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**Islands of Dread: an Ecocritical  
Reading of *The Tempest*,  
*Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of  
the Flies***

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*To my parents*

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## INTRODUCTION

The island is an extremely interesting topic for an ecocritical analysis: it is first of all a physical space which matches the elements of water and earth. Indeed, the island is defined as “a piece of land that is completely surrounded by water” (Macmillan Dictionary). Thus, even though the island is a portion of land, we cannot separate it from the surrounding water that contributes to its definition. Moreover, when we think about the island we associate it to exoticism: we do not think about modern sites like Manhattan. The island we think about is a distant, peaceful remote place. Indeed, the island is also a powerful literary setting: a place of isolation where the travelers find an alternative to their homeland. In our mind, islands are connected to elements such as shipwreck, piracy and treasures, conveying sensations of mystery, fascination and discovery. We find a great number of instances of island setting not only in literature, but also in cinema and television: among the others, *Cast Away* is the most iconic cinematic representation of modern *Robinson Crusoe*, while *Lost* is considered the pioneer of the modern television series. We are attracted by the island setting, however we may not be completely aware of the reason for it.

The aim of this thesis will be to consider the topic of the island as a setting for literary works in order to provide an ecocritical analysis. The texts that will be analysed are *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. This thesis will be divided into four chapters: the first one will provide an overview on ecocriticism and the island topic. The following chapters will focus on the three texts: the second one will analyse *The Tempest*, the third one will deal with *Robinson Crusoe* and, finally, the last one will focus on *Lord of The Flies*.

The first chapter will be divided into two sections: the first one will deal with the matter of ecocriticism, focusing immediately on the connection between ecology

and literary criticism that the term itself implies. A definition of ecocriticism will be given, focusing primarily on Cheryll Glotfelty "Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis" (1996). Subsequently, this thesis will provide a description of a number of topics which constitute the basis of the ecocritical theory. First the concept of deep history will be taken into consideration, with the discussion of the four thesis provided by Dipesh Chakrabarty. Secondly, the focus will move on the opposition between the concepts of "nature" and "culture" and the implication of this dualism. Finally, the section will discuss the connection between the critical theory fields of ecocriticism and postcolonialism, after having provided a definition of the last.

The last section of the first chapter will deal with the topic of the island: after an initial discussion on the meaning of the island in our collective imaginary, the paragraph will focus on the reality of islands in the context of colonialism. Then, a space will be given to provide an overview on the topic of the island as a literary setting, quoting the most significant works that have contributed to shape the meaning we attribute to the island discourse. Finally, Linda Charnes's article *Extraordinary Renditions: Toward an agency of Place* (2010) will be introduced as a significant source for this thesis.

The second chapter will provide an ecocritical analysis of *The Tempest*: starting from the description of the sea storm which opens the first scene, this thesis will at first provide a definition of the concept of "ecophobia", on the basis of Simon Estok's *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (2011). A parallel will then be drawn between the character of Prospero and scientific knowledge, introducing the main topic of this chapter: Prospero's manipulation of the island. Subsequently, a reading of the island will be suggested according to Gaia hypothesis formulated by scientist James Lovelock. After an illustration of this theory, the characters of Ariel and Caliban will be analysed from this perspective, with a particular emphasis on Ariel's music and Caliban's ecological knowledge. Caliban will be also discussed in the context of colonialism, even though it will be argued that his characterization is

more complex than the simple native inhabitant subjugated by the Western colonizer. Successively, a section entitled "Prospero's power" will initially focus on pearls as an innovative scientific discovery in relation to Ariel's song, element which reinforces the comparison between Prospero and the scientist. Later, the discussion will cover the theme of deforestation as an activity subtly pursued by Prospero. Finally, the last paragraph will deal with the conclusion of *The Tempest*, reading from an ecocritical perspective Prospero's decision to abjure his powers and drown his book.

The third chapter will focus on *Robinson Crusoe*, starting by an overview on the issue of the Enclosure Movement, with a reference to Robert Marzec's *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature: from Daniel Defoe to Salman Rushdie* (2007). Subsequently, this thesis will focus on the ocean, stressing on the ecocritical implications of Crusoe's shipwreck. The analysis will eventually take into consideration Crusoe's stay on the island, on the basis of the enclosure movement. Starting by the first measures taken by the protagonist at his arrival, the ecocritical study will proceed concentrating on a number of fundamental issues. The first issue concerns Crusoe's use of the Western tools that he is able to recollect from the ship, crucial for the establishment of his domain over the island. The second, most important issue is about religion: in particular, this thesis will dwell on the connection between religion and agriculture, illustrating how Crusoe relates his activity on the island to divine providence. Finally, the last section will focus on the encounter with Friday and the fulfilment of the colonization process.

Discussing *Lord of the Flies*, the last chapter will at first present the topic of the sea, stressing on the descriptions provided by the protagonist. In particular, relevance will be given to the conch, an object filled with cultural meaning as opposed to the wild uncertainty of the island. Following, evidence will be provided that the characters of the novel begin a process of appropriation of the island, starting with an exploration and culminating with a fire. However, the focus of this chapter will be the analysis of pigs and Jack's violence perpetrated against them.



Subsequently, the chapter will deal with the theme of the beast, illustrating the different shapes that it takes before the children's eyes. The last paragraph will stress on the final destruction of the island together with the realization of the protagonist concerning the nature of the beast.

This thesis will analyse how *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of the Flies* deal with nature. Considering the effects of colonialism and postcolonialism, these texts will be read in an ecocritical way. The attempt will be to answer questions like the following: what is the author doing with nature? Is the author humanizing nature? To which extent? How do characters interact with the island? Do they master it? Do they respect it? Do they behave as they were part of it? What is the connection between the text and the historical period which it was set or written in? What is happening to nature (in particular to islands) on a larger scale?

# 1. ECOCRITICISM AND THE ISLAND

## 1.1. Ecocriticism

All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human (Glotfelty 1996:9).

This passage introduces the matter of ecocriticism, stressing on the connection between literature and ecology. It is a matter of fact that human beings interact with the physical world they live in: even though we do not think about it, we are always dealing with our environment. Even when we are at home, staring at our laptop and concentrating on our work, the sun beams that cross our windows brightening our room influence our behaviour: our mood may be cheered up by the sunlight, but we may also feel frustrated because we have to work thus we cannot go out and enjoy the sunny day. Likewise, when we hear the birds singing we may feel annoyed because we lose our focus, but we may also feel revived since it reminds us that winter is over. This continuous interaction between human and non human is taken for granted, thus it is not considered worthy of much interest. We know that what surrounds us is there and we assume it will be there forever, therefore we concentrate on human issues that we consider more important and more urgent. We engage in battles for human rights even though we are primarily focused on ourselves and what we want. We empathize with those individuals who are not as lucky as we are and who have less than we have. However, we are reluctant to give

up anything of what we possess: nowadays, we are surrounded by items that are not even close to be necessary to our survival, nonetheless we perceive them as absolutely essential. In a contemporary context of globalization where the desire of a few individuals is more important than the welfare of entire populations, it sounds almost impossible to put our single lives aside and try to think about human beings as a species and about what we all together need.

However, the purpose of ecocriticism is to combine the natural world with our human reality through literature. Indeed, if history preserves our past building our identity, literature, and art in general, represent the expression of that identity. Therefore, if we combine our literature with an ecological analysis, we may find a way to approach environmental studies without perceiving it as an uninteresting discipline too distant and complicated for us. We must learn to look at both the human and the non human with the same amount of interest and curiosity, removing the barriers that we have created between the two concepts. Absurdly, we seem inclined to believe that no matter what we do, our species will survive even though our planet is dying. As a matter of fact, while the earth was there before us and will probably be there after us, we do not exist outside our planet: thus, if we intoxicate the environment we are first of all damaging our species. Ecocriticism is an instrument which can help us dealing with a topic that we must face, at the same time without necessarily rejecting what being human means for us. We can embrace an understanding of humanity as a species without forgetting the importance and meaning of our single cultures and histories.

### ***1.1.1 The Definition of Ecocriticism***

According to a number of scientists, the Earth has entered a new geological epoch called Anthropocene, an era characterized by the strong role played by humanity in the ecology of the planet. The most commonly shared opinion is that this era began with the industrial revolution, in the latter part of the eighteenth century

(Chakrabarty 2006:209). In the face of the Anthropocene, ecocritics try to read and analyse literary texts from the point of view of the natural world, based on the idea that the natural environment is more than what simply lays around human beings. The natural world must not be considered an element which is separate from human beings and not as important as them.

In her book *Literary studies in an age of environmental crisis*, Glotfelty quotes *Redrawing the boundaries*, a collection of essays which described the changes that had affected literary theory during the 1980s, nevertheless without taking into account the importance of ecocriticism (1996:xv). Indeed, according to Glotfelty, literary critics were primarily concerned with social matters such as the definition of the three categories of race, class and gender (1996:xvi). However, environmental studies flourished during the 1990s, even though they were not defined as ecocriticism yet (Glotfelty 1996:xvii). "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment [...] Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty 1996:xviii). According to Glotfelty, while by "world" literary theory generally means "society", ecocriticism extends this concept to include the environment (1996:xix). Furthermore, Glotfelty suggests that the word "environment" does not have a positive connotation, since it stands for what is around us, thus suggesting an anthropocentric approach where human beings are at the centre of the universe. On the contrary, the words beginning with "eco" convey a positive idea of connection and interdependence, overcoming the dualistic notion of "enviro" (1996:xx). Therefore, the term "ecocriticism" presupposes an harmonic balance among the species without any hierarchical order.

Drawing a comparison between ecocriticism and feminism, Glotfelty finally lists the three stages of ecocriticism: the first one suggests to look at the history of representations of nature in order to notice how these representations have changed over time (1996:xxii). The second stage deals with analysing nature writing in history in order to reconstruct a certain canon (1996:xxiii); the third one eventually concerns the comprehension of the symbolic structure of a society which

brought us to a dualistic definition of environment and humans based on the binary nature versus culture (1996:xxiv).

### **1.1.2 Chakrabarty's Thesis and Deep History**

What defines us as individuals belonging to a certain culture is our history: it tells us where we belong, teaching us how we should behave not to make the same mistakes other individuals made. Above all, our history makes us comprehend why our society works the way it does and what are the mechanisms on the basis of our system of government. However, our history begins with the development of our species, what was before is distinguished as prehistory.

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, in order to comprehend climate change crisis we should stop distinguishing between prehistory and history, which means that we should learn to conceive the world without placing human beings at the centre. Chakrabarty argues that climate change crisis challenges the way in which postcolonial historians have analysed history in the light of decolonization and globalization (2009:198). Indeed, he adds that the phenomena of globalization and global warming should be analysed together in order to comprehend our world.

Thus, he suggests four theses to explain how traditional historians put human beings at the centre of history with no consideration for the environment. Starting by the most crucial proposition, that “Anthropogenic Explanations of Climate Change Spell the Collapse of the Age-old Humanist Distinction between Natural History and Human History” (2009:201), Chakrabarty illustrates how human beings are primarily interested in social history. Gianbattista Vico and Benedetto Croce are presented as two among the thinkers who first contributed to develop an anthropocentric view of history (Chakrabarty 2009:201-202). By contrast, French historian Fernand Braudel is mentioned as someone who had a deep impact in the shift of historiography, arguing that in order to understand history, human beings

have to extend the discourse around it (Chakrabarty 2009:204-205). However, only contemporary scholars writing about environmental crisis have challenged the distinction between human and natural history. As a matter of fact, climate scientists claim that human beings are not only biological agents, but also geological agents (Chakrabarty 2009:206), which means that not only human beings can alter the conditions of human life, but also, as a species, we can modify the whole planet. The last three theses follow from the first one: we have entered a new geological era called Anthropocene, which is characterized by human capacity of affecting the natural world (Chakrabarty 2009:207). As a consequence, human history should not be only associated to capitalism (Chakrabarty 2009:212): although the Anthropocene was to some extent caused by the global expansion of Europe, it is important to consider human as a species instead of as single individual or civilisation. Finally, the last thesis states that if we combine the history of capitalism with species history, we push the limits of historical understanding (Chakrabarty 2009:220).

### ***1.1.3 Nature and Culture***

Nature and culture are two words normally considered as opposite, individuals tend to take for granted that what is cultural is not natural and vice versa. Yet this is an opposition that has been established among Western civilisation only recently. "Nature" comes from the Latin word connected to roots, the same of "nation": thus nature is connected to the genesis and origin of things. Moreover "nature" is now used as a noun, but it started as a process. Although nowadays the word "culture" is used as opposed to "nature", originally the meaning had to do with nature: being cultural meant to cultivate lands and to deal with animals (Williams 1976:87). In the early nineteenth century, the word "culture" was still etymologically connected to agriculture; however, during this period, 'culture' started to embrace an aesthetic

meaning, as a result of artistic and intellectual development (Bate 2000:4). Therefore, “culture” meant both cultivating the land and cultivating oneself through education. In the mid of the nineteenth century, the word was given an anthropological meaning: no longer connected to the education of a single individual, it started to refer to the kind of intellectual development of civilisation in a society (Bate 2000:4). By the end of the nineteenth century, the word took a sociological connotation, differentiating among social classes (Bate 2000:5).

Nowadays different meanings coexist: to be a person of culture means to be a well educated individual, but individuals can also to be part of a collective culture. However, what is apparently lost is the connection with the natural world. Bate underlines that in the novels of Jane Austen, to be part of her culture means also to have a specific notion of the environment (2000:5). By contrast, analysing the novels of Thomas Hardy, Bate suggests that, from the beginning of the nineteenth century onward, people started being alienated from the physical world (Bate 2000:13). For Austen it is obvious that the identity of her characters is influenced by the landscape; a century later, the change of the landscape has become so drastic that individuals need a word to describe that phenomenon. This is why, according to Bate, the word “environment” began to be applied to social contexts. “Prior to the nineteenth century there was no need for a word to describe the influence of physical conditions on persons and communities because it was self-evident that personal and communal identity were intimately related to physical setting” (Bate 2000:13). Industrial revolution marked the beginning of a new era where the connection between individuals and the natural world has been gradually fading. Nowadays Western industrialized individuals have created a fictional idealized romantic idea of primitive cultures, in particular native Americans. Natives are seen as people who have a genuine authentic connection to the land, a lifestyle which is longed for in times of a never ending industrialization process.

The aim of ecocriticism is to read texts which, though not primarily concerned with the natural world, can be analysed in an ecological perspective. Western

literature primarily concentrates on the lives of human beings: according to Amitav Ghosh, modern literary forms are ill equipped to deal with climate change (2016). The fact that Western literature concentrates more and more on the ordinary lives of human beings and less on the extraordinary natural catastrophes is a consequence of both colonialism and anthropocentrism. The fate of humanity as a species hardly depends on how the natural world reacts to human invasive intervention. However, human beings tend not to think about climate change crisis. We sometimes fancy a pure, technology-free relationship with the natural world, though, in parallel, we still carelessly put the human being at the centre of the world. Nevertheless, human beings cannot be separated from the natural world they live in and from the other species they share this world with. Humans interact with the environment and are constantly affected by it while affecting it. This is the reason why it is possible to read literature from an ecocritical perspective: every story of an individual is a story of a human being who lives on earth and comes in contact with other species.

