

“Two broad shining eyes”: Optic Impressions and Landscape in *Robinson Crusoe*

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Introduction

IN *Paysage et poésie*, Michel Collot defines landscape in terms of human vision: “landscape is the stretch of land that the eye can embrace” (12).¹ The representation of landscape for Collot is intimately linked with the point of view of a subject, and thus with subjectivity. Landscape is not simply an object, for it is constituted by the fusion of object and subject. Collot’s theory that landscape can only be understood in terms of the interaction between the human and the environment is encapsulated in the French geographer Augustin Berque’s concept of “*médiance*” or *mediance*. Berque derives this concept from the Japanese *fūdosei*—a notion conceived by the Japanese philosopher Tetsurō Watsuji (1889–1960). Whereas Berque employs the term *milieu* to denote “the relationship of a society with space and nature,” he defines *mediance* as the “sense of this relationship” (“Identification” 94). Like Collot, Berque theorizes landscape as a space of mediation between humans and their environs, arguing that “landscape is *imprinted on* with *mediance* and historicity” and therefore “lies neither in the object, nor in the subject, but in the complex interaction between these two notions” (*Cinq Propositions* 35, 6).² Both Collot and Berque, therefore, envision landscape as something upon which humans imprint or impress themselves.

In present times, we tend to think of entities that are impressed upon as passive objects (Swenson 31). However, as Rivka Swenson has shown, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for empiricists such as John Locke, George Berkeley or Isaac Newton the ability to be impressed upon or influenced is, in fact, characteristic of persons. A person does not simply affect others but is affected or “impressed upon” by them. According to Locke, “the first capacity of human intellect is that the mind is fitted to receive the *impressions* made on it;

either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them” (qtd. in Vienne 124; emphasis mine). In *A New Theory of Vision and Other Philosophical Writings* (1709) and *Optiks: or a Treatise of the Reflections, refractions, inflections and Colours of Light* (1704), Berkeley and Newton respectively describe how the subject is constituted in part by being impressed upon. “Rays proceed onto the Eye,” Berkeley explains (23), while Newton writes of “a great number of little Globules striking briskly on the Bottom of the Eye” (*Optiks* 166–67). In asserting that the ray “strikes” the eye, Berkeley shows that the object acts upon the (human) subject that receives those impressions. In *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1729), Newton contends that both human and non-human bodies are subject to “impressed forces”: “An impressed force is an action exerted upon a body, in order to change its state, either of rest, or of uniform motion in a right line” (def. 4).³ Therefore, being impressed upon does not necessarily negate one’s identity as an *actor* or *agent* in the world, terms that John Yolton reminds us are central to Locke’s concept of the person: “When he [Locke] came to articulate a concept of person, he looked to action and agency as the basis for that elaboration” (169).

When analyzing the representation of human interaction with the environment in early eighteenth-century works, Locke’s and Newton’s theories of action and impression are illuminating, especially when set alongside more recent theories of agency and space, such as those of Collot and Berque, as well as those articulated by the French geographers Jacques Lévy and Michel Lussault. In their *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l’espace des sociétés*, Lévy and Lussault use the terms “actant” and “actor” to identify and differentiate the roles played by human and non-human beings in encounters with each other (38–47). For Lévy and Lussault, while non-human creation cannot be an actor, it can be an actant inasmuch as it has the capacity to act but does not have subjective interiority and intentionality; unlike the actor, who is endowed with reason, non-human creation has no will, a characteristic of the actor. Drawing on these early modern and modern theories of agency and space, this essay will argue that landscape in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is, at the very least, an actant if not an actor, a reading that helps to clarify the relationship between humans and the natural environment in Defoe’s time and texts. In it, I will contend that landscape in these Defovian works is not merely a setting for his characters but fully integrated and continuous with them, in a single interconnected realm. I will focus on Berque’s theory of the “imprint” in its examination of landscape as a space of interconnectedness and continuity between humans and nature and will consider the extent to which we should mine pre-Romantic literature for an environmental awareness and aesthetics. I will first put forth the argument that landscape in *Robinson Crusoe* is a place on which Crusoe imprints himself to appropriate or master it. I will then propose that Crusoe’s imprint on the landscape is, in fact, ambivalent, as it is not only the sign of the human will to control and transform the landscape, but it is also a form of action that turns man into an actor and landscape into an actant, a

subject, and even into a “person” in the continuum between humans and their milieu.

