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Imprints on the World – Animals in *Robinson Crusoe*

Abstract

Over the past two decades, animal studies, now referred to as human-animal studies (HAS), has begun to focus on the multitude of roles played by animals in texts, in a decided departure from the historically prevalent concentration on human characters. This article is interested in the interdependences that entangle both the humans and the animals in Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Animals naturally inhabit the island on which Crusoe is marooned, but some of the novel's pertinent episodes are set on the European continent, which indicates that animals are everywhere and that they are autonomous of human beings. As subjects of analysis, animals do not exclusively belong to the realm of biology, but neither are they mere carriers of cultural associations: to treat them as such would ignore their nature as specific creatures with their very own characteristics and independent existences. They need to be acknowledged as complete entities, not extensions of human beings.

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A seminal text from many perspectives, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a coloniser's and capitalist's narrative. Its episodic structure, typical for an early eighteenth-century novel, repeats a pattern of exploration and setbacks: Robinson Crusoe, as a young man, is deeply discontented with the quiet and industrious life that his father imagines for him. He cannot accept the idea "that mine was the middle State, or what might be called the Upper Station of Low Life, which [my father] had found by long Experience was the best State in the World, the most suited to human Happiness [...]" (RC 5). Here, Robinson Crusoe describes the jostling for social standing, and his ambition that fuels his actions for the rest of the novel, which will inform not only his relationships with other human beings but also with animals.

Although his very first outing ends in a shipwreck, he ventures out again, only to be captured by pirates and sold into slavery. After his escape, he becomes a plantation owner and trader of slaves, and ultimately accumulates a fortune. The second shipwreck, which is often seen as the main part of the novel, leaves him stranded on a desert island. This part is paradigmatic of the ways Crusoe acts and positions himself, both literally and metaphorically. Once marooned and, as he believes, alone, Crusoe sets about safeguarding his long-term survival in the inimical surroundings and soon meets with a fair amount of success. The fact that Crusoe's exploitative strategies firstly affect the animals he encounters has drawn critical attention for some time; however, it is only relatively recently that animals become the focal point of analysis. As Borgards, Klesse and Kling note in their introduction on animals in *Robinson Crusoe*, critics have either focused on the realism of the novel or on Robinson as one of the first fictional characters of modernity. From this perspective, animals are no longer given allegorical meaning, and instead become expressions of the protagonist's cultural practices (Borgards/Klesse/Kling 2016: 19). In an alternative view, *Robinson Crusoe* as a text of modernity is contested and the novel's Puritan heritage is stressed instead. Here, Crusoe represents man's journey from deviation and sin towards a final redemption, and the animals are part of the symbolic inventory of the novel (ibid.: 19-

20). In both readings, as Susan McHugh has pointed out, animals *as animals* basically vanish from the text (quoted in Borgards/Klesse/Kling 2016: 18). For roughly two decades of critical examination, animal studies – or, more recently, human-animal studies – has attempted to remedy this gap in the humanities by consciously examining the cohesion between animals as creatures and animals' cultural impact on human societies.¹ In their overview of current developments in human-animal studies, Krebber and Roscher noted that, as the field becomes increasingly diversified and professionalised, research informed by human-animal studies now shares one common impulse: to recognise that the approaches of the natural sciences are insufficient in explaining animals' lives and behaviours (Krebber/Roscher 2016: 12). At the same time, there is an increasing critical awareness of the eminently important role animals play and have always played in the development of human societies. Accordingly, any research into animals and their societal significance profits from tapping into a variety of disciplines (ibid.). Consequently, the critical analysis of animals yields findings as productive as the analysis of human beings. That is to say, animals do not only belong to the realm of biology, nor are they exclusively carriers of cultural associations. Their constant close connection and entanglement with humankind is unavoidable, and has existed since humankind itself. As Donna Haraway succinctly noted in her seminal *When Species Meet*, "[...] we are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down" (Haraway [2007] 2008: 42). Haraway's text focuses on contact zones: It assembles and connects cases in which human and non-human animals all alike contribute to meaning-making processes and, ultimately, world-building. Consequently, they are equally important actors, a view that calls a halt to "human exceptionalism" (ibid. 12).