#### ***1.1.4 Ecocriticism and Postcolonialism***

Postcolonialism is the study of the effects of colonialism to the world. It is a controversial concept, since although the term has chronological connotations, more than simply the marker of an era, it is also a critical process. Indeed, on the one hand it refers to the period that started with the end of colonialism, on the other it is a critical method that can be applied to any historical period. During the era of colonialism, which lasted over centuries, basically no continent was left untouched by the British empire. Somehow, for a very long period, British individuals assumed that they had the right to occupy foreign lands and rule over their inhabitants. By the time the process of decolonisation started, in the twentieth century, the effects of colonial empire had already left an indelible mark, not only



physically, but also in the collective memory of both Western and non-Western individuals. British colonialism was divided into two types of colonies: settler colonies and occupation colonies (Huggan – Tiffin 2010:7). Occupation colonies were places politically and militarily ruled by British individuals, however colonists had a certain amount of respect for the local culture and they did not consider the land empty. In settler colonies, by contrast, inhabitants were considered unworthy of any respect, thus they could be disposed of and killed.

Postcolonial studies were traditionally more focused on the effects of colonialism on individuals, while little attention was given to the environmental consequences. Huggan and Tiffin argue that, in the context of colonialism, the land is supposed to be an object at the disposal of the colonizer: thus there is a parallel between the subjugation of native populations and that of the territory. For this reason, ecocriticism and postcolonialism are intertwined and cannot be considered separately (2010:12).

## **1.2 The Island**

### ***1.2.1 The Island in Collective Imaginary***

“What is an island that it should awaken feelings and fantasies within us?” (Meeker 2011:197). We are fascinated with the idea of the island, a natural site that conjures up a huge variety of images: peace, tranquillity, sun, cloudless sky and crystal sea. One question arises: when we picture an exotic island in our mind, are we really expressing the desire to contemplate the idyllic beauty of a landscape, or rather are we flirting with an imaginary place contaminated by cultural meanings which actually does not exist?

Lowenthal argues that, from a continental perspective, islands represent an exotic reality separate from the everyday life (2007:208). However, the Edenic sight

of a small wild piece of land surrounded by water does not match with the idea of a dangerous environment and a vulnerability to degradation. During the Enlightenment islands brought memories of the past thanks to both their physical nature and the culture of their inhabitants (Lowenthal 2007:208). By the late eighteenth century, islands started being considered a positive alternative to modernity and progress, while throughout the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth, insular lifestyles were stereotyped and scorned as regressive and barbaric (Lowenthal 2007:208-209). Nowadays, although some negative stereotypes persist, island inhabitants are admired and seen as instances of ancient positive values elsewhere lost: above all, community, simplicity and collaboration with nature are celebrated (Lowenthal 2007:209). To the continental eyes, far from the restless advancement of progress, the islander maintains a strong connection with a past that, if once considered backward, is now hailed and envied as rooted (Lowenthal 2007:209). Carrying such a significant meaning, islands are preserved through heritage (Lowenthal 2007:210).

Meanwhile, due to their charm and fascination, islands are among the most likely destinations of journeys and vacations, aspect which is strongly connected to the cruise ship industry (Meeker 2011:201). In fact, the collective romance with islands has caused a deep impact through cruise ship tours. The positive result is that tourism has enriched local economies; nevertheless, communities have been transformed into commercial sites, which means that small islands have become dependent upon tourist income and are manipulated and governed by mainland corporations (Meeker 2011:201). The inhabited islands on earth are about 21,000, and 10% of the world population lives on them; among these, the islands allowed to govern themselves are very few, and still they are subjected to outside laws (Meeker, 2011:201).

Thus, when discussing the island, it is essential to consider the numerous elements which, for centuries, have been nourishing the discourse around it. It is fundamental to understand the difference between what a real natural site is, and

what is just the projection of an idealized world that individuals fancy to know. As human beings, since our birth, we have been indoctrinated with a construct of images and ideas which have contributed to the formation of our knowledge. Even though we take it for granted, what we know may not correspond to the actual truth. The first element worthy of consideration is colonialism.

### ***1.2.2 Islands and Colonialism***

The reality of island colonies was certainly not an idyllic one. Islands have been subjected to violence for centuries, because of their status of strategic places for trades (Meeker 2011:200). Small islands, in particular, have been invaded not only by military forces but by commercial ones, too (Meeker 2011:201). The ecosystem has been altered on one hand by taking forests and minerals elsewhere, on the other by introducing new species of plants and animals (Meeker 2011:201). During his studies, Darwin noted the uncanny biology of island species, in contrast with continental ones, deducing that on islands evolution takes an alternative path (Scott 2014:638). Obviously, this peculiarity has been threatened by colonialism and, as a result, the biology of many islands has been changed by European exploitation in different ways (Scott 2014:639). Indeed, Islands were used for experiments with invasive species and intensive cultivation of native species: agriculture is the representation of the human desire of taming nature in order to improve and control it (Scott 2014:639). As a consequence, although islands can be generous and resourceful habitats with a low competition as a result of isolation, they can also be places stressed by extreme weather conditions or human intervention (Scott 2014:641). As Scott underlines, the only possible option in case of unfavourable conditions is adaptation, otherwise a species will face extinction (2014:641). One among the most famous examples of how an island may become a “horror scenario” is the extinction of the dodo in the Mauritius after European intervention in the sixteenth century (Scott 2014:641).

Because of their circumscribed and contained nature, islands are apparently

easy to tame and domesticate; thus individuals tend to presume they are easily comprehensible (Lowenthal 2007:206). “Most of the world's islands, even those that did not experience major population changes as a consequence of European expansionism, have been shaped, though in distinctive and often unique ways, by European politics” (Hay 2003:203-204). Therefore, colonialism had a deep impact on islands, which have been affected and influenced by European politics. As a result, the discourse around the island evokes opposite concepts of heaven and hell, refuge and prison; yet, islands exist and are neither prisons nor paradises (Hay 2003:205). However, the dichotomy that islands embody in collective imagination is exactly what makes them interesting as settings for fiction. An element that contributes to this idea of island duplicity is the uncanny nature of its species: islands flora and fauna is not completely stranger to individuals who come from the mainland, still it is not the same. In other words, individuals can recognize familiar aspects of a landscape which is nevertheless unknown.

### **1.2.3 Islands in Literature**

The island as a setting for literary works has been a recurrent motif since ancient times. The archaic legend of “Island of the Blessed” and the numerous islands described by Homer have nourished the imagination of Western civilisation (Meeker 2011:198). Ancient myths were followed by a fictional tradition which is still developing nowadays. Among the most popular and iconic literary works, *The Divine Comedy* and *The Tempest* present island settings which have inspired later texts (Meeker 2011:198-199). Dante Alighieri imagined the Mountain of Purgatory as an island, associating this physical site to spiritual growth, while William Shakespeare chose a mysterious island as a site for magic and illusions (Meeker 2011:198-199).

In the introduction of their collection of essays, Le Juez and Springer argue that “The shipwreck and island motifs are atemporal and universal” (2015:2). On the one hand, considering the common metaphor of life as a ship voyage, the shipwreck is

often connected to a symbolic derangement which threatens the stability of the individual. On the other, the island represents an extremely interesting site for a story to be set, primarily because of the dichotomy it has come to represent in Western collective imagination throughout centuries. Indeed, islands may be earthly heavens where individuals embrace a pure, contemplative and uncontaminated life, leaving behind the artificial industrialized reality of the city. However, more often than not, what at first appears as a utopia, soon changes into a heterotopia where characters have to face chaos, disorder and fight with each other.

Le Juez and Springer divided their collection of essays into five sections, according to the ways in which authors have been dealing with island setting: first of all the island connected to the individual, as a place which conveys exploration of the self, and the shipwreck connected to failure and fate (*The Tempest* is quoted as the most significant example) (Le Juez – Springer 2015:3-6). Secondly, the island as an aesthetic concept, meaning a site that provides space for imagination and can be translated in literature but also art and music (Le Juez – Springer 2015:6-7). The third section deals with the representation of islands and shipwrecks as projections of different views over the real world in different times (Le Juez – Springer 2015:7-9). The penultimate section is concerned with gender, showing the island as a feminine space, thus exploring the connection between islands and women (Le Juez – Springer 2015:9-10). Finally, the island can become a space of experimentation, in particular connected to science-fiction genre (Le Juez – Springer 2015:10-13). The quantity and variety of the ways in which authors have approached the island topic suggest how the island as a natural space has been translated through centuries into a symbolic representation of human experience through many different perspectives. In other words, art reflects the cultural construct that individuals have attributed to islands in Western society.

#### **1.2.4 Linda Charnes's "Place"**

In her article "Extraordinary Renditions: Toward an agency of Place" (2010), Linda Charnes discusses two very different literary texts: Stanislaw Lem's science fiction *Solaris* and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The aim of her analysis is to demonstrate that the physical settings of these two works are characters on their own that exert a deep influence on human characters, rather than simply environmental spaces occupied and exploited by them. Indeed, she argues that she is concerned with "the relationship between character, place, and the alchemy between them" (2010:58): thus, even though her article does not properly belong to the ecocritical field, her critical approach is consistent with the main principle of ecocriticism. That is to say, human beings and the physical world have to be considered as different species that coexist, interact, and constantly influence one another. According to Charnes, both *Solaris* and *The Tempest* provide significant instances of relationship between characters and place (2010:59): "each raises the issue of what being present, and present being, might mean when we step beyond our rigid categories of person, place and presence" (2010:60). Indeed, according to Charnes, only the negotiation between character, situation and place can approach the understanding of "the truth" (2010:60).

Furthermore, Charnes quotes Robert Boyle and Thomas Hobbes as two thinkers who, although operating in two different domains, meaning respectively the empirical science and the political one, nonetheless both established a current of thought that "limited the knowable world to what could be verified" (2010:63). According to this principle, there are two spheres: the Subject and the Object poles, and those elements which do not belong to either one or the other sphere, find no official place (2010:64). Indeed, this strict distinction between the Subject and the Object poses limits to comprehension, since how can we establish whether a tree, a mountain or the ocean are subjects or objects? Charnes argues that the Place is something that has an entity on its own and "can exert a powerful agency over its

occupant and visitors” (2010:76), thanks to the intertwining of elements such as location, human perception, action and time. Therefore, Charnes's article provides an extremely interesting source for an ecocritical analysis, and it will be mentioned in each chapter that follows. The islands of *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of the Flies* will be discussed as territories occupied by human characters on the one hand, and as places that constitute characters of their own on the other.

## 2. THE TEMPEST

### 2.1 The Storm, Ecophobia and Prospero's "Art"

*The Tempest* begins with a storm: we find ourselves immediately in the middle of a chaotic situation, where sailors are desperately trying to prevent the ship from colliding with an island. The atmosphere is gloomy, death is in the air, and we feel uneasy and anxious about what is going to happen. What we perceive at first is an inevitable fate looming over helpless human beings, small and powerless under the merciless fury of an ungovernable sea.

Storms are always frightening for us, yet fascinating at the same time: when the sky goes dark, lightnings hit our eyes and thunders strike our ears, we feel somehow excited. Perhaps in those moments we nearly realise how insignificant and marginal our existence is, if compared to the greatness of what surrounds us. Storms, indeed, remind us, even though for a few moments, that the natural environment is alive and is not simply there to contain us. Last night I could not sleep because the wind was blowing so violently on the windows and I am very sensitive to noises. But it was not just the noise that kept me awake: I felt a sense of uneasiness and discomfort, which, I have come to realise, is a feeling I have been developing over the last year every time there is a storm. When I was little I used to enjoy storms: as I said before, I liked the sensation of being small and powerless and, by contrast, perceiving the mysterious force of the weather, which I associated to the supernatural. I somehow felt that there was something out there beyond us human beings and I liked to fancy that I could establish a connection with the environment. Over the past year I have grown aware of climate change and I have come to realise how radically the weather has changed. Storms are more violent, gusts of wind are stronger and more dangerous, causing a huge number of trees to be eradicated.



Sometimes a never ending series of lightnings would appear in the sky, without thunders nor rain. Even if we do not care to be informed, and we do not want to know about the natural catastrophes affecting distant countries, it is impossible not to notice how deeply and rapidly the climate is changing even where we live. Nowadays, I do not feel pleased and excited by storms any more, I just feel scared.

Similarly to the characters of *The Tempest*, we, as human beings, have embarked on a dangerous and arrogant journey, challenging the limits of our survival. In the play, the sailors are desperately trying to save the ship and avoid crashing into the land: in the same way, we should find a way to limit the damage and avoid, or at least postpone, our extinction.

### **2.1.1 When Man Meets the Sea**

In the first scene, the most relevant character is the boatswain. Like all the sailors, he appears only at the beginning; yet, from an ecocritical point of view, he represents an extremely interesting incipit for the story, because he embodies an ambivalent attitude which is typical of human beings towards nature. In particular, two lines are worthy of consideration: “Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough” (1.1.7-8) and “if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the presence, we will not hand a rope more” (1.1.21-23). In the first one the boatswain is addressing the wind, as if it could hear him; moreover, he is challenging the weather, as if the two of them were in a competition and one had to defeat the other. The fact that the boatswain talks directly to the wind underlines a very common tendency among human beings to confer characteristics that are typically human to the natural world. He is humanizing nature, an attitude which reflects humans' tendency to put what is human at the centre of the world. Although the boatswain's challenge to the sea suggests a sort of connection, where the man seems to put himself and the sea on the same level, the boatswain fails to recognize the natural element for what it is, the non-human. It is as if the only way

to establish a contact with the natural world were to pretend it had human characteristics. The second line suggests the meaninglessness of human social hierarchy during a natural catastrophe: the boatswain mocks the authority of the noblemen which, in this case, is completely useless. This aspect puts in evidence the contraposition between human society, governed by laws established by men, and natural world where all these laws lose their meaning. These two short lines by the boatswain already suggest much about human attitude towards the natural world: on the one hand we are apparently incapable of establishing a connection with the natural world without humanizing it; on the other we perceive the strong contraposition that results from the encounter between humans and the sea, which are put the one against the other.

According to Steve Mentz, the first scene of the play portrays the encounter between human labour, together with human attempt to exert control over the natural world, and the sea which by contrast is ungovernable. He underlines how Shakespeare, through the character of the boatswain, uses several times the word “yare” or “yarely”, a technical term which is basically an order to act quickly (Mentz 2009:11). Therefore, Shakespeare presents a human activity, based on technical labour, meeting a chaotic natural environment where human skills and hard work are not sufficient to deal with the power of the ocean. In this chaotic situation, even the power of the king is reversed and all the rules that characterize Western European society do not exist any more.

However, we know that the tempest is not a real one, it is instead the result of Prospero's art. According to Mentz, the boatswain's address to the storm can be read as a hint to supernatural powers, and the contraposition is that between Ariel's non-human abilities and the sailors' hard work based on skill and experience (2009:12). Mentz ends suggesting that “the boatswain's last line in the first scene, however, registers the bodily limits of any human encounter with the sea” (2009:13). He underlines that, even though the storm is not real and no one dies, the image of death strikes the reader and the image of “cold mouth” pictured by the

boatswain suggests death by drowning.

It is interesting to notice that, in this context, land is dangerous: sailors try to steer away from a shoreline and the boatswain claims that a landless sea would be safer. However, Gonzalo expresses longing for the land with the lines “Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground – long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death” (1.1.65-68). More than simply suggesting two different points of view, this contraposition between dangerous land and land as a safe idyllic place can remind us of the dichotomy which characterizes the discourse of the island and, more generally, the human attitude towards the natural world.

