Mime Journal

Volume 26 Action, Scene, and Voice: 21st-Century Dialogues with Edward Gordon Craig

Article 10

2-28-2017

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Recommended Citation

Haskell, Eric T. (2017) "Picturing Robinson Crusoe: Edward Gordon Craig, Daniel Defoe and Image-Text Inquiry," Mime Journal: Vol. 26, Article 10. DOI: 10.5642/mimejournal.20172601.10

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Picturing *Robinson Crusoe*: Edward Gordon Craig, Daniel Defoe, and Image-Text Inquiry

Eric T. Haskell

Edward Gordon Craig's illustrations for *Robinson Crusoe* present an intriguing yet uncommon case of image-text inquiry. Although his Cranach Press *Hamlet* is universally considered to be a *chef d'oeuvre* of modernity in the landscape of twentieth-century book arts, Craig's woodcuts for Defoe have gone largely unnoticed, even in the scholarly community. But if *Hamlet* was Craig's passion, *Robinson Crusoe* was his obsession. The saga of Defoe's protagonist who departed from York to eventually find himself stranded for twenty-eight years on a deserted island resonated profoundly with Craig who early on identified himself with Crusoe, tentatively agreed to illustrate the book for Count Harry Kessler in the late 1920s, and then spent the rest of his life producing the images for a volume that would have to wait until 1979 to be published posthumously under the direction of his son. This present investigation is two-fold. It seeks not only to consider the terrain of interpretations of *Robinson Crusoe* in the arts but, more importantly, to shed new light on the signification of Craig's illustrations as they chart new ways of imagining and imaging Defoe's masterpiece.

Daniel Defoe was sixty years old when he wrote Robinson Crusoe, roughly the same age at which Craig created the bulk of his illustrations in the late 1930s. The novel was originally published in London by W. Taylor in 1719 with a single illustration, a frontispiece by an unknown artist, engraved by John Clark and John Pine, and featuring the protagonist dressed in goatskins. An overnight success, the novel was reprinted four times within that year. By the beginning of the twentieth century, few books other than the Bible had known a more prolific career in the history of printed editions. Because it was the original castaway novel, a precursor (if you will) to a host of sagas most recently alluded to in the film Life of Pi, Robinson Crusoe has also been the source for a seemingly endless panorama of ventures in the fine arts (painting, works on paper, sculpture), in the performing arts (plays, pantomimes, operas, film, television), and in the decorative arts (bookbinding, ceramics). A brief tour of the horizon of these artistic activities allows us a glimpse into the post-publication visual universe of Robinson Crusoe. Consider, for example, Charles Leslie Robert's painting (1858), Walter Crane's watercolor (1909), or Charles Samuel Keene's graphite sketch (1847), or even the life-sized sculpture (1885) by Thomas Stuart Burnett of Alexander Selkirk, whose real-life adventure served as the model for Defoe's story. In the performing arts, there is Jacques Offenbach's 1867 opera, a pantomime featuring a rather curious Robert Hale at London's Royal Alhambra Theatre circa 1915, the 1916 musical starring Al Jolson, and an impressive panoply of filmic versions, including Luis Buñuel's 1954 rendition. However, Paramount Pictures' 1964 science fiction thriller, Robinson Crusoe on Mars, no doubt deserves the Oscar for having deviated the most from Defoe's original story. The world of television and video games, such as Newgrounds' Robinson Crusoe: The Game, has also cashed in on Defoe in the least memorable ways imaginable. And finally, the decorative arts have demonstrated their passion for the tale in an infinite assortment of objects from wallpaper, to ceramics, and bookbindings. Last but not least, Robinson Crusoe sunglasses, manufactured by Oliver Goldsmith Eyewear in 1962, seem useful for all prospective castaways headed for deserted islands under tropical suns.

