

## Beyond Narrative: Narrative and the Impasse of Freedom in *Robinson Crusoe*

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### Introduction

Whenever we are reading a novel, we are dealing with a narrative, and a narrative is its constitutive component. At the same time, a narrative sets a certain limit to a novel whose transgression brings about a serious consequence to the novelistic universe. Since it came into being, the novel has exploited the inherent ambivalence of its limit in order to continually reinvent itself. Though *Robinson Crusoe* is often referred to as the origin of the English novel, it has already attained a fully advanced stage of development in this respect and manipulates a much more complicated narrative scheme than we may imagine.

After his repatriation, Crusoe casually sums up his life, comparing himself to Job: "I might well say, now indeed, That the latter End of *Job* was better than the Beginning."<sup>10</sup> After a long suffering which God had inflicted on him in order to try his faith, Job was restored to happiness, and God blessed him with a doubled fortune.<sup>11</sup> If we call a narrative in which the theme of restoration finally asserts itself "a narrative of restoration," the reference to Job above seems to suggest that *Robinson Crusoe* is also such a narrative, and in fact it has often been thought of as one. The narrative of restoration presupposes a totality which is to be restored in the end, and as long as we assume that an autobiography is an attempt to gain a knowledge of the self which is lacking at the outset, it can also be thought of as such a narrative, because it finally completes the self in its totality by providing it with the knowledge of itself. Since it is well known that *Robinson Crusoe* was written under the influence of Puritan spiritual autobiographies, we might be inclined

to assume that all it has to offer is after all a quest of identity which underlies these narratives. However, *Robinson Crusoe* radically departs from authentic spiritual autobiographies in that it pushes to an extreme an impasse on which they continued to stumble.

In the Puritan doctrine, what embodies this impasse is predestination. It is an assertion that human beings form a part of the scheme of Providence in which they are destined either to salvation or to damnation regardless of what they do. What is disturbing about it is that the scheme of Providence has been settled in advance, so that they can never hope to change it for better nor for worse, whatever they do. On the other hand, however, the Puritan doctrine is based on a sort of individualism, and Puritans are supposed to stand in immediate relation to God without the mediation of the church. It follows that they are "technically" conceived as autonomous beings who are accountable to God for their own conduct. Such a technical premise seems incompatible with predestination, according to which human beings are conceived as "determined" in advance, because the idea of accountability can be understood only against the background of freedom on the part of those who are held accountable. Now we can see where the impasse which we mentioned above lies: on the one hand, human beings are technically conceived as autonomous beings; yet on the other, they are actually determined in advance. As a result, human beings are held accountable for the scheme of Providence which is not even accessible to them, and therefore for which they cannot be accountable. *Robinson Crusoe* offers a solution to this impasse, which brings about the abolition of the divine narrative itself. The abolition of narrative does

not simply mean its dissolution, because even after the dissolution of narrative one still remains within the field of its attraction which continues to affect one. The abolition of narrative rather means the abolition of its attraction itself and the acceptance of "absolute freedom" which it conceals. In the following, I hope to show how *Robinson Crusoe* attains absolute freedom and what it exactly means.

### I Providence

Since Puritan spiritual autobiographies are undoubtedly the predominant influence on *Robinson Crusoe*, we begin with the evaluation of this influence.<sup>13</sup> It is well known that Puritans habitually devoted themselves to the careful examination of their lives, because their lives were supposed to be governed by Providence, whose existence is revealed in the disposition of their lives. When Crusoe is cast away alone on an uninhabited island, the attitude which he adopts towards his miseries eloquently attests to the fact that the Puritan ethic strictly regulates his behaviour. Though the prospect before him almost overcomes him, he begins to draw up an account of his condition when he has more or less recovered his presence of mind:

I now began to consider seriously my Condition, and the Circumstance I was reduc'd to, and I drew up the State of my Affairs in Writing ... to deliver my Thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my Mind; and as my Reason began now to master my Despondency, 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, and I stated it very impartially, like Debtor and Creditor, the Comforts I enjoy'd, against the Miseries I suffer'd .... (65 - 66)

Instead of being overcome by the immediate experience of his miseries as such, he sets the positive aspects against the negative ones of his condition so that he can estimate it more or less objectively. What he tries to avoid here is the submission to his miseries as such which immediately affect him. Drawing up an account

of his condition, he distances himself from the immediate experience of his miseries in order to recognize his condition. It should be noted that he conceives his condition not as something that can immediately be experienced but something that can only be "recognized." Therefore, his distance from the immediate experience of his miseries is essential to his recognition of his condition.

Such a relationship between distance and recognition was also recognized by authors of spiritual autobiographies. They believed that, even though the existence of Providence cannot immediately be perceived, it can still be accessible to them through signs which can be rendered intelligible when they are properly interpreted. Since their lives were supposed to abound in such signs, whatever they did could not be neglected, and they carefully recorded their lives in detail so that they could detect Providence in them.<sup>14</sup> In their attitude towards their lives, they suggested that the distance from Providence is not only essential to its recognition but also constitutive to its existence as such, because it is accessible to them only through recognition. Such a constitutive relationship between distance and recognition is what so-called fatalists fail to grasp. Since, as we have seen, predestination seems to contradict the idea of accountability, fatalism was often considered its only logical consequence. The common assumption of fatalism is that, since human beings are predestined either to salvation or to damnation, it makes no difference whatever they do. They would think: whatever they do, they are what they are supposed to be, and there is no escaping from it. Such an assumption necessarily leads to an extreme, and fatalists even presume to assume that whatever they do is justified as long as it is set down in the scheme of Providence in advance. What they fail to grasp is that the distance from Providence is constitutive to its existence as such. Though they immediately presuppose Providence in whatever they do, the fact is that they can only recognize it in what they "have" done, because Providence comes to impose itself on their conduct only after its completion. Therefore, whatever they do cannot immediately be justified, and as a matter of fact it is nothing but this gap which separates action from

recognition that opens up the dimension of accountability in the face of predestination.

The distance which authors of spiritual autobiographies maintained from Providence is a means to avoid the dead end of fatalism, and what Crusoe tries to achieve is nothing but such a distance. While maintaining it, he can preserve the dimension of accountability, which keeps open the space for freedom. Since he is cast away on the island, he repeatedly asks himself why God has done it to him, and his question shows why human beings should technically be conceived as autonomous beings in the Puritan doctrine. He asks himself: "*Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus us'd?*" (92) His putting this question to himself is significant in that it opens up the space for freedom on his part, because the question indicates that the gap which separates action from recognition has not been closed up yet. Such a question is meaningless to fatalists, who assume that action immediately corresponds to recognition. Crusoe sticks to his question in order to prevent the circle of predestination from closing itself and thus keep open the gap which separates action from recognition. At first, the premise of human freedom seems meaningless in the face of divine determination, but it is indispensable in order to preserve the dimension of accountability. It is as it were a technical means of preserving human freedom in the face of divine determination, and human beings "must" conceive themselves as autonomous beings so that they may be held accountable for their own conduct.

Therefore, the impasse which stems from the contradiction between human freedom and divine determination is after all essential to the Puritan doctrine, because it is nothing but this impasse that opens up the dimension of accountability. Though predestination is often misunderstood as divine determination pure and simple, it actually constitutes an "injunction" which human beings must assume in order for human freedom to assert itself in the face of divine determination: that is, never let the circle of predestination close itself. If predestination constitutes an injunction which prevents it from asserting itself to the full, it is after all essential to human freedom, and

human freedom can assert itself only as long as human beings assume this injunction. Therefore, the paradox of human freedom is that we cannot get rid of the impasse of human freedom without getting rid of human freedom itself. It is not an accident that authors of spiritual autobiographies stuck to predestination at all cost. They knew very well that they should not get rid of it if they wanted to preserve freedom for themselves at all. If freedom were not foreclosed in advance, they could not assume what might be called "the injunction of freedom" which constitutes the essence of predestination. When Crusoe is cast away on the island, he distances himself from the immediate experience of his miseries and thus refuses to submit himself to them, and his refusal of submission attests to the fact that he has assumed the injunction of freedom. His assuming this injunction constitutes a decisive moment for his conversion, and now we go on to see how he assumes this injunction to the full as he undergoes conversion.