### **2.1.2 Ecophobia**

In the introduction of *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare, Reading Ecophobia*, Simon Estok explains the concept of “ecophobia”, arguing that contempt for the natural world is a recognizable discourse that finds expression in Shakespeare. According to Estok “hunting is a result of ecophobia, of a generalized fear or contempt for the natural world and its inhabitants [...] We may define ecophobia as an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism” (Estok 2011:4). Ecophobia is strongly connected with the idea of control, even though humans cannot actually exert a total control over the natural environment; indeed, in Shakespeare, nature often emerges as unpredictable.

In addition, Estok briefly gives a summary of the ecological background during Elizabethan times. He underlines how individuals could easily portray the image of an hostile environment, because they were familiar with grain shortages, bad harvest and bad weather (2011:5). On the one hand humans fear the unpredictable and ungovernable power of nature; on the other individuals have always attempted to exert control over the natural environment. Thus, according to Estok, ecophobia

is a characteristic of human progress, and progress has been a mark of human behaviour since more or less 9000 years ago, when primitive men started making more sophisticated tools (2011:6).

Estok adds that in Shakespearean times, Western individuals had already crossed the seas and Britain had started the building of an empire, a process which, among all the other implications, was crucial for the establishment of human control over the natural environment. Through maps, the world was becoming more accessible, knowable and less mysterious. Exotic places and native inhabitants were tamed, subjugated and homogenized, under an optic that put white British individuals at the centre of the world, seeing Western culture as the noblest, most intellectual and dignified form of civilization. As Estok underlines, later in the nineteenth century, Romanticism, apparently worshipping and promoting the beauty of nature, was actually applying to nature the equivalent of the principle of “the Noble Savage” (Estok 2011:7). They were contemplating the beauty of nature from a superior position, idealizing it through sweet descriptions coloured by fantasy, all in order for the author to exert his ability of Romantic writer. This is a crucial point: even when we are admiring and fancying the natural world, still we are reasoning from a superior position where we humans are the centre and nature is peripheral.

Estok argues that it was with Industrial Revolution, and probably the beginning of the Anthropocene, that humans could consolidate the control of nature (2011:7). He adds that, by the Restoration, pollution became a serious concern in England: particularly, in London the air was filthy as a result of coal burning and deforestation. Long before, in 1543, Henry VIII's *Act for the Preservation of Woods*, underlines that the state of forests was a matter which government took into consideration; moreover, by the seventeenth century, whole texts had appeared about the matter (Estok 2011:9). Therefore, in Shakespearean times, the discourse of nature bore a number of significant meanings: nature was tamed though, in parallel, it was unpredictable.

### **2.1.3 Magic or Science?**

Thus, Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* in a context where ecological crisis was a serious matter and individuals were affected by environmental changes. Above all, individuals were starting to control nature in an unprecedented way. The first scene portrays a fearsome natural disaster which nearly kills a number of travellers. However, the point is that the tempest is the result of Prospero's manipulation. Which means that the real responsible for such a horrible and dangerous situation is a human being, not the weather. Prospero's ability of mastering nature is introduced by his daughter Miranda in the second scene "If by your art, my dearest father, you have put the wild waters in this roar, ally them" (1.2.1-2). Gabriel Egan underlines that Miranda refers to her father's power using the word "art" and he suggests that although, given the context of the play, the word is immediately connected to magic, it can also mean science (Egan 2006:154). Indeed, as Egan underlines, the main source of the play was the account of the shipwreck of the Sea Venture at Bermuda islands, while heading to Virginia. Interestingly, during an archaeological dig at Jamestown colony, part of a thermoscope was discovered: it proved that before 1600 some individuals were trying to make tools and devices which could allow them to predict the weather. Under these circumstances, Prospero can be seen as the scientist who is able to exert a certain influence over the natural world, even though not a complete one.

The nature of Prospero's magic is quite mysterious: we know that the core of his power lies in his books, and that the island is populated by spirits who obey him through the mediation of Ariel. Furthermore, thanks to Caliban, Prospero has acquired knowledge about the island vegetation. Thus, both Ariel and Caliban represent the connection between Prospero and the island. Although Prospero does not interact with the island directly and he does not seem interested in its flora and fauna, throughout the play, he uses a number of figures of speech which refer to the environment. In the second scene, while he tells Miranda the story of their downfall,

he pictures three images connected to the natural world. First, with the line “To what tune pleased his ear, that now he was the ivy which had hid my princely trunk and sucked my verdure out on't” (1.2.85-87), he compares himself to a tree, creating the tree metaphor to describe the betrayal of his brother, who is compared to an ivy that sucks the energy of the tree. Then, he uses the personification to picture their journey through the sea: “There they hoist us to cry to th'sea that roared to us, to sigh to th'winds, whose pity, sighing back again, did us but loving wrong” (1.2.148-151). This line represents the winds as ambivalent because they did wrong in blowing the ship to sea, but were also full of pity. Like the boatswain, Prospero humanizes the wind, attributing to it both the fault for their unfortunate situation and the sentiment of pity. Finally the line “hear the last of our sea-sorrow” (1.2.170) marks the beginning of a series of sea compounds in the text, among which “sea-storm” (1.2.177), “sea-sorrow”, and “sea change” (1.2.401) are the most relevant. According to Mentz, the sea writes all human plots and stories, and the three compounds evoke three different situations: respectively chaos and fear, loneliness and desperation, possibility and hope (2009:9). Again, these situations and the consequential feelings are manifestations of what is definitely human. To Prospero, the natural world exists only in relation to himself.

## **2.2 Ariel, Caliban and Gaia**

### **2.2.1 Gaia**

The image of an island as a living organism can be connected to the Gaia hypothesis formulated by scientist James Lovelock in 1972. This theory was basically built on the idea that the earth is a living being where every organism which inhabits it contributes to its functioning. There is a sort of balance, which he called “homeostasis” that needs to be kept in order to guarantee the survival of all the

species and the welfare of the planet. From a scientific point of view, this theory has been strongly debated. However, it has become a very popular metaphor, especially among ecocritics, to describe the radical impact we have on the planet and how deeply our lifestyles can damage it and threaten our species.

In “Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: The unexpected return of the Elizabethan World Picture” (2003), Gabriel Egan illustrates that, to explain his theory, Lovelock imagined a planet called Daisy World where only two kind of plants grow: white daisies and black daisies. The difference between the two flowers is that while the white daisy reflects the sunlight keeping itself and the environment cool, the black daisy absorbs the light, photosynthesizing better and keeping itself and the environment warm. In Lovelock’s model, at the beginning the climate is cold, so the black daisies thrive and warm the surrounding. When the climate becomes increasingly hotter, the black daisies start dying while the white daisies start thriving, keeping the surrounding cool. At the end the temperature becomes too high and all the daisies die. However, the crucial point in Lovelock’s argument is that for a limited yet quite long period, even though the sun temperature was regularly increasing, the temperature on Daisy World has remained the same. Indeed, the ecosystem of the planet has regulated itself: the shift from black daisies to white daisies is a consequence of the overheating, that guarantees a regular temperature on the planet. That is to say, without the daisies, the temperature on Daisy World would have increased together with the sun temperature (Egan 2003:3-4).

Egan argues that, although we may see this theory merely as an anthropomorphization of nature, in the last decades there have been changes in the philosophy of science that have mined the classical distinction between “alive” and “dead”. He adds that the implications of recent scientific discoveries and Gaia Hypothesis are not welcomed by modern critical theory which is based on grounded oppositions (Egan 2003:4-5). However, as Egan underlines, Shakespearean culture “contained many views about the universe that we consider mistaken” (2003:5). Although, as Egan specifies, we cannot know for sure what precisely were the

general beliefs of the period, if we read Shakespeare we find references to “comets presaging disaster and the music of the sphere” (2003:5). These elements can make us suppose that in the early modern period individuals believed in a sort of connection between what happened to human beings and events which occurred in the natural environment (2003:5).

### **2.2.2 Ariel and Music**

Ariel is a spirit who inhabits the island. We may say that he is part of the island, given his capability of interacting with natural elements: “I come to answer thy best pleasure, be't to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curled clouds” (1.2.189-192). This line suggests a deep connection between Ariel and the natural world, to the point that we may perceive the island as a living being and Ariel as its soul.

Ariel has served Prospero since the day Prospero found him caught “into a cloven pine, within which rift imprisoned thou didst painfully remain a dozen years” (1.2.277-279) and set him free. When Prospero recalls that moment he stresses on how Ariel's pain affected animals: “thy groans did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts of ever-angry bears” (1.2.287-289). According to Egan, the natural environment of the island “mediates the power of whoever controls it” (Egan 2006:159), an element which is evident when Prospero reminds Ariel of his experience as a prisoner. Prospero does not really focus on Ariel's pain: he concentrates on how his suffering hit other living beings which heard his cries. Sycorax hunted Ariel in order to frighten animals and, even though not willingly, the spirit was conveying her power (2006:159). When Ariel is weak and held in captivity, all the species which inhabits the island bear the consequences, thus Ariel can be considered the heart of the island. Luckily, Prospero sets him free from the tree and defeats evil Sycorax; yet is Ariel free? We know the answer is no. Ariel is not free because Prospero made a servant out of him the moment he helped him out of the



tree. Ariel becomes Prospero's property and, as a consequence, so does the island. Prospero literally owns the island in any sense and it is extremely difficult to decipher his intentions and behaviour towards the environment. As already mentioned, he never directly interacts with the natural elements, though he controls Ariel and uses him to govern the natural world. Apparently, he is not interested in the ecology of the island, and his unique real desire is to make justice and regain his dukedom. Yet, until the end, he maintains a tight grip on Ariel and, consequentially, on the island.

The association between the island and Gaia hypothesis is reinforced when Ferdinand hears the music performed by the spirits: "Where should this music be? I'th' air, or th'earth? It sounds no more, and sure it waits upon some god o'th island. [...] This music crept by me upon the waters" (1.2.388-392). Here Ferdinand seems to perceive the liveliness of the environment and he associates it to a God. We know that the spirits respond to Ariel, who in turn obeys Prospero's orders; therefore the logical consequence is that the spirits are playing some instruments to enchant Ferdinand and lead him where Prospero wants. Yet we can also interpret the music as the sounds and noises that result from the interaction among the natural elements that constitute the island. The waves that ebb and flow, the leaves shaken by the breeze, the birds singing: all these elements and more, together, can create a sort of music. Later in the play there is a passage where Caliban describes the island as a space when you can hear sounds and noises (3.2.133-41): according to Scott, it could be the effect of Ariel's magic, but from an ecocritical perspective it could also represent the sounds that characterize an ecosystem where different species coexist (Scott 2014:644).

It is important not to underestimate the consequences of colonialism on Western early modern imagination. Individuals would hear or read tales about exotic realities so distant and unknown that they could probably barely picture on their minds. The noises of a mysterious remote island are indeed a melody that contemporary audience could only try to imagine but not recollect, since it had

never been experienced. When Ferdinand listens to this music he lets himself completely be absorbed by it: he lives the new experience of the island in a pure disinterested way. He perceives that the island is alive and, even though he does not understand the meaning of this new reality, he tries to establish a connection. More than that, it is the environment that calls him and guides him, and he answers the call simply listening. Ferdinand's experience, together with the island description by Caliban, are perhaps the unique instances of interaction with the natural world that we can find in the play. Yet, we know that the island communicates to Ferdinand only because it answers Prospero's commands. Thus, Prospero manipulates nature, and any exchange between a human being and the natural world is part of Prospero's design.

### ***2.2.3 Caliban and Colonialism***

According to Estok, the appropriation of the land goes together with the appropriation of Caliban (2011:103). However, even though Caliban can easily be associated with the image of native inhabitants subjugated to colonization, what his character embodies is far more complex and cannot be reduced to that image. He is described as strange, not completely human, and definitely not trustworthy. Caliban's mother, Sycorax, was the owner of the the island before Prospero; we know very little about this character, she is portrayed by Prospero as a powerful witch: "His mother was a witch, and one so strong that could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, and deal in her command without her power" (5.1.269-271). On the one hand, Caliban could be seen as the character who more than anyone has a claim to the island; not simply because of inheritance, but also because he has an ecological knowledge that allows him to establish a connection with the island. However, as Estok underlines, Caliban is not completely a man, therefore he does not have the kind of rights embodied by the other male characters of the play; he adds that, from a Western imperialistic perspective, he is part of the exotic

landscape (2011:104).

In the context of colonialism, anthropocentrism means that the white European male considers both the landscape and its inhabitants as elements which he has the right to exploit. The colonizer takes his superiority for granted, his actions are based on the assumption that everything he encounters in the New World is there at his disposal. Either he is only interested in establishing his power, and other civilizations are not even worthy of being considered human; or, to some extent, he wants to build a relationship, though not a fair one: from his superior position, the colonizer becomes the master who educates his slave.

According to Scott, Caliban is the native islander subjugated by the castaways. As a consequence, he is forced to share the knowledge he possesses with his new master: therefore, Prospero acquires the power of Caliban, which is the ecological knowledge of the island (Scott 2014:643). This is an interesting element: the relationship between Prospero and Caliban is based on an exchange. Indeed, we know that Prospero has educated Caliban, but we also hear from Caliban that he has taught something to Prospero, too: "I loved thee and showed thee all the qualities o'th' isle: the fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile" (1.2.337-339). Thus, part of Prospero's knowledge results from his encounter with Caliban and the development of their relationship. As Scott argues, Prospero literally becomes the owner of the island because he can dispose of both Ariel's magic and Caliban's physical strength, learning from the last one about the island flora (Scott 2014:643). Being Prospero's slave, Caliban performs the activity of carrying logs, even though it is not clear what is the reason for this work. As Scott underlines, The position of Caliban has shifted from a predator to a slave who carries heavy logs for his master (2014:644). Egan (2006:161) argues that Caliban is necessary to Prospero and Miranda because he performs activities such as making them fire: this distinguishes him from animals. However, Prospero refers to him as a "subject" (5.1.169) and Caliban himself seems to think that "the man is made by the nature and behaviour of the master" (Egan 2006:162).

As already mentioned, there is a passage where Caliban describes the island as a space when you can hear sounds and noises:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices  
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,  
Will make me sleep again. And then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
I cried to dream again (3.2.133-41).

According to Scott, the passage shows Caliban's humanity while he contemplates the beauty of a natural environment. "It is a metaphor of balanced biodiversity borne on musical harmony, with the 'thousand twangling instruments' as interconnected species exchanging resources through mutualistic relations" (Scott 2014:644). It is impossible not to sympathise with Caliban in this passage, because his description of how the environment affects him is poetically beautiful, yet extremely meaningful. Here, he is not willing to persuade his interlocutors, neither he is speaking out of a particular interest. He is simply expressing how he feels the island and how the natural world gives him comfort and delight. Caliban is informing other individuals not only about what life on the island is like, more than that, he is explaining how he himself is involved in this living process.

Scott suggests that, given the context of colonialism, these words evoke a sense of nostalgia for a landscape that has lost its freedom and has been irreversibly contaminated by the colonial domain (2014:644). Therefore, more than simply a native inhabitant subjugated by a Western individual, Caliban is also part of the island organism, like Ariel. Indeed, Ariel and Caliban are both creatures belonging to the island and, as a result, they are both Prospero's slaves. They both desire

freedom from their master, though they respond in different ways. Ariel has obtained the promise of freedom in exchange for his services, thus he obeys Prospero's orders patiently waiting for his reward. Caliban, by contrast, does not expect any positive outcome from the relationship with his master, thus his behaviour is more oppositional than Ariel's: as a consequence, Caliban plots with Stephano and Trinculo against Prospero's life.