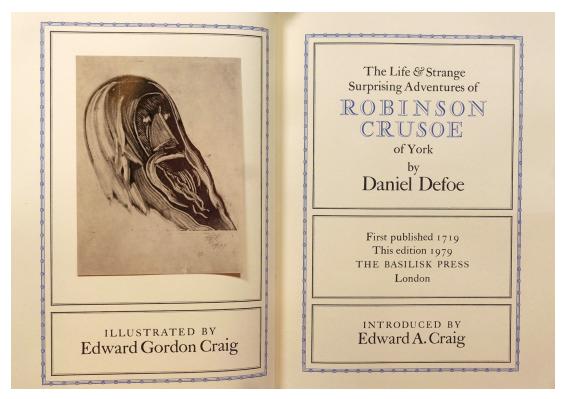


Figure 1. Title page of Daniel Defoe, The Life & Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, illustrated by Edward Gordon Craig. The Basilisk Press, 1979. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Of course, not every retelling of Defoe adheres strictly to the author's text. Notable mis-tellings, such as Agnus MacDonall's turn-of-the-century painting (ND), include Crusoe's anachronistic discovery *par excellence* of a crate of Jello on his island retreat. More often, however, the misreadings have to do with the introduction of female companionship into scenarios as different as United Artists' 1932 film, starring Douglas Fairbanks in one of his few "talkie" movies, or Pierce Brosnan's 1996 caper, which received rave reviews from the infamous film rating site, Rotten Tomatoes. Both demonstrate Hollywood's eternal search for sex in the cinema rather than for accurate adaptations of great literature.

However, it is in the book arts, and specifically in the realm of the illustrated book, that *Robinson Crusoe* has had its most impressive impact. Over 125 artists have pictured the novel. As we have seen, the first edition's frontispiece was geared to an adult readership commensurate with Defoe's text. Prominent nineteenth-century artists, such as George Cruickshank, J.J. Grandville, Gavarni, and John Everett Millais continued in this vein. However, by the end of the century and into the early years of the twentieth century, children's literature had enthusiastically adopted Defoe. Willy Pogany's circa 1914 illustrations typify the genre and demonstrate its appeal as an adventure story even for the nursery. Of the numerous examples produced during this period, many remain anonymous. What we might call the golden age of *Robinson Crusoe* illustrations, however, dates from 1900 to 1950. During the almost 300 years since the publication of Defoe's novel, over fifty of the 125 illustrated editions appeared during this specific period. Their general tone seems to be situated halfway between an adult and a young-adult viewership. The Rhead Brothers' edition from 1900 and N.C. Wyeth's images from 1920 epitomize the spirit of this golden age. When one considers visual representations of *Robinson Crusoe*, these are the ones that most frequently come to mind, not only because of their intrinsic beauty as works of art but, more importantly, because they assist the reader in seamlessly following the plot of Defoe's story. Thus, what the vast majority of

these illustrated editions have in common is that they are fundamentally narrative in nature. They approach the text with the explicit desire of rendering into visual terms precisely what is presented by the author. Thus, their primary function follows the traditional mode of picturing literature in what we might call the "CliffsNotes style." Pushed to its limit, this "style" might culminate in such version as Sam Citron's graphic novel from 2011 in which image entirely eclipses text.

Robinson Crusoe

26

THE LIFE AND STRANGE SURPRISING ADVEN



I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off bis tra-de, lived afterward at York, from whence be had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutnaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe, and so my companions always called me. I had two brothers, one of which was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockbart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards; what became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father and mother did know what was become of me.

being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free shol generally goes, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my indination to his led me so stronply apainst thewill, nay, the commands of my father, and apainst all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be somethinp fatal in that propension of nature tendinp directly to the life of misery which

was to befall me. My father a wise My father, a wise and prave man pave me serious and extellent counsel apainst what he foresaw was my desipn. He called me one morninp into bis chamber, where be was confined by the pout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wanderino inclination I had for leavinp my father's bouse and my native country, where I mipht be well introduced, and bad a prospect of raisino my fortunes by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one band, or of aspiring, superior fortunes ou the other, who went abroad upon adveutures, to rise by euterprise, and make themselves famous iu uudertakiups of a uatur out of the commou road; that these thiups were all either to for above me, or too far



below me, that mine was the middle state, or of low life, which he had found by loup experience was the best state in the world, the most happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and

Figure 2. Edward Gordon Craig, trial proof for rejected page design. *Robinson Crusoe,* The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 26. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