## II Narrative

As we have seen, the influence of Puritan spiritual autobiographies on *Robinson Crusoe* is far from superficial, and this influence is especially apparent in the first half of it, where Crusoe undergoes conversion. Since the narrative which is developed there culminates in his conversion, we call it "the narrative of conversion" in the following. Apart from an emphasis on religious matters, spiritual autobiographies distinguish themselves from secular narratives in that conversion constitutes a nodal point around which the narrative scheme is organized. The moment of conversion is often described as the passage to the other side of life, through which the scheme of Providence working behind human life is revealed. Therefore, conversion is the moment when the perspective of human life overlaps the scheme of Providence, and as a result the meaning of life suddenly reveals itself.<sup>(9)</sup> Since the first half of *Robinson Crusoe* intends to establish such a narrative as its authentic narrative, we begin by examining the narrative of conversion as it is developed.

*Robinson Crusoe* opens with an account of Crusoe

himself and the origin of his family which seems to determine the course of the narrative that follows. At the outset, we are told that he was born to a family of foreign origin who came to settle in England, and that the original name of his family "Kreutznaer" turned into "*Crusoe*" as the result of "the usual Corruption of Words in *England*"(3). As he is the third son of the family, he is "not bred to any Trade" and soon falls prey to his wandering disposition which urges him to go to sea. In order to dissuade him from wandering without any prospect of life, his father entreats him to content himself with the middle station of life, which he recommends him as "the best State in the World" (4). However, Crusoe does not listen to his advice and finally leaves home in order to go to sea. When we are told that *Crusoe* is a corrupted form of the original name of his family *Kreutznaer*, which might be thought of as his "authentic" name, we are inclined to assume that the original name of his family corresponds to his authentic origin, and that his alienation from it urges him to the quest of identity. When we see him leave home disobeying his father, we feel further convinced that he wanders in search of his identity, because in his disobedience to his father he seems to evade social determination in order to determine for himself. Such an assumption is based on the opposition between an alienated inauthentic state and a non-alienated authentic one, and it is obvious that the same opposition underlies the narrative of conversion.

Leaving home, Crusoe goes to sea and never returns home even after he almost lost his life in his first voyage, obstinately persisting in his wandering disposition. After a few voyages which he barely managed to survive, the ship which he boarded is caught in a storm, and its crew is all lost except him. Though he was not killed in the storm, he is cast away alone on an uninhabited island from which he has no means to escape, and as a result he is forced to live there depending solely on himself. After his landing on the island, he begins to build a fortification in order to fence himself in. Though he insists that he builds it for "Security from ravenous Creatures, whether Men or Beasts" (58), he soon admits, as if in an aside, that his fear of danger proved to be groundless afterwards:

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 compleatly fenc'd in, and fortify'd, as I thought, from all the World, and consequently slept secure in the Night, which otherwise I could not have done, tho', as it appear'd afterward, there was no need of all this Caution from the Enemies that I apprehended Danger from. (59)

Though his fear is groundless after all, he is so obsessed with it that he makes himself fortified not only against the supposed danger but also "from all the World." When the ladder which he uses in order to get over the fence which surrounds the fortification is put inside, he is completely fenced in, and there is no means of entrance left outside. It should be noted that he fences himself in where there seems to be no need to do so at all. Even if we consider that he does not know it at first, his obsession with the groundless fear makes us suspect that his desire to fence himself in stems from some other reason than he openly admits here.

If Crusoe does not build the fortification for fear of danger, it follows that he does so, as he suggests himself, in order to defend himself "from all the World." For a man who is in his position, however, to defend himself from all the world is, paradoxically enough, to do so from nothing, because he lives alone on an uninhabited island where he has no world to defend himself from. Therefore, he does not build the fortification because he has the world to defend himself from beforehand. On the contrary, the world from which he defends himself appears in his eye only at the time of the construction of the fortification. It is not an accident that he seriously begins to reflect on his condition as the construction of the fortification approaches completion. When he draws up an account of his condition, he is still working on the fortification, and his settlement in it almost coincides with the time when he begins to keep a journal: "having settled my houshold Stuff and Habitation .... I began to keep my Journal" (69). It should be noted that both drawing up an account of one's own condition and keeping a

journal in which one records one's own life require a distance from oneself so that one can posit oneself as the object of one's own observation. However, one cannot immediately posit oneself against oneself, for one can posit oneself only against something that is "not" oneself. When Crusoe settles in the fortification, he posits himself against the world, but it does not mean that the world appears in his eye by itself. It is rather that his settlement in the fortification coincides with the appearance of the world against which he posits himself. In other words, his settlement in it puts him in a position in which both the world and himself "at once" appear in his eye.

It is when Crusoe puts himself in this position that he begins to recognize Providence as the ultimate source of his existence. This can be seen from the fact that he begins to think of his miseries not as miseries as such but as the retribution of Providence: "sometimes I would expostulate with my self, Why Providence should thus compleatly ruin its Creatures, and render them so absolutely miserable, so without Help abandon'd, so entirely depress'd, that it could hardly be rational to be thankful for such a Life" (62). While reflecting on his miseries, he asks himself why Providence has done it to him. When he puts this question to himself, he posits himself as the object of his own observation, and his positing himself as the object of his own observation presupposes his positing himself against Providence. In other words, his putting the question to himself puts him in a position in which Providence appears in his eye, and this position makes his miseries appear not as miseries as such but as the retribution of Providence. Since this position is founded on the act of positing as such, however, it is suppositious and cannot sustain itself without the support of meaning which substantiates it. This explains why the ears of corn which have sprouted without being taken care of fail to make a lasting impression on Crusoe. When he finds them growing, he is so surprised that he is immediately convinced that it is the work of Providence intended for his sustenance: "I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus'd this Grain to grow without any Help of Seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my Sustenance, on that wild

miserable Place" (78). However, his conviction does not last and soon gives way to his reason when it occurs to him that there might be nothing miraculous about it: "I must confess, my religious Thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the Discovering that all this was nothing but what was common; tho' I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous" (78 - 79). Though his belief in God begins to abate when he realizes that what seems to be miraculous might be a common incident after all, there is no indication that strictly distinguishes a miracle from a common incident, because a miracle is as it were "in the eye" of one who believes it. What is lacking here is something that sustains his belief in the face of his reason.

It is when Crusoe undergoes conversion that what is still lacking in his belief is finally provided. While he is on the verge of death suffering from illness, he finds himself saying a prayer: "*Lord be my Help, for I am in great Distress*" (91). As his illness makes him feel helpless in the face of his miseries, he seriously begins to reflect on Providence as the ultimate source of his existence. He begins with the premise that God governs the world which he has created. As he goes on with his reasoning, however, he cannot but admit that it is God himself who has reduced him to his miseries:

... it rested upon me with the greater Force, that it must needs be, that God had appointed all this to befall me; that I was brought to this miserable Circumstance by his Direction, he having the sole Power, not of me only, but of every Thing that happen'd in the World. Immediately it follow'd,

*Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus us'd?* (92)

It is not enough to recognize Providence as the ultimate source of his existence, because it necessarily follows that it is God himself who has reduced him to his miseries. There is another step that must be taken: that is, to believe that God looks on him. If he can believe that God looks on him, he can also believe that his miseries are not arbitrarily inflicted on him but deliberately intended for him to suffer. When he asks

himself why God has done it to him, he assumes that God cannot be indifferent to him, because he asks himself not “what” God has done to him but “why” he has done it to him. He does not only try to detect Providence in his miseries but also tries to “understand” it and recognize the reason which explains it. In other words, he assumes that Providence is not simply what “is” but rather what makes itself understood. Though such a difference might seem redundant, it is what enables him to assume that God cannot be indifferent to him, and what is still lacking is only a pretext which sustains his belief that God looks on him.

Crusoe comes across such a pretext the moment he casually opens the Bible: “only having open’d the Book casually, the first Words that occur’d to me were these, *Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me*” (94). Though the verse from the Bible appears more or less enigmatic to him at the time of reading, it comes to make a strong impression on him after he has recovered from illness. He recognizes himself as one who is addressed in the verse when he begins to conceive his deliverance from illness as the work of Providence: “Have I not been deliver’d, and wonderfully too, from Sickness?” (95). Though his conviction that God has delivered him from illness confirms his belief that God looks on him, however, his deliverance from illness only makes him thank God for the benefit which he has received, and such a belief will fail him as soon as it occurs to him that there might be nothing miraculous about it. Since a pretext remains a pretext as long as his belief fails him, there must be something that sustains his belief in the face of his reason in order to make a word of God out of a pretext.

