



Appropriation of the *Oikos*: Precarious Host/Guest Relations in Daniel

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*

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Abstract

Daniel Defoe's most renowned adventure novel *Robinson Crusoe* introduces the eponymous protagonist as a self-made practical man that fares more or less well in the world given his survival skills helped by a fair amount of luck. Crusoe appears to be the embodiment of *Homo economicus* who optimally engages with his environment to reach his self-interested ends, and such engagement accordingly points to a certain manipulation or domination of other humans, animals, and nature. Crusoe has an unabashed propensity for claiming people, nonhuman beings, places, and objects that fall under his gaze as his own throughout the narrative. In this study, Robinson Crusoe's self-interested individualism and his deeply anthropocentric relations with the environment which appears only as a means for the *anthropos* to achieve his ends will be read through the lens of Derridean host/guest relations in which Crusoe is revealed to be a guest who is received in the "home" of the *oikos* (as in homeland, i.e., the land that receives/accommodates). In this light, it will be further argued that Crusoe's deeply anthropocentric, expansionist, and exploitative attitude figures as a precursor to humans' endless desire to dominate and appropriate nature (*oikos*), and thus become masters/hosts in the world where they are, in fact, mere guests.

Keywords: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, Derrida, host, guest, *oikos*

Introduction

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) occupies a niche in the history of English novel with its formally realistic and detailed narrative that gave shape to the development of the genre in the eighteenth century. A strong contender for the title "the first English novel," it has gained an unprecedented popularity around the world with its elaborate depiction of the life and adventures of a marooned man on an island off the coast of the Caribbean. If, as Ralph Fox writes, the novel genre generally deals with "the struggle of the individual against society, against nature, and it could only develop in a society . . . where man was at war with his fellows

or with nature” (as cited in Hawthorn, 1997, p. 32), then *Robinson Crusoe*'s immense popularity across the world can be attributed to its characterization of a self-made individual who manages to survive despite and against the odds. As Doreen Roberts writes, it “shares with a few other English fictions, such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Alice in Wonderland*, the distinction of being known about in some form or other, however truncated, by millions of people who have never read the original” (2000, p. ix). With this fame (or notoriety), the figure of striving individual (against society, nature, or other individuals) embodied by Robinson Crusoe comes to dominate the eighteenth-century fiction as the publication of the novel “was an immediate success . . . [and] [a]lmost at once the novel was pirated, plagiarized, abridged and imitated in English” (Roberts, 2000, p. ix).

Deriving its force from humanist and anthropocentric discourses prevalent in the Age of Enlightenment, the idea of the individual has come to represent a higher order of beings that differ from nonhumans in kind and degree. The abysmal gap wedged between humans and nonhumans culminates in the Age of Enlightenment with irreparable repercussions. This has led to numerous ontological claims that decidedly mark humans as different and separate from nonhumans and nature. Coupled with the so-called superior capacity of reason, championed by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, such assumed difference has become a catalyst for our unilateral destructive relations with nonhumans and the world. The figure of man conceived by the Enlightenment has been declared a master figure that claims superiority and ownership. Accordingly, in this study, Robinson Crusoe's self-interested individualism and his deeply anthropocentric relations with the environment which appears only as a means for the *anthropos* to achieve *his* ends will be analyzed through the framework of Derridean host/guest relations. In such relations, the host must own a place to be a host/master, and to this end, might as well try to appropriate some space to become one which I take to be the case in Crusoe's situation. Therefore, I further argue that Crusoe's increasingly possessive, expansionist, and exploitative attitude embodied by his incessant claims of ownership and appropriation, figures as a strong precursor to humans' endless desire to dominate and domesticate nature (*oikos*), and thus become masters/hosts in the world where they are, in fact, mere guests.

Being Guest: The Exilic Journey of Robinson Crusoe in the *Oikos*

Jacques Derrida's foray into the notion of hospitality is closely linked to the *sans-papiers* movement of the 1990s in France which he addresses in a public speech in 1996. With the implementation of oppressive legislation against immigrants in France by right-winged governments at the time, the issues surrounding cosmopolitanism, rights, laws, and hospitality became heated debates. Derrida contributed to these debates with rigor both in his 1996 public address and in his lectures. In his approach to hospitality, Derrida revisits Kant's ideas on cosmopolitanism and universal hospitality in *Toward Perpetual Peace* and “derives from it a significant body of political and ethical thought that goes beyond orthodox cosmopolitanism” (Leung and Stone, 2009, p. 194). Furthermore, drawing on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, especially his ideas on ethics, alterity, and the Other, Derrida sets out on exploring the uncharted terrain of hospitality from a distinct angle that problematizes the traditional understandings thereof.