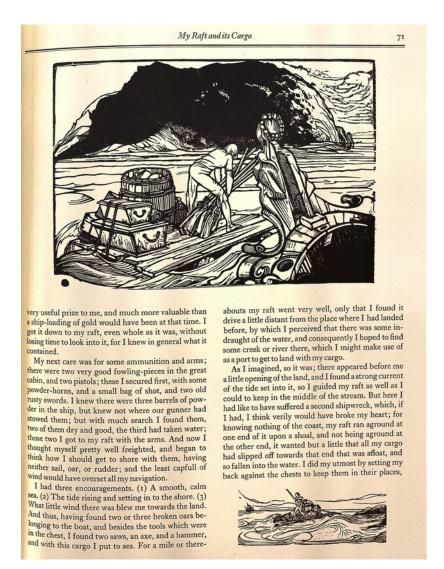


Figure 3. Edward Gordon Craig, woodcut illustration. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 71. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Edward Gordon Craig breaks new ground in his interpretation of *Robinson Crusoe*. His goal is to transcend traditional illustration in order to arrive at a psychological illumination of Defoe's text. In doing so, he goes beyond the figurative to a quasi-abstract vision of the novel. From 1924 to 1962, Craig worked intermittently on this illustrative suite, which was printed by the John Roberts Press and published by the Basilisk Press in 1979, twelve years after his death. Limited to 515 copies, this edition of Defoe contained Craig's black and white woodcuts, along with an informative account of the artist's nearly four-decade project written by his son, Edward ("Teddy") A. Craig. Since his father was deceased, Teddy made the pictorial selection out of a host of blocks that Craig had made during his lifetime. Teddy's sister, Helen, placed the images within Defoe's text according to her recollections of her father's wishes. Text and illustrations were arranged in double-column mode.

The genesis of the book is notable; it reflects Craig's lifelong zeal for Defoe, which as we have said bordered on the obsessional. The actor-artist first read the novel in 1894 at the age of twenty-two while studying acting at the London Lyceum. In his *Daybooks* entry for November 27 of that year, Craig writes with enthusiasm: "Read *Robinson Crusoe* for the first time: ENCHANTMENT" (Craig 12). Craig's first efforts at illustrating the text date from 1924-30, in the wake of the success of his collaboration with Count Kessler on the Cranach Press *Hamlet*. With two of Craig's woodcuts, Kessler prepared a trial page for *Robinson Crusoe* fashioned after the *Hamlet* template [Figure 2], but the typeface was, according to Craig, "too heavy for an eighteenth-century subject," and the project was soon abandoned due to the publisher's

failing health (Craig 23). The second and most intense phase of woodcut production for *Robinson Crusoe* came in 1938 when Craig moved to the Parisian suburb of St. Germain-en-Laye. As World War II broke out, the artist's depression was acute. In Defoe's text he sought solace. Teddy postulates that Crusoe helped Craig cope with the loneliness he felt as an Englishman in Occupied France. Robinson Crusoe, he notes, "always had a unique position among his special friends and advisors" (Craig 11). Craig writes: "What is it [that] attracts us so much to this lonely figure who is monarch of all he surveys and is so much alone? Is it not our desire to be alone ... to be alone at last? And we experience all that through him—for we become Robinson Is it that we recognize ourself (sic) in Crusoe ... " (Craig 12). About his father, Teddy further recounts that "he read it over and over again ... and in the silence of the reading he entered the silence of the island—and became Robinson Crusoe. He achieved a kind of peace that we inherit in some fifty of his finest blocks" (Craig 12).

The Adventures of Kootnson Crusoe

took off the skins and preserved them. Coming back by the sea-shore, I saw many sorts of sea-fowls, which I did not understand; but was surprised, and almost frightened, with two or three seals, which, while I was gazing at, not well knowing what they were, got into the sea, and escaped me for that time.

Nov. 6. – After my morning walk I went to work with my table again, and finished it, though not to my liking; nor was it long before I learned to mend it.

Nov. 7. - Now it began to be settled fair weather. The 7th, 8th, 9th, 1oth, and part of the 12th (for the 11th was Sunday) I took wholly up to make me a chair, and with much ado brought it to a tolerable shape, but never to please me; and even in the making, I pulled it in pieces several times. Note, I soon neglected my keeping Sundays; for, omitting my mark for them on my post, I forgot which was which.

never to please me; and even in the making, I pulled it in pieces several times. Note, I soon neglected my keeping Sundays; for, omitting my mark for them on my post, I forgot which was which.