When Crusoe begins to read the Bible more seriously than ever, he recalls the wickedness of his life in the past and suddenly comes up with a different interpretation of the word “deliver” in the verse mentioned above:

Now I began to construe the Words mentioned above, *Call on me, and I will deliver you*, in a different Sense from what I had ever done before; for then I had no Notion of any thing being call’d Deliverance, but being deliver’d from the Captivity I

was in ... Now I look’d back upon my past Life with such Horrour, 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 ... And I add this Part here, to hint 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. (96–97)

As he recalls the wickedness of his life in the past, the idea of sin suddenly presents itself in his mind, and it appears to him “so dreadful” that he seeks nothing but “Deliverance from the Load of Guilt.”<sup>(6)</sup> However, it should be noted that, though his sin appears to him dreadful, it serves as the support of his belief. As he begins to conceive “Deliverance from Sin” as “a much greater Blessing” than “Deliverance from Affliction,” he takes the final step towards his conversion, because sin cannot be refuted even in the face of reason. Since one can recognize sin only when one holds oneself accountable to God for it, it comes into being only as the consequence of the relationship between oneself and God. Once one has recognized sin, however, it “founds” the relationship of which it is in fact the consequence. When Crusoe recognizes himself as one who is addressed in the verse, he posits a relationship between himself and God. When he recognizes sin, however, he “founds” this relationship, holding himself accountable to God for his sin. As a result, his recognition of sin makes a word of God out of a pretext, and it is not an accident that he suddenly begins to expect God to hear him as he prays: “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” (96). The fact that he expects God to hear him indicates that the relationship between himself and God is finally established. Whenever he prays, the conviction that God hears him sustains his belief, and even the alienating aspect of his suffering has fallen off, because now he can believe that his miseries are not arbitrarily inflicted on him but deliberately intended for him to suffer.

Therefore, it is when Crusoe recognizes sin that he undergoes conversion, because it is his recognition of sin that establishes his belief. The narrative of conversion becomes consistent when it creates sin in its origin, and it is nothing but the creation of sin that makes one come to terms with the experience of helplessness before Providence. Though belief seems to assert itself in the end, it is the creation of sin rather than of belief that compensates for the experience of helplessness, and belief is no more than the consequence of sin. This explains why Crusoe conceives his deliverance from sin as a much more greater blessing than his deliverance from affliction. If his miseries were arbitrarily inflicted on him, it would make him mad, because it makes him appear entirely helpless before Providence. On the other hand, his recognition of sin enables him to believe that his miseries are deliberately intended for him to suffer as a punishment for his sin, so that he can retain the minimum of subjective freedom in the face of Providence, whose objective determination he can never hope to change for better nor for worse. Therefore, his recognition of sin prevents the circle of Providence from closing itself and enables him to suffer his miseries on his own, and it is not an accident that he embraces his sin so eagerly that it becomes the only support of his being. When he undergoes conversion, he assumes what we call the injunction of freedom to the full, and the narrative of conversion asserts itself in the face of his miseries. In the second half of *Robinson Crusoe*, however, the narrative of conversion is radically destabilized, and the solution which it offers marks its departure from authentic spiritual autobiographies.

### III Origin

In *Robinson Crusoe*, the importance of the problem of origin cannot be overestimated, but I have deliberately overlooked it so far in order to examine the narrative of conversion in comparison with Puritan spiritual autobiographies. When we examined the account of Crusoe himself and the origin of his family,

we took note of the fact that *Crusoe* is a corrupted form of the original name of his family *Kreutznaer*, and assumed that the original name of his family corresponds to his authentic origin, and that his alienation from it urges him to the quest of identity. In our assumption, therefore, he has already fallen from his authentic origin in his given existence, and his fall from it constitutes the motive for his quest of identity. His fall from his authentic origin makes him refuse social determination, because it is nothing but the alienating nature of social determination that attests to his fall from the non-alienated state of self-sufficient bliss. Though he seems to refuse social determination in order to determine for himself when he leaves home disobeying his father, however, it should be noted that the middle station of life which his father recommends him is devoid of any characteristic whatever. His father describes it as "the most suited to human Happiness, not exposed to the Miseries and Hardships, the Labour and Sufferings of the mechanick Part of Mankind, and not embarrass'd with the Pride, Luxury, Ambition and Envy of the upper Part of Mankind" (4). The middle station of life as his father describes it here does not determine at all. On the contrary, it rather seems to be a station in which one can evade any social determination. Therefore, it is far from true that Crusoe evades social determination in order to determine for himself.

There are some peculiar passages in the first half of *Robinson Crusoe* that we have not mentioned so far, and they make us see what is at stake in the problem of origin. These passages occur between Crusoe's departure from home and the shipwreck after which he is cast away on the island, that is to say, before the narrative of conversion begins to assert itself. Apart from social determination which he believes he is evading in leaving home, there is something "in" him that compels him to leave home:

... I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea, and my Inclination to this led me so strongly against the Will, nay the Commands of my Father, and against all the Entreaties and Perswasions of my Mother and other Friends, that there seem'd to be something fatal in that Propension of Nature tending

directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me.  
(3)

It is what he calls “that Propension of Nature” here that immediately compels him to leave home. When we assumed that he refuses social determination in order to determine for himself, we conceived his propension of nature as an impulse to deliver himself from social determination. Since the middle station of life which his father recommends him does not determine at all, however, such an impulse becomes perverse, so we have to reconsider the nature of this perverse impulse.

As Crusoe says, there is “something fatal” about this impulse, and it “directly” tends to miseries which are to befall him. Therefore, there is something “in” him that is entirely out of control, and it obstinately pushes him on regardless of his will:

... my ill Fate push'd me on now with an Obstinacy that nothing could resist; and tho' I had several times loud Calls from my Reason and my more composed Judgment to go home, yet I had no Power to do it. I know not what to call this, nor will I urge, that it is a secret over-ruling Decree that hurries us on to be the Instrument of our own Destruction, even tho' it be before us, and that we rush upon it with our Eyes open. (14)

What he calls “a secret over-ruling Decree” here deprives him of the power to resist it and makes him “the Instrument of [his] own Destruction.” This self-destructive compulsion does not allow him to distance himself from it and immediately imposes itself on him, so that it subverts his status as a subject. In other words, it does not simply force him but rather “determines” him, and its determination is radically subversive, because, since it comes from within, it cannot be got rid of. A common assumption which underlies an autobiography is that self-knowledge which it provides with one increases one’s freedom, but the self-destructive compulsion which pushes Crusoe on regardless of his will is entirely incompatible with such an assumption and subverts the stable relationship between knowledge and freedom. He cannot resist this

compulsion which determines him from within, because it does not allow him to distance himself from it. As a result, he is reduced to an instrument which does not have even the minimum of subjective freedom from the “objective” determination of this compulsion, and driven to his own destruction “with [his] Eyes open.”<sup>17</sup>

This self-destructive compulsion is opposed to desire in that it admits no subjectivity on the part of one whom it affects. It asserts itself according to its “internal” logic and admits no intervention of desire. Since it is nothing but this compulsion that compels Crusoe to leave home, it is impossible to explain his wandering disposition in terms of desire, and we have to renounce our assumption that he evades social determination in order to determine for himself. Therefore, we have to renounce the idea of the fall from an authentic origin as well. It is not that a fall causes the alienation from an authentic origin. On the contrary, the idea of an authentic origin itself is constructed from the perspective of a fall. Since there is no authentic origin in the first place, the narrative of conversion does not restore authentic identity, but in fact it constitutes a defence against the self-destructive compulsion which obstinately pushes him on regardless of his will. As we have seen, this self-destructive compulsion cannot be got rid of, so the narrative of conversion only channels its overwhelming drive into a different figuration in order to prevent it from asserting itself blindly according to its internal logic, and Providence is nothing but this different figuration. Therefore, Providence is not determination which comes from outside but a defence against the self-destructive compulsion which comes from within.

