

## **Imagining a Letter from Robinson Crusoe: Experiencing *Constant Becoming***

**Marc Z. Yang, PhD**  
Professor of French  
Wingate University  
United States

The unity of a world is nothing other than its diversity, and this, in turn, is a diversity of worlds. A world is a multiplicity of worlds; the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the mutual sharing and exposition of all its worlds -- within this world.

— Jean-Luc Nancy

Awakening is joyous. The innocence of awakening, the active disconnection of the past, make possible this joy. How good to be alive! How refreshing is this silence! How calm the evening is! How pungent is smells! In every joy there is an awakening.

— Alphonso Lingis

In seeking an open-ended future, one is not required to affirm that misnomer, 'free will', but to acknowledge the capacity of any future eruption, any event, any reading, to rewrite, resignify, reframe the present, to accept the role that the accidental, chance, or the undetermined plays in the unfolding of time.

— Elizabeth Brosz

Un nouveau Robinson se débattait dans sa vieille peau et acceptait à l'avance de laisser crouler l'île administrée pour s'enfoncer à la suite d'un initiateur irresponsable dans une voie inconnue.

— Michel Tournier

**Dear Sir,**

This is very likely a letter that presents a total surprise to you, a surprise in the sense in which French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy speaks of the experience of freedom: "Freedom is the specific logic of the access to the self outside of itself in a spacing, each time singular, of being."<sup>1</sup> My letter constitutes precisely this singular and unique "spacing", this sharing of being.

Well, my name is Robinson Crusoe. Not the Crusoe of Daniel Defoe's creation, but the Robinson of Michel Tournier's brainchild. As it took exactly twenty-eight years, two months and twenty days from the shipwreck of the *Virginie* to the arrival of the *Whitebird* to the island - if I remember correctly, the captain of that vessel was called William Hunter, a man completely opposite to my captain from the *Virginie*, Pieter Van Deysse - it took almost as long for me to write you this letter, my only letter to a reader thus far.

Why this length of time? My story as imagined by Tournier took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more than two hundred and fifty years ago. But you only became acquainted with my story much more recently. You might remember that you and I first met on a beautiful sunny day, back in the spring of 1992. (Oh my goodness, to me this arrow of time flies faster than speed of a supersonic craft of your time!) You were waiting to go to a graduate seminar on twentieth century French literary criticism when your classmate came to you in great excitement, " Please read this novel! It is eye opening!" That book was *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* by Michel Tournier. You quickly researched Tournier before reading his novel, and immediately became fascinated by the author's background, especially the fact that after four years of training in philosophy at the University of Tübingen in addition to his studying philosophy at the Sorbonne alongside his best friend Gilles Deleuze, he emigrated from the kingdom of philosophy to the world of literature.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Sense of the World*, translated and with a Foreword by Jeffrey S. Libretto, University of Minnesota Press, 1997 (Originally published as *Le sens du monde*, Editions Galilee, Paris, 1993), p. 70.

You devoured the novel with delight and felt thrown into a world impregnated with surprises and wonders. It was an awakening, the sort of awakening American philosopher Alphonso Lingis described in the passage I have placed in front of this letter<sup>2</sup>. That reading of Tournier's novel is when you got acquainted with me, Robinson, and me with you. This surprising encounter or event (I am sure you would prefer the word "event" because Nancy frequently uses it in his book *The Sense of the World*) made you decide to write a doctoral dissertation on Michel Tournier, letting the novel *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*<sup>3</sup> play a pivotal role in your Nietzschean interpretation of his writing. I really wanted to let you know how much I appreciated your continual visits to my island every time you reread the novel.

Subsequently *Dalhousie French Studies* published your interview with Tournier<sup>4</sup>. You went back to meet with him a few more times later on, while starting to focus your research on the concept of *constant becoming*, a philosophical position you have been advocating ever since. Based on your publications I could see you clearly were trying to let Tournier co-create with other thinkers of *becoming* such as Nietzsche, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre Hadot, and Edward Said. Recently you had Jean-Luc Nancy join this *praxis* of co-creation.

