This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday" (157). Friday's mouth opens again, this time with a different result.

> From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption . . . [I]t passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. (157)

The novel's ending is certainly perplexing. Did Susan actually die in a wreck with the first captain? Is she merely a fictional character (even less substantial than Defoe's Robinson Crusoe)? Or is this simply a different story? There is, nevertheless, a concerted quest for the tale of Friday. In these two codas, something issues forth when Friday opens his mouth: "the sounds of the island" or "a slow stream." Yet this remains a tale not told. Defoe never told the full story of Friday, and for all their efforts, Susan and Foe (and Coetzee) have yet to tell his story. Indeed, Coetzee raises the troubling possibility that we may be utterly unable to recover the story of Friday. When Walcott and Césaire recast classical shipwreck tales, they reject homecoming and the "classical" sense of closure. In his own way, Coetzee resists fulfilling expectations, by emphasizing how central Friday's story is but leaving only hints of what that silence—that untold story—might hold.[32]

While Susan has little power over her own life, she insists on control over her story. Yet, in some sense, she fails, for she is wholly elided in Defoe's 1719 novel. This may appear an odd remark, but in considering the idea of alternative stories, we turn now not to those of Susan and Foe but to the competing versions of two novelists, Coetzee and Defoe. I would like to consider how Coetzee's novel contends with Defoe's "original."[33] Césaire and Walcott competed against Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe: these mod-

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32. Burnett (1996) 248 comments, "Just as Coetzee's text refers back to Defoe's, so it also refers forward to Friday's story, which cannot be contained within its bounds"; cf. Parry (1996) 45. Coetzee (1992) 248 notes that though the story is Susan's, "Friday is the true test. Is his history of mute subjection to remain drowned? I return to the theme of power. The last pages of *Foe* have a certain power. They close the text by force, so to speak: they confront head-on the endlessness of its skepticism."

33. Corcoran (1996) 258 remarks on "the fact that *Robinson Crusoe* exists as a real novel which can be used as a point of reference at any moment."

els were explicitly named; engagement with these earlier texts was closely argued. Coetzee offers his version of the Crusoe story, but he does so in a way that raises questions: Who is a better storyteller, Foe or Susan Barton? Which novel is better, *Robinson Crusoe* or *Foe*? Who is the better novelist, Daniel Defoe or J. M. Coetzee? Who tells a more persuasive tale? What criteria should be used to make these judgments?

I could recount the innovations that Coetzee's *Foe* (which, in part, presents Susan's story) makes on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.* But I would rather flip it around: how does Defoe's 1719 novel follow—or diverge from—Coetzee's *Foe*? What happens if we buy into the fiction of *Foe* that Susan Barton was actually shipwrecked, survives, and tells her story to Mr. Daniel Foe—that is, that she accurately recounts what took place on the island and afterward in England by means of memoir and letters, now found in Coetzee's 1986 novel? On this supposition, I might ask how the "actual" Defoe used Susan's story as the basis for his novel—and what significant changes Defoe has introduced?[34]

First of all, Defoe "eliminates" the female character. In Defoe's novel, there is only Crusoe and, later, Friday. In fact, Susan intuits Foe's inclination on this.

> '"Better had there been only Cruso and Friday," you will murmur to yourself: "Better without the woman."' (71–72)

Is the shipwreck story better without a woman?[35]

Second, Defoe's novel initially presents a single man; then follow cannibals, the rescue of Friday, mutineers, and a second rescue. In *Foe* (according to Susan's letter), there are no cannibals, yet the figure of Foe presses the point and asks about clothes, muskets, and the wreck (53, 55, 82–83). Susan wonders why Foe longs for Cruso to have a musket and a carpenter's chest of tools. Is it possible to see revealed in Susan's exchange with Foe the novelist's creative mind at work anticipating later choices for his own 1719 novel?

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34. Burnett (1996) 244 argues, "In *Robinson Crusoe* the illusion is created that Crusoe is himself the recorder of his own story: Defoe is obscured behind the persona of the narrator. What Coetzee does is to force Defoe out into the open."

35. Alternatively, we might see the figure of Susan transferred to other characters written by Defoe, such as Roxana (called "Susan") in the *Fortunate Mistress;* see Engélibert (1996) 281 note 13. Attridge (2004) 69 believes that the novel's "manner of proceeding is to rewrite, and fuse together, the biography of Daniel Defoe and those of several of Defoe's fictional characters," including Roxana and those in *Colonel Jack* (73, 74 note 13).

Third, Susan insists that Cruso could have extended his ingenuity to include ink and writing tablets so that he could keep an authentic journal—she would have done so (82), because "Who but Cruso . . . could truly tell Cruso's story?" (51) This, in fact, bears on the overarching claim in Defoe's novel—that Crusoe kept a journal that we are able to read. Coetzee here suggests that Defoe used Susan's idea to employ Cruso/Crusoe as the narrator. By giving priority to Coetzee's work, we can speculate about the uses Foe/Defoe makes of Susan as "Muse."

There are many points of comparison and divergence between the two novels. I would point to one wonderful possibility. Susan says, "I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind" (54). Is it not plausible to see this remark of Susan's leading Defoe to invent that memorable scene of Crusoe's shock and horror in coming upon a single footprint on the beach? I might go further, for Susan's spirit—her energy, ingenuity, and desire to record this story—is in a sense transferred to the character of Defoe's Crusoe. Susan not only suggests various details but also supplies the character traits that Defoe adopts for the male protagonist in his novel.[36]

In *Foe,* Cruso tells Susan that "not every man who bears the mark of a castaway is a castaway at heart" (33). What does this means? Perhaps the true castaway—one who is a "castaway at heart"—is one who is resilient and survives. This castaway must have a tremendous capacity to adapt and take on new roles—must possess the ability to reinvent himself or herself like Defoe's Crusoe. Coetzee's Susan demonstrates many of these qualities, including a restlessness of heart: "When I was on the island, I longed only to be elsewhere, or, in the word I then used, to be saved" (50). Yet she reports that once she was back home in England, "a pang of longing went through me for the island" (144; cf. 63). We might say that Susan is a better (and more interesting) protagonist in a shipwreck story than the monotonous Cruso—in many ways, she serves as a "precursor" to Defoe's restless Crusoe.

This approach of reading Defoe's novel against the "sources" of Susan Barton's memoir and letters may not involve such a wild presupposition. A late scene in Coetzee's novel describes Foe's "raw materials," those papers kept in a chest beside his table: a census; bills of mortality; travel accounts; and books of voyages, captivity, and war (50). The historical Daniel Defoe used documents such as these to produce his essays, poems, and novels. Susan's "memoir" may be seen as merely another source that Defoe would have drawn on for his tale of Robinson Crusoe.

36. See Engélibert (1996) 269.

In judging the merits of these two novels, one criterion is plausibility. Which is more likely: that the shipwrecked survivor have carpenter's tools and seed and the means to make a boat, as in Defoe's story; or that he have only a knife and no musket or boat, as in Coetzee's tale (16, 55)? In *Foe* when a storm comes, the fire goes out, and they sleep in the mud—a dreary scene, but perhaps this is more credible (28). If verisimilitude is the key to determining which story is better, Susan (and Coetzee) have some claim to superiority over Foe (and Defoe).[37]

But we may be getting ahead of ourselves. We have yet to confront a vexing problem: how are we to think of Susan Barton? Did she actually exist? In several passages, Coetzee encourages us to question the reality of Susan Barton. She herself says,

> 'When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso. Is that the fate of all storytellers?' (51)

Is Susan a ghost? Is she a Muse? Is she substantial (134, 152)? Susan speaks to Foe "as if you were beside me, my familiar ghost, my companion. Cruso too" (107). Is Susan Barton real but eliminated by Defoe, or is she fictional? The answer is complicated by what Foe calls "our worst fear" regarding the reality of these characters.

> That we have all of us been called into the world from a different order (which we have now forgotten) by a conjurer unknown to us . . . Have we thereby lost our freedom? . . . Do we of necessity become puppets in a story whose end is invisible to us? (135)

Should we think of Foe and Susan being dimly aware of their own existence as characters in a novel like something out of a *Twilight Zone* episode?

Foe continues to compare writing to conjuring.

> We sit staring out of the window, and a cloud shaped like a camel passes by, and before we know it our fantasy has whisked us away to the sands of Africa and our hero (who is no one but ourselves in disguise) is clashing scimitars with a Moorish brigand . . . Have we cause

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37. Coetzee (1992) 27 prefers the term *illusionism* to *realism:* "The most accomplished illusionism yields the most convincing realist effects."

> to believe that the lives it is given us to live proceed with any more design than these whimsical adventures? (135)

Just as we fail to hear Friday's story, we are never told enough to determine Susan Barton's status. As Attridge remarks, "by the end [of *Foe*], there is no distinction between characters invented by author and individuals with independent reality."[38]

Defoe tells the story of Robinson Crusoe, shipwrecked on an island for twenty-eight years. Coetzee's *Foe* tells the story of Susan Barton, also shipwrecked on an island. We may compare the relative merits by setting Coetzee's version against Defoe's. But even if we limit ourselves to *Foe,* the question arises, what sort of shipwreck story should be told? What ingredients are necessary? Should it be realistic, dull, and more "plausible", or should it be full of excitement and adventure? Should there be particulars or a finely crafted five-part structure culminating in a reunion? Coetzee demonstrates an awareness of the possible features that shipwreck narratives may comprehend—a lone survivor, meeting others, adopting new roles, various means of rescue, potential elements that may entertain (pirates, cannibals, romance)—but he refuses to present a single, authoritative version. Coetzee sets competing stories in collision and forces his reader to consider which might be best.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has been prolific in its offspring. We have seen how ancient Greek tragedy, recent American cinema, and science fiction respond to Defoe's vision of Crusoe's success on his island "kingdom." Walcott's *Pantomime* and Coetzee's *Foe* address different issues: when two people find themselves on an island, how are master and servant chosen, and who will claim control of the narrative and play the role of storyteller?

In previous chapters, I have sketched the historical context behind shipwreck narratives to help explain how epic, novel, and drama reflect something of the author's life and times. Here, it is tempting to wonder whether Friday's silence—his mutilation and inability to speak—reflects the fact that Coetzee wrote *Foe* in South Africa in the 1980s, when a political voice had been denied to the black majority of that country's population. Coetzee, however, resists such historicizing of his own works: he insists that they are

38. Attridge (2004) 79.

not allegories but novels.[39] I am willing to leave it at that. *Foe* is a shipwreck story that asks how shipwreck tales might best be told.

As the past seven chapters have made clear, an essential feature of the shipwreck survivor is that he—or she—takes on the task of telling the shipwreck tale. First-person narration is found in Homer's *Odyssey* and the even earlier Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor." In *Pantomime* and *Foe,* different versions of what happened on Crusoe's island compete, yet the competition between Susan and Foe confounds our hopes, for neither is able to tell the story of Friday.

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39. On Coetzee's resistance to interpreting his novels as overt political commentary, see Parry (1996) 61–63. Attridge (1996) 171 remarks that many of Coetzee's novels "have either made no mention of South Africa or have been set in a South Africa distanced, by temporal or geographical displacement, from the actual country as it existed at the time of writing. An apologist for the traditional canon might argue that Coetzee's novels are not about the South African situation *per se,*" yet he later notes that "there is clearly some significance in the fact that Friday is a black African in *Foe,* unlike Defoe's tawny-skinned creation" (184).

CHAPTER 9

Conflict, the Common Good, and Redemption in *The Mysterious Island, Lord of the Flies, Lost,* and *Gilligan's Island*

Unlike the circumstances in *Philoctetes, Robinson Crusoe,* and *Cast Away,* this chapter examines *group shipwrecks* on deserted islands. Recurrent features include survivors adopting new roles, a recapitulation of human technological progress, and the potential for refiguring society. My focus will be on group dynamics that lead to either conflict or elevation of the common good. Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1875) demonstrates a remarkable level of technological expertise and an utter absence of discord. Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) depicts boys devolving into savage violence against one another. The television show *Lost* oscillates between group cohesion and strife. The comedic *Gilligan's Island* is something of an oddity: no transformations take place.

Harmony in *The Mysterious Island*

Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1875) contrasts with *The Tempest,* for there is no plotting or conspiracy; harmony is maintained as the previous social hierarchy is maintained on the island. Another remarkable feature of Verne's tale is the rapid recapitulation of technological development. The novel begins with five men and a dog in a balloon, escaping from a Con-

federate prisoner-of-war camp in Richmond, Virginia, in March 1865. A terrible storm raging for five days carries them seven thousand miles to an island in the South Pacific. The balloon is in danger of splashing in the sea, so they jettison many of their supplies. Captain Cyrus Harding and the dog Top are lost in the water after a partial splashdown before they reach land.

Shipwrecks (and now balloon wrecks) frequently begin in ignorance. When the four men reach the beach, they do not know whether they are on an island or a continent (or even what part of the world they are in) or whether Captain Harding and Top are alive. In short order, the four men make an inventory: they have clothes, a notebook, and a watch, but no knife, tool, or weapon, for these had been jettisoned to lighten the balloon. The narrator explicitly contrasts their situation with the "imaginary hero" of Defoe who was "never in such absolute destitution . . . From nothing they must supply themselves with everything" (36).[1]

Naturally, they must attain the basic necessities for survival. After setting up shelter, their food at first consists of shellfish and birds' eggs. They fret for a bit about their lack of resources for producing fire, but soon they are successful. They also find Top and Captain Harding a mile from shore, though Harding has no recollection of walking there. The five of them have the right temperament and skills to complement one another: "It would have been difficult to unite five men, better fitted to struggle against fate, more certain to triumph over it" (90). They are led by Captain Harding, a courageous engineer with an "inventive mind" (36). Neb (from "Nebuchadnezzar") was once a slave but, now free, followed Harding to prison in Richmond, seeking to liberate him: he cooks for the crew. There is also a journalist, Gideon Spilett; a sailor, Pencroft, who serves as carpenter and tailor; and a young man, Herbert Brown, whose expertise is natural history (23). Top helps the five in their many adventures.