This provides us with an insight into the nature of the narrative of conversion. It is not a means to come to terms with the determination of Providence but a means to establish Providence as the ultimate guarantee of reality. With the help of it, one can evade accepting contingent reality to the full and spare oneself the burden of “infinite” accountability, because Providence, which serves as a guarantee of contingent reality, is ultimately accountable for it. Therefore, it is not an accident that Providence as the ultimate guarantee of reality finally enables Crusoe to attain self-containment:

I look'd not upon the World as a Thing remote, which I had nothing to do with, no Expectation from, and indeed no Desire about: In a Word, I had nothing indeed to do with it, nor was ever like to have; so I thought it look'd as we may perhaps look upon it hereafter, viz. as a Place I had liv'd in, but was come out of it; and well might I say, as Father Abraham to Dives, Between me and thee is a great Gulph fix'd. (128)

Here he has completely withdrawn from reality and begun to look on it as "a Thing remote" with which he has nothing to do.<sup>(8)</sup> What has brought about this complete withdrawal from reality if not Providence as its ultimate guarantee? Since he has neither "Expectation from" nor "Desire about" the world, contingent elements are completely excluded from his self-sufficient universe. It should be noted that the narrative of conversion finally brings about not the full acceptance of reality as the revelation of Providence but, paradoxically enough, the complete withdrawal from reality as such. As a result, Crusoe's resignation to Providence ends in his absorption in the closed economy of his self-sufficient universe.<sup>(9)</sup> In the second half of *Robinson Crusoe*, however, his self-containment is radically disrupted, and his self-sufficient universe turns into the field of a contention between opposing forces.

#### IV Belief

The second half of *Robinson Crusoe* seems to fail to develop any narrative that can be compared with the narrative of conversion, which, as we have seen, it successfully develops in the first half of it. In the second half, it seems to gradually distance itself from narrative as such and begin to search for some other means to sustain itself. This shift is announced when Crusoe has "a strange Uneasiness" in his mind: "I had a strange Uneasiness in my Mind to go down to the Point of the Island, where, as I have said, in my last Ramble, I went up the Hill to see how the Shore lay, and how the Current set, that I might see what I had to do" (149).

His uneasiness can be thought of as the return of his wandering disposition which has been suspended since he was cast away on the island, because the narrative of conversion has effectively repressed it. However, his reviving uneasiness forcibly takes him out of his habitation down to the other side of the island which has remained external to his understanding. It might be said that he transgresses the confines of the narrative of conversion and enters the domain of the unknown, and this transgression radically disrupts the closed economy of his self-sufficient universe.

When Crusoe goes down to the other side of the island driven by a strange uneasiness which suddenly presented itself in his mind, he finds there what he has not in the least expected:

It happen'd one Day about Noon going towards my Boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'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; I listen'd, I look'd round me, I could hear nothing, nor see any Thing, I went up to a rising Ground to look farther, I went up the Shore and down the Shore, but it was all one, I could see no other Impression but that one, I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my Fancy; but there was no Room for that, for there was exactly the very Print of a Foot, Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot; how it came thither, I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. (153–154)

The whole description of the scene is worth examining in detail. When he finds the footprint, he cannot believe his eyes and has to return to it to see if it is still there after he went away for a little while. It should be noted that it is completely isolated from any other indication that would confirm it. He can see nothing, hear nothing, and even find no other footprint that the same person might have left. Returning to where he found the footprint, he examines every part of it as if it were not enough to see it as a whole, and his confusion indicates that it appears to him as an embodiment of contingent reality as such which is incommensurable with the

closed economy of his self-sufficient universe.<sup>(10)</sup>

When Crusoe finds the footprint, he stands astonished as if he has seen “an Apparition.” What he calls “an Apparition” here stands for anything whose existence cannot be substantiated. Since such a thing cannot be included in the narrative of conversion without threatening to subvert it, it is not an accident that his belief in God suddenly fails him: “my Fear banish’d all my religious Hope; all that former Confidence in God which was founded upon such wonderful Experience as I had had of his Goodness, now vanished” (156). We cannot understand why a single footprint can completely banish all his confidence in God, if we do not realize that it threatens to subvert the narrative of conversion which sustains the illusion of his self-sufficient universe. As we have seen, the narrative of conversion with the idea of sin at the heart of it enables him to withdraw from reality into the closed circuit of self-containment. However, the footprint brings into the narrative of conversion a piece of contingent reality which is entirely incommensurable with its closed circuit, and as a result suspends its operation. The suspension of the narrative of conversion immediately brings him back to the reality of his condition which he does not dare to confront: that is, he is no more than “a Prisoner lock’d up with the Eternal Bars and Bolts of the Ocean, in an uninhabited Wilderness, without Redemption” (113). The existence of contingent reality “without Redemption” is what the narrative of conversion has concealed. If there is no Providence as the ultimate guarantee of reality, reality is just unbearable, because one is forced to assume infinite accountability for contingent reality for no other reason than that it is “given.”<sup>(11)</sup>

Since the given reality which Crusoe is forced to confront is unbearable, he cannot accept it as it is. On the other hand, however, he can no longer depend on the narrative of conversion which had enabled him to withdraw from the given reality into the closed circuit of self-containment. As a result, he finds himself helpless between the given reality and the failed illusion, but his solution seems no more than a continuation of the same illusion that has failed him:

I then reflected that God, who was not only Righteous but Omnipotent, as he had thought fit thus to punish and afflict me, so he was able to deliver me; that if he did not think fit to do it, 'twas my unquestion'd Duty to resign my self absolutely and entirely to his Will; and on the other Hand, it was my Duty also to hope in him, pray to him, and quietly to attend the Dictates and Directions of his daily Providence. (157)

In spite of his disillusionment, his belief in God does not simply fade away, and it might seem that he is only pretending to believe that the narrative of conversion is still effective here. When he resigns himself to God, however, he conceives his resignation as his “Duty” rather than as the consequence of his “spontaneous” belief. The emphasis here is not so much on his innermost feeling which he entertains towards God, as on his ritualistic commitment to his duty to God. It should be noted that his resignation to God takes the form of what might be thought of as a commitment to duty for its own sake. As he says, it is “[his] unquestion'd Duty to resign [himself] absolutely and entirely to his Will.” His resignation to God here is “absolute” in that it no longer depends on his spontaneous belief. However, it cannot be thought of as a ritualistic commitment to duty as such, because it is also his duty “to hope in him, pray to him, and quietly to attend the Dictates and Directions of his daily Providence.” Therefore, his resignation to God cannot but confront a contradiction: on the one hand, he emphasizes the need of his ritualistic commitment to his duty to God; yet on the other, he must depend on God and even believe in God.

However, this contradiction is, paradoxically enough, essential to the resignation to God, and it is nothing but this impediment to “spontaneous” belief that pushes it to an extreme. When Crusoe is in bed afflicted with the thought of danger which might befall him, the verse from the Bible which provided the occasion for his conversion before suddenly occurs to him and immediately delivers him from affliction: “those Words of the Scripture came into my Thoughts, *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver,*

*and thou shalt glorify me.* Upon this, rising cheerfully out of my Bed, my Heart was not only comforted, but I was guided and encourag'd to pray earnestly to God for Deliverance" (157). Though the verse which occurs to him is the same verse what provided the occasion for his conversion before, its significance here is different, because what he calls "Deliverance" here indicates not the deliverance from sin but the deliverance from affliction. As we have seen, his choice between these alternatives constituted a decisive moment for his conversion, and he took the final step towards his conversion by choosing the former rather than the latter. However, his overruling the previous choice here is not a sign of regression in his belief, but it rather pushes it to an extreme and makes it absolute. His resignation to God no longer depends on his recognition of sin which sustains the narrative of conversion. As long as he depends on the narrative of conversion for his belief, his recognition of sin is indispensable, because it enables him to believe that the given reality is a punishment for his sin. As a result, his recognition of sin makes a word of God out of a pretext. When he recalls the verse without recognizing sin, however, his satisfaction is derived from a different reason. His resignation no longer makes a word of God out of a pretext but establishes a pretext as a pretext as such and makes him accept it as a word of God. In other words, he is forced to "immediately" accept a pretext as a word of God.

