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*Life of Pi*: An Intertextual Dialogic and Cultural  
Materialist Study**

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work to my beloved parents Hacene and Baya.*

*I am really grateful for their constant prayers, moral and financial supports all along my studies. Their gentle tap on my head and their check upon me at late nights during the fulfilment of this work have always push me to give the best of myself.*

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*To my dear nieces and nephews, May God protect them.*

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*I dedicate this dissertation*

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## **Abstract**

*The present work studies all of Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** (1719), Jules Verne's **The Mysterious Island** (1874) and Yann Martel's **Life of Pi** (2001) from both an Intertextual Dialogic and a Cultural Materialist approach. The purpose of this dissertation is, on the one hand, to draw parallels and direct comparison between Defoe's source text and Verne's literary adaptation and, on the other hand, to discuss the marked differences between Defoe's masterpiece and Martel's narrative. The main focus of this dissertation is to analyse the evolution of the Robinsonade genre through evaluating the change witnessed in its perspectives and ideologies. To achieve this goal, this work will be based on Bakhtin's two prominent concepts of 'Stylization' and 'Polemic' combined with his "Dialogism" developed in his books entitled **The Dialogic Imagination** (1981) and **Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics** (1984). Furthermore, we will also adopt and explore Raymond Williams's theory of Cultural Materialism particularly his concepts of 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent' ideologies of culture which he introduced in his two books entitled **Marxism and Literature** (1977) and **Culture and Materialism** (1980). Our analysis of the three novels under scrutiny shows that Verne's **The Mysterious Island** is, to a certain degree, a stylization of Defoe's classical Robinsonade, while Martel's modern and contemporary novel might be read as an overt polemic directed at Defoe's canonical work. Additionally, our study reveals that each novel portrays different ideologies which are developing through time and adapting to new changes depending on the author's ideological stance as well as novel's settings.*

**Keywords:** *Robinson Crusoe, The Mysterious Island, Life of Pi, Intertextuality, Dialogism, Stylization, Polemic, Ideology, Residual, Dominant, Emergent.*

**I-Introduction**

With the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Daniel Defoe did not only deliver an adventure novel to the public but he has also invented a completely new genre known under the name of Robinsonade, also called ‘deserted island stories’ or ‘castaway narratives’. A broad definition of Robinsonade would be the repetition of the story and themes of *Robinson Crusoe*. Taking into account that Defoe’s masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe* is an open text<sup>1</sup>, it has, as a matter of fact, generated many new stories and has been imitated, translated and adapted into various literary, cinematic and other art forms, through a rich variety of ‘Robinsonade Writings’. The Robinsonade narratives refer, accordingly, to the adoption of Crusoe’s story and experiences.<sup>2</sup>

Among the literary adaptations of Defoe’s canonical text *Robinson Crusoe*, Jules Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* (1874) and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* (2001) constitute the major concern of our study. Actually, both authors were greatly inspired by Defoe’s text, a fact which is mainly reflected in their works. Both Verne’s literary work and Martel’s follow *Robinson Crusoe*’s scheme and plot. This means that they both discuss common themes of shipwreck, remote island, social breakdown, loneliness, and survival. Despite the different periods in which all the three works have been written, there are various common points which bind them together. Verne’s and Martel’s narratives cannot, in any way, be read without making reference to Defoe’s model. The reader feels the presence of Crusoe in the two novels throughout the characters’ experiences and the struggles they faced all along their journeys. The characters, for instance, in both Robinsonades under study are introduced as castaways who found themselves marooned and abandoned on ‘uninhabited’ islands. They, thus, struggled to survive against all odds and unfavourable conditions. They went back to the primitive lifestyle and met face to face with wild life. In order to survive, they were, like Crusoe, obliged to find solutions and ways to support themselves with their basic needs and to improve their living conditions as well.

Still, Robinsonades cannot be considered just as narratives which tell stories about castaways' adventures and the experiences they go through. This literary genre goes, basically, beyond such perception. Robinsonade narratives convey second meanings above and beyond the overall surface meaning. This second meaning carries deeper ideological notions. To better understand the evolution of the Robinsonade genre, one has to understand the historical, socio-cultural and political environment in which it has developed.

The genre has witnessed a remarkable development and a shift from traditional to modern Robinsonades. Both types share themes yet they differ in perspectives. Each author presents and invests the subject according to his own concerns, convictions and style. The Robinsonade, therefore, becomes an intellectual, experimental and playful elaboration. Most works and studies conducted on the traditional and classical Robinsonades such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* argue that the genre is merely concerned with colonialism, settlement and land seizure. Both Daniel Defoe and Jules Verne present their characters as 'colonist agents' for the purpose of diffusing their colonial agenda. The castaways develop, in such narratives, a colonial ideology and a thriving possessing attitude towards the islands and the natives as well. However, the modern Robinsonade narratives such as *Life of Pi* reject all forms of colonial ideology, exploitation of the natives besides racial discrimination. Such a Robinsonade is involved in promoting modern and contemporary ideologies. Hence, they come as a reaction against all the imperial and racial notions formerly portrayed in the traditional Robinsonades.<sup>3</sup>

The two Robinsonades under study portray different ideologies, which are all greatly influenced by the epoch in which the tales are written, besides the setting including the historical and socio-cultural surroundings which, accordingly, have a direct impact on their plots. In other words, each castaway tale is characterised by particular and different historical,

political, social and cultural backgrounds, which, in return, undergo a significant change throughout time and then differ from a period to another.

Our aim in this research paper is to investigate the intertextual dialogic relationship found between Defoe's classical Robinsonade and its two adaptations already mentioned. We will focus mainly on Bakhtin's prominent concepts of 'stylisation' and 'polemic'. We will appeal to the former to discuss the affinities between *The Mysterious Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*, while the latter will be applied to analyse the differences between *Life of Pi* and Defoe's novel. Our study will also make use of Cultural Materialism. We will, thus, examine and apply Williams's concepts of 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent' ideologies of culture, with the purpose of investigating the different ideologies portrayed in the two works under scrutiny.

### The Review of Literature

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1874), and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001) have received a large amount of criticism from different critics using different perspectives and viewpoints. Several studies have been conducted to deal with these three narratives which can be accordingly classified through different ideological perspectives and literary angles. That is, from postcolonial, structural, to Marxist perspectives.

To start with Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, Ian Watt (1967) and Martin Green (1979) analyse the novel from a postcolonial perspective. They believe that Defoe presents the British colonial ideology through his main character Robinson Crusoe, to whom he attributes stereotypical and somewhat hostile English racial characteristics. In other words, Crusoe is the representation of a colonial figure and a colonial mind in this fiction. These colonial representations are portrayed in the way Crusoe dominates and cultivates the island through the use of European technologies, in addition to the fact that he takes Friday as his

slave, teaches him English and imposes his religion on him, a fact which refers to the strategy used by the Western coloniser (white man), with the purpose of enlightening the uncivilised people. Crusoe attempts to create a new English society on the island. He seizes the island property and makes it his comfortable dominion. In a sense, Crusoe's enclosure in a distant place symbolises the European colonial project. All in all, from both Watt's and Green's postcolonial interpretations of Defoe's masterpiece, we come to understand that the narrative reflects the 18<sup>th</sup> century European imperialism and colonialism.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* has yielded a huge bulk of criticism from different perspectives. The French theorist, Roland Barthes made a structuralist interpretation of Verne's work in his essay "*the Nautilus and the Drunken Boat*" published in (1957). Barthes states: "to enclose oneself and to settle, such is the existential dream of childhood and of Verne. The archetype of this dream is this almost perfect novel: *The Mysterious Island*".<sup>5</sup> According to Barthes, *The Mysterious Island* is the ideal novel about Verne's childhood dream. This dream is reflected in the characters' ultimate objective of enclosure in a safe and distant place, which, in the novel, refers to Lincoln Island. The settlers made of that island the place where their dream is realised, where they make real appropriation of the world. They were able to transform the island from an 'uninhabited' 'virgin' place to a 'civilised' land, where they build their own world. And this is mainly done thanks to their intelligence, hard labour and their endless scientific and engineering accomplishments. In this sense, according to Barthes, Verne "re-invents the world, fills it, closes it, shuts himself up in it, and crowns this encyclopaedic effort with the bourgeois posture of appropriation".<sup>6</sup>

In addition, Pierre Macherey made a Marxist interpretation of Verne's novel in his book "*A Theory of Literary Production*" (1966). He believes that the domination of nature is a major theme in Verne's work. The characters in *The Mysterious Island* had the ability to

dominate the island in all its forms and to construct it according to their needs. Macherey means that Verne presents an ideology through his characters which results in man's "conquest of nature by industrial technology".<sup>7</sup> This means that, the settlers in *The Mysterious Island*, armed with scientific knowledge, were able to exploit the powers of nature and use them for their own interest. That is to say, they dominated nature to achieve better living conditions, which contribute to their survival on the 'uninhabited' island.

Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* has similarly received a great literary recognition. Charlotte Innes (2002) and Alistair Brown (2007) discuss the novel's religious theme. They believe that the author's point of view is to convince the readers to be open to all religions, and to have faith in God, which might be the basis to any religion. They argue that Martel's aim is to make his readers question their faith and accordingly persuade them to believe in the existence of God. Martel portrays the theme of religion through his main character Pi, who believes in three different religions simultaneously (Hinduism, Christianity and Islam). For him faith and belief are more important than the whole exclusive truth of those religions. That is to say, the protagonist Pi does not value any religion over another. According to him, what matters is not which religion you believe in, but it is rather about one's faith. He believes that all religions carry faith and truth in them. In short, Innes (2002) and Brown (2007) believe that Martel's novel is a story that inspires the readers to believe in one Supreme Being and aims to discover God in all religions.<sup>8</sup>

### **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the above review of literature, it is clear that the three works have raised important debates among different critics and writers, and many studies have dealt with the three selected novels separately. Actually, they have been interpreted from postcolonial, structural, and Marxist perspectives. However, to our best knowledge, few studies have ever combined the three fictions together, and not many research papers have, so far, dealt with the

Intertextual Dialogic and the Cultural Materialist approaches in one sole body of work. Therefore, we intend to conduct both a comparative and a contrastive analysis through which we will try to highlight the ways both *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* are respectively similar to and different from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. We will, as a matter of fact, focus on analysing the two novels in their engaged dialogue with Crusoe's novel. In addition, we will provide a cultural materialist analysis of the two narratives under scrutiny.

First of all, our work will examine the link between *The Mysterious Island* and *Robinson Crusoe* as they share perceptible characteristics. We aim, hence, to study both novels by drawing parallels between them and find the textual connections that bind them. In the second position, we will focus on contrasting *Life of Pi* with *Robinson Crusoe*. Despite the fact that they follow the same scheme and plot, a significant distinction can be drawn between them. Our work will also be based on determining and explaining the different ideologies at the level of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi*.

To achieve our aim, we will intend to appeal to Intertextuality in general and Bakhtin's concept of Dialogism in particular which he exposes in his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984). We will precisely make use of his two concepts of 'stylization' and 'polemic' with the purpose of evaluating the change in perspectives in the Robinsonade genre since the latter is flexible and increasingly developing through time. Our work will be, then, directed to the study of the different ideological, historical, socio-cultural and political contexts in which the events of the three narratives are written since they are the products of their times. To fulfill this task, we will make use of Raymond Williams's theory of cultural materialism. We will, thus, borrow his fundamental concepts of 'Residual', 'Dominant', and 'Emergent' ideologies of culture, which he introduced and explained in his two books entitled *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and *Culture and Materialism* (1980).

## Methodological Outline

This dissertation is entitled ‘Survival Narratives in Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Jules Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi: An Intertextual Dialogic and Cultural Materialist Study*’. It is composed of five sections. The first section is a general introduction where we introduce the issue of the Intertextual Dialogic and the Cultural Materialist study and mention the three literary works. We also review some previous critics that have been written on Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Jules Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* and Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*. We have then raised the issue and the working hypothesis which is the study gap that we aim to address and the methodology to be followed. The second section includes methods and materials. It consists of Intertextuality and Michael Bakhtin’s concept of Dialogism besides Raymond Williams’s theory of Cultural Materialism on which our work is based along with the summaries of the three novels. The third section consists of the results and the findings of our research paper. The fourth section is dedicated to the discussion and the analysis of the three literary works. It will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the Intertextual Dialogic study of Defoe’s original Robinsonade and its two rewritings. While the second chapter discusses Raymond Williams’s ideologies of culture which we analyse and apply on the three selected Robinsonades. The last section of this research paper is a general conclusion which restates our main findings.

## II-Methods and Materials

### 1/ Theoretical Framework

In order to study Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and its two adaptations *The Mysterious Island* (1874) and *Life of Pi* (2001) from both the Intertextual Dialogic and the Cultural Materialist approaches, we are going to rely on the theory of Intertextuality and on Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of Dialogism developed in his books entitled *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1984). We are going also to

support our work with Raymond Williams's theory of Cultural Materialism focusing precisely on his three notions of ideology discussed in *Marxism and Literature* (1977).

But before starting to explain Bakhtin's concept of Dialogism, it is worth to define the term intertextuality because they are two interrelated terms. In order to understand the former, one must first and foremost understand the latter. The term intertextuality was first coined by Julia Kristeva in the (1960s). Kristeva's theory of intertextuality denotes the existence of a text in another text. The meaning of a text is understood, in Kristeva's view, as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text", in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another".<sup>9</sup> This means that no text can be considered original and no author can claim his work to be his own creativity but, rather, all texts are intertexts or existed texts. The term intertextuality refers to the intertextual relationship between pre-existent texts and revised texts. Graham Allan (2000) argues, in this context, that a "text is not an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality".<sup>10</sup> That is to say, every text is a product or a result of another text that has been formerly published by others.