These men explore the island and find no trace of humans—not even a footprint (39; cf. 77, 271). They deduce that they are far from shipping lanes, and apparently the shores are not frequented by natives from neighboring islands. Given these circumstances, their response is methodical. They move into the virtually impregnable "Granite House" (236; cf. 136–37). They engage in hunting by setting traps and pits; Herbert and Spilett serve as archers (156, 163). They identify and employ medicinal herbs (140) and soon expand their forays into agriculture, after Herbert (not unlike Crusoe) finds a single grain of corn stuck in the lining of his waistcoat (147). Ultimately,

1. I follow the text of Verne (1998).

they have a farm with domesticated animals and a mill (163, 224, 237, 295), and they supply themselves with candles, liquor, and beer (145, 231).

While it is not surprising that castaways recapitulate the development of human culture, the degree to which these new islanders are able to exploit recent technological advances is extraordinary. Harding guides them in the basics of ceramics: finding clay to make bricks in their oven, they produce three thousand bricks in two days (90–92, 95). They pass through the "metallic age" by using local reserves of iron ore; their industry produces hammers, crowbars, axes, spades, hatchets, blades, saws, and nails (107–8, 112–13). Later, they will set up a telegraph (310). This nineteenth-century tale reflects its historical period, as Captain Harding puts recent knowledge to use. Many chemical elements have been discovered; science has explained processes such as oxidation and reduction. In addition, the islanders imitate the Industrial Revolution with their mass production of bricks and other commodities.

One odd "coincidence" is a chest that washes up containing all sorts of useful items they lack. They imagine that an American or European ocean-going passenger must have thrown the chest overboard. Spilett comments,

> Tools, weapons, instruments, clothes, utensils, books—nothing is wanting! It might really be said that he expected to be wrecked, and had prepared for it beforehand. (182)

In terms of transformation, the islanders do change somewhat; Neb and Pencroft become very skillful carpenters (296). To a remarkable degree, though, each of the survivors maintains his previous role: Neb remains loyal to his "master" Captain Harding; Herbert persists as a curious naturalist; Pencroft retains his role of sailor and lover of tobacco. Yet Pencroft insists on one thing: that they "not think of ourselves as castaways, but colonists, who have come here to settle" (78). In this, they are certainly successful, as indicated by the narrator's comments after they have spent a year on the island.

> They were then [upon arrival] mere castaways, not even knowing how they should preserve their miserable lives from the fury of the elements! And now, thanks to the knowledge of their captain, and their own intelligence, they were regular colonists, furnished with arms, tools, and instruments; they had been able to turn to their profit, the

> animals, plants, and minerals of the island, that is to say, the three kingdoms of Nature. (231)

Their success reflects an exceedingly optimistic vision of nineteenth-century American expansion.

There are recollections of the world they knew before. The five islanders still keep track of time and observe Sunday as a day of rest (93–94). Once they realize that they may be on the island for some time, they decide to make it a "little America," with towns and a railway, so that they might claim it as part of the Union (78). They idealistically name parts of the island to reflect their "old world" (e.g., Mt. Franklin and Union Bay), and the whole land is dubbed Lincoln Island (81).

In short, these castaways have everything they could want, and they soon find themselves accustomed to their "new life."

> Everything prospered . . . They were so well suited to this life, and were, beside, so accustomed to the island, that they could not have left its hospitable soil without regret! (238; cf. 336)

It is as though "the hand of the Almighty has thrown" them there; "Providence had wished to reward them" (78, 183).

Two episodes provide a sharp contrast to their good fortune. The first is the fate of another castaway, Ayrton, marooned on Tabor Island, 150 miles away (278–306). In a boat built by Pencroft, the five men of Lincoln Island sail to Tabor Island and there discover a nearly naked man with shaggy hair and untrimmed beard.

> It was evident that if the castaway had ever been a civilized being, solitude had made him a savage, or worse, perhaps a regular man of the woods . . . Memory must have deserted him long before, and for a long time also he had forgotten how to use his gun and tools, and he no longer knew how to make fire! (278)

Although "solitude had reduced him to this condition," the Lincoln Islanders try to "rescue one of God's creatures from brutishness"—and they succeed. Brought back to Lincoln Island, Ayrton tells of the events that led to his twelve years of solitary living. Once again we encounter the risk of

Philoctetes' or Chuck Noland's reversion to a more primitive life. Ayrton's fate could have struck anyone in similar circumstances. This implicitly contrasts with the ability of the five Lincoln Islanders to maintain their level of civilized existence. The group has prospered, while Ayrton regressed to "brutishness."[2]

The second episode to upset their harmonious existence is the arrival of a pirate ship. Harding notes that for three and a half years, "it might be said that they had had everything their own way," but now, for the first time, fate turned against them (395).[3] Now six Lincoln Islanders (including Ayrton) face fifty attackers. The situation soon becomes desperate (361), but the pirate brig suddenly explodes and is swallowed up by the sea.

The most striking features in *The Mysterious Island* are, first, the extremely rapid recapitulation of human technological development; second, the benevolent harmony enjoyed by the group; and third, the unexplained mysteries on the island that add up over time. This is, after all, a "mysterious island." First, how did Harding get a mile from shore upon arrival (54)? Second, how was Top saved from his watery struggle with a dugong (119–20)? Third, how did a leaden bullet find its way into a three-month-old piglet that they catch and eat, when they had yet not acquired weapons or ammunition (164–65)? The discovery of the bullet after seven months on the island has much the same effect as Crusoe's discovery of a footprint in Defoe's novel, for it signals profound consequences (164–65).

> Not only did [the island] now appear to be uninhabited by any but themselves, but the colonists were compelled to believe that it never had been inhabited. And now, all this scaffolding of reasonings fell before a simple ball of metal, found in the body of an inoffensive rodent! In fact, this bullet must have issued from a firearm, and who but a human being could have used such a weapon? (169)

In addition, there are odd coincidences: the washing up of the chest with so many necessary items, their canoe arriving just in time, a bottle floating to shore with news of Ayrton on Tabor Island—these incidents evoke great wonder in the colonists (207). But when a torpedo sinks the pirate ship, Captain Harding addresses his comrades,

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2. On Ayrton's regression to "brutishness," see 301–6, discussed by Weaver-Hightower (2007) 128–31.

3. Lincoln Island, as they call it, had previously seemed a paradise (465).

> We can no longer be in doubt as to the presence of a mysterious being, a castaway like us, perhaps, abandoned on our island, and I say this in order that Ayrton may be acquainted with all the strange events which have occurred during these two years. Who this beneficient stranger is, whose intervention has, so fortunately for us, been manifested on many occasions, I cannot imagine. What his object can be in acting thus, in concealing himself after rendering us so many services, I cannot understand. But his services are not the less real, and are of such a nature that only a man possessed of prodigious power, could render them. (371)

They are soon to encounter this "beneficient stranger," but they will not escape the island even with his aid.

The five men realize they are twelve hundred miles from Tahiti and eighteen hundred miles from New Zealand.[4] Just as the mysteries of the island are revealed, a volcano awakens, and they learn that Lincoln Island is about to be destroyed (443, 459, 480). Their only chance is either for a ship to appear or for the colonists to build a truly ocean-worthy vessel (435). They begin their shipbuilding, but they are not quick enough (444). In the end—in March 1869, after almost four years on the island—a ship, the *Duncan,* miraculously appears and rescues the six men and their dog (490–91).[5]

The almost continual good luck and ingenuity of the colonists on Lincoln Island in *The Mysterious Island* is striking: the survivors (all men) are optimistic, successful, and almost hyperrational; not only do they achieve incredible feats of technology, but they also bear one another no signs of animosity. They are the best that human civilization has to offer. This contrasts sharply not only from the conspiracies of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* but also from *Lord of the Flies,* in which violent competition leads to murder.

Conflict in *Lord of the Flies*

Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) conforms in many ways to patterns established in other shipwreck stories.[6] Like the shipwrecked in Defoe's *Robinson*

4. With the help of the atlas and sextant (both in the chest that washed up), they calculate their longitude and latitude (238–39).

5. Verne contemplated different endings but finally followed his editor's urgings for a happy one.

6. In some ways, *Lord of the Flies* is Golding's answer to Ballantyne's nineteenth-century

Crusoe and Sophocles' *Philoctetes,* the boys in *Lord of the Flies* are stranded on a deserted island and must seek food, water, and shelter. In other respects, Golding's novel recalls Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* for the group "shipwreck" in *Lord of the Flies* sets up tensions between various individuals and groups. My focus here, however, will be on Golding's complicated treatment of civilization and savagery. The boys move from an established order to conflict, as they are transformed into hunters (a part of human culture) and killers. To that extent, they reestablish a mark of "civilization." Their island society devolves into savagery as the violence found in the outside world erupts on the idyllic Pacific island where they are stranded.

The story, set at the time of a world war, opens with the "shipwreck" survivors exploring the island. Their prior journey is referred to only elliptically. Evidently the boys were evacuated in a plane from England, and the plane then crashed. "The man with the megaphone"—the pilot—was not "in the passenger cabin" but was "up in front" and so did not survive (6).[7] The rough landing leaves its mark on the island, a "long scar smashed into the jungle" (5, 7). The plane itself is no longer on the island. As Piggy tells Ralph, "That storm dragged it out to sea . . . There must have been some kids still in it" (6). At some point, the pilot told the boys that an atom bomb had been dropped. They hope for better luck than might be found in the "outside" world. Ralph, Jack, and Simon climb a mountain on the first day to verify that this is an island surrounded by open sea; a reef about a mile out shelters a lagoon from rough waves. From the lack of villages or boats, Ralph concludes that the island is uninhabited (26).

In group shipwrecks, a social hierarchy must be established. At Piggy's suggestion, Ralph blows a conch shell, summoning the boys to an assembly. Ralph insists that they are going to have to look after themselves. There will be "'Hands up' like at school." Whoever holds the conch may address the group without interruption (29). Jack endorses Ralph's idea.

> I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English and the English are best at everything. So we've got to do the right thing. (38)

The fine island the boys are on offers food, water, and a good time (30). Jack's optimistic idea about not being "savages" will be put to the test.

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novel *The Coral Island:* see Niemeyer (1988) and Kermode (1988).

7. I follow the text of Golding (1988).

Ralph is voted in as "chief," and various "classes" emerge: the hunters, "special people" to watch the fire (37), the "biguns," the "littluns," and so on (54). The rationale for fair-haired Ralph as "chief" is explained as follows:

> The most obvious leader was Jack. But there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch. The being that had blown that, had sat waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart. (19)

Piggy, short, fat, and asthmatic, has been raised by his "auntie." He is vulnerable without his glasses: "Jus' blurs . . . Hardly see my hand" (36).[8] Yet Piggy is also extremely practical (19): he suggests that Ralph call a meeting and remembers the boys' names. As the voice of reason, he warns of fire's danger. Among the older boys, Piggy becomes an object of ridicule, providing a bond for everyone else.

> They bumped Piggy, who was burnt, and yelled and danced. Immediately, Ralph and the crowd of boys were united and relieved by a storm of laughter. Piggy once more was the center of social derision so that everyone felt cheerful and normal. (138)

Nevertheless, Piggy is the only one with the "intellectual daring to suggest moving the fire from the mountain" to the beach and to experiment to see which leaves are best for producing smoke (120–21).

The red-haired Jack Merridew leads the choir, is enticed by the prospect of hunting, and later becomes a chief in opposition to Ralph. Simon is one of the three to climb the mountain, helps build shelters on the beach, and is a sort of clairvoyant who reassures Ralph, "You'll get back all right" (103). When alone in the forest, he speaks to the grinning pig's head covered with buzzing insects—the "Lord of the Flies" (127, 132–33).[9]

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8. While Ralph lights a fire, Piggy "waited to receive back his sight" (149); cf. "they blinded me" (156).

9. Golding speaks of Simon as a "Christ-like" figure who is tempted by the devil (the "Lord of the Flies") and is sacrificed (192); see his interview in Kermode (1988) 199; cf. Oldsey and Weintraub (1965) 24 and Spangler (1988). Epstein (1988) 279 notes that the phrase "Lord of the Flies" is simply a translation of the Hebrew name *Ba'alzevuv* (*Beelzebub* in Greek), or "lord of the insects."

Like other castaways, the boys partially recapitulate human technological development. Early on, the boys are ignorant of various skills: starting a fire, building a shelter, or killing an animal. They never end up developing agriculture or domesticating animals, but they do hunt and gather. They build "rude" shelters of palm trunks and beds out of leaves (151). Jack's group later establishes defensive fortifications on Castle Rock.

Another skill acquired is the use of fire to signal a passing ship or plane. At first, the boys do not know what to do—rub sticks, spin a bow, or use matches (35–36)? In the end, they use Piggy's glasses to focus sunlight to ignite the signal fire (35–36). Fire is also used to harden the tips of their wooden spears and to cook wild pig.

The boys in *Lord of the Flies* institute various social rituals, such as blowing the conch to summon the boys to assembly. Other group activities include song, dance, hunting, and outright war, something Jack and his followers seem to delight in. A dead parachutist is said to be a beast with teeth and "big black eyes" (114–15). Belief in this "beast" leads to solidarity (140). Although Simon realizes that "the beast was harmless and horrible; and the news must reach the others as soon as possible" (136), he is killed before conveying these facts.