This shift of emphasis from the recognition of Providence through sin to the immediate acceptance of it affects Crusoe's reading of the Bible. While he tried to disclose a hidden meaning of a verse through interpretation before, the verse which he comes across on opening the Bible now "immediately" delights him without any effort of interpretation:

When I had done praying, I took up the Bible, and opening it to read, the first Words that presented to me, were, *Wait on the Lord, and be of good Cheer, and he shall strengthen thy Heart; wait, I say, on the Lord:* It is impossible to express the Comfort this gave me. In Answer, I thankfully laid down the Book, and was no more sad, at least, not on that Occasion. (157)

The verse which he comes across here is almost no more than a variation of the common formula: God helps those who help themselves. The essence of this formula consists not in some hidden meaning to be disclosed but in an order: that is, help yourself, and God will help you. This order is radical in that it concerns the dimension of will as such, because God intervenes only after one has asserted one's will to help oneself. The intervention of God might finally serve as the support of one's will, but it takes place only after one has performed an act of willing. As a matter of fact, it is this isolation of will in its pure form that opens up the space for absolute belief, and the dimension of will in its pure form becomes accessible only when one immediately accepts God and entirely resigns oneself to him.

It should be noted that will in its pure form takes the form of its very opposite, that is to say, absolute resignation in which will as such is completely foreclosed except the will of God. It might be said that the isolation of will in its pure form immediately leads to the universalization of the will of God. As a result, he begins to conceive his own secret will as a "dictate":

... I afterwards made it a certain Rule with me, That whenever I found those secret Hints, or pressings of my Mind, to doing, or not doing any Thing that presented; or to going this Way, or that Way, I never fail'd to obey the secret Dictate; though I knew no other Reason for it, than that such a Pressure, or such a Hint hung upon my Mind .... (175)

As he says, there is no reason to obey such a secret dictate except "such a Pressure or such a Hint" that present themselves in his mind. Since it is obvious that such a dictate comes from within, it is nothing but what we call will in its pure form converted into a dictate. The conversion of will in its pure form into a dictate is indispensable, because will in its pure form cannot be realized as it is. Though the realization of will requires at least the minimum of distance from will as such, such a distance is completely foreclosed in will in its pure form. Therefore, the realization of will in its pure form

becomes possible, paradoxically enough, only at the expense of its immediate assertion.

When Crusoe confronts savages, we can see how the renunciation of the immediate assertion of will serves as a positive instigation to action. After falling asleep afflicted with an irresistible desire for deliverance, he has a dream in which he finds on the shore two canoes with savages who belong to them. Those savages have brought with them another savage whom they are going to kill in order to eat. All of a sudden, the victim begins to run away. When Crusoe sees him alone, he shelters him in his fortification and saves him, and this savage becomes his servant. While all of it was no more than a dream, he is surprised to find real canoes on the shore more than a year later. He also finds savages who belong to them feasting around a fire, and they have brought with them two more savages whom they are going to kill in order to eat. When one of the victims begins to run away in the direction of his fortification, he expects that his dream might be realized. On seeing two savages pursuing the victim, however, he suddenly has an impression that Providence has called him: "It came now very warmly upon my Thoughts, and indeed irresistibly, that now was my Time to get me a Servant, and perhaps a Companion, or Assistant; and that I was call'd plainly by Providence to save this poor Creature's Life" (202). Obeying this call, he knocks down one savage pursuing the victim and shoots down the other. As a result, he has saved the victim as he did in his dream, but it cannot be said that his dream is realized as it was. Since he knocked down one savage and shot down another in order to save the victim, he did not simply wait and see as his dream was realized in front of him. While his participation in the deliverance of the victim was restricted to his sheltering him in his fortification in his dream, it has become much more important in its realization.

It should be noted that Crusoe cannot act on his own until he has an impression that Providence has called him. While his dream is being realized in front of him without his participation, it prevents him from acting on his own, because his action is "prefigured" in his dream. As a matter of fact, one cannot act on one's

own when one's action is prefigured, and one can act on one's own only when one can maintain at least the minimum of distance from such prefiguration. Therefore, it is not an accident that Crusoe can act on his own only when the call of Providence suddenly disrupts the closed circuit of the prefiguration of his dream and opens up the space for his participation. However, what he conceives as a call of Providence is not a call but what we call will in its pure form converted into a call. We can see it from the fact that he deliberately decides on no concrete measures to take until he confronts the savages: "I resolv'd to put my self upon the Watch, to see them when they came on Shore, and leave the rest to the Event, taking such Measures as the Opportunity should present, let be what would be" (200). He deliberately refuses to act on his own in order to keep open the space for will in its pure form. Since the prefiguration of his dream hinders the immediate assertion of his will to act, he has recourse to will in its pure form which precedes the will to act, and it is his performance of an act of willing that suddenly disrupts the closed circuit of the prefiguration of his dream. Since will in its pure form cannot be realized as it is, it takes the form of a call of Providence and opens up the minimum of distance from itself in order to realize itself. Therefore, the call of Providence can be conceived as the self-distantiation of will in its pure form, and it is nothing but this self-distantiation of will in its pure form that constitutes the essence of absolute resignation.<sup>(12)</sup>

## V Power

As the island begins to be populated, however, such absolute resignation gives way to the will to dominate pure and simple. Since Crusoe saved the savage whom he names "*Friday*" afterwards, he is no longer alone on the island and begins to exercise power over the subject as a master:

... in a little Time 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 sav'd his Life; I call'd him so for the Memory of the Time;

I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know, that was to be my Name .... (206)

When he tells Friday what they should call each other, neither name that he chooses is a real name. *Friday* is no more than the name of the day on which Crusoe saved him, and he decides on it only “for the Memory of the Time.” While *Friday* is no more than a contingent name which has no meaning for its bearer, the name with which Crusoe makes Friday call him immediately provides its bearer with a meaning. As he first teaches Friday simply to “say *Master*” and then lets him know that it is to be his name, it is not a name as such but a form of address which presupposes a relationship between one who is addressed and one who addresses, that is to say, between a master and a subject. When Crusoe tells Friday that it is to be his name, he conceives his status as a master as his own property, ignoring the fact that it actually stems from a relationship. Therefore, it might be said that he hypostasizes his status as a master when he makes a name out of a form of address. Though we usually assume that a master can be conceived as a master only as long as he stands in opposition to a subject, Crusoe “immediately” embodies a master as such, so that his status as a master is not determined by a subject. On the contrary, it immediately determines itself independently of any subject.

When Crusoe embodies a master as such, his will to dominate immediately asserts itself and closes up the space for what we call will in its pure form. Since such immediate assertion of will hinders absolute resignation, it is not an accident that Providence ceases to serve as the ultimate guarantee of reality. When he catches sight of an English ship which is in fact seized by mutineers, he suspects that there might be something wrong with it, because he is in the part of the world where an English ship has no business at all. He gives some reasons that would substantiate his suspicion, and concludes: “it was most probable that they were here upon no good Design; and that I had better continue as I was, than fall into the Hands of Thieves and Murtherers” (250). His suspicion is based on reasoning pure and simple so far, and there is nothing mysterious

about it, but he suddenly attributes it to Providence: “Let no Man despise the secret Hints and Notices of Danger, which sometimes are given him, when he may think there is no Possibility of its being real.... that they are certain Discoveries of an invisible World, and a Converse of Spirits, we cannot doubt” (250). It is obvious that he deliberately misrecognizes Providence as the source of his suspicion, because he does not think that “there is no Possibility of its being real.” What he conceives as Providence here has nothing to do with what we call the self-distantiation of will in its pure form, and even his reference to Providence is entirely redundant. His suspicion based on reasoning pure and simple precedes the intervention of Providence, or to put it more precisely, the reference to it. Since the reference to Providence is entirely redundant, what sustains his suspicion is after all reasoning pure and simple, and his reason immediately asserts itself without the intervention of Providence.

Therefore, it is not Providence but Crusoe himself that is ultimately accountable for his decision here. Since his decision immediately asserts itself, he refers to Providence not as its ultimate guarantee but merely as its formal confirmation. It is not an accident that, when he stealthily observes the captain of the English ship and his mates, who are all seized by the mutineers, he imagines himself as an all-powerful being who has control over their lives:

This put me in Mind of the first Time when I came on Shore, and began to look about me; How I gave my self over for lost: How wildly I look'd round me: What dreadful Apprehensions I had: And how I lodg'd in the Tree all Night for fear of being devour'd by wild Beasts.