Derrida's conception of hospitality runs along the axes of, *inter alia*, host, guest, and space. Hospitality refers, in its simplest form, to a warm welcome or reception extended to others. However, Derrida who cautiously calls it the “quasi-synonym of ‘welcome’” (1999a, p. 45)

approaches such a seemingly transparent act of reception of others with circumspection. He locates an inherent contradiction at the heart of this otherwise favorable welcoming act:

It would seek its passage through the violence of the host, who always keeps watch over the rite. For the risk is great. To dare to say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here, that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* [*accueillir*] the other . . . (1999a, p. 15)

There are certain keywords here that highlight some of the significant aspects of Derridean understanding of hospitality: violence, host, risk, home/place, and others. In his rendition, on the one hand, hospitality figures as a violent act in benevolent disguise because the host's seemingly warm reception of the guest is simultaneously accompanied by a policing of the guest. The rite of welcoming makes clear to the guest that the latter should behave themselves because they set foot in somebody else's home/place/property. However, on the other hand, by "[c]rossing the threshold" and "entering" (Derrida, 2000, p. 123), the guest poses a potential risk for the host because hospitality "implies letting the other in to oneself, to one's own space—it is invasive of the integrity of the self, or the domain of the self" (Still, 2010, p. 13). Host/guest relations as such are mostly framed by intersubjective encounters or by relations between subjects and states/nations (as in Kant). I propose to widen the scope of this approach so as to situate it within a broader framework that takes account of the individual as a guest who is received in the home of nature-as-host (*oikos*).

The Greek word *oikos* means "house, habitation, dwelling; . . . family; household; home" ("Oikos," 2002, p. 227), and etymologically constitutes the root of such words preceded by the prefix "eco-" as "ecology" and "ecocriticism." "*Eco* and *critic* both derive from Greek, *oikos* and *kritis*, and in tandem they mean 'house judge,'" writes William Howarth, "[s]o the *oikos* is nature, a place Edward Hoagland calls 'our widest home,' and the *kritos* is an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order, no boots or dishes strewn about to ruin the original decor" (1996, p. 69). In this regard, beyond its narrow conception, *oikos* also designates a bigger dwelling or place to inhabit for all beings, human or nonhuman alike—that is, nature and/or the world. If the *oikos* is 'the original décor' for all, it simultaneously initiates at one stroke the gesture of hospitality towards humans and nonhumans.

The question still begs to be asked, though: "What does such a macrocosmic rendition of the *oikos* as 'our widest home' entail?" Put into perspective, it pulls the veil away from our eyes to reveal what has been there from the very beginning: that we are eternal guests on Earth. Examples like the famous sparrow story recounted by Bede the Venerable and the biblical story of the Fall attest to this human condition. The relevance of Bede's analogy which emphasizes humans' transitory life/existence in this world (hence guests in this world) is clear whereas the story of the Fall is a little more intricate and obscure, and, therefore, necessitates a closer inspection. In this story, after having created the heavens and the earth "the Lord God plant[s] a garden eastward in Eden . . ." (Genesis 2: 8–9). The garden as a designated space in the east of Eden marks a territory with boundaries in the midst of which stands the tree of knowledge (Genesis 3: 3). It is God as host who places Adam and then Eve in *his* garden, and the pleasures of Eden Adam and Eve enjoy are conditioned by the prerequisite that "[b]ut of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it . . ." (Genesis 2: 17). Such conditional hospitality highlights the roles of host and guest by emphasizing that Adam and Eve can stay

