

**Castaways and colonists from Crusoe to Coetzee**

**SUSANNA JOHANNA SMIT-MARAIS**

**11660139**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of  
Philosophy in English at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West  
University**

**Promoter: Prof. M.J. Wenzel**

**Co-promoter: Prof. A.M. de Lange**

**November 2012**

## Table of contents

---

Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Opsomming	vii
<b>Chapter 1: The Castaway Novel as Literary Genre</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Contextualization	1
1.1.1 <i>Boundaries, narrative space and identity</i>	4
1.2 The castaway novel: origins and conventions	6
1.3 The cultural dominant	9
1.3.1 <i>Genre and the formation of literary dominants</i>	11
1.4 Problem statement	12
1.5 Thesis	13
1.6 Aims	14
1.7 Theoretical framework and method	14
1.7.1 <i>Narrative perspective: narration and focalization</i>	15
1.8 Choice of texts	18
1.9 Chapter division	19
<b>Chapter 2: Eighteenth Century Colonists: <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> and the Myth of the Castaway</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Contextualization	22
2.2 <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> as archetypal castaway novel	25
2.3 <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> 's 18 <sup>th</sup> century contexts	29
2.4 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization	33
2.4.1 <i>Narrative structure</i>	34
2.4.2 <i>Narrative effects</i>	37
2.4.3 <i>Narrative distance and ideology</i>	38
2.4.4 <i>The pursuit of Reason</i>	40
2.5 Converting and containing space and identity: <i>Crusoe</i> 's monologic world	42
2.6 The footprint as spatial marker	50
<b>Chapter 3: Reinventing the past in Umberto Eco's <i>The Island of the Day Before</i></b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 Introduction	53
3.2 Contesting archetypes of the castaway genre	62
3.3 <i>The Island of the Day Before</i> and the 17 <sup>th</sup> century context	66
3.4 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization	73
3.4.1 <i>Narrative structure</i>	76
3.4.2 <i>Narrative effects</i>	79
3.4.3 <i>Narrative distance and the manufacture of sympathy</i>	81

3.5	Narratological strategies and the fictionalization of the past	84
3.5.1	<i>Metafiction</i>	85
3.5.2	<i>Historiographic metafiction</i>	87
3.5.3	<i>Intertextuality</i>	92
<b>Chapter 4: Contesting Boundaries in JM Coetzee's <i>Foe</i></b>		<b>99</b>
4.1	Contextualization	99
4.2	Deconstructing archetypes	102
4.3	<i>Foe</i> and the representation of Defoe's 18 <sup>th</sup> century contexts	105
4.4	Narrative perspective: narration and focalization	109
4.4.1	<i>Narrative structure</i>	110
4.4.2	<i>Narrative effects</i>	117
4.4.3	<i>Narrative distance and the failure of sympathy</i>	119
4.5	Narratological strategies and postmodern revision	121
4.5.1	<i>Intertextuality</i>	121
4.5.2	<i>Allegory</i>	128
4.5.3	<i>Irony</i>	131
<b>Chapter 5: Transcending Boundaries in Yann Martell's <i>Life of Pi</i></b>		<b>135</b>
5.1	Contextualization	135
5.2	Re-contextualizing archetypes of the castaway novel	141
5.3	<i>Life of Pi</i> and the 21 <sup>st</sup> century context	144
5.4	Narrative perspective: narration and focalization	146
5.4.1	<i>Narrative structure</i>	149
5.4.2	<i>Narrative effects</i>	151
5.4.3	<i>Narrative distance: sustaining sympathy</i>	153
5.5	Narratological strategies and the transformation of the past	155
5.5.1	<i>Metafiction</i>	155
5.5.2	<i>Intertextuality</i>	157
5.5.3	<i>Carnavalesque</i>	159
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion</b>		<b>166</b>
6.1	Generic transformation and the dominant shift	169
6.2	Narrative perspective, distance and the resurrection of sympathy	174
6.3	Concluding remarks	175
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>178</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

- I am thankful to have been blessed with immense support throughout this study.
- Prof. Marita Wenzel and Prof. A.M. de Lange guided this study with patience. Their input and constructive criticism were invaluable
- My husband, daughter, parents and in-laws provided emotional support and encouragement. My husband helped to create the infrastructure I needed to complete this study, while my mother-in-law was always willing to look after my daughter so that I could work.
- My friends Karien Hattingh and Christina Naurattel encouraged and supported me throughout.
- Prof. Annette Combrink edited this thesis during an immensely busy time and supplied me with valuable feedback.

## **Abstract**

Generic transformation of the castaway novel is made evident by the various ways in which the narrative boundaries that separate fiction from reality and history, the past from the present, and the rational from the irrational, are reconfigured in Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* (1994), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2002). The dissolution of boundaries reflects the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel from the 18<sup>th</sup> century literary context to the present postmodern, postcolonial context. In this regard, the narrative utilizes various narratological strategies, the most significant being intertextuality, metafiction, historiographical metafiction, allegory, irony, and the carnivalesque. These narratological strategies rewrite, revise, and recontextualize those generic conventions that perpetuated the culture of masculinity and conquest that defines colonialism and the traditional castaway novel epitomized by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

From a postcolonial perspective, the castaway's state of being reflects on the condition of the colonized as well as the colonizer: his/her experience of displacement is similar to colonized peoples' separation from their cultural, spiritual and personal identities; simultaneously, processes of appropriation, adaptation and control of space resemble colonization, thereby revealing the constructed nature of colonial space. As such, space is fundamental to individual orientation and social adaptation and consequently, metaphorically and metonymically linked to identity.

In the selected postmodernist and postcolonial texts, the movement from the position of castaway to colonist as originally manifested in *Robinson Crusoe* is therefore reinterpreted and recontextualized. The postmodernist and postcolonial contexts resist fixed and one-dimensional representations of identity, as well as the appropriation and domination of space, that characterize shipwreck literature from pre-colonial and colonial periods. Rationalist notions of history, reality and truth as empirically definable concepts are also contested. The castaway identity is often characterized by feelings of physical and spiritual displacement and estrangement that can be paralleled to postmodernist themes of existential confusion and anxiety.

**Keywords**

Boundaries, Castaway, Colonialism, Focalization, *Foe*, Genre, Hybridity, Identity, *The Island of the Day Before*, *Life of Pi*, Liminality, Literary dominant, Narration, Narratological strategies, Postcolonialism, Postmodernism, Post-postmodernism, Robinson Crusoe, Space & Place

## Opsomming

Die generiese transformasie van die skipbreukelingsroman word bevestig deur die verskeie wyses waarin die narratiewe grense wat fiksie van realiteit en die geskiedenis skei, asook die verlede van die hede, en die rasonele van die irrasionele, herkonfigureer word in *The Island of the Day Before* (1994) deur Umberto Eco, *Foe* (1986) deur J.M. Coetzee en *Life of Pi* (2002) deur Yann Martel. Die verbrokkeling van grense reflekteer die dominants-verskuiwing binne die genre van die skipbreukelingsroman sedert die 18de eeuse literêre konteks tot en met die postmoderne, postkoloniale hede. Ten opsigte hiervan, ontplooi die narratief verskeie narratologiese strategieë, waarvan die belangrikste intertekstualiteit, metafiksie, historiografiese metafiksie, allegorie, ironie, en die ‘carnavalesque’ is. Die betrokke narratologiese strategieë herskryf, hersien, en herkontekstualiseer die konvensies van genre wat deur die kultuur van manlikheid en verowering aangemoedig is en wat kolonialisme, asook die tradisionele skipbreukelingsroman soos vergestalt deur Daniel Defoe se *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), omskryf.

Vanaf die postkoloniale perspektief, spreek die skipbreukeling se wese tot die kondisie van die gekoloniseerde sowel as die koloniseerder: sy ervaring van ontworteling is soortgelyk aan dié van gekoloniseerdes se ervaring van vervreemding van hul kulturele, spirituele en persoonlike identiteit; terselfdertyd, toon prosesse van toeiening, aanpassing en beheer van ruimte ‘n ooreenkoms met kolonisasie, wat dan ook die gekonstrueerde aard van koloniale ruimte openbaar.

In die geselekteerde postmodernistiese en postkoloniale tekste word die beweging van skipbreukeling tot kolonialis soos wat oorspronklik deur *Robinson Crusoe* gemanifesteer is, herinterpreteer en herkontekstualiseer. Die postmodernistiese en postkoloniale kontekste bied weerstand teen gevestigde en een-dimensionele representasies van identiteit, asook die toeiening en dominerende van ruimte wat skipbreukelingsliteratuur van die pre-koloniale en koloniale periodes definieer. Rationeel-gebaseerde interpretasies van die geskiedenis, realiteit en waarheid as empiries definieerbare konsepte word ook teengestaan. Die skipbreukelingsidentiteit word dikwels gedefinieer deur gewaarwordinge van fisiese en spirituele ontworteling

en vervreemding wat parallel gestel kan word aan postmodernistiese temas van eksistensiële verwarring en angs.

### **Sleutelsterme**

*Foe*, Fokalisasie, Genre, Grense, Hibriditeit, Identiteit, *The Island of the Day Before*, Kolonialisme, *Life of Pi*, Liminaliteit, Literêre dominant, Narratief, Narratologiese strategiëe, Postkolonialisme, Postmodernisme, Post-postmodernisme, *Robinson Crusoe*, Ruimte & Plek, Skipbreukeling

## CHAPTER 1

### THE CASTAWAY NOVEL AS LITERARY GENRE

#### 1.1 Contextualization

This thesis traces the development and transformation of the castaway novel from the 18<sup>th</sup> century literary context to the present. At the social, historical and cultural levels, the castaway novel reflects significant phases in Western cultural development, specifically from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, such as the rise and decline of colonialism, changing perceptions of truth, history and authority, as well universal topics related to the human condition and the nature of our material and spiritual existence. To illustrate this evolution in worldview and its expression in generic terms, Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* (1994), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) and Yann Martell's *Life of Pi* (2002) are contextualized and analysed. These novels present the reader with multiple and often contrasting perspectives, which reflect critically on the traditional castaway novel, exemplified by *Robinson Crusoe*. Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* juxtaposes 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century contexts, Coetzee's *Foe* contrasts Susan Barton's story with the 'official' story that is published by Daniel (De)Foe, while Martell's *Life of Pi* conflates the ontologies of the rational and irrational. As such, the castaway novels I have selected provide a useful platform to examine the various ways in which literature has consistently represented space and its imposed boundaries that define place as integral facets of individual and social identity.

Although much has been written on the topic of the castaway novel as literary genre, the significance of the island in pre-colonial and postcolonial contexts, as well as the extent to which the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century castaway novel, including *Robinson Crusoe*, reflected the rise of colonialism, there has been little investigation into the way in which and the extent to which the genre has evolved since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Recent studies on the castaway or shipwreck novel include a dissertation by Russell, titled *Linking Genesis to Modern Castaway Narratives* (2005) that correlates the narratives of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and Marianne Wiggins' *John Dollar* (1989) to the story of Adam and Eve in order to interpret them as retellings of the creation story. Kapstein's thesis *The castaway state: On islands and nation-building* (2002) examines the way in which the island in British postcolonial literature relates the idea of the postcolonial nation to notions of uncertainty, displacement, disruption and anxiety. In her thesis *Empire islands: Castaways, cannibals,*

*and fantasies of masculine incorporation in post/colonial island narratives* (2002), Weaver-Hightower maintains that the island-trope appeals to writers of stories of colonization because the borders that are imposed on the island mirror perceptions of the male body as bounded and controlled, while imagining the potential colony as an island allows the fictional colonist to play out a fantasy of natural colonial authority. On the topic of *Robinson Crusoe* and its postcolonial revisions, Fallon's thesis, "*The world is full of islands*": *Literary revision and the production of a transnational "Robinson Crusoe"* (2003) explores the continuing presence of *Robinson Crusoe* in late twentieth-century literature. Fallon argues that contemporary criticism of *Robinson Crusoe* tends to maintain a hierarchical relationship between colonial and postcolonial literature which favours the latter and tends to disregard the important connections that exist between literatures across political boundaries. This thesis will differentiate itself from previous studies on the castaway novel as its main objective will be to establish the significance of the castaway in literature and to examine how, and to what extent, representations of the castaway have changed, specifically with regard to the way his identity relates to boundaries and space.

Stories of shipwrecks and castaways have timeless appeal. At a superficial level, stories of castaways appeal to our sense of adventure as the challenge of overcoming the hostility and indifference of nature through human enterprise at one and the same time evokes feelings of exhilaration and anxiety. It is also this notion of 'survival' on an island-wilderness that has, in recent years, been commercialised in reality TV-shows that artificially recreate a castaway-scenario (under the ever-watchful eye of TV-cameras and production companies) for the purpose of mass entertainment. At a more subliminal level, these stories of human beings who are literally and metaphorically isolated from the rest of society invoke our subconscious fear of the unknown and allude to the possibility that in the battle to survive – and without the constraints placed on us by society – we may come face to face with the savage that is hidden within each of us.

The best-known story of a castaway is probably *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe. The success of this novel inspired so many imitations and more recently, reinterpretations of the classic tale's narrative structure that its title can be said to define a literary genre – the "Robinsonade" novel (O'Malley, 2007). Even though the terms 'robinsonade' and 'castaway' refer to the same notion, henceforth the latter will be used to identify the genre – i.e. the castaway novel. Stimpson (1996:viii) posits the

notion that the fascination with the story that still resonates across many ages and cultures more than 250 years after it was first introduced to the world has elevated the tale of Robinson Crusoe to mythical status when he argues that:

The story has been rediscovered and reinterpreted through successive generations in a series of variations and modulations on the crucial themes of solitude, survival, the relation to nature and the relation to others: in short, the mythic value of Crusoe has become a pretext over many centuries for an examination of some of the fundamental problems of existence.

As this passage suggests, *Robinson Crusoe* managed to become a treatise on the consequences of an isolated existence for the human spirit. The novel conveys how the condition of being ‘cast away’ – whether it be physically, socially or spiritually – is suggestive of the extent to which individual experience of space is inextricably linked with notions of belonging and identity. Accordingly, the castaway-figure in literature is often presented as being alienated, rootless and displaced; therefore, his<sup>1</sup> dilemma shares a close affinity with that of colonized people. He is forcibly separated from his cultural environment (often by means of natural or environmental forces) and is confronted with a physical space that separates him from society and evokes feelings of displacement and a longing for ‘home’.

As a result of the unfortunate circumstances the castaway is subjected to, he is often forced to reorganize and reconstruct his direct environment in order to orientate himself in space. For the purposes of this study, ‘space’ will be contextualized as a perception of general orientation (physical, psychological and emotional) towards one’s physical surroundings, also represented in literature.

Subsequently, in an often difficult and complex process that resembles colonization, the castaway has to appropriate space and construct boundaries in order to ensure his physical and psychological survival. In the castaway novel, boundaries manifest as physical structures that organize and demarcate space for the purpose of providing refuge, and to help the castaway orientate him/herself in space. Boundaries can also be created by the castaway to protect or separate, such as the shipwrecked Pi in Martel’s novel who demarcates clear boundaries between his own territory and that of the ravenous tiger with whom he has to share the small life boat. However, boundaries can also be something which the castaway has

---

<sup>1</sup> When referring to the castaway, I use the pronouns he, his, or him.

no control over, such as the almost insurmountable ‘boundary’ represented by the ocean that encloses the castaway, be it an on island or a ship. As spatial markers, boundaries also have a psychological dimension manifested by the way in which the castaway interacts with space. These boundaries often reveal something about the castaway’s mindset as well as his/her historical context, such as Robinson Crusoe’s neurotic construction of hedges and other enclosures whereby he attempts to invest the island space with cultural meaning. Postmodern castaway narratives often emphasize textual boundaries through writing strategies of intertextuality, metafiction and permutation. In this regard, Coetzee’s *Foe* systematically breaks down the boundaries that exist between history and fiction.

### ***1.1.1 Boundaries, narrative space and identity***

The crossing of boundaries often results in a liminal state, as the liminal zone is a “midpoint of transition” (Turner, 1974:237) between two margins. Even though the liminal zone provides the castaway with possibilities for renewal and transformation, liminality is not a permanent state but rather a temporary phase. The castaway therefore has to undergo a “rite of passage” (Turner, 1967) that follows a pattern of separation, liminality and re-assimilation: first, he is separated from society, followed by a liminal period during which the castaway has to overcome various hardships and lastly, the rite of passage comes to an end when the castaway is reintegrated with society. The castaway is therefore either absorbed into his new environment permanently, whereby this phase ceases to be liminal, or he eventually leaves this environment behind and is reintegrated with society.

Postcolonial theory conceptualizes space as a “multidimensional entity” (Darian-Smith, Gunner & Nuttall, 1996:2) encompassing social, cultural and territorial dimensions. Spatial orientation thereby becomes a facet of social adaptation and identity formation. The castaway’s identity is transformed through his struggle for survival that situates him in a transitional phase, hovering between the old and the new and as such establishing a state of liminality. Accordingly, the castaway-figure represented in postcolonial novels illustrates how conventional, unyielding notions of space and identity have become ambiguous and even obsolete. Notions of identity and location are therefore continually questioned by a postmodern and postcolonial context that foregrounds the way in which cultural identity has become increasingly hybridized. In this regard, hybridity can be defined as a state of transition that involves the assimilation and transferral of one set of cultural elements – such as ethnicity, language, religion, beliefs and practices – to those of another. Therefore, as a

state of liminality or intermediacy, hybridization entails a merging of different cultural orientations into a liminal zone and consequently, also a reassessment of concepts of self and other. This liminal or hybrid state often poses several dangers or threats – both physically and psychologically. In the castaway novel, these dangers comprise weather conditions, stormy seas and uninhabitable islands, but also the effects of solitude and privation on the human psyche.

In light of the above contextualization, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is contextualized as historical master text and archetypal castaway novel. As a seminal work in the emergence of the English novel, the first person narration in Defoe's novel inadvertently establishes the 18<sup>th</sup> century castaway identity as fixed while the island space is contained – adhering to what Marais (1996:56) refers to as a “totalising system of knowledge” that would later become fundamental to the Imperial ideal. Marais (1996:54) points out that both setting and character undergo metamorphoses: Crusoe's character transforms from an existentially isolated castaway to self-affirming colonist while the island space is cultivated from an alien, uncontained environment into a domesticated settlement. He further points out that Crusoe's identity “expands in direct proportion to the transformation of the island by European discourse” (1996:57) as Crusoe's identity transformation becomes concomitant with his appropriation of space as both processes depend on the imposition of boundaries that organize, demarcate, and reconfigure space so that it becomes place.

Various 19<sup>th</sup> century castaway novels emulated the ‘Robinsonade’ motif, such as Johann Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson* (1813) and R.M. Ballantyne's *Coral Island* (1858). Wyss's novel tells the story of a family of six who are shipwrecked on an Edenic island. They quickly adapt to their new environment by cultivating and domesticating the island, which they christen “Little Switzerland”. In Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, three English boys are shipwrecked and manage to survive – and triumph over – their perilous adventure through a code of ‘gentlemanly’ conduct that involves strategies of appropriation and control. As such, narrative constructs of space and identity in these texts will be examined in order to trace the ideological underpinnings inherent to the representation of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century castaway.

The castaways in the selected 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century texts cross boundaries, thereby becoming both liminal and marginal characters. The castaway-character in Coetzee's *Foe* is a woman. As a marginal character, Susan Barton's identity formation is related to the destabilization of the historical centre of masculine cultural representations. Eco's castaway is a young man

who transgresses temporal boundaries by rewriting his past. Martel's castaway is an adolescent boy from postcolonial India, and the liminal condition and existential struggles of this character reflect subversively on the colonial adventure romances of the 'boys' adventure' by juxtaposing the irreconcilable worlds represented by rationalism and reason with imagination, the irrational and the spiritual. In the case of Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* and Yann Martell's *Life of Pi*, the castaways are stuck on a stationary ship and a drifting lifeboat respectively, and both have to contend not only with the onslaught of the forces of nature, but also with forces within themselves.

## 1.2 The castaway novel: origins and conventions

Traditionally, stories of shipwrecks and castaways can be traced back to the tradition of sea fiction – that is, stories about men (and less often, women), who set off on voyages at sea for purposes of travel or exploration. This physical journey across vast oceans and past unknown shores often also involves a spiritual journey – a rite of passage whereby knowledge of the outside world becomes symbolic of spiritual insight and transcendence. Poyer (1995:1) suggests that even though novels about shipwrecks and castaways only 'begin' once the journey at sea ends, they can still be regarded as sea novels, since disaster - or being lost at sea, being cast away – is always looming at the edge of the seafarer's consciousness.

Poyer (1995:1) relates sea fiction to the genre of the adventure or voyage novel, a genre that can be traced back to 931 BC to Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem of a brave sailor's long voyage to Ithaca following the fall of Troy. During the return journey back he is shipwrecked and becomes a castaway, which forces him to make his way through foreign lands and experience perilous adventures before finding his way home at last. However, as Poyer (1995:1) points out, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that sea fiction – and as such also fiction dealing with shipwrecks and castaways – was assimilated into the established literary genre of adventure or voyage literature with the work of authors such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Shipwreck and the predicament of the castaway became a favourite topic of the popular adventure romances of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that depicted exploration and colonization as noble pursuits, such as *Kidnapped* (1874) by Robert Louis Stevenson and *Mysterious Island* (1886) by Jules Verne.

Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, sea fiction and, by implication, also castaway fiction, were limited to non-fiction that provided a framework for that which came later. Poyer (1995:2) defines

these non-fictional modes as “Voyage literature” as it mainly consisted of reports by voyagers on their travels and adventures at sea. Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, sailed to unfamiliar parts of the world and reported on what he and his crew saw and experienced. Voyage literature inevitably contained stories of real-life shipwrecks and castaways, one of the most famous probably being the memoir of Alexander Selkirk, upon whom Daniel Defoe based *Robinson Crusoe*. According to Poyer (1995:2), this tradition of literature continued until the 1850s, when the last unknown corners of the world were mapped. These unpolished but mostly credible accounts provided creative subject matter to accomplished writers like Defoe, Swift and Fielding. At the hands of these writers, sea fiction was assimilated into the popular literary culture of the time and became a category of one of the definitive genres of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, namely the adventure romance.

There are several thematic elements or conventions common in sea novels and by implication, also the castaway novel, as the following exposition will show. The first theme is *separation* (Poyer, 1995:3), as human beings are both literally and metaphorically separated from the rest of the world while at sea. He (1995:3) further distinguishes between “small group” and “solitary” separation. The former refers to a set of people being constrained in close quarters, such as a ship or island, for a relatively long period of time. Another form of separation is concerned with a single person only, such as *Robinson Crusoe*. These narratives are therefore centred on the lone sailor of a small boat, or the shipwrecked castaway or character adrift who has to survive this solitary condition for a prolonged period of time. The isolated figure may overcome an indifferent or hostile environment through their own resourceful efforts, like Crusoe, or he may surrender to it, like Conrad’s Kurtz succumbs to base forces outside and within. As a result of the castaway’s isolation, unresolved conflicts and dark, previously hidden aspects of their characters are brought to the fore and consequently, the outcome of prolonged isolation can potentially result in a form of intellectual and psychological regression, such as the castaway Roberto in Eco’s *The Island of the Day Before* descent into madness.

The second theme that Poyer (1995:4) refers to is *command*. Sea fiction is often concerned with the moral conundrum faced by the upstanding individual who either forsakes human law and sanity in the name of ambition, such as Captain Ahab and his relentless pursuit in Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851). Sometimes the individual in command simply makes the wrong decision, like Conrad’s *Lord Jim* (1899-1900). Sea fiction is therefore concerned with

the responsibility of commanding a ship, as the captain is not only master of his own fate, but also that of all those aboard the ship. Closely related to the theme of command are the themes of “discipline” and “rebellion” (Poyer, 1995:4). The captain must be able to maintain discipline and quell rebellion to prevent mutiny and safeguard himself and his crew. The themes of command, discipline and rebellion are of lesser significance in the castaway novel and may manifest in different ways. In *Life of Pi*, the theme of command links up with the notion of survival as Pi must maintain his dominance over the tiger or face certain death.

The third theme is *technique*, referring to the mechanisms, technical skill and artistry associated with the seafarer’s occupation. In this regard, Poyer (1995:5) maintains that ships were some of the most complicated and advanced mechanisms that existed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. References to the technicalities of ships and seafaring were therefore integral to these stories. The ship is also an important thematic element: it transports, contains and supports and as such, must be kept in pristine working order at all times. In the castaway novel, the ship is inevitably wrecked and either replaced with another vessel, such as a lifeboat, or an island.

The fourth and most significant theme is the *sea* (1995:5). As a vast expanse of water, the sea is often portrayed as an overwhelming phenomenon that is contrasted with the insignificance and frailty of humans. The sea is simultaneously a physical, metaphoric and symbolic structure. A liminal space, the sea needs to be crossed in order for voyagers to reach their destination – be it unfamiliar territories or their homeland. For the castaway, the sea is also an insurmountable and infinite space that separates him / her from society. Poyer (1995:5) contends that the sea is above all, a manifestation of the divine, though in most castaway novels, the sea is often a source of ambivalence and awe.

The fifth distinguishing theme is “the sea as the source of the *unknown*” (Poyer, 1995:6). To the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century consciousness, the sea hid mythical creatures such as giant squids, monsters and mermaids. The sea also was the battleground of pirates and habitat to giant whales that could overturn a boat without effort. Interestingly, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sea holds the sunken wreck, the torpedo and missile, barrels of toxic waste, and fewer and fewer fish. *Life of Pi* (2003), for example, integrates the theme of ecological awareness into the narrative.

At a universal level the sea novel and its affiliate, the castaway novel, metaphorically allude to the trials and tribulations of life. At the social, historical and cultural levels, however, the genre traces various significant stages in Western cultural development from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, such as the rise (and eventual decline) of colonialism.

### **1.3 The cultural dominant**

The Augustan, Romantic and Victorian periods span the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and can broadly be characterised as a time of colonial expansion, social upheaval, scientific progress and the rise of the middle class. In literature, this is reflected by idealism and romanticism but also rationalism. Though varied and diverse in their concerns, literature from these periods reflects the major intellectual concerns of the time and therefore deals with themes related to the individual's experience of various social, political and also cultural contexts. Novels spanning the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries trace the various problems, divisions and contradictions of the time while articulating society's firm belief in social progress and self-improvement. This is clearly illustrated in *Crusoe's* universal tale with its range of interpretative levels dealing with aspects related to human ingenuity and resilience, repentance and redemption, as well as the compounding theme of individual and social progress from a primitive state to a "productive and ordered existence" (Rogers, 2001:253).

Relating to the canonical significance of *Robinson Crusoe*, Marais (1996:48) claims that there is a connection between the rise of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and European imperialism. He (1996:49) furthermore suggests that as a consequence of imperialism, popular literary genres from the period, such as travel writing, mediated representations of 'unknown' territories through a pre-existent and familiar European discourse. Thereby, processes of colonization such as appropriation and domestication were acclimatized to and integrated with the 18<sup>th</sup> century European literary consciousness. It could be argued that literary representations of appropriation, domestication and domination became fundamental facets of colonial tales of adventure, and as such, also to the castaway novel.

Following in the footsteps of *Crusoe's* 18<sup>th</sup> century adventure tale, the castaway novel only really became a popular genre during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - not only due to its sensationalist preoccupation with exotic settings and peoples, but also because these novels paralleled colonial expansion to social and individual advancement. Consequently, the motif of unexplored, 'unoccupied' lands featured as an undifferentiated colonial backdrop to

popular 19<sup>th</sup> century culture. As ‘uncharted’ territory, islands provided imaginative literary spaces for the enactment of male fantasies of occupation, conquest and empire-building. As a form of imperial romance, the castaway novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fed into a tradition of colonial travel narratives, exploration and the “boys adventure”, and as such, sustained those conventions and ideas first perpetuated in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Representations of space and identity in these novels tend to promote the notion of imposing a European or ‘homeland’ culture onto an alien and threatening landscape in an attempt to interpret and familiarise ‘exotic’ territories to the European identity. Spatial appropriation and domestication are consequently presented as the ideal solutions to the dilemma faced by the castaway. In the castaway novel of this period of colonial expansion, the castaway-identity is usually represented as being shaped by the forces of Providence that help the castaway to create an idyllic and elaborate society on the island-space. This notion is based on predominantly western patriarchal norms and ideologies, in a process that is often represented as a rite of passage. Furthermore, the castaway identity is fixed, adhering to an unyielding and codified structure of hierarchy and authority.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a shift in the way in which literature engaged with the notion of identity and spatial orientation. The twentieth century was introduced by a shift in mood characterised by unease, disillusionment about the past and doubt and unease about the future, which was also reflected in literature. The new century saw western societies in a state of anxious transition that manifested itself in the renovation and radical remaking of all pre-1914 art forms in Europe and America and this reactionary process or paradigm shift, which so radically altered the very nature of aesthetic perception, constitutes modernism. Wolfreys (2004:155) defines modernism as a “heterogeneous network of irreversible epistemological transformations” that covers a wide range of discourses and disciplines. In literature, modernism marks a shift in the literary dominant that culminated in a radical break with some of the traditional modes of Western thought, specifically that of religion, morality and ways of conceiving the human self. Modernist literature interrogates the very nature and basis of systems of knowledge and as such, foregrounds the epistemological dominant.

Postmodernism involves both a continuation of and reaction against the “countertraditional experiments” (Abrams, 2005:176) of modernism. Chambers (1990:96) asserts that postmodernism does not simply refer to that which comes after modernism, nor does it imply a completely different set of principles. Instead, postmodernism should be considered as a

cultural form which “emerges in a critical relationship with the preceding principles”. Postmodernism can broadly be defined as a multi-disciplinary reaction to the assumed incontestability of scientific or objective conceptions of meaning, knowledge, truth, value and the notion of “self”. As a dominant literary approach of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, postmodernism is primarily concerned with modes of being – the “ontological dominant” (McHale, 1989:10) – and as such, interrogates the nature of existence. As an extension of postmodernism’s reactionary theoretical suppositions, postcolonialism should be regarded in terms of being an ongoing process – with an overtly political implication - which has occurred and is occurring in different places at different times. Edward Said’s classic *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) represents postcolonial theory as a tool for rethinking forms of knowledge and social identities that emanated from the colonial project of domination.

Postmodernism and postcolonialism provide suitable contexts for this thesis, as these approaches are both typified by a questioning stance toward conventional notions from which our ontological conception of the world is constructed.

### ***1.3.1 Genre and the formation of literary dominants***

Duff (2000:xiii) defines genre as a “recurring type or category of text, as defined by structural, thematic, and/or functional criteria”. Genre therefore categorizes and classifies literary and non-literary texts. However, as Duff (2000:4) points out, genres should not be regarded as static universal categories, but rather as systems whose character alter and evolve across time. With regard to fiction, the term is used to denote types of popular fiction in which a high degree of standardisation is manifested, such as detective stories, science fiction or the adventure romance. A particular literary genre is therefore perceived as such when a noticeable unit of literary texts adhering to a similar literary convention becomes established. According to Duff (2000:iii), these categories are collectively known as ‘genre fiction’. A shift in dominant effects and facilitates generic transformation – a process by which literary genres change or evolve across time. This process of transformation constitutes a change of those conventions that typify a genre. For that reason, even though *Robinson Crusoe* and J.M. Coetzee’s postmodernist novel *Foe* are both generically categorised as castaway novels, their inherent ideological preoccupations and suppositions are radically different. Each new work within a genre therefore has the potential to influence change within the genre.

For the purpose of this thesis, I define genre as a dominant-specific literary concept and explore how dominant-shifts that occur within a genre itself, in retrospect often correspond to the social context from which a text was derived. Genre therefore relates and adheres to particular historical periods as well as literary trends and conventions. In *The Dominant* (1935), Roman Jakobson (as quoted by McHale, 1989:6) defines the literary dominant as “the focussing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components.” According to Duff (2000:xii), not only individual works, but also entire genres can be seen to possess such a dominant.

In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale (1989:6-11) draws on this idea of the literary dominant to typify the primary preoccupations and implications of a particular literary context, such as modernist fiction’s foregrounding of the epistemological dominant (concerned with notions of *knowing*), and postmodernist fiction’s foregrounding of the ontological (concerned with problems of *being*). McHale (1989:11) further explains that the dominant functions to specify the order of urgency in which different aspects of a text are foregrounded. This implies that a postmodernist text can be interrogated with regard to its epistemological implications, though it is more pressing to interrogate the text about its ontological implications. As with genres, however, one dominant may be superseded by another, as different dominants emerge depending on which questions the author addresses and the reader<sup>2</sup> asks of the text, as well as the position (historical, social, ideological, etc.) from which this interrogation of the text takes place. McHale (1989:11) contends that this process of dominant change is “not linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible”. The shift in dominant within a literary genre is therefore a principal mechanism of literary evolution.

#### **1.4 Problem statement**

How do postmodern and postcolonial reconfigurations of narrative boundaries that separate fiction from reality and history, the past from the present, and the rational from the irrational, reflect the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel from the eighteenth century literary context to the present?

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the ‘reader’ will be denoted as feminine for purposes of consistency and coherence, and also because the reading process that I relate in this thesis is mediated through my own (feminine) perspective.

As such, broad questions to be investigated are:

1. What is the significance of the castaway-figure in the traditional (pre/colonial) context with regard to the dominant-shift that occurred in the castaway novel and how does the castaway-figure in the traditional (pre/colonial) context evolve to reflect the concept of the dominant shift?
2. How do narratological strategies and narrative perspective reconfigure boundaries in the selected texts and how does this manifest in the generic transformation?
3. How do narrative representations of the castaway-identity relate to the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel?
4. In what way does the castaway's interaction with and orientation to space and boundaries relate to the construction of colonial and postcolonial space?
5. Why can space and boundaries be regarded as fundamental aspects of identity formation and transformation and how has identity become increasingly constitutive of hybridity and a state of liminality in the contexts represented by the selected texts?

## **1.5 Thesis**

This thesis argues that a generic transformation of the castaway novel is made evident by the various ways in which the narrative boundaries that separate fiction from reality and history, the past from the present, and the rational from the irrational, are reconfigured in the selected texts by Eco, Coetzee and Martel. The dissolution of boundaries reflects the dominant-shift that has occurred in the castaway novel from the 18<sup>th</sup> century literary context to the present postmodern, postcolonial context. In this regard, the narrative utilizes various narratological strategies, the most significant being intertextuality, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, allegory, irony, and the carnivalesque. These narratological strategies rewrite, revise, and recontextualize those generic conventions that perpetuated the culture of masculinity and conquest that defines colonialism and is traditionally associated with the castaway novel. This shift into the domain of the ontological configures space as a liminal zone and contests the boundaries colonialism imposed on representations of space and identity in literature. In the process, traditional, colonially conceived notions of identity have become destabilized and even hybridized; consequently the castaway-experience comprises a postmodern condition of ontological uncertainty and existential isolation.

From a postcolonial perspective, the castaway's state of being reflects on the condition of the colonized as well as the colonizer: his/her experience of displacement is similar to colonized peoples' separation from their cultural, spiritual and personal identities; simultaneously, processes of appropriation, adaptation and control of space resemble colonization, thereby revealing the constructed nature of colonial space. As such, this thesis will approach the concept of space as being fundamental to individual orientation and social adaptation and consequently, metaphorically and metonymically linked to identity.

## **1.6 Aims**

1. To determine the significance of the castaway-figure in the traditional (pre/colonial) literary context and to establish how the evolution of the castaway figure from the traditional, precolonial to the postmodernist, postcolonial context reflects the concept of the dominant shift.
2. To examine how narratological strategies and narrative perspective reconfigure boundaries in the selected texts and to relate this to generic transformation.
3. To relate narrative representations of the castaway-identity to the shift in dominant that has occurred in the castaway novel towards a transformed genre of the postmodernist, postcolonial castaway novel.
4. To determine the ways in which the castaway's interactions with and orientation to space and boundaries relate to the construction of colonial and postcolonial space.
5. To show how space and boundaries are fundamental aspects of identity formation and transformation and that this is constitutive of hybridity and a state of liminality in the contexts represented by the selected texts.

## **1.7 Theoretical framework and method**

An analysis of the selected texts is done with the aim to define and explain the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel to become a transformed genre of the postmodernist, postcolonial castaway novel. The shift in literary dominant will be traced from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century rationalist to the ontological or post-rationalist dominant of postmodernism. This process of change and transformation is reflected by the ways in which the respective stories are narrated and as such, the focus will not only be on the content of the stories, but also on the problems of their (re)production. In this regard, Eco's story is narrated from the perspective of both 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century narrators, Coetzee's interpretation of the

‘Robinsonade’-story is narrated from the perspective of an 18<sup>th</sup> century, middle-class English woman, and Martel’s 20<sup>th</sup> century narrator is a boy from postcolonial India. The selected texts will illustrate generic transformation by tracing the development from authoritarian, non-reflexive and subjective narration towards a narration that self-reflexively flaunts its own subjectivity. The problem of narration thereby becomes a central premise whereby the castaway genre is both subverted and transformed.

Meister (2009:329) defines *Narratology* as a “discipline dedicated to the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation”. As such, in this thesis the term ‘narratological strategies’ refers to the various narrative devices such as intertextuality, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, allegory, irony, the carnivalesque, that are all utilized in the selected texts to reveal the limitations of realist literature in order to transgress the traditional parameters of genre, in particular the castaway novel. The analysis of narratological strategies in the selected texts will apply postcolonial theory - as an extension of postmodern theory - to the conceptualization of space, place and identity in various contexts. Narratological strategies and narrative perspective in the selected texts are furthermore related to the contexts reflected in narrative. According to Lerner (1991:335), “any text can be related to at least three contexts: its ideology, its strategies of writing, and social reality”. Viljoen (2007:7) asserts that it is within these contexts that the identities of societies or individuals are formed and as such, these contexts relate back to a text’s conceptualisation of space, boundaries and identity. An analysis of the selected texts will demonstrate the interrelationship between narration and various contexts. Changes in context, and also the way in which the narrator engages with contexts of the past and the present, could effect a shift in literary dominant and as such, create generic transformation.

### ***1.7.1 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization***

Narration fundamentally refers to the act of telling of a story, either orally or in written form. In any literary work there exists a reciprocal relationship between the observer of the represented events, the narrator of these events and the reader of the work. Bal (1985:100) stresses the importance of differentiating between the “one who sees [focalizer] and the one who speaks [narrator]”, while Currie (1998:18), referring to the concept of narrative point of view, contends “that in narrative there is a point from which a narrator views fictional events and characters as if visually”. Even though the distinction between the acts of *seeing* and *telling* does to some extent relate to the concepts of the traditional first person narrator and

third person narrator, the focalizer does not necessarily have to be the narrator. Events in a literary text may therefore be related - by the first or third person narrator - as perceived from the point of view/perspective of a particular character. Narrative perspective may be defined as the way in the story's representation is influenced by the position, personality and values of the narrator, the characters, as well as other hypothetical entities in the world of the story (Niederhoff, 2009: 884). For the purposes of this thesis, the concept of narrative perspective will be aligned with narration and focalization, specifically with regard to the internal and external positions that these actions can take, or whether events are perceived from the inside or outside of a character or narrator's consciousness. I find the term 'perspective' particularly useful as it implies a sense of subjectivity or particularity with regard to the way in which events and characters are viewed, which makes it less restrictive than 'point of view', as this term does not include the concept of focalization. As such, perspective not only indicates the point or position from which the reader, narrator and characters view events and characters, but also the kind of mind located at this position and the kind of benefit the mind enjoys in terms of its "access" (Booth, 1996:155), or lack thereof, to the various aspects that make up the world of the story.

For the purposes of this study, the terms 'narration and focalization' are both used to denote the perspective from which characters and events are relayed to the reader. Focalization is to a large extent manipulated and determined by the narrator. It is after all the narrator who 'selects' the perspectives that will be presented as well as those that will be omitted. This thesis further differentiates between the different types of narration, as set out in Wayne C. Booth's essay from *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), in order to show how variations of narrative distance can enhance or diminish the reader's sympathy for characters and narrators. In the light of more recent theories on narratology, such as the conceptual frameworks developed by Mieke Bal in her seminal work *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985), Booth's work might be considered outdated. However, I find his approach to the relationship between narrative perspective and degrees of distance very applicable to this thesis, as the perspective and distance from which the narrator 'sees' / focalizes and 'tells' / narrates are not dealt with as comprehensively by Bal. Booth (1961) also establishes a correlation between narrative distance and the concept of narrative sympathy. In this regard, Currie (1998:22) contemporizes Booth's category of 'degrees of distance' by examining how the concept of sympathy is entwined with the ideological function of narrative. I use aspects of Booth and Currie's work as a basis to show how the

concept of narrative sympathy in the selected texts is suggestive of the way in which ideology is contained within texts and contributes to generic formation and transformation.

In his influential essay *Types of Narration* (1961)<sup>3</sup>, Booth provides useful categories with which to ascertain and interpret the narrative effects produced by narration and focalization in a given text. As such, he proposes a differentiation between real author, implied author, narrator, characters and readers. Booth (1996:14) emphasizes that in terms of narrative effect, it is important to establish whether a narrator is dramatized and to what extent the author shares his beliefs and characteristics. The *implied author* is the “author’s ‘second self’” (Booth, 1996:147), thus the author’s literary version of himself, such as the chronicler in Eco’s *The Island of the Day Before*. The *dramatized narrator* is a first-person narrator who is also a character, such as Susan Barton in *Foe*. The dramatized narrator may be radically different from the implied author who creates him, or he might be relatively similar in terms of his beliefs and characteristics, such as the similarity in worldview between the main character and the fictional author who writes his story in *Life of Pi*. Narrators can furthermore be *self-conscious* (Booth, 1996:150) in the sense that they are fully aware of themselves as writers and self-reflexively refer to the process of writing (such as is the case in most postmodernist novels), or alternatively, they can seem unperturbed by their role as writer and avoid discussing the process of writing, or they can seem completely unaware that they are writing or relating a literary work. In addition, Booth (1996:150) points to the degrees and kinds of distance that separate the narrator from the author, the reader, and the other characters in the story. This distance is measured in terms of the degree or extent of identification on the grounds of moral, intellectual and aesthetic values. Currie (1998:22) adapts Booth’s category of *degrees of distance* to the concept of sympathy, or sense of intimacy that the text establishes between the reader and characters. He (1998:20) relates the extent of sympathy to the similitude between the values of the reader, the author, the narrator and characters and interprets it in terms of the devices of *access*, *closeness*, and *distance*. *Access* refers to the extent of the reader’s knowledge about a character or event, while *closeness* describes the perspective or position from which a character is revealed to the reader (Currie, 1996:21). Here one can distinguish between an *inside view* provided by the character-focalizer and an *external view*, provided by an external-focalizer or third person narrator. The concepts of the inside view and the external view can also be explained in

---

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in ONEGA, S. & GARCIA LANDA J.S. eds. 1996. *Narratology: an introduction*. London : Longman. p.145-154.

terms of Genette's<sup>4</sup> distinction between *intradiegetic* and *extradiegetic*. In narratology, the concept 'diegesis' refers to the fictional world in which the story takes place. As such, a narrator can either be 'inside' the fictional world that is described to the reader, which Genette terms an *intradiegetic narrator*, or outside this fictional world, thus an *extradiegetic narrator* (Rimmon-Kenan, 2007: 95).

The acts of narration and focalization give a sequence of events a particular form pertaining to the temporality, order and frequency of those events. According to Wolfreys (2004:163), through the act of narration, "narrative produces a particular identity or meaning through the singular arrangement of a temporal and spatial series of incidents, figures, motifs and characters". Genre can therefore be seen as a manifestation of the way in which a story is told: *how* a story is narrated, and *why* it is narrated that way. The way in which a story is narrated and the intention with which it is narrated, can be enhanced by various narratological strategies, such as intertextuality and metafiction. Wolfreys (2004:163) contends that narration provides patterns and images that acts of reading seek to comprehend in ways that situate narrative as a "mediation of individual or social beliefs, habits, or ideologies". Bal (1985:122) asserts focalization to be "the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation" and therefore it is strongly implicated in the construction of a literary text's underlying ideologies.

Accordingly, in the colonial adventure romance, the narrator also focalizes events and typically assumes a position of superiority and authority, 'narrating' a colonial space in which constructions of identity, space and boundaries are stable and fixed. According to Phillips (1997:15) the "realistic, plain language" used by narrator in *Robinson Crusoe* seems to report the 'truth' about Crusoe's adventures on the island. The character-focalizer or first person narrator in *Robinson Crusoe* therefore naturalises not only ways of seeing, reading and inscribing the landscape, but also the social relations embedded in these processes.

## 1.8 Choice of texts

The selected postmodernist, postcolonial texts span a period of over three decades and can be seen as exemplars in the evolution of the castaway novel genre. However, my discussion of these novels does not follow an exact historical chronology as *The Island of the Day Before*, though published a number of years after Foe, is be discussed prior to Coetzee's novel. The

---

<sup>4</sup> From *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983)

reason for this is that Eco's novel provides a bridge between the pre-colonial context and the contemporary postmodern context. As the prototypical rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe* in terms of its foregrounding of the relationship between writing, appropriation and conquest, *Foe* establishes an intertext between *The Island of the Day Before* and *Life of Pi* that links its postmodern context with a new and emerging epistemological framework as delineated in the novel by Martel. Stories and their telling lie at the centre of these novels, thereby bringing the role of the narrator and focalizer to the fore and as such, the process of generic transformation can be related to increasingly self-reflexive modes of narration that are resistant to totalising systems of knowledge compounded by conventional notions of truth, history and authority. The selected texts illustrate how, in the process of orientating himself in an alien and potentially threatening space, the castaway identity often becomes hybridized through his interaction with the environment and/or other cultural forms he comes into contact with. Narratological strategies in these texts, most significantly intertextuality, allegory, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, irony, and the carnivalesque reflect the dominant shift that has occurred in the genre and that defines its transformation.

## **1.9 Chapter division**

As historical master text and point from which the castaway novel evolved, the narrative in *Robinson Crusoe* is structured around notions of credibility and truth that align the ideas, norms and values represented in the novel with its 18<sup>th</sup> century context. Crusoe's narration serves an ideological function as it reveals his sense of ownership over the island as well as his transformation from a castaway into a colonist. The first person narration and focalization, together with its factual and straightforward narrative style, give Defoe's story a sense of historical veracity that is enhanced by Crusoe's written observations, lists and inventories.

The self-reflexive third person narrator in the third chapter of Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* constantly and inappropriately intervenes in the representation of 17<sup>th</sup> century social reality. In the process, the narrator reveals the extent to which the 17<sup>th</sup> century understanding and interpretation of the world were informed by a rational and linear experience of space and time and relates it to the main character's quest to find the secret of longitude. In this regard, narratological strategies of metafiction, historiographic metafiction, and intertextuality reconfigure the temporal boundary between past and present in order to

emphasize a non-linear and incongruous experience of space and time that is defined by a state of liminality.

In the fourth chapter, a chapter that examines JM Coetzee's *Foe*, first person narration deterministically places the problem of stories and their telling at the centre of the text by relating history to fiction. The construction and representation of history are thereby exposed as being inseparable from its ideological context. Narratological strategies of intertextuality, allegory, and irony dissolve textual boundaries and thereby reveal representations of space, place and identity to be ideologically circumscribed and as such, subject to the conceptualisation of self and other, margin and centre.

In chapter five in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, the first person narrative resists interpretation – focusing instead on moral and spiritual transcendence – in order to foreground the redeeming and transformational potential of storytelling. Narratological strategies of metafiction, intertextuality, and the carnivalesque destabilize and dissolve the boundaries between the conflating ontologies of fiction and reality as well as the rational and irrational in order to reveal the regenerative potential of narrative.

In the selected postmodernist and postcolonial texts, the movement from the position of castaway to colonist as originally manifested in *Robinson Crusoe* is therefore reinterpreted and recontextualized through various narratological strategies, thereby suggesting that a generic transformation and dominant shift have occurred within the castaway novel. Whereas colonially conceived processes of appropriation, domestication and enclosure of space are offered as ways to resolve the castaway's existential dilemma in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century texts, the postmodernist, postcolonial text there offers no resolution - only hybridity and a state of transition or liminality. The postmodernist and postcolonial contexts resist fixed and one-dimensional representations of identity, as well as the appropriation and domination of space, that characterize shipwreck literature from the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Rationalist notions of history, reality and truth as empirically definable concepts are also contested. The castaway-identity is often characterized by feelings of physical and spiritual displacement and estrangement that can be paralleled to postmodernist themes of existential confusion and anxiety.

