

THE MANY FACES OF DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE*: EXAMINING THE
CRUSOE MYTH IN FILM AND ON TELEVISION

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INTRODUCTION

“We do not usually think of Robinson Crusoe as a novel. Defoe’s first full-length work of fiction seems to fall more naturally into place with Faust, Don Juan, and Don Quixote, the great myths of our civilization.”

Ian Watt. “*Robinson Crusoe as a Myth.*”

When my friends and students hear that my dissertation studies the cinematic versions of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, their immediate reply is that they are familiar with the Crusoe story. When I ask whether they have read the book, however, most admit that they have not. Yet, all of them know who Robinson Crusoe is. Everyone recalls that he is a castaway, shipwrecked and marooned on a deserted island for many years. As for the rest of the story, each has a different version of it. Some remember Man Friday – “Crusoe’s faithful slave;” others mention cannibals and Crusoe’s crusade with them; and there are those who think of Friday as Crusoe’s *female* companion, surprised to find out that in the book, the Friday figure is, in fact, a man, not a woman. It is obvious that what my friends and students know about *Robinson Crusoe* comes from the fame Crusoe’s character has maintained throughout years. Their recollections are based not on the original version of Defoe’s novel, but rather on its numerous abridgments and editions, or on various cinematic adaptations and retelling of the Crusoe story.

Robinson Crusoe has undoubtedly attained the status of a myth, and continues to live outside its original context, time and culture. Scholars frequently refer to “the Crusoe myth,” (Spaas 98), “the Crusoe phenomenon” (James 1). Margaret Drabble states that

Defoe “created one of the most familiar and resonant myths of modern literature” (qtd. in Spaas 98); Ian Watt claims that *Robinson Crusoe* is “almost universally known, almost universally thought of as at least half real,” and that it “cannot be refused the status of myth” (“*Robinson Crusoe* as a Myth” 313); French critic Arlette Bouloumie writes that Crusoe is “a mythological character through the mere fact that he has become autonomous” (qtd. in Spaas 98). To Michel Tournier, one of the best known French novelists, and an author of *Friday and Robinson* – a rewriting of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* – the Crusoe myth is “one of the most topical and vital that we possess,” one that in fact “possesses us” (183). “Never has a myth been more living” than that of Robinson Crusoe, Tournier declares in a 1996 interview.

Indeed, the story of Robinson Crusoe has been rediscovered, retold and reinterpreted through generations. “The strength and fascination of the story, encapsulated by Defoe but not restricted to his telling, is that it escapes all ideological strictures and continues to suggest alternative readings and prompt rewritings from alternative vantage points,” Brian Stimpson asserts in the preface to *Robinson Crusoe. Myths and Metamorphoses* (ix). Certainly, since its publication in 1719, *Robinson Crusoe* has gone through hundreds of versions. Michael Seidel claims that “no single book in the history of Western literature has spawned more editions, translations, imitations, continuations, and sequels than *Crusoe*” (8). Pat Rogers’ study lists “at least 200 English editions, including abridged texts; 110 translations; 115 revisions and adaptations; and 277 imitations” by 1900 (11). The Crusoe story has also been rendered in poems, an opera by Offenbach, an ice-show by Tom Arnold and countless British pantomime, the earliest example being *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Harlequin Friday*, performed at the Drury Lane Theater in 1781.

That the Crusoe myth extends beyond literature is obvious from numerous non-literary materials, ranging from pottery and paper dolls to cartoons and stamps. Ian Watt mentions a restaurant tree, called “Robinson,” which was opened up by an enterprising French industrialist in 1848 near Paris. Also in France, “un Robinson” has become a popular term for a large umbrella (“Robinson Crusoe as a Myth” 312).

Robinson Crusoe has generated many new stories, usually referred to as “Robinsonades.” Robinsonade, to define it broadly, “repeats the themes of *Robinson Crusoe*; usually it incorporates or adapts specific physical aspects of Crusoe’s experience and is an obvious rewriting of the Crusoe story. Other times, it shares ideas or narrative style” (Fisher 130). Thus, *Robinson Crusoe* adaptors have metamorphosed Defoe’s castaway into a dog, a woman, a child, a family, a doctor, and an idyllic lover, among many others. Rogers’ study catalogs a great number of imitations of Defoe’s novel. An incomplete list of popular Robinsonades includes the following works: *The Voyages, Dangerous Adventures, and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Falconer* (1720), John Barnard’s *Ashton Memorial* (1725), Johann Rudolph Wyss’s *The Swiss family Robinson* (1812-27), Captain Marryat’s *Masterman Ready* (1843), *The Dog Crusoe* (1860), *The Catholic Crusoe* (1862), *Six Hundred Robinson Crusoes* (1877). Serious revisions of *Robinson Crusoe* continue to be made. The most recent permutations of the Crusoe story include Derek Walcott’s *Castaway* poems, Muriel Spark’s *Robinson* (1958), Michel Tournier’s *Friday and Robinson* (1972) and J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986).

My dissertation focuses on the cinematic versions of the Crusoe story. Starting from the early 1900s, a significant number of films use the Crusoe myth as the text for an entire movie, or as a set piece within a film. Undying fascination with a mythic figure of a castaway led numerous filmmakers to rewrite, reinvent, and rework the Robinson Crusoe

story. Some of the cinematic adaptations of Defoe's first novel include the following works: Otis Turner's *Robinson Crusoe* (1913), George Marion's *American Robinson Crusoe* (1916), Robert Leonard's *Robinson Crusoe* (1917), Edward Cline's *Little Robinson Crusoe* (1924), Bryan Foy's *Robinson Crusoe* (1924), Walter Lantz's animated *Robinson Crusoe* (1925), M. Wetherel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1927), Edward Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932), Frank Moser's *Robinson Crusoe* (1933), Luis Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1952), George Miller/Rod Hardy *Robinson Crusoe* (1996). There are Mexican, Russian, French, Italian, Brazilian, and Dutch filmic adaptations of Defoe's novel as well. As Carl Fisher notes, "there are few places without a specific national Robinson" (131).

In addition to these "literal" adaptations, there have also been features, serials and television series using the Crusoe narrative one way or another. Some of these works completely rewrite Defoe's novel. Many versions alter the physical elements of the story, such as the shipwreck, living conditions, and setting; some increase number of castaways; others decrease length of isolation; a few change the castaways' motives for traveling, and/or experiences during isolation. Yet, as we will see later, they all share specific characteristics that link them together and back to Defoe's novel. A partial list of such cinematic Robinsonades include the following works: *Swiss Family Robinson* (1960) by Disney Studios; Byron Haskin's *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964); *Man Friday* (1975), directed by Jack Gold from a screenplay by Adrian Mitchell; *The Adventures of the Wilderness Family* (1975), *The Further Adventures of the Wilderness Family* (1978), *Mountain Family Robinson* (1979); *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), directed by Randal Keiser; Caleb Deschanel's *Crusoe* (1989); Robert Zemeckis's *Cast Away* (2000), a popular reality TV show *Survivor* (2000).

The purpose of my dissertation is to explore the relationship between cinematic Robinsonades and Defoe's novel. My aim is to study the different versions of the Crusoe myth, by interpreting not only the ways they differ from one another, but also the ways they stay the same. What narrative elements, themes, issues, and motifs persist in the various retellings of the Crusoe story and why? What kind of appetite does the Crusoe story feed viewing audiences of many different generations and cultures? What do the filmic Robinsonades say about Defoe's novel and what do they tell us about a particular time and culture in which they were produced?

The enduring power of *Robinson Crusoe*, I believe, lies in its multiplicity. Is this an adventure story about an individual's physical survival? Or is it a spiritual autobiography? Is Defoe advocating economic individualism, or the reverse? Is Crusoe punished for his disobedience to his father, or (as his wealthy state at the end of the novel may suggest) is his rebellion rewarded? Since 1900, critics have developed diverse, even conflicting and contradictory, readings of Defoe's novel. It has been interpreted as a redemption narrative, as economic parable, as survival story, as a piece of pre-colonialist propaganda; If Virginia Woolf sees *Robinson Crusoe* as a novel without a "soul," in which "God does not exist" ("Robinson Crusoe" 307), Nigel Dennis claims that "there never was a book in which God's hand was busier" (qtd. in Ellis 16). If Dottin finds the dates and figures of Defoe's novel unconvincing and invalid, Ganzel's study tries to demonstrate that of the numerous references to time in *Robinson Crusoe*, there is "only one error" (qtd. in Ellis 6). John Bender sees Defoe's protagonist as the personification of an oppressive "penitentiary" mentality, while Ian Watt views Crusoe as an embodiment of self-sufficient, isolated, and joyless capitalism. Downie locates Defoe's book into the "travel tradition," while Hunter stresses the novel's similarity to Puritan confessional literature. While differing viewpoints

are nothing new in literary criticism, the fact that *Robinson Crusoe* can produce so many contrasting readings is remarkable, if not unique. As Kevin Cope observes, “one would be hard put to find any instance in literary history of a work that has so fluently and pervasively elicited such contrary responses” (150).

Because of “the basic contradictions of the story as written by Defoe” (James 7), a single critical approach is incapable of unwrapping all the layers of *Robinson Crusoe*, and reconciling the sometimes paradoxical elements of this intricate novel. The contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in Defoe’s book make the narrative open to multiple readings.

Louis James argues that *Robinson Crusoe*

[. . .] embodies a sturdy individualism, the values of the English yeoman. Yet, in ruling over his little kingdom, Crusoe also shows a monarchist desire for order and control. Crusoe illustrates the capitalist ideal of acquiring and producing, and even keeps a store of gold sovereigns. Yet he also inhabits an island where the capitalist value system of exchange is entirely absent, and where monetary wealth is useless. Most notably, the island is both loss and plenitude, a place of exile and a refuge. Crusoe salvages everything he needs from the wreck, even pen, paper, guns and ammunition, and lives a paradigm of bourgeois respectability, even down to his cat, dog and his umbrella. Yet he is also portrayed as mere “natural” man, struggling with his bare hands against the environment, and forced to make for himself the most basic objects – a spade, cooking pots and bread from seed he has had to plant. Magically, both images of Crusoe exist side by side, and few readers question the contradiction. (James 7)

Robinson Crusoe’s popularity, then, lies in the fact that it is a text that leaves us with many open-ended questions which later writers revisit and respond to. Filmmakers, like literary critics, have approached Defoe’s text variously. Each cinematic version of the Crusoe story offers an original perspective on Crusoe’s character and sees the events from a different point of view. Some are interested in Crusoe’s relationship with Friday and the racial issues involved. In his 1972 film *Man Friday*, Adrian Mitchell, for instance, retells

Robinson Crusoe's story through the eyes of Friday. Bunuel's 1952 version, Deschanel's *Crusoe* (1988), and Miller/Hardy's more recent adaptation (1996) also have the Crusoe-Friday relationship at the core of their motion pictures. However, each work portrays a very different Crusoe figure. Their films, then, are the critical responses to, rather than the "literal" adaptations of Defoe's novel. Others center on Defoe's omission of women from *Robinson Crusoe*, and thus, rewrite the story so as to fill in the gap in the original. Edward Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, thus introduces Saturday, a beautiful native woman, as Crusoe's companion on the island. Yet other filmmakers see *Robinson Crusoe* as a good children's story. Films like *Swiss Family Robinson* by Disney Studios and 1960s TV series *Gilligan's Island* ignore Crusoe's soul-searching, and make a fun-filled, adventurous journey out of the Crusoe myth. These adaptations also add new characters to the story; so, instead of one solitary castaway, viewers explore the island with a family of six in *Swiss Family Robinson* and seven castaways in *Gilligan's Island*. Zemeckis's *Cast Away*, on the contrary, is a dramatic rewriting of the Crusoe myth that focuses on isolation of an individual, and how solitude changes the character emotionally, psychologically and physically.

My dissertation will also examine other, somewhat cloaked examples of the contemporary actualizations of the Crusoe story. Movies such as *Six Days, Seven Nights*, *The Blue Lagoon*, *Trouble in Paradise*, as well as the popular TV series *Lost*, and the reality television show *Survivor* are, I will argue, all transformations and variations on the Crusoe myth. They use Defoe's novel as a "raw material," to quote Bela Balazs, and by giving the castaway story a different emphasis, turn it into an original work with a different meaning, significance, and point of view.

Despite these differences in interpretation, viewpoint, focus, and interest, all of these films repeat the themes of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and thus share many characteristics that group them together as "Robinsonades." A number of central motifs emerge through the many cinematic versions of the Crusoe myth. First of all, all the works discussed here incorporate the specific physical aspect of Crusoe's experience; that is, the protagonist of each one of these films is in a similar situation: they are all castaways on an uninhabited island. Whether by accident, or voluntarily, these characters find themselves isolated from everything and everyone they know and care about. They have to learn to survive not only physically, but emotionally, mentally, and psychologically as well.

Second, although in the extraordinary circumstances, the characters themselves are not extraordinary. Like Defoe's Crusoe, these castaways are average, normal, down-to-earth individuals. As in Defoe's novel, nothing miraculous happens in the plot of these films. The challenges they face are tough yet also ordinary: how to get food, water, fire and shelter; how to defend themselves from wild beasts; how to cope with isolation... The island, thus, becomes a major character in these works.

The third element that unites these films is the presence of the Friday figure, or the central representative of "the other" culture. However, each work incorporates this theme differently. In some motion pictures, as in Defoe's novel, Friday is Crusoe's servant and like Defoe's protagonist, he is usually saved by the Crusoe figure under the similar circumstances. Yet in other films, Friday may be not a physical person, but an object of the central character's imagination, such as Wilson, an imaginary "friend" of Chuck Noland, a solitary castaway in Zemeckis's *Cast Away*. Wilson in reality is just a volleyball, but for Chuck "he" becomes a companion during his four years of isolation. With the help of Wilson, Chuck maintains his sanity. For other castaways, "the other" may be pirates,

native inhabitants of the island, or a person of the opposite sex for whom they develop romantic feelings. He (or she) may be dutiful and obedient like Defoe's Friday, or rebellious, hostile, and even dangerous.

Fourth, protagonists of the Robinsonades discussed here undergo a radical change during their experience on the island. Whether they get rescued and go back to the civilized world, or decide to stay on the island, their view of the world, their value system, and priorities are significantly altered. At the end of the film, they are (or claim to be) quite different characters from what they were at the beginning.

The continuing life of *Robinson Crusoe* in cinema and on television proves that after more than three hundred years, the Crusoe myth still resonates. What is it about the castaway story that is so appealing to the twentieth and the early twenty-first century filmmakers and audiences? What contemporary needs and desires does the Crusoe story satisfy? Several factors contribute to the vitality of the Robinson Crusoe myth in film and on television. First of all, as I have already pointed out earlier, one of the main reasons for the enduring appeal of Defoe's novel is its potential for metamorphoses. Defoe's story can have many meanings. As Tillyard notes in *The Epic Strain in the English Novel*, one "can describe the plot of *Robinson Crusoe* in several ways; and this possible multiplicity is one reason why the book holds us so strongly" (33). Michael Seidel agrees: the questions the Crusoe story raises, he notes, "are so basic that *Robinson Crusoe* is a primer for the science of man, a field study for the anthropologist, the psychologist, the economist, the political scientist, the sociologist, the geographer, the engineer, the agronomist, the theologian, and even, as the story develops, the military strategist" (9). Hence, the many possibilities inherent in Defoe's text provide a filmmaker with many angles from which to choose, many themes to develop, since the castaway myth is rich in economic, sociological,

cultural, theological, political, and psychological implications.

Moreover, the Crusoe myth attracts because it is a survival story. Most importantly, it is a story of success. It celebrates human ingenuity and resourcefulness, and offers an optimistic, flattering image of humankind. As James Sutherland points out, the Crusoe story has the gratifying structure of a man desperately struggling to survive alone against the world, surviving by sheer native energy, triumphing over difficulties, and creating his own little cosmos out of what, if he had been indolent and hopeless, must have remained chaos. Such a positive outlook on life and humanity is bound to remain a popular, forceful and powerful image.

Furthermore, the island setting of the Crusoe myth offers filmmakers a unique space within which they can address universally and continually fascinating themes of solitude, survival, hope, and exploration of unknown, among many others. The island setting, which pervades most cinematic Robinsonades, provokes individual maturation and revelation. The kind of self-awareness that island heroes achieve is usually seen as more dramatic and remarkable than the one that could be achieved in a civilized world. The island of the cinematic Robinsonades is a place where all formal political, religious, and social constraints break down and where people can discover their true identities apart from a society and civilization. After the island experience is over, the castaways find themselves forever changed. Their outlook on life, their priorities, and their values alter significantly. The island, thus, has as much meaning and depth in the cinematic Robinsonades, as individual characters. Moreover, the desert island is paradoxical, being both “a prison” and paradise, exotic and foreign, yet home and familiar. Its paradoxical nature is fascinating to viewers because the island’s paradoxes can be compared to the paradoxes of life itself.

The experience of encountering “the other,” so central in the Crusoe myth, is reiterated in the cinematic Robinsonades as well. It is not surprising that the image of “the other” would have the cinematic appeal. The presence of “the other” offers considerable opportunities for contemporary filmmakers. To some it provides a chance to focus viewers’ attention on the issues of race and/or ethnicity, while other filmmakers employ the theme of otherness to create an external conflict, and to integrate some action into the story. Thus, the natives become a source for a comic action in *Gilligan’s Island*; The oriental pirates in *The Swiss Family Robinson* make this adventure tale more exciting and dynamic; In *Lost* the presence of “the others” brings suspense into the plot, and contributes to viewers’ enjoyment, as well as their interest in continual viewing of the series; The creators of a popular TV show *Survivor*, on the other hand, use the customs and rituals of the “other” cultures to create “challenges” for the show’s contestants. The players are then “challenged” to participate in the traditions of “the other.”

Last, but not least, one of the reasons for the popularity of the Crusoe story among filmmakers may be the fact that filming *Robinson Crusoe* can be relatively inexpensive. First of all, its author is long dead, and a filmmaker does not have to pay for the rights to use his narrative. Also, it can be a low budget movie, usually requiring only a very small cast, and no expensive special effects. For example, in Bunuel’s *Robinson Crusoe* sixty out of the film’s ninety minutes is shot with the Crusoe character, played by Dan O’Herlihy, alone on the screen¹. Similarly, in Govorukhin’s and Deschanel’s adaptations, as well as in Zemeckis’s *Cast Away*, a solitary protagonist adjusting to his new environment is given

¹ This argument does not, of course, apply to all filmic Robinsonades. Those retellings of the Crusoe myth that add additional characters usually are more action-packed and dynamic, and require the use of special effects, which considerably increases the cost of the pictures. For example, *Lost* is one of the most expensive series on television today. Similarly, a budget for *Swiss Family Robinson* exceeded four million dollars, which was considered a very high expense in 1960.

most of the film's screen-time.

My dissertation was very much influenced by the following critics: Robert Mayer, Robert Stam, Catherine Craft-Fairchild, Gillian Parker, Michael Klein, among many others. Where I see my work as offering something new, however, is that this is the only full-length study of the cinematic Robinsonades of more than one genre and medium. Part of the interest in seeing several versions of the same novel is in seeing what choices the filmmaker has made in rendering the Crusoe myth on screen, what has been retained from the original narrative, and what has been discarded and why. Moreover, I try to demonstrate how different filmmakers employ the Crusoe myth to shine a light on our own times. As my discussion of the various films and TV shows will illustrate, more often than not, the filmic Robinsonades say more about the contemporary world than they do about the world of Defoe. The cinematic retellings of *Robinson Crusoe* then are deeply rooted in their historical time and culture. The progression and transformation of the Crusoe myth demonstrate that it has come to mean a multitude of things for contemporary audiences that, to quote Tournier, "were completely unknown to dear old Daniel Defoe." Two hundred fifty years earlier, Tournier states, "Defoe couldn't have anticipated one one-hundredth of what I saw in [*Robinson Crusoe*], or what you see in it, because we read it with the eyes of people at the end of the twentieth century, conscious of the problems of the Third World, modern sports, the Club Med" (qtd. in Beckett 165).

As I researched this project, I was surprised to discover how little has been published on the film and television adaptations of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. It was particularly surprising considering the fact that the adaptations of other classical writers' fictional works have been thoroughly studied. For instance, several book-length studies have been published on the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, or the novels by Austen,

Hardy and Dickens. Although there are numerous cinematic versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, there are surprisingly few scholarly works on them. For example, several essays have been written on Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe*; there are a handful of articles on Zemeckis's *Cast Away* and *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, but hardly anything on Deschanel's *Crusoe* and next to nothing on the early *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations, or on the connection between Defoe's novel and the TV shows *Lost* and *Survivor*. In fact, despite the obvious parallels between the Crusoe story and the plot of such films as *Six Days, Seven Nights*, *The Blue Lagoon*, and *Swept Away*, no one has examined these motion pictures in relation to Defoe's text.

The only book length study about the filmic Robinsonades is Anne Hutta Colvin's dissertation *The Celluloid Crusoe: a Study of Cinematic Robinsonades*. However, Colvin's work was written in 1989, and some of the best and most compelling rewritings of the Crusoe myth appeared after the 1980s. Colvin's study then is dated and incomplete. Furthermore, Colvin disregards the earlier versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, and begins her study with Bunuel's film, which was released in 1952. Why Colvin chose to focus on post-1950 material is left unclear. Such arbitrary cut-off date leaves readers uncertain about the earlier adaptations: Are there no filmic versions of *Robinson Crusoe* prior to the 1950s? If there are, then why is focusing on post 1950 important? Moreover, Colvin's dissertation does not take into account the romanticized rewritings of the Crusoe myth. Neither does she examine how the medium of television appropriates the Crusoe myth. She does draw readers' attention to *Gilligan's Island* but the reference is only made in the conclusion and is, therefore, very brief.

Other significant studies on the filmic Robinsonades include Robert Mayer's excellent essays – "*Robinson Crusoe* in Hollywood," published in *Approaches to Teaching Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*, edited by Maximilian Novak and Carl Fisher, and "Three

Cinematic Robinsonades,” published in *Eighteenth Century Fiction on Screen*, edited by Mayer himself, and Robert Stam’s chapter “Colonial and Postcolonial Classics: from *Robinson Crusoe* to *Survivor*” from his *Literature through Film. Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*. Both Mayer and Stam offer insightful analysis of some of the most popular versions of the Crusoe story. For example, they discuss Zemeckis’s *Cast Away* and the adaptations by Bunuel’s, Deschanel, and Gold. However, these are short articles and, therefore, cannot cover many areas.

It is often claimed that movies and television do not educate or advocate causes. “You cannot make a message picture,” Sidney Poitier states in “Entertainment, Politics, and the Movie Business.” “A message picture is a statement, a preachment, a speech without entertainment values. [. . .] We are not accustomed to that in America and until such time as the motion picture is no longer the domain of the profit-seekers, you have to principally entertain people” (qtd. in Manchel 906). Those who highlight the escapist aspect of film and television forget that many times “the pure entertainment” emphasis of American cinema requires conscious or unconscious suppression and debasement of minority, or “other” cultures, in order to validate the values of the dominant groups, or to cater to their desires and expectations. The stereotyped images of the “other” many movies and television shows depict effect American viewers’ attitudes, opinions and imagination. Often times they advance negative thoughts and perceptions about minority cultures and people. Hence, films and television have a great psychological and sociological impact. Lindsay Patterson, an African-American intellectual, for example, argues that the influence of films is “frightening,” and notes that “the existence of racial discrimination in some countries is a result of their populations having continuously viewed the black man as a foot-shuffling idiot in American films” (Patterson ix).

What does all this have to do with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*? As my analysis of the filmic Robinsonades demonstrates, calling attention to the source novel's troubled relationship with Friday as a natural subject is one significant way filmmakers interrogate Defoe's text. Paradoxically, however, even those motion pictures that entail a clear critique of racist and colonialist conventions of the original novel lapse into accepting the novel's view of the natives as ruthless, barbarous and savage. It is troubling that none of the cinematic Robinsonades examined in this study imagines the native cultures any other way than backward, primitive and uncivilized. None doubts, questions, or reinterprets native cannibalism. Many depict the native people as stereotypical blackface, participating in savage rituals, such as cutting each other's throats, or ripping out each other's hearts. Deprived of psychological complexity and individual voice, the native characters of the filmic Robinsonades are reduced to racial types. The stereotyped images of the natives used in these films and TV shows represent a minimal attempt from the part of the filmmakers to understand the native cultures. Instead, in order to stress the entertainment aspect, these films and TV shows magnify their peculiarities and strangeness, and portray western ideals and lifestyle as culturally superior. Such stereotypical depiction of other cultures is very problematic, since it influences American viewers' national consciousness as well as their personal encounters with foreign people. They help perpetuate such negative traits as cultural insensitivity, ethnocentricity, narrow-mindedness, chauvinism, and aggressive patriotism. By positioning foreign cultures into the realm of otherness, the filmic Robinsonades allow America to set itself apart from the non-Western world.

I believe it is imperative that we investigate the filmic Robinsonades in light of what images they present about foreign cultures and people. I also believe that the Crusoe myth has a great potential not only to entertain, but also to educate. As conservative as

Defoe's novel may be, it can be put to progressive ends. The cinematic retellings of the Crusoe story can be a powerful way to address the issues of racism, ethnocentricity, cultural insensitivity, and to advocate tolerance, acceptance and appreciation of people's differences. They can teach Western viewers that "there are no 'savages,' only men living in civilizations different from our own" (Tournier 189).

In a single study one cannot even list all the different cinematic retellings of the Crusoe story. For this reason, I discuss what I consider to be the most interesting and the best illustrative examples of the filmic Robinsonades of a particular genre and medium. The dissertation is composed of eight chapters. Chapter One – "Novel to Film Problematic" – examines the relationship between film and literature and discusses major approaches in adaptation theory. I discuss the various ways the renowned film critics and theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein, Andre Bazin, Bela Balazs, George Bluestone, Morris Beja, Brian McFarlane, and Dudley Andrew among many others, view adaptation. The debate centers on the following questions: Why do filmmakers continue drawing on literary sources? How should one view films based on novels – as a reading of the original text or as distinct works of art? What about the questions of "fidelity"? How "faithful" should a film stay to an original narrative?

Chapter Two – "Transferring Daniel Defoe's Novel into Film" – focuses on those motion pictures that directly link themselves to Defoe's novel. I examine M. Wetherel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1927), Edward Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932), Louis Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1952), Stanislav Govorukhin's *Zhizn I Udivitelnye Priklyucheniya Robinzona Kruzo* (1972), Caleb Deschanel's *Crusoe* (1989), and Rod Hardy/George Miller's *Robinson Crusoe* (1996). My analysis of these films develops from

an approach that views adaptation as a process of “intertextual dialogism.” This approach, built upon Michael Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic, understands adaptation as a personal, partial, individual, and most importantly, critical “reading” of the source novel. Thus, these adaptors do not attempt to replicate Defoe’s text, but rather, enter into dialogue with it, interpret it, and critique it. Moreover, all *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations are embedded in the particular time and culture in which they were produced. A close analysis of these motion pictures also reveals a paradox. Although the filmmakers attempt to criticize the source text’s racist and colonialist conventions, they end up reproducing Defoe’s view of “other” cultures as uncivilized, barbarous, and ruthless. The depiction of the natives is stereotypical in each *Robinson Crusoe* adaptation examined in this chapter. Each picture heightens the native culture’s otherness and primitiveness. Such negative portrayal undermines the anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective these films want to develop.

Chapter Three – “A Voice of Friday: Jack Gold’s *Man Friday*” – focuses on Jack Gold’s film *Man Friday* (1975) exclusively. Gold’s adaptation takes a drastically different position on Defoe’s novel. First of all, it presents the events solely from Friday’s point of view. Here the narrator is Friday, not Crusoe. This shift in perspective reinvents the castaway story entirely. Gold, unlike any other filmmaker before or after him, rewrites Defoe’s protagonist in a wholly negative way. His revision rejects the Crusoe figure altogether. The film’s pessimistic ending implies that the cultural boundaries separating the races are insurmountable. The extreme negativism of Gold’s film sets this version of the Crusoe story apart from the rest.

Chapter Four – “Simplifying the Crusoe Myth: Adapting *Robinson Crusoe* for Children” – examines three cinematic versions of children’s Robinsonades: Walt Disney’s *Swiss Family Robinson* (1960), the animated *Robinson Crusoe* (2003), and a popular

sitcom of 1960s, *Gilligan's Island*. Children's Robinsonades focus on satisfying the young viewers' hunger for discovery, adventure and exploration. To that end, they lighten the intensity of the original text by "simplifying" the Crusoe story, making it a fun-filled, joyous, and exciting escapade. Moreover, children's Robinsonades enhance the basic Crusoe story through the addition of more characters. Having more than one protagonist is essential, since more characters allow for more possibilities for adventure.

Chapter Five – "Romanticizing the Crusoe Myth" – examines the romanticized rewritings of the Crusoe myth. The motion pictures discussed here – *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), *Trouble in Paradise* (1988), *Six Days, Seven Nights* (1998), and *Swept Away* (2002) – transform the Crusoe myth so that it fulfills the contemporary moviegoers' desire for romanticism. These "masked" examples of contemporary actualization of the Crusoe story introduce two castaways, always a man and a woman, who find themselves stranded on the deserted island. The primary focus of these films becomes the relationship between the two castaways, rather than one solitary individual's ordeal. The stunning cinematography of the romanticized versions of the Crusoe story conditions the way the audience responds to these films.

Chapter Six – "Science Fiction Robinsonade" – examines Byron Haskin's film *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964) as an example of a science fiction Robinsonade. In this rewriting of the Crusoe myth the theme is still one of being cast away from civilization. However, the original story has been modified so that the sea becomes equivalent to the sky, and the sailing ship becomes a spaceship. *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* fits into Greg Grewell's model of the explorative colonial narrative, although it contains elements of the domesticative and the combative models as well.

Chapter Seven – “Twenty-First Century Crusoes and Their Audiences” – focuses on Robert Zemeckis’s film *Cast Away* (2000), and a popular television series *Lost* (2004). Both works exploit the cinematic potential of Defoe’s novel by incorporating in their stories all of the important themes of the Crusoe myth: voyages, disasters, physical and psychological torments, solitude, and fear of unknown. Both works use the Crusoe story as “a raw material” to serve their own purposes. Both *Cast Away* and *Lost* aim to expose the sins and the vices of modern society/world. Both reflect, and respond to contemporary concerns and anxieties, including estranged personal relationships, balance between personal and professional life, violence, dysfunctional families, substance abuse, and others.

Chapter Eight – “Making the Crusoe Story a ‘Reality’ Story” – examines the popular reality television show *Survivor* (2000) in relation to Defoe’s novel. After highlighting interesting parallels between reality television genre and the newly-emerged eighteenth-century novel, I discuss the different themes and issues *Survivor* shares with *Robinson Crusoe*. If Crusoe is an embodiment of economic individualism, *Survivor* is a version of the twenty-first-century American corporate culture. *Survivor* contestants, similar to Defoe’s castaway, pursue money. *Survivor* also records Western encounter with the “other” and in significant ways reproduces the imperial overtones of Defoe’s novel.

CHAPTER ONE

Novel to Film Problematic

“My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear; to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see. That – and no more, and it is everything.”

Joseph Conrad.

“The task I’m trying to achieve is above all to make you see.”

1. W. Griffith.

These two famous passages, one by a celebrated writer Joseph Conrad, and another by an American film director D. W. Griffith, are frequently cited in comparisons of film and literature. The visual stress of Conrad’s terms, critics note, makes the aims he cites seem as appropriate to a filmmaker as a novelist. In this chapter I am putting Defoe somewhat into the background in order to examine the relationship between film and literature and to discuss major approaches in adaptation theory. I will consider some compositional similarities and differences between the two mediums, and examine the various ways film critics and theoreticians view adaptation and address the question of how a filmmaker can go about adapting a novel into film.

“Ever since film arose as a story-telling art, there has been a tendency by filmmakers, writers, critics, and audiences alike to associate it with literature, as well as an insistence by many people that the associating is false or perhaps deceptive,” Morris Beja observes in his book *Film & Literature* (1979). Indeed, much has been written about film’s

relationship with literature. While some claim that “film and literature are as far apart as, say, cave painting and a song” (Mailer), others stress the literary origins and background of the film form. Many critics and theoreticians have argued that film shares a closer relationship to prose fiction, particularly the novel, than to drama. D. W. Griffith, for example, flatly states that movies are “picture stories; not so different [from novels]” (qtd. in Ross 1). Robert Nathan makes a similar argument when he claims that the film “is like a novel, but a novel to be seen instead of told” (qtd. in Ross 5).

The first theoretician, who drew parallels between film technique and literary technique, was Sergei Eisenstein. His famous essay, “Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today,” examines the influence of the novels of Charles Dickens on the early film, and argues that the movies of D. W. Griffith owe a debt to Dickens. “Griffith has [. . .] as much a Dickensian sharpness and clarity as Dickens, on his part, had cinematic ‘optical quality,’ ‘frame composition,’ ‘close up,’ and the alteration of the emphasis by special lenses,” Eisenstein insists (125). The essay even claims that Griffith, who is usually seen as a discoverer of one of the most important principles in film composition – montage – “arrived at montage through the method of parallel action, and he was led to the idea of parallel action by Dickens” (125).

Later scholars have developed a comparative method even further by making numerous analogies between film and literature. Joy Gould Boyum, for instance, sees film as “a variety of literature” (30). She examines the similarities between cinematic and literary languages and concludes that “film’s mode of communication may be virtually identical with that of literature” (23). Film, Gould Boyum argues, *can* make generalized statements, such as the following example from Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be

in want of a wife” as easily as literature can and more importantly, film can do so through the very same means; that is, through words, whether spoken or written. Moreover, both film and literature, Gould Boyum maintains, build generalizations indirectly. Literature, in the manner of film, does not articulate themes, but instead encourages us to come to an understanding of them through character and action. Thus, Gould Boyum concludes, the most crucial likeness between the two languages is “their very special capacity to create those characters and actions, to situate them in time and place, and ultimately then to bring us into fictional worlds. [. . .] In both instances, narrative and world are created” (30).

Beja's book makes a similar argument. As Beja states in his introduction, "this book concentrates on the art of *narrative*, the realm in which written literature and film are most intimately connected. Indeed, it will examine the possibility that written stories (for example novels) and filmed stories (what people mean by 'the movies') are really two forms of a single art - the art of narrative literature" (xiv). Beja defines the novel as "along fictitious written narrative in prose" (22) and "the type of films we concentrate in this book" as "a long fictitious narrative on film" (23). He rejects the argument that film is exclusively a "visual" art and claims that it is also "an art of words" (54).

In his book *Literature and Film* (1969), Robert Richardson explores some literary parallels for the film's most characteristic devices, and goes as far as to argue that “many of the techniques which the film is accustomed to regarding as exclusively filmic are in fact not new, nor are they confined to film” (64). Richardson uses Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* to support his claim that “the technique of characterizing by pictures or images” is not new with the movies (57). Literature, he points out, “had already achieved some unusual and purely visual effects before film even arrived” (60). Hawthorne's novel, Richardson asserts, offers endless material for a discussion of visual effects in literature.

Even the technique to manipulate sound is not cinematic, and is “part of the literary experience,” Richardson maintains. The matching of an actual sound with the word describing that sound – words like buzz, chirp, and hiss, for example – is one way literary artists have affected readers’ imagination. Richardson examines the fourteenth century works, such as *Gawain* and *The Green Knight* as “a splendid use of sound for major dramatic effect” (61), and concludes that experiencing a literary work “is in large part the experiencing of imagined images and sounds” and that “the literary artist must work harder to stir the imagination, to create pictures and sounds that the reader will actually experience, but the very fact that he must work to achieve such an effect gives him a self-consciousness about what he is doing that many film makers never reach, simply because it is so easy to provide actual images and sounds” (64).

Scholars who stress the similarities between film and literature have made a valuable contribution to film studies; yet they have overlooked the codes and elements that are specifically and uniquely cinematic. In their analysis they trivialize fundamental differences in the organization of the two very different mediums’ respective composition practices. Some of these differences include creation, production and distribution, as well as perception and appreciation of the two art forms. These are significant distinctions and worth pointing out here. A novel has a single author, who, to quote the artist-hero of James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is “like the God of the creation.” A film, on the other hand, is a group endeavor, which depends upon numerous people, each doing a specific task. As Beja observes, the role of a screenwriter is “nowhere nearly as absolutely controlling as the role of the writer in the production of a novel or a book of poems” (62).

Moreover, movies are commercial products and their existence depends on being able to appeal to a relatively large audience. Even a film which aims at a limited or

sophisticated, rather than a mass audience will lose money if it is not seen by at least couple of million people. Commercial filmmakers then must get audiences to pay admission to see their films. However, the financial risk has become worthwhile, since the monetary rewards for even a moderately successful film are huge. The plight of a serious filmmaker, then, to quote Beja, “is less enviable when contrasted to that of the novelist, poet, musician, sculptor, or painter” (61). The latter can practice their arts with a minimal financial outlay, while “no filmmaker can afford single-handedly to produce and create a major feature film” (Beja 61). In fact, film-production costs “constitute the most expensive overhead of all art media” (Manchel 1300). Despite the fact that films can be rented or purchased for home viewing, a film needs a theatrical screening in order for most video outlets to convert it for sale or rental in video store. Stores generally display only the top forty box-office hits. Consequently, commercial films generally need to appeal to a relatively large population.

The perception and appreciation of film and literary work are different as well. Our freedom of choice, it has been argued, is more limited with respect to film than literature. While reading a book we picture the episodes, and imagine what the characters look like. A reader's imagination is free, even within the limits set by the descriptions of an author. A film, on the other hand, “imposes” the visual images on viewers. “It is impossible for us to overcome the visual image; that is all there is, it is right in front of us, and we cannot make it any different” (Beja 64). Moreover, “a film can only show us what can be shown: the eye can only see what can be seen by the eye, a limitation not shared by the mind's eye” (Beja 64).

Some distinctions in perception and appreciation of film and written literature which were significant a decade or so ago have become less pervasive with the

development of technology. For example, DVD distribution makes the experience of viewing a film much less dissimilar from reading a novel. The act of seeing a movie can now be just as private as the act of reading. Seeing a film does not have to be “a group experience” anymore, necessarily involving a trip to the movie theater. Availability and ease of possession have, thus, minimized the distinctions in the experience of film or written literature. Now we can buy our own films just as easily as we do books; we can borrow them from the libraries, and can even view them on our computer screen. Of course, watching a movie in a theater is very different from watching it on a television, or a computer screen: the size of the screen and the quality of the image and sound can have a major effect on the reaction and the experience of a viewer.

The examination of the relationship between film and literature necessarily involves a consideration of the issue of adaptation. As Brian McFarlane observes in his influential book on the theory of adaptation, *Novel to Film* (1996), “as soon as the cinema began to see itself as a narrative entertainment, the idea of ransacking the novel - that already established repository of narrative fiction - for source material got underway” (7). Indeed, adaptations are, as another critic puts it, “the lifeblood of the film and television business” (Seeger xi). Many Academy and Emmy Award winning films are adaptations. For instance, Beja reports that, since the inception of the Academy Awards in 1927, “more than three fourths of the awards for ‘best picture’ have gone to adaptations [and that] the all-time box-office successors favor novels even more” (78). The reason why filmmakers continue drawing on literary sources, McFarlane states, appears to “move between the poles of crass commercialism and high-minded respect for literary works” (7). There is the lure of pre-sold title, and the expectation that respectability and popularity of a novel might infect a film as well. Beja agrees that “some important impulses toward adaptations may not be,

strictly speaking, 'literary' at all; they are financial, perhaps, or derive from the sheer need to come up with material to be filmed" (77).

The issue of adaptation has attracted critical attention from the very outset. Critics wrote about it as early as 1911. Stephen Bush, for instance, regarded motion pictures as a promising means of introducing the literary classics to the masses: "It is the business of the moving picture to make [classic novels] known to all," Bush asserted (qtd. in Gould Boyum 4). Bush's view of cinema as having educational potential was not shared by most academics, writers, and theorists who saw the adaptation as destructive to literature. Vachel Lindsay and Virginia Woolf, for example, both writing in the silent film days, railed against the adaptation. Lindsay claimed that the adaptation went against the uniqueness of the film medium. Woolf, on the other hand, thought that books were the "prey" and "unfortunate victims" of "parasite" movies ("Robinson Crusoe" 26). In her article "The Movies and Reality" (1926), Woolf asserts:

All the famous novels of the world, with their well known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both, the alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples. (265)

Lindsay's and Woolf's arguments against the adaptation were echoed by later critics. Hannah Arendt, for example, lamented that filmmakers destroyed works of "great authors of the past" by altering them in order to make them more entertaining for the mass media. "The danger is [. . .] precisely that it may become very entertaining indeed," Arendt exclaimed. "There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect, but it is still an open question whether they will be able to survive an

entertaining version of what they have to say" (qtd. in Gould Boyum 7).

Even Eisenstein mocks the idea that the film is an autonomous, independent art form when he writes:

It is only very thoughtless and presumptuous people who can erect laws and an aesthetic for cinema, proceeding from premises of some incredible virgin-birth of this art! Let Dickens and the whole ancestral array, going back as far as the Greeks and Shakespeare, be superfluous reminders that both Griffith and our cinema prove our origins to be not solely as of Edison and his fellow inventors, but as based on an enormous cultured past; each part of this past in its own moment of world history has moved forward the great art of cinematography. Let this past be a reproach to those thoughtless people who have displayed arrogance in reference to literature, which has contributed so much to this apparently unprecedented art and is, in the first and most important place, the art of viewing. (136)

Andre Bazin, one of the most influential and important writers on cinema, forcefully declared that it was a filmmaker's responsibility to give a faithful rendering of a text.

Unlike his predecessors, Bazin does not find the relationship between film and literature damaging:

It is nonsense to wax wroth about the indignities practiced on literary works on the screen, at least in the name of literature. After all, they cannot harm the original in the eyes of those who know it, however little they approximate to it. As for those who are unacquainted with the original, one of two things may happen; either they will be satisfied with the film which is as good as most, or they will want to know the original, with the resulting gain for literature. [. . .] The truth is, that culture in general and literature in particular have nothing to lose from such enterprise. (19)

However, Bazin highly values faithfulness to an original source, arguing that "the filmmaker has everything to gain from fidelity" (19). The novel, Bazin maintains is "already much more highly developed, and catering to a relatively cultured and exacting public." Thus, it offers the cinema "characters that are much more complex" (19). Infidelity to an

original text, in Bazin's view, is a betrayal of both literature and cinema. "[. . .] those who care the least for fidelity in the name of the so-called demands of the screen [. . .] betray at one and the same time both literature and the cinema" (21), Bazin claims.

Such favoring of literature over cinema, Robert Mayer observes in his introduction to *Eighteenth-Century Fiction on Screen*, "seems almost inescapable in discussion of adaptation; the very word, after all, suggests alteration or adjustment in order to make something fit its new context or environment without, however, changing that something into something else – one 'adapts,' that is, one does not 'transform' or 'metamorphose!'" Indeed, some filmmakers have rejected the very idea of adaptation. The French director Alain Resnais, for example, once stated that for him adapting a novel for one of his own films would seem - since the writer of the book has already "completely expressed himself" - "a little like re-heating a meal" (qtd. in Beja 79). For Resnais, the written fiction brings a pre-existent weight to the cinema which burdens the process of filmmaking. Ingmar Bergman, on the other hand, who always writes his own scripts, declares firmly that "film has nothing to do with literature" (225) and that "we should avoid making films out of books" (226). Bergman connects literature with words, and argues that while words interact with the intellect, film interacts with the imagination. "The two art forms are usually in conflict," he argues (225). "The irrational dimension of a literary work, the germ of its existence, is often untranslatable into visual terms – and it, in turn, destroys the special, irrational dimension of the film" (226).

Horton Foote, an Academy Award winning screenwriter who did film adaptations of Steinbeck, Faulkner, Harper Lee, and O'Connor, states that adapting the work of other writers to the screen is "the most difficult and painful process imaginable" (7) and that he does "anything [he] can to avoid it" (7). "When you're dealing with your own work, you're

inhabiting a familiar world, and you can move around with some confidence and freedom," Foote observes. "But when you try to get inside the world of another writer, you're under constant tension not to violate this person's vision" (7). In Foote's view, to be really successful adapting another writer's work, a filmmaker must like the original. "I don't have to always understand it, but I have to like it and be willing to try to understand it and go through the painful process of entering someone else's creative world. And each time, I find that entrance into that world is different" (7), Foote points out.

Bela Balazs, another distinguished early theorist of cinema as well as a scenarist and a director, denies the possibility of any transfer, or transposition from literature to film. Balazs argues that although an adaptation takes the subject of another work, it achieves both a content and a form very different from the original narrative: "[. . .] while the subject, or story, of both works is identical," he accentuates, "their *content* is nevertheless different. It is this different *content* that is adequately expressed in the changed form resulting from the adaptation" (7-8). To Balazs, every "serious and intelligent adaptation," is "a re-interpretation" (11). The original book is a "raw material" for a filmmaker, rather than a sacred text: "[a filmmaker] may use the existing work of art merely as raw material, regard it from the specific angle of his own art form as if it were raw reality, and pay no attention to the form once already given to the material" (10).

George Bluestone, whose *Novels into Film* (1957), is still considered to be one of the foundational texts on fiction-to-film problematic, sees adaptation from a perspective similar to that of Bela Balazs. Bluestone argues that although novels and films of a certain kind do reveal a number of similarities, the two media "are marked by such essentially different traits that they belong to separate artistic genera" (viii), as different from each other as "ballet is from architecture" (5). The novel, Bluestone maintains, is "a linguistic

medium,” whereas “the film is essentially visual” (viii). Each medium is autonomous, with its own unique and specific properties.