in this garden only so long as they steer clear of the forbidden fruit. However, Eve and Adam eat the fruit and their transgression is not simply a fall from the grace of God but it is also a revelation that they are turned out of doors and banished—which discloses their fundamental guest status in the garden of Eden. The fall indicates a form of displacement, and at the same time exile, in this case, from their *oikos* to unknown places where God bids them to “have dominion over . . . every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1: 28). Having to leave the garden, Adam and Eve turn into archetypal exilic figures that traverse, as ever guests, the uncharted lands and seas to become ultimately the hosts/masters of the world.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* maps out one such exile or exilic journey that witnesses the fine precarious line between host and guest with far more reaching implications. Robinson Crusoe whom we mostly recall as a self-made practical man starts his journey, in fact, as a self-exiled man that leaves his *oikos* to make it in the bigger *oikos*. Referring to first human nomadic societies before “sedentary cultures and lifestyles,” Anne Dufourmantelle argues that “the first condition of humanity is exile” (2013, p. 14). Although Crusoe lives in a world where sedentary life is the norm, he nevertheless reveals at the beginning of the novel how he, much like Adam and Eve, did not listen to the word of his host, that is, his father, and chose a nomadic life which would transform him into a wandering guest: “I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea [which] . . . led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands, of my father . . .” (2000, p. 1). This is a form of breaking the rule of the house and the will of the host which constitutes his “*original sin*” (Defoe, 2000, p. 149). This transgression puts Crusoe on an unknown path of adventures as a guest because, from then on, he will always be in a foreign territory. Accordingly, his position as a guest is instantiated in his many encounters with others, which are sometimes quite welcoming and other times not so much. For instance, his arrival in Yarmouth as a miserable and “unfortunate” man after the foundering of the ship off the coast of Norfolk leads to a warm welcome extended with “great humanity” (in the form of accommodation and money) to them by both the magistrates in town and the merchants and ship owners (p. 9). His next journey, however, ends in disaster when he is captured and enslaved by the pirates in Salée (Salé, Morocco) and hence treated with not so much hospitality—which is followed by a series of good encounters that would deliver him from his miseries. When he escapes with Xury from the Moors, he is spotted by a Portuguese ship whose captain treats Crusoe with charity: “I have saved your life on no other terms than I would be glad to be saved myself . . .” (p. 24). Similarly, when he arrives in Brazil with the help of the Portuguese captain, he is once again offered hospitality by “a good honest man, like [the captain]” (p. 25). In this sense, these intersubjective encounters Crusoe has with others exemplify and play out the dynamics of sometimes hospitable and other times hostile host/guest relations.

The culmination of Crusoe's position as a guest, however, occurs when he is washed ashore on an island in a wave-battered state where he is to spend the next twenty-eight years of his life. Crusoe's arrival on the island as such with no other living soul to accompany him is a climactic point in that it replicates, in a sense, the fall of Adam and Eve. With all his ties that bind him to others, society, and his host country severed, Crusoe finds himself for the first time face to face with nature in all its starkness. All his relations with the *oikos* up until this point have been obscured by societal, cultural, and human relations but now the crudity of nature, namely, his host, looms on the horizon like never before. Stripped of all his possessions, Crusoe himself also stands stark naked—like Adam and Eve—in the face of the *oikos* and seems like a helpless nomadic guest who crosses the threshold and enters the territory of the island-as-host. In this respect, this moment in the novel reproduces the primal scene of the (coming-into-)existence

and evolution of humans in the world, who, as history has witnessed, gradually evolve from ordinary critters to skilled exploiters. Therefore, Crusoe's arrival on the island which is a microcosmic or downscaled form of the primeval Earth (host) is a turning point in the novel, and sets the stage, in the remainder of the novel, not only for an encounter between the *oikos* and the guest but also for the unyielding efforts of this guest to be host—which gives hints about the anthropocentric modern individual.

A Quandary: Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism

Crusoe's intersubjective encounters with hosts, as we have seen, reveal the precarious condition of host/guest relations that might turn out hospitable or sometimes hostile. When such encounters are expanded so as to take account of the wider network of human and nonhuman relations, it becomes clear that they are heavily rooted in the age-old (mis)conception and (mis)construction of the *anthropos* as the center of the universe (hence the term "anthropocentrism"). As Plato informs us, Protagoras, as far back as the fifth century BC, declared that "[m]an is the measure of all things" (1997, p. 169), which has had a decisive role in our perception of what human is for much of history and persisted, to this day, in different forms through the writings of many figures like Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonist medieval philosophers, humanist philosophers of the Renaissance, Descartes, and Enlightenment philosophers. The consideration of humans as the center of the universe has been further encouraged by certain properties attributed solely to humans such as reason and rationality. The assumptions of humanism and the Age of Enlightenment that demarcate humans as separate from nonhumans and nature *qua* their capacity to think have led to the "idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress" of humans (Braidotti, 2013, p. 13). And such understanding has inevitably set the wheels in motion for a development or progress in every aspect of life that would benefit only humankind for that matter.