I know you are quite fond of Foucault. I myself find his thinking very penetrating, and it helps me better understand my experience in the island on which I was marooned. Let me paraphrase one passage from Foucault's monumental work *The Order of Things*. It goes as the following: *If the discovery of the return is indeed the end of philosophy, then the end of man signifies the return of the beginning of philosophy. In our time we are destined to think in the void left by man's disappearance. But this void neither creates a deficiency, nor constitutes a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think.*<sup>5</sup> This "unfolding of a space" represents marvelously my journey in discovering the *other island* where I experienced this "man's disappearance" while embracing Gilles Deleuze's vision of the "structure du possible"<sup>6</sup> in Tournier's novel.

I have no doubt you are very familiar with my story, but please let me have the honor to share it again with you while keeping in mind your concept of *constant becoming* as an overall philosophical position. I believe sharing it with you will get me even closer to true freedom, to the freedom as one which is *constant becoming*, to the freedom à la Nancy: "Power has an origin, freedom is a beginning. Freedom does not cause coming-to-being, it is an *initiality* of being."<sup>7</sup> In a sense my whole journey illustrates gaining access to experience of sharing, sharing as the meaning of the world, sharing as the world of meaning, sharing as experience of freedom, all again à la Nancy.

People don't seem to pay attention to the fact that I was college educated. The time when I was a student at the University of York was a time when the Americas became fierce battlegrounds for major European colonial powers: the military, economical, and political rivalry between France and Great Britain concentrated in the North while Spain was busy accumulating wealth and destroying native cultures in the South. It was also a time when many Europeans rushed to the other side of the Atlantic for a chance to have a better life. I was no exception. At the age of twenty-two I left my young wife (my *affaire* with a hot Italian student named Spéranza unfortunately did not last long) and two children behind in York and joined to seek my fortune in the New World – as so many of my compatriots had -hoping my family would join me later. Taking passage in the *Virginie* at Lima, I tried to avoid the devilish man, captain Pieter Van Deyssel. His dismaying perspicacity and cynical Epicureanism was indeed not very comforting to a simple-minded young man like me with a Quaker upbringing. The horrible storm forced me into close contact with him, as the captain's cabin was the only shred of comfort remaining in the ship. That was when I had to take part in Captain Van Deyssel's Egyptian tarot cards reading game.

<sup>2</sup> Alphonso Lingis, "Innocence" in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, edited by Elizabeth Grosz, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*, Gallimard, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> Yang Zhaoding, "Entretien avec Michel Tournier", *Dalhousie French Studies* 42 (1998): 149-158

<sup>5</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, London, Tailstock Publications, 1970, p. 342.

<sup>6</sup> See Zhaoding Yang's article: "Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique: le refus de retour chez Michel Tournier", *Dalhousie French Studies* 45 (1998): 55-61.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Experience of Freedom*, translated by Bridget McDonald, Stanford University Press, 1993 (originally published as *Experience de la libération*, Editions Galilee, 1988), p. 78.

He was richly indulging his gift of prophecy, puffing smoke from his china-bowled Alsatian pipe, hunching like Buddha in his chair while my thoughts were wandering, worrying more about the storm that had begun tossing the boat than the captain's often enigmatic comments. All the furry of that hellish storm intensified, but Van Deysse, compatriot of philosopher Spinoza, seemed totally absorbed in his tarot reading. Then everything became suddenly motionless, he looked hard at me and said sternly: "Crusoe, take heed of what I say. Beware of purity. It is the acid of the soul."<sup>8</sup> At that moment a black wall of water crashed upon the deck and swept everything away. The captain's last comment was about the last card "Jupiter". The shipwreck of the *Virginie* happened in the evening of September 29, 1759 in the waters of the Islands of Fernandez on the west coast of Chile.

Everything was returned to peace after the storm when, with a sharp pain on my left shoulder, I came back to consciousness on the beach of an unknown island. After I crawled a few yards higher up on the beach, the horrific effects of the storm jumped in front of my eyes: the shore was littered with gutted fish, shattered shellfish, and piles of brownish weed, the kind that grows only at a certain depth. The next thing I saw was the ridiculous and pathetic shape of the *Virginie* resting two cable lengths away: a mute declaration of disaster. It was a miracle I did not even have any broken bones; the only injury was the badly bruised left shoulder.