Bluestone outlines the differences in origins, audiences, modes of production, and censorship requirements that, he believes, reinforce the autonomy of each medium. If the reputable novel has been supported by small, literate audience, has been produced by an individual writer, and has remained relatively free of rigid censorship, Bluestone observes, the film has been supported by a mass audience, produced cooperatively under industrial conditions, and restricted by a self-imposed Production Code. Because of these differences, “what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each². [. . .] An art whose limits depend on a moving image, mass audience, and industrial production is bound to differ from an art whose limits depend on language, a limited audience and individual creation” (63-64).

There is, then, an “inevitable abandonment of ‘novelistic’ elements” (viii) in films based on novels, according to Bluestone. This abandonment of language as its sole and primary element “is so severe that, in a strict sense, the new creation has little resemblance to the original” (viii). Thus, when the filmmaker undertakes the adaptation of a novel, Bluestone argues, “he does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel – the novel viewed as raw material. He looks not to the organic novel, whose language is inseparable from its theme, but to characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and, [...] have achieved a mythic life of their own” (62). For Bluestone, then, “there is no necessary correspondence between the excellence of a novel and the quality of the film in which the novel is recorded” (62).

² That is why, Bluestone observes, Proust and Joyce would seem as absurd on film as Chaplin would in print.

The filmmaker, he concludes “becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right” (62).

Many scholars have criticized Bluestone’s “medium-specific approach” as “a quite astounding evidence of a ‘lack of fit’ between Bluestone’s conceptual principles and intentions, and his attempts to apply his theories to real case studies” (Cardwell 47). *Novels into Film* disallows almost any similarity between novels and film texts, and thus, between novels and adaptations. Yet, Bluestone analyzes specific adaptations in relation to their source novel: “The method calls for viewing the film with a shooting-script at hand,” he states. “During the viewing, notations of any final changes in the editing were entered on the script. After the script had become an accurate account of the movie’s final print, it was then superimposed on the novel.[. . .] Before each critical evaluation, I was able to hold before me an accurate and reasonably objective record of how the film differed from its model” (Bluestone xi). If, as Bluestone’s has argued, the differences between the two media are as vast as “Wright’s Johnson’s Wax Building [and] Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*” (6), how are we to understand such comparison? The very existence of adapted texts defies the laws of “medium specificity.”

Later theorists rejected notions of “medium specificity” by concentrating not on the question of *if*, but, rather, *how* adaptation happens. Beja puts together the most debatable and challenging questions critics have been trying to confront

How should a filmmaker go about the process of adapting a work of written literature? Are there guiding principles that we can discover or devise? What relationship should a film have to the original source? Should it be 'faithful'? Can it be? To what? Which should be uppermost in a filmmaker's mind: the integrity of the original work, or the integrity of the film to be based on that work? Is there a necessary conflict? What types of changes are permissible? Desirable? Inevitable? Are some types of works more adaptable than others? (80-81)

Scholars who take “the comparative approach” to adaptation “emphasize on looking for the ways in which the same narrative is told using different conventions” (Cardwell 56). McFarlane, whose *Novel to Film* (1996) is one of the most influential works within what Cardwell refers to as “the comparative” tradition,³ criticizes the notion that “a film is a film and there is no point in considering it as an adaptation” (194). His aim, McFarlane states, “is to offer and test a methodology for studying the process of transposition from novel to film, with a view not to evaluating one in relation to the other but to establishing the *kind* of relation a film might bear to the novel it is based on” (vii). In pursuing this goal, he attempts to distinguish “between that which can be transferred from one medium to another (essentially, narrative) and that which, being dependent on different signifying systems, cannot be transferred (essentially, enunciation)” (vii).

McFarlane also criticizes “the near-fixation with the issue of fidelity” (194). He argues that “fidelity criticism is unilluminating,” since filmmaker’s reading of the original can never coincide with that of many other readers and viewers (9). Moreover, the stress on fidelity to the original, McFarlane accentuates, “undervalues other aspects of the film’s intertextuality” (21). He recognizes that any film, whether or not it is based on a novel, has non-literary, non-novelistic influences and “to say that a film is based on a novel is to draw attention to one – and for many people, a crucial – element of its intertextuality, but it can never be the only one. Conditions within the film industry and the prevailing cultural and social climate at the time of the film’s making [. . .] are two major determinants in shaping any film, adaptation or not” (21). The critic who fails to address the adaptation’s intertextuality, McFarlane emphasizes, “[. . .] is guilty of undervaluing the film’s cultural

³ Whelehan and Mayer refer to McFarlane’s approach as “the narratological approach.”

autonomy as well as failing to understand the process by which the novel has been transposed to film (200).

It is important to emphasize here that in raising the issues of intertextuality, McFarlane does not deny “how powerfully formative the source work is in shaping the response of many people to the film version” (22). He, thus, proposes two lines of investigation: “(a) in the transposition process just what is it *possible* to transfer or adapt from novel to film; and (b) what key factors other than the source novel have exercised an influence on the film version of the novel?” (22). However, although McFarlane recognizes the importance of intertextuality, the analysis he offers in his book does not incorporate the examination of a film’s intertextual space.

Furthermore, McFarlane thinks that it is important “to assess the *kind* of adaptation the film aims to be” (22). Many adaptations, he observes, “have chosen paths other than that of the literal-minded visualization of the original or even of ‘spiritual fidelity,’ making quite obvious departures from the original” (22). Such departures, McFarlane emphasizes, may be seen as a “commentary on”, or even “a deconstruction” of the original. Evaluating the film version of a novel from the viewpoint of a filmmaker’s aim would eliminate the use of such terms as “violation,” “distortion,” “travesty” and negate the implied sense of the novel’s supremacy.

Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, the editors of *The English Novel and the Movies* (1981), also acknowledge fundamental differences between the two media, but recognize that there is the possibility of convergence. They divide adaptations into three main groups, according to how faithful to the original text they are. Because of the expectations of the audience, most films, they argue, “attempt to give the impression of being faithful, that is, literal translations of the text into the language of film” (9). A second approach to

adaptation “is the one that retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text” (Klein and Parker 10). A third and different approach is one “that regards the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work” (Klein and Parker 10).

Other theorists also seek to categorize adaptations so that, as McFarlane observes, “fidelity to the original loses some of its privileged position” (10). Geoffrey Wagner, for example, suggests three following group headings: “transposition,” in which “a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference” (Wagner 222); “commentary,” or “re-emphasis,” or “re-structure,” where “an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect [. . .] when there has been a different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than infidelity or outright violation” (Wagner 224); and finally, “analogy,” which “must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art” (Wagner 226).

In a similar vein, Dudley Andrew categorizes adaptations into “borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation” (98). “Borrowing” – the most frequent mode of adaptation – is when the artist employs the material, idea, or form of an earlier, usually successful narrative. The success of adaptation of this sort, Andrew points out, “rests on the issue of fertility not their fidelity” (99). “Intersecting,” on the other hand, preserves the uniqueness of the original text “to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation. The cinema, as a separate mechanism, records its confrontation with an ultimately intransigent text” (99). Finally, “fidelity of transformation” is a kind of adaptation where film tries to measure up to a literary work, or of an audience expecting to make such a comparison. “Here it is assumed that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text” (100).

Such categorization as offered by Klein and Parker, Wagner, and Andrew is useful because, as Sarah Cardwell observes, it “does not presuppose that each adaptation aims for fidelity to its source text” (60). However, Cardwell also points out some problems with the methodology of dividing adaptations into groups. If the primary aim of the film or television programme is *not* fidelity to the source novel, she asks, how are we to study and evaluate such adaptations?

If the basis of analysis is comparison between film and novel, then only those elements in the film that are also present in the book will be highlighted in the resulting analysis. As these elements have already been sought out and noted, we are left with a considerable proportion of filmic text that is not explicable in terms of the source book and is therefore (within the comparative mode of approach) left uninterpreted.
(Cardwell 62)

Furthermore, Cardwell maintains, recognition of the existence of different types of adaptation can “induce a proclivity towards favoring one type of adaptation over another” (63). For instance, “analogy” – defined by Andrew as a “mode [that] refutes the commonplace that adaptations support only a conservative film aesthetics” (Andrew 100) – is usually praised more than other categories of adaptation. According to Cardwell, “this could be because this type of adaptation best reinforces film as an autonomous art form” (63).

Cardwell proposes an approach that “regards adaptations in terms of an ever-developing meta-text” (68). This view recognizes that adaptations may draw upon earlier adaptations, as well as upon the primary source novel. If we study adaptations by looking for equivalencies in a literary source, Cardwell emphasizes, we will be overlooking elements of the film or television programme that are “vital to its own, particular aesthetic appeal, and its meaning as an artwork” (68).

Here Cardwell builds upon another major approach theorists take on adaptation. Mayer calls this method “the intertextuality model” (6). Roland Barthes, who is one of the most influential scholars proposing “the intertextuality model” for studying adaptations, treats the literary text as one of many items in the “multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (*Image* 146). Every text, Barthes maintains, is “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (*Image* 146). Moreover, the origins of these quotations are “always anterior, never original” (*Image* 146). A writer’s only power is “to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” (*Image* 146). The film, Barthes argues, emerges from such intertextual matrix.

Christopher Orr makes a similar argument when he states:

By placing the notion of adaptation within the theory of intertextuality, we can describe the literary source [of a film] as one of a series of pre-texts which share some of the same narrative conventions as the film adaptation. This description obviously does not exhaust the film’s intertextual space, which also includes codes specific to the institution of cinema as well as codes that reflect the cultural conditions under which the film was produced. (72)

The dominant discourse within adaptation studies – the discourse of fidelity – is inadequate, Orr accentuates: “The danger of fidelity criticism, even when it is dealing with the most ‘faithful’ of film adaptations, is that it impoverishes the film’s intertextuality either by ignoring the other codes that make the filmic text intelligible or by making those codes subservient to the code of a single precursor text” (72). The discourse of fidelity, thus, “reduces intertextual space to a single pre-text rather than attending to the richness of that space” (73). A possible alternative to fidelity criticism, Orr argues, is to approach the move from novel to film “from an ideological perspective:” “Within this critical context,

the issue is not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source, but rather how the choice of a specific source and how the approach to that source serve the film's ideology" (73).

One problem with "the intertextuality model," according to Mayer is that

[. . .] once one highlights Roland Barthes's 'multidimensional space,' the relationship between a particular text and a particular film may get lost; at the very least, the task of describing any film's emergence from its intertextual matrix seems at best daunting, and in some cases colossal. While intertextuality allows one at least theoretically to place a film that draws upon a work of fiction within its proper context, seeing the cinematic work as shaped not only by a particular text but also by a multitude of elements within a cultural setting – including other films, a star's persona, political discourse, and potentially almost innumerable narratives and other items from popular and elite culture – use of the intertextuality model might in some cases tend to obscure the relationship between the two works. (6)

Mayer proposes recent "reading theory" by Hans Robert Jauss, Harold Bloom, and Stanley Fish as the best possible "solution to the problems posed by the intertextuality model's account of the fiction-to film problematic" (7). Reading theorists put forward an argument that reading is a creative act, rather than "the decoding of signs that yields something essential about a text (such as its 'basic theme')" (Mayer 7). Jauss, Bloom and Fish, then, refuse to privilege a text over any reading of that text. They reject ideas about influence and obligation and instead see "the history of art in terms of responses to earlier works and artists that are themselves autonomous creations with no responsibility to the earlier works even though they may evince a powerful interest in, likeness to, interrogatory attitude toward, or anxious view of, those earlier works" (Mayer 9). Building on this approach, Mayer offers a similar argument regarding the issue of adaptation. He views a film as a reading of a novel, and argues that "films that derive from novels and other forms of fiction are distinct works of art with no debt to texts even though they have a clear and important link to those texts" (2-3). Such approach to adaptation, Mayer maintains, solves the

problem of privileging text over film because the new work, with its particular answers to the questions posed by the earlier works, alters the prior work and “as a result the several works are [. . .] contemporary with each other and each exist in a field that has likewise been transformed by the act of reception” (8).

Some scholars view adaptation as essentially an act of literary criticism. In his book *Filming Literature. The Art of Screen Adaptation*, Neil Sinyard argues that filmmakers use the camera to interpret, not simply illustrate the original text. “A leitmotif of this book,” Sinyard accentuates, is “the proposition that the best adaptations of books for film can often best be approached as an activity of literary criticism, not a pictorialisation of the complete novel” (117). Sinyard compares a film to a critical essay, arguing that like a critical essay, a film stresses what it sees as the main theme of the original source. The adaptation selects some episodes, and excludes others; it offers alternatives, and “in the process, like the best criticism, it can throw new light on the original” (117). The best film adaptations, then, as Sinyard sees it, “provide a critical gloss on the novels” (117).

As some of the major positions on adaptation outlined in this chapter demonstrate, novel to film problematic continues to be a debatable topic of inquiry among critics of both cinema and literature. As Mayer observes, the various approaches scholars take on the issue of adaptation “are far from being mutually exclusive” (13). My analysis of the relationship between Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and the films based on the Crusoe myth in the consequent chapters will embody a number of these theoretical positions. Were I to employ only one single theoretical approach in this study, I would be forced to distort Defoe’s novel to fit my own interpretation.

Robinson Crusoe adaptations, as the subsequent chapters will try to demonstrate, approach the Crusoe myth differently, personally, partially, individually, and critically.

Instead of replicating Defoe's text, contemporary filmmakers interpret, critique and interrogate it. In the process, the novel loses its status of distinctive privilege, and becomes subject to overtly ideological rereading, encompassing a seemingly inexhaustible variety of instances of film genres, including drama, comedy, fantasy and science fiction, and ranging from Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe* to Keiser's *Blue Lagoon* and Haskin's *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*.

It is important to mention here that *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations are not unique in their imaginative rendering of the original text. There are many adaptations of other writers' fictional works, that, similar to the cinematic Robinsonades, do not aim at fidelity to the original source, and take great freedom with the source novels. For example, Alfonso Cuarón's 1998 *Great Expectations* makes no attempts to seem authentically Dickensian. Although it retains the story's original title and the bare outline of the plot, it rewrites the original narrative entirely: the movie is set in modern-day Florida and New York; the filmmaker simplifies the story radically, and changes the names of most of the characters. Roland Joffé's 1995 *The Scarlet Letter* also transforms Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel of the same title into something entirely different. Joffé's film, Paul Niemeyer states, "grafts 1990s attitudes and ideas on to both Hawthorne's novel and on to the colonial era in which it is set" (40). The end results are a radical change in storyline, and a very different ending. A 1995 film *Clueless* is an imaginative rendering of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*. Although loosely adapted, it is nonetheless recognizable. The film is set in the late 1990s California and imagines what Austen's heroine would be like if she lived in the twentieth century America.

Shakespeare has also become part of pop culture. Many Shakespeare adaptations aim for the mainstream Hollywood audience, and accordingly, take great liberties with the

original source. For instance, a 1920 film version of *Hamlet*, starring Asta Nielsen, portrays Hamlet as a woman, who is in love with Horatio. There are many other original *Hamlet* adaptations. *Hamlet*, to quote Luke McKernan and Olwen Terris, “has been animated at least twice, portrayed as twins and turned into a cowboy” (qtd. in Boose and Burt 215). Filmmakers have reworked other Shakespearian plays as well. Oliver Parker’s *Othello*, for example, was marketed as an “erotic thriller,” that was “as accessible as *Fatal Attraction*” (qtd. in Boose and Burt 67). Ian McKellen, director and producer of a 1995 film *Richard III* encouraged “everyone working on this film not to think of it as Shakespeare.” Hence, the film is a retelling of the Richard III story in the context of modern British fascism, and against the background of the 1930s and World War II. “It’s a terrific story, and who wrote it is irrelevant,” McKellen asserts (qtd. in Boose and Burt 11). There are also more than dozen animated versions of Shakespeare’s plays, including Disney’s 1994 *The Lion King*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Hamlet*.

The various versions of these classical texts mark the significantly multiple ways in which contemporary world conceives and recreates these narratives. Alterations of these works, as a famous Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli points out, may be justified because of the centuries that stand between these authors and ourselves. It is the “responsibility” of filmmakers to bridge a gap to the classics, Zeffirelli accentuates, and to capture the imagination, desire and expectations of modern audiences. *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations demonstrate the particular cultural “solutions” and frustrations tied to the era of their production. Although many themes of Defoe’s novel are readily adaptable to film, there are certain aspects that automatically create tension between the original text and the films that adapt or employ that text. Filmmakers alter Defoe’s eighteenth century novel in

order to tell and sell a story more amenable and relatable to contemporary viewers.

Hence, in the case of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* "infidelity" to the original source becomes, to quote Stam, "a political obligation" for filmmakers, since being "true" to the original text would mean endorsing the conservative colonialist and misogynistic premises with which Defoe's work has been traditionally associated. A wide range of films discussed in this study illustrates how Defoe's novel becomes subject to oppositional and critical appropriations, where, more often than not, rendering the text on screen means disrupting, rewriting, and reinterpreting it. Using the camera, filmmakers create a second perspective on the story. They reveal the potential of the film medium by providing an alternative "frame" to the Crusoe story.

My study, thus, recognizes that more often than not, fidelity to the original source is not what the cinematic Robinsonades discussed here aim. Yet, I believe that the examination of how Defoe's text has been represented on big screen and on television necessarily involves the questions about "fidelity." Accordingly, exploring what has remained from the original narrative and what has been removed and/or ignored by different filmmakers and why, will not be out of place and will take a considerable part of my analysis, since, to quote Mayer again,

while in a theoretical sense one can assert a radical disjuncture between film and text, in practice one must acknowledge that when viewing or analyzing a film that refers to a work of fiction, consideration of questions of how the text has been rendered on film, what has been retained and what has been discarded, and the relationship between fictional and cinematic technique are inevitably raised. (11)

Hence, I will explore the ways in which the filmmakers respond to Defoe's narrative. As we will see, some films retain a deep engagement with the original text, while others use the Crusoe myth to focus on the issues pertinent and significant for contemporary viewers.

Furthermore, even the most “faithful” and “literal” adaptations of Defoe’s novel do more than simply respond to the original text. All these films are subject to the cultural and ideological preconceptions of their time. They are filmed in accordance with the codes and conventions familiar to the modern audiences. Such cultural factors, as we will see in our discussion of the films, affect adaptations in significant ways. It may mean simplifying, clarifying, or romanticizing the story line.

CHAPTER TWO

Transferring Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* into Film

"From a psychological point of view, the imagination of disaster does not greatly differ from one period in history to another. But from a political and moral point of view, it does."

Susan Sontag. *Against Interpretation*.

This chapter will focus on the films that directly link themselves to Daniel Defoe's novel: M. Wetheral's adaptation of *Robinson Crusoe* (1927), Edward Sutherland's film titled *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932), Luis Bunuel's *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1952), Stanislav Govorukhin's Russian version, *Zhizn I Udivitelnye Priklyucheniya Robinzona Kruzo* (1972), Caleb Deschanel's *Crusoe* (1989), and George Miller/Rod Hardy's latest adaptation *Robinson Crusoe* (1996). For the purposes of this chapter it is most useful to understand film adaptation as a process of "intertextual dialogism" that sees adaptation as "less a resuscitation of an ordinary word than a turn in an ongoing dialogical process" (Stam 4). The approach of viewing adaptation as a "reading" of the source novel, one "which is inevitably partial, personal, conjunctural" (Stam 4), suggests that just as any literary text can generate an infinity of readings, so any novel can generate any number of adaptations.

This approach on adaptation is built upon Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic. According to Bakhtin, authors are constructed dialogically, meaning that the "I" only comes into being in dialogue with a "Thou." A dialogic work carries on a continual dialogue with other works of literature and other authors. It does not merely answer,

correct, silence, or extend a previous work, but informs and is continually informed by the previous work. Consequently, for the novelist to exist, they must engage in dialogue with their characters as well as other texts. These other voices create the background necessary for the author's own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they "do not sound" (Bakhtin 278). Furthermore, the dialogue extends in both directions, and the previous work of literature is as altered by the dialogue as the present one is.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* itself is participating in the process of dialogical transformation. Defoe's original text, which he published in 1719, generated two sequels: *The Farther Adventures* (1719), and the *Serious Reflections* (1720), both responding to and expanding on the original narrative. Moreover, even the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe* is something of an adaptation of earlier texts. Defoe's novel, as Stam observes, is itself "an artifact rooted in various intertexts: the Bible, homiletic tracts, journalistic writing about castaways, and sensationalist travel literature, just to mention a few" (65). The prototype for the Crusoe character, critics frequently point out, was an Englishman Alexander Selkirk, who spent four years in isolation on a Pacific Island of "Juan Fernandez" near Chile. Defoe transforms Selkirk's story to suit his own purposes. If Selkirk was put ashore on the desert island at his own request, in the novel Crusoe is shipwrecked; Crusoe spends not four, but twenty-eight years in isolation, and his island is located not in the Pacific but in the Caribbean near the Orinoco river. Moreover, Selkirk never experienced the religious awakening that marks Crusoe's island adventure. Finally and most importantly, Crusoe encounters Friday on the island, and their relationship is at the core of the novel. Selkirk, on the other hand, did not meet anyone during his four years of solitude.

The term "dialogic" does not apply to just literature, however. All language and all thought appear dialogic to Bakhtin. Bakhtin's work fits with the concept of "intertextuality." More recently, many people have seen his idea of dialogism as especially relevant to the world of adaptation. This chapter uses the approach of intertextual dialogism to study the Defoe adaptations. I view the filmic *Robinsonades* as an intensely dialogic phenomenon, thus, dismissing the idea of the original text as a single, authoritative, "monologic" source and instead embracing the idea of adaptation as a "reading" of that source novel. The diverse filmic adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* examined in this chapter, then, do not attempt to replicate Defoe's novel, but rather, enter into dialogue with it, interpret it, and critique it. Consequently, each film renders the Crusoe story differently on screen. Each filmmaker uses the Crusoe myth to suit his own purposes. Each adopts a specific theme from the novel and dramatizes that theme.

Hence, Wetherall's *Robinson Crusoe* focuses on the physical, rather than the emotional or spiritual survival of the Crusoe character. The controversial aspects of Defoe's novel, such as religious side of Crusoe's experience, and racial and colonial issues raised by the Crusoe/Friday relationship are ignored in the film. *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, on the other hand, is a satire on contemporary life. The film celebrates the ingenuity of the Crusoe character. However, Sutherland's motion picture highlights the racial problematic by making its protagonist exceptionally racist and sexist. In Govorukhin's Russian version of *Robinson Crusoe*, Robinson is a Marxist hero. Bunuel's, Deschanel's and Hardy/Miller's versions focus on the Crusoe/Friday relationship. All three films critique Defoe's novel by rewriting the story of the two men's encounter and by depicting the Friday figure as morally superior to Crusoe. In all three films the Crusoe character is reformed by his relationship with Friday. Yet, each film portrays a very different Crusoe figure. In

Bunuel's adaptation he is more sympathetic. Deschanel's version, on the other hand, depicts him as a heartless, arrogant and cruel slave trader

Furthermore, each motion picture examined here is a product of a particular time and culture in which it was produced. Time and culture choose what they like most out of Defoe's novel and its film adaptations explore those elements. The Crusoe story transforms constantly because it reflects and responds to the changing expectations, attitudes and values of a particular time and culture. As Andrew Bergman claims in his book *We're in the Money: Depression America and its Films*, "as films are not viewed in a void, neither are they created in a void. Every movie is a cultural artifact [. . .] and as such reflects the values, fears, myths, and assumptions of the culture that produces it" (xi).

Time and culture dictate how Defoe's novel is read. The cinematic Robinsonades then are faithful not to the source text, but to that cultural (and historical) reading. Hence, Stanislav Govorukhin's *Robinson Kruzo* is a decidedly Soviet version of Defoe's novel; Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* reveals an underlying Eurocentrism of American cinema in the 1930s, and Hardy/Miller's adaptation – a politically correct Hollywood version of *Robinson Crusoe* – settles on a late twentieth-century morality, drastically going against Defoe's emphasis and purpose.

Despite their differences, the *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations examined in this chapter share the significant characteristics. First, these films make it clear that "race is *the* dilemma presented to twentieth century artists who appropriate Defoe's text for their own purposes" (Mayer 36). The earlier versions "solve" this issue by either ignoring the racial problematic (Wetheral), or as in the case of Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, by being "egregiously sexist" (Mayer 36). The films by Bunuel, Deschanel, and Hardy/Miller, on the other hand, focus our attention on race and ethnicity by making Friday a "representative

of a prime racial or ethnic other in society in which the film was made" (Mayer 170).

Thus, in Bunuel's version, made in Mexico, the Friday figure is of an Indian descent; in Deschanel's and Hardy/Miller's adaptations he is African, whereas in Govorukhin's Russian film, made during the Soviet era, Friday is played by a Georgian actor.

Second, the religious aspect of Defoe's novel is another area contemporary filmmakers find hard to render on screen. As Mayer states, most adaptations are skeptical about the piety of Defoe's protagonist. The films by Bunuel, Govorukhin, and Hardy/Miller alter the values attributed to religion in the book entirely by showing the uselessness of religion in the lives of their solitary protagonists. Sutherland and Deschanel ignore the religious side of Crusoe's experience altogether. Their castaways have no sense of relationship to God.

Third, the depiction of the natives is stereotypical in each motion picture. Even the films that entail a clear critique of racist and colonialist conventions of the original text (such as the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel, and Hardy/Miller), lapse into accepting the novel's view of the natives as barbarous, ruthless, and savage. None of the films examined here imagines the natives any other way than stereotypical blackface, participating in savage rituals, such as cutting each other's throats, or ripping out each other's hearts. In all these films the natives are seen as masses, not as individuals; they are associated with cannibalism; the Friday figure of each motion picture needs to be rescued from his own people. The only exception can be found in Deschanel's *Crusoe*. However, this African is introduced into the story as a cold blooded murderer of Lucky, another native man who Crusoe originally saves. Such portrayal of the natives contradicts the anti-colonial perspective the films by Bunuel, Deschanel and Hardy/Miller want to develop. In his analysis of Deschanel's *Crusoe* Stam acutely observes:

Slavery [. . .] is implied to be a punishment for the natives' barbarous practices. Since Africans were already enslaving and abusing each other, the spectator might conclude, it was not so terrible to enslave them. Here the film simply reproduces the rescue *topos* of colonialist discourse: the peoples conquered by European colonial powers were always already at each other's throats, and Europe did Africans a favor by imposing a superior, more humane and peaceful, civilization. (95)

Stam's argument can be applied to all *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations discussed in this chapter.

Finally, all the *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations examined here end as the Crusoe character leaves the island. None of the films show Crusoe's life *after* his rescue. The questions of how Crusoe reintegrates into the society, whether his newfound morality survives civilization are left open. That the films ignore the novel's account of the protagonist's life after his homecoming marks a significant difference between the two mediums. It shows that fiction "can better handle generically ambivalent material than film (or at least a film aimed at a mass audience)" (Kramer 142). In the novel, as Frank Manchel notes, there is often a need for the central plot to have greater development and greater continuation. The film, on the other hand, is usually "a shorter, more immediate, presentation," which "generally concentrates on significant content only" (Manchel 1299). Thus, while adapting novels, filmmakers "pick up major episodes and cut everything that is not significant, even transitions that are not vital to the main plot" (Manchel 1299). Since the central conflict of the cinematic Robinsonades is solved with Crusoe's rescue, Crusoe's life once he returns to civilization becomes uninteresting and anticlimactic to viewers. Hence, the filmmakers discard it.

The films' disregard of the original conclusion of the Crusoe story is not the only difference that sets these cinematic Robinsonades apart from the novel. Elisions from the

book also include those parts that depict Crusoe's early adventures and the events that lead to his shipwreck. Most films either ignore the depiction of Crusoe's life before the shipwreck, or quickly rush through the main events in order to focus on his life as a castaway. Moreover, the films that do give viewers a glimpse of the Crusoe character's life before the island episode, do not attempt to reproduce Crusoe's initial predicament. Instead, they introduce the protagonist in a way that is most fitting for their purposes. Thus, Deschanel's *Crusoe*, which is focused on the issues of race and slavery, introduces the Crusoe figure as he leads the chase of a runaway slave. The Hardy/Miller production, which is a decidedly contemporary version of Defoe's novel, "begins, like so many other stories, with a woman." The movie rewrites the source text entirely when it opens up with a duel scene between a lovesick Crusoe and his rival. It is not until the Crusoe figure is marooned on a desert island that the stories of the films and the novel merge. Again, this omission/change from the source text has to do with the emphasis the film medium places on the significant.

The Earliest *Robinson Crusoe* Adaptations: Wetheral's *Robinson Crusoe* (1927) and Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932)

M. Wetheral's silent film is the earliest existing adaptation of Defoe's novel, as three earlier versions from 1913, 1916, and 1922 have been lost. The foreword of the picture informs viewers that the movie was photographed on the very island in the Caribbean where Crusoe spent his years of solitude. Wetheral's version focuses on the physical, rather than the emotional and/or spiritual survival of Crusoe's character. Like Defoe's protagonist, Wetheral's castaway labors hard to get food, build a shelter, defend himself from wild animals. He also keeps a journal, in which he documents his thoughts, and his daily

activities. However, there are major differences as well: the religious aspect of Crusoe's experience is entirely ignored in the film; so is Robinson's relationship with his father, who is not even mentioned in Wetheral's adaptation. One significant addition is Robinson's love interest, Sophie.

The film does not seem to know what to make of the Crusoe/Friday relationship. We see very little interaction between the two men until the ship arrives and they are rescued. Wetheral's version does replicate the novel in its portrayal of Crusoe as a master, and Friday as a submissive slave; however it also stresses the affectionate nature of their relationship. The subtitle reads: "In the companionship of Friday Crusoe found great new happiness." Yet, Crusoe sees Friday as a savage and a cannibal. "No, no, murder but not eat," he tells Friday about the mutineers. In Wetheral's adaptation, as in the original novel, Friday is seen as the "other" to whom Crusoe can teach civilization. The native man's arrival confirms Crusoe's confidence in the values of the Western civilization that he has rebuilt on the island.

Six years after Wetheral's adaptation, another version of the Crusoe story appeared on the big screen. Edward Sutherland's *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* (1932) – an adventure comedy – is a lighthearted rewriting of the Crusoe myth. The film was produced by Douglas Fairbanks – one of the most celebrated actors of the silent cinema. Fairbanks also plays the main role in the movie. Described by the *New York Times* as an "amusing satirical skit" and praised as "artful, jolly, and imaginative" (qtd. in Coppedge), the film turns Defoe's novel into a satire on contemporary life. The main character – Steve Drexel – is a modern day Mr. Robinson Crusoe, who, while cruising the South Seas with friends, takes a bet to get off a deserted island and live a life of Robinson Crusoe for one whole year. He swears that he will be 'living the life of Riley' when his friends return. And so, in

less than two months Steve builds a comfortable home with all amenities, including a tree house, a turtle-powered water lifter, nets and traps, a ballista for hurling nets into the water, and even a radio. Like Defoe's character, Sutherland's "Crusoe" too encounters a native man, who he calls his "man Friday." Sutherland also introduces Saturday – a beautiful native woman – in the story.

The film highlights the advantages and pleasures of a simple life. The opening credit of the movie reads:

From the time Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, man has vainly sought to find solace, comfort and earthly pleasures in an artificial world of his own creation. Down through the ages has come that eternal heritage, the urge in every man to turn his back on so-called civilization, to get back to nature and revel in the glories and freedom of a primitive paradise.

Consequently, we do not see the Crusoe character experiencing any sort of psychological or emotional torment because of his solitude. On the contrary, Drexel finds great pleasure living an isolated life. The contrast between the "civilized" world and life on the island is emphasized in a scene, in which, while listening to the radio, "Crusoe" hears the news from the world he has left behind: a rich capitalist committed a suicide, another wealthy store owner was murdered; there was an explosion that killed many innocent men. Drexel, who is far from all the miseries of the real world, can take pleasure in the simple way of life he leads on the island.

Sutherland's film, which is obviously a precursor to *Gilligan's Island*, exemplifies the "can-do" spirit of the early twentieth century America. With minimum resources at his disposal, Drexel subjugates the jungle and recreates civilization. The references to the Boy Scouts and Dan's Beard's *American Boy's Handy Book* – which was at the time of the film's release a popular young adult wilderness and outdoor survival skill manual – want to

emphasize the fact that Drexel is not unique in his ability to subdue the wilderness, but is a representative of a resourceful, self-confident and indigenous American man in general. In one episode, for example, he explains to the monkey that he learned his survival skills from the Boy Scout Club.

The film is both racist and sexist. Mayer calls it “egregiously racist” (36). The natives the Crusoe character encounters are “the Hollywood bone-in-the-nose variety” (50). Their ignorance and barbarity, and the white men's "superiority" are augmented in the episodes that depict the story of Saturday a beautiful young woman who is forced to marry a man she hates. One of the rituals the natives of Saturday's tribe perform during the engagement ceremony includes a groom knocking down the front teeth of a bride. Saturday manages to escape an unwanted marriage and takes a refuge with Drexel. When hundreds of natives come after the runaway bride, "Crusoe" manages to defeat them without any bloodshed. He outwits them all, proving once more his superiority.

The film's racist conventions are especially apparent in the castaway's encounter with Friday. The Crusoe character treats Friday with the utmost cruelty. He keeps him in shackles and when he tries to escape, he almost kills him. There is no attempt from Drexel's part to get to know the native, or to have any kind of conversation with him. He does not even seem to perceive him as a fellow human being. Thus, although the film, like the novel, celebrates the resourcefulness and ingenuity of its protagonist, it does so by making the Crusoe character exceptionally racist. The protagonist has to constantly prove himself "a superior White Father in the face of native savagery" (Tibbetts 128).

Such Eurocentrism is not surprising, given the fact that the film was a product of the early 1930s America. Representations of racial ‘primitiveness’ was very common in early film. Movies such as Edward S. Curtis's *In the Land of the Headhunters* (1914) and

Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), for instance, "actively suppressed signs of contemporary Native American modernity – such as rifles, wristwatches, blue jeans, and signs of written language – in order to present images of precontact, ahistorical indigenous primitives" (*Schirmer Encyclopedia* 370). In *Nanook of the North*, for example, Nanook, played by the Inuit actor, is so amazed by a trader's gramophone that he bites the record three times, "a gesture that reinforces the pretense that the Inuit were antimodern, both childlike and bestial" (*Schirmer Encyclopedia* 370).

Similarly, Drexel's colonial encounter with the natives in *Mr. Robinson Crusoe*, with Drexel depicted as a powerful, potent, self-sufficient and confident character and the natives portrayed as masses of silenced "others," signifying the unknown, primitive, and brutal, reveals an underlying Eurocentrism of American cinema in the 1930s. The trope of the encounter between a European explorer and fearful, intimidated, or hostile "natives" continues to have a powerful presence in later films. As our discussion of the later date *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations will try to demonstrate, even those filmmakers who aim to critique Eurocentrism, lapse into a stereotypical depiction of the "other."

Mr. Robinson Crusoe also introduces a beautiful native woman Saturday into the story. Saturday is seen as both Drexel's servant, and as a beautiful toy "Robinson Crusoe never had." Unlike the native men, Saturday is not depicted as brutal – probably because she is a woman. Instead, she is shown as docile and, similar to the Friday character in Defoe's novel, willing to enslave herself to Drexel out of gratitude. It is important to note here that *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* was released during an era marked by the anxiety about racial mixture. Films such as D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) depicted the horror of interracial relationship. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPA) Production Code of 1930 dealt explicitly with interracial romance,

stating that “miscegenation⁴ (sex relationships between the white and black races) is forbidden” (*Schirmer Encyclopedia* 370). This wording was taken from the pre-Code industry restrictions of 1927, called “The Don’ts and Be Carefuls.” The miscegenation themes were prominent in film history. As film theorist Ella Shohat argues, even when films did not appear to address race or ethnicity in their content, issues of racial and ethnic hierarchy were always present (qtd. in *Schirmer Encyclopedia* 371).

Consequently, *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* keeps a comfortable distance between Drexel and Saturday. Drexel never makes sexual advances at Saturday, despite the fact that she is the only woman on the island. Saturday is clearly attracted to Drexel. The first day they meet, she shows the European protagonist the way people in her tribe kiss – they touch each other with their noses, instead of their lips. That same night, Saturday refuses to sleep alone. She leaves her own bed, and lies next to Drexel, making it clear that she is his, if he only wishes it.

That Drexel does not take Saturday seriously, however, is clear from several episodes. For example, he laughs at Saturday when she gives him her comb – a native ritual that marks the commitment between the couple. Trying to explain why he cannot accept her ‘proposal,’ Drexel lists the insurmountable differences between Saturday’s culture and his own. Saturday’s desire to have a romantic relationship with the European protagonist then is a butt of the film’s joke. Viewers, like Drexel, are expected to laugh at the absurdity and impossibility of a serious relationship between the European hero and the “primitive” native woman.

The racist and sexist undertones of Sutherland’s film are strengthened further in the final scene of the movie. The “happy ending” of *Mr. Robinson Crusoe* shows Saturday in

⁴ The word “miscegenation” comes from the Latin “miscere,” “to mix,” and “genus,” meaning “race” or “type.”

the New York City, performing a native dance for the Ziegfeld Follies. She is half naked, wearing only a tiny grass skirt and a coconut bra. The viewers, dressed conservatively and elegantly, are clapping their hands enthusiastically. Drexel is among the audience as well, sitting on the front row with his friends. The scene is heavy with sexist and racist overtones. Saturday is obviously viewed by the Westerners as an exotic toy. She is there to allow viewers to assume the role of colonial adventurer without ever leaving the comfort of their civilized world. Saturday's performance reinforces the view of her as the primitive other. The Western viewers watching her show (including the film viewers), are given the power to scrutinize her. Moreover, they are reassured of their own superiority, and their superior position as the civilized, modern norm against which difference is measured. Deprived of psychological complexity and individual voice, Saturday is reduced to a racial type. What is more, the film depicts her as perfectly satisfied with her position as the racialized other. The last shot is of her smiling face, sending "nose" kisses to Drexel.

Luis Bunuel's *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1952)

Luis Bunuel's *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* is one of the most celebrated adaptations of Defoe's novel. Shot in Mexico in 1952 as a collaboration between Mexican and American production studios, this was the filmmaker's first color film, one of his first two English language works, and the first movie to use a mixture of English and Spanish speaking actors. As Marvin D'Lugo observes, of Luis Bunuel's twenty-two motion pictures shot in Mexico, none was more successful commercially than *Robinson Crusoe* (80). It was widely distributed, and very well accepted both by critics and viewers. *Parents* magazine gave the movie the best picture award, and Dan O'Herlihy, the actor who plays Crusoe, was nominated for Oscar.

While analyzing Bunuel's adaptation of Defoe's first novel, critics frequently point out what seems a very obvious mismatch between the director and the novelist.

Narratologically linear, moralistic, Protestant, and colonialist Defoe, they accentuate, is an odd choice for surrealist, "anti-moralist, anti-clerical, and anti-bourgeois" (Stam 79)

Bunuel who declares himself "still an atheist . . . Thank God!" (qtd. in Mayer 37).

Bunuel's other films - *Un Chien Andalou* (1928), *L'Age d'Or* (1930), *Los Olvidados* (1950), *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1974) - are, as Gillian Parker puts it, "ferocious raiding parties on the dignity of the acquisitive bourgeoisie" (15).

The filmmaker's interest in *Wuthering Heights*, the other English novel adaptation Bunuel made in 1953, is not surprising since "with its defiance of the conventions in the name of *l'amour fou*" it fits well enough (Parker 14). But what could appeal to Bunuel in *Robinson Crusoe*? In a 1954 interview with Tony Richardson, Bunuel states:

[*Robinson Crusoe*] was a film I really wanted to make. You must see that. There is nothing Hollywood about it. I start with Crusoe on the Island – no ship or wreck – I have him alone for seven reels, then with Friday for three, and then the pirates just at the end as it is in the book. I just watch Robinson build his house, make pots, grow wheat . . . yes. I made it about his struggle with nature . . . and about solitude . . . and despair. (qtd. in Richardson 138)

In another interview, Bunuel explains his fascination with Defoe's protagonist further:

Robinson, like the others, was offered to me. I didn't like the book, but I liked the character, and I accepted it because there is a certain purity about him. First of all, it's man face to face with nature. [...] I tried to do some things that could have been interesting. I think something remains. Some so-called surrealist and, apparently, incomprehensible passages were cut. [...] I made the film as I could, I wanted to portray human solitude above everything else, the anguish of man without human society. (qtd. in Colvin 21-22)

Another observation viewers usually make about Bunuel's film is that out of all *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations, Bunuel's is the most "faithful" rendering of the original source. And so it seems at first. Throughout the film Bunuel maintains the impression of a narrative fidelity to the original text. The opening scene shows a gold-bound edition of Defoe's book to signify its status as a classic and to accredit the novel as the film's source text. Scholars point out many similarities between the film and its source novel. Bunuel's *Crusoe*, just like Defoe's protagonist, tells his own story in a voice over narration. Furthermore, as Robert Mayer observes, Bunuel's film "depicts *Crusoe's* life on the island as described in the novel more amply than any other film version" (38). Bunuel, like Defoe, pays a lot of attention to detail. *Crusoe* is alone for most of the story - for seven reels of the film. Viewers watch how he builds his shelter, finds food and water, learns to herd his own animals, and produces his own crops and corn. Then, twenty some years later, *Crusoe* finds a footprint on the sand. He saves a native man from cannibals. *Crusoe* names him Friday and teaches him English. After several more years, an English ship arrives. *Crusoe* and Friday rescue the ship's captain from mutineers. *Crusoe* finally returns to England. Friday accompanies him.

At first glance, then, the film appears to conform to the novel. However, in his retelling of the *Crusoe* story, Bunuel incorporates seemingly minor details and scenes that completely rewrite the original text. By rejecting the values many readers see to be embodied in Defoe's book - Puritan religious beliefs, celebration of "the middle Station of Life," colonialism - Bunuel's film becomes not a "literal" transference of Defoe's novel on screen, but rather, a critical commentary on the original source. Bunuel reverses all the main points made in the book and the message he constructs stands in stark opposition to

the original text. At the end, although both Defoe and Bunuel tell the same story, they are as different from each other as night and day.

One of the most important shifts Bunuel's film makes in the original is the drastic shift in point of view. As Gillian Parker observes, in the novel the events are seen solely through the eyes of the protagonist. Crusoe shows readers what he wants them to see and how he wants them to see it. "Crusoe as a narrator describes, that is, presents, the object or the event, and simultaneously judges it, fits it into his schema" (Parker 26). The film, however, depicts Crusoe as a separate figure. The events are presented "in the independent images, and so [they] exist free of [Crusoe's] definition" (Parker 26). As a result, the film reveals a discrepancy between the situation and Crusoe's perception of it. Viewers no longer trust Crusoe's account of the events. Instead, Crusoe is "placed in the physical and moral landscape, not himself the judge but instead subject to judgment" (Parker 27). Such approach allows the filmmaker to present his own interpretation of the original text and its characters.

Bunuel's film starts with a shipwreck scene, and, thus, skips the beginning action of the novel: it does not provide viewers with any background on the protagonist, or describe the events that lead to Crusoe's departure. Crusoe's life before the tragic incident is completely unknown to us. However, the voice-over narration establishes that Crusoe is sailing to Africa to bring back slaves to Brazil. Bunuel, unlike Defoe, gives a name to Crusoe's vessel. As the storm hits, and the ship crashes against the rocks, viewers clearly see the word *Ariel* engraved on it. Marvin D'Lugo argues that the filmmaker's decision to name Crusoe's ship *Ariel* is a significant detail:

For an Anglo-American audience, the reference to *Ariel* may cast this as a version of the opening scene of *The Tempest* and thus be read as an invitation to view the subsequent narrative as a

reworking of the Shakespearean text. Yet in the Latin American context within which the film was produced and within which it eventually circulated in a Spanish-language version, the Shakespearean allusion may conversely invoke the anti-colonialist symbolism of Jose Enrique Rodo's well known essay, "Ariel," a denunciation of US and European commercial imperialism in Latin America. (D'Lugo 81)

D'Lugo makes an excellent point in connecting the name of Crusoe's vessel with what is often referred to as Latin America's most famous essay. *Ariel*, first published in Uruguay in 1900, two years after Spain's defeat to the United States over Cuba and Puerto Rico, is a secular sermon to Latin American youth. It consists of a long valedictory speech by a teacher, named Prospero, to his students, who represent the youth of Latin America and to whom the work is dedicated. Prospero speaks under the gaze of a statue of Ariel, the Shakespearean symbol used by Rodo to "convey the ideal of classical beauty and wisdom" (Roman 279).

In *Ariel*, Rodo instructs the youth of Latin America to seek their true identity in their Greco-Roman roots and to denounce the materialistic and utilitarian thought of England and the United States. Rodo condemns Latin America's admiration for the United States, claiming that Latin Americans already possessed qualities that made them spiritually superior to the commercial and materialist Anglo-Saxons. Those qualities, Rodo argues, were visible in Latin American art and literature.

Rodo's essay, which was a great success throughout Latin America, played a predominant role in developing Latin American nationalism. Generations of Latin American intellectuals and literary figures have used *Ariel* to express their patriotic sentiments, and to advocate regional and cultural identity. Bunuel's decision to name Crusoe's ship *Ariel* then is more than a coincidence. Into his retelling of the Crusoe story, Bunuel finds a way to insert his own themes. The filmmaker, as Meyer observes,

"repeats important features of the novel and simultaneously disrupts them" (41). Hence, this seemingly minor addition to the original text is an early indication that the Spanish filmmaker will depart from Defoe's narrative in important ways. More importantly, it points toward the major theme of Bunuel's adaptation – its critique of racist and colonialist conventions.