From an ecocritical perspective, we can associate the character of Prospero to the scientist or, more in general, to the Western individual who, in the name of progress, exploits nature for his aims; thus, Ariel and Caliban represent the environmental response. On the one hand, we perceive the natural world as passive: we postpone the necessity of dealing with the ecological crisis and we continue to exploit our environment. On the other hand, the truth is that the natural world is not passive at all: the danger of climate change is real and its consequences have been occurring for decades. Consequently, if we associate Prospero's island to Gaia hypothesis, we may argue that both Ariel and Caliban are involved in the environmental living process: Ariel has the power to direct natural elements, while Caliban's connection with nature lies in his ecological knowledge. These characters represent both an intermediary between Prospero and the environment, and the result of human intervention in the non-human.

## **2.3 Prospero's Power**

### ***2.3.1 Pearls, the Sea and Scientific Knowledge***

Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
Nothing of him that doth fade,

But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.  
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:  
Ding-dong.

Hark! now I hear them — Ding-dong, bell (1.2.397-405).

This song performed by Ariel is quite cryptic and it has been largely debated by critics. According to Egan (2006:149), *The Tempest* is influenced by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, thus, it is concerned with the possibilities of transmutation. Consequentially, he argues that, when approaching Shakespeare, it is important to consider the new scientific discoveries that influenced the common knowledge during the early modern period. Moreover, Egan suggests that Ariel's song shows how Shakespeare was aware of the new scientific theories about the formation of pearls (2006:149-150).

In *A Brave New World of Knowledge: Shakespeare's The Tempest and Early Modern Epistemology*, B. J. Sokol connects Ariel's song to a later Renaissance scientific discovery: the formation of the pearl in an oyster. First of all, Sokol explains that, although in the early years of the seventeenth century the most significant scientific discoveries were attributed to astronomers and physicist, sciences such as chemistry, zoology, ecology, ethnology and anthropology contributed significantly to the scientific revolution, too. Among these discoveries is the formation of pearls by Dr Guillaume Rondelet, who questioned the theories formulated by classical natural history authors (2003:31-32). According to Sokol, this discovery “typified a shift from magical and analogical thinking toward more rational modes of pursuing knowledge” (2003:32). Before, according to Sokol, the main source for the nature of pearl formation was Pliny's *Natural History*, which was probably a school text when Shakespeare was young (2003:34). According to Pliny, pearls are conceived when dew reaches oysters. Eventually Sokol explains that, before *The Tempest* was written, a number of European empiricists had challenged Pliny's theory; in

particular, the establishment of the second Virginia colony contributed to the circulation of new scientific developments in London. “In the sixteenth century the best pearls were still described as 'orient' [...] from the early sixteenth century onward pearls came in great quantity to Europe not from Arabia or India, but from Spanish-dominated regions of South and Central America” (2003:35). As Sokol underlines, although in the West a truly reliable scientific explanation for the pearl formation would appear centuries later, during Shakespearean times, a number of European writers were formulating more and more accurate theories (2003:36). Among the most relevant, Italian traveller Girolamo Benzoni wrote a tale in 1565, where he explained that pearls grow organically inside oysters, arguing the improbability of a contact between dew and underwater oysters (Sokol 2003:38). Finally, “experts found that pearls are composed of thin layers of the same material as the shells of the enclosing mollusks, and that they arise from morbid concretions deposited in order to isolate unexpelled irritants” (Sokol 2003:39). The revolutionary aspect is that such precious and valuable objects as pearls are the result of a disease. We do not know how much Shakespeare knew about pearls and oysters; yet, if these revolutionary discoveries circulated, it is possible that he was influenced by them. Sokol argues that, in spite of the new alternative theories, until the late seventeenth century, writers were still associating pearls with dew, employing them to represent beauty and perfection. However, a number of poets would invert the traditional meaning connected to pearl in a satyric way. Moreover, pearls would become a means for propaganda that encouraged Native Americans to donate gems in exchange for access to Europe's civility (2003:39-41). Sokol finally underlines that “A lexical doubleness of that time paradoxically combined a connection of the eye's translucence with pearls and a connection of pearls with cataracts that spoil the same translucence” (2003:42).

Therefore, behind the use of pearls in poems stood a significant meaning in terms of progress and scientific revolution. During the early modern period, natural phenomena, which before were mysterious and unexplainable, started to be

scientifically described in a more accurate way. In Ariel's song, Alonso's eyes become pearls: there is a transformation from the human to the non-human. Indeed, Alonso's dead body experiences a metamorphosis, becoming part of the sea.

Mentz wonders what is the meaning of "sea-change", suggesting that many critics attribute to the song the meaning of Shakespeare's art, without considering the physical and metaphorical qualities of the ocean (Mentz 2009:1). He adds that readers tend to take for granted that Ariel's song is not really about the sea, because it may be difficult to acknowledge that the sea needs singing: "it appears at once too vast and too obvious for inquiry" (2009:2). This position can be related to a more general non-ecocritical attitude, according to which natural elements in literature are often read as metaphors of human behaviours or feelings, and consequentially analysed in an anthropocentric perspective. As far as Mentz is concerned, the water-world is an element that belongs to us, influencing our bodies and culture, yet at the same time it is foreign (2009:3). He argues that, in the play, the sea is the natural element which represents the untrustworthiness of the natural environment (2009:5). In Ariel's song, Alonso has drowned, thus he died because of the sea; yet his body is welcomed by the sea and we may say that he is reborn in a different shape. Therefore, the sea acquires an ambivalent meaning as the element which on one hand takes a man's life, and on the other gives him a rebirth. As Mentz underlines, the most crucial characteristic of the ocean is its inhospitality: human bodies cannot survive there too long. Even though we are more than two-thirds made of water, we cannot live in the sea (2009:5).

Mentz illustrates how the history of Western culture is that of the encounter between humans and the ocean: to the ancient world the ocean was represented as the face of an angry God, while later romantic poets portrayed both the attractiveness and the dangerous nature of the sea. Successively, in the early modern period, the collective discourse about the sea was influenced by sailors' sea-routes around Africa and South America: the oceans became the key highways for colonial expansion. In this context, the cultural meaning of the ocean was



reshaped: more than an hostile fearsome supernatural power, it became a background for human activity and opportunity (2009:3). The sea could still be dangerous and, to some extent, mysterious; however, by Shakespearean times, it became not only more accessible but also, as Mentz underlines, an instrument for human empowerment. Therefore, according to Mentz, the sea-change is a change “from divine mystery to primal reality” (2009:4). Indeed, in the play, at first the sea appears scary and mysterious, only to be eventually revealed an instrument in Prospero's hands.

According to Mentz, the song contains traces of technical terminology connected to the sea: the word “fathom” “derives its meaning from the width of two arms stretched out and had come by Shakespearean times to be a common measure of underwater distance and depth. [...] This maritime word orders and measures the ocean” (2009:8). Mentz adds that technical terminology related to the sea has generated a number of metaphors, element which suggests that individuals have been fascinated with the sea life and all the difficulties it embodies. The word “fathom” itself gained a metaphorical meaning “either to find a depth [...] or to discern a hidden meaning” (2009:8). The sea can be measured and crossed, aquatic forms of life such as pearls can be scientifically studied and explained.

On the one hand Ariel's song suggests an ambiguous ocean steeped in supernatural power, which turns a dead body into a new form of life. On the other hand, the song is nothing but a deception conceived by Prospero, and the ocean is simply a background for the achievement of his goal. Even though “The song presents a sea-floor we can almost visit, an ocean at the margins of human comprehension” (2009:9), the real ocean is very well comprehended and exploited by Prospero. According to Mentz, the song suggests that to reach and understand the sea “humans and poetic forms must open themselves to disorder” (2009:9). The king is dead and the sea represents a new logic that replaces him: except that the king is not really dead and everything happens because of Prospero's will. The scientist is the one who writes the plots and acts as a director influencing other

characters' actions and decisions. What happens when the scientist is also the colonizer?

### **2.3.2 Deforestation**

Egan (2006:155) suggests that the arboreal imagery is recurrent during the play: in the first act, as already mentioned, Prospero evokes the metaphor of a king as a tree (1.2.86), and, similarly, both Sebastian and Ariel refer to usurpation using the verb “supplant” (2.1.276), (3.3.69). Moreover, Prospero compares the marriage bed to a seed bed:

Then as my gift, and thine own acquisition  
Worthily purchased, take my daughter. But  
If thou dost break her virgin knot before  
All sanctimonious ceremonies may  
With full and holy rite be ministered,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow; but barren hate,  
Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew  
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly  
That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed  
As Hymen's lamp shall light you (4.2.20).

In this passage, the union between Ferdinand and Miranda is compared to a natural growing process that has to be preserved and nurtured in a pure and chaste way, otherwise bad weeds will destroy it. There is a parallel between women and nature: Prospero literally gives Miranda to Ferdinand as a gift, a seed that will produce a flower, but only if Ferdinand keeps it intact until the wedding ceremony. Thus, to some extent, the seed purity is protected and respected; however, it is something

that will provide a benefit for both Ferdinand and Prospero. As soon as the ceremony will have granted the holiness of the union, Ferdinand will make a flower out of the seed, so that the dukedom of Milan and the kingdom of Naples will be caught under the same power, for the benefit of the two male rulers. As this metaphor suggests, Prospero is interested in nature only as far as his anthropocentric needs are concerned.

Egan underlines that Prospero's main activity on the island has been its deforestation and adds that the play stresses on its activity and rapidity (2006:155). Both Caliban and Ferdinand perform the activity of carrying logs, therefore it is more than legitimate to assume that trees have been cut down. However, the reason why Prospero would have forests taken down and what is the purpose of this activity is a quite mysterious matter. Egan suggests that if we consider the historical background, William Strachey explains that the survivors of the Sea Venture shipwreck needed wood in order to build a pinnace (Egan 2006:156). Either, Egan assumes, before the voyage of his enemies, Prospero was willing to build a means of transport in order to leave the island; or he simply uses wood to make improvements of his dwelling (2006:156).

As a matter of fact, when individuals happen to be shipwrecked on an island, the most obvious thing to do is to try to build a boat in order to leave. As Egan underlines, we know that Prospero wants to leave; yet, instead of building a boat, he waits and creates the conditions for a shipwreck as soon as the occasion presents itself. In the meantime, he pursues the activity of clearing the forest, as if he meant to stay and control the island (2006:157). It is possible that, before the shipwreck, Prospero was planning to build a sort of pinnace, maybe he had tried without success. However, it sounds improbable that a man of his "art" and power could not manage to create a means that allowed him to leave the island. More likely, the act of deforestation is simply a way to control and govern the place where he has established his mastery.

Egan explains that, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, among the

policies of the British government, was the planting of Ireland as an effort to subdue it. Critics have suggested that Ireland may be the mysterious island described by Shakespeare, as the British colonial endeavour towards Ireland was well known. Bearing in mind the historical and social context of the period, it is likely to suppose that contemporary audience would have immediately associated the deforestation references to colonisation (2006:157).

### ***2.3.3 From Possession to Alleged Liberation***

The masque is a celebration set up by Prospero for the union of the young couple. As Egan (2006:165) explains, it is represented by spirits appearing in the shape of goddesses, among which is Ceres, who represents the fertility of the new married couple. Similarly, Iris is the rainbow goddess: in the biblical account of the worst tempest ever, a rainbow was set in the sky by God, as a symbol that there would be no more such floods and flora and fauna would be subordinate to humans (Genesis 9.1-17). Although these goddesses are pagan, it is possible to establish a comparison with the Christian anthropocentric religion (Egan 2006:165). Prospero has manipulated the newly married couple, in the same way he has been manipulating the natural world. Egan argues that the masque begins with the description of an apparently idyllic countryside which nonetheless “contains a hint of environmental degradation” (2006:165).

Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas  
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and peas;  
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,  
And flat meads thatched with stover, them to keep;  
Thy banks with pionèd and twillèd brims,  
Which spongy April at thy hest betrimms  
To make cold nymphs chaste crowns; and thy broomgroves,

Whose shadow the dismissed bachelor loves,  
Being lass-lorn; thy pole-clipped vineyard;  
And thy sea-marge, sterile and rocky hard,  
Where thou thyself dost air—the Queen o' th' Sky,  
Whose watery arch and messenger am I,  
Bids thee leave these, and with her sovereign grace,  
Here on this grass plot, in this very place,  
To come and sport. Her peacocks fly amain (4.1.60-74).

Egan focuses on the line “peonied and twilled brims” (4.1.64), suggesting that “to pion” means to “excavate a trench”, while “to twill” means “to weave as to produce diagonal ridges” (Egan 2006:166). This explanation suggests that humans were manipulating the land in order to prevent soil erosion; thus, Prospero's activity of deforestation may be understood as either a consequence of erosion, or as its cause (Egan, 2006:166). But why does a man who is able to command the weather need the natural protection of trees?

Estok suggests that the landscape evoked by Shakespeare is similar to the “wonder cabinet” described by Steven Mullaney in *The Place of the Stage*: a place that inspires desire and awe for what is strange in a marvellous way (2011:104). He adds that colonial fantasies blossomed over the exotic otherness and the promise of a better life in a fertile and generous land. However, the other is also unknown, the New World can become a space of danger: the first image of the island is that of a place of madness and chaos, due to the storm and the consequent shipwreck (Estok 2011:104). Yet we know that the only responsible for this catastrophe is Prospero, a man who, thanks to his studies and intellect, is able to influence the natural world. As far as Estok is concerned, the island is a space which “is totally within Prospero's phallic power” (2011:104).

As a matter of fact, Prospero is not a frightening character, and we do not fear him as we read the play; by contrast, the natural world is immediately presented as dangerous and unpredictable (2011:104). Since the beginning, we tend to

sympathise with Prospero, even though we realise that there may be something wrong with his “art”. The storm immediately puts humans and nature in opposition, creating a sense of competition between the two. In this context, Caliban is a liminal figure between the human being and the dangerous natural world: he is untrustworthy because of his natural savagery and he needs to be taught, reformed and taken under control (2011:105). Yet, while Caliban is able to establish a connection with the natural world, Prospero is not.

Egan argues that Prospero's acts are irreversible: he “has the power to change the world in ways that he cannot undo” (2006:169). Therefore, Prospero's ability to control the natural world is only apparent, and it reflects human overconfidence and ingenuity. Prospero's art may represent new technologies and commercial exploitation and “the only way to hold on to what one most want to preserve is not to discover how to bring it back once it is gone, but to learn not to destroy it in the first place” (2006:169).

In the end Prospero decides to abjure its magic:

I have bedimm'd  
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,  
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault  
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak  
With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory  
Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up  
The pine and cedar: graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art. But this rough magic  
I here abjure, and, when I have required  
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,  
To work mine end upon their senses that  
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,

Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book (5.1.41-57).

After listing all the natural phenomena he was able to cause thanks to his powers, Prospero expresses the will to renounce his art. As a consequence, he decides to drown his book, the object that represents the main source for his power; furthermore, he finally gives Ariel his freedom: "My Ariel, chick, That is thy charge: then to the elements Be free, and fare thou well!" (5.1.317-318). Thus, apparently, Prospero is no more willing to control the natural world: indeed, his purpose is fulfilled, since his legitimacy has been restored. However, it is not specified what Prospero means to do with Caliban after he has discovered his plot: Caliban's last lines only suggest that he will "be wise hereafter" and "seek for grace" (5.1.295-296).