As we saw in Defoe, much of what survivors establish on their "new" island is modeled on the life they knew before the wreck—in this case, the England of the boys' upbringing. They discuss how grown-ups would vote or settle disputes. They initially insist on rules, punishment, and a clearly recognized authority. But tensions develop between the new way of life and the old. When Ralph first hears the voice of Piggy, he adjusts his stockings "with an automatic gesture that made the jungle seem for a moment like the Home Counties" (5). Still, the "wild" life competes with their idea of civilization. Clothes are a significant marker of order and lack of "wildness": soon the boys roam about without shoes or shirts. This move away from civilization reaches a point when, during the raid on Ralph's camp, Jack is "stark naked save for paint and belt" (130).

Golding also compares the boys to animals. Ralph is "like a seal" and gnaws meat "like a wolf" (60, 67); Jack is "dog-like" or "ape-like" (43, 44); the towheaded twins, Sam and Eric, "lay grinning and panting at Ralph like dogs" (16); the "littluns" appear to be "running round like insects" (41). The boys are human, yet these animal similes foreshadow the bestial instincts that soon will be unleashed.[10]

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10. Piggy worries that without order and obedience, "We'll be like animals" (85), and he asks, "What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages? What's grownups going to think?" (83).

Central to the novel is whether the old "moral" order will prevail. When Roger and Maurice kick down sand castles of the "littluns," Maurice recalls the established pattern of crime and punishment.

> In his other life Maurice had received chastisement for filling a younger eye with sand. Now, though there was no parent to let fall a heavy hand, Maurice still felt the unease of wrongdoing. At the back of his mind formed the uncertain outlines of an excuse. (55)

In this case, the recollection of grown-ups provokes an uneasy conscience in Maurice.

Initially, the rules work. When Ralph simply holds up the conch, there is silence (20). The young boys have "the reassurance of something purposeful being done" (15). When Jack breaks the rules, Ralph complains, "The rules are the only thing we've got" (84). But when Ralph later plans to blow the conch and call the boys, Jack retorts, "We shan't hear it" (134). When some boys ignore the importance of the signal fire, Ralph is concerned about "the breaking up of sanity" (81; cf. 84).[11] Piggy is bewildered when Jack raids the shore camp for fire: "I can't think why Jack didn't seize the conch" (131). By this time, however, Jack and his band have moved beyond the boys' initial compact.

To a considerable degree, the boys are forced to "reinvent" themselves. Ralph becomes a leader, a speaker, and a thinker (32–33). Piggy functions as advisor and rememberer of names. Sam and Eric (who become "Samneric") demonstrate "unexpected intelligence" (35). The boys assume new functions and relationships, as explorers (22), friends (26), or fire tenders (37). Already leader of the choir, Jack learns how to track and hunt.

The most chilling transformation occurs when Jack and his followers become hunters and killers. When Ralph, Jack, and Simon come upon a squeaking piglet as they are exploring the island on the first day, Jack raises his knife but hesitates, and it escapes. Jack says he was deciding where to stab, but we are told that he did not act "because of the enormity of the knife descending and cutting into living flesh; because of the unbearable blood." However, "next time there would be no mercy" (27). Soon he carries a sharpened stick and goes about naked except for a pair of tattered shorts held up by his knife belt. He smells animal scent on the ground and succeeds in finding warm droppings that "steamed a little" (43–44). With

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11. Piggy is pessimistic: "If Jack was chief he'd have all hunting and no fire. We'd be here till we died" (85; cf. 164).

an "opaque, mad look" in his eyes, he has a "compulsion to track down and kill" (48).

While animals do not smell him, Jack insists they can see him, so he puts on face paint, using white and red clay and a piece of charcoal (57). Jack then gazes on his reflection: "He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger" (58). Jack has transformed himself into something new. Restraint has vanished: "the mask was a thing of its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness" (58; cf. 130). The hunters now succeed in killing a wild pig and Jack establishes his new identity,

> "Am I a hunter or am I not?" They nodded simply. He was a hunter all right. No one doubted that. (76–77)

The relationship between Ralph and Jack follows a precarious path. At first, they are friends (26); the break comes when the fire goes out just before a ship passes in the distance (62). Ralph chastises Jack for failure in his duty. When Piggy emphasizes Ralph's displeasure, Jack hits Piggy in the head, breaking one of his lenses. Piggy now has "only one eye" (66). The rift is clear.

By setting up his alternative society, Jack challenges Ralph.

> He's not a hunter. He'd never have got us meat . . . He just gives orders and expects people to obey for nothing. (117)

The hunters follow Jack, "wedded to [the sow] in lust, excited by the long chases and the dropped blood." They also "put on paint and sneak up" to raid Ralph's camp to take fire (125–26). Jack's tribe then tries to propitiate the beast by putting the pig's head on a stick: "This head is for the beast. It's a gift" (127). Claiming his right to rule, Jack sits on "the log that was his throne"; "painted and garlanded, [he] sat there like an idol" (137–38). Offering food and protection, Jack asks, "Who'll join my tribe and have fun?" (139) His followers intone, "The Chief has spoken" (13). Warfare soon ensues.

For each shipwreck tale considered in this book, the question arises, what happens when you are isolated from home? Who do you become? In *Lord of the Flies,* the question is, what happens to boys when adults are removed? The outlook in *Lord of the Flies* is not initially bleak. In several passages, the

absence of civilization suggests a sort of Eden or paradise. After Jack rouses a bird, "the silence [was] shattered and echoes set ringing by a harsh cry that seemed to come out of the abyss of the ages" (44). Climbing the mountain, Jack surmises, "I bet nobody's been here before" (23). These passages suggest a pristine habitat, untainted by human corruption.[12]

One of the boys' goals is to be protected from the "beast," but it becomes clear that the beast actually lies within themselves. When Jack says there is no beast, Piggy answers this claim, "Unless we get frightened of people" (78). Simon suggests of the beast, "Maybe it's only us" (82). The wreck has led to a new order on the island, and this new order is missing any check on human savagery. The "Lord of the Flies" explains this to Simon.

> Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? . . . I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are? (133)

The threat lies within the souls of these young boys.[13] In the end, they seek to kill Ralph by burning the island.

A pivotal juncture occurs when Roger began to throw stones at the young boy Henry but "threw to miss" (56).

> Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which [Roger] dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. (57)

This scene sinisterly prefigures the actions by Castle Rock when the same boy, Roger, unleashes the huge boulder on Piggy, killing him.

Ralph and Piggy reach Castle Rock to retrieve Piggy's glasses. Ralph blows the conch, and "Savages appeared, painted out of recognition" (161). Though "masked in black and green," Jack is "identifiable by personality and red hair" (162). Ralph tries speaking sensibly.

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12. On this "Eden-like island," see Tiger (1974) 48.

13. On the pattern of the six hunts, see Mueller (1988) 245. Delbaere-Garant (1978) 86 links the rocks thrown first at the little one and then at Piggy. See Babb (1970) 13 on fire imagery.

> Listen. We've come to say this. First you've got to give back Piggy's specs. If he hasn't got them he can't see. You aren't playing the game—(164)

But soon Ralph calls Jack "a beast and a swine and a bloody, bloody thief," and they fight by the cliff's edge (163–66). Then, as the tribe intones an "incantation of hatred," Roger levers a boulder off the heights, and it strikes Piggy: the conch explodes into dust, and Piggy falls forty feet onto the rocks below. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, "like a pig's after it has been killed" (167). There is silence at first, but no remorse. Next, the boys scream wildly, and Jack's victory is complete. Ralph has no "tribe," the conch is gone, and Jack asserts, "I'm chief" (167). Golding contrasts these two symbols to indicate the shift in power. The pig's skull "gleamed as white as ever the conch had done," but the conch has by now "exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist" (171, 167). Though Ralph splits the pig's head in two, human ferocity has vanquished any hope for rationality.

Violence may arise at any time, but the boys are often not fully aware of the seriousness of their situation. At times, they don't realize when they are playing a game and when they really are killing an animal (or a human). Ralph reminds the others that some things are serious: "Being rescued isn't a game" (157).[14] Jack suggests that they have someone pretend to be a pig, but the distinction between acting and killing gets blurred.

> "You could get someone to dress up as a pig and then he could act—you know, pretend to knock me over and all that."
>
> "You want a real pig," said Robert, still caressing his rump, "Because you've got to kill him."
>
> "Use a littlun," said Jack, and everybody laughed. (106–7)

This is a grim brand of humor, yet it is not clear whether this game of pretending can escalate to really killing a pig—or a boy.

The line that divides play and reality is erased.[15] When Simon emerges

14. The naval officer who rescues the boys at first thinks that they have been up to "fun and games" (185) but soon recognizes the seriousness of what has happened. "'What have you been doing? Having a war or something?' Ralph nodded . . . 'Nobody killed, I hope? Any dead bodies?' 'Only two. And they've gone.' The officer leaned down and looked closely at Ralph. 'Two? Killed?' Ralph nodded again" (186).

15. Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes (1988) 242 remarks that when Maurice plays the role of the pig, "the line between pretense and reality is becoming more difficult to see."

from the forest, he is not perceived as human. The circle of boys descends on this "thing [that] was crawling out of the forest" (141).

> The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the center, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leaped on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws. (141).

Then "the beast lay still . . . its blood was staining the sand." This is no game: as Ralph says later, it is "murder," the first killing of a human (144).

Lord of the Flies has been labeled "adolescent" literature, yet the situation described in the novel itself is serious. The boys' arrival leads to a hope that they can start over and create a better place, setting up a society modeled on an idealized "other world." Piggy continues to believe that grown-ups are sane and rational.

> At home there was always a grown up . . . Grownups know things . . . They ain't afraid of the dark. They'd meet and have tea and discuss. (86)

Piggy and Ralph agree that grown-ups would not set fire to the island; they would build a ship instead. Both boys are impressed by the "majesty of adult life" (86).

But events on the island come to resemble life in the world outside in another sense. The plane carrying the boys has perhaps been shot down by a "civilization in ruins" (57); an atomic bomb has been dropped; the parachuted corpse drops on the island after a "battle fought at ten miles' height" (88). Grown-ups in the "outside world" are at war. In the end, the boys are rescued by an English warship, "the trim cruiser." In the world "outside," disputes are settled by violence.[16] In fact, the boys have accurately mirrored

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16. The naval officer who rescues the boys has a revolver; the ship he commands is armed with a submachine gun (185). Golding himself (in Keating and Golding (1988) 191) asks, "In the end the question is, who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?" He later explicitly states, "[O]f course, the cruiser, the adult thing, is doing exactly what the hunters do—that is, hunting down and destroying the enemy" (194); see Tiger (1974) 48.

the reality of their parents' world, with its war and destruction, though perhaps not fully in the eyes of the naval officer, who sees "a semicircle of little boys, their bodies streaked with colored clay, sharp sticks in their hands" (185). Nevertheless, they possess the capacity for murder.

Near the end, Jack's tribe pursues Ralph, who is hiding in the forest. Ralph has become an outcast—"'cos I had some sense" (172). He knows that "[t]hese painted savages would go further and further," that "Jack . . . would never let him alone; never" (170). He still hopes: "They were savages it was true; but they were human" (171). Perhaps he could "pretend they were still boys, schoolboys who had said 'Sir, yes, Sir'—and worn caps" (171). After all, fire is their only hope of rescue—"No fire; no smoke; no rescue" (170)—yet the boys are using it to drive Ralph into their murderous hands.

After Jack sets the island on fire, it feels like the end of the world: the earth vibrates, pigs squeal, birds scream, mice shriek (183).[17] Ralph turns into an emotion—all "id"—as he "became fear; hopeless fear on flying feet, rushing through the forest—toward the open beach" (184). Just when he is trapped—down and about to cry for mercy (185)—an officer stands over him and asks, "Who's boss here?" Ralph responds, "I am" (186). Ralph is now safe, and he has a

> fleeting picture of the strange glamour that had once invested the beaches. But the island was scorched up like deadwood—Simon was dead—and Jack had . . . (186)

Reduced to tears, Ralph "wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy" (186–87).

Rejecting the inherent goodness of mankind, Golding defines "innocence."

> [The boys] don't understand their own natures and therefore, when they get to the island, they can look forward to a bright future, because they don't understand the things that threaten it. This seems to me to be innocence.[18]

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17. Tiger (1974) 44–45 comments, "They turn the Edenic island into a fiery hell."

18. Golding (1988) 190. Mueller (1988) 248 concludes that Golding opposes the "belief that the human being is essentially good and the child essentially innocent." Coskren (1988) finds *Lord of the Flies* to be a rejection of Rousseau's vision of uncorrupted man in his original state.

The balloonists in *The Mysterious Island* create a functioning, rational, safe community. *Lord of the Flies* signals a darker view of what can happen to a group isolated on an island, with the sobering conclusion that perhaps grown-ups would not have done any better.

Living Together or Dying Alone in *Lost*

We now turn to *Lost,* a television series that completed its sixth and final season in 2010. The show's characters, stranded on a South Pacific island, are "lost" in more than simply the geographical sense. Matthew Fox (who plays the doctor, Jack) remarks on the name of the series,

> The title, "Lost," is so much more about these characters being individually, personally and spiritually lost than being lost on the island . . . It will test them as individuals. Maybe they will be finding themselves rather than being found.[19]

Here, I will primarily discuss season 1, which presents the survivors' first forty-four days on the island. My focus will be on group dynamics, personal transformation, and the cause of the crash.

The plane that crashed was Oceanic Flight 815, flying from Sydney, Australia, to Los Angeles.[20] There are scenes familiar from other "shipwreck" stories: chaos after the crash; the initial exploration of the island; salvaging from the wreck itself; ignorance among survivors about where they are, who has survived, and the identity of their fellow survivors; and hope for an immediate rescue. This last expectation is tempered by news from the injured pilot that the radio had given out, that the plane was a thousand miles off course, and that the rescuers would be "looking for us in the wrong place."