Indeed, despite the fact that the term intertextuality was first coined by Kristeva, it is important to recall that the key figures and theorists who framed the concept are Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes and Michael Bakhtin. Accordingly, Kristeva's work is fundamentally based on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism in addition to her contact with Roland Barthes. It is through the formulation of such theorists that intertextuality becomes a critical theory and an approach to texts.<sup>11</sup>

The Russian theorist, Mikhail Mikhailovitch Bakhtin has also developed his philosophy of language known under the name of Dialogism in his books *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984) and *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). The term dialogism which refers to Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, examines the relationship that exists between a person's speech and others' discourses. The concept of dialogue has a fundamental role within

the Bakhtinian view of dialogism. Therefore, it has a direct relationship with language. In his essay *'Discourse in the Novel'* (1981), Bakhtin writes:

Language for the individual consciousness lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's'. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.<sup>12</sup>

From the above quotation, we come to understand that the word, according to Bakhtin, is not only associated with one's own or to one specific individual, but it is also related to other users. In other words, language, which is the fundamental medium of dialogue, is not formed by one single voice but through multiple voices. This means that a word or utterance is formed through the speaker's relation to other people and others' words. And that language is appropriated to a speaker only when it is formulated with his own intentions. This is also the case of a novelist, who makes use of ideas that are constructed beforehand by his predecessors, and subsequently changes them to serve his own purposes. According to Bakhtin, the author enters in a 'dialogic relation' by bringing together both his voice and that of his precursor.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin introduces several prominent concepts which are related to the intertextual dialogic nature of language. Among them, we identify 'stylization' and 'polemic' which are two distinct concepts that emerge to complement the term dialogism. As explained in Bakhtin's works, stylization is a concept which refers to the fact of using someone else's discourse in the direction of one's own personal intentions. In this context, Bakhtin claims: "discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context".<sup>13</sup> He adds that the most important aspect for a stylizer "is the sum total of devices associated with the other's speech precisely as an expression of a particular point of view".<sup>14</sup> This means that the stylizer interprets, changes and reproduces a person's speech and idea according to his

ideological, cultural and social positions. Indeed, in ‘stylization’, “the author’s thought, once having penetrated someone else’s discourse and made its home in it, does not collide with the other’s thought, but rather follows after it in the same direction”.<sup>15</sup> This means that when someone’s original idea is used in another’s discourse, the two ideas do not clash or oppose each other, but instead, they go along within the same concept and context.

However, in ‘polemic’ the two ideas resist “within the very object itself”.<sup>16</sup> Like ‘stylization’, the Bakhtinian concept of polemic refers to the use and appropriation of an author’s dialogue into one’s own. However, in this case, the authors’ words are “treated antagonistically”.<sup>17</sup> This means that the other’s discourse opposes the author’s idea. In other words, he does not follow his predecessor’s direction but, rather, takes a wide different position and perspective. He thus contradicts and challenges the author’s original idea.

Bakhtin distinguishes two types of ‘polemic’ which are ‘hidden’ and ‘overt polemic’. Both types have a common principle; however, there is a slight difference between them. In a hidden polemic, the other’s discourse clashes with the authors’ dialogue in an indirect and implied way. This means that one cannot understand the other’s antagonist perspective expressed within his discourse, if he takes into account only its surface meaning. Actually, the other’s discourse carries a second meaning as well, which as a matter of fact, is implicitly reflected within his words. In this sense, Bakhtin asserts: “the other’s thought does not personally make its way inside the discourse, but is only reflected in it, determining its tone and its meaning”.<sup>18</sup> Overt polemic, on the other hand, “is quite simply directed at another’s discourse, which it refutes, as if at its own referential object”.<sup>19</sup> This means that the other’s discourse opposes the authors’ dialogue directly and explicitly. One can easily notice the other’s oppositional stance toward the author’s dialogue since it is expressed clearly and without ambiguity.

Besides Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘stylization’ and ‘polemic’, we are also going to support the present work with Raymond Williams’s theory of Cultural materialism relying precisely

on his notions of 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent' ideologies of culture. Cultural materialism is a theoretical movement that emerged in the early (1980s). The Cultural materialist approach deals with analysing cultural texts. It focuses on analysing canonical and historically important texts, with the aim of considering how all the various historical, economic, cultural and political contexts might impact upon the meanings presented within those texts. In order to understand the meanings of a literary work, one must also understand the context in which it was written and first performed. Cultural materialism is also concerned with analysing the relationship between literature and power. This means that through close textual analysis and after exploring a text's historical and political contexts, cultural materialists identify the processes through which the power structures of a given society attempt to spread and propagate ideology. Cultural materialists examine how hegemonic forces in societies adopt important cultural texts and subsequently use them to instil specific values and ideologies on a given culture.<sup>20</sup>

In his book *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Raymond Williams discusses the development of culture through three main categories of ideology which are, 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent'. To begin with, Williams clearly explains what does he mean by 'Residual'. He describes the residual elements of a culture as all those old systems, practices, norms, values and social customs that are formed within society in a previous time period, yet, they are still alive within contemporary cultures. In this sense, according to Raymond Williams, "the residual by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the actual process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present".<sup>21</sup> This means that even though residual is inscribed in the past, it plays an active role in the current time and consequently influences the subsequent societies.

Moreover, Raymond Williams discusses the meaning of the dominant ideology in his work. He describes it as the shaping force of society. It refers to a variable set of principles,

values, rituals and practices that are shared by a major community within society. It represents, hence, the ‘hegemonic’, ‘leading’, ‘influential’, and most ‘powerful’ culture. The dominant ideology includes, as well, some elements from the residual culture, which has been previously dominant. Yet, they are, as noted by Williams, “reinterpreted, diluted, and projected”.<sup>22</sup> These residual aspects are being reshaped and modified according to the new dominant principles.

In addition, Williams’s notion of ‘emergent’, conversely, refers merely to the appearance of new principles and institutions within society. Raymond Williams means by emergent that “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships, and kinds of relationships are continually been created”.<sup>23</sup> Emergent practices may be considered as alternative to the dominant ones. This means that emergent culture can become eventually dominant. Despite the fact that the emergent culture may get incorporated into the dominant one, there will always be exceptional cases when the former challenges the latter.

To conclude, we may say that all of the ‘Residual’, ‘Dominant’ and ‘Emergent’ contribute to understanding how does culture in a given time period function. Thus, all of the three notions denote that the socio-cultural assumptions are not fixed, but they are rather changing and evolving through time.

## 2/Materials

### Summary of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

*Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is an autobiographical novel by Daniel Defoe. It narrates the story of a young Englishman named Robinson Crusoe. His father, a merchant from German origins, wanted him to follow the respectable career of a lawyer, as well as to stay in the middle state of life. However, Crusoe’s will to become a sea merchant and his strong determination to make more urged him to disobey his father’s commands and, eventually, decided to start his career as a sailor. Crusoe started to make many successful voyages but,

unfortunately, his voyage to West Africa for the purpose of importing slaves for his plantation in Brazil turned into a disaster. The ship got wrecked and Crusoe was the only survivor of the crew. Consequently, he found himself marooned on a distant and uninhabited island where he remained for twenty-eight years.

During his stay on the island, Crusoe faced many obstacles and difficulties. But being a hard worker, he succeeded to survive and eventually made of that island his property. He built fortifications and established a small farm. He developed a strong religious faith and became a good Christian. He saved a captive whom he named Friday after the day he rescued him. The latter became his devoted and loyal servant as well as his only human companion on the island. He taught him English and converted him to Christianity. One day, a group of cannibals set ashore with prisoners whom Crusoe and Friday saved from death. These prisoners turned out to be a Spaniard and Friday's father, who, subsequently, told Crusoe that there were other prisoners who have been held by the cannibals. With the help of Friday's father, Crusoe decided to rescue them and to bring them to his island with the purpose of expanding his colony. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December (1686), Crusoe was rescued by a British ship and returned to England, his mother country.

### **Summary of Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1874)**

The story of the novel is about five American prisoners of war who escaped from Richmond, Virginia, during the American Civil War with an air hot balloon. The latter crashed and landed near an island where the castaways spent four years. Not knowing when they will be delivered, the castaways made of that island their new home. They named it 'Lincoln Island' after the U.S President Abraham Lincoln. Thanks to Cyrus Harding's scientific ingenuity and directions, the castaways succeeded to improve their conditions and subsequently built a small American society on the uncharted island.

Since their stay in the island, the castaways have noticed some supernatural events such as Cyrus' rescue after having fallen down from the balloon, Top's saving from a deadly fight with a dugong, the mysterious appearance of a box of equipments, the explosion of the pirate ship and many other mysterious facts. They thus, realised that they were not alone on the island and that there must be a secret helper. They found a message in a bottle informing them that there were another castaway on Tabor Island waiting to be rescued. Once there, they discovered that it was Tom Ayrton, one of Verne's characters previously introduced in his novel entitled *In Search of the Castaways* (1867). At the end of the novel, the castaways discovered that the secret helper was Captain Nemo, who is actually a character from Verne's *Twenty Thousands Leagues Under the Sea* (1870). On his deathbed, Captain Nemo offered the castaways a treasure and warned them about the upcoming explosion of the island because of a volcanic eruption. Fortunately, the castaways were finally rescued by a passing ship. And once again, it was Nemo who has informed the crew of the ship about the place of Cyrus Harding and his companions.

### **Summary of Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001)**

The novel is about the life story of an Indian teenager named Piscine Molitor Patel. His father was the owner of the Pondicherry zoo, but because of the harsh and insecure conditions India was enduring in the mid-(1970s), Santosh Patel decided to sell it and to immigrate with his family and some of the zoo animals to Canada. They embarked on a sea voyage on a Japanese cargo ship called the Tsimtsum. The ship sank and Pi found himself the only human survivor of the wreck and, consequently, ended up with a (450)-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker in a small lifeboat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

The story of the novel focuses on Pi's ordeal and survival with Richard Parker. Pi has tried so hard to keep himself alive from both the Bengal tiger and starvation as well as from mental despair. As the novel progresses, the boat made its way near an island, where Pi and

Richard Parker decided to stay. However, they quickly left the place when Pi realised that it turns into a murderous and carnivorous territory. Afterwards, the lifeboat has landed on a Mexican shore, where Pi has been finally rescued. As to Richard Parker, he immediately disappeared into the jungle without looking back to Pi, his companion and friend of ordeal. Once Pi was in hospital, he received the visit of the Japanese officers who wanted to make a report about the reasons behind the sinking of the *Tsimtsum*. The officers did not believe Pi's story of survival. As a result, Pi invented another story in which he replaced the animals with human characters to make it seem more credible and convincing.

### III-Results

In this research paper entitled: Survival Narratives in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*: An Intertextual Dialogic and Cultural Materialist Study, we have brought into discussion an intertextual dialogic and a cultural materialist study of *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* in relation to Defoe's myth *Robinson Crusoe*. Our study and analysis of Defoe's novel and its two literary adaptations above mentioned have revealed that they all belong to the Robinsonade genre and, as a matter of fact, share common themes of wreck, island, castaway, isolation and survival. However, each rewriting depicts distinct historical, socio-cultural, political and ideological characteristics which are ever-changing from a period to another. Our work has, then, put in evidence the remarkable shift and change in perspective and ideology in the three Robinsonades.

The first chapter of this dissertation entitled: The Intertextual Dialogic Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* has revealed that there is an intertextual dialogic relationship between Defoe's source text and its two literary adaptations. In the first section of this chapter, we have brought *The Mysterious Island* and *Robinson Crusoe* under the light of a comparative study. After analysing the existing affinities between

the two works, our study has demonstrated that they both belong to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional type of the Robinsonade genre. Both Robinsonades share perspectives and have common themes of wreck, survival, civilising mission besides colonial ideology. Our analysis has, then, revealed that Verne's novel is, to a certain extent, a stylization of Defoe's first literary work.

In the second section of the first chapter, we have conducted a contrastive analysis between Martel's *Life of Pi* and Defoe's source text. Throughout our analysis we have noticed that although Martel's narrative is a rewriting of Defoe's story, there are major differences between the two works. Our study has, then, demonstrated that Martel's narrative and Defoe's belong to two different types of the Robinsonade genre. Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, *Life of Pi* illustrates the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries modern and contemporary Robinsonade, which most of the time challenges and refutes the colonial and imperial ideologies previously portrayed in early writings of the genre. Thus, our contrastive study has revealed that Martel's novel might be read as an 'overt polemic' directed at Defoe's traditional Robinsonade.

The second chapter of the present dissertation is entitled: The Cultural Materialist Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi*. This chapter has been devoted to the study of the three Robinsonade narratives from a cultural materialist approach. We have made use of Raymond Williams's concepts of 'residual', 'dominant' and 'emergent' to study the different ideologies of culture portrayed in each novel. We have thus, deduced that each novel reflects the socio-cultural, historical and political contexts and backgrounds of the period in which it has been published. Our study has also revealed that the novel's ideological characteristics have witnessed a considerable change and a remarkable development which are manifested according to its settings and context, as well as the author's ideological stances, convictions and style.

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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>James, Louis. "Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective Views." Spaas and Stimptson. (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1996).P.p, 1-9.

<sup>2</sup>Fisher, Carl. "The Robinsonade: An Intercultural History of an idea." Approaches to Teaching Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.ed.by Maximilliam E. Novak and Carl Fisher. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2005, cited in Nikoleishvili, Sophia, "The Many Faces of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe: Examining The Crusoe Myth in Film and on Television"PhD diss., the University of Missouri-Columbia, 2007.Accessed on October 2019. <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/4786/research.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Ian, Kinane. *Didactics and the Modern Robinsonade: New Paradigms for Young Readers*. Liverpool: Liverpool University press, 2019. [Accessed February, 10, 2020]. [https://books.google.dz/books?id=hmOtDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dqbl&ots=ZUd-rELTO8&sig=ACfU3U3fts-VyLbsq7OT2TSS\\_CpsKYIZbA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewixipnj-broAhVMKBoKHUTqD-8Q6AEwEHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=hmOtDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dqbl&ots=ZUd-rELTO8&sig=ACfU3U3fts-VyLbsq7OT2TSS_CpsKYIZbA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewixipnj-broAhVMKBoKHUTqD-8Q6AEwEHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>4</sup> Green, Martin. 1979. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*. New York: Basic.