Studying animals in literary texts does not simply mean looking at any given text afresh and opening up new layers of meaning, but ultimately doing what should be a self-evident cultural exercise: it is impossible to examine human culture by only looking at *homo sapiens*, as the more recent history of the natural habitat we all inhabit, as well as exploiting and endangering it, has so drastically shown. Reframing Defoe's novel to bring animals into the frame, too, is ultimately a step towards a reading of the natural world as encompassing all life, and a conscious effort to acknowledge that fact.

In this paper, the reframing of *Robinson Crusoe* refers to a discursive practice that guides the relevance and relatability of a cultural product. Here, it is not one of the many adaptations and rewritings of *Robinson Crusoe* that are the focal point of my analysis, but a frequently underexposed, albeit integral, part of the text. In pertinent moments of Crusoe's contacts with animals, my rereading and reframing of the novel will foreground them as non-human actors. In this sense, a new layer of meaning is added, as the lens of animal studies is able to shed light² on the previously disregarded, anthropomorphised, or othered non-human actors.

¹ Katherine M. Quinsey (2017) points out how the thinking about animals, and human-animal relations, has changed shape since early modern times, and how the eighteenth century in particular redefined the order of human beings within their natural environment (3-4).

² *Robinson Crusoe* is a canonical text which has produced extensive research from an early stage, and spawned innumerable other cultural products. A recent example of reframing the novel is the animated adventure film *Robinson Crusoe*, a Belgian-French production from 2016 (dir. Vincent Kesteloot

To a certain degree, my approach follows Friedrich Balke's structure. Balke highlights episodes of *Robinson Crusoe* and convincingly organises his study of animals into domestication and bestialisation (Balke 2016: 61), noticing that the island itself largely contains animals that are to be tamed or bred by Crusoe, while the genuine beasts only appear in the final stages of the novel. There are manifold ways in which animals play an indispensable role for Crusoe as a coloniser; a closer look at the animals is also significant for readers' view on the novel as a whole. Generally, to complement Balke's helpful domestication/bestialisation binary, I suggest that the novel actively negotiates species boundaries. These are decidedly blurred in the initial stages of Crusoe's desperate home-making on the island; he belongs to just one of many species contesting for the resources of this natural space. Even as he tames and kills animals for food, his farming efforts are largely sustainable. When he meets Friday, and then more human beings, this state changes. Animals, initially simply indispensable for Crusoe's survival, explicitly become part of the colonial power play. The blurring of lines between them and colonised human beings testify to the racism inherent in Crusoe's colonial project. Moreover, these lines are drawn by the coloniser in an arbitrary fashion, as are the humans' assessment and classification of the animals in the first place.

My analysis of the mutual influences and webs of interdependences that entangle the human characters and the animals in the novel will be bookended by Crusoe's first efforts to settle on the island, on which he will spend 28 years, and his crossing of the Pyrenees on his final return to the European continent. Crusoe might be read as founder and developer of a society, his "kingdom", which he proceeds to establish on the island. This process unfolds in a complex web of relations with animals: their presence greatly helps Crusoe along his way but, ultimately, his thrust is against animals. Highlighting the animals in the text, however, does not expunge the various ways in which Crusoe interacts with the human characters, and the implications of this. After all, he is an adventurer, a merchant, an early capitalist, and a trader of slaves. Examining the animals in the text does not gloss over the downside of his ventures; rather, it throws the trail of blood running through the text into stark relief.

My analysis therefore starts with Robinson's survival and his first colonialist efforts, and will proceed to him meeting the only other human being he becomes close to on the island, Friday. With Haraway, the focus will be on the depiction of meaning-making as a concerted effort by human *and* non-human animals, in the sense that animals are a fixed and inherent part of all the events on the island and beyond. Accordingly, the animals throughout the novel are read as essential actors and not as mere extensions of human beings. Their inclusion as creatures in their own right is, in the light of Haraway's approach, an acknowledgement of their crucial part within cultural practices, which often are situated in contact zones between species.

and Ben Stassen). The film is narrated from the animals' perspectives and is only loosely connected to the novel, as it intermingles various elements from other texts (like the pirate Long John Silver from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*). Its colourful aesthetics and somewhat erratic adventure plot is aimed at children. The narrator of the film is a scarlet macaw, who saves the day more than once through his ability to speak human language. The film switches perspectives and accords the roles of human characters to the animals; it also has dark lines running through the plot in keeping with its textual bases.