The first half of Bunuel's film centers on the themes of loneliness and isolation. Crusoe undergoes different "stages of solitude" (Aranda 156). The initial struggle is for mere physical survival. But Crusoe has to learn to survive not only physically, but emotionally as well. Bunuel goes extra length to show the utter despair of the isolated individual. Several episodes depict Crusoe at near madness. In one scene, for instance, the filmmaker shows Crusoe imagining that he is partying with his friends. He hears the voices of his companions, singing and laughing. Crusoe sings along with them, but soon realizes the absurdity of his situation, and starts weeping uncontrollably.

Thus, although Crusoe manages to master nature, he cannot abolish his own solitude. "I learned to master everything on my island - except myself," he ruminates. His only hope for spiritual consolation is the Bible, which he finds on board of the sinking ship and which he brings with him on the shore. "Only God can deliver me from this place," Crusoe exclaims, as he reads the Holy Scripture. However, unlike Defoe's protagonist, Bunuel's castaway finds no comfort in religion. On the contrary, "the film reveals the absurdity of Crusoe's looking for any purposive design behind his adventurous fate, and behind the indifferent working of nature" (Parker 21). In one scene Bunuel depicts Crusoe running to the mountain top to shout the words of the Twenty-third Psalm across the depth of the valley: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. [. . .] He restoreth my soul," Crusoe exclaims. All he receives in response is emptiness, the hollow echo of his own

voice, which intensifies the awareness of his isolation even more. The violent music played in the background complements Gusoe's frustration and depression. In another scene, Crusoe runs wildly into the sea, bearing a flaming torch in his hand. As he shouts "help" and weeps bitterly, he realizes that there is no one watching, there is no sign anywhere that explains his situation, no gleam of hope to which he can hold on. He then sadly throws his torch into the water.

As these added scenes demonstrate, Bunuel breaks with one of the most important aspects of Defoe's novel - its spiritual context and its debt to Puritan confessional literature. For instance, many scholars (Starr; Hunter; Sutherland) have shown how the various stages in Crusoe's religious development in the novel - from original sin (disobeying his father) to spiritual hardening (eight years of rambling with other sinners) to a gradual repentance and ultimate conversion - follow closely the established pattern of 17th century Puritan spiritual autobiography. For Defoe's Crusoe, David Blewett argues, the island is a part of a divine paradox. It is a place where Crusoe is physically imprisoned and it is also a place that sets him free. Religious awakening gives Defoe's protagonist an unusual strength to cope with his miserable situation: "My condition began now to be, though not less miserable as to my way of living, yet much easier to my mind; and my thoughts being directed, by a constant reading the Scripture and praying to God, to things of a higher nature, I had a great deal of comfort within which till now I knew nothing of" (94), Crusoe tells his readers. This new-found spirituality keeps Defoe's protagonist from being a tragic hero. James Sutherland points out that the kind of isolation of a human soul Crusoe experiences in the island would normally provide the conditions usually associated with tragedy. Crusoe's fight for survival certainly arouses both pity and fear, but as Sutherland maintains, Defoe avoids the tragic implications of Crusoe's position.

Bunuel's castaway, on the other hand, *is* a tragic hero. It is obvious that Bunuel does not attempt to replicate Defoe's novel, but rather is engaged in a dialogue with the source text, which he "did not like," but which he presumed was well-known enough, so that viewers could compare the two. The Spanish filmmaker critiques Puritan religious values embodied in Defoe's text. Bunuel's skepticism is made evident in the added scenes that clearly reveal the uselessness of religion in his protagonist's plight. Bunuel's Crusoe finds no answers in reading the Bible: "The scriptures came meaningless to my eyes. The world seemed but a whirling ball - its oceans and continents a green scum, and my soul of no purpose, no meaning." As John Russell Taylor observes, in the film "the values attributed to religion in the book are so altered that instead of its being one of the main things to keep Crusoe sane in his trials we appreciate rather that its failure to help him even though he clings desperately to its forms is one of the main factors in driving him mad" (99).

That Bunuel's film entails a clear critique of Puritan religious values embodied in Defoe's text is further demonstrated in the later scene during which Crusoe, very much like Defoe's protagonist, attempts to "instruct Friday in the knowledge of the true God" (211). Like in other episodes, in this dialogue between the two men Bunuel follows the original text very closely and at the same time reworks the original narrative so that he refutes rather than supports the message Defoe's novel conveys. The scene is set on a little porch of Crusoe's "home" where the two men are sitting, smoking pipes. Viewers see Poll the parrot in the background. While explaining sin and temptation to Friday, Crusoe is dumbfounded, unconvincing and inarticulate when the latter starts asking the challenging questions:

Friday: Is God not much more strong as devil? Why not God kill devil, so make him no more wicked?

Crusoe: Without the devil, there'd be no temptation and no sin. The devil must be there for us to choose the sin, or to resist it.

Friday: Is God let devil tempt us?

Crusoe: Yes.

Friday: Then why God mad when we sin?

At this point Crusoe runs out of answers. He laughs awkwardly, then turns to his parrot and exclaims: "Poll, you understand, don't you? Friday can't get these things into his head. Poor Friday has a hard head." And this is where the conversation ends. Bunuel's Crusoe is obviously unable to convert Friday to Christian faith. Crusoe may have forgotten how useless religion has been during his loneliness, but viewers certainly have not, and we can only laugh at Crusoe playing the priest to Friday. In the novel, on the other hand, Crusoe's conversation with Friday about Christian theology has a very different outcome. Not only does Friday convert to Christian faith but as Crusoe himself points out, he becomes "such a Christian as I have known few equal to him in my life" (215). Once again, Bunuel is engaged in a dialogue with the source novel, which he assumes his audience knows.

Unlike the novel, in the film, Crusoe's torment on the island includes the sexual component as well. In his article "The Films of Luis Bunuel," Tony Richardson goes so far as to claim that in Bunuel's film Crusoe's "torment is above all sexual" (134). Francisco Aranda calls the movie "profoundly erotic," even though there are no female characters in it (156). And as Robert Mayer convincingly argues, "Bunuel's Crusoe is a notably sexual being" (38). Bunuel undeniably accentuates on Crusoe's longing for intimacy, his nostalgia for love and desire, and by depicting Crusoe's agonies of sexual deprivation critiques the original text's disregard of sexuality. Several added scenes depict Crusoe's anguish. In one episode, for instance, while going through the clothes taken from

the ship, Crusoe discovers a woman's dress inside a chest. The camera shows a close up of Crusoe's distressed face. He picks up the dress, smells it, puts it back and walks out of the room. Later, he gazes at the scarecrow who he has dressed in a woman's gown. And when Friday dresses up as a lady, Crusoe angrily orders him to get out of his sight.

Many critics have argued that Bunuel's Crusoe is far more sympathetic than Defoe's protagonist. Robert Stam, for instance, observes that the filmmaker makes Crusoe less of a colonialist and racist. The film critiques the novel by improving its hero (Stam 79). One of the ways Bunuel revises Crusoe's character is by turning him into a man of nature. Unlike Defoe's protagonist, who, as scholars frequently assert "has a purely instrumental, exploitative, even predatory attitude toward nature" and for whom "land is essentially real estate" (Stam 80), Bunuel's Crusoe is a lover of nature, and animals. As Parker puts it, "This Crusoe works in alliance with nature rather than in control of it as master" (23). Viewers see him admiring the beauty of the tropical landscape, and affectionately talking to his pets, and even insects. Crusoe's unusual humanity and fondness to nature becomes obvious from the very beginning of the film. In one of the early scenes, the morning after a shipwreck, Crusoe wakes up, "half perished with hunger." He finds a nest on a tree with an egg inside. He breaks the eggshell, and finds a fragile, wet baby chick inside. The camera moves to show a close up of Crusoe who affectionately puts the baby bird back to the nest and walks away. In a later episode, we see Crusoe feeding the beetles, and referring to them as his "little friends."

Bunuel also rewrites Crusoe's relationship with his father. In the novel, the father's admonitions against Crusoe's going to sea are presented from the very beginning of the story, framing the entire narrative. Crusoe's "original sin," as seen by many scholars, is disobeying his parents by going against his father's "serious and excellent counsel" to be

content with "the Middle Station of Life." During his solitary years on his "Island of Despair" Crusoe often reflects upon "the good advice of [his] father" and regrets neglecting his advice: "my dear father's words are come to pass," Crusoe ruminates. "I rejected the voice of Providence, which had mercifully put me in a posture or station of life, wherein I might have been happy and easy; but I would neither see it myself, or learn to know the blessing of it from my parents; I left them to mourn over my folly, and now I am left to mourn under the consequences of it" (88). In the film, on the other hand, Bunuel depicts a very different picture. Here Crusoe's father - a representative of the bourgeoisie - is shown to be cruel, uncaring, even unnatural, denying his son sustenance – water. Thus, Bunuel attacks what Defoe celebrates.

The only glimpse of the father we get in the film comes from a nightmare Crusoe has during his sickness. In his dream, fever-stricken and thirsty Crusoe is begging his father for some water. The father, dressed in red Puritan garb, is standing in front of a big bucket of water, bathing a pig. He ignores his son's pleading, giggles indifferently, and finally, speaks to him with supercilious tone: "Why did you fling yourself into this stupid adventure? Did you not know that your mother and I were praying that God would not separate us from you? But you were always wayward. Your mother and I will forgive you. But remember God will not forgive you... Remember! He will not forgive you. You will die!" The next shot is of the father, standing in front of large buckets of water, and pouring the liquid from one container into another. The camera cuts to Crusoe, who gets up from his hammock, and grabs an ax in order to kill his heartless father. The father's words are repeated over and over again in a voice over narrative: "He will not forgive you. You will die. You will die like a dog." The last shot is of the father's skull, floating in the water.

It is obvious from this dream sequence that Bunuel wants to emphasize the cruelty and cold-heartedness of Crusoe's father, who is a representative of the bourgeoisie. By turning the novel's wise and affectionate father into an unforgiving, judgmental and uncaring man, the filmmaker clearly attacks the middle class lifestyle and norms - the world the father represents. Instead of taking care of his sick child, the father is seen to be performing a fruitless labor - bathing a pig, or aimlessly putting water that his son needs from one bucket into another. In the film, Crusoe's rebellion, then, is seen not in terms of his "original sin," but rather "a wish fulfillment for a son anxious to liberate himself at last from a stern, oppressive patriarch who has associated his own self-righteous dominance with that of God himself" (Mellen 6).

This sense of liberation from bourgeoisie norms dictating people how to live, is visually evident very early in the film. As Gillian Parker observes, Bunuel shows Crusoe "released from the closed world of his father into the more perilous but open world of nature" (17). The morning after the shipwreck, Crusoe observes his ship stranded on the rocks off the coast. He immediately decides to swim to the vessel and get all the necessary items from there. When Crusoe boards the ship, the camera leaves Crusoe's point of view and instead focuses on the remains of the "civilized" world - shackles, chains, guns, making it impossible to forget the mission of the journey. The interior of the ship is dark and dirty. Crusoe moves in the narrow, filthy passageways where rats are running around. Opposed to this picture is the natural world of the island - beautiful, pure and sunny, with lush vegetation, sparkling, clean water and the blue sky. As Gillian Parker acutely observes, "the irony of the visual contrast affirms the island, for all its earlier threat, and denies the ship and the burden of civilization it carries" (17).

Crusoe thus starts a completely new life on the island, one that requires him to "give up his middle class identity to a great extent through his manual labor" (Parker 19). He transforms from "a very sorry workman," who had "never before handled an axe or tool" into a man who through "constant and hard labor" manages to survive all odds. As Parker observes,

In telling his tale of a man who returns to nature, survives by gaining knowledge of its ways, and lives by satisfying earthly work, Bunuel taps into a modern version of pastoral, and to the form's built-in critique of the upside-down values of the outside world. It is a frame of reference that never comes to mind in discussing the novel because there the island is not the green world that stands in opposition to civilization, but on the contrary a confirmation of the commercial world. (19)

However, Crusoe cannot be completely divorced from the world he left behind. He, thus, brings with him on the island part of that world. As Parker states, "Bunuel, never one to avoid contradictions, makes [Crusoe] also a representative of the other side, of the negative traits which the film is criticizing" (20). Nowhere is this critique more apparent as in Crusoe's relationship with Friday.

Bunuel makes the most important transformation of Defoe's narrative in his rendering of the Crusoe/Friday relationship. Conventionally, as many scholars point out, "*Robinson Crusoe* is thought to be the story of the protagonist's triumph over adversity on his tropical island, with Friday usually relegated to the secondary status of a cliché in the Crusoe narrative" (D'Lugo 90). The film, on the other hand, grants Friday a very significant role, not as Crusoe's servant and companion, but as the person who "holds the key to Robinson's salvation" (D'Lugo 90). Bunuel openly critiques the colonial master/slave relationship and, as Mayer points out, suggests that Friday is "in important respects, Crusoe's moral superior" (42). Unlike the novel, in the film, Crusoe's

relationship with Friday becomes one of brotherhood and a true friendship.

Friday is introduced in the film in much the same manner as he is in the novel: one day, during his walk on the beach, Crusoe discovers a footprint larger than his own on the sand. He soon learns that cannibals have arrived in his island. After saving one of their victims, Crusoe gives the native man a name of Friday. To express his gratitude for saving his life, Friday kneels down and puts Crusoe's foot on his head. Once again, Bunuel follows the original narrative closely and, at the same time, departs from it in significant ways.

Right after Friday's arrival, Crusoe takes on a very different role from the hardworking man viewers have known in the first half of the film. There is a resurgence of all the old social prejudices and principles. Crusoe immediately starts instructing Friday in the manners of his old bourgeoisie life. As Buache states, "the 'civilized' man is reborn, with all his trail of moral *partis pris*, his defensive reflex being only an alibi" (73). Crusoe becomes a colonialist, and cannot envisage any other relationship with Friday apart from being that of master and slave. "How pleasant it was to once more have a servant," he ruminates as he sits smoking his pipe, while Friday is working. Later, Crusoe teaches Friday Christian theology, unaware of his own hypocrisy.

Bunuel's film represents Crusoe as a brutal and arrogant master. He chains Friday's feet and keeps him as if he were his prisoner. "I'm your master. I'll do as pleases me," he replies haughtily when Friday asks him why he is treating him that way. Several added scenes augment Crusoe's oppressiveness and inhumanity. For instance, Friday is not allowed to smoke a pipe and when one day he tries it without Crusoe's permission, the latter punishes him by putting shackles on him. Friday is denied knowledge of guns. In the novel, Crusoe lets Friday handle his weapons almost immediately. Right after rescuing

him, Crusoe and Friday set out to investigate whether or not cannibals left the island.

Crusoe narrates: "[. . .] having now more courage, and consequently more curiosity, I took my man Friday with me, giving him the sword in his hand, with the bow and arrows at his back, which I found he could use very dexterously, making him carry one gun for me, [. . .] and away we marched" (201). In the film, however, Crusoe goes extra length to hide all of his weapons from Friday. He constantly uses the musket to instill fear in him, and intimidates him by firing his gun when he least expects it. Crusoe's inhumanity is highlighted by Friday's good nature. He is loyal, clever, kind, and has a great sense of humor.

The turning point in the men's relationship begins when, after Crusoe asks Friday if he wants to go back to his people, Friday passionately avows that he would never leave Crusoe and that if his people came to the island, they will not kill his master, because he has saved Friday's life. The native's sincerity, his loyalty and compassion overwhelm Crusoe and from this moment he undergoes a major transformation. Bagging Friday for forgiveness, Crusoe exclaims: "I want you to be my friend." In the voice over narrative following this scene we hear Crusoe declaring that "Friday was as loyal a friend as ever man could want." The remainder of the film focuses on the newly developed friendship between the two men. Crusoe learns that a relationship that is not exploitative is far more satisfying. As Tony Richardson states, "only when he learns to trust Friday's affection does [Crusoe] return from his obsession and isolation to a new sanity" (135). Crusoe finally finds an end to his awful loneliness. The two men hunt together, smoke pipes, cut each other's hair, work side by side, and rest together. "These were the happiest days of all I've had on my island," Crusoe ruminates. "With his many different skills [Friday] enriched my life on the island."

In Bunuel's film, then, Friday becomes someone the native man in Defoe's novel never does - Crusoe's equal, his companion, and his friend. Virginia Higginbotham observes that "as Crusoe grows to trust Friday, it is clear that it is Crusoe, not Friday, who is growing in humanity" (74). D'Lugo states:

Together with Robinson, [Friday] embodies the film's humanistic theme of 'Man's re-encounter with Man.' In this sense, Bunuel's casting of Jamie Fernandez, brother of famed Mexican film auteur, Emilio Fernandez, in the role of Friday is perhaps more than a coincidence. For this Friday serves as much as a refutation of the condescending European myth of the noble savage as a reminder of Emilio 'Indio' Fernandez's marketing of exotic pseudo-indigenous characters [. . .] as cinematic representations of Mexico to the world. (90-91)⁵

The ending of Bunuel's film leaves more questions than answers. As Crusoe and Friday get ready to leave the island and re-integrate into society, viewers wonder whether fraternity of the two men will survive "civilization." The fact that Crusoe is dressed in an expensive attire of the gentleman, while Friday is dressed as a page hardly suggests that the two will overcome the established patterns of social hierarchy. Bunuel's finale then is far from being optimistic. It implies that the equality and understanding between the races are only possible in the "unreal" world of the deserted island.

Stanislav Govorukhin's *Zhizn I Udivitelnye Priklyucheniya Robinzona Kruzo* (1972)

Stanislav Govorukhin, one of the most popular Soviet and Russian filmmakers, has directed a series of successful TV adaptations of adolescent classics, including *Robinson Crusoe* (1972), *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1981), *In Search of Castaways* (1983), and *Desyat Negriyat* (an adaptation of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*) in 1987.

⁵ Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez is frequently referred to as the most famous person in the history of Mexican cinema. Critics often underline his staunch commitment to Mexican cultural nationalism. Fernandez's first film as a director, *La Isla de la Pasion* (1942), has been praised as "a titanic promise for strictly patriotic [Mexican] cinema" (IMBD). Its "authentic" portrayal of Mexican life and its concern with race relations have made the film controversial.

His *Robinson Crusoe* appeared during the time of strict censorship of the Soviet regime. Defoe's novel seems completely incompatible with the Soviet era for a number of reasons. First, *Robinson Crusoe*, an adventure story, belongs to a genre that was under strict control from the 1920s until late 1980s. Furthermore, as an archetype of economic individualism, Defoe's book seems an odd choice for a Soviet director. However, in the hands of a Russian filmmaker, painfully aware of the ways of ideological censorship, the story of *Robinson Crusoe* becomes something quite different. In Govorukhin's film, the problematic of economic individualism, and issues of personal economic power, and emphasis on individual self-interest are completely ignored. Defoe's protagonist is deconstructed: here Crusoe is a Marxist hero, who is a representative of Marx's ideal, "a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common" (Marx 92). Almost all the basic capitalistic elements of the novel - the importance of contractual relationships, the economic motive, the drive to accumulate, venturing in search of economic opportunity, utilitarianism, and the limited relationship with others, including the family members - are rejected in the film. Here Crusoe is depicted, similar to Karl Marx's interpretation of Defoe's protagonist in *Das Kapital* in 1867, as a favorable example of the pre-capitalist man producing goods because they are useful and producing as much as is useful to him and not seeking profit.

Govorukhin's film starts with a shipwreck scene. The musical background, which includes selections from Vivaldi, and the sound of the raging waves intensify our awareness of the protagonist's tragic experience. Crusoe, the sole survivor from the wreck, finds himself stranded on an uninhabited island. The major differences between the film's Crusoe and Defoe's protagonist start to appear very early in the film. Whereas "the novel catalogues with relish the great store of commodities Crusoe salvages from the wreck"

(Parker 17), Govorukhin's film ignores this. Instead, the viewers' attention is directed to one detail: Robinson, like Defoe's castaway, makes a discovery of gold while searching the interior of the ship. However, unlike the novel's Crusoe, the film's protagonist does not keep it. He lets the coins slide through his fingers and turns away. In this one early scene, Govorukhin disassociates his character from Defoe's economic man.

Crusoe soon realizes that he has to labor hard to get the most necessary things for survival. Govorukhin introduces the motif of resistance through an early image of a spider that Crusoe observes as he contemplates about his miserable condition. Crusoe puts a handful of sand all over the tiny insect. Each time he buries the spider in the sand, it manages to get out. Watching the spider struggle for its life gives Crusoe an inspiration to fight for his own survival. The scene is immediately followed by a series of episodes in which viewers see Crusoe building a shelter, making pots, hunting for food, and exploring the island.

The film depicts Crusoe's solitary life on the island in a lot of detail. Much attention is given to his attempts to grow a crop of wheat, and to cut down the biggest tree on the island to make a boat. After many days of hard labor Crusoe builds a large boat, but he cannot bring it to the water. The scenes following the castaway's failed attempt to sail allow viewers to see Crusoe's inner turmoil. In one episode he is weeping bitterly, in another he is sitting inside his boat, pretending to be in an open water, sailing his way to human company. A sense of loneliness and isolation is heightened visually as well: Frequent long shots throughout the film show Crusoe looking tiny and powerless in the vast and specious landscape with huge cliffs and enormous mountains.

However, as weeks, months and years pass by, Crusoe gets accustomed to his life on the island: "I grew fond of my island" (my translation), he tells viewers in a voice over

narrative. "What did I leave behind, anyway? Here I worked hard and got rewarded for my labor. Here I was my own king and I was my own servant. I was happy." Defoe's

Crusoe makes similar remarks when he ruminates about his condition:

[. . .] I began [. . .] to feel how much more happy this life I now led was, with all its miserable circumstances, than the wicked, cursed, abominable life I led all the past part of my days; and now I changed both my sorrows and my joys; my very desires altered, my affections changed their guts, and my delights were perfectly new, from what they were at my first coming [. . .] I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be happy in this foresaken, solitary condition than it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state in the world. (109-110)

However, the major difference here is that Crusoe's thoughts in the novel are motivated by his religious awakening, whereas the film's Crusoe's are not.⁶ Here Govorukhin clearly departs from the original work and gives his adaptation a different economic, moral and political meaning. The film becomes a critique of capitalist society and its values and Crusoe stands in stark opposition to it. This argument is reinforced at the end of the film. As Crusoe is leaving the island to go back to England, we see him standing on the deck of the ship, and a close-up shot reveals his face, which is gloomy and sad, rather than happy and cheerful. When the captain of the rescue ship asks him what he is thinking, Crusoe responds: "You may not believe me, but I can hardly restrain myself from jumping off of

⁶ In fact, Govorukhin's protagonist has rather ambivalent attitude toward religion. For instance, he laughs at his own naivete when he realizes that barley grew on the island not miraculously, but because he threw the old grains of corn away, and the few unspoiled ones sprang up. There is a similar scene in the novel in which Crusoe "began to suggest that God had miraculously caused [barley] to grow without any help of seed of sown, and that it was so directed purely for my sustenance on that wild miserable place" (76). He, too, finds that his "religious thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate upon the discovering that all this was nothing but what was common" (76). However, Defoe's Crusoe keeps thinking about the incident and concludes that "I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really a work of Providence as to me, that should order, or appoint, that ten or twelve grains of corn should remain unspoiled [. . .] as if it had been dropped from Heaven" (76-77). The film's Crusoe does not think twice about the incident, and his cynicism about Providential miracle is what prevails.

this ship, and going back there. Because there, on that island, I found happiness." These are the last words Crusoe speaks and the words with which the film ends.

Yet, Crusoe's yearning for human company never abates. Therefore, when Friday appears in his life, Crusoe embraces him, and receives him not as a slave, but as a companion and a friend. Govorukhin rewrites the entire relationship between the two men. If Bunuel's, Deschanel's and Hardy/Miller's adaptations embody a critical view of the colonial enterprise that has been linked with Defoe's novel, Govorukhin's film simply ignores the issues of race and slavery. There is no evidence in the film to suggest that Crusoe sees Friday as his slave. After he saves the native, Crusoe introduces himself as "Robinson," not as a "master." And when Friday makes a humble gesture of gratitude, Crusoe interrupts him, saying: "I know you want to tell me that you are indebted to me forever. But I do not need a slave. I need a friend." The friendship of the two men, then, develops immediately. Crusoe trusts Friday blindly. They sleep in the same room from the first day. "His mere presence was a pleasure to me," Crusoe narrates.

If Defoe's Crusoe, often referred to as "an embryo imperialist," sees himself as a king and others as his subjects, the film's Crusoe never imposes his will on Friday. "You will go home when we make a boat," he tells the native. The film, thus, does not want viewers to see Crusoe as a colonizer. The two men comprise "a community of free individuals" who produce goods together. We see them work side by side, and share the products of their labor. Interestingly, the role of Friday is played in Govorukhin's film by a Georgian actor, Irakli Khizanishvili. By depicting the relationship between Crusoe and Friday as idyllic and mutually beneficial, the Soviet filmmaker reinforces the illusion of harmony and amity among all Soviet republics. Friday seems free to go back to his people,

but why would he ever abandon Crusoe and return to those who doomed him to death? Similarly, why would Georgia, or any other republic would want to be apart from Russia?

Caleb Deschanel's *Crusoe* (1988)

Caleb Deschanel is an acclaimed American cinematographer, who began his career shooting John Cassavetes's film *A Woman under the Influence* (1974). His major cinematography credits also include *The Black Stallion* (1979), produced by Francis Ford Coppola, *The Right Stuff* (1983), which earned Deschanel his first Oscar nomination, *Hope Floats* (1997), and *Anna and the King* (1999). Other Academy Award nominations, all for Best Cinematography, include the following films: *The Natural* (1984), *Fly Away Home* (1996), *The Patriot* (2000), and the controversial *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). Deschanel was instrumental in developing the Steadicam system that assured rock-steady camera movement under any circumstances, which he would later refine into his own "skycam" system for aerial photography ("Caleb Deschanel"). Throughout his career Deschanel directed two motion pictures – *Crusoe*, and *The Escape Artist* (1982). Critics have praised the visual styling of both films. *Crusoe*, which earned respectful reviews, put the imagery above the word, and is often cited as one of Deschanel's "most beautifully lensed films" ("Caleb Deschanel").

Deschanel's film explores the question of what happens to a person's character and identity once he is freed from society's constraining influence. When released from the context of the conventions, values and ambitions of the world in which he lives, Deschanel's *Crusoe* undergoes a profound transformation. He changes from a heartless and arrogant slaver trader into a compassionate and caring individual. Like Bunuel's adaptation before it, *Crusoe* is interested in the issues of race and slavery, and presents the

Crusoe/Friday relationship in a new light. The transition in Crusoe's character is interconnected with his encounter with the film's Friday figure. The mutual respect and reciprocity that develop between Crusoe and the native man suggest the possibility of an equal, peaceful and compassionate relationship between the races. In this regard, *Crusoe* stands in stark opposition to Jack Gold's *Man Friday* – discussed in Chapter Three – which implies that the white man's prejudice, narrow-mindedness and puritanical paranoia make any real understanding between the people of different cultures impossible. By the end of Deschanel's film, "Crusoe has traveled much further than the sumptuous desert island on which he was marooned" (Paskin 230). His new found morality compels him to set the native man free, rather than allow the European scientists to capture him.

Deschanel's film, similar to Bunuel's adaptation, is engaged in a "reading" of the source novel. The filmmaker enters into dialogue with Defoe's text, and critiques it. The end result is a personal, critical interpretation of the original narrative, rather than a straightforward transference of the book's content on the screen. *Crusoe* moves the story from England into colonial Virginia, and changes the time frame from the seventeenth century to 1808. This shift in location is an early indicator that the film "only will be selectively faithful to the novel" (Meagher 150). Another important shift the film makes from the novel is a shift in point of view. In the book Crusoe tells his own story. In Deschanel's motion picture, on the other hand, there is no single narrator. If Bunuel's, Govorukhin's, and Hardy/Miller's adaptations translated Crusoe's journal writing to the screen with voice over narration, Deschanel rejects this narrative feature entirely. Instead, as Sharon Meagher observes, "Deschanel's *Crusoe* reveals only as much to us as can be conveyed through visual image and external dialogue. We viewers do not have any special access to Crusoe's thoughts, and the actions are performed in the present; they are not

filtered through the lense of retrospection as they are in the novel” (Meager 150). Although such narrative strategy undermines Crusoe's power as narrator, Crusoe is still the focalizing character. "We still see through his eyes, and hear through his ears" (Stam 95).

Crusoe, who is played by Aidan Quinn, is introduced into the story as a slave trader. Deschanel lays a special emphasis on depicting Crusoe as a slaver, indicating that this aspect of Defoe's protagonist is often lost in popularized retellings. At the beginning of the film he is portrayed as a heartless and cruel man. In the opening scene he captures a black fugitive and puts him on sale in an auction. The film clearly sympathizes with the runaway and Crusoe, as a leader of a chase, is presented as insensitive, unfeeling, and brutal. He shows no emotion as his dogs catch the shivering man. Moreover, the inhumanity that Crusoe's character displays reflects not merely Crusoe's personality but the society at large. During the auction scene viewers see slaves treated as commodities. "What do you have?" – one of the slavers inquires, -"First sale, or resale?" Auctioneers bid over a "strong buck" and a "healthy female, with a musical voice." Such episodes, as Stam points out, "emphasize slavery as a commercial and financial institution, something downplayed in the Defoe novel" (94).

After the auction Crusoe decides to take a journey to Africa. "The pens in Guineas are crammed," he tells one of the slave traders, promising him to buy slaves at "twenty-five dollars for a buck, ten dollars for a girl." Crusoe, then, boards the ship not as an innocent adventurer "entirely bent upon seeing the world" (Defoe 4), but as an experienced, ambitious and arrogant slaver. As Stam acutely observes, Deschanel's film "brings back to the surface the inherent violence of racialized slavery" (94). Ironically, even the ship's pastor cloaks the real purpose of the journey, declaring that the reason of their trip is to carry on "Christ's spirit to Africa." *Crusoe* exposes the hypocrisy of its characters and

mocks this "euphemization of injustice" (Stam 94).

The film's depiction of Crusoe as an unsympathetic and unlikable character is further reinforced during the storm sequence. Everyone hates the arrogant slave trader. One of the sailors urinates in his water jar. Crusoe himself shows no emotion when a heavy rain forces several passengers off the board of the ship. He steps over the lifeless bodies of his companions without trying to rescue them. Later, when he makes his visit on the board of the sinking ship, Crusoe finds a bottle of liquor. Viewers see how self-centered Crusoe is as he makes a toast: "To me."

When explaining his interest in the Crusoe myth, Deschanel has stated: "What attracted me to the story was the idea of concentrating on a single character and the changes he goes through. Although there is plenty of action in the film— the shipwreck, slave auction, warriors, sacrifices, the real drama comes from watching the central character and how he deals with the situation he finds himself in" (qtd. in Paskin 230). The film tells the story in long, slowly developed scenes in which dialogue plays "a necessarily minor part" (Darling 5). Kevin Thomas of *Los Angeles Times* critiques the slow pace of *Crusoe*: the filmmaker "need[s] to get to the heart of the matter more quickly," Thomas asserts, "especially what's in the offing is so predictable. [. . .] Anyone [. . .] can tell you that this Crusoe will end up shipwrecked on a remote island – yet it takes the film 25 minutes to get us there. Worse, it takes a full hour into what is only a 95-minute movie for anything significant to happen, by which time it scarcely matters" (13).

What Thomas fails to see is that the message the film aims at conveying *requires* the slow pace. Deschanel wants to show Crusoe's rebirth as a human being, his change from an arrogant and pitiless slave trader into a compassionate and sympathetic man. The profound transformation Crusoe's character undergoes *has to be* gradual, otherwise it will

not be convincing. Thus, the early scenes of the movie depict Crusoe's initial attempts to cling to civilized manners and rituals. For many weeks he shaves, dresses up before dinner, and tries to wear his dead friend's shoes before he allows himself to go barefoot. It is not until much later in the film that viewers start to see a gradual change in his character.

This shift is first reflected in Crusoe's changed relationship with the animal world. While still on board of the ship, Crusoe's indifference, even cruelty to animals is evident from a scene during which he kicks the captain's dog out of his room. However, during his solitary years on the island, the dog he abuses in an earlier sequence "becomes Crusoe's interlocutor" (Stam 94), and his only friend. This is the first time in the film that we see Crusoe being caring and kind. When the dog gets sick, Crusoe lovingly nurses him. He even lets him sleep on his bed, while he spends a night on the ground. This is also the first and the only time viewers see Crusoe praying. "Lord, I beg you for my dog's life," he weeps. "he is such a good dog." In these episodes with Crusoe and his dog, Deschanel for the first time shows the humane side of his protagonist. But the dog dies and Crusoe's solitude is more unbearable than ever. As he buries the animal, viewers see the graves of Crusoe's companions in the background. There is only death around him. The music intensifies the castaway's loneliness and desperation.

The arrival of Lucky – the Friday figure in the film comes right after the burial episode. There is no footprint in Deschanel's version. Instead, Crusoe observes the natives arriving with canoes in his island through a telescope. As in the novel, he sees them practicing a ritual during which they slit the throats of their prisoners and drain their blood on the fire. Crusoe saves one of the natives and names him "Lucky", because, as he explains, "You are a lucky man. First, because you're alive. Second, because you have me as your master, and third, because I have no one to sell you to."

In Deschanel's film, as in other *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations, the depiction of the natives is disappointingly stereotypical. The filmmaker stresses the brutality of the natives' practice. It is hard not to shriek from revulsion as the camera shows a close-up of a beheaded man, or as we hear the loud cheers of the frantic spectators. The gruesome episode is inserted into the film without any context, or explanation. The people performing the gory ritual are never identified, named or defined. They are merely masses of "others," who Western audiences are quick to despise because of their brutality and ruthlessness. Such negative portrayal of the natives is paradoxical, since it contradicts the very premise of Deschanel's motion picture. The anti-colonial perspective *Crusoe* wants to develop is clearly undercut here.

Critics often misunderstand the fact that Deschanel's film has two Fridays. Lucky, who escapes from Crusoe's abode the very first night, is killed by another native man and the remainder of the motion picture focuses on Crusoe's relationship with this African. In their analysis of *Crusoe*, both Robert Stam and Sharon Meagher misread the film when they overlook the fact that it is not Lucky, but the other warrior with whom Deschanel's castaway develops a relationship. This is a significant detail, since this "Friday" is not a victim whose life Crusoe saves. In fact, it is he, who rescues Crusoe from sinking into quicksand. If in Defoe's novel "Crusoe's saving of Friday's life provided the rationale for enslavement" (Stam 97), in Deschanel's film Crusoe loses the role of life savior. Instead, here it is the Friday figure who decides whether to rescue Crusoe or let him die. Crusoe's very life, thus, depends on the generosity and benevolence of the native.

The above-mentioned scene takes place when Crusoe attacks the African with his gun, but runs out of ammunition. The two start wrestling in a quicksand-like mud. Their fight ends with both men sinking into quicksand. As Stam acutely observes, the scene is

heavy with symbolism: "Both men become mud-colored, their epidermic difference neutralized; now they are just two human beings clinging to life" (95). Finally, the native manages to escape. The camera shows him seated nearby, watching Crusoe, as he slowly sinks in the mud. Then, the very last minute, he gets up, gets hold of a branch of a tree, and lowers it, so that Crusoe can grab it and pull himself to safety.

Gradually, the two men develop a peaceful and respectful relationship. They learn to trust each other. In one scene the African pretends to be asleep on the ground, while Crusoe is working nearby. The native looks defenseless, fragile, and vulnerable. Crusoe, with an ax in his hand, approaches him, and watches him closely, as the other man stays motionless on the ground. Crusoe lifts up his ax, as if to strike him, but he immediately turns back, and continues his work. As he leaves, the camera moves to a close up of the native's face, who, slightly opening his eyes, watches Crusoe move away. This developing trust evolves as the two build a raft, cook, and work together.

However, the two never become the interracial idyll portrayed in Bunuel's, Govorukhin's and Hardy/Miller's versions. In Deschanel's film both Crusoe and the Friday figure maintain their independence from each other. In one scene, for example, the two men sing their favorite songs, each in his own language, trying to overpower the voice of the other. Furthermore, the African continues to speak his native language, and does not even attempt to pronounce any word in English until Crusoe says the same word in his native tongue. He always wears his native dress and body ornaments. Gradually, Crusoe learns to respect the native man's individuality and "to reject the instrumental discourses of colonial society" (Meagher 155).

At the end of the film, when the ship of the English scientists arrive on the island, Crusoe is a changed man. As he watches the white men capture the African, viewers are

reminded of the opening scenes of the film. Now Crusoe is not a captor, but a sympathetic observer of the abhorrent slave-catching chase. Crusoe watches as the scientists catch and chain the man he has come to know and respect. Later, when he converses with the Europeans about the fate of the African, Crusoe puts on the native's necklace, made from crocodile's teeth, thus, adopting a new identity. At night Crusoe secretly frees the African, who sails away to freedom. As Stam points out, "the slave-catcher of the opening sequence has become the slave freer of the final sequence" (97).

In spite of the fact that Deschanel's film continuously stresses the African man's devotion to his own customs and lifestyle, his self-reliance and individualism, *Crusoe* fails to give a voice to the Friday figure. As in other adaptations, in this motion picture as well, the native man is deprived of psychological complexity and individuality. Viewers never get to know his name, his background, or his personal history. What brought him to this island? Why did he kill Lucky? Why did not he accompany his fellow tribesmen to his native land? What was his life like before he met Crusoe? None of these questions are answered in the film. The Friday figure of Deschanel's motion picture remains unfamiliar, unknown, exotic, the "other."

Rod Hardy/George Miller's *Robinson Crusoe* (1996)

The Rod Hardy/George Miller production of *Robinson Crusoe* was originally made as a US television film for hallmark in 1996, but it was not released on television in the U.S. until 2001. Distributed by Miramax, one of the most powerful Hollywood studios and starring Pierce Brosnan, the film is a politically correct Hollywood version of the 18th century. As Robert Stam observes, The casting of Brosnan as Crusoe "inevitably brings with it the intertextual memory of the James Bond films, so that we subliminally align

enterprising twentieth-century Cold War heroes with eighteenth-century colonial entrepreneurs like Crusoe, whose gun retroactively seems to foreshadow James Bond-style gadgetry” (97).

More than any other adaptation examined in this chapter, the Hardy/Miller version of Defoe’s novel represents the film industry’s overriding concern with profit. The filmmakers’ intentions to maximize profits and minimize financial risks are made evident by the movie’s extraordinarily rapid pace, by the moviemakers’ decision to frame the Crusoe story as a love story, and by the addition of politically correct violence, common in American film of the 1990s.

The Hardy/Miller version does not attempt to reproduce Crusoe’s initial predicament—his failure to follow his father’s advice and the resulting calamities. The father figure is not even present in the film. Instead, there’s a love story involved. “And so my story begins, like so many other stories, with a woman,” Crusoe declares in a voice over narrative, and as the first scenes of the movie unfold, viewers find themselves following the storyline that at first, has no similarity with Defoe’s text: The film’s Crusoe is a Scotsman, who kills a friend in a duel over the love of Mary, a beautiful young woman he has loved since childhood. After the killing, Crusoe has to flee Scotland and go to sea. When a storm hits, Crusoe is cast ashore on an island in an Indian Ocean. This is where the two stories merge. The film’s protagonist, like the novel’s Crusoe lives an isolated life on a desert island, until one day he finds a footprint of another man.

The film, Stam indicates, “makes token gestures toward a shallow political correctness” (97). Indeed, the filmmakers incorporate modern day values and transform Crusoe’s character so that he is sympathetic in the contemporary sense of the word. The mission of Crusoe’s journey to sea, for instance, is not to trade slaves, but to flee from the

revenging relatives of his rival, whom he was forced to kill in order to save his beloved woman from an unwanted marriage. The first glimpse we get of Crusoe is of a man who is courageous, brave and honest. Although he murders a man during a duel, his actions are seen as morally just and forgivable, since the man Crusoe is fighting stands between him and his life long love, Mary. Crusoe tries to avoid the bloodshed until the very last minute and only fights when he sees that there is no other way to save his sweetheart.

The film's remarkably rapid pacing puts Hardy/Miller's adaptation in stark contrast with the adaptations by Bunuel, Govorukhin, and Deschanel. This version of *Robinson Crusoe* is clearly not interested in the theme of solitude, and the phenomenological aspect of man alone. Crusoe's solitary days on the island are skimmed over in about fifteen minutes of on-screen time, representing a minimal attempt from the filmmakers' part to explore the complexity of Crusoe's situation. After the opening of the film establishes that it is going to be "a story of extraordinary friendship and undying love," the movie rushes through the early parts of Crusoe's solitude to focus on the relationship he develops with the native man Friday. Twenty some years of isolation turn into just two years of solitude. The depiction of Crusoe's life on the island, and his physical and emotional struggle for survival prior to Friday's arrival, are scanty and unemotional if compared to Bunuel's or Deschanel's versions of the same story. The footprint episode comes before viewers get a chance to grasp the complexity and hopelessness of Crusoe's situation.

The film's alteration of the original narrative operates especially in relation to the Crusoe/Friday relationship. As Stam acutely observes, in Hardy/Miller's version of *Robinson Crusoe* Friday's character "maintains his pre-colonial faith, becoming a kind of equal interlocutor with Crusoe" (97). The film's Friday never acquires a dominated slave's position. He is self-confident, opinionated, and very clever. He inspires respect and awe,

rather than pity. In one scene, trying to impress Friday, Crusoe aims his gun at a bird, shoots it, and looks proud as the bird falls off the tree. Friday, unimpressed, picks up a stick from the ground, aims at another bird, and kills it with just one blow.

Throughout the movie Friday maintains his independence from Crusoe. When Crusoe does something he does not like, Friday leaves him. In one scene, for instance, Crusoe, very much like Defoe's protagonist, tries to "turn [Friday] from his pagan ways" by educating him about "true God."

Crusoe: Friday, I have to talk to you about God. Your maker. Your creator.

He made everything. He made you.

Friday: Pokya. Pokya God. [. . .]

Crusoe: You can't worship a crocodile, Friday.

Friday: Why not? [. . .]

Crusoe: This is pagan blasphemy, Friday. The true God is greater and more powerful. True God is love. He teaches us to love our enemies.

Pokya is not God.

Friday: Show me God.

Crusoe: You can't see God. It's in the spirit.

Friday: I see spirit in trees; I see spirit in animals. I see spirit everywhere.

Exasperated Crusoe takes the Bible, hands it to Friday and exclaims: "Here is God; His sacred word. This is the living testament to His love, His wisdom, His divine plan."

Friday picks up the Bible, turns the pages over, and states, provocatively: "Where? I see no God." Crusoe snatches the Bible out of Friday's hands, shouting: "No, you have to read it, [. . .] you heathen savage. This blasphemy and your soul shall be damned to eternal torments." At these words Friday gets up, declaring in a haughty tone "I no like your God. I no like you." He then leaves Crusoe's abode and does not come back until Crusoe apologizes for his words.

Later, when Friday finds out the meaning of the word "master" - the name Crusoe has given himself - he almost chokes Crusoe to death, yelling "I'm not your slave." Again, it is not until Crusoe sincerely apologizes and assures him "No. It was a mistake. You are

not my slave. You are my friend," that Friday comes back to Crusoe. In this film, then, Crusoe can never subdue Friday. In fact, it is Crusoe, who starts questioning his own faith and the validity of his beliefs: "The lessons of humility do not come easily to a stubborn soul. Once I had thought mine was the only true path. Now I was no longer sure," - Crusoe tells viewers in a voice over narrative. Eventually Crusoe and Friday become devoted friends, but only when Crusoe learns to accept Friday for who is.

Thus, on one level, the film critiques the colonial master/slave relationship by depicting an utopian vision of trans-racial camaraderie. Yet, at the same time, Hardy/Miller's adaptation seems strangely acquiescent to the racist and imperialist undertones of Defoe's novel. For instance, the film does not seem to criticize Crusoe's genocidal actions against the natives. In this version, Crusoe performs about what Defoe's protagonist and other filmic Crusoes only fantasize: he and Friday set traps and murder the cannibals of the rival tribe who arrive on their island to perform a ritual during which they sacrifice their tribesmen to their Gods. Thus, viewers are expected to applaud the actions of the biracial buddies as they team up to ensnare, blow up and kill large numbers of the native men. Furthermore, the film features stereotypical picture of the natives, with the black, painted faces, playing drums, and following ruthless rules, and living cutthroat lifestyle. The movie, thus, accepts without irony Defoe's sensationalist charge of native cannibalism. Cannibalism is never reinterpreted, or even doubted.

The end of the film, like its beginning, disengages from the original text entirely and depicts very different chain of events: During the massacre of the natives, Crusoe gets wounded. Friday is faced with a difficult decision: either they stay on the island and risk Crusoe's life, or they go to Friday's island, and face the people who doomed Friday to death. Friday decides to risk his own life in order to save Crusoe and the two men sail to

the neighboring island with the canoe of the murdered natives. The natives cure Crusoe's wounded shoulder, but after he recovers, they force him to fight against his friend Friday in a duel, which must leave one of them dead. If Crusoe wins, they will let him go; if Friday wins, they will accept him back into the tribe. During an emotional encounter between the two men Friday tries to convince Crusoe to kill him. Crusoe refuses to hurt his life savior. As they battle, a single gun shot is heard and Friday falls dead into the arms of Crusoe. Friday's murderer – a captain of a European ship, gives Crusoe a free passage to Scotland and after six years of separation, Robinson is finally reunited with Mary.