<sup>5</sup>Roland, Barthes. "The Nautilus and the Drunken Boat." In *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972). p, 65.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Macherey, Pierre. "Jules Verne: The Faulty Narrative." In *A theory of Literary Production*. Trans. Geoffrey Wall. (New York: Routledge, 1985). p, 165.

<sup>8</sup>Innes, Charlotte. 2002. "Robinson Crusoe, Move over," in *the Nation*.Vol. 275, No. 6.

<sup>9</sup>Kristeva, Julia. *Word, Dialogue, and Novel. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Colombia. U. P.1980). P.p, 64-91, cited in Alfaro, Maria Jesus Martinez. *Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept*. Atlantis, Vol. 18, No. 1/2. University of Zaragoza. 1996. p, 268.

<sup>10</sup>Graham, Allen. *Intertextuality*.Taylor & Francis e-Library. (London: Routledge, 2000). p, 35.

<sup>11</sup>Merlude, Zengin. "An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definition, Axioms and The Originators." No. 25/ 1. Pamukkale University. 2016. P.p, 299-326.

<sup>12</sup>Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays* (C. Emerson, Trans., M.Holquist, Ed). (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).p, 293.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p, 284.

<sup>14</sup>Bakhtin, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).p, 91.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p, 93.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>The contributors of New World Encyclopaedia. "Raymond Williams". In *New World Encyclopedia*. New World Encyclopaedia. July, 2019 accessed on June, 2020. [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Special:CiteThisPage&page=Raymond\\_Williams&id=1022326](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Special:CiteThisPage&page=Raymond_Williams&id=1022326).

<sup>21</sup>Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). p, 122.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p, 123.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

**CHAPTER One: The Intertextual Dialogic**  
**Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious***  
***Island* and *Life of Pi***

## IV-Discussion

### Chapter One: The Intertextual Dialogic Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi*

#### Introduction

The first chapter of our dissertation is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to study the intertextual dialogic relationship between Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* and Daniel Defoe's first literary work, *Robinson Crusoe*. We will provide a comparative study with the purpose of developing the existing affinities and drawing parallels between both works to find the textual connections that bind them. This section, then, studies *The Mysterious Island* as a stylization of *Robinson Crusoe* since the former rewrites some of the main episodes of the latter. Both belong to the traditional type of the Robinsonade genre, and, therefore, share perspectives and ideologies including wreck, survival and most importantly the character's transition from castaways to colonists along with the civilising mission in the island where they were marooned.

The second section, however, will provide a contrastive analysis through which we will study the intertextual dialogic relationship between Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* and Defoe's source text. Our study will focus on discussing the marked differences between the two castaway narratives. Unlike *The Mysterious Island*, *Life of Pi* is a modern adaptation of the Crusoe tale which provides completely different, new and contemporary ideologies. The major concern of this section is to put in evidence Martel's opposition and rejection of the imperial and colonial ideologies portrayed in *Robinson Crusoe* throughout his novel.

#### Section One: *The Mysterious Island*: a Stylization of *Robinson Crusoe*

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a fundamental model for the Robinsonade genre. With the publication of his masterpiece, Defoe succeeds to create a literary genre which has

inspired several generations of writers among them Jules Verne. Verne has undertaken a unique enterprise with regard to *Robinson Crusoe*. He has, thus, chosen to re-write it and the product of this endeavour is his novel entitled *The Mysterious Island*. As such, *Robinson Crusoe* is for Verne the ideal literary source on which he would rely to write, with his own style, his Robinsonade novel.

Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1874) is a re-writing of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, first published in (1719). The transition between the periods when the two literary works were written is evasive; however, they do share various themes. The link between them, despite the fact that they are written several years apart, cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, the Robinsonade brings into question the issue of intertextuality. That is to say, studying a Robinsonade is always studying the dialogue and the relationship that the 'new' text maintains with the 'first' text, or recognised at least as first, from which it originated. As far as this section is concerned, we will study the intertextual dialogic relationship between Defoe's first novel and its two adaptation *The Mysterious Island*, focusing mainly on Bakhtin's concept of 'stylization'. But before doing that, we should go back to the notions coined by Julia Kristeva and Michael Bakhtin, the first contributors to the development of intertextuality. On account to Bakhtin's notion of language and dialogue, Kristeva argues: "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read".<sup>1</sup> Taking into consideration Kristeva's words, this means that a text cannot be studied in isolation from other texts. Writing on stylization, Bakhtin (1984) claims that the author who stylizes: "makes use of someone else's discourse in the direction of its own particular aspirations".<sup>2</sup> This is the case of Verne who, being inspired by Defoe's work, adapts its 'mythic' elements, which refer to the castaways' survival on a remote island who, subsequently, develop colonial attitudes, become settlers and seize the island's property. Verne succeeds to rewrite his own adventure fiction, yet by incorporating his scientific knowledge.

Daniel Defoe's castaway tale might be regarded as a classical work whose influence extends to the worldwide cultures. While analysing such influence, Martin Green (1990) designates the French writer, Jules Verne as "the story's most important heir and transmitter, at least in the second half of the nineteenth century".<sup>3</sup> Verne makes a great contribution to the Robinsonade genre by publishing his science fiction narrative *The Mysterious Island*, which rewrites some of the main episodes of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Actually, "the story is unmistakably a revised and up-to-date version of Robinson Crusoe".<sup>4</sup> This means that Verne has followed Defoe's story and to a certain extent ideology; thus his body of work is borrowed from Defoe's tale. In other words, to write his adventure novel, Verne takes an identity from *Robinson Crusoe* and then departs from it. In this context, Loxley (1990) argues: "the ideological precepts of Defoe's eighteenth-century text are reworked in Verne's euphoric scientism, renegotiated for a technological age".<sup>5</sup>

It is commonly known that the basic element in a Robinsonade is the presence of castaways who experience a rough adventure which consequently changes the course of their lives. Both *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* are castaway tales which revolve around a variety of common themes including: wreck, survival, remote island, civilising process besides colonial ideology. As already mentioned, many episodes of Verne's tale comply with Defoe's model. In this regard, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) asserts: "[t]he story is familiar: a castaway, brave and lucky, survives a shipwreck and initial despair to make the perfect home of an alien island, meanwhile evolving, himself from survivor to colonist".<sup>6</sup> That is to say that in the Robinsonade narrative the characters witness a shift from an initial survivor position to an engaged colonist position which is the case of both Defoe's main character and Verne's group of castaways who are to be considered as colonist agents that diffuse a colonist agenda.

Jules Verne has embraced the Robinsonade genre and accordingly engages in a dialogue with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe's literary influence is reflected in

Verne's work to such an extent that readers and critics of both authors draw parallelism and direct comparison between the two novels. As far as *The Mysterious Island* is concerned, Verne provides his readers with an updated version of Defoe's narrative, yet by replacing its main character Crusoe, the sole survivor of the shipwreck, with a group of five castaways: Cyrus Harding, Gideon Spilket, Pencroft, Herbert and Neb. Both Defoe's and Verne's characters do share a comparable story. Like Robinson Crusoe who faces a terrible storm in the middle of the ocean, where he gets shipwrecked and therefore stranded on an inhabited island, Verne's characters likewise were put under a serious situation that threatened their lives while escaping during the American Civil War in a balloon. The five Americans were crashed in an unknown island because of a violent storm. Comparably, in both novels, the characters were being wrecked, yet they succeed to survive despite the fury of the storm that blew during their voyage. Through these events, it is obvious that Verne's storyline is foremost based on the classical and original tale, that of Defoe. Writing on Verne, Pierre Macherey (1987) argues that "it is more important to recall that the obviously symbolic character of Crusoe constitutes a permanent obsession in all his work".<sup>7</sup> This means that Crusoe represents for Verne the 'mythical' character who inspires him to create similar characters and which contributes to writing his Robinsonade. Macherey further adds that *The Mysterious Island* "is the contestation of a symbolic character: Robinson Crusoe; so that it is indeed a novel about a novel".<sup>8</sup>

In any Robinsonade, the presence of an island remains a common trait. The presence of an island where one or more people are going to be stranded is such a recurring element in the genre that one can almost say that there is no good Robinsonade without the presence of an island. Like in *Robinson Crusoe*, the first thing the American castaways did is to identify whether the place where they have been marooned is an 'island or continent'. This means that they ask the same question as Crusoe did when he first reached land. To answer such question, they proceed into exploring the place. After surveying their position, they realised

that it was a virgin island. The physical state of Verne's island in *The Mysterious Island* is much similar to the one of Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*. In connection to Defoe, Verne presents the island as an 'exotic' 'virgin' place characterised by a harsh environment and wild, but not dead nature. In order to survive, Verne's castaways thus had to face such a hostile and wild nature just as Crusoe did.

Moreover, parallels between Crusoe's attempt to reconstruct the 'chaotic' nature in the island and the way Verne's characters bring several changes to the island's landscape can be drawn. Like Crusoe, the five settlers have one common objective, which is to idealise that island and make it a microcosm of a society that conforms to their mother country. This means, they aimed to reproduce an American society in the abandoned territory. As a result, they proceed in transforming the island. In parallel to *Robinson Crusoe*, Verne's island went through a stage of 'civilisation'. That is to say, the island's civilising process is equally significant in both texts. Following Crusoe's experience and activities during his ordeal and the way he manages his survival, Verne departs from such concept and thus presents his characters as hard workers, who despite the hardships they encounter, are able to handle the situation and improve their condition.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the transformation of the island was made possible thanks to the redoubtable efforts the castaways made during their being there. They alter the physical state of the island through building, planting and inventing. Overall, like Crusoe, "Verne's protagonists, too, build all over their island".<sup>10</sup> In a sense, both Crusoe's and Verne's characters share one ultimate aim which is to make of that island a productive space which suits their daily needs, and so they did. With their will to labour and invent, they were able to transcend the state of nature in the island.

It is commonly argued that the Robinsonade narratives are associated with colonialism. Both *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* make a great contribution to the colonial ideology. As we know, Daniel Defoe's greatly influential work has inspired Jules

Verne in many ways particularly in terms of its colonial perspective. *Robinson Crusoe*'s position as a typical Robinsonade novel makes it a valuable source of reference for Jules Verne. Based on the colonial dimensions of Defoe's text, Verne contributes to the 'Crusoe myth' and provides his readers with a revised, yet related version to Defoe's novel. In doing so, he makes a crucial involvement in the colonial enterprise by publishing his well known novel *The Mysterious Island*. Parallels between both texts in relation to colonial ideology can be drawn.

As far as *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* are concerned, colonialism constitutes a dominant ideology in both texts. In connection to Defoe's text, Verne engages in colonial writings by offering a revised narrative which corresponds to the traditional Robinsonade genre. This means that Verne foregrounds the myth of colonialism inspired by Defoe's hero in his novel *The Mysterious Island*. Thus, his work might be regarded as a stylization of Defoe's tale. Crusoe's colonial mentality is also equivalent to the one of Verne's castaways. They, like Crusoe, engage in activities which are bound with the colonial enterprise. These activities are being reflected in the way they take possession of the island where they were marooned. Taking into consideration the fact that Defoe's hero is a representative of European colonialism, Verne correspondingly establishes his characters as American castaways who subsequently became settlers. This means that after having declared themselves settlers, the five Americans in *The Mysterious Island* develop a colonial identity and therefore proceed to control the whole space. In this regard, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) claims: "the castaway moves beyond despondency to embrace his new role of colonist".<sup>11</sup>The transition of Verne's characters from castaways to settlers has been formerly manifested in Defoe's protagonist. Verne has, to a certain extent, stylized Defoe's text and accordingly has attempted with success to reinterpret it throughout his novel.

On a similar vein, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* depict the protagonists' efforts to make of the island a safe home space. In a Robinsonade, the theme of homemaking remains a significant element to discuss. In this regard, Andrew O'Malley argues that "Robinsonade are not just stories about discovering strange and exotic places, but about making these places 'home' for their adventure protagonists".<sup>12</sup> As far as Defoe's tale is concerned, once Crusoe declares his ownership over the island, he transforms it into a small English 'society'. He has, thus, established it as his private property and made it his comfortable dominion where he can feel home. Crusoe himself declares: "the whole country was my own meer property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion."<sup>13</sup>

By the same token, Verne's characters seize the island's territory and make of it their safe home space. This means that through the different accomplishments and changes the castaways brought into the island, they succeed in transforming it from a 'wild' to a secure environment, by consequently implementing their American social and cultural norms into the landscape with the purpose of offering it to the American government. This process is clearly reflected in Cyrus Harding's words: "we will leave our island, after having taken possession of it in the name of the United States. Then we will return with any who may wish to follow us to coloni[s]e it definitely, and endow the American Republic with a useful station in this part of the Pacific Ocean."<sup>14</sup> Hence, like Crusoe who establishes an English society in the island, the settlers in *The Mysterious Island* correspondingly establish an American one. In this context, Ian Kinane (2019) claims that "homemaking is part of the colonialist ethos of traditional Robinsonade narrative as it demonstrates the protagonist's ability to remake their islands and successfully import elements of European culture into this new setting".<sup>15</sup> Alongside, Weaver-Hightower (2007) asserts that the castaway colonists engage into "making the space familiar and marking their rights over their territory".<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, the characters in Verne's novel proceed into naming the island and its places. Pencroft the sailor claims: "[l]et us give them names, as the Robinsons did, whose

story Herbert has often read to me”.<sup>17</sup>Pencroft’s words allow us to draw direct comparison between Verne’s characters and Crusoe. In this regard, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) states: “[I]ike the Robinsons, Verne’s castaways project their collective identities onto the island by naming parts of the island for their experiences there”.<sup>18</sup>The act of naming the island and its attributes might be regarded as an aspect of a colonial ideology in both *The Mysterious Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*; for after this, the castaways establish their sense of ownership over the whole landscape and make of that island an ideal colonised territory.