From an ecocritical perspective, we may read Prospero's final decision as the acknowledgement that he can no more control the natural world. Indeed, the idea of a book being drowned suggests that it may contain dangerous notions that it is better not to discover. Thus, Prospero gives up his power to control the island because on the one hand he does not need it any more and, on the other, he is aware of the dangerous outcome that such an activity could imply. As a matter of fact, Prospero's life was threatened by Caliban's plot, element which suggests that the way Prospero had been exploiting Caliban has turned against Prospero himself. Although, throughout the play, Prospero never loses control of the whole situation, still we perceive the looming of a threat. Being a tragicomedy, *The Tempest* is extremely ambiguous: no real disaster occurs, no one dies; yet, the theme of death is somehow always in the air, immediately evoked by the false storm and then resumed by the following plots. Moreover, we cannot really establish where good ends and evil starts, and vice versa: the edges are extremely blurred. In the end, the island is apparently liberated from Prospero's domain: however, while Ariel is finally

free, Caliban's destiny is not clarified. Thus, even though Prospero has openly renounced his power to exert control over the island, we do not picture the island as completely free.

#### **2.3.4 Was Prospero's Power Real?**

However, Linda Charnes argues that when Prospero decides to renounce his art, he does not really have a choice: indeed, his magic does not really belong to him, since it cannot be exercised outside the island (2010:67). It is undeniable that Prospero does exert a sort of power on the island, since both Ariel and Caliban are his slaves and obey his orders. However, Charnes illustrates the difference between “power” and “authority”, arguing that Prospero's power is defined by the control he has on the island characters and resources, while “there is nothing in the play that indicates 'legal jurisdiction'” (2010:69). Indeed, Charnes poses the question “can there be a sovereign without Law?” (2010:69). Her answer is negative, arguing that Shakespeare himself decided to portray the island not as a mere territory but as an entity with its own agency (2010:68).

Indeed, Charnes discusses the matter of Prospero's books, which, although are presented by Caliban as the source of Prospero's power (3.2.89-94), Prospero was supposed to possess also back in Milan, where he did not exert any form of magic (2010:71). Indeed, Prospero's art seems to exist only on the island. According to Charnes, the books are “that element in the story that everyone believes is 'the key', but that is just a constitutive distraction” (2010:72). Therefore, these books confer a sort of authority to Prospero, even though he does not have any authoritative right at all: “to believe in his authority is to justify his abusive power over Caliban, Ariel, and the other spirits of the isle. And to believe that the power gives him sovereignty is [...] to regard the island as his territory. And once we've done that, we have become complicit in its colonization” (2010:72). Moreover, we know that, before Prospero, Sycorax used to control the island through magic, though she did not



possess Prospero's books (Charnes 2010:72). What is the difference between Sycorax and Prospero? He refers to her as a witch, but are Prospero's power different from Sycorax's? Charnes answers that it is the island the real source of power that allowed Sycorax first and Prospero then to gain an apparent authority, underlining that this power "arises from a symbiotic relationship with the mysterious *will of the island*, not from his [Prospero's] own 'will in the world'" (2010:73).

How should we understand *The Tempest*, then? Does Prospero represent the scientist who exploits and controls the natural world in the name of progress, or is Prospero simply an individual who occupies a space persuading himself and the others of his authority even though the actual power lies in nature itself? I argue the answer is both. Prospero's art entirely belongs to the island: Ariel is the one who creates the sea storm and directs all the spirits, Caliban is the one who possesses the ecological knowledge. Prospero appropriates the land and its resources without possessing any right to it, establishing a domain based on his supposed superiority which is taken for granted from Ariel, Caliban and from us. By contrast, the island is a living organism which shares its resources with human characters: even though we are tempted to perceive it as entirely subjugated, we must bear in mind that Prospero was nearly murdered by Caliban.

## 3. ROBINSON CRUSOE

### 3.1 British Empire and Enclosure

#### 3.1.1 *The Enclosure Movement*

The Enclosure Movement started when Holland, France and England were in competition to control the Indian subcontinent and trades to the East: throughout the nineteenth century, colonial subjects began to suffer new politics of land enclosure, that had a “destructive ecological impact” upon the land (Marzec 2007:8).

we have come to accept the essence of 'land', and its various formations, as self-evident. We must therefore reawaken an ontological understanding of land [...] An enclosure is the turning of open, communal land into private property. It involves the surrounding of that land with barriers designed to close off the free passage of people and animals (Marzec 2007:8-9).

The enclosure act implies an activity of measurement of the land: therefore, portions of the land are “legally registered as separate, private-and thus 'positive'-properties” (Marzec 2007:9). Enclosures were glorified by theorists, scholars and novelists, because they were considered an advancement in agriculture and farming, since they could increase productivity. Notwithstanding this, the movement was not welcomed by everyone: indeed, many individuals opposed enclosure practices, since it denied the principle of free access to land (Marzec 2007:9). Riots against the matter started in the sixteenth century and went on until the eighteenth; however, from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the

Restoration, parliament favoured enclosure as a possible solution to the economic problems (Marzec 2007:9).

The most revolutionary aspect of this movement is that it marked a change in the economic system from an immediate short-term use production, to a long-term storage production-for-profit (Marzec 2007:9). In addition, the turning of land into private property involved a new system of registration: as a consequence, “Imbricated in a sheet of language, land is pulled into a discursive state archive that functions at the same time as a system of supervision” (Marzec 2007:9). As a result, the new discourse around the land emphasised the importance of geographical metaphors: in particular, terms such as “territory”, “field” and “landscape” mark the introduction of the discourse of enclosure and the consequent development of geographical awareness:

*Territory* names a juridico-political dispersion of power: a mapped area controlled by a lord, a military commander, an imperial surveyor, a governor, or a nation [...] *Field* denotes an economico-juridical dispersion: the landlord who encloses a space of land, turning it into his “field” in order to expand his sovereignty and his income [...] *Landscape* indicates a politicoaesthetic dispersion: the comportment of land to an artist’s image of organic beauty” (Marzec 2007:10).

As a consequence, a feeling of dread arose towards those wild lands that were not enclosed or contained: for instance, during the expansion of New England, settlers were confounded by the absence of demarcation of Indian property (Marzec 2007:10). The fact that these populations would move and settle upon different territories was beyond Western ideology comprehension. By the time that enclosure acts became an ordinary way of life, British citizens started to deem the Commons not only useless but also dangerous (Marzec 2007:10). Before the acts of enclosure, free access to the Common for activities such as pasturing was granted under the name of “use-rights”(Marzec 2007:12). Subsequently, these rights have

gradually been annulled. As a result, those individuals who could not prove to be related to a specific landlord, were legally considered masterless; therefore, a farmer was no more simply someone who tended the land, becoming a subject under the power of someone else (Marzec 2007:12).

In opposition to the principle of enclosure, these landless individuals called themselves “inhabitants”, a term which suggests an ancient and effective right to the land. The displacement of the individual from “inhabitant” to “landlord” represents a crucial point: “Inhabiting stems from the word *habiting* [from the French *habiter*], that is 'to have dealings with', 'cohabit', 'dwell', 'inhabit'. But it is also part of the realm of being itself: [Latin *Habere*], meaning 'to have', 'to be constituted', 'to be'.” (Marzec 2007:12-13). Thus, the implication of the word “inhabitant” is that the human being and the land are not considered unrelated elements. Indeed, the essence of the inhabitant itself lies in his way of dealing with both the natural space where he lives and his co-inhabitants (Marzec 2007:13). Therefore, the self and the land can only be thought of as strongly related: while inhabitancy relates to exteriority, based on the principle that land supports humankind, according to the logic of enclosure and individuality, it is the individual who “sets up the land, territorializes it with its positive presence, places an individual name upon the land to establish it as private property” (Marzec 2007:13).

### **3.1.2 Enclosure in Literature**

In *Robinson Crusoe*, when he is shipwrecked on the island, Crusoe is filled with anxiety because he finds himself in a wild and uncultivated space he is not accustomed to. The land appears as a “meaningless presence that bewilders Crusoe's sensibility, and by extension the sociosymbolic order of the British Empire that he carries on his back” (Marzec 2007:2). The only way Crusoe can overcome his dread is to create a series of enclosures.

According to Defoe, the enclosure was an effective system that could turn the

land into “an object to be mastered by humankind”, thus imposing a new model of enlightened imperial culture (Marzec 2007:2) Indeed, in *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Defoe operates a cataloguing of the English landscape, encouraging the normalization of the land, through scientific development, and promoting the enclosure system (Marzec 2007:3). As Marzec explains, *The Tour* has been a very influential document as far as economy and agriculture are concerned. According to Marzec, the “encyclopedic noting of the markets and industries of cities” suggests how the discourse of enclosure was related to the activity of registration, a “new administration of knowledge” (Marzec 2007:19).

Moreover, *The Tour* portrays London as a central core that produces both progress and morality, values which are then radiated to the surrounding space. Therefore, the countryside is gradually enclosed and disciplined from London, receiving its “metaphysical justification” (Marzec 2007:19). The way in which Defoe describes and catalogues the English landscape suggests a panoptic gaze: land becomes thus predetermined by the intervention of the metropolis (Marzec 2007:19). According to Marzec, enclosures mark “a new political aesthetic” and are representative of “England's superiority over other lands” (2007:20). Thus, enclosures are the concrete realization of human domain over the natural world: London is the centre of a network that has gradually built a system of national control based on the redesigning of nature (Marzec 2007:21).

As a consequence, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, English novels contain a great number of references to enclosures, element which shows how the English novel itself is influenced by a “new imperial formation of the land” (Marzec 2007:3). Moreover, literary characters reflect a significant correspondence between identity and the land: the imperial subject is overwhelmed by anxiety and he feels the urge to move; this impatience must be tamed by the developing of a colonial system of utility. As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the novel, Robinson feels the need to leave England and venture into sea, even though he is aware of the dangers. Thus, the colonist individual is characterized by a dichotomy: on the one

hand he is overwhelmed by a nomadic impulse, on the other he governs this impulse by the activity of agriculture. (Marzec 2007:4) This literary topos is “a structural imperative of Western teleological narratives of identity formation” (Marzec 2007:4), the individual learns to control his nomadic desire relocating that desire under the colonisation context. The land has been characterized in English literature as a volatile good that needs to be conquered by the west, since the imperial consciousness has ruled fiction representation in the modern era (Marzec 2007:7). “The imperial encounter with land thus emerges as a syndrome, and land itself comes to be represented in the sociosymbolic order of empire as a hostile being needing to be enclosed, 'cured', and 'cultivated'”(Marzec 2007:8). The generalized fear of the land that emerges in literary texts from the late seventeenth century onward has not been considered by postcolonial theorists. They have missed “the onerous presence, at the earth of the planet's strongest colonial order, of a significant ontological dread” (Marzec 2007:8).

### **3.2 The Ocean**

According to Mentz, “in our age of ecological crisis, the ancient story of shipwreck seems especially topical” (2013:76); he adds that Crusoe's arrival at the island can be read as an allegory of human response to ecological crisis, where the act of swimming represents a way of responding to ecological catastrophe (2013:76).

From the beginning of the novel, the sea is associated to danger and uncertainty. While Crusoe feels the urge to leave his country and venture to find fortune in far away lands, going to sea is immediately portrayed by his father as an error. Crusoe abandons the stability of his homeland for an “oceanic rambling” (Mentz 2013:77). Mentz argues that, although Crusoe's nomadic desire has been principally read as the symbol of global economic expansion, from an ecological point of view, the rejection of land for sea eludes pastoral fantasies to embrace oceanic change. That

is to say, venturing on the ocean implies facing, instead of avoiding, the hostility of the environment.

Crusoe goes through two oceanic storms: the second one, which, according to Mentz, “evacuate human knowledge” (2013:77) is the most dreadful:

a violent Tournado or Hurricane took us quite out of our Knowledge; it began from the South-East, came about to the North-West, and then settled into the North-East, from whence it blew in such a terrible manner, that for twelve Days together we could do nothing but drive, and scudding away before it, let it carry us whither ever Fate and the Fury of the Winds directed; and during these twelve Days, I need not say, that I expected every Day to be swallowed up, nor indeed did any in the Ship expect to save their Lives (Defoe 2007:36-37).

The storm is such a powerful manifestation of nature that, like the characters of *The Tempest*, Crusoe feels lost and bewildered. Basically, the storm reverses anthropocentrism, in the sense that the individual loses the control over what surrounds him along with all expectations for the future (Mentz 2013:77). Moreover, Mentz suggests that “Crusoe's immersion, even more than his island stay, represents radical isolation”(2013:77). In fact, while Crusoe's stay on the island relies on a future planning that involves the assembling of allies, both human and not, during the shipwreck he is completely left alone without any perspective or aim. Even though the individual is not physically alone in the ship, during the storm there is no sense of community: fear governs everyone's mind. The ship passengers may try to cooperate in order to face the disaster, however the presence of other individuals does not bring relief to anybody.

When Crusoe finally finds himself really alone in the water, he tries to fight the waves as much as he can:

Nothing can describe the Confusion of Thought which I felt when I sunk into

the Water; for tho' I swam very well, yet I could not deliver my self from the Waves so as to draw Breath, till that Wave having driven me, or rather carried me a vast Way on towards the Shore, and having spent it self, went back, and left me upon the Land almost dry, but half-dead with the Water I took in. I had so much Presence of Mind as well as Breath left, that seeing my self nearer the main Land than I expected, I got upon my Feet, and endeavoured to make on towards the Land as fast as I could, before another Wave should return, and take me up again (Defoe 2007:39).

Crusoe describes the sea as an hostile force far more powerful than himself, an enormous angry enemy which is going to destroy him. Like the boatswain in *The Tempest*, Crusoe on one hand humanizes the sea, attributing to it the human sentiment of fury, on the other he calls it an "enemy", establishing an opposition between the maritime environment and himself, as if they were fighting against each other:

But I soon found it was impossible to avoid it; for I saw the Sea come after me as high as a great Hill, and as furious as an Enemy which I had no Means or Strength to contend with; my Business was to hold my Breath, and raise my self upon the Water, if I could; and so by swimming to preserve my Breathing, and Pilot my self towards the Shore (Defoe 2007:39).

However, Mentz suggests that the accuracy of language, in contrast with the emergency of the situation, symbolises the "entanglement between human and the ocean" (2013:78-79). He adds that the most crucial element is the discrepancy between human ability and the maritime environment. Indeed, even though Crusoe can swim very well, it is not enough; he needs to be patient and embrace the strength of the sea in order to preserve himself. "Swimming represents an indirect form of heroic endurance" (Mentz 2013:79) and the word "preserve" evokes lack of agency and accommodation. Therefore, although he portrays the sea as a merciless



enemy ready to kill him, at the same time he seems to acknowledge that the only way to survive is to balance his swimming abilities with the necessity to adapt to the rules of the maritime environment.

I recover'd a little before the return of the Waves, and seeing I should be cover'd again with the Water, I resolv'd to hold fast by a Piece of the Rock, and so to hold my Breath, if possible, till the Wave went back; now as the Waves were not so high as at first, being nearer Land, I held my Hold till the Wave abated, and then fetch'd another Run, which brought me so near the Shore, that the next Wave, tho' it went over me, yet did not so swallow me up as to carry me away, and the next run I took, I got to the main Land (Defoe 2007:40).