However, it is vital to note that the colonial world Robinson Crusoe is shown to be building, the basic tenets of which he has brought with him on the island, engulfs all living beings in his project of control, command, and hierarchy, with the known racist implications and outcomes. While a reading of the text will include human beings and animals as equally important for an understanding of the novel, this means at the same time that they are all subjected to Crusoe, whose treatment of them blurs the human/non-human line with inhuman and contemptuous aims of domination and exploitation. Therefore an analysis must look at all concerned, which are entangled and caught in a web of inbuilt hierarchies and power structures; this pertains to human and non-human beings alike. I will conclude with the endpoints of Crusoe's colonialist enterprise in human-animal-relations after his time alone on the island. Indeed, some of the most pertinent, final episodes that play out the human-animal configuration are set on the European continent after Crusoe's return. As it turns out, even then animals continue to figure centrally in his efforts to re-build his existence back among human beings.

2 Trying to survive: the island

The commonplace that Robinson Crusoe is marooned on an 'uninhabited' island is, on a closer look, a speciesist point of departure. The island may seem to be untouched by human beings – a wrong assumption on Crusoe's part, as it turns out – but it actually teems with animals, into whose habitats he must venture if he wants to survive. It is striking that Robinson himself acknowledges this fact, when he observes "that the Island I was in was barren, and, as I saw good Reason to believe, un-inhabited, except by wild Beasts" (RC 40). When the fact of his survival has sunk in, and after retrieving a collection of useful items (such as tools and ammunition, cf. RC 41) from the parts of the wreck he can reach over several days before it disintegrates, Crusoe begins to make his new surroundings habitable. He is a lone survivor figure, alive by sheer luck, in an environment inimical to human life. He establishes himself on the island with extraordinary success, but he must also overcome many setbacks.

In the first stages of his stay, when he slowly comes to terms with the fact that he will spend a considerable amount of time, if not the rest of his life, on this island, Crusoe's first encounters with animals are fairly restricted in focus: either he kills animals for food (goats and a turtle) or fur (a cat), or he tames and breeds them as provisions for the foreseeable future (again, goats, cf. RC 81).³ In the initial steps of his self-sustained life on the island, the slave trader, plantation owner and explorer becomes a farmer. He also grows crops of barley and rice in another of his basic endeavours to secure steady sustenance. However, he feels he is surrounded by (animal) enemies – in this case, goats and hares who feed on the crops. He encloses his land, which works as a defence against the herbivore mammals, but does not help to keep away birds, who pick the corn directly from the ear before Crusoe can harvest it. In his present situation, this is not just a nuisance but could mean serious trouble for his food plans: it is dangerous for him to lose a harvest. Lucinda Cole has pointed out the

³ Cats and goats were not endemic on the island but were living markers of previous explorations. See for example Paul Evans's (2009) article on the changes of, and damages to, the habitat of the Juan Fernández archipelago, where Alexander Selkirk was marooned. The introduction of non-endemic species has remained a danger to the archipelago's ecological system since the first explorers.

value of the seeds for Crusoe, not least because they would, in the future, enable him "to produce a gustatory reminder of England: white bread" (Cole 2016: 149). At first, he simply tries to solve the problem by force, using the weapon he retrieved from his wrecked ship. But he soon realises that the animals are cleverer than he thought.