Moreover, we can identify other similarities while analysing both texts. For instance, in Defoe’s text, Crusoe starts to make his own journal in which he aligns his daily activities during his ordeal in the island. Comparably, Verne’s American castaways “reckoned the days they had passed on Lincoln Island, and from that time kept a regular account”.<sup>19</sup> This means that in ‘Lincoln Island’ as in the ‘Island of Despair’, the castaways write down all their deeds and the events that occurred in the island with a concrete timeline. Besides, both Daniel Defoe and Jules Verne make an account of their characters’ religious orientations. Both authors portray Christianity as the ideal religion in their respective works. Consequently, readers of both texts notice that religion is central to Crusoe’s life as well as to the American colonists’. This can be seen in the fact that they persevere in reading the Bible during their ordeal. In this context, Crusoe himself declares: “[i]n the morning I took the Bible; and beginning at the New Testament, I began seriously to read it, and imposed upon myself to read a while every morning and every night”.<sup>20</sup>Throughout Defoe’s novel, Crusoe makes reference to Providence and constantly prays to God. Likewise, Verne’s characters “were religious men, scrupulous observers of the precepts of the Bible, and their situation could not but develop sentiments of confidence towards the Author of all things”.<sup>21</sup> In short, like Crusoe, Verne’s American castaways develop strong religious faith and find refuge in God which they believe had helped them to overcome both isolation and mental despair.

Another detail which we find in both *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Mysterious Island* is the presence of animals. In both narratives, we have been told that the castaways raise animals and have them for their company during their ordeal in the island. Their companionship is of great benefit for them. In Crusoe's island as in 'Lincoln Island', animals provide a source of help to the castaways. They make a valuable contribution to the daily activities in the islands. They warn their masters in case of danger and threatening situations. In the case of *The Mysterious Island*, Jup the ape help Cyrus Harding and his companions doing the daily domestic tasks. In Defoe's novel, animals provide Crusoe with mental support as they keep him company and reduce his feeling of solitude since he is the only human being on the island.

### **Section Two: *Life of Pi: an Overt Polemic Directed at Robinson Crusoe***

In the present section, we intend to contrast Martel's *Life of Pi* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* since the former might be considered a perfect postcolonial re-writing of the latter. Despite the fact that Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* offered a basic structural and thematic background to Martel's *Life of Pi*, one cannot deny the existing differences between the two novels. While reading the two literary works, we notice that they share themes of shipwreck, remote island, spirituality and survival. That is to say, both Piscine Molitor Patel and Robinson Crusoe are portrayed as the only survivors of a shipwreck, who consequently have to look for ways and solutions to ensure their survival in such critical and hard circumstances. However, a deeper and conscious reading of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Life of Pi* reveals that they diverge and differ in many aspects. Our contrastive analysis of the two fictions then, takes a particular interest in the colonial and imperial heritage of Defoe's classical work. We will, as a matter of fact, provide a deeper study of the elements above mentioned and compare them to Martel's novel. Most studies and analysis conducted on the two works argue that *Robinson Crusoe* might be classified, in the light of Bakhtin's overt polemic's concept, in the category of 'colonial literature', while *Life of Pi* is purely a product of postcolonial and counter

colonial literature. In a way, Martel's work might be read as an 'overt polemic' directed at Defoe's literary piece.

One of the most important elements to which many postcolonial theorists and authors draw attention to is Robinson Crusoe's imperial and colonial heritage. As we have already mentioned, Defoe's castaway novel reflects and presents the colonial project of Britain and the West based mainly on conquest and settlement. Defoe's novel portrays Britain's colonial and imperial ideology that include the spatial appropriation and domination, fixed and static representations of British and European identity and culture, as well as the racist attitudes and views depicted through Defoe's main character Crusoe.

It is generally approved and accepted that the first step undertaken by colonisers in terms of their colonial and imperial processes remains the demarcation of boundaries and occupation of space, which afterwards develops into complete conquest and settlement. This means: an entire and whole appropriation, domination and domestication of space with all its elements and constituents; including all of the nature, the environment, the natives and the animals as well.

Moreover, during the 'Age of Discovery' in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, island spaces constituted the ideal areas where European colonisers realised and achieved their colonial goals and projects, and therefore islands were the first local and territories to be colonised. As a result of the influence of the dominant cultural ideologies of that period, most of the literary works being published in that era including the traditional castaway or shipwreck texts of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries such as Defoe's first novel, took the island motif as a crucial element for their literary writings. The island in the Crusoe story has played a crucial role in the success of Crusoe's colonial and settlement project. Defoe's central character succeeds to impose his control and mastery over the island, and therefore his status changes from a castaway to a colonist. He establishes himself as the governor and the owner of the island where he was

shipwrecked, and where he exercises his control and claims his mastery and appropriation of the geographical space for about (28) years. And even after his deliverance, Crusoe does not completely leave the island. He establishes a small British community and manages to come back with the necessary needs and tools for the purpose of expanding his colony.

Defoe's novel, then, provides readers with the 18<sup>th</sup> century coloniser's and castaway's nature to seize and appropriate the colonised territory. In this way, the novel is viewed as one of the great myths of Western literature that depicts and pictures both Western and European colonialism and imperialism. However, in his postcolonial novel *Life of Pi*, Martel strongly challenges and overtly polemicises with Defoe's portrayal and representation of space. The island is usually presented in early castaway novels and especially in Defoe's text as the ideal environment and setting that contributes to the rise and development of colonialism as well as establishing colonies is replaced by a small lifeboat in Martel's narrative. Unlike Crusoe who was shipwrecked on a wild and distant island on which he survived for (28) years, Pi Patel's story of survival for (227) days takes place in a small boat in the middle of the ocean. With the decline of colonialism and the start of the decolonisation process, most European and Western nations lost their colonies; therefore, the spacial domination and appropriation of the traditional and direct colonialism was no more possible.

Another important detail that reasserts Martel's resistance of the notions of empire, colonial dominance and appropriation of land presented in Defoe's work is mainly evident in his introduction and presentation of the 'algae island', on which Pi came across once in the Pacific ocean, which the author presented as being acid and carnivorous. Pi notices that "[t]he radiant promise it offered during the day was replaced in [his] heart by all the treachery it delivered at night"<sup>22</sup>, and the most important reason behind Pi's leaving the island is when he found human teeth on an algae tree, what makes him realise that it must be those of a person who has been devoured by those carnivorous plants. Being convinced that the island is

dangerous and unsafe for him and Richard Parker, Pi, then, decides to leave the island in the early morning.

Martel strongly quarrels with the paradisiacal images and descriptions of discovered lands presented in early European exploration and adventure writings and traditional Robinsonades in general and in Defoe's castaway novel in particular. He stresses the transition in the portrayal of the colonised setting from exotic to a more realist image of these territories. By introducing the algae island as acid and carnivorous, Martel overtly polemicises with Defoe's portrayal of the colonised space as a paradise, which has to be owned and viewed as the coloniser's property. We do believe that the human teeth that Pi discovers in the algae trees stand as a metaphor for the coloniser, as if the trees represent the natives and the teeth symbolise the colonisers. The fact that Pi believes that the teeth must belong to a person who came in the island and who has been eaten by the algae tree means that the traditional and direct colonialism of the early centuries has completely declined and disappeared by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and that the natives and the invaders alike are now well-aware and conscious about the hard realities and consequences of colonialism; therefore, they would not accept to reproduce the tragic and colonial past of their history.

Furthermore, Crusoe does not only impose his spacial dominance and authority over the island, but has completely transformed and changed it according to his vision. Throughout his novel, Defoe portrays Crusoe as a representative of the 'civilised', 'enlightened' English man and colonisers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While reading the novel, we notice that the main character introduces the British culture, the English language and Christianity as the only relevant principles of a civilised and developed nations and societies. Besides, the novel provides the readers with Crusoe's complete erasure of Friday's identity and culture. He changes and replaces the native's eating habits, clothing, religion and language. In other

words, Crusoe plays the role of a missionary who accustoms and familiarises the ‘savage’ with his British eating habits and attire, teaches him the English language and transplants on his mind beliefs about Christianity as the only religion where we can find the true God. In doing so, Defoe presents his English identity and culture as fixed and static. That is to say, *Robinson Crusoe* aims at establishing the dominance and superiority of Western and European civilisations on the remote and ‘virgin’ island, and also to marginalise all what is non-Western and non-European.

Through his novel *Life of Pi*, Martel aims to engage in an overt polemic with the Englishness and Euro-centric cultural elements and assumptions illustrated in Defoe’s fiction. The fact that Martel chooses Canada as the setting where the adult Pi lives, symbolises the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s multiculturalism and globalization policies which are clearly reflected in the plurality of nations provided in *Life of Pi*, as well as the multiplicity of cultures and religious tolerance. Unlike Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe* which portrays the ‘superiority’ of the 18<sup>th</sup> century European and British culture, the Christian religion and the English language, Martel’s novel *Life of Pi*, on the other hand, presents the international cultural diversity and religious pluralism. We are informed that the adult Pi lives and settles in Canada; however, he is still attached to India. In other words, even though Pi adopted the Western and especially the Canadian lifestyle and culture, he never forgets about his mother country and native culture, and, therefore, never prefers one culture over another. Martel’s work illustrates the simultaneous and harmonious co-existence of two different and distinct cultures on the same territory. This means that the colonial supremacist model is being rejected by Martel. In a way, *Life of Pi* polemicalises with the superiority of the single and dominant British culture demonstrated in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Additionally, by introducing the religious pluralism of Pi Patel who believes in three different worldwide religions that include Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, Martel tends to

overtly polemicise with Defoe's establishment of Christianity as the only true religion, and therefore asserting that other religions are fake and insignificant. Martel develops a religious tolerance while Defoe develops a discourse of hatred and discrimination. In fact, contrary to Crusoe who believes that Christianity is the only true nature of God and that it is and will always remain the only true religious faith, Pi Patel, on the other hand, considers that all religions are true and that they do share the same objective which is to love God. Pi is well aware about the contradictions and differences between his three religious orientations, but he assumes that each of them has something particular. As a matter of fact, he decides to equally accept and devote himself to all of them at the same time. Martel's aim is to convince his readers to respect and accept all religions, and therefore to put an end to the worldwide religious conflicts and discrimination.

Another important element that draws a contrastive standpoint between Martel's postcolonial novel *Life of Pi* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is clearly viewed in the relationships the main characters sustains with others. In Defoe's text, the relationship between Crusoe and Friday depicts the racial discrimination and the 'master /slave' relationship based mainly on inferiority, slavery and exploitation. It is these attitudes that best exemplify the myth of colonialism and colonial relationships in Defoe's novel. Defoe presents Crusoe as a representative of the 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial figure and coloniser, while Friday is portrayed as the 'other', who would, consequently, be the 'colonised' and the marginalised. Crusoe establishes himself as the only 'enlightened' and 'civilised' man on the island and therefore his superiority urges him to consider no creature on the colonised space to be his equal, and even his only fellow-human Friday was reduced to the role of both a servant and a slave. Crusoe's diction when describing the native depicts the colonial discourse through which colonisers assert their racial superiority, and, thus, justify their colonial project as their duty to civilise and enlighten the 'other' or the 'colonised'.

Moreover, even the human-animal relationship portrayed in *Robinson Crusoe* is affected by Crusoe's colonial mentality. For instance, he teaches his parrot some English words so that he can, in a way, interact with him and overcome his solitude on the island. The parrot then might stand as Crusoe's companion since he is the only human being there. From here we can claim that Crusoe's relationships are based only on profits and benefits, and that he treats others in terms of their utility and usefulness. However, Martel's postcolonial novel *Life of Pi* illustrates the shift that has occurred in the traditional castaway novel in relation to the colonial inter-personal and human-animal relationships. Accordingly, postcolonial authors such as Yann Martel engaged critically with the reconsideration of the dominant and colonial relationships of early works of the Robinsonade genre, and especially Defoe's castaway novel. Martel offers an alternative to the Robinsonade genre by publishing his castaway narrative, which is a contemporary re-adaptation that destroys the colonial clichés and, thus, offers a post colonial Robinsonade and a counter colonial discourse. In this context, Ian Kinane (2019) argues:

The ideological messaging which has under-pinned the Robinsonade since production began on imitating Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has been transmuted: the contemporary Robinsonade has, in part, moved to redress much of the imperial bias of the genre through the explicit advocacy of counter-colonial and post colonial policies.<sup>23</sup>

For instance, unlike Crusoe who has completely oppressed and dehumanised the native by giving him an inhuman name and who has not even considered him his equal, the Bengal tiger Richard Parker with which Pi was shipwrecked and survived for (227) days in a small lifeboat, was given a real human name and has even been considered as Pi's companion and friend. Hence, we can see the transformation and change in perspective in the early deserted island fictions concerning the colonial and imperial relationships portrayed in the two selected novels.

In Defoe's tale, Crusoe exercised his sense of superiority and authority not only on human beings, but rather on animals as well. Despite the fact that the latter provide a source

of help to Crusoe once being marooned in the island, they are not given any consideration. That is to say, Crusoe does not develop any sign of sentiments towards them. He treats them in terms of their usefulness. Hence, their primary function was only to serve him during his ordeal. However, in the case of Martel's novel, we notice that animals are given a significant importance. Pi's father was the owner of the Pondicherry zoo, before he decides to sell it and to immigrate with his family to Canada. Pi grows up in a zoo and consequently possesses a great knowledge about animal's characteristics and habits, and he even specialises in zoology in the Toronto University after being rescued. In contrast to Crusoe who believes that animals are inferior and that they should be considered only in term of their commodity values, Pi asserts that it is true that animals are, to a certain extent, different from human beings, yet, they are not inferior and therefore they should be treated with respect and admiration. Pi's companion during his ordeal, Richard Parker, was well treated and has never been viewed inferior. Unlike Crusoe who builds and consolidates his fortification because he believes that wild animals are dangerous and threatening for him, he provide himself with the necessary precautions to keep himself safe, Pi, on the other hand, shared his small lifeboat with the wild animal and co-habited with it for several months. He does not regard the tiger's aggressivity and behaviour as a threat, but as the animal's instinct. It is true that Pi elaborates a plan to tame and domesticate the Bengal tiger, but not for the purpose of imposing his superiority and dominance over it. Pi's only aim in taming Richard Parker was to stay alive. Actually, Pi even believes that it is Richard Parker that kept him alive during their ordeal at sea together.