Actors and Actants in the Pre-Romantic Ecology of *Robinson Crusoe*

Robinson Crusoe tries to imprint himself on the pristine space of the island on which he accidentally lands, after a period of utter rejection of it, as is epitomized in the numerous objects from his past life and civilization that he fetches from the wreck and carefully keeps with him during his first thirteen days as a castaway. Crusoe wishes to recreate a version of his home on the island, writing, “I made a cave just behind my tent, which served me like a cellar to my house” (*RC* 63). To that end, he digs the ground of the island and gets closer and closer to it: “I began to make my way *into* the rock” (*RC* 63; emphasis mine). His imprint on the island becomes deeper and deeper. Crusoe feels the need to appropriate space. After spending the first night sitting on the branch of the tree, he writes, “I came down from *my apartment* in the tree” (*RC* 52; emphasis mine); the possessive adjective and the word “apartment,” which belongs to his cultural sphere in England and not to the nature of the island, underline his appropriative inclination. He “fixe[s] [his] habitation” (*RC* 65) on the island. He then makes a survey of the island when, the day after his arrival, he walks to the top of the hill to “view the country,” to create a mental map of the island in order to master it. On the one hand, as postcolonial readers of *Robinson Crusoe* have claimed, to make such a mental map is to leave one’s trace, one’s imprint, or one’s vision on the landscape. On the other hand, this gesture might turn the island into an actant, imprinting itself on Crusoe’s mind through the eye, as the vision theories of Locke and Berkeley outlined above show. Regardless, Ronald Shusterman maintains that the map is an imprint and an account of the real, and that “real or pictorial landscapes are imprinted with our values and fantasies.”⁴ The third action Crusoe performs is to build a barricade to circumscribe space and create a closed place for himself: “[A]s well as I could, I barricaded myself round with the chests and boards that I had brought on shore, and made a kind of hut for that night’s lodging” (*RC* 57).

By building his fortifications and his “castle,” thereby “enclosing [himself] among the hills and woods, in the centre of the island” (*RC* 102), Crusoe, as the perfect Lockean man, projects onto the pristine island his desire for power and property. The island, as seen through his eyes (eye-land), becomes a place where his subjectivity and will are expressed (I-land). Of the way Crusoe reproduces his former spatial organization on the island, we might say that he turns it into just another city in an attempt to extract order from the apparent disorder of the natural world. These juxtaposed walls, fortifications, buildings, apartments, etc.—the quasi-geometrical delimitations created by Crusoe—function as a type of miniature city, inspired by London. Indeed, he calls his island his “Kingdom” (*RC* 138) and the way he explores it by zones is similar to Defoe’s exploration of the island he inhabits in *A Tour thro’ the whole island of Great Britain* in thirteen circuits. In the *Tour*, London appears in the middle of the narrative, which

underlines its central position, geopolitically speaking. On the desert island, the place on which Crusoe encloses himself behind barricades, within a fortress, represents the core of the island, the center of this uncharted land and Crusoe's 'home.' The verticality he gives to that place makes it stand out in the island. He tells us that whenever he found it necessary to spend a night away from his fortress, he either reposed himself in a tree "or surrounded [him]self with a row of stakes set upright in the ground, either from one tree to another, or so as no wild creature could come at . . . [him] without waking . . . [him]" (*RC* 109–10). The multiplication of constructions make of this place a sort of "urbanature,"⁵ or cityscape, in which the relationship of Crusoe to the natural world is defined by his urban habits, emphasizing the growing dominance of the urban landscape in this epochal period for London. But before everything else, those barricades and fences serve to appropriate and control space.