[...] I saw my little Crop surrounded with Fowls of I know not how many sorts, who stood as it were watching till I should be gone: I immediately let fly among them (for I always had my Gun with me) I had no sooner shot but there rose up a little Cloud of Fowls, which I had not seen at all, from among the Corn itself. (RC 85)

These birds feeding on his crops are uncanny for two reasons. They belong to species unknown to Crusoe, as most animals on the island would have been, with the exception of those introduced to the habitat by previous explorers. Secondly, the birds seem to be intelligent, waiting for him to depart from his field so that they can start feasting. Crusoe accepts that he cannot watch his land permanently; he needs to devise a method to deter birds during his absence. Crusoe's method seems commonplace, but his description of it sheds light on the relationship between humans and animals in the book. Crusoe uses some of the birds he managed to shoot as a deterrent:

[...] so I took them up, and serv'd them, as we serve notorious thieves in England, (viz.) Hang'd them in Chains for a terror to others; it is impossible to imagine almost, that this should have such an Effect, as it had; for the Fowls wou'd not only not come at the Corn, but in short they forsook all that Part of the Island, and I could never see a Bird near the Place as long as my Scare-Crows hung there. (RC 85)

Friedrich Balke (2016: 70) and Greta Olson (2013: 167-168) have pointed out the criminalisation of birds in this passage. The direct and overt comparison to the punishment of thieves in Crusoe's contemporary England⁴ produces an anthropomorphisation of the birds, while at the same time pointing to the bestialisation of criminals – eventually it blurs the boundaries between the two in both directions. Ultimately, the common denominator across species here is (potentially unjust, at least disproportionate) suffering at the hands of the ruling power.

The scarecrow episode highlights a crucial issue when one focuses on the animals of the novel: there is always at least a double layer of significance. The passage is informed by basic tenets of biology – for example the feeding habits of birds – and of farming, with a farmer's pragmatic solution of a very common problem, the raiding of his crops by parasites, be they mice, rats,⁵ rabbits, or birds, as in Crusoe's case. In addition, Crusoe precisely describes the behaviour of the birds: his animal opponents seem to understand that even a gun-wielding farmer will at some point withdraw again and leave them to their own devices in the corn field. Intelligent birds like crows and starlings tend to grasp quickly what is a harmless deterrent, and what is a real danger. Familiarity with animal behaviour is an indelible part of the cultural his-

⁴ On the general impact of narratives on criminals and criminality, and on the bestialisation of criminals, see for example Gladfelder (2009, particularly 65-67), and Olson's monograph (2013).

⁵ Lucinda Cole (2016: 145-147) has drawn attention to the strange absence of rats in the novel. They only appear very marginally, whereas Alexander Selkirk – Crusoe's real-life model – was beset by them. She makes a convincing point of the island as an idealised, virtual eco-system, not necessarily a realistic one, in which the coloniser Crusoe can thrive better than Selkirk did. I am indebted to Jennifer Henke for this reference.

tory behind this passage. Naturally, animals as characters in jurisdiction are nothing new, as mediaeval lawsuits against animals show. But the 'punishment' of the birds, as Crusoe phrases it in his narration of the passage (the birds did not actually commit a crime but merely followed their instinct to find nourishment), is likened to contemporary practices of criminal justice. Using dead birds as deterrent is a known practice in agriculture. At the same time, the comparison instituted here satirically elevates Crusoe into a criminal prosecutor. This is later expanded in his casting of himself as an absolutist monarch. Gibbeting – the custom in which the bodies of executed men were put on public display, often until they decomposed – would have been familiar to Defoe's contemporary readers.

This episode of the scarecrow is pertinent in its elucidation of two strands that are always present when Defoe's narrative turns to animals: the natural sciences and contemporary social discourse on crime and punishment. An ongoing contest for resources, with boundaries between the human being and the animals that so far seemed clear-cut, is not as straightforward as it seems at first sight. Boundaries become indistinct as soon as the idea of criminality is introduced into the defence of Crusoe's plantation. The birds and their intelligence and cunning are conceived of as enemies just as capable of doing damage as human beings. Simultaneously, the explicit presentation of the treatment of human thieves back in England dehumanises the human criminals. Species boundaries between human and animal are by no means clear in the novel; in the case of the criminal birds, the shifting of boundaries centres around contemporary ideas of justice and punishment, introduced on the island by Crusoe. In three following decisive episodes, which will be analysed more closely, the boundaries are permanently negotiated and re-negotiated.