Besides, Martel's central character goes even to imitate and mimic the animal's eating habits after he completely submits to the basic needs of hunger and survival. For instance, in the beginning of *Life of Pi*, we are told that Pi is a vegetarian, but because of the extreme state of starvation he was exposed to, he had no choice but to change his eating habits. Therefore, he finds himself obliged to become carnivorous like Richard Parker, to such an extent that he has even eaten the flesh of the French blind man, whom he met in the ocean. We do believe

that the more Pi lives with the Bengal tiger, the more he becomes a wild and carnivorous animal himself. In this regard, Pi says that he “ate like an animal, that this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate,”<sup>24</sup> and that he began “to imitate Richard Parker in sleeping an incredible amount of hours”.<sup>25</sup> In short, through presenting Pi’s imitation of Parker’s behaviours, Martel overtly polemicises with the colonial human-animal relationship illustrated in early pre-colonial and colonial literatures in general and in Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) in particular. Likewise, Martel opposes and clearly stands against the racial notions and assumptions that animals are inferior to human beings, and thus should be domesticated, tamed and exploited by the colonisers in such immoral manners.

## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup>Bakhtin, M. M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). p, 92.

<sup>3</sup>Green, Martin. *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Park University Press, 1990). p, 129.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Loxley D. The Latitudes of Empire: Jules Verne’s Mysterious Island. In: *Problematic Shores: The Literature of Islands*. (London:Palgrave Macmillan, 1990).P.p, 15-72.

<sup>6</sup>Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca. *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*. London: the University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Accessed February, 2020. [https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDaHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbv\\_atb&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDaHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbv_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>7</sup>Macherey, Pierre. Jules Verne: The Faulty Narrative. In *A theory of Literary Production*. Trans. Geoffrey Wall. (New York: Routledge, 1985). p, 199.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca. *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*. London: the University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Accessed February, 2020. [https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDaHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbv\\_atb&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDaHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbv_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> O’Malley, Andrew. *Children’s Literature, Popular Culture, and Robinson Crusoe*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), cited in Kinane, Ian. *Didactics and the Modern Robinsonade: New Paradigms for Young Readers*. Liverpool: Liverpool University press, 2019.[Accessed February, 2020].<https://books.google.dz/books?id=hmOtDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dqbl>

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<sup>13</sup>Daniel, Defoe. *Robinson Crusoe*. ed. Thomas Keymer. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 2007). p, 203.

<sup>14</sup>Jules, Verne. *The Mysterious Island*. (Blackmask Online Collection: Gutenberg-Self Publishing Press, 1999). p, 234.

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<sup>16</sup>Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca. *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*. London: the University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Accessed February, 2020. [https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDAHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_atb&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDAHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>17</sup>Jules, Verne. *The Mysterious Island*. (Blackmask Online Collection: Gutenberg-Self Publishing Press, 1999). p,55.

<sup>18</sup>Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca. *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*. (London: the University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Accessed February, 2020. [https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDAHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_atb&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=xjHDAHrT90YC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>19</sup>Jules, Verne. *The Mysterious Island*.(Blackmask Online Collection: Gutenberg-Self Publishing Press, 1999). p, 65.

<sup>20</sup>Daniel, Defoe. *Robinson Crusoe*.ed. Thomas Keymer. (New York: Oxford University Press Inc. 2007). p, 139.

<sup>21</sup>Jules, Verne. *The Mysterious Island*.(Blackmask OnlineCollection: Gutenberg-Self Publishing Press, 1999). p, 66.

<sup>22</sup>Yann, Martel. *Life of Pi*.(New York: Harcourt, Inc, 2001).p, 224.

<sup>23</sup>Kinane, Ian. *Didactics and the Modern Robinsonade: New Paradigms for Young Readers*. Liverpool: Liverpool University press, 2019.[Accessed February 10 2020].[https://books.google.dz/books?id=hmOtDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dqbl&ots=ZUd-rELTO8&sig=ACfU3U3fts-VyLbsq7OT2TSS\\_CpsKYIZbA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwixipnj-broAhVMKBoKHUTqD-8Q6AEwEHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.dz/books?id=hmOtDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dqbl&ots=ZUd-rELTO8&sig=ACfU3U3fts-VyLbsq7OT2TSS_CpsKYIZbA&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwixipnj-broAhVMKBoKHUTqD-8Q6AEwEHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>24</sup>Yann, Martel. *Life of Pi*. (New York: Harcourt, Inc, 2001).p, 183.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. p, 193.

## **CHAPTER Two: The Cultural Materialist**

**Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious***

***Island and Life of Pi***

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## **Chapter Two: The Cultural Materialist Study of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi***

### **I/Residual, Dominant and Emergent Ideologies of Culture in *Robinson Crusoe***

#### **Introduction**

The present chapter is meant to study and analyse all of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* from a cultural materialist approach relying mainly on Raymond Williams's concepts of 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent', which he introduces as the three stages culture goes through. We have thus, applied them to demonstrate the change in ideologies and perspectives in the novels under scrutiny, in addition to highlighting the evolution of culture through time as well as the shift and development of the Robinsonade genre.

#### **I/a-Mercantilism as a Residual Ideology in *Robinson Crusoe***

Mercantilism was a predominant economic system of trade in the Western world from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is defined as a system that "promoted governmental regulation of a nation's economy for the purpose of augmenting state power at the expense of rival national powers".<sup>1</sup> It was a system based on restrictions over free trade in order to assure control of resources and capital. That is to say, under Mercantilism, the government imposed restrictions and controlled production and trade.

Written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Defoe's masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) depicts a turbulent period in British history; a period that marked the collapse of the Mercantilist system and the emergence of the Capitalist order.<sup>2</sup> Defoe presents this economic shift through his protagonist. Although Crusoe was born and raised in a Mercantilist English environment,

he could not remain indifferent and was influenced by the socio-economic changes Britain went through.

In the very beginning of the novel, Crusoe rebels against the middle class mindset. He disobeys his father's advice to follow the middle path of life. Crusoe's father represents the mercantilist spirit and hence, the conservative or traditional system. He, therefore, chooses to follow the middle state of life as it "had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind".<sup>3</sup> He tried to convince his son about the benefits of remaining at home and living a life of simple comfort. However, Crusoe's urge to go to sea takes over his father's will and commands. He asserts that "he would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea".<sup>4</sup> In this way, Crusoe rejected his father's traditional way of life and the little gains of the Mercantilist order as well. It is worth to note that with the emergence of the capitalist system, Mercantilism became a residual ideology. As the new Capitalist order is instilled in Crusoe's mind, the latter develops a strong desire to make more profit. He believes in a new system, due to which he departs in quest of adventure and profits.

Being the third son of the family, Crusoe knows that he would inherit nothing. It was usual at that time that the first son will inherit everything from his parents, and that the others will have nothing for their own. This fact worries Crusoe and further pushes him to make his own fortune. Crusoe's desire to venture and his aspirations to make more profits are to be considered as Capitalist aspects. Crusoe's dissatisfaction with his middle status impels him to work and earn more. Ian Watt (1967) asserts, in this sense, that Crusoe's "aim is never merely to maintain the status quo, but to transform it incessantly".<sup>5</sup>

When in Brazil, Crusoe realizes "how well the planters lived, and how they grew rich suddenly".<sup>6</sup> He then decides to establish his own plantation and start making his fortune. In order to manage the labour and to increase production, Crusoe needs hard workers; a fact which leads him to commit an illegal practice, which, in the novel, refers to the slave trade.

He thus embarks on a slave gathering expedition to West Africa. “Crusoe is an adventure capitalist as well as a slaveholder,” John Richetti (1975) argues.<sup>7</sup> The slaves were of a great advantage in the growth of Crusoe’s plantation and contribute to his success in making his wealth. Crusoe asserts: “in the advancement of my plantation; for the first thing I did, I bought me a negro slave”.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout his novel, Defoe also reveals the influence the new Capitalist order had on the individuals’ mind and actions. His protagonist Robinson Crusoe stands as the epitome of this new system. His actions are, thus, associated with this shift. He rejects the old Mercantilist order and, therefore, embraces the ideals of the new Capitalist system. The capitalist system offers a new order where ambitious individuals such as Robinson Crusoe can evolve and become wealthy individuals. From the examples cited, we came to the conclusion that Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* depicts the collapse of Mercantilism, which is, as a matter of fact, considered as a residual ideology in the novel due to the emergence of Capitalism, which in return, came to challenge the old system.

### **I/b-The Dominant Ideology of Colonialism in *Robinson Crusoe***

The term colonialism might be defined as “a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world”.<sup>9</sup> Writing about colonialism, Roland Horvath (1972) claims: “it seems generally, if not universally, agreed that colonisation is a form of domination-the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behaviour of other individuals or groups”.<sup>10</sup> Daniel Butt (2013), on the other hand, identifies three important features when explaining the term colonialism. He believes that the latter is associated with the combination of “domination,” “cultural imposition,” and “exploitation”.<sup>11</sup> Another crucial colonial attitude used by Europeans or “colonisers” to impose their ideological values and beliefs, is the ‘civilising mission’, which contributes to the spread of Christianity. This colonial and imperial practice is, according to them, justified as a ‘duty’ with the purpose of ‘enlightening’ and bringing the

colonised into a state of civilisation. This practice is called ‘the white man’s burden’ which is considered as a task through which the white colonisers impose their civilisation on the black inhabitants of European colonies. That is to say, the colonising process is justified by the colonisers as a ‘civilising task’.

Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* depicts a period marked by the British colonial expansion. The colonial ideology is technically apparent in the novel through Crusoe’s actions and attitudes which are mainly reflected in the appropriation of the island as his own property, besides the relationships he makes with others, especially with his servant Friday. Among Crusoe’s main colonial attitudes portrayed in Defoe’s tale, the appropriation of the island remains an important one. His colonial ideology urges him to declare the ownership of the island. Crusoe, in this sense, states: “to think that this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as completely as any Lord of Manor in England”.<sup>12</sup> Crusoe thinks that his ownership is legitimate and legal. John Richetti (1975) claims that Crusoe is “a representative of the capitalist ideology, driven to acquire, control and dominate”.<sup>13</sup> That is to say, Crusoe is the representative of the eighteenth century coloniser and the embodiment of the European man. His colonialist and capitalist thoughts urge him to establish a colony and reproduce a new society similar to the English one by implementing European technological and agricultural structures in the ‘virgin island’. In doing so, the island takes a British form and “became an image of Britain and the British Empire”.<sup>14</sup> This is a colonial strategy used by the different colonial European countries during their invasions of African and Asian lands.

Crusoe’s relationships with others also depict the colonial and the Eurocentric attitudes. Defoe’s work presents the distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans which refers to the coloniser/colonised relationship. Edward Said (1979) claims that “there are Westerners, and there are non-Westerners. The former dominate; the latter must be

dominated”.<sup>15</sup> In his novel, Defoe depicts Crusoe and Friday as the representatives of the master-slave relationship. Defoe’s diction in describing Crusoe as a ‘coloniser,’ ‘white,’ ‘advanced’, and the natives as ‘cannibals,’ ‘savages,’ ‘wretches,’ introduce Europeans as ‘civilised,’ while the natives as ‘primitive’ and ‘uncivilised’. The portrayal of these two figures as such directly reflects the social and racial difference established between them. The reason behind this is to prove the superiority of the Westerners, and to condemn the non-Westerners to inferiority and insignificance.

Crusoe, furthermore, names the native he rescued from the cannibals ‘Friday’ after the day he saved him. This name is symbolically violent because it devalues the native’s real and human name. It actually acts as a sort of reminding the savage about his servitude and submission to Crusoe. Moreover, Crusoe does not give the native a European or Christian name because he never considers him as equal. The first thing Crusoe does is teaching Friday to call him ‘Master’, a fact that allows him to show his superiority and impose his dominance over him, thus establishing a difference and a distance between them. Roxann Wheeler (1995) believes that Crusoe contributes to “contemporary eighteenth century articulation of race and colonial power relations.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***I/c- Robinson Crusoe and Cultural Imperialism: an Emergent Ideology***

Despite the fact that colonialism and imperialism share nearly the same purpose, which is to maintain control and dominance over less powerful territories, a little distinction can be drawn between both terms. While colonialism refers to the ‘practice’ that include the use of force to exercise power by the coloniser over the colonised, imperialism is, on the other hand, achieved through ‘ideological’ process, which include Euro-centrism and civilising missions. In this context, Edward Said (1994) makes the following distinction: “imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; “colonialism,” [...] is the implanting of settlements on distant territory”.<sup>17</sup>

As far as *Robinson Crusoe* is concerned, cultural imperialism is technically visible underneath the storyline through Crusoe's acculturation of Friday. When Crusoe first met Friday, the latter did not know any word in English. But as Crusoe's intention was to make him his slave and servant, communication was vital. Therefore, Crusoe starts by teaching his servant few simple words such as 'master', 'yes' and 'no'. He asserts: "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".<sup>18</sup> As the novel progresses, Friday could interact with his master even though his English is bad. Although Friday is a good learner, he by no means reaches Crusoe's linguistic capacities. Defoe exposes Friday's bad English as a way to show the inferiority of the non-Europeans.

The 'civilising mission' is clearly seen in the novel. Defoe presents Crusoe as a European missionary, who engages in spreading 'the Word of God'. His religious faith leads him to successfully convert the 'savage' Friday into Christianity. Crusoe wanted to 'enlighten' the soul of 'the poor savage creature' and to open his eyes "to receive the light of the knowledge of God in Christ".<sup>19</sup> Friday could not remain indifferent to his master's religious instructions. He, therefore, "listened with great attention, and received with pleasure the notion of Jesus Christ".<sup>20</sup>

Another imperialistic feature accomplished by the English colonisers in order to spread their culture is achieved through the imposition of their English clothing style. Hildi Hendrickson (1996) argues that the "European fashions were elements of a system designed to sweep away the culture and tradition of colonised Africans".<sup>21</sup> This feature is evidently perceived underneath the Crusoe story and is mainly reflected through Friday's character.