Nov. 13. – This day it rained, which refreshed me exceedingly, and cooled the earth; but it was accompanied with terrible thunder and lightning, which frighted me dreadfully, for fear of my powder. As soon as it was over, I resolved to separate my stock of powder into as many little parcels as possible, that it might not be in danger.

Nov. 14, 15, 16. – These three days I spent in making.

Nov. 14, 15, 16. – These three days I spent in making little square chests or boxes, which might hold about a pound, or two pound at most, of powder; and so putting the powder in, I stowed it in places as secure and remote from one another as possible. On one of these three days I killed a large bird that was good to eat, but I know not what to call it.



Nov. 17. - This day I began to dig behind my tent into the rock, to make room for my farther conveniency. Note, three things I wanted exceedingly for

this work, viz. a pick-axe, a shovel, and a wheelbeare or basket; so I desisted from my work, and began consider how to supply that want, and make me was tools. As for a pick-axe, I made use of the iron crow which were proper enough, though heavy; but the next thing was a shovel or spade. This was so aboutely necessary, that indeed I could do nothing effect ually without it; but what kind of one to make, I kee not.

Nov. 18. – The next day, in searching the wood, found a tree of that wood, or like it, which in the Brant they call the iron tree, for its exceeding hardness, this, with great labour, and almost spoiling my ar, cut a piece, and brought it home, too, with difficult enough, for it was exceeding heavy.

The excessive hardness of the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the second or the wood of the wood, and having my are the second or the wood of the wood, and having my are the second or the wood of the wood, and having my are the second or the wood, and having my are the wood, and ha

The excessive hardness of the wood, and havings other way, made me a long while upon this machine, for I worked it effectually, by little and little, into de form of a shovel or spade, the handle exactly shape like ours in England, only that the broad part having no iron shod upon it at bottom, it would not lastness long. However, it served well enough for the use which I had occasion to put it to; but never was shovel, I believe, made after that fashion, or so larg a-making.

I was still deficient, for I wanted a basket or a whether was still deficient, for I wanted a basket or a whether would be a busing no such things as twigs that would be a busing no such things as twigs that would be a was a wheelbarrow, I fancied I could make all but the wheel, but that I had no notion of, neither did I law how to go about it; besides, I had no possible way in make the iron gudgeons for the spindle or axis of the wheel to run in, so I gawe it over; and so for carriga way the earth which I dug out of the cave, I make a thing like a hod which the labourers carry mortar is when they serve the bricklayers.

This was not so difficult to me as the making the

This was not so difficult to me as the making as shovel; and yet this, and the shovel, and the atment which I made in vain to make a wheelbarrow, took as up no less than four days; I mean always, excepting my morning walk with my gun, which I seldom failed and very seldom failed also bringing home somehing fit to eat.

Nov. 23. - My other work having now stood sill because of my making these tools, when they were finished I went on, and working every day, as greath and time allowed, I spent eighteen dissentiely in widening and deepening my cave, that it might hold my goods commodiously.

Met. - During all this time I worked to make this non or are spacious enough to accommodate me as a subsouse or magazine, a kitchen, a dining-room, and order; as for my lodging. I kept to the tent, except this stretimes in the wet season of the year it rained shird, that I could not keep myself dry, which caused as furrurards to cover all my place within my pale wisheg poles, in the form of rafters, leaning against the rock, and load them with flags and large leaves of ten, lea thatch.



Deember 10. — I began now to think my cave or vault failed, when on a sudden (it seems I had made it too mg) a great quantity of earth fell down from the top and one side, so much, that, in short, it frighted me, and to without reason too; for if I had been under it, I had beer wanted a grave-digger. Upon this disaster I lad great deal of work to do over again; for I had the tose earth to carry out; and, which was of more impattance, I had the ceiling to prop up, so that I mght be sure no more would come down.

might he ure no more would come down.