Basic necessities at first come from the plane; then Jack finds fresh water, the oracular Locke hunts boar, and all the survivors collect fruit from the island interior. Soon, their diet consists of boar, fish, and lots of fruit. Starting a fire seems to be no problem. For shelter, they set up tarps on poles;

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19. Adams (2004) 5. In the same piece, Naveen Andrews (who plays Sayid) remarks, "All of our characters are bereft of something, whether it's sanity, good sense, prudence, a loved one, strength; we're all bereft in some kind of way. *The island might be a focus for us to find ourselves as individuals*" (my italics).

20. It is said that the South Pacific is the only place on earth containing one million square miles without any people.

then they make use of caves. Though they initially do not engage in agriculture, the Korean woman Sun plants a garden in episode 13. Conventional medicine is obtained from searching the luggage from the wreck and is supplemented by Sun's herbal remedies from the island's plants. After six days and the initial salvaging, caring for the wounded, and lighting of signal fires on the beach, forty-six survivors await an uncertain future. Later, the set of characters is expanded by the baby of the young Australian woman Claire, other survivors from earlier wrecks (Danielle Rousseau and Desmond), and the discovery (in season 2) of survivors from the tail section and the "Others."

One theme developed throughout the series is the tension between community and conflict: cases of joint action and solidarity alternate with periods of dispute and violence. Much of the time, the survivors work together to help the wounded, bury the dead, collect food and water, and share in Locke's boar. This idea of community is articulated by Jack when he comes back from the "rabbit hole."

> We have to stop waiting. We can't do this. Every man for himself is not gonna work. It's time to start organizing. We need to figure out how we're going to survive here.[21]

Jack leads by articulating the need for maintaining solidarity. Though everyone does not endorse his plan to move to the caves, he asks everyone to find a way to contribute. As Jack points out, they do not know how long they may be on the island: "If we can't live together, we're going to die alone."

Conflict arises first among the passengers of Flight 815 and later between these survivors and the Others, who were already on the island. A series of squabbles result from the hoarding of the confidence man Sawyer.[22] Also, there are different points of view concerning strategies for survival, escape, and defense. Jack's idea of moving to the caves leads to a split between the "pessimists" (as Sawyer calls them), who go to the caves and a reliable freshwater source, and those who stay on the beach with the signal fire. Tensions rise, but Jack insists, "We're not savages . . . Not yet." Locke later uses the burning of an escape raft to rally group cohesion against the Others: "They've

21. Episode 1.5 (i.e., season 1, episode 5; this format is followed hereinafter for citing television episodes).

22. At one point, thought to have Shannon's asthma medication, Sawyer is tied up, and Sayid begins to torture him; later, Michael battles Locke over his son, Walt; and Jin tackles, beats, and tries to drown Michael (for his wristwatch, which Michael found in the wreckage).

attacked us . . . Abducted us. Killed us. Maybe it's time to start worrying about them."[23] In the beginning, a community is formed, but it remains difficult to prevent violence—until the passengers of Flight 815 unite against an outside threat, the Others.

The survivors realize they all face a new and challenging situation. Obviously, they are no longer in "civilized" society; there is no recognized legal authority. Though Jack tries to lead, Sawyer chides him for thinking he is "still back in civilization." "I'm in the wild!" Sawyer proclaims. Later, Sawyer describes going into the forest as a "hike into the heart of darkness" and tells the Korean Jin, "It's lord of the flies time now!"[24] This sense of reverting to primitive living is signaled by their carrying torches and by the fact that the survivors are physically stripped down: their clothes are torn, and apparently they do not go more than a week or so without a rain that soaks their T-shirts.

A central theme of *Lost* is that of a "second chance" on the island. The plane crash marks a sharp break from the past. Episode 3, in fact, is titled "Tabula Rasa" (or "Blank Slate"), an idea developed by the English philosopher John Locke, whose name also belongs to one of the survivors. The characters on *Lost* are now able to start new lives, a recurrent feature of shipwreck survivors over the past four thousand years. When Kate wants to tell Jack why she was in handcuffs, Jack defends the new existence awaiting each one of them.

> I don't wanna know. It doesn't matter, Kate, who we were, what we did before the crash. Three days ago we all died. We should all be able to start over.[25]

So let us explore these new lives—not only how the survivors of Oceanic Flight 815 seek to "reinvent" themselves but also how these "new" lives contrast with the ones they lived before the crash. I will largely limit my discussion here to seven of the many characters: Jack, the American doctor; Sayid, the Iraqi and ex-Republican Guard soldier; Charlie, the rock star; Kate, the

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23. Episode 1.17 (Locke knows that Walt, not the Others, set the raft on fire).

24. These statements are nods to the novels of Conrad and Golding; the unconscious parachutist stuck in the tree canopy in season 3 recalls the dead parachutist from *Lord of the Flies.*

25. Episode 1.3. Locke says much the same thing to Shannon: "Everyone gets a new life on this island, Shannon. I think it's time you get yours" (1.17). In season 2, Locke proclaims, "It doesn't matter who we were. It only matters who we are." Jin and Sun also try to "start over" (1.17).

fugitive; Sawyer, the con man; Locke, the bald-headed hunter; and Hurley, the lottery winner.

Relatively few details of the survivors' prior lives are told in "real" time.[26] *Lost* reveals the past by means of flashbacks. As a character stares ahead at the waves, sky, or jungle, we are shown events from the character's life before the plane crashed on the island. Retrospective narratives are found in Prospero's speech to Miranda in *The Tempest* 1.2 and in Odysseus' stories in *Odyssey* 9–12; in *Lost,* scenes on the island are juxtaposed with earlier episodes from characters' lives. The effect of the many flashbacks in *Lost* is that we are allowed to see parts of a character's previous existence that are not accessible to his or her fellow survivors; the effect, of course, is dramatic irony, as we become much more knowledgeable than the characters on the island are.

The first scenes of the entire series are presented from Jack's point of view. His eye opens as he looks up at trees (an eye opening is a leitmotif of the series). Then he runs through the jungle to a scene of chaos: the plane's fuselage is in flames by the beach, with people running around in a panic. Jack begins to help, by comforting, asking others to pitch in, and taking charge. There is no election, but Jack is a natural leader, instilling courage and confidence in others.

Flashbacks reveal that Jack is tormented by Oedipal demons. Although he is a spinal surgeon, he could never be good enough for his abusive, alcoholic father (also a surgeon). "You don't have what it takes," he is told. Jack's psychodrama is explicitly Freudian. At one point, he actually tells an airline employee, "I need it to be over. I need to bury my father." So is Jack changed by his arrival on the island? Does he adopt a new sort of identity? Well, yes and no. Before Jack came to the island, he was a surgeon who cared for the sick and was a leader in the operating room, roles he also fulfills on the island. To some extent, he is still intense and has a problem with "letting go."[27] But the situation on the island is different, and Jack's father is dead, implying that Jack may be healed—after all, he is literally stitched together by Kate on arrival.

Sayid and Charlie are two characters who achieve a kind of redemption on the island. Sayid, a former Iraqi soldier, has expertise in electronics. We

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26. When people are truthful, they are often not believed. Boone is incredulous when he is told that Locke was a "regional collection supervisor for a box company" (episode 1.11). When Hurley admits that he is worth $156,000,000, Charlie responds, "Fine. Don't tell me. Bloody jokes!" (episode 1.18)

27. On the night before his wedding, Jack's father says, "Commitment is what makes you tick, Jack. The problem is letting go" (episode 1.20; cf. 2.1).

learn from flashbacks that Sayid also has experience in "interrogation" techniques from the days of Saddam Hussein. He tells Jack that he only needs ten minutes with Sawyer to get him to talk, explaining how either reeds or bamboo shoots may be placed under the fingernails. Sawyer tries to call his bluff, saying that Sayid never actually tortured anyone. Sayid replies, "Unfortunately for both of us, you're wrong." Later, Sayid is ashamed, "What I did today—what I almost did—I swore to do never again." To a great extent, Sayid's actions on the island redeem him from those earlier acts as a torturer in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. He has a conscience and repents, telling the "wild woman" Danielle Rousseau, "I did something I'm ashamed of."

Charlie, a bass player for the rock band Drive Shaft, is another figure seeking a second chance. Flashbacks in episode 6 recount Charlie's rise to rock-and-roll stardom, when he was conflicted, depressed, and became a heroin addict. In the end—with Locke's help—Charlie beats his addiction on the island. "I've made my choice," Charlie announces, throwing a bag of heroin into the fire.[28] We might even say that Charlie redeems himself many times over and proves himself heroic. He saves Jack from the collapsed cave, protects the pregnant Claire as best he can, and, in the third season, willingly sacrifices his life by diving to an underwater station in the episode titled "The Looking Glass." Charlie explains his willingness to risk everything: "I have no one on the island." By the time he exits the series, Charlie has shown his mettle and leaves many close friends behind—he is not alone.

It is harder to make the case that Kate or Sawyer achieve redemption. As Sawyer says, "A tiger don't change his stripes." The first time we see the fugitive Kate on-screen, she is rubbing her wrists. Her flashbacks reveal that she has been running all her life.[29] The second episode tells the story of her life on the lam and escape to Australia (there is a reward of twenty-three thousand dollars for her capture).

Then there is Sawyer, the confidence man. He exhibits courage: he does not run from a polar bear but keeps on shooting (and in season 2, he pulls a bullet out of his shoulder with his bare hands). He often speaks the truth when no one else is willing to. Yet Sawyer is the bad boy, resists authority, and breaks the rules. According to Kate, Sawyer hoards "like a pack rat" and lives "like a parasite—always taking, never giving." She adds, "No one

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28. Of course, Charlie later grabs one of the Virgin Mary dolls loaded with bags of heroin from the crashed Nigerian plane (episode 1.24). Even before casting for the series began, the character of Charlie was sketched in as "a recovering addict in need of redemption."

29. Episode 1.22 is titled "Born to Run."

misses you . . . I pity you."[30] Flashbacks reveal Sawyer as a confidence man himself, but the letter he lets Kate read explains how (when he was eight years old) his mother was seduced and his father swindled, leading to the murder-suicide of his parents. He has spent his life pursuing the con man responsible. It turns out that *Sawyer* is not his real name; he is James Ford. *Sawyer* is the name of the man who cheated his parents: "I became the man I was huntin'. I became Sawyer."[31] Yet Kate thinks his carrying the letter around for years shows that there is "a human being in there somewhere."[32]

Kate and Sawyer have some rough edges. They both continue to scam other people on the island, yet Kate does help an Australian farmer after a truck accident (though he had turned her in to the police) and becomes a midwife for Claire's baby—the first new citizen of this island community.[33] In the final episode of season 1, Kate risks her life for the group by carrying unstable dynamite in her pack, saying, "I need to do this." Sawyer sends mixed signals as well. He seeks justice by avenging the wrongs against his parents.[34] When Michael says that to risk his life on the raft, Sawyer must either be a hero or want to die, Sawyer responds, "I ain't no hero." Nevertheless, he dives into the sea to retrieve the raft's lost rudder and tries to stop Walt's kidnapping—and in doing so, he gets shot. Maybe there is hope for both Sawyer and Kate.

John Locke is an obvious candidate for transformation once on the island. Early on, he plays a sort of mystic, telling Walt about ancient Mesopotamia, making a dog whistle, hunting boar, and relying on his intuition. Flashbacks reveal how different Locke's life had been before he reached the island. He worked in a toy store and was raised in foster homes without knowing his parents. His mentally unbalanced mother appears, he meets his ailing father (Anthony Cooper—the original Sawyer, it turns out) and

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30. Episode 1.6. When Sawyer's artery in his arm is cut, Jack helps. Sawyer sneers, "If the tables were turned, I'd watch you die."

31. Episode 1.7.

32. In defense of Sawyer, we should perhaps mention that when Sawyer sees a boy (a reflection of his younger self) during one of his scams (shown in a flashback), he announces, "Deal's off!" (episode 1.8).

33. Episodes 1.3, 1.20. There may be some implausible aspects of Kate's character. Would she really rob a bank with three thugs simply to get a little model plane from a safe-deposit box that "belonged to the man I killed" (1.12, 1.22). The federal marshall claims that Kate needs the toy airplane "to atone for killing her boyfriend," who died in her car accident (1.23).

34. Episode 1.16. Departing on the raft at the end of season 1, Sawyer sings the Bob Marley song "Redemption," thinking he will soon avenge his parents' deaths (1.24).

Fig. 11. *Lost*'s Jack and Kate, played by Jack Shephard and Evangeline Lilly. (By permission of Photofest Inc.)

Fig. 12. *Lost*'s Locke, played by Terry O'Quinn. (By permission of Photofest Inc.)

gives him a kidney, only to have this newfound father vanish.[35] Then Locke must use a wheelchair for four years (his accident is explained in season 3) and works in a cubicle for a cruel boss at a box factory. Locke's goal is to go on an Australian walkabout, hoping for spiritual renewal. He is rejected because of his "condition," yet he insists that he was destined to do this. His mantra is "Don't tell me what I can't do." Locke is very much rejuvenated by his arrival on the island, both physically (he can walk again) and spiritually: "The island made me whole again."[36] He can live a life he was unable to before, tracking, hunting, and exploring.[37] As he tells Walt, "A miracle happened."[38] Without question, Locke is reborn on the island.

The deeper significance of the flashback technique and the gradual revealing of past lives is that these people who think they are total strangers have lives that actually intersected before they reached the island. The survivors on the island are in fact related to one another in surprising ways: the original Sawyer who swindled the parents of the island Sawyer (James Ford) is also the father of Locke (he is the man who scammed Locke out of

35. Episode 1.19.

36. Episode 1.19.

37. Locke says to Jack, "You be the doctor . . . Let me be the hunter" (episode 1.11). The boy Walt insists, "He's a warrior." Charlie calls Locke the "Great White Hunter."