3 Species encounters – human to human

Robinson Crusoe becomes increasingly courageous in his explorations of the island, and he roams the territory in long tours, which lead him away from his "castle" for days. He manages to establish a comfortable livelihood for himself, and he builds another living place in a different area, his "Country Seat" (RC 110). He conceives of himself as the king of his lands, surrounded by his "Servants" – his parrot, his old dog, two cats. Self-complacently, he observes that he "had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among all my Subjects" (RC 108). In his imagined kingdom, and due to the lack of other humans, the animals stand in for his people. They experience – at least potentially – the same kind of treatment that an absolutist monarch might inflict on their subjects as they mete out their fates indifferently. A reader may imagine that Crusoe sees human life in a similar way.

But one day, traversing the island as usual, he discovers the print of a naked foot in the sand and is deeply shocked. Panicking, Crusoe flees to his safe home, deeply worried that his peaceful existence on the island may have come to an end: "Never frightened Hare fled to Cover, or Fox to Earth, with more Terror of Mind than I to this Retreat" (RC 112). Having to face the fact that another human being set foot on the island, Crusoe, in his use of metaphors, conceives of himself as a hunted animal in an ironic subversion of the state of things as they were so far. The sheer terror of mind he experiences dehumanises him to a degree that the boundaries between human and animal become blurred once more. The self-proclaimed 'King' of the island, owner of

land and animal 'slaves', is ultimately nothing but prey. The passage is less than subtle in its argument that the most deadly and dangerous animals are human beings – a claim that is particularly true when humans' own kind is concerned. While Crusoe was mainly afraid of predatory animals in the initial stages of his stay on the island, and hoping for a human presence to rescue him, the discovery of the footprint now shatters his relatively comfortable and secure existence.

On another of Crusoe's exploratory tours, he must again face the possibility that he is no longer the only human on the island. When he inspects one of the numerous caves on the island, he is shocked by a living presence in the dark. Here, there is a blurring of species boundaries (between human and animal) and also a blurring of boundaries between the material, biological characters and the supernatural: "I saw two Eyes of some Creature, whether Devil or Man I knew not, which twinkl'd like two Stars, the dim Light from the Cave's Mouth shining directly in and making the Reflection" (RC 128). The fear of unexpected, unknown eyes staring back at him is further enhanced by Crusoe's unfamiliarity with his surroundings. For him, the eyes cannot immediately be classed as belonging to any specific creature, and in his stressed, over-active imagination, whatever is looking at him does so with a mind, and thus must be either a devil or a man. This makes the encounter even more frightful. In addition to the disembodied gaze, Crusoe

heard a very loud Sigh, like that of a Man in some Pain, and it was follow'd by a broken Noise, *as if* of Words half express'd, and then a deep Sigh again: I stepp'd back, and was indeed struck with such Surprize, that it put me into a cold Sweat; and if I had had a Hat on my Head, I will not answer for it, that my Hair might not have lifted it off. [...] I saw lying on the Ground a most monstrous frightful old He-goat, just making his Will, as we say, and gasping for Life, and dying indeed of meer old Age. (RC 129)

When Crusoe, relieved, notices his error, he does not necessarily feel less threatened because the animal is close to death but because the goat *is not a man*. Crusoe's relief is in keeping with the realism of the novel, but the element of the supernatural is not far off here. Together with his path to what he sees as a God-fearing, religious life, the suggestion of the presence of the devil ties in with the discourse on the difficult search for redemption extant in the novel. Crusoe expresses his fear of the unknown, and the idea of a satanic presence in the cave is bolstered by simple biology: the animal in hiding has, indeed, two horns. Despite all this, there is also a strong touch of humour in the passage. Crusoe is so extraordinarily afraid, which is not quite consistent with his usual overbearing attitude and diction;⁶ his rueful admission that his hair stood on end in the cave, given in his typical, grave voice, makes for an instance of comic relief, which is rather rare in the book as a whole. While inhabited by a multitude of animals, the novel keeps returning to the dictum *homo homini lupus* (variations of which have been known since Roman antiquity). This episodes succinctly shows, as yet without the actual appearance of human beings, that assumed safety and power can collapse very quickly, and that Robinson Crusoe's position is

⁶ Michael Seidel, however, has noted how on occasion Crusoe's imagination runs ahead of him, and drily remarks on Crusoe's fears on the island, most of which are perfectly natural: "Crusoe worries about all sorts of things, the worst of them sudden annihilation: [...] He seems afraid inside his cave (earthquakes) or outside it (animals)" (Seidel 2009:183).

actually a tenuous one – he is constantly compelled to enforce it, and the slightest imponderability is a threat.