This day I went to work with it accordingb, and get two shores or posts pitched upright to the
up, with two pieces of boards across over each post.
In Is finished the next day; and setting more posts up
with boards, in about a week more I had the roof
ward; and the posts standing in rows, served me for
puttions to part of my house.



Dec. 17. – From this day to the twentieth I placed shelves, and knocked up nails on the posts to hang everything up that could be hung up; and now I began to be in some order within doors.

Dec. 20. – Now I carried everything into the cave,

Dec. 20. – Now I carried everything into the cave, and began to furnish my house, and set up some pieces of boards, like a dresser, to order my victuals upon; but boards began to be very scarce with me; also I made me another table.

Dec. 24. - Much rain all night and all day; no stirring

Dec. 25. - Rain all day.

Dec. 26. - No rain, and the earth much cooler than before, and pleasanter.

Dec. 27. – Killed a young goat, and lamed another, so as that I catched it, and led it home in a string. When I had it home, I bound and splintered up its leg, which was broke. N.B. – I took such care of it, that it lived; and the leg grew well and as strong as ever; but by my nursing it so long it grew tame, and fed upon the little green at my door, and would not go away. This was the first time that I entertained a thought of breeding up some tame creatures, that I might have food when my powder and shot was all spent.

my powder and shot was all spent.

Dec. 28, 29, 30.— Great heats and no breeze, so that there was no stirring abroad, except in the evening, for food. This time I spent in putting all my things in order within doors.

order within doors.

January 1. – Very hot still, but I went abroad early and late with my gun, and lay still in the middle of the day. This evening, going farther into the valleys which lay towards the centre of the island, I found there was plenty of goats, though exceeding shy, and hard to come at. However, I resolved to try if I could not bring swydog to hunt them down.

come at. However, I resolved to try if I could not bring my dog to hunt them down.

Jan. 2. – Accordingly, the next day, I went out with my dog, and set him upon the goats; but I was mistaken, for they all faced about upon the dog; and he knew his danger too well, for he would not come near them.

them.

Jan. 3. — I began my fence or wall; which, being still jealous of my being attacked by somebody, I resolved to make very thick and strong.

N.B. — This wall being described before, I purfully the property of the strong this property.

to make very thick and storing.

N.B. – This wall being described before, I purposely omit what was said in the journal. It is sufficient to observe that I was no less time than from the 3rd of January to the 14th of April working, finishing, and perfecting this wall, though it was no more than about twenty-four yards in length, being a half-circle from one place in the rock to another place about eight yards

Figure 4. Edward Gordon Craig, woodcut illustration. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, pages 82-83. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Craig's first illustrations for *Robinson Crusoe* were primarily narrative. This is not astounding when we think that Craig carried with him throughout his life a copy of Defoe illustrated by the celebrated George Cruikshank, and these illustrations were entirely narrative. Craig's first attempts include what the artist called his "raft pictures" [Figure 3], as well as images of his various cave retreats [Figure 4]. A master stage designer, Craig seems anxious to set the scene so that the island scenario can unfold. Other woodblocks, such as "Robinson Reading the Bible" and the discovery of the footprint, follow closely the habitual stock scenes that traditional illustrators had always pictured from the novel (Defoe, Basilisk 116-17). A radical change occurred, however, when Craig suddenly notes, "Why echo Defoe's words—how can there be anything in that? But then if we don't do that, how [to] illustrate the book?" (Defoe, Basilisk 47). This revelation irrevocably changed the way in which the artist would continue his quest of

illustrating the text. In sum, it constituted an "aha moment" that seemingly spearheaded the shift from mere representation to the exceptional precinct of picturing ideas rather than mere plot. This abrupt transition curiously coincided with Craig's discovery of a wooden mask [Figure 5] in a Parisian shop of the Quartier Latin. He immediately purchased it, and his project gelled. A sort of talisman for Craig, the mask pushed him past the figurative into the realm of abstraction so central to our concerns.