38. Episode 1.3.

his kidney—season 3 reveals all). Sawyer (James Ford) meets Jack's father in an Australian bar and hears just enough to figure out that he must be Jack's father (because of Jack's father's tagline that the Boston Red Sox are fated to never win the World Series). At the end of season 1, Sawyer tells Jack how proud his father was, remarking, "Small world, huh?"[39]

We now turn to the mysteries of the island. Shipwreck victims are often ignorant about who survived, where they are, and if the island is inhabited, but *Lost* presents seemingly unsolvable enigmas. Some mysteries are weird but can be explained: the magnetic anomaly of the compass, the whispers Sayid and Sawyer hear in the jungle, the polar bears, and so on. But what are we to make of sirens sounding in the jungle, trees falling down, and the killing of the pilot in the cockpit? The "Death Monster of Smoke" is seen in season 2. Is this a supernatural monster? Are we in a Stephen King novel? (Hurley calls it the "security system that eats people.") This sense of mystery is reinforced by the eerie music composed by Michael Giacchino, with its dissonant sounds, exploding trombones, sharp dynamic changes, and gunshot percussion—and by the beat of a heart (or a plane crash?) at the end of each episode.[40]

Some questions, of course, receive relatively straightforward answers. We learn why certain people were in Australia traveling to Los Angeles. Jack was there to retrieve his father's body. Kate was being brought back to the United States for trial. We learn why certain people were on that particular flight. Claire was told to take it by a psychic; Hurley wanted to be home for his mother's birthday; Sayid was on this flight, rather than an earlier one, so that he might bury a Muslim friend.[41]

Yet there are tougher questions about the island. For instance, why did the plane go down, and why did it crash on this particular island? (Episodes in subsequent seasons will partially explain this.) Even in the first season, Sayid and Kate discuss how unlikely it was that they survived the crash at all. Sayid believes that it was "beyond the odds." It does seem highly implausible that so many people would still be living, emerging with just scratches, after the tail section broke off while still in the air and after the middle section "cartwheeled through the jungle." Kate attributes it to "blind dumb luck," saying, "Some things just happen," but Sayid is skeptical: "It shouldn't have happened."[42]

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39. Episodes 1.16, 1.23.

40. According to the *Lost* article on Wikipedia, some of the unusual sounds are produced by "striking suspended pieces of the plane's fuselage." On the soundtrack of *Lost,* see Ross (2005, 2010).

41. Episodes 1.24, 1.21.

42. Episode 1.7.

So what caused the wreck? It is no surprise that there is disagreement. Locke speaks confidently of "a miracle" and "destiny": "Everything that happened, happened for a reason." The survivors are "here . . . not by accident."[43] In episode 24, Locke characterizes Jack as "a man of science," whereas he himself is "a man of faith."

> Do you really think all this is an accident? The crash . . . this place—was it a coincidence? We were brought here for a purpose."

Jack asks who brought them to this island. Locke answers,

> The island brought us here . . . The island chose each and every one of us. The island chose you. It's destiny.[44]

Perhaps we have not traveled so far from the wrath of Poseidon, Prospero's magic, or Crusoe's Providence in explaining a wreck. *Lost* brings us back to at least a partial endorsement of the ideas of fate and supernatural forces.[45]

One of the most intriguing backstories is Hurley's. He is friendly and helpful, and when "everyone's way tense," he sets up a two-hole golf course. It turns out that Hurley is a fabulously wealthy lottery winner. Based on what happened after his win, he believes the numbers he played on the lottery—4 8 15 16 23 42—are cursed.[46] There is an extensive—and grimly humorous—set of disasters associated with Hurley after he acquires his wealth: relatives dying, houses burning, people falling out of windows. Is the jinx all in his head? Is it pure coincidence? How are we to explain that these same six numbers are also on the "hatch" on the island?[47] This set of numbers brought Danielle Rousseau's scientific team to the island years earlier and,

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43. Episodes 1.5, 1.19.

44. Locke also tells Jack that Boone was "a sacrifice that the island demanded" (episode 1.24).

45. Some theories by the series' fans (found in Internet chat rooms) were rejected by the show's creators, who said, for example, that the survivors were not dead or in purgatory, that aliens had not come from outer space, and that the island was not part of a reality TV show with the survivors as unwitting contestants.

46. Episode 1.18. Hurley's friend Leonard, who is in a mental institution, tells him, "You opened the box. Get away from the numbers or it won't stop"; this convinces Hurley that he is the cause of the plane crash. Rousseau agrees that the numbers led her to change course: "The numbers brought me here. They brought you too" (1.18).

47. Episode 1.24.

in turn, are the same numbers that Desmond must punch into a computer every 108 minutes. When he fails to do so, Oceanic Flight 815 crashes.[48] Is this due to fate, coincidence, six degrees of separation? This is just one of the many mysteries in *Lost.*

Can what has happened be attributed to fate? Jack is generally rational and cautious. A frequent line of Jack's is "I'm not sure of anything yet."[49] He tells Locke, "I don't believe in destiny"; instead it is just "luck" that he found water at the caves.[50] When Hurley blames his curse for Arzt blowing himself up at the Black Rock, Kate tells him it was an "accident." An Australian widow Hurley visits tells him that some bad things would have happened anyway: "You make your own luck. Don't go looking for an excuse. Don't blame it on the damn numbers!"[51]

It is fair to say that the writers of *Lost* had an interest in sustaining this ambiguity (which allowed them to justify later episodes and yearly renewals).[52] There will always be some people who see design (the wrath of Poseidon for Odysseus' troubles, Providence for Crusoe) and some who believe that events are more arbitrary. In *Lost,* we meet with lots of con games: there are those by Sawyer, Kate, and Locke's father (the real Sawyer), and the Others repeatedly intervene in seasons 2 and 3, but the writers of *Lost* may have perpetrated the biggest scam of all. The show's creators (Abrams, Lindelof, and Lieber) supplied enough evidence to support the idea that some coincidences are amazing yet truly random, while, alternatively, they offered compelling testimony that appeared to argue for a larger purpose. The show's "mythology," as they like to call it, encourages speculation and theorizing about the island's mysteries. Is it really coincidence that (in season 2) Eko happens to crash on the same island where his brother previously crashed? We may scoff at Sayid's Muslim friend who thinks it is "not happenstance" that they have met in Sydney (we know that the CIA brought them together), but are we supposed to take Locke even halfway

48. The number of minutes between retyping the numbers on the island's computer, 108, is the sum of the six digits. In the final episode of season 1 (1.24), Hurley, hustling through the airport, passes some girls in soccer jerseys with the same sequence of numbers.

49. Episode 1.22.

50. Episodes 1.24, 1.6.

51. Episode 1.18. Hurley has gone to Australia to speak to the widow of Sam, a man who heard the numbers with Leonard at a Pacific Ocean "listening post."

52. As cocreator Damon Lindelof said, "The audience is savvy and knows they're not getting off [the island], because if they do the series ends"; see Adam (2004) 4. Elsewhere, Lindelof spoke of the "Catch-22 implicit" in such television series; see Aurthur (2005).

seriously when he talks about destiny and what is "supposed to happen"? (In the interest of full disclosure, I should say that I am a "random universe" kind of guy.) Of course, provided that they planned it all wisely enough, the writers were in a position to make things work out: they introduced the interconnections between apparently total strangers.[53] They appear to have succeeded in maintaining a balance between certain parallels that seem coincidental, on the one hand, and evidence that argues for a godlike plan, on the other, producing a series that enticed both skeptics and those who believe in the "Grand Design."

One final issue presented in the first year of *Lost* is closure: will the survivors of Flight 815 ever be rescued? The ultimate goal for the survivors is to get off the island (except for Walt and Locke, who wish to stay).[54] Initially, they attempt to send out a distress signal. At the end of season 1, Michael builds a boat and declares, "My son and I are leaving," an instance of "us taking control of our destiny."[55] *Lost* covers the familiar means of departure: by a craft built on the island or with outside help (later, Jack almost leaves on the Others' submarine before Locke blows it up).

An issue relevant to escape is whether the island is inhabited. In the typical shipwreck scenario with an inhabited island, the "natives" may assist the newcomers or threaten their departure—or even their survival (the Phaeacians and, ultimately, Prospero aid those who wish to leave). In episode 9, Sayid encounters Danielle Rousseau, who has been on the island for sixteen years. She was part of a scientific team that had been shipwrecked after encountering a storm three days out from Tahiti. Danielle presents a familiar possibility for a shipwrecked survivor and the effects of solitude: she is a survivor who hunts, sets traps, and can vanish into the jungle quickly, yet she appears to have been reduced to a primitive state—and is accused by other characters of being somewhat crazy.

As Sayid meets Danielle, Ethan—who was not on the plane—appears among the survivors, but no one notices. In a subsequent episode, there is the neat coincidence of Sayid returning to tell his comrades, "We're

53. Stanley (2007) B1 commented that it was an open question "whether the writers actually have a cohesive story line that ties together all the unexplained subplots." She also remarked that *Lost* remained intriguing halfway through the third season "mostly because it defies its own illogical reasoning."

54. Walt says, "I don't want to move anymore. I like it here." Locke says, "I like it too" (1.17). Locke, in fact, is the one who hits Sayid and smashes the transceiver and other equipment, believing everyone is "too focused on getting off the island" (1.21); in season 3, Locke blows up the Others' submarine, which could have brought Jack back to "civilization."

55. Episode 1.14.

not alone," just as Hurley's census reveals that Ethan was not in the flight manifest and therefore was not on the plane (I do not attribute this sequence of events to the hand of God—only to the hands of the screenwriters.)[56] So there are "Others": the survivors now know of Rousseau and Ethan and wonder how many more there may be. In seasons 2 and 3, we learn about the Dharma Institute and the fertility clinic; there are kidnappings and eventually a battle between the Flight 815 travelers and the Others (who bluntly tell Jack, "It's not your island. This is our island"). These confrontations complicate the shipwreck scenario, yet the basic features of the shipwreck scenario—wreck, salvage, acquisition of necessities, establishing a hierarchy, outside threat, and possible escape—are all put in place in season 1. Like *The Mysterious Island, Lost* adapts two models: first, the survivors must act on the assumption that they are alone on the island; then, they must confront those already living there (as happens in *The Tempest*).

The Comic Shipwreck: *Gilligan's Island*

Finally, I here examine a comic approach to the shipwreck situation in the television series *Gilligan's Island* (1964–67). For this series, too, I will focus on the first season, with particular attention to the ways in which *Gilligan's Island* differs from other shipwreck narratives. At the start of each episode, "The Ballad of Gilligan's Island" explains how a three-hour boat tour from Honolulu went off course during a storm. Five passengers and two crew members of the S.S. *Minnow* were shipwrecked on "an uncharted desert isle."[57] Exploration reveals the island to be uninhabited, but there are caves, fruit trees, and a freshwater lagoon.

For the most part, the nautical hierarchy of the Skipper giving orders to first mate Gilligan continues on the island. These two initially work to rescue their five passengers: in the first episode, they even build and launch a raft, but they are attacked by sharks and drift back to the island. The Skipper also plays a leadership role when they build a community hut, saying,

56. Episodes 1.8–10.

57. In episodes 1.12 and 1.18, we learn that they were hundreds of miles off course southeast of Hawaii, drifted for three days, and are "approximately 140 degrees Latitude, 10 longitude," but this makes no sense (latitude only goes up to 90 degrees). If we reverse latitude and longitude (as the Wikipedia article on *Gilligan's Island* suggests), they end up twelve hundred miles southeast of Hawaii, which is somewhat plausible, though it would still require quite a storm.

"We've got to function as a group."[58] The Professor, a science teacher and scoutmaster, serves as encyclopedic counsel, gadget maker, and physician. He is also the voice of reason, with logical explanations for the many strange occurrences. When the Skipper interprets an earthquake as a "warning," the Professor calls it an accident, the "kind of accident that happens with predictable regularity and statistical frequency."[59] (Take that, Locke!)

Ginger is a singer, dancer, and movie star, whose message to the outside world is "Call my agent." She flirts as unabashedly on the island as she did before in Hollywood or on Broadway. In many ways, her foil is the Kansas farm girl Mary Ann, who wears pigtails and a gingham dress in contrast to Ginger's shimmering evening gown. The show predates the women's movement, for Ginger and Mary Ann—the "girls"—do "women's work," such as sewing, washing, and cooking. (In episode 20, the women strike for equal rights and secede, but the next episode reverts to the status quo.)

The Howells are a fabulously wealthy couple played by Jim Backus (the voice of the cartoon figure Mr. Magoo) and Natalie Schafer. They are extreme caricatures of impractical and eccentric snobs. Mr. Howell is always worried about buying and selling stocks, high-society parties, and his net worth.[60] Once, Mr. Howell holds up a shovel and asks, "How does this thing work?" This couple is utterly self-assured: "Nobody rushes a Howell." Mr. Howell delights in his own jokes ("I must write that one down") and sleeps with a teddy bear.

In episode 6, when Mr. Howell and the Skipper both try to give orders to Gilligan, a conflict ensues over who is in charge on the island. Mr. Howell maintains that once they reached land, the Skipper's authority came to an end. The solution is an election, which Gilligan wins (by write-in votes). But no one listens to his orders, so we are back to the old regime in the next episode, with the Skipper barking orders (and the Professor and Mr. Howell not far behind). Survival is not in question for the most part: they find water on the island, fire seems to be no challenge (in contrast to *Cast Away*), and huts are quickly built. Their diet consists largely of fruit and fish; later, they plant a garden irrigated by a bicycle-powered system, and they build the most amazing contraptions out of bamboo.[61]

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58. Episode 1.2. In episode 1.9, we hear of an agreement that they will share anything they find on the island (which is the basis of the Professor's "ruling" in episode 1.16).