The so-called progress of humans that has long been sought after at all costs has traditionally been measured in relation to what extent the *anthropos* can know, dominate, and keep nature under control. Francis Bacon in *The New Organon* (1620), for instance, suggests that humans "penetrate further . . . and conquer nature . . . and eventually open up access to [its] inner rooms" in order to achieve "sure, demonstrable knowledge" (2000, p. 30). As such, the more humans have dissected nature, the more they have declared themselves as the masters of the world, simultaneously perpetuating the binary opposition or dualism that pits humans against nature. For the Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood, one of the characteristics of such dualisms as "reason/nature" is "instrumentalism" or "objectification" which dictates that "[t]he upperside [the first term] is an end in itself, but the underside [the second term] has no such intrinsic value, is not for-itself but merely useful, a resource. The identity of the underside is constructed instrumentally . . ." (1993, pp. 44, 53). In other words, such anthropocentric attitude conceptualizes nature as secondary and instrumental to humans who see it merely as something to be exploited to achieve their own ends. As Lawrence Buell puts it, anthropocentrism indicates "the assumption or view that the interests of humans are of higher priority than those of nonhumans" (2005, p. 134). Such "anthropocentric" as well as "egocentric" practices have caused environmental problems as well as global ecological crises almost to the point of no return (Oppermann, 2012, p. 14). In this respect, the self-endowed alleged "superiority" of the *anthropos* manifests itself in the latter's one-sided exploitative relations with the *oikos*.

The alarming scale of the environmental changes brought about by anthropocentric practices demonstrates that humans, in fact, “grew into a significant geological, morphological force,” hence initiating a new “geological epoch” which Crutzen and Stoermer call the “Anthropocene” (2000, pp. 17–18). Anthropogenic pressures applied to the *oikos* have increased since the Industrial Revolution to such an extent that “[w]e do not just make the earth different; we make it different on a different scale” (Colebrook, 2017, p. 6). The disruption of the *oikos* on a large scale has revealed the ramifications of anthropocentric practices that have been ravaging the ecosystems, and caused a surge in attempts to counter anthropocentric attitudes. To this end have been proposed various approaches that attempt to displace the *anthropos* from his self-aggrandizing superior position, and instead cultivate what we can call “ecocentrism” which designates “the interlinkage of the organismal and the inanimate” (Buell, 2005, p. 137).¹ An ecocentric approach emphasizes the interconnection of all human and nonhuman beings, and challenges the self-attributed superior position of the *anthropos* by deconstructing the binaries that have helped *him* sustain his position. By definition, ecocentrism annuls the possibility of constructing binary oppositions which can be regarded as the root cause of environmental exploitation and degradation. Instead of anthropocentrism’s hierarchical (vertical) ladder of beings that prioritizes the interests of the *anthropos*, ecocentrism proposes a non-hierarchical (horizontal) order that pre-empts valuing the *anthropos* above others. In other words, it puts forward an ontological equality that envisions flourishing or existing responsibly in the *oikos* where the interests of any human or nonhuman being inevitably intersect with those of other human or nonhuman beings.

Ecocentric approaches the earliest examples of which can be traced to Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic” and Arne Naess’ “deep ecology” have constituted the backbone of ecocritical studies since the latter’s emergence in the early 1990s. In ecocritical studies, this approach figures as a catalyst to unravel and expose the anthropocentric assumptions prevalent in culture and cultural productions like literary texts,² and accordingly aims to recast and reconfigure our anthropocentric value system into an ecocentric one—in which all human and nonhuman communities are envisaged as inseparable “entanglements” (Barad, 2007, p. ix). However, despite such ecocritical stances developed to shed light on the troubled relationship between the *anthropos* and the *oikos*, anthropocentrism seems to be going nowhere and the *oikos* is still in a bleak condition, as is clear from the warnings to humanity issued by scientists from all over the world in 1992, 2017, and 2020.³ Our self-understanding is still unfortunately rooted for the most part in the anthropocentric ideals and values of the Enlightenment. Accordingly, our exploitative desires and practices embodied by the figure of Robinson Crusoe continue to

¹ Ecocentrism is used semi-synonymously with biocentrism which posits that “all organisms, including humans, are part of a larger biotic web or network or community whose interests must constrain or direct or govern the human interest” (Buell, 2005, p. 134). Ecocentrism expands the scope of attention given only to “the organismal” in biocentrism by including “the inanimate” (Buell, 2005, p. 137).

² This is not to suggest, however, that all literary texts necessarily present an anthropocentric worldview. There are many literary works, especially in contemporary fiction, such as Aminatta Forna’s *Happiness* (2018) that problematize anthropocentrism and instead explore “the need for an interdependent world and the impossibility of a sovereign self” (Sarıkaya-Şen, 2020, p. 1).