As I knew nothing that Night of the Supply I was to receive by the providential Driving of the Ship nearer the Land, by the Storms and Tide, by which I have since been so long nourish'd and supported; so these three poor desolate Men knew nothing how certain of Deliverance and Supply they were, how near it was to them, and how effectually and really they were in a Condition of Safety, at the same Time that they thought themselves lost, and their Case

desperate. (252)

When he mentions “Deliverance and Supply” awaiting these men, he has in mind the care of Providence which saved and sustained him after the shipwreck. As the advantage of his position which enables him to observe them without being observed himself is compared with the omnipotence of Providence, he imagines that he assumes the role of Providence here. However, it is curiously ironic that, when Crusoe reveals himself to these men, the captain almost misrecognizes him as God: “Tho 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!*” (254) When Crusoe reveals himself, the captain becomes confused, because he recognizes a man in place of God. His confusion indicates a certain division which Crusoe himself embodies, that is to say, a division which separates his human existence and the role of Providence which he assumes.<sup>(13)</sup>

This division becomes more apparent when the captain mentions Crusoe as “the Governour” before a stubborn mutineer in order to force him into submission while Crusoe himself keeps out of sight: “the Captain told him he must lay down his Arms at Discretion, and trust to the Governour’s Mercy, by which he meant me; for they all call’d me Governour” (268). When the captain addresses the mutineer, Crusoe is not present except as a mere name in his discourse. The irony of it is that his power can assert itself without the presence of his person, and even more effectively. Crusoe himself is almost aware of this when he says: “I kept my self and one more out of Sight, for Reasons of State” (268). It is obvious that he keeps himself out of sight not only for reasons of “State” but also for reasons of “power.” This incongruity between his person and his power is further asserted when he comes to his hostages “in person” without revealing his identity:

When I shew’d my self to the two Hostages, it was with the Captain, who told them, I was the Person the Governour had order’d to look after them, and that it was the Governour’s Pleasure they should not stir any where, but by my Direction; that if they did, they

should be fetch’d into the Castle, and be lay’d in Irons; so that as we never suffered them to see me as Governour, so I now appear’d as another Person, and spoke of the Governour, the Captain, the Castle, and the like, upon all Occasions. (271)

What takes place in his confrontation with his hostages here is more complicated than it may seem. It is not simply that he speaks of himself disguising himself as someone else, but rather that he speaks of “something” external to him. Since his person does not embody the power which is supposed to belongs to him, he is forced to experience this power as something external to him. Moreover, this incongruity between his person and his power reveals that he is “nothing” in his own right. As if to compensate for his impotence, he puts on a habit which would be suitable for a governour when he finally reveals himself as a governour, but his habit makes him uneasy: “It was a very kind and agreeable Present, as any one may imagine to one in my Circumstances: But never was any thing in the World of that Kind so unpleasant, awkward, and uneasy, as it was to me to wear such Cloaths at their first putting on” (274). His uneasiness indicates that his person is incongruous with the appearance which his habit gives him. Far from giving him the appearance of an authentic governour, his habit reveals the lack of correspondence between his person and his power, and this lack of correspondence provides us with an insight into the nature of power.

Though Crusoe imagines that he embodies the power which he exercises, his power and his person do not correspond with each other, because the former can assert itself without the presence of the latter. Since his power does not belong to him, the immediate assertion of his will to dominate is completely hindered, and he can assert it only as long as he experiences it as something external to him. It is interesting to note that the recognition of one’s own will as something external to one is what authors of spiritual autobiographies ultimately tried to achieve. They tried to recognize their own will as the will of God, and nothing but the conviction that the former was congruous with the latter let them live on with ease. As Crusoe no longer

conceives Providence as the support of his will, however, such a conviction is meaningless to him, and he is forced to confront his own impotence in the face of the power which asserts itself without the presence of his person. Since he is still absorbed in the role of Providence here, his impotence still remains unconscious, but he has "unknowingly" revealed it, and the only step to take further is to "comprehend" it, that is to say, to accept it to the full.

## VI Freedom

Soon after Crusoe revealed himself in his habit, he finally accomplishes his deliverance which he has long awaited, and his repatriation brings us back to his reference to Job which we quoted at the beginning of our discussion. However, we cannot fail to mention another incident which comes to conclude *Robinson Crusoe*. Though it might appear no more than a contingent anecdote added to the main narrative, it cannot easily be dismissed as such, because it actually provides the only "logical" conclusion of *Robinson Crusoe*. On his way home, Crusoe decides to go by land rather than by sea, apparently depending on the direction of Providence which presents itself in his mind: "let no Man slight the strong Impulses of his own Thoughts in Cases of such Moment" (288). When he comes to cross mountains, however, wolves attack him and endanger his life. Having narrowly escaped from them, he finally comes to refute the direction of Providence as something unreliable:

For my Part, I was never so sensible of Danger in my Life; for seeing above three hundred Devils come roaring and open mouth'd to devour us, and having nothing to shelter us, or retreat to, I gave my self over for lost; and as it was, I believe, I shall never care to cross those Mountains again; I think I would much rather go a thousand Leagues by Sea, though I were sure to meet with a Storm once a Week. (302)

When he confesses to his sense of danger which seized him when wolves attacked him, he thoroughly overrules his previous decision, preferring even the most reckless

one rather than it. What impresses us most about the narrative of his journey through mountains which leads up to his refutation of the direction of Providence is its sheer formlessness. It seems to have no scheme that underlies it, and everything seems to be left to mere chance. The guide who was hired so as to lead the band including Crusoe and Friday in the mountains gets badly hurt by wolves suddenly attacking him while he is recklessly walking alone ahead of the rest of the band. Friday narrowly rescues him, but he begins to make a fool of a bear which is no less dangerous than the wolves which attacked the guide, and he kills it in the most diverting way. At night, hundreds of wolves attack the band, but they narrowly manage to escape with a stratagem using powder.

After having escaped from danger, Crusoe comes to know that it is by mere chance that he got through it without being devoured:

... they enquir'd much what kind of a Guide we had gotten, that would venture to bring us that Way in such a severe Season; and told us, it was very much we were not all devour'd. When we told them how we plac'd our selves, and the Horses in the Middle, they blam'd us exceedingly, and told us it was fifty to one but we had been all destroy'd; for it was the Sight of the Horses which made the Wolves so furious, seeing their Prey .... (302)

He realizes that the decision which he made at the outset depending on the direction of Providence, as well as those which he made after it, was wrong with the exception of the decision on the stratagem which he devised to deal with the wolves. The irony of it is that, though every decision that he made was wrong, he finally accomplished his escape out of his own resourcefulness. As he confesses to his sense of danger after having escaped, he did not blindly depend on the direction of Providence as he pretended to do, and therefore it failed to sustain his conviction even before it was thoroughly refuted. It might be said that the formlessness of the narrative of his journey through mountains stems from the fact that he still pretends to depend on the direction of Providence, though he no

longer resigns himself to it with his whole heart. As if to counterbalance the lack of resignation on his part, the direction of Providence which he apparently depended throughout the journey finally proves unreliable. Though he was wrong throughout, he finally manages to survive on his own, and his survival most powerfully asserts the dissolution of the scheme of Providence. Therefore, the wolves which attacked him can be conceived as the embodiment of contingent reality as such stripped of Providence, and this is why he was "never so sensible of Danger in [his] Life."

This incident which concludes *Robinson Crusoe* is significant in that there is no illusion whatever in it. Though Crusoe still pretends to depend on Providence, it no longer serves as the ultimate guarantee of reality. On the contrary, he accepts its absence to the full when he realizes that the decision which he made at the outset depending on it was wrong.<sup>(14)</sup> The absence of Providence, whose all-embracing scheme underlies the narrative of conversion, is further confirmed when he arrives in England at last and finds that his father has already been dead: "my Father was dead, and my Mother, and all the Family extinct, except that I found two Sisters, and two of the Children of one of my Brothers" (278 - 279). Considering that what Crusoe called his "ORIGINAL SIN" (194) stems from his disobedience to his father, it might seem that his death corresponds to the dissolution of the narrative of conversion. However, our impression is rather that his death makes such a correspondence itself appear meaningless. His death does not put an end to the narrative of conversion but merely reveals that it does not exist. Therefore, the end of *Robinson Crusoe* does not simply coincide with the dissolution of illusion, but it rather comes to an end when Crusoe confronts the "nonexistence" of illusion and accepts it to the full. His acceptance of the nonexistence of illusion corresponds to what we called the "abolition" of narrative at the beginning of our discussion. As we have seen, the single footprint which Crusoe found on the other side of the island immediately suspended the narrative of conversion, but nevertheless his belief in God did not simply fade away, and his disillusionment even made it absolute. This indicates that the dissolution of narrative

does not immediately deliver one from narrative as such, because one still remains within the field of its attraction which continues to affect one. The abolition of narrative rather means the abolition of its attraction itself, and it is what Crusoe accomplishes in the end.