59. Episode 1.10.

60. Mr. Howell also refers to polo and his yacht club and is fond of saying "I'm a Harvard man."

61. The bike is also used to power a fan, as well as washing, sewing, and hole-digging machines.

Fig. 13. The castaways from *Gilligan's Island,* played by Dawn Wells (Mary Ann), Alan Hale Jr. (the Skipper), Tina Louise (Ginger), Bob Denver (Gilligan), Natalie Schafer (Mrs. Howell), Russell Johnson (the Professor), and Jim Backus (Mr. Howell). (By permission of Photofest Inc.)

The castaways' challenges include technological problems, whether they are alone, and possible rescue. They have tools from the ship, such as a machete and several saws, a flare gun with flares, a flashlight, and a gun and bullets. Yet these either run out or explode (all the flares blow up simultaneously after one of Gilligan's misfires). The consequence is that they often must improvise. When the gun runs out of bullets, they craft a bow and arrow; torches provide light at night. The Professor makes shellac and putty from island substances; Ginger fashions a clamshell compact with berry dye for lipstick, eye shadow, and mascara; Mr. Howell makes golf clubs with an oyster shell and uses an avocado pit as a ball.

In several episodes, the castaways come to believe that someone else is on the island (at times with good reason). They find islander artifacts and fear cannibals; once, a chimp stealing food makes them believe they are under siege; at various times, an outsider is either discovered or reaches the island. Wrongway Feldman, who crashed his plane on the island in the 1930s is discovered in episode 5. With everyone's help, he takes off in his plane and reaches civilization, but as his nickname indicates, he is unable to give accu-

rate directions that will aid in their rescue. One of the all-time great shows (from season 3) features the arrival of Phil Silvers as Broadway producer Harold Hecuba ("HH" to his friends), who steals the castaways' idea for a musical version of *Hamlet* (lyrics are set to melodies from Bizet's opera *Carmen*).

Numerous attempts at escape or rescue are tried: the Skipper and Gilligan paddle away in a raft; flares are used to signal passing planes or ships; they tie a message around a migratory duck's leg; Gilligan invents an apparently superpowerful glue to repair the boat; their life raft is repaired. Each attempt ultimately fails, leaving them still stranded on the island. The radio gives them news from "civilization," including the early report that the SS *Minnow* is believed lost and that the passengers and crew are presumed dead.

Even in this humorous treatment, there are many implicit references to earlier shipwreck tales. After they escape the storm and reach dry land, Gilligan kisses the ground—like Odysseus—but exclaims, "This island tastes terrible!" On returning from an escape attempt and thinking they are on a different island, the Skipper and Gilligan see footprints and believe they are threatened by "savages" (cf. Crusoe's spotting of a footprint on the beach). The castaways use conchs to call one another (cf. *Lord of the Flies*). The Professor, Ginger, and Gilligan all keep journals to record their adventures—the storytelling drive is alive and well. Allusions to Defoe's hero are explicit in the song from the end of each show.

> No phone, no light, no motor car,
> Not a single luxury.
> Like Robinson Ca-rusoe
> It's primitive as can be.

The series creator, Sherwood Schwartz, called the figures on *Gilligan's Island* "the world's most famous castaways."

Gilligan's Island proves that the shipwreck scenario can be treated as conventional comedy with stock characters, vaudevillian lines, and an accompanying laugh track. If they had to be shipwrecked on an island, Ginger wonders, "Why couldn't it have been Manhattan?" We are also presented with lots of physical comedy. When the Skipper wants the group to split up ("You go this way and I'll go that way"), they invariably cross paths and run into each other. The island equivalent of the Three Stooges' "fish slap" is for Gilligan and the Skipper to be hit on the head with coconuts.

Why do they never escape? Well, a lot of the time, Gilligan is not just accident-prone but is a world-class bungler. Since he readily takes orders

from the Skipper, Mr. Howell, and the others, his lineage may be said to derive from the comic slave character in ancient Greek and Roman comedy (Dromio in Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors* is another descendant). The shipwreck scenario gives Gilligan a unique "function": to destroy or pervert each attempt to rescue the castaways. The Professor will announce, "This is our best chance yet to get off the island," but then Gilligan will drop logs on the transmitter or forget to tie a message to a duck's leg.[62] It is a unique feature of comedy that if what took place on the comic stage (or screen) actually happened to people in real life, it would be tragic. When each of the castaways' attempts at rescue fails, we find it humorous, though we would weep at the same circumstances in real life.

In the end, there is no serious attempt at verisimilitude. The castaways are afraid of running out of fresh water, yet a waterfall gushes into the lagoon. Their "crops" are facing blight, but they are eating pancakes in the very next episode.[63] Building a runway for Wrongway Feldman is no problem (very different from what is described in Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*), yet Gilligan wrestles with what are obviously a rubber shark, a plastic lobster, and a stuffed chimp doll.[64] No one has any interest in sex at all (I guess this makes it "family entertainment"),[65] and an incredible number of visitors appear: a Japanese submariner, a mobster, a theatrical agent, a surfer from Hawaii, and Wrongway Feldman a second time.

Somehow, knowing that the tale is comic and that its characters are not real people—the fact that we are not fully suspending our disbelief—allows us to laugh. The castaways plan to signal a search plane with a large mirror, but Gilligan swings in on a vine and smashes it to small pieces; sharks eat sections of a raft conveying Gilligan and the Skipper, until it becomes progressively smaller. Because these incidents are accompanied by a laugh track—and, in a sense, because we are rooting for them to fail (or else, as with *Lost,* the series would end)—we delight in this predictable kind of entertainment. The Skipper in a Santa Claus outfit (or is it him?) points out that things could be worse: they could have been lost at sea or stuck

62. Episodes 1.7, 1.12.

63. Episodes 1.8, 1.9. When Gilligan becomes rich (winning three million dollars from Mr. Howell), the Skipper tells Gilligan that he is like his own "son" and asks Gilligan to call him "Dad" (1.13), but all of this is forgotten in subsequent episodes.

64. Cf. also the actor in a gorilla suit in episode 1.22. Although the *Minnow* breaks up in episode 1.8, the intact boat appears in the rest of the series.

65. When Mrs. Howell recapitulates the plot of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (in which Athenian and Spartan women refuse to have sex with their husbands until they make peace), she offers the bowdlerized synopsis that the women "completely ignore the men" (episode 1.20).

on a place with no food or water or could have become enemies by now.[66] Instead, they have become like a family that gets along—there are no coups or human sacrifices (as in *The Tempest* and *Lord of the Flies*), so perhaps their lives are not so bad.

Gilligan is the central character. He is always in the middle of the action, guarding the water supply, digging a well, climbing trees. He messes up with punctual regularity, but he is always trying his best. In addition, he is the heart and soul of the island, for, however exasperating Gilligan is, everyone likes him. He has a generous spirit and considers everyone on the island his friend. When he wins three million dollars from Mr. Howell in a putting contest, he wants to buy "something nice for his friends": a science lab for the Professor, a farm for Mary Ann, a ship for the Skipper, a movie studio for Ginger. While often cowardly for comic effect, Gilligan proves heroic on occasion, such as his rescue of the imprisoned castaways from a Japanese submariner who is unaware that World War II has been over for twenty years.[67]

Does this isolated shipwreck scenario offer the possibility of transformation? Is there any sense in which the castaways "re-invent" themselves? Not really. The general rule for television sitcoms until the 1980s was that each new episode starts pretty much where the previous one began—and this is how character development runs as well. Gilligan remains a bungler, the Skipper a blowhard, Ginger a flirt; and the Howells remain obsessed with wealth and prestige—even on a deserted island, where money is irrelevant.[68] It would be difficult to maintain that these survivors live new lives or are transformed. Indeed, it goes against the impulse of stock comic characters to develop in any serious way—Bozo does not redeem himself. The figures in *Gilligan's Island* do try new activities: Mr. Howell builds; Gilligan prospects for gold; the Skipper acts in Ginger's Cleopatra play; the Professor assumes the role of judge to settle disputes. Yet only in the dream sequences do characters undergo profound transformations (e.g., Gilligan as a sheriff protecting a duck or as Dracula after a bat bite)—without lasting effect. There are no flashbacks (such as in *Lost*) to reveal these castaways' previous lives or who they were before the wreck.[69] Familiar motifs may be adopted from earlier shipwreck narratives, but *Gilligan's Island* does not conform to

66. Episode 1.12.

67. Episode 1.15.

68. When Mrs. Howell says there are "times when money is absolutely useless," her husband retorts, "Oh, Lovey—watch what you say!" (episode 1.14)

69. There is a flashback, but it is merely to the shipwreck's aftermath (episode 1.12).

the archetypal shipwreck feature: the potential for transformation found in Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe fails to make its way into this comic series.

Whether accidental arrival results from ship, plane, or balloon wreck, familiar challenges confront the survivors. This struggle is met with startling success in *The Mysterious Island,* where humans command nature as best they can by means of scientific knowledge and a capacity for harmonious existence. Bleaker prospects facing the boys in *Lord of the Flies* derive in part from human nature—whether isolated or not. *Lost* navigates between these poles of solidarity and dissension, but the central theme of the series is transformation and a kind of "redemption." *Gilligan's Island* presents many common features: the experience of the wreck, ignorance of where they are, and the quandary of whether they will receive outside help or must make their own escape. As we see in *The Mysterious Island, Lost,* and *Gilligan's Island,* the scenario of a group on an (apparently) uninhabited island often turns out to be a situation in which someone already lives on the island.

In addition to television and movies, other graphic media, such as painting, illustration, and the perennial *New Yorker* cartoon help us visualize the shipwreck predicament. As I noted in chapter 1, it is not my goal in this book to comprehensively survey all treatments of the shipwreck scenario. My more limited purpose here is to examine the extremely influential works by Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe—and the distinct scenarios they explore—and then consider adaptations and variations of their precursors and successors.

CHAPTER 10

Shipwreck and the Selling of Paradise

The argument of this book has been that poets and writers use the shipwreck scenario to explore human nature, examine identity, and pursue the possibilities of transformation. The relationship between shipwreck and transformation manifests itself in various ways. For Odysseus, shipwrecks are an obstacle to regaining his former status; for those in *The Tempest,* shipwrecks present the opportunity to seize power or transform society; for Crusoe, the shipwreck sets the stage for a religious conversion. We have also seen how shipwrecks may lead to freedom for Ariel, Caliban, and Friday. *Foe* makes clear the survivor's need to control the shipwreck tale. Yet for all the variety, we have also seen common features in almost every story: storm, despair, divine intervention, rebirth imagery, ignorance and exploration, and the struggle to reestablish civilization and avoid the descent into savagery.

People have voyaged across the open sea for at least forty thousand years.[1] As long as there have been sea journeys, there have been mishaps—and undoubtedly stories told about those misadventures. Historical shipwrecks are surveyed in several books, such as *The Mammoth Book of Storms, Shipwrecks, and Sea Disasters* and *The Tragic History of the Sea.* Other well-known historical shipwrecks include those of the sixteenth-century Spanish explorer Núñez Cabeza

1. Diamond (1997) 41 argues that for modern humans to cross from Asia to Australia—even with lower sea levels—they would have had to cross open water of at least fifty miles: "The occupation of Australia/New Guinea [forty to fifty thousand years ago] is momentous in that it demanded watercraft and provides by far the earliest evidence of their use in history." These early sailors would have had to cross the southern end of the Wallace Line, which is marked by a deep sea trench between Bali and Lombok in present-day Indonesia. Wade (2007) considers whether these voyagers were predominantly a single group.

de Vaca, the story of the lost Gloucester swordfish boat as reconstructed by Junger in *The Perfect Storm,* and the wrecks of the *Titanic* and the *Indianapolis*—to say nothing of recent discoveries made by underwater archaeologists that take us all the way back to the second millennium BCE.[2]

Literary shipwrecks follow a pattern at odds with actual shipwrecks. In historical shipwrecks, it frequently happens that (a) most or all of the travelers die (as in *The Perfect Storm*), (b) the survivors are saved on the sea, or (c) they make it to shore and are received hospitably by the inhabitants and conveyed to their destination.[3] Unlike literary works, it is unusual for actual shipwreck survivors to endure an extended, isolated existence—too often, shipwrecks take place in northern climes where cold, hunger, and injury lead to a quick end. Literary versions are generally set in tropical regions where survival is more credible.[4] A second feature of actual shipwrecks is that the chain of command from aboard the ship is often maintained. The captain of a vessel retains his authority even on a deserted beach. In contrast, epics, novels, and dramatic treatments often seek to question—if not overthrow—the previous chain of command. Third, actual accounts often focus on the coming of the storm and the conditions that led to the shipwreck, while literary treatments tend to focus on the aftermath once survivors have reached shore.

While this book's focus has been fictional shipwrecks, we have encountered works that reflect historical shipwrecks in which initiative has been essential for survival, sanity, and any possibility of escape. The survivor must call on a resilience never needed before. In actual practice, survivors may become listless and depressed, unable to summon sufficient energy to adapt to many daunting challenges. Also, considerable bravery is required for someone (like Odysseus or Chuck Noland) who has experienced shipwreck—a near-death experience at sea—to go out alone in an improvised craft and once again face the sea in order to return home.

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2. See Lawrence (2004), Brandt (2006), Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1993, a modern translation of the 1555 edition), and Junger (1997); for the *Titanic,* see Lawrence (2004) 183–214 and Brandt (2006) 313–29; for the *Indianapolis,* see Stanton (2001); for an example of the work done by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University, see Steffy (1994).

3. For example, Lawrence (2004) 49 reports that when the *Proserpine* was wrecked in the mouth of the Elbe in 1799, "the inhabitants of the village received the strangers with great kindness, and did everything in their power to alleviate their sufferings"; but "the next day, the islanders, unable to resist the temptation of plunder, took to their boats, and made off to the ship, which they ransacked, and carried off all the arms, stores, and provisions of every kind" (54).