In his novel, Defoe describes Friday as a 'savage', 'uncivilised' and hence a "stark naked"<sup>22</sup> creature. Crusoe, accordingly, introduces him to the English standards of clothing and, thus, brings complete change in his attire. Crusoe dresses Friday in a typical English man's outfits. In this context, Crusoe declares: "let him know I would give him some clothes;

at which he seemed very glad, for he was stark naked”.<sup>23</sup>All in all, Crusoe’s process of changing Friday’s dressing style represents another significant aspect through which he imposes his cultural standards upon him.

*Robinson Crusoe* might be a good example of the increasingly emerging cultural imperialism at that time. It portrays different aspects of British imposition of cultural values on the non-western nations. Accordingly, Defoe presents his protagonist Robinson Crusoe as a representative of the English imperialism. Crusoe succeeds to transmit his English habits and norms to his servant Friday, thus creating a new identity and changing his servant’s cultural values. He, in a way, deracinates Friday from his identity and in doing so, the Westerner eradicates the native’s culture.

## **II/Residual, Dominant and Emergent Ideologies of Culture in *The Mysterious Island***

### **II/a- The Residual Ideology of Slavery in *The Mysterious Island***

The term slavery is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as “the condition of being legally owned by someone else and forced to work for or obey them”.<sup>24</sup> Another interesting definition of the term is provided in the Merriam Webster dictionary which defines it as “a state of a person being a chattel of another”.<sup>25</sup> The term refers to the condition in which some people are legally owned and exploited by others, as well as having their lives wholly controlled and directed by their owners. Enslaved people were not considered as humans, but rather as commodities which might be bought, sold and exploited.

Historically speaking, the institution of slavery is an ancient practice that traces its origins to the first and early human civilisations; and many, if not all parts of the world, have been affected by this phenomenon. Many historians associate slavery with the European and Western colonialism and imperialism which, as a matter of fact, resulted in transporting thousands of Black Africans from their continent to work as labourers and servants in the

European and Western colonies. In this context, Bill Ashcroft (2007) believes that “the European slave trade and plantation slavery not only uprooted Africans from their home environments, but, through centuries of systematic racial denigration, alienated enslaved Africans from their own racial characteristics”.<sup>26</sup>

As far as *The Mysterious Island* is concerned, we are informed that the novel deals with the issue of slavery in the United States of America. Verne’s characters are five American unionists imprisoned in Virginia during the American Civil War; a war between the Northern and the Southern states of America for the abolition of slavery. However, despite the fact that Verne’s novel is viewed by many as a “pro-union and pro-abolitionist text”<sup>27</sup>, it also portrays some racial characteristics. That is to say, the novel is both racist and anti-racist at the same time. We are informed that Verne’s characters are against the practice of slavery and they do support the abolitionist movement of the latter in the American soil. Yet, a deeper reading of Verne’s 19<sup>th</sup> century text reveals that there are still some remaining and residual aspects of slavery and racism which are consciously and/or unconsciously presented by the author in his text, principally performed by the five American castaways in Lincoln Island. In this context, Noel Carroll (2001) argues: “readers of our own day cannot fail to note a great deal of residual racism in the book”.<sup>28</sup> Among the main elements which depict and illustrate racism and enslavement in Verne’s novel, we mention Neb’s appellation of the engineer Harding as ‘master’, in addition to the use of racist diction while describing Neb and the way he is treated besides the enslavement of the domesticated ape named Jupiter.

One of the most important residual aspects of racism portrayed in Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* resides in the fact that the African American ex- slave named Neb calls the engineer ‘master’. In the beginning of the novel, we have been told that the Negro is freed from slavery; but later on, we have noticed that he still behaves as an enslaved person. Harding does not only save and free the ex-slave Neb, but he has also allowed him to

accompany them in their escape from Virginia during the American Civil War. In return, the ex-slave, who is now a freed person, continues to be an obedient and respectful servant to his master the engineer Cyrus Harding as well as to his castaway companions. Despite regaining his liberty, Neb continues to call the engineer ‘master’ and to serve the white Americans during all the four years they spent on the island.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of Verne’s novel, we notice that the institution of slavery has been declined and weakened; therefore, Verne presents Neb as an ex-slave who regained some of his personal liberties and rights; and who is also well-treated and respected by his white castaway companions. However, he is still treated as a servant. We do believe that Neb’s servitude and obedience to the white American castaways denote that racism and racial discriminations still exist in the American soil in general, and in Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* in particular. Overall, regardless of the efforts and measures undertaken to abolish slavery in the United States of America, there are always some facts and acts which maintain that the black race and slaves would never be considered equal to the white Americans for the long coming years.

Moreover, Verne’s presentation and description of Neb can also tell us a lot about the racial discrimination portrayed in the novel. For instance, he describes the four white Americans as educated and enlightened characters, while Neb as a Negro ex-slave who lacks intelligence and knowledge. Verne presents each of the white American castaways as endowed with specific skills. For example, Cyrus Harding is an engineer, his friend Gideon Spilett is a journalist, Pencroft is a sailor, and finally Herbert as Pencroft’s adopted son. Whereas, he presents Neb as the one who is only responsible for domestic tasks such as house-keeping and cooking. Verne has by no means introduced Neb as a skilful and intelligent person like the other characters in his novel, but he has described him as docile,

childlike and naive. Hence, as noted by Noel Carroll (2001), Verne's use of such diction while describing Neb "strikes us as racist".<sup>30</sup>

Besides, another racist point detected in the novel is the affinity and affection between Neb and the domesticated ape Jup. Jules Verne writes that "any one would have said that the Negro and the ape understood each other when they talked together. Jup had besides a real affection for Neb, and Neb returned it".<sup>31</sup> From the above quotation, we deduce that the author puts both Neb and Jup in the same social category; that is to say, in the lower class. It is just as if Neb has been diminished and reduced to an animalistic state. Taking into consideration that Verne has established a bond between both of them, we may say that "the monkey is virtually Neb's double".<sup>32</sup>

Verne portrays also some racist terms in his novel such as 'Negro' and 'Boy' mainly used to describe African American men. These two terms are judged by many as extremely offensive, harmful and racist. Historically speaking, the white Americans usually refer to Afro-Americans as 'boys' to suggest that Blacks are mentally, physically, and spiritually inferior to them.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the term has been used by white Americans to express and assert their racial superiority. Like the term 'boy', the word 'negro' also is considered as aggressive and intolerant. The word describes those dark-skinned people who most of the time came from Africa; and who have been forced into slavery by Europeans and Westerners in their colonies. Thus, in attributing such terms to the only Afro-American character of the novel, Verne unconsciously exposes the superior considerations of the white race, and; therefore, proves that racist ideology contributes largely to shaping the American history, which is actually something hard to be completely removed and abolished.

Another and last important residual aspect of slavery depicted in the novel is the enslavement of the ape Jupiter, also called Jup. After being captured by the castaways and discovering that he belongs to the family of anthropoid apes; which is a race of apes

“possessed of an almost human intelligence”<sup>34</sup> and that this same race of orang-utans can do “everything as well as the best servant that ever walked upon two legs”<sup>35</sup>, the settlers of Lincoln Island decided to domesticate the animal for the purpose of making him a servant. Thanks to Neb’s efforts and patience, the animal is rapidly trained to work for the benefits and profits of the settlers. In this context, Pencroft addressing the ape told him that “[he] will be satisfied with no other wages than [his] food”.<sup>36</sup> Throughout his narrative, Verne tends to depict Jup as a representative of the enslaved natives portrayed mainly in early colonial texts, who are enslaved against their will by the colonial forces for the purpose of exploiting them; especially in obliging them to do the hardest and most arduous works. As a result of the ‘absence of natives’ in the colonised island, the five settlers reduced an ape into a servant. In a way, this might be considered as a metaphor to show the racism endured by the natives in their homelands, and the way they are exploited.

### **II/b- *The Mysterious Island* and Colonialism: A Dominant Ideology**

Jules Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* (1874) is an enthralling island fiction published at the height of the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial expansion. In the novel, Verne exposes some important colonial aspects. These aspects can be seen through the novel’s five characters, who once stranded on an uncharted island in the south Pacific, exercised their sense of authority and domination over the whole space. Verne’s masterpiece is thus considered as a nineteenth century text which might be associated with colonial ideology.

The first aspect which allows us to classify *The Mysterious Island* in the category of colonial texts resides in the transition of Verne’s characters from ‘castaways’ to ‘settlers’. In the first part of the novel, after the exploration of the island where they were marooned, the five castaways noticed that it is uninhabited. They are the only humans existing in that island. They realise that they had no choice but to remain there. So, they took it as an opportunity to occupy the island. In this context, Pencroft suggests to his companions to not consider

themselves as castaways, “but colonists who have come here to settle”.<sup>37</sup>The sailor’s suggestion was very welcomed by his companions. This change in their names reflects and clarifies very well their intention of occupying the land. In her book entitled *Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) attests that “colonists such as those in *The Mysterious Island* project themselves onto the landscape to receive a sense of control over the island, attempting to document and fix their shaky sense of “ownership” of the territory”.<sup>38</sup>In a way, Verne’s castaways consider the island as an ideal territory to colonise.

Another aspect of colonial ideology in the novel is reflected in the fact that the castaways establish their possession over the island. After the group consider themselves colonists, they make real appropriation of that island as well. This process of appropriation is achieved through the naming and consequently the mapping the island. As Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) claims: “Verne’s castaway colonists begin by visually surveying the island and then designate their ownership through naming it”.<sup>39</sup> As far as the novel is concerned, the colonists decide they would give the island an American name to remind themselves of their origins. The engineer, Cyrus Harding to his companions states: “[l]et us give it the name of a great citizen, my friend; of him who now struggles to defend the unity of the American Republic! Let us call it Lincoln Island”.<sup>40</sup>And so they did! The island is from then on called ‘Lincoln Island’ in honor to the US president of that time who saved the union from a collapse due to the Civil War.

In addition to naming the island, Cyrus Harding and his four companions give names to different places of the island as well, such as two bays which they name ‘Washington Bay’, ‘Union Bay’, and the name of ‘Mount Franklin’ given to the island’s mountains, beside ‘Lake Grant’. These are typically American names which all belong to their mother country. In this respect, Harding himself declares: “[t]hese names will recall our country and those of

the great citizens who have honored it”.<sup>41</sup>Overall, the process of giving American names to the island and its different locations accentuates Verne’s characters’ attempt to seize, appropriate and take possession over the whole landscape. By giving names to the island and its locations, the colonists contribute to what is called in postcolonial studies the ‘mapping’ of the island. According to Ashcroft et al (2007), “maps and mapping are dominant practices of colonial and postcolonial cultures”.<sup>42</sup>In his novel, Verne mentions that “[t]he island was spread out under their eyes like a map and they had only to give names to all its angles and points. Gideon Spilett would write them down, and the geographical nomenclature of the island would be definitely adopted”.<sup>43</sup>This means that through naming different parts of the island, the colonists succeed to adapt a form of categorisation of the whole space. They locate and classify the island’s geographical features to make it a suitable place for them to live, or as Pencroft claims: “to say where one is going, and where one has come from. At least, it looks like somewhere”.<sup>44</sup>As a result of naming and mapping the island, the colonists assure total authority over it. In this sense, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) claims: “colonial authority here slips between visual acumen and cartographic dominance, for to assure control over the island, they had “only” to view it, name it, map it, and inscribe that mental mapping and mastery onto physical space”.<sup>45</sup>

After the island appropriation, the five American colonists’ sense of domination grows bigger. As a matter of fact, they proceed into ‘civilising’ the island. Such a process undergoes different major steps. Taking into consideration the fact that when the colonists first landed on the south pacific island, they found it a ‘virgin’ ‘uninhabited’ place, they regard this as an opportunity to claim their position over the whole space. Consequently, they were not “content with mere survival but engage in activities that present a virtual template for the colonial enterprise”.<sup>46</sup>Verne’s characters, in a sense, engage in the transformation of the island which includes building, inventing, cultivating and much more activities; a transformation that reflects their colonising process.

By combining their intelligence, skills and hard labour, the colonists were able to create all the necessary elements for developing the island and improving their living condition as well. They, then, succeed in building dwellings, making electricity, pottery and inventing a telegraph. Skilfully directed by the engineer, the group of colonists also engages in chemical work. This means that they were able to produce nitro-glycerine, the sulphate of iron and the sulphate of alumina beside other chemical substances. As Bill Ashcroft (2012) argues: “Smith, the indomitable engineer who leads the group, is the embodiment of colonial determination and scientific modernity”.<sup>47</sup> Thanks to their scientific ingenuity, the five American unionists were able to conveniently bring an ‘unfrequented’, ‘uninhabited’ and ‘desolate’ island from an extreme ‘destitution’ into a state of ‘civilisation’, thus making it an ideal liveable environment. All in all, Jules Verne’s *The Mysterious Island* is that “one novel which offers a virtual template for the power of modern ingenuity to turn a conveniently unpopulated Pacific island paradise into a colonial utopia”.<sup>48</sup>

To conclude, we may say that through the civilising process of Lincoln Island and thanks to the different accomplishments the colonists achieved, they succeed to transform it and create a colony. They reproduce a society which fits the norms of an American one. In this regard, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower (2007) adds: “castaway colonists spend much of their time on the island trying to turn it into a more ‘civilised’ western space like that they left”.<sup>49</sup> It is their first aim since they settle in that island. In other words, the colonists’ intention is to make of that island a ‘little America’ which they wish to offer to the American government later on. Pencroft’s words clarify such an intention: “we will make a little America of this island! We will build towns, we will establish railways, start telegraphs, and one fine day, when it is quite changed, quite put in order and quite civilised, we will go and offer it to the government of the Union”.<sup>50</sup> The colonists in both narratives present a nostalgic feeling with their mother country, so they build their colonies in the shape of their country of origin.