In the subsequent chapter, an analysis of narratological strategies in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* determines the extent to which the novel embodies 18<sup>th</sup> century ideologies concerned

with the relationship between space, boundaries and identity. Intrinsically, *Robinson Crusoe's* conceptualisation of space, boundaries and identity provides the basis from which the castaway novel has evolved through forms of reinvention and retelling that question, challenge or subvert the assumptions of race, class, gender and culture ascribed to Defoe's novel.

## CHAPTER 2

### 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY COLONISTS: *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

#### AND THE MYTH OF THE CASTAWAY

##### 2.1 Contextualization

This chapter deals with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)<sup>5</sup> as an archetypal text of the castaway genre that is primarily defined by a mythic conversion experience as the novel's core narrative structure, or central plot, traces the hero's transition from social isolation and disconnection towards self-actualization and social re-integration. As the sole survivor of a shipwreck, Crusoe has to survive in and adapt to a space he initially experiences as alien and threatening. Isolated, anxious, and lonely with not much else to occupy his thoughts, he attempts to atone for a barren spiritual past by reforming himself. In light of this context, the central question that this chapter aims to address is why *Robinson Crusoe* can be regarded as an archetypal text of the castaway genre. Related to this question, this chapter examines the ways in which Defoe's novel perpetuated those imperialist constructions of space, boundaries and identity that are traditionally associated with the castaway novel.

The aim of this chapter is to show that *Robinson Crusoe's* archetypal value lies in its depiction of a conversion process whereby a castaway transforms himself and his environment so that his isolated, anxious and lonely existence becomes meaningful and contented. As such, Crusoe's experience of and adaptation to space, together with processes of identity formation, establish the novel not only as *the* definitive castaway novel, but also as *the* prototypical novel about the colonial quest in the 18th century. In this regard, Crusoe's colonization of the island is made evident by the boundaries Crusoe imposes on the island space and which signify the limitations inherent to Defoe's realism. These limitations only become apparent in postmodernist and postcolonial readings of the text as such readings tend to be critical of the controlling authorial narrative voice as well as Defoe's attempt to validate Crusoe's appropriation of the island and of Friday.

---

<sup>5</sup>. Full title: *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last Strangely deliver'd by Pyrates* (Facsimile of the title-page of the 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1719).

Crusoe's transformation of the island illustrates how an expansion of geographical boundaries – of which Crusoe's colonization of the island becomes a metaphor - could bring about an expansion of selfhood linked with insight that comes with methodical introspection and that would be very difficult to achieve within the confines of civilized society. At a religious level, the novel incorporates the idea that a spiritual awakening can be especially transformative when taking place in isolation. However, in line with his rationalist sensibilities, Crusoe even appropriates religion to correspond to his solemn sense of spiritual sobriety and moral righteousness. As McNelly (2003:1) points out, Crusoe's spiritual awakening is imbued with even further significance when he converts a non-European Other to Christianity. In postcolonial theory, the concept of the 'Other' refers to those who exist outside colonial power structures on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, or gender. In economic terms, the novel promotes the expansion of trade, commerce and English resourcefulness; while psychologically, Defoe's Crusoe indicates how relations with the Other can, as McNelly (2003:1) so aptly puts it, "hone an ego that can master both its own selfhood and the destiny of others". In the light of the various contexts *Robinson Crusoe* engages with, British colonialism seems to inform nearly every aspect of *Robinson Crusoe* at the formal as well as the thematic levels.

In an essay on Daniel Defoe, James Joyce defines Crusoe's transformation from a spiritually condemned and existentially despairing man to self-affirming colonist as an embodiment of the "whole Anglo-Saxon spirit" (1994:323) by describing Defoe's hero as

The true symbol of the British conquest[...], who cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman. He is the true prototype of the British colonist...

After two challenging years of gradually adapting to life on the island, Crusoe himself articulates what Stimpson (1996:ix) in the Preface to *Robinson Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses* refers to as a "metamorphosis" of spirit and mind:

Before, as I walked about, either on my hunting, or for viewing the country, the anguish of my soul at my condition would break out upon me on a sudden, and my very heart would die within me, to think of the woods, the mountains, the deserts I was in; and how I was a prisoner, locked up with the eternal bars and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness, without redemption. In the midst of the greatest composure of my mind, this would break upon me like a storm, and make me wring my hands and weep like a child. Sometimes it would take me in the middle of my work, and I would immediately sit down and sigh, and look upon the ground for an

hour or two together; and this was still worse to me; for if I could burst out into tears, or vent my self by words, it would go off, and the grief having exhausted itself would abate.

But now I began to exercise myself with new thoughts; I daily read the word of God, and apply'd all the comforts of it to my present state...I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken, solitary condition than it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state in the world; and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place. (1985:126)

Initially, Crusoe experiences a strong sense of imprisonment: he is trapped in an “uninhabited wilderness” from which release seems impossible. The inescapable “anguish” of his “soul” is exacerbated by the vastness of the ocean and the hostile unfamiliarity of the island. Trapped on an uninhabited island with no means of returning home, Crusoe’s former identity is subjected to a process of dissolution since he can no longer think of himself as a seafaring adventurer. Instead, he now considers himself a “prisoner”; a man “without redemption” (126). This brings about existential disorientation and a disintegration of familiar ways of thought and self-understanding, causing bouts in which he either breaks down in the “midst of the greatest composure of [his] mind” (126), or sits down listlessly to “look upon the ground for an hour or two” while in the middle of his work. Crusoe is therefore confined to a liminal zone, both physically and psychically. However, his liminal condition also brings about new perspectives as Crusoe begins to “exercise [him] self with new thoughts” (126). Through the application of religious sensibility and rational thought, Crusoe ‘reforms’ himself and his environment, in the process becoming an embodiment not only of Enlightenment rectitude, but also of Western accomplishment. Phillips (1997:27) links Crusoe’s metamorphosis from “risk-loving mercantile capitalist” to practical, sedentary farmer” to a transition in adventure from an ideology of mercantile capitalism to an ideology of middle-class conservatism. Thereby, *Robinson Crusoe* manages to naturalize and normalize constructions of space and identity which before seemed unfamiliar to its 18<sup>th</sup> century readership.

Crusoe is shipwrecked on the island as an obstinate fool without any real prospects in life. On the island, he is subjected to various threats and dilemmas – imagined and real – which initially result in his overwhelming sense of despair. After almost two years on the island, Crusoe reaches a turning point of mind and spirit, he repents his past “seafaring wickedness” (103) and gradually begins to transform himself along with his environment. By the time he leaves the island 28 years later, he has become a resourceful and capable ruler over an

economically viable empire. This conversion process therefore also extends to the island, as this space becomes the site onto which all of Crusoe's anxieties and aspirations are inscribed and consequently, the island is 'transformed' from untamed wilderness into cultivated paradise.

The meaning of Defoe's story has been absorbed into Western culture to the extent that the figure of Robinson Crusoe has come to exemplify Western man's ability to master himself and his environment even when faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In view of its British Imperialist underpinnings, *Robinson Crusoe* has evoked a multiplicity of readings and interpretations, often markedly informed by the historical context in which such a reading took place. The novel was generally considered as a romantic adventure tale and moral fable by its 18th and 19th-century readership, whereas 20th and 21st century interpretations, such as Michael Tournier's *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*<sup>6</sup> (1967), Sheila Fugard's *The Castaways* (1972), and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, to name a few, have tended to interrogate the novel in terms of its assumptions about race, gender, class and culture. *Robinson Crusoe*'s position as archetypal English 'realist' novel makes it an important and valuable point of reference for postmodernist and postcolonial narratives. As McNelly (2003:2) points out, many post-19th century readings have pertinently engaged colonial themes and issues by focusing on the Crusoe-Friday relationship as well as matters relating to it, such as cannibalism and the fear of yielding to savagery. As this thesis will show, *Robinson Crusoe*'s postmodernist rewritings therefore engage with the novel intertextually by (often subversively) retelling and reconstructing the tale as a critical reflection on its 18th century contexts. To illustrate the extent to which Defoe's novel shaped representations of space, identity and boundaries in literature for more than a century after it was written, the following section will contextualize *Robinson Crusoe* as a literary and generic archetype in order to justify the novel's social, cultural and historical significance.

## 2.2 Crusoe as archetypal castaway-novel

Defined by transition and transformation, Defoe's tale has established itself as a universal and even mythic exploration of the relationship between individual and environment, of the nature of existence and the relationship between self and 'other'. If a defining function of myth is to generate a "series of variations upon itself while remaining faithful to the

---

<sup>6</sup> Translates into English as *Friday, or, The Other Island*

underlying paradigm” (Stimpson, 1996:viii), then *Robinson Crusoe* may be considered as such. Watt (1994:289) contends that myth “always tends in transmission to be whittled down to a single, significant situation”: in the case of Crusoe, this situation is defined by his island existence. Crusoe’s solitary condition on a deserted island effectively sets him apart and distinct from other human beings, thereby situating him as an archetypal character – a solitary hero in a hostile wilderness whose situation is revealed to be the result of God’s divine will. Despite his isolation, Crusoe still conforms to a social pattern of behaviour in the sense that he establishes a hierarchy in which he assigns to himself the role of master to his goats, cats and later Friday. He considers himself to be appointed by God to have befallen “this miserable circumstance by His direction” (107) so that he can repent for his wayward past and reform himself morally. However, apart from being a moral and religious fable, the novel’s primary archetypal resonance lies in its epic depiction of human endurance and resourcefulness in an unknown and threatening space.

Phillips (1997:23) points out that despite its commercial success and cultural significance in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the story of *Robinson Crusoe* had a far greater impact on the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the British reading public had become exponentially larger by this time. Forty-one editions of *Robinson Crusoe* were published in Britain in the forty-years following its publication (Phillips, 1997:23). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the basic story of *Robinson Crusoe* had featured in at least 700 editions and translations as well as imitations that also related tales of solitary survivors and desert islands (Watt, 1994:288). The 19<sup>th</sup> century therefore saw the story of *Robinson Crusoe* canonized as *the* archetypal modern adventure story, a “foundational myth of modern, enlightened Europe” (Phillips, 1997:24).

Green (1990:3) identifies three main motifs or narrative elements which are structured around *Robinson Crusoe*’s narrative core and which have been varied and recombined by writers of subsequent castaway novels. The first and most obvious motif is that of *shipwreck*. Usually the result of a storm or some other mechanical fault which causes the ship to sink, shipwreck is most often the means by which the castaway arrives on the island. A traumatic experience, the shipwreck brings to an end the soon-to-be castaway’s former life and often also former self. The shipwreck and its disorientating aftermath bring the castaway face to face with his (or her) mortality:

Nothing can describe the confusion of thought which I felt when I sunk into the water; for tho' I swam very well, yet I could not deliver my self from the waves so as to draw breath, till that wave having driven me, or rather carried me a vast way on towards the shore, and having spent it self, went back, and left me upon the land almost dry, but half-dead with the water I took in...I was now landed and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope...I walked about on the shore, lifted up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapt up in the contemplation of my deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe, reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and that there should not be one soul saved but my self... (65-6)

Crusoe's disorientation and existential anxiety, which he articulates as a "dismal prospect of my condition" (80), are soon linked with concerns about his physical state: "I had a dreadful deliverance: for I was wet, had no clothes to shift me, nor any thing either to eat or drink to comfort me, neither did I see any prospect before me, but that of perishing with hunger, or being devoured by wild beasts"... (66).

This notion also relates to one of the novel's central motifs, the *island*, which initially is the setting for Crusoe's despair though it is gradually transformed. As such, Defoe's novel depicts the processes by which space becomes place. Seeing that this motif's relevance extends beyond the scope of the present contextualization, the island and its thematic significance will be discussed extensively in a later section of this chapter.

The third motif is *solitude* and / or *social disconnection*. The solitary castaway has been replaced by a pair, a family or a group in some castaway novels, in which case the concept of social separation remains applicable. Initially, Crusoe laments: "I had great reason to consider it as a determination of Heaven, that in this desolate place and in this desolate manner, I should end my life; the tears would run plentifully down my face when I made these reflections"... (80). However, after a time on the island, he begins to reconsider his separation from society as a situation in which he might be "more happy" than he would in the "liberty of society, and in all the pleasures of the world" (125). The change of perspective is closely related to Crusoe's conversion-experience as defined by the way in which his solitary life on the island shapes his identity. In the novel, Crusoe hones his neurotic fear of being discovered, overpowered and eaten by cannibals. His fear of cannibals possibly also masks his sense of self-aggrandizement as manifested by his unwillingness to forfeit his 'kingdom' if discovered.

I want to add a fourth motif, namely *survival*. This concept is especially relevant, as I would like to suggest that the will to adapt and survive regulates identity formation and adaptation to space in the castaway novel. Green (1990:3) points out that in the castaway novel, the nature and placement of these motifs differ from each other in the degree of their variability, such as in Coetzee's *Foe* in which the motif of social disconnection is more prominent than that of survival, or Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* and Martel's *Life of Pi*, where the island is substituted with a ship and a lifeboat respectively. *Robinson Crusoe* was, however, the first novel in English literature to develop these motifs and align them with their historical context in a meaningful way.

Defoe clearly uses common archetypes to great effect as the novel integrates prevalent 18<sup>th</sup> century ideas and beliefs with a narrative pattern of separation, displacement, and resubstantiation, a pattern, which Seidel (1991:37), in his influential work "*Robinson Crusoe*": *Island Myths and the Novel*, purports to be an important constituent of Western literature that can be traced back as far as Homer. *Robinson Crusoe* reaffirms this narrative pattern but relates its constituents to rational thought and individual resourcefulness. The 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalist and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau claimed that Defoe's tale "affords a complete treatise on natural education" (1994:262) and that it serves as a guide for progressing towards a "state of reason".

In its depiction of Crusoe as solitary spokesman for tolerance, reason and the virtues of work and routine to preserve sanity when faced with difficult circumstances<sup>7</sup>, Defoe's novel has established the basis for the castaway novel's examination of questions pertaining to existence. Some of these questions are: What happens to an individual when he has to survive in isolation? How does such an individual combine aspects of nature and culture in a resourceful manner? What is the relation between mastery of spatial domain and psychological well-being? What does the individual need to survive? Or to thrive? *Robinson Crusoe* addresses these questions from an 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalist perspective. Even though the responses to these types of questions have undergone variant and meaningful reformulations, the questions themselves have remained unchanged and universal across social and historical divides.

---

<sup>7</sup> These concepts remained important throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as suggested by Conrad's depiction of the chief accountant in *Heart of Darkness* (1902). Marlow notices that despite the wilderness in which the station is located, the accountant is always impeccably dressed and seems to be one of the few colonials who have been able to maintain a sense of a work ethic despite the squalid circumstances under which he has to carry out his duties.

### 2.3 *Robinson Crusoe's* 18<sup>th</sup> century contexts

Though the crux of Crusoe's tale has remained familiar in literary and popular culture, some important but complex matters falling outside the scope of the castaway novel also need equal consideration. Seidel (1991:4) points out that the narrative also engages with ideas related to maritime and international law, as well as topics on plantation husbandry, slavery and cannibalism and also economic theory. Even though an in-depth study of these matters falls beyond the scope of this thesis, they are relevant in the sense that they also emphasize Defoe's courageous engagement with the challenges of his age. Born Daniel Foe in 1660, Defoe faced various obstacles such as ill health, the threat of political prosecution and bankruptcy before achieving literary success at the age of 59 when the first part of *Robinson Crusoe* was published (Rogers, 1979:1). Defoe resembled his fictional creation most significantly in terms of his own industrious endurance, and can therefore be said to have lived a life of metaphorical shipwreck and recovery (Seidel, 1991:5). Like his contemporaries Locke and Newton, Defoe's ideas were defined by Enlightenment values of tolerance, reason and practical work. Living in an age that placed great emphasis on the empirical observation of both material circumstance and social reality, Defoe believed that anything which was filtered through the mind, seen, thought, desired, feared and recorded, was describable and knowable (Seidel, 1991:6). He was able to integrate this belief with his writing, which was concerned with empirical observation and objective representation. Defoe's writing – specifically *Robinson Crusoe* – therefore foregrounds the rationalist dominant.

In terms of its historical context, the story of *Robinson Crusoe* is loosely based on the circumstances surrounding Alexander Selkirk's four and a half years of solitude on the island of Juan Fernández from 1704 to 1709. Green (1990:17) suggests that Defoe might have met Selkirk, but also could have read about his experiences in travel literature of the time, such as Captain Woodes Rogers's *Cruising Voyage Round the World* (1712) in which he gave a full account of his rescue of Selkirk. However, much of Selkirk's story differs quite markedly from Crusoe's. Selkirk was not shipwrecked but chose to stay behind on the island because of a dispute with his captain. Unlike Crusoe, Selkirk was well stocked and could sustain himself comfortably during his four-year stay on the island. Selkirk's experience differed most markedly from Crusoe's in that, according to Woodes's account, his solitary existence on the island had affected him for the worse: despite his supplies he seemed to have turned

“slightly feral”, he lost proficiency in language and “appeared deranged” (Seidel, 1991:39). Selkirk therefore seemed to have regressed to the “meer Savage” Crusoe feared he might become himself. Unlike Crusoe, Selkirk had not devoted himself to the transformation of the island to safeguard himself against a descent into savagery. Nevertheless, Selkirk’s journal provided stimulating material that Defoe adapted with the intention of making his story more authentic. As Seidel (1991:40) explains, Defoe borrowed certain events, such as the taming of goats and using skins as clothing, from Selkirk’s accounts and used them in *Robinson Crusoe*. Aware of the marketable potential of Selkirk’s story, Defoe used it as a broad outline for a story that elaborated on subjects of particular interest to him, such as philosophy, economics, and religion.

Postcolonial readings of *Robinson Crusoe* tend to highlight the way in which the island is systematically transformed into a microcosm of 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain. This notion is supported by Crusoe’s assertion that he was “king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had a right of possession...as completely as any lord of a manor in England” (114). Crusoe assumes the right to take possession of the island and in the process establishes a class-hierarchy similar to that of 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Most importantly, Crusoe’s own social position is altered on the island, as his rise from middle-class drifter to land-owning aristocrat indicates.

The novel’s inseparability from its 18<sup>th</sup> century context is furthermore enhanced by the way in which the transformation of the island provides a blueprint for colonialism: Crusoe succeeds in developing a small but thriving plantation economy, sustained by a one-man subservient labour force in the person of Friday (Thieme, 2002:56). As the “true prototype of the British colonist” (Joyce, 1943:11), Crusoe domesticates the island and its inhabitants. In the process, the landscape increasingly becomes a site of over-writing and erasures in the sense that it becomes re-shaped and re-defined through various cultural preferences and agglomerations. Crusoe’s cultural identity – a product of his 18<sup>th</sup> century context - is thereby imprinted onto the island space.

As a representative of 18<sup>th</sup> century middle-class values, Crusoe manages to improve his life on the island by means of a Puritan work ethic coupled with self-sufficient thriftiness. Accordingly, *Robinson Crusoe* established itself as a text of educational importance and significant literary influence (Loxley, 1990:6). This was not only because of its immense popularity, specifically among its ever-increasing middle class readership, but also because

the novel managed to inform and shape 18<sup>th</sup> century British consciousness on matters related to selfhood, religion, morality and politics. Defoe's novel satisfied the 18<sup>th</sup> century reader's interest in matters related to the practical realities of their world, as well as educating them on matters related to the more spiritual aspects of life. Given the way in which the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* is defined by transition, redemption and transformation, I agree with Seidel's (1991:15) suggestion that the novel could be regarded, in part, as a "memoir of spiritual conversion" in the sense that it relates the "rooting out of sinful and disobedient inclinations". According to Hunter (1994:251), *Robinson Crusoe* has much in common with providence literature of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially in its tendency to interpret events within a philosophical and religious framework while emphasizing their strange or surprising aspects; in the process aligning it with a particular worldview. However, Defoe extends this tradition by making ordinary events seem extraordinary when interpreted within a religious framework, and as such, Hunter (1996:252) contends that in this respect, *Robinson Crusoe* draws upon the Puritan literary tradition, particularly spiritual biography and pilgrim allegory. Accordingly, the "purposeful pattern of the subject's life is superimposed over the chronological record of events" (Hunter, 1996:252) in such a manner that the structural and thematic aspects of the story seem to relate every single event to spiritual redemption and transcendence.

The social and literary impact of *Robinson Crusoe* grew even more pertinent when British imperialism was at its height, as suggested by the extensive rewritings, adaptations and imitations of Crusoe's story in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The social context of *Robinson Crusoe* closely overlapped with its ideological context in the sense that one of its most important ideological underpinnings proposed the concept of 'civilization' to contrast with that of 'savagery', thereby establishing a central notion on which the justification of colonialism was based.

According to Sambrook (1986:46), the central objective of 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy was to establish secure foundations of morality equally informed by reason and religion. Crusoe is able to re-establish a strong moral foundation as he improves nature and establishes a semblance of western civilization on the island by not succumbing to a life of savagery, sloth and brutality. In addition, he reforms the native Friday from his previous 'savage ways', which further increases his moral propriety. Depictions of Crusoe's hard work and industriousness also helped to establish the concept of the Protestant work ethic. In a sense,

the novel 'foreshadowed' British Imperialism and though it chronicled more out-dated forms of imperial adventure, such as slavery and plantation capitalism, it placed significant emphasis on more progressive and morally agreeable forms of colonialism, such as religious conversion and the 'elevation' of colonized people through exposure to Western customs. Philips (1997:26) suggests that the most significant contributions of *Robinson Crusoe* can firstly be seen in the way it provided a model for mass settlement projects of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and secondly, in the way it established a conservative ideology of the middle class that familiarized and normalized imperialist constructions of identity and spatiality.

Defoe employs various writing strategies that serve to highlight the novel's masculinist and imperialist underpinnings. These strategies are allegory, intertextuality, archetype and realism. An overtly masculinist text, the story portrays how one man gains power and control over other men by gaining power and control over a geographical locale. Women are mostly absent and when they do feature in the story, they are peripheral, such as Crusoe's mother, the widow, and even his own wife. Even though Defoe probably omitted women from *Robinson Crusoe* in compliance with its masculinist worldview, it also provided a justification for evading a contentious 18<sup>th</sup> century dilemma, namely that of human sexuality. Defoe aligned his story with a moral code that placed strong emphasis on propriety, sobriety and decency and regarded human sexuality as a source of moral debasement. Without any women on the island, Crusoe remains free of temptation and moral corruption. This issue is often dealt with subversively in postcolonial rewritings of the text, as in the sexual encounter between Susan Barton and an impassive Cruso in Coetzee's *Foe*.

The novel also has a strong allegorical premise as Crusoe's engagement with and his enactment of the colonial enterprise are both wholly fictional. In a view that subscribes to this argument, McInelly (2003:3) contends that *Robinson Crusoe* advances and articulates the colonial project by means of the fictional representation of the adventures of a man who single-handedly masters an island, his native companion, and himself. In this way, the allegorical representation of a man's solitary existence on an island wilderness creates the ideal conditions for the development of the novel: well-developed characters who internalize experiences within a setting that remains true to real life. With regard to intertextuality, Defoe's novel seems to allude to classic literary works, such as *The Odyssey* with regard to the theme of man's innately searching nature, while the scene of the shipwreck is suggestive of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Seidel (1991:37) points out that like its predecessors,

*Robinson Crusoe* employs common literary archetypes by building on a narrative pattern of separation, displacement and resubstantiation so prevalent in Western literature. As Seidel (1991:37) points out, notions of craft, ingenuity, and power are other prevalent themes of famous island fictions. As such, *Robinson Crusoe* revitalized the archetypal story of the wandering adventurer who overcomes existential isolation and related it to principles of rational thought and moral propriety.

Realism in *Robinson Crusoe* provided a new context for interpreting 18<sup>th</sup> century reality. The realistic mode enabled Defoe to convincingly portray the life of a shipwrecked adventurer on a remote island while also integrating this portrayal with a wide range of relevant topics of the day. Such topics included natural law, economic theory, religious conversion, colonial policy as well as animal and plant husbandry (Seidel, 1991:22). The novel is also replete with realistic images of everyday objects, such as earthenware pots and candles, and realistic images of geography, such as the map illustration which first appeared in the fourth edition (Phillips, 1997:15). As such, Defoe's use of realism recasts the geographical image of the island wilderness as a domesticated space, while the realistic plain language of *Robinson Crusoe* convinced readers that the novel was being truthful about adventurers and their settings, even if its portrayal was fictional.

#### **2.4 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization**

The similitude between Defoe's world and the world of his fictional hero aligns the norms of the fictional world with that of the author and his 18<sup>th</sup> century context. This allegiance between Defoe's world and the world represented in his novel suggests that ideology is transferable to texts, as narrative perspective in *Robinson Crusoe* re-enacts the concerns of its author as well as of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at large. To this purpose, the narrative dramatizes physical, spiritual and psychological experience in a way which, as Rogers (1979:vii) contends, "gave the English novel new expressive powers" that are yet to be exhausted. The seemingly unselective, true-to-life rendering of the adventures of a shipwrecked mariner in a linear narrative sequence established realism as a definitive novelistic mode in English literature.

A character-narrator, *Robinson Crusoe* narrates in both first and third person, presenting his observations by means of a factual narrative style focused on actions and events. Events and

characters are narrated from the perspective or point of view of Crusoe, who is therefore also the focalizer.

As a realist novel, narration in *Robinson Crusoe* is structured around concepts of factuality and truth. Crusoe's tendency to present all events in his diary – from the mundane to the extraordinary - unselectively and in the same circumstantial, matter-of-fact way, has the effect of making the novel seem like a true reflection of both personal and social experience. To this effect, an external-focalizer and narrator states in the preface that “[t]he editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it” (25). The implication is that Defoe affirms the verifiability of his own story by assuming an ‘objective’ but fictive editorial voice. As external narrator, Defoe becomes what Bal (1985:125) refers to as a “witness” whose narration provides various indications that the story has not been invented and must be considered true. Bal (1985:125) points out that this claim by the external-narrator does not necessarily prove the story to be true, but rather “speaks for the intentions of the narrator”. The story is furthermore aligned with Enlightenment virtues as the editor claims it will be “told with modesty, with seriousness, and with [...] religious application” (25). With the onset of the first chapter, the narrative voice then switches to that of the fictional character-focalizer Crusoe, whose narration attempts to foster an illusion of historical veracity throughout. Defoe therefore recasts fiction as fact and maintains credibility by adopting an authoritative style of narration that presents facts in the form of Crusoe's written observations as well as various lists and inventories.

#### **2.4.1 Narrative structure**

Structurally, the narrative can be divided into five sections, each representing a stage in Crusoe's character transformation. The first stage relates his life before the island during which he has various adventures at sea and in Brazil. The beginning of this section centres on his dissatisfaction with life that leads to a disagreement with his father after which he elopes to become a ship hand. The first person narrative contains several instances of *prolepsis* or anachrony through which Crusoe anticipates his future misfortunes and subsequent self-reproach. According to Genette (1991:147), the first person narrative lends itself to this form of anticipation by means of its “avowedly retrospective character” that permits the narrator to allude to the future in his present situation. Crusoe, in retrospect aware of the prophetic nature of his father's warning not to set off into a seafaring life, states that “[n]ever any young adventurer's misfortunes, I believe, began sooner, or continued

longer, than mine” (31), thereby foreshadowing the life-altering event which is to follow. Instances of prolepsis deviate from the chronology of the narrative by bringing it to the reader’s attention that these future events the narrative refers to have already occurred. This emphasizes the fact that Crusoe narrates his tale from a position of moral propriety and insight, which he believes he lacked before his experience on the island.

In this section, the narration also describes the numerous perils - typical of sea and adventure fiction – that Crusoe has to face before being shipwrecked on the island, such as storms at sea, visits to exotic locations and being sold into slavery. This section ends with a restless Crusoe, now a plantation owner in Brazil, again setting sail in search of adventure and meaningful experience.

The second stage begins with the shipwreck and ends with Crusoe’s deliverance that culminates in the religious and moral conversion of Friday into a figure of servitude. Shortly after being shipwrecked, Crusoe devises various plans and strategies with which to ensure his survival. He brings these into action through various industrious and thrifty ways. The almost inventory-like approach with which Crusoe keeps record gives detailed accounts of the various ways in which he appropriates the island with the help of Providence. This section traces Crusoe’s moral and spiritual conversion as well as the colonization of the island over a period of 26 years. Accordingly, narrative strategies of focalization and narration extensively reveal and develop the inherent ideological beliefs and suppositions contained within the text. An ideology that is consistently foregrounded in this section is Crusoe’s belief that it is his moral right and duty to establish and maintain a state of providential ownership on the island:

How mercifully can our great Creator treat His creatures, even in those conditions in which they seemed to be overwhelmed in destruction! How can He sweeten the bitterest providences and give us cause to praise Him for dungeons and prisons! ...It would have made a stoick smile to have seen me and my little family sit down to dinner; there was my majesty the prince and lord of the whole island; I had the lives of all my subjects at my absolute command. (157)

Crusoe clearly regards his island as a kind of sovereign state, handed to him by the forces of providence to rule and oversee. The relation Crusoe’s narration establishes between himself and ‘his’ island reveals his colonizer-mindset and confirms the extent to which narratorial processes mediate the ideologies inherent in the text. Character-focalization in *Robinson*

*Crusoe* perpetuates a colonial ideology that is probably the novel's most influential, but also most contentious, underpinning.

In the third stage, Crusoe has been on the island for 27 years and his colonization of the island is complete. Other castaways, including Friday's father, are now Crusoe's subjects, thereby making up an island colony with Crusoe as self-appointed 'governor'. His factual style of narration is epitomized by his 'inventory of the dead' (237) after Crusoe and Friday attack a group of cannibals who are about to feast on their prisoners – a savage from a rival tribe and a Spaniard. During this clash, 21 of the 25 cannibals are killed and the captive savage – who turns out to be Friday's father – and the Spaniard are saved. This event confirms Crusoe's mastery of his environment. With two more 'subjects' added to his kingdom, Crusoe has transformed his life on the island from being a solitary existence to an ordered society:

My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own meer property; so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. 2ndly, my people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute lord and lawgiver; they all owed their lives to me... (240-1)

Crusoe's mastery over nature, fate and himself stands as the culmination of the text's ideology; accordingly, his "subjects" only come into being through their subservience - those who resisted have been relegated to facts and figures contained in an inventory of the dead. Crusoe's narration thus reveals the workings of the colonial mind by progressively establishing a link between the concepts of mastery and subjugation.

In the fourth stage, Crusoe is delivered from his island existence 28 years after he was shipwrecked and 35 years after leaving his parents' home. Crusoe manages to recuperate most of the earnings from his plantations generated over the years and re-enters society a very wealthy man. The novel concludes with the fifth and final stage in which Crusoe covers a period of eight years in his typically concise and factual manner – he even relates his marriage, the birth of his children and the death of his wife in a single sentence. The novel ends with his departure for the East Indies as a trader; he revisits the island eight years after leaving it, and finds that it has become a prosperous colony. The first person narrative has come full circle, as both Crusoe and his island have been transformed and are flourishing. As this overview of the novel's narrative structure illustrates, the narrative is arranged according to a pattern that delineates Crusoe's transformation, from restlessness and discontent in the

first stage, to shipwreck and solitude, followed by domestication and containment, then deliverance, and lastly, fulfilment.

#### **2.4.2 Narrative effects**

The categories that produce narrative effects in *Robinson Crusoe* are the *dramatized narrator, scene and summary, commentary, the self-conscious narrator* and *variations of distance*. Booth (1996:147) posits that particular narrators give rise to specific narrative effects and that their significance or impact depends on whether the narrator is dramatized in his own right and whether the author shares the narrator's beliefs and characteristics. Crusoe is a dramatized narrator in the sense that he is a character – an “I”-narrator (Booth, 1996:147) - whose views stand between the reader and the event. According to Booth (1996:147), the author of a text “creates a superior version of himself, a ‘second self’”, called the “implied author”. The extent of similitude between author Daniel Defoe and his central character establishes Crusoe not only as an ideal version of Defoe himself, but also of mankind in general.

The various ways in which events and characters are revealed to the reader also constitute an important narrative strategy. Crusoe relays most of his tale by “telling” or “summary” (Booth, 1996:149), though his narration does contain instances of showing or “scene”. When a narrator is telling, he is also focalizing events and characters. Telling allows Crusoe to give meticulous accounts of all he observes and experiences and is suggestive of his almost neurotic impulse to record and recount facts. Crusoe supplements these accounts with commentary on a range of topics dealing with human experience; comments that are not only suggestive of Defoe and Crusoe's respective though similar worldviews, but also of the ideology of the text. The ideological implications of Crusoe's narration are furthermore validated by Crusoe's awareness of himself as writer of his story, which establishes him as a “self-conscious narrator” (Booth, 1996:150). This awareness allows him to select and edit his observations in a way that would elevate his tale to the level of historical fact.

In terms of degrees of distance, there is a significant moral distance between Crusoe the mature narrator and Crusoe's narrated younger self. The differentiation in character between Crusoe before, during and after life on the island is indicative of Crusoe's conversion and therefore integral to the thematic and structural development of the narrative. Crusoe the mature narrator is also much closer in distance to the author / implied author, Daniel Defoe.

This notion of distance also relates to the notion of reliability. Booth (1996:152) defines a reliable narrator as one who “speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work”. In the case of *Robinson Crusoe*, these norms define Crusoe as a man of his age – rational, pragmatic, religious, morally astute as well as economically shrewd. As Crusoe’s narration subscribes to the norms of the text, he is a reliable narrator. Crusoe ‘sees’ with Defoe’s eyes and ‘speaks’ with Defoe’s tongue. Narrative effects in the novel situate Crusoe as a mediator between the author (Defoe) and the reader.

### **2.4.3 Narrative distance and ideology**

Currie (1998:18) adapts Booth’s theory on variations of distance to examine how a reader’s response to a text is manufactured by the rhetoric of narrative, which implies that narrative has an ideological function. Various techniques of narration and focalization can therefore establish a sense of intimacy, or what Currie (1998:19) refers to as “sympathy” between the reader and characters. However, Currie (1998:20) also notes that information alone is not enough to elicit a sympathetic response and that ultimately the reader’s judgment is controlled by the source of information as well as the way in which this information is presented. Narration and focalization are therefore influential in shaping the reader’s response to characters and events in a story. As a conversion narrative, *Robinson Crusoe* induces sympathy effectively mainly because the hero is also the focalizer of his own story. This narrative strategy focuses the reader’s attention exclusively on Crusoe and his isolation, which sets him apart from other human beings and serves to magnify his existence in the world. Crusoe’s identity is consequently defined by isolation and the way in which he manages to master isolation by transforming himself and reversing his state of liminality, which in effect situates him as a universal symbol of human resilience.

Crusoe’s earnest and factual narrative style allows the reader to grasp his initial yearning without judging him for deserting his parents, especially as his self-reproach suggests sincere remorse for his early ways. In addition, the shipwreck and his isolated condition on the island which constitute the heart of the story, induce a high degree of sympathy, while his resourcefulness and adaptability add to his credibility in the eyes of the reader. Spiritual reflection and moral reformation are also intended to encourage a sense of intimacy between Crusoe and the reader. However, even though Defoe manages to elicit sympathy for his hero’s moral journey, this does not mean the reader is unaware of Crusoe’s flaws, such as his tendency to be emotionally indifferent, his neurosis, or the fact that he seems rather

unimaginative. As I explained in the previous chapter, Currie (1998:22) adapts Booth's category of "degrees of distance" to contend that sympathy is technically produced and controlled by the devices of *access*, *closeness*, and *distance*.

The first device, access, refers to the extent of the reader's knowledge about a character or event (Currie, 1996:20). As Crusoe is the only focalizer, the reader has a high level of access to Crusoe's character, but no access to other characters, such as Friday. If, instead, Friday had a 'voice' in the sense that events were also relayed from his perspective, the reader might potentially become alienated from Crusoe. However, as Crusoe is a first-person narrator, the reader is aware that his narration is ultimately biased and as such access is more limited than it might have been in the case of omniscient narration. The reader never gains access to Crusoe's mind, as thoughts, emotions and perceptions are inevitably filtered before the reader can access them. Crusoe therefore controls the narrative point of view, and consequently is able to manipulate the reader's judgements so as to sustain a sense of intimacy between himself and the reader throughout.

Secondly, closeness is concerned with the position from which a character is revealed to the reader (Currie, 1996:21). Defoe provides the reader with an inside view to Crusoe's character, thereby enhancing the level of intimacy between the reader and Crusoe. The inside view fosters the illusion of unmediated access to Crusoe, though as I pointed out, this is not truly the case. The inside view facilitates the reader's opinions of Crusoe by manufacturing sympathy for Crusoe, as "the sustained inside view leads the reader to hope for good fortune for the character with whom he travels, quite independently of the qualities revealed" (Booth, 1961:246). The level of closeness established by the inside view in *Robinson Crusoe* therefore enables Defoe to create and sustain sympathy for Crusoe, despite his shortcomings. The 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century reader will, inevitably, attribute flaws to Crusoe's character that Defoe did not intend. These flaws in Crusoe's character have ideological significance when interpreted in relation to the novel's 18<sup>th</sup> century context. When considered from a postcolonial perspective, it is undeniable that Crusoe's ambition for power, possession and prestige points to a rather presumptuous master-complex. I would therefore like to argue that when considered from a 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, these flaws will detract from the reader's sympathy for Crusoe despite the sustained inside view. This "decline of sympathy" is one of various narrative aspects relating to the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel.

The above notion of the variability of sympathy in terms of issues such as historical context or the reader's personal prejudice can be related to the third device, namely distance (Currie, 1996:21). Distance refers to the extent of the reader's sympathy for characters and degrees of distance are manifested by the narrator and situated between the two poles of access and closeness. Accordingly, the greater the level of access and closeness, the smaller the distance is between reader and narrator. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the degree of distance Defoe intended is slight, as Crusoe's seemingly honest and frank narration creates an illusion of accessibility and closeness. Nonetheless, narrative sympathy is a dynamic concept, and the contemporary reader will probably respond differently to *Robinson Crusoe* than the 18<sup>th</sup> and even 19<sup>th</sup> century reader. The distance between Crusoe and the reader might therefore be greater when considered from a more contemporary perspective, which also implies a lesser degree of sympathy. Such a reading also points to the ideological function of narrative, as well as how ideology is contained within texts and contributes to generic formation and transformation.

#### **2.4.4 *The pursuit of Reason***

Crusoe is constantly observing, surveying, contemplating and scrutinizing, but the narrative perspective never moves toward the emotional aspect of his character. Commenting on a lack of emotion in Defoe's writing, Charles Dickens, in his 1874 essay titled "The lack of emotion in Defoe" remarks that *Robinson Crusoe* probably was the "only popular book that could make no one laugh and no one cry" (1994:274). The main reason for this is that the narrative only provides detailed accounts of events external to Crusoe, such as his physical surroundings and artefacts, salvaged or self-made, which he uses to appropriate his surroundings. The narrative process never really moves inward in the sense that Crusoe's narration seems detached from emotional experience and he seems almost incapable of deep feelings. He is completely aware of the implications of being cast away, but he never, for instance, displays any emotional longing for his parents and home. Instead, his mostly emotionless narrative style abounds with precise accounts of what he does, sees and thinks, but never really depicts his inner life. In a view that supports this argument, Leslie Stephen remarks that Defoe failed to provide his novel with psychological depth, mainly as a result of giving a "very inadequate picture of the mental torments to which his hero is exposed" (1994:278). However, psychological depth in an age of reason was not what Defoe was after. The authoritative narrative voice mostly attempts to provide a realistic and empirically verifiable depiction of life on a desert island. This is illustrated by Crusoe's behaviour

shortly after being washed ashore as sole survivor of a shipwreck: he momentarily “*reflect[s]* upon” his “dreadful deliverance (66), but then pulls himself together, *walks* “about a furlong” (67) inland, *finds* fresh water, *places* tobacco in his mouth, *climbs* up a tree, *cuts* a short stick, *makes* himself comfortable and *falls* asleep (67).

The psychological and emotional aspects of his character are revealed in terms of brief periods of repose in which he reflects on his isolation, regret, grief and fear – mostly during his first two years on the island and again after discovering the ominous footprint in the sand. Though Crusoe’s discovery of the footprint marks a pivotal moment in the narrative (as it signifies a turning point in the narrative as well as being a meaningful spatial marker), his discovery thereof is relayed rather matter-of-factly. Crusoe - casually and within a single paragraph – details the geographic traits of his various habitations on the island before abruptly announcing “[b]ut now I came to a new scene in my life” (162). The footprint confronts the reader almost just as starkly as it does Crusoe, mainly because the narration does not prepare the reader for this significant turn in the narrative. As savages and cannibals are frequent motifs in adventure romances of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the reader is not really surprised by the discovery of this ‘other’, potentially threatening presence. Crusoe, however, who has grown very secure with his position on the island, is “thunder-struck” (162). As such, this sudden diversion in the narrative emphasizes the unexpectedness with which Crusoe’s subconscious fear becomes a reality. The mystery surrounding the footprint also creates suspense. Bal (19:114) defines suspense as the “results of the procedures by which the reader or the character is made to ask questions which are only answered later”. Bal (19:114) furthermore relates the process by which suspense is created to focalization. In *Robinson Crusoe*, neither the character-focalizer nor the reader has any information regarding the origins of the footprint. Consequently, Crusoe’s focalization establishes the footprint as a source of anxiety and unease – an inscription of otherness. The footprint then becomes an important signifier in Crusoe’s spiritual and moral conversion as well as being a significant coordinate in the narrative structure.

According to Rogers (1979:115), the footprint sets in motion a chain of events and reactions in the plot as well as Crusoe’s mind which are necessary for him to endure in order to achieve spiritual and moral actualization. Initially, the footprint unsettles Crusoe’s ‘world order’, which causes a temporary lapse in his spiritual conversion process. For two years, he lives in

fear of being discovered by cannibals. During this time, he castigates himself for submitting to “terror and discomposure” at the cost of his religious devotion:

...under the dread of mischief impending, a man is no more fit for a comforting performance of the duty of praying to God, than he is for repentance on a sick bed : for these discomposures affect the mind as the others do the body; and the discomposure of the mind must necessarily be as great a disability as that of the body, and much greater, praying to God being properly an act of the mind, not of the body. (171)

Crusoe here seems to relate the intense emotions he experiences to his spiritual regression. The more irrational and problematic aspects of his character, or “discomposures of the mind”, are discouraged in favour of moral duty and propriety. Consequently, narrative strategies in the novel align Crusoe’s religious principles with Reason rather than emotion. The pursuit of rational thought therefore enables him to resume his conversion-process. Defoe’s main protagonist is thereby defined by his 18<sup>th</sup> century context in the sense that he aspires toward both Reason and Piety. As oppositional forces to unreason, these virtues fortified Crusoe’s 18<sup>th</sup> century sensibility from yielding to powerful irrational and regressive impulses within.

## **2.5 Converting and containing space and identity: Crusoe’s monologic world**

The conversion and containment of space and the overt awareness of time define Crusoe’s transformation of an unknown, marginal and ambiguous geographical locale into a prototypical British colony. Crusoe thereby establishes a monologic world order on the island that defines identity as fixed and the island space as contained. In the Bakhtinian sense, a monologic world is closed, static, and limiting in the way in which it avoids interaction with the Other as it gives priority to the “single voice” (Dentith, 1995:45) of an authorial narrator. Bakhtin distinguishes the monologic from the polyphonic, as the latter grants the voices of characters as much authority as the narrator’s voice, which often engages in active dialogue with the characters’ voices (Dentith, 1995:41). Though Bakhtin relates his concept of the monologic to the deterministic and limiting effect of the traditional third person-narrator or external-focalizer, the concept is also applicable to the “overarching consciousness” of Crusoe’s narration, “which can see through and ‘place’ the consciounesses of the characters”, particularly Friday’s, and “reconcile their differences” or Friday’s ‘otherness’ in order to bring the narrative to a “conclusive solution” (Dentith, 1995:44), which is illustrated by Crusoe’s transformation of himself and ‘his’ island’.

According to Phillips (1998:12), adventure stories – such as *Robinson Crusoe* – construct a concrete cultural space that represents a social totality in an imaginatively accessible and appealing manner. Such a cultural space, though imaginary, naturalized constructions of ‘home’ and empire during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by interpreting the unknown in terms of the known, so the island becomes a utopia of eighteenth-century, British, middle-class values. However, the concept of utopia is ambiguous since it refers to a non-place in the sense that it only exists as a literary invention. Such an idealised setting, as well as the values it exemplifies could therefore only truly exist in the reader’s imagination. Nevertheless, the manner in which Defoe portrays Crusoe’s adaptation to unfamiliar or alien space recasts the island as a monologic world, a *place* that stands oblivious to the various ambiguities, inversions and contradictions contained within its representation.

According to Seidel (1991:37), islands conjure up a double image of sea and land. On the one hand, the island offers protection and shelter against the onslaughts of the sea and climatic conditions. On the other hand, the island often stands as a geographically remote piece of land, surrounded by an ocean that separates the castaway from his homeland. As such, the island also becomes a symbol of the castaway’s isolation and estrangement and is often represented as a site related to man’s most primal fears and apprehensions. In the context of the castaway novel, these fears usually relate to onslaughts from unknown and unpredictable forces, whether these be man, beast or hunger. Upon first seeing the island onto which he will shortly be shipwrecked, Crusoe experiences it as being “more frightful than the Sea.” (1985:64). As Crusoe initially regards the island with apprehension, I am in agreement with Marzec (2002:130) when he argues that as a “nonsymbolizable, meaningless presence”, the island unsettles Crusoe’s sensibility to the extent that he no longer experiences the world as interpretable, familiar and ordered. The island is clearly a liminal space, as it lies at the margins of survival and demise, of civilization and civilized behaviour.

However, the remote island wilderness often also functions as an idyllic or utopian space in adventure stories as islands, whether real or allegorical, represent the ideal playground for adventurous pursuits and imperial ideals. Loxley (1990:3) provides a useful description of the representation of the island in literature and he explains that the island is a space in which all historical and political contradictions are eliminated, as the desert island is not subject to normal political, social and cultural interference. The island therefore offers the ideal setting in which the major themes of colonialism and imperialism can be articulated, as Defoe’s

novel so clearly illustrates. Since mastering the surrounding ocean would be an impossible feat, the island becomes the only terrain on which the castaway can attempt to leave his mark. This urge to appropriate, inscribe, and claim exemplifies the imperialist drive towards geographical and economic expansion. However, even in the most naïve of adventure stories, the island always maintains a level of ambiguity, as the impenetrable wilderness remains a threatening presence – both physically and psychologically – that must be kept at bay. During a moment of reflection, Crusoe’s considers his purpose within the greater scheme of the Creation: “What is this earth and sea of which I have seen so much? Whence it it produced? And what am I and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal? Whence are we?” (107). As this passage suggests, popular 18<sup>th</sup> century views regarded the castaway predicament as a condition of “spiritual abandonment” (Thieme, 2001:55) as a result of which the castaway must overcome the limitations of material life in order to become spiritually enlightened. Crusoe’s interaction with the island setting reveals how one man redeems himself in such a condition by equipping the island with all the supports of civilized life. Integral to Crusoe’s integration of such ‘supports’ with his environment are notions not only of craft and ingenuity, but also of power. Control over island space is therefore a central motif in *Robinson Crusoe*, appropriated from its literary predecessors the *Odyssey* and *The Tempest*. *Robinson Crusoe* represents many aspects of Britain or ‘home’ in relation to the island by perpetuating an ideology that places Britain at the centre and colonies like the island, at the margins. Phillips (1997:i) refers to this process as “mapping” as it charts “colonies and empires, projecting European geographical fantasies onto non-European, real geographies”. Mapping is not only applicable to representations of space and place, but also to constructions of race, class, gender, religion and language. As Defoe’s novel demonstrates, mapping enables the imaginative and material possession of the island by means of spatial conversion and cultural inscription. The island is thereby transformed from an uncharted and impenetrable wilderness into a cultivated paradise - a space arranged into a structure of enclosures, fortifications and plantations.