³ See “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity” (1992) by Henry W. Kendall et al., and “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice” (2017) and “World Scientists’ Warning of a Climate Emergency” (2020) by William J. Ripple et al. For the critical responses of environmental humanities scholars to these warnings, see the special issue of *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* (vol. 1, no. 1, June 2020) edited by Steven Hartman and Serpil Oppermann.

ravage the world we live in. In this respect, literary texts like *Robinson Crusoe* might not only help us locate the origins of our anthropocentric attitudes but also expose their logic and perpetuation which operates through “setting up a moral dualism, where the underside is not part of the sphere to be considered morally but is . . . seen as outside morality altogether” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 53). Therefore, as will be discussed in the next section, Crusoe’s self-centered and self-interested desire to be a master or host overrides his responsibility towards the *oikos* which unconditionally welcomes him but which, in Crusoe’s eyes, does not deserve ethical standing, and hence is open to his appropriation.

Becoming Host: The Case of *Homo Robinsoniensis*

Derrida views hospitality as an ethical problem pertaining to “one’s dwelling place, one’s identity, one’s space, and one’s limits” (2000, p. 149). It is about welcoming the stranger/guest to ‘one’s own space,’ namely, letting the other in. In this sense, an act of hospitality “describes a figure, a space that allows a gesture of invitation to take place” (Dufourmantelle, 2013, p. 13). However, it is also an act that inherently harbors violence towards the other because each invitation simultaneously introduces or imposes limits on the invited guest (see Derrida, 2000, p. 55). Such characterization is related to the distinction Derrida suggests between “conditional or juridico-political” and “unconditional or hyperbolic” hospitality (2000, p. 135). The limits are always already there when it comes to conditional hospitality—the limits, conditions, and terms that decide what the guest can or cannot do, hence the violence inherent in it. On the other hand, unconditional hospitality fundamentally diverges from any sort of limitation. It “dispenses with law, duty, or even politics” whereas the conditional one is “circumscribed by law and duty” (Derrida, 2000, p. 135). The island in *Robinson Crusoe* offers such unconditional welcome to Crusoe when he ends up there all alone. It is a form of absolute openness to the other/guest without imposing any conditions or limits.

The rendition of the island as embodying absolute/pure hospitality ideally serves two purposes in this study. First, unlike intersubjective hospitality, it makes it possible to go beyond the predominantly anthropocentric conception of hospitality to an ecocentric one that exceeds the narrow scope of the former. Second, it enables us to explore what such hospitality might bring forth in terms of its potentialities to transform our outlook on our relations with the *oikos*. For Derrida, “[i]f, however, there is pure hospitality, or pure gift, it should consist in [an] opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be” (1999b, p. 70). Put differently, it points to a complete openness (or even a sort of total resignation) to the extent that “the host must, in a moment of madness, tear up the understanding between him and the guest, act with ‘excess,’ make an absolute gift of his property, which is of course impossible” (Caputo, 1997, p. 111). It is in the light of such impossible offering that the island/*oikos* should be seen and evaluated because pure hospitality which requires letting one’s guard down welcomes the guest as well as the risks the latter might pose. The risks are always already inherent in an act of pure hospitality in that one can know neither who/what might arrive (hence, Derrida’s use of the word “*arrivant*” (1993, p. 33) for the guest/other/visitor who arrives unexpectedly, unlike the invited or expected guest) nor what the *arrivant* might do.

The risks impossible hospitality entails and the *arrivant* carries are worth tracing in Defoe’s adventure novel because Crusoe instantiates the early (and still current) exploitative, possessive, and expansionist attitude adopted collectively by humans towards the *oikos*, our host. Crusoe appears to be the embodiment of *Homo economicus* who not only optimally

engages with the environment but also pursues *his* interests at all costs—which points to the manipulation or domination of nonhumans and nature in general. When Crusoe comes to himself after the shock of realizing that he is the only person who survived the shipwreck, the first thing he does is “to look round me to see what kind of place I was in, and what was next to be done . . .” (Defoe, 2000, p. 35). As the so-called practical/rational man he is, Crusoe sets to scavenging the shipwreck for necessary provisions, arms and ammunitions, and virtually everything that can be or not of use to him in any way. He cuts down the masts of the ship to make a raft that will help him get the goods to the shore. There is, indeed, something striking in his practical engagement with whatever seems to be around him at any given moment. From the very first days on the island, Crusoe works very systematically, especially with regard to what is to be done next: “My next work was to view the country and seek a proper place for my habitation, and where to stow my goods to secure them from whatever might happen” (p. 39). Having procured un/necessary goods, Crusoe sets about trying to discover a practical location to pitch a tent.