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## II/c-Abolitionism as an Emergent Ideology in *The Mysterious Island*

While reading the first pages of Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island*, the reader quickly understands that the novel's first setting is Richmond, Virginia, during the American Civil War (1861-1865); a setting that is symbolically significant. Verne introduces his characters as prisoners of war who escaped from Richmond, at the time of the war for the 'abolition of slavery' in the United States. The novel, then, deals with the U.S. Abolitionism, or the abolition movement. Abolitionism in general, might be defined as "the doctrine that calls for the [end] of slavery".<sup>51</sup> The term 'abolition' is also defined as the "eighteenth-and nineteenth century movement to abolish the [enslavement] of African-Americans".<sup>52</sup> The movement emerged early in countries such as Great Britain and France. Then, it spread to the United States as a newly emergent ideology. Verne's *The Mysterious Island* depicts some aspects and ideas of this new emerging doctrine. Among the emergent aspects of abolitionism portrayed in the novel, we find Cyrus Harding's illegal emancipation of Neb besides Verne's naming of his characters (Neb and Harding) in reference to 'Nebuchadnezzar' and 'Cyrus the Great', constitute the most important forms of abolitionism.

Among the newly emergent aspects of Abolitionism depicted in Verne's work, we find Cyrus' illegal emancipation and liberation of Neb. In the beginning of the novel, we are told that Cyrus freed Neb and allowed him to accompany the war prisoners in their escape from Virginia during the American Civil War. They escaped on a hot air-balloon on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March (1865). That is to say, only a few days before the end of the war, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April (1865). We deduce that Cyrus liberated Neb before Lincoln's ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment on December (1865) which officially ended slavery in the United States.

Being isolated on Lincoln island, the five American castaways did not know whether the war for the emancipation had ended or not. Therefore, despite Cyrus' efforts to free Neb, he is still considered a slave since there is no legal document proving his liberty. That is to

say, if he is likely to return to the American territory before the end of the war, Neb will be captured and re-enslaved again. It is only after the end of the Civil War that Lincoln ratified the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment which legally freed the slaves. In (1870), there was the ratification of 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment which provided some male Blacks with ‘voting rights’ along with the emancipation of slaves which granted them citizenship. We do believe, in short, that Neb’s Freedom and emancipation depends on the North’s victory. If the North lost the war, Neb would remain a slave forever.

Another important detail that draws our attention while analysing *The Mysterious Island* is Verne’s naming of two of his characters in reference to the Babylonian king, named ‘*Nebuchadnezzar*’ in addition to the Persian king called ‘*Cyrus the Great*’, who are, in the novel, Neb and Cyrus Harding. After the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in (586 B.C.) by the king *Nebuchadnezzar*, the entire city of ‘Judah’ has been destroyed including the king’s Solomon temple, and thousands of Jews were taken captives into Babylonia; a period in Jewish history known as the ‘Babylonian Exile/ or Captivity’.<sup>53</sup> The Jews were enslaved for many years in Babylon by the king ‘*Nebuchadnezzar*’, before being delivered and saved by the king ‘*Cyrus the Great*’, who invaded Babylon in (539 B.C.), and therefore, ended the Babylonian Captivity. He liberated the enslaved Jewish people and allowed them to return to their homeland in order to restore their city and to re-build their holy temple.

By making reference to these two historical figures who played an important role in the Jewish history, Jules Verne intentionally/or indirectly reveals both his anti-colonial and anti-racist vision, as well as his position concerning the abolitionist movement. Writing on Jules Verne, Noel Carroll (2001) states: “the author forthrightly allies himself against racism throughout the text”.<sup>54</sup> Verne, then, introduces the only ‘black’ of the novel named Neb, an abbreviation for ‘*Nebuchadnezzar*’, as “a Negro born on the engineer’s estate, of a slave father and mother, but to whom Cyrus, who was an Abolitionist from conviction and heart,

had long since given his freedom”.<sup>55</sup> Verne, accordingly, presents his master Cyrus Harding, whom he named after ‘*Cyrus the Great*’, as the liberator and the saviour of the former-slave Neb.

The Persian King, Cyrus, was mainly known and remembered for his religious tolerance and respect for other cultures. He allowed the people of the nations he conquered and ruled to practice their customs and religions.<sup>56</sup> He even authored the ‘*Cyrus Cylinder*’, which was viewed by many historians as the first declaration of human rights,<sup>57</sup> through which he promised “religious freedom and worship for those living under his rule in the Achaemenid Empire”<sup>58</sup>, as well as giving the permission “to those who were transferred in Babylon as prisoners to return to their homeland”.<sup>59</sup> Like ‘*Cyrus the Great*’ who liberated the Jews from slavery, Verne’s character, Cyrus Harding, is also introduced as a Northern abolitionist who has freed the ex-black slave Neb. Jules Verne purposely tends to reduce the king ‘*Nebuchadnezzar*’, who imported and enslaved thousands of Jews, into a slave himself. Verne’s use of these two historical figures, then, might be considered as a hidden polemic against slavery and slave trade. From this standpoint, we come to conclude that Jules Verne is, obviously, a supporter of the abolitionist movement, which is considered as an emergent ideology in his work.

### **III/ Residual, Dominant and Emergent Ideologies of Culture in *Life of Pi***

#### **III/a-*Life of Pi* and Colonialism: A Residual Ideology**

Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi* depicts a period marked by the emergence of modern and contemporary policies. This period is viewed by many as the era when both colonialism and racism are nothing but residual ideologies. Throughout the novel, Martel portrays some residual elements of colonialism. He is engaged in promoting anti-colonialist and non-racial ideologies. His work then, gives an insight to the decline of the old colonial and racial assumptions. Among the residual elements of colonialism portrayed in *Life of Pi*, we might

refer to the island's unfavourable condition and unpleasant image, besides the naming of the tiger along with the fight between him and Pi over the territory on the lifeboat, which constitute the major arguments in this direction. Martel's portrayal of these elements as residual aspects in his novel illustrates his anti-colonial stance.

We are introduced, at the level of the novel, to Pi's discovery of a strange island during his ordeal in the Pacific Ocean. At first sight, Pi does not realise exactly what the island is about, but once there, he discovers that it is completely made of Algae and populated by thousands of Meerkats. Martel presents the island as a peculiar territory. "[T]he island was not an island in the conventional sense of the term,"<sup>60</sup> Martel says. Its strangeness resides in the fact that, during the daytime, the island is like any ordinary territory; however, when the night falls, it undergoes a metamorphosis. That is to say, the island turns into a very dangerous and deadly environment. In this respect, Pi asserts: "[t]he radiant promise it offered during the day was replaced in my heart by all the treachery it delivered at night".<sup>61</sup> The danger of the island lies in its acidity in addition to the presence of carnivorous algae plants. These algae produce a deadly acidic substance that causes the death of any creature which would, subsequently, be dissolved and absorbed by the plants. Pi discovers that these plants have, at an earlier time, devoured a human being whose "soul had arrived on these terrible shores before him,"<sup>62</sup> when he finds a tree with a strange kind of fruit that happens to be a human tooth. Pi is exposed to threatening situations once being on the island since the latter is full of perils. With this sordid portrayal, Martel demarcates from the conventions of the traditional Robinsonade, and offers a contemporary anti-colonial Robinsonade.

After discovering that the island turns into a murderous and predatory territory by night and that the algae plants have formerly devoured humans, Pi left the island right away. The fact that Pi stayed for only few days in the island explains that the latter is not a suitable and safe place where he can settle, even for a short period of time. Through the portrayal of

the island's horrific landscape and condition, Martel reveals that the epoch of settlement and land domination is being brought to an end. He stresses that the blissful atmosphere of Robinson Crusoe's island is no more the same in *Life of Pi*. He, therefore, establishes the process of colonising specific areas of land to be ineffective. The island does not fit high colonialism norms of a territory to be subsequently colonised. That is to say, by establishing the island as an insecure and unfavourable environment, Martel overtly highlights that the ideological notions of settlement, land seizure and appropriation are being diminished in his novel in particular and during the contemporary era in general. The depiction of the island as an 'insecure', 'carnivorous', 'acid' and 'predatory' area might be considered as a symbol for the decline of the colonial enterprise in the narrative. This means that through drawing the island's detrimental state, Martel accordingly establishes it as a no more utopian atmosphere to be occupied. In doing so, he illustrates the decline of the traditional colonial ideology in the modern times.

Another important residual aspect of colonialism portrayed in *Life of Pi* is the naming of the Bengal tiger with which Pi shares his lifeboat during his ordeal at sea. Pi's companion is given a typical English name; Richard Parker. The fact that Martel chooses such a European name might be considered as a metaphor in the novel because, on the one hand, it refers to particularly devaluing the status of 'the white man' which is, in fact, a representative of European colonialism and, on the other hand, to generally portray colonialism as being a dangerous and threatening animal.

Confronted to a wild animal, Pi was obliged to protect and keep himself alive. To do that, he proceeds into taming Richard Parker. This taming process stands for the control over the powerful creatures; that is to say, the European colonisers. Through Pi's taming of such a fierce animal, Martel explains that the European's colonial ideology is being controlled and weakened. In short, the Bengal tiger named after a European man, which is subsequently

tamed by an effortless and defenceless simple boy, might be regarded as a symbol for the regression of the coloniser's power as well the decline of the colonial era.

Additionally, the fight between Pi and Richard Parker over the territory on the lifeboat might be regarded as a residual aspect of colonialism. Throughout his novel, Martel portrays the competition over the territorial dominance between Pi and Richard Parker on the lifeboat. Both of them struggle over maintaining their place on it. Therefore, each one proceeds to mark his own space. However, Pi did not allow the tiger to take the whole possession over it. Despite his ferocity, Parker could claim his authority neither over the small space on the lifeboat, nor over Pi. The latter, accordingly, succeeds to mark the boundary of their respective territories. In doing so, Pi gets over the dominance of the wild creature and, thus, imposes himself as the dominant male on the lifeboat. Pi is the anti colonial figure in the novel, while Parker is a representative of European colonialism. Thus the fight between them might stand as a metaphor for the fight between the colonial and the anti-colonial ideologies. Martel proves that the colonial practice of spacial dominance is being weakened and, therefore, challenged. He accordingly exposes the decline of the power of the European coloniser in particular and colonialism in general.

### **III/b- The Dominant Ideology of Multiculturalism in *Life of Pi***

The term 'Multiculturalism' emerged in the late (1960s) and early (1970s) in different contemporary Western democracies. It is a practice which may be defined as the state of co-existence of diverse cultures within a unified society. From a sociological perspective, multiculturalism is described as "a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organisation or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organisation or society".<sup>63</sup>

The main purpose of multiculturalism is to create a society where individuals from different cultural backgrounds can unify and live together cooperatively. It aims at promoting cultural freedom of individuals and the recognition of the cultural differences of diverse ethnic groups. Multiculturalism creates a social interaction between different races and religions; an interaction that is reflected in growing evidence of cultural diversity. Proponents of multiculturalism claim that the adoption of the latter came as a means to discourage hatred, discrimination and violence. It promotes the integration of individuals from a range of cultures and the contribution of minorities into a single social environment, where they are all treated equally without discrimination or social judgment, sharing equal rights and opportunities. Brahm Levey (2007) defines, in this respect, multiculturalism as “a set of practical policies aimed variously at improving the absorption of minorities and harmoniously integrating a culturally diverse society around liberal, democratic values”.<sup>64</sup>In a way, multiculturalism excludes the Euro-centric Western perception, which on the contrary is based on establishing socio-cultural differences, thus ignoring and undervaluing the non-western societies.<sup>65</sup>

The concept of ‘multiculturalism’ is adopted by many contemporary countries. Canada might be seen as the first to become officially a multicultural country. The Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was the first who introduced the Canadian multicultural policy in (1971). His goal was to “formalise a policy to protect and promote diversity, recognise the rights of Aboriginal peoples, and support the use of Canada’s two official languages”.<sup>66</sup>The Canadian multiculturalism Act of (1985) promotes “the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada’s future”.<sup>67</sup>Immigration played a significant role in the development of multiculturalism in Canada. The country became a ‘cultural mosaic’. It accepts the unification and integration of different ethnic social groups in one common

society where everyone's cultural heritages are respected. In this context, Irene Bloemraad (2006) states: "immigrants in Canada are more likely to become citizens".<sup>68</sup>

India as well, is considered as one of the most multicultural nations in the world. The country is characterised by an immense cultural diversity in terms of language, race and mainly religion. There are many religions that coexist in India such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism in addition to many others. This is why India is called a 'secular country'.<sup>69</sup> This term means that there is an equal treatment of several religions within the country. The Indian constitution prohibited discrimination on the grounds of religion, thus creating a tolerant country where all religions are treated equally and where people have the right to profess freely any religion they want. In this respect, Mahatma Gandhi once said "I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion, i.e., to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another".<sup>70</sup>

Among the major themes in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, the socio-cultural diversity remains a significant one. It gives an insight to the socio-cultural diversity and provides the reader with multiple cultural voices. The author portrays this diversity through different aspects, which include the blending of several cultures in the novel, in addition to the religious pluralism.

The issue of cultural diversity is clearly presented in Martel's novel. Many examples are being portrayed about this diversity and the most important one would be the coexistence of several cultures. Martel's narrative assembles different settings, a fact which has great influence on the novel's cultural diversity. The different settings in Martel's work are India, the Pacific Ocean, Canada and Mexico. These settings are regarded to be the core of multiculturalism. The opening section of the novel is set during the (1970's) in Pondicherry, a former French colony in India. This means that Pi's native town is coloured by several French

cultural aspects. Although the novel's initial setting is India, other settings are mentioned as well. Further in the novel, Pi makes an unsuccessful voyage to Canada due to which he finds himself adrift in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger for (227) days. The last section of the novel is set in Mexico.

Pi has landed on a Mexican shore, where he has been rescued by Mexicans who took great care of him. The help Pi received from those people is to be considered as a multicultural feature in the novel. It is a humanitarian act which sends a message of great significance, that of love, brotherhood and care shared between people from different cultural backgrounds. In this respect, Pi asserts: "I was overwhelmed by the generosity of those who rescued me".<sup>71</sup>In short, the story's different settings cannot be taken for granted when dealing with the issue of multiculturalism since they are much related to it. The shift in settings in the novel refers to the blending of several cultures, thus resulting in the cultural diversity by promoting a harmonious coexistence between distinct cultures.