Crusoe makes use of the verb *fence* to speak about his construction project, remarking, "I was completely fenced in, and fortified, as I thought, from all the world" (*RC* 63). The vocabulary used here by Crusoe is the same as that employed by Defoe in the *Tour* to talk about enclosures, in which land is "cur'd, fenc'd off, plow'd and sow'd," as well as the act of enclosing, in which men "fence and part off the land" (1:234). In both texts, space is appropriated to make it fruitful and productive, economically speaking, and is restricted to its owner. Of enclosures, by which "open, communal land" is turned "into private property," Robert P. Marzec writes,

It involves the surrounding of that land with barriers designed to close off the free passage of people and animals....To agricultural theorists, political scholars, and novelists such as Arthur Young, Jeremy Bentham, Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding, enclosures were seen as a great advancement in farm and land management. They enabled farmers to increase the productivity of their laborers. The movement was hailed by the entrepreneurial class as one of the greatest advances in land development. (8)

Through this particular handling of the land, humans leave an imprint on nature: they influence and transform it. In the case of *Robinson Crusoe*, a section of the desert island looks like "a planted garden" after Crusoe encloses it and tries to order the natural landscape visually (*RC* 101). This garden-like area figuratively converges with the architectural structures that function as an urban space to produce a familiar English environment. Crusoe is very much a Lockean in this wish to imprint himself on the landscape, reflecting the Enlightenment desire for a universally coded and controlled landscape. In Crusoe's ordering of the island space, one can feel the triumph of rationality, of the conviction that nature can be understood and controlled through reason, as Newton outlined in *Principia Mathematica* (1687).

Crusoe feels the urge to control, shape, master, structure, map, modify and domesticate space. As Marzec points out, Crusoe can only establish a relation with the island once the land becomes English, that is enclosed, so that "he can connect

to it in any substantial fashion” (3). Crusoe does indeed oppress and contain the island by calling himself king, father, and governor and calling the animals he discovers on it his subjects. Several studies have shown how Crusoe controls the island, for instance, through the power of naming. Maximillian Novak’s “Friday: or, the Power of Naming” is representative of this line of thought.⁶ Crusoe names the land mass “the Island of Despair” (*RC* 72), the animals (Poll the parrot for instance), and the other human being (Friday). Novak writes that “Crusoe creates all and possesses all as much by the power of naming as by his labor” (“Naming,” 120), and he “never over the years inquires as to ‘Friday’s’ real name” (*RC* 117). So by surrounding land with barriers designed to close off the free passage of people and animals, by placing animals there and by controlling them (and Friday) through naming, Crusoe strives to deny any form of agency to either the island or its inhabitants. Crusoe appears to be the principal and only actor surrounded by the environment. His attempt to imprint himself on the island clearly shows his desire to transform it into an object that can be mastered. He, as a *subject*, needs to dominate the land he is on by leaving his imprint on it.⁷ A power differential is apparently established between Crusoe and the island, but does that mean that the island becomes a mere *object* appropriated and transformed by humans?

In *Robinson Crusoe*, the shaping and reshaping of landscape by humans is epitomized by the print of a man’s naked foot in the sand of Crusoe’s desert island, which both surprises and terrifies him. Crusoe first imagines it is the devil’s footprint before concluding that “it must be some more dangerous creature” (*RC* 154). By this he means a savage, but the passage could remind us of the danger of humans who leave a trace, like a scar, on the pristine sand of the island. This footprint might also call to mind Crusoe’s own transformation of the land, and since he attributes the footprint to the devil, it might be seen as a sign of divine punishment for tampering with nature. The word “footprint” is still used in our times to describe the human impact on nature: the expression “carbon footprint” signifies the human role in polluting the ozone layer.⁸

However, the footprint in *Robinson Crusoe* does not damage pristine nature: it is simply a sign on the sand that the waves will erase in an instant. I believe that it emphasizes the will to become one or continuous with nature by imprinting oneself on it. The writings of the modern artists Hamish Fulton and Arnold Berleant illuminate this image in the novel, as they speak back into Defoe’s pre-romantic treatment of the human-nature continuum in *Robinson Crusoe*. In *Le Plateau de l’albatros*, Kenneth White quotes Hamish Fulton, a Land Art representative, who observes that “the only thing one should make with a landscape is photographs. The only things one should leave on a landscape are one’s footprints.”⁹ The footprint epitomizes not so much the negative repercussions of the human appropriation of space, but, as Arnold Berleant states in *Living in the Landscape*, the “connections rather than differences, continuity rather than separation, and the embeddedness of the human presence as knower and actor in the natural world” (7). In this passage, while recognizing that humans are actors in nature, Berleant also underlines the unity of human experience during

contact with the natural world. The motif of the human imprint on the landscape in *Robinson Crusoe* stresses the unity Berleant writes about and the interconnectedness of human beings and their environment.