Crusoe finds a relatively secure flat area on the side of a hill, and even before putting up the tent, first makes a fence out of the poles and cables he collected from the ship:

[T]his fence was so strong, that neither man nor beast could get into it, or over it . . . The entrance into this place I made to be not by a door, but by a short ladder to go over the top; which ladder, when I was in, I lifted over after me, and so I was completely fenced in, and fortified, as I thought, from all the world . . . Into this tent I brought all my provisions . . . and having thus enclosed all my goods, I made up the entrance, which, till now, I had left open, and so passed and repassed, as I said, by a short ladder. (pp. 44–45)

There are several factors at work in this passage that relate to how Crusoe as the guest on the island takes the first step toward becoming a host. First, even before properly pitching his tent, Crusoe embarks on building a fence which marks the space as both his property and his territory. In this respect, this place on the side of the hill figures as one of the very first things that he has claim to on the island and foreshadows his possessive behavior in the remainder of the novel. Crusoe variously refers to this place as his “house” (p. 45), “home” (pp. 77, 85), “habitation” (pp. 60, 64, 76), “abode” (p. 77), “old hutch” (p. 85), “plantation” (p. 116), “my little fortification” (pp. 116, 118), “castle” (pp. 118, 139, 155, 157), “dwelling” (p. 124). However, “in order to constitute the space of a habitable house and a home,” argues Derrida, “you also need an opening, a door and windows, you have to give up a passage to the outside world [*l'étranger*]. There is no house or interior without a door or windows” (2000, p. 61). Such openness to the outside world/others is denied in Crusoe’s “home” which brings us to the second point I want to make in relation to the above passage. Places that can be called “home” or “house” require visible entrances like doors and windows which materialize the possibility of hosting. And yet, the extra effort Crusoe puts into enclosing and fortifying his place with a wall annuls such ‘passage to the outside world.’ As Crusoe records in his diary,

I worked excessive hard these three or four months to get my wall done; and the 14th of April I closed it up, contriving to go into it, not by a door, but over the wall by a ladder, that there might be no sign in the outside of my habitation . . . This was a complete enclosure to me; for within I had room enough, and nothing could come at me from without, unless it could first mount my wall. (p. 60)

He goes so far as to make his place invisible from the outside and thus, from the get-go, confiscates and makes his own a part of the space of the welcoming island (*oikos*). There is no indication in Crusoe's appropriated space for any sort of invitation or hospitality. He adds another layer of wall later and even plants trees to fortify his enclosed space which thus becomes "perfectly impassable" (Defoe, 2000, p. 124). So, when he attempts to "enlarg[e] [his] cave" behind the tent, he reaches the other side of the hill and "[makes] a door, or way out, which came beyond by fence or wall . . . But I was not perfectly easy at lying so open . . . I thought I lay exposed, and open for anything to come in upon me" (p. 79, also see p. 123). Although this opening comes handy for him, the idea of exposure to the outside world nevertheless troubles him. Third, these quoted passages, which exemplify what we might as well call Crusoesque anthropocentric attitude, give hints about his possessive relation with the environment and the island at large, and such attitude, in a sense, illustrates humans' exploitative and irrevocably damaging engagement with their host, namely, nature, especially in the last two or three centuries.

Having secured his place with fences, walls and trees to the extent of invisibility, Crusoe decides to explore the island which points to the modern individual's obsession with exploration, more space, wealth, and power as was already hinted at in the narrative by his previous pursuits in Guinea and Brazil. From this point onwards, "Crusoe the DIY hero," as Hammond and Regan humorously call him due to his self-establishing skills (2006, p. 66), adopts an expansionist attitude which adds to the gravity of his insatiable desire to appropriate and possess more space. He starts making excursions into the island during one of which he finds himself in the face of

an opening, where the country seemed to descend to the west . . . and the country appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing . . . that it looked like *a planted garden*. I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure, though mixed with my other afflicting thoughts, to think *this was all my own; that 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. (p. 76, emphases added)

The way Crusoe characterizes this encounter is full of ironies given his earlier stance toward 'the outside world [*l'étranger*]' which he banishes from his "home" by not making any doors or windows. Unlike his ardent refusal to welcome others, the opening he comes across seems to be a form of unconditional invitation or welcome that is extended to him by the island. The opening in this part of the island overlooks a valley which resembles 'a planted garden' and is apparently reminiscent of the garden of Eden. The idea of a planted garden in itself designates a marked space and, in turn, implies somebody/something that has worked on this space and made it look like the way it is. In this regard, it can be read as a design of the *oikos* as the host that has apparently opened (or left open from the very beginning) its own space to guests without imposing any terms or conditions. The irony comes to its full force when Crusoe declares it all as "[his] own" and claims he "ha[s] a right of possession" (p. 76) upon seeing the place. Even in Kantian terms, such a place would be regarded as in "common possession" of all people (not one single individual) who naturally have "the right to the *surface* [of the Earth/*oikos*]" (Kant, 2006, p. 82).