Hardy/Miller adaptation is the only version of *Robinson Crusoe* in which Friday dies. Friday does not belong to the “civilized” world of Crusoe. That's why he needs to die. Friday stays and dies “the other.” His memory haunts Crusoe forever. The film ends with Robinson's thoughts that highlight the significance of Crusoe's encounter with Friday: “Mary and I were blessed for prosperity. But for the rest of my days I would think often and long of the man who'd given me the greatest gift of all – my life when I'd all but lose it... and his friendship into death.”

CHAPTER THREE

A Voice of Friday: Jack Gold's *Man Friday*

“Over the past few decades the encounter between Robinson and Friday has taken on a significance that Daniel Defoe was a thousand leagues from even suspecting.”

Michel Tournier. *The Wind Spirit*.

This chapter focuses on Jack Gold's film *Man Friday* (1975) exclusively. I examine this motion picture separately from the adaptations discussed in Chapter Two because Gold's film takes drastically critical stance in respect to Defoe's novel and its protagonist. Like the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel and Hardy/Miller, the Crusoe/Friday relationship is at the core of Gold's movie. However, *Man Friday* retells the castaway story not from Crusoe's point of view, but rather from Friday's perspective. The fact that Friday replaces Crusoe as the focalizing character immediately indicates *Man Friday's* intention to deconstruct and subvert the Crusoe myth. The events here are seen from Friday's eyes. Friday is also a narrator of the story of the two men's encounter.⁷ This shift in point of view rewrites the story entirely. In *Man Friday* it is Crusoe who becomes "the other," the outsider. Friday, like the Crusoe character of Defoe's novel, tries to make sense of the white man's values and customs, and finds them dissolute, incomprehensible and intolerable. Hence, in the film it is Friday who takes a role of a teacher. He tries to show Crusoe how to be generous, loving, and joyful, and how to laugh and enjoy life.

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Gold's casting of Richard Roundtree as Friday adds to the filmmaker's attempt to make the issues of race and oppression central to the film. Roundtree had just starred in the "blaxploitation" film *Shaft* (1971) and in its sequels in 1972 and 1973.

Friday, to quote Stam, becomes "the 'ebony saint,' the therapist and healer who ministers to the unhappy consciousness of the white man" (91). Crusoe, on the other hand, is depicted as a narcissistic, irrational, hysterical, cruel, sexually repressed, and joyless man.

Gold's *Man Friday* is based not on Defoe's book directly, but rather on a 1972 novel of the same name by a prolific British writer, Adrian Mitchell.⁸ Mitchell's radical rewriting of the Crusoe myth turns Defoe's story into a parable about the interface between two very different cultures. A brief look at Mitchell's biography and his other works makes the writer's interest in the Crusoe myth understandable. First coming to public attention as a poet during protests against the Vietnam War, Mitchell devoted a great number of his novels, poems and plays to the evils of war, oppression and discrimination, and the importance of pacifist politics. Mitchell was among the first "performance poets" in Britain during the 1960s, although his work has always had a more political edge than the writings of other poets of the same period, such as Roger McGough, Brian Patten and Adrian Henry.

"Make love. We must make love/Instead of making money," Mitchell writes in one of his anti-war poems, entitled "To You," and the subject has continued to preoccupy him. Poems such as "Playground" and "Roundabout" were written in the wake of the invasion of Iraq and demonstrate the range of his vision, his need to go against oppressive forces. Mitchell's hatred to oppression and war was rooted in his autobiography. His mother was a Fabian socialist, who lost two brothers during the First World War. "She tried to hoist the wounded world on her frail shoulders/It seemed a possibility," writes Mitchell in one of his poems. His father was himself a survivor of the trenches: He "descended into hell [. . .] Send, by the King, to hell in a kilt," Mitchell recalls in "My Father's Hand." In *Blue*

⁸ Mitchell is also a screenwriter of Gold's film.

Coffee: Poems 1985-1996, there are memories of being evacuated as a child during the Second World War.

Mitchell's lifelong pacifism, his hatred of oppression and hegemony explain why he would find the Crusoe myth an interesting and provoking source to rewrite. Defoe's novel –a commemoration of European domination and superiority – provided the twentieth-century playwright with an excellent raw material within which to express his political and ideological beliefs. The plot of *Robinson Crusoe* offered Mitchell a good starting point for a discussion on physical, religious, and economic subjugation – issues he found especially significant and problematic. Mitchell uses the Crusoe myth as a parable to comment on British imperialism and its effects on the subjugated nations. The relationship between Master and Friday as depicted in *Man Friday* invites audiences to ponder about British conquests in India, the Caribbean and Africa. *Man Friday*, which clearly relies on the audiences' familiarity and knowledge of the source text, reworks the original text entirely by portraying the events not from Crusoe's, but from Friday's perspective. In the end, everything we know about the Crusoe story is turned upside down.

Gold's adaptation of Mitchell's play also gives Friday's perspective the central stage. Friday's perceptions, his views and opinions about the events permeate the entire film. Notably, *Man Friday* has not been received favorably by critics of either literature or film. In a column written for *Films in Review* in 1975 Hugh James states: "this film's script would have us believe that the noble savage had it all over the Englishman, who finally is left alone on his island to read about his dreary God while Friday returns to his tribe to sing and dance and make love" (635).

Penelope Huston writes:

Jack Gold's *Man Friday*, with Peter O'Toole as a crotchety Crusoe and Richard Roundtree as an over-sophisticated Friday [. . .] stacks the cards for the noble savage; and the idea of presenting the story as it appears to Friday is one of those ingenious conceptions which perhaps need the Shavian sense of paradox if they're really to work. [. . .] The island stockade isn't that timeless, and Jack Gold lets the film straggle erratically. (151)

Robert Stam, on the other hand, states that *Man Friday* is not a "great" film "in either aesthetic or political terms. Its critique is, in many ways, 'skin-deep.' Despite the film's critique of European colonialism and Anglo-Christian Puritanism, at the end it has Friday embody the ideal Christian, who patiently and lovingly tries to educate his errant master" (92).

One of the main reasons the film received such harsh reviews, I believe, is that Gold, unlike any other filmmaker before him, rewrites Defoe's protagonist in a wholly negative way. The film, Mayer argues, makes it impossible to identify or sympathize with Crusoe: "*Man Friday* does not so much refigure the Crusoe myth as discard the figure of Crusoe, identifying the character as one that cannot be reformed or recuperated but that instead has to be rejected" (Mayer 44). Such radicalism is problematic because it implies that the cultural boundaries that separate the different cultures and races are insurmountable. *Man Friday* exposes the evils of racism, slavery, and colonialism, and questions conventional binaries, yet it offers no solution. The pessimistic conclusion of the film insinuates that Friday and Crusoe can never coexist, and that the historical problem of racial inequity will remain permanently.

Furthermore, *Man Friday* failed both at the box office and among critics because it is hard to decide whether it is a serious drama, a comedy, a musical, or an adventure film.

Since the filmmaker cannot decide which direction he wants to take, the movie does not succeed as any of them. In order to broaden the film's appeal, Gold adds many unnecessary episodes which obscure the movie's purpose and meaning. For example, Friday often breaks into his "native" songs, but because he sings the lyrics in English and the music sounds too contemporary, these scenes do nothing more than distract viewers from the main storyline. There are also some plotting problems. Friday's character speaks perfect English with his tribesmen; yet, the film pays a particular attention to Crusoe's attempts to teach the native the English language.

Another big problem with *Man Friday*, to quote one of its reviewers, is that "it is acutely conscious of being made in the mid 1970s" (Ebert). Especially irrelevant and unsuccessful are the filmmaker's attempts to "Hippify" the movie. Friday and his tribesmen are portrayed as joyful members of festive and erotic community, reminiscent of the hippie culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As members of a subgroup of the counterculture, Hippies inherited a tradition of cultural dissent from the Bohemians and the beatniks. They rejected established institutions, criticized middle-class values, opposed nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War, embraced aspects of Eastern religions, used alternative arts, street theater, and folk music as a part of their lifestyle, championed sexual liberation, and opposed political and social orthodoxy by choosing an ideology that favored peace, love, and personal freedom ("Hippe").

Similarly, Friday's community offers the image of an alternative society, one invigorated by expressive music and dance, communitarian values, and free love. For example, Friday admits that he may be a father, but does not know to whom, or how many children. In one episode he even offers Crusoe to satisfy his sexual needs by having sex with him, implying that it is common practice at his tribe. Moreover, Friday's negative

views on the Englishman's religious beliefs, his perception of Crusoe's shady morals, and odd customs and traditions parallel the hippies' critique of the dominant culture as a corrupt, monolithic entity that exercised undue power over people's lives. The hippies' claim to be "seekers of meaning and value," is comparable to Friday's efforts to humanize Crusoe, and his attempt to change the Englishmen's inflexible, sad life into a more meaningful, and joyous existence.

The parallels between Friday's community and the hippy culture fail simply because they are so out of place and out of time. The uselessness and ineffectiveness of the analogy leaves viewers with little sense of who Friday actually is. The film depicts Friday's native community more sympathetically than the adaptations by Wetheral, Sutherland, Bunuel, Deschanel and Hardy/Miller. However, the depiction is still insufficient and paradoxical. *Man Friday* portrays Friday's tribe as the place of endless joy and perpetual celebration, but tells viewers very little, if anything, about the native society's background, language, mores and beliefs. Even Friday's real name is never disclosed. As Stam acutely observes, Gold's Friday stays "in a cultural and historical vacuum, the film does not dare to imagine Friday's life before Crusoe. [. . .] The film critiques Eurocentrism [. . .] but remains Eurocentric in its incapacity to imagine Friday" (92). Thus, despite the fact that *Man Friday* elevates the native man to a more active and noble role, the movie fails to deliver what it promises. Despite the shift in point of view, it is Crusoe who remains the center of the film's storyline. It can be argued that Friday merely tells *Crusoe's* story, and very little of his own.

Finally, the humor and the wit of Mitchell's original novel fail to translate into the movie. The best parts of the source text are those in which Friday verbally rationalizes the Englishman's strange customs and traditions. For example, this is what Friday says about

Crusoe's religious beliefs in the novel:

You see the God of England is a very difficult person to understand and harder to live with. [. . .] I will say briefly that there are many different kinds of sins or bad things which God does not like. Many of these sins are not bad things with us. For example, Master said that it is not a sin for a man to shit, because a man must shit. But it is a sin for a man to take pleasure in shitting. Likewise it is not a sin for a man to copulate with a woman with whom he has performed various rituals in one of the English God huts. But it would be a sin for the same man to copulate with the same woman without those rituals. And another sin for him to copulate with anyone else. And this Jesus who is also the English God, he did not copulate at all, although he lived for thirty-three years, he did not copulate once. I asked Master if Jesus ever shit, but he became angry and would not answer. Yes, it is all extremely hard to follow. I never really understood it all. (2)

Mitchell's humor loses its sharpness in the film, since on the screen, Friday's reactions, his perceptions of Crusoe's customs and traditions must be shown visually, rather than written, or articulated verbally. Gold does use the voice-over narration – Friday recalls the events during a tribal assembly. However, the focus of the film shifts to depicting the irrationality and the narrow-mindedness of the Crusoe figure, and Friday's witty and humorous comments, which enliven the source text, get lost in the movie.

Gold's film opens with a close-up of Crusoe, played by Peter O'Toole, sitting on the beach, and reading aloud from the creation story in Genesis. His attire – a goatskin coat and a goatskin hat - indicates that he has already been on the island for a long time. Later we learn that he has been living alone for twelve years. *Man Friday* then, shows viewers nothing of Crusoe's experience at sea or on the island before his encounter with Friday. Unlike other adaptations that celebrate Crusoe's industry and inquisitiveness by showing the castaway laboring hard for survival, Gold's motion picture depicts Crusoe as inactive

and sedentary. The only reference to Crusoe's labor is an adjustable ladder that leads into Crusoe's dwelling.

The Bible reading scene is immediately followed by the footprint episode. Viewers see a close up of Crusoe's horrified face as he sees a large footprint on the sand. Crusoe's first thoughts are those of panic and terror. "Barbarians," "savages," he mumbles as he runs around like a madman. As Stam observes, the comic impact of this scene "derives from the disproportion between the signifier - a mere footprint - and the overwhelming horrible signification which the thunder-struck Crusoe attributes to it" (88). The scene then quickly cuts to present time on Friday's island. Friday is asked by the village chef to tell the story of his encounter with a white man, Crusoe. Viewers take their first look at the "barbarians." Friday's tribesmen are loving, joyful and happy. There are smiling faces all around. Laughter and harmony preside over the tribal hut. The film, thus, "offers benign images as a corrective to Crusoe's paranoid vision, a vision left unquestioned in the novel, where Crusoe controls the discourse" (Stam 88). Hence, Gold's film transforms the novel's (as well as other films') view of the natives. Here they are not just masses, but individuals. They all have personal names, even occupations. Friday, for instance, is a storyteller. He entertains the tribe's children with amusing stories.

At the request of the tribe Friday begins to tell his people about his ordeal. Thus, the main story line of the film, the relationship between Friday and Crusoe, is remembered in flashback by Friday. The scenes cross-cut between Crusoe's island and the tribal hut on Friday's native land. Friday's stories to the tribe are used much in the same way as the chorus was used in a Greek play. Thus, Friday's narration is frequently interrupted by the tribesmen's comments and questions regarding the strange white man's customs. The shifting back and forth between the tribal episodes and the scenes that depict the main

storyline is not very effective, since it distorts the sense of continuity and the overall narrative structure of the film.

Gold's motion picture accentuates the differences between Crusoe's culture and Friday's culture visually as well. The two settings – the interior of the tribal hut and Crusoe's island – are presented very differently in the film. As Mayer observes, Master's island "is presented almost claustrophobically. [. . .] Frequently [it] seems bathed in a cruel white light" and "except on a few occasions when the film focuses on Friday, there are essentially no vistas of the sea or of verdant nature in *Man Friday*" (42). Furthermore, the scenes on Crusoe's island are often shot with one person at a time in the frame, a technique that clearly stresses the psychological distance between the two characters. The tribal hut, on the other hand, creates a comfortable, contented environment. The soft, warm lighting indicates the bond among the tribesmen. We always see more than one person in the frame, which is indicative of the togetherness and camaraderie among Friday's people.

Friday starts his story with the account of his first encounter with Crusoe. One day he and four of his friends decided to go fishing. However, when the storm hit, their canoe broke into pieces and they found themselves washed up on shore of an unfamiliar island. Friday and his friends prepare a funeral ceremony for one of the natives who died during the shipwreck. During the burial ritual the natives eat their dead comrade, "so we could take some of the spirit of that man whom we loved into the future with us." Like other adaptations, *Man Friday*, thus, accepts the existence of native cannibalism but unlike other films, it "suggests that anthropophagy might well be a loving act and [. . .] not a sign of degeneration making colonization with its putative 'civilizing' effect almost inevitable" (Mayer 43). Gold's motion picture, then, aims at transvaluation of the conventional and stereotypical depiction of the natives as being ruthless and barbarous savages.

Consequently, Crusoe's "rescue" of Friday is completely transfigured in Gold's film. If in the adaptations by Wetheral, Bunuel, Deschanel, Govorukhin, and Hardy/Miller the Friday figure is a victim who *needs* to be rescued, in *Man Friday* Crusoe's actions are the result of his paranoia. Crusoe, who is observing the natives from a distance, misapprehends everything. Believing that Friday is the cannibals' prisoner, he shoots all the natives but Friday. "In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," Crusoe cries as he murders three of Friday's friends. "I have come to rescue you, you poor savage," he then tells Friday. "I have saved your life." Viewers, who know that "the only danger from which Crusoe save[s] Friday [is] the danger presented by Crusoe himself" (Stam 88), see the irrationality and brutality of Crusoe's actions. Ironically, Crusoe, who cold-heartedly murders Friday's friends, sees himself as Friday's life savior.

The remainder of the film focuses on the relationship between Friday and Crusoe. Their cultural differences unfold through a series of discussions the two men have about various topics, including religion, sex, England, sport, work, and money. Friday knows that he must be smart to survive. "I knew that if I had to live, I must be a very cunning mosquito," he narrates. As he tries to make sense of the white man's customs, however, Friday becomes increasingly confused. For instance, Friday is bewildered when Crusoe tries to explain to him the idea of ownership. He does not understand why anything "can be for one person only." Similarly, Friday's fellow tribesmen find the concept of individual property puzzling. "Do you mean to tell me that this Crusoe fellow comes from a tribe of people who go around saying 'this is mine' and 'this is yours?'" - the village elder asks. The whole community greets the principle of private property with laughter.

In the same way, Friday cannot understand the concept of competition. When Crusoe explains the idea of sport, Friday is dismayed. He does not appreciate the thrill of

victory. To him it is more important to have fun and enjoy the game than to win. Thus, when Crusoe sets up a mini Olympics, in which the two men compete in running, swimming and soccer, Friday delights in playing, while Crusoe is anxious to win. Consequently, Friday loses the foot race. During the swimming race he easily outswims the master, but he waits until Crusoe catches up with him, and misses his opportunity to be a winner. As Friday relates the concept of sport to his people, one young man proposes to set up a swimming competition among the tribesmen. But the idea is unacceptable for everyone. "This boy is not well," the tribe's elder declares as he sends him off with a beautiful young woman who is supposed to bring him back to his senses by giving him plenty of love and attention.

Friday is equally puzzled about the Englishman's religious beliefs. Crusoe's God seems vindictive, cruel and unforgiving to free spirited and cheerful Friday who loves life and the pleasures it offers. Crusoe constantly reminds Friday that "God punishes." Friday does not understand why Crusoe's omnipotent God allows the devil to exist. He is dumbfounded when one day he discovers Crusoe flagellating himself for having had an erotic dream. When Crusoe tries to explain why God is angry with him, Friday innocently responds: "God would not send you a love dream if he were angry with you." Then he offers to satisfy Master's sexual desires. "If you had told me you needed loving, I would have helped you," Friday exclaims. "I have a body too. I am a loving man." Horrified Crusoe shouts at Friday: "Man shall not love man. You have offered me a poisonous gift." The tension of the scene is undercut by Crusoe's parrot, saying "Poor Robinson Crusoe. All will be well. I love you. I love you," implying that Crusoe does need love. As Mayer acutely observes, the film clearly "endorses Friday's point of view – his pleasure in the body, his untroubled view of sexuality, and his refusal to accept the idea of an angry,

vengeful god” (43). Crusoe’s homophobia makes him blind to Friday’s caring and kindness.

Gold’s film mocks Crusoe’s chauvinism, his aggressive patriotism. Every day Crusoe salutes the Union Jack, which hangs high on top of a large pole. When Friday enquires what England is like, Master proudly declares that it is the richest country in the world. But when the native finds out that there are no bananas in England, he burst out into a loud laughter, stating sympathetically: “No bananas? Poor England.” Exasperated Crusoe chides Friday: “There is nothing funny about England.” Master’s evidence of English superiority is that they have coal. But Friday is not convinced. The warm climate of his island, the native responds, makes coal unnecessary. “I’d much rather have a warm island with lots of bananas,” Friday declares, leaving infuriated Crusoe with nothing to say.

The most critical confrontation between the two men occurs in regard to social issues. Friday, who is doing all the work while Crusoe is just watching, reading, or sleeping, one day resolves not to “live as a slave.” He refuses to perform a single task “until all the work is shared.” As usual, Crusoe tries to control Friday by force. He punishes the native by locking him in a dark cave. However, when Friday escapes, Crusoe has no choice but to compromise. He promises to pay him wages for his labor – one coin per day. “To be paid means that you are a free man,” Crusoe explains. Moreover, with these gold coins Friday can buy things from Master, Crusoe explicates. When the native asks how much Master’s hut and its contents will cost, Crusoe, not taking him seriously, replies: “two thousand coins.” Ironically, by teaching Friday capitalistic values of money and consumption, Crusoe is unthinkingly carving his own fate. As days, months and years go by, Friday amasses the gold coins until he has enough to purchase Crusoe’s hut and all of its contents.

“Europe’s narcissistic claims about its civilizing mission” (Stam 92) are mocked in the scenes in which Crusoe tries to formally educate Friday. He decides to give the native daily lessons. Ironically, the process of “civilizing” Friday includes punishment – “the principle of life,” as Crusoe defines it. Friday is not allowed to talk. If he has a question, he has to raise his hand. When he forgets this rule, Master punishes him – he hits his hand with a hickory stick. One day, to prevent Friday from interrupting the lecture by asking questions, Crusoe ties up the native, literally silencing him by stuffing his mouth with a cloth. The irony of the scene is hard to miss: as Crusoe shackles Friday and puts a gun on his head, viewers see the word “civilization” written on the chalkboard. Crusoe is incapable of teaching Friday anything except fear, punishment, and hate.

Man Friday, thus, mocks everything the novel is believed to presuppose: Crusoe’s “contractual mentality” (Stam 92), his puritanical phobias, his egotism and greed, his narrow patriotism and national chauvinism, and his repressed sexuality. Viewers are constantly reminded of Crusoe’s narrow mindedness, his inability to understand the customs other than his own. Instead of reasoning with Friday, he constantly uses his gun to insist upon the rightness of his views. He is incapable of compassion and kindness.

Moreover, Crusoe’s narrow mindedness, his willfulness and egotism are seen in the film not as a result of Crusoe’s individual psyche, but as representative of the world to which Crusoe belongs. This argument is reinforced with several added scenes during which the castaways meet two European men whose ship arrives in Crusoe’s island. During these episodes viewers get a glimpse of Crusoe’s “civilization.” What we see, however, is a world filled with cruelty, distrust, violence, and deceit. The two men – a captain of the vessel and his friend – turn out to be the slave traders, traveling to Africa to capture the natives. Friday is horrified when he observes the white men’s treatment of the

black slaves through a telescope. They are whipped, beaten, chained, and abused. Friday can see the bleeding scars on the bodies of the natives. Here Gold's film clearly defies the idea implicit in Defoe's novel that Europeans were imposing a superior, humane and peaceful civilization on barbarous natives. In *Man Friday* the natives are honorable, generous, and humane, while Crusoe and his fellow countrymen are murderers, hypocrites, and aggressors.

Furthermore, the greed of the captain and his companion is so overwhelming that it makes them incapable to feel any compassion for their own countrymen – Crusoe. They see him not as a fellow human being whom they can help, but as a commodity, an opportunity to make more money. Thus, they plot to take Crusoe to England in deceit and then sell him there as a white slave. However, Crusoe accidentally overhears the two men's conversation, and shoots both Europeans dead during a fight.

Parallel to Crusoe's attempts to "civilize" and "educate" Friday, the film shows *Friday's* efforts to humanize Crusoe. As Stam observes, the native tries to change Crusoe's rigid notions "not only for the sake of his own survival but also for Crusoe's sake" (91). Thus, Friday, who "embodies the corrosive power of laughter" (Stam 91) teaches his sad and joyless Master how to take pleasure in life, how to dance and sing, and "how **not** to take himself seriously" (Stam 91). In one scene, for instance, he asks Crusoe to dance for him. As Crusoe performs an awkward, stilted number, Friday interjects: "Only your feet are dancing. You must dance with your whole body, with your soul." Next, he asks Master to sing an English song. After a long deliberation, Crusoe finally agrees. As he hums a verse about springtime and lovers, and about beautiful English country folks, Crusoe becomes visibly affected. This is the first time in the film where we see Crusoe displaying any sentiment rather than anger, fear, or hatred. In the middle of his song Crusoe starts

weeping. Embarrassed by his own “weakness,” Crusoe runs away, and throws himself into a river.

In another sequence Friday tries to explain to Master his tribe’s tradition to keep what they refer to as “the sorrow day.” When one day Crusoe finds the native sitting motionless on the ground, intently staring at something, he enquires what he is doing. Friday explains that once a year, he and his fellow tribesmen put all their daily chores aside, sit quietly and think about those people whom they have loved and who are no longer with them. If you keep yourself focused, and if you are patient, Friday explicates, “the faces of people you’ve lost will come to visit you.” He then urges Master to see if *he* can see the images of his loved ones. “Have you lost no one, Master?” he enquires. Crusoe decides to give it a try. However, he contests right away: “I see nothing.” Friday assures that if he gives it more time and effort, “they *will* come.” The camera moves back to show viewers a full shot of the two men, sitting still on the ground, with their heads down. This is one of the very few times in the film when we see both Friday and Crusoe together in the frame. It is also the only time that we see a possibility of peace and harmony between the men. The next shot is of Crusoe, weeping bitterly.

Although these scenes show amore humane side of Crusoe, they do not prevail, because, unlike the protagonists of other *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations, Gold’s Crusoe does not allow himself to act on those sentiments. He suppresses them, deems them dangerous. “I think you are dangerous,” he tells Friday after the “sorrow day” incident. “For a minute I lost my soul.” To prove to himself that he is not affected by Friday’s beliefs, Crusoe exhibits even more violence against the native: He chains his head on a pole and threatens to kill him. The major differences between Gold’s and other versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, thus, have to do with differences in the filmmakers’ interpretation of Defoe’s character.

The films by Bunuel, Deschanel and Hardy Miller have the Crusoe figure undergo a major transformation. He learns to respect and appreciate the differences between himself and “the other.” Crusoe of *Man Friday*, on the other hand, is intransigent. He is incapable of change.

Friday ultimately realizes that it is impossible to humanize Crusoe. On his tribesmen’s inquiry if Master understood the meaning of “the sorrow day,” Friday responds: “He understood nothing.” The native decides that the only way to escape from Crusoe, is to rebel. He, thus, demands that Crusoe keep his promise to sell his house and belongings to Friday for two thousand gold coins. One day, Friday surprises Crusoe by taking his gun and seizing all of his possessions, including his hut. With the gun Friday gets power. He becomes in charge. The roles reverse. Now it is Friday who stands watching as Crusoe is working to build a boat that will take the two men to Friday’s island.

The end of *Man Friday* reverses the end of the novel. Instead of Friday accompanying Master to a “civilized” world, the two men sail to Friday’s island. At this point in the film the present and the past times converge, and viewers are invited to decide together with the tribesmen whether to grant Crusoe his wish to join Friday’s tribe and teach the children about “the world beyond the ocean”. “I would very much like to stay,” Crusoe declares in front of the assembly. “I know I have wronged your tribe in the past but it was simply because I didn’t understand.” Friday is urging his people not to allow Master to stay. When the tribe’s elder proposes that Crusoe stayed among them because he is a sick man and needs their help, Friday vigorously remonstrates that “He is sickness itself,” and that he would only teach their innocent children fear, guilt and power.

The tribal assembly episode is directly followed by a scene that shows Crusoe alone on his island, reading from Genesis. The tribesmen have obviously decided the

Englishman's fate: he does not belong to their world. Thus, they put him back on his island. "Crusoe is again alone, and his final desolation is represented as the result of his attempt at achieving a kind of monstrous mastery over everything around him" (Mayer 44). The end of the film depicts Crusoe the same way the opening scene does – he is sitting on the beach reading from the Bible: "in the image of God created He him. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it.'" Nothing has changed. Crusoe of the final sequence is the same person he was in the opening scenes: willful, sexually repressed, joyless, and lonely. Thus, if in Bunuel's, Deschanel's and Hardy/Miller's versions the Crusoe figure can be reformed and saved by his encounter with the film's Friday, in Gold's version the reform, and, consequently, the deliverance are not possible. Crusoe's last words – "subdue it" – are symbolic, because they describe Crusoe's way of life best, from the way he "subdues" his own emotions and feelings to the way he tries to "subdue" Friday. To oppose this gloomy scene, the film cuts to show the tribe on Friday's island celebrating Friday's return. Happiness, laughter and joy reign all around Friday's island.

Interestingly, the final scene of *Man Friday* as shown in 1975 Cannes Film Festival was different from the one that depicts Crusoe all alone, rejected by Friday's tribe, and doomed to spend the rest of his days in isolation. An alternative ending, which was "later recut and softened" (Mayer 44), shows Crusoe committing suicide as he returns to his island. Both endings, however, are extremely pessimistic. The film's conclusion seems to imply that the cultural boundaries separating the races are insurmountable. Friday and Crusoe cannot coexist. Such extreme negativism, as Mayer observes, "was bound to be problematic," given the importance of the Crusoe myth (Mayer 45).

CHAPTER FOUR

Simplifying the Crusoe Myth: Adapting *Robinson Crusoe* for Children

“There is hardly an elf so devoid of imagination as not to have supposed for himself a solitary island in which he could act Robinson Crusoe, were it but in the corner of the nursery.”

John Ballantyne.

“[Robinson Crusoe] is one of the best books that can be put in the hands of children.”

James Beattie. *Dissertations Moral and Critical.*

“That awful solitude of a quarter of a century – the strange union of comfort, plenty, and security with the misery of loneliness – was my delight before I was five years old, and has been the delight of hundreds of thousands of boys.”

Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Although Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* was not written for children, it has frequently been seen as a children's book, designed to teach young readers ethical ideals such as hard work, thrift, fortitude, prudence, and independence. As Robert Stam expresses it, Crusoe “incarnates practical courage, do-it-yourself ingenuity, perseverance, the spirit of ‘if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.’” (Stam 69). Immediately following the publication of Defoe’s novel in 1719, chapbook editions, sometimes reducing the original story to as few as twenty-four pages, began to appear. The first abridged edition, targeted particularly at children, was published in 1768. As Dennis Butts notes in his essay “The Birth of the

Boys' Story and the Transition from the *Robinsonnades* to the Adventure Story," "there were approximately 150 abridgments published for children between 1719 and 1819 alone" (Butts 446).

Moreover, children's books based on Defoe's novel also began to appear. Novels such as Johann Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson* (1814), Captain Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1841), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Michael Tournier's *Friday and Robinson* (1971), Carol Brink's *Baby Island* (1937), and Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1960) revised the Crusoe myth so it appealed to young audiences. The most famous recreation of the Crusoe story remains *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johan Wyss. Wyss, who was a Swiss pastor, wrote the story of a castaway family to amuse and educate his own children. First translated in English in 1814 by the British philosopher William Godwin, the book has never been out of print. As Butts points out, in America, *The Swiss Family Robinson* has been more popular than Defoe's original, "perhaps because [. . .] Wyss's tale more warmly endorses family values" (447).

This chapter will examine the cinematic versions of children's Robinsonades⁹. I will focus my analysis on Walt Disney's adaptation of *Swiss Family Robinson*, the animated *Robinson Crusoe*, and a popular sitcom of 1960s, *Gilligan's Island*. These Robinsonades, like Defoe's novel, are concerned with the idea of individuals left almost entirely to their own devices, and faced by a severe test of human endurance. However, if Defoe "stresses the difficulty and precariousness of going it alone in a wilderness" (Miller 150), children's Robinsonades depict the castaways' experience on a deserted island as the

⁹ As emphasized in *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film*, children's films may be divided into two categories: those made expressly for a child audience, and those made about children regardless of audience (259). This chapter takes this distinction into account, and concentrates only on those cinematic Robinsonades that are targeted for children viewers. By "children" young people under the age of about fourteen are meant.

exciting adventure. Films and TV shows that adapt the Crusoe story for children ignore such aspects of the original text as the physical and psychological torment of a castaway, his loneliness, his soul searching, and instead focus on satisfying the young viewers' hunger for discovery and exploration. As Nickolas Tucker states, "with the emphasis firmly upon action rather than analysis, these stories trade in straightforward confrontations rather than in anything more subtle, with progress measured in physical achievement instead of psychological understanding" (167).

In the simplified, joyful and exciting world of these films survival comes easy. The characters of children's Robinsonades usually find all their needs met in their new Eden. Although these castaways, like Defoe's protagonist, labor hard to get a shelter, food, water and other necessities, these tasks are treated with a great humor in *Gilligan's Island* and with the Disney touch in *Swiss Family Robinson*. The characters laugh and play their way through the days with no moments of depression and contemplation. All three works celebrate life. All of them lighten the intensity of the original text by "simplifying" the Crusoe story and making it one of adventure and exploration.

Another way in which the basic Crusoe story has been enhanced in these works is through the addition of more characters. Except the animated *Robinson Crusoe*, which follows the original story line, both children's Robinsonades examined here have placed the castaway hero at the head of a family that, together, has been shipwrecked or marooned and must struggle to survive. Having more than one protagonist is crucial in the stories targeted at young audience, since more characters allow for more possibilities for adventure. In these stories, surviving is a joint effort of men, women, and children. Moreover, viewers "can enjoy both their identification with the resourceful [. . .] settlers on

their desert island, along with the fantasy of having the gratifying devotion of a faithful, uncritical follower” (Tucker 166).

The Swiss Family Robinson (1960)

The Swiss Family Robinson, directed by Ken Annakin and produced by Walt Disney Productions, was released in 1960, at the height of Disney's interest in creating live action features. Filmed on the Caribbean island of Tobago, the motion picture's lavish pre-production planning and on-location shooting – that lasted for twenty-two weeks – resulted in a budget that exceeded four million dollars (“*Swiss Family*”). However, its extraordinary success at the box office, and subsequent popular reissues in 1969, 1972, 1975, and 1981, and a release on home video in 1982 have made it one of Disney's top-grossing films. Disney Film Park recreated a famous tree-house of the movie, which has further increased and perpetuated the fame and recognition of this motion picture.

While commenting on the popularity of a Disney film in the 1940s, Douglas Gomery states: “It was estimated that one in three inhabitants of the planet had seen a Disney film” (qtd. in Ma 49). If more than sixty years ago, one third of the world population was exposed to a Disney production, one wonders what the percentage would be today! Indeed, Disney's importance as a producer in both American motion picture history as well as in American television history is incalculable. More than in any other way, Disney's presence and persona helped represent his company as promoters of American family values, and television itself as a “family medium” (Griffin). The late-1950s through the mid-1960s saw the appearance of many Disney's live-action, adventure films aimed at family audiences. As Michael Pflug notes, “not content to merely rule the world of animated feature films, Walt Disney set out early on to corner the market for live-

action family fare as well.” *Swiss Family Robinson* finds itself among such Disney family films as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1955), *Old Yeller* (1957), *The Shaggy Dog* (1959), *Toby Tyler* (1960), *The Absentminded Professor* (1961), *Son of Flubber* (1962), *The Misadventures of Merlin Jones* (1964), and *That Darn Cat* (1963). These films strongly reinforce the Disney value system, which in turn "is consistent with the Basic American package: individualism, advancement through self-help, strict adherence to the work ethic, and the supreme optimism in the possibility of the ultimate improvement of society through the progressive improvement in humankind" (Wasko 117).

Hence, *Swiss Family Robinson* provides a model for a dominant all-American ideology. The film reinforces the values of hard work, and family togetherness. The Robinsons love to work. They are always engaged in some sort of purposeful activity. With hard work and ingenuity the family manages not only to survive in the jungle, but to transform it into a thriving domain of houses, gardens and farms. Not only hard work but individual solutions are consistently represented as the Robinsons confront difficult situations such as the shipwreck, creating a secure and comfortable home in the middle of the wilderness, rescuing themselves from wild animals, or encountering pirates. Whenever necessary, the young Robinson brothers take matters into their own hands, so that they can survive.

The very title of the Disney film (and Wyss's novel) makes it clear what aspects of the Crusoe myth this version will be revising. In place of Robinson Crusoe's self-sufficiency and independence, this retelling of the Crusoe story puts the family values of loving interdependence and cooperation at its core, along "with the pieties of nationalism" (Miller 141). The Robinsons are a close-knit family of five. They are depicted as loving, caring and very considerate of one another. They leave their native country of Switzerland

to avoid being pressed into military service, and flee to New Guinea to keep the family together and start a new life in a new colony. Defoe's Crusoe, in contrast, is not a dedicated family man. His ties to his parents and siblings are not tight. His description of his family lineage early in the novel is very sketchy. None of the family members are mentioned by their names. Crusoe's mother is scarcely characterized, and the two sisters mentioned later in the narrative are entirely omitted. Suggesting a rather distant relationship between his parents and himself, Crusoe leaves home without any qualms, and goes to sea. Later, when he returns to England after thirty five years of rambling, he describes his entire married life in two sentences:

In the meantime, I in part settled my self here; for first of all I married, and that not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction, and had three children, two sons and one daughter. But my wife dying, and my nephew coming home with good success for a voyage to Spain, my inclination to go aboard, and his importunity prevailed and engaged me to go in his ship, as a private trader to the East Indies. (298)

Contemporary readers have been dismayed by Crusoe's seeming apathy towards his family.

In his essay "Crusoe's Women: Or, the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time," Ian

Bell notes that

The fate of the anonymous Mrs. Crusoe is surely one of the most poignant our literature offers, even more pathetic than that of the first Mrs. Rochester, and even less satisfying than that of poor Mrs. Gulliver. Providing her husband with two sons and a daughter, she herself is remembered only indifferently - 'not either to my Disadvantage or Dissatisfaction' - and her whole life is carried on in a subordinate clause between more interesting maritime journeys. (40)

The Swiss Family Robinson reworks some of the confusion and obscurity about Crusoe's family life and by turning a solitary castaway into a close-knit family unit, makes the Crusoe myth more congenial and agreeable to a twentieth-century audience.

The Swiss Family Robinson, clearly targeted at children, kindles young viewers' imagination. It satisfies their need for exploration and discovery. Hillis Miller explains children's fascination with the story of a shipwrecked family in a chapter "Why I Loved *The Swiss Family Robinson*" from his book *On Literature* the following way:

I know [. . .] why I found *The Swiss Family Robinson* so enchanting. One of my earliest memories is of being carried in a "pack basket" on my father's back on a camping trip with the rest of my family [. . .] in northern New York State. [. . .] Equipped with no more than you could carry on your back, you could "set up camp," cut some fragrant balsam boughs for bedding, make a camp fire for cooking and heat, in short, create a whole new domestic world in the wilderness. I can still remember the pleasure of falling asleep in the open-fronted lean-to [. . .], wrapped in my blanket [. . .], smelling the balsam, and listening to the murmur of the adults' voices as they sat by the dying campfire. *The Swiss Family Robinson* is a hyperbolic version of that pleasure. It is a deep satisfaction of the nest-making instinct. It is the creation, out of the materials at hand (plus a few things saved from the wreck, of course!), of a new world, a metaworld. (127)

Indeed, the Disney film, unlike Zemeckis's *Cast Away*, is far from inviting a tragic understanding of the castaway family's experience. Being stranded on a deserted island is nothing but an exciting, fun-filled and adventurous journey in Annakin's motion picture. The three sons – Fritz, Ernst and Francis – have the jungle as their playground, and elephants, ostriches, jackals, zebras and flamingos as their playmates. "Don't you sometimes feel this is the kind of life we were meant to live on this earth? – the father contemplates. "Everything we need... Everything right here, at our fingertips... You know, if only people could have all this and be satisfied, I don't think there'd be any real problems in the world." Such carefree, happy-go lucky outlook permeates the entire movie. "Don't worry about tomorrow," the father announces to his family. "It'll take care of itself."

Before long, the Robinsons transform the island into a thriving domain of houses, gardens and farms. The film teaches children the spirit and value of team-work, loyalty and family togetherness. With the joint effort, the Robinsons can do anything. The tree-house the family constructs is so elaborate that it even has an elevator, running water, organ and a stove. They also design a pirate alarm, a tiger trap, and hand grenades made of coconut shells stuffed with explosive powder and a fuse. Thus, with hard work and ingenuity the family tames the wilderness and creates a comfortable, secure, loving home. Defoe's Crusoe too manages to triumph over nature. He too transforms his island. However, unlike the Swiss Robinsons, Crusoe "does [everything] with great effort, with much trial and error, and with many failures" (Miller 150). He frequently stresses "the exceeding laborousness" of his work: "the many hours which for want of tools, want of help, and want of skill everything I did took up out of my time," he writes. Crusoe's life, thus, to quote Hobbes, is "nasty," "solitary," and "brutish," whereas the life of the Swiss Robinsons is cheerful, gregarious and enjoyable.

Unlike what we see in the novel, fear or discomfort of the alien surrounding is minimized in the film. The mother figure is the only one who initially expresses doubts and apprehensions about their new life on the island. For example, she worries that her sons would "never know what it was like to be married, [. . .] what it's like to have a family." Later she strongly opposes the idea of a tree-house, stating that it would not be safe. However, each "gloomy" episode is contradicted by a cheery, happy incident that dispels all fears and doubts and makes even the most practical and prudent concerns of the mother seem unimportant and trifling.

The beautiful, bountiful, and safely uninhabited island where the Robinson family is stranded is a tropical paradise. It is a world "swarming with things to be shot, tamed, or

eaten, or farmed and than eaten, if you are clever enough to know how to do so” (Miller 149). Every flora and fauna they need grows right at their feet. The father figure is “a natural scoutmaster, a living textbook of universal knowledge” (Lundin 200). Even *during* the shipwreck, he takes time to explain the principle of lever to his sons. The film, thus, is “an attractive fantasy of ever resourceful man and the complaisant nature of desert island” (Tucker 168). Viewers identify with the characters who present them with such “flattering, exciting image of humanity and its capacity for brave deeds and positive action” (Tucker 167).

The second half of the film introduces Roberta, a young British girl the Robinson brothers rescue from the pirates. Soon a love triangle emerges as Fritz and Ernst compete for the affections of Roberta. The Disney film is filled with gender stereotypes. Both the mother figure and Roberta are portrayed as defenseless, vulnerable and frail, constantly in need of protection from the Robinson men. Roberta, who at first poses as a boy, is a very "unnatural" man. She fails to keep up with the boys as they travel through the wilderness. She shivers through the night, screams at the sight of a lizard and covers her eyes with her hands at the sight of danger. As soon as her gender is revealed, however, she plays the role of a lady effortlessly. Roberta's vulnerability and powerlessness are juxtaposed by the Robinson brothers' audacity and strength. They heroically rescue Roberta from the pirates, wrestle and kill a poisonous snake, and overcome every single obstacle they encounter on their way to the family camp. Fritz and Ernst mock Roberta's weakness when they think that she is a boy. But the brothers' attitude toward her changes drastically as soon as she is revealed to be a girl. "If we had known you were a girl... We'll try to make it easy for you as much as possible," they assure her.

The Disney production of *The Swiss Family Robinson* differs from Wyss's novel in that it brings human antagonists – Asian pirates – into the story. Thus, the film revives Defoe's cannibalistic natives by introducing the Oriental other. The pirates, marked by racial difference from the European protagonists, raid the ocean and threaten the tranquility and safety of the Robinson family. The pirate characters serve no other purpose in the film than to “silhouette the heroism of Caucasian protagonists” (Ma 45) and to make a tale of adventure more exciting. The pirate characters, thus, lack individuality. They are not defined, named, or identified. It is primarily through costume and make-up that the viewer comes to associate the mere sight of the Asian pirate leader and his group as a source of fear-instilling badness. So, when the Robinsons fight with them at the end of the movie, viewers root for the family because they know them and admire them.

The presence of the pirates, then, provides an opportunity for action in the Disney film. It gives the Robinsons a chance to further demonstrate their creativity, resourcefulness and potency. The final sequence of the movie is entertaining because every part of the family's planning can be put into play as the pirates make their way into the island where the Robinsons reside. Viewers admire the family's inventiveness as they make use of their coconut bombs, traps, and as they dupe a large number of pirates. Although the battle scenes entail violence, they “do not stray far from G-rated slapstick” (*“Swiss Family Robinson DVD Review”*). Despite a collapsing bridge, a tiger pit, coconut bombs, stacks of heavy stones stumbling down the hill, no pirate really gets hurt, or so it seems to viewers who see no blood and no dead bodies throughout the entire sequence.

As Miller observes, both Defoe's novel and *The Swiss Family Robinson* are “episodic and open-ended, promising further adventures that might be told” (142). This sense of never-ending, continuous adventure, so appealing to young viewers, is particularly

emphasized by the Disney film's ending. Although the family is rescued by Roberta's grandfather, a sea Captain, the Robinsons decide to stay on the island. There is no reason, no motivation for the family to leave their tropical paradise. Even previously skeptical and doubtful mother comes to a conclusion that "this is the kind of life we were meant to live on this earth." When the father asks her if living on the island is what she really wants to do, she replies without hesitation: "Yes. It's been a good life for us here." Roberta too, who never understood "how anybody could choose [a life] like this," and who missed "the color and excitement" of the real world, changes her mind at the end of the movie and decides to stay on the island with Fritz. "Funny, isn't it? – she tells Fritz. "How you can change your mind about what's important? Take your parents. All this time they wanted to go to New Guinea. Now they found out everything they want is right here. I can understand how they feel. Two people, if they have each other, what more could they want?" Ernst is the only one who resolves to go back and pursue his education.

The Robinsons, then, like Defoe's Crusoe, establish a permanent colony on the island which they call "New Switzerland," with the father serving as its governor. The decision to stay on the island is the one young viewers would surely embrace. The conviction that "this enchanted island still exists somewhere," that "somewhere the Robinsons remain forever, always having new adventures and always encountering new animals, plants, birds and fish" (Miller 155), leaves children with a sense of contentment and satisfaction. However, such ending would only be appealing for the Disney version of the Crusoe myth. What would have been a tragic finish for other filmic Crusoes, is a joyous finale for the Robinson's.¹⁰

¹⁰ During the 1970s, a number of films, focused on the adventures of "the wilderness family" Robinsons, also paid homage to Defoe's novel. *The Adventures of the Wilderness Family* (1975), *The Further Adventures of the Wilderness Family, Part 2* (1978), and *Mountain Family Robinson* (1979) are about the Robinson family members who voluntarily leave civilization and settle in the heart of wilderness. These

In a chapter entitled “Walt Disney’s *Swiss Family Robinson*. Imperialist Ideology in Family Entertainment,” from his book *Deathly Embrace*, Sheng-Mei Ma claims that in establishing a permanent colony on the island, this “seemingly wholesome family fun” film is in fact “perpetuating imperialist ideology” (48). The ending of the Disney film – the fact that Ernst alone returns to Europe and the rest of the family stays on the island – “strengthens rather than severs the family’s bond with Western civilization. The island truly becomes new Switzerland, an outpost of the empire, a reincarnation of their home in Behn, Switzerland, because the Robinsons are even more closely connected with the Old World by means of the second son” (48) ¹¹.