Humans are hopelessly social animals. Although they often make each other's lives miserable, even kill each other without blinking their eyes, and mostly for selfish reasons though disguised under a spectrum of important causes. But when they are thrown into solitude, they desperately seek the presence of others. Other humans, especially my family, my friends, and my fellow Quakers, surrounded all my twenty-two years. My first instinct was to set about looking for other survivors from the wreck and for inhabitants of the island. The hot sun was in the sky high above so I made myself a conical hat from the ferns scattered about. I also picked up a fallen branch to serve as walking stick and entered the thorny undergrowth at the foot of volcanic uplands. From its crest I hoped to survey the land. Walking alone in the heavy silence of the forest, the noise of my own progress exploded in frightening echoes. I did not detect any human habitation, even animals seemed absent from the leafy cathedrals of vegetation stretching before me. I finally encountered a wild goat, rooted in the spot for some strange reason, blocking my path (later I understood it was his curiosity at seeing a human being for the very first time). When this hairy statue made a strange sound like a deep belly chuckle, I was suddenly overtaken by a violent fit of anger. My walking stick was too light, so I picked up a black, knotted cudgel of wood and brought it down between the goat's horns with all my strength... I could have been the first and only human being the goat ever saw before I took his life. And he could have lived a very peaceful life because later on I discovered, that except for vultures, there were no carnivores on the island. My violent act could be justified by my fear, exhaustion, lack of human companionship, trauma from the shipwreck, and so on and on... But was my killing any different from that of Europeans when they gunned down Native Americans? This comparison made me very uneasy, and still does now.

I was too exhausted to measure the full extent of my shipwrecked misfortunes. Total despair prompted me to baptize the island the "Île de Désolation." Exploring the mountaintop I found some kind of wild bananas and dined on them. Afterwards I had a dreamless sleep under a large boulder "guarded" by a huge cedar tree. When I woke up the next day I began to walk back to the beach I had left the day before, realizing I was probably doomed to solitude for a very long time. I felt like an orphan of humanity and fell in a mood of heavy melancholy. I had forgotten all about the slaughtered goat until I came upon it on the path. Half a dozen hideous vultures were watching my approach with small pink eyes; their heads sunk between their shoulders, the goat lay gutted on the stones. It was a relief for me to find my knotted cudgel, so I grabbed it and brandished it at the birds. They were fearless, and it was with great effort that I made them fly away.

I started imagining myself the dead goat. The solitude had its first strong effect on me: without my fellow human beings I found myself confronted with my absolutely naked vulnerability. A chill traversed my whole body. Yet I brought the gutted goat down to the beach and roasted it over a fire of eucalyptus twigs. The crackle of the flames consoled me. I chewed the musky meat with my eyes on the horizon. I resolved to keep the fire going permanently for two main reasons: for my spiritual comfort and as a signal to possible rescuers. I had decided to go to sea to seek my fortune, not to settle down in an uninhabited island, thus I refused to do anything that would suggest any action or non-action that indicated I had accepted to stay within its confines.

---

<sup>8</sup> Michel Tournier, *Friday*, translated by Norman Denny, John Hopkins Paperbacks edition, 1997, p. 14. The author of this article would like to credit Norman Denny's translation of Tournier's novel *Friday* because he uses some of Denny's words and expressions as Robinson recounts his story.

My only preoccupation was to find ways to best signal possible rescuers. You see, Sir, when escaping was my only goal, I ceased to exist, the world of meaning suspended. "There is no meaning if meaning is not shared, and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, but because *meaning is itself the sharing of being*."<sup>9</sup> Philosopher Nancy is absolutely right to link meaning to sharing. Remembering Nancy saying that "*world is not merely the correlative of sense, it is structured as sense, and reciprocally, sense is structured as world*"<sup>10</sup>, I would go even further: *meaning is structured as relation*. On my part I had lost contact with my fellow human beings, I stopped tracking time hoping my eventual rescuers would tell me how much time had elapsed since the wreck of the *Virginie*, and I refused to have anything to do with the "Île de Désolation." This lack of relation to anybody drove me to the edge of insanity, and I fell victim of hallucination: having at my feet this liquid mass in constant motion everything started changing forms in a blink of eye.