4 Friday: people and parrots

With the appearance and rescue of Friday, Crusoe's loneliness comes to an end. There is a subtle shift in Crusoe's relationship to animals after Friday's arrival on the island. The relationship between the two men is interspersed with animal scenes. An early one can be read as a continued – and successful – attempt by Crusoe at colonisation, of which Friday becomes a part and significantly changes in his dealings with animals in the course of the novel.⁷

A bird figures prominently in the scene and falls victim to Crusoe's power strategy. Friday is as afraid of Crusoe as Crusoe had been of the animals on the island on numerous occasions, and so Crusoe must convince Friday that he has no intention of hurting him. Moreover, he wants to accustom Friday to the consumption of animal meat, as he lives in constant fear that Friday could turn on him to kill and eat him. Crusoe shoots a young goat, and as Friday has no knowledge of firearms and no way of knowing how exactly the goat died, he is afraid that Crusoe may kill him in the same mysterious way. Interestingly, in order to take Friday's fear away, Crusoe reverts to killing more animals.

[...] I loaded my Gun again, and by and by I saw a great Fowl like a Hawk sit upon a Tree within Shot; so to let Friday understand a little what I would do, I call'd him to me again, pointed at the Fowl which was indeed a Parrot, and to my Gun, and to the Ground under the Parrot, to let him see that I would make it fall, I made him understand that I would shoot and kill that Bird; according I fir'd and bad him look, and immediately he saw the Parrot fall, he stood like one frighted again [...] and I found he was the more amaz'd because he did not see me put any Thing into the Gun; but thought that there must be some wonderful Fund of Death and Destruction in that Thing, able to kill Man, Beast, Bird, or any Thing near, or far off [...]. (RC 153)

The passage is extraordinarily telling in many respects. Typically for Defoe's prose, it lists the actions and methods. Conceivably, this has to do with the language barrier between Crusoe and Friday but it is also characteristic of the novel's realism and its obsession with material and physical detail, as well as plausibility.⁸

The pointless killing in this scene highlights Crusoe's disregard for the animal life around him, although he is fully aware of the fact that animals can be good companions, too: while he killed the goat kid for its meat, the shooting of the parrot is a simple demonstration of power for Friday. It also highlights Crusoe as a coloniser, implicitly connecting the animals with Friday in the sense that they all have to suffer at his hands – the possession of the firearm is the only thing that distinguishes Crusoe, whose colonial and imperial project is to subjugate, along with the animals, human beings. There is an implied threat towards Friday in the passage, which Friday rightly senses; the bird has to die for the coloniser's power to be physically presented. No-

⁷ See Borgards / Klesse / Kling 2016: 20-21, and Flynn 1994: 427-428. On the question of whether, and how far, the text endorses colonial ventures uncritically, see Todd 2018: 142-145.

⁸ On the function of lists and listing in relation to the text's realism, see Birke 2016. On the textual traditions present in the novel, see for example Hunter 2018, also on contemporary readers' expectations of travel writing, which probably influenced Defoe's descriptions of nature (ibid.: 6-7).

tably, the demonstration of power, which can be read as technological and military, uses an animal as a demonstration object. In a macabre show-and-tell, a parrot becomes the victim of political power play, and the colonial agenda of the novel is inscribed in its pointless death.