Ma’s argument about “interpellation of imperialist ideology” in the guise of family entertainment (43) is convincing. The film conveys imperialist ideology from the very beginning. From the very first minutes of their arrival on the island, the family claims it as their own. Their sense of proprietorship only increases as they impose their “civilized” order on the “primitive” island. The presence of the Asian pirates further strengthens the film’s imperialist ideology. The Asian pirates, who are native to that part of the world, and

films, like *Swiss Family Robinson*, celebrate family togetherness. With a joint effort and hard work, the Robinsons create home in the wild mountains of Utah. They spend their solitary days constructing homestead, taming wild animals, and enjoying the local flora and fauna. “I don’t know what I would do if I ever have to leave this place,” exclaims Skip Robinson’s teenage daughter in *Mountain Family Robinson*. The family’s self-imposed exile is depicted in all three films as an exciting, never-ending adventure. Viewers are meant to embrace a simple, uncomplicated, uncorrupted life of the Robinsons, and support them in their decision to live outside civilization.

¹¹ Imperialist ideology, Ma maintains, is perpetuated “not only through the content of the film but through the capitalist, neo-imperialist circulation of the film” (50). The global audience of *Swiss Family Robinson* also includes Asian viewers, who do “not seem particularly troubled by the intersection of family entertainment and imperialist ideology. Asian viewers would probably join in the family’s hurrahs when retreating pirates disintegrate into canon fodder” (50). Ma, who is originally from Taiwan, is apprehensive about what he refers to as “the colonization of the mind.” “I can testify to this subtle cultural imperialism firsthand,” Ma notes. He remembers the times when he saw *Swiss Family Robinson* for the first time at a movie theater in Taipei, Taiwan. One image that stayed with him throughout the years was “alas, the cheers, including my own, over the logs’ crushing of scoundrels who looked most like me” (50). Three decades later, his two-year-old daughter has the same reaction when she watches the film. She “[keeps] repeating in Mandarin “Bad Guys!” Bad Guys!” whenever pirates grace the TV screen” (50).

who are depicted as brutish and uncivilized, cannot be rightful owners of that tropical paradise. They need to be “repelled, if not exterminated” (Ma 44). Only the Western protagonists are skilled, clever, and civilized enough to rule the world. Of course, children viewers are oblivious of this larger context of *Swiss Family Robinson*. What they enjoy is the film’s playfulness, its humor, its inventiveness and “heroic” action.

Gilligan’s Island (1964-1967)

Gilligan’s Island, a popular American TV sitcom of 1960s, also simplifies the Crusoe myth by employing it for comic purposes. *Gilligan’s Island*, created by Sherwood Schwartz, was originally produced by United Artists Television. Sponsored by the corporate giants, Philip Morris & Company and Proctor & Gambler, the show aired for three seasons on the CBS network, starting from 1964, and ending in 1967. The plot centered around the comic adventures of seven castaways, who were shipwrecked and stranded on a deserted island near Hawaii. “Truthfully, I don’t honestly know where the concept for *Gilligan’s Island* came from,” Schwartz notes in his book *Inside Gilligan’s Island. From Creation to Syndication*. Schwartz “can’t deny the possible influence of *Robinson Crusoe*,” emphasizing the fact that “it was one of my two favorite books when I was a youngster” (13).

Despite harsh reviews from critics, *Gilligan’s Island* was a favorite with television viewers from the very beginning. “I didn’t create, write, and produce a TV show to please critics [. . .] or network executives,” Schwartz has remarked. “I created, wrote, and produced a show to please two judges: myself and the public” (163). And the public it did please. *Gilligan’s Island* “climbed into the top ten the first year” (Schwartz 164). When, in its second year, it was moved from Saturday evenings to Thursday evenings, “again, it

climbed back into the top ten” (Schwartz 164). For Schwartz that was a great success. When discussing how negative reviews affected him, Schwartz stated: “It’s a relatively simple task to produce a show that will appeal to a few dozen critics. Their opinions and tastes are pretty obvious and fairly well known. It’s a lot more difficult to produce a show that will appeal to 25 or 30 million people of all ages, all backgrounds, all races, all colors, and all creeds. That’s the number of viewers you needed in 1963 every week to have a hit TV series” (163-164).

Gilligan’s Island obviously appealed to the public. “Strangely enough, none of the jokes and insults [from the critics] made the slightest dent in the popularity of [the show],” Schwartz recalls (164). The series was not forgotten even after its cancellation in 1967. *Gilligan’s Island* grew enormously popular during decades of syndication, becoming the most repeated series in television history. After more than forty years, reruns are still regularly broadcast on TBS, TNT, and NIK. The show’s success spawned a number of spin-offs, including three made-for-television movies in 1978, 1979, and 1981, one of which, *Rescue from Gilligan’s Island*, “remains one of the highest rated film special in television history” (Schwartz xv); a cartoon series, entitled *The New Adventures of Gilligan*; *Gilligan’s Planet*, an animated science fiction version; and *Gilligan’s Island: The Musical*, first produced in the early 1990s. Today the title character of Gilligan is a widely recognized American pop culture icon, ranked, for example, at 122 place in the July 2003 list of “200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons,” compiled by VH-1 and *People Magazine* (“Gilligan’s Island”).

While the series is not specifically targeted at children, it is, as many critics agree, an “infantile show,” whose “very silliness [is] one of its main assets” (Carter 4). Youngsters have always been devoted viewers of the show. In his book *Here on Gilligan’s Isle*, Russel

Johnson, an actor playing a role of the professor, notes that “the trick that hooked kids” to the show was that “there was no downtime” on *Gilligan’s Island* (93). “Our show looked like no other tropical paradise on television, especially in color,” Johnson states, it “moved along at a fast pace, with no dull stretches” (93). Categorized as a “comedy and family” genre, *Gilligan’s Island* is often viewed as the defining case of mindless and escapist entertainment. The show turns everything into a comedy. Its extremely optimistic, cheerful intake on life, and a positive image of American man as master of himself and nature, appeal both children and adult audiences. Moreover, young viewers enjoy watching grown-ups act like infants. They laugh at the silly mistakes the castaways make in each episode, at Gilligan’s clumsiness and the Skipper’s frustration. “I think some kids even thought it would have been wonderful to really be on that island with this crew of crazy people, always throwing parties and putting on plays and such. Some fans have told me that after school they went out and played ‘Gilligan’s Island’ instead of playing ‘house’ or other games,” recalls Johnson (93)¹². Many episodes even reenact kids’ favorite fairytales, such as *Cinderella*, and *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Gilligan’s Island increases the number of castaways to seven. The characters, who are introduced in an opening sequence, are a representative microcosm of white American society. This miniature society includes people from all walks of life: the younger generation and working class is embodied by Gilligan, the first mate of the wrecked ship S.S. Minnow, the intelligentsia is exemplified by the Professor; Ginger Grant is a celebrity who personifies a traditional Hollywood ideal of femininity; the U.S. military is

¹² Viewers have frequently commented on several characters’ total lack of sexual interest in *Gilligan’s Island*. However, this disregard of sexuality further indicates that the creators of *Gilligan’s Island* saw young children to be the primary viewers of the show. Johnson agrees with this view: “Sherwood Schwartz did not want to get into the sexual natures of the characters too deeply, outside of the obvious, like the Howell’s devotion to each other and Ginger’s lusty one liners,” Johnson observes. “Keep in mind, the consensus from the cast in the beginning was that we were targeting this show toward children. The fact that adults came along was a surprise to all of us” (184).

represented by the Skipper; Mary Ann, the girl next door, is a symbol of traditional American virtues of innocence, sincerity, kindness, caring, and modesty; and the idle rich, living off the labor of others, are portrayed by the Howells.

Despite the tragic circumstances in which the castaways find themselves, there is no room for tragedy in *Gilligan's Island*. Viewers do not even get to see the shipwreck scene. Instead, it is related in a theme song that opens up each episode:

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale
A tale of a fateful trip
That started from this tropic port,
Aboard this tiny ship.
The mate was a mighty sailing man,
The Skipper brave and sure,
Five passengers set sail that day
For a three hour tour . . . a three hour tour.
The weather started getting rough,
The tiny ship was tossed,
If not for the courage of the fearless crew
The Minnow would be lost.
The Minnow would be lost.

Unlike other children's Robinsonades, *Gilligan's Island* makes a specific reference to Defoe's novel: "No phone! No light! No Motorcar!/Not a single luxury/Like Robinson Crusoe,/It's primitive as can be," says a theme song. However, the castaways' life on the deserted island is far from being "primitive." Mr. Howell even has his golf clubs with him, the professor has access to the entire New York public library, and Mrs. Howell has brought along an inexhaustible wardrobe for just a three hour tour. They also own a transistor radio that never stops working despite three years of almost constant use and tinkering. With this link to the civilization, the castaways listen to news reports, and know everything that is taking place in the outside world.

Gilligan's Island invokes and repeats many themes from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The vast majority of the show's story lines, for instance, revolve around an invasion of the

peaceful microcosm of the island by the natives. Several episodes focus on "savage" or non-Western visitors who arrive on the island and disturb the tranquility of the castaways. The relationship between the European protagonists and the natives are always hostile and threatening. Depicted as typical Hollywood stereotypes, the natives are superstitious, murderous, and brutal. The unbridgeable cultural differences are emphasized in each episode in which the natives appear. They are always seen as the other, and their presence is always equated with imminent danger.

If in the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel and Gold the presence of the natives provided an opportunity for a serious reflection on Defoe's novel, in *Gilligan's Island*, the natives become a source for a comic action. Like the Asian pirates in Disney's *Swiss Family Robinson*, the non-Western other serves no other purpose in the storyline than to illustrate the European protagonists' superiority over the "primitive" natives, and to show off the virtues of the castaways. Even clumsy, unskilled and inept Gilligan can outsmart the "savages." In "How to be a Hero," Gilligan successfully manages to rescue all of his friends from a native man's captivity and becomes a true "hero." Thus, the Western protagonists always manage to outwit the "primitive" natives. However, they never exercise any cruel form of domination against them. The show constantly emphasizes the fact that despite their flaws, the castaways are good people.

As Paula Carter notes in her book *Gilligan Unbound*, *Gilligan's Island* manages to capture the mood of the 1960s America at the peak of its self-confidence, "when it was still exuding the New Frontier spirit conjured up by John Kennedy, the spirit that was soon to triumph in the U.S. moon landing" (Carter 4). The show teaches its young viewers that resourceful, indigenous Americans could be dropped anywhere on the planet, even in the middle of an uninhabited, isolated island, and not only would they survive, but they would

make home there. With minimum resources at their disposal, they could subdue the wilderness. Indeed, "nothing about the remote and exotic locale of the island unsettles the castaways" (Carter 23). They never show a lack of self-confidence, or doubt their ability to survive. This fantasy of human super-competence, however unreal, appeals young viewers, because it implicitly reveals their own potentials as well. Watching these ever-resourceful, ever-potent characters can be wonderfully reassuring for children. It leaves them with the belief that they too would be able to survive all odds.

The island of *Gilligan's Island*, like the one of *The Swiss Family Robinson*, is portrayed in the show as a happy medium between the two extremes of a primitive world of the natives and a dubious world of modern civilization. Here the castaways are closer to the natural state, yet they still enjoy many benefits of civilization. Unlike the natives, for example, the Western protagonists own (and can devise) some technology on the island; however, as Carter observes, they do not become slaves to it. Moreover, "they participate in some of the benefits of the division of labor without suffering the alienation characteristic of an advanced market economy" (Carter 19). Hence, on the island the castaways live a happy, uncorrupted, harmonious life, "neither too primitive nor too corrupt by modern civilization" (Carter 22). That is why Wrongway Feldman, a pilot who finally manages to return to civilization after thirty three years of isolation, returns to the island shortly after his rescue. When the castaways ask him why he came back, he responds: "Because I wanted to get away from that horrid dingy place you call civilization. You can have that rush-rush-rush [. . .]. I don't want any part of it. [. . .] All that hustle and bustle, and the trains, and subways... No privacy. *This* is life! Trees, birds, rest, nature... Why would anyone want to leave this paradise?" This is also why the writers of *Gilligan's*

Island reject the idea of having the castaways rescued. Something always goes wrong at the last minute that hinders the characters' plan to leave the island.

***Robinson Crusoe* (2003)**

The animated *Robinson Crusoe*, released in 2003 by the Delta Studios, differs from children's Robinsonades examined earlier in that it follows Defoe's novel rather closely. Unlike *Swiss Family Robinson*, and *Gilligan's Island*, this film does not introduce any new characters into the story. Like Defoe's book, it uses the voice-over narration and centers on the experience of one solitary castaway. Here too, Robinson shows the same industry that Defoe's Crusoe does, but he lacks the seriousness of Defoe's protagonist. In the animated version targeted for children, Robinson finds great pleasure exploring his island, and taking care of his "family" of the dog, the cat, and the parrot. Furthermore, the religious aspect of his experience is entirely ignored. So are the issues of race, and slavery. The film calls attention to the purpose of Robinson's travel to Africa. Robinson goes there not to buy slaves, but to "exchange knives, hatchets" and other necessary objects for "leopard skin, ivory, and gold dust."

The animated version of *Robinson Crusoe* spends very little time portraying Crusoe's solitary days on the deserted island. The scene depicting Crusoe's first day after the shipwreck, and his exclamation - "I should spend my days in isolation," - is immediately followed by a sudden appearance of Poll the parrot, who talks almost as coherently as a human being. "So, I'm not alone after all," Crusoe cries out. "You've given me a heart!" Later, when he finds a captain's dog and a cat, they live, as Crusoe himself notes, "like a happy family all under one roof." Very soon the film fast forwards

fifteen years of the castaway's life on the island: "five, ten, fifteen years passed," announces Crusoe.

In the animated version of *Robinson Crusoe*, as in the original text, Friday – a poor victim of the brutality of his own people – is rescued by Crusoe. Compared to the adaptations targeted at adult viewers, in this children's Robinsonade the violence of the rescue scene is softened. Yet, it is not entirely erased. By means of their odd appearance and cruel actions young audiences would easily associate the native men with fear and badness. Crusoe, on the other hand, is depicted as good and courageous. His saving of Friday's life further reinforces the view of him as a kind, brave and noble character.

The film takes no notice of the issue of slavery. When Friday arrives, the two have a relationship of pure friendship from the very beginning. Crusoe puts him in his bed, and makes him feel at home. "It took me several days to convince him that I was his friend and wanted to help him," Crusoe narrates in a voice-over. They *both* agree that Crusoe "should call him Friday, [since] I could not pronounce his real name." Moreover, Crusoe does not force Friday to learn English. Friday is eager to study both the language and the customs of the Europeans. However, Friday's readiness to gain knowledge of Crusoe's lifestyle, value system, and language acknowledges the superiority of the Western culture Crusoe represents.

Friday's loyalty, his trustworthiness and fidelity are stressed throughout the film. When Crusoe gets sick, Friday takes a good care of him. At the end of the movie, Friday returns to his people. He does not follow Crusoe to Europe. "I have been happy [on the island], but now I am pleased to return to my own people," Friday tells Crusoe as they say farewell to each other. "I will take a wife, and we will have many children, and I will tell them about you, Robinson, and about the life we've shared. It will be a story my people

will tell from father to son, over the years." Just like other children's Robinsonades, this is a story of adventure, friendship, and survival. "[This island] has been my home, but only because you helped me *make* it home," Robinson tells Friday at the end of the film.

"Whatever happens, I shall never forget you, Friday. I found in you as true and good a friend as a man could ever wish for."

In his essay "The Strange Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe," Philip Zaleski, an author of *The Recollected Heart*, remonstrates that the children's Robinsonades ignore the religious aspect of Defoe's novel. Children's versions of the Crusoe story, he observes, alter not only the character of Crusoe, but "the very significance of his shipwreck, the very meaning of his life." Both the abridged versions of Defoe's novel and the narratives/films that are based on it, excise religion from their storyline altogether, and, thus, "tear the heart out of the novel," Zaleski points out. Zaleski's observations about the lack of religious overtones in children's Robinsonades are indeed accurate. Out of the motion pictures examined in this chapter only *The Swiss Family Robinson* incorporates religion. It is established from the very beginning that the film's protagonists are Christian. As soon as the family gets on the shore of the deserted island, the first thing they do is pray and thank God for their deliverance. However, religion does not play a significant part in the story. It does not influence the characters' actions, or shape their way of life in any significant way. There are no moments of spiritual consciousness or religious reflection. The Robinsons' journey is decidedly not a spiritual one. Although the end of the film depicts the family being much stronger, more confident and self-assured, their progress is physical and emotional, rather than spiritual. On the other hand, both the animated *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gilligan's Island* neglect religion altogether.

What accounts for the absence of religion in children's Robinsonades? Bringing religious convictions into prominence, I believe, would change the mood of these works altogether. None of these pictures have a reflective feel. They all concentrate on "action rather than analysis," and on "physical achievement instead of psychological understanding," to quote Tucker again (167). Thus, the focus on religion would hinder the continuing process of the adventure narrative the children's versions of the Crusoe story pursue. Moreover, as Ian Watt states in *The Rise of the Novel*, "The modern reader [. . .] tends to pay little attention to [religious] parts of [Defoe's] narrative" (76). Hence, were the children's Robinsonades centered on religion, one suspects, they would not be so popular among young audiences.

To conclude, children's Robinsonades are exciting, fun-filled adventure stories. Children love watching them, because they fulfill their fantasy of super-competence. Whether or not the simplified, always exciting world of these films makes any intellectual or psychological sense, they are still emotionally satisfying to young audiences, because they offer an optimistic, positive image of humanity, and at the same time gratify children's hunger for discovery and exploration. As Paul Hazard expresses it, children

[. . .] start out in life rather fearful. Like their great shipwrecked friend, they find themselves tossed onto an unknown land whose limits they will never know except by slow exploration. Like him, they are afraid of the darkness that falls. [. . .] Little by little, they gain poise and are reassured, and begin to live on their own accord. Just as Robinson does when he starts out to reconstruct his life. (58)

The Children's Robinsonades provide young viewers with just such poise and reassurance.

CHAPTER FIVE

Romanticizing the Crusoe Myth

“[. . .] the influence of Daniel Defoe’s [Robinson Crusoe] extends into our own century and ‘Robinsonism’ has become a concept which, far from being closed to modernity, can be reshaped according to the cultural development of a given period.”

Carmen Figuerola. “The Robinson Myth in Jean-Richard Bloch’s *Le Robinson juif*.”

In his essay "Art Form and Material," Bela Balazs, one of the distinguished early theorists of cinema as well as a scenarist and a director, states: "It is an accepted practice that we adapt novels and plays for the film; sometimes because we think their stories 'filmic,' sometimes because the popularity they have gained as novels or plays is to be exploited in the film market. Original film stories are very few and far between" (7). A filmmaker, Balazs argues, looks at the existing work of art "merely as raw material, regard[s] it from the specific angle of his own art form as if it were raw reality and pay[s] no attention to the form once already given to the material" (10). Thus, the same story, when given a different emphasis, is turned into a different theme. "Nearly every artistically serious and intelligent adaptation is such a re-interpretation," Balazs maintains. "The same external action has quite different inner motives, and it is these inner motives which throw lights on the hearts of the characters and determine the content which determines the form.

The material, that is the external events, serve merely as clues, and clues can be interpreted in many ways" (11).

As our discussion of various adaptation theories in the first chapter demonstrates, Balazs is not the only theorist who views adaptation as a transformation of literary texts - raw material for adapters – into multiple new variations. In his "Introduction" to *The English Novel and the Movies*, published in 1981, Michael Klein suggests that there are three ways in which a filmmaker can use the literary source in an adaptation: as a faithful, literal interpretation; as a core structure for reinterpretation; and as raw material for an original work. In a similar vein, Dudley Andrew names "borrowing" - using the material, idea, or form of an earlier, usually successful narrative - as the most frequent mode of adaptation. The success of this sort of adaptation, Andrew states, "rests on the issue of fertility, not their fidelity" (99).

Such an approach to adaptation as presented by Balazs, Klein, and Andrew, is especially useful for this chapter, which focuses on somewhat "masked" examples of the contemporary actualization of the Crusoe story. Crusoe's island, it has often been pointed out, lacks the fundamental component of the desert island fantasy: the woman. As Ian Watt humorously puts it, Crusoe's desire for male company "is an interesting break from the traditional expectations aroused by desert islands, from the *Odyssey* to the *New Yorker*" ("*Robinson Crusoe* as a Myth" 328). Many filmmakers have filled in that gap in Defoe's novel and introduced a romanticized rewritings of the Crusoe myth. The motion pictures examined in this chapter, thus, employ one of the most popular myths of Western culture but transform it by introducing a woman so that it fulfills the contemporary moviegoers' desire for romanticism.

The films discussed here – *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), *Trouble in Paradise* (1988), *Six Days, Seven Nights* (1998), and *Swept Away* (2002) – then, use Defoe's novel as "raw material." The filmmakers of these motion pictures take the castaway story, and by giving it a different emphasis, turn it into an original work with a different theme. These movies heavily rewrite the Crusoe story by placing it in our modern time, culture and climate, and by tailoring it to a contemporary audience's expectations. Instead of having one solitary individual undergoing the physical and psychological torment that results from a long period of isolation from the rest of the world, these films introduce two castaways, always a man and a woman, who find themselves stranded on the deserted island. The primary focus in these motion pictures becomes the relationship between the two castaways and how the island experience changes them. The controversial aspects usually associated with Defoe's novel (religion, colonial enterprise, the racial issues...) are ignored in these films.

The stunning cinematography of these motion pictures – the captivating island setting with sun-drenched beautiful beaches, and azure skies – is pervasive, and in stark contrast to a rigid and rocky island setting of *Cast Away*, or other versions of *Robinson Crusoe*. The visual impact of the background conditions the way the audience responds to the film. There is a sense of adventure as well as escape into a place of idyllic solitude, and Eden-like place. Even daily chores have adventure and romance. Passion is heightened. In this island microcosm characters undergo radical emotional, psychological, and physical change. Their value system, their priorities are significantly altered during their experience on the island. At the end of each film, the protagonists are quite different people from what they were at the beginning. On the island the characters grow, mature, discover their true selves, and most importantly, find their soul-mates.

Furthermore, the two castaways who end up stranded together on the remote island in these motion pictures are almost always people of different social status, values, political affiliation, lifestyles, and priorities. The island, which is a place where all social, hierarchical, and class constraints break down, turns the world of these characters upside down. The roles get reversed: the powerful become powerless; the hated one becomes the loved one; the values the characters so proudly avow in the real world, and the principles they follow, are put aside and forgotten on the island. It is a different zone altogether. "Nirvana. That's where we are. No more 'Yes, Sir,' 'No, Sir,' [. . .]. No more breaking my back over a stinking stove," Paddy Button from *The Blue Lagoon* exclaims as he sets his foot on the shore of the deserted island.

The Blue Lagoon (1980)

The Blue Lagoon (1980), directed and produced by Randal Kleiser, is based on Henry De Vere Stacpoole's 1903 novel. It had been filmed previously, first by W. Bowden and Dick Cruickshanks in 1923, starring Molly Adair and Dick Cruickshanks, and later by a British director Frank Launder in 1949, starring Jean Simmons and Donald Houston. The earlier motion pictures lack the nudity and sexual content of the 1980 version. Kleiser's *The Blue Lagoon*, which focuses on a sexual awakening of two teenage castaways, was criticized as immoral by several Christian and conservative groups, primarily due to the themes presented in the film. The story, they argued, touches on masturbation, teenage sex, alcoholism, and other controversial subjects without delving into any of these topics in depth, or presenting a moral message. To this day, some Christian film review sources cite *The Blue Lagoon* as "a benchmark for measuring the immorality of a film, particularly when it comes to teenagers in sexual situations" ("*The Blue Lagoon*").

Despite such critical responses – or perhaps because of them – *The Blue Lagoon* was the ninth biggest box office hit of 1980 in North America, according to Box Office Mojo, grossing \$58,853,106 in the United States and Canada ("*The Blue Lagoon*"). The reason for its success is that Kleiser, like other filmmakers discussed in this chapter, tailors his film to a contemporary movie audience's desires and expectations by romanticizing one of the most popular myths of our time. "Why do we keep returning to Blue lagoon?" – a viewer ponders in his review of the movie. "Because wouldn't we all like to be marooned on a gorgeous tropical island with our perfect love and be left to live simple and fulfilling lives in paradise?"

The Blue Lagoon fulfills that fantasy. It is a story of two children, Emmeline and Richard, shipwrecked on a tropical island with a ship's cook, Paddy Button. When Paddy dies, the children are left alone to survive solely on their resourcefulness, and the bounty of their tropical paradise. The film rushes through the two little children's struggle to survive in the jungle to focus on the castaways' life as teenagers. Their love happens naturally. Viewers expect it. The rest of the film concentrates on the sexual awakening of the two characters. By the time they are rescued, they have learned a great deal about life and are raising a child of their own.

In an audio commentary to the film, Kleiser states that *The Blue Lagoon* was his attempt to make an innocent and beautiful movie about two young people discovering their sexuality. *The Blue Lagoon* is indeed innocent and, in some ways, remarkably beautiful. The relationship that the two teenagers develop is tender, caring and sensual, but never obscene or pornographic (Pope). One reviewer even calls the film "revoltingly clean" (Denby 53). Furthermore, the characters' growing love for each other is supported visually as well. *The Blue Lagoon* looks breathtaking. Shot almost entirely on location on and

around the Fiji Islands, the film is alive with colorful coral reefs, majestic waterfalls and lush jungles. In the novel Stacpoole provided very specific details regarding the island and its animal inhabitants. A ship's surgeon for over forty years, Stacpoole was an expert on the South Sea Islands (Pope). Cinematographer Néstor Almendros, who was nominated for an Oscar for his work in this film in 1980, visually recreates the paradise with lush landscape shots and exotic animal and insect close-ups.

According to Bryan Pope, the biggest disappointment of *The Blue Lagoon* is that "Kleiser and Stewart refuse to take the story in interesting directions. In addition to being a romance, it could have been a rousing South Seas adventure or a gritty tale of survival. Or why not all three?" The movie does flirt with this idea by introducing the threat of island natives who make human sacrifices, but then quickly drops it.¹³ Instead, it focuses entirely on the characters' sexual awakening, touching only occasionally on the harsh, sad realities inherent in the story's premise. One of the few moments that effectively illustrates how time and isolation can dissolve even the most deeply ingrained memories is when, on one Christmas morning, Richard and Emmeline sing Christmas carols from their childhood, only to forget the words. The moment is both funny and heartbreaking. Another touching episode includes Richard and Em discovering a lifeless body of Paddy Button, their only guardian and protector on the island. The loss of Paddy introduces the children to death, which is much uglier, more real and horrifying than their childish ideas about it. The little kids' innocence is slowly breaking. Richard and Em realize their own eventual fate.

In his review of *The Blue Lagoon* a film critic Roger Ebert states that the film

¹³The children and the natives never meet one another. However, their presence is strongly felt throughout the film: Em and Richard live in continual fear of the savages, who leave death and destruction wherever they go. Several times viewers get a glimpse of the native men's barbarous lifestyle: they sacrifice human beings to their bloodthirsty Gods. Their way of life is contrasted with the purity and innocence of the European protagonists who, although removed from civilization, remain intrinsically civilized.

“could conceivably have been made interesting if any serious attempt had been made to explore what might really happen if two 7-year-old kids were shipwrecked on an island.” But Kleiser is not interested in making the story of two shipwrecked children a tale of wilderness survival. The details about daily life of the castaways are glossed over. Survival is easy on this bountiful island; it has fresh water, ample fruit, and the sea with plenty of fish. Before he dies, Paddy teaches the children various useful skills, including the construction of a hut, and collection of food. After the death of their protector, Richard and Emmeline are left alone. The film shows how they grow up, “mostly at sunset” (Ebert). Kleiser skips the depiction of the little children’s life on the island and shows them some seven or eight years later. Not only have Em and Richard survived, but they live very comfortably in a hut “that looks like a Club Med Honeymoon cottage” (Ebert). They spend days fishing, swimming, and diving for pearls.

From there the film focuses on the sexual awakening of the two teenagers. Their bodies mature and develop, and they do not know how to cope with the variety of physical and emotional changes that come with adolescence. They are physically attracted to each other, but do not know how to express it. Their general ignorance of human sexuality causes much frustration and tension. They have many unanswered questions about their bodies and their feelings. Ultimately, they learn about sex, childbirth, and parenthood. After the birth of their son, Paddy, the three live a happy, peaceful life on the island. Thus, although unfettered by the bonds of society from their early years, the two subscribe to marriage and traditional role-playing. Richard provides food, while Emmeline takes care of a newborn baby. When one day they spot a ship, they make a mutual decision to remain on the island. They are content here. They are complete.

The film's ending is rather ambiguous. One day, Emmeline and Richard take their boat to the other side of the island. After losing the oars, the two young parents and Paddy find themselves adrift at open sea. While trying to rescue themselves, Em and Richard do not notice the baby eating the poisonous berries he picked. Once they realize it, it is too late. Hopeless and desperate, the parents decide to eat the berries as well, embracing each other to await death. Meanwhile, as it turns out, Richard's father has been sailing the South Seas, looking for the castaways. He finally finds them floating in the boat. The unconscious bodies of Em, Richard, and Paddy are rescued. When Richard's father inquires about their condition, the ship's captain answers: "They are asleep." However, the ending leaves it uncertain as to whether they are sleeping and can be revived, or if they are dead. Viewers never see the young castaways awake again, and the film ends with many unanswered questions: Will the characters survive? What will their life outside the island be like? Will they be able to reintegrate into society?¹⁴

Six Days, Seven Nights (1998)

Six Days, Seven Nights (1998), directed by Ivan Reitman from a screenplay by Michael Browning and starring Harrison Ford and Anne Heche, tells a story of a stressed out New York fashion magazine editor Robin Monroe and her fiancé who travel to an island resort in South Pacific for a romantic getaway. However, when Robin is called away from her vacation by her boss, she asks a charter plane pilot Quinn to take her off the island for a one-day photo shoot in Tahiti. Their plane goes down and Robin and Quinn find themselves stranded on a deserted island. Cut off from the outside world, Quinn and Robin

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Return to the Blue Lagoon, a sequel based very loosely on Stacpoole's actual sequel *The Garden of God*, attempts to answer the unanswered questions left by the ending of *The Blue Lagoon*. This 1991 film picks up where the last one left off - a ship discovering the unconscious bodies of the two young parents and their baby. Emmeline and Richard die, but Paddy survives. He ultimately ends up back on the island in a story similar to that of the first film.

are forced to find a way to survive. The remainder of the movie shows how the two castaways pass their time by getting to know each other, how they fight against pirates, and finally, how they start to fall in love. The island experience changes both characters dramatically. A workaholic, Robin is a modern woman in an exaggerated way, who learns that human relations are more important than the photo shoots. Once they are rescued, Robin and Quinn try to go back to their previous lives, but they cannot. The island has taught them different values.

In her review of the film, Stephanie Zacharek observes that part of what is so entertaining about *Six Days, Seven Nights* is “the way Reitman mixes all the conventions of the stranded-on-an island motif: unpleasant encounters with creepy-crawly nature, the building of stuff out of bamboo and found objects, the first kiss in paradise. [. . .] The movie simply *looks* like a vacation; it almost makes you feel as if you’ve actually been somewhere.” Indeed, Reitman’s motion picture employs the Robinson Crusoe myth to satisfy contemporary viewers’ desire to escape from their daily, mundane lives into a world of adventure, and excitement. James Simmons, an author of *Castaways in Paradise*, refers to Crusoe’s story as the most popular fantasy of our times. This is a fantasy for those people, Simmons remarks, who are trapped in a nine to five desk jobs, fantasizing about being cast away on a deserted island. They think that if they could only chuck it all and escape to an island in the Caribbean, or the Pacific, they would find a paradise. But the island fantasy inevitably includes romance, and Reitman’s film centers on that premise. It introduces two completely different protagonists who eventually fall in love: Robin Monroe, “too irremediably urban” (McCarthy) and Quinn Harris, “one of those guy guys” who if “you send [. . .] into the wilderness with a pocket knife and a Q-tip [. . .] build you a shopping mall.” As Todd McCarthy observes, “this sort of antagonistic attraction between

opposites has been done by Hollywood countless times before.” In its portrayal of the mismatched lovers, *Six Days, Seven Nights* echoes such films as *African Queen*, *Romancing the Stone*, *High Art*, and *The Horse Whisperer*, all of which center around a relationship of two very different protagonists, “one of whom is dedicated to mass-marketing trivia in glossy packages, while the other turns away from consumer culture for something purer or more natural” (Taubin 140).

Reitman’s motion picture takes the safe path of incorporating the themes contemporary viewers would find fascinating, from the mythic figure of the castaway to romance, comedy, and adventure. However, by choosing the safe path, *Six Days, Seven Nights* forfeits originality and becomes too predictable. By featuring everything that “might conceivably hook an audience” (Turan) – attractive stars, exotic setting, mean pirates, white beaches, witty speeches, and incompatible lovers – *Six Days, Seven Nights* becomes nothing more than “a well-worn standard diversion” (Turan). One can easily guess the outcome of the movie from its very first episodes. As Rob Dreher of *New York Post* remarks, the film is “watchable,” yet “undistinguished” and “thoroughly routine romantic comedy” (39).

The opening scenes of the film establish Robin Monroe, played by Anne Heche, as a workaholic editor of a *Cosmo*-like fashion magazine, *Dazzle*. Robin is an exaggerated version of a contemporary American woman: her demanding job leaves her no time for anything else, including spending time with her boyfriend Frank, played by David Schwimmer. One day Frank, who is an attorney, and leads equally hectic life, surprises Robin with a vacation on the secluded South Pacific island of Makatea. That Frank and Robin’s relationship lacks spark and excitement is evident almost immediately. When Frank proposes to Robin, he reminds her that it is their anniversary that day. “We have an

anniversary? – Robin asks, surprised. They are one of those couples who, as a local pilot Quinn, played by Harrison Ford, observes, “come here looking for ‘the magic,’ expecting to find romance when they can’t find it in any other place. It’s the island. [. . .] If you don’t bring it here, you won’t find it here.”

Robin and Frank certainly do not find romance on a remote island. Robin, who is only a phone call away from her boss, decides to take an assignment to fly to Tahiti for a photo shoot for a day. For a second she has qualms about leaving Frank alone: “What kind of message am I sending to Frank if the day after our betrothal I am leaving him to go on some photo shoot,” she exclaims. But when her boss reassures: “an excellent message. This is the perfect opportunity to establish parameters. I read somewhere that 38.6% of women are pressured into quitting their jobs in the first year of marriage,” Robin is convinced.

But one day trip to Tahiti turns into a disaster. Robin and Quinn crash on a deserted island after their plane is hit by lightning. The crash exacerbates the different personalities of the two castaways. Quinn likes a "simple" life. He tells Robin that he quit his very successful business and "came out here, got a nice little house on a beautiful beach. Got [his] plane. Got peace and quiet." Robin does not understand how Quinn can find such remote life appealing. When Quinn says that he is "livin' the life every man dreams of," she comments, rolling her eyes: "Well, yeh, until they're twelve."

Reitman’s film glamorizes and romanticizes the island adventure. Everything in *Six Days, Seven Nights* is neat, sanitary, and relatively pleasant. There are fresh peacocks ready to be skewered and eaten. No one develops diarrhea after drinking the water. Even a scorpion and a snake turn out harmless. The indigenous life appears to be exciting, enjoyable, and appealing. Robin, who at first seems too urban to cope with the Robinson

Crusoe lifestyle, does surprisingly well in wilderness. Predictably, as the two castaways grow closer, they start to fall in love.

When the solitary lives of the two castaways threaten to get dull, Reitman introduces pirates to divert viewers. As James Bebardinelli notes, “they are on hand to add some action to the proceedings. Who wants to spend ninety minutes watching Quinn and Robin grow closer over cozy peacock dinners? So instead, we get rubber raft chases, a foot race through a forest, and a fist fight.” The pirates, who are native to that part of the world, are marked by racial difference from white protagonists. They have fake accents and are quintessentially wicked. They are depicted not only cruel and ruthless – they have no qualms about murdering people and throwing their bodies into the open sea – but also stupid and easy to dupe. Quinn and Robin outsmart them without much trouble. It is enough to mention that they have hidden gold inside a ship that the pirates immediately drop everything and follow them. Of course, Quinn and Robin manage to escape. Danger only brings the two castaways closer. With a mutual effort, they manage to fix the plane and fly back to the island of Makatea.

Return to a civilized world is bitter sweet for both characters. Both know that they cannot simply forget the island experience and go back to their former lives. "Was what happened on that island anything?" Robin ponders. "Or was it just something that happened to two people when they're alone on an island together?" Quinn cannot deny that "it was something." Yet, their life paths do not seem to intersect. "I am pretty set on my ways," Quinn insists. "You have so many possibilities. You deserve someone fresher. Let's be smart about this. You're not gonna move out here and become my copilot, and I'm not gonna go to New York and be your receptionist. So, where does that leave us? Let's not complicate things."

But the things are already complicated. A life that seemed so satisfying to Robin before, suddenly becomes unbearable. And Quinn realizes how lonely he has been. They both discover that human relationships are more important than anything else. At the end, both characters are ready to sacrifice. Robin gets off the plane. How the characters plan to overcome the challenges that lie in their future, is left unknown, but that does not matter. The last shot is of the couple embracing each other.

Trouble in Paradise (1988)

Trouble in Paradise, directed by Di Drew and starring Raquel Welch and Ralf Cotterill, is another desert island fantasy story. Rachel, a rich, spoiled socialite is shipwrecked on a remote island with drunk, shabby Jake, a crew member of the ship. At first the two castaways hate each other. Rachel humiliates and insults Jake at every opportunity she gets. Jake, on the other hand, is insensitive and cruel toward his only companion. However, when Rachel gets sick, Jake's feelings start to change. Slowly the two start to fall in love. On the desert island, Rachel and Jake have their utopia.

The island, as in the films discussed earlier, is a major character in this motion picture. It is a place where none of the social/hierarchical/class roles apply. While on the ship, Rachel gets great pleasure in demeaning Jake, constantly reminding him that he is subordinate to her. Although well aware of her own sexuality, sex in general does not cross her mind. She strikes poses in her sexy lingerie, never thinking that Jake would be so bold as to desire her. Evidently she thinks that sex does not cross socio-economic boundaries. On the island, however, Rachel and Jake trade roles. Here it is Jake who holds the power. He knows how to make fire, how to cook dinner, whereas Rachel is powerless and vulnerable.

Trouble in Paradise rushes through the struggle of the two castaways to survive in wilderness to focus on their developing relationship. Rachel and Jake do not even need to build a shelter for themselves. Conveniently, they find a rather comfortable little hut with a bedroom, a cozy king size bed, and all necessary furniture. To make things even better, there are plenty of chicken and pigs running around inside the abandoned dwelling, ready to be eaten. As Jake concludes based on the documents they find inside the house, people who lived there, had to evacuate the island to avoid the nuclear radiation.

The film thus focuses on the two castaways' relationship as it turns from being hostile, cold, and disrespectful, into passionate and loving. Despite their different lifestyles and social status, both Jake and Rachel are lost souls. Neither of them have anyone in the real world who misses them, and who cares about them. When Rachel asks Jake if he left someone special behind, he responds, "Lots of people left behind, but none of them who love me." Rachel, who recently lost her husband, and has no children, also has no one to return to.

The island stirs deep emotions. It shows the other side of the characters, the side they try so hard to conceal when in real world. Here, far from civilization, they discover their true selves. The island, thus, liberates both characters. Soon viewers realize that behind Rachel's haughtiness and arrogance there is a lonely and vulnerable woman. She has learned to mask her feelings and hide her true emotions. Her late husband, viewers find out, has emotionally abused her. Because of that, she is skeptical about love. On the other hand, Jake's ruggedness is only external. Deep inside, he is a sensitive man. Jake is a dreamer. He quit his job as a window cleaner to "chase something that does not exist, dream you can't catch." For him dreaming is "the only thing that makes the reality possible." The dream does come true on the island. Both Rachel and Jake find what they

have been searching all their lives – Jake finds a woman who loves him for who he is and Rachel finds a man who is genuine, who loves her unconditionally, who protects her, and rescues her.

The end of the film brings some action into play, and also tests the relationship of the two castaways. As it turns out, Rachel's husband faked his own death, and is now desperately looking for the lost ship, because he and three of his confidantes hid sixty five million dollars worth of heroine inside the coffin that was supposedly carrying his body. When one day Rachel spots their yacht, she and Jake swim to it and soon discover the ugly truth. After a long and heart-pounding fight, Rachel and Jake overpower Rachel's husband George, and his friends. But instead of killing them, they put them in a small boat and just like Crusoe does with the mutineers, leave them on the deserted island.

***Swept Away* (2002)**

Swept Away is a remake of 1974 Italian-language film that was written and directed by the first woman to ever receive a Best Director Oscar nomination, Lina Wertmuller. Wertmuller's controversial, yet very powerful motion picture, titled *Swept Away by an Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August*, is an allegory on social and class injustice as well as a battle for dominance between the sexes. Unlike the original, a 2002 version, directed by a British director Guy Ritchie and starring Madonna, received bad reviews from critics and even won the worst picture award. "Though the movie purports to be a satirical examination of capitalism, its vague discussion of money and power adds up to very little," Bret Fetzer comments in his review. "The love story is surprisingly sincere, making *Swept Away* a standard romantic potboiler with gorgeous tropical backdrops." Roger Ebert notes that "the original film was about something. This isn't." Ritchie's

remake, many agree, takes a story with meaning and a message and turns it into a clichéd story.

The plot of *Swept Away* follows the storyline of Wertmuller's film rather closely: Cruel, capitalist Amber and communist fisherman Giuseppe are shipwrecked on a deserted island. Despite their differences, they fall in love and find complete happiness on the island where the two social classes merge, and where such passion is possible. However, to prove that their utopia is real, it has to be tested, and that testing ground is back in civilization. But the real world does not adjust easily to a shift in social stratification. And thus, unlike the couples discussed earlier, Amber and Giuseppe fail the test. The film ends with Amber - although changed and softened by the island experience - flying back to her house with her millionaire husband, taking with her only the memories of her island utopia.

As this brief summary makes clear, all of the elements of the traditional Robinsonade underlie *Swept Away*: a shipwreck, a deserted island, a master-slave relationship, and finally, a return home. However, as in *Blue Lagoon*, *Six Days, Seven Nights* and *Trouble in Paradise*, the focus here is on the romantic relationship that develops between the two characters of different social classes, values, political affiliation, life styles, and personalities. The story introduces Amber as a stereotypical wealthy, arrogant, and clearly very unhappy wife of Dr. Anthony Leighton, a head of a successful pharmaceutical company. The story opens up with Anthony surprising Amber with a cruise from Italy to Greece, with four of their friends in tow. Amber's haughtiness and conceited personality become apparent from the very first scenes of the film: as soon as she finds out what her husband has planned, she immediately starts complaining: the yacht they have hired is far beneath her standards, and the crew members are crude peasants. The primary target of her criticism becomes the first mate of the crew, Giuseppe, or Pepe, played by

Adriano Giannini.¹⁵ Giuseppe, an ardent communist, feels nothing but contempt for Amber, but he is paid well and thus, has to tolerate her attacks if he wants to keep his job.

The yacht thus represents two completely different worlds: the rich American capitalists and the Italian working class. The film clearly sympathizes with the crew's point of view. Viewers see the actions of Amber, her husband, and their friends with the eyes of Pepe and the captain. *Swept Away* exposes the hypocrisy of relationships that are based exclusively on money and convenience rather than on respect and caring. Out of the three couples neither one is actually happy with each other. None of the three women show any love or affection for their spouses. The husbands are indifferent, cold and distant as well. They go to sleep alone while women drink and play cards all night. There is no connection, no interaction among the guests. They do not socialize without aggressiveness and competition.

The mise-en-scene reinforces this sense of isolation and detachment that exists in the world of the yacht. There are essentially no views of the natural scenery or the sea. Most of the scenes are shot inside the yacht, in the cramped and tiny spaces with all the guests squeezed into one frame. Amber and her friends are indifferent to the history and culture of the places they are visiting. They spend the days lounging around, drinking, eating, and gambling. Amber even refuses to take a swim, complaining that the water is filthy. The listless and indolent life on the yacht is later contrasted to the vital and sexual world of the island.

One day, Amber declines an invitation to go diving with her friends, but later changes her mind, demanding that Giuseppe take her to the underwater caves. Giuseppe warns her about an upcoming storm, but ignoring his advice, she orders him to take her

¹⁵ Adrianno Giannini, who plays Giuseppe, is the son of Giancarlo Giannini, an actor who played the equivalent role in Wertmuller's original film.

there anyway. Along the way, the motor of the dinghy dies and Amber and Giuseppe end up stranded out in the middle of the sea. From this moment on, Amber's life starts to change. She soon realizes that neither her money nor her complaints can repair the dingy, bring rescuers, or prevent a storm from washing them onto a deserted island. Suddenly, both Pepe and Amber discover that the tables are turned. Giuseppe, a trained fisherman, knows how to survive on the island, while Amber is utterly helpless. The social roles are reversed: the victimized servant now becomes master. Pepe demands that he be called "master" and that she serve him if she wants to be fed. When she fails at something, he hits her. Amber tolerates Giuseppe's abuse, because she has no other choice.