The rock represents a sort of mediator between Crusoe and the ocean: according to Mentz, the human clings the rock in order to counteract the power of the waves. Therefore, although the force of the ocean cannot be avoided, it can be coped with: "swimming does not represent a permanent solution to environmental catastrophe, only a temporal survival tactic" (Mentz 2013:79).

### **3.3 Robinson, the Island and Enclosure**

#### ***3.3.1 The Beginning of the Enclosure Process***

According to Marzec, it is curious that while Crusoe was able to describe very accurately his position for the entire duration of the oceanic storm, only when he finally reaches the island he seems to lose the ability to determine where he is (Marzec 2007:15). Crusoe is exhausted and worried, but above all he is disoriented: indeed, what upsets him the most is the lack of enclosure. As a matter of fact, at first he decides to sleep on a tree, which, as Marzec suggests, is a way not to inhabit

“the land in its own terms” (2007:2).

Night coming upon me, I began with a heavy Heart to consider what would be my Lot if there were any ravenous Beasts in that Country, seeing at Night they always come abroad for their Prey. All the Remedy that offer'd to my Thoughts at that Time, was, to get up into a thick bushy Tree like a Firr, but thorny, which grew near me, and where I resolv'd to set all Night, and consider the next Day what Death I should dye, for as yet I saw no Prospect of Life (Defoe 2007:41-42).

During the shipwreck, Crusoe had already addressed the land as “more frightful than the Sea” (Defoe 2007:39). It is true that Crusoe feels uncomfortable because he is afraid of savages and wild beasts; however, on a deeper level, Crusoe is afraid of being on a wild territory which is completely unenclosed. As a consequence, the space is reorganised in a proportional and rational way, in order to be improved. After having established that the island is his property, Crusoe starts a process of enclosure of the natural space (Smit-Marais 2011:107). As a matter of fact, Crusoe spends a year building a dwelling that he calls a “wall”; the idea of habitation becoming a wall shows us how the discourse of enclosure is part of Crusoe's mentality (Marzec 2007:15).

I have already describ'd my Habitation, which was a Tent under the Side of a Rock, surrounded with a strong Pale of Posts and Cables, but I might now rather call it a Wall, for I rais'd a kind of Wall up against it of Turfs, about two Foot thick on the Out-side, and after some time, I think it was a Year and Half, I rais'd Rafters from it leaning to the Rock, and thatch'd or cover'd it with Bows of Trees, and such things as I could get to keep out the Rain, which I found at some times of the Year very violent (Defoe 2007:58).

Thus, as Susan Smit-Marais explains, “Crusoe takes the first step towards converting

the island: space, or at least part of it, is contained and becomes place" (2011:107). He builds a sort of fortress in order to protect himself from savages and wild animals. Since the beginning, Crusoe establishes very clear boundaries between his dwelling and the outside unknown wilderness, so much so that the space becomes "an extension of Crusoe himself" (Smit-Marais 2011:107). The domesticated area becomes increasingly wider as the novel develops: during the 28 years he spends on the island, Crusoe organises a number of enclosures such as habitations, fences and plantations (Smit-Marais 2011:107). Marzec suggests that "such obsessive acts of fortification mark the importation of an enclosing apparatus that seeks to appropriate land while never inhabiting it" (2007:15).

According to Smit-Marais, the way in which Crusoe relates to the environment reflects the colonisation process, that is performed through his "appropriation" and "domestication" of the island (2011:103). Moreover, Crusoe projects into the island his values and costumes, typical of the British middle-class society (Smit-Marais 2011:104). At first Crusoe thinks that the island is barren, then he realises that there are some areas characterized by dense vegetation: "to his observant colonialist gaze, the island's untamed expanses of forest, scrubland and mountain present an ideal opportunity for cultivation and domestication" (Smit-Marais 2011:107). As a consequence, the description of the space that Crusoe gives is not objective because it is filtered by his expectations: "the Country appear'd so fresh, so green, so flourishing, every thing being in a constant Verdure, or Flourish of Spring, that it looked like a planted Garden" (Defoe 2007:85). This passage underlines how Robinson personifies the Western vision of the African land, thus the way in which he describes what he sees is influenced by Western social beliefs and ideology (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:5). Although the island should not be considered a space that contains human beings, being passive and subordinate to them, Crusoe's island is an empty space which needs to be filled and modelled by Western superiority (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:5).

I descended a little on the Side of that delicious Vale, surveying it with a secret Kind of Pleasure, (tho' mixt with my other afflicting Thoughts) to think that this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as compleatly as any Lord of a Mannor in England (Defoe 2007:85) .

To describe this setting, Crusoe uses terms normally associated with the English landscape such as “garden”, “vale”, “mannon”. Therefore, he “appropriates the space through language” and what is unknown and chaotic becomes familiar and neat, in conformity with Western education (Smit-Marais 2011:108). Indeed, “Out of nothing Robinson creates something; with the wilderness as his starting point, he cultivates something resembling his own European culture” (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:6).

In the context of the Enlightenment, the most important value was that of self-improvement, achievable thanks to progress and moral righteousness. In the novel, the pursuing of this ideal is represented by the “individual advancement from a primitive state to a productive, ordered and purposeful existence” (Smit-Marais 2011:104). More specifically, “Crusoe's sense of security and well-being are related to the state of his possessions such as tools, food and most importantly, land” (Smit-Marais 2011:105).

### **3.3.2 *Crusoe's Tools***

Geert Vandermeersche and Ronald Soetaert argue that Robinson's actions on the island are determined by his prior education: he is not “naturally educated”, because he applies the knowledge he already possessed (2012:7): “Robinson is dependent on his own culture's tools [...] Only through such tools does Robinson get control on nature. He transforms the wild (unwritten) nature into an ordered (written) space” (2012:8). Thus, the way in which Crusoe relates to the environment,

is dependent on his Western formation and ideology. One of the first things he does after the shipwreck is to reach the ship in order to take with him as many useful objects as possible:

I found that all the Ship's Provisions were dry and untouch'd by the Water, and being very well dispos'd to eat, I went to the Bread-room and fill'd my Pockets with Bisket, and eat it as I went about other things, for I had no time to lose; I also found some Rum in the great Cabbin, of which I took a large Dram, and which I had indeed need enough of to spirit me for what was before me: Now I wanted nothing but a Boat to furnish my self with many things which I foresaw would be very necessary to me (Defoe 2007:43).

The first thing Crusoe looks for is obviously food. Then he searches for those tools that can be useful to him and can allow him to create an environment which resembles the Western educated one. He finds clothes and, what is very important to him, weapons:

My next Care was for some Ammunition and Arms; there were two very good Fowling-pieces in the great Cabbin, and two Pistols, these I secur'd first, with some Powder-horns, and a small Bag of Shot, and two old rusty Swords; I knew there were three Barrels of Powder in the Ship, but knew not where our Gunner had stow'd them, but with much search I found them (Defoe 2007:44).

It is thanks to these tools that Crusoe can gradually build his empire. Guns allow him to hunt and obtain food, while other tools enable him to make his dwelling comfortable. For instance, he uses a hatchet to build a chair and a table (Defoe 2007:59). Later he uses clay to create crockery, such as pots and dishes (Defoe 2007:102-103), and he makes baskets, too (Defoe 2007:92). Starting from his tools and his knowledge, Crusoe manipulates the natural elements in order to make his life the more civilized as possible. According to Smit-Marais, the physical elements

through which Crusoe is able to enclose the space, such as hedges, trees, plantations and fences, are soaked in cultural meaning: thus, space becomes associated to Crusoe's white middle-class Christian British identity (2011:108).

Moreover, he writes a diary, where he records all his daily activities, which emphasizes how he is creating order out of chaos. As Vandermeersche and Soetaert underline, "Robinson Crusoe does not observe the island with the eye of the lover of nature" (2012:8); as a matter of fact, writing and calculation are "the traditional tools of culture" (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:8) that Robinson uses to control space and organize time. As Smit-Marais suggests, Crusoe needs to control not only space, but also time: in his journal, Crusoe records each day where he describes his activities, giving information about the island latitude and longitude, too. "Space and time are furthermore contained through his neurotic preoccupation with counting and measuring" (2011:109). Marzec argues that "more than just a physical transformation, enclosing commands the full range of being" (2007:15): indeed, in *Robinson Crusoe* enclosure is not only a physical one. There is the enclosure of time, when Crusoe strictly divides his daily routine according to "work", "sleep" and "diversion" (Defoe 2007:62), in order not to be idle. There is enclosure of his domestic space, where his tools and goods are compartmentalized, and enclosure of consciousness, too: "his sense of security depends upon his sense of being a self-made individual unfettered from exterior influences" (Marzec 2007:16).

Thus, Marzec adds, Crusoe pictures himself as an original thinker, someone who, although without any experience, is nonetheless able to obtain what he needs thanks to engagement and efforts. Therefore, Crusoe's island becomes an image of the British Empire, as British structures are applied to the natural space; in addition, Crusoe's enclosures are not simply practical devices; more than that, they "demarcate civilized space" (Smit-Marais 2011:108). Although, at first, Crusoe's intervention in nature is due to necessity and survival instinct, later it becomes a way to make his life pleasant and comfortable (Smit-Marais 2011:109).

### **3.3.3 Religion**

I saw some few Stalks of something green, shooting out of the Ground, which I fancy'd might be some Plant I had not seen, but I was surpriz'd and perfectly astonish'd, when, after a little longer Time, I saw about ten or twelve Ears come out, which were perfect green Barley of the same Kind as our European, nay, as our English Barley [...] after I saw Barley grow there, in a Climate which I know was not proper for Corn, and especially that I knew not how it came there, it startl'd me strangely, and I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus'd this Grain to grow without any Help of Seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my Sustenance, on that wild miserable Place (Defoe 2007:67).

This is a crucial passage because it marks the beginning of Crusoe's religious commitment: until this moment, even though he was already influenced by Christian religion, as we Europeans all are, he was not aware of it.

When he sees barley growing out of the land, Crusoe does not immediately realise that he had previously accidentally thrown out the husks of corn. Therefore, he is persuaded that he is dealing with a miracle. From this moment, "Crusoe begins an extended search for a metaphysical cause that would redeem the island and its land" (Marzec 2007:16) and he starts searching the island looking for signs of Providence: "I went all over that Part of the Island, where I had been before, peering in every Corner, and under every Rock, to see for more of it, but I could not find any" (Defoe 2007:68). The hint of a divine power intervening to help him, makes Crusoe more positive and faithful towards his destiny. In fact, he starts considering his situation from a different point of view: if he is cast on a desert island, while all his companions are dead, there must be a sort of design for him.

When Crusoe realises that the growing barley was accidentally caused by himself, although he is initially disappointed, he starts acknowledging that he can farm the land. Indeed, this new awareness only consolidates his faith and devotion

to divine Providence: the growth of barley was not a miracle itself, however the accident of dropping the grains happened because of God's will.

I must confess, my religious Thankfulness to God's Providence began to abate too upon the Discovering that all this was nothing but what was common; tho' I ought to have been as thankful for so strange and unforeseen Providence, as if it had been miraculous; for it was really the Work of Providence as to me, that should order or appoint, that 10 or 12 Grains of Corn should remain unspoil'd, (when the Rats had destroy'd all the rest,) as if it had been dropt from Heaven; as also, that I should throw it out in that particular Place, where it being in the Shade of a high Rock, it sprang up immediately; whereas, if I had thrown it anywhere else, at that Time, it had been burnt up and destroy'd. I carefully sav'd the Ears of this Corn you may be sure in their Season, which was about the End of June; and laying up every Corn, I resolv'd to sow them all again (Defoe 2007:68).

Thus, Providence is what allows Crusoe to acknowledge the potential of his work on the island, preparing the ground for an activity which is entirely directed by himself. Indeed, "The evolution here goes from the belief in a divine order, then natural order, to man-directed design, similar to the evolution of 'culture'" (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:7). In fact, before the second half of the seventeenth century, the word "culture" was connected to the activity of farming; Vandermeersche and Soetaert quote Bauman (1987:94): "before, social values and behaviour reproduced itself through seemingly self-evident mechanisms, either following 'the nature of things' or a 'divine order'" (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:6). After that, individuals started to assume that it was necessary for the society to be formed, and the meaning of "culture" became "the intention and practice of 'gardening' as a method of ruling society" (Bauman quoted by Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:6).

After an episode of illness, Crusoe finds strength in the Bible, and in particular



he muses upon two sentences: "Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me" and "Can God spread a Table in the Wilderness?" (Defoe 2007:81). Crusoe's faith becomes stronger and stronger, together with the belief that the power of God arises also in a remote place like his island. As a consequence, "he becomes entirely governed by the need to institute a plan of cultivation" (Marzec 2007:16): since he needs to be delivered from the island, he feels that he has to engage himself in this activity. As a consequence, Crusoe needs to bring civility to the island because he wants to redeem himself from a previous condition of spiritual abandonment; "control over island space is therefore a central motif in *Robinson Crusoe* and it underlines the connection between the formation of Western identity and the colonisation of the space" (Smit-Marais 2011:106).

From this moment onward, "Crusoe commits himself to a spiritual cause that would redeem him and, by extension, also the island" (Smit-Marais 2011:110). To Crusoe, tending the land and farming becomes a way to atone for his sinful past. Indeed, there is a parallel between colonialism and existentialism: the cultivation and the containment of the land go together with a spiritual transformation (Smit-Marais 2011:111). Therefore, "deliverance" is not simply associated to Crusoe's own rescuing from the island, it means also to deliver the island itself from wilderness to a providential foundation (Marzec 2007:16). On the basis of both enclosure acts and the search for Providence, Crusoe starts a new economy, which "marks the shift from a communal and native relation, to the domination of the land as a space of production" (Marzec 2007:16).

The attitude of Crusoe towards the land is typically the one based on the dialectic of possession and responsibility from Christian tradition. In modern times individuals tend to think of science and religion as to contrasting categories; however, Lynn White argues that modern Western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology (1967), which means that Western scientific thought nowadays is informed by Christian religion. "Then God said, – Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over every creeping thing that creeps

on the earth.” (Genesis 1.26). The word “rule” seems to imply that at the origin of Christian culture lies the idea that the relationship between man and nature is not one of equality. On the one hand this passage can be read as the ultimate demonstration that in our tradition man feels that he has the right to do whatever he wants with nature. On the other the passage may imply that only to some extent man has to exert mastery, because sometimes intervention is necessary. Although mastery can have a constructive, pragmatic connotation, for humans the idea of disposing of nature as they like is more compelling. In Christian tradition man is not a passive observer, but one who makes. The dominant approach to nature of Western society is influenced by this tradition, where nature is seen as an object that humans have to continuously re-elaborate.

Thus, Crusoe embodies the dialectical ideology of possession and responsibility typical of the Christian tradition. He “cultivates with a sense of stewardship”, transforming the wilderness into a British garden (Scott 2014:646).

Alongside the activity of cultivation, Crusoe decides to breed and enclose goats, too: “I resolv’d to enclose a Piece of about 150 Yards in length, and 100 Yards in breadth, which as it would maintain as many as I should have in any reasonable time, so as my Flock encreased, I could add more Ground to my Enclosure” (Defoe 2007:124-125). Crusoe domesticates a parrot, teaching him to speak and to call him by his name; he is therefore surrounded by a “court” of animals, as he describes in this passage:

It would have made a Stoick smile to have seen, me and my little Family sit down to Dinner; there was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away, and no Rebels among all my Subjects. Then to see how like a King I din’d too all alone, attended by my Servants, Poll, as if he had been my Favourite, was the only Person permitted to talk to me. My Dog who was now grown very old and crazy, and had found no Species to multiply his Kind upon, sat always at my Right Hand, and two Cats, one on one Side the

Table, and one on the other, expecting now and then a Bit from my Hand, as a Mark of special Favour (Defoe 2007:125-126).

