

DEFOE'S ROBINSON CRUSOE AND KAFKA'S THE CASTLE:  
TWO APPROACHES TO LITERATURE UNDER THE SCRIPTURAL ECONOMY

by

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(Under the Direction of Dorothy Figueira)

ABSTRACT

This paper explores two of Michel de Certeau's key concepts, "the scriptural economy" and the "celibate machines" (or "bachelor machines") that seek to subvert this system. De Certeau frequently cites Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe as the quintessential work of the scriptural economy and it is my contention that Franz Kafka's The Castle can be viewed as an *example par excellence* of a celibate machine. I compare these two works by examining the different ways in which they approach the three aspects of writing, defined by de Certeau as: the blank page, the text, and the goal of social efficacy. Ultimately, Kafka's novel successfully undermines the hegemonic, masculine authority of scriptural practice that one finds in Defoe's text, but in doing so, traps its characters in its circular, celibate process.

INDEX WORDS: scriptural economy, celibate machine, bachelor machine, Robinson Crusoe, The Castle, Michel de Certeau, Daniel Defoe, Franz Kafka

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**ATHENS, GEORGIA**

**2008**

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May 2008**

## **DEDICATION**

**This is dedicated to my parents, Cathy and Paul Knowlton.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Bogue for introducing me to the writings of Michel de Certeau. Thank you, Dr. Spariosu, for guiding me through my first reading of Kafka's The Castle. And last but not least, thank you to Dr. Figueira for teaching me to not always believe everything I read about “the other.”

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Michel de Certeau occupies a unique position in literary theory. His interests range from literature to mysticism to psychology and historiography. However, it is this ability to lithely move between fields (often in the span of a single thought) that allows him to reinvigorate static ideas simply by re-contextualizing them with his acrobatic, inter-disciplinary approach. This perspective makes him especially well-suited to engage Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Franz Kafka's The Castle—two texts that were initially revered for their perceived religious content at the time of their publications, but which have since been exhumed repeatedly by structuralists, feminists, and most recently, post-colonialist critics, all of whom more or less reject those initial readings of the works as spiritual autobiography and religious allegory, respectively. Through his polymathic lens, de Certeau allows us to “have our cake and eat it too” by offering us a theoretical structure that can equally entertain ideas pertaining to the religious content of the texts (which is undeniably present on some level) just as well as it can interact with a Marxist deconstruction of the works. The reason why his theories can perform such a balancing act is not due just to his post-structuralist leanings, but because one gets a sense that he is a thinker whose theories extend to his practice. De Certeau avails himself of the *tactics* that his diverse background offers, rather than seeking the *strategic*



omniscience that other critics often claim in their endeavors and, as a result, he grants us access to unexplored niches of the text.

Two of de Certeau's key concepts, which we will be exploring at length, are that of "the scriptural economy" and those works of art he calls "bachelor machines" or "celibate machines" (alternate translations of *les machines célibataires*). We will, for the most part use the latter term, except in cases where it may be useful to highlight the masculine qualities of these works. The scriptural economy, as de Certeau defines it, originates in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries with the transition from orality to literacy, the movement from an agrarian civilization to an industrial society, and with the rise of the nation-state as the organizing system, displacing the former power of the Church. De Certeau is not the only thinker, of course, to explore our philosophical evolution from an oral to a written society. Much of Walter Ong's writing, for example, is concerned with similar issues, but de Certeau's ability to trace the parallels between these changes and the simultaneous metamorphosis of the Christian faith grants his writing a particularly acute explanatory power.

The three qualities de Certeau views as essential to the scriptural endeavor of writing are: the blank page, the text, and the goal of social efficacy. The blank page essentially defines the boundaries of a text in which the scriptural production will take place. By doing so, it also performs the Cartesian move of positing both a subject (the narrator) and an object (the environment and characters upon which he will act). A third important feature of the blank page is that it banishes the ambiguity of the body or the "traditional cosmos, in which the subject remained possessed by the voices of the world" and in its place inserts "an

autonomous source [which] is put before the eye of the subject who thus accords himself the field for an operation of his own” (Practice 134). Upon this newly-defined place, a writer then constructs a text which, through its gestural and mental operations, creates a symbolic order. The additional effect of this act is to “[compose] the artefact of another ‘world’ that is not received but rather made,” and this alternate world may be understood as the “generalized utopia of the modern West” (Practice 135). Lastly, the construction of a text, as outlined above, should not be viewed as a “game” but as a factory of social efficacy, one which consumes the raw material of the past, or tradition, in order to spit out new myths marked by the Enlightenment values of progress and individualism. It is the tendency towards “making the alterity of the universe conform to its models” that makes its actions “capitalist and conquering” (Practice 135).

Standing in opposition to the hegemony of the scriptural economy are those works of arts that de Certeau calls “celibate machines.” These are the “myths of an incarceration within the operations of a writing that constantly makes a machine of itself and never encounters anything but itself” (Practice 150). If a text such as Robinson Crusoe can be seen as a writing machine that “tortures” the oral word into scriptural submission, a celibate machine is a malfunctioning device that tortures the written word and thereby “mimes its own death and makes it ridiculous” (Practice 152). One of the specific examples that he offers is Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony,” which he identifies as one of “those comedies about people stripped naked and tortured, ‘automatic’ stories about defoliations of meaning, theatrical ravagings of disintegrating faces” (Practice 150). This “comic” view of the penal colony would seem to place de Certeau on

the side opposite Günther Anders, or to take a more recent voice, George Steiner, who read such ominous scenes as precursors to the horrors of the Holocaust (Langer 109-111). In de Certeau's view, such interpretations are myopic due to their inability to view the greater hegemonic role of scriptural practice against which Kafka's writing struggles through a use of tactics and linguistic subterfuge. The deaths we find in this and other of Kafka's works are mere mockeries of death, and their mourning for the loss of the singular voice of the Scriptures is meant to be ironic and ludic, not prophetic or omniscient (Practice 152). The latter reading would mistakenly place Kafka at the center of the panopticon looking out, like Robinson Crusoe on his hill.

Another example of a celibate machine to which de Certeau alludes frequently is Duchamp's 1911-1925 composition "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)," which provides him with much of the vocabulary he uses to speak about "characters transformed into cylinders, drums, ruins and springs" as well as playing off of what he perceives as one of Duchamp's main concerns in the piece, namely "glass as window/glass as mirror" (Practice 151). We will be exploring Kafka's The Castle as a celibate machine, a text that is not explicitly named by de Certeau in his work, but one which I will argue provides us with an *example par excellence* of this concept in its countless references to writing, orality, and the breakdown of language and meaning.

Although Kafka's novel figures less prominently in de Certeau's writings, Robinson Crusoe is one of his main touch points whenever discussing issues related to the development of the scriptural economy. In one such reference, he writes:

For more than four centuries in the West, writing has been the substitute for myth, and—from Robinson Crusoe to Moses and Monotheism—it was the subject of ‘novels’ playing the part of myths. It is a praxis...It was the action/myth of a society capable of transforming itself into a blank page upon which it could write the story of its won genesis, and relate that story to what the society was separating from (as knowledge) without losing the referent (since it used it). A machine par excellence, in turn pedagogical, entrepreneurial, urbanist, scientific, and revolutionary.

(Heterologies 158)

Depuis quatre siècles, l'écriture s'est, en Occident, substituée à tous les mythes et, de Robinson Crusoe à Moses et le monothéisme, elle est le sujet des ‘romans’ qui en jouent le rôle. Mais c'est une pratique...Mythe-action d'une société capable de se constituer en page blanche où elle puisse elle-même écrire sa genèse dans un rapport à ce dont elle se distingue (comme savoir) sans le perdre (puisqu'elle l'utilise). Machine par excellence, tout à tout pédagogique, marchande, urbaniste, scientifique ou révolutionnaire. (Arts de Mourir 84-85)

To take another passage, in The Practice of Everyday Life, he states in his overview of the scriptural economy: “I shall give only one example of this structuring practice...It is one of the rare myths that modern Occidental society has been able to create (it has generally replaced myths of traditional societies by practices): Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*” (Practice 136). Beyond de Certeau's

interest in Defoe's book, few critics would dispute the importance of the work in the development of English literature or the emergence of the novel as a genre, in spite of their varied interpretations or even antithetical approaches to the text. In his influential 1967 work The Rise of the Novel, Ian Watt asserts, "Robinson Crusoe is certainly the first novel in the sense that it is the first fictional narrative in which an ordinary person's daily activities are the centre of continuous literary attention" (24).

The boundaries of this scriptural endeavor—for as de Certeau does, I will acknowledge my complicity in erecting yet another written artifice—are confined to a comparison between Defoe's Robinson Crusoe as representative of the greater scriptural economy and Kafka's The Castle as an example of a celibate machine that seeks to problematize written language as a form of resistance. The structure borrows heavily from de Certeau's definition of writing as consisting of a blank page, the text inscribed upon the page, and lastly, the text's primary goal of social efficacy. Within the first of these three aspects, I will explore how the two authors initially approach the blank page, how panoptic vision allows Crusoe to conquer this blank page whereas K. is denied this ability, and lastly how these works relate to the genres of spiritual biography and religious allegory. In the second section, I will look at the ways in which Defoe and Kafka define the self and the other, as well as those voices that threaten to disrupt their projects. The third chapter will address the idea of the book as a path towards social efficacy, as revealed by the use of clothing and texts within texts, in addition to examining the complementary relationship between social efficacy and male dominance within the novels.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BLANK PAGE

All writing begins with the blank page. This empty space separates the voice of the narrator from the din of voices outside the text, essentially defining where the fictional world begins. Fittingly, I will examine the opening passages of Robinson Crusoe and The Castle in order to reveal their very different approaches to this initial step of the scriptural endeavor. Moving on from there, I will explore how vision (or lack thereof) can be seen to represent Crusoe's mastery over the blank page and, conversely, K.'s inability to navigate or even identify the boundaries of the page. Lastly, in light of the aforementioned points, we will discuss the ways in which each of these very different approaches to narration correspond to the religious writings to which both have been compared.

