







A U S D R U C K B O O K S

2011

Literature is the competition of misinterpretations that consciousness naturally and necessarily produces on themes of the unconscious, and like every competition it has its prizes. One would have to show exactly how in this sense mythology fails and dies in two classic novels of the deserted island, Robinson and Suzanne. *Suzanne and the Pacific* emphasizes the separated aspect of islands, the separation of the young woman who finds herself there;¹ Robinson Crusoe, the creative aspect, the beginning anew. It is true that the way mythology fails is different in each case. In the case of Giraudoux's Suzanne, mythology dies the prettiest, most graceful death. In Robinson's case, its death is heavy indeed. One can hardly imagine a more boring novel, and it is sad to see children still reading it today. Robinson's vision of the world resides exclusively in property; never have we seen an owner more ready to preach. The mythical recreation of the world from the deserted island gives way to the reconstitution of everyday bourgeois life from a reserve of capital. Everything is taken from the ship. Nothing is invented. It is all painstakingly applied on the island. Time is nothing but the time necessary for capital to produce a benefit as the outcome of work. And the providential function of God is to guaran-

¹ Jean Giraudoux, *Suzanne et le Pacifique*, Grasset, Paris

tee a return. God knows his people, the hardworking honest type, by their beautiful properties, and the evil doers, by their poorly maintained, shabby property. Robinson's companion is not Eve, but Friday, docile towards work, happy to be a slave, and too easily disgusted by cannibalism. Any healthy reader would dream of seeing him eat Robinson. Robinson Crusoe represents the best illustration of that thesis which affirms the close ties between capitalism and Protestantism. The novel develops the failure and the death of mythology in Puritanism. Things are quite different with Suzanne. In her case, the deserted island is a depository of ready-made, luxurious objects. The island bears immediately what it has taken civilization centuries to produce, perfect, and ripen. But mythology still dies, though in Suzanne's case it dies in a particularly Parisian way. Suzanne has nothing to create anew. The deserted island provides her with the double of every object from the city, in the windows of the shops; it is a double without consistency, separated from the real, since it does not receive the solidity that objects ordinarily take on in human relations, amidst buying and selling, exchanges and presents. She is an insipid young woman. Her companions are not Adam, but young cadavers, and when she

reenters the world of living men, she will love them in a uniform way, like a priest, as though love were the minimum threshold of her perception.

What must be recovered is the mythological life of the deserted island. However, in its very failure, Robinson gives us some indication: he first needed a reserve of capital. In Suzanne's case, she was first and foremost separate. And neither the one nor the other could be part of a couple. These three indications must be restored to their mythological purity. We have to get back to the movement of the imagination that makes the deserted island a model, a prototype of the collective soul. First, it is true that from the deserted island it is not creation but re-creation, not the beginning but a re-beginning that takes place. The deserted island is the origin, but a second origin. From it everything begins anew. The island is the necessary minimum for this re-beginning, the material that survives the first origin, the radiating seed or egg that must be sufficient to re-produce everything. Clearly, this presupposes that the formation of the world happens in two stages, in two periods of time, birth and re-birth, and that the second is just as necessary and essential as the first, and thus the first is necessarily compromised, born for renewal and already renounced in a

catastrophe. It is not that there is a second birth because there has been a catastrophe, but the reverse, there is a catastrophe after the origin because there must be, from the beginning, a second birth. Within ourselves we can locate the source of such a theme: it is not the production of life that we look for when we judge it to be life, but its reproduction. The animal whose mode of reproduction remains unknown to us has not yet taken its place among living beings. It is not enough that everything begin, everything must begin again once the cycle of possible combinations has come to completion. The second moment does not succeed the first: it is the reappearance of the first when the cycle of the other moments has been completed. The second origin is thus more essential than the first, since it gives us the law of repetition, the law of the series, whose first origin gave us only moments. But this theme, even more than in our fantasies, finds expression in every mythology. It is well known as the myth of the flood. The ark sets down on the one place on earth that remains uncovered by water, a circular and sacred place, from which the world begins anew. It is an island or a mountain, or both at once: the island is a mountain under water, and the mountain, an island that is still dry. Here we see original creation

caught in a re-creation, which is concentrated in a holy land in the middle of the ocean. This second origin of the world is more important than the first: it is a sacred island. Many myths recount that what we find there is an egg, a cosmic egg. Since the island is a second origin, it is entrusted to man and not to the gods. It is separate, separated by the massive expanse of the flood. Ocean and water embody a principle of segregation such that, on sacred islands, exclusively female communities can come to be, such as the island of Circe or Calypso. After all, the beginning started from God and from a couple, but not the new beginning, the beginning again, which starts from an egg: mythological maternity is often a parthenogenesis. The idea of a second origin gives the deserted island its whole meaning, the survival of a sacred place in a world that is slow to re-begin. In the ideal of beginning anew there is something that precedes the beginning itself, that takes it up to deepen it and delay it in the passage of time. The desert island is the material of this something immemorial, this something most profound.

A part of text taken from the book
Gilles Deleuze
Desert Islands and Other Texts /1953 - 1973 /

editor
Aleš Čermák / Ausdruckbooks
design
Aleš Čermák / Ausdruckbooks
graphic interventions
Aleš Čermák
edition
100 pcs
printed in
2011
publication
No.3
published by
Ausdruckbooks

