

A Message from the Sea...



Eva Flora Mazzoncini - 4 G



Isla de Más a Tierra, 21th March 1701

I, the undersigned Alexander Selkirk, Scottish sailor and secretary of the governor of the Isla de Más a Tierra Mr Robinson Crusoe, not knowing if I will be able to return to my homeland and divulge these roles in person, entrust these words to the sea, so that they may be led to some enlightened mind and inspire posterity even three hundred years from now.

What I will report in this letter is the dialogue - which I have witnessed - between Mr Crusoe, whom I accompanied on his second trip to this remote island together with the native Friday, and Mr Lemuel Gulliver who, after his last voyage by sea, was shipwrecked there with his raft on his way back to his native land.

In fact, one evening around the fire, after having listened carefully to the adventures that had brought Mr Robinson to this island the first and second time, Mr Gulliver, who had just recovered after struggling for hours against the rushing wind and violence of the sea, in turn shared the story of the fantastic and unknown societies and worlds encountered on his four voyages and said:

"I tried to adapt to the new situations I encountered, but without success. I believe that the cause of my failure is the very structure of these bizarre societies: the Lilliputians, however generous, have a warmongering disposition and are deeply divided internally by hatred and pettiness. Nor did things go better with the giants Brobdingnag: life with them was impossible! They magnify all human, moral and physical defects in an exasperated way, and have even treated me as an object of amusement. Then in the city of Laputa, I saw scientists conducting completely senseless studies and oppress other nearby populations. The community in which I fit best, and the only one I would have liked to have stayed in, is that of the Houyhnhnms, the wise horses, despite being disgusted by their servants, the Yahoo, so similar to me, human beings in appearance but ugly in body and in the spirit. But the horses were afraid that I could become a despicable being just like Yahoo, so when I asked to be admitted among them, they banned me. "

Robinson, who had remained silent while listening to these journeys, understood that the man in front of him had led them exclusively with the aim of finding a utopian world and not out of thirst for conquest, as he had done. He reflected on how Gulliver's frustration lay precisely in the fact that he had not behaved as a colonizer like him. "Friend - he said - you should have civilized the people you met, instead of trying to understand them and being subjugated by them. With God's help, even in this place on the edge of the world, I still managed to organize a primitive empire and become master of the island! "

"You see - continued Robinson - with your attitude you have destroyed the perception and esteem of yourself, while I, since I have come to this place, have thoroughly explored it and begun to exploit this environment more and more, creating only with myself the utopian society that you have been looking for in all your travels. I made a virtue of necessity and in any case I evaded other people who could have destroyed the harmony I was able to create. So, despite my isolation, I must admit that my life on this island was not so bad. "

"You have only had luck - replied Gulliver - and you have also found a meek companion who has bowed to your dominion, renouncing his nature to serve you and become "civil" like you. But what is civilization for you? The need to have someone submissive to be able to feel master of the world? What will you do if we can get back to England? Will you boast of this conquest of yours? Will you show it as evidence that nothing is impossible for a man of faith, even surviving on a desert island infested with cannibals? Are you really convinced that you can win any challenge? "

"We are too different friend - concluded Robinson - Due to the isolation from the shipwreck I have rediscovered my faith and this helped me to understand that by combining the will with the disciplined application of intelligence, technology and brute force, anything is possible. You're always trying to understand the point of view of others, however, it has eventually made you misanthropic and frustrated. You are too critical of society and human beings, and above all too critical of yourself; not only have you not conquered anything, but you have been subjugated and taken hostage. The mistake is accepting other cultures, changing our way of being to get closer to those who are a thousand miles away from us." He finally said glancing at Friday who was preparing an unlikely fish and fruit soup.

"I have learned nothing from my travels - Gulliver retorted - except the awareness that the society in which I lived before, your so-called civilized world, which I saw mirrored in the extravagant societies I met, must improve. In particular the horses, those exceptional beings, majestic and meek, sociable and gregarious, capable of blending together beauty, power, agility, elegance and freedom, made me understand that it is possible to pursue more morally elevated ideals of peaceful coexistence and of sincerity. So do not mistake my curiosity towards other cultures for weakness and accept my proposal to try, here and once back home, to change. We, who in addition to reason are also able to experience feelings and passions compared to horses, have a greater potential and we must use it to improve, rather than to exploit others to our advantage and discriminate against them."

Mr Robinson, struck by these words, remained silent for a long time, mulling over concepts such as identity and ethnic judgment, which many times had entered his mind but which he had pretended not to notice. He saw in front of him his path into which he had transformed the place and the other he had met, forcing them to resemble him, and in a moment he understood his guilt and hypocrisy. He also thought about how things could have gone if he had instead made himself available to the new cultures he met, putting himself at their service and opening up to confrontation and, even without ever denying his origins, he had accepted their contamination.

In a moved tone he urged his new companion to regain strength: together they would return to England to spread the essence of their experience of the journey, which is that of re-birth in a different form, given by contact with elsewhere and by 'meeting with the other, thus imagining to lay the foundations for a society that is finally tolerant and integrated.

Alexander Selkirk