In the context of *Robinson Crusoe*, conversion involves the re-organization of space by subdividing it according to proportions and rational divisions, which implies an improvement of rather than a return to nature. Crusoe achieves this by means of appropriation and containment or enclosure of the island space and in this regard, Seidel (1991:57) posits the conversion-motif to be central in Defoe’s novel:

*Robinson Crusoe* works and reworks the motif of conversion. Conversion is at the heart of the narrative. To set a man on an empty island meant that everything has to be converted to Crusoe's use to have significance; hence the novel is in a direct and metaphoric sense about varieties of conversion: fear to salvation; stuff to structure; nature to culture; accident to providence; paranoia to toleration. Crusoe makes over his island, turns his religious sensibility, shifts his politics, transforms his life. Turning things around or seeing another side – to see the other side of the island actually becomes one of Crusoe's obsessions – is what Crusoe does and what makes him who he is.

The conversion process has a psychological aspect that is manifested by the way in which Crusoe interacts with the island. Attempts to curtail his fears of wild animals, savages, or dying from hunger are dealt with firstly by securing himself physically; thereby also calming himself psychologically. After salvaging what he can from the ship, he sets out to explore his surroundings. He then goes in search of food and a suitable place for his "habitation" (71) to counter irrational fears. Crusoe takes the first step towards converting the island: space, or at least part of it, is contained and becomes place as he erects a kind of fortress or enclosure that shelters him from savages, wild beasts and the elements. This fortress consists of a tent, stakes and cable salvaged from the ship, which he fashions up against a hollowed-out rock. Upon finishing this task, a relieved Crusoe remarks that he was "completely fenced in, and fortify'd ... from all the world" (77). Seidel (1991:58) notes that Crusoe's humble fortress "miniaturizes" what will later be his relation to the island at large in the sense that Crusoe's behaviour foreshadows his future interaction with the island because he manages his initial situation by setting clear boundaries between the outside (the unknown wilderness) and the inside (his habitation), in the process defining margin and centre. This illustrates that space, albeit only a small area, has been contained and now becomes an extension of Crusoe himself. Interestingly, during the course of the novel, the geographical area covered by wilderness (margin) becomes increasingly smaller in relation to the expansion of the various domesticated spaces (centre) on the island. Crusoe is therefore able to ease his psychological dread during his 28 years on the island by monopolizing space so that it becomes a bastion against unfamiliar influences or threatening presences from the 'outside'.

Crusoe's appropriation of the primitive setting is defined by the way in which the island becomes a site for interpreting experience. Having first thought the island to be barren, Crusoe gradually discovers that the island is in fact densely vegetated in some parts. To Crusoe's observant colonialist gaze, the island's untamed expanses of forest, scrubland and mountain present an ideal opportunity for cultivation and domestication. During one of his

explorations of the island, Crusoe compares the beauty of the natural setting to that of a cultivated garden and relishes the thought of claiming possession of all the natural splendour that surrounds him.

...and the country appeared so fresh, so green, so flourishing, every thing being in a constant verdure or flourish of spring, that it looked like a planted garden.

I descended a little on the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure...to think that this was all my own, that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly and had a right of possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance as completely as any lord of a manor in England. (113-14)

This valley also becomes the setting for his second residence, or as Crusoe later refers to it, his “country- house”. He therefore articulates the unspoiled natural scenery in terms usually associated with the English landscape such as “garden”, “vale” and manor” and in the process, he organizes his experience and imaginatively appropriates space through language. No longer part of the dense, unnameable space which confronted Crusoe when he first arrived on the island, chaotic nature becomes comfortably familiar through its association with words denoting order and western refinement. Only once the island space is familiarized by no longer being associated with an unknown wilderness, can Crusoe begin to convert it. *Space* is colonized and becomes *place* as illustrated by Crusoe’s claim of ownership.

Containment is central to Crusoe’s conversion of space and entails a form of cultural inscription. These physical structures – or spatial markers - such as fences, hedges, plantations and his various dwellings, invest the island space with cultural meaning so that it becomes metaphorically and metonymically linked to Crusoe’s identity as a white, middle-class, Christian British man. Structures – specifically those that demarcate and enclose - which Crusoe associates with his homeland are therefore transplanted to the island, thereby shaping it into an image of Britain and the British Empire. In this regard, Marzec (2002:138) provides a concise definition of enclosure in regard to the way in which it contains space:

Enclosure involves the meticulous measurement of a piece of land followed by the surrounding land with barriers designed to close off the free passage of people and animals: Large “open” fields formerly devoid of physical territorial boundaries are brought into a system in which land is held “in severalty” (by individuals) through the erection of stone walls, fences, ditches and hedges that separate one person’s land from one’s neighbours’

Crusoe constructs enclosures not only for the practical purpose of providing refuge or storage, but also to demarcate ‘civilized’ and domestic space from chaotic nature. However, his “country-house” (115), or bower in the valley, contrasts with his initial fortifications, since he constructs it simply for pleasure as he was “enamoured of the place” (115). The bower therefore marks an important psychological turning point for Crusoe, since he no longer only relates spatial containment to survival, but also to self-fulfilment and “pleasantness” (115). The containment of space therefore not only transforms space physically, but also ontologically, or as Marzec (2002:144) contends, “commands the full range of Being”. Accordingly, as the following section of this chapter will show, containment defines Crusoe’s identity transformation in relation to time and space, the Other, consciousness and religious experience<sup>8</sup>.

When Crusoe is shipwrecked, he lacks a strong sense of identity, but during his stay on the island, he reinvents himself and systematically constructs his identity so as to become an exalted hero. Interestingly, his identity as a white, middle-class, Christian, British man is only affirmed as the story proceeds – i.e. while he is *away* from Britain and separated from the trappings and symbols of western civilization. Crusoe has access to a shipwreck full of useful tools, provisions and other commodities which he puts to good use on an island he seemingly has to himself. As artefacts of civilization, Phillips (1997:31) suggests that these goods from the shipwreck represent “elements of Britain, of his British social self”. Consequently, these elements acquire symbolic significance and are transferred onto the island through their use and application. In the process, they become amplified in himself and in his engagements with the island.

Relishing the ordered state of his possessions in his cave, Crusoe remarks ...”I had every thing so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great” (86). Crusoe values his possessions not only for the sustenance they provide or enable, but also for the way in which they provide structure and meaning to his existence on the island. As such, Crusoe integrates familiar objects which he associates with home with his identity in order to appropriate, transform and master an alien and threatening environment. The way in which Crusoe materializes experience becomes concomitant to the conversion of space and identity.

---

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Marzec (2002:145), who differentiates the different types or modes of *enclosure* on the basis of these categories.

Crusoe's obsession with orientating himself in space and time is revealed by the way in which he keeps an exact record of each day that goes by, his journal entries as well as his calculations of the latitude and longitude at which the island is located (81). He furthermore structures time in terms of his daily tasks and activities, such as his "times of work", "time of sleep" and "time of diversion" (88). Space and time are furthermore contained through his neurotic preoccupation with counting and measuring. He tends not to denote space in general terms, but instead quantifies space with a surveyor's precision. For example, the plain on which he pitches his tent is not large, but rather a "hundred yards broad, and about twice as long" (77). Similarly, domestic space is compartmentalized and the interior of his cave, for example, consists of a "warehouse or magazin, a kitchen, a dining-room, and a cellar" (91). No longer merely a cave providing shelter, space has now been domesticated and can be utilized as such – space has become place by being lived in, demarcated and named. The exacting precision with which Crusoe keeps track of time and organizes space enables him to rationalize – and in the process also master – his condition as well as his environment.

Crusoe's containment of time and space extends to the way in which he relates to the Other. He saves a native islander from hostile cannibals and names him Friday; a name that identifies him with nature (which the God of Genesis created before Adam and Eve, on a Saturday). In being associated with nature, Friday's inferiority vis-à-vis Crusoe is immediately established – like the island and its animal inhabitants, Friday is imaginatively colonized. In a view that supports this perspective, McNelly (2003:16) points out that the imposition of the name Friday begins the process whereby Crusoe's servant is transformed into an image of Crusoe himself:

I made 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... (209)

The act of naming becomes a means of exerting power and authority. The name 'Friday' not only brands Crusoe's native companion as his possession, but also eradicates Friday's history and former life. Friday's identity thereby becomes intertwined with Crusoe's – his name serves as a continuous reminder that his new life is a blessing bestowed upon him by his Master. However, this interdependency works both ways, as Friday also validates Crusoe's image of himself as master and benefactor, in the process reinforcing the sense of authority on which Crusoe's transformed identity depends. When Crusoe delivers Friday from the

cannibals and converts him to Christianity, his authority over the island is legitimized. With God's blessing, Defoe's castaway – formerly a common Englishman – has now become a master and king. The colonial context of the novel thereby facilitates the transformation of the 'everyman' into someone who is remarkable, heroic and powerful. As self-appointed "Master" (209), his interaction with Friday is enclosed in a pattern of subjugation and domination as Friday not only submits his identity to Crusoe, but his entire culture, while Crusoe on the other hand, perceives only his own monologic and subjective worldview in the character of Friday. As Marzec (2002:147) points out, the potential for alterity and newness that Friday's presence might have brought to Crusoe's world is denied. Interestingly, postcolonial works such as Tournier's *Vendredi* (1967), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978) rewrite Defoe's story of exile from a postcolonial perspective, and engage with his master text at various ontological levels. Moreover, Tournier and Coetzee problematize Friday's 'otherness' by contesting and reinventing some of the masculinist, racist and imperialist constructions of identity in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Crusoe's containment of Friday's identity links up with his containment of consciousness: his sense of wellbeing depends on his ability to sustain himself efficiently, unhindered by outside influence. He devises a mechanical instrument to sharpen his tools, without ever having "seen such a thing in England" (Crusoe, 1985:98) and invents a kiln for his pottery even though he has "no notion of a kiln" (Crusoe, 1985:133). He re-invents himself as a completely original thinker, "a Cartesian act of enclosure at the depth of consciousness" (Marzec, 2002:145) and thereby, the island space is gradually rid of all obscurity. Crusoe's extensive reliance on rational thought and methodical behaviour to survive and thrive enables him to develop a firm and unchanging knowledge of himself and his world, to the extent that he deems himself to have become "naturalized to the place, and to the manner of living" (Crusoe, 1985:185) on the island. However, despite the physical signs of enclosure, the wildness of the land is only *contained*, not eradicated. This notion, which is incompatible with the monologic worldview of Defoe and his hero, points to the precarious nature of Crusoe's ontological certainty as it is dependent on the monologic world order that he establishes on the island.

Religious experience is another aspect of life on the island that is also contained by Crusoe. This is illustrated when he throws away the husks of corn, which to his astonishment, grow into fertile corn stalks. Crusoe comes to the conclusion that "God had miraculously caused

this grain to grow without any help of seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my sustenance” (94). By attributing this incident to Providence, or a “secret power” that “guides and governs...all” (107), Crusoe commits himself to a spiritual cause that would redeem him and by extension also the island. Aided by Providence, he sustains himself comfortably on the island through the continuous cultivation of the land. In the process, he achieves deliverance, not only from the island prison, but also from his existential condition (109):

...my soul sought nothing of God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort: as for my solitary life, it was nothing; I did not so much pray to be delivered from it...it was all of no consideration in comparison to this. And I add this part here, to hint to whoever shall read it...they will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction.

The single-mindedness with which Crusoe cultivates the island becomes a way in which he attempts to atone for his sinful past. His efforts to redeem himself motivate his intention of returning the island to its true providential foundation (Marzec, 2002:145), or (re) claiming the island from the wilderness and converting it into a ‘paradise’ of Christian civilization. He does this by claiming the island for himself and, by extension, for England. As Crusoe defines his displacement in religious and spiritual terms, existential anxiety is paralleled by colonial anxiety and resolved through spiritual transformation and the containment of land. Thereby, spatial conversion acquires a metaphysical dimension whereby Crusoe mediates his colonization of the island.

## **2.6 The footprint as spatial marker**

Crusoe’s appropriation of space is a subliminal expression of his neurosis over having his ‘kingdom’ infiltrated by outside forces. When Crusoe discovers the footprint in the sand, the sustainability and legitimacy of his island-kingship are called into question. A definitive spatial marker, the footprint becomes a symbol not only for presence, but also for absence or loss in the sense that it potentially indicates the end of his sovereign rule over the island, and as such, also the loss of selfhood. The footprint is foremost a physical imprint that alludes to the threatening presence of another, whose foot turns out to be bigger than his own when he measures the mark of the print against his own. After much deliberation, Crusoe decides that the footprint must belong to “some more dangerous creature” than the devil, “viz. that it must be some of the savages of the main land” (163). The size of the savage’s footprint enhances the “self-diminishment” (Seidel, 1991:66) Crusoe experiences on discovering the ominous print in the sand. In addition, the footprint delineates the absence of a social support system

that defines Crusoe's marginal and therefore also vulnerable life on the island; as a result, Crusoe comes to realize the paradoxical nature of his situation:

... for I whose only affliction was, that I seemed banished from human society, that I was alone, circumscribed by the boundless ocean, cut off from mankind, and condemned to what I called silent life; that I was as one who Heaven thought not worthy to be numbered among the living, or to appear among the rest of His creatures; that to have seen one of my own species would have seemed to me a raising from death to life, and the greatest blessing that Heaven it self, next to the supreme blessing of my salvation, could bestow; I say, that I should now tremble at the very apprehensions of seeing a man, and was ready to sink into the ground at but the shadow or silent appearance of man's having set his foot in the island. (164)

For the first few years on the island, Crusoe is deeply affected by his isolation and longs for a sense of community with others from his "own species" (164) that he has lost since becoming a castaway. To cope with his condition, Crusoe begins to interpret his singular existence as a kind of providential entitlement to ownership, so that he gradually develops a more ambivalent attitude to his isolation. He begins to adapt to - and even cherish - his isolation and the possibility that his solitary existence might come to an end instils trepidation in him that his island-kingdom might be 'taken' from him.

After discovering the footprint, the consolation he derives from his solitude is replaced by despair. The ensuing fear of being discovered and at the mercy of cannibals drives him to near madness. As Seidel's (1991:67) analysis also indicates, the footprint even causes Crusoe to change the essential nature of his exile, since he no longer interprets it in providential and religious terms, but rather sees it as a form of enforced exile and he notes that the "uneasiness" that resulted from his discovery of the print made his life "much less comfortable than it was before" as he now lived in the "constant snare of the fear of man". (171). As a spatial marker, the footprint has a significant impact on the process of spatial conversion: Crusoe intensifies the setting up of fortifications and other enclosures even further, for example by planting a plantation in front of his habitation to hide it from view (168-170). Eventually, reason calms his anxiety and he is able to return to a semblance of life as it was before his discovery, though he now exercises caution in firing his gun, lighting fires or roaming the island. The looming fear of incursion therefore turns Crusoe's beloved island from a place of emotional and psychological refuge into a mere physical abode.

The arrival of Friday almost five years later again reverses his situation, as Friday's inherent docility enables Crusoe to again appoint himself as 'master', in control of his own fate as

well as the fate of the native Other. He therefore reintegrates himself, along with his newly-converted subject, with his reclaimed island-kingdom. The footprint therefore introduces an important turn in the narrative as it marks – physically and structurally - the final phase in the conversion of space, namely the establishment of a colony.

As this analysis and the contextualization have shown, Crusoe, shortly after arriving on the island, sets in motion various processes to restructure the untamed, chaotic nature of the island space into a meaningful site that resembles his homeland. His appropriation and containment of space enable him to construct a new home – a transformed space that exemplifies the extent to which the physical and psychological colonization of space defines Western identity as being located at the centre. This chapter therefore examined the significance of the castaway-figure in the traditional, pre-colonial context with regard to the way Defoe's novel perpetuated a culture of masculinity and conquest by, and relating it to, Crusoe's experience of and adaptation to space, his imposition of boundaries on the island-space, as well as processes of identity transformation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REINVENTING THE PAST IN UMBERTO ECO'S *THE ISLAND OF THE DAY BEFORE***

#### **3.1 Contextualization**

While *Robinson Crusoe* is defined by the clear demarcation and appropriation of space, the naming of place, and the representation of identity as fixed with regard to the way in which Crusoe is merely an embodiment of rationalist progress, Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before*<sup>9</sup> (1994) attempts to view spatiality, boundaries and identity from a postmodernist perspective that diffuses the demarcation of boundaries with regard to space and time, past and present and fiction and reality/history. In the light of this precept, the central question that arises in relation to this chapter is concerned with how narratological strategies reconfigure the temporal boundary between past and present in order to reinterpret 17<sup>th</sup> century representations of space, time and identity in a postmodern context. Related to Eco's postmodern reconfiguration of the boundary between past and present, this chapter will also investigate how Eco's reinterpretation of space, time, boundaries and identity confirms the generic transformation of the castaway novel.

The main objective of this chapter in relation to my thesis is to illustrate that *IDB* is an exemplar of generic transformation of the castaway novel, as Eco's postmodern premise casts doubt on the legitimacy of any single interpretation of reality as well as the existence of absolute truth. Instead, multiple authors and narrators, as well as the alternation between worlds and contexts, function as the premise for various narratological strategies, particularly metafiction, historiographic metafiction, and intertextuality, that emphasize a non-linear and incongruous experience of space and time that is defined by a state of liminality. Eco's novel can be regarded as a transitional novel as it introduces those postmodernist narrative strategies that trace the movement from older, more traditional conceptualizations of the castaway to more contemporary ones; thus *IDB* provides the bridge between Defoe's realism and Coetzee and Martel's postmodernism.

The novel confronts the reader with multiple plots, each of which is related but separable.

---

<sup>9</sup> The title will henceforth be abbreviated as *IDB*

The main story line centres on the tale of Roberto de la Griva, who had sailed on an English ship, the *Amaryllis*. He becomes part of this voyage as a French spy in the service of Cardinal Richelieu in order to discover the secret of how to calculate and measure longitudes. While at sea, Roberto is the only survivor of a shipwreck when the *Amaryllis* is destroyed in a storm. In order to stay afloat, he straps himself to a door that eventually bumps into a Dutch ship, the *Daphne*. The ship is anchored at an equal distance to a mysterious island and a continent, but as Roberto cannot swim, he is trapped on the *Daphne*, which itself appears to be mysteriously abandoned, but still contains massive provisions and other fantastic cargo. It turns out, however, that Roberto is not alone on the *Daphne* when he discovers that a member of one of the ship's original crew, the eccentric Father Caspar, also inhabits the ship.

While a castaway, Roberto begins a series of letters to a Parisian woman he is infatuated with, the Lady Lilia. In these letters, he reveals the details surrounding the shipwreck, recounts his previous life and explains to her how he ended up on the *Amaryllis* in the first place. Though Roberto's letters, entries and other notes are sketchy and few, his manuscript does reveal that he was born a noble in Italy, the only son of indulgent parents. As a young boy, he created a fictional identical twin brother, Ferrante, whom he uses as scapegoat for all his misdemeanours. However, he never outgrows this childish quirk and through his letters, it becomes clear that Roberto gradually blurs the distinction between the reality and fabrication with regards to Ferrante's existence. When he is still a teenager, he fights with his father in the siege of Casale where his father is killed. This event causes him to forego the innocence of his childhood years; disillusioned, Roberto accompanies the French, who had been Italy's ally in the battle against Spain, to Paris. Here he joins the society of urbane, radical, but also faddish philosophers and falls in love with the unreceptive Lilia. In an effort to impress her, Roberto talks irreverently about the French government and is thrown in prison. His irresponsible political views and his impressive ability with languages (he also speaks French and English without accent as well as some German), attract the attention of Cardinal Marzaran, Richelieu's right-hand man. Marzaran offers him his freedom on condition that he becomes a spy on an English ship, the *Amaryllis*, which is on a secret mission to discover how to measure longitude accurately. Roberto thereby ends up on the ill-fated *Amaryllis* on a mission to the Solomon Islands, which was believed to be located on the prime meridian and could therefore be used as a point from which to measure longitude. Later on, his fellow castaway Father Caspar informs him that this was also the mission of the *Daphne*.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was defined by transformation of almost all areas of life, including religion, science, domestic relations and culture. This progressive mindset was also reflected in literature, which manifested as a heightened focus on and analysis of the self as both an intellectual and spiritual being. As the 17<sup>th</sup> century was also an age of expansive geographical discovery, the understanding and interpretation of the world became less based on medieval superstitions, such as the belief that sailing to the extreme end of a flat earth would cause ships to fall into a deep abyss. Instead, discoveries by scientists such as Copernicus and Galileo Galilei, who established that the earth circumnavigated the sun, perpetuated an understanding of the world and the universe that was based on reason and empirical observation (Potter, 1993:91). Scientific progress during the 17<sup>th</sup> century was marked by several ‘inventions’ that facilitated a more rational or scientific understanding of space and time, such as the first refracting telescope (1608), Pascal’s adding machine in 1642 (Windelspecht, 2002:xxv), the pendulum (1656), which made clocks more accurate (Windelspecht, 2002:189), and the ground-breaking reflecting telescope, which Isaac Newton assembled in 1668 (Windelspecht, 2002:233). With the help of these and many other new scientific devices and phenomena, space and time could now be quantified, qualified, measured and calculated through the application of certain scientific principles. However, in accordance with this era’s expanding technological vision that often fused dream with reality, Eco fictionalizes 17<sup>th</sup> century history by also including a few fantastical devices, such as the “Powder of Sympathy” (chapter 16), which appears to transcend space and time, and the “Specula Melitensis” (chapter 21), a giant mirror with which seafarers determine the location of the prime meridian. As the narrative in *IDB* also suggests, the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a playing field for visionaries mad scientists alike and according to Rietbergen (1998:305), the pages of 17<sup>th</sup> century publications featured an enormous number of mechanical gadgets envisioned by these ‘inventors’. Though only a few of these gadgets were actually realized, such as the “water-driven organ-cum-automata” (Rietbergen, 1998:304) devised by the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), they nonetheless embodied the inquisitive spirit of the age.

*IDB* focuses specifically on Roberto’s quest to find an accurate method to solve the navigational problem of longitude, or how to find one’s way east or west. As the technique of measuring latitudes had become customary by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, European nations vied to unlock the secret of longitude, as this would enable them to map land and ocean more accurately. According to Sorrenson (1995:264), the British state took the problem so seriously that it founded the Royal Greenwich Observatory in 1672 to observe the

movements of the stars and planets for the use of navigators, while in 1714 Britain created the Board of Longitude to solve what was generally deemed to be the “central navigational problem of the century”.<sup>10</sup> During the age of discovery, which spanned the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the accurate mapping of ocean and land were key to geographical expansion and as such, also to political and economic control. Geographical discovery and expansion were based on a rational and linear experience of space and time, and in this regard, maps charted the rise of colonies and empires. By means of mapping, Europe was able to imaginatively and materially anticipate the possession of previously unclaimed parts of the world (Phillips, 1997:1-2). The desire to explore the globe and to expand their territories provided a means for the European powers to justify colonialism. Eco’s novel therefore also provides a glimpse of how the age of exploration altered European society’s understanding and interpretation of the world in a way that contributed to the colonial drive.

The ideological context of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was defined by a spirit of liberation and a sense of being emancipated from the restrictions of medieval traditions (Potter, 1993:114). Religion specifically became an important force of consolidation within European societies and was used to uphold civility and social order among the masses. However, this was not always successful as the 17<sup>th</sup> century was also characterized by social dissent and violent rebellion, even if the factors that led to this were not only religious, but also political and economical.

Even though the 17<sup>th</sup> century was an extremely religious period, scientific study was no longer as constrained by religious principles as it had been during the previous centuries. Consequently, the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a time of significant advancement in the fields of science and mathematics; moreover, technological achievements of this time directly impacted on both society and the future of science (Windelspecht, 2002:xvii, xx). The Englishman Francis Bacon (1596-1650) and the Frenchman René Descartes (1596-1650) embodied developments that reflected the thinking of men like Copernicus and Galilei. The work of Sir Francis Bacon, particularly his *Novum Organum* (1620), stressed a scientific approach to learning and opposed the scholastic doctrines of figures such as Albert Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. Bacon therefore refuted medieval ways of seeing the world in favour of a new, scientific, experimental approach that entailed not accepting anything as true unless it could be proven (Potter, 1993:133 & Rietbergen, 1998:306-7). Bacon therefore contributed to the

---

<sup>10</sup> The problem of longitude was eventually solved by Englishman John Harrison’s invention of the chronometer in 1765. The chronometer was a timekeeper that was able to keep accurate time aboard a ship so that navigators could find their way east or west (Sorrenson, 1995:267).

development of the scientific method, which is the process whereby scientists obtain scientific proof of their ideas by using experiments and then defending these ideas against the scrutiny of their peers. Descartes contested Bacon's theory that only the experimental method could lead to valid knowledge and instead, he proposed a mathematical but deductive style of argumentation as the basis of all scientific thought. This resulted in 'Cartesianism', which saw the mind and body as distinct and which also influenced western ways of thinking for centuries, even if many of the principles of his theory were quickly disproved by empirical research (Hebron, 2008:65 & Rietbergen, 1998:307).

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) is considered to be one of the great scientists of the 17th century, especially as he established the idea of a mechanical, "clockwork-like universe" (Potter, 1993:214) that was based upon the principle of the linear progression of time and the mathematical ordering of space in terms of the exact nature of the relationship between the components that make up the universe. His seminal work, *Philosophiae naturalis Principia mathematica* (1687), describes the cosmos as a mathematical system in which the celestial bodies continuously move in set positions determined by the relative gravitational force of the sun, earth and other planets (Windelspecht, 2002:210). Newton challenged the Aristotelian cosmology of the Christian world in which the Creator had to be eternally present to effect movement, as his observations confirmed that the universe did not need Divine intervention to function (Rietbergen, 1995:310). However, despite advances in scientific thought, the general population remained largely ignorant as their experience and understanding of the world were still partially based on medieval superstition. In *IDB*, the sense of contradiction between old and new that defined the 17<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated by the character of Father Caspar Wanderdrossel, a German Jesuit who provides Eco with the opportunity to satirize the "strange combination of erudition and crackpot ideas that constituted the scientific world view of the baroque period" (Bondanella, 1997:177). Though an intelligent man who is relatively informed with regard to scientific practices of the time, Father Caspar's interpretation of the concept of the meridian is flawed as it is based on biblical superstition:

... at this point of the earth there is a line that on this side is the day after and on that side the day before. And not only at midnight but also at seven, ten, every hour! God then took from this abyss the water of yesterday (that you see there) and emptied it on the world of today, and the next day the same, and so on! (266)

In this passage, Father Caspar explains that the rains of the great Flood could not have submerged the earth in forty days, therefore God must have stood at that meridian to take water from the previous day (on the side of the meridian where the island is located) and then poured it onto the other side of the meridian (on the side where the *Daphne* is located) for a period of forty days. As Bondanella (1997:178) points out, the 17<sup>th</sup> century provided a context where learned men combined the most ground-breaking scientific or mathematical achievements with theories that in the contemporary context would seem ridiculous. Eco therefore seems to suggest that even in science there exists no real certainty (Bondanella, 1997:178).

Religion remained the cement of western and central European societies during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but what had changed was that religious principles were integrated with the basis of thinking and acting, which were reason, lucidity and tolerance (Rietbergen, 1998:311). New ways of thinking that became firmly established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and had been inspired by men such as Bacon, Descartes and Newton, achieved their completion with the dawn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment, which embraced a more empirical, individual and secular way of looking at God, man and the world.

Given the extent to which *IDB* engages with the historical context of its central character, I contend that Eco revises the past and integrates it with the present to reinterpret 17<sup>th</sup> century representations of space, time, boundaries and identity from a 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective. The 20<sup>th</sup> century character-narrator, who will subsequently be referred to as the “chronicler” (20) and who is supposedly Eco<sup>11</sup> the author, reviews a manuscript (consisting of memoir-type notes, journal entries and love letters), written in the 1640s by the main character, Roberto de la Griva, while he was a castaway on the *Daphne*, an abandoned ship. By offering multiple interpretations of Roberto’s bewildering story, which spans almost sixteen years and covers topics such as war, politics, theology and also more poetic matters related to love and romance, Eco presents the reader with various possibilities as to the nature of Roberto’s true character, which has the effect of portraying Eco’s protagonist as hero and villain, conqueror and coward, a man ruled by reason and a self-delusional madman. *IDB* is therefore a novel of plurality, as the reader has to navigate to and from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries through a

---

<sup>11</sup> It is important to differentiate between Eco the author, and Eco the character, in the sense that Eco ‘writes’ himself into his narrative in the guise of the chronicler, who is also the central narrator and focalizer.

web of multiple plots, relayed by different narrators, each informed with their own biases and ideological agendas.

As a postmodern novel, *IDB* paradoxically installs and undermines the realist tradition through various narratological strategies that serve to highlight the interrelatedness of space and time, past and present, and fiction, reality, and history. Metafiction in *IDB* is made evident by the self-conscious intentionality with which the chronicler focuses attention on the process of reconstructing Roberto's past; to do this, he also relies on his knowledge of 17<sup>th</sup> century history. As the chronicler revises and reconstructs Roberto's past together with aspects of 17<sup>th</sup> century history, *IDB* is also historiographically metafictional. Intertextuality functions within the larger context of historiographical metafiction as it examines the processes and systems that generate texts, as well as the relationship between texts, from a postmodern perspective. Historiographical metafiction and intertextuality are therefore made evident by the fact that the chronicler engages with a text from the past through fictional as well historiographical practices.

From a postmodernist perspective, Eco reconfigures the traditional parameters of genre, namely author, narrator, space and identity by setting permeable boundaries between author and narrator, author and reader, as well as space and time. Metafiction and intertextuality furthermore illustrate the extent to which imperialist constructions of spatiality and temporality define the parameters imposed by the traditional castaway novel. In accordance with the notion of plurality, Eco's novel is also an eclectic combination of different genres, such as the chivalric romance, adventure novel, philosophical novel, science fiction and fantasy. Nonetheless, the castaway novel's central generic motif of social disconnection is structurally and thematically significant with regard to the solitude and existential bewilderment Roberto experiences as castaway. In this regard, the opening lines set the stage:

I take pride in my humiliations and as I am to this privilege condemned, almost I find joy in an abhorrent salvation. I am, I believe, alone of all our race, the only man in human memory to have been shipwrecked and cast up upon a deserted ship. (1)

As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear to the chronicler and the reader that Roberto's solitude seems to have had a detrimental effect on his sanity: "how long had he so lost his sense of reality?" (469), ponders the chronicler towards the end of the novel.

Narration and focalization in *IDB* reflect subversively on narrative elements of veracity and truthfulness in *Robinson Crusoe*, as the chronicler emphasizes that “a storyteller resorts to every artifice to see not only that the reader enjoys imagining what has not happened but also that at a certain point he forgets that he is reading and believes it really happened” (368). This idea is made evident by Defoe’s narrative, because he falsely purports that his story is an authentic “history of fact” (1965:27) and in doing so, Defoe inclines the reader to accept lies as truth and fiction as history.

In *IDB*, the chronicler’s metafictional commentary flaunts his narrative manipulation of past events in order to cast doubt on the truthfulness of Roberto’s story. Moreover, his emphasis on the various inconsistencies and gaps in the story opposes narrative authority, which traditionally imbues realist novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* with truthfulness and historical veracity. Referring to a letter that Roberto writes shortly after his arrival on the *Daphne*, the chronicler reveals his own impressions about the castaway’s self-interest, or “fondness of himself”, detected in his reflections on his life, as he

does not tell in complete detail what has happened to him, but instead tries to construct his letter like a story or, more, like a sketch for what could become both letter and story, and he writes without deciding what things he will select later; he drafts, so to speak, the pieces of his chessboard without immediately establishing which to move and how to deploy them. (17)

The chronicler points out that Roberto’s manuscript is haphazard, unreliable and self-contradictory and that in several instances, his writing needs to be fleshed out and structured in accordance with what has already been revealed and what he still plans to reveal. The fictionality of the chronicler’s adaptation is emphasized by his admission that he has to construe and rearrange the fragments that make up Roberto’s manuscript according to his own discernment. Ironically, both Roberto and the chronicler lack narrative authority as they are both unreliable in the sense that their narratives are unverifiable and potentially deceptive. However, the chronicler has no proof that Roberto’s manuscript is fallacious, but he supports his opinion on the basis of the numerous inconsistencies, discrepancies and gaps in the manuscript. Since the reader has no way of assessing the manuscript for herself, she must accept the chronicler’s word while she remains aware of the chronicler’s narrative manipulation of the text.

From the outset, the chronicler is clearly sceptical about Roberto’s virtuous character and the truthfulness of his story, as recorded in his memoirs which he writes while shipwrecked

aboard the *Daphne*. At the beginning of the second chapter, the chronicler points to the difficulties involved in making sense of Roberto's rather incoherent story, especially since he is very vague about his past:

Roberto tells us very little about the sixteen years of his life preceding that summer of 1630. He refers to episodes of the past only when they seem to have some connection with his present on the *Daphne*, and the chronicler of his turbulent annals must read between the lines of the story. To judge by his quirks, he is the sort of author who, to postpone the unmasking of the murderer, gives the reader only the scantiest of clues. And so I must wrest hints from him, as if from a delator. (20)

The chronicler admits that he has to make his own inferences about Roberto's past – inferences that cast doubt on Roberto's portrayal of himself as a lovelorn hero, an idea “inspired ... by the dusty volumes of romances and chivalric poems” (21) Roberto reads during his early youth. The chronicler suggests that to reconstruct the fragments of Roberto's story as a unified whole, he must not only examine the information that is provided, but also extrapolate what is implied or even withheld. In an attempt to impart a sense of coherence onto Roberto's narrative, the chronicler continuously edits and revises the manuscript by commenting on, analysing and interpreting Roberto's experiences and viewpoints and relating them to his own knowledge of mid-17<sup>th</sup> century mores.

*IDB* is a text that examines the nature of boundaries, particularly those between past and present as well as time and space. Boundaries can be real or imaginative, and the boundaries we impose suggest something about how we interpret the world. In the novel, Roberto is unable to cross temporal boundaries: he is stuck within sight of an island he cannot reach, in a physical sense because he cannot swim, but also theoretically and imaginatively because he believes the island to be on the opposite side of the international date line and therefore located in the day before. As such, Roberto assumes he would have to travel back in time to reach it, which he cannot do; he does not understand that the meridian is only an abstract concept – an imaginary line on the surface of the earth that demarcates one calendar day from the next. Roberto's interpretation of the meridian is therefore informed by a linear experience of space and time, as he reveals when he surmises that if “I were on the line of the meridian, it would be midnight on the dot, but if I looked to the west, I would see the midnight of Friday and if I looked to the east, I would see the midnight of Thursday” (265). The chronicler entertains the idea that from the deck of the ship it is possible for Roberto to literally look back in time, and to his own past, from the vantage point of the present. I would suggest that the *Daphne* is situated in a liminal zone where past and present converge,

a place that embodies the “‘presentness’ of the past” (Hutcheon, 2003:110) with regard to postmodern conceptions of temporality, identity and also genre. Reaching the island would imply that he has travelled from the present back to the day before, thereby achieving the impossible feat of transcending time and space.

The island’s real and imagined inaccessibility represents the impossibility of truthfully representing the past, or history, from our position in the present. In a view that supports this conceptualization of the island, Rice (2003:357) contends that “readers who gaze on a text situated in history are also faced with a kind of island located in the past” in the sense that even though we can reflect on the past, we can only represent it from a particular vantage point; consequently, representations of the past can never be conclusive. In *IDB*, this idea is manifested by the way in which prevailing narratological strategies of metafiction, historiographical metafiction and intertextuality focus attention on concepts of indeterminacy and probability, thereby establishing the novel’s resistance to totalizing conceptions of reality, history and genre.

### **3.2 Contesting archetypes of the castaway genre**

In the previous chapter, the archetypal nature of the castaway-identity in *Robinson Crusoe* was related to four main motifs that, in different ways and to different degrees, have become important structural components in the castaway novel genre. In *IDB*, Eco defines the motifs of the castaway novel in an unconventional way and interpret them in a postmodern context. Thereby, *IDB* resists those motifs that structure the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*. The first and most straightforward motif, namely *shipwreck*, occurs when Roberto’s ship is destroyed by a violent storm. Everyone on board perishes, except for Roberto who manages to survive by strapping himself to a door. This door eventually bumps into the *Daphne*, which in this novel takes the form of another important motif, the *island*. The *Daphne*, which is in excellent condition, is anchored between an island and a continent, but since Roberto cannot swim, he realizes that he is trapped – or cast away - on the ship. This is ironical, as a ship that seems completely seaworthy ought to provide the ideal means for safely reaching land. However, as the anchor is too heavy for Roberto to move by himself, the *Daphne* as well as Roberto is bound to remain immobile. The ship itself appears to be mysteriously abandoned, but still contains massive provisions and other fantastic cargo, such as a greenhouse with an incredible variety of plant life:

A garden, an indoor orchard, is what the men from the *Daphne* had created in this space...Flowers, shrubs, saplings had been brought here with their roots and earth, and set in baskets and makeshift cases. But many of the containers had rotted; the earth had spilled out to create, from one container to the next, a layer of damp humus, where the shoots of some plants were already taking root. It was like being in an Eden sprouting from the very planks of the *Daphne*.

...He discovered some rough fruits that he would not have dared touch, if one of them, falling to the ground and splitting open in its ripeness, had not revealed a garnet interior. He ventured to taste others, and judged them more with the tongue that speaks than with the tongue that tastes, since he defines one as a bag of honey, manna congealed in the fertility of its stem, an emerald jewel brimming with tiny rubies. Now, reading between the lines, I would venture to suggest he had discovered something very like a fig. (38-9)

In the light of Roberto's discovery, the grain and tobacco that Crusoe manages to grow on his island of "providence" (Defoe, 1965:95) seem rather modest when compared to the diversity and opulence of the plants, flowers and fruits grown on the *Daphne*. Roberto also comes across several cages with poultry as well as an aviary that contains a wide variety of exotic birds that he mostly cannot identify and that looks as "if an artist's hand had painted them and decorated them for some pantomime" (41). I would like to suggest that through its abundant cargo, the ship becomes a parody of the providential nature of the island paradise of *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as many other castaway novels of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the popular *Swiss Family Robinson* (1813) and *Coral Island* (1858). In this regard, the *Daphne* also becomes a domesticated and cultivated wilderness - an Edenic paradise "sprouting from [its] very planks"... (38).

Eco's parody is enhanced by the title of the chapter, *The Serraglio of Wonders*, which refers to the incredibly diverse collection of plants and animals showcased aboard the ship. The collection of plant and animal life also alludes to a practice that became popular in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continued up until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This practice entailed the capture of wild and exotic animals for public exhibition for the purposes of entertainment and study, or to be kept within the grounds of aristocratic or royal courts. These menageries were mostly founded and owned by aristocrats or royals as displays of power and wealth, since live exotic animals were difficult to acquire and expensive to keep (Nichols, 1999). The confinement of animals – and even humans - from exotic territories was a manifestation of a form of colonialist propaganda that emphasized peculiarity or difference - in the case of human displays, specifically ethnographical difference. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the desire to record, explore and systemize knowledge also became one of the driving forces behind

colonialism. Consequently, humans and animals not indigenous to the European continent were often treated with callous curiosity and studied for purposes of scientific and biological classification.

The third motif is *solitude and social disconnection*. Initially, Roberto seems to be the only human inhabitant of the abandoned *Daphne*. However, it turns out that he is not alone and for a brief period, the company and guidance of fellow-castaway Father Caspar Wanderdrossel, relieve his loneliness. Unfortunately, Father Caspar drowns while attempting to reach the island in one of his inventions, a contraption that resembles a submarine. Consequently, for most of his time aboard the *Daphne*, Roberto considers himself to be condemned to a life of meaningless “purgatory” (Martino, 2003:116), in the sense that time, as well as his life, seems to have come to a standstill on the stationary ship. Roberto knows that reaching land is his only chance of being reunited with society, or more specifically, his beloved Lilia. To hasten the passing of time and to suppress his loneliness, he starts to write letters to Lilia. These letters become a fictionalization of his life up until the shipwreck and as such, represent Roberto’s attempt to re-establish a connection with the outside world in the sense that he strives to re-live his past through writing. In these vicarious recollections, his fictional self becomes the hero of the story as he reconstructs “the history of his misfortunes” so that he may seek “consolation for his present state” (52).

Towards the end of the novel, the chronicler notes that by existing in his fictional world, Roberto is “able to ensure that the things that happened there would not exceed his capacity of endurance” (367). With too much time at his disposal to reflect on the failures and unfulfilled desires of his past, Roberto is overcome by jealousy of his evil twin Ferrante. He convinces himself that in his absence, Ferrante has become involved in a passionate affair with Lilia. However, the chronicler and the reader are aware that Ferrante might be another figment of Roberto’s imagination, as his existence cannot be confirmed. The chronicler furthermore suspects that Roberto’s love relationship with the Lady Lilia is based on wishful thinking and that, at best, Lilia had been mildly amused by his infatuation with her. As the novel progresses, Roberto’s writing therefore increasingly reveals the extent to which his isolation and feelings of disconnection have distorted his perception of reality. Rice (2003:359) points out that Roberto’s delusions are made evident by the hierarchical distinction he creates between his present reality and his fabricated memories, the latter being the world his mind occupies most of the time. Unlike Crusoe, he is unable to use his solitary

existence as a means to reform himself and instead regresses into a state of despair and delusion, a condition that is aggravated when a Stone Fish poisons him, causing severe hallucinations. Roberto's state of mind serves to highlight his existential isolation and displacement and also reflects subversively on the conversion narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* as his identity does not undergo transformation, but regression.

Roberto's fictionalization of his past also has a bearing on the fourth motif of *survival*, and as I suggested previously, he 'lives' in the past he reconstructs in the pages of his manuscript in order to cope with the present. The chronicler offers an explanation for Roberto's fabrications by contending that "[t]o survive, you must tell stories" (207), which in the context of the novel suggests that stories may have the ability to deflect our focus from our present suffering by drawing us into another world where this suffering does not exist. As the *Daphne* contains ample provisions and is protected from stormy seas by being anchored in a quiet bay, Roberto's battle for survival is not physical, but psychological. Nonetheless, in the end he does not adapt or endure, and probably does not survive: the chronicler imagines that when Roberto can no longer bear his situation, he makes a last desperate attempt to reach the island. On the grounds of his last entry of the manuscript, the chronicler deduces that Roberto sets fire to the ship, descends into the sea and disappears under the waves, hoping to achieve "one of the two happinesses that were surely awaiting him" (503), which is to be reunited with Lilia, or death.

For a time as a castaway Roberto is able to survive psychologically in the sense that he begins to view himself as the hero of a chivalric romance; for this reason, he imbues his fictional self with the heroic virtues his circumstances require, such as courage and fortitude. However, as the boundaries between the fictional world of his story and the real world begin to dissipate, he is completely overcome by his delusions. When he abandons the *Daphne* and descends into the sea, his break with reality is complete as he immerses himself – body, mind and soul – in the world of the story. Ironically, storytelling – which at first helps him to survive – in the end contributes to his demise.

As the preceding discussion has shown, in *IDB* some of the motifs of the castaway novel manifest in unusual and complex ways that parody traditional representations of the castaway as an archetype of heroic endurance and individual progress in an unsympathetic environment. In this regard, the *Daphne*, with its excess of plants, animals, and other provisions that would enable any castaway to survive comfortably, becomes a parody of the

providential nature of the desert island of traditional castaway novels such as *Robinson Crusoe*, where physical survival is a continuous struggle. Furthermore, Roberto's psychological decline that results from his isolation along with his inability to survive his ordeal (despite the *Daphne's* ample cargo), contrasts with *Robinson Crusoe's* premise of endurance and survival in the face of insurmountable odds. Moreover, Crusoe does not only survive, but prospers to the extent that he gradually transforms the hostile wilderness of the island into a domesticated British colony over which he appoints himself as master.

### **3.3 *The Island of the Day Before* and the 17<sup>th</sup> century context**

As was stated previously, the postmodern premise of *IDB* juxtaposes the 17<sup>th</sup> century context with the present in order to reveal the differences and similarities between them and as such, an examination of the spirit that defined the era is relevant in the light of Eco's playful juxtapositioning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the present.

Thomas (1971:5) contends that 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century societies were extremely diverse in terms of their standard of living, educational level and intellectual ability: consequently, these societies were characterized by many different beliefs and levels of sophistication. The diverse nature of 17<sup>th</sup> century society therefore makes it difficult to generalize; nonetheless, the following section will provide an overview of the 17<sup>th</sup> century context in terms of its historical or social reality, ideologies and writing strategies in order to show how Eco's novel encapsulates all the complexities, contradictions and peculiarities of this period.

As European life had been dramatically transformed by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, this period is considered to be "one of the great watersheds of modern history" (Clark, 1960:ix). According to Clark (1960:ix), this transformation was defined by a change in atmosphere that developed during the course of the century, a change marked by turmoil and upheaval. In England, the Puritan Revolution and the Civil War led to a sharp break in the continuity of English history, while on the rest of the European front, half a dozen countries were affected by revolution. Clark (1960:ix) makes an important point by relating the change and revolution of this period to the transition from the old world to the new, a movement away from the sanguinary, yet romantic tumult of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century towards the sensible sobriety and propriety of the Enlightenment.

The first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was marked by civil war and the overthrow of monarchical rule, such as the English Civil War or English Revolution (1642-1651), which was partly due to religious factors as well as being a rebellion by the middle class against an inefficient government. One of the most cataclysmic events of this time was probably the trial and execution of King Charles I in 1649, which was a direct outcome of the revolution. This sent shock waves through royal courts and other hierarchical institutions through the whole of Western Europe. Another major European event was the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which was fought mainly in Germany and at some point involved nearly every European nation. According to Potter (1993:115), this conflict was particularly brutal and destructive, and stemmed from a combination of political and religious issues which the Reformation had brought up.

In England, the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw a continuation of a pattern whereby political and social power left the hands of monarchical rulers and became concentrated in the hands of ordinary citizens in the form of a middle class who owned land and took part in trade. Though more numerous than the nobility, the middle class was still a minority group compared to the working class. However, as Potter (1993:139) points out, England was following a very different course from the rest of Europe, where kings were increasing their power over the nations they governed, assuming absolute authority and not allowing their people any say in government. In countries like France, Austria, Russia and Prussia the kings and emperors increased their power and eventually this resulted in war and revolution, thereby effectively ending much of monarchical rule.

In *IDB*, many of the historical events that define the 17<sup>th</sup> century are alluded to in Roberto's manuscript or otherwise inferred by the chronicler. Roberto's story approximately spans the time between 1630 and the 1640s (he is shipwrecked in 1643), which means that he lives through the Thirty Years' War. In fact, one of its numerous battles, the siege of Casale, has a formative influence on Roberto's character, as it is one of three periods during which Roberto learns "something of the world and of the ways of inhabiting it" (45). At the time, he is only sixteen years old and prior to the siege, he has led a relatively peaceful and sheltered existence as the son of a nobleman. The death of his father, who is killed in battle, has a marked effect on him since he now considers himself to be "still more alone", an "orphan" and a "besieged soldier" (76). Though never stated pertinently by the chronicler, the reader surmises that the violence and loss of this experience damage him psychologically and

establish feelings of existential isolation and disillusionment. The impact the war had on his psyche therefore probably contributed to the delusions he developed later on in life.

Other instances that relate the novel to the 17<sup>th</sup> century context are references to the devastation caused by the Bubonic Plague (which Roberto contracts and survives), his involvement in various types of political intrigue, and his capture by the French court after being mistaken for a political insurgent. He is consequently blackmailed to go on a voyage aboard the English ship the *Amaryllis* as a French spy in the service of Cardinal Richelieu.