4. For the desperate situation of cold weather strandings, see the account of a Saint Lawrence River wreck in Lawrence (2004) 59–61.

Our exploration of the historical context of the *Odyssey, The Tempest,* and *Robinson Crusoe* has revealed how specific triggers (the Bermuda shipwreck, the marooning of Selkirk) may have stimulated the production of new shipwreck tales.[5] The broader "spirit" of the times—Greek colonization in the eighth century BCE, "New World" voyages, philosophical inquiry, innovative technology, politics in the postcolonial world—also have had a powerful effect on how these stories are reinterpreted. For example, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Locke contemplated "man in a state of nature"; Rousseau argued that humans outside of society avoided corruption; Hobbes implies that once there are two (or more) individuals, conflict inevitably ensues, resulting in "a war of all against all." The ideas of such political philosophers may well have influenced Defoe and later shipwreck storytellers. In the postcolonial world, there is a great impulse to rewrite the narratives of Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe as a way of exploring slavery, European colonialism, and political independence. Also, in the last 150 years, technological advances—and science fiction writers—have translated the shipwreck scenario to wrecks on other planets.

The manner in which Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe have provided models raises complex issues about allusion, adaptation, and competition. How does Homer's *Odyssey* serve as a model (or foil) for Sophocles' *Philoctetes* or Luke's tale of Saint Paul? Does every group shipwreck necessarily recall Shakespeare's *The Tempest*? *First on Mars* or *Lost* may explicitly recall *Robinson Crusoe* or *Lord of the Flies,* but it is often difficult to claim deliberate imitation when an archetypal situation is presented. Chapter 8 demonstrates that within the novel *Foe,* characters engage in fierce competition as storytellers of shipwreck tales, with a parallel contest "outside" the novel between Defoe and Coetzee.

In this final chapter, before considering the fascination of shipwreck narratives, I would like to raise a contemporary issue, namely, the use of the shipwreck scenario for marketing purposes. Beyond novels, drama, film, and television, another modern appearance of the shipwreck scenario is commercial, what we might call the "selling of paradise." The name of the Castaways Guest House in Walcott's play *Pantomime* captures this impulse, for the Caribbean island of Tobago today actually markets itself as Crusoe's island. As the advertisement reads,

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5. For a fascinating study of how Melville's *Moby Dick* grew out of a historical shipwreck, see Philbrick (2000).

Fig. 14. Saint Lucia's Rodney Bay, a tourist attraction with luxury hotels. (Photo by the author.)

> Where Robinson Crusoe would have stayed, if he'd had the choice . . . he surely wouldn't have minded the swimming pool on the terrace either.[6]

There are also Prospero's Magic Cave and the restaurant Caliban's on Bermuda; you may follow the adventures of Odysseus on a Mediterranean tour; South Pacific islands promise a "Pacific paradise" at the most out-of-the-way, isolated place on earth.

In the context of global travel and ecotourism, the shipwreck scenario is activated to attract tourists to these islands. Promotional materials will typically show a deserted beach; if habitation is revealed, it may consist of

6. Copy by Bernhard Grdseloff from the site http://www.caribbean-sun.com/ (this advertisement is no longer posted). There are also Castaways' Beach Resort in Dominica (Caribbean) and the Odysseus Hotel in Folegandros, an island in the Greek Aegean; Gozo near Malta in the Mediterranean is called "Calypso's Island"; Crusoe's Retreat Coral Coast is found in Fiji (South Pacific). S. Jones (2007) notes that as the Polynesians spread across the Pacific, their isolation protected them from contact with disease, yet they became extraordinarily vulnerable to Western infection. The European "discovery of paradise" in the South Pacific resulted almost immediately in ravaging the island population (and in the twentieth century, the islands' remoteness even led to their selection as testing sites for atomic weapons).

hut-like structures. The most significant omission is that the local people have been photoshopped out of the picture, or if locals are on hand, they are serving visitors drinks with a smile. The implication is that the island is yours—you are monarch of all you survey.[7] The absence of other people does not suggest isolation and the risk of boredom, insanity, or starvation; rather, in today's marketing, islands without inhabitants offer an escape from the nine-to-five world of work and a chance to reinvent yourself through snorkeling, island dancing, parasailing, and exotic rum drinks. The promotional pitch suggests an odd paradox, promoting the romantic idea of a simple life (a reaction against the materialism and excessive consumption in the modern world), while still promising coddling and luxury.

The claim that islands offer a transformational experience does contain a seed of truth. Although I realize this stretches the meaning of the term *shipwreck* a bit, it has been argued, from an evolutionary perspective, that plants, animals, and birds isolated on islands evolve into new species due to this protected environment. The most famous example is that of Darwin's finches on the different islands of the Galapagos. Recent work in biology has demonstrated how ancient birds in southeast Asia spread thousands of miles across the Pacific to the islands of Fiji and Hawaii. It appears that the descendants of these birds—subsequently isolated on remote islands—have evolved into new species, often at a rapid rate. I would not suggest that human fascination with shipwreck and new identities has an evolutionary basis, but when the time scale is altered, arrival in a new environment and subsequent existence in relative isolation may well lead to transformation and a new identity for the species itself.[8] Shipwrecks evoke contemplation of a new sort of existence, for the island becomes a "new world," where someone may create society anew or adopt a new identity.

An important perspective is also found in Walcott's criticism of the idea of islands as a sort of paradise. By introducing Golden Age motifs in pivotal scenes of *Omeros* (1990), Walcott confirms the powerful impulse to idealize

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7. See Pratt (1991) 201–27 on descriptions in travel literature containing "monarch-of-all-I-survey" scenes.

8. Filardi and Moyle (2005) remark on oceanic islands' "isolation and the potential for rapid differentiation" (216). Biologists speak of the "island rule" that stipulates that species on an island grow or shrink in physical size in order to survive; with few nutrients, animals become smaller (*Homo floresiensus*?); without predators, they may become quite large (such as the Komodo dragon). Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Galapagos* (1985) does a remarkable job imagining precisely this sort of transformation for human survivors isolated on the Galapagos. Quammen (1996) 54–55 quotes Charles Lyell: "It seems to me that many species have been created, as it were expressly for each island since they were disconnected and isolated in the sea."

islands in the Caribbean. He draws on both land and sea paradises to recall earlier pristine eras, including that of Adam and Eve.[9] Of course, anyone can call an island "paradise," but the reality may be quite different. In fact, Walcott sets up a counterargument and demonstrates that his island of Saint Lucia is, in many respects, not paradise. The characters in *Omeros* do not live the life of the gods: they are mortal; suffering is pervasive. As Walcott puts it, "affliction is one theme / of this work, this fiction" (28). The leg wound of Philoctete is traced to his slave ancestors (19); Helen leaves Achille; Plunkett loses his wife to cancer. The island's past demonstrates that if there ever had been an idyllic past, corruption and suffering have now set in.[10]

Walcott resists this commercial vision in the speech he gave in accepting the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature. While acknowledging the popular conception, he distinguishes between the marketable mirage ("what is the earthly paradise for our visitors") and the reality for those who live there.

> So many people say they "love the Caribbean," meaning that someday they plan to return for a visit but could never live there, the usual benign insult of the traveler, the tourist . . . The Caribbean is not an idyll, not to its natives.[11]

In order to see Ithaca again, Odysseus rejects immortality promised by Calypso; in analogous fashion, Walcott's *Omeros* repudiates the idea of an island utopia. As the narrator says at one point, "Only the dead can endure it in paradise" (63). By focusing on the lives of the islanders—fishermen, waitresses, taxi drivers, pig farmers—in *Omeros* and elsewhere in his work, Walcott overturns the utopian vision of the Caribbean.

In tracing four thousand years of shipwreck tales in this book, my ambi-

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9. Dennis Plunkett feels that his wife, Maud, "deserved Eden after this war" (28); Maud, in turn, describes the mountain heights of Saint Lucia.

> "It's so still. It's like Adam and Eve all over."
> Maud whispered. "Before the snake. Without all the sin." (63; cf. 187)

For a discussion of the "Adamic" experience in Walcott's works, see D'Aguiar (1992–93) and Terada (1992), especially 151–61; cf. Walcott (1974b) 5 and Minkler (1993) 273–74.

10. In *Omeros,* Walcott contrasts the reputed paradise with the islanders' sometimes hellish existence, as the narrator's father describes the women carrying anthracite down from the hills of Saint Lucia: "Hell was built on those hills // . . . the endless repetition as they climbed the / infernal anthracite hills showed you hell, early" (74).

11. Walcott (1993a) 265–66. Elsewhere, Walcott (1970) 26 describes "the limbo of the night-club, the hotel cabaret, and all the other prostitutions of a tourist culture."

tion has been to convey to a broad audience the excitement of individual works as well as the dialogue between later and earlier works. A final challenge, however, is to explain the modern resonance of the stories of Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe. The archetypal scene of a shipwrecked survivor confronting the elements remains a compelling situation that resonates today for a variety of reasons. I will mention three.

First, this book has traced out part of a literary tradition that establishes the link between shipwreck, identity, and transformation. We have seen how Homer, Shakespeare, and Defoe have connected arrival by shipwreck with the assumption of new roles. Indeed, one of the most fascinating features of the shipwreck scenario is the potential to start over, to begin a new life, to reinvent oneself. Crusoe the castaway has come to represent the possibility of a new life.

A second reason for shipwreck tales' contemporary relevance is an impulse to explore human nature in what amounts to a kind of controlled experiment with limited space, time, resources, and interacting figures. One way to analyze human nature is to strip a situation down to bare essentials and see what happens. Shipwrecked survivors not only find themselves in reduced circumstances with respect to food and livelihood; there are interactions between individuals who may not know one another and are forced to coexist or perish. Part of our fascination arises from contemplating survivors' responses as they seek to reestablish their lives and social relationships.[12]

A third possible explanation for the perennial fascination for shipwreck stories is aesthetic. There is something about the ocean, the tide, the rhythm of the waves, and the isolation of a lonely beach that evokes a powerful reaction that has inspired writers, dramatists, and artists.[13] The idea of "man in a state of nature" has captivated great authors and thinkers, beginning with Sophocles in his play *Philoctetes.* But a person may be isolated in a variety

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12. The premise of BBC's *Desert Island Discs* is that someone must choose music that is essential for an isolated existence like that of Crusoe. In a 1942 survey, University of Chicago students were asked who they would most like to be stranded with on a desert island. Their answer was Madeleine Carroll (famous from Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*). When she was asked who she would like to be shipwrecked with, Carroll answered, "A good gynecologist!"

13. Palm trees are part of the isolated beach scene. In her essay "On Beauty and Being Just," Scarry (1999) considers the palm tree as an example of beauty (16) and notes the special effects of sun and shadow: "The signature of a palm is its striped light. Palm leaves stripe the light. The dyadic alternations of leaf and air make the frond shimmer and move, even when it stays still, and if there is an actual breeze, then the stripings whip around without ever losing their perfect alignment across the full sequence" (34). A subliminal effect of such trees seems to be an accentuation of wind, light, and movement.

of ways: in a desert, on a mountaintop, deep in a forest or jungle. The shipwreck scenario on a seagirt island is somehow different.

The lonely beach suggests a sense of renewal and starting over. Each day, the tide comes in and washes the sand clean: each morning begins fresh. Such a scene is continually revived by the elements of sea, tide, wind, and waves—indeed, the rhythm of waves may be heard as a replication of the human heartbeat, the meter of all human existence. Walcott speaks of the sense in which the Caribbean resembles Eden; the islander lives like Adam in a new world.

> I can still remember the tremendous elation I had at eighteen just standing on a little hill somewhere and looking around at the sea and the sky and the town, knowing that nobody had really written about this. *It was exhilarating to know that I was privileged to be the first one to put down the name of a certain town, or fisherman, or road—a privilege very few writers ever have*. . . The fact is, the beauty is overwhelming, it really is. It's not a used beauty, there are no houses there; it's not a known beauty, and so *the privilege of just looking at these places and seeing their totally uncorrupted existence remains an Adamic experience.* Looking across at the mountains, or walking on a beach that is really deserted on an early morning, *you can't avoid the feeling that this is a new world.*[14]

Isolated land, surrounded by water, evokes a new world of possibility.

In Walcott's *Omeros,* the sea itself appears to have a redemptive power, a capacity to wash away the suffering of the past and cleanse the crimes and pain of history. Achille thinks

> of the stitched, sutured wound that Philoctete
> was given by the sea, but how the sea could heal
> the wound. (242)

If anything has the power to redeem the people of Saint Lucia, it is the sea, due partly to amnesia.

> The ocean had
> no memory of the wanderings of Gilgamesh,

14. Walcott in Hirsch (1979) 283, my italics. Cf. his later remarks in Hirsch (1986) 211.

or whose sword severed whose head in the *Iliad.*
It was an epic where every line was erased

yet freshly written in the sheets of exploding surf
in that blind violence with which *one crest replaced*
another with a trench and that heart-heaving sough

begun in Guinea to fountain exhaustion here,
however one read it, not as our defeat or
our victory; *it drenched every survivor*

with blessing. It never altered its metre
to suit the age, a wide page without metaphors.
Our last resort as much as yours, Omeros.