Paradoxically, during his stay on the island, Crusoe owns a tame parrot, who can speak and is for a long while the only voice Crusoe hears, with the exception of his own.⁹ On finally leaving the island, Crusoe takes his tame parrot with him, which he mentions explicitly: "I carry'd on board for Reliques, the great Goat's-Skin-Cap I had made, my Umbrella, and my Parrot" (RC 201). In the case of parrots, it is a matter of definition (and possibly of the degree of familiarity and taming) that dictates which of them lives and which has to die. The text makes a point here that the line between pet, prey, and livestock is not just a thin one, but a completely arbitrary one. The debate in the Western world of why (for example) cows are slaughtered while dogs are kept as valued and loved pets is taken to its extreme here. The exact same species in the same context and surroundings is treated completely differently by Crusoe. That arbitrary line is also present in Crusoe's dealings with Friday: will he be a free man or a slave? The relevance of the parrot is additionally played out in the question of language, as language is a crucial point of delineation – this is true for the parrot, as well as for Friday, albeit in different ways. The tamed parrot speaks; the wild does not. Initially, Friday and Crusoe do not have a language in common, and they must communicate through signs and gestures. At the beginning, Crusoe teaches Friday much as he would teach a tame parrot, with the crucial difference that Friday, next to being a human companion, must be made non-threatening in the process. In the novel, the treatment of animals is inextricably linked with the respective treatment of human beings; it would be difficult to maintain that the treatment of the two could ever have been separated in the first place.

5 Species at war

The ending of the novel, after Robinson Crusoe's return to civilisation and into human society, is characterised by inordinate violence between man and animal. However, this violence is not amongst men, as perceptive readers of the novel would perhaps expect from the ruthless capitalism expounded in Crusoe's actions so far. Back on the European continent, Crusoe travels by land from Portugal to England. When he and his group of men cross the Pyrenees in winter, they encounter the large predators that Crusoe had anticipated and feared back on his island. Ironically, the wild beasts of his imagination turn out to be familiar European species.¹⁰ In the final episodes of the novel, boundaries between species are firmly re-established but once again, a certain amount of unclarity is retained by the precarious balance of prey and predator. The mountainous area is wild and untamed, and strikes fear into Friday who has never seen snow before. The natural environment in Spain is not quite as deserted, but it is infinitely more dangerous than that of Crusoe's island. While on horseback, the scout of the group is suddenly attacked by "three monstrous Wolves" (RC 210). Friday

⁹ A parrot may be very different from a dog, but could certainly assume the function of a companion species here, see Haraway 2003.

¹⁰ See also Friedrich Balke's remarks regarding the final episodes of the novel, with animal bestialities set "[a]usgerechnet [in] Europa, de[m] Raum der Zivilisation [...]" (Balke 2016: 82).

manages to shoot one of them, without knowing what animal he has in front of him, and this scares the others off. Friday plays an important role in the next encounter with a large predator, a bear. Even Crusoe describes bears as generally peaceful creatures as long as they are left unmolested: "but as to Men, he does not usually attempt them, unless they first attack him: On the contrary, if you meet him in the Woods, if you don't meddle with him, he won't meddle with you" (RC 211). However, Friday follows and teases the bear, throwing a stone at him (RC 212). In a performance of bodily prowess, Friday climbs a tree and the bear follows him; then Friday shakes the tree and the bear with it, "[a]s if he had suppos'd the Bear could speak *English*; *What you no come farther, pray you come farther*" (RC 213). Crusoe intends to shoot the bear from below and wants Friday to get out of the way, but Friday refuses to. He climbs down to pick up his gun but "*No shoots, says Friday, not yet, me shoot now, me no kill; me stay, give you one more laugh*" (RC 213). Friday waits until the bear climbs down from the tree,

and just before he could set his hind Feet upon the Ground, *Friday* stept up close to him, clapt the Muzzle of his Piece into his Ear, and shot him dead as a Stone. Then the Rogue turn'd about, to see if we did not laugh, and when he saw we were pleas'd by our Looks, he falls a laughing himself very loud; *so we kill Bear in my Country, says Friday*; so you kill them, says I, *Why you have no Guns: No, says he, no Gun, but shoot, great much long Arrow.*" (RC 213-214)

Friday's performance can be read as an echo of Crusoe's shooting of the parrot in the passage analysed above, only more sophisticated. The colonial chain of events goes on, but is broken again as soon as Friday frames the shooting as 'native'.