#### *Points of entry*

The starting point for Robinson Crusoe's story is his birth, both literally and metaphorically, upon the blank page:

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, tho' not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, named Kreutznaer, 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. (Defoe 1)

Here we have the “I” of the first-person, immediately establishing the reader’s identification with the narrative voice, a year, and the coordinates for our protagonist’s geographical and bourgeois origins. As Virginia Woolf remarks of that first line, “Nothing could be plainer, more matter of fact, than that beginning,” and as a result, we later find ourselves readily “swallowing monsters that we should have jibbed at if they had been offered us by an imaginative and flamboyant traveler” (286). This trust allows us to enter the blank page with nary a glance at the outside world we are leaving and with little thought as to the narrative’s authenticity or authority. Why would Crusoe (or Defoe) lie about facts which make reference to the “real world?”

The narrator continues the history of his family name: “and after I was so called, that is to say, Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of the words in England, we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe; and so my companions always call’d me” (Defoe 1). While this tracing of his name’s lineage serves to further legitimize and authenticate the “I” of the novel, it is also significant in that it explicitly addresses the “corruption” of words by spoken language in contrast to the fixed meaning of the written word. From the outset, it is clear that the ambiguity of mispronunciation, and along with it the body, have been banished from the text. On this blank page, Defoe performs the “Cartesian move of making a distinction that initiates, along with a *place* of writing, the mastery (and isolation) of a subject confronted by an *object*” that will grant Defoe’s protagonist the self-identity and fictional space in which to begin his adventures (de Certeau, Practice 134).

In contrast is the opening of The Castle, which as countless critics have noted, was originally composed in the first-person, but later revised to the third-person. As such, Kafka's revision leaves the reader with a nameless protagonist, denoted only by the letter "K." rather than the comforting "I" of Crusoe's narrative. While Defoe's narrator immediately draws the reader into a textual intimacy, Kafka's narrative approach is disorienting and jarring as if to lay bare its scriptural enterprise and "put off" the reader. This is particularly apparent in the often-quoted opening passage:

It was late evening when K. arrived. The village lay under deep snow. There was no sign of the Castle hill, fog and darkness surrounded it, not even the faintest gleam of light suggested the large Castle. K. stood a long time on the wooden bridge that leads from the main road to the village, gazing upward into the seeming emptiness. (Castle 1)

Es war spät abend als K. ankam. Das Dorf lag in tiefem Schnee. Vom Schloß war nichts zu sehn, Nebel und Finsternis umgaben ihn, auch nicht der schwächste Lichtschein deutete das große Schloß an. Lang stand K. auf der Holzbrücke die von der Landstraße zum Dorf führt und blickte in die scheinbare Leere empor. (Das Schloß 7)

Rather than enveloping the reader by offering a clearly marked path into the blank page, and the scriptural world to follow, Kafka opens the curtain only to reveal an empty stage. The above lines would contain less significance, of course, if this initial blank page of snow, fog, and darkness were eventually filled in with a proper description detailing the dimensions of the Castle (or for that matter, K.



eventually decoded into a proper name). Such a progression would allow the necessary subject and object to emerge as we would expect from the blank page of a scriptural endeavor. Instead, Kafka's celibate machine refuses to engage in that Cartesian practice of delimiting the complementary positions of subject and object, self and other.

Further description only serves to reinforce the Castle's multitudinous and ambiguous nature:

It was neither an old knight's fortress nor a magnificent new edifice, but a large complex made up of a few two-story buildings and many lower, tightly packed ones; had one not known that this was a castle, one would have taken it for a small town. K. saw only one tower, whether it belonged to a dwelling or a church was impossible to tell. Swarms of crows circled round it. (Castle 8)

Im Ganzen entsprach Schloß, wie es sich hier von der Ferne zeigte, K.'s Erwartungen. Es war weder eine alte Ritterburg, noch ein neuer Prunkbau, sondern eine ausgedehnte Anlage, die aus wenigen zweistöckigen, aber aus vielen eng aneinanderstehenden niedrigern Bausten bestand; hätte man nicht gewußt daß es ein Schloß ist, hätte man es für ein Städtchen halten können. Nur einen Turm sah K., ob er zu einem Wohngebäude oder einer Kirche gehörte war nicht zu erkennen. Schwärme von Krähen umkreisten ihn. (Das Schloß 17)

While Crusoe mentions a multiplicity of places (York, Bremen, Hull) at the beginning of his narrative, it is only to reinforce the unity and authenticity of his

identity. In the case of The Castle, we are confronted with a different sort of multiplicity in which the setting is neither old nor new, neither secular nor religious, but an indistinguishable blurring of the two. Meaning circles around the text as if it were an ominous swarm of crows that never lands: in this case, the blank page of scriptural practice remains blank.

*Panoptic vision, strategy, and tactics*

Essential to Crusoe's colonizing of the island is the hill on which he observes the comings and goings of all those below. The text is littered with scenes such as this one, in which he observes the cannibals for the first time:

I set my guns at the foot of my ladder, and clamber'd up to the top of the hill, by my two stages as usual; standing so, however, that my head did not appear above the hill, so that they could not perceive me by any means; here I observ'd by the help of my perspective glass, that they were no less than thirty in number. (Defoe 169)

Later, he spies a ship a little ways off in the water and climbs once again "to the top of the hill, as I used to do when I was apprehensive of any thing, and to take my view the plainer without being discover'd" (Defoe 210). He soon discovers that this ship is full of a mutinous crew, and it is this ability to observe without being observed which allows him and his cohorts to take the trespassers by surprise: "We could see them plainly, though they could not perceive us: We could have been very glad they would have come nearer to us, so that we might have fir'd at them..." (Defoe 222). To list one other example, his initial success in

killing the goats he will use for food, clothing, and later as livestock depends upon the following discovery:

I concluded that by the position of their opticks, their sight was so directed downward, that they did not readily see objects that were above them; so afterward I took this method, I always clim'd the rocks first to get above them, and then had frequently a fair mark.

(Defoe 51)

Throughout the novel, Crusoe is able to see without being seen and he uses this characteristic to his advantage, overtaking his foes and, as with the cannibals, biding his time before he strikes at them. Crusoe's hill can thus be seen as a precursor to Bentham's panopticon, an invention developed a little over 50 years after Defoe's death and later adopted by Michel Foucault in his seminal work Discipline and Punish as the primary metaphor for the modern prison-state.

From his aerial view, Crusoe can be said to utilize *strategy*, a term defined by de Certeau as consisting of the following three traits: "a triumph of place over time," "a mastery of places through sight" (panoptic vision allows one to foresee events before they happen), and lastly a certain power of knowledge which is a precondition to the prior two characteristics (Practice 36). This concept would seem to offer an explanation of how Crusoe is able to manipulate those individuals who intrude upon the blank page of his island before they can mark it for themselves. Through his ingenuity, he has mastered both time and space by utilizing the hill and spyglass he finds readily at hand to construct a primitive panopticon. The goats, the cannibals, and the mutinous English soldiers are not completely powerless (*tactics* are still available to them, which we will discuss in

a moment) but they lack the omniscient vision that Crusoe possesses. As a result, he will enforce his law on each of his subjects in the same way that a king or emperor would in any other civilized part of the world.

K.'s lack of vision contrasts distinctly with Crusoe's panoptic perspective. His gaze is often fragmented—only catching a glimpse of a tower among the many houses—and hazy, such as when K. looks up towards the Castle on his way to the Gentlemen's Inn:

When K. looked at the Castle, it was at times as if he were watching someone who sat there calmly, gazing into space, not lost in thought and therefore cut off from everything, but free and untroubled; as if he were alone, unobserved; and yet it could not have escaped him that someone was observing him, but this didn't disturb his composure and indeed—one could not tell whether through cause or effect—the observer's gaze could not remain fixed there, and slid off. (Castle 99)

Wenn K. das Schloß ansah, so war ihm manchmal, als beobachte er jemanden, der ruhig dasitzte und vor sich hinsehe, nicht etwa in Gedanken verloren und dadurch gegen alles abgeschlossen, sondern frei and unbekümmert; so als sei er allein und niemand beobachte ihn; und doch mußte er merken, daß er beobachtet wurde, aber es rührte nicht im Geringsten an seine Ruhe und wirklich—man wußte nicht war es Ursache oder Folge—die Blicke des Beobachters konnten sich nicht festhalten und glitten ab. (Das Schloß 156)

Here we are at the other end of the panoptic stare—K. watches, but is watched in turn. While Crusoe observes the visitors to his shores at length and for as long as he wishes, K.'s eyes are unable to remain fixed upon his goal. The Castle is clearly an other, but it is an other which refuses to interact with K. as a subject, hence its utter neutrality to his gaze.

John Zilcosky explores K.'s increasing blindness through the course of the novel as a metaphor for the approach of death. Whether or not one agrees with this particular interpretation of linking vision with mortality, Zilcosky does an excellent job of contrasting K.'s limited vision (he is referred to as a "blindworm" in Kafka's text) to the panoptic perch from which Klammer (who is associated with the eagle) can watch, or at his whim choose not to watch, K.'s movements below:

Like the blindworm, named for its tiny, myopic eyes, K. sees the world as looming, larger-than-life figures that perpetually sneak up on him or appear abruptly out of the corners of unlit rooms.