In his review of the manuscript, the chronicler reveals Roberto's incomplete understanding of the science and philosophy of his time, such as his misconception that he would have to travel back in time in order to reach the island, since it lies on the other side of the prime meridian. Eco therefore portrays Roberto as a kind of everyman – relatively educated and privileged, but also somewhat ignorant and inexperienced, especially in the field of science, which sometimes causes him to have uninformed opinions and to assume things on the basis of emotion rather than intellectual conjecture. During his stay in Paris, Roberto again seems to be easily influenced by all he is exposed to, but he lacks the ability to interpret and apply this newly acquired knowledge appropriately. Consequently, the chronicler states that:

We can tell the sort of circle in which he moved during the happy April (or perhaps May) of his youth by his frequent quotation of teachings that to us seem dissonant. He spent his days learning from the Canon how a world made of atoms could be conceived, just as Epicurus had taught, and yet willed and governed by Divine Providence; but, attracted by the same love for Epicurus, he spent his evenings with friends who called themselves Epicureans and could combine debate about the eternity of the world with the society of beautiful ladies of scant virtue. (154)

Roberto seems to follow the conflating ideas of Epicureanism and Divine Providence; the former defines the universe as infinite and eternal with atoms moving inadvertently in empty space, while Divine Providence is based on the belief that nothing can exist without Godly intervention. The inconsistencies in his worldview suggest that Roberto is a weak student of both science and philosophy as he is led astray by his infatuation with the world of Romance. Consequently, he haphazardly applies principles from both disciplines to his fatalistic vision that “love obeys the same laws that govern sublunary and celestial bodies” (173). Roberto also studies under the French philosopher Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655), who is referred to as the Canon of Digne in Eco's novel (Kelly, 1995). He teaches Roberto that the intellect only consists of things that can be perceived and, ironically, this empiricist belief becomes the

basis for the imagined realities and dreams Roberto experiences later on, since he firmly believes them to be real and as such, valid.

In terms of its art, architecture, literature and music, the 17<sup>th</sup> century is often also referred to as the baroque period. Baroque art forms are renowned for their dramatic intensity, embellishment and grandeur and could partly be seen as a reaction against the artistic restraint of the High Renaissance. Hebron (2008:18) and Potter (1987: 78-9) both point out that the baroque period's expressive and theatrical style initially asserted the power of the Catholic Church as it accompanied the Counter-Reformation, a movement whose aim was to reform the Catholic church and to protect its traditions against the innovations of Protestant theology and the more liberalizing trends of the Renaissance.

Most baroque art forms originated in Italy and the paintings by artists such as Carravaggio (1565-1609) and Velasques (1599-1660) exemplified this era's bold and expressive style, especially in the way these artists used light and shadow to create atmosphere. Regarding architecture, the Italian architect Bernini (1598-1660) created one of the best-known examples of baroque architecture in the form of the colonnades outside St. Peter's Basilica, an imposing structure that combines vast spaces with curved lines. However, numerous churches and public buildings all over Europe exhibited the elaborate decorativeness and intricate designs that typified the baroque style. The baroque approach also extended to music with opera probably being its most notable innovation. This new form also originated in Italy and integrated literature, drama and music with elaborately painted stage settings (Guisepi, 2007).

Baroque literature tended to favour religious subjects as it was strongly influenced by two major movements that began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, namely Puritanism and the Counter-Reformation. Puritanism was defined by an extreme form of moral and religious earnestness and devotion that aimed to 'purify' the Church of England from all remnants of Roman Catholicism (Hebron, 2008:93). On the other end of the scale, the Counter-Reformation was another important force that impacted on the stylistic and thematic aspects of baroque literature.

The religious writings of the era tend to stress the illusory nature of earthly glory compared to the heavenly kingdom. As Hebron (2008:18) also points out, despite its violent upheavals, much of this period's literature reflected a sense of deep spirituality and piety. In this regard,

religious and spiritual concerns were central in the work of the Englishmen John Donne (1573-1631) and John Milton (1608-1674), two of the most prominent poets of the time whose work manifested the baroque trends of continental Europe through its emphasis on emotional expressiveness and sincerity. Hebron (2008:131) notes that Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) embodies all the major themes of the era as it unifies "Protestant thought with deep humanist learning and classical epic with the theatrical imagination of the continental baroque".

However, various other literary genres also evolved during this period. Highlights of English literature included Jacobean drama, which included four of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, namely *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Romances also became popular later on in the century and like Roberto's manuscript, these dealt with stories of romance and adventure that was usually set in a world of magical and mysterious events. Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, also a castaway novel, is an example of such a Romance, as it is set on an imaginary island somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea (Potter, 1987:130-31). The *masque*, though not a play in the complete sense, was another notable form of entertainment that was performed by members of the court rather than actors. According to Potter (1987:132), a *masque* was a very simple kind of play, consisting of little dialogue, instead showcasing singing, dancing, extravagant costumes and detailed stage sets.

Clark (1960:326) notes that during the baroque period, France produced in comedy and tragedy some of the greatest works of classical drama, such as the satirical comedies of Molière (1622-1673) and the psychological explorations of the tragedies of Jean Racine (1639-1699). In Spain, the baroque was a time of notable literary creativity that produced writers whose overt cynicism regarding the Spanish monarchy is made evident in their satirical novels, such as the picaresque *Don Quixote* (1605 & 1615) by Miguel de Cervantes (Clark, 1960:326). *IDB* and *Don Quixote* share important similarities, as both parody the chivalric romance and depict the adventures and self-delusions of an eccentric hero. Moreover, like Eco's novel, Cervantes's novel is concerned with the review of an antiquarian manuscript and engages with themes of intertextuality and textual representation.

The most significant quality the literature of this period shared was probably that it tended to be highly personal and characterized by emotional intensity. Many literary genres were also allegorical, and during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, writers extended and refined the allegory with its multiple layers of meaning. As a result, the metaphor became one of the most widely used

literary devices of the time, and was often used to represent the futile drudgery of daily life and man's struggle to find meaning in existence (Potter, 1987:124-5). In this regard, the character of Padre Emanuele, a priest Roberto meets in the cathedral of Saint Evasio shortly after the siege of Casale, lectures him on the importance of celebrating metaphor in the written and spoken word:

...the supreme Figure of all: Metaphor. If Genius, & therefore Learning, consists in connecting remote Notions and finding Similitude in things dissimilar, then Metaphor, the most acute and farfetched among the Tropes, is the only one capable of producing Wonder, which gives birth to Pleasure...

[...] And knowing how to conceive Metaphors, & thus see a World immensely more various than it appears to the uneducated, is an Art that is learned. For I must tell you, in this world where today all lose their minds over many and wondrous Machines...I construct Aristotelian Machines that allow anyone to see with Words..." (90)

Padre Emanuele is one of Eco's many voices in the novel and Capozzi (1996:174) suggests that he is also the literary persona of Emanuele Tesauro (1692-1775), a renowned Italian literary theorist during the baroque era. Padre Emanuele maintains that metaphor has the uncanny ability to find likeness in things or notions that appear to be unconnected by uncovering those similarities that are otherwise concealed from the mind's eye; a discovery that results in "Wonder", which in turn creates "Pleasure". This passage also contains a metaphor in the form of the image of an "Aristotelian Machine", which alludes to the machine-like ability of metaphors to uncover hidden meanings and define complex abstract concepts that cannot be understood in any other way, thereby enabling one "to see [the truth] with Words" (90). Eco therefore seems to use one of the most definitive literary devices of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to interpret the past, but from the perspective of the present. Baroque writing strategies, such as metaphor and allegory, also link up with the postmodernist affinity for allusion, self-referentiality and intertextuality. Capozzi (1996:172) provides a useful definition of baroque literature in relation to the postmodernist context by describing both as modes that incorporate self-referential textual games. He furthermore argues that baroque literature thrives on

...aspects of sensuality and hedonism, on psychological games, on masks, doubles, intrigues, deus-ex-machina, stimulation, performance, hyperboles, and in short, on everything theatrical (Capozzi, 1996:172).

There is no shortage of any of these devices in *IDB*, particularly the double, a motif of Eco's novel that links up with the notion of plurality. Capozzi (1996:172) draws a relation between

the characteristics of baroque literature and postmodernism, specifically as applied in Eco's novel, with regard to their juxtapositioning of themes and styles, their intertextual referencing and their mixing of genres. As such, *IDB*'s integration of past and the present confirms the postmodernist tendency to recycle the past by reinterpreting its themes, motifs, and stylistic devices. Eco also draws a relation between Roberto's indeterminate and fragmented narrative and the postmodern representation of reality and history in literature, and conflates them with Enlightenment notions of narrative authority and subjectivity.

The above contextualization of 17<sup>th</sup> century social reality, ideologies and writing strategies reveals how the past continues to be highly relevant to our knowledge of the world and ourselves. As such, I contend that the 17<sup>th</sup> century does not merely function as the historical backdrop to the account of Roberto's life – rather, Eco utilizes it as a textual device that (re)produces meaning in the postmodern context. On the basis of these parallels between the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the postmodern context, Eco (1989:38-9) also terms the postmodern age the “Neo-Baroque” because of various parallels he perceives between the postmodern age and the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Eco (1989:38-9) argues that that baroque sensibility manifested a point in history where man opted “out of the canon of authorized responses” to find himself “faced (both in art and science) by a world in a fluid state which requires corresponding creativity on his part” (Eco, 1989:39); while Calabrese's (1992:15) argument links up with that of Eco as he asserts that the baroque is more like “a category of the spirit, in contrast to ‘classical’”. The baroque period's potential for inspiring new and inventive ideas in literature took the form of aesthetic strategies that challenged the parameters of the imagination, such as intertextuality, indeterminacy, and unreliability. As themes of indeterminacy and multiplicity in *IDB* illustrate, postmodernism has adapted these aesthetic strategies from the 17th century as they correspond to a worldview that relativize concepts of truth and reality. However, postmodernism does not only reflect the contemporary social and cultural vision, but responds to it in a way that self-reflexively questions the foundations of past and present knowledge, the baroque period included.

The section that follows will illustrate how narration and focalization engage with various epistemological and ontological issues in *IDB* by blurring the boundaries between past and present and time and space, thereby highlighting the problematic nature of any attempt to represent the past objectively and factually.

### 3.4 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization

In *IDB*, the perspective of the central character-narrator and focalizer juxtaposes the world of the present with the 17<sup>th</sup> century world of Roberto De La Griva, thereby highlighting the levels of ontological distance as well as similitude between them. Ontological distance is mainly manifested by the chronicler and the reader's awareness of the fallaciousness of Roberto's narrative, while the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the contemporary context share similarities in terms of the strategies and devices that are central tropes for literary representation in both eras. The narrative in *IDB* reviews an account by a 17<sup>th</sup> century castaway, Roberto de la Griva, from a contemporary perspective. In this regard, the chronicler (who is also the central narrator and focalizer) consistently aims to cast doubt on the factual veracity of the story by means of a whimsical narrative style that is inherently metafictional and provides plausible insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Roberto's character. This is illustrated by the following passage in which the chronicler discusses the possible reasons behind Roberto's decline of faith after the siege of Casale:

It is hard to say if his faith had been shaken most by the infinitely small and infinitely big worlds, in a void without God and without rule, that Saint-Savin had make him glimpse, or by the lessons of prudence from Saletta and Salazar, or by the art of Heroic Devices that Padre Emanuele bequeathed him as the sole science.

From the way he recalls it on the *Daphne*, I tend to believe that at Casale, while he lost both his father and himself in a war of too many meanings and of no meaning at all, Roberto learned to see the universal world as a fragile tissue of enigmas, beyond which there was no longer an Author; or if there was, He seemed lost in the remaking of Himself from too many perspectives. (145-6)

Here, the chronicler assumes a philosophical tone that relates Roberto's loss of faith to his disillusionment about his place in the world as a result of his experiences during the war, as well as the influence of various tutors whose teachings had challenged Roberto's naïve and outdated ideas about existence and religion which he had previously accepted unquestioningly. Consequently, he seems to be overwhelmed by a sense that he has no control over his destiny and is therefore subject to the random whims of an infinite and enigmatic universe. By providing the reader with insight into Roberto's disillusionment, the chronicler convincingly establishes a link between his supposed instability and his existential displacement, while also bringing it to the reader's attention that Roberto was affected in this way even before he became stranded on the *Daphne*.

In several instances, the chronicler points to the untrustworthiness of Roberto's perspective and brings to the reader's attention that he has to rely on his imagination to fill in the various gaps contained in Roberto's incoherent story himself. The rendition of Roberto's story is therefore mostly fictional as the chronicler has to construct a story around a person he only perceives through a manuscript and as such, the process of rewriting the past is inevitably influenced by the chronicler's social and ideological contexts, which in turn determines his perspective on events. In this regard, Eco uses historiographical metafiction and intertextuality to relay the difficulties involved in any attempt to represent the past due to the provisional and indeterminate nature of historical knowledge - an idea that is also embodied by the island which Roberto is unable to reach.

Through its motifs of doubles and parallel universes or alternate worlds, Eco's novel can be considered as a metaphor for indeterminacy and multiplicity, specifically with regard to the postmodernist interpretation of the concepts of reality and truth. As Brown (2008:82) also points out, the novel contains multiple levels of fictionalization in the sense that Roberto writes his own as well as his 'double', Ferrante's story, the chronicler writes Roberto's story, while Eco writes the chronicler's story. These multiple perspectives, or levels of narration, resist the idea of narrative authority and legitimize the notion of alternate worlds, namely the 17<sup>th</sup> century world and the chronicler's world, but also the alternate world where Roberto exists as a hybrid of himself and his evil alter ego or 'twin', Ferranté. According to Brown (2008:71), Roberto's belief in the double is a form of escapism which allows him to avoid his responsibility for his own actions. Furthermore, as he narrates the transgressions of Ferrante, whom he depicts as a thug and heartless seducer of women, it becomes apparent that Roberto lives vicariously through his fictional double:

In a single moment many different Robertos could be doing different things, perhaps under different names. Perhaps under the name of Ferrante? In that case, could the story be believed he was inventing about an enemy brother not be the obscure perception of a world where to him, Roberto, other vicissitudes were occurring, different from those he was experiencing in this world and at this time?

Come now, he said to himself, of course you would have liked to be the one experiencing what Ferrante experienced when the *Tweede Daphne* unfurled her sails to the wind. (435)

In the above passage, the narrative perspective shifts between the first and the third person; these shifts in perspective reveal the fragile nature of the boundaries between past and present and time and space, as the chronicler and Roberto assume both voices intermittently. In some

instances, the story is also narrated in the first person by other narrators, such as Padre Emanuele or Father Caspar and consequently, narrators are all perceiving and telling a part of the story, or their version of the 'truth', thereby enhancing the notion of indeterminacy, as the various parts narrated by each character-narrator do not necessarily make up a coherent whole. Brown (2008:71) points out that most of Roberto's reflections on the motif of the double, or "fractured" identity occur when the third-person perspective of the chronicler is most intrusive. The chronicler reveals himself at these particular moments to reinforce the possibility that like Ferrante, he is one of Roberto's fictional creations. In this way, the narrative perspectives of Roberto and the chronicler become interchangeable as the juxtapositioning of first and third person narration creates the impression that the chronicler could be narrating Roberto, or the other way around. In light of my own analysis and contextualization of the novel, I am in agreement with Carpozzi's (1996:171) suggestion that to an extent, Roberto functions as an echo of Eco, as they employ similar storytelling techniques, share a similar knowledge of the workings of narrativity and textual strategies. This emphasizes notions of multiple truths and interchangeable identities within the context of alternate worlds that coexist in time.

Eco's novel makes evident the complex way in which narrative represents time as a constituent of space, an idea that is illustrated by the concept of longitude. To calculate longitude correctly, it is necessary to know exactly what time it is aboard the ship as well as the exact time at the home port or another fixed place of known longitude. As Bondanella (1997:176) explains, knowing the different times in two different places at an identical moment allows a navigator to convert the difference in hours (time) into a geographical separation through which location (place) can be calculated. The calculation of longitude thereby establishes a space-time continuum where time is pinpointed in space, which is manifested as place. Roberto mistakenly believes that the island is a place located in the past and that by crossing the space between the ship and the island he would in fact be travelling back in time. In this regard, the chronicler sympathetically declares that he will

...challenge anyone to find himself abandoned on a deserted ship, between sea and sky in a vast space, and not be ready to dream that in his great misfortune he at least has had the good fortune to stumble into the heart of time. (273)

Roberto therefore believes that if he is able to reach the island, he can reverse the linear progression of time but to do so, he must first gain control over time and space, a feat that is only possible in narrative. In a view that underlines the textual representation of time aboard

the *Daphne* as being “unhinged” (363), Martino (2003:117) also contends that Roberto positions himself in the linear momentum of time by writing himself into his story - he attempts to conquer time by spatializing it in narrative. His attempt to conquer time by reverting back to the past through writing destabilizes his experience of selfhood, as a narrative of personal identity needs to be structured linearly in order to present our experience of the past, present and future coherently. Bondanella (1997:176) notes that though the problem of longitude is ultimately “a scientific problem associated with telling time and measuring physical distance by means of time”, time is an also an integral aspect of writing and reading. Given the nature of my interpretation thus far, I want to expand Bondanella’s assertion by suggesting that longitude basically orders space according to the parameters of linear time and as such, longitude in Eco’s novel becomes a metaphor for the problem of representing time in narrative. This is illustrated by the way in which Roberto and the chronicler revert to narrative in an attempt to order their disjunctive experience of time and to make sense of Roberto’s chaotic world. Eco’s novel successfully creates a new context in which to represent time in narrative by using Roberto’s attempt to transcend time in narrative as metaphor for the way in which postmodern culture consigns events to the past and then recontextualizes them through narration and rewriting. Consequently, Eco’s postmodern novel foregrounds the fact that time can only be represented as a linear narrative when it has been consigned to the past. This means that the postmodern novel, such as *IDB*, tends to relate its deconstruction of linear time to cultural processes and ideology, which in turn influence and determine the formation and transformation of genres.

### **3.4.1 Narrative structure**

The narrative covers a time span of around sixteen years and mainly consists of Roberto’s life story up until the shipwreck, as well as an account of his time as castaway. The greatest part of the narrative reviews a manuscript that consists of Roberto’s reflections on defining events in his life, notes on his daily existence as a castaway, and also love-letters that he writes but is never able to send. Roberto’s life story can therefore be divided into the time before and the time after the shipwreck.

As a whole, the manuscript lacks substance and veracity as it reveals more about the idealistic and delusional nature of his heroic aspirations than it does about his true character. According to the chronicler, the biggest problem with Roberto’s manuscript is that it has a “fragmentary” structure and consists of “too little to make a story with a proper beginning

and a proper end” (512). Consequently, Roberto’s scant account of his life has to be fleshed out by the chronicler and devised as “a series of intersecting or skewed stories” (505). As a result, the greatest part of the novel is made up of the chronicler’s attempt to reconstruct Roberto’s story through his own surmises, logical conclusions and an impressive overview of the historical period that covers topics that range from astronomy to zoology.

As the chronicler reviews the story more than 300 years later, he is an external-focalizer as he is not involved in the events he recounts. External focalization establishes various instances of prolepsis or anachrony in the text, as the chronicler is able to anticipate Roberto’s future misfortunes and psychological decline since these events happened in the past. An example of anachrony occurs when the chronicler hints that Roberto is losing the ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality when he explains that the “Art of Romance, though warning us that it is providing fictions, opens a door into the Palace of Absurdity, and when we have lightly stepped inside, slams it shut behind us” (369). The chronicler seems to suggest that for someone in such a fragile state of mind as Roberto, it would be very easy to cross the threshold between fiction, or the “Art of Romance” (369) and reality, and that once that threshold into the world governed by the irrational or absurd has been crossed, it is almost impossible to return to a world governed by the rational. This idea is reminiscent of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* (1605 & 1615) whose inability to integrate rational perspectives and objectives with his unrealistic and romanticized worldview alienates him from society.

Events are also focalized through analepsis or flashbacks, as Roberto recounts his past while stuck on the ship, though these are not instances of internal focalization as they are mediated by the chronicler. Eco’s use of external focalization is significant as it comments on the fictional nature of storytelling by foregrounding the inconsistent and unverifiable nature of past events. As such, history is made up of a series of provisional, indeterminate events that are then ‘chronicled’ through processes of selection, ordering and interpretation.

Roberto transforms his life into a story in order to pass the time and to suppress the crushing solitude of his existence on the *Daphne*. In the process, he transforms his rather bland life story into a chivalric romance that is situated within the realm of the fantastic (Martino, 2003:117) and which the chronicler reconstructs so that it resembles a story with a beginning (the siege), middle (the time in Paris, the shipwreck and the time he is stranded on the *Daphne*) and an inconclusive ending (his descent into the sea), the outcome of which is “dissolution” (45). I would suggest that after the traumatic experiences of the siege, Roberto

starts to reflect on the purpose of his existence, realising that even though the siege led to the death of many, including his father, it was just “one more chapter in a meaningless history” (53) in the sense that “in life things happen because they happen, and it is only in the Land of Romances that they seem to happen for some purpose or providence” (512). As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that Roberto’s “purpose” is to become the hero of a story in which he manages to reach the island, destroy his evil twin, Ferrante, and win back the heart of his beloved, the lady Lilia:

Perhaps conceiving Romances means living through our own characters, making them live in our world, and delivering ourselves and our creatures to the minds of those to come, even when we will no longer be able to say *I*...

But if this is so, it is up to me alone to banish Ferrante from my own world, forever, to have his banishment governed by divine justice, and to create conditions whereby I can be united with Lilia.

Filled with renewed enthusiasm, Roberto decided to conceive the last chapter of his story.

He did not know that, especially when their authors are now determined to die, stories often write themselves, and go where they want to go. (482)

Roberto’s decision to eliminate Ferrante from the story he writes entails that he would have to kill his fictional self as well, which ultimately leads him to disappear beneath the sea, an act that resists narrative closure and opens the story up to various possibilities.

Rice (2003:354) relates the complex narrative structure of *IDB*, with its interconnected network of ontological levels, parallels and multiplicities, to a “rhizome labyrinth”, a metaphor that is suggestive of the multiple layers that make up the narrative and that consist of Roberto’s experiences on the *Daphne*, flashbacks to his past, his dreams and hallucinations, as well as the chronicler’s attempts to make sense of these narratives and convey them to the reader. The image of the rhizome labyrinth is also embodied by the maze-like layout of the *Daphne*, with its complicated passages and interleaving rooms that contain, amongst other things, a greenhouse and an aviary. As Rice (2003:358) also points out, Eco’s vision of the *Daphne* corresponds to what chapter five calls the “Labyrinth of the World”<sup>12</sup> (52), which suggests that like Crusoe’s island, the *Daphne* is a metaphorical

---

<sup>12</sup> The title of this chapter refers to a popular 17<sup>th</sup> century satirical allegory that compares life to a complex spiritual journey, titled *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart* (1632) by the Czech author John Amos Comenius (Rietbergen, 1998:212). This intertextual citation is ironical, since

representation of the world on a small scale with regard to its various mysteries, secrets, ambiguities and inexplicabilities. Martino (2003:120) suggests that the *Daphne* is a prison – not only in a physical sense, but also spatially as Roberto is stuck on a motionless ship, with an island that exists in the past in close proximity, but that is still impossible to reach because he is unable to swim. Linking up with Martino’s (2003:120) idea of the ship as a spatial prison, I furthermore contend that on the *Daphne* Roberto is exiled inside a liminal zone. Consequently, it becomes a site where the ontological boundaries between space and time, and past and present are at their most permeable and fragile; in this way, it becomes the ideal space for Roberto to play out the fantasies of his imagination. The gradual disintegration of realism facilitates generic transformation as it foregrounds the domain of the ontological, specifically with regard to the disintegration of boundaries between worlds.

### 3.4.2 Narrative effects

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Wayne C. Booth identifies categories for narrative effects that result from the narrative perspective or the way in which a story is narrated and focalized. In *IDB*, the categories of the *dramatized narrator*, *self-conscious narrator* and *variations of distance* are especially significant with regards to the way in which narration and focalization contest the legitimacy of any single interpretation of reality. In *IDB*, narrative effects furthermore reveal the cohesion between the norms of the fictional world and the norms of the author, as Eco seems to transpose his beliefs and characteristics onto the central character-narrator, the chronicler. In this way, Eco writes himself into the narrative in the same way that Roberto places himself in the role of hero of his story and in each instance, there is the “multiple mirroring of author and hero” (Martino, 2003:115). Eco projects a sense of self-reflexive irony onto the narrative as he positions himself as one of several narrators (and characters) in the story, which undermines the notion of narrative authority in the text, including his own.

Booth (1996:147) regards the narrative entities of “real author” and “implied author”<sup>13</sup> (Booth, 1996:147) separately. The implied author is the real author’s literary version of himself, which in *IDB* would be the chronicler, who is also a “dramatized narrator” (Booth, 1996:147) as he is a character in the story. The chronicler is a reliable narrator in the sense

---

Comenius’s protagonist achieves spiritual insight and transformation on his journey, while Roberto’s spiritual journey is never fully actualized and thus fails.

<sup>13</sup> The implied author also refers to the chronicler, who is Eco disguised as a character in his novel, therefore Eco’s fictional self.

that he speaks in accordance with the norms of the implied author. The norms of the implied author, also called the norms of the text, in *IDB* are defined by postmodern resistance to the notion of any single interpretation or truth and as such, emphasize the fictionality of any reconstruction of the past. Roberto, however, is an unreliable narrator as his narrative is deceptive while his self-deluding belief in the truthfulness of his story clashes with the norms of the implied author. The moral, physical and temporal distance between Roberto and the chronicler complicates the narrative, as does Roberto's lack of narrative credibility. The chronicler is a self-conscious narrator (Booth, 1996:150), because he is fully aware of himself as a writer and he consistently emphasizes the extent to which his assembly of the various pieces of Roberto's story has to rely on inference rather than fact. In this regard, the chronicler remains emotionally detached but in some instances interrupts Roberto's narration to convey his amusement or bafflement with the ignorance and follies of Roberto and his age and relates them to the human condition. Through the guise of the chronicler, Eco shapes or intervenes in Roberto's narrative by querying it, by making assumptions, and also by altering it through commentary and speculation that switch modes between parody, exaggeration, scholarly inference and seriousness. An example of narrative intervention occurs when the chronicler comments on Roberto's irrational thoughts and hallucinations after being poisoned by a Stone Fish: "We will not have looked for coherence of verisimilitude I trust, in all I have narrated thus far, because we have been describing the nightmare of a man poisoned by a Stone Fish. But what I am preparing to narrate surpasses all our expectations." (462). Here, the chronicler reminds the reader not to apply logic or reason to the reading process, and also warns that the narrative is about to become even more absurd. These instances of authorial intervention insert a form of illusion-breaking self-reflexivity that facilitates the ontological breakdown of the world of the text as the fictional is integrated with the 'real'.

Booth (1996:150) relates variations of distance to the degrees and kinds of distance that separate the narrator from the author, reader, and other characters. This distance may be normative, moral, intellectual, physical or temporal. With regard to variations of distance in *IDB*, the central narrator (chronicler) and the implied author is the same entity, which means that there is almost no distance between them. However, there is a significant degree of distance between the implied author, the reader and the 17<sup>th</sup> century characters, particularly Roberto. This distance is firstly temporal, which implies that it also has an ideological and intellectual basis as the author, the chronicler and the contemporary reader interpret Roberto's story from a postmodernist cultural framework that is receptive to notions of

indeterminacy and discontinuity in narrative. There is also a level of ironical distance between the chronicler, the reader and Roberto, as the narrator and the reader are aware that Roberto's manuscript is mostly fictional and that his perceptions result from hallucinations and madness. Roberto, however, is completely convinced that his perceptions are real and as such, he does not realize the implications of fictionalizing his life up until the final moments of the story when he decides to descend into the sea so that he may save a dying Lilia by reaching the island.

Despite their shared contexts, there is a degree of distance between the implied author and the reader, as the implied author never reveals himself to the reader (he remains anonymous as he only refers to himself as the "chronicler") and establishes himself as an enigmatic presence since he only shares information about Roberto's manuscript but none about himself. His astounding knowledge of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and ability to relate cultural phenomena of the baroque era to the contemporary context also baffle most readers. There are various clues that point to the fact that the chronicler is in fact a fictional persona of Eco, such as his narrative style, which is at times playful, but also poetic, academic, archaic and colloquial; his storytelling techniques and clever use of puns and other word games; and his use of textual strategies, specifically intertextual reference and metafictional self-reflexivity. The reader therefore has no access to the implied author's character since she is unable to see behind the mask he inevitably wears in his double capacity as author and narrator of the text, a strategy that reinforces Eco's reputation as an author whose work resists narrative authority and closure.

### ***3.4.3 Narrative distance and the manufacture of sympathy***

Currie (1998:17) proposes that identity exists only in narrative since "the only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterize us and organize them according to the formal principles of narrative" (Currie, 1998:17). This suggests that the act of narration has the ability to interpret, organize, and represent our inner lives. Consequently, our response to characters in novels is the result of a "referential illusion" (Currie, 1998:17) that allows us to make inferences about fictional characters similar to those we make about real people. Authors use narratological devices, specifically voice (first or third person), distance (as the outcome of levels of access and closeness) and judgement (the reader's response to the norms and values represented by the character) to construct character identity. In this regard, voice, distance and judgement are important devices for the analysis

of narrative perspective, as they are able to explore and describe subtle shifts in narrative voice and perspective, the movement into and out of characters' or narrators' minds, the modes in which the speech and thoughts of characters are presented, and importantly, how these aspects work together to manufacture narrative sympathy, or to resist it. According to Currie (1998:19), a reader's sympathy for characters is mainly based on the sense of intimacy or compassion that the reader feels toward the characters. As explained in the previous chapter on *Robinson Crusoe*, sympathy, or lack thereof, is indicative of the ideology of the text and is technically produced and controlled by the devices of access, closeness and distance.

The reader only has access to Roberto through the chronicler, and therefore her knowledge of him is mediated and as such, limited. The production of sympathy in *IDB* is a complicated and ambivalent process, as Roberto automatically inspires the reader's sympathy on the one hand, while also evoking her judgement on the other. Roberto's kindness, his passion and his sensitive nature elicit the reader's admiration and sympathy, while she also feels pity towards Roberto due to the hardships he has to endure, first during the siege and later as a castaway on an abandoned ship. However, the reader also judges him as he lacks self-knowledge, he deceives himself and others (to his own detriment), he is prone to bouts of self-pity, and he tends to be boastful, though his words are rarely carried through into actions. Interestingly, his alter ego, Ferrante, is presented as a cruel, conniving and vindictive psychopath, and it can therefore be argued that Roberto invents his twin, or, if he does exist, depicts him in a poor light to evoke sympathy for himself. Unlike Roberto, Ferrante is also self-aware, ambitious and assertive and as such, he seems to represent Roberto's aspiration to be less submissive and cowardly.

The movement between the first and the third person narration also complicates the creation of sympathy. The chronicler relays Roberto's thoughts and feelings in third person, though the narrative voice sometimes switches to first person when the words of Roberto or other characters are quoted directly; while the chronicler reverts to first person when he shares his personal opinions and knowledge of the time with the reader, when he judges Roberto's actions, and when he comments metafictionally on the text.

The chronicler provides the reader with a high level of access to Roberto's character, as he mediates his impression of Roberto's thoughts, emotions and perceptions to the reader. However, the notion of access is compromised by the chronicler's admission that the

information he shares with the reader is biased and mostly based on conjecture. The self-admitted unreliability of the chronicler's narration is illustrated, for example, by the chronicler's doubt as to the exact month of Roberto's shipwreck, or how soon after his arrival on the *Daphne* he begins to write love-letters to Lilia. Early on in the novel, the chronicler brings it to the reader's attention that he will ... "try to decipher [Roberto's] intentions", but if he is "mistaken", it is "too bad: the story remains the same" (8). The reader therefore knows that the high level of access to Roberto's character is only an illusion based on a subjective interpretation of a manuscript that was apparently written by a 17<sup>th</sup> century castaway named Roberto de la Griva. Nonetheless, the oscillations between first and third person narration and the voices of the chronicler, Roberto, and other 17<sup>th</sup> century characters, seem to sustain this illusion of access sufficiently to evoke sympathy for Roberto, particularly with regard to the hopeless situation he finds himself in, his existential anxiety and the mental decline that results from it. Narrative manipulation of access to Roberto's character softens the reader's judgement of Roberto's flaws.

In terms of closeness, the reader is provided with an external view, as Roberto's character is revealed to the reader by an external focalizer. The external view reduces the potential intimacy between the reader and Roberto as it obstructs sufficient access to his character. The oscillation between the distance of the external view and the accessibility to Roberto's character manifests the degree of distance between the reader and Roberto. The degree of distance between the reader and Roberto fluctuates throughout the novel in accordance with the varying levels of access that are established at any given point of the story. Through subtle shifts in narrative perspective, between layers of represented voices and thoughts, Eco manages to make the reader like Roberto enough to hope for his redemption while also making the reader stand back from him in judgement and thereby acknowledging his faults. Even though the reader never judges Roberto too harshly, she is aware that her sympathy is mediated by the author's manipulation of the degree of distance between Roberto and herself. It is therefore not only Roberto's flaws that detract from the reader's sympathy for him, but rather the reader's awareness that it is a response that is evoked, and to a large extent controlled, by the author.

In terms of access and closeness, there does exist a degree of distance between the reader and the chronicler, whose metafictional comments mostly examine issues related to the intertextual relationship between texts, and the inability to know the past with any certainty.

Nonetheless, there are a few instances where the reader glimpses a more emotional side to the chronicler's character, especially in the final chapter, entitled *Colophon*, which functions as an epilogue to the novel and has the purpose of providing editorial information on Roberto's manuscript. Here, the chronicler points to the reductive and prejudiced way historical narratives tend to represent those "unknown" (513) people who exist in its margins: in the final paragraph of the novel, he recalls the derisive way in which the person who handed him the manuscript referred to Roberto and his contemporaries as "[p]eople with no soul" (513). The irony of this statement is manifested by the fact that Eco's novel focuses on a castaway character who embodies the soul or spirit of his era as it deals predominantly with existential issues and their relation to cultural phenomena. Narration in this chapter also has a more personal tone and Eco no longer seems disguised as the chronicler. In this way, Eco seems to establish a kind of aftermath to the ontological breakdown of the previous chapter by fusing author, narrator and character into a single entity, thereby resisting traditional parameters of genre in terms of the representation of space, boundaries, and identity and the relationship between author, narrator, character and reader.

The following section will examine how the narratological strategies revise the generic parameters of author, narrator, space/time, boundaries and identity that define the traditional castaway novel.

### **3.5 Narratological strategies and the fictionalization of the past**

Postmodernism opposes notions of subjectivity and displays an inherent scepticism towards the possibility of any single interpretation of reality and the existence of absolute truth. Postmodern fiction is therefore critical of narratives that represent history as a series of chronological events that depend on the linear progression of time and the idea that space is fixed and stable. To illustrate this belief, postmodern narratives initiate various transgressions and subversions; they often deploy self-interrogative and self-reflexive modes such as intertextuality and metafiction. In this regard, narratological strategies in *IDB* reconfigure the temporal boundary between past and present in order to emphasize a non-linear and incongruous experience of space and time that is defined by a state of indeterminacy and liminality.

Space and time cannot transcend the standard protocols of material reality in 'real' life, which means that our material bodies cannot travel back or forward in time, or traverse vast

distances in a matter of seconds. However, spatio-temporal distortions that would not be possible in reality are possible in narrative and have become a defining feature of postmodernist fiction where the reader's recognition of these distortions or transgressions is part of the author's intention (Bridgeman, 2007:52). Therefore, even though we can access our past through our memories and recollections, it is narrative that enables us to represent and revise our perspective on the past in writing, which has the effect of making our personal histories seem perpetual. In this regard, *IDB* parallels storytelling to the representation of the past, as both modes represent reality through a combination of imaginative interpretation and logical surmise. In contrast, the authorial narrative voice of the traditional castaway novel, specifically *Robinson Crusoe*, relies on narrative specificity and particularity (such as the meticulous way in which Crusoe records time and keeps track of events) in order to align Crusoe's story with history rather than fiction. Eco's fictionalization of the past refutes history's truth claim and reveals the hidden inconsistencies and affectations of novels that maintain it is possible to represent the past truthfully and objectively.

### **3.5.1 *Metafiction***

A metafictional work primarily interrogates its own status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Though not limited to contemporary fiction, metafiction can be regarded as one of postmodernism's dominant subjects as it is highly committed to an examination of the problem of representation (Waugh, 1995:41) and the "conditions of meaning-construction" (Currie, 1995:15) from its position as a "borderline discourse" that "places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes the border as its subject" (Currie, 1995:2). With regard to the way in which Eco's novel explores the epistemological foundations of reality and fiction, I find Onega and Garçia Landa's (1996:31) definition of metafiction to be a way of writing as well as a way of reading particularly relevant to *IDB*. Therefore, metafiction is a writing strategy that deliberately manipulates fictional structures, such as Eco's intentional merging of the fictional past with the fictional present. A metafictional reading of a text such as *IDB* may produce interpretations that result from the spontaneous interplay between writing and reading, such as the discrepancy between what Roberto *writes*, what the chronicler *reads*, and how this is mediated to the reader.

As such, metafictional commentary in *IDB* centres on the unverifiable nature of Roberto's manuscript and the contentious way in which it is reconstructed by the chronicler, who is of

the opinion that the form and content of the manuscript have more semblance to a novel than they do to a historical document. Eco therefore incorporates the textualized past into the present in order to examine the limits and possibilities inherent to the representation of the past in the present. Therefore, even though the past can be revised and rewritten in narrative, instances where the chronicler intrudes on the narrative to comment on writing also suggest that narrative is ultimately authoritarian and subject to the will and whims of the storyteller and in this way, metafiction establishes a form of parody that Eco uses to examine narrative authority and perspective. In a view which underlines the idea that narrative is always inevitably authoritarian, Capozzi (1996:170) points out that metafictional elements that initially make up the story background are increasingly brought to the fore by the chronicler's attempt to negotiate Roberto's conflicting desire to be both narrator and protagonist of his own story. In another contemporary castaway novel, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, the central character Susan Barton faces a similar dilemma and eventually, Daniel Foe prevents her from fulfilling either role.

Consequently, *IDB* contains numerous metafictional instances where the reader is directly or indirectly addressed. Here are two examples:

Why, the reader may ask, have I been speaking, for a hundred pages at least, of so many events that preceded Roberto's being wrecked on the *Daphne*, while on the *Daphne* itself I have made nothing happen. But if the days on board a deserted ship are empty, I cannot be held responsible, for it is not yet certain this story is worth transcribing, nor can Roberto be blamed. (147)

So we may assume that gradually, perhaps through the therapeutic action of that balmy air or that sea water, Roberto was cured of a complaint that, real or imagined, had turned him into a lycanthrope for more than ten months (unless the reader chooses to insinuate that because from now on I need him on deck full-time, and finding no contradiction among his papers, I am freeing him from all illness, with authorial arrogance). (280)

Even though the amiable tone of Eco's metafictional comments seems to invite the reader to become actively involved in the re-construction of the story, it also establishes an aesthetic and critical distance between the author, reader, and text by reminding the reader that like Roberto's story, the novel *IDB* is a work of fiction that belongs in the "Land of Romances" (367). Metafiction therefore reveals how a work of fiction such as *IDB*, creates its imaginary worlds and parallels the writing of fiction to reality by focussing the reader's attention on the fact that as one of many possible worlds, reality is similarly constructed or "written" (Waugh,

1995:53). This idea of ‘constructedness’ is illustrated by Roberto’s attempt to write a fictional work based on his life story:

He thought, namely, that he might construct a story, of which he was surely not the protagonist, inasmuch as it would not take place in this world but in a Land of Romances, and this story’s events would unfold parallel to those of the world in which he was, the two sets of adventures never meeting and overlapping.

What would Roberto gain by this? Much. By inventing the story of another world, which existed only in his mind, he would become the world’s master... (367)

As I stated previously, Roberto starts to write to make his present reality more bearable. While he has little control over his present reality, in the world of his memoirs he is “master” and therefore he is able to select, order and represent events and characters as he wishes. Brown (2008:73) points out that the process whereby Roberto writes his memoirs mirrors that of the chronicler’s own experience; like the chronicler, Roberto also fabricates a narrative from a combination of fragments and conjecture, or memories and imagination. Initially, Roberto is completely aware of the boundary between his world and the world of his story, but towards the end of *IDB* (which is also the point where Roberto’s writing stops), he no longer distinguishes between these worlds and has become convinced of the reality of his constructed, fictional world. The novel therefore establishes a metafictional parallel between the way in which Roberto and the chronicler/Eco are writing and rewriting the same basic story. The way in which the chronicler and Roberto’s writings comment metafictionally on each other, merges past and present and destabilizes the boundary between fiction and reality. This is indicative of a shift in the generic parameters of the castaway novel in the sense that the narrative of *IDB* describes an “experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems” (Waugh, 1995:46).

### **3.5.2 *Historiographical metafiction***

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently. (Eco, 1995:173)

Historiographical metafiction describes fiction that is metafictional as well as historical in its references to the texts and contexts of the past. As “metafiction that is equated with the postmodern”, such novels tend to incorporate “intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality” in their representations of the past (Hutcheon, 2007:3). In *IDB*, this takes the

form of the chronicler's review of a 17<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, a historical artefact that relates the past of its author, Roberto de la Griva. In the postscript, the author/narrator Umberto Eco offers two possible hypotheses to explain the origin of the manuscript, neither of which can be proven and as such, he admits that his hypotheses are "fruit of the imagination" (505). Though there are various instances of historiographical metafiction in the novel, this narratological strategy is made particularly evident in the postscript.

As the first hypothesis relies heavily on fact and verifiable evidence, it resembles historiography. According to this hypothesis, in 1642 the Batavian Abel Tasman discovered the *Daphne* in close proximity to a series of small islands that he named the Prins Wilhelms Eijlanden. On board the ship, he discovers Roberto's papers and is able to ascertain that they include some discussion on the topic of longitude. Tasman might have thought that the papers contained an important secret, so he handled them with the utmost confidentiality. Eco speculates that Roberto's papers ended up unused in a secret archive of the Dutch East India Company, only to be cleared out after more than 300 years by an archivist of the Company as the problem of longitude had been solved by then and the papers therefore were no longer of any importance.

The section dealing with Eco's first hypothesis contains numerous instances of historiographical metafiction as it paradoxically seems to install and then subvert the factual style, formal tone and the attention to detail of a text that has been written on a historical subject and which bases its information on truth and veracity. The section imitates historiographical writing as it contains various references to dates and facts: Abel Tasman sets sail out from Batavia in "August of 1642" (506) and in "in February 1643" (505), he discovers a collection of small islands that must have been in the vicinity of the island of the day before. When historiography attributes specific dates with historical significance, it renders events chronological and creates the impression that these events are verifiable as they can be traced back to a specific moment in time. In this section, Eco also claims that Tasman provided the exact geographical location of the Prins Wilhelms Eijlanden as "17.19 degrees latitude south and 201.35 degrees longitude" (506), which is a fact that can be verified. Earlier in the novel, Father Caspar calculates the *Daphne* to be located "between the sixteenth and seventeenth degrees of latitude south and at one hundred eighty longitude" (254), which means that if Father Caspar's calculations were correct (which the chronicler doubts), the *Daphne* was in the vicinity of the Prins Wilhelms islands, which would make

Tasman's discovery of the ship probable. However, at the time of Tasman's voyage, the secret of longitude was not yet discovered and therefore it would have been impossible for him to accurately calculate his position and therefore, it is impossible to determine the position of the *Daphne* in relation to Tasman's islands. Eco deliberately incorporates false and indeterminate information with so-called historical fact and consequently, it becomes difficult for the reader to distinguish fact from fiction. With the invention of the marine chronometer, the problem of measuring longitude was resolved and the secrecy surrounding the issue became redundant and accordingly, Roberto's papers on the subject of longitude are relegated to the status of historical curiosity (Bondanella, 1997:175).

Eco also uses what Hutcheon (2003:122) refers to as one of the "paratextual conventions of historiography" in the form of the footnote to "inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations" (Hutcheon, 2003:122). This particular footnote contests Tasman's recorded claim that he discovered the Prins Willelms islands in June, as this means that his path could not have crossed with that of the *Daphne*, as she "presumably" only arrived in those parts in "July or August of 1643" (1). Eco refutes the historical evidence that was supposedly recorded in Tasman's diary when he remarks, "we cannot be sure that Tasman's diaries are reliable (and, indeed, the original no longer exist)". The footnote then goes on to state that

The reader can easily verify the truth of what I have written by consulting P.A. Leupe, "De handschriften der ontdekkingsreis van A.J. Tasman en Franchoy's Jacobsen Vissche 1642-2" in *Bijdragen voor vaderlandsche geschiedenis en oudheidkunde*, N.R. 7, pp 254-93. No objection can be made, surely, to the documents collected as *Generale Missiven*, including an extract from "Daghregister van het Casteel Batavia" dated 10 June 1643, in which Tasman's return is reported. But my hypothesis is still plausible, for it would be easy to suppose that in order to maintain a secret like that of longitude, even a document of this sort would be manipulated. With communications that from Batavia had to reach Holland (and there is no telling when they arrived there) a gap of two months would pass unnoticed. Moreover, I am not at all sure Roberto arrived in the area in August and not earlier. (506)

The sense of authority and objectivity that is installed through the citation of historical documents is subverted by the way in which intertextual reference is combined with speculation and theoretical contemplation to present a possible rather than historiographical version of events. As the footnote illustrates, historiographical metafiction blurs the line between fiction and history as both are thereby given parallel status in terms of the extent to which they represent the past truthfully and objectively. Eco draws attention to the

subjectivity of history when he acknowledges that he is not completely sure what happened in the past: “my hypothesis is still plausible” and “I am not at all sure” (506). The way in which Eco combines history and fiction points to the way in which these two genres are narrative discourses used to impose a sense of order and meaning onto the past, which without narrative would resemble a chaotic and fragmented web of events. As such, what historiographical metafiction aims to achieve is not to deny that events did occur in the real ascertainable past, but rather that these events are presented as historical ‘facts’ when they are selected and represented through processes that are not necessarily neutral, objective or transparent.

The second footnote is very brief and pertains to the fact that the whereabouts of Tasman’s second voyage is unknown, as “God only knows where he went” (507). This footnote reads “[a]bsolutely no log or documentation of this voyage exists. Why?” (507). Eco implies that like Roberto’s manuscript, Tasman either faded into obscurity, or was sent on a secret mission, as it was thought that his first voyage contributed to solving the problem of longitude. The reason why there exists no record of Tasman after he set out on this voyage is as much a mystery to Eco as it is to the reader, but it probably is because no textual evidence in the form of records or journal entries of this voyage exists and as a result, this voyage is rendered historically insignificant and irrelevant.

Eco describes the second hypothesis as being “more like a novel, enthralling” (507). Here, Eco hypothesizes that Roberto’s manuscript was discovered in 1989 by a relatively well-known historical character, an “exceptional man” (507) known as Captain Bligh. As there was a mutiny on Captain Bligh’s ship, the *Bounty*, the captain and eighteen of his men were loaded into a sloop and set adrift. However, Bligh manages to sail more than six thousand kilometres and eventually ends up in Timor, which is approximately where the chronicler calculated the *Daphne* must have been located. Eco speculates that Bligh discovered the *Daphne*, and since more than 150 years had passed since Roberto abandoned the ship, she was in a very derelict condition. Nonetheless, Bligh discovers Roberto’s papers, which are in a poor condition but still legible. Eco suspects that the manuscript’s reference to the yet undiscovered Island of Solomon might have sparked Bligh’s interest, since he hoped the document might not only make him the discoverer of the Island of Solomon, but prove that the French were wrong in their assertion that the islands had already been discovered, first by the Frenchmen Bougainville in 1768 and again by Surville in 1769. Bligh probably delivered

the manuscript to the Admiralty, but yet again, the manuscript is found to be of no value and consequently, Roberto's manuscript is put into storage among other "bundles of erudite rubbish for litterateurs" (509). Apparently, Bligh goes on to live a contented life as an admiral in the British Navy, oblivious to the fact that Hollywood immortalized his character when the novel, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, written by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall based on the events surrounding the mutiny, was adapted into a very successful film of the same name in 1962, starring Marlon Brando as Fletcher Christian, the man who led the mutiny against Bligh.