A second episode from *Robinson Crusoe* that emphasizes the *continuum* between the island and the human self is the one in which Crusoe goes into a cave and sees two shining eyes and experiences terror. He thinks, again, that it is the devil: "I saw two broad shining eyes of some creature, whether devil or man I knew not, which twinkled like two stars; the dim light from the cave's mouth shining directly in, and making the reflection" (*RC* 174). But it is really just a dying goat. He essentially sees his own "reflection" in the shining eyes, and he comes to the conclusion that "there was nothing in this cave that was more frightful than [him]self" (*RC* 175). It is an important moment for him to illustrate the argument of continuity. Perhaps in that scene there is an acceptance of a continuity he had been trying to repress. Once he recognizes himself as the source of his own fear, through the motif of reflection, he is able to put the cave to use. He notices it is sparkling and beautiful, buries the goat in it, and uses it as a storeroom. Crusoe comes to see a sympathy or sameness between himself and the island; and the island, because it can change him, has the capacity to act, which is characteristic of the actant, a non-human entity capable of changing or transforming an individual or a society.

Elsewhere in the text, Crusoe tries to find his own reflection in elements or entities that were on the island before him. For example, Crusoe's 'conversation' with Poll, wherein the actant-parrot repeats Crusoe's own self-questionings, elevates Poll to the level of an avatar for the personified island, and a *medium* for the *continuum* between Crusoe and the landscape in which he finds himself, as he actually talks to it. Even if he recognizes that they had an existence before his arrival on the island, Crusoe constantly tries to find a connection between the elements of the environment and himself—a connection that is close to Berleant's conception of the embeddedness and connectedness between humans and nature. Therefore, although Crusoe is clearly an actor on the island, with subjectivity and intentionality, landscape—in this case, the desert island, but also the city of London in Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* or the landscape of Great-Britain in his *Tour*—is also an acting subject in this relationship. The landscape is an actant capable of transforming Crusoe, not only an object as we might surmise in light of Crusoe's attempt to domesticate it.

Indeed, though Crusoe builds fortifications on the island in an apparent attempt to master the landscape, the description of these erected structures reveals that Crusoe's protected place is made in nature's image, resulting in a creative fusion of the human and natural environment: "When this wall was finished, and the outside double-fenced with a turf well raised up close to it, I persuaded myself that if any people were to come on shore there, they would not perceive anything like a habitation" (*RC* 79). Crusoe does not alter natural space; instead, he creates a *continuum* between himself and nature, almost elevating the physical environment to the state of personhood—at least philosophically. Such is the case

when he calls the animals his subjects after naming them. The word “subject” can be understood in two ways: in the sense of subjection, but also in the sense of subjectivity, or at least the opposite of an object. As Collot maintains, landscape is always seen by someone and from somewhere. It is by nature “subjective” as it implies the point of view of a spectator or observer. In studying the changes in English attitudes toward landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Raymond Williams claims that “it is in the act of observing that this landscape forms” (126). For Simon Varey, in the works of Defoe, spaces are defined by the activity of the individual (140). Crusoe brings the island to reality by looking at and shaping it with his British gaze, as if the island was waiting for the arrival of someone to give form to latent possibilities. However, this notion reminds us of Berkeley’s and Newton’s theory of optical impressions; as Swenson explains, for these and other “eighteenth-century visual theor[ists] the object of the gaze is not the one who is seen but the one who sees” (29). The seeing subject (in this case Crusoe) is actually the object of the seen person or thing, which becomes the real subject. In *Robinson Crusoe*, therefore, the actant or the natural environment also impresses itself on the actor: Robinson Crusoe.