Living on a deserted island overturns the characters' political ideologies as well. On the yacht, while discussing capitalism and personal success, Amber insists that "the nature of capitalism is more successful than communism. You don't see too many people emigrating to Cuba, or China." When her husband's friend suggests that many times there are ethical problems raised by capitalism, Amber fires back: "The laws of capitalism are: The proprietor of goods can set any price he or she sees fit and shall not be at the mercy of any moral or ethical issues," she states. On the island, however, her ideas change. When she asks Pepe to sell her a fish, Pepe refuses, reminding her that money is meaningless to him now. He demands that she wash his clothes in return for food. "Can I at least have something to eat first?" - Amber pleads. "Do you give drugs to the needy before they've paid for them? Well, we don't accept credit in this house either," Pepe argues. "You are completely taking advantage of me. I am hurt and I need to eat," Amber complains. The "laws of capitalism" she so passionately avows on the yacht are forgotten here. On the other hand, the values Giuseppe so proudly subscribes to on the yacht are put aside on the island. Here he becomes the capitalist. The film, thus, pokes fun at political devotees who

are zealous only in theory. Even the most devout follower of a political system will deviate from that system if it does not respond to personal needs, *Swept Away* argues.

In spite of the rage and physical abuse, love develops between Amber and Pepe. Their battle turns into a strong sexual attraction. However, Ritchie's motion picture presents this transition in a very abrupt and unconvincing way. One moment Amber is slapped to the ground and the next she is kissing Giuseppe's feet. The film supports their relationship through several idyllic love-in-paradise scenes. The two are shown embracing each other tenderly, sharing daily chores, and enjoying the beautiful landscapes. Furthermore, the background music by an Estonian composer Arvo Part is romantic, sensitive, gentle and soothing.

Swept Away idealizes the island as a place where all formal political, religious, and social constraints break down and where people can discover their true selves. Both Giuseppe and Amber learn about themselves on the island. Here they find their utopia. Amber admits that she has never been so happy in her life. She does not want to leave the island. When she spots a ship passing by one day, she hides. However, their relationship cannot escape the trial. Their love needs to be tested and the testing ground must be back in civilization. As Rebeca Weaver-Hightower observes, "their island's flaw is its utopic nature, its very existence so outside of 'reality' that it fosters a romance so groundless that it could survive nowhere else." Thus, the film ends as Amber flies back to New York with her husband to resume her old life. Amber weeps quietly as the helicopter takes off, leaving the island and her lover behind. Giuseppe's figure, running after the jet, becomes smaller and smaller, until it fades away altogether.

The problem with Ritchie's *Swept Away*, to quote one reviewer, is that "it's lost the politics and the social observation and become just another situation romance" (Ebert).

Ritchie's motion picture, as Wertmuller's original version, aims at depicting the political, religious and social liberation achieved on the island as the most desirable condition for human beings, while recognizing that living outside class, gender or social constraints is only possible in the fantasy world of the deserted isle. Reality, which the protagonists eventually have to face, destroys that fantasy. However, the concluding sequence of Ritchie's film obscures this premise, and *Swept Away* becomes nothing more than a picturesque love story. In Wertmuller's original version, once they are rescued, Raffaella *chooses* to go away with her rich husband, leaving Gennario and her memories behind. Wertmuller's motion picture stresses the fact that the real world necessitates a shift of power back to Raffaella. Although changed by the island experience, and genuinely in love with Gennario, she is not strong enough to overcome the consequences a shift in social stratification requires her to take. The conclusion of Ritchie's motion picture, on the other hand, lacks the complexity and depth of Wertmuller's ending. Here the couple's final separation is a result of a misunderstanding based on a misdelivered letter! The film continuously stresses Amber's willingness to leave her wealth and status behind for true love. It is *only* her watchful husband's intervention that keeps the lovers apart – because of her husband's contrivance, Amber never gets Giuseppe's letter and is *forced* to leave. Such ending oversimplifies Ritchie's film and conceals its intended meaning.

CHAPTER SIX

Science Fiction Robinsonade

“The hero, alone on his island, deprived of all assistance from his fellows, and nevertheless able to look after himself, is obviously a figure that will enthrall readers of all ages.”

Ian Watt. “Robinson Crusoe as a Myth.”

One of the reasons for the enduring appeal of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is that it is a fascinating story about one ordinary individual’s desperate struggle to survive in the wilderness. James Sutherland observes that as a story, *Robinson Crusoe* has the firm and satisfying structure of a man triumphing over difficulties, creating his own little cosmos out of what, if he had been merely idle and despondent, must have remained chaos. Crusoe’s ingenuity, his ability to master nature and survive by sheer native energy have captivated readers for centuries. The wilderness theme – man vs. nature – central to the Crusoe story, fascinates readers because it focuses on such universal issues as physical and emotional survival, spiritual hope, and the exploration of unknown.

As John Dean states in his essay “The Uses of Wilderness in American Science Fiction,” although the wilderness theme “has steadily diminished in the prevailing currents of American and English literature since World War Two,” it has become the “common property of science fiction” (68). Part of the reason for the lack of concern with wilderness, Dean explicates, is “its diminishment as an object of daily experience and present wonder” (68). Where does man’s capacity for wonder go when all the wilderness

has gone? – Dean speculates. The answer to this question, Dean suggests, lies in the genre of science fiction:

The highly Americanized, modern form of SF preserves American ideals of wilderness. SF can nicely accomplish this feat because it can rewrite history: it builds stories on the basis of altered, hypothetical states rather than blunt, empirical reality. Wilderness is lost – but wilderness is not lost. SF provides us with new, green worlds for old. (69)

Science fiction employs the wilderness theme in order to provide audiences with an adventure and to depict “a place where an alert protagonist discovers his essential values” (Dean 68). The wilderness theme “plumbs the depths; it takes [viewers] back to profound basics. Wilderness is an iconographic phenomenon read with the mind’s eye and the spirit’s impulses. Plunged into life and death experiences, the wilderness hero clearly sees why he is alive; he must survive” (Dean 68).

Dean’s essay makes it clear why the Crusoe myth is an excellent and predictable plot source for the film genre of science fiction. As Dean observes, traditionally, in Western literature there are four wilderness areas: forests, oceans, deserts, and mountains. Science fiction opens up a fifth area – space: “deep space, outer space, the endless field of the stars” (77). Accordingly, science fiction Robinsonades modify the Crusoe story so that the sea becomes equivalent to the sky, the sailing ship becomes a spaceship, and the natives become the aliens. The major theme of these motion pictures, however, is still survival under Spartan conditions through the use of reason, determination, and technology.

In her dissertation *The Celluloid Crusoe*, Anne Colvin puts together a list of science fiction Robinsonades up to 1980s. The list, which is included in an appendix, is very extensive and incorporates numerous motion pictures, all employing the Crusoe myth in the service of science fiction. I have updated Colvin’s list to include science fiction

Robinsonade filmography after 1989. As the brief summary of these motion pictures makes clear (see the appendix), the protagonists of each one of these science fiction Robinsonades find themselves in a similar situation - all of them are strangers in a strange environment, desperately trying to survive physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

Additionally, science fiction Robinsonades focus on the protagonist's coping with the new environs on a daily basis rather than the inevitable catastrophe that befalls them. In these films, then, "the hero automatically survives a preliminary disaster [. . .] The initial survival predicament [. . .] is the inciting incident of or the prelude to the main action of the plot" (Colvin 144). Finally, science fiction Robinsonades are distinguished from other types of science fiction films in that their emphasis is on people rather than on special effects. The protagonists of these motion pictures are ordinary individuals, just like Crusoe, not super heroes like Spiderman or Superman, for instance.

Although many science fiction films make use of the Crusoe myth, this chapter will focus on Byron Haskin's *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964) exclusively. Since this dissertation does not center solely on science fiction Robinsonades, I examine only one motion picture as an illustrative example of how the science fiction genre employs and transforms the Crusoe story. However, I realize that many claims which I make in my analysis of this movie are appropriate for this particular motion picture only, and may not apply to other filmic Robinsonades of the same genre. The reason I chose this particular film for close analysis is because it is, I believe, the best example of the blend of the Robinsonade and the science fiction genre. *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* openly adopts the plot of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Unlike other science fiction Robinsonades, Haskin's film contains an explicit allusion to Defoe's novel in the title, and thus, establishes from the very beginning that its aim is to rewrite Defoe's story. The plot of *Robinson Crusoe on*

Mars follows the storyline of Defoe's book very closely, although the events take place not on a deserted island, but on the planet of Mars. Finally, *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, similar to the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel, Gold, Govorukhin and Hardy/Miller, does not attempt to simply replicate Defoe's novel. Instead, Haskin, as other filmmakers before and after him, enters into dialogue with Defoe, and interprets and critiques the source text.

In his essay "Colonizing the Universe: Science Fiction Then, Now, and in the (Imagined) Future," Greg Grewell responds to John Dean's argument about the uses of wilderness in American science fiction in the following way: Dean, Grewell argues, overlooks how the literature of colonization "has come to inform science fiction literature and film. [. . .] Dean does not consider how wilderness and its inhabitants have been exploited and colonized" (42). To Grewell, science fiction productions, whether cinematic or literary, are based on earthly narratives of colonization. Underlying most science fiction plots is the colonial narrative: "The science fiction industry has essentially borrowed from, technologically modernized, and recast the plots, scenes, and tropes of the literature of earthly colonization" (26), Grewell maintains. Even when a science fiction production does not seem directly to invoke or be informed by the colonial narrative, "there remain the multifarious relations to colonialism, to its history, to the ways that it has shaped this old world," Grewell observes (29).

According to Grewell, there are three basic models of science fiction colonial narratives: the explorative, domesticative, and combative. In the explorative model, the concern is with the "discovery" of inhospitable, alien wilderness, "and with the possibility of human contact with the often-unfriendly beings inhabiting these foreign worlds" (28). In these cases, Grewell maintains, the central focus is not on the civilization of the aliens, but rather "on the physical and psychological torment the galactic colonist experiences"

(28). The second type, which Grewell calls the domesticative, “has largely to do with establishing a home, whether is the singular or plural as a small settlement, trading post, or larger colony somewhere out there” (28). In both the explorative and the domesticative models, the number of castaways is generally relatively few. *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, for instance, depicts a solitary life of a single astronaut; *The Forbidden Planet* has a dozen earthlings. “No matter the number, the ultimate goal tends to remain the same: to seek out and settle – that is, colonize –new worlds” (Grewell 29).

Finally, the combative model “enlarge[s] the scale of things” (29). In this case viewers are presented with “whole-scale conflict, with one civilization battling it out with another for existence or sometimes for something less immediate such as territorial or trade rights” (29). Accordingly, these films are more action packed, or violent. The combative model is not apart from the explorative and domesticative models. Rather, “it represents a late, progressive stage in continuum” (29).

Robinson Crusoe on Mars fits into the explorative colonial narrative model.

However, as our analysis of the film will make clear, it contains elements of the domesticative and the combative models as well. Based on Defoe’s novel, the film maintains the novel’s plot while casting its scene on Mars: The story begins as an American spacecraft the Mars Gravity Probe One, piloted by Commander Christopher “Kit” Draper and Colonel Dan McReady, is forced out of its Mars orbit when it dodges a large meteor. Unable to reclaim their orbit, Colonel McReady, played by Adam West, and commander Draper, played by Paul Mantee, must separately exit their craft so that it can regain its orbit. The two astronauts land in two opposite sides of a mountain range. McReady is dead, and Mona, a space traveling monkey, is Kit’s only companion. The first half of the film focuses on a solitary castaway’s struggle to survive both physically and emotionally.

The second part introduces the Friday figure and centers on the relationship between the two men. Friday escapes from the alien slavers. The two develop a strong bond. At the end of the movie, Kit and Friday successfully escape from the alien slavers and are finally rescued by a United States spacecraft

As Colvin observes, “given the natural mysteries of the Red Planet and the contrived ones created by science fiction writers and then by movie makers, [. . .] it is no wonder that the combination of two popular myths, *Crusoe* and life on Mars, was successful at the box office” (132). Matthew McGowan calls it “meditative,” “intelligent” and “humanistic.” In *Film Guide*, Leslie Halliwell, the journalist and film-researcher, notes that “this is an absorbing, entertaining and well-staged piece of science fiction” (827). John Barker, another film critic, labels it “one of the best of the sixties films,” and Kenneth Von Guden and Stuart Stock place *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* in the company of such classic science fiction motion pictures as *The War of the Worlds*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *A Clockwork Orange*, listing it as one of the twenty all-time great science fiction films (qtd. in Colvin 142).

One of the selling points of the movie was the boast on both posters and in the trailer that “this film is scientifically authentic.” *Time Magazine* stated: “here comes a pleasant surprise, a piece of science fiction based on *valid speculation*” (emphasis mine). In order to reinforce the sense of authenticity, the filmmakers cast unknown actors in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*. “There is some advantage, when watching a film of this sort, in *not* seeing a major star in it,” Ib J. Melchior, one of the screenwriters for the film, noted in an interview. “When I see Kirk Douglas or Elizabeth Taylor, it is a *film*; the other way seems so real. I think this is what they tried to do in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, they were

actors you were not familiar with, and the film was more believable that way” (qtd. in Weaver 267).

For the audience of the sixties, this claim to authenticity carried some weight. As Jeff Rovin states in his book titled *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction Films*,

In general, the audience of the sixties was more demanding. On a purely commercial note, they would now be paying three dollars or more to visit a theatre that in the fifties, they had entered for ninety cents. Also, humanity had begun its conquest of space, and tolerance for the fantastic, as opposed to that which was of stoic realism, became severely unbalanced in favor of the realistic. (117)

The claim to authenticity made by *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* can be compared to Defoe’s own claim to authenticity for *Robinson Crusoe*. In the Preface, Defoe wears the mask of an Editor when he writes: “The editor believes the thing to be a just history of fact; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it” (xv). According to Watt, the writer’s aim to give his work an air of complete authenticity marked the novel’s departure from previous literary forms, including tragedy, comedy and romance. Eighteenth-century novelists went great lengths to attest the authenticity of their stories. The various technical characteristics of the novel – the individualization of characters, the detailed presentation of the environment, the use of proper names for protagonists, particularization of time and space, and the adaptation of simple and clear prose style – all contributed to the furthering of a claim that the stories it depicted were an authentic account of the actual experiences of individuals.

As *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* illustrates, the early novelists’ desire to present their work as an authentic piece has not diminished with time. The claim to authenticity continues to be an important aspect for filmmakers. If a film is said to be based on “real” incident, it is somehow seen as more important and interesting. Statements such as – “it’s a

true story,” and “based on actual events” – frequently advertise a particular motion picture, and often contribute to the success of that movie.

One way *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* achieves the much admired “scientific authenticity” is through its portrayal of a desolate and alien Martian landscape. The film’s brilliant use of muted soundtrack and color, its superb photography combined with Albert Whitlock’s matt paintings make “one of the best looking Martian landscapes ever conceived” (“Review of *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*”). Most of the scenes were filmed in Death Valley National Park in California, at a place called Zabriskie Point (“*Robinson Crusoe on Mars*”). Not a lot was known about Mars at the time of the film’s release. “Mariner 4 was still a year away and thus the movie just scraped in before the great disappointment, when in 1965, 22 depressingly lifeless black and white images were beamed back to Earth” (“Review of *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*”). The film, however, does take into account scientific data about the nature of the planet Mars. For instance, from telescope and spectrographic analysis the Martian atmosphere was known to be too thin to support meaningful life. Accordingly, the movie spends a great amount of time to show that breathable air is the biggest issue for the castaway astronaut. Kit cannot breathe in the Martian atmosphere without life support.

Furthermore, it certainly did not hurt ticket sales that *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* was made by Byron Haskin, who directed the sciencefiction classic *The War of the World* in 1953 with producer George Pal. By the time *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* was released, Haskin has been a celebrated filmmaker. Some of his previous works include the following: *Treasure Island* (1950) – Walt Disney’s first live-action film, *The Naked Jungle* (1954), *Conquest of Space* (1955), and *The Power* (1968). As Von Gunden and Stock

claim, Haskin “considered *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* to be the best film he ever directed” (qtd. in Colvin 132).

Thus, the marriage of the science fiction genre and one of the most popular Western myths gave *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* a large and diverse audience. The first half of the movie, just like Defoe’s novel, depicts a solitary astronaut’s desperate struggle for survival. This part of the film fits well into Greg Grewell’s model of the explorative colonial narrative, as the central focus here is on the castaway’s discovery of inhospitable, alien world, and on the physical and psychological torment he experiences. Kit’s situation is even more dramatic than Crusoe’s in that he finds that he cannot breathe in the Martian atmosphere. Thus, he has to look for a way to supply himself with the most essential need – oxygen.

In his essay “The Naturalization of Friday’s Man, Robinson, in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*,” Walter Rankin states: “just as Defoe’s Crusoe serves as a mirror for seventeenth and eighteenth century British politics, so this stranded American astronaut reflects contemporary American politics.” Transforming Defoe’s hero into a Navy astronaut, Rankin notes, “allow[s] the figure to remain focused on exploration and adventure. In this film, our world has long been colorized, and other planets are clearly the next frontier. As a representative of the armed forces, Draper would appear to embody an even more clearly defined national agenda than Defoe’s Crusoe.” Draper’s nickname, Kit, Rankin observes, “suggests a programmed hero, who has been given the resources to succeed, but who will still have to figure out exactly how to assemble them to complete himself.” To that end, Draper becomes the American hero, and the film itself “an undiluted and unselfconscious hymn to American ingenuity” (Kadrey). Throughout the movie Kit is shown as endlessly resourceful, and endlessly driven to survive and work. “I feel a little bit like Columbus –

set down in a strange, new land full of new wonders, new discoveries,” he records in his taped journal. “It’s a challenge all right, challenge to my training. Sometimes challenges can get mighty big. But I’m gonna stay alive, believe me. That’s for the morale officer.”

Draper realizes that following the standard rules of his survival training is not sufficient and that he has to make his own discoveries in order to survive. His video tape survival manual is of little use, being based on hypothetical, rather than real knowledge of another planet. He finally solves the air problem, with the accidental discovery that a coal like substance he has been burning for warmth has a great deal of oxygen in it, which he captures to refill his oxygen tanks. The water and food dilemma is resolved too: Draper follows the monkey to locate a fresh water pool with sausage-like reeds growing in it. For shelter, Kit finds a cave. He, thus, “domesticates” the alien, inhospitable Martian environment and transforms it into a “a quasi-base camp marked by an American flag at the entrance – five years before Neil Armstrong would plant a flag after taking his giant leap for mankind” (Rankin). Haskin’s film, then, clearly contains the elements of the domesticative narrative model explained by Grewell.

Once the issues of obtaining oxygen, water, food, shelter and fire are overcome, the film centers on psychological and emotional aspects of the castaway’s survival. The one thing no amount of ingenuity can alleviate is loneliness. The need for human companionship remains as much a centerpiece of *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* as it is central to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Although Draper survived training for two months in isolation, he cannot accept that he might be alone forever. Kit, who, like Crusoe, chronicles his activities in a diary, remonstrates about his solitude in the following manner: “All right, here’s another note for you boys in Survival, for you geniuses in Human Factors: A guy can lick the problems of heat, water, shelter, food – I know, I’ve done it.

But here's the hairiest problem of all: Isolation, being alone. Boy, here's where he'll crack; here's where he'll go under."

Several scenes that depict Draper at near madness are reminiscent of the episodes from Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe*. In one sequence, Draper, just like Bunuel's Crusoe, talks to his own echo: "Say something," he shouts. "I mean, say something back." But all he hears in response is the sound of his own voice. Exasperated Draper cries out: "Mr. Echo, go to hell." In another episode, Draper is talking to Mona, the monkey: "If you just had four words, just four that you understood – yes, no, come, go – that's all, we could talk to each other." Yet in another sequence, Draper imagines that Colonel McReady comes to his cave. Draper begs his friend to talk to him, but McReady remains mute and motionless during the entire visit. The astronaut's unbearable solitude is highlighted visually as well: the Martian landscape is frequently contrasted with the lone man. Haskin's use of long shot after long shot aims at establishing an overpowering sense of desolation and loneliness.

Friday's arrival changes the mood of the film. As Anne Colvin notes, many viewers have criticized *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* "for having a bipartite structure: the struggle with solitude and survival and the experience with Friday. Some critics suggest that the film's second half is 'both unlikely and a little silly, distracting from its overall realism'" (139). However, Ib Melchior, the screenwriter of the film, defends this organization as reminiscent of Defoe's novel, which is also comprised of two parts: Crusoe alone and Crusoe with Friday. In the book, Friday joins Crusoe after Crusoe rescues him from the cannibals. Similarly, in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, Friday joins Draper after his escape from the alien slavers. Thus, Haskin's film, similar to Bunuel's adaptation, maintains the impression of a narrative fidelity to the original text. At the same time, however, Haskin,

like Bunuel, adds seemingly minor details and episodes that question, critique, and reinterpret the source novel.

The film introduces the Friday figure in much the same way Defoe's novel does: One day, while walking with Mona, Draper discovers not a footprint, but the remains of a human hand with thick iron shackles on its wrist. Kit's first response, like that of Crusoe, is fear. He rushes back to his cave, and removes all signs of his presence. Some time later, Kit sees spaceships in the distance. Hoping that they are rescue spacecrafts from the earth, he hastens to them, but discovers that the ships belong to the alien slavers, who are on ore mining expedition on Mars. Kit observes the aliens, and soon finds out that their slaves are cuffed with the bracelets he found earlier on the skeleton. In the midst of all of this, one of the slaves makes his escape and appears in front of Draper.

The fact that the alien, who is the Friday figure in the film, is not rescued by Draper is a significant change from the original tale, because it establishes from the outset that "Friday can take care of himself" (Rankin). *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, similar to the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel, Gold and Hardy/Miller, thus questions the original text, critiques it, and attempts to move beyond the colonizing impulse. As Greg Grewell observes, "the film intentionally plays down the role of Friday as slave, making him instead a rather grateful friend-servant" (30).

However, the relationship between Draper and Friday does not start on that note. Initially, Kit experiences the same apprehension and fear about the alien that Bunuel's Crusoe experienced. From the very beginning, Kit asserts his dominance over Friday in very explicit and cruel terms. He warns him: "Me, I'm the boss and remember that. You get out of line just one iota, and I'll bring your enemies right back into this cave." Rankin observes: "The wariness with which Draper and Mona welcome Friday reflects the caution,

mistrust, and xenophobia that many would have felt during the era, and these feelings give the film additional significance when viewed today.” Friday is not allowed to touch anything. Kit sleeps with his knife. Like Crusoe, Draper does not ask the alien his name but gives him one: “Come on, Joe, or whatever your name is. Friday, that’s it, with apologies to Robinson Crusoe.” He demands that he learn English: “You gonna learn English if I have to sit on your chest for two months,” – he insists.

However, soon the two men's relationship transcends the master/slave paradigm and focuses instead on their growing friendship. The turning point begins when one day, after a meteor explodes above and Draper is nearly buried alive under an ash fall, Friday rescues him and carries his unconscious body to safety. When Draper recovers, he thanks him not in English, but in the alien's native tongue. From that moment the dynamic of the two men's relationship changes drastically. Kit no longer looks at Friday as his servant who has to do everything he demands. He assures Friday that he does not have to imitate him, and urges him to be his own person: "Don't just copy me," he asks the alien, when the latter tries to repeat the English words. "You tell me something. Tell me what's inside you. Tell me, ah, for instance, where do you live? What planet? Where's your home?" Soon Kit learns that Friday comes from a star in the constellation Orion; that he is seventy-eight years old, although he looks younger than Kit. The astronaut also shows the alien where the Earth is located, commenting that he lives "just around the corner" from Friday. As Rankin observes, "it is not just the world, but the universe that is becoming smaller"

Especially interesting is the film's treatment of religion. *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*, unlike many other versions of Crusoe's story, does incorporate religion. As Walter Rankin observes, “although religious themes could have easily been excised from the film, they are addressed both metaphorically and directly.” The planet itself, Rankin notes, is essentially

a desert, and “Friday greatly resembles a Philistine slave.” After Friday rescues Draper, the latter recites the Twenty-third Psalm as they walk back to the cave: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want./He makes me lie down in green pastures;/He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul./He leads me in right paths for His name’s sake,” – Draper utters. According to Rankin, this part of the film is very significant because it “remarkably inverses” Defoe’s tale by transforming Friday into Draper’s shepherd: “As the film progresses, the viewer realizes that Friday takes on, whether purposefully or not, a religious significance akin to a Martian Moses who will lead Draper through a desert, a kind of valley of the shadow of death (keeping in mind that the film was shot on location in Death Valley).” During the dangerous journey across the perilous Martian landscape, Friday leads Draper to safety. He is the one who determines when they walk and when they rest, and he saves his oxygen pills for Draper, “essentially restoring his partner’s soul at the potential loss of his own life.” It is Friday, Rankin suggests,

[. . .] who ultimately leads Draper along the right ethical paths, building friendship and trust in an otherwise hopeless environment. By the film’s conclusion, when oxygen is instantly released from the melting cap and a rescue ship suddenly appears, Draper is ready to return not with his man, but rather with his companion, Friday.

Draper’s recitation of the Twenty-third Psalm in Haskin’s film clearly echoes the episode from Bunuel’s *Robinson Crusoe* in which the solitary castaway desperately tries to find meaning in these words. However, this sequence from *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* lacks the tragic implications apparent in Bunuel’s adaptation. In Haskin’s motion picture, the religious theme has evidently been toned down and is not invasive.

This argument is further reinforced by the episode during which Draper discusses cosmic order with Friday. Similar to Defoe’s *Crusoe* (as well as the protagonists from Bunuel’s, Hardy/Miller’s and Gold’s adaptations) in one of the scenes Draper talks to the

alien about God. The scene takes place when, after many days of traveling, the two thirsty men find a fresh pool of water. As Draper drinks it, he declares: "Thank God for Water." It is then that Friday inquires about God:

Friday: God?

Draper: Yes. Supreme Being; Father of the Universe; Big Father...

Friday: Canichuba. We say Canichuba. Order... Canichuba... Order...
God. Good.

Draper: Yeh, that's right. Divine order... Good.

In this episode, it is clear, Draper does not attempt to pressure Friday into embracing his religious beliefs. Friday, on the other hand, does not challenge Kit's views on omnipotent God because "they are universal in scope" (Colvin 141). Both men respect each other's understanding of religion, and each other's beliefs. This tolerance can be seen as an example of the equanimity between the two men. By focusing on the developing friendship and camaraderie between Draper and Friday, the film critiques colonial master/slave relationship depicted in the original text. In *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* the alien becomes not only Crusoe's equal, his companion, and his friend, but also his life savior. Defoe's Friday, in contrast, remains the slave.

The remainder of the film focuses on Kit and Friday's escape from the alien slavers, the two men's travels across the perilous Martian landscape, in the underground canals of Mars and on its polar icecap, and their ultimate rescue from Mars by a United States spacecraft. During this action packed journey Friday shows much loyalty, intelligence and compassion. He even risks his own life to rescue Draper. He secretly saves the air pills that he has been taking for Draper, who has run out oxygen. These red pills save the astronaut's life, since they provide oxygen directly in the blood. Eventually, despite constant bombardment, the two men end up at the polar icecap. Exhausted, freezing, and almost out of the air pills, they build a snow shelter, "just like the Eskimos." The dramatic

finale depicts a meteor crashing into the ice cap, melting the snow, and creating a firestorm. Finally, and right on time, a rescue ship from Earth finds Draper and his companion, and picks them up to take them back to the Earth.

The last part of the film - Kit and Friday's escape from the alien slavers and their ultimate rescue - contains the elements of the combative model, explained by Grewell. Although the conflict in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* is not as large-scale and violent as in more explicit examples of this type of science fiction productions produced during the latter half of the twentieth century, it is much more action packed, and reveals "a postmodern penchant for deflating space and collapsing time, for making the alien familiar and the familiar alien, the universe known and mapable" (29). Thus, although *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* is primarily based on explorative colonialist theme, it clearly incorporates aspects of both domesticative and combative colonialist narratives, even if the complete domestication of the planet Mars never happens. Draper, the lone castaway astronaut cannot domesticate the planet. However, he "map[s], catalog[s], and describe[s] the resources and beings of other land" and, thus, opens the door for "trade, administration, or occupation" (Grewell 14). The film ends as the United States spacecraft retrieves the two men and takes them back to Earth. Draper's taped diaries and real life experiences on Mars serve the cause of promoting the colonization of the "new world." Although the future plans are not explicitly articulated by anyone in the film, the implied message still seems to be clear - Mars is both habitable and domesticatable. Commander Draper's experience brings Mars colonization closer to reality.

Friday's return to the planet of Earth with Draper further supports "a typical colonial fantasy" (Grewell 14) of a domesticated alien. Friday is loyal, clever, and amenable. He is so dedicated to Draper that he is willing to risk his own life to save his.

As Greg Grewel observes, although the film "waters down the enslavement theme," it still remains apparent, as does the master-subordinate relationship (30). Viewers never even get to know Friday's real name. Yet, Draper's willingness to learn at least some of Friday's language, as Rankin argues, is a compelling shift from the original tale, and allows us an American hero who does not merely shift nationalistic propaganda. This argument is heightened throughout the movie. For instance, when, after much effort and labor, Draper finally succeeds in cutting Friday's bracelets off of his wrists, he liberates Friday. By removing Friday's shackles – symbols of pain and servitude – Draper sets the alien free, and at the same time makes him forever indebted to him.

Furthermore, Haskin's film, much like the early literature of colonization, treats the aliens as less human, as savage, uncivilized, and brutal. As Greg Grewell notes, early narratives of colonization denigrated cultures and peoples being explored and justified the colonization of the "other" by "touting the so-called superiority of the conquering colonizers. In this way, the colonizers defined, usually only for worse, both the people and the places they were exploring and exploiting" (30). *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* follows the same pattern. Here the aliens from whom Friday escapes are depicted as cruel, murderous, and heartless, while Draper is shown to be benevolent, compassionate, and caring. Such portrayal of the aliens is analogous to the depiction of the natives in the adaptations by Bunuel, Deschanel, Hardy/Miller, and Govorukhin, and, like these motion pictures, strangely contradicts the anti-colonial outlook the film attempts to advocate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Twenty-First Century Crusoes and Their Audiences

“Robinson Crusoe, cast ashore on a desolate island, destitute of human assistance, and of mechanical implements, providing, nevertheless, for his subsistence, for self-preservation, and even procuring for himself a kind of competency. In these circumstances, I say, there cannot be an object more interesting to persons of every age.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Emile*

This chapter will examine two contemporary realizations of the Robinson's Crusoe story: Robert Zemeckis's film *Cast Away* (2000), and a hugely popular television series today, *Lost* (2004). Although the mediums of these two works are very different, they are easily comparable: To begin with, as an executive producer of the show, Jack Bender points out, *Lost* has been viewed by audiences as a show that more so than others, “looks like a feature film” (qtd. in Vaz 166). Gates, an American television director and producer, who has directed several *Lost* episodes, agrees. While observing how *Lost* reflects a change in today's television, Gates notes: “I think television has gotten more sophisticated as audiences have gotten more sophisticated. Some shows have very strict rules about how to shoot things, what's expected in terms of coverage, how scenes are approached. *Lost* seems to be more film-oriented in its style, that's something J.J. [Abrams] and Jack [Bender] have instilled in the show” (qtd. in Vaz 166). Indeed, *Lost* delivers the quality of a feature film. The entire series is shot outside and on location, instead of a soundstage.

Maintaining quality week by week is challenging, since while a filmmaker has many months to perfect a motion picture, episodic television has to deliver that quality in just eight days. "I think good episodic television is, by far, the hardest [medium] to maintain quality week-by-week, to not slip into a pattern of, 'that's good enough'" (qtd. in Vaz 56), states Bender.

Moreover, the film's and the series' treatment of the Crusoe myth link these two works of very different genre together more closely than one might expect. Both *Cast Away* and *Lost* are striking revisions of the Crusoe myth. Yet, although neither of them contains any explicit allusions to Defoe, or his protagonist, both share many major themes with Defoe's novel; most importantly, the characters of both works are re-enacting the physical and emotional drama and torment of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. At the same time, both *Cast Away* and *Lost* dramatize themes pertinent, significant and meaningful for contemporary viewers. *Cast Away*, for instance, encourages us to think about such issues as estranged personal relationships, overbooked schedules, and contemporary American life in general, "dominated by a faith in entrepreneurial capitalism and peopled by workaholics" (Mayer 171), while *Lost*, with its multiple characters addresses many such serious problems as violence, betrayal, dysfunctional family relationships, and substance abuse, among many others.

Despite these similarities, one cannot overlook the contrast between *Lost*, as a representative of a TV serial and *Cast Away*, as an example of a free standing film. The cinema and the TV, as they stand today, create very different expectations and a different atmosphere. Films are usually identified with the individual perspective of the director who determines the plot, the style, the choice of actors, and the general atmosphere of the film (Lorand 14). A weekly television series, on the contrary, can have a number of

directors assigned to different episodes throughout a season. TV, thus, “tends to reflect the common, the majority” (Lorand 14).

Moreover, a TV show, as *Lost* writer Carlton Cuse points out, “is a very organic entity and you don’t just force your will upon it. A lot of what happens is a two-way street. We get feedback watching an actor’s performance and the qualities they bring to a character” (qtd. in Vaz 55). Thus, the drama series such as *Lost* is not only made by a team of writers, actors, director, but it is also directly influenced by rating, or the public opinion. By contrast, films are more idiosyncratic. Because movies are “not in the front line of the battle for audiences or programme exports,” filmmakers, Elliot *et. al.* accentuate, “can “express their own particular viewpoints and commitments in their own distinctive voice and style” (qtd. in Tulloch 35). While creators of TV dramas, to quote Brandt, aim at “ventilating public issues” (qtd. in Tulloch 6), filmmakers have less pressure “to work with the most prevalent ideological themes” and accordingly, can “raise awkward political questions [. . .] in forms that may disturb or even overturn the audience’s expectations” (qtd. in Tulloch 35).

Furthermore, TV shows, the plot of which can develop over several months, or even years, provide more opportunities to paint a broader canvas, and to present stories of greater complexity. Thus, *Lost* does not restrict its focus to the United States only, but instead argues that the issues addressed in the series are global and part of our lives whether we live in America, Australia, Africa, China, or the Middle East. Hence, the picture *Lost* portrays is far more extensive and wide ranging than what audiences see in Zemeckis’s feature.

Robert Zemeckis's *Cast Away* (2000)

Cast Away, directed by an Academy Award-winning filmmaker Robert Zemeckis, and starring two-time Oscar winner Tom Hanks, was the highest grossing film released in the year 2000, making over two hundred and thirty million dollars (“*Cast Away*”). Zemeckis and Hanks had already worked together on *Forest Gump* (1994), a film that became a critical and commercial hit, and for which Zemeckis won the DGA award and the Oscar for Best Director, while Hanks was rewarded with the Academy Award for Best Actor. Reteaming with Hanks, Zemeckis started making *Cast Away* in 1999, and the production spanned over two years. As Hanks notes, he came up with the idea for the film, and began developing the project with screenwriter William Broyles, Jr. six years prior, when the two men were working together on *Apollo 13* (“About the Film”). In his interview with CNN, Tom Hanks recalls his inspiration for the script of *Cast Away*:

I remember seeing somebody on television. He had been shipwrecked during the war; he had to cling to some coral atoll for a few days and he thought he was going to die. He was on television, being interviewed, and the interviewer couldn't get past the idea that this must have been an adventure somehow. The person said, “No, it was not an adventure, it was a harrowing experience, and I thought I was going to die.” And she asked, “Do you ever want to go back and visit the place?” “No, I never wanted to see that island again.” So here was this dichotomy of what it should be and what it really was in real life, and I thought, well, now, *that's* interesting. I've never seen *that*. The idea of Swiss Family Robinson... always make it seem as if humankind, on an island like this, can do a few simple things and survive and even flourish and enjoy it. (“Tom Hanks”)

The reality of the situation, Hanks maintains, caught his attention. Zemeckis, Broyles, and Hanks shared a common vision for the film. They wanted *Cast Away* to address the following questions: “What would it do to a human being to have all connection to all humanity removed? What is that going to do to the human psyche? And then, what's

going to happen when it's suddenly all over, gone in the wink of an eye?"¹⁶ ("Tom Hanks"). According to the official *Cast Away* website, in order to explore the idea of solitude, Broyles, the screenwriter of the motion picture, decided to get some first-hand experience. Two experts in primitive technology took him to an island near the sea of Cortez, where the writer, like his fictional creation, was cast away from the world he knew. "The first thing that came to mind was Oh, my god, I've got to survive," Broyles recalls. "I had to figure out where to get water, how to make a knife out of stone, what to eat. Some of these experiences became a kind of rudimentary basis for what happens to Chuck [in the movie]" ("About the Film").

Although *Cast Away* shares many major themes with Defoe's novel, it contains no explicit allusions to Defoe, or his protagonist. Director Robert Zemeckis notes: "We can't get away from the Crusoe reference, but I do think that the things being explored in that story are of that time and the ones in this film are of ours" ("Tom Hanks and Robert Zemeckis"). *Cast Away* dramatizes themes pertinent, significant and meaningful for twenty-first century viewers. The film's central character, Chuck Noland, most critics agree, "represents the corporate capitalism of our times" (Alexander 83). Chuck, systems operational engineer for FedEx, is a workaholic whose hectic life is ruled by the clock.¹⁷ His fast-paced career and his drive to be successful in corporate culture leave him no time for personal relationships. The film introduces its protagonist in a telling way: Chuck is first seen on Red Square in Moscow, Russia. The year is 1995. The background depicts men taking down a statue of Lenin, which clearly marks the beginning of the new life for

¹⁶ Defoe is not interested in the psychological effects of solitude. Because of this, many readers find Crusoe's character unconvincing and not credible. For example, Charles Dickens stated that "the second part of *Robinson Crusoe* is perfectly contemptible, in the glaring defect that it exhibits the man who was 30 years on that desert island with no visible effect made on his character by that experience" (qtd. in *Robinson Crusoe*. Ed. By Michael Shinagel 295).

¹⁷ Chuck's name, critics note, "invokes both the castaway (Chuck) and dystopian no-land of solitude" (Stam 98).

this once Communist country. Chuck is there to try to teach the Post Soviet people the Western values of efficiency, time management, and self-discipline: “Time rules over us without mercy,” he tells Russian FedEx employees. “We live or die by the clock. [. . .] We must never allow ourselves the sin of losing track of time. [. . .] It took 87 hours and 22 minutes for the package to be delivered from Memphis to Moscow. It took less time for the cosmos to be created.”

What Chuck shares with Defoe’s protagonist is that he, very much like Crusoe, is a representative of “homo economicus.” Like Crusoe, he is unable to be content with his lot in life. Although he has everything to be happy – a great job, a beautiful and loving girlfriend – he is not satisfied. His drive to be more successful and to climb higher on corporate ladder causes him to put off proposing to his long-time girlfriend Kelly, and to abruptly leave her during a Christmas dinner to take on an assignment. Instead of a romantic proposal Chuck had planned, they “do Christmas” in the car. Even the gifts the two exchange are equated with the values that Chuck embraces: He gives Kelly a pager, while he receives a watch. After a quick good bye and a brief “I will be right back” message, Chuck leaves Kelly to take the fatal flight that maroons him on a deserted island. Chuck’s “market-oriented” attitude clearly evokes Crusoe’s desire to acquire material wealth, and his inability to remain at home to embrace the safety and well-being of “the middle-Station of Life.”

Furthermore, the same devaluation of personal relationships can be seen in Chuck’s life as in Crusoe’s. As Watt points out, Defoe’s protagonist treats people he meets throughout his life in terms of their commodity value. The clearest case is that of Xury. Emotional ties and personal relationships, Watt observes, play a very minor part in *Robinson Crusoe*, except when they are focused on economic matters. Only money and

fortune are a proper cause of deep feeling, and friendship is accorded only to those who can safely be entrusted with Crusoe's economic interests. Similarly, Chuck views people not as companions, or friends, but as "only as part of his job: as bosses and employees, as customers and suppliers. [. . .] He finds it difficult to see people in any other terms" (Alexander 84). In one episode, for instance, Chuck learns that his co-worker's wife has cancer. Chuck does not know how to respond to the man's emotional trauma, and greets it with an awkward silence. Finally, he offers him help to arrange a meeting with a doctor. Instead of giving the distraught man an emotional support and sympathy, Chuck offers him a practical solution.

What separates Crusoe and Noland, however, is the way their creators perceive them. Defoe's book is a celebration of individualism and the rise of capitalism, as well as "a demonstration of the therapeutic value of hard work" (Walker Bergstrom). Defoe's portrayal of a hero of economic individualism, as Watt notes, was destined to be successful in the age in which the commercial and industrial classes, who were the prime agents in bringing about the individualist social order, had achieved greater political and economic power, and this power was already being reflected in the domain of literature. At this time literature began to view trade, commerce and industry with favor. This was a rather new development. Earlier writers, such as Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Dryden, had attacked many symptoms of emergent individualism. By the beginning of the 18th century, however, Addison, Steele and Defoe were setting the seal of literary approval on the heroes of economic individualism (*The Rise* 61-62). Thus, Crusoe's desire to "rise faster than the nature of the thing admitted" is also the source of Crusoe's greatest virtues in the novel – his resourcefulness and ingenuity, his industriousness and perseverance. As Alexander expresses it, these qualities, and Crusoe's desire to improve his situation, become not his

vice but rather his virtue, the means by which he builds a life for himself out of the wreckage of the ship.

Zemeckis's motion picture, on the other hand, is clearly critical of the capitalistic values that control every single aspect of Chuck's life. Being dominated by a faith in entrepreneurial capitalism, and letting one's career obliterate all other facets of one's life, are seen as destructive in *Cast Away*. The film, thus, attempts to show "Crusoe's darker side," often ignored by critics. It puts forward "the dark side of progress" (Tournier 184), "the negative social and psychological corollaries of the rise of economic individualism," such as the "solitude of the soul" of economic man ("Robinson Crusoe as a Myth" 331).

At first glance, the opening scenes of *Cast Away* seem to participate in a similar discourse of a middle-class Protestant work ethic that Defoe's novel does: Defoe's Crusoe, like Zemeckis's Chuck Noland, "keeps up a grueling pace, comforted only by the material luxuries of a society in an economic growth spurt, and all the questionable value systems that go with it. Crusoe too is a man concerned with efficiency" (Walker Bergstrom). For instance, while describing his life on the island, Crusoe writes: "I was seldom idle; but [. . .] regularly divided Time, according to the several daily Employments that were before me" (112). In another place he notes: "To this short time allowed for labour, I desire may be added the exceeding laboriousness of my work, the many hours which for want of tools, want of help, and want of skill, everything I did took up out of my Time" (111).

However, whereas Chuck's preoccupation with his work, his inability to slow down to "smell the roses," to quote Zemeckis, are criticized in the film, Crusoe's industriousness is meant to be praiseworthy and admirable in the novel. As Walker Bergstrom observes: "at the rise of capitalism in England, industry was deemed a virtue and associated with good deeds and an honest life; but by the time of late capitalism in the U.S. we have a

discourse of the workaholic, 'burnt-out' and absentee parents, as well as a call for 'family values' instead of more money. Individualism had taken its toll on the moral self."

Moreover, that workaholism is not merely Chuck's personal problem is evident throughout the film. *Cast Away* criticizes the culture, rather than the individual, who belongs to that culture. As Catherine Craft-Fairchild observes, Chuck's devotion to – obsession, rather – with his work clearly is not unique. Chuck's girlfriend Kelly is just as absorbed in her work as Chuck is. Although they love each other and have a committed relationship, both Kelly and Chuck are too busy to spend quality time together. In one scene, for example, Chuck visits Kelly at her workplace, and they dance to the sound of a copier. Later, when they compare their schedules, Kelly's is just as booked as Chuck's. Like Chuck, the crew of the airplane Chuck takes, fly on Christmas Eve, also leaving their loved ones behind on that holiday. Thus, the film wants to emphasize that "the pressure-cooker capitalist system" (Craft-Fairchild) is the cause of Chuck Noland's workaholism, not his individual personality.

Making Chuck Noland an employee of the FedEx Corporation adds to the sense of realism. Viewers know FedEx, and the world in which it exists, hence making Chuck's journey more authentic, believable, and relatable. Moreover, it further supports the argument that the film's criticism does not center on its main character alone. Chuck is a part of "the FedEx family." FedEx is the very embodiment of capitalism. Since it began operations in 1973, Federal Express has become an icon of American business efficiency. It represents modern day values of timeliness, technology, competitiveness, and self-discipline. Their 1979 ad campaign began a series of advertisements that promised deliveries that are "Absolutely, Positively Overnight." In 1994 the company adopted a new slogan, "The World of Time." As Carol Kaufman-Scarborough notes, in FedEx advertising,

the theme of scheduled efficiency is always at the forefront. FedEx, then, is not used in the film for mere product placement, but to set the stage for "the ironic time use fable to be told" (Kauffman-Scarborough 90). The film relies on viewers' understanding of a clear message FedEx communicates regarding the benefits of efficient time use. Because of this understanding, symbolic irony the movie renders about time-obsessed capitalist culture is more easily recognizable. The irony is visually evident early in the film as well. As Kauffman-Scarborough observes, in many scenes, the FedEx packages are carried so that the logo is upside down. The "World on Time" slogan tends to appear reversed, as if to say "Time on the World." "The viewer is cued to expect that the successful efficiencies of monochronic time will somehow be turned upside down in scenes to come"(90).