Because K. gains no visual high ground throughout the novel, he can never sufficiently organize the village as a view, can never frame or map it. (Zilcosky 138)

Vision is power. Those without power, who view things from an ant-like perspective, must resort to trickery and deception or, to use de Certeau's terminology, *tactics*. Rather than attempting to conquer time through the establishment of a place, one who practices tactics relies on a "clever utilization of time" (Practice 38-39). The most obvious example of K.'s attempt to use time to his advantage can be found in K.'s agonizing wait for Klammer outside in the cold

of the pub's courtyard and the protagonist's gradual realization that the official will never arrive:

It seemed to K. as if they had broken off all contact with him, but as if he were freer than ever and could wait as long as he wanted here in this place where he was generally not allowed, and as if he had fought for this freedom for himself in a manner nobody else could have done and as if nobody could touch him or drive him away, or even speak to him, yet—and this conviction was at least equally strong—as if there were nothing more senseless, nothing more desperate, than this freedom, this waiting, this invulnerability.  
(Kafka 106)

Da schien es K. als habe man nun alle Verbindung mit ihm abgebrochen und als sei er nun freilich freier als jemals und könne hier auf dem ihm sonst verbotenen Ort warten solange er wolle und habe sich diese Freiheit erkämpft wie kaum ein anderer es könnte und niemand dürfe ihn anrühren oder vertreiben, ja kaum ansprechen, aber—diese Überzeugung war zumindest ebenso starkals gäbe es gleichzeitig nichts Sinnloseres, nichts Verzweifelteres als diese Freiheit, dieses Warten, diese Unverletzlichkeit. (Kafka 169)

Here K. finds himself in a double bind: not only is his gaze of the Castle blocked, denying him a strategic advantage, but his attempts to use time to achieve his goals (such as waiting interminably for Klammer in the snow) are for naught,

denying him also a tactical advantage. The Castle is an impregnable fortress that can be taken neither by the force of strategy or the cunning use of tactics.

The blank page that is for Crusoe the raw material from which to construct his scriptural empire, is for K. a self-imposed prison. For without any law or marking on the body of the text, there cannot be true freedom from this law.

Kafka's protagonist, obsessed with being inducted into the scriptural process, can only wait eternally for the signifying mark that never arrives.

### *Religious allegory and spiritual autobiography*

Curiously, despite almost 200 years separating the two works, both Robinson Crusoe and The Castle have drawn comparisons to Paul Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. As Leopold Damrosch, Jr. notes, Defoe made explicit comparisons between his novel and Bunyan's allegory and justifies his fictional account in the following way:

The selling [sic] or writing a parable, or an allusive allegoric history, is quite a different case [from lying], and is always distinguished from this other jesting with truth, that it is designed and effectually turned for instructive and upright ends, and has its moral justly applied. Such are the historical parables in the Holy Scriptures, such 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' and such, in a word, the adventures of your fugitive friend, 'Robinson Crusoe.' (qtd. in Damrosch 82)

Meanwhile, Edwin Muir, one of the original translator's of Kafka's work, was the first to draw a parallel between Bunyan's Christian myth and The Castle:

Perhaps the best way to approach *The Castle* is to regard it as a sort of modern Pilgrim's Progress, with the reservation, however, that the 'progress' of the pilgrim here will remain in question all the time, and will be itself the chief, the essential problem. *The Castle* is, like the Pilgrim's Progress, a religious allegory; the desire of the hero in both cases to work out his salvation. (14 in Neumeyer)

I will attempt to apply de Certeau's concepts of the scriptural economy and the celibate machine to show the ways in which Defoe and Kafka can be seen as re-inscribing traditional Christian myths, though each towards a different end. De Certeau proves an incisive critic who moves us slightly beyond the traditional dichotomy of secular versus religious that often colors discussions of these works.

First, let us examine the parallels between Robinson Crusoe and Bunyan's work, specifically, and spiritual autobiography in general. Pilgrim's Progress follows a long scriptural tradition dating back to St. Teresa's Interior Castle, written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and even further back to St. Augustine's Confessions, which is composed in the infancy of the Christian church around 400 AD. Much of Certeau's writing concerns itself with the shift that occurs from this oral, mystic tradition (as embodied in the latter two works) to a new scriptural practice of progress that seeks to posit a new kind of voice:

One can say that before the 'modern' period, that is, until the sixteenth or seventeenth century, this writing (Holy Scripture) speaks. The sacred text is a voice...The modern age is formed by discovering little by little that this Spoken Word is no longer heard, that it has been altered by textual corruptions and the avatars of



history...The capitalist, scriptural conquest is articulated on that loss and on the gigantic effort of 'modern' societies to redefine themselves without that voice. (Practice 137)

On peut dire qu'avant la période 'moderne' donc jusqu'au XVI-XVII siècles, cette Ecriture parle. Le texte sacré est une voix...la modernité se forme en découvrant peu à peu cette Parole ne s'entend plus, qu'elle s'est altérée dans des corruptions du texte et dans les avatars de l'histoire...La conquête capitaliste scripturaire s'articule sur cette perte et sur l'effort gigantesque des sociétés 'moderne' pour se redéfinir sans cette voix. (L'Invention 239-240)

De Certeau finds in the scriptural economy, a new type of autobiography, which has its origins in, but differs significantly from, the mystic tradition in which the writer professes to relate the "voice" of the Holy Spirit through her text. He notes the newfound power that the autobiographical "I" assumes in the scriptural economy as it has taken the place once held by Holy Scripture:

On the one hand, it confirms the 'objectivity of the text,' since the author (the subject of the utterance), the narrator (of the text), and the actor (the hero of the story) are bound together in a single 'I,' and since the 'I' is by convention identical to a proper name...On the other hand it designates both the reason for and the content of the discourse: *why* one writes and *what* one writes. (Heterologies 94)

D'une part, il vient confirmer 'l'objectivité du texte' puisque l'auteur (le sujet de l'énonciation), le narrateur (du texte) et l'acteur (le héros de l'histoire) sont alliés en un seul 'je,' et que le 'je' et le nom

propre sont identiques par convention...D'autre part, il désigne à la fois la raison et le contenu du discours: *pourquoi* on écrit et *ce* qu'on écrit. (L'Énonciation 204-205)

In this way, we may approach Robinson Crusoe as a spiritual autobiography, but one which testifies on the behalf of the scriptural economy. Thus Crusoe's "original sin" of leaving home against the wishes of his father is nothing more than "the dynamic tendency of capitalism itself, whose aim is never merely to maintain the status quo, but to transform it incessantly" (Watt 16). By the end of the novel, as Damrosch and others have pointed out, the protagonist has learned to identify his will with the Hand of Providence (94-95). Thus when he appears to the English sailors near the end, it should not be seen as a coincidence that they mistake him for an angel. However, Crusoe—ever the level-headed and materially-minded man—wryly replies: "If God sent an angel to relieve you, he would have come better cloath'd, and arm'd after another manner than you see me in..." (Defoe 214-215).

Crusoe's island, then, is the same island to which the Christian mystics retreated; only it is now a blank page on which to inscribe one's own will rather than waiting for the voice of God. De Certeau skillfully captures this image that signifies the movement away from the ambiguous, mystical world of St. Teresa's Interior Castle, which is still very much tied to orality, and towards Crusoe's scriptural island of progress and individuality:

The island becomes a piece of *private* property whose boundaries are threatened by the trace of the other...The economic subject replaces the mystic subject; the factory island replaces the monastic

island. In both cases, the island is the same empty stage, but with different operations inscribed upon it—transformational in one case, productive in the other. (Heterologies 96)

[L'île] se transforme en *propriété* privée (menacée sur ses bords par la trace de l'autre)...Le sujet économique remplace le sujet mystique. De même l'île usinière se substitue à l'île monastique. Dans un cas et dans l'autre, c'est pourtant la même scène vide, où s'inscrivent des opérations soit alternâtes soit productrices. (L'Énonciation 208)

On a very basic level, this can be understood as merely another rehashing of the tireless debates between the secular and religious meanings found in Defoe's novel, but if one takes de Certeau's repurposing of Christian mythology seriously, this provides a context for the profound changes in philosophical thought in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as an explanation of why "an apology of colonialism" is so tightly woven with the practices of traditional spiritual autobiography.

Kafka's Castle can be seen as a return to the empty, impossible interior of St. Teresa's mystic castle, which in its ambiguous structure "unites opposites" and "combines unity and plurality of 'dwellings'" (de Certeau, Heterologies 95), a parallel that has also been noted by Ronald Gray (56). However, rather than attempting to use this as evidence of a spiritual underpinning to Kafka's novel (as Max Brod, Edwin Muir, and others have attempted), I merely wish to suggest the connection between it and the blank page posited by St. Teresa. In Kafka's case, we begin from the assumption that "God is dead" and so any vocal murmurings

exist to problematize the discourse of the scriptural economy rather than reverse it. As de Certeau says, there is no returning to this earlier time of orality and belief:

We no longer believe, as Grundtvig (or Michelet) did, that, behind the doors of our cities, in the nearby distance of the countryside, there are vast poetic and 'pagan' pastures where one can still hear songs, myths, and the spreading murmur of the *folkelighed*...These voices can no longer be heard except within the interior of the scriptural systems where they recur. They move about, like dancers, passing lightly through the field of the other. (Practice 131)

Nous ne croyons plus, comme Grundtvig (ou Michelet) que, derrière les portes de nos villes, dans le proche lointain des campagnes, il y a de vastes pâturages poétiques et 'païens' où parleraient encore les chants, les mythes et la proliférant rumeur de la *folkelighed*...Ces voix ne se font plus entendre qu'à l'intérieur des systèmes scripturaux où elles reviennent. Elles circulent, danseuses et passantes, dans le champ de l'autre. (L'Invention 231-232)

Thus, reading The Castle as religious allegory is fraught with problems and interpretive glosses that seek to cover over the ambiguity of the text. De Certeau identifies celibate machines, such as Kafka's novel, as "antimystical" stories which can be seen as "fables torn in two." They still contain isolated, mystic experiences, but in a "makeshift clock repair, they isolate these precious parts, disseminate them in another space, 'set them going' in backward motion...and

reverse their usage” (Heterologies 159). This is also the reason why, conversely, structuralist readings such as Charles Bernheimer’s are able to convincingly decode the organizational schema of the text, but must resort to vague, convoluted language whenever faced with traces of the transcendent.