After his repatriation, Crusoe suddenly finds himself in possession of a large fortune which comes not from the legacy of his family but from his plantation which he had left to the care of his partner. When he receives a letter telling the news, the reference to Job which we quoted at the beginning of our discussion occurs: "I might well say, now indeed, That the latter End of *Job* was better than the Beginning." When we quoted it, it seemed to suggest that *Robinson Crusoe* can be thought of as a narrative of restoration, but it has now become obvious that it cannot be reduced to such a simplistic narrative. Thought it was written under the influence of Puritan spiritual autobiographies, it radically departs from them in that it breaks through the impasse of freedom on which they continued to stumble. We formulated this impasse earlier as follows: on the one hand, human beings are technically conceived as autonomous beings; yet on the other, they are actually determined in advance. However, *Robinson Crusoe* does not try to assert freedom as if such an impasse simply did not exist. On the contrary, it pushes this impasse to an extreme and confronts what it actually conceals. It does not conceal, as we commonly assume, absolute determination from which there is no escape, but in fact it conceals, paradoxically enough, "absolute freedom." The confrontation with absolute freedom is traumatic, because, if one is absolutely free, one is ultimately held accountable for reality, however contingent it may seem. Since there is no guarantee of reality, one has to accept contingent reality to the full and assume "infinite" accountability. Therefore, the impasse of freedom is not an impasse as such but a defence against absolute freedom. The acceptance of absolute freedom means the dissolution of the defence against it, and of the idea of infinite accountability as well, because it is nothing but the idea of infinite accountability that gives rise to the defence against absolute freedom. As we have seen, the impasse of freedom is essential to the Puritan doctrine which is

based on predestination. Since the idea of authentic identity to be restored is constructed from the perspective of predestination, the acceptance of absolute freedom means nothing but the acceptance of the loss of such identity itself. This acceptance of the loss of authentic identity is after all what Crusoe accomplishes in the end.<sup>(15)</sup>

### Conclusion

What we call absolute freedom has nothing to do with freedom as we commonly understand it. As absolute freedom completely forecloses desire, one cannot even desire it but can only "accept" it. It might be misleading even to say that one "attains" it, because it is always already there. This is why one can only conceive it, paradoxically enough, as "imposed" freedom even when one accepts it. In a sense, this imposed freedom is already formulated in the first paragraph of *Robinson Crusoe*, which provides an account of the derivation of Crusoe's name. The last part of the paragraph reads: "we are now called, nay we call our selves, and write our Name *Crusoe*, and so my Companions always call'd me" (3). After we are given an account of the derivation of his name, we are finally told that he is simply called so and calls himself so, and this simple assertion provides us with an insight into the nature of a name. A name serves as a name at all only as long as others call one with it, and it does not provide one with a point of positive identification, because one is always "given" it and cannot penetrate its "given" status. Therefore, one's identification with one's name is always "negative" in essence, and one can overcome this fundamental negativity only when one assumes its given status to the full. In other words, one can overcome the fundamental negativity of one's name only when one accepts the fact that one is simply called so and calls oneself so, without penetrating its given status.

What Crusoe accomplishes at the end of *Robinson Crusoe* is of the same nature, but it is pushed to an extreme. He comes to assume the given status of his existence to the full and opens himself up to absolute freedom, that is to say, contingent reality as such.

Opening himself up to the full, he finally retains nothing that would sustain his identity, and absolute freedom means nothing but the contingent status of given existence.<sup>(16)</sup> Therefore, nothing is "restored" to its place, and even his repatriation is not "restoration." This explains why he feels himself "a Stranger" when he returns home: "When I came to *England*, I was as perfect a Stranger to all the World, as if I had never been there" (278). He cannot be restored to his place, because no place is opened up for him in advance. Similarly, his fortune, of which he suddenly finds himself in possession after his repatriation, is simply "given" him, because, until he receives a letter telling the news, he has had no idea that he is in possession of such a large fortune. The inordinate degree of his surprise at hearing the news attests to this: "In a Word, I turned pale, and grew sick; and had not the old Man run and fetch'd me a Cordial, I believe the sudden Surprise of Joy had overset Nature, and I had dy'd upon the Spot" (285). Even if we consider that he has not in the least expected such a large fortune, however, his show of surprise here strikes us as exaggerated, and we cannot but feel that there is something excessive here.

The only other occasion that Crusoe is surprised to the same degree is when the ship which he boarded on his first voyage is caught in a storm. While he is working at a pump, he suddenly swoons hearing the noise of a gun:

In a word, I was so surprised, that I fell down in a Swoon. As this was a time when every Body had his own Life to think of, no Body minded me, or what was become of me; but another Man stepped up the Pump, and thrusting me aside with his Foot, let me lye, thinking I had been dead; and it was a great while before I came to my self. (12)

On both occasions, the description of his surprise is curiously similar: on one occasion, he swoons and appears dead; on the other, he grows sick and almost dies. What characterizes his surprise on both occasions is his approach to death, and the similarity between them is further confirmed when we are told that his wandering disposition begins to revive after his

repatriation:

... though I had sold my Estate in the *Brasils*, yet I could not keep the Country out of my Head, and had a great Mind to be upon the Wing again, especially I could not resist the strong Inclination I had to see my Island, and to know if the poor *Spaniards* were in Being there, and how the Rogues I left there had used them. (304)

His strong inclination to go to sea again seems to indicate the return of the self-destructive compulsion which has been neutralized so far. It is not an accident that his surprise on both occasions which we mentioned above almost puts him to death, because the ultimate destination of the overwhelming drive of this self-destructive compulsion is nothing but his death.

Therefore, Crusoe's acceptance of absolute freedom does not only deliver him from illusion but also releases the self-destructive compulsion which this illusion has effectively neutralized so far. When this self-destructive compulsion begins to assert itself according to its internal logic, it deprives him even of the minimum of subjectivity and converts absolute freedom into its opposite. Is there not any means to avoid this fundamental impasse of freedom? We cannot answer this question at the moment, because *Robinson Crusoe* finally leaves it open. However, it has taken us very far along the path to absolute freedom, and the recognition of the fundamental impasse of freedom which it has revealed undoubtedly constitutes a step towards the realization of real freedom.

#### Notes

(1) Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) 284. Further references to *Robinson Crusoe* are to this edition.

(2) The Bible reads: "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand

camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses" (*Job*, 42.12).

- (3) For examples of the extensive application of the concept of spiritual autobiography to the reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, see G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966).
- (4) For a brief discussion on Puritanism and Puritan spiritual autobiographies, see Leopold Damrosch, Jr., *God's Plot & Man's Stories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 18 – 71.
- (5) In *Moll Flanders*, Defoe describes the moment of Moll's conversion exactly in this manner: "I now began to look back upon my past Life with abhorrence, and having a kind of view into the other Side of time, the things of Life, as I believe they do with every Body at such a time, began to look with a different Aspect, and quite another Shape, than they did before" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 287).
- (6) In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud explains the sense of guilt by means of the relationship between aggressiveness and the super-ego (*Civilization, Society and Religion, The Penguin Freud Library*, vol. 12, London: Penguin Books, 1991, 315 – 326).
- (7) The self-destructive compulsion which takes hold of Crusoe is what is called "the death drive" in psychoanalysis, whose concept Freud first developed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (On Metapsychology, The Penguin Freud Library*, vol. 11, London: Penguin Books, 1991, 275 – 338). In this essay, I understand it, as it is usually defined now, as "a direct will to destruction" without biological implications which Freud first attributed to it (Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959 – 1960*, London: Routledge, 1992, 212).
- (8) This is not the only occasion when Defoe

mentions extreme solipsism. In the first chapter of *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*, which is entitled "Of Solitude," the narrator says:

The world, I say, is nothing to us but as it is more or less to our relish. All reflection is carried home, and our dear self is, in one respect, the end of living. Hence man may be properly said to be alone in the midst of the crowds and hurry of men and business. All the reflections which he makes are to himself; all that is pleasant he embraces for himself; all that is irksome and grievous is tasted but by his own palate. (*Romances and Narratives by Daniel Defoe*, vol. 3, London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1895, 2)