That was a warning sign. I decided to abandon my passive expectation and began to build a boat big enough to take me to the coast of Chile. With this resolve in mind I overcame my reluctance and visited the *Virginie* in search of tools and materials. With great hope I named the vessel I was going to build the *Escape*. I spent days and months working on my *Escape*, and when it was finally completed a growing panic overwhelmed me: the boat was too heavy and too far from any shore. The task to get it to the waters singlehanded would have required more than rest of my life! Dear Sir, I gave up. I sank into the bottom of the abyss and joined several families of peccaries in the "souille" (mire).

Exiled from my fellow human beings, those who had sustained me as a part of humanity without me realizing it, I lost the strength to stand on my own. I moved less and less and always returned to the "souille" where my body lost all weight in its warm coverlet of slime while the toxic emanations of the stagnant water drugged my mind. Only my eyes, nose, and mouth were active, alert for edible weed and the spawn of toads drifting on the surface. I became less than subhuman. In the "souille" my drugged mind was constantly invaded by phantoms from the past. When in delirium I imagined I frantically chased after a Spanish galleon seeing my long deceased younger sister Lucy on it, I could no longer doubt the disorder of my mind. Only a little more was needed to degrade myself utterly and to drive me to the depth of madness. I knew I must end my pseudo existence of escaping.

To be or not to be, that is the question.

Dear Sir, my "escaping" episode is in fact an attempt to run away from becoming. Becoming invites changes, welcomes newness, embraces unknown, and advocates impermanence (the very heart of Buddhist teaching)<sup>11</sup>, but I was taught all the opposites: a set of conventions regarded as eternal truth governed my twenty-two young years before the shipwreck. Please be patient with me.

"Predictable, measured, regulated transformation, change under specifiable conditions and with determinate effects, seem a readily presumed social prerequisite."<sup>12</sup> That was what in my mind when I resolved to leave the "souille", and I spent the next few weeks making a methodical survey of the island and taking stock of its resources. By good fortune, the spells of bad weather had not completely demolished many useful objects and tools from the wreck. With everything I rescued from the *Virginie* I regained hope and moral strength, and the "Island of Desolation" became the "Île de Spérance (hope)" for me. I was busy codifying, territorializing, mapping; I was once again in control of time and space; and in my "Île de Spérance" I started to establish an economical, political, and moral order modeled after my now far away home country: the Great Britain. The "île administrée" I created gave me back the feeling of the dignity of a human being with free will. In my "île administrée" newness, creativity, and innovation would be rejected only unless they were regulated, planned, organized, and rationalized. My relationship with dear Spérance was everything in forms of binary oppositions but *sharing*. I did not share; this Spérance would be whatever I wanted her to be. In Nancy's eyes this would be the sheer absence of meaning.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford University Press, 2000 (originally published as *Ere singular plural*, Editions Galilee, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Sense of the World*, P. 8.

<sup>11</sup> See Thick Nhat Hahn, *You Are Here: Discovering the Magic of the Present Moment*, Tambala Publications, Inc., Boston, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, "Thinking the New: of Futures yet Unthought" in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, edited by Elizabeth Grosz, Cornell University Press, 1999, p. 16.

Everything progressed orderly in my "île administrée." Production increased steadily; I even started to worry a little about surplus. But after a little while I started to neglect the water clock when the water ran out. Yet every time when that had happened a voluptuous feel of freedom came to surprise me. Progressively I stopped my functions as governor and administrator, Spéranza stopped being a territory to be exploited, but became a wondrous being, unquestionably feminine, to be experienced in a sense of sharing. With this new discovery, in the place of rationalistic speculations toward her I felt new needs arising in my heart and flesh. I began to imagine confusedly whether the cave might not be the mouth or eye or some other orifice of that great body. I ventured into the very depths of the cave and felt I was near the core of Spéranza, the beating heart, the mysterious mind of her great body.

My exploration of the cave led me to discover a recess about five feet deep, perfectly smooth and curiously shaped in which I succeeded to place my naked body just like a child in a mother's womb. I was suspended in a happy eternity. How long did I stay there? I could not know; the only thing I felt was a sense of total peace. I plunged into the forgotten world of my childhood, and I was haunted by the memory of my mother.

I made frequent visits to the recess. One day I came near sullyng Spéranza with my semen. I suddenly realized the incest nature of my intimate exploration of this maternal earth. I was horrified by my own act.