## CHAPTER 3

### UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

The second aspect of scriptural practice is the construction of a text upon the site of the empty page. This text can be seen as an alternate world or as the “fundamental and generalized utopia of the modern West” (Practice 135). I will argue that while Crusoe’s narrative represents a properly functioning writing machine that produces such a utopia, K.’s world can be better described as a textual dystopia in which language itself becomes ominous and menacing. The first way in which this utopian vision (or dystopian in the latter case) manifests itself is in the formation of a written self. This is followed by a taming of the other, so that it better reflects the self by becoming “the same.” Along the edges of these projects, one finds disruptions or exceptions that problematize the utopian or dystopian worlds, but ultimately reinforce their validity.

#### *The invention of the self*

Upon landing on the island, Crusoe begins keeping a journal of his day-to-day activities. Interestingly, he describes events that have already been narrated earlier in the story, changing the details slightly. Eric Jager has noted the importance of writing in the protagonist’s self-formation:

As soon as he writes ‘I,’ Crusoe transcribes himself to the page  
before him, constructing from his experience a self that he can edit,

revise, interpret, and reinterpret, to name only a few of the writer's powers over his written self. (324)

However, we should not stop there. Crusoe, the “quintessentially self-made man,” invents not only himself, but with this self an alternative world, as well (Jager 333). De Certeau writes, “...on the blank page, an itinerant, progressive, and regulated practice—a ‘walk’—composes the artefact of another ‘world’ that is not received but rather made. The model of a productive reason is written on the nowhere of the paper” (Practice 135). We should note here that Crusoe’s rational ordering of reality through his journal is only a self-reflective act to the point that it allows him to create an order of his experiences. In other words, his scriptural production is a one-way arrow, pointing at those things around him merely to make them into objects that he, as the subject, can then understand, use, and control.

This “making of an alternate world” also manifests itself through the ever-shifting language that Crusoe uses to describe his dwellings. At the very beginning of his settlement of the island, he constructs a “fence or fortress” and behind this he plants his tent and digs a “cave” (Defoe 49). After his first journey abroad on the island, Crusoe arrives “home” as he “must now call my tent and cave” (Defoe 84). At this point in the narrative, he begins to divide his time between his home and a bower, which likewise, is later transformed into his “country-house” (Defoe 90). Near the halfway point of the novel, his triumph over the wildness of the island is clear as he indicates by noting the “the sixth year of my reign, or my captivity, which you please...” (Defoe 115). Finally, when he returns to his home after discovering the footprint on the beach, he arrives at

his “castle, for so I call’d it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued” (Defoe 129).

All of the above serves to illustrate the ways in which Crusoe can be seen to create a utopian world through the overlapping practices of language and labor. Many have commented on Defoe’s sudden dropping of Crusoe’s journal entries, explained within the narrative as being due to the protagonist running out of ink with which to write (Defoe 87). However, Defoe’s “flimsy excuse” can be viewed in a new light, if we identify this moment in the narrative (which immediately follows Crusoe’s naming of his “home”) as the point where the blank page of the protagonist’s journal becomes the blank page of the island upon which he will further establish a sense of self (Damrosch 90).

Just as Crusoe attempts to fashion an identity, both through his journal entries and his construction of a scriptural castle, K. attempts a comparable self-invention through language by declaring to the townspeople that he is the land surveyor sent for by the Castle. Yet, as many have pointed out, the veracity of his statement is immediately called into question by K.’s inability to recognize his supposed assistants, Artur and Jeremias, and throughout the novel, the Mayor and townspeople insist that K. is merely the victim of a joke. Later, when K. receives a letter from Klamm, congratulating him on the progress he has made in his new position, he more or less admits his fraud, exclaiming, “It’s a misunderstanding!” (Kafka 118). Rather than Crusoe’s confident and pragmatic self-invention, the protagonist of The Castle is plagued with self-doubt and ambivalence, even as he asserts his identity:



So the Castle had appointed him land surveyor. On one hand, this was unfavorable, for it showed that the Castle had all necessary information about him, had assessed the opposing forces, and was taking up the struggle with a smile. On the other hand, it was favorable, for it proved to his mind that they underestimated him and that he would enjoy greater freedom than he could have hoped for at the beginning. And if they thought they could keep him terrified all the time simply by acknowledging his surveyorship—though this was certainly a superior move on their part—then they were mistaken, for he felt only a slight shudder, that was all. (Castle 5)

Das Schloß hatte ihn also zum Landvermesser ernannt. Das war einerseits ungünstig für ihn, denn es zeigte, daß man im Schloß alles Nötige über ihn wußte, die Kräfteverhältnisse abgewogen hatte und den Kampf lächelnd aufnahm. Es war aber andererseits auch günstig, denn es bewies seiner Meinung nach, daß man ihn unterschätzte und daß er mehr Freiheit haben würde als er hätte von vornherein hoffen dürfen. Und wenn man glaubte durch diese geistig gewiß überlegen Anerkennung seiner Landvermesserschaft ihn dauernd in Schrecken halten zu können, so täuschte man sich, es überschauerte ihn leicht, das war aber alles. (Das Schloß 12-13)

It is quite unclear who is inventing whom: K. initiates his acceptance as the Castle's land surveyor, yet he is slightly frightened when he is recognized as such. Instead of Crusoe's one-way arrow of signification, we are given a two-headed

arrow running between K. and the Castle that confuses self and other, subject and object. This is not, by any measure, the utopian world that is the setting of Certeau's second characteristic of scriptural practice (Practice 135). If anything, K. has entered a textual dystopia in which he is neither master nor servant, subject or object, but merely a malfunctioning cog.

### *Taming of the other*

In order for a textual utopia to exist, there must be unity, rather than disunity between the self and the other. The way in which scriptural practices usually accomplish this rather paradoxical task is by offering us, in place of the other, a return to the same. In essence, what was once other, is now made to reflect the will, desires, and values of the self or subject of the written text. De Certeau views Robinson Crusoe as fundamental in establishing the blueprint for this relationship that will be repeated throughout Occidental literature for the following two centuries:

Defoe thus outlines a *form* of alterity in relation to writing, a form that will impose its identity on the voice, since when Friday appears, he is confronted by an alternative destined to have a long history: he must either cry out (a 'wild' outbreak that calls for interpretation and correction through pedagogical—or psychiatric—treatment) or else make his body the vehicle of the dominant language (by becoming 'his master's voice,' a docile body that executes the order, incarnates reason and receives the status of

being a substitute for enunciation, and is thus no longer the act but the acting out of the other's 'saying'). (Practice 155)

Defoe dessine ainsi une *forme* de l'altérité relative à l'écriture, une forme qui va également imposer son identité à la voix, puisque, plus tard, Vendredi apparaissant, il sera soumis à une alternative promise à une longue histoire: ou bien crier (déchirure 'sauvage', appelant l'interprétation et la correction d'un 'traitement' pédagogique—ou psychiatrique), ou bien faire de son corps l'effectuation de la langue dominante (en devenant 'la voix de son maître', corps docile qui exécute l'ordre, incarne une raison et reçoit pour statut d'être un substitut d'énonciation, non plus l'acte mais le *faire* du 'dit' de l'autre). (L'Invention 265)

The most explicit example of this "taming of the other" can be found in the first encounter between Crusoe and Friday. With it, the nightmares that have haunted the protagonist ever since his first discovery of the cannibals on the island will now come to an end. Crusoe metaphorically devours Friday, before he can be devoured by the cannibalistic other, by incorporating the latter into his scriptural world:

In a little time I began to speak to him and teach him to speak to me; and, first, I let him know his name should be FRIDAY, which was the day I saved his life: I called 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: I likewise taught him to say Yes and No, and to know the meaning of them (Defoe 143).

Here we have the construction of a subject-object dichotomy of master and servant and the establishment of a rational discourse, in the form of yes-no, that returns the system to stability. Also, to revisit for a moment our discussion of Crusoe's strategic position within the narrative, his choice of the name "Friday" seems to carry an added significance. The name "Friday" is associated with time, the essential trait of *tactics*, and this allows Crusoe, with his panoptic vision, to quite literally place himself as "master over time."