Crusoe grants the natural environment such subjectivity when he declares, for example, that “the growing up of the corn ... had at first some little influence upon [him], and began to affect [him] with seriousness” (*RC* 91). In this case, he is “affect[ed]” by the island: the island has a capacity of action even if it is non-human, the definition of an actant. Adjectives attributed to the island are, in fact, modifiers typically applied to human beings, to Crusoe himself: “unhappy island” is repeated several times in the novel (*RC* 99, 173) and other such expressions, like “my desolate and solitary island” (*RC* 138), appear frequently. These hypallages endow the island with the attributes of a human being, capable of being affected and capable of acting—calling to mind Newton’s and Locke’s view of a person as that which is centered on action. This personification goes far beyond a form of anthropomorphism that would enable Crusoe to see the island in his own image, and thus to shape, master and dominate it through his gaze. On the contrary, here the island’s capacity of being seen by a human being and of being anthropomorphized by him is what elevates it to the rank of an actant. Both Crusoe and the island are affected by each other: he is no longer an actor within an environment but an actor interacting with an actant, the island. Crusoe does often personify the island, and it certainly impresses itself upon his journal and his psyche every bit as much as he impresses himself upon it and attempts to contain and represent it within narrative. The personification¹⁰ of the island (I-land), therefore, definitely separates it from the category of object and defines it as an actant. It grants the island the kind of action and affect proper to persons.

The fact that Crusoe *can* impress himself upon the island and that it *does* respond to and impress itself upon him gives it at least the potential—within the bounds of eighteenth-century theories of sympathy in which an affinity between creatures can be felt—to be considered at least a quasi-character. The sea is able to “swallow” human beings (“my fears and apprehensions [are] of being swallowed up

by the sea” [RC 14]). Crusoe’s fear of being consumed by the sea denotes an emotional affinity between humanity and nature, an affinity that can be read as a pre-romantic response to the environment that leads to the will to protect the natural world. Indeed, the storm can be read as a warning of ecological disasters and natural catastrophes, and Crusoe’s fear might be the manifestation of both this environmental awareness and the recognition of the dangers of being united to a natural environment damaged by the human imprint. The seascape becomes a sort of “bodyscape,” as the waves are the “body” of the sea (“the wave that came upon me again buried me at once ... in its own body” [RC 48–49]); and the island can produce things (“I went out ... to acquaint myself with what the island produced” [RC 63]). The island is not just a setting: it really has a capacity of action and a capacity to affect the individual who tries to survive on it. Crusoe even addresses his “beloved island” as if it were a character *per se*: “O happy desert’, said I, ‘I shall never see thee more. O miserable creature!’” (RC 139). Similarly, in the *Tour*, the island of Great Britain is humanized, as it is described as an organism throughout the travelogue; Defoe goes through mouths (embouchures) and necks (peninsula), and a city shakes hands with another: “From Liskard, in our Course west, we are necessarily carry’d to the Sea Coast, because of the River Fowey, or Fowath, which empties it self into the Sea, at a very large *Mouth*” (I.263); “... the Peninsula, or *Neck* of Land between” (I.263); “Westminster is in a fair Way to *shake Hands* with Chelsea” (II.66; emphases mine).¹¹

The kind of sympathetic relationship—or emotional response, often concern or sorrow, stemming from another’s emotional condition—that Crusoe has with his island can also be seen between the individual and the city of London in *The Tour* and more particularly in *A Journal of the Plague Year*. The city is an actant, by Lussault and Lévy’s definition, and so is the plague.¹² In the *Tour*, London is represented as a monster devouring everything it can (“London has eaten it up” [*Tour*, I.178]). In *A Journal of the Plague Year*, the city is spoken about as if it were a human creature with a “face” (“The face of London was now indeed strangely altered” [*JPY* 37]), and had the capacity of action, as can be seen in the following metaphors used to characterize aspects of it: “the parish of St Giles ... buried 120”; “till this week the city continued free” (*JPY* 28). London as a huge metropolis stands for the human construction or imprint on the environment, and reading the environment and the traces left on it by humans is useful to decipher the nature of the individual within the landscape: the field of psychogeography. From this perspective, HF stands for the figure of the wanderer in the urbanscape, the mental traveller who reworks with his imagination the layout of the city of London but is prevented from doing so by the plague that dislocates the space of the city (by the policies of seclusion or displacement) and renders familiar topography strange and frightening. Yet, he hardly stops walking in the streets of London, trying to recognize the city he used to know, trying to imprint himself on every nook and corner of London in order to go on living in it, instead of abandoning it. The wanderer HF is deeply attached to his urbanscape, and he is affected by what he sees in the streets of London. HF relates, for example: “this

was a mournful scene indeed, and *affected* me almost as much as the rest” (JPY 81, emphasis is mine). He is impressed upon by the visible consequences of the plague on the city, as is the population of London, epitomised by the “shrieks of women and children at the windows and doors of their houses” (JPY 37).