However, oblivious to such understanding, Crusoe marks this place as his own by building “a little kind of a bower, and surround[ing] it at a distance with a strong fence, being a double hedge as high as I could reach, well staked, and filled between with brushwood” (p. 78). His obsession with fences to keep out the outside world reaches a whole new level when he spots a footprint in the sand after which he adds another layer of wall to his first already secure house which he calls his “second fortification” (p. 123). In addition, from then on, he starts referring to his house as his “castle” (pp. 118, 127). The immediate shock and terror he feels upon seeing the footprint reveals his quite materialist outlook because he is not just concerned about his dear life. Rather, he is terrorized by the idea of another guest on the island who might overthrow him (now the host after appropriating so much space) because, as he narrates shortly before he sees the footprint, he considers himself the “lord of the whole manor” or the “king or emperor over the whole country . . . There were no rivals: I had no competitor, none to dispute sovereignty or command with me . . . I possessed infinitely more than I knew what to do with” (pp. 98–99). In short, he had everything in the world to lose and thus could not, as it were, suffer to do so.

Derrida writes that *Robinson Crusoe* “is a long discussion between Robinson and so many beasts. And the theater of that discussion is, indissociably, a theater of solitary sovereignty, of the assertion of mastery (of self, over slaves, over savages and over beasts . . .)” (2011, p. 28). Indeed, the animals on the island have their share of Crusoe’s overbearing anthropocentric stance which reveals another aspect of his obsession with control. As we have seen, his appropriation of space is not enough for him: he has to be able to control the appropriated space, keep it under control, hence the fences and double fortification he builds around his houses. Control (or being in control) appears to be a key factor for Crusoe which also extends to his treatment of animals or his “subjects:” “There was my majesty, the prince and lord of the whole island; I had the lives of all my subjects at my absolute command” (p. 113). Here he refers to Poll (his parrot), his dog, and two cats that accompany him by the table during the dinner as his subjects which, he further says, “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 dined, too, all alone, attended by my servants” (p. 113). And, indeed, he leisurely kills animals when he cannot tame them enough to keep under control or sometimes when he simply wants to show off (to Friday) his skills of handling a gun. The two cats by his side during the dinner are the ones he was able to tame but “the rest run wild in the woods . . . [and] would often come into my house, and plunder me too, till at last I was obliged to shoot them, and did kill a great many . . .” (p. 114). Crusoe even says that he “came to be so pestered with cats, that [he] was forced to kill them like vermin, or wild beasts, and to drive them from my house as much as possible” (p. 78). On the other hand, he similarly kills turtles, fowls, pigeons, and goats for food, and other animals like foxes and hares which he could not “satisfy [him]self to eat” because of their taste but “killed several” nonetheless (pp. 83–84). His attitude toward the animals can be evaluated as a manifestation of his desire to keep nonhuman others, and nature in general, under his control—the failure of which, otherwise, gives him uneasiness. This desire of his finds its embodiment both literally and metaphorically in the “enclosures” (pp. 117, 127) he builds for keeping domesticated animals like goats because the ones he cannot tame are bound to be killed (like the rest of the cats). As Derrida puts it, “a Robinsonian man relates to the animal only for himself, with a view to himself, from his point of view, in his being-for-self. This is how he relates to the animal that he eats, that he domesticates, that he masters, enslaves or exploits . . .” (2011, p. 198). With such anthropocentric attitude, Crusoe overtakes the island where he initially arrived as a guest by basically taming and dominating the space of the *oikos* including the latter’s nonhuman inhabitants—which means that he has come to turn himself into a host with sovereignty over

the island and his “subjects” therein, hence the pride he feels when he “visit[s] [his] new colony in the island” at the end of the novel (p. 235).