K.'s encounters with the other are complicated by the fact that he never attains that mastery over his environment that comes so easily to Crusoe. He does half-heartedly invent personas for himself, such as when he humorously tries to gain entrance to the Castle by giving the fake name "Josef" over the telephone (Castle 21). However, when it comes to defining the other, he is consistently unable to do so: a problem stemming from his reliance on tactics rather than strategy, which we have discussed earlier. One of the first examples of K.'s weakness in this regard, is the scene in which K. meets his two assistants, perhaps the only two characters who are clearly his inferiors throughout the novel:

'This is difficult,' said K., comparing their faces as he had often done before, 'how am I supposed to distinguish between you? Only your names are different, otherwise you're as alike as'—he hesitated, then went on involuntarily—'otherwise you're as alike as snakes.' They smiled. 'People usually can distinguish quite easily between us,' they said in self-defense. 'I can believe that,' said K., 'for I witnessed it myself, but I can only see with my eyes and cannot

distinguish between you with them. So I shall treat you as one person and call you both Artur, that's what one of you is called—you perhaps?' K. asked one. 'No,' he said, 'my name is Jeremias.' 'Fine, it doesn't matter,' said K., 'I shall call you both Artur.' (Castle 18-19)

'Es ist schwer mit Euch,' sagte K. und verglich wie schon öfters ihre Gesichter, 'wie soll ich Euch denn unterscheiden. Ihr unterscheidet Euch nur durch die Namen, sonst seid Ihr Euch ähnlich wie Schlangen.' Sie lächelten. 'Man unterscheidet uns sonst gut,' sagten sie zur Rechtfertigung. 'Ich glaube es,' sagte K., 'ich war ja selbst Zeuge dessen, aber ich sehe nur mit meinen Augen und mit denen kann ich Euch nicht unterscheiden. Ich werde Euch deshalb wie einen einzigen Mann behandeln und beide Artur nennen, so heißt doch einer von Euch, Du etwa? --'fragte K. den einen. 'Nein,' sagte dieser, 'ich heiße Jeremias.' 'Gut, es ist ja gleichgültig,' sagte K., 'ich werde Euch beide Artur nennen.' (Das Schloß 33)

Tellingly, while Crusoe's first interaction with Friday is an attempt to set up an either-or, subject-object system of naming, K. insists that he lacks the ability to differentiate between these two individuals. Therefore, the only other option left to him is an ambiguous and confusing and-also naming system. This interchangeability is further complicated when one of the pair, Jeremias, later asserts himself as Frieda's lover, usurping the narrator as subject and primary actor in that particular relationship, which in turn sets up a new and-also relationship between K. and Jeremias.

Another example of Kafka's intentional undermining of the traditional role of power that language plays in the scriptural economy can be found in the almost comedic exchange between K. and Olga that precedes the tragic story of her sister Amalia:

'There's an official at the Castle called Sortini.' 'I've heard of him,' said K., 'he was involved in summoning me.' 'I don't think so,' said Olga, 'Sortini hardly ever appears in public. Aren't you mistaking him for Sordini, written with a 'd'?' 'You're right,' said K., 'it was Sordini.' 'Yes,' said Olga, 'Sordini is quite well known, one of the most industrious officials, he's often mentioned, Sortini by contrast is very retiring and little known.' (Castle 187)

'Es gibt einen Beamten im Schloß der heißt Sortini.' 'Ich habe schon von ihm gehört,' sagte K., 'er war an meiner Berufung beteiligt.' 'Das glaube ich nicht,' sagte Olga, 'Sortini tritt in der Öffentlichkeit kaum auf. Irrst Du Dich nicht mit Sordini, mit 'd' geschrieben?' 'Du hast recht,' sagte K., 'Sordini war es.' 'Ja,' sagte Olga, 'Sordini ist sehr bekannt, einer der fleißigsten Beamten, von dem viel gesprochen wird, Sortini dagegen ist sehr zurückgezogen und den meisten fremd. (Das Schloß 295)

Here, not only do we see a simple breakdown of meaning and communication between K. and Olga, but also a multiplication of the other into two distinct entities. Whereas, before this conversation there was a single individual named Sortini-Sordini, there are now two officials with two mutually exclusive stories that split K.'s attention—that of the industrious Sordini who is one of the figures

in K.'s convoluted journey, and the reclusive Sortini who, we later learn, is the source of the Barnabas family's misfortunes. Significantly, the author grounds this ambiguity in the field of linguistics, which often deals with the transition of words between the body and the page: the phoneme "t" is the aspirated form of "d," highlighting the ambiguity and malleability of meaning expressed through a single sound.

### *Disruptive voices*

So far, I have discussed the ways in which Crusoe's island can be viewed as a scriptural utopia and K.'s world as the opposite. However, to complicate matters, in each case there is an exception or a disruption that upsets the conceptions established thus far. It is my goal to show the ways in which these disruptions, found in each of the texts, merely serve to reinforce their essential structure, i.e. they are "the exceptions which prove the rule." In Crusoe's case, it is the footprint on the beach and in the case of K., we find two distinct examples of disruptive voices which enter into an otherwise scripturally sealed world.

When Defoe's protagonist first discovers Friday's footprint upon the sand, it so completely overturns his world that he loses "all that former confidence in God" (Defoe 131). While this is a temporary crisis of faith, it serves our purpose of connecting Crusoe's scriptural enterprise as a replacement for the position once held by the Holy Scriptures. How else can one explain how a footprint causes such a dramatic loss of religious faith? Significantly, Crusoe immediately returns to his newly christened "castle" and begins to build a second wall around his initial fortifications, but not stopping there, also reinforces the first so that it

is “above ten foot thick” (Defoe 135). In order for his island to remain a utopia, he must draw a line between himself and the other in addition to the one he initially uses to establish his subjective identity over the wilderness.

His other defense against this sudden “smudge” upon his blank page, is to simply subsume the other into himself:

In the middle of these cogitations, apprehensions, and reflections, it came into my thought one day, that all this might be a meer chimera of my own, and that this foot might be the print of my own foot, when I came on shore from my boat. This chear’d me up a little too, and I began to perswade myself it was all a delusion; that it was nothing else but my own foot. (Defoe 132)

This particular passage echoes one that follows only a few pages later, in which Crusoe believes he sees a pair of eyes watching him from the dark of a cave. Could this be the ghost of the panoptic stare of which he is supposedly the master? No, order is quickly restored as Crusoe realizes that it is merely an ancient he-goat dying of old age, and what is more, he discovers that the cave walls are covered in diamonds or precious stones of some sort; this newly discovered cave will now serve as his armory to store the majority of his gun powder and bullets (Defoe 151).

To touch upon one last example of a disruption in Crusoe’s utopian narrative, I will turn to the passage in which Poll, the parrot he has taught to speak, awakens him with a start by crying: “Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe, where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been” (Defoe 119)? About this scene, Jager notes:



Crusoe becomes more of an other to himself than he really wants to be: to read the words 'poor miserable Robinson Crusoe' in his journal is self-composing, but to hear the words 'poor Robin Crusoe' spoken unexpectedly by another is not. (326)

However, rather than being an actual threat, his parrot becomes yet another slight destabilization of the text, which is then subsumed into Crusoe's self. As Jager puts it, this scene becomes a mere "diversion" providing our protagonist with a "semblance of society" (326-327).

Conversely, within the scriptural machinations of K.'s dystopian Castle, Kafka seems to offer at least the echo of a utopian, or at least more viable way of life. The chapter that contains Amalia's story (as told by Olga) has been at the center of critical debate for many Kafka scholars. Marjanne Goozé has pointed out that it makes up one-sixth of the total book and writes, "If one attempts to interpret as K., one gets just as lost and confused as he. Kafka's text demands that the reader, like Amalia, actively question interpretation and even the form of the text itself," but ultimately concludes that "Kafka's text shows the necessity of breaking out of traditional textual systems, points the way out, but offers no alternative solution to the problems of interpretation" (140). As in most readings of this chapter, Goozé's focuses on Amalia's persistent silence throughout the text. However, if one shifts this perspective slightly, it becomes apparent that it is Amalia's *scream* and then subsequent silence that most clearly mark her as an alternative to the "sexual and textual order of the Castle" (Goozé 346).

To de Certeau, it is the cry that carries the potential to at least temporarily disrupt the scriptural system by returning us to the site of the body, and with it, the otherness of physical difference:

Perhaps at the extreme limit of these tireless inscriptions, or perforating them with lapses, there remains only the cry: it escapes, it escapes them. From the first to the last cry, something else breaks out with them, the body's difference, alternately *in-fans* and ill-bred, intolerable in the child, the possessed, the madman or the sick—a lack of 'good manners'... (Practice 147-148)

Peut-être, à la frontière extrême de ces écritures inlassables, ou les trouant de lapsus, y a-t-il seulement le cri: il échappe, il leur échappe. Du premier cri au dernier, quelque chose d'autre avec lui fait irruption, qui serait du corps sa différence, tour à tour *in-fans* et mal élevée, intolérable chez l'enfant, la possédée, le fou ou le malade, un manqué de 'tenue'... (L'Invention 254)

While Goozé rightly identifies the limits of Kafka's text in suggesting an alternative to the dystopian scriptural world, Amalia's scream is only one of several instances of disruption within the novel that cumulatively seem to offer at least a fragmented portrait of its other.