(295–96, my italics)

The ocean has no memory of ancient epic.[15] Each epic line of the ocean—that is, the crest of one wave replacing another—is "erased // yet freshly written." Like lines of verse, the ocean drives wave after wave upon the island's beach, offering a baptism of sorts: to the characters in *Omeros,* it offers renewal; to each survivor, blessing (as claimed in the passage just quoted).[16]

The ocean is a dangerous, uncontrollable force, yet it also functions as a source of renewal. Emerging from the sea constitutes a cleansing, a kind of baptism, that leads to a new outlook on future possibilities. In literature—and perhaps in life—the sea's lack of predictability promotes the contemplation of multiple resolutions. Each morning, the tide washes the beach of what was there yesterday. Each wave cleanses and removes, but it also deposits driftwood, seaweed, supplies (as in *Robinson Crusoe* or *Cast Away*), and even survivors themselves. In speaking about the importance of wind and surf, Walcott contemplates "images of erasure."

> To me there are always images of erasure in the Caribbean—in the surf which continually wipes the sand clear, in the fact that those

15. Elsewhere, Walcott refers to the "white, amnesiac Atlantic" (61).

16. To the narrator of *Omeros,* the sea offers inspiration. In encountering the spirit of the poet Homer—*Omeros* in Modern Greek—the narrator says that "your voice in that sea" has allowed him to become "the freshest of all your readers" (283). D'Aguiar (1992–93) 74 argues that "for Walcott the Caribbean artist is closer to Adam than Christ; an analogy circumscribed by the poet's view of the Caribbean as a 'New World' situation"; cf. Collier (1993) 91.

Fig. 15. Waves on the beach on Saint Lucia. (Photo by the author.)

> huge clouds change so quickly. There is a continual sense of motion in the Caribbean.[17]

Each new day is announced by the clean slate of a washed beach, suggesting the possibility of redefinition. Walcott speaks of "the Caribbean Sea, whose smell is the smell of refreshing possibility as well as survival."[18] The image of waves breaking on a beach is inextricably associated with erasing the past and its complement: a new beginning. As Walcott says, "the surf which continually wipes the sand clean" makes possible the "Adamic" experience in the Caribbean. Each day, the cycle of renewal starts again. In Greece, Bermuda, Tobago, Saint Lucia, and the islands of the South Pacific, an island beach evokes both the danger of the sea—the threat of shipwreck—and the promise of a new day bringing infinite possibilities.

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17. Walcott in Hirsch (1986) 214. Walcott (1997) 237 also comments, "The Caribbean writer wakes up every morning to a sense of complete erasure. There is no continuity. There is nothing to look at to confirm time."

18. Walcott (1993a) 264.

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Index

Achilles, 39, 42n35. See also *Omeros*
Acts, book of, 83–87
Adam and Eve, 20n20, 48n8, 67, 100, 111, 219, 219n9, 221–23, 222n16
Adams, Commander, 98–100
Aeneas. See *Aeneid*
Aeneid, 33–34, 53, 53n17
Africa, 44, 91n23, 95, 97n35, 159–61, 164, 167, 178–79, 179n39
Agriculture, 108, 181, 196
Alcaeus, 48n9
Alcinous, 14–16, 23n35
Alonso, 48, 54, 55–56, 61–64. See also *The Tempest*
Altaira (Alta), 98–104
Animals. *See* Domestication of animals
Antonio, 7–8, 48, 55–56, 61–64. See also *The Tempest*
Apollonius. See *Argonautica*
Argonautica, 33–34
Ariel, 48–49, 62–66, 91, 98–100. See also *The Tempest*
Aristotle, 21, 47n5, 125n24, 136–37, 149, 149n24
Athena, 12, 16, 22
Autonomy, 21–22, 75–76, 88, 172

Barton, Susan, 150n26, 164–79. See also *Foe*
Beast. *See* Primitive state, Reversion to
Bermuda, 46, 73–77, 87. See also *The Tempest*
Boat construction, 10, 10n3, 17, 112, 130–31, 149, 183, 185, 193, 206

Caliban, 49–50, 56–59, 59n31, 63–66, 65n38, 66n39, 77n78, 87–97, 88n15, 95n32, 99–100. See also *A Tempest*; *The Tempest*
Calypso, 10, 11, 16–22
Cannibal, 46, 69, 71–73, 104, 155n32, 161–63, 163n8, 165n14, 167, 209. *See also* Montaigne
Caribbean Islands, 36–44, 72, 96–97, 100, 158
Cast Away, 130, 145–51
Castor and Pollux (or Polydeuces), 48n9, 85. *See also* Alcaeus
Cave, living in, 140, 146, 196
Césaire, Aimé, 6n5, 43, 87–97, 100. See also *A Tempest*
Charlie, 199, 199n28. See also *Lost*
Charybdis, 17–18
Civilization, 4, 54–55, 71–73, 94n31, 96, 101, 107–13, 110n13, 141–42, 142n9, 145, 152, 155–56, 165–66, 181–85, 186–94, 197, 209
Clothing, 11–14, 108–11, 112–13, 133, 188, 189, 197
Coetzee, J. M., 174–79. See also *Foe*

Colonialism, 25–28, 27n33, 41, 68–71, 73–77, 87–89, 94n31, 95–96, 96n33, 101–2, 132, 132n55, 157–64, 158n2, 182–83
Comedy of Errors, 78
Communication, 125–28, 155, 165
Cruso in *Foe*, 164–79
Crusoe, Robinson, 101–38, 152–53, 154–55, 157–64, 181
Culture. *See* Civilization

Defoe, Daniel, 131–32, 174–78, 175n34, 175n35. See also *Robinson Crusoe*
Divine epiphany, 16, 18, 32, 37, 53, 57, 85, 93, 116
Divine plan, 32n5, 121
Domestication of animals, 108, 110, 181–82

Eden, Garden of, 18n17, 20n20, 40, 69, 100, 111, 111n14, 190–91, 191n12, 194n17, 219, 219n9, 221
Egyptian "Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor," 30–33
Euripides, 34–35, 35n11. See also *Helen*
Europe. *See* Civilization; Colonization

Ferdinand, 50–53, 59, 59n30, 59n31, 62, 76n73, 92. See also *The Tempest*
Fire, 109n10, 146, 148 fig. 9, 155, 187–88, 194
First on Mars, 151–56, 153 fig. 10
Foe, 164–79
Foe, 165–78. See also *Foe*
Footprint on the beach, 99, 104, 104n4, 105 fig. 5, 152n31, 154–55, 167, 176, 181, 184, 210
Forbidden Planet, 97–100
Friday, 104–6, 114, 114n18, 125–29, 132, 157–64, 164–79. See also *Foe*; *Pantomime*; *Robinson Crusoe*

Gilligan, 210–12. See also *Gilligan's Island*
Gilligan's Island, 207–13
Golden Age, 54–55, 54n21, 69, 71–72
Golding, William. See *Lord of the Flies*
Gonzalo, 54–56, 61, 71–72, 76n73, 92, 94n31, 100. See also *A Tempest*; *The Tempest*

Helen, 34–35, 40–41
Homer, 32–33. See also *Odyssey*
Human society, 21–22, 110–11, 148–49
Hunting, 107–8, 141, 142n8, 181, 188–94, 191n13
Hurley, 204–5. See also *Lost*

Identity, 5, 21–23, 32–33, 43–44, 94–95. *See also* Transformation
Immortality, 16–22, 38, 43
Ithaca, 22–25, 27, 28 fig. 3

Jack Merridew. See *Lord of the Flies*
Jack, 198, 201 fig. 11, 204–5. See also *Lost*
Jason. See *Argonautica*
Jonah, 33
Jourdain, Sylvester, 74
Journal (Crusoe's), 122–25, 154, 176

Kate, 199–200, 201 fig. 11. See also *Lost*
The Krell, 99–100. See also *Forbidden Planet*

Language: Caliban, 50, 89–90; Friday, 126–28
Leucothea, 11–12
Locke, John (fictional character), 200–202, 202 fig. 12, 204–5. See also *Lost*
Locke, John (philosopher), 124n39, 126n44, 132, 132n56, 132n57, 197, 216
Lord of the Flies, 185–95
Lost, 195–207

Maud Plunkett, 39–40, 42. See also *Omeros*
Menelaus, 20n21, 34–35
Merchant of Venice, 78
Miranda, 47–49, 47n5, 50–53, 73, 73n61, 88n16, 91–93, 93n28, 98–100. See also *A Tempest*; *The Tempest*
Montaigne, Michel, 46, 71–73

Morbius, Doctor, 98–100. See also *Forbidden Planet*
The Mysterious Island, 180–85

Names and naming, 90–91, 90n22, 91n24, 111, 126, 126n45, 129, 150–51, 183
Narrative. *See* Ownership of narrative
Narrator, 173, 173n31
Nausicaa, 13–16, 14n10, 37–38, 52–53, 59, 92
Naval exploration, 25–28, 45–46, 68–71
New World, 68–71, 73, 82, 218
Noland, Chuck, 145–51. See also *Cast Away*
"No-man," 9, 38n17

Odysseus, 9–29, 36–43, 52–53, 59, 92, 103, 106–7, 117, 123, 130, 145. See also *Odyssey*; *Odyssey. A Stage Version*
Odyssey, 9–29, 45, 59, 136–38
Odyssey. A Stage Version, 36–38
Omeros, 39–43, 160n5, 221–22
Ownership of narrative, 123, 164, 167–79

Pantomime, 157–64
Paradise, 18n17, 20, 31–32, 40–42, 43, 54–55, 55n22, 55n23, 184n3, 190–91, 217n6, 218–19, 219n10
Parrot: "Poll," 68–69
Penelope, 19, 24–25
Pericles, Prince of Tyre, 78
Peripeteia ("reversal"), 136–37. *See also* Aristotle
Petronius. See *Satyricon*
Phaeacians, 13–16, 23n24
Phillip, Jackson. See *Pantomime*
Philoctetes. See *Philoctetes*
Philoctetes, 139–45, 185–86
Piggy. See *Lord of the Flies*
Plautus: *The Rope*, 35n11
Plunkett, Denis, 39–43, 160n5. See also *Omeros*
"Poll," 68–69
Polyphemus, 9, 10n3, 23, 38
Poseidon, 10–12, 18, 24–25, 204
Postcolonialism, 43–44, 96–97n34, 100
Powhatan Indians, 69n51
Primitive state: reversion to, 107, 140–45, 140n4, 146–47, 149–50, 183–84, 184n2, 188–94, 197, 206
Progress, 77n78
Prospero, 46n3, 47–53, 57–59, 60–66, 66n40, 80n82, 80n83, 87–97, 98–100, 117, 123, 204–5
Providence, 113–14, 121, 121n33, 122n34, 123n38, 170, 183, 204–5

Ralph. See *Lord of the Flies*
Rebirth: imagery, 12–13, 22n23, 102–3, 120n29; spiritual, 101, 117–22
Religious conversion, 117–22, 117n25, 120n29, 126–29, 134–35
Renaissance: self-fashioning, 68, 68n44, 68n45; society, 45, 66–68
Reversal: role, 159–60, 162; sexual, 25n28, 171–72, 172n29. See also *Peripeteia*
Robby the Robot, 98–100
Robinson Crusoe, 101–38, 150n26, 174–78, 174n33, 185–86

Saint Elmo's Fire, 48, 48n9, 75, 76, 92n27
Saint Lucia, 39–49
Saint Paul, 48–49n10, 83–87, 121
Salvation: spiritual, 83–87, 121
Satyricon, 35
Savagery, 186, 188–94. *See also* Primitive state, reversion to
Sawyer, 199–200. See also *Lost*
Sayid, 198–99. See also *Lost*
Science fiction, 97–100, 145n19, 151–56
Sea Venture. See Bermuda
Sebastian, 55–56, 61–64. See also *The Tempest*
Selkirk, Alexander, 125, 132–36. See also *Robinson Crusoe*
Shakespeare, William, 45–82, 80n83, 81n86, 82n88. See also *A Comedy of Errors*; *Merchant of Venice*; *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*; *The Tempest*; *Twelfth Night*

Shelter, 108–9, 111, 133, 141
Shipbuilding. *See* Boat construction
Shipwreck, 10–13, 16–18; historical, 73–77, 83–87, 214–16, 215n2, 215n3, 215n4, 216n5; image, 26 fig. 2
Simon. See *Lord of the Flies*
Slavery, 44, 49–50, 52–53, 64–66, 82, 87–88, 158–64, 165, 165n14
Society. See Human society
Sophocles. See *Philoctetes*
State of nature, 101–2, 126n44, 132, 132n57, 132n58, 165n15, 216, 220
Status quo: reversion to, 6–7
Stephano, 56–59, 76n73. See also *The Tempest*
Storm, 10–11, 17–18, 101
Storyteller, 16, 23–24, 122–25
Strachey, William, 74–77. *See* Bermuda
Suffering, 20–21
Swept Away, 1–3
Sycorax, 49, 57, 89n21. See also *A Tempest*; *The Tempest*

Technology. *See* Civilization
A Tempest, 43, 87–97, 100
The Tempest, 45–82, 88, 130, 136–38, 186
Toolmaking, 107–10
Transformation, 2–3, 45, 50, 75–80, 93, 113–22, 116n21, 126–29, 148, 166–67, 182–83, 189–90, 197–202, 212–13, 218, 218n8, 220; potential, 6–7; rejected, 21–22, 33, 60, 82, 82n88, 151
Trewe, Harry. See *Pantomime*
Trinculo, 56–59. See *The Tempest*
Twelfth Night, 78–80

Ulysses. *See* Odysseus
Utnapishtim, 18n15, 31–32
Utopia, 54–55, 55n23, 100. *See also* Paradise

Vergil. See *Aeneid*
Verne, Jules. See *The Mysterious Island*
Viola, 78–80. See also *Twelfth Night*

Walcott, Derek, 43–44, 87, 91n24, 218–19, 221–23. See also *Odyssey. A Stage Version*; *Omeros*; *Pantomime*
Wertmüller, Lina, 103. See also *Swept Away*
Wilson. See *Cast Away*
Wreck: airplane, 145, 186, 195–96, 203, 205; balloon, 180–81; spaceship, 97–100

Zeus, 17