Figure 5. Anonymous wooden mask. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 25. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Until that point in time, Craig relates, "I could not *see* Robinson Crusoe" (Defoe, Basilisk 44). Suddenly, his departure from simple storytelling manifested itself in the form of a suite of portraits of Crusoe that constitute a gallery of theatrical masks. The frontispiece for the volume clearly demonstrates the influence of the wooden mask on Craig's artistic inspiration [Figure 1]. Here, the nose of the mask morphs into a sail while the lips act as a boat moving across the waters of the face. Craig articulates the fact that Crusoe's physiognomy is distinguishable from all others because of his twenty-eight-year-long sojourn on the island. Since it is the sail and ship that symbolically transport the protagonist to what he first calls his "island prison," the artist references them directly (Defoe, Basilisk 87).



I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull.



He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe, and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of which was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards; what became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father or mother did know what was become of me

Being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free school generally goes, and designed me for the law; but 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 persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon adventures, to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings, of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me I might judge of the happiness of this state by this one thing, viz. that this was the state of life which all other people envied; that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequences of being born to great things, and wished they had been placed in the middle of the two extremes, between the mean and the great; that the wise man gave his testimony to this as the just standard of true felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty or riches.

He bid me observe it, and I should always find, that the calamities of life were shared among the upper and lower part of mankind; but that the middle station had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many

Figure 6. Edward Gordon Craig, woodblock illustration. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 52. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

On page one of the volume, the first line of the text is cleverly flanked by a pair of thumbnail masks, which face one another [Figure 6]. Although the young Robinson featured below only contemplates his future voyage as he launches a tiny sailboat across water that has accumulated on the top of a barrel in the streets of York, Craig prefigures the real voyage ahead that will change the lad's life forever. With the artist's focus on the solitude Crusoe experiences once on the island, he demonstrates that his interest lies primarily in the tribulations surrounding the isolation of the castaway and the crippling effect they exert upon his psyche. The series of portrait-masks that follows thus serve as a barometer of Robinson Crusoe's interior landscape. Exasperated at the outset [Figure 7], these portraits demonstrate, in rapid succession, the various stages of the human condition: fright, bewilderment, loneliness, denial, hopelessness, oblivion, anxiety, despair, and finally total depression [Figure 8]. The triangular nose-sail is the single most prominent defining feature of these portraits. It remains ever-present throughout the series. We see it when Crusoe sleeps (Defoe, Basilisk, 57) and even when his physiognomy espouses that of the natural world with which he has become one [Figure 9]. This announces his definitive isolation from humankind. When he runs out of ink and realizes that he will no longer be able to keep his journal, his anguish is at its

apex [Figure 10]. Craig pictures him sullen and encased in a tomb-like structure, a metaphor of his imprisonment on the island. As a suite, the portrait-masks record the evolving transformations of Crusoe's move from societal order to primitive disorder and from civilization back to nature in a sort of Rousseau-esque dirge.

From Defoe's text, Craig derives the essence of Crusoe's path of physiological disarray. His portrait-masks are akin to the Stations of the Cross in the protagonist's downhill spiral to despair. Indeed, there is an almost religious fervor in the descent which echoes across the suite in an ominous silence. Crusoe states: "I seemed banished from human society ... I was alone, circumscribed by the boundless ocean, cut off from mankind, and condemned to what I call silent life" (Defoe, Sterling 143). Crusoe dubs his new home the "Island of Despair," calling it a "miserable" and "dreadful" place (63, 70, 80). All of this is clearly mirrored in the portrait-masks, which impeccably reflect his state of mind as it grows more and more despondent. The viewer of these illustrations needs not see what Crusoe sees simply because mere contemplation of these portraits constitutes the most accurate revelation imaginable of the protagonist's tortured soul. As his existentialist drama unfolds in Defoe's text, Craig pictures it to perfection.

In his rendering of the mask series, Craig sees himself as an actor-illustrator. "An actor," he writes, "makes gestures and movements that help develop the mood of the play, but these are his own ideas put against the backdrop of the play" (Defoe, Basilisk 21). For Craig, there is an intrinsic link between the art of acting and the art of illustrating. To be lasting in their impact, both require more than simply aping text or copying stage directions verbatim. Rather, Craig operates in an uncommon precinct where understatement and insinuation reign over mere re-telling of the textual entity. Thus, the hallmark of these images resides in their ability to project onto the paginal plane the psychological disarray, the emotional destitution, and agony of solitude experienced by the castaway.



Figure 7. Edward Gordon Craig, woodblock proof. Robinson Crusoe, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 76.

Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

coason to go.

mainder of my solitary residence in this dismal place.
Helieve the reader of this will not think strange if I
onfess that these anxieties, these constant dangers I
led in, and the concern that was now upon me, put
and to all invention, and to all the contrivances that
I lad laid for my future accommodations and convariences. I had the care of my safety more now upon
my hands than that of my food. I cared not to drive a
nail or chop a stick of wood now, for fear the noise I
should make should be heard; much less would I fire
again, for the same reason; and, above all, I was inmoterably uneasy at making any fire, lest the smoke,
which is visible at a great distance in the day, should
beray me; and for this reason I removed that part of
my business which required fire, such as burning of
pots and pipes, &c., into my new apartment in the
woods; where, after I had been some time, I found, to
my unspeakable consolation, a mere natural cave in
the earth, which went in a vast way, and where, I dare
say, no savage, had he been at the mouth of it, would
be so hardy as to venture in; nor, indeed, would any
man lese, but one who, like me, wanted nothing so
much as a safe retreat.

The mouth of this hollow was at the bottom of a grat rock, where, by mere accident, (I would say, if I did not see abundant reason to ascribe all such things now to Providence). I was cutting down some thick braches of trees to make charcoal; and before I go on, I must observe the reason of my making this charcoal, which was thus.

lwas afraid of making a smoke about my habitation, as I said before; and yet I could not live there without baking my bread, cooking my meat, &c. So I contrived to burn some wood here, as I had seen done in England under turf, till it became chark, or dry coal; and then putting the fire out, I preserved the coal to carry bome, and perform the other services which fire was wanting for at home, without danger of smoke.

But this is by the by. While I was cutting down some wood here. I preserved the tablind a very thick

But this is by the by. While I was cutting down some wood here, I perceived that behind a very thick branch of low brushwood, or underwood, there was a kind of hollow place. I was curious to look into it; and getting with difficulty into the mouth of it, I found it

mouth shining directly in, and making the re



However, after some pause I recovered m began to call myself a thousand fools, and that the that was afraid to see the devil was live twenty years in an island all alone, a durst to believe there was nothing in this was more frightful than myself. Upon this, up my courage, I took up a great firebrand rushed again, with the stick flaming in my hunt gone three steps in, but I was almost frighted as I was before; for I heard a very like that of a man in some pain, and it was foll broken noise, as if of words half expressed, a deep sigh again. I stepped back, and was ind with such a surprise, that it put me into a cand if I had had a hat on my head, I will not a it, that my hair might not have lifted it off plucking up my spirits as well as I could couraging myself a little with considering power and presence of God was everywhere able to protect me, upon this I stepped forw and by the light of the firebrand, holding it over my head, I saw lying on the ground a m strous, frightful, old he-goat, just making h we say, and gasping for life; and dying, index old age.

I stirred him a little to see if I could get him he essayed to get up, but was not able to raise

Figure 8. Edward Gordon Craig, woodcut illustration. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 115. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

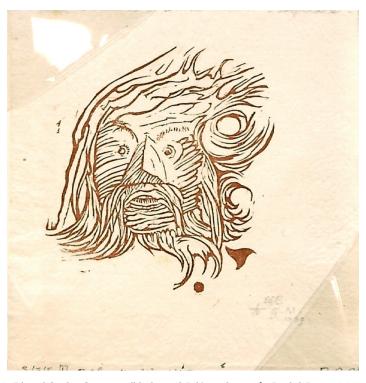


Figure 9. Edward Gordon Craig, woodblock proof. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 119. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Craig's interest in Defoe's novel has an unusual slant. His focus is almost entirely on Robinson Crusoe's sojourn on the island. Between the beginning of the text and the shipwreck, there are a total of three letter decorations and one small illustration. Similarly, as soon as others arrive on the island, Craig's interest wanes. He has completed his self-reflective task, and there are only a few minor woodcuts between that point in the saga and the end of the book. He never pictures any other human being in his suite, not even Crusoe's much-illustrated man Friday. Clearly, the artist's self-identification with Crusoe is pivotal. In fact, it is the very *raison d'être* of his obsession with Defoe's text. What eventually transpires, of course, is an evolution in the protagonist as he transitions from despair to delight in his new hermetic life in which he is the self-proclaimed king of the island. Suddenly, his cave becomes his "castle" (Defoe, Sterling, 180). However, if Craig does not choose to picture this shift, he does recognize it in the witty poem he pens as follows:

Our birthdays ...
Rarely does Fate give us much a present on this day of days.
...
But Robinson on his birthday (his 28th) was actually given a whole Island by Fate.
Ponder this well. (Craig 13)

In conclusion, the Cranach *Hamlet's* success was due to Craig's ability to evoke a sense of place using his expertise as a brilliant stage-crafting magician to illuminate the *clair-obscur* of Elsinore across the acts of Shakespeare's tragedy and thus create the genius of the place. Reflected in a series of portrait-masks, *Robinson Crusoe's* sense of place is a psychological rendering rather than a scenic one. There is no architectonic stagecraft here, but rather a suite of masks that record the evolving inter-configurations of the protagonist's mental disarray as he faces a life of solitary confinement. More than any other illustrator to date, Edward Gordon Craig moves the reader-viewer into a new terrain where the plot is seconded by a specific focus on the interior landscape of the protagonist. There is indeed some traditional retelling in his work, but almost half of his illustrations are portrait-masks. This new dimension points to the modernity of Craig's vision as an artist. Through him, an early eighteenth-century text is revivified in potent ways, shedding new light on an almost 300-year-old literary masterpiece. Thus, in his peerless avant-garde fashion, Craig maps new visual terrain, leaves an indelible mark on Defoe, and reminds us of the intrinsic value of book illustration as textual illumination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This essay benefited greatly from invaluable insights provided by my colleagues Thomas Leabhart (Resident Artist and Professor of Theatre at Pomona College), Judy Harvey Sahak (Sally Preston Swan Librarian and Director or Denison Library at Scripps College), and Carrie Marsh (Director of Special Collections and Libraries at Honnold Library, Claremont). It is dedicated to my Pomona College professor and mentor *par excellence*, Leonard C. Pronko, Professor Emeritus of Theatre, Pomona College.

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of time and labour which it took me up to make a plank or board. But my time or labour was little worth, and so it was as well employed one way as another.

However, I made me a table and a chair, as I observed above, in the first place, and this I did out of the short pieces of boards that I brought on my raft from the ship. But when I had wrought out some boards, as above, I made large shelves of the breadth of a foot and a half one over another, all along one side of my cave, to lay all my tools, nails, and ironwork; and, in a word, to separate everything at large in their places, that I might come easily at them. I knocked pieces into the wall of the rock to hang my guns and all things that would hang up; so that had my cave been to be seen, it looked like a general magazine of all necessary things; and I had everything so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great.

And now it was when I began to keep a journal of every day's employment; for, indeed, at first, I was in too much hurry, and not only hurry as to labour, but in too much discomposure of mind; and my journal would have been full of many dull things. For example, I must have said thus: Sept. the 30th.—After I got to

shore, and had escaped drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my deliverance, having first vomited with the great quantity of salt water which was gotten into my stomach, and recovering myself a little, I ran about the shore, wringing my hands, and beating my head and face, exclaiming at my misery, and crying out, I was undone, undone, till, tired and faint, I was forced to lie down on the ground to repose; but durst not sleep, for fear of being devoured.

Some days after this, and after I had been on board the ship, and got all that I could out of her, yet I could not forbear getting up to the top of a little mountain, and looking out to sea, in hopes of seeing a ship; the fancy at a vast distance I spied a sail, please myself with the hopes of it, and then, after looking steadily till I was almost blind, lose it quite, and sit down and weep like a child, and thus increase my misery by my folly.

But having gotten over these things in some measure, and having settled my household stuff and habitation, made me a table and a chair, and all as handsome about me as I could, I began to keep my journal, of which I shall here give you the copy (though in it will be told all these particulars over again) as long as it lasted; for, having no more ink, I was forced to leave it off.



Figure 10. Edward Gordon Craig, woodcut illustration. *Robinson Crusoe*, The Basilisk Press, 1979, page 80. Special Collections, Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California. Reproduced with permission of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

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