Another scene in which voices come into play occurs very early in the story when K. picks up the telephone at the inn with the hope that he will be able to reach someone at the Castle who will validate his position as the land surveyor. Instead, he hears a very curious sound:

From the mouthpiece came a humming, the likes of which K. had never heard on the telephone before. It was as though the humming of countless childlike voices—but it wasn't humming either, it was singing, the singing of the most distant, of the most utterly distant, voices—as though a single, high-pitched yet strong voice had emerged out of this humming in some quite impossible way and now drummed against one's ears as if demanding to penetrate more deeply into something other than one's wretched hearing. K. listened without telephoning, with his left arm propped on the telephone stand he listened thus. (Castle 20)

Aus der Hörmuschel kam ein Summen, wie K. es sonst beim Telephonieren nie gehört hatte. Es war wie wenn sich aus dem Summen zahlloser kindlicher Stimmen—aber auch dieses Summen war keines, sondern war Gesang fernster, allerfernster Stimmen—wie wenn sich aus diesem Summen in einer geradezu unmöglichen Weise eine einzige hohe aber starke Stimme bilde, die an das Ohr schlug so wie wenn sie fordere tiefer einzudringen als nur in das armselige Gehör. K. horchte ohne zu telephonieren, den linken Arm hatte er auf das Telephonpult gestützt und horchte so. (Das Schloß 36)

Charles Bernheimer argues, rather vaguely, that “This pure sound is the undifferentiated murmur of language engaged in its own temporal process” and “To reach the Castle is to be displaced from any possible center into a stream of language that allows no individual articulation to interrupt its autonomous

movement” (374-375). However, I detect another possible meaning in this enigmatic passage: it is almost as if, for a moment, the suppressed cry of the body in its multitudinous and ambiguous form, here in the form of a chorus of childlike voices, has crossed its wires with the telephone lines running to the Castle. If Amalia’s screams temporarily undermine the “good manners” of scriptural discourse, these haunting telephonic echoes of the other captivate K. for a split second, opening a small window of escape, if only to be quickly interrupted by the official’s voice demanding what he wants.

Later, when K. speaks with the chairman, the latter clarifies how the Castle’s telephone system works:

Here on our local telephones we hear that constant telephoning as a murmuring and singing, you must have heard it too. Well, this murmuring and singing is the only true and reliable thing that the local telephones convey to us, everything else is deceptive. There is no separate telephone connection to the Castle and no switchboard to forward our calls; when anyone here calls the Castle, all the telephones in the lowest-level department ring, or all would ring if the ringing mechanism on nearly all of them were not, and I know this for certain disconnected. Now and then, though, an overtired official needs some diversion—especially late in the evening or at night—and turns on the ringing mechanism, then we get an answer, though an answer that’s no more than a joke. (Castle 72)

Dieses ununterbrochene Telephonieren hören wir in den hiesigen Telephonen als Rauschen und Gesang, das haben Sie gewiß auch

gehört. Nun ist aber dieses Rauschen und dieser Gesang das einzige Richtige und Vertrauenswürdige, was uns die hiesigen Telephone übermitteln, alles andere ist trügerisch. Es gibt keine bestimmte telephonische Verbindung mit dem Schloß, keine Zentralstelle, welche unsere Anrufe weiterleitet; wenn man von hier aus jemanden im Schloß anruft, läutet es dort bei allen Apparaten der untersten Abteilungen oder vielmehr es würde bei allen läuten, wenn nicht, wie ich bestimmt weiß, bei fast allen dieses Läutwerk abgestellt wäre. Hie und da aber hat ein übermüdeter Beamter das Bedürfnis sich ein wenig zu zerstreuen—besonders am Abend oder bei Nacht—und schaltet das Läutwerk ein, dann bekommen wir Antwort, allerdings eine Antwort, die nichts ist als Scherz. (Das Schloß 116)

From this, one would most likely conclude, as K. does, that the voices one hears over the telephones cannot be taken seriously and are thus worthless in one's quest to gain admittance to the Castle. However, the chairman interrupts him, explaining that these interactions are indeed "of real significance" and that, as with all correspondences, their interpreted meaning of either hostility or friendship is often "greater than any official meaning could ever be" (Castle 72-73). Could this be the one place in which a Castle official inadvertently tells the truth? If we view these voices, in light of de Certeau's thoughts on the text as a banishment of the body, this cacophony of murmurings, singing, and jokes may be the only resistance to the scriptural system (Practice 176).

## CHAPTER 4

### PLAYING GAMES WITH SOCIAL EFFICACY

The goal of any scriptural undertaking is social efficacy. Despite his declaration in A New System of Education that he “hates books,” Rousseau selects Robinson Crusoe as the one text he wishes for his imaginary student Emile to read since it will “serve as our guide during our progress to a state of reason” (262). By contrast, I will argue that The Castle should not be read in this way, but instead as a ludic work that actively resists, through play, the Enlightenment view of books as instruments of societal reform that can be said to pervade the scriptural age. First I will look at how Defoe and Kafka use everyday objects such as clothing to, respectively, reinforce and subvert the goal of social efficacy. Next, I will examine the ways in which letters, lists, and texts function within the works to advance or slow the progress of the two protagonists. Lastly, I will explore the ways in which social efficacy can be seen as having a symbiotic relationship to male dominance in the novels.

#### *The clothes make the man*

Clothing plays an interesting role in Robinson Crusoe, and in many ways, can be said to symbolize the social efficacy that all proper scriptural endeavors hold up as their goal. De Certeau writes:

Clothes themselves can be regarded as instruments through which a social law maintains its hold on bodies and its members, regulates

them and exercises them through changes in fashion as well as through military maneuvers...Glasses, cigarettes, shoes, etc., reshape the physical 'portrait' in their own ways. Is there a limit to the machinery by which a society represents itself in living beings and makes them its representations? Where does the disciplinary apparatus end that displaces and corrects, adds or removes things from these bodies, malleable under the instrumentation of so many laws? (Practice 147)

Les vêtements eux-mêmes peuvent passer pour les instruments grâce auxquels une loi sociale s'assure des corps et de ses membres, les règle et les exerce par des changements de mode comme en des manœuvres militaires...Les lunettes, la cigarette, les chaussures, etc. refont à leur manière le 'portrait' physique... Où est la limite de la machinerie par laquelle une société se représente par des vivants et en fait ses représentations? Où s'arrête l'appareil disciplinaire qui déplace et corrige, rajoute ou enlève dans ces corps, malléables sous l'instrumentation de tant de lois? (L'Invention 254)

The social law that de Certeau describes above plays out in miniature upon Crusoe's island. One of the first ways in which the protagonist begins to assimilate Friday into his society is by outfitting the reformed-cannibal with attire nearly matching his own:

First of all, I gave him a pair of linen drawers, which I had out of the poor gunner's chest I mentioned and which I found in the wreck; and which with a little alteration fitted him very well; then I made

him a jerkin of goat's-skin, as well as any skill would allow; and I was now grown a tolerable good taylor; and I gave him a cap, which I had made of a hare-skin, very convenient, and fashionable enough; and thus he was cloath'd for the present, tolerably well, and was mighty well pleas'd to see himself almost as well cloath'd as his master. It is true, he went awkwardly in these things at first wearing the drawers was very awkward to him, and the sleeves of the waistcoat gall'd his shoulders and the inside of his arms; but a little easing them where he complain'd they hurt him, and using himself to them at length he took to them very well. (Defoe 175)

This pivotal scene takes place after Friday (at Crusoe's instruction) symbolically gathers the "skulls, bones, flesh, and whatever remain'd" and burns them to ashes, despite the fact that he "had still a hankering stomach after some of the flesh" (Defoe 175). After this process of purification, in which Friday at least partially disposes of his old identity, Crusoe gives him his new garments, and, indeed, afterwards Friday begins his true transformation from savage cannibal to the civilized (though inarticulate) Christian he will become. Friday "takes to" anything and everything that Crusoe offers him—be it religion, language, or social practice—just as easily as the drawers and waistcoat he puts on.

However, clothing is just one of the everyday items with which Crusoe "converts" Friday. Shortly after the scene described above, he takes his new companion on a hunting expedition during which Friday is frightened and amazed by Crusoe's gun:



He did not see the kid shot at, or perceive I kill'd it, but ripp'd up his wastcoat to feel if he was not wounded, and as I found, presently thought I was resolv'd to kill him; for he came and kneel'd down to me, and embracing my knees, said a great many things I did not understand; but I could easily see that the meaning was to pray not to kill him. (Defoe 177-178)

This “playing out” of their respective roles of master and servant is at once a game from Crusoe’s perspective, and from Friday’s, a very real demonstration of the former’s dominance over him. One of the primary ways in which de Certeau defines the social efficacy of a written text is that it is not a game. In this case, we have a blurring of the line between a game and true violence, allowing the power dynamic to be played out with no permanent repercussions other than Friday’s capitulation to his master. As a result, Crusoe allows Friday to “enter the mystery, for such it was to him, of gunpowder and bullet, and taught him how to shoot” thus inducting him into the values of the scriptural economy (Ibid 187).

Several critics, including Stephen Dowden and Marjanne E. Goozé, have briefly touched on Kafka’s recurrent use of clothing throughout The Castle and how it consistently thwarts the protagonist K. Dowden observes:

Village dress does baffle him. He overestimates the prestige of Barnabas implied by his costume and underestimates the power of his drably decked out assistants. What seems normal to the inhabitants is opaque to him, confusing and dispiriting. (76)

Whereas in Robinson Crusoe, clothing serves to tame the other, in Kafka’s novel, we meet characters who are seemingly unable to be tamed with language or

clothing. Klammm, who can be seen as K.'s doppelganger throughout the novel, most clearly personifies this amorphous quality:

They say he looks completely different when he comes into the village and different when he leaves it, different before he has had a beer, different afterwards, different awake, different asleep, different alone, different in a conversation, and, quite understandably after all this, almost utterly different up there at the Castle. (Castle 176)

Er soll ganz anders aussehen, wenn er ins Dorf kommt und anders wenn er es verläßt, anders ehe er Bier getrunken hat, anders nachher, anders im Wachen, anders im Schlafen, anders allein, anders im Gespräch und, was hienach verständlich ist, fast grundverschieden oben im Schloß. (Das Schloß 278)

In Klammm, then, we have an other who will always remain distinct and different from K. simply because his appearance is never static. Interestingly, though, there is one distinguishing feature upon which all the villagers' descriptions agree, in that he "always wears the same coat, a black morning coat with long tails" (Kafka 176). It would appear that the black coat symbolizes the very limits between self and other. While all other characteristics of Klammm are described as being transitory and fluid, his outermost clothing layer remains the same—a rigid border.