Another important aspect which points toward the cultural diversity in the novel is portrayed through the main character, Pi Patel. We learn about Pi's life after the end of his ordeal. Once an adult, Pi has settled down in Canada, particularly in Toronto. He is, thus, introduced to a completely different culture which he accepts with much ease and admiration. For him, Canada is a great country "inhabited by compassionate, intelligent people".<sup>72</sup>Despite the fact that Pi has been integrated in a western country where he follows a new and a much different lifestyle, he never forgets about his native Indian background. In this context, Pi claims: "I love Canada. I miss the heat of India, the food, the house lizards on the walls, the musicals on the silver screen, the cows wandering the streets, the crows cawing, even the talk of cricket matches, but I love Canada".<sup>73</sup>We have been told that Pi has got married. His wife Meena is "also Indian but has a more typically Canadian accent".<sup>74</sup> His children Nikhil and Usha, bear typical Indian names. These two examples explain the way Pi is still tied to his

Indians origins. Accordingly, we come to the conclusion that he succeeds to mingle two distinct cultures. All in all, Pi's adaptability of the Canadian culture beside the Indian one, is a great example of multiculturalism in Martel's narrative.

Religious pluralism is also given expression through *Life of Pi*. This concept refers to the diversity of religious orientations that coexist in one sole environment where 'tolerance' is practiced. It is an aspect that contributes largely to the cultural diversity in the novel. It can be seen through Martel's main character. To put the novel in this context, the story centres on Piscine Molitor Patel, who believes in three different religions simultaneously. In other words, Religion is the driving force to Pi's life.

At the very outset, the protagonist Pi asserts that "[w]e are all born like Catholics -in limbo, without religion, until some figure introduces us to God".<sup>75</sup> Martel introduces Pi as a young boy, raised in a Hindu family, who worships 'Lord Krishna', believed to be the incarnation of their god Vishnu. Pi's commitment to Hinduism is due to his Auntie Rohini who, as a new born, takes him to a Hindu temple thus making him worship and practice Hinduism as his native religion. In this respect, Pi asserts: "I have been a Hindu all my life. With its notions in mind I see my place in the universe".<sup>76</sup> However, as the novel progresses, he explores the issue of spirituality and is therefore introduced to other grounds of different religious orientations in an early age. Accordingly, Pi develops a strong curiosity in the divine faith. He first explores Christianity when he was fourteen. His curiosity pushes him to wander into a church where he meets the Catholic Priest named Father Martin. The latter introduces his Christian beliefs and notions to Pi who accepts them warmly. He himself declares to the priest that he "would like to be a Christian".<sup>77</sup> He shows his admiration to Jesus Christ and declares that his humanity is "so compelling".<sup>78</sup> Pi is blown away by the fact that Jesus, the son of God, would pay for all of the sins of humanity.<sup>79</sup> Thus, he is spiritually convinced about the peace and the love the Christian religion promotes. In a way, Piscine Patel converts himself to Christianity and admits it to be his second religion beside Hinduism. Addressing

Pi, the priest declares: “[w]hoever meets Christ in good faith is a Christian. Here in Munnar you met Christ”.<sup>80</sup> Once in the church, Pi offers prayers to Jesus and thanks his lord Krishna for putting him in his way.

Pi’s faith urges him to discover God in different religions. After his conversion to Christianity, Pi is also introduced to Islam at the age of fifteen. He himself declares that “Islam followed right behind, hardly a year later”.<sup>81</sup> While exploring his hometown in India, Pi comes across the Muslim quarter “a small, quiet neighborhood, with Arabic writing and crescent moons inscribed on the façades of the houses”.<sup>82</sup> Once in Mullah Street, Pi meets a Muslim man named Mr. Satish Kumar, who works in a bakery. The latter interacts with Pi and shares with him a piece of bread then takes a leave for a while in order to pray. Pi observes and describes every gesture the man does while he is praying. At first Pi claims that “Islam is nothing but an easy sort of exercise”.<sup>83</sup> The next day, Pi goes to see Mr. Kumar once again in order to ask him what his religion is about. He then replies: “[i]t is about the beloved”.<sup>84</sup> He further tells him that “[i]f you take two steps towards God, God runs to you”.<sup>85</sup> From here, Pi shows total admiration and interest in Islam. Mr. Kumar has a great influence in Pi’s mind as he introduces him to the beliefs and values of his religion. This influence is expressed further when Pi enters a mosque, where he joins the worshipers and listens to the imam. He also prays with Mr. Kumar and practiced dhikr, he hence states: “I felt good to bring my forehead to the ground. Immediately it felt like a deeply religious contact”.<sup>86</sup> Pi goes on saying that Islam “is a beautiful religion of brotherhood and devotion,”<sup>87</sup> he thus challenges “anyone to understand Islam, its spirits, and not to love it”.<sup>88</sup>

In his work, Yann Martel also portrays the religious influence his main character experiences in his early life as he accepts and practices Hinduism, Christianity and Islam simultaneously. This means that he combines three different religions into one and embraces them with due respect and admiration. In this context, Dina Georgis (2006) states: “Pi decides he cannot choose between religions and instead follows all three with much ease and

synchronicity”.<sup>89</sup> However, his practice is not accepted by the three religious leaders. That is to say, the pandit, the priest and the imam react strictly and show total disagreement to Pi’s acceptance and practice of three religions. They believe that it is an intolerant act and that Pi must choose one religion among the three. Each argues that his religion is the right and the superior one. Pi responds to them by quoting Gandhi and telling them that “all religions are true”.<sup>90</sup> He further states that “if there is only one nation in the sky, shouldn’t all passports be valid to it?”<sup>91</sup> In a sense, Pi justifies his choice in believing in three religions by stating that he “just wants to love god”.<sup>92</sup> Thus, he stresses the importance of having faith in God. Pi’s strong religious conviction is manifested in his devotion to love God. He believes that despite the fact that each religion has its own name, principles, rituals and values, they do share one common essence that of ‘loving God’. In regards to Pi’s parents, Martel presents them as secular persons, this means that they are very understanding and tolerant concerning religion. They at first, like the religious leaders, think that Pi has to choose only one religious path, but later they came up to accept their son’s decision.

Additionally, Yann Martel, who in an interview with Andrew Steinmetz (2002), explains that “[Life of Pi] is in no way a defence of organised religion. It is an argument that faith, or what’s at the core of religion, is something that should definitely be considered”.<sup>93</sup> This means that the author supports the belief of multiple religions at once and stresses the importance of having faith in God. In this sense, Master Plots (2010) suggests that the “central themes of Life of Pi concern religion and human faith in God”.<sup>94</sup> In short, *Life of Pi* is a novel which makes emphasis on the religious tolerance and depicts faith in God as the soul of any religion.

### **III/c- Globalization as an Emergent Ideology in *Life of Pi***

Globalization is a concept used to refer to the process by which some nations integrate their economic, political, social and cultural policies and ideologies across the globe. Globalization may be defined as “the process of the world becoming a single place”.<sup>95</sup> In this

context, sociologists like Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King (1990) define globalization as “all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society”.<sup>96</sup>

The concept of ‘globalization’ is a complex one. It affects several fields, but first and foremost culture. David Held (2005) claims that culture “is a crucial component of globalization because it’s through culture that common understandings are developed, so culture is central to connections between places and nations”.<sup>97</sup> Cultural globalization refers to the cultural exchange and the interaction of several cultures around the world. It involves the interconnectedness and interdependence of different cultures worldwide. All in all, Cultural globalization creates a globally connected world where different cultures can coexist harmoniously in one single country. This means that, due to cultural globalization, the world is getting more and more connected.

*Life of Pi*’s theme of cultural diversity leads us to analyse it from a much related perspective. This diversity gives way to another ideology to emerge, an ideology known as Globalization. The author sheds light upon some aspects which reflect the theme of cultural globalization. Yann Martel’s novel might thus be considered a great example of ‘cultural globalization’.

Among the major aspects of cultural globalization in the novel, the presence of the Indian culture in Canada remains a significant one. Being a multicultural country, Canada is open to many foreign cultures and welcomes people from different nations and origins. The Indian culture is pretty present in Pi’s host country, Canada. Globalization influences many aspects of culture including food. It is, therefore, considered as a driving force for globalization. In Martel’s work, we are told that Pi went to an Indian restaurant once in Canada, “[t]he first time I went to an Indian restaurant in Canada I used my fingers”.<sup>98</sup> As this quotation indicates, Indian restaurants are to be found in Canada. The Indian cuisine, which is

a representative of the Indian culture, has gained international popularity. As a result of such popularity, there are many restaurants which serve the Indian food outside India, which is the case in Canada.

The presence of different places of worship in Pi's hometown in India can also be considered as a key aspect of cultural globalization in the novel. The Indian society is made up of diverse cultures and religions. Since ancient times, India has always been a country of not only one but many religions; a country where all of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and other religions can coexist in harmony. Pi's hometown in India, Pondicherry, has several places of diverse religious and spiritual practices. These places of worship include Hindu temples, in addition to churches and mosques. As Pi asserts in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the novel, "[t]he hill on the right, across the river from the hotel, had a Hindu temple high on its side; the hill in the middle, further away, held up a mosque; while the hill on the left was crowned with a Christian church".<sup>99</sup> Taking into consideration Pi's words, the author stresses the existence of different religious communities in India. Globalization contributes to the dissemination of cultures worldwide. As a matter of fact, globalization results in bringing together people from different cultural heritages, origins and religions. Consequently, we find numerous cultural items and diverse religious features that belong to a given group or society in a totally foreign country.

The religious diversity in Pi's hometown had had a significant impact on Pi Patel from his young age until his adult life. This impact is mirrored through the presence of various religious items in the protagonist's house, which belong to the three religions he practices. In the fifteenth chapter of the novel, the author makes a detailed description of Pi's house in Canada. He compares it to a temple due to its religious atmosphere. Pi's house is not an ordinary temple where one single religion is practiced, but rather there are diverse shrines and artifacts which symbolise his three different religions. Pi dedicated his office to religious practices, as the author mentions: "[u]pstairs 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”.<sup>100</sup> In addition to other religious Hindu figures, there is a statue of Virgin Mary, beside “a framed photo of the black-robed Kaaba, holiest sanctum of Islam”.<sup>101</sup> Pi’s house is considered as a good example of cultural globalization because it brings together three different religious orientations. The point is that Pi brings his three religious beliefs, which are totally unlike and from different backgrounds and origins, and assembles them in one country. The main character, in a way, contributes to the spread of multiple religious beliefs in a single society; thus, encouraging tolerance and dialogue between diverse communities and individuals across national borders.

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## V- Conclusion

As an English novel, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is one of the most famous myths of Western literature. On account of the novel's success, Defoe presented a wholly brand new genre to the literary world known as the Robinsonade genre. In doing so, he inspired many generations of writers including Jules Verne and Yann Martel, who have, respectively, made a remarkable contribution to the genre by publishing their castaway narratives entitled *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi*. Throughout our analysis, we have deduced that the two Robinsonades under study are subject to a clearly identified narrative scheme which discusses common themes of wreck, isolation and survival. However, each author has reinterpreted and adopted the themes of the Robinsonade according to his own political and socio-cultural stances, thus providing both similar and different versions of it. Our analysis has accordingly proved that the Robinsonade genre has witnessed an important transition from earlier or traditional to completely new and modern editions.

In our work we have attempted to study and analyse the dialogic relationship between Defoe's masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, and its two re-writings, which are Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. Thus, we have attempted throughout our work to bring the three narratives under the light of a comparative as well as a contrastive analysis under the framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism. We have, additionally, tried to examine the three narratives from a cultural materialist perspective. We have, then, put in evidence the different ideologies portrayed in each novel. To do so, we have relied on Raymond Williams's notions of ideologies of culture and power.

From the initial section of the first chapter of our research paper which dealt with the affinities between Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, we have deduced that both narratives share noticeable points. A deep analysis has revealed that both Verne and Defoe belong to the same traditional Robinsonade type. Both authors exposed

and supported the colonial ideology of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in their works. Therefore, to conduct our comparative analysis we have made use of Bakhtin's concept of 'stylization'. We have come to conclude that *The Mysterious Island* is, to a certain extent, a stylization of *Robinson Crusoe*.

From the second section of the first chapter that discussed the differences between *Life of Pi* and *Robinson Crusoe*, we have come to conclude that despite the fact that both novels centre on the theme of castaway and survival, yet there are many differences between them. To shed light on these differences, we have relied on Bakhtin's concept of 'polemic'. Hence, we have deduced that Martel's narrative collides with Defoe's original tale. In contrast to *Robinson Crusoe*, *Life of Pi* does not belong to the traditional, but rather to the modern type of the Robinsonade genre. We have deduced that Yann Martel opposes Defoe's ideology and rejects old forms of stereotypes and racial assumptions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Accordingly, our contrastive study has demonstrated that Martel's narrative came to polemicise with the ideologies of the traditional and early adventure castaway narratives with the aim of promoting contemporary, anti-colonialist, besides non-racial and unprejudiced ideologies.

In addition, the present work also attempted to study and examine all of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* from a cultural materialist perspective. In the second chapter of our dissertation, we have attempted to discuss the different ideological notions based on culture and power. To shed light on these different ideologies portrayed in each Robinsonade, we have appealed to Raymond Williams's cultural materialism, precisely on his three notions of 'Residual', 'Dominant' and 'Emergent' ideologies of culture. Through our analysis, we have tried to highlight the way each ideology is portrayed in all the three narratives. We have come to conclude that each novel portrays different ideological notions which are constantly developing through history and adapting to new changes depending on

the novels' context, settings as well as the authors' ideological stances. Our study has come to the point that all of Daniel Defoe, Jules Verne and Yann Martel attempted to propagate their ideologies and project them through their works.

Yet, the subject matter of this dissertation did not allow us to examine and discuss other issues in relation to the three works under scrutiny and certainly, still many other interpretations are possible to join the three novels together. We think that all of *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Mysterious Island* and *Life of Pi* can be studied through multiple and different literary theoretical approaches. Therefore, we encourage and invite students to dig further in these three works to explore other issues from other perspectives. And among interesting topics we suggest to undertake a research on the anxiety of influence of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* on Verne's novel.

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