In his essay "Of Time, Narrative, and *Cast Away*," Douglas H. Ingram argues that Zemeckis's film

[. . .] expresses the best and worst of Hollywood – the best in its dramatic and psychologically astute depiction of the physical, psychological and spiritual challenges of the castaways – and the worst in its reliance on sentimental mush to emplot the challenge of interpersonal relationship. It is, really, two movies. We need to overlook the tedium and predictability of the love story and appreciate the cinematic artistry showing the castaway's plight.

Clearly, one of the significant differences between Zemeckis's film and Defoe's novel is the addition of romance to the plot of the movie. *Cast Away* introduces Kelly Frears, played by Helen Hunt, as Chuck's love interest. Such revision is seen by Mayer as the result of a commercial need to tailor the film to contemporary audience's expectations. Romantic plots, critics agree, have become a universal. Out of twenty four film adaptations Bluestone examined, seventeen had increased the love emphasis (42). Love is "an emotion to which people around the globe can relate. Where love of God was

important to Defoe's readers, love of one another is what strikes a chord with modern moviegoers" (Walker Bergstrom). The addition of romance to the plot of *Cast Away*, then, should not come as a surprise. "The film plays it safe by focusing on a love story," Mayer notes.

However, *Cast Away* is not a typical Hollywood romance. Although central to the story, the love theme is not the only, or the most significant theme in the movie. As the film's screenwriter points out, the main part of the motion picture concerns an individual's struggle "to learn to survive first physically and then emotionally" (DVD "Director's commentary"). It is, as one reviewer puts it, "a metaphor for stripping away (or casting away) all the trappings of a normal, modern existence, thereby finding out what is truly important in life" (Clinton).

Chuck's ordeal begins when he is washed up on the beach of a deserted island after a plane crash. Predictably, the first thing Noland does on shore is to check time on his watch and his beeper. Neither of them functions. All of a sudden, Chuck finds himself in a completely different space, one without clocks, schedules, cell phones, or much of a future. A tropical island, where "all measures of time are directed by nature" provides a stark contrast to the highly scheduled world of FedEx (Kaufman-Scarborough 92). Thus, everything Chuck believed was important – his watch, his pager – are completely useless to him now. They have stopped working on this timeless island. For the first time in his life Chuck finds himself in a place with no clocks and deadlines, just endless, unfilled, unscheduled time.

The uselessness of Noland's watch and pager is comparable to the uselessness of gold in Defoe's novel. In a famous speech this is how Crusoe denounces the money he discovers aboard the wrecked ship: "I smiled to myself at the sight of this money," Crusoe

recalls. "O, drug!" said I aloud, "what art thou good for? Thou art not worth to me, no, not the taking off of the ground; one of those knives is worth all this heap; I have no manner of use for thee; e'en remain where thou art, and go to the bottom as a creature whose life is not worth saving" (55).

What separates Defoe's protagonist from Chuck Noland, however, is that while Chuck truly comes to realize the absurdity of his former convictions and beliefs, Crusoe never actually stops believing in the power of money. His rejection of gold in the quoted passage, for example, does not have "confidence in the attitude it urges" (Halewood 88). Crusoe continues to view gold as "a formidable authority, which is further enhanced by insistent personification. As a 'creature' having 'life' and addressed with four vocative pronouns in three sentences, it is clear that in Crusoe's imagination the money is a power to reckon with" (Halewood 88). Hence, after the initial rejection, Crusoe "upon second thoughts" takes the gold and secures it. In taking the money, "Crusoe behaves like an enterprising capitalist - perhaps even The Capitalist" (Halewood 87). Crusoe's revulsion then is "merely conventional, an attitude not so much held as wished for" (Halewood 89).

The most memorable parts of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, readers usually agree, center on the island. "The stark facts of the hero's island existence occupy almost all our attention," notes Watt. Although *Robinson Crusoe* is a trilogy, hardly anyone knows the sequels of the first book. Even the other parts of the first volume, comprising of Crusoe's early adventures, and his return to civilization, are forgotten by many readers. Similarly, as Roger Ebert notes in his review of *Cast Away*, "the movie's power and effect center on the island" (Ebert).

Furthermore, the novel's meticulous descriptions of Crusoe's daily activities are comparable to the film's particular attention to detail. In the novel, we see Crusoe salvage

everything he can from the ship, and stow it carefully. The reader delights in watching how Crusoe succeeds in making all sorts of necessary things for himself, and how through a long, slow and laborious process of trial and error, ultimately finds use for almost everything he salvages from the wrecked vessel. In a similar vein, *Cast Away* depicts Chuck's struggle to survive in a great detail. Stripped of the conveniences of everyday life, Chuck first must meet the basic needs of survival, including water, food, and shelter. Viewers observe how, after much effort and frustration, he learns to split coconuts, trap fish, build fire, and make use of the contents of several FedEx boxes that wash up on the shore: a designer dress is turned into a fishing net, figure skates are used as cutting tools, and eventually, for dental surgery, and video cassettes provide binding material.

From the moment the plane crashes until after Chuck finds his way to civilization, which comprises the major part of *Cast Away*, stretching for over an hour, Hanks is the only actor in the film. Zemeckis, many agree, takes great risks by daring to make "something akin to a silent movie through more than half of its playing time" (Mayer 171). To enhance the feeling of alienation and solitude that the protagonist experiences on the island, Zemeckis chooses not to use the musical score. Thus, for more than an hour the only sounds heard are the island's natural noises, and a little dialogue Chuck has with his imaginary friend, Wilson. "The absence of music and sparse dialogue were essential," notes Hanks in one of his interviews about the film. "Those scenes are among the most active parts of the movie, because something important is going on every second. I think that we have gotten used to a voice-over that explains everything, or characters that wisecracks their way through their adventures. But Chuck doesn't say anything unless there's a reason to. He does everything for a specific purpose" ("About the Film").

Moreover, the film never cuts away from its central character; there are no flashbacks, no “back in Memphis” scenes. Viewers, then, follow Chuck on his step-by-step journey of survival, where even the smallest things, such as opening a coconut, become significant accomplishments. In an interview with Tom Hanks, for instance, the actor comments on the episode during which Chuck makes fire for the first time: “It is important not only because he can cook, and he can feel heat, but more than anything else he’s done something. He has created this living, breathing element all on his own that did not exist without him being there, and after much effort. That is an accomplishment almost like Chuck’s rebirth.” By making fire, then, Chuck gets not only heat, and warm food, but most importantly, he achieves “ego stability” (Ingram).

After the initial predicament is over, and Chuck learns how to sustain himself physically, the film fast forwards four years. Interestingly, unlike most films where budget restrictions require shooting the scenes out of order, *Cast Away* was shot in story order. It was made over a sixteen-month period with a year long break in the middle in which Hanks lost fifty five pounds and grew a long beard to show the effects of his time on the island (“*Cast Away*”). The alteration is overwhelming. The scene that introduces Chuck four years later depicts him looking like what Crusoe would have labeled as “a meer savage.” Transformed from a stout and well dressed businessman into “a thin, unshaven primitive in a loincloth, Noland lives the savagery that Crusoe fears” (Craft-Fairchild). When on the island, Crusoe frequently imagines what would have happened to him, had he not salvaged many necessary things from the ship: “What would have been my Case, if I had been to have lived in the condition in which I at first came on shore, without necessaries of life, or necessaries to supply and procure them?” – he muses. “I should have lived, if I had not perished, like a meer savage; that if I had killed a Goat, or a fowl, by any contrivance, I

had no way to flay or open them, or part the flesh from the skin, and the bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my teeth, and pull it with my claws like a beast” (126).

The fate from which Crusoe is saved befalls Chuck in *Cast Away*. Viewers see him spear fishing and tearing apart the raw flesh with his teeth. He still lives in a barren cave. As Hanks points out, their main goal was to depict everything that Chuck went through “to be free of the artifice of standard cinematic storytelling” (“Tom Hanks”). Chuck is an ordinary man, not a superhero. Thus, when the film reintroduces him four years after his arrival on the island, viewers do not find him living in “a little hut with clothelined and some kind of improvised, primitive refrigerator” (“Tom Hanks”). Believably, Chuck is unable “to develop some kind of bamboo bicycle that could power a generator, or have rope swings all over the place so [he] could get around quicker” (“Tom Hanks”). Moreover, no one else shows up on the island. There is no man Friday, no raiding pirates, and no shark attacks. “It *would* be nice if the pirate ship came into the middle of the lagoon somewhere, or the seaplane with the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit models [arrives], but that doesn’t happen, either,” comments Hanks.

The second half of Zemeckis’s film focuses on the castaway’s psychic torment. After Chuck has learned how to survive alone physically, he is faced by a bigger challenge: How can he survive emotionally and psychologically? While researching the logs and the journals of real life castaways, the screenwriter William Broyles discovered that at one point all of them “reached this cracking point of desperation where they just couldn’t go on any more” (“About the Film”). Similarly, after four years of isolation, Chuck is on the verge of insanity. As Zemeckis accentuates, the castaway’s story is an “illustration that surviving is easy, it’s living that’s difficult.” Chuck’s need for companionship, his despair and profound loneliness make him create an imaginary friend called Wilson. In reality,

Wilson is just an inanimate object - the volley-ball – but it takes on human characteristics and “personality” in the film and becomes a key part of Chuck’s existence on the island. Wilson is the means by which Chuck verbalizes his fears, and his feelings. Wilson’s “face” is essentially painted with Chuck’s own blood. Chuck talks to him, argues with him, reasons with him. Wilson becomes a projection of Chuck's inner world. As Chuck's time on the island continues, the two develop a very affectionate relationship. Wilson is essential for Chuck to maintain his sanity. The loss of Wilson, as Douglas Ingram notes, equals loss of self. Once Wilson comes into being, he is present in every scene with Chuck. They are never apart. Therefore, when, during the sail, Wilson drifts away from the raft, Chuck unthinkingly jumps into the ocean to "rescue" him. Chuck's actions and emotions in this dramatic scene are credible and genuine because viewers, like Chuck, have come to view Wilson not just as an object, or merely an imaginary friend, but someone for whom life is worth risking. According to one critic, "there is nothing for Noland after Wilson's loss but loss of self - unless there is a return to civilization" (Ingram).

Wilson is a striking revision of the Friday figure of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. Unlike Bunuel, Deschanel, Gold, and Hardy/Miller who criticized the original text’s depiction of the Crusoe/Friday relationship by calling into question Crusoe’s view of Friday as his natural subject, *Cast Away* takes a safe path of erasing the problematic relationship altogether. Zemeckis, thus, entirely removes the non-Western other, and instead, introduces not an actual human being as Chuck’s companion, but an object, a valley ball. Wilson, very much like Friday in Defoe's novel, is a controllable companion. He always responds when Chuck addresses to him, and he is quiet when Chuck does not feel like speaking. Furthermore, Chuck can be impatient, even cruel at times, and Wilson does not mind. He always understands and forgives, even when he is kicked, thrown away

and then retrieved. However, because Wilson is a volley-ball, not an actual human being, viewers do not respond to Chuck's occasional cruelty and dominance the same way they would if Wilson was a living, breathing individual. This is fitting, since no matter how inanimate an object Wilson may be in reality, he becomes as significant of a character in Zemeckis's film as Friday is in Defoe's novel, yet with the thorny master/slave aspect of the Crusoe/Friday relationship removed. Hanks states in an interview with CNN: "[Wilson] has the best lines in the movie. Nobody ever hears them but me, but we all knew *exactly* what the conversation was... He asks questions and I ask questions. He answers back and I answer back to him. You just don't hear them, but that doesn't make them any less palpable, the lines and ideas he expressed" ("Tom Hanks"). Hence, it seems as if Zemeckis can have his cake and eat it too.

Judging from the positive responses Wilson received from critics, such re-imagining of Friday was a winning strategy: "Wilson probably [is] one of the best supporting inanimate objects in film history," raves one reviewer. "It must be one of the most brilliant and unique product placements in the history of films" ("Tom Hanks"), claims another. The Broadcast Film Critics Association named Wilson the Volleyball Best Inanimate Object of 2000. In fact, Wilson became so popular after the film's release that NASCAR stock car driver Dale Earnhardt, Jr. drove several races with a volley-ball in his car, whom he called "Wilson."

The island experience teaches Chuck that human relationships are more important than anything else. As Craft-Fairchild notes, "human relationships move from peripheral to central in the course of Noland ordeal." (5). Being stranded on a deserted island for four years "is the best thing that ever happened to this guy," Hanks says in an interview. "If

Chuck hadn't gone through that experience and lost everything he would never have come to understand what's truly important" ("About the Film").

However, as many scholars point out, one thing that is missing in the film is "any sense of relationship with God" (Craft-Fairchild 5). Noland's journey, unlike that of Defoe's *Crusoe*, is not religious. Instead of the Bible, Chuck uses secular images, such as Kelly's photograph, or the angel wings imprinted on one of the packages, to help him maintain his sanity. These images provide Chuck with hope and a desire to continue living. They also connect him with the outside world and help stabilize his internal world. Kelly's photograph is a constant reminder of an invaluable lesson Chuck has learned through his island experience – that human relationships are uppermost in life. The FedEx package with the angel wings, on the other hand, "promotes hope and identity in a spiritual dimension" (Ingram). Chuck's refusal to open this last package, sent by an unknown sender to an unknown recipient, and with unknown contents, is Chuck's solution to despair. As Kathleen Streater expresses it,

Noland traces the wings with reverence because he is intrigued by the fact that someone has imposed a sense of themselves on this pre-printed, pre-made, ready for delivery box. It is like the voice of another person and Noland is beginning to recognize that human contact is what he needs to survive. He doesn't need what is in the box as much as he needs the strength of individual spirit the artistic expression represents; he needs the faith of spiritual deliverance represented through the art itself; and finally, he needs to hope that someday he will be able to deliver that package back to its owner. (qtd. in Craft-Fairchild)

Indeed, when, after his return to civilization, Chuck finally delivers this package to its sender, he leaves a note on it that reads: "this package saved my life."

Those critics, who focus their analysis on the image of angel wings and what they represent, frequently compare it to the sense of Providential rescue that informs *Crusoe's*

conversion. For instance, Streater uses words, such as “faith” and “spiritual deliverance” to describe what the angel wings symbolize. Ingram (quoted above) also connects the wings to Chuck’s spiritual awakening. It is true that the image of angel wings has some value in connecting Chuck to another, imagined person, and in providing him with some sort of psychic stability. However, secular forms of spirituality do not offer sufficient spiritual sustenance to Chuck; they do not supply him with the kind of psychic stability and piece of mind that Defoe’s Crusoe achieves with his religiosity.

In *Cast Away*, love and personal relationships have taken the place of religion. As Gregory Benoit perceives, the lack of any sense of religion leaves Chuck dependent on seeing his life as merely the product of fate, “an impersonal, mysterious force, as mutable and as unpredictable as the ocean. [. . .] He has no way of knowing what will come next on the tide, whether it will be good, or evil or worst of all, nothing at all, and he has no hope whatsoever that there is any intelligent being who is responsible for what come in” (27). Stephen Garber makes the similar argument when he states that Chuck Noland is simply “a man hurrying to nowhere, a human being lost in the cosmos” (10). Defoe’s Crusoe, in contrast, “clings to the trust that God is completely in control of all the events of his life [. . .] that whatever the tide brings in will be in his best interest because the tide is merely one small tool in the hands of God” (Benoit 27). Crusoe’s reading of the Bible, then, “saves him in more ways than one – both spiritually for a heavenly future and in preserving his sense of purpose in the here-and-now” (Craft-Fairchild). Crusoe sees the hand of God in everything. Consequently, he thinks it pointless to try to defy what God has planned for him. When he finds himself stranded in the open sea, while trying to escape from the island, his thoughts are as follows:

I saw how easy it was for the Providence of God to make the most miserable condition mankind could be in, worse. Now I looked back upon my desolate solitary island as the most pleasant place in the world. [. . .] I stretched out my hands to it with eager wishes. “O happy desert!” said I, “I shall never see thee more! O miserable creature,” said I, “whither am I going!” Then I reproached myself with my unthankful temper, and how I had repined at my solitary condition; and now what would I give to be on shore there again! Thus we never see the true state of our condition till *it is illustrated to us* by its contraries (my emphasis). (134-35)

After this incident, Crusoe gives up every attempt to rescue himself, and entrusts his fate entirely to God. This decision leads to his continual internal stability and peace of mind. “I lived mighty comfortably,” he tells readers about his solitary days on the island, “my mind being entirely composed by resigning to the will of God and throwing myself wholly upon the disposal of His Providence” (131).

The different reaction to their predicaments, then, takes each man into a different place: religion helps Crusoe not to lose hope and to find happiness even in his solitary state, while the lack of it leads Chuck towards suicidal despair. As Catherine Craft-Fairchild states, “while Crusoe conquers his island, Noland’s island conquers him.” The difference between the psychological states of the two castaways is evident in the episodes in which each man climbs the highest hill of the island in which they are stranded. Chuck climbs the mountain with the thoughts of committing suicide, while Crusoe surveys the grounds with great pleasure: “I was lord of the whole manor; or if I pleased, I might call myself king, or emperor over the whole country which I had possession of. There were no rivals. I had no competitor, none to dispute sovereignty or command me” (125).

Occasionally, when loneliness does overtake Crusoe, he comforts himself with religious thoughts: “when I began to regret the want of conversation, I would ask myself whether thus conversing mutually with my own thoughts, and as I hope I may say, with

even God Himself, by ejaculations, was not better than the utmost enjoyment of human society in the world” (131). Chuck, whose only source of strength and hope resides in secular images, does not, cannot attain the same sort of psychological and emotional stability.

What each castaway learns from his ordeal differs significantly as well. Crusoe’s experience on the island transforms him from a godless adventurer into a devout believer in an omniscient God, while Chuck learns to pursue love and less material goals. *Cast Away*, thus, adapts the Crusoe myth to twenty-first century cultural ideals, and instead of depicting a pious protagonist to whom many contemporary viewers would have trouble relating, presents a character who the audiences would immediately recognize as “truly a man of our times” (Ravitch). The lesson four years of isolation teaches Chuck— learning “what’s truly important in life” and realizing that he “should have never gotten on that plane” – is more compelling, powerful and realistic for modern moviegoers than Crusoe-like piety would be. By ignoring the religious issues, Zemeckis, then, takes a safe path yet again. As Mayer notes, the religious side of Crusoe’s experience has usually troubled contemporary filmmakers. Indeed, the adaptations examined earlier are either skeptical about the piety of Defoe’s protagonist, or, like *Cast Away* does, disregard it altogether.

Judging from the positive responses *Cast Away* received from viewers, the issues addressed in the film reflect the worldview and concerns of mainstream American audiences. Contemporary American viewers can relate to both Chuck before the island experience – his “tick-tock-tick-tock” mentality, his “market-oriented” attitude, his desire to climb higher on corporate ladder – and Chuck, who returns home after a life-changing experience, determined not to allow career and professional ambition to take precedence over family, friendships, and love. Part of western audiences’ ability to relate to Chuck,

according to Catherine Walker Bergstrom, “may have to do with their living in the paradox of secularized, and yet fundamentally spiritually oriented societies.” Anita Goldman agrees with Bergstrom’s view: Materialism, she notes “has not provided an answer to the profound, human longing for affiliation and meaning. The civilization that has invested everything in speed, renewal, interchangeability and profit is finding that more and more people are suffering from mental collapses and are looking for alternatives to the lost and empty feeling that follows on the heels of soulless consumerism” (qtd. in Bergstrom). *Cast Away*, then, tackles with some of the most important issues of the early twenty-first century America.

The curious mix of materialism and spirituality is very noticeable in Defoe’s novel as well. As Edwin Benjamin notes, Defoe’s Christianity “is at times fairly materialistic” (35). Crusoe, to quote one critic, is forever “divided between earth and heaven, between accumulation and renunciation, action and contemplation” (Halewood 87). Of course, Crusoe himself believes that he has been transformed by his religious experience on the island. However, to many, his religious piety is insincere. Even under his new-found spirituality, Crusoe’s ambitions, his desire to improve never abate. Even after his return to England, Crusoe is calculating his profits, inventorying his assets, and cataloguing his property. He frequently reproaches himself for disobeying his father and following what he calls his “inclinations” toward adventure. Yet, ironically, his disobedience is what leads him to both a faith in God and to immense wealth.

We should pause here for a second to examine Crusoe’s religiosity in light of Defoe’s embrace of capitalism and individualism. I am inclined to disagree with those critics who see Crusoe’s spirituality in ironic tension with his economic interests and argue that Defoe is satirizing his protagonist and his view of himself. The discrepancy that exists

between Crusoe's religious convictions and his personality, I believe, reflects the times during which Defoe lived. As Watt examines in his *The Rise of the Novel*, the conflict between spiritual and material values was "more obvious in the eighteenth century than any other time" (83). The seemingly contradictory mix of Crusoe's religiosity and his temperament is the result of this conflict, and to quote Watt again, stems from "an unresolved and probably unconscious conflict in Defoe himself" (81). It suggests "not insincerity but the profound secularization of [Defoe's] outlook, a secularization which was a marked feature of his age" (*The Rise* 82).

The return home is an important divergence between *Cast Away* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Originally, Hanks recalls, they planned to have Chuck rescued by some rich Japanese tourists. However, soon both the screenwriter and the director came into realization that they would be missing "an important philosophical beat in Chuck's struggle" if they had him saved, rather than him saving himself (DVD, "Interview with Tom Hanks"). Thus, after four years of isolation, Chuck resolves to build a raft, and get away from the island, even at the risk of losing his life. "I'd rather take my chance out there in the ocean than stay here and die on this island, spending the rest of my life talking to a God-damned volleyball," he tells Wilson. Consequently, Chuck constructs a raft and makes a daring escape from the island. After sailing for an unknown period of time over a distance of about six hundred miles, Chuck finally encounters a passing cargo ship that rescues him and returns him back to civilization as a profoundly changed human being.

On returning home Chuck must come to terms with the fact that his life would never be the same again. "The idea of both being drastically changed and at the same time being back to the same place where you started [. . .] is unique [. . .] here," Hanks comments. The film's finale is drastically different from what we see in Defoe's novel.

Crusoe goes back to England only to find that he has become a wealthy man. He reintegrates into society right away: he gets married, has children, and lives a happy, comfortable life. Chuck, on the other hand, comes back to Memphis to find that he has been “buried,” literally, by his co-workers, friends and his girl-friend. Everyone has moved on, most importantly Kelly, who has married and has a child. Chuck feels the same loneliness and isolation in a crowded city that he felt on the island. He is unaffected and unemotional when the FedEx family throws him a big homecoming celebration. He feels awkward around the people he used to work with. Thus, Chuck is still very much a castaway, but this time not physically, but emotionally and psychologically.

Zemeckis rejects the idea of a traditional Hollywood happy ending for *Cast Away*. Chuck and Kelly do not end up happily ever after. The end of the film shows Chuck at a crossroads, trying to decide which way to go. The road viewers feel Chuck should take leads to a ranch of a young woman whose package Noland delivers right before the final scene. This is the only package Chuck has left unopened on the island – the one with angel wings printed on it. It is ironic, however, that, as Catherine Craft-Fairchild observes, the isolated ranch of Chuck’s potential girlfriend is “almost another island, surrounded by ‘a whole lotta nothin’ all the way to Canada” (9).

In his article “Zemeckis’ ‘Cast Away’: an Island Adventure that Misses the Boat,” Doug Strassler argues that “Zemeckis presents us with the before and the after, but he never shows us the during, he provides us the bookends but no novel to be held in between.” Zemeckis, Strassler states, cuts out the first month of Chuck’s return home, so readers miss out on an important phase of Chuck’s readjustment, as well as his reassessment of his old life. For instance, viewers “never see such crucial moments as the first time he takes a

razor to his face in four years, or the first time he boards a plane again. Zemeckis makes his movie so compact that he leaves no room to ruminate,” Strassler concludes.

Strassler’s criticism is unfounded. The ramifications of going back to the civilization, Chuck’s painful re-entry to the world, and his re-evaluation of his old life are addressed in the film manifestly. It is true that *Cast Away* skips the critical part of the protagonist’s return home – the first four weeks of Chuck’s life after his rescue. However, although the film does not show the scenes in which Chuck shaves his beard for the first time, or boards a plane, there are many other episodes that invite a tragic understanding of Chuck’s homecoming. For instance, in one scene we see a close up of Chuck’s gloomy face as he switches his lighter on and off countless times; a simple click of a tiny button on his lighter is all it takes to make fire. In another episode, he asks a waiter for two cups of ice, and adds with a sad smile “I like ice.” Showing Chuck after he has already gotten over the shock of readjustment is, to me, more compelling than the depiction of Chuck’s immediate reactions and emotions would have been. After four weeks, viewers see, Chuck still feels like a castaway. Every single person in the film seems oblivious to what Chuck is going through. Viewers see the tragic irony of Kelly’s comment when, during his last visit, she tells Chuck: “I got whole milk, 2%, and nonfat. I don’t have any half and half and that’s what you like.”

What Zemeckis’s film lacks, however, is an ability to offer a viable alternative to the capitalist corporate culture it criticizes. Catherine Craft-Fairchild is right when she states that “Zemeckis’s critique remains incomplete because, [. . .] he can see no ‘outside’ to capitalism, can develop no other model or method of work/production.” Capitalist system remains, even if Chuck, after his experience on the island, no longer believes in the values it inculcates. The film’s ending is uncomfortably ambiguous. It leaves Chuck’s fate

uncertain, and viewers are left with many unanswered questions: what will Chuck's life be like in this time-obsessed, materialistic, and estranged world? Will he go back to "the FedEx family"? Chuck's financial security, Craft-Fairchild acutely observes, depends on an unspoken FedEx payoff, and "Chuck's new-found criticism about the company does not seem to stop Noland from reaping its benefits."

Moreover, in view of the film's criticism of capitalism, it is ironic that *Cast Away* greatly benefited two major brands – Wilson and FedEx. FedEx Corporation did not pay the filmmakers for product-placement rights.¹⁸ However, despite the tragic crash of a FedEx plane depicted in the film, *Cast Away* did everything but damage the company's reputation. If anything, FedEx profited from the success of *Cast Away*. One of their advertisements in the United States, for example, features a character who survived an ordeal very similar to Chuck Noland, returning an unopened package to its owner.

Wilson Sporting Goods also received huge financial benefits. One of the volleyballs used in the film sold at an online auction for \$18,400 ("*Cast Away*" Wikipedia). At the time of the movie's release, Wilson Sporting Goods launched its own joint promotion, centered on the fact that one of its products was "co-starring" with Tom Hanks. After the film's release, "Wilson" became so popular that Wilson, the sports equipment manufacturer, actually created and marketed a volley-ball with Wilson's face on it ("*Cast Away*" Wikipedia).

Even the video game industry benefited from the success of *Cast Away*. In 2006 a new game – called *Far Cry Instinct: Evolution* – was created which, similar to the film, is set in a tropical location. Players are "stranded" on a hidden island containing a wrecked ship, two corpses, rocks laid out to spell "HELP," and a volleyball resembling Wilson.

¹⁸ Zemeckis has made this fact clear in a number of interviews.

Cast Away, then, is critical of capitalism, yet, paradoxically, it partakes in a capitalist mode of production. Being an obvious product of capitalism, the film's success greatly depends on capitalist corporate culture. The film's extraordinary commercial success and the product placement – promotion of the volleyball and FedEx – are the examples of how the filmmakers exploit certain aspects of contemporary capitalism to make their movie successful. Although FedEx did not pay the moviemakers for their presence in the feature, they provided them with extensive support throughout the filming process. For instance, FedEx cooperated closely with the filmmakers to ensure that all FedEx materials seen in the movie were authentic. Chuck's homecoming scene was filmed on location at FedEx's home facilities in Memphis, Tennessee ("*Cast Away*" Wikipedia). The assistance the company provided to the film can be considered as a form of payment for the placement. In this light, the film seems to be exemplifying the very values that its main protagonist comes to reject.

***Lost* (2004)**

Lost, an Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning serial drama television series, is clearly tailored to fit the expectations of contemporary moviegoers. It has everything twenty-first century viewers want to see on television: drama, suspense, horror, mystery, romance, crime, even comedy; it is an all in one show. While *Lost* contains numerous literary references, there are, surprisingly, no explicit allusions to Defoe and his protagonist. Similarly, critics who write about *Lost*, draw parallels with many authors and works of fiction, but remarkably, no one has examined the series in relation to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Instead, the links are made between *Lost* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Some also explore

the significance of naming the characters after the well-known thinkers, such as, for instance, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. One study even makes parallels between the castaways of *Lost* and an eighteenth century minister and songwriter John Newton. The range and variety of comparisons critics have made in relation to the series make it even more surprising that no one would examine what seems to me such an obvious connection to Defoe's novel.

The series exploits the cinematic potential of Defoe's novel. All of the important themes of the Crusoe story are depicted here: voyages, a plane crash (instead of a shipwreck), disasters, physical and psychological torments, isolation, terrible nightmares, fear of a strange environment, and encounters with "the others." Forty-eight people, all from very different backgrounds and cultures, find themselves stranded on a deserted island after their flight goes down. On the island, isolated from everything and everyone, each castaway is faced with a search for meaning very similar to that which Defoe's protagonist embarks upon on his "island of despair"

Created by J. J. Abrams, Damon Lindelof, and Jeffrey Lieber for ABC and filmed primarily on location in Oahu, Hawaii, *Lost* is one of the most expensive series on television today. The show "has become a staple of American popular culture with references to the story and its elements appearing in other television shows, commercials, comic books, webcomics, humor magazines and song lyrics" ("Lost"). The series' fictional world has also been explored through board and video games, and a reality game, *The Lost Experience*. As of March of 2006, three novelizations of *Lost* have been released by Hyperion Books: Cathy Hapka's *Endangered Species* (2005) and *Secret Identity* (2006), and Frank Thompson's *Signs of Life* (2006). The show has generated a dedicated and thriving international fan community, usually referred to as "Lostaways" or "Losties," who

have been active in developing numerous fan websites, fan clubs, and discussion forums. Because of the show's elaborate mythology, many fan sites have focused on developing different theories about the mysteries of the island.

The reason for the show's immense popularity, I believe, lies in its versatility. *Lost* has the second largest cast in American primetime television behind *Desperate Housewives* ("Lost"). A wide range of characters provides the series with the raw material for addressing various issues that most contemporary viewers would find relatable, significant, and interesting, as well as giving the creators an opportunity for more flexibility in story decisions. Thus, among the castaways there are murderers, adulterers, drug addicts, mental patients, doctors, a torturer from the Iraqi Republican Guard, a police officer... According to Brian Burk, an executive producer for the show, with a large cast, "you can have more interactions between characters and create more diverse characters, more back stories, more love triangles" (qtd. in "Lost"). Thus, it is hard to categorize *Lost* as a single genre. A DVD release labels the series as "Drama, Adventure, Mystery, and Thriller." Some episodes also include a number of mysterious elements which have been ascribed to science fiction or supernatural phenomena. Such mixture of different genres ensures a large audience.

Lost was apparently inspired by the success of the reality TV program *Survivor* (discussed in Chapter Eight). Lloyd Braun, head of ABC at the time, wanted the new show to be a cross between Zemeckis's film *Cast Away* and *Survivor*. Like in *Cast Away*, at the heart of the series is the depiction of the sins and the vices of the contemporary society. The isolated island, in which the castaways are stranded, is a place for suffering, struggle and growth. Most of the characters are lost not only physically, but also psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. *Lost* addresses many such serious contemporary issues as

violence, betrayal, stereotyping, dysfunctional families, substance abuse, and estranged personal relationships, among many others. The TV series, however, goes a step further by not restricting the focus to the United States only but instead, depicting the characters from different countries, cultures and backgrounds, and thus, arguing that these issues are global and part of our lives whether we live in America, Australia, Africa, China, or Middle East. Because of such universality of the issues addressed, *Lost* is one of the most watched programs internationally. Within a year, the series had become popular in South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Damon Lindeloff, a co-creator of *Lost*, notes: “I think one of the things that makes this show accessible to people all over the country and, now, in foreign countries, is the characters on the show are as confused about things as we [the audience] are!” (qtd. in Vaz 82).

Lost is an appropriate title for the show that tells a story of a group of people who are lost geographically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. As Lindeloff and Abrams put it, “the show is about lost people on a lost island” (qtd. in Vaz 10). Each castaway is disillusioned, abandoned, addicted, betrayed, imprisoned, or crippled in some way. None of them has any ties left in the world. As Lynette Porter and David Lavery express it, “this international group’s carry-on baggage includes contemporary anxieties about relationships, world events, and personal traumas” and thus, their significance goes beyond the archetypes they represent(60). The characters are likable, sympathetic and memorable because they are so relatable and recognizable. As Robert Burke Richardson observes, the cast of *Lost* “seems to have been consciously constructed to function as a microcosm of current American society” (*Getting Lost* 116). Thus, among the castaways you can see both “a man of science” (Jack) and “a man of faith” (Locke); a redneck (Sawyer) and an Iraqi (Sayid); the rich and the poor, outlaws, immigrants, husbands and

wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, even celebrities (Charlie). These characters are average Americans, “whose aspirations we share and whose demons we understand” (*Getting Lost* 15). They reveal universal human fears and frailties, as well as ingenuity and courage.

The island of *Lost*, like the one of *Cast Away*, is a character in itself. It is beautiful, mysterious, and sublime, inspiring both awe and admiration. It has as much meaning, secrecy, integrity and depth as the characters themselves. In the island’s wilderness, the castaways undergo remarkable physical, emotional and psychological transformation. It is telling that many episodes in the first season start with the close-up of one of the character’s eye, emphasizing the beginning of an eye-opening experience. The island is mysteriously attuned to all of the protagonists, speaking to them in dreams and visions and pushing them into dangerous quests. The castaways’ previous lives are shown to viewers in flashbacks, so the audiences can see the full impact of the island’s effect on each character.

While trying to solve the mysteries of the island of *Lost*, many fans have theorized that it is actually not an island, but rather a purgatory. Although the creators of the show have repeatedly denied this hypothesis, many viewers still accentuate on the isolated island’s “purgatorial landscape” (Douthat 24). Most of the characters carry secret sorrows and hidden sins, and the island becomes for them a supernatural catalyst for redemption. Damon Lindelof, one of the creators of the series, calls the episodes of *Lost* “redemptive stories.” He states: “We show characters flaws in the past, and explore ways these people can evolve on the island and redeem themselves” (qtd. in Porter and Lavery 203).

When the plane goes down and the survivors find themselves stranded on an isolated island, they are forced to re-examine their lives, and to find their true identities.

The crash, as a first-season poster of the show announced, “was only the beginning” for the castaways. What seems like a final act, or at least the most traumatic experience in the characters’ lives, is, in reality, the starting point. The island provides the possibility to have a fresh start. “Everyone gets a new life on this island,” Locke tells Shannon, while Jack assures Kate, “It doesn’t matter [. . .] who we were – what we did before this. [. . .] Three days ago we all died.” The island, then, provides each character with an opportunity for rebirth.

The possibility of the new beginning and the hope of reinvention of one’s self are the concepts that would appeal the twenty-first century viewers of *Lost*. However, these ideas are not unrelated to Crusoe’s transformations in Defoe’s novel. Crusoe too, believes that he was brought on the “island of despair” for a reason. Although at first he sees his miserable condition as a result of blind fate – “I was an unfortunate dog and born to be always miserable” (86) – later he decides that God “has appointed all this to befall me” and that “it was a just punishment for my sin, my rebellious behavior against my father, or my present sins, which were great; or so much a punishment for the general course of my wicked life” (86). Crusoe too thinks that he has been given a rare opportunity to re-assess his life, and reinvent himself. “Why has God done this to me? “What have I done to be thus used?” (90), he ruminates. “It was not long after that I [. . .] found my heart more deeply and sincerely affected with the wickedness of my past life. [. . .] Now I looked back upon my past life with such horror, and my sins appeared so dreadful, that my soul sought nothing of God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort” (94), Crusoe remonstrates. The strong faith in Providential will and divine predestination helps Defoe’s Crusoe recreate his life on the island and find a new self.

The characters of *Lost* embark on a similar quest for meaning that Crusoe does in Defoe's novel. The notion that there is a greater force that has brought the survivors to the island, and that they survived for a specific, although yet unknown purpose, is pervasive. Castaways wonder aloud why they are on the island, and how and why they survived: "Do you think we're being punished? [. . .] For things we did before, the secrets we kept, the lies we told?" - one of the castaways ponders. Although *Lost* does not advocate any specific religion the way Defoe's novel does, it explores concepts like faith, hope, fate and destiny. Spirituality takes many different forms in the show, and not all of them are within traditional or recognized religious expression. For instance, Locke, one of the leaders of the group of the castaways, is "a man of philosophy." His faith is rooted in a paganistic, ritualistic appreciation of the powers of the island. Characters such as Echo, Rose, Clair, and Charlie represent a more conventional pole of faith – pure religious faith. Thus, they identify spirituality with a specific religion – Christianity. Jack, who is a surgeon, on the other hand, is "a man of science." As a doctor, he believes in the power of the technology and advanced medicine. Jack bases his beliefs on facts and knowledge. His need for rational answers to the mysteries of the island often pits him against Locke, who believes that they were "brought here" for a reason: "Do you really think that all this is an accident?" – Locke ruminates. "That we, a group of strangers survived many of us with superficial injuries? Do you think we crashed on this island by coincidence? [. . .] The island brought us here... This is no ordinary place... This is destiny."

As the castaways confront life-threatening situations, they often grapple with the question of whether their lives on the island are governed by purpose or blind chance, and whether spiritual or secular sources are more logical in providing them with answers. The survivors also start questioning the foundation of their previous lives. Will they, or how

will they, be held accountable for their past actions? Who or what is behind everything that happens on the island? More importantly, were they brought here on purpose? Is life a series of predictable causes and effects, or is it run logically? Defoe's *Crusoe* undergoes the same soul-searching: "What is this earth and sea, of which I have seen so much," he ponders. "Whence is it produced, and what am I, and all the other creatures, wild and tame, human and brutal, whence are we? Sure we are all made by some secret Power who formed the earth and sea, the air and sky; and who is that? (89).

Each castaway, very much like Defoe's character, wrestles with these fundamental questions. However, unlike Defoe's novel, *Lost* does not guide viewers toward a particular belief. Each character finds a different answer, a different approach of making sense of their ordeal. As Potter and Lavery state, "*Lost* shows that all forms of spirituality may be valid and connected in more ways than we may realize. What matters is that each character who feels spiritually lost can find a life path that makes sense to him or her" (200). Thus, Christian characters such as Echo, Clair and Charlie find solace in traditional expression of their religious beliefs. Echo and Charlie start building a church; Claire baptizes her newborn son. Said, a Muslim character, performs religious rituals during times of distress. Locke and Desmond, on the other hand, give spiritual meaning to a seemingly mundane task of pushing a button inside the mysterious hatch every one hundred and eight minutes. Their absolute faith in the powers of the island helps them cope; it provides them with purpose and gives meaning to their lives.

Although *Lost* does not affirm a specific belief system, it does seem to argue that spirituality is crucial in preserving the mind and soul of the castaways. Characters without a belief system often are shown as unstable, shifting back and forth between emotional extremes. Belief in a higher power does not seem to protect anyone on the island – each

castaway is vulnerable, each susceptible to the dangers of the mysterious island – but those with a solid spiritual foundation are portrayed as less “lost” and more likely to survive the island’s challenges emotionally. “Redemption is a possibility for those who seek it” (Porter and Lavery 175). Only those who *want to* be “found” *will be* found.

Unlike Zemeckis's *Cast Away*, *Lost* does address the issue of otherness. The theme is introduced from the very first episode. Sayid, an Iraqi military vet, is immediately blamed for the plane crash by one of the survivors. The Asian couple – Sun and Jin – are clearly looked at as outsiders by the rest of the group. “They ignore us,” Sun tells her husband. Knowledge and sociopolitical power also create otherness on *Lost*. Locke’s peculiar behavior, and his strange identification with the island, for instance, set him apart from the rest of the survivors. On the other hand, Jack, who takes on a role of a leader from the very beginning, and who has a powerful ability to cure people, is separated from the rest of the castaways. “Knowledge and power,” Porter and Lavery observe, “are two ways by which the castaways are divided into ‘us’ – average people – and ‘other’” (75). However, as the castaways start facing the terrors and mysteries of the island, they realize that they are “all in this together” and that they have to unite, “work together or surely die alone.”

Lost, with its multinational and multiracial characters, clearly promotes diversity and acceptance of everyone’s differences. “We wanted to have [. . .] many different sorts of nationalities [. . .] on the island,” notes Lindeloff. The character of Sayid, as a former member of Iraq’s Republican guard, “helped us represent what we really wanted the show to be about,” the creators of *Lost* accentuate. Sayid, who is “our enemy in theory,” who is the person “you never in a million years would have met given what your life was like before the crash,” suddenly becomes “the living, breathing person,” someone you need in

order to survive. Condemned initially as the “other,” he eventually becomes the castaways’ “brother-in-arms” (qtd. in Vaz 82). “I just could not wait to direct the scene where Sayid reveals to Hurley he was in the Republican Guard,” recalls Abrams. “It was a great moment because Hurley had been bonding with this guy and when he hears he was in the Persian Gulf War it doesn’t even occur to him [that the man didn’t fight on the American side]. The Sayid character basically says to him, ‘I was your enemy.’” (qtd. in Vaz 82).

There are many such moments on *Lost*, during which the characters start questioning their previous convictions and principles, “the framework that [they] have based their lives on” (qtd. in Vaz 82). Viewers are also encouraged to reexamine the issue of otherness. The characters and audiences alike see the wrongness of judging people based solely on their appearances. In the airport, Shannon, a twenty year old spoiled and arrogant socialite, snubs Sayid, when he asks her to watch his luggage for a couple of minutes. Shannon immediately calls the airport security and reports that a suspicious looking Arab man left his bags unattended. The island experience proves Shannon’s distrust and fear of the “other,” unfounded and unreasonable. Sayid is no monster. He is affectionate, loyal, and dependable. Shannon’s paranoia and hatred soon turn into love and admiration. Shannon and Sayid – the most unlikely couple – become inseparable. Naveen Andrews, an actor playing the role of Sayid, notes that a pairing of Shannon and Sayid was his idea: “What would really shock middle America? What if Sayid has a relationship with a woman who looks like Miss America?” (DVD) recalls Andrews in an interview.

For dramatic purposes, *Lost* also introduces a mysterious group of people living on the island, who the castaways encounter and who they continuously refer to as “the others.” However, these islanders are nothing like Friday of Defoe’s novel. They appear to be connected with Dharma Initiative, a “large-scale communal research compound” of

"scientists and free thinkers" from around the world who conduct research into various disciplines, including meteorology, psychology, parapsychology, sociology, zoology, and electromagnetism. How "the others" are connected to the original Dharma Initiative is still uncertain. What viewers do know, however, is that "the others" too, are involved in elaborate research and experimentation. The landscape of the island is littered with the remains of the experiments. There are abandoned hatches, labs and zoos all over the island. These tests have disturbed the natural ecosystems; there are unpredictable and irregular storms, animals live outside their natural habitats... Technology interferes with nature on the island. Everything is artificially manipulated in some way. "The others" of *Lost*, then, are representative of "scientific arrogance" (Douthat 24). Whatever their experiments were meant to do, they have clearly worked themselves out to what seem to be disastrous consequences.

The castaways' nightmares about the mysterious "others" parallel Crusoe's paranoia about the natives who he refers to as the "savages." The fear of the outside, then, is a recurrent theme in both Defoe's novel and *Lost*. Jean Jacques Hamm observes that "fear is [. . .] a constant dimension of [Crusoe's] world" (117). Similarly, the survivors of *Lost* live in continual terror of the unknown world of "the others." However, if Crusoe's horrors are dissipated by Friday, who "is no monster" (Hamm 117), fears of the castaways of *Lost* only get more real and terrifying as the time passes. The series leaves readers with many unanswered questions about "the others": Who are they? How long have they been on the island? What do they want from these castaways? How do they know so much about each person? Are they somehow responsible for the crash? This re-imagining of "the other" brings suspense into the plot, and contributes to viewers' enjoyment and their interest in continual viewing of the series.

To conclude, by employing one of the oldest, the most traditional and popular myths of Western culture, both *Cast Away* and *Lost* expose the sins and the vices of modern society/world. Both respond to contemporary anxieties about human relationships, balance between personal and professional life, family relations, and world events, among many others. As J. Wood suggests in his recent book *Living Lost. Why We're All Stuck on the Island*, the reason so many people find *Lost* appealing and interesting is because it reflects what is already going on in the mind of the viewer, both culturally and historically. The story elements of the show, which continue to be written on a week-by-week basis, are, Wood argues, "phantom parallels to our real concerns." *Lost* takes "these very real concerns straight off the front pages, abstract[s] them into their psychological impression, and then crystallize[s] that sense back into the framework of the narrative." Because of the nature of the themes and issues addressed on *Lost*, this show, Wood maintains, would not have had the same appeal for the audiences of the 1990s, or earlier. "Lost draws on a specific sense of 21st century isolation and distress; it taps into some very here-and-now concerns, and speaks to the audience's deeper lizard-brain psyche as it weaves its sophisticated tales."