In this particular film adaptation, William Bligh is portrayed as a tyrant who treats his men with disrespect and cruelty. For this reason, according to the film, a faction of Bligh's men, led by Fletcher Christian, rebels against his inhumane treatment of his crew and starts the famous mutiny (Brunner, 2007). The film ends with Bligh's defeat and consequently, he is remembered by all who saw the film as a contemptuous villain. Therefore despite what historiographers might say (whose account relatively few people are aware of), Bligh is "made odious to all posterity" (509) by popular culture's contamination of history. As the conflating reconstructions of Bligh's character suggest, flaws and errors, whether deliberate or inadvertent, can potentially occur in any representation of the past. Eco's intertextual reference to a film reveals postmodernism's parodic relation to mass culture; in this regard, postmodernism contends that history is made up of competing truths that come from various sources and that range from 'high' cultural forms such as historiography to 'low' cultural forms such as mainstream films. This idea links up with Hutcheon's (2003:44) assertion that postmodernism collapses the boundaries between high cultural forms and low cultural forms, or high art and low art. In this way, historiographic metafiction "espouses a postmodern ideology of plurality" (Hutcheon, 2003:113) and thus it combines fiction with history and the 'real' with the imagined, as Eco's novel so aptly illustrates.

The novel self-reflexively conflates, mixes and inverts fact with fiction in a way that likens the writing of history to storytelling, as the writing and reading of historiographical and fictional texts depend on the same narrative conventions that include narrative perspective, characterization, plot, structure, style, theme, and so forth. In this regard, I posited in the first chapter that if narrative conventions display a high degree of standardization in terms of structural, thematic, and functional criteria (Duff (2000:xiii), a novel may be associated with a particular genre. However, even though *IDB* is based on the notion of the castaway, the

parodic manner in which Eco incorporates intertexts of science, pseudoscience, philosophy, history, and numerous novelistic genres, resists generic typecasting. As Eco's novel proves, the postmodern castaway novel resists classification and revises concepts of author, narrator, space, boundaries and identity.

### 3.5.3 *Intertextuality*

The term "intertextuality" was first coined by Julia Kristeva in her 1966 essay *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (Kristeva, 1986:34), in which she adapts the term from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "dialogism" (Dentith, 1996:52), which defines the self and society as being in a dialogical relationship. This entails that individual and social languages define each other and as such, any individual discourse is negotiated by social discourses, a practice that Bakhtin terms "heteroglossia" (Dentith, 1996:52). Linking up with the concepts of "dialogism" and "heteroglossia", Bakhtin situates the novel as a "polyphonic" mode of discourse in the sense that it is particularly open to the influence of competing ideological voices (Dentith, 1995:41). In this regard, Kristeva (2002:8) maintains that her conceptualization of intertextuality "replaces Bakhtin's idea of several voices within an utterance with the notion of several texts within a text". Intertextuality is thus based on the notion that no text can exist as an autonomous and self-sufficient entity as "the writer's and the reader's experience of other texts conditions its form and interpretation" (Onega & Garçia Landa, 1996:32). As the subsequent analysis will show, intertextuality engages with the textualized past in order to reveal that we can only know the past through its narratives (Hutcheon, 2003:128).

In *From Reflections on the Name of the Rose* (1985)<sup>14</sup>, Eco suggests that there are three ways of writing about the past, namely romance, the swashbuckling novel, and the historical novel (Eco, 1995:176). *IDB* clearly shares an intertextual affinity with all three of these novelistic genres. Like most castaway novels, it firstly has aspects of romance, since the lovelorn Roberto presents his past as a "fairy-tale construction" in which his imagination is allowed "to roam freely" (Eco, 1995:176). As most of the action takes place on an abandoned ship or in Roberto's imagination, *IDB* is a "story of an elsewhere" (Eco, 1995:176). *IDB* also resembles the swashbuckling novel as it presents a "'real' and recognizable past" and peoples it with "characters already found in the encyclopaedia ... making them perform actions that

---

<sup>14</sup> Reprinted in Currie, M. (ed). 1995. *Metafiction*. New York, NY : Longman. p. 172-178.

the encyclopaedia does not record” (Eco, 1995:176). Here, characters such as Cardinal Richelieu, Cardinal Mazarin and Padre Emanuele (Emanuele Tesauro) come to mind and these historical personas all help to shape Roberto’s fate.

Lastly, *IDB* also meets the criteria of a historical novel, so even though events and characters are fictional, they reveal things about the time that may relate to a character at a personal level, but are not notable enough to be included in history books (Eco, 1995:176), such as that Cardinal Mazarin took part in the siege of Casale under his birth name of Guilo Mazzarini. Roberto is shocked to discover the Cardinal’s identity when he is interrogated by him more than ten years after the siege, as he was convinced he “saw the Cardinal’s dying a dozen yards away” (181). Therefore, though Eco’s representation of characters and events of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is realistic, it does not claim to be ‘real’. As *IDB* illustrates, intertextual analysis also leads to an analysis of the conventions of genre, which establishes it as a useful way for the observation and evaluation of generic transformation.

Capozzi (1996:167) relates the numerous “intertextual echoes” in *IDB* to a “variety of interdisciplinary sources ranging from semiotics, philosophy, and reader reception theories, to a gamut of postmodern narrative theories”. In the light of the various manifestations of intertextuality in *IDB*, I concur with Onega and Garçia Landa’s (1996:32) distinction between several types of intertextual relationships that are determined by the reader’s perception of the relations that exist between a given text and its intertextual referents. The first and most common type of intertextual relationship is with other literary texts, while the second is the intertextual relationship with generic conventions, patterns of motifs, plot structures, and character types, such as the archetype. In this regard, *IDB* borrows from the castaway genre and relates the defining generic motif of social disconnection to Roberto’s existential anxiety. Thirdly, a text can also stand in an intertextual relationship with other social discourses and discursive conventions, such as feminism. This approach is based on Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, 1996:52) and in *IDB*, this type of intertextual relationship is manifested by the way in which Eco juxtaposes 17<sup>th</sup> century ideologies with postmodern ones in order to reveal how the most significant ideologies of both periods are defined by volatile instability and indeterminacy within society and culture. Lastly, a text can also stand in an intertextual relationship with critical commentary. This type of intertextuality involves extremely sophisticated methods of analysis that problematize the relationship between a text and its subsequent readings. *IDB* engages intertextually with the work of critics such as

Michel Foucault and Harold Bloom by incorporating their ideas on postmodern pastiche, parody and intertextuality with his fiction (Bondanella, 1997:183). Moreover, novels such as *The Name of the Rose* (1983) and *Foucault's Pendulum* (1989) have established Eco as reputable writer/critic and accordingly, his novels are written on the borderline of fiction and criticism as they self-reflexively examine their own interpretive possibilities.

In *IDB*, Eco establishes an intertextual relationship with literary and theoretical texts from four historical periods, namely the 17<sup>th</sup> century or baroque era, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the contemporary context. With regard to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Eco alludes to a vast array of baroque texts, such as *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), the metaphysical poetry of John Donne and Giambattista Marino, as well as the literary treatises of Emanuele Tesauro. Eco also alludes to defining literary devices of the baroque, such as Petrarchan conceit and metaphor. Moreover, as Capozzi (1996:175) points out in his thorough and insightful essay on *IDB*, the title of each chapter is either a direct quotation or a paraphrasing of the title of a treatise or other type of text from the baroque era, such as *Wit and the Art of Ingenuity* (1639) by Matteo Pellegrini (chapter 29), or *Dialogues of the Maximum Systems* (1632) by Galileo Galilei (chapter 24).

*Robinson Crusoe* is a central intertext of *IDB* and Roberto's story shares several parodic similarities with Crusoe's. The most obvious similarity is that Roberto and Crusoe both are shipwrecked and become castaways who have to battle the effects of existential isolation on the human psyche. Also, Roberto shares Crusoe's "century and circumstance" (Rice, 2003:356), as Roberto is shipwrecked more or less sixteen years before in 1643, and both these characters have a drifting way of life that seems to lack a sense of purpose before the shipwreck. Their names are also similar as Roberto's first name echoes the name Robinson while his surname – De la Griva – means 'of the thrush', the best-known thrush being a robin, therefore alluding to 'Robinson' (Kelly, 1995:3). There are two important structural similarities in the narratives; in the first instance, both Roberto and Crusoe feel threatened by the intrusive presence of an "Other" (240), and secondly, both discover a mysterious footprint (200) that fuels the fire of their paranoid natures.

However, Roberto's character also differs from Crusoe's in important ways that reflect subversively on Crusoe and his 18<sup>th</sup> century context. In the first instance, Roberto proves "unable to keep track of time" (1), and he can only give an approximate date of the time of his arrival on the *Daphne*. Crusoe, on the other hand, is meticulous to the point of obsession

in his timekeeping, and he notes the exact date (and sometimes even the approximate time of day) in his journal as well as keeping an up to date calendar. Crusoe relies on the passage of time to structure his existence and therefore the spirit of scientific progress and rational thought has shaped his view of time. For Roberto, however, time in the present seems to stand still and therefore he reverts to the past through narrative, as it is only there where time seems to progress in a linear way. Another point of difference pertains to the way in which Roberto and Crusoe seek redemption from their situations. Crusoe commits himself to work, piety, and prayer to overcome his despair, while Roberto loses himself in the writing and reading of his story. As was explained in the previous chapter, *Robinson Crusoe* is a traditional conversion narrative, as Crusoe transforms his identity and the island space. In contrast, Roberto's story traces his psychological and emotional regression as he is unable to accept his fate and chooses to avoid it. In this way, *IDB* reflects subversively on Defoe's premises of transformation and triumph as the contrasting fates of Roberto and Crusoe emphasize the fictionality and *un-realism* of Defoe's story.

*Robinson Crusoe* inspired several 19<sup>th</sup> century adventure novels, some of which are alluded to in *IDB*. In this regard, Eco creates a postmodern pastiche of 19<sup>th</sup> century popular novels, particularly with regard to the idealistic themes of chivalry and heroism that Roberto aspires to. Such novels are Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831), *The Three Musketeers* (1844) and *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1848-50) by Alexandre Dumas; while Roberto's evil alter ego/twin Ferrante reminds the reader of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Bondanella, 1997:187 & Capozzi, 1996:167).

Previously, I pointed out that Eco establishes intertextual relationships with contemporary criticism in his work and in *IDB*, Eco borrows Harold Bloom's notion of the "Anxiety of Influence" from *The Anxiety of Influence: a theory of poetry* (1973), a seminal work of poststructuralist criticism in which Bloom argues that all texts are a response to works that precede them and that the process of writing fiction involves selecting and (re)working one's favourite "palimpsests". In this regard, Eco concludes his novel with the following: "Finally, if from this story I wanted to produce a novel, I would demonstrate once again that it is impossible to write except by making a palimpsest of a rediscovered manuscript – without ever succeeding in eluding the Anxiety of Influence." (512). Here, the image of the palimpsest, a manuscript written over an older manuscript that has been partially erased, though the old words can still be made out beneath the new, is an apt metaphor for Eco's

view of the nature of fiction as a narrative mode for revisiting, revising and recycling the past. Eco also relates, and supports, his idea of the familial nature of the relationship between texts of the past and the present with an intertextual reference to Bloom's theory that all texts are by nature palimpsests and intertexts. Eco then goes on to tease the reader when he simultaneously contests and flaunts his novel's fictionality:

Nor could I elude the childish curiosity of the reader, who would want to know if Roberto really wrote the pages on which I have dwelt far too long. In all honesty, I would have to reply that it is not impossible that someone else wrote them, someone who wanted only to pretend to tell the truth. And thus I would lose all the effect of the novel: where, yes, you pretend to tell true things, but you must not admit seriously that you are pretending. (512-13)

Here, Eco once again blurs the boundary between fiction and reality when he anticipates that the reader might wonder if his novel is truly based on a forgotten manuscript written by a 17<sup>th</sup> century castaway, Roberto de la Griva. Thereby, he makes the reader aware of the relativity of a concept such as "truth", as it is subjective and made up of too many variables: Ferrante, pretending to be Roberto, could be the author of the manuscript, or it could be a purely fictional work, written by someone (such as Eco) who intended "only to pretend to tell the truth" (513). Furthermore, the historicity and origin of the manuscript cannot be verified with any certainty, and it is impossible to determine which events are based on the 'truth', and which are mere fabrications. Permutation therefore occurs when Eco transgresses literary boundaries between the fictional world and the real world by revising and reconstructing Roberto's story, thereby purporting to have created a 20<sup>th</sup> century adaptation of the original manuscript. In this regard, Eco points to the ambivalent nature of writing and reading by emphasizing the pretence involved in writing a story and as such, he suggests that novels should be conscious of their status as works of fiction without forsaking that indefinable and fantastical ability to entice readers to immerse themselves in the world of the story.

This chapter set out to examine how *IDB* is an exemplar of generic transformation in the castaway novel, specifically in the way multiple narrative perspectives in the form of Eco, the chronicler and Roberto, as well as the existence of alternate worlds, function as the premise for various narratological strategies that resist interpretation and present the reader with several possible versions of the 'truth'. Thereby, the novel challenges narrative authority through modes of narrative subjectivity and unreliability as well as authorial intrusion. The transformation of genre is facilitated by a shift in dominant which is made evident by the way Eco rewrites, revises, and recontextualizes those generic conventions that exemplified the

realism of *Robinson Crusoe*. In this regard, an analysis and contextualization of *IDB* revealed that narratological strategies, particularly metafiction, historiographical metafiction and intertextuality reconfigure the temporal boundary between past and present in order to reinterpret 17<sup>th</sup> century representations of space, time, and identity in a postmodern context. As a result of the reconfiguration of boundaries, Roberto's experience of space and time becomes non-linear and incongruous and consequently, also defined by a state of liminality that also extends to the ship, the *Daphne*, to which he seems to be eternally bound. In terms of identity, the castaway Roberto exemplifies the postmodern crisis of identity that is defined by fragmentation, hybridization, instability, and existential anxiety. As a postmodern castaway novel, *IDB* calls attention to the permeability of the boundaries that separate past and present, fiction and reality, and time and space, which in turn points to the fragile and constructed nature of realist representation in narrative.

The concept of generic transformation relates to a familiar notion that Eco deals with in his work, specifically the essay *The Open Work* (1989), in which he conceptualizes texts as machines for generating interpretations (Eco, 1989:7), while Capozzi (1996:166) notes that when the novel originated as a genre in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was popularly regarded as a "stupendous and glorious machine"<sup>15</sup> in the sense that the novel was the first literary genre that had the distinct ability to produce an infinite number of meanings through the interpretation of its numerous and interrelated signs and symbols. The "Neo-Baroque narrative machine" (Capozzi, 1996:165) of Eco's novel in particular, uses intertextual and intratextual meaning to produce irony, word-games, parody, and pastiche. An examination of *IDB* further reveals that the 17<sup>th</sup> century's overall cultural traits illustrate how texts are rewritten and reinterpreted over and over again, while also emphasizing epistemological and ontological issues that are still very relevant today, such as the nature of existence, the workings of the universe, and debates surrounding the existence of God.

The following chapter, on J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, will link up with *IDB*'s premise of the past as an indeterminate construct that is endlessly invented and re-invented and relate it to the notion of postmodern revision, which is underlined by Coetzee's rewriting of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from a postmodernist and postcolonial approach which manifests generic

---

<sup>15</sup> Adapted and translated from Giovanni Manzini's 1637 essay *La piu stupenda e gloriosa macchina. Il romanzo italiano del sec. XVII, op. cit.*

transformation by challenging and inverting the roles the realist novel traditionally assigns to author, narrator, and reader.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONTESTING BOUNDARIES IN THE CASTAWAY NOVEL: J.M. COETZEE'S *FOE***

#### **4.1 Contextualization**

J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) returns to the premise of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* contained in the story of one man's heroic ability to master himself and his environment in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Coetzee challenges Defoe's portrayal of spatial adaptation and identity transformation from a postmodern and postcolonial perspective by exploring the role of the storyteller or narrator in order to reveal the power of the author to silence, exclude and omit certain events and people on the basis of gender, class and race. In light of this context, the central question this chapter will aim to address is concerned with how narratological strategies - in particular intertextuality, allegory and irony - dissolve textual boundaries. Related to this question, this chapter will also examine how and to what extent Coetzee's novel confirms generic transformations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century castaway novel. With regard to *Foe*, textual boundaries refer to the margins that separate history from fiction, author from character, author from reader and thereby also fiction from reality.

The aim of this chapter in relation to my central thesis is to situate *Foe* as an exemplar of generic transformation of the castaway novel as Coetzee continually challenges the authorial function in order to examine the nature of textual boundaries, particularly with regard to the relationship between narrator and author. Coetzee's use of intertextuality, allegory and irony examines and completely re-writes imperialist constructions of identity and spatiality to show how they not only define *Robinson Crusoe*, but also the castaway genre as a whole. This chapter therefore contextualizes *Foe* as an intertext between Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, as Coetzee's novel stands as a midpoint of the evolution of the castaway novel genre in the sense that it relates Eco's intertextual citations of the past in the present to the problems of narrative authority and ideology. In addition, *Foe* articulates the castaway novel's central generic motif of social disconnection, or being 'cast away', through Susan Barton's existential isolation, a condition that is exemplified by her struggle to have her story told. She longs to have her "substance" (51) returned to her in the sense that she wants her past to be authenticated through Daniel Foe's writing.

Postmodernism refers to a multi-disciplinary cultural phenomenon that reacts against the assumed incontestability of scientific or objective conceptions of meaning, knowledge, truth, value and the notion of “self”. Emanations from or branches of postmodernism are postcolonialism and feminism, both of which have overt political agendas and aim to rethink systems of knowledge as well as traditional social identities, while intertextuality and metafiction are definitive postmodernist strategies that react to the past by rewriting it from a different viewpoint. From a postcolonial perspective, Coetzee contests the concept of boundaries imposed by colonization by transgressing the traditional parameters of genre, namely author, narrator, space (setting) and identity (character). *Foe* reconfigures these traditional parameters through an exploration of the limitations of realist literature that are manifested in Coetzee’s attempt to re-write *Robinson Crusoe*. This revision illustrates the possibility of other voices and alternative versions by engaging with the notion of storytelling and the overlapping roles of author and narrator. Postmodernism contends that both history and fiction are “narrative discourses ... both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past” (Hutcheon, 2003:89). Coetzee examines the similarities between history and fiction in order to show that historical representation and fictional representation are mediated through similar processes of ordering, selection and omission. As textual representations of the ‘real’ world, history and fiction are equally subjective, and as such, flawed. Both are made up of many stories, none of which can allege to be the only truth. Coetzee’s revision places fact and fiction, story and history, on an equal ontological footing with regard to their influence on the reader. By transferring history to the realm of fiction, *Foe* challenges history’s claim to veracity and incontestability.

In *Foe*, various textual boundaries - most notably the boundary between history and fiction - are gradually dissolved, thereby altering the shape and form of the castaway novel. Coetzee achieves this result by inserting and foregrounding the stories of characters Defoe either omitted or suppressed in his definitive castaway text, namely a female castaway Susan Barton, and the mute, morose slave Friday. Susan’s story stands central and subverts Defoe’s narrative by offering an alternate perspective to life on the island that reflects subversively on Crusoe’s Enlightenment ideals of a progressive and rational existence. This is achieved, for example, through the respective novels’ treatment of time and the relation thereof to the notion of individual progress. In this regard, Susan recounts the dreariness and loneliness that typified daily life on the island:

Time passed with increasing tediousness. When I had exhausted my questions to Cruso about the terraces, and the boat he would not build, and the journal he would not keep, and the tools he would not save from the wreck, and Friday's tongue, there was nothing left to talk of save the weather. (34)

Time on the island is unstructured and undifferentiated, and the tedium with which time passes suggests that, at an existential level, life on the island does not evolve. Moreover, Susan describes Cruso as a bad-tempered and uncommunicative old man who "has too little desire to escape, too little desire for a new life" (88). The fact that Cruso makes no effort to keep a journal or notes of his life on the island suggests that he has no interest in keeping track of time and as such, no interest in tracing his progress in terms of the ways he improves his life or transforms the island-space.

In comparison, Robinson Crusoe's days are filled with various tasks that structure the passing of time on the island and enable its transformation:

I was very seldom idle; but having regularly divided my time, according to the several daily employments that were before me, such as, first, my duty to God, and the reading of the scriptures...secondly, the going abroad with my gun for food which generally took me up three hours in every morning, when it did not rain; thirdly, the ordering, curing, preserving, and cooking what, I had killed or caught for my supply; these took up great part of the day... (Defoe, 1985:126)

As this passage suggests, Crusoe's existence is structured according to an overtly linear-time scheme that reflects his obsession with precise and detailed timekeeping. In a view that corresponds with my assertion that there is a relation between the narrative's linear structuring of time and Crusoe's obsession with keeping track of time, Parker (2011:19) suggests that this linear time-scheme reinforces an important colonialist assumption that relates the forward progression of time to progress and accomplishment. As such, the overall inefficiency that Susan ascribes to Cruso in her narrative can be related to his inability and unwillingness to keep time. This inverts Defoe's linear time scheme, specifically with regard to his idealistic assumptions regarding work ethic and individual progress, thereby suggesting the futility of the whole colonial venture. Like the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*, historical writing also tends to follow a linear time-scheme. Coetzee's inversion of the linear time scheme is therefore one of the ways in which his revision manages to contest history's master status, as represented by Defoe's narrative, in order to expose its inherent ideologies, such as its authoritarian claims to truthfulness and accuracy.

As *Foe* places the problem of stories and their telling at the centre of the text, the narrative emphasizes the dialectic between history and fiction. In this regard, intertextual references, such as those in Part I where Susan recounts her time on the island with fellow castaways Crusoe and his slave Friday, show history and its representation to be inseparable from its ideological context. This is illustrated, for example, by the social structure on the island, as Susan immediately assumes that Crusoe rules over the island, with herself as “his second subject, the first being his manservant Friday” (11). Clearly, the social hierarchy is determined by an 18<sup>th</sup> century ideology based on white male hegemony. Daniel Foe’s intention of reworking Susan’s story into a tale of heroic conquest reflects the beliefs, values and cultural trends of his time. Therefore, Coetzee’s breakdown of traditional power structures determined by nationality, race, gender and class reveals representations of space, boundaries and identity in *Robinson Crusoe* to be ideologically constructed and even invalid.

#### **4.2 Deconstructing archetypes**

As a universal exploration of the relationship between individual and environment and the nature of existence, Defoe’s tale has managed to establish its hero as an archetype of human endurance and individual progress in a hostile environment. Furthermore, the novel’s commercial success and cultural impact since its publication in 1719 have enhanced Crusoe’s status as the archetypal castaway hero. However, apart from its thematic, commercial and cultural significance, the archetypal nature of Crusoe’s identity as castaway is defined by four main motifs that have been copied, recombined or, as is the case with Coetzee’s *Foe*, deconstructed in subsequent castaway novels. The first motif is *shipwreck*. Susan Barton’s first person account of the shipwreck is described in realist language and seem very much in line with the diction and style the reader would expect from any traditional castaway novel. The opening paragraph, which depicts Susan’s arrival on the island, parallels Crusoe’s own experience because she describes her exhaustion, physical discomfort and disorientation as she swims towards the “strange island” (5) after she is set adrift by mutineers who take control of the ship on which she is travelling to Lisbon.

The second motif is the *island*, a symbol of isolation and the intellectual and psychological setting for Susan’s epistemological dilemmas. Susan describes the island as a harsh environment; “a great rocky hill with a flat top, rising sharply from the sea on all sides except one, dotted with drab bushes that never flowered and never shed their leaves” (7). Seemingly nothing more than a large chunk of rock rising from the ocean, the island is a drab and

monotonous place. The landscape also functions as a metaphor for the spiritual and intellectual apathy of the island's three inhabitants, especially Cruso. Susan feels that Cruso's life on the island has "narrowed his horizon" (13), because he never even contemplates leaving the island (13). An "island of sloth" (88), the inhospitable landscape is neither appropriated nor cultivated and remains a barren wilderness - a world of inverted Enlightenment values. Coetzee's island further subverts the idea of the uncharted island wilderness as a haven for colonialist progress by removing Defoe's story from its place of origin and instead, England, a domesticated island and a place of western civility, becomes the setting for almost half of the novel. Susan notes that ... "Britain is an island too, a great island. But that is a mere geographer's notion. The earth under our feet is firm in Britain, as it never was on Cruso's island." (26). However, Susan's notion of England as a place where she will feel existentially grounded is proved false, as England is figured as yet another dystopic location. Back home, Susan is unable to ascertain an identifiable truth<sup>16</sup>, which adds to her growing sense of displacement. She is unable to interact with space to any meaningful extent and as a result, she struggles to develop a sense of who she is and where she belongs. Even in her homeland she begins to consider herself a "woman washed ashore." (99). She also laments:

the life we lead grows less and less distinct from the life we led on Cruso's island. Sometimes I wake up not knowing where I am. The world is full of islands, said Cruso once. His words ring truer every day. (71)

The inertia that characterizes life on the island as well as England seems to extend to the mental state of both Susan and Friday, as both characters prove to be either unable or unwilling to adapt and / or change. Susan eventually admits to Foe that the story of the island is "the same story over and over, in version after version, stillborn every time: the story of the island, as lifeless from his hand as from mine"... (151). As such, the island space in *Foe* seems to function as a metaphor of the existential isolation and disconnection of Susan and Friday. Even after being 'rescued', both remain cast away as they remain marginal characters – physically, socially and spiritually - as neither is able to reintegrate with their respective societies.

---

<sup>16</sup> In this chapter, the concept of 'truth' can be interpreted in two ways, depending on the context. The first way refers to the realist convention and relates to Susan Barton's idea of truth as something absolute and verifiable. The second way refers to the postmodernist conception of truth as relative and mediated – and as such, unobtainable.

Linking up with the idea of the island as metaphor is the third motif of *solitude* and *social disconnection*. In Defoe's novel, Crusoe comes to value his separation from society as an opportunity to achieve self-actualization, free from the trappings of society. In *Foe*, however, Susan remains an isolated and anxious character despite the fact that she has Cruso and Friday as companions on the island. Although this can, in part, be ascribed to Cruso's morose indifference and Friday's muteness, Susan's inability to form a meaningful connection with another person, especially Friday, is exemplified even more back home in England. Here her obsession with the question of responsibility drives her firstly to attempt to regain "the substance of the truth" (51), or sense of self she has lost, and secondly, to give a voice to Friday. Both these attempts fail and Susan's social disconnection becomes increasingly pronounced in part three of the novel:

But now all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me. ...Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you?' (133)

Susan's narration becomes increasingly disoriented and vague. This emphasizes her ontological confusion and facilitates the dissolution of boundaries between the fictional world and the 'real' world that begins in part three and culminates in part four of the novel.

The fourth motif, namely *survival*, is mostly disregarded in *Foe*, especially when compared to the traditional castaway novel where the ability to adapt and survive facilitates identity transformation. Even though the island in *Foe* presents its inhabitants with certain difficulties and discomforts, they are never at risk of perishing from hunger or being eaten by wild animals or cannibals. Ironically, it is back in England where Susan and Friday are forced into a life of poverty. Consequently, Susan becomes increasingly desperate for Daniel Foe to write and publish her story so that she and Friday may survive on the income this would generate.

In *Foe*, Coetzee deconstructs traditional archetypes to reveal how they were created to perpetuate prevalent colonialist ideas and beliefs. Whereas *Robinson Crusoe* examines questions pertaining to existence from an 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalist perspective, *Foe's* postmodernist approach to existential issues emphasizes the way in which the divisions between self and other as well as margin and centre define Western identity. The implication that the imposition of these divisions has for the way writers and readers relate to language as a source of meaning is discussed in a later section of this chapter.

### 4.3 *Foe* and the representation of Defoe's 18<sup>th</sup> century contexts

Though a 20<sup>th</sup> century novel, *Foe's* greatest subversive potential lies in the way it purports to be an 18<sup>th</sup> century novel. Coetzee achieves this by setting his novel during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The historical setting is enhanced by Coetzee's use of the conventions of the Richardsonian epistolary novel – a popular 18<sup>th</sup> century genre – whereby, as Marais (1989:10) points out, the reader is placed as a letter-reader within the structure of the novel. Coetzee also incorporates aspects of the adventure romance with regard to plot, specifically in the first part of the novel. The novel is written in realistic plain language in a register reminiscent of *Robinson Crusoe*.

A real-life historical character is inserted into the narrative in the form of Daniel Defoe, who was born Daniel Foe but later changed his name. Defoe only became an established author with the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, which is loosely based on the circumstances surrounding a real life castaway, Alexander Selkirk. Coetzee includes historical facts concerning Defoe's life, such as his ill health, his struggle to get his fiction published, and his bankruptcy. Historical biographies of Daniel Defoe tend to depict him as a man of his age; concerned with integrating his fictional representations of reality with empirical observation and rational thought. However, Defoe's fictional persona as created by Coetzee seems disorganized and uninterested in empirical fact; he decides against a historiographical representation of events when he dismisses Susan Barton's account and writes a completely fictional work instead. Coetzee suggests that instead, (De)Foe used its basic theme of shipwreck and its aftermath to write *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

Even though it is generally accepted that the real-life castaway Alexander Selkirk inspired Defoe to write *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe's novel is a work of fiction that manages to capture his era's spirit of progress and reason. The novel's immense popularity, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, can mainly be attributed to its inspirational depiction of one man's ability to reform himself by overcoming numerous physical and psychological challenges. *Foe* therefore revises the original narrative's depiction of adventure and tribulation by offering the reader an alternate perspective in the form of a bleak and uninspiring story that relates the experiences of Susan Barton as a castaway on a desert island. A female storyteller would have been significant in an 18<sup>th</sup> century context as women were regarded as socially and constitutionally inferior; female voices did not carry much weight and even lacked

credibility. Aware of her inferior social standing, Susan narrates her recollections and impressions of her time on the island, as well as her struggle to reintegrate Friday and herself into English society, to Foe in the form of conversations and letters. Regarding Susan's rather bland story, Foe remarks:

‘The island is not a story in itself...We can bring it to life only by setting it within a larger story. By itself it is no better than a waterlogged boat drifting day after day in an empty ocean till one day, humbly and without commotion, it sinks. The island lacks light and shade. It is too much the same throughout.’ (117)

Foe clearly thinks that Susan's narrative does not adhere to the requirements of a good story, since he believes a book should be made up of “loss, then quest, then end” (117). Given Foe's condescending attitude towards Susan and her story, I am in agreement with O'Connell's (1989:51) assertion that Foe's writing is so much defined by his own narrow politics and Puritanism that he stifles Susan's creative impulse and confines it within the parameters of his own traditional style. Foe thinks that the island story should only form part of the “larger story” (117), which is why he is so interested in the story of the lost daughter who is reunited with her mother. Foe's refusal to pen down her story makes Susan feel frustrated with her inability to articulate a truthful account that also accurately depicts the psychological impact of being a castaway. She gradually comes to regard herself as a victim of the system of white male hegemony that determined the form and content of popular 18<sup>th</sup> century English fiction. The alternate perspective, presented by a character whose story would likely have been omitted or marginalized during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, becomes a prominent strategy that Coetzee uses to question the veracity of historical evidence.

As such, Coetzee recasts the 18<sup>th</sup> century historical context in order to undermine prevalent Enlightenment ideologies. As argued in the previous chapter, one of the most significant of these beliefs is that space is a representation of individual and societal progress and therefore should be ordered and cultivated. Subsequently, Crusoe's appropriation and organization of space enable him to rationalize – and in the process also master – his condition as well as his environment.

The island on which Susan Barton is shipwrecked, however, bears no resemblance to *Robinson Crusoe's* Enlightenment paradise. The island is barren and wild; it exhibits none of the ordered containment of Crusoe's island. As a place of sloth and degeneration, the island undermines the 18<sup>th</sup> century Protestant work ethic. Crusoe only has the most necessary tools

to perform the most basic of tasks, such as a knife, a spade, a mattock, and crudely made bowls for eating and drinking. Unlike Defoe's Crusoe, the Cruso depicted in Susan Barton's account never even attempts to salvage tools and provisions from the shipwreck. When Susan urges him to return to the wreck so that they may possibly acquire more tools, Cruso dismisses her request as impractical:

“The ship lies on the bed of the ocean, broken by the waves and covered in sand,” Cruso replied. “What has survived the salt and seaworm will not be worth saving. We have a roof over our heads, made without saw or axe. We sleep, we eat, we live. We have no need of tools.” (34)

Cruso's apathetic attitude defies Enlightenment virtues of rational proficiency, ingenuity and progress. Robinson Crusoe's clever use of tools, his diligence and his craftsmanship articulated these ideals to the 18<sup>th</sup> century reader. Susan's account exposes Cruso's unproductive use of space and time as he only occupies himself with the futile task of creating terraces and walls:

The terraces covered much of the hillside at the eastern end of the island, where they were best sheltered from the wind...I asked Cruso how many stones had gone into the walls. A hundred thousand or more, he replied. A mighty labour, I remarked. But privately I thought: Is bare earth, baked by the sun and walled about, to be preferred to pebbles and bushes and swarms of birds? (33)

These terraces can be interpreted as a parody of *Robinson Crusoe's* preoccupation with cultivation and containment, as Defoe's hero constructs several enclosures on the island, not only for purposes of refuge or storage, but also to demarcate 'civilized' and domestic space from chaotic nature. Ironically, his labour is regressive as it turns fertile land into barren earth. Cruso's motivation for his behaviour is that he clears the earth to lay the groundwork for “those who come after” (33) to plant and harvest the seed they bring from their homeland. Flint (2011:340) establishes a relationship between *Foe* and the South African antipastoral in the sense that Coetzee explicitly recasts Defoe's island as a dystopic anti-garden, an agricultural wasteland, except for the terraces and walls that serve no purpose. I would like to add that Coetzee's negative portrayal of Cruso's labour in relation to the island reflects subversively on processes of containment and enclosure, thereby commenting on the misguided nature of the Enlightenment project of colonization by representing it as an endeavour that had a destructive impact on colonized land and people.

Susan depicts Cruso's character as slothful, deceitful, unrepentant and indifferent to salvation. Cruso stagnates on the island and seems to be almost the exact opposite of Defoe's hero, whose identity shows progression from being helpless, weak and impulsive to rational and authoritative. Cruso's indiscriminate and thoughtless 'reign' over the island kingdom, together with his exploitive treatment of Friday, reveals the true nature of the colonial project.

Another 18<sup>th</sup> century ideological belief undermined in *Foe* is that of the importance of realistic representation and accurate memory to preserve historical continuity. Coetzee achieves this by undermining the realist method. In this regard, Cruso keeps no journal to provide a record of his life on the island. Susan ascribes this to his lack of "inclination to keep one" (16). To Susan, this is problematic, since she believes that the substance of our memories is necessary for the construction of our histories, and as such, memory shapes identity:

For surely, with every day that passes, our memories grow less certain, as even a statue in marble is worn away by rain, till at last we can no longer tell what shape the sculptor's hand gave it... There is no shame in forgetting: it is our nature to forget as it is our nature to grow old and pass away. But seen from too remote a vantage, life begins to lose its particularity. (17-18)

It is the way in which this sense of "particularity" starts to fade, with regard to Susan's memory as well as Foe's re-interpretation of her story, that the realist method together with the notion of historical continuity is undermined:

All shipwrecks become the same shipwreck, all castaways the same castaway, sunburnt, lonely, clad in the skins of the beasts he has slain. The truth that makes your story yours alone, that sets you apart from the old mariner by the fireside spinning yarns of sea-monsters and mermaids, resides in a thousand touches which today may seem of no importance, such as: when you made your needle (the needle you store in your belt), by what means did you pierce the eye? When you sewed your hat, what did you use for thread? Touches like these will one day persuade your countrymen that it is all true, every word, there was indeed one an island in the middle of the ocean where the wind blew and the gulls cried from the cliffs and a man named Cruso paced about in his apeskin clothes, scanning the horizon for a sail. (18)

Susan Barton's quest for substantiality and credibility is invested in the details of everyday life on the island. Her failure (as well as Cruso's) to recall and recount these semblances of daily life is made parallel to the reader's own fruitless search for meaning. Foe's postcolonial premise reflects subversively on the 18<sup>th</sup> century culture of masculinity and conquest

perpetuated by *Robinson Crusoe*, a culture that enabled the implementation of those totalising systems of knowledge, defined by Marais (1996: 48) as “an empirical epistemology based on the certitude of a subjectivity that can fix knowledge”. This culture of masculinity and conquest also shaped British imperialism. The next section aims to illustrate how narration and focalization in *Foe* highlight the problems inherent to an attempted re-writing and re-contextualization of Defoe’s seminal 18<sup>th</sup> century tale of adventure.

#### 4.4 Narrative perspective

In *Robinson Crusoe*, narration and focalization establish a likeness between Defoe’s world and the world of his fictional character. This semblance aligns the norms of the fictional world with that of the author and his 18<sup>th</sup> century context. In *Foe*, however, narration and focalization function to highlight the ontological distance between the 18<sup>th</sup> century world of the character-narrator and focalizer, Susan Barton and the world of the novel’s author. Ontological distance in *Foe* is manifested by strategies of writing, the most significant being intertextuality, irony and permutation. The disparity between the norms of the fictional world and the norms of the author, J.M. Coetzee, exposes the culture of oppression and subjugation that formed part of the colonial drive.

Narratological strategies in *Foe* reveal the relationship between writing and cultural ideology as being defined by the conditions of authorship. In *Foe*, 18<sup>th</sup> century ideological constructs surrounding race, gender and dominant cultural forms motivate Daniel Foe to dismiss Susan’s story, because he feels a female castaway might lack credibility and reputability to an 18<sup>th</sup> century readership. Interestingly, this is more indicative of Foe’s own prejudice than it is of the mindset of the general 18<sup>th</sup> century readership, as there had been an established tradition of 18<sup>th</sup> century women’s writing by the time *Robinson Crusoe* was published. In this regard, female authors such as Aphra Behn, Eliza Haywood, Delarivier Manley, Sarah Scott and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu were well-respected (Hoyenski, 2002 & Alessio, 2013).

A more legitimate reason why Foe chooses to dismiss Susan’s story, is because her story’s inclusion of the black slave Friday’s mutilation and his silence might project ethical questions about the colonial project. In addition, Daniel Foe feels that the form and content of Susan’s story might be too trite to fulfil the requirements of a good adventure romance.

As character-narrator, Susan Barton narrates her experiences in the first person and from her own perspective, which also establishes her as focalizer. However, in the final part of the novel, narration and focalization shift to an external or third-person narrator in the form of the author himself. This narrative shift exemplifies the ontological breakdown of the text, as textual boundaries dissolve completely when the author transcends time and space when he enters the narrative as a character-focalizer. In the process, the tenuousness of *Robinson Crusoe* and realist literature in general is exposed, thereby also resulting in a shift of generic parameters.

#### **4.4.1 Narrative structure**

The narrative consists of four parts, each set in a different time and place as well as presenting a change in characters and narrative style. Part I recounts the pretext *Robinson Crusoe*, but from a different perspective. As O'Connell (1989:46) points out, *Robinson Crusoe* is generally considered to be the first novel in English literature, which makes it an extremely suitable choice for Coetzee to use in order to explore problems surrounding the representation of history, such as translation and interpretation. Foe's intertextual representation of Defoe's plot, setting and characters juxtaposes fiction with reality as well as history by creating various ontological levels that result in narrative discontinuity and disconnection. In this regard, *Foe* places itself on a higher ontological level than *Robinson Crusoe* as well as documented history. This means that the author, as well as the postmodernist reader who acknowledges many different voices, considers *Foe* to be a more plausible version of the truth than both *Robinson Crusoe* and recorded history.

There are also several ontological levels contained in the novel. These levels are structured according to the different chapters or parts. Each part represents a higher ontological level.

Part I, written in realist style and narrated by Susan Barton in plain language, is the most fictional of all the levels and provides an account of life on the island. The narrative begins with Susan's shipwreck on the island and ends with Cruso's death en route to England aboard the ship that rescues the castaways. Initially, this section seems to allude to the 18<sup>th</sup> century adventure genre and therefore also to *Robinson Crusoe*, most notably with regard to style. However, in terms of plot development, Susan's narration begins to stray from the adventure genre in the sense that nothing strange or surprising happens on the island. Throughout Part I, Susan stresses the difference between reality and imagination by pointing to the extent to

which the inhospitable island onto which she is shipwrecked contrasts with the popular but idealized conception of the desert isle as “a place of soft sands and shady trees where brooks run to quench the castaways’ thirst and ripe fruit falls into his hand” (7). In this regard, *Robinson Crusoe* managed to present these idealized conceptions more convincingly, as Crusoe guards against man’s slothful nature through hard work and industry. In *Foe* however, Cruso’s sloth and listlessness undermine the Protestant work ethic first established in *Robinson Crusoe*. Travellers’ depictions of desert isles as places where one could have a carefree existence also contrast ironically with Susan’s emotional state, as her frustration, boredom and depression are the result of aimlessly whiling away the days. The purposelessness of Susan’s life on the island also stands in ironic contrast to the original, as the contemporary reader is able to recognise that Crusoe’s puritan work ethic lacks true purpose as it is often misdirected to the point of being ridiculous.

Contrary to idealized perceptions, the narrative in Part I of *Foe* consists mostly of Susan’s musings on the dullness of day-to-day life on the island. The most memorable part of her stay on the island is when she realizes that Friday is mute because slave owners cut out his tongue. After more than a year on the island, Susan contemplates the uneventful nature of life on the island:

...why was it that so little of the island could be called extraordinary? Why were there no strange fruits, no serpents, no lions? Why did the cannibals never come? What will we tell folk in England when they ask us to divert them? (43)

Here already her frustration with her lack of creative imagination becomes apparent. She is very aware that her story would seem rather unremarkable to her countrymen as it lacks the excitement and romance that readers require from travellers’ tales.

Part II consists of letters written to Foe. In this section, Susan’s preoccupation with storytelling and writing becomes even more pertinent, specifically with regard to the mysteries surrounding Friday and the interpretation of the past in the present. Her letters contain various references to the self-consciousness involved in the writing process, as well as the idea of the author as a creator who has the power to determine the outcome of events:

I have set down the history of our time on the island as well as I can, and enclose it herewith. It is a sorry, limping affair (the history, not the time itself) – “the next day,” its refrain goes, “the next day...the next day” – but you will know how to set it right. (47)

Even though Susan is eager to tell her story, she knows that she lacks the creative ability to imbue her story with the “liveliness” and “colour” (40) needed to make it more appealing to the reading public. She naively thinks that an experienced writer will be able to arrange the facts into a stylistically appealing and intelligible format, thereby presenting her story in a manner that is logically and aesthetically consistent. In this regard, she considers Foe a “steersman steering the great hulk of the house through the nights and days, peering ahead for signs of the storm” (50).

Her letters also recount the problems that she and Friday have to face in their struggle for survival. In this section, Susan and Friday undertake several journeys across the English countryside in search of Daniel Foe and also to the port of Bristol in an attempt to find a ship that can return Friday to Africa. On these journeys, Susan is unable to establish a connection with Friday. Consequently, she struggles to assemble all the different parts needed to construct the story of her life as a castaway, and she laments that she “would give much to hear the truth of how he was captured by the slave-traders, and lost his tongue” (57). Friday’s silence contains an integral part of the story Susan wishes to tell; without his story, she believes, her story will be incomplete and misleading. She is furthermore bound to Friday by her compassion and sense of moral responsibility, which stems from her guilt in becoming an accomplice to the colonization of Friday during her time on the island. When they are rescued from the island, she pleads with the ship’s captain not to leave Friday behind: ... “[he] is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not to abandon him to a solitude worse than death” (39). This statement turns out to be ironical, as Friday, and Susan, end up living a life of solitude alongside one another. For Susan, the only resolution to this burdensome situation would be if she could part from him in an amicable way, while she also hopes that by returning him to Africa, her story will acquire a sense of closure.

The walk to Bristol evokes Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953). It reveals the hopelessness of the situation in which Susan and Friday find themselves, as the journey to Bristol turns out to be fruitless. The dead baby that they come across in a ditch outside the town of Marlborough symbolizes the futility of Susan’s quest, as her story will never be heard. Moreover, she realizes that Friday will never be able to return to Africa a free man and will forever remain bound to her, thereby forcing her to also relinquish her own freedom: ““So the castle I had built in the air, namely that Friday should sail for Africa and I return to London

my own mistress at last, came tumbling about my ears” (111). The relationship between Susan and Friday is suggestive of how the identities of both colonized and colonizer have remained fixed within the cultural residue left by colonization.

The ‘lost daughter’ is also introduced in this section. Even though Susan claims to have gone to Bahia to search for her daughter and had been shipwrecked on her way back, she does not recognize the girl who claims to be her daughter. She shuns the girl and is convinced that Daniel Foe has set up the girl to pursue her:

‘Who is she and why do you send her to me? Is she sent as a sign you are alive? She is not my daughter. Do you think women drop children and forget them as snakes lay eggs? Only a man could entertain such a fancy...She is more your daughter than she ever was mine.’ (75)

Her rejection of the false daughter Foe attempts to foist on her suggests her resistance to Foe’s attempt to claim her story for himself. She feels indignant about Foe’s blatant attempt to deceive her in order to add some colour or excitement to her story. As the girl is Foe’s invention, Susan claims her to be “father-born” (91), since Foe is the one who has brought her to life, like an author does to a character in a story. Susan becomes increasingly disillusioned with the concepts of truth and authorship because she does not have the cultural legitimacy to write her story in a way that will assert her “freedom by telling her story according to her own desire.” (131). This sense of disillusionment becomes even more evident in part III, notably with regard to the absolute power of the author to manipulate the representation of the truth.

The third ontological level is manifested in Part III, and here, Susan has tracked Friday down to an attic in a house in the town of Whitechapel. Susan and Foe discuss the nature of writing extensively in this section, thereby also revealing their contradictory perceptions of writing, authorship and truth. Here the narrative places overt emphasis on the process of writing by speculating on the act of writing through metafictional reflections on the question of authorship. During a discussion of the matter of Friday’s silence, Susan proposes to Foe that “it is possible that some of us are not written, but merely are; or else...are written by another and darker author” (143). It seems here that Susan realizes that neither Foe nor herself will be able to “make Friday’s silence speak” (142), and that the silence surrounding him might be relegated to a realm which lies beyond their comprehension. Susan initially believes that authors have the ability to write stories that tell the ‘truth’ about experience, and that good

writing can give substance to a particular experience. Nonetheless, it becomes clear to Susan and the reader that the story Foe intends to write subscribes to the white, western male idea of a successful narrative voyage. In this regard, Susan comments to Foe:

‘Once you proposed to supply a middle by inventing cannibals and pirates. These I would not accept because they were not the truth. Now you propose to reduce the island to an episode in the history of a woman in search of a lost daughter. This too I reject. (121)

Susan therefore rejects Foe’s proposed narrative with its structure of loss-quest-recovery because she feels such a narrative would misrepresent the truth. They never encountered cannibals, pirates or any other threat on the island. Moreover, Susan’s story is completely centred on the island episode, rather than her search for her lost daughter. Susan also fears that Foe’s revision will impose a fake sense of closure as she feels herself and Friday have remained displaced despite being ‘recovered’ from the island.

As Susan becomes aware of Foe’s manipulation of her, she becomes more determined to have her story told. She resists Foe’s attempts to take control of her story, but is unable to see that she is doing the same to Friday.

In Part IV, which is also the final part, the author J.M. Coetzee enters the story as a character whose narration comments on Defoe’s writing. In doing so, Coetzee wants to suggest that authors have an ethical responsibility not only to record events and relate them truthfully, but also to “descend into them and interpret their meaning, so that he and the reader will emerge the wiser for the experience” (O’Connell, 1989:52), which is exactly what he achieves in this section.

Structurally, Part IV can be sub-divided into three parts; the first two parts are set inside a house and the third part takes place under the sea, inside a shipwreck. Parts one and two are also divided by means of asterisks, while the third part has no typographical markings to divide it from the previous section. All three sections follow a similar pattern: the narrator enters an enclosed space, either inside a house or a ship. In the darkness, the narrator stumbles over a dead body while climbing the stairs. On entering a room, he finds two more corpses, as well as Friday, who lies motionless but is still alive. In the first two sections that take place inside a room in Foe’s house, the reader easily identifies the two corpses on the bed as Susan and Daniel Foe. However, in the third part, the male corpse is explicitly identified as Susan Barton’s “dead captain” (157), possibly revealing Susan’s deeper feelings

for the captain, or suggesting that she just as well might have died alongside her captain, since her story was doomed even before she met Foe.