In the same way that the island functions as actant in *Robinson Crusoe*, the city in *A Journal of a Plague Year* is again nearly raised to the level of personhood, as it experiences emotions by Defoe’s account. For example, we read therein, “London might well be said to be all in tears” (JPY 37). While this personification of the city could be read as a mere metonymy for the weeping population of London, my sense is that the city’s sympathy with its population in *A Journal of the Plague Year* and the island’s ability in *Robinson Crusoe* to respond (by existing as a sensible, sensate body) to Crusoe makes those landscapes and seascapes actants, and nearly actors.¹³ As explained above, unlike an actant, an actor has subjective interiority and intentionality on top of the capacity to act. By personifying extensively the city and the island, by emphasizing the sympathetic relation between them and the individuals that inhabit them, Defoe blurs the distinction between the actant and the actor. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the island is an extension of Crusoe’s identity, and his defense consists in barricading himself within his I-land. Cutting himself off from his island feels like self-mutilation for Crusoe, who will feel the need to come back there once he has left. This interaction or interconnectedness between human and the environment reveals an osmosis between them, a form of fusion, inclusion and continuity, and it helps define the landscape not as an object but as a relation, the relation between a society and its environment.

This continuum or fusion between Crusoe (representing society) and his island (representing the environment more broadly) is also brought about by the writing instruments he retains from his former life. These “(im)printing” tools give his account its structure, as he writes a journal with them: “I found pen, ink, and paper, and I husbanded them to the utmost; and I shall show that while my ink lasted, I kept things very exact” (RC 68). This printing material helps Crusoe leave his trace, his imprint on the history of the island, as his journal, if found, will be the only object by which he will be remembered. The act of writing or printing on paper leads to yet another level in the continuity at stake in the representation of landscape in Defoe: the continuity between real and textual landscapes.

Geography (geo-graphia/graphein), etymologically speaking, means writing the world, leaving traces and records of the actions of humans on earth, and it is by the textualization of landscape that geographers acquire complete knowledge, as pointed out by Gillian Rose: “landscape textualized renders geographers’ knowledge exhaustive” (101). Therefore, on a metatextual level, Crusoe’s journal and Defoe’s novel are other ways of imprinting the human self on the island, in the same way as the interaction between the individual and the urban landscape recreates, re-imagines, and remodels the London of 1665 in *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Landscape becomes text, and, as Alain Roger suggests in his book *Court traité du paysage*, one should not talk so much of “landscape” but of “landart,”

thereby underlining “the artistic origin and dimension of all landscapes” (46).¹⁴ In the aesthetic engagement and environmental continuity at stake in the representation of landscape, one can see that the relation between humans and landscape is not only a matter of optic viewpoint: if landscape impresses itself on humans through their eyes (as theorized by Locke, Newton and Berkeley), they really create landscape by this physical and aesthetic reciprocal engagement with the environment.

Conclusion

As Berque claims, “landscape is in the subject (our brain) as it is in the object (the things of the environment).”¹⁵ Landscape exists in gaze, and there is no separation but rather continuity between the perceiver and the perceived: this relation between the actor (the human) and the actant (the landscape) epitomizes the parallel development of landscape and individual. Writing of the visual arts, Michel Collot explains that, as we understand the terms, ‘landscape’ appeared at the same time in Europe as the ‘individual’ (through the development of portrait and perspective), in the Renaissance. As has often been noted, Defoe’s focus in his novels is the individual. Many of his titles consist of the names of his protagonists—Moll Flanders, Robinson Crusoe, Roxana, Captain Singleton, Captain Jack—and record how these individuals evolve in their milieu and how their milieu determines their lives in a constant interaction between the two. By analyzing how one of Defoe’s individual characters, Robinson Crusoe, imprints himself on the landscape and how he is imprinted upon in return, this essay has sought to demonstrate that despite many new urban and industrial developments that saw Nature as simply an instrument, there was nevertheless a sense of the “fundamental relatedness of things” (Berleant 7), a sense of the continuity between humans and their milieu—the actor and the actant.