- (9) The closed economy of Crusoe's self-sufficient universe is reflected in his attitude towards money: "I had, as I hinted before, a Parcel of Money, as well Gold as Silver, about thirty six Pounds Sterling: Alas! There the nasty sorry useless Stuff lay; I had no manner of Business for it" (129).
- (10) The significance of Crusoe's finding the footprint cannot be overestimated, because it discloses the limit of narrative as such. James Joyce's high praise of *Robinson Crusoe* exactly concerns its break from the closed economy of traditional narratives:

Saint John the Evangelist saw on the island of Patmos the apocalyptic ruin of the universe and the building of the walls of the eternal city sparkling with beryl and emerald, with onyx and jasper, with sapphire and ruby. Crusoe saw only one marvel in all the fertile creation around him, the print of a naked foot in the virgin sand. And who knows if the latter is not more significant than the former? (*Daniel Defoe, Buffalo Studies* 1, Buffalo: The State University of New York, 1964, 25)

- (11) In *Nostromo*, Joseph Conrad depicts the most

extreme outcome of solitude without redemption. Left alone on the Great Isabel, Martin Decoud begins to doubt his self-identity:

After three days of waiting for the sight of some human face, Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt about his own individuality. It had merged into the world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature. In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part. (London: Penguin Books, 1990, 413)

Confronting the absolute solitude of nature which admits no subjectivity, his self-identity loses its consistency and gets swallowed up in it.

- (12) Crusoe's confrontation with savages causes a further complication when we consider it in terms of justice. As he seriously begins to reflect on the means of his deliverance, the problem of justice presents itself in his mind. In order to get a savage in his possession from whom he might be able to learn how to reach the mainland, he might have to attack a whole band of savages and even kill some of them: "I had greatly scrupled the Lawfulness of it to me; and my Heart trembled at the thoughts of shedding so much Blood, tho' it was for my Deliverance" (199). As he cannot reconcile his desire with his sense of justice, his divided mind torments him for a great while, but his irresistible desire for deliverance finally overcomes him:

However at last, after many secret Disputes with my self, and after great Perplexities about it, for all these Arguments one Way and another struggl'd in my Head a long Time, the eager prevailing Desire of Deliverance at length, master'd all the rest; and I resolv'd, if possible, to get one of those Savages into my Hands, cost what it would. (200)

However, his resolution does not succeed in dispelling his scruple, and it returns when he actually comes to deal with a whole band of savages: "it occurr'd to my Thoughts, What Call? What Occasion? much less, What Necessity I was in to go and dip my Hands in Blood, to attack People, who had neither done, or intended me any Wrong?" (232)

What prevents Crusoe from attacking savages without scruple is the lack of cause on his part. Though their barbarous customs strike him as odious, they do not constitute a sufficient cause for his attack which might be as barbarous itself. While still hesitant about the justice of his attack, he decides to hide himself near the savages ready for action so that he can act whenever a distinct call of Providence presents itself in his mind: "I resolv'd I would only go and place my self near them, that I might observe their barbarous Feast, and that I would act then as God should direct; but that unless something offer'd that was more a Call to me than yet I knew of, I would not meddle with them" (232 – 233). However, the thought of such a call drops from his mind when he observes that the victim who is to be killed next is an European. The moment he sees two savages move away from the rest of the band in order to kill the victim, he immediately determines to attack them to save him. No call of Providence is mentioned before he determines to act. We are simply told: "I had now not a Moment to loose; for nineteen of the dreadful Wretches sat upon the Ground, all close huddled together, and had just sent the other two to butcher the poor *Christian*" (233). It should be noted that it is not a call of Providence but the imminent danger to "the poor *Christian*" that determines him to act here.

When we see Crusoe save the Christian at the cost of the lives of savages, we might be inclined to conclude that he is simply acting on the principle of ethnocentrism after all, but his resolution has a more radical aspect. At the moment of his resolution, he is confronted with an impasse which he might not be able to

overcome without violating his sense of justice. The imminent danger to the Christian seems to give him a pretext for momentarily suspending justice in order to save the victim. It might seem that his resolution simply replaces "absolute" justice with "practical" justice, but in fact such justice annuls the concept of justice itself, and his resolution establishes practical justice as absolute justice that overrules even justice itself. Such a resolution is "anarchic" in that it admits no principle, that is to say, no justice except itself while lacking in justice itself. His resolution might be thought of as the consequence of his ethnocentrism, but such an explanation ignores the fact that it enables him to assert himself and break through the impasse which makes him impotent in the face of what is going on in front of him. In the last analysis, the problem of justice remains open here, and it seems to be an important issue to be discussed in the future.

- (13) Crusoe's acquisition of absolute power on the island has often been interpreted as his "internalization" of Providence. See, for example, John J. Richetti, *Defoe's Narratives: Situations and Structures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 21 – 62; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600 – 1740* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) 315 – 337. However, these readings only bring us back to mystification from which Defoe tried to deliver himself. Though he began to write under the influence of the Puritan tradition, mystification was the last thing that he would have had recourse to. For example, the narrator of *A Journal of the Plague Year* says:

... when I am speaking of the Plague, as a Distemper arising from natural Causes, we must consider it as it was really propagated by natural Means, nor is it at all the less a Judgment for its being under the Conduct of human Causes and Effects; for as the divine Power has form'd the whole Scheme of Nature, and maintains Nature in its Course; so

the same Power thinks fit to let his own Actings with Men, whether of Mercy or Judgment, go on in the ordinary Course of natural Causes, and he is pleased to act by those natural Causes as the ordinary Means; excepting and reserving to himself nevertheless a Power to act in a supernatural Way when he sees occasion .... (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 193–194)

His point here is that the plague is not simply “inflicted” on human beings from outside. On the contrary, it is rather human beings themselves that further inflict it on themselves. He does not simply try to explain the plague by means of natural causes nor the supernatural power of Providence, but indicates that the cause of the plague is somehow “in” human beings themselves, and it is here that he delivers himself from mystification, both scientific and religious.

- (14) Crusoe’s resigned acceptance of the absence of Providence here forms a clear contrast with the confusion into which the single footprint he found on the other side of the island put him before. Reflecting on a possible encounter with savages which might have taken place, he becomes very depressed:

The Thoughts of this sometimes sunk my very Soul within me, and distress’d my Mind so much, that I could not soon recover it, to think that what I should have done, and how I not only should not have been resist them, but even should not have had Presence of Mind enough to do what I might have done; much less, what now after so much Consideration and Preparation I might be able to do .... (174 – 175)

It should be noted that what depresses him here is not what has taken place but what “might have” taken place. As long as what has taken place is strictly distinguished from what might have taken place, he can feel confident in the face of reality.

When these begin to merge with each other, his sense of reality itself is radically disturbed, so that he cannot act on his own. After he accomplished his deliverance, however, his sense of reality holds even when he realizes that Providence no longer serves as the ultimate guarantee of reality.

- (15) Since Ian Watt read *Robinson Crusoe* as a myth of individualism, his thesis has long served as the basis for further interpretation (*The Rise of the Novel*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957, 60 – 92). On the other hand, however, Crusoe’s psychological inconsistency has often been pointed out. For example, Virginia Woolf writes: “It is true that [Defoe] takes the opposite way from the psychologist’s – he describes the effect of emotion on the body, not on the mind” (“Robinson Crusoe,” *The Common Reader: Second Series*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1932, 57). She suggests that Defoe’s technique consists in a sort of “short circuit” which immediately connects emotion and the body. If pushed to an extreme, such a short circuit would subvert the stable relationship between body and mind. In the last analysis, *Robinson Crusoe* seems to mark the limit of individualism and point towards a different relationship between body and mind. Therefore, it is not an accident that Woolf compares it to an anonymous production of the race: “The book resembles one of the anonymous productions of the race rather than the effort of a single mind” (“Defoe,” *The Common Reader*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1925, 121).

- (16) Now we can see that the account of the derivation of Crusoe’s name epitomizes the problematic which is developed in *Robinson Crusoe*. Roughly speaking, it concerns the choice between opposite alternatives: that is, fantasy formation and subjective destitution. I am indebted to Slavoj Žižek’s interpretation of these concepts in Lacanian psychoanalysis for the formulation of the problematic in this essay. See, for example, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London:

Verso, 1996) 92–95.