The ontological level of Part IV functions as a liminal zone that lies ‘outside’ the boundaries of the story as well as ‘outside’ the world that resembles reality, i.e. the reader’s world. Textual boundaries have ceased to exist, as the surreal narrative landscape manifests a complete breakdown of the realist mode through its dreamlike language and symbols that seem to descend into the realm of the subconscious:

The staircase is dark and mean. On the landing I stumble over a body. It does not stir, it makes no sound. By the light of a match I make out a woman or a girl, her feet drawn up inside a long grey dress, her hands folded under her armpits; or is it that her limbs are unusually short, the stunted limbs of a cripple? Her face is wrapped in a grey woollen scarf, I begin to unwrap it, but the scarf is endless. (133)

This paragraph is from the first section of Part IV, and resembles the beginning of Part III, which opens with the words: “The staircase was dark and mean. My knock echoed as in an emptiness.” (113). The similarity between the opening sentences of Parts III and IV indicates that the final breakdown of textual boundaries is set in motion in Part III. In the above extract, the body with the stunted limbs inside the long grey dress probably belongs to the girl who claims to be Susan’s daughter. The deformity of her limbs symbolizes the way in which reality is often distorted, or biased in its representation. The underdeveloped limbs also relate to the way in which the stories of all the female characters, namely Susan, her daughter and the girl set up by Foe to claim she is Susan’s daughter, never reach fruition on their own but are absorbed into Foe’s writing.

The woollen scarf emphasises the idea of suppression; it conceals the identity of the figure in the grey dress. When the author attempts to uncover the face, he is not able to unravel the scarf so that the figure’s identity remains hidden. Through the metaphor of the obscured face, the narrator comments on the omissions and absences that remain hidden in all forms of realist writing. The seemingly infinite woollen scarf is a symbol of the complex and layered nature of truth and reality, as manifested by the novel’s multiple framed narrative. In this regard, the notion that the stories contained in each ontological level of the novel refocalize and rewrite those of the previous level, points to the impossibility of any story having only one possible interpretation.

Coetzee mediates the gap between the text and the world even further when he is transported from Foe's house into the wreck, thereby continuing and rewriting the narrative started by Susan in Part I:

Bringing the candle nearer, I read the first words of the tall looping script: 'Dear Mr Foe, At last I could row no further.'

With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slip overboard. Gripped by the current, the boat bobs away, drawn south toward the realm of the whales and eternal ice. Around me on the waters are the petals cast by Friday.

With a sigh, with barely a splash, I duck my head under the water. Hauling myself hand over hand down the trunks, I descend, petals floating around me like a rain of snowflakes. (155-56)

Here the narrator descends into the dark void of the wreckage above which white petals<sup>17</sup> are floating. These petals indicate the location of the wreck and surround the narrator during his descent. In this way, they connect the fictional world with the world outside the boundaries of the narrative, or the 'real' world. Like Friday, the petals occupy a non-narrative space and provide a clue into the meaning of Friday's silence; the hole in the story:

...this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday.

He turns and turns till he lies at full length, his face to my face. The skin is tight across his bones, his lips are drawn back. I pass a fingernail across his teeth, trying to find a way in.

His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face. (157)

From the above passage, it seems that Friday has at last attained a sense of identity in this non-narrative space and has made it his "home" (157). Here, words become meaningless abstractions; they have no function. Instead, concrete bodies and the marks and scars on these bodies 'speak' for themselves: "bodies are their own signs" (157); these marks and scars are therefore inscribed on the body and bear witness to suffering and abuse and in

---

<sup>17</sup> Refer to *Foe*, p87 where Susan ponders the mystery surrounding Friday and the petals: "What were you about when you paddled out to sea upon your log and scattered petals on the water?" Susan makes the assumption that Friday scatters the petals above the wreck of the ship that brought him to the island as someone he loved drowned when the ship sank.

refusing to communicate in the language of his oppressors, he chooses to remain in this non-narrative space. Thereby, Friday opposes the colonizer's attempt to appropriate and reproduce his story silence becomes his only means of resistance against European historical and cultural domination. Eventually, Friday's silence<sup>18</sup> overwhelms the narrator and subdues all other narrative voices. The soundless stream that flows from Friday engulfs everything and culminates in the narrator's/author's sensory realisation of his own blindness – "it beats against my eyelids" (157). This image seems to imply that the narrator's eyes are being prised open to the truth behind colonization and its aftermath.

In part IV, the disintegration of realism facilitates generic transformation. In this regard, Coetzee's interpretation of the realist novel *Robinson Crusoe* uncovers the various omissions and hidden ideologies embedded in the progressive Enlightenment ideals of Defoe's prototypical castaway novel. The most significant of these omissions is how colonization by the West perpetuated slavery by normalising the forceful appropriation of land and unscrupulous treatment of people. This notion can be seen as a ramification of *Robinson Crusoe's* central ideological premise, namely oppression and exclusion on the basis of race, class and gender.

#### 4.4.2 *Narrative effects*

As was also stated in previous chapters, Wayne C. Booth identifies categories for narrative effects produced by narration and focalization in a given text. In *Foe*, the most important of these categories are *the dramatized narrator*, *the self-conscious narrator* and *variations of distance*. Narrative effects function to reveal the similitude, or lack thereof, between the norms of the fictional world and the norms of the author. Narrative effects also show whether the author shares the narrator's beliefs and characteristics.

In his analysis of the different types of narration in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), Booth differentiates between real author, implied author, character and reader and contends that narrators are figuratively placed between implied authors and characters in order to negotiate the narrative effects that appear in a text. The real author of *Foe* is J.M Coetzee, while the implied author is the real author's literary version of himself. In *Foe* the implied author takes

---

<sup>18</sup> *Foe* highlights various modes of silence, and links them to powerlessness, oppression and subjugation, but also resistance. Friday's silence manifests an intertextual gap between Defoe and Coetzee's stories as well as being the source of Susan's various misreadings.

the form of the narrator who enters the text in the final section as a character. Susan Barton narrates and focalizes most of the story and is a dramatized narrator or “I” narrator (Booth, 1996:147). Booth (1996:152) describes a narrator as unreliable when he / she does not speak or act in accordance with the norms of the work, that is, the implied author’s norms. Susan is therefore an unreliable narrator as there is a significant difference between the norms of the implied author and her own. The main reason for this is that the norms of the author are defined by his postmodernist and postcolonial assessment of the narrator and her 18<sup>th</sup> century context. However, Susan’s narration moves closer to the norms of the author as the story progresses in the sense that she gradually realizes her own misreadings, specifically with regard to Friday, thereby becoming more reliable in the eyes of the reader.

Susan has an acute awareness of herself as the writer of her story. She is therefore a “self-conscious narrator” (Booth, 1996:150). This awareness causes her much bewilderment as she feels overwhelmed by the ethical responsibility of selecting and editing her experiences (as well as Friday’s) in a way that is imaginative yet truthful. Her doubt springs from the fact that she knows that if Foe were to author and publish her story, it would be elevated to a level on par with historical fact. This is exactly what happens when (De)Foe uses her story as the basis for *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the most definitive works of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as a generic blueprint for the representation of the imperial ideal in literature.

With regard to variations of distance, Susan is distant from the implied author, though this distance decreases towards the end of the novel. This distance is firstly temporal, as the implied author is a 20<sup>th</sup> century writer, while Susan’s narration takes place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, the distance also has an ideological basis as the 18<sup>th</sup> century understanding of concepts of space, boundaries and identity differs vastly from that of the present day. According to Booth (1996:152), the most important of the different kinds of distance is that between the unreliable narrator and the implied author, who imparts his / her own judgement of the narrator onto the reader.

There exists a notable moral and intellectual distance between Susan as she is when she is shipwrecked, and Susan towards the end of the novel. Even though Susan’s character shows some progression in the sense that she changes from being idealistic to disillusioned, her identity is never transformed. Since identity transformation in *Robinson Crusoe* is aligned with spatial conversion, Susan’s lack of identity transformation reflects subversively on the way spatiality is represented in the traditional castaway novel. In *Foe*, space mostly

functions to exemplify the characters' existential isolation, while the boundaries imposed by colonialism have become obsolete. Linking up with the concept of existential isolation, Susan seems to be distant from other characters, specifically Cruso, Friday and Foe since she is unable to establish a meaningful relationship with any of them. While Cruso and Foe disregard her and constantly try to undermine her by silencing or misrepresenting her, Friday is consistently apathetic towards her. Moreover, Susan is 'far away' from the contemporary reader in the sense that he/she does not identify with Susan and is mostly frustrated by her ironical lack of self-awareness. The narrative distance that exists between herself, the implied author, other characters as well as the reader, in part defines Susan's existential isolation.

The narrative also establishes a degree of distance between the implied author and the reader, as the implied author enters the narrative in the final part as an enigmatic presence, thereby enhancing this distance. This serves to highlight the way in which the narrative resists closure, leaving the reader with questions regarding the concepts of authorship and writing.

#### ***4.4.3 Narrative distance and the failure of sympathy***

Currie (1998:19) points out that techniques or strategies of narration and focalization can control a reader's sympathy for characters. As explained in chapter two, sympathy is technically produced and controlled by the devices of access, closeness and distance. As the reader has a high level of access to Susan's character, but limited or no access to other characters and events, her narration is potentially biased. Susan is aware that her recollections depend on memory alone and therefore are fallible:

For surely, with every day that passes, our memories grow less certain, as even a statue in marble is worn away by rain, till at last we can no longer tell what shape the sculptor's hand gave it. (17)

Initially, Susan believes that keeping a record of events will enable her to remember everything in its "particularity" (18). However, Susan eventually realizes that her control over her own narrative is superficial and determined by greater forces. During a conversation with Foe on the nature of storytelling and authorship, she laments:

'In the beginning I thought I would tell you the story of the island and, being done with that, return to my former life. But now all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me. I thought I was myself and this girl a creature from

another order speaking words you made up for her. But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you?" (133)

Susan's identity becomes overwhelmed by epistemological uncertainty. Therefore, even though the reader seems to have a high level of access to Susan, this is not truly the case as her narrative gradually becomes infused with doubt, making it inaccessible. It is difficult for the reader to develop a strong sense of sympathy for Susan as access to her is obscured by the existential darkness in which her narrative envelops her: "...my vision was blocked...I could not see" (127).

In terms of closeness, the reader is provided with an inside view as Susan is a first person narrator or character-focalizer. Though the inside view usually fosters the illusion of unmediated access to the character-focalizer, Susan's narration elicits little sympathy for either herself or her cause. The reader probably feels most sympathy for Susan in the first part of the novel, because here her first person narrative depicts the hardship she has to endure on the island realistically and portrays her as a reasonable character forced to endure life with an emotionally unstable Crusoe. However, as the novel develops, the reader's sympathy declines as the result of being confronted with the *constructedness* of Susan's identity and her narrative in the sense that she is a fictional character created by the author to perform a narrative function. In the final section, the implied author inserts himself into the narrative as a character-focalizer, an action that enables him to establish an inside view. However, this inside view is sustained from even deeper within the narrative layers that make up the text, as it seems to be narrated and focalized from the perspectives provided by the different versions of the past on which Susan's story, and eventually *Robinson Crusoe*, is based. . Thereby, the fictional nature of the narrative is flaunted even further and in the process, the boundary between the fictional and real worlds is dissolved, affirming the constructed nature of both fiction and reality.

Degrees of distance refer to the extent of the reader's sympathy for characters and events. The greater the level of access and closeness, the less the distance between reader and narrator will be: "...the deeper our plunge, the more unreliability we will accept without loss of sympathy" (Booth, 1996:154). In the light of Susan's unreliability as a narrator and since both access and closeness are limited in *Foe*, the degree of distance between the reader and the characters, specifically Susan, is significant. This lack of narrative sympathy comments ironically on *Robinson Crusoe*, as Crusoe's character is constructed in such a way that the

degree of distance would be negligible, which means that the reader would experience a strong sense of sympathy for Crusoe. However, Coetzee's revision casts Defoe and his fictional hero in a rather negative light, resulting in a decline of sympathy. This notion relates to the role of historical perspective in a reader's interpretation and understanding of a given text. The historical context is therefore an important aspect of the formation and transformation of genres.

#### **4.5 Narratological strategies and postmodern revision**

Postmodern revision refers to the way in which postmodern narratives engage with history and fiction in order to foreground how both these concepts "take on parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual past" (Hutcheon, 2003:124). In this regard, Coetzee addresses the inconsistencies and omissions of the textual past by rewriting *Robinson Crusoe*, a founding narrative of colonial storytelling, from a postcolonial perspective by recreating its implicit colonial ideology in order to subvert it. Most significantly, the fact that the narrator is a woman inverts the literary conventions of the male-dominated world of 18<sup>th</sup> century fiction and ascribes the novel with a feminist perspective. Coetzee's novel reconceptualizes the plot, the act of creation of the book by its author, Daniel (De)Foe, as well as of the famous characters of Crusoe (in *Foe* spelt Cruso) and Friday. In the process, Coetzee's parodic revision elevates itself to a level of higher historical veracity than its 18<sup>th</sup> century counterpart. Coetzee contests the textual boundaries imposed by *Robinson Crusoe* by means of various narratological strategies, the most important for the purposes of this chapter being intertextuality, allegory and irony. In *Foe*, these postmodernist, postcolonial narratological strategies function interdependently with regard to their sustained focus on the issue of representation, specifically the representation of those voices that have traditionally been suppressed or omitted, or what Gauthier (1997:53) describes as "representation of the margins, and representation which is mediated".

##### **4.5.1 Intertextuality**

Intertextuality denotes how texts both shape and are shaped by other texts, which means that a text is made up of other texts by means of open or covert citations and allusions. A.S. Byatt (2000:46) provides a useful conceptualization of intertextuality by positing that a text is "all the words that are in it, and not only those words, but the other words that precede it, haunt it,

and are echoed in it". Although the use of intertextuality is not limited to postmodernist texts, Hutcheon (2007:118) emphasizes that

postmodernism directly confronts the past of literature – and of historiography, for it too derives from other texts (documents). It uses and abuses those intertextual echoes, inscribing their powerful allusions and then subverting that power through irony.

Postmodernism uses intertextuality to engage with history in an ironical sense in order to challenge the absolutisms created by centralised meaning, thereby situating the origin of meaning within the history of discourse itself. Postmodern intertextuality emphasizes the textual nature of our knowledge of the past, as well as revealing the limitations inherent to this knowledge, since all forms of knowledge, especially historical knowledge, are inevitably biased and determined by social, cultural and political power structures.

Novels that rewrite other novels create new meaning that requires of the reader to be aware of the similarities and discrepancies between the revision and the original text. The reader must therefore not only make sense of the revision, but must also mentally revert back to the original text in order to grasp the full value of what Turk (2011:296) refers to as the “transformative narrative”<sup>19</sup>, and with regard to the intertextual relation between *Foe* and *Robinson Crusoe*, Turk (2011:299) contends that the reader will deliberately

...construct expectations based on textual elements not only of *Foe* but of *Robinson Crusoe*...we expect some similarities between the plot and characters of *Foe* and those of its intertexts...Second, we construct expectations based on the assumption that there is some *reason* for these intertextual relationships; we expect that Coetzee’s novel will, as Genette would say, either imitate or transform Defoe’s in some perceptible and meaningful way. Like any other expectations activated by the rules of configuration, these expectations may be fulfilled, reversed, deflected, or frustrated.

Turk’s conceptualization of intertextuality as a narrative device that creates a set of expectations from the reader is illustrated by the way Coetzee reverts to the ‘original story’ in the sense that he revises and reconfigures Defoe’s master text in a way that directs the reader towards alternative possibilities of *what could have been*. *Foe* relatively quickly reverses and frustrates the expectation that there will be similarities between the plot and characters of itself and Defoe’s novel. The first intertextual allusion occurs with the novel’s title, *Foe*, which is a double-edged reference to *Robinson Crusoe*’s author, Daniel Foe. He changed his

---

<sup>19</sup> Turk adapts her concept of the “transformative narrative” from Genette’s notion of “hypertexts” (Genette, 1997:7), meaning literary texts that transform other literary texts in a direct or indirect manner.

name to Defoe before the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*; moreover, his name also alludes to the way in which his adaptation of Susan's story will oppose and suppress her voice as well as Friday's. Within the first few pages, the reader realizes that *Foe* will offer an alternative perspective on selected characters and events from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Readers familiar with *Robinson Crusoe* will likely be able to identify several obvious differences between these two texts, mainly manifested by characterization, narrative structure, writing strategies and philosophical principles. Intertextuality in *Foe* enables Coetzee to rewrite history in a new context as his novel engages intertextually with both history and fiction. Consequently, Coetzee creates an intertext between 18th and 20<sup>th</sup> century worlds; therefore the rationalist dominant and the ontological dominant. *Foe's* alternate perspective on the past foregrounds ontological issues and as such, defines the dominant shift that has taken place in the castaway novel.

Through its intertextual engagement with *Robinson Crusoe*<sup>20</sup>, *Foe* displaces the authorial voice imposed by realism and thereby critiques the generic traditions from which its 18<sup>th</sup> century intertext originated, namely voyage literature and the adventure romance. In the same way, *Foe* also reflects subversively on related genres *Robinson Crusoe* inspired, most importantly the Robinsonade tradition and the colonial novel. As a re-interpretation and re-contextualization of the castaway novel, *Foe* does not only function as a critique of Defoe and his novel, but also of those ideological formations of white, male, western dominance which *Robinson Crusoe* makes evident.

Coetzee suggests that Defoe did not write his novel from information derived from the account of true-life castaway Selkirk or from other travellers' accounts, but that *Robinson Crusoe* is in fact the result of the various additions and omissions Defoe applied to the 'original' Susan Barton story titled "*The Female Castaway. Being a True Account of a Year Spent on a Desert Island. With Many Strange Circumstances Never Hitherto Related*" (67). In the light of the textual evidence and my interpretation thus far, I agree with Hoegberg (1995:87) when he maintains that Coetzee inserts his novel into the margin between the supposed events of the island (according to Susan Barton) and the writing of *Robinson Crusoe*. In the process, he foregrounds the ideological purposes that motivated Defoe's authorial choices, specifically the 'resurrection' of the white male castaway, Cruso, who dies

---

<sup>20</sup> Though less important for the purposes of this thesis, *Foe* also contains intertextual references to Defoe's novel *Roxanna* (1724), specifically with regard to the events surrounding Susan and her lost daughter.

soon after being rescued from the island, the omission of the female castaway, and the misrepresentation of Friday. All of these authorial choices were made purposefully in order to suppress the voices of the female castaway and the black slave. As such, a resourceful white British male who treats his subjects with paternal kindness and restraint replaces Susan, the female castaway character. Friday, on the other hand, is presented as an eternally obedient and grateful subject to Crusoe's kinship - a 'noble savage' and living proof that the colonial project is to the advantage of both colonizer and colonized.

*Foe* asserts itself as the urtext (though parodically)<sup>21</sup> to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* by situating itself as the prototype that inspired all colonial novels of adventure and shipwreck. However, in contrast to the colonialist assumptions about progress, development and rationalism embraced by most 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century castaway novels, the characters in *Foe* lethargically idle away their time within the framework of a plot that seems to lack development and thematic purpose. Coetzee's ironic inversion of character and plot as well as his foregrounding of an existentialist instead of a rationalist philosophical framework, casts doubt on the whole of *Robinson Crusoe* as well as on its acclaimed 'realism', which undermines textual (and therefore also historical) authority. Intertextuality inserts and then subverts the narrative conventions of *Robinson Crusoe*, thereby dissolving the textual boundaries that separate 'truth' and invention as well as history and fiction.

For the purposes of this chapter, I assign the term 'intertextual gaps' to refer to the missing links present in texts that can take the form of additions, omissions, contradictions and misrepresentations. These gaps are mostly the result of narrative manipulation and are mostly intentional and ideologically motivated. A central philosophical concern in *Foe* has to do with the complex relationship between art and reality. Susan's failure in having her story told is a metaphor for the gap between art and reality with regard to art's inability to provide a precise or completely truthful representation of reality. *Foe* therefore relays a postmodernist scepticism about the implication of concepts such as 'truth', since it conceptualizes the 'truth' as subjective and conditional. Linked to the idea that art is unable to represent reality, is the notion of the distance, or "unbridgeable gap" (Williams, 1988:34) between text and world. In this regard, intertextuality in *Foe* foregrounds the various gaps between historical event and narrated story. In this way, Coetzee suggests that both historical

---

<sup>21</sup> *Foe's* claim is without substance and an indication of the novel's playful engagement with its main intertext. The reader knows that *Foe* did not really precede *Robinson Crusoe*, if only because its publication date (1719) preceded *Foe* (1986) by 267 years.

and fictional narratives are subjective; moreover, the processes that construct these narratives are both selective and repressive in the ordering of events and characters. As Coetzee's revision illustrates, the transposition of events and characters into narratives inevitably creates gaps, no matter how transparent and objective the mediation of these events and characters attempts to be.

There are three important intertextual gaps in *Foe* that are manifested by different versions of the past, offered by Defoe (and by extension also Foe), Susan, and Cruso. The reader of *Foe* tries to reconcile these contrasting perspectives in order to arrive at an understanding of Susan's experience and it soon becomes clear that the gaps are the result of the silences embedded in the text. It is, however, Friday's silence that stands central in the versions that Susan and (De)Foe give of the past. Susan remarks to Foe that "[t]o tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!" (67).

Friday's past imposes limits on Susan's story in the sense that her story remains incomplete unless she can account for how he lost his tongue and came to be Cruso's slave. Since Friday never communicates his story in a way that the other characters – his oppressors - can comprehend, he is obscured by his silence and docility, thereby manifesting his position as voiceless, unknowable Other: "...the story of Friday [...] is properly not a story but a puzzle or hole in the narrative" (121).

This remark, made by Susan to the author Daniel Foe when she explains to him that it is impossible for her to speak on Friday's behalf, points to the fact that Friday's silence represents an integral part of Susan's story, but a part that will remain untold. In a discussion of how to reconcile the writing process with the mysteries surrounding Friday's story, Foe remarks to Susan that "[i]n every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken, I believe. Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story." (141).

As an author, Foe is acutely aware that stories not only consist of what is said, but also of what remains unsaid, or "unspoken" (141). Moreover, it is often that which is unspoken (the silences) that ultimately defines a story and reveals its ideological formations. Foe knows that unless an author is able to probe the silence that lies at the heart of a story, the story would only reveal a superficial truth, leaving both author and reader "none the wiser" (141).

Foe compares the writing process to being “lost in a maze of doubting” (135). This suggests that stories are a jumble of truth and invention in which the author might get lost if he does not, as Foe advises, “plant a sign or marker in the ground” (135) so that he can “have something to return to, and not get worse lost” (135). To Foe, this “marker” in the text has more to do with thematic development that enables the structural organization of the text, and less with the distinction between fact and fiction. Interestingly, the image of placing an insignia or marker in the ground suggests an act of appropriation that claims ownership of the text and the stories inscribed in it. During an earlier conversation with Susan, Foe contends that a structure of “[l]oss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, then middle, then end” (117) should be imposed on narratives in order for a story to develop sensibly and not be “too much the same throughout” (117). Foe’s solution to the authorial predicament created by Friday’s silence is to appropriate his silence and integrate it with the thematic and structural development of the narrative. He therefore uses – and abuses - his authorial power to make “Friday’s silence speak, as well as the silence surrounding Friday” (142). In this way, *Robinson Crusoe* becomes the manifestation of (De)Foe’s attempt to create meaning out of Friday’s silence; this takes the form of giving Friday a tongue and a voice – though not his own. In this way, Friday, like Crusoe, becomes a textual manifestation of Defoe’s 18<sup>th</sup> century ideological beliefs. As such, his words and thoughts are not his own, but those of the implied author, Daniel Defoe. Susan’s struggle for autonomy becomes a metaphor for the complex way in which a text – and its characters – is never completely free from the influence of its author or the author’s context.

Even though some silences, such as the absence of the female voice, might be partially recoverable from written history, some silences have been so ingrained in historical memory that they have become impenetrable. Friday’s silence represents an intertextual gap that can never be bridged and as such his silence is an outcome of the lies and manipulated ‘truths’ that form part of all written histories. His silence, which can also be considered as a condition of passive resistance against his oppressors, confines his identity to the realm of powerlessness and oppression, because he cannot construct his own narrative in the language of his oppressors. Various critics support an interpretation of Friday’s silence as a means of resistance. Marais (2001:137) maintains that silence in *Foe* enables a form of ethical resistance associated with the other’s ability to resist violence and effect change by instilling a “burdensome anxiety of responsibility for the other” (Marais, 2001:137), while Dragunoiu (2001:317,321) points to the existentialist implication of Friday’s silence in the sense that he

intimates his story by withholding it, thereby situating his silence as an act of dissent that binds Susan to him in a relationship of mutual oppression. Gauthier (1997:65) suggests that Coetzee uses silence to resist “representational governance in both the semiotic and political senses of representation”, thereby inserting the voice of the colonized into historical writing by signifying its absence.

Intertextual gaps in *Foe* are manifested by conflicting versions of the past that link up with various semiotic gaps in the sense that the gap between signified and signifier becomes a metaphor for the distance between historical event and narrated history. The semiotic gap between what a word is intended to mean and how it is interpreted, is suggested by Susan’s realization of the difficulties involved in representation, specifically with regard to the way in which it is impossible to assess Friday’s understanding of the relationship between signified and signifier:

While he works, I teach him the names of things. I hold up a spoon and say, “Spoon, Friday!” and give the spoon into his hand... hoping thus that in time the word *Spoon* will echo in his mind willy-nilly whenever his eye falls on a spoon.

What I fear most is that after years of speechlessness the very notion of speech may be lost to him. When I take the spoon from his hand (but is it truly a spoon to him or a mere thing? – I do not know), and say *Spoon*, how can I be sure he does not think I am chattering to myself as a magpie or an ape does, for the pleasure of hearing the noise I make, and feeling the play of my tongue, as he himself used to find pleasure in playing the flute? (57)

In the above extract, the signified is the stem-and-bowl utensil used for scooping and eating food, while the signifier is the “spoon”. Susan wonders whether Friday has any capacity to understand or learn a language, and fears that he is unable to perceive any relationship between objects and concepts (or signifiers) and what they represent. Friday may therefore not even grasp the concept of ‘language’ or “speech”, and might therefore never be able to communicate. Another possibility is that his seeming lack of comprehension might have more to do with his own passive resistance than “speechlessness”. The notion of semiotic distance is not only applicable to Friday, but also to the vast distance between Susan’s story (in the form of a manuscript and letters) and Foe’s representation of her story. Coetzee seems to draw a correlation between Friday’s inability or unwillingness to understand language (and to be ‘understood’, in return), and the way in which Susan’s story avoids representation. In this way, Susan’s story, like all stories omitted and suppressed from historical narratives, is relegated to mere meaningless “chattering”; or “noise” without meaning.

An important aspect of the intertextual gaps in *Foe* is the fact that Coetzee does not attempt to explain the mysteries surrounding Susan, her lost daughter, and, most importantly, Friday. Instead, his revision resists closure and relates the gaps in the text to the problems of realist representation and the verification of historical ‘truths’; thereby, *Foe* becomes an allegory for the intertextual nature of reading and writing.

#### 4.5.2 *Allegory*

As one of Coetzee’s earlier works, *Foe* can in the first place be considered as a political allegory for the implications and repercussions of the Western imposition of power on colonized territories. In addition, Coetzee’s revision explores the intricate relationship between truth and fiction that transcribes past event into narrated story; consequently, *Foe* continuously brings the act of reading to the reader’s attention while also commenting on the act of writing. Defoe’s authorship of Susan’s story symbolises the way in which written accounts of past events are subjected to processes of ordering and selection that involves placing emphasis on certain episodes and suppressing of others. Throughout, the reader is made aware of the revisionist nature of writing in the sense that *Foe* can be said to constitute a ‘rewriting of a rewriting’, as it revises *Robinson Crusoe* - which in itself is a revision of the story Susan relates to Foe. According to Lin (2001:1-2), Coetzee’s allegorical revision manages to incorporate ...”three highly fluid motifs – history, writing, and being – and emphasizes their simultaneous significations by showing that these motifs are transferable to and shareable by one another”.

Coetzee shows how the production of history is interdependently related to the concepts of writing and being. As such, *Foe* shows history as a concept that has linguistic and philosophical associations and in linguistic terms, history is defined by the systems that make up meaning in a language. Language therefore conveys processes and assigns meaning to concepts, in this case ‘history’, which can broadly be defined as a system of knowledge that records and analyses past events. As this process of documentation and analysis is subject to manipulation and control, I agree with Marais’s (1989:15) contention that “authoritarian practice is made possible and underpinned by language”. The reason for this is that the syntactical structure of language determines the positions of subject and object, while the relation between them is also indicative of power relations, for example the power relation implied by master (subject) and slave (object). This implies that in the acts of writing and reading, the projection of meaning is determined by positions of power and powerlessness,

oppressor and oppressed, as Susan's attempt to colonize Friday's story suggests. Language can therefore be a means of subjection, but also of subversion, as the dissolution of boundaries in *Foe* proves.

In a philosophical sense, the act of writing is a means of exploring and expressing modes of being. Anyone who is prevented from creating his / her own historical narrative by writing about his / her past, is therefore denied an important aspect of existence, which is the right to have a 'voice' and be acknowledged. All that is known about Friday's identity is what others' narratives ascribe to it. Even if he wanted to, Friday does not have the ability or legitimacy to represent himself in an 18<sup>th</sup> century British context. This notion highlights how colonialism provided a context in which authors assumed ultimate power in the representation of colonized subjects. Nonetheless, it should be noted that during the colonial period spanning the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a very small number of Black authors writing in English did resist imperialist depictions of Africans in their work, such as Olaudah Equiano from Nigeria and Tiyo Soga from South Africa.

Lin (2001:2) draws a parallel between postcolonial and allegorical writing when she argues that the "inaccessibility of Friday's personal history thus embodies a much broader implication in that Coetzee turns postcolonial writing, the writing of a suppressed personal history, into a problem of allegorical writing, which is the writing of history in general". In *Foe* the writing of history becomes an existentialist issue; an allegory of the way in which a writer's access to the past determines his ability to create a historical narrative as well as a personal history. Coetzee relates the linguistic act of writing to the philosophical issue of being, and in this regard, Lin (2001:5) emphasizes that the problem of writing also becomes the problem of identity, as Susan's identity seems to be firmly invested in her story. *Foe* begins as a novel about a woman writing an adventure story and develops into a treatise on the nature of writing and its implications for being:

When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso. Is that the fate of all storytellers? Yet I was as much a body ad Cruso. I ate and drank, I woke and slept, I longed. (51)

Susan's struggle with writing her personal history illustrates the relation between the act of writing and the act of being – without a written account of her story, her existence becomes insubstantial and indeterminate, like an apparition. Given Susan's struggle with writing her

story, I want to apply Lin's (2001:5) assertion that the "thematic shift" from writing to being is illustrated by the development of Susan's identity, to the way her worldview gradually changes during the course of the novel. This change is manifested in terms of her preconceptions about history, writing and being; initially, she is unable to form a connection between the act of writing and the state of her being. Moreover, it is not until much later in the novel that she is able to regard Friday with empathy, as a fellow human being rather than a "dumb beast" (32) or a "cannibal...a devourer of the dead" (106). When she does eventually achieve a degree of insight regarding her own role in Friday's oppression, she is able to acknowledge the connection between writing and being.

This connection is illustrated towards the end of the novel when Foe suggests that Friday's muteness is actually a blessing, since "as long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish'" (148). In return, Susan counters his argument, asserting that Friday's desires are indeed clear to her:

'Friday's desires are not dark to me. He desires to be liberated, as I do too. Our desires are plain, his and mine. But how is Friday to recover his freedom, who has been a slave all his life? That is the true question. Should I liberate him into a world of wolves and expect to be commended for it? What liberation is it to be packed off to Jamaica, or turned out of doors into the night with a shilling in your hand? Even in his native Africa, dumb and friendless, would he know freedom? There is an urging that we feel, all of us, in our hearts, to be free; yet which of us can say what freedom truly is? When I am rid of Friday, will I then know freedom? Was Crusoe free, that was despot of an island all his own? If so, it brought no joy to him that I could discover. As to Friday, how can Friday know what freedom means when he barely knows his name?' (148-9)

In the above extract, Susan's speculation on the nature of freedom aligns the concept of writing with the concept of being. In the process, she seems to relate the freedom to tell her story (or freedom of expression) to a kind of liberation that is capable of surpassing the restraints and restrictions of one's historical, cultural or ideological context. Susan realizes that her desire to tell her story is a reflection of her need for autonomous self-actualization through the attainment of existential freedom. However, when she becomes aware of Foe's intention to appropriate her story along with Friday's, she realizes that the freedom they long for will remain unattainable. As such, Susan's transformation is defined by her changing attitude towards Friday, as her view of him develops from initially perceiving him as an "uncomfortable presence" (23), to an absence that threatens to erase her personal history and finally, as an equal, someone who is "his own master" (150), who, though "not free...is not

in subjection” (150). In this regard, the irony inherent to Susan’s initial misreading of Friday, will be examined in the following section.

### 4.5.3 *Irony*

Postmodernism uses irony as a primary mode of expression to subvert conventions and negotiate contradictions. The title of Coetzee’s novel is foremost ironical as the word “Foe” takes on a double meaning, referring to the name of Susan’s supposed benefactor, Daniel Foe, as well as his central role in the suppression of her and her story. Despite providing Susan and Friday with food and shelter, and also taking Susan to his bed, Foe proves to be her enemy, as his name (which was later changed to Defoe) suggests. Foe’s antagonism manifests itself at two levels. At an individual level, he is antagonistic towards Susan in the sense that he consciously tries to stifle her creativity and imagination, while at a social level, his antagonism is revealed through his conscious decision to ignore colonialism’s dark truth of violent appropriation and domination, as symbolized by Friday’s mutilated tongue. Irony is further made evident through Susan’s reluctant subjugation of a voiceless Friday, as well as her inability to see Friday’s silence as a form of passive resistance.

Susan’s unwitting subjugation of Friday is based on her colonialist assumptions regarding sameness and difference. As Friday is black, a “Negro with a head of fuzzy wool, naked save for a pair of rough drawers” (6) she immediately categorizes him as being different, “like a dog” (21). On the island, Susan hardly notices Friday and when she does, she regards him with aversion; a “shadowy creature” (24) and an ‘other’, inferior to herself, a white European woman:

‘Hitherto I had given to Friday’s life as little thought as I would have a dog’s or any other dumb beast’s – less indeed, for I had a horror of his mutilated state which made me shut him from my mind and flinch away when he came near me. This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit of soul – call it what you will – stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior. (32)

The inevitable closeness of life on the island leads her to gradually consider him in a different light. Certain episodes, such as when Friday casts the petals on the water, cause Susan to acknowledge his human attributes and qualities. Much later on, his dancing in robes (92) and playing on the flute (96) has a similar effect on her, as these episodes reveal the creative and sentimental aspects of Friday’s character. However, despite these instances that arouse her empathy for him, she still oppresses Friday and tries to colonize his story. In one of her

journal entries, she admits that her frustration with Friday causes her to sometimes “use words only as the shortest way to subject him” (60). She also confesses that she understands “why a man will choose to be a slaveowner” (61). Susan therefore knows that language can be used as a means to assert power, as her communication with Friday only takes the form of a handful of commands (inherited from Cruso) on her part and glum compliance on his. Ironically, it is not until much later that she is able to recognize the similarities between herself and Foe with regard to their ambition to have total narrative control over another’s story; by attempting to appropriate Friday’s story, she has done the same to him as Foe has done to her.

Consequently, her attempts to engage with Friday on her own subjective terms are futile. She does not have the insight to recognize that she is misreading Friday’s situation. While staying in Foe’s home, she sets out to teach Friday basic English. She explains to an uncomprehending Friday that:

Through the medium of words I have given Mr Foe the particulars of you and Mr Cruso and of my year on the island and the years you and Mr Cruso spent there all alone, as far as I can supply them; and all these particulars Mr. Foe is weaving into a story which will make us famous throughout the island, and rich too. You will have money with which to buy your way to Africa or Brazil, as the desire moves you, bearing fine gifts, and be reunited with your parents, if they remember you, and marry at last and have children, sons and daughters. And I will give you your own copy of our book, bound in leather, to take with you. I will show you how to trace your name in it, page after page, so that your children may see that their father is known in all parts of the world where books are read. Is writing not a fine thing, Friday? Are you not filled with joy to know that you will live forever, after a manner? (58)

Susan’s interpretation of Friday’s situation is naïve and even patronizing. She idealistically believes that Friday will be liberated – with a copy of his leather-bound life story in hand - once he is reunited with his own people, which she assumes to be living in Africa or Brazil. She is ignorant about the fact that Friday himself possibly has no idea where he comes from or with whom he ‘belongs’. Her over-simplified viewpoint does not fully acknowledge the atrocities that have been committed against Friday, such as the greater legacy of which his enslavement and mutilation form part. Susan also proves her complicity with the emerging British colonial mindset when she claims ownership of Friday, as she indicates in letters to Foe: “If Friday is not mine to set free, whose is he?” (99), and “I do not love him, but he is mine” (111). By seeing it as her duty to act as Friday’s saviour, his impoverishment and oppression are relegated to his material situation and legal status. Susan does not realize that

Friday's deprivation is rather an existential condition from which his oppressors (and therefore also herself) will never be able to free him. Moreover, she does not recognize that like Cruso and Foe, she only wants to appropriate Friday's story in order to claim it for herself by absorbing his story into her own. This passive denial of the truth causes her to be blindsided by her own ambition, as she is unable to present Foe with a coherent narrative as a result of her preoccupation to get Friday to reveal his story to her.

Even after realizing that taking control of Friday's story is a form of subjugation, she struggles to see his silence as a form of ethical resistance. Initially, she ascribes his silence only to his muteness and firmly believes that if Friday had the ability to speak, he would do so: "You err most tellingly in failing to distinguish between my silences and the silences of a being such as Friday. Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being reshaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others" (121). Susan draws a distinction between her own self-determined silence (as a manifestation of her desire to be known only by the story of the island), and Friday's silence: "No matter what he is to himself (is he anything to himself? – how can he tell us?), what he is to the world is what I make of him." (122). She reveals her ignorance when she explains to Foe that unlike her own silence, Friday's silence is a manifestation of his powerlessness, and that

[t]herefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is the child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born. Whereas the silence I keep regarding Bahia and other matters is chosen and purposeful: it is my own silence. (122)

Ironically, Susan believes that Friday's silence is enforced on him by his physical condition and limited mastery of language, while her own is chosen. This implies that her silence is powerful, while Friday's silence is "helpless" (122) and in this regard Susan regards her silence as a means through which she is able to prevent Foe from gaining control over her story. Ironically, her silence does not seem to have any real impact on Foe and in his adaptation of her story, her silence is reflected by the fact that he completely omits her from the story.

As I have already suggested, Friday's aloofness as well as the disdain that Susan senses from him implies that his silence is the result of an unwillingness to communicate. Early on, Susan is almost able to grasp the reason behind Friday's detachment when she notes that the "unnatural years Friday had spent with Cruso had deadened his heart, making him cold,

incurious, like an animal wrapt entirely itself” (70). She is therefore partially able to see Friday’s personality as the outcome of being colonized and mutilated, but she naively believes that Friday’s contempt is limited to Cruso. She is unable to relate it to a wider system of colonial subjugation and oppression of which she also forms part and she does not see that through his silence, he might be resisting her attempts to take control of his life and his fate. His silence defies her attempts to turn his story into narrative, and thereby colonize him. Friday’s silence is therefore powerful because it is non-compliant, as it enables him to assume narrative control - not only over his own story, but Susan’s as well since her story will remain incomplete without his. In this way, the story of the island, as appropriated by (De)Foe, becomes the story of Friday’s silence.

This chapter has related Foe to the transformation of the castaway novel genre by examining how *Foe’s* subversion of *Robinson Crusoe* is defined by its dissolution of textual boundaries. The interchangeable way in which concepts of history and fiction manifest in *Foe* suggests that both fictional and historiographical writing may reshape the past for ideological purposes. The dissolution of textual boundaries in *Foe* forces the reader to reconfigure the generic parameters of the traditional castaway novel in terms of the roles of author and narrator as well as formations of spatiality and identity. As a postcolonial castaway novel, *Foe* embraces the notion of multiple truths, thereby situating the genre in the present, “to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological” (Hutcheon, 2003:110), or monological in its representation of spatiality and identity. It is therefore Coetzee’s exploration of the boundaries that separates fact/history from fiction and that captures and envisages the shift towards a transformed genre of the castaway novel.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES IN THE CASTAWAY NOVEL:**

#### **YANN MARTEL'S *LIFE OF PI***

##### **5.1 Contextualization**

While Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is defined by a rationalist worldview expressed in terms of spatial appropriation with the imposition of boundaries, and shows evidence of hegemonic practices that infer fixed, generic and personal identities, *Life of Pi* (2002) resists the implications of a rationalist worldview. Instead, postmodernist and postcolonial notions of hybridity, duality and alterity or otherness inform the narrative, and together with the formation and transformation of identity, the aforementioned notions contest definitive markers in support of a dynamic interaction of the characters with their environment that ensures constant changes in the formation of identity.

It is significant that the survivor of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* is a boy, as this not only completes the argument of generic transformation over time, but also points to the inclusion of the other to accommodate change. Together with this radical change in perspective, Martel also elaborates on the imaginative and transcendental possibilities of storytelling. Pi Patel, the central character, is able to survive 227 days cast away on the open sea on a lifeboat. Pi's awe-inspiring account of his death-defying ordeal presents the reader with two possible versions. The first story, to quote the official report on the shipwreck tragedy, is "an astounding story of courage and endurance" (319) and suggestive of the transcendental power of the spiritual over the merely physical. The other story, however, is a horrible and grim reminder of the corrosive effect physical deprivation can have on the human condition.

In the light of this contextualization, the central question that arises in this chapter is concerned with how narratological strategies, specifically metafiction, intertextuality and the carnivalesque, destabilize and dissolve the boundaries between fiction and reality and the rational and irrational. Related to Martel's destabilization of the world of the 'real' and the rational, this chapter will also examine how the novel's representation of space, boundaries and identity manifests generic transformation of the castaway novel.

The main objective of his chapter in relation to my central thesis is to confirm *Life of Pi* as the culmination of generic transformation of the castaway novel as the dissolution of boundaries in *Life of Pi* transcends the limitations of a rationalist experience of space and identity and consigns fiction, or storytelling, to the realm of the irrational and imaginative. In this way, Martel's postmodernist novel resists an overtly rationalist interpretation of the world, focusing instead on moral and spiritual transcendence in order to foreground the redeeming and transformational potential of storytelling, which is manifested by Pi's adaptation of the 'truth' to ensure his physical and psychological survival.

As the title suggests, the novel mainly focuses on a defining experience in the life of the main character, an Indian boy named Piscine (Pi) Molitor Patel. Though deeply religious, Pi has an unconventionally hybridized view of religion as he proclaims to love God so much that he embraces three religions - Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. For most of the novel, Pi tells of his miraculous survival after the Japanese cargo ship carrying himself, his family as well as a collection of zoo animals, sinks in the Pacific on a voyage from India to Canada. Pi is the only human survivor of the shipwreck and he finds himself sharing a lifeboat with a hyena, a zebra with a badly broken leg, an orangutan, and an adult male Bengal tiger, called Richard Parker. Within a few days only Pi and Richard Parker remain, and the two castaways endure their fate together until the lifeboat reaches the coast of Mexico after almost seven months adrift at sea. However, when the officials from the Japanese Ministry of Transport call his story into question, Pi provides an alternative version in which the animals are replaced with people. In this version of events, Pi assumes the persona of the fearsome tiger, Richard Parker. His mother is the orangutan of the first story, the zebra is a Taiwanese sailor with a badly damaged leg and the hyena is a ravenous Frenchman, who also was the ship's cook. In this gut-wrenching story, Pi has to bear witness to the butchering of his mother and a Chinese sailor by the deranged cook. In a desperate moment, Pi in turn kills the cook and becomes the sole survivor of the shipwreck.

*Life of Pi* takes the qualifying generic motifs of the castaway novel genre, namely the journey, the shipwreck, the island, solitude, and survival, and reinterprets them as constituents of a liminal state in which identity transformation and hybridization take place. The physical, moral and spiritual implications of being cast away lie at the core of *Life of Pi* and suggest that the novel can broadly be categorized as a castaway novel. Martel's novel also engages with several other genres, such as the adventure romance, albeit mostly for the

sake of parody, the epic (in its exploration of the epic struggle between man and beast), the bildungsroman (in the depiction of Pi's moral and spiritual growth and maturation), fantasy (in its depiction of animals with human personalities and an island with flesh-eating trees), the epistolary genre (in the form of various documents and Pi's journal entries) and also, as the title *Life of Pi* suggests, fictional autobiography.

*Life of Pi* is undoubtedly a postmodernist novel with its conflation of the ontologies of the rational and the irrational, emphasizing notions of multiplicity, hybridity, and liminality, while the narrative predictably resists closure and engages the reader in the process of interpretation and deciding which of Pi's stories to believe. On top of this, the novel also deals with prominent postcolonial issues, such as multiculturalism, migration, and displacement. In a view that highlights the novel's theme of the dynamics of traumatic experience and its aftermath, Duncan (2008:167) defines *Life of Pi* as a "postmodern survival narrative", as Pi's story not only articulates his individual trauma, but in addition, "invite[s] contemplation of the aesthetics of memory, the construction of selfhood, and cultural representation" (Duncan, 2008:167). As my own analysis and interpretation of Pi's identity (trans)formation suggest, Duncan (2008:168) maintains that postmodern narratives position the survivor not as a centred, stable self, but rather as decentred, fragmented, and, I would like to add, hybridized by the reconciliation of the past, untraumatized self with the present, traumatized one.

It is important to note, however, that despite the novel's inherent postmodernist premise, Martel is critical of the rational agnosticism or atheism of more radical forms of postmodernist fiction with regard to their sense of "depthlessness" (Wolf, 2004:19) that manifests as a tendency to neglect ethical and existential issues in order to persistently focus on deconstructive processes instead. According to Wolf (2004:119), *Life of Pi* transcends radical postmodernism's anti-metaphysical approach – referring to speculative and unexamined assumptions that have not been empirically confirmed by logic and observation, such as religious belief - by scrutinizing the failures of such an overly secularized and rationalist worldview in terms of its "lack of openness towards religious questions" (119). Stratton (2004:6), however, aligns Martel's position on religion with the novel's postmodernist approach, as the narrative does not relate God's existence to fact or faith, but rather to the question of which story is the better story: the one that confirms God's existence or the one that denies it? Though I agree with Wolf (2004) that the novel is critical of an

overly secularized and rationalist worldview, like Stratton (2004) I do not consider it to be anti-postmodernist – rather, I would suggest that postmodernism’s open-endedness establishes a context in which Martel can explore the possibility that God may indeed exist. Martel therefore seems to relate rationalism to agnosticism, logic and reason, while he relates the irrational to religious belief, spirituality, and imagination. *Life of Pi* makes evident the postmodern tendency to blur the boundaries between the knowable and unknowable, or fiction and reality, by means of the narratological strategies of metafiction, intertextuality and the carnivalesque, Martel uses metafiction to flaunt his novel’s fictional status and to interrogate its narrative form and content, while intertextuality engages with more familiar or traditional castaway novels to reveal how the process of revision assists the reader in making sense of existence, similar to the way in which Pi’s revision of the ‘true’ story helps him to come to terms with the tragic events of his past. The narratological strategy of the carnivalesque renders the spirit of medieval carnival into literary form to effect “the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings” (Dentith, 1996:65) associated with carnival. The carnivalesque has the ability to temporarily invert and subvert social hierarchies and power structures in order to “destabilize...to make comic that is taken seriously the social order” (Wolfreys, 2004:27). The carnivalesque is defined by a subversive and liberating approach to dominant cultural forms and beliefs which in *Life of Pi* is mainly manifested by grotesque realism. In this regard, *Life of Pi* parodies notions of heroism and endurance often depicted in the adventure novel and conflates them with Pi’s vulnerability and despair, while grotesque realism emphasizes the novel’s themes of physical and moral decay as well as human depravity.