K., through his naiveté, is oblivious to any limits or borders—instead he obsessively seeks to decode the signs and stories he encounters even as they unravel before his eyes. Because of this, many of the villagers view him as both a

curiosity and as a threat to their community. The place where this is perhaps clearest can be found in K.'s final conversation with the landlady regarding her clothing:

As for you not knowing anything about clothes, that is true. But in that case—and I am requesting this of you in all seriousness—do also refrain from passing judgment on the valuableness of clothes or the inappropriateness of evening dresses and so on. ‘Besides’—it was if a cold shudder went running through her—‘you may have nothing to with my clothes, do you hear?’ (Castle 313)

Daß Du nichts von Kleidern verstehst, ist richtig. Dann aber unterlasse auch—darum will ich Dich ernstlich gebeten haben—darüber abzuurteilen, was kostbare Kleider sind, oder unpassende Abendkleider u.dgl. Überhaupt—hiebei war es als überliefe sie ein Kälteschauer—sollst Du Dich nicht an meinem Kleidern zu schaffen machen, hörst Du? (Das Schloß 490-491)

The landlady seems to almost mock K. for not speaking the same “language” that the rest of the villagers do. However, suddenly turning serious, she acknowledges the danger that such an outsider perspective could potentially pose, hence her request that he avoid any direct interaction with the system (through criticism, etc.) as well as her command that he should not touch her clothing. The physical reaction of a shudder lets us know that we have brushed up against the very border where the self and the other meet. The goal of social efficacy seems to be impossible here: K. strives to affect change in a system that is constantly

changing itself, confusing the distinctions that would allow him to act as the triumphant subject.

*Letters, lists, and texts*

Letters, lists, and texts figure prominently in Crusoe's novel. When the protagonist returns home after 28 years, it requires merely a few letters to his old acquaintances to reestablish his place in society and restore to him all of the wealth he has accumulated while away. However, the first time that Defoe breaks off from the narrative is in the often-cited list that Crusoe makes in an attempt to "comfort himself" by setting all of the good aspects of his situation against all of the evil ones:

EVIL	GOOD
I am cast upon a horrible Desolate island, void of all hope of recovery.	But I am alive, and not drown'd as all my ship's company was.
I am singl'd out and separated, as it were, from all the world to be miserable.	But I am singl'd out too from all the ship's crew to be spar'd from death; and He that miraculously sav'd me from death, can deliver me from this condition.
I am divided from mankind, a solitaire, one banish'd from humane society.	But I am not starv'd and perishing on a barren place, affording no sustenance.
I have no clothes to cover me.	But I am in a hot climate, where if I had clothes I could hardly wear them.
I am without defence or means to resist any violence of man or beast.	But I am cast upon an island, where I see no beasts to hurt me, as I saw on the coast of Africa; and what if I had been shipwreck'd there?
I have no soul to speak to, or relieve me.	But God wonderfully sent the ship in near enough to the shore, that I have gotten out so many necessary things as

will either supply my wants, or enable me to supply my self even as long as I live. (Defoe 54-55)

This rational ordering of Crusoe's circumstances into pros and cons can be seen as an attempt to conquer the ambiguity of an apparently meaningless calamity. However, though we have the positing of various dichotomies, there is little to suggest that the paired arguments are interchangeable. As Brown has observed, "One *fact* is not registered against another. The facts are the same on both sides of the sheet; each side merely interprets the fact in a different way" (584). Rather than coming to the conclusion (as Brown does) that this is a symptom of Crusoe's subjective mind or relativity in the absence of an external compass, I find a rather objective and rational explanation for the passage. In it, Defoe sketches out the major plot points that will guide the course of the novel, in almost a perfect reverse chronology of events: 5) Crusoe will be rescued after 28 years, 4) he will regain his connection with human society and as a king or governor no less, 3) he will learn to fashion clothing from goat skins making him appear as if an "angel" to the captured Englishmen, 2) he will become an adept hunter of fowl and the goats—the latter will supply him with the clothes in #3, and 1) the ship will provide all of the materials that he will require to survive and thrive in all of the preceding scenes mentioned above. Thus, while this text may seem innocuous at first glance or perhaps as representing a spiritual struggle (echoing the genre of spiritual autobiography) it is essentially a blueprint for Crusoe's conquering of the savage environment in which he finds himself, ultimately leading to a higher post in society upon his return. In other words, this is his step-by-step plan of social efficacy.

Another place in the novel in which lists come into play is in the curious “scorecard” that Crusoe offers after he and Friday dispatch with a group of natives who come from a neighboring, rival tribe:

3 kill’d at our first shot from the tree.

2 kill’d at the next shot.

2 kill’d by Friday in the boat.

2 kill’d by ditto, of those at first wounded.

1 kill’d by ditto, in the wood.

3 kill’d by the Spaniard.

4 kill’d, being found dropp’d here and there of their wounds, or  
kill’d by Friday in his chase of them.

4 escap’d in the boat, whereof one wounded if not dead.

21 in all. (Defoe 199)

Just as the aforementioned list of “good and evil” appears to simply capture Crusoe’s mental and spiritual state, so too does this list seem to merely summarize the action that has taken place. However, this scene also marks the induction of Friday (and now the Spaniard whom they rescue) into Crusoe’s scriptural empire. As he remarks afterwards:

My island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I look’d. First of all, the whole country was my own meer property; so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. 2dly, my people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute lord and

lawgiver; they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion of it, for me. (Defoe 203)

Thus Crusoe is no longer a lone individual who must inscribe his will and thoughts onto the paper of his journal, but a king whose subjects are willing to carry out his bidding and help him to shape the text of the island, insuring his permanent place as the subject. Ian Watt remarks of this bookkeeping mentality: “Our civilization as a whole is based on individual contractual relationships, as opposed to the unwritten, traditional and collective relationships of previous societies” (15). Through Crusoe’s list making, he is able to define his miniature society by binding them together (within a text) in opposition to those who are still other.

In The Castle, texts, which mainly take the form of letters, work towards a very different purpose: they are anything but tools of social efficacy. As he reads the first letter he receives from the Castle, K. notices its strange and shifting tone:

It wasn’t consistent, some passages treated him as a free man and conceded that he had a will of his own, such as the initial greeting and the passage concerning his wishes. There were other passages, though, that treated him openly or indirectly as a lowly worker who was barely noticeable from the director’s post...The thought—a crazy one in the case of such authorities—that indecision might have played a role here, scarcely occurred to K. (Castle 23)

Er war nicht einheitlich, es gab Stellen wo mit ihm wie mit einem Freien gesprochen wurde, dessen eigenen Willen man anerkennt, so war die Überschrift, so war die Stelle, die seine Wünsche betraf. Es gab aber wieder Stellen, wo er offen oder versteckt als ein kleiner vom Sitz jenes Vorstandes kaum bemerkbarer Arbeiter behandelt wurde...Den einer solchen Behörde gegenüber wahnwitzigen Gedanken, daß hier Unentschlossenheit mitgewirkt habe, streifte K. kaum. (Das Schloß 41-42)

Whereas the texts that we find in Crusoe's narrative may appear ambiguous at first, such as the listing of "good and evil" aspects of the island, the end result is always a "mastery" over these multiplicities. K., however, regularly encounters texts that resist interpretation; they are indifferent to his will. The ongoing irony, though, is that K. still recognizes the "authority" of scriptural practice despite his inability to interpret or make sense of it. Immediately after the scene above, he removes a picture from his wall and hangs the letter in its place, a symbolic act denoting its importance (Castle 25).

Writing permeates Kafka's novel and (if only by the sheer number of letters, files, and messages) it seems to contain the power and significance for which K. strives. However, despite the fact that all of the characters in the novel seem to be in some way affected by these scriptural transactions, there are several scenes in which these texts are treated in sacrilegious ways, causing K. a slight concern that he attributes either to a specific text being unimportant, such as when Momus proceeds to eat a pretzel over some papers covering them in caraway seeds and salt, or to his own ignorance of the ways of the Castle, such as



when K. observes the servants delivering files to the officials. In the latter scene, he watches the inner-workings of the Castle in action:

Meanwhile the servant had finished his work, only one file, actually only a scrap of paper, a note from a notepad, had been left lying in the car through the fault of the attendant, and now they couldn't decide to whom it should be allocated. 'That might well be my file,' was the first thought that went through K.'s head. The council chairman had always spoken of the smallest case...[the servant] was fed up with this task; with his index finger on his lips he motioned for his companion to be quiet—K. was still some distance away from him—tore the note into little pieces and put them in his pocket. That was probably the first irregularity in office operations that K. had ever noticed here, though it was possible that he misunderstood this, too. (Castle 279-280)

Inzwischen hatte der Diener seine Arbeit beendet, nur ein einziger Akt, eigentlich nur ein Papierchen, ein Zettel von einem Notizblock, war durch Verschulden der Hilfskraft im Wägelchen zurückgeblieben und nun wußte man nicht wem ihn zuzuteilen. 'Das könnte recht gut mein Akt sein', gieng es K. durch den Kopf. Der Gemeindevorsteher hatte ja immer von diesem allerkleinsten Fall gesprochen...[der Diener] war des Verteilens schon satt, mit dem Zeigefinger an den Lippen gab er seinem Begleiter ein Zeichen zu schweigen, zerriß—K. war noch lange nicht bei ihm—den Zettel in kleine Stücke und steckte sie in die Tasche. Es war wohl die erste

Unregelmäßigkeit, die K. hier im Bureaubetrieb gesehen hatte, allerdings war es möglich, daß er auch sie unrichtig verstand. (Das Schloß 439)

Unlike Crusoe, who is the originator of all of his texts, K. is the object of almost all of the files and letters that he encounters. Interestingly, he employs the same sort of rational thinking that Defoe's protagonist does, but instead of utilizing it to shape his world, he uses it to explain away obvious discrepancies, and, in doing so, he is constantly reacting to rather than acting upon the others around him. These texts, then, do have the capability of social efficacy in one aspect, but their logic is unfathomable to K., and thus he is the befuddled reader rather than the confident writer we find in Crusoe.