This passage shows not only how Crusoe encloses and domesticates animals, but also how he humanizes them. He calls them his “family”, picturing a domestic scene at dinnertime, while at the same time he refers to himself as “Prince” and “Lord” of the island. Thus, these animals are his family but also his “subjects”, ready to obey his orders; Crusoe is proud to underline that none among them is a “rebel”, they are all trustworthy “servants”. Moreover, he clarifies that only his parrot is allowed to speak to him, as if the fact that the other animals do not speak was a matter of his own will. The attitude of the cats that wait for him to give them something to eat, becomes, too, the human behaviour of those who want a special treatment. It is interesting to notice how any characteristic which does not belong to the human is completely rejected: everything is filtered through Crusoe's anthropocentric view. Both animals and the landscape are objects providentially set at Crusoe's disposal, instruments that allow him to build an empire through a new system of economy. According to Marzec, Crusoe's new economy is based on “stockpiling”: he is pleased by the increased inventory of the land, as “this increase in stock in turn leads to an increase in the size of his holdings” (Marzec 2007:16). The stockpiling allows Crusoe to turn the wilderness of the island into a “providential table” (Marzec 2007:16-17).

### ***3.3.4 The Footprint, Friday and Colonization***

It happen'd one Day about Noon going towards my Boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the Print of a Man's naked Foot on the Shore, which was very plain to be seen in the Sand: I stood like one Thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an Apparition; [...] I could see no other Impression but that one, I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my Fancy; but there was no Room for that, for there was exactly the very Print of a Foot,

Toes, Heel, and every Part of a Foot; how it came thither, I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering Thoughts, like a Man perfectly confus'd and out of my self, I came Home to my Fortification, not feeling, as we say, the Ground I went on, but terrify'd to the last Degree, looking behind me at every two or three Steps, mistaking every Bush and Tree, and fancying every Stump at a Distance to be a Man; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted Imagination represented Things to me in, how many wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way (Defoe 2007:130).

When Crusoe discovers a footprint and realises he is not the only human being on the island, he is caught by distress: he is afraid that some savages might find him and kill him. However, Crusoe is not simply worried for his survival; more than that, the presence of another individual calls his sovereignty into question. Crusoe has established a realm that now is threatened because someone else might claim the ownership of the island (Smit-Marais 2011:111). The way in which Crusoe relates to the wilderness is ambivalent: before the discover of the footprint, he wanted to bring civilization on the island as much as possible, restraining wild nature. Afterwards, he uses natural wilderness as a means of fortification, meant to hide the civilised microcosm he has built. "The looming fear of incursion therefore turns his beloved island from a place of emotional and psychological refuge into a mere fortress"(Smit-Marais 2011:112). In fact, as Marzec suggests, "Crusoe's discovering of the footprint throws into high relief the ontological dread concealed by these acts of enclosure" (2007:17), that is to say, his entire stability collapses under Crusoe's overwhelming anxiety. As a consequence, Crusoe decides to destroy his enclosures, element which symbolizes that the land has become his territory. Significantly, enclosures are an extension of Crusoe's self, therefore he cannot allow his properties to be possessed by another individual. The identity of the island is now mixed with Crusoe's identity, which means that without his mastery, this

environment does not have a reason for being.

The first Thing I propos'd to my self, was, to throw down my Enclosures, and turn all my tame Cattle wild into the Woods, that the Enemy might not find them; and then frequent the Island in Prospect of the same, or the like Booty: Then to the simple Thing of Digging up my two Corn Fields, that they might not find such a Grain there, and still be prompted to frequent the Island; then to demolish my Bower, and Tent, that they might not see any Vestiges of Habitation, and be prompted to look farther, in order to find out the Persons inhabiting (Defoe 2007:135).

Thus, the land “is not an object that preexists Defoe's presence” (Marzec 2007:17), it is part of Crusoe's self development, and, as a consequence, it is better to let it grow wild again, rather than see it occupied by someone else. Indeed, if another individual were to conquer the island, that would mean to conquer Crusoe's subjectivity, too. For this reason, in *Robinson Crusoe*, identity and land are strongly intertwined and can be understood only in relation to each other (Marzec 2007:17).

From a narrative point of view, the footprint represents the prelude to the introduction of Friday, who, according to Marzec, is introduced as a solution to Crusoe's condition of uncertainty and anxiety (2007:17). This character first appears to Crusoe in a dream, where Crusoe saves a savage from cannibals who occasionally come to the island to eat their prisoners, and then the savage becomes his servant (Defoe 2007:167). Friday is thus introduced as a solution to the “potential threat of alterity” (Marzec 2007:18): indeed, he is portrayed as the object that will heal Crusoe's anxiety and help him to re-establish his domain.

When finally Friday comes into the picture, Crusoe's dream is fulfilled: “Similar to how Robinson turns the wilderness into a liveable, meaningful place, he transforms the nameless savage into the 'human being'” (Vandermeersche – Soetaert 2012:8). Otherness is partially eradicated, indeed Friday's physical characteristics are described as more Western than exotic:

He was a comely handsome Fellow, perfectly well made; with straight strong Limbs, not too large; tall and well shap'd, and as I reckon, about twenty six Years of Age. He had a very good Countenance, not a fierce and surly Aspect; but seem'd to have something very manly in his Face, and yet he had all the Sweetness and Softness of an European in his Countenance too, especially when he smil'd. His Hair was long and black, not curl'd like Wool; his Forehead very high, and large, and a great Vivacity and sparkling Sharpness in his Eyes. The Colour of his Skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly yellow nauseous tawny, as the Brasilians, and Virginians, and other Natives of America are; but of a bright kind of a dun olive Colour, that had in it something very agreeable; tho' not very easy to describe. His Face was round, and plump; his Nose small, not flat like the Negroes, a very good Mouth, thin Lips, and his fine Teeth well set, and white as Ivory (Defoe 2007:173).

According to Crusoe, Friday is handsome because he is physically similar to Europeans: Friday's otherness is immediately contained. Thanks to Friday, the power of enclosure is re-established: "Friday submits not only his identity to Crusoe, but his entire culture" (Marzec 2007:18): "I found all the Foundation of his Desire to go to his own Country, was laid in his ardent Affection to the People, and his Hopes of my doing them good" (Defoe 2007:191). Friday is a name that can be associated to nature: indeed, nature was created by God before Adam and Eve, who were created on a Saturday. Both the island and Friday are inferior to Crusoe, thus they are object of colonisation (Smit-Marais 2011:109). Indeed, as Marzec underlines, that between Crusoe and Friday is not a real encounter, in the same way as he never encounters the island: he always puts himself in a detached superior position without ever establishing a true connection (Marzec 2007:18). As Smit-Marais suggests, the arrival of Friday allows Crusoe to re-establish his monologic kingdom; when he gains control over the island again, Crusoe can finally create the ultimate form of space conversion, that is to say the establishment of a colony (Smit-Marais

2011:113).

In fact, in the last part of the novel, we see that the island becomes quickly populated in a way that progressively increases Crusoe's power. First he saves a Spanish sailor and Friday's father from cannibals and, as a result, he gains two other subjects:

My Island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look'd. First of all, the whole Country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion. 2dly, My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Law-giver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, if there had been Occasion of it, for me (Defoe 2007:203).

Subsequently he helps a British captain to retake his ship from mutineers; in exchange, the captain donates the ship to Crusoe, so that he can finally leave the island. Interestingly, Crusoe decides to show these people all his fortifications and enclosures, because at this point he knows for sure that these individuals are no more "other", since they have become an extension of his identity: "Accordingly I gave them the whole History of the Place, and of my coming to it; shew'd them my Fortifications, the Way I made my Bread, planted my Corn, cured my Grapes; and in a Word, all that was necessary to make them easy" (Defoe 2007:233).

### ***3.3.5 Is Crusoe an Imperialist?***

If we apply Linda Charnes's article to this novel, first of all it is significant to underline the difference she illustrates between "place" and "territory": "the combination of sovereignty and jurisdiction turns a place into mere territory [...] territory, while strictly deriving from the Latin word for 'land', is always understood to be a defined space that falls under the authority of some person, institution or

even of animals” (Charnes 2010:69). Does Crusoe's application of the enclosure movement to the island reflect this combination of sovereignty and jurisdiction?

While, as Charnes underlines, Prospero never called himself king of the island (2010:71), Crusoe attributes to himself not only the title of king but also that of emperor (Defoe 2007:109). Moreover, what Crusoe does on the island is not mediated by some spirits or creatures, everything he creates is the result of his own direct intervention. Indeed, the island portrayed by Defoe, with neither music nor non-human creatures, resembles much more a real territory than the one represented by Shakespeare. Still, even the power of Crusoe does not come entirely from himself: indeed, the episode of the accidental sowing underlines how an external force contributed to this almost miraculous event. Of course, without Crusoe involuntarily scattering the seed, the corn would not have grown. However, even when he realizes it was not a miracle but an accident caused by himself, Crusoe is still bewildered about it, since to throw away the seed is certainly not sufficient for the corn to grow (Defoe 2007:68). Although Crusoe attributes his fortune to divine providence, it was the land the entity which made it possible for the seed to become corn.

Thus, we can consider this island a character with its own agency, as Charnes does with *The Tempest*. This island embraced Crusoe, offering him shelter in its caves and nourishing him with its animals and fruits. Although Crusoe turns the island into the prototype of a British cultivated garden, the land does not completely lose its identity. Indeed, if a footprint is sufficient to throw Crusoe into despair, it means that the wild otherness embodied by the island is still there, even after Crusoe's domestication. Crusoe attributes to divine providence both the goods that he is able to obtain from the land, and the mission he persuades himself he has to pursue.

Therefore, in *Robinson Crusoe*, religion corresponds to Prospero's magic books in *The Tempest*: indeed, religion confers Crusoe an authority that otherwise he does not possess. Like Prospero, when Crusoe leaves the island he loses his authoritative



powers, because outside the island he is no emperor and nobody answers to him except Friday. Like Caliban, Friday represents that part of the island that the protagonist maintains under his control. However, Crusoe was nearly killed several times: after the shipwreck, he risks his life later in the novel when he becomes ill (Defoe 2007:77), when he ventures on the sea around the island and is stuck by the currents (Defoe 2007:118-120), not to mention the omnipresent threat of the cannibals. Like Caliban's plot, these dangers remind us that the protagonist is not invincible: in spite of his efforts of establishing a supremacy, Crusoe's authority can be undermined by external forces far more powerful than him.

## 4. LORD OF THE FLIES

*Lord of the Flies* is an extremely uncanny text which primarily deals with the threshold between childhood and adulthood. The characters struggle to survive in a desert island where a mysterious evil force threatens their stability; the main question that arises is: where does the beast come from?

Clearly, Golding was concerned with the exploration of human psychology, and the novel is disturbing because, as we read it, we perceive human violence. Indeed, the children who are cast away alone in this island, gradually lose their innocence and their attitude towards the natural world reflects that of adults. According to Bern Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, the novel has often been appreciated from psychological and religious points of view rather than from a literary perspective; indeed, it is considered a fable or a myth, instead of a novel, by a number of critics (1963:91). However, Oldsey and Weintraub argue that the novel is too long to be a parable and, since it deals primarily with human beings, it is a fable neither (1963:97). Different literary traditions converge in this novel: beside the religious tradition, the field of the “boy's book” meets the topic of the survival narrative, and, most significantly, the tradition of anti-science writing (Oldsey – Weintraub 1963:91). In fact, even though the novel deals with the inner state of human beings, the role of the environment is crucial: in particular, the recurrence throughout the novel of the dichotomy civility versus savagery is a central topic.

As Oldsey and Weintraub underline, when we read *Lord of the Flies* we should combine the realm of fiction with that of allegory. Indeed, the concepts of time and space are not thoroughly specified: the island is described step by step, so that we explore the territory along with the characters who do not have a clear notion of where they are and when (1963:92). Moreover, the location of the island is extremely vague: we know that it must be far from civilisation, since only two ships pass by for the entire duration of the novel. Yet, it is a place above which human

fightings take place (Oldsey – Weintraub 1963:93). Notwithstanding this, as Robert J. White argues, “the concreteness of Golding’s prose [...] preserves the plausibility of character, the credibility of plot, and the form of action that are necessary to the novel” (1964:163).

If we follow the narrative path, we witness a gradual transition from a Western civilized behaviour to a barbarous one, a course that matches with the passage from an initial awe and delight for the island to a progressive uneasiness culminating in dread. Should we assume that it is the island which is responsible for the children’s turn into merciless and evil savages?

Shortly after the beginning, some of the characters start mentioning a mysterious beast: nobody can describe it accurately, or claim to have seen it clearly. However, its presence becomes stronger and stronger and irreversibly affects the children’s behaviour on the island. At first it is thought to be a sort of snake, then it becomes a sea animal with tentacles and finally it turns into a creature which resembles nothing they are familiar with. The terror towards this unknown monster which inhabits the island becomes nearly unbearable, until both the main characters and the reader realize that perhaps the beast is not a threat that comes from the outside, namely the natural world, but rather it exists within the characters themselves. Therefore, it is not the island that represents a danger for the boys; on the contrary, the boys cause several damages to the environment, from a fire which destroys part of the vegetation, to the obsessive hunting of pigs.

## **4.1 The Sea and the Sea Shell**

### ***4.1.1 Between Wonder and Britishness***

According to Andrew Sinclair, the novel deals with the relationship between the sea and human beings (1982:172). The protagonist, Ralph, is the first character

introduced by the narrator: he is walking toward the lagoon, soon followed by another boy. This second character, who will be later named “Piggy”, is heard by Ralph as he cries: “He was clambering heavily among the creepers and broken trunks when a bird, a vision of red and yellow, flashed upwards with a witch-like cry; and this cry was echoed by another.” (Golding 1954:1). In this passage, the narrator establishes a parallel between Piggy and a bird, the boy's cry immediately following the bird sound. The parallelism suggests a similarity between the human and the non-human: one cry echoes the other, the vision of the bird shortly anticipating the meeting with Piggy. Immediately after, another passage confirms this analogy: “The fair boy stopped and jerked his stockings with an automatic gesture that made the jungle seem for a moment like the Home Counties.” (Golding 1954:1). Here the comparison is drawn between the jungle and British landscape: although the island is wild and uncultivated, when Ralph fixes his socks, he momentarily feels familiar with what surrounds him. When he reaches the beach, Ralph finally encounters the sea:

Ralph stood, one hand against a grey trunk, and screwed up his eyes against the shimmering water. Out there, perhaps a mile away, the white surf flinked on a coral reef, and beyond that the open sea was dark blue. Within the irregular arc of coral the lagoon was still as a mountain lake—blue of all shades and shadowy green and purple. The beach between the palm terrace and the water was a thin stick, endless apparently, for to Ralph's left the perspectives of palm and beach and water drew to a point at infinity; and always, almost visible, was the heat (Golding 1954:4).

As Sinclair underlines, the first attitude of the boys towards the island is a positive one (1982:172): in particular, this passage suggests that the sea is perceived by Ralph in all its beauty and peacefulness. Indeed, the description is characterized by images of light and soothing colours which convey an idea of tranquillity: the pleasant sight is almost heavenly. As a consequence, immediately after, Ralph

decides to pull off his clothes (Golding 1954:4), element that symbolizes a desire of embracing the new environment without restrictions. Therefore, the first sensation perceived by both Ralph and the reader is freedom.