Even if significant shifts in thought happened between the beginning of the eighteenth-century and the Romantic period—between Locke, Berkeley, and Newton on the one hand, and Coleridge, Blake or Shelley on the other—there are also continuities. Romanticism understands the complex interpenetration between subject and object worlds, advocates a mode of relationship involving “an extension of sympathy that reaches so far and becomes so constant that the self loses any desire to differentiate between itself and the world” (Pite 362), and addresses the idea that human beings must treat animals with compassion. The reading of *Robinson Crusoe* offered in this essay suggests that these ideas—which enabled the Romantics to imagine a profound sympathy between nature and humans, between landscape and the human mind—were not absent in Defoe’s time. *Robinson Crusoe*, and to a lesser extent *A Journal of the Plague Year* and the *Tour*, show that Defoe wrote in a period of epistemological change, that the Age of Reason already contained elements of sentimentalism, and that the vocabulary of emotion and sensibility had started to emerge, as Geoffrey Sill has recently noted in relation to

some of Defoe's novels. So there is a *continuum* between the age of Defoe and the age of Coleridge in terms of the relationship between the human and the non-human, a relationship that was to evolve toward more and more sympathy and concern.

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NOTES

- ¹ The original text reads, "Le paysage est l'étendue du pays que l'œil peut embrasser dans son ensemble." Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the original French are mine.
- ² The original texts read, "le paysage est empreint, conjointement, de médiancé et d'historicité" and "le paysage ne réside ni seulement dans l'objet, ni seulement dans le sujet, mais dans l'interaction complexe de ces deux termes."
- ³ In the same work, Newton writes: "A body only exerts this force when another force, impressed upon it, endeavours to change its condition; and the exercise of this force may be considered as both resistance and impulse; it is resistance so far as the body for maintaining its present state, opposes the force impressed; it is impulse so far as the body, by not easily giving way to the impressed force of another endeavours to change the state of that other" (def. 3).
- ⁴ The original text reads, "les paysages picturaux ou réels sont empreints de nos valeurs et de nos fantasmes" (Shusterman 16).
- ⁵ The term "urbanature" was coined by Ashton Nichols in *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Towards Urbanatural Roosting*.
- ⁶ Two other articles deal with that issue: Maximillian E. Novak, "Crusoe the King and the Political Evolution of his Island," and Ian A. Bell, "King Crusoe: Locke's Political Theory in Robinson Crusoe."
- ⁷ This Cartesian will to be the master and owner of nature is part of the paradox of a Robinson Crusoe who is modern in spite of the fact that he is lost on his desert island.
- ⁸ See Anthony N. Penna's book, *The Human Footprint: A Global Environmental History*.
- ⁹ The original text reads, "le principe de Fulton est simple et radical: 'la seule chose que l'on devrait faire avec un paysage, ce sont des photographies. Les seules choses que l'on doit y laisser, ce sont les traces de ses pas'" (White 114) On geopoetics, see Kenneth White's website, <http://www.kennethwhite.org/geopoetique/>.
- ¹⁰ Samuel Johnson defines personification in his 1756 dictionary as "the change of things to persons," quoted in Keenleyside, "Personification for the People: On James

Thomson's *The Seasons*" (447). Keenleyside adds that the *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies that entry as the first English use of the term. She also maintains that Thomson "acknowledges that we may not know what a person is. But he also suggests that we may not know what a person is not; or who (or what) is a person" (451).

¹¹ For other representations of the landscape as a body, see II.84, 102, 110.

¹² Lévy and Lussault analyze the virus of the flu as an actant in their *Dictionary*. Lussault's analysis of how the epidemic process structures space and is structured by the social use of space in the case of SARS can be transferred to the reading of the plague and how it reflected the social occupation of the London space.

¹³ For a discussion of sympathy and sensibility, see Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820*, Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel*, and Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Oscillations of Sensibility."

¹⁴ The original text reads, "On pourrait même se demander si, au lieu de 'landscape', il n'eût pas mieux valu forger 'landart' (en un seul mot), soulignant ainsi l'origine et la dimension artistiques de tous les paysages (ou 'paysarts', en tant que pays artialisés, *in situ*, ou *in visu*."

¹⁵ The original text reads, "le paysage est dans le sujet (notre cerveau) comme il est dans l'objet (les choses de l'environnement)" (Berque 25).

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