#### *Women in the scriptural economy*

Robinson Crusoe is notable for its utter absence of women, as critics such as Ian Bell and Christopher Flynn have noted. The latter draws upon Defoe's political beliefs to construct an analogy between the male colonizing power of Britain and the female colony of America. He writes:

Crusoe's sexless colonization of his island points to a model that avoids the weakness apparent in the Miltonic version of biblical paradise, which is woman. Crusoe establishes a largely self-sufficient colony that is bound to him and, by analogy, to Britain. It only lacks the means of perpetuating itself, and this seems to be by design. The female, as Eve, or as America, is dangerous and must be

tamed or desexed before it can become a viable commercial entity.  
(Flynn 15).

However, at the very end of the book, Crusoe sends from Brazil “seven women, being such as I found proper for service, or for wives to such as would take them” as well as sheep, hogs, and five pregnant cows (Defoe 258). Flynn reads this as indicative of the idea of “women as commodities” and remarks: “The presence of women is allowed only after the feminine nature of the island itself has been tamed” (15). Interestingly though, even earlier than this, Crusoe has already become a father of sorts to Friday thereby bypassing the need for women in procreation: “his very affections were ty’d to me, like those of a child to a father; and I dare say he would have sacrific’d his life for the saving mine upon any occasion whatsoever” (Defoe 176). This sexless propagation is continued in the final scenes of the novel mentioned above, as Crusoe populates his island with Brazilian and English women, an action which mirrors his taming and breeding of the goats earlier in the novel. As he prepares the traps to snare the animals, he thoughtfully notes that “particularly I wanted a she-goat great with young” (Defoe 122).

Women are not considered as other in Defoe’s novel. Rather, they are simply another tool for the protagonist to use in his colonizing of the island. As Bell has observed, the only functions that individual women perform in the novel are to oppose Crusoe’s initial going abroad (as his mother does) and to faithfully keep his financial affairs in order until his return (as the widow does.) About Mrs. Crusoe, Bell wryly remarks,

Her whole life is carried on in a subordinate clause between more interesting maritime journeys...Having continued Crusoe's line by bearing his children and so providing him with heirs—fortunately the male children outnumber the female—his wife is of no more use, and her presence merely hinders the continuing process of the adventure narrative. (40)

The scriptural economy in Robinson Crusoe sexlessly replicates without the need for the female species. In this way, women are mere tools of social efficacy that allow the male protagonist to populate his island and maintain his affairs while abroad. However, even their most basic duties of homemaking and producing children are, for the most part, not necessary to Crusoe in his goal of establishing his own civilization.

I have discussed the ways in which the character Amalia can be seen to offer an escape from the scriptural prison of the Castle. However, ultimately Kafka's novel (as a celibate machine) is unable to embrace the feminine perspective, only representing it as an alternative world of silence and screams. De Certeau explains:

It confesses (or flaunts, whichever you like) its relation to its limit, the limit of being masculine and nothing but. The celibate of the machine, in effect, returns to the fundamental, structuring form of difference—sexuality—and refuses to exercise any masculine power of expressing the feminine in speech. A cutting refusal, made exactly at the time when the impossibility of becoming, through pain, the writing of an other (feminine) causes the ambitions

formerly invested in death to flow back toward the erotic. In setting its limit, the celibatory apparatus is also refusing to express feminine in writing. It does not make use of the power of a masculine narrative to bring the feminine to expression.

(Heterologies 166)

Mettant fin à la coïncidentia oppositorum, lavée de toute 'consolation' qui surmonterait la différence, la machine a essentiellement pour distinction d'être male. Elle se tient de la sorte dans le lieu de sa production. Elle avoue ou elle affiche (comme on voudra) son rapport à sa limite d'être et de n'être que masculine. Son célibat retourne en effet à la forme structurante et fondamentale de la différence—la sexualité--, et refuse un pouvoir masculin de dire la femme. Refus tranchant, au moment même où l'impossibilité pour cette vie d'être par la douleur l'écriture d'une autre fait refluer vers l'érotique les ambitions hier investies dans la mort. En posant sa limite, l'appareil célibataires n'accepte pas d'écrire aussi la femme. Il ne garde pas dans le récit masculine le pouvoir de faire parler le féminin. (Arts de Mourir 95)

Thus, as Marjanne Goozé has pointed out, Kafka's text is a reaction against traditional scriptural practices, such as Robinson Crusoe, yet it is unable to posit a coherent alternative to this calculating, colonizing force. Instead it dramatizes its loss of control, or as de Certeau says, "It is the male divide that gives it its power—the violence of a writing whose eroticism increases with its *loss* of power (religious, cosmological, or political) over the other" (Heterologies 167).

The character of Frieda is especially problematic. She at first appears to be Klamm's mistress, then shifts her allegiances to K., only to reveal at the very end of the novel her ties to K.'s assistant Jeremias who is " 'my playmate from childhood days—we used to play with one another on the slope of the Castle hill, wonderful days you've never once asked me about my past' " (Castle 250). Whereas critics debate the role of women as spiritual extensions of the Castle or threats to its authority, Frieda's position seems to place her in a situation similar to K.'s:

All you actually see is Frieda taking beer into Klamm's room and then coming out with the payment, but Frieda describes what one cannot see, and one has to take her at her word...but once the barmaid has become Klamm's mistress, why does he leave her in the taproom, especially so long? Why doesn't he lead her higher?... But they saw no such signs and Frieda remained in the taproom, and secretly she was even quite happy that everything remained as it was. (Castle 295)

Was man sieht, ist zwar nur, daß Frieda das Bier in Klamms Zimmer trägt und mit der Bezahlung wieder herauskommt, aber das was man nicht sieht, erzählt Frieda und man muß es ihr glauben...wenn aber einmal das Ausschankmädchen Klamms Geliebte ist, warum läßt er sie und gar so lange in Ausschank? Warum führt er sie nicht höher?...Aber man merkte nichts und Frieda blieb im Ausschank wie bisher und war im Geheimen noch sehr froh, daß es so blieb. (Das Schloß 461-463)

This passage suggests that Frieda's "authority" as Kamm's mistress is as debatable and ambiguous as the legitimacy of K.'s assumed role as landsurveyor. It is not so much that Kafka's novel is an anti-feminist work, but that in its reaction against the masculine domination of the scriptural economy, it traps both men and women within its circular, celibate process. The short-circuiting of social efficacy denies scriptural progress, and in doing so, also fragments each of the female characters, denying any of them an identity as a coherent, unified other.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Franz Kafka's The Castle represent the two paths available to artists within a scriptural economy, namely to echo its myth of progress as Defoe does or to resist its conquering and capitalist tendencies by creating a celibate machine such as the one found in Kafka's work. By examining the scriptural process—as defined by de Certeau, as the blank page, the text inscribed upon this page, and the goal of social efficacy that is central to any scriptural undertaking—one can see the ways in which the two authors respectively confirm and subvert the values of progress, individualism, and male dominance.

De Certeau's wide-ranging background in literary theory, religious history, modern historiography, and psychology allows a unique and tactical approach to these texts that individual readings of religious allegory, post-colonialism, and feminism cannot offer in their single-minded approaches. As a result, we can revisit Defoe's text as a pivotal work that contains the mystic tradition of spiritual autobiography as well as view it as a precursor to the capitalist, industrial world that immediately follows. Likewise, Kafka's novel can be seen as both a denial of the God-like authority of the scriptural economy, while at the same time, a work that echoes the plurality and ambiguity of mystical writings such as St. Teresa's Interior Castle.



The one criticism common to both works is their inability to posit a distinct feminine identity. Defoe establishes a sexless colony in which women are largely absent and, when they do appear, play the role of a mere tool or even livestock brought in to insure the propagation of species. Kafka, by contrast, subverts the male, conquering tendencies of the scriptural narrative through his constantly shifting words and characters, but is ultimately unable to offer a true alternative to this world. Instead, both men and women are caught in his circular, celibate maze.

If we are, as many suggest, transitioning from a scriptural age to a cybernetic one, de Certeau's views seem especially relevant, as such a transition will no doubt affect our society just as radically as the written word once transformed oral culture. The one hope we can have is that new voices will rise to challenge and question this evolution and that artists will continue to create works akin to the celibate machines that "stripped naked the modern myth of writing" (de Certeau 153). De Certeau seems to hold the same hope for our future:

Perhaps this anti-myth is still ahead of our history, even if it is repeatedly confirmed by the erosion of scientific certainties, the massive 'boredom' of people at school, or the progressive metaphorization of administrative discourses. Or perhaps it has simply been place 'alongside' a galloping technocratization, like a suggestive para-dox, a little white pebble. (Practice 153)

Peut-être cet anti-mythe est-il encore en avance sur notre histoire, même s'il trouve déjà de multiples confirmations avec l'érosion des

assurances scientifiques, avec l'ennui massif des scolarisés, ou avec la progressive métaphorisation des discours administratifs. Peut-être est-il simplement posé à côté d'une technocratisation galopante, tel un para-doxe indicatif, un petit caillou blanc.

(L'Invention 261)

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