Crusoe’s attitude that helps him establish his “colony” is similarly overbearing when it comes to his relations with human beings. For instance, his fellowship with Xury, with whom he shares the same position during their slavery at the hands of the Moors, takes a drastic turn after they manage to escape. As a man who is “resolved to have [his] liberty” from slavery (Defoe, 2000, p. 16), he assumes the master position ironically by making Xury his slave, that is, by confiscating the liberty of another fellow. Crusoe even considers himself entitled to sell “[his] boy Xury” to the Portuguese captain (pp. 24–25). His relation with Xury anticipates his exploitative encounter with Friday in the latter half of the novel. Their relation starts when Friday manages to run away from his captors toward the camp of Crusoe who, having earlier dreamed of saving a “savage” (p. 152), takes the chance to rescue Friday. Given the self-interested man he is, it is not out of goodwill that he saves his life. Rather, as he realizes after the dream, “[his] only way to go about an attempt for an escape was, if possible, to get a savage into [his] possession . . .” (p. 152). The circumstances that prepare the ground for such a rescue attempt materialize only about a year and a half later, and he immediately seizes the opportunity when he sees two people being dragged to the shore. Upon this sight, the first thought that crosses his mind is “that now was my time to get me a servant, and perhaps a companion or an assistant . . .” (p. 155). This ignorant and egocentric approach is further revealed in Crusoe’s immediate naming of this fellow whose name he does not even ask: “I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me; and, first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life” (p. 158). Crusoe once again assumes authority and casts himself in the role of the master: “I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name” (p. 158). As a host/master, Crusoe denies Friday an unconditional welcome, cautiously lodges him between the two fortifications he built around his tent, and “tak[es] in [his] ladders too; so that Friday could no way come at [him] in the inside of [his] innermost wall . . .” (p. 160). An act of unconditional hospitality necessitates a gesture of letting the other in without any impositions; however, Crusoe, who is himself received unconditionally in the “home” of the *oikos*, introduces boundaries and sets terms and conditions (e.g., imposing his language, religion, and culture on Friday) to assure his position as the host/master. Moreover, his self-absorbed outlook encourages him to “teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful” (p. 161). Similar to his appropriation of the animals and the island in general, Crusoe apparently sees it viable to exploit others, too. As Judith Still notes, “Crusoe sees animals, and lesser men too, in terms of how they serve his self-interest . . .” (2015, p. 277). Therefore, Crusoe’s relations with humans and nonhumans alike are almost always conditional and are framed in such a way that always benefits none other than Crusoe himself.

Crusoe has an unabashed propensity for claiming things, animals, people, and places that fall under his gaze. “[T]he whole country,” says Crusoe, “was my own mere property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion” (p. 185). In this respect, the word “colony” that Crusoe uses in the penultimate paragraph of the novel is quite telling and prescient with regard to the environmental issues we have today. Crusoesque attitude signifies not only a highly utilitarian one that apparently does not benefit the *oikos* but also appears to be the precursor to as well as the catalyst of what humans have become in the past two or three hundred years. Such anthropocentric attitude has penetrated the depths of the *oikos* with the intention of making it (along with its non/human inhabitants) a colony that is always to be kept under control and

exploited freely. This kind of attitude the so-called rational/practical man adopts exemplifies what Derrida calls “Homo Robinsoniensis who would perceive, who would interpret, who would project everything . . . in proportion to the insularity of his interest or his need, even his desire, in any case to his anthropocentric and Robinson-centered phantasm” (Derrida, 2011, pp. 198–199). Indeed, the “insularity” and self-interested limited point of view of *Homo Robinsoniensis* have brought the world to the dire and irrevocable situation it is in today.

Conclusion

Homo sapiens or better yet *Homo Robinsoniensis* has already gone down in the records as the deadliest species that has befallen the *oikos*, and from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, the unexpected *arrivant* has long arrived and is possibly here to stay until the host's (*oikos*) obliteration at some point (probably very soon). Due to the former's parasitic, invasive, and extremely destructive nature which has brought about the Anthropocene, or what we might as well venture to call, the Robinsonocene, the *oikos* does not seem to be able to hold any longer. It would be highly naïve to suggest in a nostalgia-laden way that we should live in harmony with the *oikos* and its nonhuman inhabitants as our ancestors did in the past simply because they did not. After the cognitive revolution starting around 70,000 BC, *Homo sapiens* started driving other species to extinction wherever they went (Harari, 2014, pp. 70–83). However, the evolved and deadlier-than-ever version of *Homo sapiens* in the recent past (at least since the Industrial Revolution) has depleted natural resources and destroyed other species, and disrupted the ecosystems in an unprecedented fashion (unlike their ancestors), and thus brought the Earth to the brink of collapse as never before. Such anthropocentrism dictates a value system that fundamentally prioritizes humans over nonhumans and obstinately refuses to acknowledge the irreducible interconnections between them. It further eclipses the interdependence of all human/nonhuman beings and hence opens up a milieu where humans falsely feel entitled to pursue their interests at the expense of all other non/human beings and the *oikos*. It is high time we recast our anthropocentric value system into an ecocentric one because, should we continue to ignore the consequences of our practices and refuse to take responsibility for our actions, there will be no more *oikos* to accommodate any of us, that is, human and nonhuman guests. And, unless we dispense with the insularity of, and see through and beyond “the limits of a Homo Robinsoniensis” (Derrida, 2011, p. 198), all that awaits us is sheer nothingness.

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