Pi’s ability to adapt by co-existing with a tiger in a small space and maintaining dominance over his section of the lifeboat enables him to survive. In the novel, Pi’s ability to demarcate space becomes an important aspect of survival. Pi realizes that he has to train Richard Parker to remain within his own territory:

I had to make him understand that I was the top tiger and that his territory was limited to the floor of the boat, the stern bench and the side benches as far as the middle cross bench. I had to fix in his mind that the top of the tarpaulin and the bow of the boat, bordered by the neutral territory of the middle bench, was my territory and utterly forbidden to him. (168)

The notion of demarcating and organising space alludes to *Robinson Crusoe*, as Crusoe constructs enclosures not only for the practical purpose of providing refuge or storage, but

also to demarcate ‘civilized’ and domestic space from chaotic nature. Pi therefore has to construct ‘markers’ that designate territory by regularly splashing his urine onto the areas that are off-limits to the tiger (172). After they have been castaways for a number of months, Pi notices how the space inside the lifeboat has gradually been altered by their habitation of it, as “the lifeboat was resembling a zoo enclosure more and more: Richard Parker had his area for sleeping and resting, his food stash, his lookout and now his water hole” (188-9).

The demarcation of space on the lifeboat extends to the tiger’s territory as well, and it seems remarkable that Pi is able to transform the lifeboat by re-organizing space in terms of subdividing it according to proportional divisions that not only separate man and animal, but also enable Richard Parker to orientate himself in space. In a way that is similar to human domestication of space, animals also need to organize space before it can become a habitation.

Though Pi’s survival does to a large extent depend on his ability to dominate Richard Parker through the application of reason, the narrative relates the transformation of his identity to redemption, morality and spirituality instead of appropriation and domination. The novel’s sceptical approach to reason (as an aspect of the rational), is illustrated when Pi struggles to cope with the physical and psychological trauma of the shipwreck:

Every single thing I value in life has been destroyed. And I am allowed no explanation? I am to suffer hell without any account from heaven? In that case, what is the purpose of reason, Richard Parker? Is it no more than to shine at practicalities – the getting of food, clothing and shelter? Why can’t reason give greater answers? Why can we throw a question further that we can pull in an answer? Why such a vast net if there’s so little fish to catch”? (98)

And also:

Reason comes to do battle for you. You are reassured. Reason is fully equipped with the latest weapons of technology. But, to your amazement, despite superior tactics and a number of undeniable victories, reason is laid low. You feel yourself weakening, wavering. Your anxiety becomes dread. (161)

In these passages, Pi questions the ability of reason to explain the meaning of existence, particularly in the light of severe personal traumas, such as Pi’s loss of his family and everything familiar to him in the shipwreck. Pi suggests that reason is a useful tool with which to solve practical problems, but that it does not provide answers to those questions pertaining to human existence that ironically, are the questions that confound us. Despite its

“vast” scope, there are actually very few important questions that reason can successfully address, and it particularly fails to provide insight into the dynamics of suffering and loss. Pi suggests that if you rely only on reason to guide you during trying times, your morale will weaken, you will be overcome with “dread” (161) and thus lose the vital survival skill of “paying attention to what is close at hand and immediate” (168). *Life of Pi* therefore resists interpretation based on a rationalist experience of the world – focusing instead on moral and spiritual transcendence – in order to foreground the redeeming and transformational potential of storytelling. In Martel’s novel this is manifested by Pi’s re-invention of the ‘truth’ to ensure his physical and psychological survival.

Pi’s two contrasting versions of events fuse reality or truth with fiction and relate narrative representation, or storytelling, to the realm of the irrational and the imaginative. This is illustrated by the tension between the two worlds embodied by Pi and the Japanese officials respectively. Throughout the novel, Pi’s character is associated with the metaphysical world of spirituality, imagination and the intangible. Even though his eclectic religious fervour at first seems to be the whimsical fancy of a child, his ordeal proves his beliefs to be a solid base for his incredible story. Accordingly, as the purpose of the Japanese officials’ interview with Pi is to establish the reason - “mechanical or structural” (312) - why the *Tsimtsum* sank, they represent the rational world of logic and verifiable facts. Initially, the officials refuse to believe that Pi managed to survive with an adult Bengal tiger castaway with him on the small lifeboat. They insist on hearing “what really happened”, the “straight facts” as opposed to a “story”, since they consider stories to be fictional events that inevitably contain “an element of invention” (302). Pi, however, counters their argument and asks: “Isn’t telling about something – using words, English or Japanese – already something of an invention? Isn’t just looking upon this world already something of an invention?” Pi implies that the acts of “looking” and ‘telling’ are subjective and partial experiences. He seems to suggest that even the representation of “straight facts” can in itself never be more than just an *interpretation* of reality. Pi regards stories as transcultural and universal phenomena that facilitate our “looking upon this world”, that enable us to order, interpret and represent our experience of the world. Accordingly, Pi’s story enables him to process and adjust to the tragedy of his ordeal. As internal character focalizer, Pi fictionalizes the ‘truth’ to ensure his physical and psychological survival and as a result, emerges a spiritually tested but exalted human being. Storytelling thereby transcends the rational world of cold hard fact and becomes concomitant to the notion of survival.

## 5.2     **Recontextualizing archetypes of the castaway novel**

In *Life of Pi*, the motifs of shipwreck, the island, solitude/social disconnection, and survival manifest in a manner that reflects the postmodern and postcolonial contexts. The first motif, shipwreck, occurs when the Japanese cargo ship, the *Tsimtsum*, on which Pi and his family are travelling to Canada, sinks in a storm. In the first version, Pi is the only human survivor and in the second, his mother, the cook and a Taiwanese sailor survive the shipwreck though all, except Pi, die shortly afterwards.

The second motif, the island, takes the shape of the lifeboat. As the lifeboat is in perpetual motion, but without direction, it is a metaphor for Pi's existential displacement and despair. The lifeboat also becomes the setting for a vicious and bloody battle for survival. However, despite these connotations, the lifeboat also becomes a site for spiritual discovery (Irwin, 2002:69) and as such, it embodies the dualities of life and death, freedom and imprisonment, and imagination and reality. In this regard, Cobb (2003) defines the lifeboat as a "simultaneously claustrophobic and expansive setting, a stage that is by turns a circus ring, a killing field and a place of prayer". Irwin (2002:69) points to the interesting fact that according to true accounts in newspapers and autobiographies, the number of castaways who survive in lifeboats far outnumber the accounts of survival on islands. He suggests this is because a boat is always in motion, which improves the odds of it being discovered.

The third motif, namely solitude/social disconnection informs the context in which Pi's transformation takes place. Pi describes the loneliness and pain that result from the loss of his family as "intense ... a ripping of the nerves ... an ache of the heart" (98). As the days pass, Pi's existential isolation becomes increasingly pronounced; during his interview with the Japanese officials, he describes his journey as one that was marked by intense feelings of "solitude" (311) and despair. Though Richard Parker's presence is "overwhelming" (151), the tiger is hardly a companion but a wild animal, whose stare is "intense, cold and unflinching ... and spoke of self-possession on the point of exploding with rage" (152). Ironically, as Pi also admits, the life-threatening presence of Richard Parker on the lifeboat motivates him to survive his ordeal:

I will tell you a secret: a part of me was glad about Richard Parker. A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and

my tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living. I hated him for it, yet at the same time I was grateful. I am grateful. It is the plain truth: without Richard Parker I wouldn't be alive today. (164)

Richard Parker therefore forces Pi to focus on staying alive, as you cannot share a lifeboat with a tiger without constantly being aware of how easy it would be for the animal to kill you, unless you constantly monitor its behaviour and mood. It is the threat posed by Richard Parker that is continually on Pi's mind, rather than his devastating loss and the hopelessness of his situation. If Pi were to focus too much on the latter, he would in all probability have decided that he could not bear to go on living. Nonetheless, the novel is very clear about the cruelty of the battle to survive, especially with regard to its examination of themes of human depravity. During his interview with the officials, Pi suggests that the "evil" hidden within him, the "selfishness, anger, ruthlessness" (311) gave him the strength and determination to kill the cook, and consequently to survive. The motif of survival is also linked to storytelling, as Pi's construction of narrative enables him to establish a sense of distance between himself and his desperate situation, similar to the way in which Roberto in *IDB* escapes from his reality through writing. This points to the redemptive potential of fiction and in this regard, Pi constructs an alternative version of events, a version he can live with and that gives him the motivation to survive.

Martel's novel incorporates a new motif not seen in the other postmodernist novels, namely the relationship between humans and nature, particularly humans and animals, and interprets it in the context of respect and the acknowledgement that animals are different from though not inferior to humans. As such, Martel rethinks the utilitarian and hierarchical way in which the traditional castaway novel tends to portray the relationship between man and nature. In a view which supports this argument, Dwyer (2005:13) contends that such a utilitarian view of nature, particularly of animals, reflects the Enlightenment belief that nature and animals should serve the ends of human progress and advancement. In *Robinson Crusoe*, this is made evident by the fact that Crusoe regards no creature on the island as his equal and consequently, even his fellow-human Friday is relegated to the role of servant. Crusoe's urge to domesticate animals stems from the fact that he considers them as inferior and accordingly, he views them only in relation to their usefulness and never even considers them as potential companions (Dwyer, 2005:14). Even Crusoe's relationship with the parrot, which he tames and teaches to speak his name, is only based on the notion that he sees the parrot as a crude and amusing extension of himself.

*Life of Pi* is replete with references to animal life and throughout the novel Pi displays a keen interest in the habits and characteristics of animals while as an adult, he also studies and specializes in zoology. Growing up, Pi is surrounded by a vast variety of animals in his father's zoo, a time which he reminisces as being "paradise on earth" (14). In contrast to the human-animal relationships in *Robinson Crusoe*, Pi's relationship with animals is based on respect and admiration as well as his acknowledgement that they are different, yet equal, to humans. In this regard, Pi stresses that he "learned the lesson that an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us" (31). Pi first bears witness to the fierce brutality of a tiger when, as an eight year old boy, his zookeeper father forces him to witness a zoo tiger killing and devouring a goat in order to make his sons aware of just how dangerous and ruthless wild animals are. Consequently, he is under no illusion that he will be able to befriend Richard Parker, because he knows that the tiger's animal nature is not compatible with his own. Pi therefore does not regard Richard Parker's fierceness and aggression as amoral, but realizes that the tiger's nature defies human comprehension as it is driven by instinct, impulse, and a will to survive at all costs. It is interesting, however, that the longer Pi lives on the lifeboat with Richard Parker, the more he becomes like a wild animal himself when he succumbs to the basic urges of hunger and survival: "It came as an unmistakable indication to me of how low I had sunk the day I noticed, with a pinching of the heart, that I ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate" (225). Pi notices that suffering and deprivation have turned them both into "two emaciated mammals, parched and starving" (239), while in addition, he has gradually started to sync his daily routines with Richard Parker's, so that he begins "to imitate Richard Parker in sleeping an incredible amount of hours. It wasn't proper sleep, but a state of semi-consciousness in which daydreams and reality were nearly indistinguishable" (239).

These passages illustrate a kind of 'bestialization' with regard to the way in which Pi gradually hybridizes into animal form, a notion that is supported by the allegorical relation his two stories establish between humans and animals, with himself as the tiger. Associating humans with animals dehumanizes as it strips them of civility and the faculty of reason; according to Bakhtin (1984:226), the human form acquires "a grotesque character" when it adopts the animal form. Animals in the novel therefore tend to represent the primitive, instinctual and irrational aspects of human nature. However, the reverse is not true as the novel contains no instances of anthropomorphism in that all the animals portrayed in the

novel act in ways true to their species - Martel never imbues them with human traits, such as is the case in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), or Walter Farley's *The Black Stallion* (1941), a children's novel about a young boy who is shipwrecked on a desert island with an untamed horse, whom he befriends by taming him (Dwyer, 2005:12). Though it must be acknowledged that Pi's fellow-castaway is a 450-pound Bengalese tiger and not a horse, the relationship between Pi and Richard Parker is based on neither friendship nor ownership, but on Pi's respect of the tiger's alterity. Martel's novel therefore indicates a change in perspective and attitude towards nature and animals in the castaway narrative that indicates an epistemic shift that pertains not only to the way in which humans view animals, but also to how they view themselves.

### 5.3 *Life of Pi* and the 21<sup>st</sup> century context

Published in 2002 and winner of the prestigious Man Booker prize in 2003, *Life of Pi* exemplifies a new era of the castaway novel genre. *Life of Pi* is a contemporary novel with contemporary preoccupations that examines the validity of both rational and irrational modes of experiencing and understanding our world. As such, the following section will provide an overview of the contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century context in terms of its social reality, ideologies, and writing strategies.

*Life of Pi* engages with postcolonial themes of displacement and migration as Pi's free-thinking parents decide to join thousands of their fellow-citizens in their decision to escape India's political turmoil that stemmed from the authoritarian politics of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. They make the decision to emigrate to Canada and consequently, the Patel-family, as well as some of the zoo's animals, board the *Tsimtsum*, a Japanese cargo ship, on its ill-fated voyage to Canada, on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1977.

Martel's novel is openly critical of many of the ideologies contemporary culture subscribes to, such as consumer capitalism and materialism, but the most significant of these ideologies is Western society's overt positivist view of truth as an objective reality that can be verified by science and empirical research. Given the nature of textual evidence that foregrounds the novel's conflation of the rational with the irrational, I am in agreement with Stratton's (2004:6) argument that *Life of Pi* is structured around a philosophical debate about modern society's tendency to favour reason over imagination, science over religion, and fact over fiction. In this regard, the extreme ends of the opposition that the modern world establishes

between reason and imagination, are exemplified by the two Japanese officials investigating the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*, with Mr. Okamoto at the one end and Mr. Chiba at the other. Mr. Okamoto is in charge of the investigation and his interpretation of the world is determined by reason and logic. He is therefore sceptical of anything that cannot be proven empirically. In the course of the interview, he sets out to prove that Pi's story is untrue by first insisting that bananas do not float, referring to the small island of bananas on which the orang-utan came floating towards the lifeboat, only to be proven wrong when they test Pi's claim empirically by placing two bananas in a sink filled with water. Still not convinced, he is adamant that things such as carnivorous trees and fish-eating algae are "botanically impossible" and "don't exist" (294), which he considers as sufficient proof that the rest of Pi's story is also fictional, since he, Mr. Okamoto, knows the "laws of nature...[w]ell enough to know the possible from the impossible" (294). Mr. Okamoto further refutes Pi's claim that he shared the lifeboat with a tiger, as no "trace of it has been found" (296), as well as the meeting with another castaway, a blind Frenchman, an incident that Okamoto describes as "far-fetched" (299). Mr. Okamoto therefore represents rationality, reason, and logic, as his remarks during the interview indicate that he does not believe Pi's first story as the "unlikely" (299) events Pi describes cannot be empirically proven.

Mr. Chiba, however, represents the opposite viewpoint of subjectivity and imagination, as he seems captivated by Pi's story, which suggests that he relies on emotion rather than reason in to mediate his understanding of the world. Though his comments during the interview are few, after hearing Pi's first story, he remarks, "What a story" (291), and unlike Mr. Okamoto, he acknowledges (in Japanese), that the bananas "really do float" (294). Mr. Okamoto reprimands Mr. Chiba on several occasions during the interview for not following the proper protocol of a scientific inquiry, as he tends to "talk idly" (295) and strays from the point.

As Stratton (2004:7) also contends, the two Japanese officials are therefore related to the binary that exists in modern society between the faculties of reason and imagination. Mr. Okamoto's limited outlook causes him to renounce everything that cannot be logically explained and consequently, he is portrayed as having a rather stunted emotional life, or lacking in "affective capacity" (Stratton, 2004:7). Mr. Chiba on the other hand, has an under-developed capacity for rational analysis and logic interpretation. Martel suggests that neither Mr. Okamoto nor Mr. Chiba's viewpoint translates into a viable epistemological method with which to explain the more 'inexplicable' aspects of existence. Instead, the conflation of

fiction and imagination with reality and reason suggests that we should allow for the suspension of disbelief when faced with matters that cannot be explained in rational terms.

Writing strategies, which include but are not limited to narratological strategies in *Life of Pi*, relate to the ontological dominant, as it structures the narrative opposition between the worlds of the rational and irrational. In this regard, Martel's narrative partially relies on the modes of realism, allegory and parody to achieve its full effect, which entails the re-thinking of the opposition between truth and fiction and the rational and irrational, as well as the extent to which this opposition has contributed to modern society's spiritual decline. The novel's foregrounding of ontological issues presupposes that a dominant shift has taken place in the castaway novel genre since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which emphasized the cultural dominant with its intrinsically rationalist premise. A shift in dominant effects generic transformation, the process through which literary genres change and transform over time to create new genres. As new genres become established within literary and popular culture, these genres in turn are altered or transformed by time and through assimilation into literary, social and cultural contexts. Duff's (2000:xvi) assertion that "transformation" can "denote a significant modification of a genre in the course of its historical development" is made evident by *Life of Pi*'s deconstructive approach to notions of being and the nature of truth, as well as its fusion of seemingly irreconcilable worlds – all within the wider context of the castaway genre. Such amendments establish Martel's novel as an important exemplar of generic transformation in the castaway novel.

The following section provides an overview of the way in which narrative perspective in *Life of Pi* manipulates, controls and resists interpretation in order to facilitate the dissolution of ontological boundaries between fiction and reality and the rational and the irrational. As Booth's categories of narration and focalization, as well as Currie's adaptation of Booth's theory on narrative distance and sympathy were already covered by the previous three chapters, these aspects will not be discussed again in the subsequent section, though they will be applied to the narrative for the purpose of textual analysis.

#### **5.4 Narrative perspective: narration and focalization**

Piscine Molitor Patel is the protagonist, narrator and focalizer for most of the novel, which makes him an internal character-focalizer. In the chapters that frame the main story, Pi is an unassuming, graying, middle-aged man. He tells the story of his early childhood and life-

changing ordeal retrospectively to an anonymous author-figure, who in turn recounts Pi's incredible story to the reader. The narrative also contains a survival manual, an inventory of the lifeboat's provisions, Pi's journal entries, notes by the author, and the Maritime Department of the Japanese Ministry of Transport's official report on the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*.

The story is narrated from Pi's perspective, by a fictional author whose third person narration mediates Pi's story to the reader. The fictional author contends that "[i]t seemed natural that Mr. Patel's story should be told mostly in the first person – in his voice and through his eyes. But any inaccuracies or mistakes are mine." (xiv). Pi's story then makes up the bulk of the novel – he therefore narrates and focalizes events. The author does insert himself into the narrative at certain points to reflect on and structure Pi's account. Nonetheless, throughout the novel the authorial voice remains relatively subdued and emerges only in ten out of a hundred chapters in italicised form. The transfer of narration between the author and Pi distances the reader from the truth, as this narrative device blends fiction with reality. The fact that the author recounts Pi's story word for word without altering or commenting on his incredible story, suggests that he believes Pi's story to be true, and (like the reader), he is not aware of the alternative version until he transcribes Pi's interview with the Japanese officials, again without any authorial interference. The author's factual and unassuming narrative style manages to make the absurd seem possible and in this way, he creates the impression that Pi is a reliable and credible narrator, which makes his account more plausible. Pi is also able to provide textual evidence that supports the authenticity of his incredible story:

He showed me the diary he kept during the events. He showed me the yellowed newspaper clipping that made him briefly, obscurely famous. He told me his story. All the while I took notes. Nearly a year later, after considerable difficulties, I received a tape and a report from the Japanese Ministry of Transport. It was as I listened to that tape that I agreed with Mr. Adirubasamy that this was, indeed, a story to make you believe in God. (xiii)

Stylistically, the novel blurs the boundary between fiction and non-fiction by employing (and parodying) modes of non-fiction writing in the form of the survival guide, the users' manual, interview transcripts and an extract from the report written by the Japanese official. These fictional and non-fictional texts, together with comments by the author, strengthen the impression that the story of Piscine Molitor Patel is a true story that was told to the author, Yann Martel by the protagonist himself.

The story is endowed with a further sense of authenticity through its structuring of the first-person narration in the form of a memoir. This self-reflexive combination of fictional and non-fictional genres reflects the novel's inconclusive and perplexing ending that unsettles the notion of truth and creates tension between the reader's logical and emotional responses to the respective stories. Pi finds consolation in the "better story" (317), not in truth or fact, and manages to convince the reader as well as the Japanese officials of this viewpoint. Consequently, even the rational Mr. Okamoto must admit, in the end, that "[t]he story with animals is the better story" (317). When Mr. Okamoto chooses the first story over the second (as his official report also indicates), he effectively discredits the more rational story and elevates the irrational story to the status of 'fact'.

Martel uses realism as his central (though not only) mode of narration and as such, the first story is told with incredible attention to detail that amounts to expansive explanations and descriptions, such as the lifeboat which Pi describes in terms of its size, shape and dimensions, its design, material, colour and texture (137). However, Martel's use of realism is far from *Robinson Crusoe's* monotonous and unimaginative inventory-style narration, as Martel combines realism with imaginative storytelling. In this way, Martel tends to combine long descriptions or explanations with imaginative interjections, such as when Pi interrupts his own narrative to elaborate on his perceptive associations with the colour orange, which is also the colour of the lifeboat:

It seems orange – such a nice Hindu colour – is the colour of survival because the whole inside of the boat and the tarpaulin and the life jackets and the lifebuoy and the oars and almost every other significant object aboard was orange. Even the plastic, beadless whistles were orange. (138)

The colour orange is thereby associated with the spiritual, as Pi contends that it is a "Hindu colour", as well as the colour of survival equipment and in this way, Pi's associations with the colour orange metonymically allude to Pi's physical and spiritual survival.

In the light of the first story's length and meticulous attention to the material and emotional details of life as a castaway, I agree with Stratton's (2004:9-10) claim that realism is well suited to Martel's deconstructive purposes, as the comprehensive nature of realist documentation plays an integral role in making Pi's first story more substantial and robust, and I would add, more believable. Unlike the first story, however, the second story without animals is less than ten pages long and departs from the realist mode as it is written in factual,

flat prose that imparts a strong sense of disillusionment and scepticism. The emotionally vacant way in which Pi narrates this sparse story contrasts starkly with its chilling content, which evokes a very strong emotional reaction from the reader:

He killed her. The cook killed my mother. We were starving. I was weak. I couldn't hold on to a turtle. Because of me we lost it. He hit me. Mother hit him. He hit her back...He caught her by the wrist and twisted it. She shrieked and fell. He moved over her. The knife appeared. He raised it in the air. It came down. Next it was up – it was red. (309)

Pi seems to distance himself emotionally from the severe trauma described by the events by only providing what Mr. Okamoto refers to as the “straight facts” stripped of all “invention” (302). This suggests that the truth is not only made up of facts, but also of our imaginative interpretation of these facts. Martel seems to imply that the alternative to the “better story” would entail the “sacrifice of our imagination on the altar of crude reality” (xiv). Therefore, even though the first story also relates the trauma of loss, fear and existential isolation, the way in which the narrative merges material and ordinary details with an incredibly imaginative story, enforces the novel’s central theme of the redemptive power of fiction.

#### **5.4.1 Narrative structure**

The novel consists of three parts that relate to the periods before, during and after the shipwreck. The first part recounts Pi’s childhood years in India, the second and longest part centres on Pi’s 227 days adrift on the open sea, and the third part relates the period just after Pi’s ordeal has ended.

The novel opens with an *Author’s Note* that frames Pi’s story and in which the fictional author gives a first person account of the events leading up to his decision to write Pi’s story. The author’s ‘notes’ make up the first eight pages and provides insight into Pi’s character as well as providing background to Pi’s story. There are various ‘clues’ that suggest the author is indeed Yann Martel himself: like Martel, the author lives in Canada, has published two books, and was inspired to write a novel about Pi’s story after backpacking in India. He explains that restlessness and writer’s block caused him to travel to Pondicherry, India, where he met an elderly man named Francis Adirubasamy in a café. On hearing the author’s occupation, the old man informed him that he could tell him a story “that will make [him] believe in God” (xiii). Fascinated by the old man’s tale, the author returns to Canada to find Pi Patel who over the course of several meetings, discloses his story to the author.

Shortly after meeting Pi for the first time, the author notes that Pi's cupboards are "jam-packed" (25) with cans and packages of food, thereby hinting that Pi might have a compulsive insecurity about running out of food. To the author's detriment, it also turns out that Pi prefers his food exceptionally spicy, which can also be related to Pi's sparse and bland diet of raw fish during his ordeal at sea. In another note, the author reveals that Pi seems to get agitated with his own story at certain instances, as the only recollection Pi has left of his childhood in India are fading memories and "four nearly irrelevant photographs" (87), among which a faded black and white photo with Richard Parker looming in the background. This situates Richard Parker as a symbol of an alternative reality – a submerged presence whose symbolic significance will be echoed by his later presence underneath the tarpaulin on the lifeboat. Richard Parker's presence in the photo, together with the way in which Pi is forced to fill in the gaps of his past, signifies the way in which representations of fiction and reality become almost indistinguishable in the novel, thereby establishing a dual ontology that defines the novel's emphasis on the ontological dominant.

In Part One (chapters 1-36) Pi mainly recounts his life as young adult in Toronto and his happy childhood in Pondicherry, India. The authorial commentary in this section gradually builds up tension as to the nature of Pi's seemingly traumatic childhood ordeal, as the author guides the reader's perception of Pi by evoking sympathy and admiration for his character. After one of their meetings, the author wryly notes that their encounters leave him "weary of the glum contentment that characterizes [his] life" (63) as opposed to Pi's character who seems to have a sense of "ultimate purpose" (63) that he bases on his belief in God. In the minds of the author and reader alike, Pi becomes increasingly associated with spiritual devotion and enlightenment. In chapter 36, the final chapter to Part One, the author relates that he was pleasantly surprised to discover Pi not only has a wife, but also two children. The close and loving relationship Pi seems to have with his family leaves the author (and the reader) with the impression that Pi's "story has a happy ending" (93), despite the great tragedy that clouds his past.

In Part Two (chapters 37-94) Pi recounts his ordeal as castaway and here, notes by the author are strikingly absent. This enhances the mood of isolation and exile that characterizes Pi's ordeal as castaway and establishes ensuing events to be incomprehensible and indescribable by anyone other than Pi. As the author has already contended that Pi is a reliable narrator in the first part of the novel, the lack of commentary by the author situates Pi's story as the

central narrative and as such, attributes to it a sense of validity and truthfulness. In this section, the narrative jumps back in time as Pi vividly describes the shipwreck, how Richard Parker and the other animals came to be on the lifeboat with him, as well as the gruelling 227 days he had to survive as castaway on a lifeboat in the Pacific ocean.

In Part Three (chapters 95-100), the author again resumes his narrative. He relates his correspondence with Mr. Okamoto, formerly of the Maritime Department in the Japanese Ministry of Transport. The remainder of the narrative then takes the form of the interview transcripts. This section consists only of so-called ‘empirical evidence’ in the form of the transcribed interrogation in which the two Japanese officials, the author as well as the reader have to choose between two possible accounts, each representative of truths pertaining to two different realms of existence. In the final chapter, the author concludes with an extract from Mr. Okamoto’s official report, which states that Pi’s story is ...”unparalleled in the history of shipwrecks. Very few castaways can claim to have survived so long at sea as Mr. Patel, and non in the company of an adult Bengal tiger.” (319).

Empirical truth becomes indistinguishable from the fictional, the fantastical and irrational, as the seemingly improbable is established as fact. Narrative representation in *Life of Pi* relates the fictional and the irrational to concepts of survival and transcendence.

#### 5.4.2 *Narrative effects*

In *Life of Pi*, Booth’s categories of narrative perspective, namely the *dramatized narrator*, the *self-conscious narrator* and *variations of distance* are meaningful in the light of the prominence of the notion of multiple truths in the novel, as illustrated by Pi’s refusal to choose any one of the three religions he admires over the other. Even as a grown man, his home becomes a “temple” (45) for his eclectic, pluralistic beliefs:

Upstairs in his office there is a brass Ganesha sitting cross-legged next to the computer, a wooden Christ on the Cross from Brazil on a wall, and a green prayer rug in a corner. The Christ is expressive – He suffers. The prayer rug lies in its own clear space. Next to it, on a low bookstand, is a book covered by a cloth. The the centre of the cloth is a single Arabic word, intricately woven, for letters: an alif, two lams and a ha. The word God in Arabic.

The book on the bedside table is a Bible. (46)

Pi's approach to religion suggests that though his faith is extremely important to him, he does not consider himself as someone who sees God as the "Ultimate Reality" or sole "sustaining frame of existence" (70); on the contrary, he finds such fanatical, yet often hypocritical devotion "astonishing" and "frightening" (70). Pi's view of religion is mirrored by the two stories that are presented to the reader, in the sense that 'truth' and transcendence are not necessarily concomitant to one another. Despite the tragic circumstances it depicts, Pi's first story retains a sense of adventure in recounting a tale of courage, endurance and survival. Moreover, in this account of events, Pi continually stresses that his devotion to God provides him with the ability to endure. The alternative story, however, bleakly interrogates established beliefs pertaining to the relationship between morality and the human condition. God is mostly absent from this story and as such it depicts a world of greed, cruelty, futility and despair where man is banished to a life of existential solitude.

Narrative effects in *Life of Pi* parallel the norms of the fictional world with the norms of the author, as Martel inserts himself into the narrative by assuming the persona of a fictional Canadian author, who is also the implied author. The author is so inspired by Pi's story that he decides to turn it into a novel. Though he never states it explicitly, he does not seem to doubt the truth of Pi's story at all, though he leaves it up to the reader to make up her mind for herself by also including the alternative version of events.

As the story is narrated in the first person by Pi himself (except for the author's notes, which are narrated by the implied author), he is a dramatized narrator (Booth, 1996:147) who determines the course of events in the sense that he chooses what to reveal and how to reveal it, as well as what to omit. This notion is made evident by the fact that the two stories have the same basic premise (the struggle to survive), but with meaningful differences, particularly with regard to the way in which Pi's character is portrayed in each respective story. In the first story he is a transcendental figure who achieves an impossible feat, while in the second he is nearly broken by extreme manifestations of human depravity - which he also discovers in himself.

In addition, Pi is a self-conscious narrator (Booth, 1996:150) because he is aware of himself as narrator of his story, and he acknowledges that his "survival is hard to believe" and that he "can hardly believe it [him]self" (223). He insists that though his story cannot be validated as it resides only in his memory, he "wants to tell [the author] his story since, ...[a]fter all these years, Richard Parker still preys on his mind" (42).

On the matter of variations of distance (Booth, 1996:150), Martel establishes similitude between the moral, physical and intellectual positions of Pi and the author. This strategy creates the impression that the implied author shares, or at least accepts, Pi's metaphysical views, especially his belief that God exists. Though reader's norms are extremely variable, I would like to suggest that with most readings of *Life of Pi*, the distance between the reader, the implied author and Pi would in all probability be insignificant, as the form and content of the narrative attempt to align the ideological, moral and intellectual norms of the fictional world with the norms of the reader's world.

#### **5.4.3 Narrative distance: sustaining sympathy**

Narration and focalization play an important role in shaping the reader's response to events and characters in a story (Currie, 1998:19). In *Life of Pi*, The narrative provides the reader with direct access to Pi's character, a strategy that inspires sympathy for him and portrays him as a kind and compassionate character who has not allowed himself to be defeated by suffering. Moreover, the open and honest manner in which Pi tells his story proves that he is emotionally self-aware. As Pi is the focalizer of his story, events are narrated from his perspective which establish an inside view on events. Consequently, the reader has a high level of access to his character. Martel thus effectively manufactures sympathy for Pi as his narration situates him as a symbol of endurance and transcendence. As levels of access and closeness to Pi's character are high, the distance between him and the reader is minute.

Martel produces and controls the reader's sympathy towards Pi mainly through the inside view. In this regard, the implied author describes the adult Pi as a "sweet man" (42), whose devotion to religion is manifested by the way in his house resembles a "temple" (45). He furthermore is suspicious of agnosticism, atheism, and scientific thought, as he considers positivist outlooks on life to be uninspiring – he refers to such perspectives as "dry, yeastless faculty" (63). From the author's remark that Pi is a "shy man", who does not "show off what is most precious to him" (80), it can be deduced that Pi is unassuming and humble and that he is very protective and caring of the things that add meaning to his life, such as his family and his faith. When he shows the author photos from his childhood in Pondicherry, he becomes sombre when he admits to the author that his memory of his mother is fading and that it is "very sad not to remember what your mother looks like" (87). The author's perceptions of Pi manage to depict him as a sympathetic, yet admirable character. When Pi narrates his story, the reader's initial sympathy for Pi is supported when he relates his epic ordeal to the author.

The reader now also begins to feel intense pity for Pi when he tells of the loss of his whole family in the shipwreck, the brutal slayings of the zebra and the orang-utan by the hyena, his fear of being eaten by a tiger, and the severe physical hardships he had to endure, such as thirst, hunger, and deteriorating health. However, it is Pi's psychological suffering that is the most prevailing source of narrative sympathy and in this way, the reader hopes that Pi will be saved and that his story will have a happy ending. As a result of the high degree of sympathy that the author manufactures for Pi, the reader never judges him for the savage deeds he commits during his ordeal. With intense shame, Pi admits that

...driven by the extremity of my need and the madness to which it pushed me, I ate some of his flesh. I mean small pieces, little strips that I meant for the gaff's hook that, when dried by the sun, looked like ordinary animal flesh. They slipped into my mouth nearly unnoticed. You must understand, my suffering was unremitting and he was already dead. I stopped as soon as I caught a fish.

I pray for his soul every day. (256)

As Pi clearly feels remorse about eating the dead Frenchman's flesh, the reader is able to understand this act in relation to the context in which it happens. Moreover, this event enhances the reader's admiration of Pi as he penetrates into the heart of darkness but has the moral capacity to return, unlike Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Even after reading the alternative story in which Pi kills the cook and eats his flesh, the reader's sympathy for Pi does not diminish – rather, it strengthens it even further due to the immense tragedy it depicts. I want to suggest that the main reasons why the narratives are able to sustain sympathy for Pi's character in both stories is firstly because he is intensely self-aware and expresses shame and remorse for actions the reader normally would condemn, and secondly, because the reader perceives the implied author to be sympathetic towards Pi. Narrative sympathy is therefore sustained by the way in which the inside view successfully establishes a sense of intimacy between Pi, the implied author, and the reader. This narrative strategy focuses the reader's attention exclusively on Pi's suffering and transcendence, which inevitably leads the reader to experience a high degree of sympathy for Pi.

The following section examines the ways in which intertextuality and metafiction blur the boundary between fiction and reality, while the carnivalesque and aspects of grotesque realism hypothesized in Mikhail Bakhtin's essay *Rabelais and His World* will be examined and applied to *Life of Pi* in order to show the extent to which the novel destabilizes rationalist and empiricist notions of existence. As the theoretical implications of both intertextuality and

metafiction have been defined and discussed in the previous two chapters, these strategies will only be applied to Martel's novel for purposes of analysis

## **5.5 Narratological strategies and the transformation of the past**

*Life of Pi's* postmodernist premise is reflected by the way in which Richard Parker's enigmatic and problematic presence in the narrative destabilizes both rationalist and imaginative interpretations and orderings of experience. Through the character of Pi and the theme of human-animal relationships, Martel toys with postmodernism's scepticism about the discernability of truth and the distinction between fiction and reality. In this regard, I agree with Huggan's (210:763) assertion that *Life of Pi* combines the contradictory narratives of religion and science in a way that reveals their interdependency on one another. This interdependency is suggested by the role reason plays in Pi's survival - he admits to the Japanese officials that he applied reason throughout his ordeal, as "[r]eason is excellent for getting food, clothing and shelter. Reason is the very best tool kit" (298). Given the nature of my interpretation thus far, I want to suggest that the narrative merges seemingly incompatible concepts of religion and science, fiction and reality, and the rational and irrational.

Martel's novel undermines the generic parameters of the conventional castaway narrative by means of self-interrogative and parodic modes of metafiction and intertextuality, while the carnivalesque foregrounds the irrational realm of existence and questions the validity of interpretations on the nature of existence that is solely based on reason. In this regard, narratological strategies destabilize and dissolve the boundaries between fiction and reality and the rational and irrational. The dissolution of boundaries in the novel transcends the limitations of a rationalist experience of the world by transforming the past through narrative. Pi therefore revises the 'truth' to ensure his physical and psychological survival.

### **5.5.1 Metafiction**

*Life of Pi* self-reflexively reveals its status as a work of fiction in order to examine what Currie (1995:15) refers to as the "conditions of meaning-construction". As such, the binary between fiction / imagination and reality / truth reveals that the way in which we make sense of a text is similar to the way in which we make sense of existence. Consequently, Pi's

unbelievable story can be seen as a metafictional metaphor for the way in which we interpret experience.

Metafictional commentary in *Life of Pi* is manifested in terms of the novel's examination of the way in which fiction orders experience by expressing things that are difficult to process emotionally or that are intellectually perplexing. At the end of the story, the Japanese official Mr. Okamoto expresses his disbelief of Pi's story, to which he indignantly replies: "Tigers exist, lifeboats exist, oceans exist. Because the three have never come together in your narrow, limited experience, you refuse to believe they might. Yet the plain fact is that the Tsimtsum brought them together and then sank." (299). As this passage suggests, fiction has the potential to represent disparate elements as an intelligible whole. Martel hereby suggests that Pi's story successfully brings together elements that seem incompatible and in the process, he is able to come to terms with chaotic and traumatic reality. In the Author's Note, Martel suggests that it is this ability that ultimately differentiates fiction that "works" – the better story – from that which does not when he reflects on the reason why his previous novel failed:

It's a misery peculiar to would-be-writers. Your theme is good, as are your sentences. Your characters are so ruddy with life they practically need birth certificates. The plot you've mapped out for them is grand, simple and gripping. You've done your research, gathering the facts – historical, social, climate, culinary – that will give your story its feel of authenticity. The dialogue zips along, crackling with tension. The descriptions burst with colour, contrast and telling detail. Really, your story can only be great. But it all adds up to nothing. In spite of the obvious, shining promise of it, there comes a moment when you realize that the whisper that has been pestering you all along from the back of your mind is speaking the flat, awful truth: it won't work. An element is missing, that spark that brings to life a real story, regardless of whether history or the food is right. Your story is emotionally dead, that's the crux of it. The discovery is something soul-destroying, I tell you. It leaves you with an aching hunger. (xi)

Even though the implied author feels that his failed novel meets most of the requirements of a good story in terms of structure, theme and characterization, and that it represents the fictional world both imaginatively and realistically, it does not evoke an emotional response. As such, Martel uses metafiction to explore why the reader (and the Japanese officials) prefer Pi's first story over the second; in other words, as Stratton (2004:8) asks, to "what standards of literary evaluation does Martel explicitly or implicitly subscribe in his narrative?" The answer to this question lies in the first story's ability to make the reader engage affectively with the creative possibilities provided by imagination that translates into a suspension of

disbelief. According to Pi, the same is true of religion, and when Mr. Okamoto finally admits that “the story with animals is the better story”, Pi replies “[a]nd so it goes with God.” (317).

### 5.5.2 *Intertextuality*

*Life of Pi* cites various intertexts from the literary canon in order to parallel and parody certain ideas, motifs and conventions. Intertextuality thereby challenges the notion that there could only be a single interpretation whereby the world and existence can be understood, a notion that is made evident by the implication of the two possible versions of events in the novel.

In the first instance, intertextual references are used for the purpose of emphasis, such as the parallel between Blake’s Tiger-poem and Pi’s ambivalent feelings for Richard Parker, as illustrated by the first stanza of Blake’s “Tyger”-poem:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The tiger’s “fearful symmetry” (stanza 1, line 4) therefore becomes a metaphor for the duality of the rational (beauty, divinity, benevolence) and irrational (hideousness, depravity, malevolence) in nature, including human nature. *Life of Pi’s* intertextual parallel to Blake’s poem emphasizes Richard Parker’s fierce beauty as well as the horror of his primeval nature. When Pi views Richard Parker in full sight for the first time on the lifeboat, he describes the tiger as follows:

I beheld Richard Parker from the angle that showed him off to greatest effect: from the back, half-raised, with his head turned. The stance had something of a pose to it, as if it were an intentional, even affected, display of mighty art. And what art, what might. His presence was overwhelming, yet equally evident was the lithesome grace of it. He was incredibly muscular...His body, bright brownish orange streaked with black vertical stripes, was incomparably beautiful, matched with a tailor’s eye for harmony by his pure white chest and underside and the black rings of his long tail...Wavy dabs of black circled the face in a pattern that was striking yet subtle, for it brought less attention to itself than it did to the one part of the face left untouched by it, the bridge, whose rufous lustre shone nearly with a radiance. (151)

In both the poem and the above passage, the tiger is associated with a fire of the spirit that burns brightly with “lustre” and “radiance” (151). According to Stratton (2004:10), the dazzling display of colours and patterns on Richard Parker’s body relates him to the “incantatory” or “transcendent power of art” which in Martel’s novel is exemplified by imaginative truth and Pi’s infinite faith. However, for all the tiger’s beauty, Pi is almost immediately reminded of its primitive and dangerous nature that may explode with “rage” (152) at any moment: “His ears twitched and then swivelled right around. One of his lips began to rise and fall. The yellow canine thus coyly revealed was as long as my longest finger. Every hair on me was standing up, shrieking with fear.” Pi’s fear and awe of Richard Parker defy reason and comprehension and like Blake’s tiger, Richard Parker is a metaphor for the binary oppositions that define existence. Moreover, Richard Parker represents nature’s divine ability to transcend the limitations excessive reason places on freedom and individuality.

In addition, *Life of Pi* can be regarded as a postcolonial parody of 19<sup>th</sup> century stories of adventure, such as R.M. Ballantyne’s *Coral Island* (1857), a story of a group of British castaway boys whose ability to order and master their environment manifests a type of imperialist manhood which shaped British attitudes towards empire and masculinity. Martel’s novel parodies the adventure novel’s emphasis on imperial notions of conquest and masculinity and its relationship to survival, as Pi is an Indian boy whose survival is not determined by his physical strength or his ability to conquer, but by sheer good luck, mental power and faith.

*Life of Pi* contains several intertextual allusions to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* in terms of motifs of appropriation and demarcation of space (which were discussed earlier in the chapter), the notion of time, and the keeping of journals and inventories. As a young boy, Pi’s mother suggests that he should become involved in activities more befitting of a young boy, such as reading *Robinson Crusoe*, since she finds his “religious zeal ... terribly old-fashioned” (73); in reply, Pi asserts that spiritual matters are more important to him than secular ones. With regard to time, Crusoe structures time through his journal entries and by keeping exact records of daily life, and as such, he is always able to orientate himself in time, an action that adds meaning to his life and aids his psychological survival. In *Robinson Crusoe*, time thus relates to the rational ordering of a meaningful existence. Pi, however, feels overwhelmed by the “emptiness of time” (191) and he notes that his story “started on a

calendar day – July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1977 – and ended on a calendar day – February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1978 – but in between there was no calendar” (191). As such, Pi is only able to orientate himself in time by dividing each day into “[s]unrise”, “mid-morning”, “late-afternoon”, “early evening” and “[s]unset” (190). For Pi, time loses all meaning as days merged into weeks and weeks merged into months. Pi claims that time merely “is an illusion” and that he survived because he “forgot even the very notion of time” (192).

However, like Crusoe, Pi keeps a journal and finds consolation in the survival manual (166) and his inventory (145-6) of provisions stowed on the lifeboat, as these seem to express his predicament in quantifiable and rational terms. Ironically, the survival manual’s suggestion that “[y]arn spinning” as a way to “lift the spirits” (167) has a bearing on the novel’s premise of the transformative power of storytelling. Pi also parodies the form and content of the survival manual by writing his own ‘survival manual’ that gives advice on how to survive the unlikely predicament of being lost at sea and with a 450-pound tiger as your only company. In this regard, Pi’s manual gives tips on how to tame a ravenous tiger, how to organize space, and how to use provisions generally found on lifeboats, to protect oneself from being devoured by one’s fellow-castaway. . The humorous way in which Pi shares his advice is suggestive of the absurdity of his predicament, as it seems so incredible that it could only be possible in a work of fiction. Pi’s manual thereby blurs the boundary between fiction and reality by pointing to the fact that in some instances, the truth might be even stranger than fiction.

### **5.5.3 Carnavalesque**

In *Life of Pi*, aspects of the carnivalesque exemplified by grotesque realism as it is defined in Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World* (1968), destabilize and dissolve spatial and temporal boundaries to conflate the ontologies of the rational and irrational. The transgression and diffusion of ontological boundaries in *Life of Pi* further establishes a liminal zone where transformation and renewal can take place. The liminal zone resists interpretation based on a rationalist experience of the world – focusing instead on moral and spiritual transcendence. In *Life of Pi*, aspects of grotesque realism imbue the act of storytelling with transformative abilities. In this regard, that ability of carnivalesque literature to incorporate the grotesque with realistic representations of characters and events has the potential to collapse oppressive and out-dated modes of thinking to bring forth

emancipation by invoking the imagination. In *Life of Pi*, this notion is illustrated by the way in which the story with animals brings about redemption and transcendence.

The term *carnavalesque* is derived from *carnival*, a communal celebratory practice found throughout the medieval world and expressed through feasting, music, farce and dance, as well as other forms of entertainment. In cultural studies and critical discourse, carnival and *carnavalesque* are drawn upon in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to explore ‘low’ or popular cultural practices in relation to the ecclesiastical and feudal political culture of the Middle Ages (Wolfreys, 2004:25). Dentith (1996:67) contends that the notion of *grotesque realism* is the most important convention of carnivalized writing; expressed through the “feasting, Feasts of Fools, game-playing and symbolic inversions” (1996:67). Grotesque realism is especially relevant to *Life of Pi*, as this convention emphasizes the body as a physical manifestation of existence in a wildly exaggerated way. As such, grotesque realism will be related to prevalent motifs in the novel that defy logic and reflect subversively on the rational, namely human and animal modes of existence, bizarre or inexplicable incidents, ritual, human depravity, violence and bodily suffering.

Throughout, *Life of Pi* is preoccupied with the relationship between human and animal modes of existence. The bizarre presence of wild animals on the lifeboat and Pi’s mastery and training of a Bengal tiger both have allusions to circus-life that are reminiscent of carnival. Soon after becoming a castaway, Pi realizes that the only way to safeguard himself from being attacked by Richard Parker is to force the tiger into submission by making him understand that he, Pi, is the “top tiger” (168). During Pi’s first training-session with Richard Parker - aware of the ensuing spectacle - he exclaims:

Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, without further ado, it is my pleasure and honour to present to you: THE PI PATEL, INDO-CANADIAN, TRANS-PACIFIC, FLOATING CIRCUUUUUSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!! (165)

Pi then proceeds to blow loudly and persistently on a whistle attached to his lifejacket:

I had an effect on Richard Parker. At the very first blow of the whistle he cringed and he snarled...He roared and clawed the air. But he did not jump...He backed off and dropped to the bottom of the boat. The first training session was over. It was a resounding success. (165)

This image imparts to the novel a sense of mock-playfulness that contrasts with the seriousness of Pi’s predicament. Thereby, notions of heroic conquest and domination

perpetuated by the traditional adventure romance are parodied: the unknown wilderness filled with bloodthirsty beasts and savages takes the form of a small lifeboat – a floating circus - smeared with blood and excrement; with Pi, the ‘ringmaster’ himself reverting to savagery in the struggle to stay alive.

In the novel, Pi’s bizarre encounter with another castaway a blind, cannibalistic Frenchman, epitomizes the subversion of the rational by the irrational in the novel. This incident also shares an affinity with grotesque realism and when considered in relation to the predominantly realist mode in which the novel is written, this incident appears significantly out of place, irrational and absurd.

Pi, temporarily blind – probably as a result of starvation, dehydration and exhaustion – encounters another castaway, also blind and adrift on the Pacific Ocean. Considering the strange, absurd and pointless conversation between these two castaways, I am in agreement with Stratton (2004:13) when she points out that here Martel exploits the devices of Absurdist theatre by stressing the futile and absurd nature of human existence and the fluidity of identity. Shortly after becoming aware of each other’s presence, Pi is addressed by the other castaway:

“Is someone there?” came the voice again, insistent.

The clarity of my insanity was astonishing. The voice had its very own timbre, with a heavy weary rasp. I decided to play along.

“Of course someone’s there, I replied. There’s always some one there. Who would be asking the question otherwise?”