The human habit of killing animals and exploiting nature in general may be part of the colonisation of natural environments. Having animals killed for one by someone else – killing by proxy, as it were – is the ultimate colonisation, as it perpetuates the process of domination. It is important to note that Crusoe does not order Friday to shoot the bear here but it becomes evident that Friday engages in this elaborate killing to impress Crusoe and the rest of the group.¹¹

On the night of the same day, the group of travellers encounters more wolves, along with (half-eaten) corpses of riders and their horses (RC 214-216). A battle with several packs of wolves ensues, the result of which is only decided when the men set a line of powder alight before firing the last shots and shouting. The wolves finally flee while the men kill the injured, remaining wolves with swords (RC 216-217). The pages towards the end of the novel focus on this prolonged scene of slaughter, with decidedly military connotations: the wolves are almost equal adversaries, and it is a battle of life and death, in which the wolves are explicitly othered as murderous beasts. Balke points out that this is an organised war, which was begun by the wolves adopting quasi military behaviour and appearing as an army (Balke 2016: 87). Here, again, the text makes a conscious effort to blur the boundaries between the human and the non-human, with the result that the wolves are cast as even more threatening

¹¹ Friedrich Balke notes that the bear scene is stage action, with Friday as director and Crusoe and their group as audience ("Bühnenhandlung", Balke 2016: 83), and classifies this scene and the final battle with the wolves as a *mise en scène* of the superior powers of humankind ("anthropologische [...] Überlegenheit", *ibid.*: 83). Furthermore, the bear scene also echoes the public entertainment of bear baiting.

than they would be if they were just seen as a pack. The penultimate scenes of the novel show men and animals as mortal enemies, and Friday exerting the powers of the coloniser.

6 Concluding remarks

The Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe has an ever-moving network of relationships between species. Animals are never exclusively allegorical figures, props for the action, foreshadowers or accompanying figures to Robinson Crusoe's colonial projects. Crusoe's endeavours are inconceivable without animals; in that respect, his life on the island is indeed a narrative of the cultural history of mankind, taming and breeding animals and integrating them into society, while their presence actively influences and changes society in turn. Hence, they must be read as entities of their own, with very specific, indispensable roles. The animals are food (and competitors for food), creatures to be exploited, to be tamed as companions, and colonised, but they are also dangerous enemies in their own right. Furthermore, animals are involved in Crusoe's colonial island project before human beings are, simply because they are the first creatures he meets. They are also the last creatures he kills in the novel, providing a grim frame for his endeavours

Notably, there is no original state, no paradise, not even for Robinson Crusoe. This island was not in any way "pure" and untouched before he was shipwrecked upon it, and neither was it deserted.¹² But the event of his shipwreck changes life on the island irrevocably. It is interesting that the islands Robinson Crusoe (or Alexander Selkirk) inhabited and tried to colonise have never really recovered from previous explorers; wherever humankind appears, it leaves traces.

The novel and its protagonist subject almost everything in the natural environment to irrevocable change, which points to the fact that humankind cannot *not* interfere with the animal world, because humans are a dangerously intelligent part of it. Thinking about animals should ultimately take the perspective of entangled history – or, better, trans-species histories.

In his initial stages of colonising the island, Robinson Crusoe must join the struggle for survival, and it is by no means certain that he will be successful. In the course of this process, he strives to dominate human and non-human beings equally. They all suffer under his establishment of colonial power. Their interconnectedness and the shifting lines between them throw their maltreatment by the coloniser into stark relief. The novel makes a point of blurring inter-species boundaries, cut through by Crusoe's colonial agenda. This agenda is not quite as anthropocentric as it may seem because at least as meaningful as the human footprints, which scare Crusoe so deeply, are the prints of paws, hooves, and claws. These prints serve as material and textual markers of the animal presences within the novel's fabric of stories of culture.

¹² See Evans 2009; Borgards 2016 is also pertinent to animals and their histories after Selkirk's stay on the factual 'Robinson Crusoe's island'.

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