The same is true for Zemeckis's *Cast Away*. Audiences have received the film favorably because its protagonist grapples with the same concerns and problems that the twenty-first century viewers are wrestling with in their daily lives. Both works, thus, perform a necessary function. They give "a narrative (and a safely-distant context)" (Wood) to the viewers' real-felt emotions and anxieties.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Making the Crusoe Story a “Reality” Story

"I, poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, being shipwrecked, during a dreadful storm in the offing, came on shore on this dismal unfortunate island, which I called 'the island of Despair,' all the rest of the ship's company being drowned, and myself almost dead. [. . .] I had neither food, house, clothes, weapon, or place to fly to, and in despair of any relief, saw nothing but death before me either that I should be devoured by wild beasts, [. . .] or starved to death."

Daniel Defoe. *Robinson Crusoe*.

"These sixteen Americans [. . .] are about to be abandoned in a heart of one of the most diverse and dangerous collection of animals anywhere on the continent: zebras, elephants, lions, giraffes - just a sampling of wildlife. They'll call this place home. Temperature here can reach 120 degrees. Water is scarce. It is a land virtually untouched by the modern world. For the next thirty-nine days, these sixteen strangers will be left to defend for themselves. [. . .] They must learn to adapt."

Jeff Probst, *Survivor Africa* host.

"In retrospect, much of Crusoe's experiences read like the job description of the high-powered, high-profiled, stress-laden positions of power in this global culture."

"Robinson Crusoe and the Ethnic Sidekick." *Bright Lights Film Journal*.

This chapter examines a popular television show *Survivor* as a "hypertextual variation on *Robinson Crusoe*" (Stam 99). The format for *Survivor* was first developed in 1992 by Planet 24, a United Kingdom production company owned by Charlie Parsons and Bob Geldof. The first production of the format was the Swedish series, called *Expedition: Robinson* (1997) which, unlike *Survivor*, makes the reference to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* explicit. Since 1997, there have been several other reality TV shows produced in many other countries which, similar to *Survivor*, depict the ordinary people in remote locations. For instance, *Treasure Island*, which preceded the US version of *Survivor*, was produced in New Zealand as well as in Ireland and Australia. In the show, contestants were isolated on a remote Fijian island and competed for a cash prize. *Chasing Time*, a thirteen part-series, deposited two randomly selected players in a foreign city and challenged them to the ultimate race against time to win the luxury vacation. *Worlds Apart* transplanted American families to remote cultures across the globe to experience drastically different lifestyles firsthand. *New Boundaries* depicted an adventures journey of fifteen contestants across North America. The reason I chose to focus on *Survivor* and not other reality television series is that first of all, *Survivor* very closely replicates the Crusoe story, and second, while audiences quickly got tired of other reality game shows, *Survivor*, after seven years, is still consistently one of the most popular series in America. So famous is the show that it even has its own "reality coaster" at Paramount's Great America in Santa Clara, CA, called "Survivor: The Ride" ("Survivor").

Survivor replicates the Crusoe story by portraying the experience of sixteen people, "marooned" on a remote location – frequently on an uninhabited island – for thirty-nine days. The players' motto is "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast." Accordingly, each week one castaway is voted off from the show by Tribal Council, consisting of the contestants

themselves. At the end, only one person survives the challenge and wins the grand prize of one million dollars.

The first season of *Survivor* aired on CBS in 2000. The program has since gone through two thirteen to fifteen episode seasons each year, and at its fifteenth season, premiering in the fall of 2007, still wins approximately twenty million viewers weekly (Wright 172). The exotic locations of the show included Borneo (2000), Australia (2001), Africa (2001), Marquesas (2002), Thailand (2002), Amazon (2003), Pearl island (2003), Vanuatu (2004), Palau (2005), Guatemala (2005), Panama (2006), Cook Islands (2006), and Fiji (2007). It was recently revealed that the fifteenth season of *Survivor* would take place in China, making *Survivor China* the very first American television show in the world to film an entire series on location in this country.

In September 2001, *Survivor* received six Emmy Award nominations in the categories of outstanding nonfiction program, outstanding cinematography for nonfictional programming, outstanding main title theme music, outstanding picture editing for nonfictional programming, outstanding technical direction, camerawork, video for a miniseries, movie, or special, and outstanding sound mixing for nonfictional programming, taking the honors for outstanding nonfiction programming and outstanding sound mixing for nonfiction programming. It also received a Special Recognition Award from the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). The series also received the 2001 Family Television Award for Reality/Alternative Programming and took honors at the 9th Annual Diversity Awards for Most Diverse Television Ensemble Cast. In 2002, the show earned four Emmy Award nominations, including Outstanding Non-Fiction Programming. In 2003, *Survivor* was crowned the number one Reality Show and ranked number seven in Favorite Show on Television for TV Week's Annual Critics Poll. The show was also

nominated at the 2003 Teen Choice Awards for Choice TV Reality Show and Favorite Reality Host (Jeff Probst). In September, 2003, *Survivor* received four Emmy Award nominations, including Outstanding Reality-Competition Program, along with three other nods for editing, camera work and art direction. In January 2004, the show earned the award for “Favorite Reality-Based Television Program” at the 30th Annual People's Choice Award, its fourth consecutive victory in a row. The success of *Survivor* led to the production of another award winning reality television game show, *The Amazing Race*, in which the teams of two race around the world in competition with other teams.

Survivor has a “three-act structure” – tribe versus tribe, merger, and final survivor. During the first stage contestants are divided into two, three or four equally sized teams, called tribes. After they are left in a remote location, tribes are expected to build shelters to protect themselves and to explore the local flora and fauna for nourishment. During “Act One” players also compete as tribes in contests, called challenges. Challenges, which usually consist of endurance, problem solving, teamwork, and willpower, are designed to fit the theme of the current season. There are two types of challenges: reward challenges, during which the players compete for “luxury” items, such as food, matches, rain gear, and immunity challenges, during which contestants compete for immunity. Immunity allows the players to stay in the game until the next immunity challenge.

At the end of each episode Tribal Council is held, during which the tribesmates vote one person out of their tribe. The players usually explain their vote at the voting confessional. All eliminated contestants, except the final nine, have to leave the game altogether. The nine eliminated players form the jury, who determines the winner of the game. The jury members are present at every Tribal Council, but are not allowed to interact with the contestants. They are there simply to observe the event.

“Act Two” of *Survivor* is about merging the tribes, and thus, pitting the surviving castaways against each other. After the merge, contestants compete in challenges on an individual basis. As Mary Beth Haralovich and Michael W. Trosset observe, “attributes that were valued in Act One (strength, athletic prowess) often become liabilities in Act Two because the castaway who possesses them is perceived as a strong competitor, a threat, someone to be eliminated” (81).

“Act Three” of *Survivor* comprises the final week, culminating in the last Tribal Council. Each final player makes a closing statement, explaining why they would be the most deserving winner. The jury members then vote for one of the contestants, concluding the game and determining the ultimate winner of one million dollars. Often the members of the jury make long and dramatic speeches about their relationship with other “castaways,” about integrity and betrayal. The final Tribal Council thus “exacerbates the dramatic tensions that have been opened in the previous ‘acts’” (Haralovich and Trosset 81). There is also a “postgame” interview show, in which the eliminated castaways discuss the game strategies, and talk about the impact the *Survivor* experience had on their lives.

Survivor is commonly considered to be “the mother of American reality TV,” because it was the first highly-rated and profitable reality show on broadcast television in the USA (“Survivor”). As the 2003 television series *The Reality of Reality* observed, the “reality” television genre has traditionally been associated with “real life – unwritten, unrehearsed and uncertain” (qtd. in Crew 61). *Survivor* and other reality television shows are presented as “unscripted,” “spontaneous,” and, therefore, unpredictable. Regular viewers watch these programs to see “real,” ordinary people in “real” life (often stressful and competitive) situations, trying to overcome “real” challenges. The genre of reality television has not only proved to be a recent boom in television primetime programming,

but continues to be a critical force in its development as a cultural phenomenon. A 2001 survey conducted by *American Demographics* found that “forty-five percent of all Americans watch reality television programs. Of those, 27 percent consider themselves die-hard fans. [. . .] In fact, 37 percent of all Americans prefer to watch real people on television rather than scripted characters” (qtd. in Johnston 115).

Before examining *Survivor* in relation to Defoe's novel, I want to highlight interesting parallels between reality television and the eighteenth-century novel. Such comparison, I believe, will help better understand how both genres reflect societal values, beliefs and morals. The political, economic and personal issues to which both reality television and the eighteenth-century novel give attention, are, I will argue, a version (albeit an exaggerated one) of a culture in which these works were produced, although, as our analysis of *Survivor* and *Robinson Crusoe* will try to demonstrate, a version *Survivor* presents to contemporary viewers is hardly altered from the world which Defoe depicts in *Robinson Crusoe*.

To start with, there is much critical debate about the origins of the novel genre. After examining the differences between the eighteenth-century literary works and previous forms of literature, many scholars agree that the novel is an eighteenth century creation. In his seminal book *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Michael McKeon recognizes the fact that "the origins of the English novel occur at the end point of a long history of 'novelistic usage.'" Yet, he suggests that "by the middle of the eighteenth century, the stabilizing of terminology - the increasing acceptance of 'the novel' as a canonic term, so that contemporaries 'speak of it as such' - signals the stability of the conceptual category and of the class of literary products that it encloses" (19).

The same argument can be applied to the emergence of reality television genre, the origins of which go back to the 1940s and the 1950s with shows such as *Candid Camera*, *Beat the Clock*, and *Truth or Consequences*. However, "the stabilizing of terminology" did not occur until the 1990s. Reality television as it is currently understood began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with shows such as *Cops* (1989), and *The Real World* (1992). Today, reality television encompasses a variety of specialized formats, including the gamedoc, with shows such as *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and *Fear Factor*; the dating programs, such as *Joe Millionaire*, *The Bachelor*, and *Blind Date*; the makeover programs, similar to *What Not to Wear*, *A Wedding Story*, *The Swan* and *Extreme Makeover*, and the "docusoaps" such as *The Real World*, *High School Reunion* and *Sorority Life*. Other examples also include the talent contests (*American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars*), popular court programs (*Judge Judy*, *Court TV*), reality sitcoms (*The Osbournes*, *My Life as a Sitcom*), and celebrity variations (*Celebrity Boxing*).

What ties all these various formats of the reality TV genre together is their "professed abilities to more fully provide viewers an unmediated, voyeuristic, yet often playful look into what might be called the 'entertaining real.' This fixation with 'authentic' personalities, situations, and narratives is considered to be reality TV's primary distinction from fictional television and also its primary selling point" (Ouellette and Murray 4). Contemporary audience's desire for the "real" parallels the eighteenth century preoccupation with representing reality. Historians have seen "realism" as the defining characteristic of the newly emerged novel genre during Defoe's time. The eighteenth century writers went great lengths to attest the authenticity of their stories. For example, Samuel Richardson used the epistolary form to give credibility to his narratives. Others, including Defoe, posed as editors, claiming to have stumbled on the text at hand and to

have edited it for readers later. Some writers declared that the story was narrated to them, as is the case in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*. No matter how convincing, these claims to authenticity and the appearance of reality made these fictional works more popular and appealing to the eighteenth-century readers.

Hence, the eighteenth-century novel's commitment to truth is comparable to the emphasis reality TV shows put on "reality" of the stories they portray. Just as Defoe claims to be only the "editor" of *Robinson Crusoe's* true life story, *Survivor*, and reality television programs in general, claim to depict "real" people in "real" situations, trying to overcome "real" obstacles. The claim of "realism" is the major appeal of reality TV shows. As Richard Crew's study of viewer interpretations of reality television reveals, viewers interpret these shows as real. They watch them because they "feel that they see honest emotions, spontaneous and unpredictable stories, and authentic actions (vs. 'acted behavior') by participants" (72). What viewers of reality television and readers of the eighteenth century novel find appealing about these genres, then, is that they interpret the stories they portray as authentic, real, and therefore, easily relatable.

Despite their fixation with authenticity, however, reality TV shows, like novels, are more fiction than "reality." They contain many "fictional" elements, including carefully selected cast members, manufactured story lines, a highly-produced soundtrack, and serial drama, and thus present not reality, but rather the illusion of it. As Mark Andrejevic observes, "making reality seem real, it turns out, requires the very latest in high-tech audio and video equipment" (197). The production crew for *Survivor*, for instance, numbered more than one hundred, including camera operators, medical staff, and transportation coordinators. Moreover, they used "every format available" - 35 mm, 16 mm, and Super 8 film, as well as hidden surveillance cameras with night vision lenses, aerial footage shots

from a helicopter, and digital video. This high budget production process, Andrejevic notes, "perfectly summarizes the paradox of 'manipulated authenticity': we can imagine a cast member, clad in a loincloth and clutching a gaggle of photographers and production assistants, shooting with hand-held cameras, dollies, and special underwater cameras to catch the action" (197). Of course, in the edited versions of the show the production crew never appears. Moreover, while *Survivor* continuously stresses the fact that the show contestants are in risky and dangerous situation, "marooned for thirty-nine days" on mysterious location, in reality the players are far from actual danger. The medics are just outside camera range, ready to step in at a moment's notice; As Terry Patkin claims, "even as they appeared starving and malnourished, [. . .] *Survivor: The Australian Outback's* players were given vitamins off-screen by the well-fed crew" (18).

Even the depiction of the players' identities and personalities on reality TV shows are artificially constructed through selective editing and deception. To quote Terry Patkin again, the reality television games "assert that they show reality, but of course, the reality the audience sees is highly scripted and carefully edited" (20). The "ultimate reality-as-image" came on *Survivor: The Australian Outback*, when Michael, one of the players, had a medical emergency and had to be taken from the game by a helicopter. As the helicopter lands to whisk Michael away, we see "the videographers' tent supplied with portable refrigerator and other amenities mere yards from where the players have been roughing it for weeks" (Patkin 20). For couple of minutes, viewers are able to see the contrast between the play frame and external reality.

Both eighteenth-century novel and contemporary reality television shows satisfy audience's voyeuristic desires, their craving to know the intimate truth about other people's daily lives. The pleasure eighteenth-century readers derived from reading "real" letters and

diaries of their favorite characters is similar to the pleasure contemporary viewers obtain from the reality shows' style of filming – usually referred to as "fly on the wall" – that allows viewers to adopt the position of the voyeur catching the actions of the show's participants in all their "immediate" authenticity, and hearing their most intimate thoughts and emotions.

Both the eighteenth century fiction and reality television celebrate the everyday by focusing on daily lives of "ordinary" people. Many scholars discuss the eighteenth-century novel's embracing of a middle-class ethos. In her influential book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, for example, Nancy Armstrong notes that a growing disdain for the aristocracy and idle rich resulted in the formation of a new kind of domestic fiction, which focused on a peaceful, idealized domestic space of ordinary people, and ridiculed the excesses of the wealthy. Middle class values obliterated the values of the aristocracy. Similarly, in today's reality programming, we see a trend to celebrate the average, "ordinary" individuals. Most contestants on reality television shows come from working class backgrounds. They are truck drivers, bartenders, personal trainers, teachers, waiters, and farmers. In fact, as Elisabeth Johnston observes, "the plot of *Survivor* [. . .] depends on reducing all of its contestants, modern day Robinson Crusoes, to the bare necessities of life, stripping them of markers of class, status, and wealth" (119).¹⁹

As the novel rose as a popular market in the eighteenth century, women comprised the main audience for this new genre. They became not only novel readers but also novel writers, frequently publishing anonymously or under a pseudonym. In a similar vein, reality television is commonly considered as women's programming. The topics covered by reality shows - courtship, marriage, domesticity – are often seen as "feminine" concerns.

¹⁹ While *Survivor* does not portray the contestants in a domestic space, many other reality programs, such as *Supernanny*, *Trading Spouses*, *Wife Swap*, do.

Because of its emphasis on domestic space, its portrayal of "low life" and its appeal to female readership, the eighteenth-century novel was often shamed by literary critics as "low" art. Likewise, the phenomenon of reality television has been devalued by academia as "low culture," watched primarily by women. That is probably the reason why, despite the popularity of reality programming, there has been minimal scholarship that investigates this genre. Although recently critics have shown a new interest in reality TV, the kind of criticism the genre generates is still largely negative. As Johnston points out, "the reality television show phenomenon has launched a debate as to whether the genre evidences our society's moral decay and the increasing debasement of entertainment culture" (115). Scholars discuss the moral value of reality television programming. Such disparagement of the genre of reality television reflects the widespread condemnation of the newly emerged novel genre in the eighteenth century, which was also viewed as "profligate and improper," providing "that fatal poison to virtue," to quote an educator of the time, John Bennett (qtd. in Grogan 14).

The many similarities between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Survivor* make it surprising that no one has examined this TV series in relation to Defoe's novel²⁰. To start with, *Survivor*, very much like Defoe's novel, employs the voice over narration to give the audience access to the contestants' feelings and emotions. During these commentaries – frequently referred to as the "confessionals" – viewers can hear the most intimate thoughts of the show's participants. The characters onscreen confess about their fears and frailties, reveal their secrets, and disclose how they really feel about their competitors. Viewer, thus,

²⁰ Stam points out some parallels between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Survivor* in his chapter on colonial and postcolonial classics. However, his analysis is very brief, comprising only couple of paragraphs.

very much like novel readers, feel that they “know” each contestant better than any other player possibly could.

Before the "castaways" reach their remote destination, they are given two minutes to salvage the necessary things from the boat. Much as Crusoe had done, first thing they do when they land is to build a shelter, using a minimal number of tools available to them, and find something to eat. Viewers watch the physical (and emotional) transformation of the contestants. Although they do not dress in goat skin outfits, they do lose weight, get sore spots on their body, and become more vulnerable and weak as the weeks progress. However, despite the obvious hardship, most players find the *Survivor* experience useful and valuable. Despite his serious burning injuries on the show, Michael Skupin, one of the contestants from *Survivor: The Australian Outback*, asserts that “this was the most positive experience that could ever happen to me. Those days helped my confidence. They made me see that I could survive, if I was ever placed in that position.” Many other players share Skupin’s enthusiasm. “This game has taught me a lot about myself; not only about my strengths, but, most importantly, about my weaknesses,” declares one of the contestants.

The castaways of *Survivor* suffer not from isolation, but from lack of contact with loved ones. They get very emotional when they talk about their family members and declare that *Survivor* has taught them to appreciate their blessings, and to look at life from a new perspective. “Things you used to take for granted – reading a newspaper at the dinner table, your wife doing laundry, your kids coming home with something they made you at school – you stop taking for granted,” one of the players meditates in his confessional.

Survivor even finds place for depicting a religious aspect of the island experience for some of its contestants. For instance, Derrick, a player from the first season of *Survivor*

Borneo, like Crusoe, finds time for Bible reading and piety. “I need some quiet time, and a lot of times it includes just praying and meditation and praising God. That’s where I feel all my strength and energy come from,” explains Derrick. Sean, one of the contestants from season four of *Survivor Marquesas*, is also deeply religious. As soon as they land, Sean grabs another player’s hand, and kneeling in water, offers thanks to God for their “deliverance.” “When we first arrived on land,” Sean explicates, “it was beyond land. I’m emotional when I think of the miracles God has performed.” To Sean, very much like Defoe’s Crusoe, their safe arrival is a miracle in which God has played a direct part: “His hand was under the raft,” he exclaims.

However, other contestants look upon such religious piety with skepticism, even ridicule. “It’s funny to me that a guy would read the Bible out here,” asserts one player. “The only reason I’d bring the Bible is if [. . .] I needed a toilet paper.” Most contestants find the religious team members “awkward,” “weird” and frightening. They feel uncomfortable around them, and vote them off from the game. Derrick is expelled from *Borneo* very early on, and although Sean makes it to the final five, he is viewed by everyone as useless and insufferable.

Much as Ian Watt saw Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe as an embodiment of economic individualism, contemporary critics have seen *Survivor* as allegorizing contemporary politics and corporate ladder climbing. All *Survivor* contestants, like Defoe’s characters, pursue money. They all have jobs, a home and family, but choose to leave them to better their economic condition – the winner gets a grand prize of one million dollars. In their audition tapes most players acknowledge that winning one million dollars is their primary motivation for participating in the game. After taking the title of a “Sole Survivor” for the fourteenth season of *Survivor Fiji*, Earl Cole underlined the financial aspect of his victory:

“It feels good. It feels really good. I’ve never had a million dollars” (qtd. in Haidet).

When asked how he would use the money, Cole replied in a true Crusoe-like spirit: “Invest it; try to turn a million into ten million.”

In his analysis of *Survivor*, Robert Stam asserts that "Robinson Crusoe [. . .] would have felt very much at home in the world of *Survivor*" (100). He too might have adopted the show's motto "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast." For these "castaways," as for Crusoe, manipulation, betrayal and self-serving alliances are the strategies necessary for survival. The more calculating you are, the better chances you have of winning the prize. The best players are those who do not let their feelings and emotions get in the way of the game. Cole, the fourteenth season winner of *Survivor*, revealed a secret to his success: “How was I able to go as far as I did? I had six different alliances going. I managed all of them. It was a lot of work. I was always thinking. I had the other people thinking that I wasn’t thinking; that I wasn’t playing the game, and that I was just glad to be there. That was part of my game” (qtd. in Haidet)

The first season winner Richard Hatch also admitted to being calculating, scheming and manipulative throughout the entire game. Forming a secret voting alliance with the two remaining female members of the tribe, Hatch orchestrated the elimination of Dirk Been before the two tribes merged into one. When exposed, the voting alliance was criticized very heavily by other players. Some even saw it as cheating and felt that it was “unethical” to form alliances. However, Hatch’s tactic would become the standard for *Survivor*. After the first season, a voting strategy became routine among *Survivor* contestants. The elimination process, it is now established, does not necessarily depend on a person’s ability to contribute to island life. Rather, it is common to vote off a player who the team members consider to be “a threat” to themselves.

The world of *Survivor*, thus, is a version of the twenty-first century American corporate culture, “the jungle of contemporary capitalism” (Andrejevic 203). After the first season of the show was aired, viewers immediately started comparing the world of *Survivor* to the workplace, with contestants’ behavior and actions mirroring everyday “office politics” (Thackaberry). Journalists commented that the appeal of the show was the fact that it was “more like surviving the corporate jungle than the wilds of Malaysia” (Powell 6). Talk show hosts and sociologists agreed that the creators of the show had made a “replica of the American workplace” (qtd. in Thackaberry 156). The winner of *Survivor Borneo*, Richard Hatch, was seen as a perfect representative of the seamy side of contemporary corporate America. In her column on Salon.com Janelle Brown refers to Hatch as: “The hardened soul of the corporation, building better business by falsely encouraging everyone to get along. What he did on the island was just more of the same: building better teams that he could dominate and control and eventually screw over in his quest for the top. His win is a trophy for ladder-climbing executives everywhere.”

Mark Burnett, an executive producer of *Survivor*, endorsed such interpretation of the show. During an interview with Larry King, Burnett argued that when watching *Survivor*, viewers were watching a microcosm of corporate America, of “the political workplace.” Like players of *Survivor*, people in the workplace “want to get ahead and will do whatever it takes,” he stated. To Larry King’s comment – “they’ll eat rat to be vice president of sales” – Burnett replied: “they probably would” (qtd. in Thackaberry 165). *Survivor*, thus, is a representation of contemporary morals, beliefs, and values.

Those who saw *Survivor* as a mirror of contemporary corporate America argued that Machiavellian behavior of the show’s contestants was a representation of the dark side of American office politics: greed, the ruthless pursuit of power, manipulating others to get

to the top, shallow, inauthentic personal relationships are part of daily lives of those people who want to succeed in today's corporate world, many claimed. Trickery, deception, and betrayal are often viewed as justifiable means to achieve a goal. In an interview with a CNN reporter, Burnett stated: "I think it's a bit naïve to think that everyone would work together. [. . .] I mean, think of yourself at your job at CNN. You have to get ahead and get promoted. You're not always trying to think of the group or CNN; you're thinking of yourself, if you'd be honest" (qtd. In Thackaberry 165).²¹

For Robinson Crusoe, Watt argues, nothing is important if it does not have commodity value. Love plays little part in Crusoe's life in the novel. The same argument can be made about the "castaways" of *Survivor*. As many viewers and critics point out, *Survivor* is not about survival skills at all. It is more a test of social skills. As the host of the show states, "surviving each other, surviving the social politics is what the game is all about." Focused on the outcome of winning, a principle all contestants follow, then, is "capitalist survival of the fittest; dog-eat-dog competition; cut-throat networking; and nice guys finish last" (Stam 100). One of the players from *Survivor Australian Outback* gives a bottom-line interpretation of the show's politics when he declares: "I don't meant to sound evil," says Jeff, "butt's all about kicking someone's ass. [. . .] Some of the people in the tribe are talking about how guilty they feel and how bad they feel for the other tribe and – screw it. I mean, chop their heads off, chop their legs off. This is a game and I'm ready to beat every one of them." Jeff restates his view later as well: "I'm looking forward to voting somebody off, because it's part of the game. And I'm here to play the game. I'm

²¹ Many viewers disagree with the view that the show is a representative of contemporary corporate America. To them, it is a mistake to draw cynical conclusions about society's values and beliefs based on the actions portrayed on a game show. Several critics voiced an opposing viewpoint, challenging the notion that "to be successful in American life, you almost have to be Machiavellian or at least manipulative and shrewed and crafty" (qtd. in Thackaberry 166). Machiavellian tactics, many argue, may help you achieve some short term gains, but eventually, "every corporate crocodile [. . .] gets his comeuppance" (qtd. in Thackaberry 167).

not looking to make friends. I'm not here for that. People have got to go and I look forward to walking up, writing someone's name on a card and talking about them."

In her famous speech from the first season of *Survivor*, while explaining her vote for Richard Hatch, Susan Hawk, a truck driver from Wisconsin, declared:

This island is pretty much full of only two things: snakes and rats. And in the end we have Richard the snake, who knowingly went after prey, and Kelly, who turned into the rat that ran around like rats do on the island, trying to run from the snake. I feel we owe it to this island's spirit that we have come to know to let it be in the end the way Mother Nature intended it to be: for the snake to eat the rat. (qtd. in Podhoretz 50)

Hawk's sentiments were replicated by many. "[Hatch] turned out to be a true leader," commented one of the critics. "Not the kind of leader most of us would like, but [one who] organized an alliance that devoured victims at will [and was] voted King" (qtd. in Thackaberry 169).

Emotional ties and personal relationships play a very minor part in both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Survivor*. Many compared hollow, fake, and advantageous relationships contestants formed on the show to business relationships today which are also often based on mutual needs, promises, and expedience. Viewers took from Hatch's behavior "a kind of model of what happens in the business world every day. [. . .] the smiling handshake, the "I'm your friend up until the time I don't need you anymore" (qtd. in Thackaberry 170). As one player puts it, "Sometimes you look past relationships [in order to look out for number one] when you are seeking a greater goal. [. . .] This happens every day both in nature and corporate America. Yes, I do at times find this abhorrent, but that's just how life is [. . .] as coldly Darwinian as that may sound" (qtd. in Andrejevic 203). Producer Mark Burnett agrees: "Very few people rise up in organizations by being 100 percent on the

straight and narrow path. Some of us will talk behind others' backs at times or do a bit of back stabbing" (qtd. in Thackaberry 171).

While *Survivor* does not have the Friday figure, it does record Western encounter with the "other" and in significant ways reproduces the imperial overtones of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The association of each location with the "other," uncivilized, and wild world of exploration is emphasized by an opening sequence of each show. For instance, to introduce *Survivor Africa*, a host of the show, Jeff Probst, narrates:

We are carving a path along the scorching desert of Kenya in Eastern Africa, where these sixteen Americans are about to begin the adventure of a lifetime. They are about to be abandoned in a heart of one of the most diverse and dangerous collection of animals anywhere on the continent: zebras, elephants, lions, giraffes - just a sampling of wildlife. They'll call this place home. Temperatures here can reach 120 degrees. Water is scarce. It is a land virtually untouched by the modern world. For the next thirty nine days, these sixteen strangers will be left to defend for themselves, forced to create a new society, while battling the elements and each other. They must learn to adapt.

Whether in Africa, Malaysia, Kenya, Tahiti, or Thailand, contestants find themselves in a space that is nothing like home. Viewers are shown panoramic shots of these exotic locations with their sublime mountains, rock formations, and lush vegetation. The landscape of *Survivor* is as significant as the players themselves. As producer Burnett puts it, "The location is the seventeenth character on *Survivor*. It needs to be mysterious, epic, and inspiring, [. . .] transporting the armchair adventurer into the realm of fantasy, making them wish they were there. Nothing about a *Survivor* location should be mundane. No suggestion of the real world is allowed" (109). In his memoirs Burnett recalls one of the producers of the show suggesting the Bahamas as a filming location for *Survivor 2*:

‘There is something about an island,’ one of my producers had said when I told him I was thinking of a landlocked location for *Survivor 2*. ‘I think maybe you oughta go to the Bahamas or something.’ It was certainly an option. But I needed a place whose wildlife and topography were even more daunting than those of Pulau Tiga.²² As much as I wanted to spend six weeks sunning in the Bahamas, *Survivor* meant building a civilization from the ground up, not Club Med. (Burnett 109)

Burnett, thus, needed a location that was associated with "the other," not with familiar. Accordingly, each *Survivor* locale represents an untouched space and unspoiled nature.

Moreover, as Jennifer Bowering Delisle observes, most of the countries in which *Survivor* has been shot have been subject to colonial rule. Kenya, Australia and the island of Pulau Tiga of Malaysia, for instance, are former colonies of Britain, while the Nuku Hiva was once colonized by America. Thus, “the construction of privileged foreigners entering exoticized, ‘uncivilized’ territories immediately signals the colonial relationship between North and South” (Delisle 45). Although no natives appear in most seasons of *Survivor*, their implied presence is always felt. Often they are depicted in opening sequences; frequently a number of challenges players must overcome are built on the native people’s knowledge, customs or experience; even players’ division into tribes evokes the native presence. The names of the tribes, taken from a native language, originate from the local culture or natural history: for example, Moto and Ravu, are Fijian words for “Spear” and “to kill;” the Amazon’s original tribes, Jaburu and Tambaqui, were named for native species of stork and fish, respectively; Kucha and Ogakor are indigenous Australian words for “Eastern grey kangaroo” and “Fresh water crocodile,” and Marquesas’ original tribes, Maraamu and Rotu, were taken from the Marquesan words for “Southern Wind” and “Rain.”

22 Pulau Tiga, located on the island of Borneo, East Malaysia, is the place where *Survivor 1* was filmed.

Survivor puts a continual emphasis on the “primitive,” uncivilized world of the island. Each episode starts with picturesque shots of the wilderness. Very rarely does a focus shift from this untamed, wild space to a city life, or civilized parts of the location. “Viewers should never have the impression that a water-ski boat is going to appear over the horizon, towing a tourist” (109), states Burnett. The few shots that do depict a life outside the island are taken from the players’ audition tapes, which give viewers a glimpse of the contestants’ previous (and drastically different) lives. It becomes clear, then, that the exotic locations of *Survivor* represent the domain of the “other,” even when the cultural “other” is not physically present.

When the natives *are* visibly present, they are “clearly the noble savages of *Survivor*’s rhetorical architecture” (Vrooman 188). Especially interesting in this regard is *Survivor Africa*, which was, I believe, the only example in *Survivor* series that depicted the players outside the game site, in local villages, and in a hospital. Although other seasons of the show gave viewers a glimpse of an interaction between locals and some players, these encounters were brief and rare compared to those of *Survivor Africa* participants and indigenous Kenyans. Why? Africa – more so than any other country presented on the show – is a place where the Westerners can meet and engage with the *authentic* “other.” More than any other place depicted on *Survivor*, Africa is the one that allows the players to “witness their own privilege, leaving them thankful for the luxury of their own lives” (Hubbard and Mathers 449); it is a place marked by “a contemporary form of darkness” (Hubbard and Mathers 452) – HIV/AIDS; it is a place that needs to be recuperated and saved by the Western civilization. Interestingly, as Laura Hubbard and Kathlys Mathers observe, naming the program *Survivor Africa*, instead of *Survivor Kenya*, or *Survivor*

Serengeti or *Survivor Shaba*,²³ “reveals nothing but that Africa has failed to become specific, remains blurred, dark and irrelevant to a global economy” (446).

The images of Africa and the Africans *Survivor Africa* presents are clearly meant to underline the vast cultural differences that exist among the Western players and the “primitive” natives. A local village of Kenya, which two contestants – Ethan and Lex – visit after Ethan wins a reward challenge, appears ideally figured to represent Africa’s “otherness.” The dirty street is “packed with people dressed to the nines and clearly showing off all markers of tribal identity that they can lay their hands on” (Hubbard and Mathers 448). Ethan and Lex look out of place among these villagers, who are amused to see the two struggle to sell their goats in order to get their spending money for the day. At the end of their visit Ethan and Lex leave with a new perspective on life, commenting how this brief encounter with “the other” changed them. Africa shows them their own privilege, and teaches them to be grateful for what they have.

Survivor Africa, like many eighteenth century colonial narratives, puts a great emphasis on Western benevolence. For *Survivor* participants Africa needs to be recuperated, saved from “a contemporary form of darkness” AIDS, a disease, “that is often associated with, or blamed on, Africa” (Delisle 46). Thus, Lex is given an opportunity to drive his new car – a reward of another challenge – to Wamba hospital in order to deliver medical supplies to the African patients. As Hubbard and Mathers observe, “there is little explanation for this trip. *Survivor* appears to be relying on the citation of the thousands of circulating images and knowledge that Africa is where AIDS can be talked about and seen as true tragedy” (45). The image of the benevolent colonizer of Defoe’s times, entering

23 Other *Survivor* seasons used specific names of the region, reflecting some kind of detailed cartography, such as *Survivor Marquesas* (instead of *Survivor Polynesia*), or *Survivor Thailand*, (instead of *Survivor Asia*).

Africa and other colonial spaces in order to save morally diseased “other,” and bring light to the darkness, is carried over into *Survivor* in a contemporary context.

Survivor, thus, reproduces Defoe’s view of the native cultures as primitive, as “other.” The sense of primitiveness and of otherness is created even when the figure of the “other” is physically absent. Many times it is produced by the show’s rituals and sacrifices. In *Survivor Marquesas*, for example, the American contestants are “challenged” to eat a traditional Marquesean delicacy of raw fish with a “rotten” mixture of fish bones and crab legs. Presenting Marquesean dish as “disgusting” and “gross,” smelling “worse than a public toilet on a hot summer day,” to quote host Jeff Probst, marks the native Marquesean tradition as primitive, inferior, even savage. By demeaning and debasing the host culture in such subtle ways, *Survivor* implicitly replicates Defoe’s depiction of the natives as barbarous, ruthless, and savage.

Critics such as Tarleton Gillespie argue that television is “a vulnerable and incomplete tool of legitimation” (qtd. In Delisle 54). People who take such approach claim that the viewing audience’s opinions will not become influenced after watching shows such as *Survivor*; and that any messages and/or images the show presents about the host countries and their native inhabitants will not necessarily be read and/or accepted by viewers. I am inclined to disagree with such view and argue that popular shows such as *Survivor* do have a great power to influence viewers’ perceptions and ideas. By magnifying the cultural differences between America and the native cultures, and by showcasing the native cultures’ “backwardness” and primitiveness, *Survivor* allows America to set itself apart from the non-Western world. Many of the show’s rituals and practices help position foreign cultures into the realm of otherness. While creators of *Survivor* may not intentionally be attempting to demean and debase the host cultures, the lack of positive

images advances negative thoughts and stereotypes. The problem posed by these portrayals is that viewers, who believe in the "reality" of reality TV, would take these representations of the native cultures and from them construct their perceptions about them. The popularity of shows such as *Survivor* then is worthy of investigation in light of what images they present about foreign cultures and people.

CONCLUSION

“As fans of Gilligan’s Island are well aware, a deserted, isolated island in the ocean can often become a busy port of call: visitors arrive and depart; intriguing flotsam washes up on shore, only to be swept away by high tides and storms; and there is always the strange sensation that someone may already be living there. The same can be said, not just for Crusoe’s island, with its supporting cast of cannibals and conspirators, but for the novel itself, a veritable intertextual intersection where all roads come from and lead to other island narratives.”

John Barberet. “Messages in Bottles.”

“Reading [Robinson Crusoe] alone is not enough. It prompts an irresistible urge to rewrite it.”

Michel Tournier.

One of the reasons why filmmakers adapt novels for cinema is because “original film stories are very few and far between,” argues a scenarist and a director Bela Balazs. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is an excellent plot source (or, as Balazs puts it, “a raw material”) for movies. Only very few novels can be exploited by the film market so successfully. Defoe’s novel is, in Bakhtin’s terms, a “polyphonic” narrative, which has a potential for infinite variations and alternatives. As Pierre Macherey expresses it, Defoe is “auteur d’anticipation,” or an “author by proxy” (qtd. in Bell 41), who gave us a multifaceted text, with a capacity to be revisited, rewritten, reinterpreted and rediscovered

by successive generations. As the rich diversity of interpretations presented in the preceding chapters demonstrates, the Crusoe story changes and transforms constantly; it responds to contemporary viewers' expectations and desires, reflects modern-day values and anxieties, and exposes the sins and the vices of today's world. Accordingly, some of its retellings are tragic, some comic, some romantic, some sarcastic, some funny, and some fantastic. Consequently, viewing audiences have seen many faces of Crusoe: happy and self assured, joyless and lonely, arrogant and cruel, powerful, powerless, and even laugh-out loud funny.

Imaginative renderings and critical rewritings of *Robinson Crusoe* examined in the preceding chapters demonstrate the immediacy and resilience of the Crusoe myth, its protean nature, its potential to be shaped by different times, nations and cultures, as well as the many possibilities inherent in Defoe's text. The Crusoe story continues to fascinate audiences because it addresses the universal themes of solitude, survival, hope, and exploration of unknown, among many others. Because some of these issues "are reduced to an extreme form of simplicity" (Stimpson viii) in the novel, it invites further retelling and reinventing. Each filmmaker comes to the Crusoe story from a different perspective; each explores the area that they find especially interesting, controversial, or problematic. Thus, some adaptations give voice to Crusoe's man Friday by retelling the familiar story from an alternative – the native man's – viewpoint (Jack Gold's *Man Friday*); other filmmakers introduce into the Crusoe story additional characters (Disney's *Swiss family Robinson*); some approach it as a romantic idyll (Reitman's *Six Days Seven Nights*), and yet others employ the myth for comic purposes (*Gilligan's Island*).

To a certain extent, however, all of these works use the Crusoe story as a commentary on contemporary world, as a tool for examining our own times. Thus,

Zemeckis's *Cast Away* utilizes the Crusoe myth in order to criticize contemporary American life, marked by estranged personal relationships, overbooked schedules and materialism. In a similar vein, creators of a popular TV series *Lost* transform Defoe's plot structures and themes to suit their own purposes. Hence, *Lost* becomes a compelling mix of thoughtful reflection on the Crusoe myth and a mirror image of modern day concerns and anxieties.

Even the most "faithful," or "literal" adaptations of Defoe's novel do more than simply replicate the original narrative. Cinematic versions of *Robinson Crusoe* go far beyond rendering Crusoe's ordeal on screen. In their retelling of the Crusoe story, these adaptors reveal their culture's own dilemmas. Thus, by focusing on the thorny Crusoe/Friday relationship, Luis Bunuel's *Robinson Crusoe*, shot in Mexico during a time "when some in the 'West' were just beginning to be conscious of the wave of decolonization and the dissolution of European empires, when anti-colonialist independence movements had not yet achieved their full momentum" (Stam 87), implicitly denounces the representation of Latin America as "the other" by the Western world. Stanislav Govorukhin's *Robinson Kruzo*, on the other hand, epitomizes the strictures of the Soviet regime. In the hands of a Russian filmmaker, Crusoe becomes a mouthpiece for the Soviet political beliefs.

Hence, none of the works examined here attempt to reproduce the spirit of the novel. On the contrary, most versions of the Crusoe myth break with the important aspects of Defoe's novel, such as Puritan religiosity, middle-class lifestyle and norms, and colonialism. Almost all *Robinson Crusoe* adaptations are, thus, ideologically and politically driven. All of them submit the original narrative to extreme ideological critique.

Addressing the colonialist and misogynistic premises held by many readers to be embodied in Defoe's novel, have led to many interesting adaptations.

However, a close analysis of the filmic Robinsonades also reveals a paradox. Most cinematic versions of Defoe's novel generally attempt to redress or critique the source text's racist and colonialist conventions; yet, whether purposefully or not, they end up simply reproducing just what they aim to criticize. In the adaptations by Wetherel, Sutherland, Bunuel, Deschanel and Hardy/Miller, as well as in *Swiss Family Robinson*, in TV show *Gilligan's Island*, and in a reality TV series *Survivor*, the natives' "otherness," their primitiveness and backwardness are heightened. They are contrasted to the European Crusoe figure's self-sufficiency, resourcefulness and potency. In the contemporary retellings of the Crusoe story the natives are just as un-defined, un-named, and un-identified as they are in the source novel. As in the original text, in the cinematic versions of *Robinson Crusoe*, the sense of the cultural superiority of the Western world is created on the expense of "otherized," primitivized and silenced natives. The positioning of the non-Western world into the realm of otherness is very problematic and worthy of critical attention. The depiction of stereotyped and distorted images of the native cultures perpetuates cultural insensitivity, chauvinism and narrow-mindedness. The filmic Robinsonades, as well as television shows that appropriate the Crusoe myth, can be a good starting point for a discussion on racism and ethnocentricity.

APPENDIX

Colvin's list of Science Fiction Robinsonades:

From the 1930s: *Island of Lost Souls* (1932).

From the 1950s: *Five* (1951); *The Lost Continent* (1951); *When Worlds Collide* (1951); *It's Hot in Paradise* (1959); *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959).

From the 1960s: *Mysterious Island* (1961); *Attack of the Mushroom people* (1963); *Lord of the Flies* (1963); *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964); *Voyage to the Prehistoric Planet* (1965); *The Seventh Continent* (1966); *Women of the Prehistoric Planet* (1966); *Lost in Space* [TV serial] (1967); *Hello Down There* (1968); *The Island of the Lost* (1968); *The Lost Continent* (1968); *Planet of the Apes* (1968); *2001 – A Space Odyssey* (1968); *Captain Nemo and the Underwater City* (1969); *Marooned* (1969).

From the 1970s: *The Mysterious Island of Captain Nemo* (1973); *The Stranger* [MTV] (1973); *Gulliver's Travels* (1977); *The island of Dr. Moreau* (1977); *The People that Time Forgot* (1977); *Mysterious Island of Beautiful Women* (1979).

From the 1980s: *Planet of Dinosaurs* (1980); *E.T. The extra-Terrestrial* (1982); *Enemy Mine* (1985); *Lord of the Flies* (1989).

Science Fiction Robinsonade Filmography after 1989:

Total Recall (1990), directed by Paul Verhoeven, and starring Arnold Schwarzenegger is a story about a man, who discovers that his entire memory of the past derives from a memory chip implanted in his brain. Once he has realized his true identity, he travels to Mars to piece together the rest of his identity.

Alien Visitor (1995), directed by Rolf de Heer, is a story of a beautiful alien, sent from the planet Epsilon to pass judgment on the shameful way in which humans have mishandled their planet.

Cube (1997), directed by Vincenzo Natali, is a winner of a 1997 Toronto Film Festival prize for "Best Canadian First Feature." It depicts the plight of a group of people clad in prison-style uniforms and trapped in futuristic cube-like metal cells.

Convict 762 (1997), directed by Luca Bercovici, follows a spacecraft with an all-female crew that crashes on a planet being used as a penal colony.

In the Dead of Space (1999), directed by Eli Necekov, is a story of a scientist who, while piloting a small spacecraft, accidentally crashes into Tesla, a laboratory in space created and maintained by the Russian government.

Ascension (2000), directed by John Krawlzik, is about an agent investigating a suicide on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. When severe weather keeps him stranded on the moon longer than expected, he begins to see that a greater evil may be present at the space station.

Red Planet (2000), directed by Anthony Hoffman, and starring Val Kilmer, tells a story of Commander Kate Bowman, who sets out for Mars with an astronaut and two scientists in hopes of making our neighboring planet habitable, so that a colony of Earthlings might begin a new civilization there. But disaster strikes and the landing craft crashes into the red planet. The crew is stranded without communications as Bowman struggles to find a way to get them home.

Mission to Mars (2000), directed by Brian De Palma, follows a group of rescuers who set out to Mars to bring back any surviving members of the lost scientists who were conducting experiments on the red planet. They discover that Mars may not be a dead planet after all, and they uncover some startling evidence about the fate of their predecessors.

Cube 2: Hypercube (2002), directed by Andzek Sekula, is a Canadian filmed sequel to *The Cube*. Eight strangers awaken in a cube-shaped room with no idea of where they've come from or how they arrived.

Stranded (2002), directed by Maria Lidon is about an international party of astronauts, who crash lands on Mars. Since rescue is 26 months away, and they only have air, food, and water for a few days, the astronauts must come to grips with the idea of dying slow and painful deaths.

The Island (2005) by Michael Bay is a story of a man who lives in a confined indoor community after ongoing abuse of the Earth has rendered most of the planet uninhabitable.

Flash Gordon: Marooned on Mongo. (2004) is an animated movie. When a mysterious black hole opens on Earth and transports Alex Gordon, Dale Arden, and Dr. Hans Zarkoff to the remote planet of Mongo, they are forced to defend the peace-loving citizens of the planet from the dreaded Ming the Merciless.

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