“I was hoping there would be someone else.”

“What do you mean, someone else? Do you realize where you are? If you’re not happy with this figment of your fancy, pick another one. There are plenty of fancies to pick from.”

Hmmm. Figment. Fig-ment. Wouldn’t a fig be good?

“So there’s no one, is there?”

“Shush... I’m dreaming of figs.” (243)

From here, most of the conversation centres on food and eating, both of which are significant motifs of grotesque realism, as Bakhtin purports that the “most important of all human

features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; [a] wide-open bodily abyss” (1984:226). The repetitive and nonsensical dialogue that takes place between the two castaways therefore suggests the futility, irrationality and immateriality of an existence compounded by bodily, or physical, deprivation. This notion is further highlighted when the French castaway eventually attempts to strangle Pi so that he can eat his “heart”, “liver” and “flesh” (255). However, Richard Parker gets to him before he gets to Pi:

This was the terrible cost of Richard Parker. He gave me life, my own, but at the expense of taking one. He ripped the flesh of the man’s frame and cracked his bones. The smell of blood filled my nose. Something in me died then that has never come back to life. (255)

Carnivalized writing is also made evident by the motif of ritual. While a castaway, Pi feels comforted by a series of daily rituals that structures his day and prevents him from spending too much time contemplating his situation. These rituals include activities such as breakfast, lunch, dinner, prayers, the inspection of the lifeboat and food stores, fishing and the preparation of fish, collecting and safekeeping of distillate from the solar stills, and storing foods and equipment (190). Even though these rituals seem menial, they keep Pi lucid and alert, which are very important for his survival. Martel suggests that like animals, humans need rituals, routines, and habits to make them feel grounded and secure. When Pi is an adult, rituals remain important to him and take the form of religious practices, such as prayer and meditation. Rituals structure and give meaning to abstract ideas and emotion, which suggests that storytelling is also a type of ritual as structure to abstract ideas and emotions - in other words, ritual is an alternate form of storytelling, as stories have the ability to reveal the emotional reality of an event.

Grotesque realism is manifested through depictions of the brutal realities Pi had to face during his ordeal and as such, the story is ridden with blood, guts, gore and death as each act of violence and human depravity on the lifeboat is recounted with meticulous detail: in a macabre unfolding of the plot the hyena first ‘feasts’ on the injured zebra – devouring it alive - before viciously attacking and decapitating the frantic orangutan. The tiger then stealthily kills off the hyena. At one stage Pi’s hunger even drives him to attempt to eat Richard Parker’s faeces. Pi’s references to his bodily suffering and bodily functions signify how he increasingly yields to base or savage impulses and instincts that are exemplified by

cannibalism and his reversion into savagery. Grotesque realism therefore emphasizes that extreme physical suffering has a degrading and corruptive influence on the human psyche.

In the alternative story, this is even more pertinent. Whereas Pi is only a witness to human killing in the first story, in the second story he slays the cook with a butcher's knife; the same knife the cook used to kill and decapitate his mother. The characters of the Frenchman in the first story and the cook in the second, bear marked resemblances: not only do both revert to the ultimate savage and incomprehensible act of cannibalism, but similar to Richard Parker, both function as alter-egos to Pi's character. These morally degenerate characters signify Pi's own moral regression and he confesses that "driven by the extremity of [his] need and the madness to which it pushed [him]" (256), he ate some of the dead Frenchman's flesh. In the alternative story, Pi notes that the cook "was such an evil man...Worse still, he met evil in me... I must live with that" (311). Grotesquery, savagery and cannibalism in the novel exemplify Pi's existential regression and despair and transgress the boundary between the rational and irrational worlds.

Bakhtin (1984:19) asserts that the essential principle of grotesque realism is "degradation", which serves to remind us that as "creatures of flesh and thus of food and feces also" (Dentith, 1996:67) we are bound by our bodily needs and functions. However, Bakhtin (1984:175) emphasizes that this degradation of the grotesque body is also an ambivalent affirmation of the potential for regeneration and renewal. In *Life of Pi* this is manifested by the triumph of the imaginative over the sterility of the rational world. Related to the concept of grotesque realism and bodily degradation, is Bakhtin's distinction between the 'grotesque body' and the 'classical body' (Bakhtin, 1984:175). The latter is conceptualized as being completed and finished – the attainment of perfect proportion, while the grotesque body appears unfinished, uncompleted, "a thing of buds and sprouts, the orifices evident through which it sucks in and expels the world...a body marked by the evidence of its material origin and destiny" (Dentith, 1996:67). In being a completed thing, the classical body therefore is defined, bound and fixed and consequently unable to achieve regeneration and renewal. The grotesque body, however, is undefined and boundless – "a body in the act of becoming" (Bakhtin, 1996:226). The grotesque body is therefore a manifestation of a liminal condition and possesses regenerative potential.

In the novel, material disintegration signifies Pi's moral and spiritual suffering. Pi notes that after months at sea

Everything suffered. Everything became sun-bleached and weather-beaten. The lifeboat, the raft until it was lost, the tarpaulin, the stills, the rain catchers, the plastic bags, the lines, the blankets, the net – all became worn, stretched, slack, cracked, dried, rotted, torn, discoloured... We perished away. (239)

and

I clung to life. I was weakly frantic. The heat was infernal I had so little strength I could no longer stand. My lips were hard and cracked. My mouth was dry and pasty, coated with glutinous saliva as foul to taste as it was to smell. My skin was burnt. My shrivelled muscles ached. My limbs, especially my feet, were swollen and a constant source of pain...I would rate the day I went blind as the day my extreme suffering began. (241)

His physical body grows increasingly weary, exemplifying his spiritual despair but also facilitating spiritual rejuvenation and transcendence:

I grew weary of my situation, as pointless as the weather. But life would not leave me. The rest of this story is nothing but grief, ache and endurance.

High calls low and low calls high. I tell you, if you were in such dire straits as I was, you too would elevate your thoughts. The lower you are, the higher your mind will want to soar. It was natural that, bereft and desperate as I was, in the throes of unremitting suffering, I should turn to God. (283)

When his ordeal ends, Pi's physical body is able to heal while his spiritual self is slowly and steadily renewed through "[a]cademic study and the steady, mindful practice of religion" (3). Throughout the novel, Pi's eclectic religious sentiments are associated with the novel's thematic foregrounding of issues dealing with

*...divine consciousness: moral exaltation; lasting feelings of elevation, elation, joy; a quickening of the moral sense which strikes one as more important than an intellectual understanding of things; an alignment of the universe along moral lines; not intellectual ones; a realization that the founding principle of existence is what we call love, which works itself out sometimes not clearly, not cleanly, not immediately, nonetheless ineluctably (63)*

For Pi, stories – like religious belief – have the ability to atone for moral suffering and effect existential regeneration beyond the physical and material world. Aspects of carnivalesque in the novel juxtapose the rational – the *conceivable* - with the irrational and *inconceivable*. When considering the severity of the abominations recounted in this more reasonable or plausible version of events, it becomes clear that the “story without animals” (317) – in its

inconceivability – is in fact the story that engages with the irrational realm of human existence.

In *Life of Pi*, aspects of carnivalized writing and grotesque realism destabilize and dissolve the boundaries between the ontologies of the rational and irrational by tracing Pi's regression into savagery through grotesque depictions of physical suffering and deprivation. This foregrounding of the irrational highlights the notion that “established authority and truth are relative” (Bakhtin, 1984:10) by challenging deterministic concepts of social, cultural and individual identity. In the novel, this is made evident by the way both stories suggest that human nature is made up of aspects of good and evil and that identity is often a hybrid manifestation of both. Martel conceives identity as being fluid and dynamic; such a conceptualization destabilizes the ontological division between the rational and irrational and opens up a liminal zone in which transition, transformation and social reintegration takes place. Pi's story with animals therefore enables him to transcend his ordeal and return to society - but not before he is brought to the brink of physical, spiritual and moral annihilation.

To conclude, narratological strategies of metafiction, intertextuality and the carnivalesque in *Life of Pi* transform the past by subverting “the uniform, fixed and hierarchical world-view of rationalism” (Dentith, 1996:79), or what Pi refers to as “dry, yeastless faculty” (302) in favour of “the better story” (317).

This chapter demonstrated that *Life of Pi* destabilizes and dissolves the boundary between fiction and reality and the rational and irrational by transcending the limitations of a rationalist experience of space and identity. Related to Martel's destabilization of the world of the 'real' and the rational, this chapter also related the novel's representation of space, boundaries and identity to the transformation of the castaway novel genre. Martel's revisionist approach to the castaway tale of endurance and transformation aligns the theme of storytelling with an interpretation of the world that resists a monological and fundamentalist interpretation of reality in favour of a more dialogical position. *Life of Pi* affirms that stories are enigmatic entities that not only facilitate the expression of difficult or traumatic experiences, but may also assist us in coming to terms with alterity, or those unknown spaces of existence.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis traced the development and transformation of the castaway novel genre from its 18<sup>th</sup> century origins up to the beginning of the twenty-first century in order to identify significant markers that appear in the four novels analysed, namely Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* (1994), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2002). Special attention was paid to literary context and narrative strategies as it was assumed that a change in context would affect the need for different strategies to reflect and represent change.

Compounding a wide range of topics related to the human condition and the nature of our material and spiritual existence, the castaway novel provides a useful platform from which to examine the various ways in which boundaries contain, organize, and demarcate literary and literal spaces and shape individual and social identity. As such, this thesis set out to investigate how a reconfiguration of the boundaries that separate fiction from reality and history, the past from the present, and the rational from the irrational in the selected texts, reflect the dominant shift that has occurred in the castaway novel. In this regard, processes of reconfiguration entailed the dissolution, destabilization and blurring of boundaries. As this thesis has shown, the dominant shift is defined by the increasingly self-reflexive modes of narration that are resistant to the totalization of systems of knowledge. These modes of narration are manifested through postmodernist narratological strategies such as metafiction, historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, irony, allegory, and grotesque realism that rewrite, revise, and re-contextualize generic conventions that reflected the restrictive conformity associated with colonization as exemplified by Daniel Defoe's archetypal castaway novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. The castaway novel therefore reflects and articulates significant phases in Western cultural development at the social, historical and cultural levels, such as the rise and decline of colonialism, as well as changing perceptions of truth, history, authority, and the roles of the author and the reader. The most pervasive and definitive underpinnings of the selected novels are their emphasis on the presence of the ontological dominant that proved the castaway-experience to be a postmodern condition of ontological uncertainty and existential isolation.

The introductory chapter provided a definition and contextualization of the castaway novel as a literary genre that had its origins in sea fiction and voyage literature, which were assimilated into the popular literary genre of the adventure romance during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this contextualization, genre was defined as a dominant-specific literary concept and dominant-shifts that occur within a genre itself were related to social and historical contexts as well as literary trends and conventions. Genre is therefore determined by the way a story is told – how it is narrated, and why it is narrated that way which strongly implicates genre in a literary text's underlying ideologies. In addition, this chapter situated Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as a historical master text and archetypal castaway novel, specifically with regard to the way in which the first person narration inadvertently defines the 18<sup>th</sup> century castaway identity as fixed and the island space as contained. In this regard, the colonial adventure romance articulated the aspirations of European imperialism and consequently, appropriation; domestication and domination became important motifs of the adventure genre, including the castaway novel. However, this chapter also emphasized that postmodernist and postcolonial novels tend to problematize such fixed and one-dimensional representations of space, boundaries and identity.

The second chapter, on *Robinson Crusoe*, located Defoe's 18<sup>th</sup> century castaway novel as a conversion or transformational narrative that portrays the process whereby a shipwrecked sailor's isolated, anxious and lonely existence becomes meaningful and contented. This conversion process is defined by Crusoe's colonization of the island, his spiritual reformation and subsequent identity transformation. As nearly all aspects of Defoe's novel are informed by British colonialism, the overt imperialist ideology that drives Crusoe's conversion of space and place and also of self and other incorporates ideas on religion and economics as well as 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalist philosophy.

Initially, the remoteness of the island wilderness is paralleled to Crusoe's liminal condition, though he eventually overcomes his situation through religious devotion and rational thought, in the process becoming an embodiment of Enlightenment rectitude and Western accomplishment. Despite its commercial success and cultural significance when it was first published in 1719, Defoe's novel had a far greater cultural impact in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; not only because the British reading public had become much larger, but also because *Robinson Crusoe* perpetuated ideas and values to do with social advancement, progress and geographical expansion that enthused the British colonial quest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Narrative perspective in *Robinson Crusoe* highlights the ideological function of narrative, particularly with regard to generic transformation. Narration in the novel is structured around notions of believability and truth that align the ideas, norms and values represented in the novel with its 18<sup>th</sup> century context. As Crusoe functions as both a character-narrator and a focalizer, events and characters are represented from his perspective while his factual narrative style re-casts fiction as fact in the form of written observations, lists and inventories.

The narrative structure of the novel traces the stages in Crusoe's character transformation and also mediates the ideology of mastery and ownership inherent to the narrative. Crusoe narrates the past from a position of moral propriety and insight, which he believes he gained from his ordeal as a castaway. As he becomes accustomed to life on the island, his narration gradually establishes a link between himself and "his" island that reveals his growing sense of ownership of the island and as such, also his colonizer-mindset.

Narrative effects in the novel situate Crusoe as a mediator between Defoe and the reader. As a self-conscious narrator, Crusoe is aware of the implications of being the writer of his story. This awareness defines the process by which he selects and edits his observations so as to authenticate its historical veracity. As Crusoe's narration subscribes to the norms of the text, he is not only a reliable narrator, but also an extension of Defoe himself as the narrative distance between them decreases so that, to an extent, Crusoe becomes Defoe's idealised version of himself.

Spatial conversion is manifested by the transformation of the island from a desolate and impenetrable wilderness into a habitation made up of various types of enclosures and fortifications. As an extension of Crusoe's identity, the island stands as a triumph of Western industry and Enlightenment ideals. However, Crusoe's authority over the island is only imagined, as spatial conversion depends on the fragile interplay between Crusoe's sense of self-importance, his imagination and the arbitrary nature of language. The ambivalent nature of the island becomes even more pronounced when one considers how easily the physical signs of Crusoe's inner autonomous self can be erased from the landscape. The static nature of the monologic world order that Crusoe establishes on the island also reveals it as a site that resists renewal and lacks authenticity: Crusoe and his island become mere signifiers of Enlightenment ideals and virtues in the sense that his *being* becomes bound to an imperialist, masculinist and racist construction of space. Moreover, Crusoe's imposition of spatial

boundaries reflects the fixed nature of textual and ontological boundaries that exemplifies Defoe's realism. The subsequent section shows how the dissolution of boundaries in the postmodern and postcolonial castaway novel relates to generic transformation and the dominant shift.

### **6.1 Generic transformation and the dominant shift**

Literature of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century is defined by paradigm shifts in which notions of identity and spatiality are continually questioned and revised through various narrative processes that depict the dissolution, blurring and crossing of textual and ontological boundaries. These processes often represent space and identity in the castaway novel as liminal and hybridized, as they are concerned with modes of being and function within the larger context of the ontological dominant. In this regard, a comparative analysis between three postmodern and postcolonial castaway novels and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has revealed that a dominant shift has taken place, as Defoe's novel foregrounds the cultural dominant in terms of its emphasis on Enlightenment ideals of social progress, self-improvement, and a rational, ordered existence. These ideals are also reflected in Defoe's representations of space, boundaries and identity. Other novels that reflect similar ideals are R.M. Ballantyne's *Coral Island* and Johann Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*.

A shift in dominant is a principal mechanism of literary evolution, and therefore also of generic transformation. With regard to the castaway novel, the shift into the domain of the ontological is revealed by the dissolution of the boundaries that separated fiction from reality, truth and history, the past from the present, and the rational from the irrational.

In Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before*, generic transformation is made evident by the way in which the narrative reinterprets the past in the light of the present by means of multiple narrators and alternate worlds, a strategy that casts doubt on the legitimacy of any single interpretation of reality and the notion of absolute truth. Narratological strategies of metafiction, historiographic metafiction and intertextuality define the boundaries between past and present, fiction and history, and time and space as permeable and deconstructable; consequently, the worlds that separate these boundaries become increasingly indistinguishable. Eco's representation of temporality in terms of spatiality and vice versa is embodied by the concept of longitude and the island that is located on the opposite side of the international date line. This tempo-spatial distortion invokes a state of liminality in which

space becomes non-linear, or cyclical and infinite. Roberto's "libertine friend" (432) articulates this idea when he contends that "[s]pace is absolute extension, eternal, infinite, increate, illimitable, uncircumscribed. Like time, it has no end, is inaccessible, impossible to disperse, it is an Arabian phoenix, a serpent biting its tail..." (432).

This passage provides an accurate description of a central premise in the novel that contrasts with Defoe's representation of space and time as fixed and containable within the parameters imposed by colonization. Eco therefore expresses space in terms of time, and as such, space becomes difficult to define, and therefore also difficult to contain, control or appropriate. Spatio-temporal distortion in *The Island of the Day Before* also reflects subversively on Crusoe's transformation of the island and his identity. This is made evident when the *Daphne* falls victim to the ravages of time while Roberto is gradually receding into the world of his imagination. In the meantime, the *Daphne* becomes "a different ship. The deck was dirty and the casks leaked, were coming apart; some sails had unfurled and were torn, hanging from the arms like masks, winking and grinning among the rents" (469).

The *Daphne*'s deterioration becomes a metaphor for Roberto's psychological deterioration, as he loses his "sense of reality" (Eco, 1994:469), unlike Crusoe who adapts to and transforms his reality. Roberto's life-story thus follows the opposite pattern from Crusoe's conversion narrative, as space becomes increasingly untamed while Roberto's fractured identity becomes a hybrid agglomeration of his fictional selves (in the form of his fictional persona and Ferrante), and his 'real' self. In this way, Eco's inventive narrative style self-reflexively likens the writing of history to the writing of fiction. The significance thereof in terms of generic transformation is that Eco's novel enacts the ontological breakdown between the worlds of fiction and reality and fiction and history, which undermines Defoe's realism by highlighting the fragile and constructed nature of narrative representation.

In the fourth chapter, which analyses J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, generic transformation is manifested by revising and rewriting the past to present the reader with the 'true' circumstances on which Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is based; in this version of the story, the main character is a woman. As such, Coetzee questions narrative authority and probes the nature of the relationship between narrator and author by means of narratological strategies of intertextuality, allegory and irony. The gradual dissolution of boundaries between fiction and history culminates in part IV, as Susan's first person character-bound narration is replaced by an external or third person narrator when the implied author enters the narrative as a

character. This narrative shift exemplifies the ontological breakdown of the text, as textual boundaries between fiction and reality, author and character and author and reader dissipate completely. Coetzee thereby exposes the tenuousness of Defoe's realism.

Coetzee challenges Defoe's portrayal of spatial adaptation and identity transformation as the narrative represents space as static while the portrayals of Crusoe, Friday, and Susan contradict Defoe's characterization of them. The island-space in *Foe* stands as a symbol of isolation and intellectual and psychological anxiety: Coetzee depicts the island on which Susan Barton is shipwrecked as a barren wilderness that bears no semblance to Crusoe's cultivatable paradise. According to Wittenberg (1997:127), *Foe* engages critically with spatialized structures of power such as imperialism, which seek to establish the dominance of a Western, rational, masculine subjectivity over colonized territories. He (1997:138) argues that the notion of colonial space is "not so much connected to an actual, physical terrain but to discursive practices, textual strategies and an expression of power". The island-space in *Foe* is therefore an allegorical rather than physical space that denotes the fictional and ideological constructedness of Crusoe's island. Crusoe's island is unstable and unhinged, as Susan also points out shortly after arriving on the island:

When I lay down to sleep that night I seemed to feel the earth sway beneath me. I told myself it was a memory of the rocking ship coming back unbidden. But it was not so: it was the rocking of the island itself as it floated on the sea. I thought: It is a sign, a sign I am becoming an island dweller. I am forgetting what it is to live on the mainland. I stretched out my arms and laid my palms on the earth, and, yes, the rocking persisted, the rocking of the island as it sailed the sea and the night bearing into the future its freight of gulls and sparrows and fleas and apes and castaways, all unconscious now, save me. (26)

The island therefore seems to always be in gentle motion, as its movement resembles that of a ship, except that the island remains in the same location. As such, the island functions as a symbol for liminality and existential displacement, as it exemplifies Susan and Friday's marginality and rootlessness.

With regard to identity, *Foe's* morose, imprudent Crusoe reflects ironically on the persevering, heroic Crusoe of Defoe's novel, as the latter is able to prevail over his difficult circumstances through hard work, enduring optimism, and religious devotion. In the same way, the cheerful, loyal Friday of *Robinson Crusoe* becomes sullen, inscrutable and disengaging in *Foe* (Parker, 2011:24). However, the greatest difference between (De)Foe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Susan's version of events is the fact that Susan is completely omitted from the novel that

(De)Foe writes because of her gender. Ironically, (De)Foe's novel eventually becomes established as a universal and even mythic depiction of human endurance and resourcefulness in an unknown and threatening space. Susan's lot, however, is uncertain, though the reader is able to infer that she never shares in (De)Foe's fame and fortune that is the result of the success of *Robinson Crusoe*.

*Foe's* ironic and parodic inversion of space and identity undermines textual and historical authority. Generic transformation is manifested by postmodernist and postcolonial strategies of revision that contest the generic foundation on which *Robinson Crusoe* is based in terms of a reappraisal of the generic parameters of author, narrator, space, and identity.

Within the context of this thesis, the transformation of the castaway genre reaches its point of culmination in Chapter 5 with Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, as both space and identity are transformed in a context that is defined by notions of hybridity, alterity and imagination. Martel's postmodern and postcolonial novel therefore recontextualizes the traditional castaway narrative's rationalist and masculinist worldview exemplified by *Robinson Crusoe*. Martel suggests such a worldview to be reductive, as it cannot cast light on the uncanny spaces of existence, such as suffering, loss and deprivation. Generic transformation is articulated in terms of spatial adaptation, the transformation of identity, and the relationship between humans and animals and as such, Martel's novel challenges the generic parameters of the traditional castaway novel by means of self-interrogative and parodic narratological strategies of metafiction and intertextuality, while the carnivalesque emphasizes irrational dimensions of existence that invalidates interpretations that are solely based on reason and empirical 'truth'. In this way, Pi's two thematically incompatible stories relate rationalism to agnosticism, logic and reason, and the irrational to religious belief, spirituality, and imagination. Pi explains that when castaway on a lifeboat, physical existence becomes "extraordinarily arduous" while "morally it is killing"; consequently, "[y]ou must make adjustments if you want to survive" (217). He therefore adjusts not only the space of the lifeboat, but also his moral principles, mentality and psyche in order to survive. Pi's identity becomes representative of the metaphysical world of spirituality and imagination. In this world, animals, particularly the tiger Richard Parker, become important symbols for the physical aspects of survival, such as instinct, intuition, and a fierce will to survive.

Though the 'real' world becomes submerged in the world of Pi's imagination, he does not lose touch with reality to the same extent as Roberto of *The Island of the Day Before*, as his

ability to survive for seven months on the open sea proves<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, after his ordeal, he adapts well to life in Canada, seems to live a contented life with his family, and attributes his survival to his belief in God. The fact that Pi appears to hold on to his sanity is probably not only the result of his unwavering faith, but also because the lifeboat is perpetually moving and not stationary like the *Daphne* on which Roberto is stranded, or the island on which Susan Barton is castaway. Movement creates the illusion of progress and purpose, whereas the immobility of the *Daphne* supposes stagnation and futility.

Interestingly, *Life of Pi's* narrative structure resembles that of *Robinson Crusoe* as Pi adapts the space of the lifeboat into a protective and organized unit in which Richard Parker and he himself each has an own territory. In the same way, Pi's character undergoes transformation since he is able to transcend his desperate circumstances through the power of his imagination. Space becomes metaphorically linked to Pi's identity transformation in terms of his experience and understanding of his suffering.

Pi comes to an important yet ambivalent insight one night when he awakes and decides to look out into the night:

The sea lay quietly, bathed in a shy, light-footed light, a dancing play of black and silver that extended without limits all about me. The volume of things was confounding – the volume of air above me, the volume of water around and beneath me. I was half-moved, half terrified...For the first time I noticed – as I would repeatedly during my ordeal, between one throes of agony and the next – that my suffering was taking place in a grand setting. I saw my suffering for what it was, finite and insignificant, and I was still. (177)

Pi is awe-struck by the sea's vastness and ethereal beauty and realizes that against the backdrop of the infinite and limitless space of sky and ocean, his own suffering becomes an insignificant occurrence. He furthermore realizes that it is ironic that his intense suffering should take place in such a "grand setting" (Martel, 2002:177), as the magnificence and tranquillity of his surroundings seem incompatible with his feelings of anguish and despair.

---

22

Roberto is a castaway for no longer than two months: from his manuscript the chronicler determines that he is shipwrecked in July or August of 1643, and that his ordeal ends with his descent into the sea more or less September of the same year (Eco, 1994:1, 506). No indication is given on how long Susan Barton is cast away on the island, though it can be surmised that it is for a number of months, though not longer than a year. *Robinson Crusoe* is a castaway for the longest period as he remains on the island for 27 years. It is interesting that none of the contemporary castaways are able to keep track of time, even though their ordeals span significantly shorter periods. This might be suggestive of the improbability of Crusoe's claim that he mastered time despite being in a situation where time becomes relative and indeterminate.

Pi's awareness of his own existence as something that is part of a greater, incomprehensible whole enables him to endure his situation. In Martel's novel, containable and organizable space is limited to the lifeboat, whereas the surrounding environment is borderless, infinite and liminal and unbridgeable in its immensity. In the same way, Pi's identity formation is not limited by what is possible or reasonable as such notions become irrelevant in a situation that is as extreme as Pi's. Instead, Pi's identity is transformed by an interpretation of 'reality' that is informed by a more dialogical position that enables him to gain insight into unknown spaces within himself.

Generic transformation in *Life of Pi* is made evident by the novel's parodic and self-reflexive re-contextualization of 'Robinsinian'-notions of spatial adaptation and identity transformation that are challenged by Eco and Coetzee. Martel achieves this by destabilizing the boundary between the ontologies represented by the rational and irrational and consequently, the reader becomes part of a voyage towards the possibility of existential autonomy. *Life of Pi* therefore articulates the writing and reading of fiction as aesthetically and ethically mediated experiences of transcendence.

## **6.2 Narrative perspective, distance and the resurrection of sympathy**

Narrative perspective in *Robinson Crusoe* manipulates narrative distance in order to induce and sustain the reader's sympathy for Crusoe's situation despite obvious flaws in his character. When interpreted from a postcolonial perspective, these flaws significantly detract from Crusoe's character and emphasize the bias and prejudice contained within his narration. Postcolonial interpretations tend to focus on the fact that he appoints himself as master over the island as well as his fellow island-inhabitants and for this reason, postcolonial readings of the novel expose Crusoe's egocentric and power-obsessed nature. Such an interpretation lessens the level of sympathy the contemporary reader will experience towards Crusoe. A decline of sympathy for Crusoe also relates to negative conceptualisations of colonialism engendered in postmodernist and postcolonial literature and theory, as well as his lack of self-awareness with regard to his character-flaws, such as his overbearing ambition for power, possession and prestige. The contemporary castaway novel reflects this "decline of sympathy" through its critical stance towards the culture of masculinity and conquest perpetuated by *Robinson Crusoe*. Eco's *The Island of the Day Before* has an ambivalent approach to narrative sympathy that reflects the reader's own ambivalence towards Roberto. The narrative instead sets out to emphasize the extent to which sympathy is evoked and

controlled by the author, and consequently, the reader is made aware of the illusory and constructed nature of the sympathy that the narrative does manage to evoke for Roberto. J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* takes this notion of 'constructedness' even further as the narrative intentionally fails to produce any sympathy for Susan, despite her unfortunate circumstances. Since she does not convince *Foe* to write her story, it becomes just as much a "hole in the narrative" (121) as the mysteries surrounding Friday. Coetzee therefore obscures her character in a cloud of epistemological uncertainty in the sense that she eventually features only as a "phantom" (133) in the story that De(Foe) writes. For this reason, it is difficult for the reader to gain access to her inner life, which also prevents the reader from establishing a sense of intimacy with her. The lack of sympathy also reflects subversively on the contrived nature of the narrative sympathy in *Robinson Crusoe*, especially when the novel is considered from a postmodernist and postcolonial perspective. *Life of Pi*, however, restores the narrative sympathy that has been in decline in the postmodern and postcolonial castaway novel. In this regard, the inside view effectively establishes and sustains a high degree of intimacy (and therefore also sympathy) between Pi, the implied author and the reader. The narrative's ability to sustain sympathy for Pi's character is because of his self-aware and self-reflexive narrative style, the implied author's assertion that Pi is a reliable narrator, as well as Pi's sincere remorse for behaviour that he deems barbaric or animalistic.

### **6.3 Concluding remarks**

An analysis and contextualization of the selected postmodernist and postcolonial castaway novels have shown that the past can only be recalled in the present through narrative. The reader thereby becomes the focalizer through which past events are interpreted and understood, and in this regard, the contemporary reader tends to question the totalizing narrative authority of so-called master-narratives. Instead, postmodernist readings tend to favour multiple theoretical viewpoints, rather than the all-encompassing yet limiting perspectives such as fundamentalist religion or extreme rationalist agnosticism. Though all three contemporary novels utilize unquestionably postmodernist techniques to question dominant epistemological paradigms, *Life of Pi* initiates a movement away from radical or overtly theoretical forms of postmodernism with its anti-metaphysical approach and overly deconstructive tendencies. As a text that marks the culmination in the transformation of the castaway novel, stylistic and philosophical shifts in *Life of Pi* express larger cultural changes

in world society, such as a renewed interest in the role of religion, or any other form of spirituality or anti-secularism.

In his essay, *Introduction: After Postmodernism*, Hoberek (2007:233) proposes new models for “understanding contemporary fiction in the wake of postmodernism’s waning influence” and ascribes this decline to postmodernism’s complete appropriation of mass culture that has rendered its ability to critically engage with dominant and emerging paradigms obsolete, as postmodernism “turned out to be just as reproducible as its creators had contemptuously said all previous art was” (Hoberek, 2007:233). Given the extent to which meaning and knowledge have become decentred by its appropriation of mass culture, I agree with Hoberek’s view that that popular culture seems to have lost the ability to engage ironically and self-reflexively with its systems of representation. Instead, popular cultural forms have become intent on fostering the illusion that the individual is in control of creating, constructing and managing the cultural product. This is achieved, for example, through the individual’s ‘interaction’ with forms of social media such as Facebook or Twitter, or by ‘voting’ for a favourite contestant on a reality TV-show. The implication, as Kirby (2006) also argues, is that postmodernism has changed into a culture that “fetishes the recipient of the text to the degree that they become a partial or whole author of it”. In terms of the cultural residue left by postmodernism, he (2006) goes as far as to claim that:

The only place where the postmodern is extant is in children’s cartoons like *Shrek* and *The Incredibles*, as a sop to parents obliged to sit through them with their toddlers. This is the level to which postmodernism has sunk; a source of marginal gags in pop culture aimed at the under-eights.

As such, postmodernism as we know it, has on the one hand morphed into what Kirby (2006) terms “pseudo-modernism”, which is fed by a culture of excessive secularism, consumerism, and materialism. On the other hand, in more established cultural forms such as literature, the divergence from postmodernism seems to have produced a form of post-postmodernist fiction that occurs across a range of contemporary writing and distinguishes itself in significant yet different ways from its predecessor’s norms. Huggan (2012:766) terms such post-postmodernist literary trends to be a manifestation of a type of “postsecularism” which exists “on the knife-edge between scepticism and idealism, much in the spirit of postcolonialism and postmodernism; and to clear a space that allows, as they do, for a continual displacement of the conceptual categories on which all ideologies depend”.

As a point of convergence in the generic transformation of the castaway novel, *Life of Pi* makes evident such a postsecular or post-postmodernist approach by signalling a new mode of narrative that situates the reader as the recipient of the text to the degree that they become – without irony - complicit in the production of its meaning, or as Kirby (2006) posits, a “partial or whole author of it”, as the reader can decide for herself which of Pi’s stories is closest to the truth and what her choice of story implies. Martel relates themes of transformation and transcendence in Pi to an examination of what it means to be human within a framework provided by the castaway novel genre. Consequently, Pi exemplifies the potential for an emerging breed of fiction that is able to articulate the sense of cultural, intellectual and spiritual displacement and estrangement that has come to define the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not with paradoxical and self-reflexive irony, but unaffectedly and ethically.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary texts**

Eco, U. 1998. (1996). *The island of the day before*. Translated from Italian by William Weaver. London : Vintage.

Coetzee, J.M. 1986. *Foe*. Johannesburg : Ravan Press.

Defoe, D. 1985. (1719). *Robinson Crusoe*. London : Penguin.

Martel, Y. 2003. (2002). *Life of Pi*. Edinburgh : Canongate.

### **Secondary texts**

Abrams, M.H. 2005. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. *A glossary of literary terms*. Boston MA : Geoffrey Harpham.

Alessio. 2013. *Three 18<sup>th</sup> century women writers and their legacy*.

<http://thebrightoldoak.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/three-18th-century-women-writers-and-their-legacy/> Date of access 13 Mar. 2013.

Bakhtin, M. 1984. *Rabelais and his world*. Translated from Russian by Helene Iswolsky. Indiana: Indiana UP.

Bal, M. 1985. *Narratology: introduction to the theory of narrative*. Translated by Van Boheemen, C. Toronto : University of Toronto Press.

Blake, W. 2005. (1794). *The Tyger*.

<http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/transcription.xq?objectid=songsie.a.illbk.37&term=Tyger&search=yes> Date of access 1 Nov. 2012.

Bloom, H. 1997. (1973). *The anxiety of influence: a theory of poetry*. Oxford : Oxford UP.

Beckett, S. 2006 (1953). *Waiting for Godot*. London : Faber & Faber.

Bondanella, P. 1997. *Umberto Eco and the open text: semiotics, fiction, popular culture* : Cambridge : Cambridge UP.

- Booth, W. 1996. Types of narration. (In Onega, S. & García Landa, J.S. eds. Narratology: an introduction. London : Longman. p. 145-154.)
- Booth, W. 1961. The rhetoric of fiction. Chicago, Ill. : Chicago UP.
- Bridgeman, T. 2007. Time and space. (In Herman, D. ed. The Cambridge companion to narrative. Cambridge : Cambridge UP. p. 52-65.)
- Brown, P.T. 2008. Quantum entanglement, Chaos Theory, and the unification of multiplicities in Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before*. *Critique*, 50(1):69-85.
- Brunner, B. 2007. The Bounty, Pitcairn Island, and Fletcher Christian's descendants. [www.infoplease.com/spot/pitcairn.html](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/pitcairn.html) Date of access 24 Oct. 2012.
- Byatt, A.S. 2000. On histories and stories: selected essays. Cambridge : Harvard UP.
- Calabrese, O. 1992. Neo-baroque: a sign of the times. Princeton, NJ : Princeton UP.
- Capozzi, R. 1996. Metaphors and intertextuality in Eco's Neo-Baroque narrative machine: *The Island of the Day Before*. *Rivista di studi italiani*, 14(10):165-89.
- Cassell's Italian-English English-Italian Dictionary. 1972. London : Cassell & Company.
- Chambers, I. 1990. Border dialogues: journeys in postmodernism. London : Routledge.
- Clark, G.N. 1960 (1929). The seventeenth century. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London : Oxford UP.
- Cobb, G.T. 2003. Adolescent mariner: review of *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. *America*, 188(13). April 14.
- Corcoran, P. 1996. *Foe*: metafiction and the discourse of power. (In Spaas, L. & Stimpson, B. eds. *Robinson Crusoe: myths and metamorphoses*. Houndmills : Macmillan. p. 256-66.)
- Crang, M. 1998. Cultural geography. London : Routledge.
- Currie, M. 1998. Postmodern narrative theory. London : Macmillan
- Currie, M. (ed). 1995. Metafiction. New York, NY: Longman. p. 1- 18.

- Dentith, S. 1996. Bakhtinian thought. London : Routledge.
- Dickens, C. 1994. (1874). The want of emotion in Defoe. (*In* Shinagel, M. *ed.* A Norton Critical Edition: Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*. An authoritative text, contexts, criticism. New York, NY : W.W. Norton & Co. p. 274.)
- Dragunoiu, D. 2001. Existential doubt and political responsibility in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *Critique*, 42(3):309-326.
- Duff, D. 2000. Longman critical readers: modern genre theory. Pearson Education Limited: Edinburgh Gate. 287 p.
- Duncan, R. 2008. *Life of Pi* as postmodern survivor narrative. *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, 41(2):167-183.
- Dwyer, J. 2005. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* and the evolution of the shipwreck narrative. *Modern language studies*, 35(2):9-21.
- Eco, U. 1995. (1985). From *Reflections on the Name of the Rose*. (*In* Currie, M. *ed.* *Metafiction*. New York, NY : Longman. p. 172- 180.)
- Eco, U. 1989. *The open work*. Translated from Italian by Anna Cancogni. Cambridge, MA : Harvard UP.
- Fallon, A. M. W. 2003. "The world is full of islands": literary revision and the production of a transnational "Robinson Crusoe". Virginia : University of Virginia (Thesis-PhD).
- Flint, H. 2011. White talk, white writing: new contexts for examining genre and identity in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *Literature interpretation theory*, 22:336-353.
- Gauthier, M. 1997. The intersection of the postmodern and the postcolonial in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *English Language Notes*, 34 (4):52-71.
- Genette, G. 1997. *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*. Translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press.

Genette, G. 1991. Order in narrative. (*In*\_Walder, D. *ed.* Literature in the modern world: critical essays and documents. Oxford : OUP. p. 142-151).

Genette, G. 1983. Narrative discourse: an essay in method. Ithaca, NY : Cornell UP.

Georgis, D. 2006. Hearing the better story: learning and the aesthetics of loss and expulsion. *The review of education, pedagogy, and cultural studies*, 28:165-178.

Green, M. 1990. The Robinson Crusoe story. Pennsylvania, PA : Pennsylvania State UP.

Guisepi, R.A. 2007. The Baroque era in the arts: cultural expressions of the age. [http://history-world.org/baroque\\_era.htm](http://history-world.org/baroque_era.htm) Date of access 24 Sep. 2012.

Hebron, M. 2008. Key concepts in renaissance literature. Houndmills : Palgrave Macmillan.

Hoberek, A. 2007. Introduction: after postmodernism. *Twentieth century literature*, 53(3):233-247.

Hoegberg, D.E. 1995. 'Your pen, your ink': Coetzee's *Foe*, *Robison Crusoe*, and the politics of parody. *Kunapipi*, 17(3):86-101.

Hoyenski, E. 2002. Women writers: 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. <http://www.library.unt.edu/rarebooks/exhibits/women/17th.htm> Date of access 13 Mar. 2013.

Huggan, G. 2010. Is the "post" in "postsecular" the "post" in postcolonial? *Modern fiction studies*, 56(4):751-768.

Hutcheon, L. 2007. Historiographic metafiction: parody and the intertextuality of history. <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/blitstream/1807/10252/1/TSpace0167.pdf> Date of access: 22 May 2012.

Hutcheon, L. 2003. A poetics of postmodernism: history, theory, fiction. New York, NY : Routledge.

Ionescu, C.M. 2008. Openness and limit in Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before*. *Forum Italicum*, 42(1):155-74.

Irwin, R. 2002. The young man and the sea: review of *The Life of Pi*. *New contrast*, 30(4):68-74.

Jolly, R. 1994. Voyages in J.M. Coetzee's novels: narrative conquests in *Foe*, narrative exploration in *Age of Iron*. (In Davis, G.V. ed. *Southern African writing: voyages and explorations*. Amsterdam : Rodopi. p. 61-70.)

Jones, R. 2009. Father-born: mediating the classics in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *Digital Defoe 1*, (1):45-69. <http://english.illinoisstate.edu/digitaldefoe/archive/spring09/features/jones.pdf>  
Date of access: 5 Aug.2012.

Joyce, J. 1994. (1964). Daniel Defoe. (In Shinagel, M. ed. *A Norton critical edition: Daniel Defoe: Robinson Crusoe*. New York, NY : W.W. Norton & Co. p. 320-323.)

Kapstein, H.S. 2002. *The castaway state: on islands and nation-building*. New York : Columbia University. (Thesis-PhD).

Kelly, R. 1995. *Castaway*. *New York Times book review*: 22 Oct.

Kirby, A. 2006. The death of postmodernism and beyond. *Philosophy now*, 58.  
[http://philosophynow.org/issues/58/The\\_Death\\_of\\_Postmodernism\\_And\\_Beyond](http://philosophynow.org/issues/58/The_Death_of_Postmodernism_And_Beyond) Date of access 7 Nov. 2012

Kristeva, J. 2002. "Nous Deux", or a history of intertextuality. *Romantic review*, 93(1-2):7-13.

Kristeva, J. 1986. *The Kristeva reader*. Moi, T. ed. New York, NY : Columbia UP.

Lin, L. 2001. J.M. Coetzee and the postcolonial rhetoric of simultaneity.  
<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/view/7690/8747> Date of access: 8 Sept. 2011.

Loxley, D. 1990. *Problematic shores: the literature of islands*. Basingstoke : Macmillan.

- Marais, M. 2001. Disarming silence: ethical resistance in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. (In Yousaf, N. ed. *Apartheid narratives*. Amsterdam : Rodopi. p. 131-141.)
- Marais, M. 1996. Colonialism and the epistemological underpinnings of the early English novel. *English in Africa*, (1):47-66, May.
- Marais, M. 1989. Interpretative authoritarianism: reading/colonizing Coetzee's *Foe*. *English in Africa*, 16(1):9-16.
- Martino, A. 2003. The errant autho-biographer: reflections of the author in Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before*. *Atenea*, 23(1):115-22.
- Marzec, R.P. 2002. Enclosures, colonization, and the *Robinson Crusoe* syndrome: a genealogy of land in a global context. *boundary 2*, 29(2) : 129-156.
- McClintock, A. 1995. *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*. London : Routledge. 449 p.
- McCorkle, J. 2001. Gender, text and space in J.M. Coetzee's fiction. (In Wilson, R. & Von Maltzen, C. eds. *Spaces and crossings: essays on literature and culture in Africa and beyond*. Frankfurt : Peter Lang. p. 107-123.)
- McHale, B. 1989. *Postmodernist fiction*. Routledge : London. 264 p.
- McInelly, B.C. 2003. Expanding empires, expanding selves: colonialism, the novel, and *Robinson Crusoe*. *Studies in the novel*, 35(1):1-21, Spring.
- Meister, J.C. 2009. Narratology. (In\_ Hühn, Pier, Schmid, & Schöner eds. *Narratologia: handbook of narratology*. Berlin : Walter de Gruyter. p. 329-349.)
- Nichols, A. 1999. Romantic rhinos and Victorian vipers: the zoo and nineteenth-century spectacle. <http://users.dickinson.edu/~nicholsa/Romnat/zoos.htm> Date of access 12 Sept. 2012.
- O'Connell, L. 1989. J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe* as postmodernist allegories. *Literator*, 10(1):39-53.

- O'Malley, A. 2007. "Robinsonade". *The Literary Encyclopedia*.  
<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1717> Date of access 29 November 2012.
- Onega, S. & García Landa, J.A. 1996. *Narratology: an introduction*. London : Longman.
- Parker, J.A. 2011. *Crusoe's Foe, Foe's Cruso, and the origins and future of the novel*. *Kronoscope*, (11)1-2:17-40.
- Phillips, R. 1997. *Mapping men and empire: a geography of adventure*. London : Routledge.
- Potter, A. 1993. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. *The context of literature written in English*. Cape Town : Maskew Miller Longman.
- Poyer, D. 1995. *In the wake of Melville and Conrad: writing the modern sea novel*.  
<http://www.esva.net/~davidpoyer/sea.htm> [Date of access 09 September 2006.]
- Rice, T.J. 2003. Mapping complexity in the fiction of Umberto Eco. *Critique*, 44(4):349-68.
- Rietbergen, P. 1998. *Europe: a cultural history*. London : Routledge.
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. 2007. *Narration: levels and voices*. (In *Narrative fiction: contemporary poetics*. London: Routledge. p 87-106.)
- Rogers, P. 2001. *The Oxford illustrated history of English literature*. Oxford : Oxford UP.
- Rogers, P. 1979. *Robinson Crusoe*. London : George Allen & Unwin. 182 p.
- Russell, S.K. 2005. *Linking Genesis to modern castaway narratives*. Huntington : Marshall University. (Dissertation-M.A.).
- Sambrook, J. 1986. *The eighteenth century: the intellectual and cultural context of English literature 1700-1789*. London : Longman.
- Seidel, M. 1991. *Robinson Crusoe: island myths and the novel*. Boston, MA : Twayne Publishers. 132 p.

- Sorrenson, R. 1995. The state's demand for accurate astronomical and navigational instruments in eighteenth-century Britain. (*In* Birmingham, A. & Brewer, J. eds. *The consumption of culture 1600-1800: image, object, text*. London : Routledge. p. 262-271.)
- Stephen, L. 1994. (1874). Defoe's discovery of a new art form. (*In* Shinagel, M. ed. *A Norton Critical Edition: Daniel Defoe: Robinson Crusoe*. An authoritative text, contexts, criticism. New York, NY : W.W. Norton & Co. p. 777-279.)
- Stimpson, B. 1996. Preface. (*In* Spaas, L & Stimpson, B., eds. *Robinson Crusoe: myths and metamorphoses*. Macmillan Press : Houndmills. p. viii-xi.)
- Stratton, F. 2004. "Hollow at the core": deconstructing Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. *Studies in Canadian literature*, 29(2):5-21.
- Thieme, J. 2002. *Postcolonial Con-texts: writing back to the canon*. London : Continuum.
- Thomas, K. 1971. *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England*. London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Tournier, M. 1984. (1967). *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique*. London : Penguin.
- Turk, T. 2011. Intertextuality and the collaborative construction of narrative: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *Narrative* 19(3):295-310.
- Turner, V. 1974. *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. 1967. *Betwixt and between: the liminal period in rites of passage*. (*In* *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell UP).
- Viljoen, SI. 2007. *Reconstructing identity in Peter Carey's Jack Maggs*. Potchefstroom : NWU (Thesis-PhD).
- Wagner, K.M. 1989. 'Dichter' and 'dichtung': Susan Barton and the 'truth' of autobiography. *English Studies*, 32(1):1-11.

Walcott, D. 1980. (1978). *Remembrance and Pantomime: two plays*. New York, NY : Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Watt, I. 1994. (1951). *Robinson Crusoe* as myth. (In Shinagel, M. ed. A Norton Critical Edition: Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*. An authoritative text, contexts, criticism. New York, NY : W.W. Norton & Co. p. 288-306.)

Waugh, P. 1995. (1984). What is metafiction and why are they saying such awful things about it? (In Currie, M. ed. *Metafiction*. New York, NY : Longman. p. 39-54.)

Waugh, P. 1984. *Metafiction: the theory and practice of self-conscious fiction*. London: Methuen.

Weaver-Hightower, R.A. 2002. *Empire islands: castaways, cannibals, and fantasies of masculine incorporation in post/colonial island narratives*. Kentucky : University of Kentucky (Thesis-PhD).

Williams, P. 1988. *Foe: the story of silence*. *English studies in Africa*, 31(1):33-39.

Windelspecht, M. 2002. *Groundbreaking scientific experiments, inventions, and discoveries of the 17<sup>th</sup> century*. Westport, CT : Greenwood Press.

Wittenberg, H. 1997. Imperial space and the discourse of the novel. *Journal of literary studies*, 13(1/2): 127-150.)

Wolf, W. 2004. Migration towards a rewarding goal and multiculturalism with a positive centre: Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* as a post-postmodernist attempt at eliciting (poetic) faith. (In Ertler, K. & Löschnigg, M. eds. *Canada in the sign of migration and trans-culturalism/Le Canada sous le signe de la migration et du transculturalisme*. Frankfurt : Peter Lang. p. 107-124.)

Wolfreys, J. 2004. *Critical keywords in literary and cultural theory*. Houndmills : Palgrave Macmillan.

Wynne-Davies, M. 1989. *Bloomsbury guide to English literature: the new authority on English literature*. London : Bloomsbury Publishing.