Impossible to go back to the recess, I then found such happy intimacy with a quillai tree, a being, a living thing, totally inspired by sexual interaction in the world of plants, birds, and insects. But my "vegetable way" was interrupted one day when my gland got bitten by a big red spotted spider during my voluptuous embrace with my darling tree. This misadventure made me think of its moral significance: my "vegetable way" might be no more, no less than as a dangerous blind alley.

I was completing my project of building a rice paddy, however, looking at the gurgle of sluggishly moving water soaking into the earth, the smell of stagnation sharply evoked my memory of the "souille". I was torn between my triumph and a sense of sickening weakness. This rice paddy represented the taming of the "souille", a decisive victory over everything most primitive and disturbing in Spéranza. But it was at a high price, and I would not forget the extreme effort it had cost me. Seeing my lonely reflection on the watery surface of the rice paddy I was suddenly conscious of the vanity of all this work for the granary of wheat and barley that was already overflowing. A wave of anger caught me: what purpose did they serve: the tillage, the stockbreeding, the hoarding, the Charter, the Penal Code? Jumping the irrigation ditch, I strode away, my eyes blurring over in despair. It was not the first time I felt my cultivation of the island was a meaningless enterprise. More than once I sensed there were two Robinsons debating inside myself, and that Robinson the administrator might vanish for good before the new Robinson was fully emerged. I also thought I had already caught a sight of the *other island* during my intimate exploration of Spéranza. I fell asleep after the spasm of my despair earlier. When I opened my eyes and rolled over on my back, I saw the beautiful sun set, and I felt the warmth of the earth incredibly comforting. A wave of tenderness passed through me. I felt as never before that I was lying on Spéranza as though on a living being, that the island's body was beneath me. Never before had I felt so much intensity... I made passionate love to Spéranza and made her my spouse. That was my well known "combe rose" adventure.... I had a taste of *existence à la Heidegger*.

My "île administrée" was beautiful, perfect, and efficient, but at the same time it was like a mill constantly running empty. More than once a sense of absurdity surprised me in the middle of the day while I was out governing my kingdom. I did not even know what to do with all the gold and silver coins I rescued from the *Virginie*. One day, out checking on things with Tenn the dog, the other survivor from the *Virginie* besides me, I fortuitously saved an Araucanian boy from a cannibal ritual. I named him Friday. Yes, I intended to kill him instead of his pursuers, but my act was justified by common wisdom. Yes, I lamented about the impurity of his race, but I was just reacting according to the cultural norms back home. Unfortunately I was a product of my upbringing. For you see, a slave was the missing piece for my nicely designed system; the arrival of Friday filled this lacuna rather neatly. I must admit I was jealous and utterly amazed when I witnessed an immediate intimacy between Friday and Tenn. A natural sharing just happened between the two, no explanations seemed necessary.

Integrating Friday into my "île administrée" was no easy task even though he seemed very obedient, and grateful to me, his savior.

First he had no sense of shame, I had to teach and force him to wear clothes; he did not know a single word of English, I tried to teach him English words in action (you would call it functional learning and teaching), lots of comic scenes in the process; he had no sense of time and discipline, I set up a bunch of rules for him to observe; I also had to introduce him to Christian values of... what?

With Friday in the picture of my system, everything seemed to become operative. Working days on and days off were established; the gold and silver coins from the *Virginie* were finally in use: Friday got paid for his work. He could either get extra pay for working more or get fined by shirking his duties. He could even buy time off with his money. Fields were cultivated; animals were domesticated; Sunday chapel was mandatory. All in all it was a total victory of order over chaos in the "île administrée", and every inch of it proved the glory of the Western civilization. I maintained a strict Master/Slave relationship with Friday: he had to completely follow my orders. Nevertheless corporal punishment was infrequent, torture was non-existent, and there was absolutely no sexual harassment. Though I must confess, some of the punishments I inflicted on Friday were quite capricious. For instance I ordered him to dig holes and then refill them under the hot sun. He showed no sign of resenting this kind of absurd punishment; instead he labored with eagerness while Tenn happily jumped between holes. It was like some sort of ritual between the two. I was bewildered.

For years after while observing Friday's way of being, I often felt the *other* Robinson and the *other island* were destined to emerge at the horizon at any moment. Unconsciously I more frequently "neglected" the "île administrée" and let myself be "distracted". There was something new, exciting, still unknown, palpating in me and around the island. Little by little not only did I stop viewing *becoming* something new and different as menace or threat, I also secretly welcomed this *becoming* as chance and opportunity. Every time during the period of my "neglecting" the "île administrée" and being "distracted", I was always greeted with "incident" (such as Friday smoking my pipe, him destroying rice harvest while trying to save Tenn, etc.) upon my return. I finally realized a different Friday must have appeared during my absence. When a seemingly accidental "explosion" destroyed both the "île administrée" and my fragile emotional balance, I knew a new logic was to come to replace mine. I would call it the logic of *constant becoming*. I know you would like that, dear Sir.

With my old heritage all gone, I had to open myself up to the new: to learning from Friday. The first effect of this learning was that I started to see different things and to see things differently. I became able to enjoy sharing, sharing with Friday, sharing with the island, sharing with all the elements. I would pastiche Nancy here: *every moment of sharing touches the sense, and senses the world*. Reflecting on my "île administrée", Nancy's wisdom came to my rescue. Let me paraphrase him for you: *the world is neither a work of God nor an operation of Man, but the space of "there is," its configuration without a face.*<sup>13</sup> "There is" Spéranza, "there is" Friday, both full of sense; but I was blind to see any of this due to my static notion of everything, and more than that, due to my refusal of *constant becoming*. It was Friday who cured my "cécité" and initiated me into a surprising discovery of a whole new world in Spéranza, in him, and in myself. Didn't Deleuze make this profound statement somewhere? "Innocence is the truth of multiplicity."<sup>14</sup>

Dear Sir, the true beauty of the world comes down to this "innocence of multiplicity". Accepting *constant becoming* is to reject the very logic of *One* and to embrace the innocence of *Multiple*, as Deleuze strongly advocates in his book *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. In the same line of thinking Nancy would say: there is not "subject" and "object", but, rather, there are sites and places, distances: a possible world that is already a world.<sup>15</sup>

It was Friday who guided me out of my world of binary oppositions and initiated me into an innocent world of multiplicity where the meaningfulness of everything completes itself as open, infinitely beyond a given sense of *One*. After the "explosion" that destroyed the "île administrée" Friday became the catalyst of my metamorphosis from "terrien" to "solaire", and taught me to embrace the "jeu, musique et danse". Every day is a new beginning, exactly like in the innocent world of a child. With years of teaching by Friday I gradually approached a point where my old world seemed obsolete in this newly discovered world of *constant becoming*.

<sup>13</sup> See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson, Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 61.

For a long time I relied on my *log-book* and my reading of the Bible to make sense of my existence in the island, but now I felt I could navigate alone in my new world: "... a world joins, plays, speaks, and shares: this is its sense, which is not different from the sense of 'making sense'".<sup>16</sup>

You see, it was once more possible for me to feel, to see, to touch, to share, to laugh, to dance, and to think after the disappearance of the "île administrée" I had created. I might have surprised everyone at the end by choosing not to go back with the *Whitebird*, but my choice against "reason" was the only logical decision to me who now had resolved to embark on an adventure of *constant becoming*. People might also be perplexed by Friday's choice to leave the island, but to me Friday's departure was inevitable for the very reason that he incarnates the very *constant becoming*. I must admit that at first his departure from our island almost sent me back into total despair. When I discovered the cook's boy from the *Whitebird*, I named this skittish boy who had deserted to our island - just like me with a head of red hair - Thursday. He was younger than Friday when the latter first became my subject on the "île administrée".

Unlike me who was cast into the solitary existence of, and in, an unknown island, Thursday made a choice to join the unknown. "In the beginning is a mode of becoming"<sup>17</sup>; more than ever I have a strong conviction that *becoming* is the authentic way of our being. *Constant becoming* is the very heart of life, and it makes life possible. It is only by accepting *constant becoming* that one can become free.

Dear Sir, thank you so much for your exceptional patience by reading so long a letter from me! Both Thursday and I warmly welcome your return to our island in the near future. Shall we name it the "Island of Constant Becoming" when you honor us again with your visit?

Yours truly,

Robinson Crusoe

---

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Sense of the World*, p. 78.

<sup>17</sup> Claire Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming: Strategy, Subjectivism, and Style" in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, edited by Elizabeth Grosz, p. 126.