The beauty of the sea colours is stressed again by Ralph shortly after: “It was clear to the bottom and bright with the efflorescence of tropical weed and coral. A school of tiny, glittering fish flicked hither and thither. Ralph spoke to himself, sounding the bass strings of delight” (Golding 1954:6). Contrarily to what happens with *Crusoe*, the protagonist here is delighted with the environment he meets: his amazement for natural beauties is captured by the narrator and descriptions are tinted with hues of wonder. It is important to consider that, unlike the characters of *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, in this novel, the children are not shipwrecked on the island; they are victims of a plane accident. Thus, having not experienced the dreadful power of a sea storm, they seem to be rather welcomed by a benevolent environment that, at least at the beginning, stands in all its bright richness. However, Robert. J. White underlines that the first paragraph of the novel also informs us that, amid the beauty of the jungle a “scar” is visible, as a consequence of the plane crash. What follows is that “the children's presence then is connected with the disfigurement of the island” (1964:164).

The beach contains even a pool:

But the island ran true to form and the incredible pool, which clearly was only invaded by the sea at high tide, was so deep at one end as to be dark green. Ralph inspected the whole thirty yards carefully and then plunged in. The water was warmer than his blood and he might have been swimming in a huge bath (Golding 1954:6).

Again, the pool represents a connection with the Western world the protagonists come from, the warm water makes Ralph think of a bath. Therefore, on the one hand the island is admired for its unfamiliar properties; on the other there are elements of this new environment that remind Ralph of his homeland places and

routines.

Interestingly, as Sinclair argues, “Familiar authority governs the sea” (1982:172): in fact, when they wonder about their rescue, the boys are persuaded that a British ship will come to save them, because British Navy commanders, such as Ralph's father, are supposed to know where they are. Later in the novel there is a passage that underlines how the absolute knowledge of the British monarchy is taken for granted: “My father’s in the Navy. He said there aren’t any unknown islands left. He says the Queen has a big room full of maps and all the islands in the world are drawn there. So the Queen’s got a picture of this island” (Golding 1954:29). The image evoked in this passage is that of a whole world being explored and controlled by the British power. Even though the boys are clearly exaggerating and simplifying a huge topic, the passage stresses on the indelible mark left by British colonialism in individuals' imagination. The room of maps becomes the symbol of the Queen's power over the world; thus, the island where they are is a Queen's property, too. Indeed, as Anderson argues, the common ideology associated to the historical background of the novel pictured a world that had already been discovered, and that could be known even without travelling. As a consequence, travel is no more associated to adventure as it happened in previous times (1967:60).

#### **4.1.2 *The Conch***

Ralph took the shell from Piggy and a little water ran down his arm. In color the shell was deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink. Between the point, worn away into a little hole, and the pink lips of the mouth, lay eighteen inches of shell with a slight spiral twist and covered with a delicate, embossed pattern. Ralph shook sand out of the deep tube (Golding 1954:9).

Shells are beautiful objects, we like picking them up at the seaside and collecting them. The shell Ralph and Piggy find is a particularly big and nice one, so much so

that they suppose it is worthy “pounds and pounds and pounds” (Golding 1954:9). Although their beauty, shells are not precious objects, thus it is curious that the boys attribute to this shell such a value. However, as White underlines, the conch becomes “the emblem of authority and civilization” (1964:165), adding that Ralph becomes the symbol of human attempt to establish and maintain a society based on rationality. The definition of shell is “the hard outer part that protects the body of a sea creature” (Macmillan Dictionary); the function of the shell is therefore that of protecting its hosts. Indeed, throughout the novel, the boys will somehow feel protected by the shell, too.

Primarily it is used by Ralph as an instrument to call the other children scattered all over the island (Golding 1954:10). When all the children are gathered, they decide that a chief among them is needed:

there was a stillness about Ralph as he sat that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch. The being that had blown that, had sat waiting for them on the platform with the delicate thing balanced on his knees, was set apart (Golding 1954:15).

Thus, the shell, from an useful instrument that helps the boys fulfilling a purpose (that of calling and gathering), becomes a marker of power, so much so that Ralph is chosen as the leader, even though he does not seem to possess any particular quality. As the new leader, Ralph decides that only holding the shell in his hands a person will be allowed to speak; thus it will be necessary to ask for it and wait for one's turn (Golding 1954:25). Therefore, the shell becomes the symbol of legitimacy: it is a natural sea element, its only practical utility is that of calling. However, it is given a profound cultural meaning: “Ralph felt a kind of affectionate reverence for the conch, even though he had fished the thing out of the lagoon himself” (Golding 1954:67). Since Ralph and Piggy find the conch, it is looked at as a valuable, almost enchanted object worthy of a specific role for the children's life on

the island. According to Robert Anderson, the children's organization of life on the island is based on public school rules (1967:61). Indeed, the shell represents rules, laws, order, leadership and turn-based prolific conversation. The power of the conch starts weaken when Jack decides to live according to his own rules: "The conch doesn't count on top of the mountain, – said Jack, – so you shut up." (Golding 1954:33); "Conch! Conch! – shouted Jack. – We don't need the conch any more. We know who ought to say things" (Golding 1954:89). Throughout the novel, while the cohabitation gets worse and worse and the great part of the children start turning into savages, the only anchor that keeps Ralph's faith and hope alive is blowing the conch and calling the assembly. In fact, all the boys who remain loyal to Ralph give importance to the conch: "The group of boys looked at the white shell with affectionate respect" (Golding 1954:126). However, as savagery starts taking over the boys, the power of the shell starts fading away, until in the end "The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist" (Golding 1954:163).

Yet, According to Eric Wilson, the novel can be read as a satire of Hobbes's theory of the State of Nature: indeed, he argues that the course of the novel does not reflect the end of civilization; on the contrary, the children recreate an arc of cultural formation. Separated from their homeland, these characters are forced to invent a new model of society which is appropriated for the space they occupy (2014:148).

## **4.2 Appropriation**

### ***4.2.1 Exploration***

The first decision that Ralph takes, as a leader, is to go on an exploration with two other boys, Jack and Simon, in order to figure out if the place where they are is



effectively an island. From this moment, the boys start behaving as if the island was becoming their property; first of all, according to Ralph, they should map the territory: "We ought to draw a map, – said Ralph, – only we haven't any paper." (Golding 1954:19). Drawing a map of a place is a way not to get lost, but also a way to control the space, exactly as the British empire has done with the New World. At a certain point during the expedition toward the top of the mountain, the boys start playing with a big rock, until it falls down:

The great rock loitered, poised on one toe, decided not to return, moved through the air, fell, struck, turned over, leapt droning through the air and smashed a deep hole in the canopy of the forest. Echoes and birds flew, white and pink dust floated, the forest further down shook as with the passage of an enraged monster: and then the island was still (Golding 1954:20).

This passage describes the first way in which the boys deliberately interfere in the physical structure of the environment. Indeed, after they have moved the rock, it befalls the trees, creating a hole in the forest. The effect of the impact is similar to that of an earthquake and the rock is compared to a monster that makes the forest shake. When they finally reach the top of the mountain, the boys ascertain that the place where they have ended is actually an island:

They had guessed before that this was an island: clambering among the pink rocks, with the sea on either side, and the crystal heights of air, they had known by some instinct that the sea lay on every side. But there seemed something more fitting in leaving the last word till they stood on the top, and could see a circular horizon of water. Ralph turned to the others. "This belongs to us" (Golding 1954:21).

When they are on the top and they can clearly see the island perimeter, Ralph is the first one to express the concept of property. The passage hints to the fact that, had

the place not been an island, Ralph would have not pronounced the words. Indeed, had they not seen the “circular horizon of water”, they would have known that, somewhere, there would have been other individuals with a claim to that place. However, they are on a desert island, and, from where they stand, they can see every inch: this awareness, combined with a sense of power given by their position, makes Ralph decree that the island belongs to them. The idea of property is reinforced immediately after: “Eyes shining, mouths open, triumphant, they savored the right of domination” (Golding 1954:22).

Scientific humanism, which is faith in the progressive and liberating power of science and man's ability to rationally posit values, has stripped man naked of the religious context which gave his life meaning. Confidence in mankind's ability to conquer nature and prejudice gave modern man the sensation that hitherto undreamed of possibilities were now opened to him (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:83).

According to the boys system of education, it is taken for granted that if they are in an island that is owned by nobody else, then it automatically becomes theirs. Here the children express a state of mind which is typical of adulthood: they “savor the right of domain”, that is to say not only they feel entitled to exert a domain over the island, but also they are extremely pleased with the feeling. From the moment they verify the place is an island, they proclaim themselves the masters of the island, feeling delightfully satisfied by the idea of power.

#### **4.2.2 Fire**

Chapter two is called “Fire on the mountain”: indeed, Ralph suggests to make a fire on the top of the mountain (Golding 1954:30), so that a possible ship passing by would assume there is someone cast away on the island. To light the fire, Ralph uses

Piggy's spectacles, in order for the sunlight to be reflected in the pieces of wood the boys had gathered. At first the attempt is not apparently successful, because the fire does not produce any smoke to be seen at a distance. However, when the boys decide to let the fire burn out and try again later on, the fire starts spreading:

Smoke was rising here and there among the creepers that festooned the dead or dying trees. As they watched, a flash of fire appeared at the root of one wisp, and then the smoke thickened. Small flames stirred at the trunk of a tree and crawled away through leaves and brushwood, dividing and increasing. One patch touched a tree trunk and scrambled up like a bright squirrel. The smoke increased, sifted, rolled outwards. The squirrel leapt on the wings of the wind and clung to another standing tree, eating downwards. Beneath the dark canopy of leaves and smoke the fire laid hold on the forest and began to gnaw. Acres of black and yellow smoke rolled steadily toward the sea (Golding 1954:35).

The description of the damage caused by the fire is detailed and intense: at first the boys notice the smoke rising, then they lower their gaze, focusing on the trees from which the smoke ascends. They watch the fire growing, the flames beginning to devour leaves and brushes. The fire is compared to a squirrel which climbs a tree very fast and immediately after jumps to another tree. Finally the quantity of smoke becomes “acres” quickly reaching the sea, while the forest is eaten by flames. At this point, the boys realize they have literally set fire to the forest:

At the sight of the flames and the irresistible course of the fire, the boys broke into shrill, excited cheering. The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as a jaguar creeps on its belly toward a line of birch-like saplings that fledged an outcrop of the pink rock. They flapped at the first of the trees, and the branches grew a brief foliage of fire. The heart of flame leapt nimbly across the gap between the trees and then went swinging and flaring along the whole row of them. Beneath the capering boys a quarter of a mile square of forest

was savage with smoke and flame. The noises of the fire merged into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain (Golding 1954:35-36).

The advancement of the fire is compared to a jaguar that creeps: the fire is both unstoppable and fatal. The passage underlines how the boys feel excited; as a matter of fact, they were the ones to create the fire. They are not scared, nor are they caught by uneasiness: indeed, they feel powerful for what they have done. The passage is crucial since it clearly shows that not only the boys own the island, but also they can manipulate it. The rock being pushed down was an anticipation to this: it was the beginning of a process of awareness that now is completely fulfilled. Indeed, if the children wanted to make a fire in order to be rescued, with no intention of damaging the island; yet when the smoke is widely visible, they are excited instead of relieved. Furthermore, these lines implicitly suggest what will become clearer and clearer throughout the novel: there is no evil force within the island itself. Conversely, there seems to be an amount of thirst for power, combined with the need of exerting control over the natural world, rooted in white Western male human beings, even if they are children. In particular, the attitude of some of the boys towards the natural world becomes cruel and merciless when they face hunting.

#### **4.2.3 Pigs**

Since the beginning of the novel, Jack displays an impulsive and violent attitude, together with the constant need for hunting. While Ralph is less interested in meat and more focused on the importance of fire in order for them to be rescued, Jack becomes more and more obsessed with the hunting and killing of pigs. During the first exploration, immediately after they have ascertained to be on an island, Jack, Ralph and Simon come across a little pig:

They found a piglet caught in a curtain of creepers, throwing itself at the elastic traces in all the madness of extreme terror. Its voice was thin, needle-sharp and insistent. The three boys rushed forward and Jack drew his knife again with a flourish. He raised his arm in the air. There came a pause, a hiatus, the pig continued to scream and the creepers to jerk, and the blade continued to flash at the end of a bony arm. [...] He snatched his knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy (Golding 1954:23).

This description is extremely meaningful: first of all, the piglet, not even a grown up pig, is pictured as totally defenceless and scared. It is trapped, therefore it cannot move, and even its “voice” is weak, so that it cannot sound properly. Thus, this pig is portrayed as the most innocent and less harmful creature there could have ever been. Instead of feeling pity towards the animal, Jack instinctively takes his knife, as if the desire of killing the pig was a natural part of himself. There is a moment of suspense when Jack seems to be going to kill the animal, but then he hits a tree instead of the piglet. The last lines are significant because they anticipate that the next pig will not be spared. Jack's aim is not simply to provide himself and the other boys with meat: he is a hunter who needs to kill in order to feel satisfaction. The next passage shows Jack in the middle of hunting process:

He swung back his right arm and hurled the spear with all his strength. From the pig-run came the quick, hard patter of hoofs, a castanet sound, seductive, maddening—the promise of meat. He rushed out of the undergrowth and snatched up his spear. The pattering of pig's trotters died away in the distance (Golding 1954:40).

When Jack hears the pigs approaching, he is mesmerized. Indeed, throughout the novel, hunting comes more and more to represent the purpose of his life, so much

so that he seems to progressively forget the willing of being rescued:

Jack had to think for a moment before he could remember what rescue was. "Rescue? Yes, of course! All the same, I'd like to catch a pig first—" He snatched up his spear and dashed it into the ground. The opaque, mad look came into his eyes again (Golding 1954:44).

It is as if the activity of hunting completely absorbed his identity, becoming an obsession. He cannot stay away from it, the expression "mad look" suggests that this instinct is drawing him towards a dangerous path. On the contrary, Ralph tries to stay focused on smoke as their only hope to be rescued: "I was talking about smoke! Don't you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!" (Golding 1954:45).

As J. D. O'Hara underlines, the children are rearranged by Golding into two opposite micro societies: one led by Ralph, the other by Jack. The first group leads a peaceful almost vegetarian life, their unique aim is that of keeping a fire on because they want to go back home. The other group, which becomes larger and larger, as many among Ralph's boys end up joining Jack, establishes a life based on hunting, not interested in being rescued (1966:412). Furthermore, O'Hara suggests that, since the novel focuses a lot on eating and killing, many readers may assume that Golding "thinks of man as a combination of angel and animal and sees in his animal nature the source of corruption" (1966:416). However, he argues that the character of Piggy contradicts this interpretation: indeed, although he physically resembles pigs, he is not animalistic at all.

As a matter of fact, in our Western culture, to be compared to an animal is usually considered an insult or a reproach, since animals are considered inferior to human beings. When we teach children to be polite and well mannered, we keep reminding them that they are not animals, therefore they should not scream, run, or eat in a wild savage way. When an individual, especially male, behaves violently and

willingly hurts someone, we call him a beast. When an individual is considered stupid he or she is compared to a donkey or a hen, likewise an individual who eats too much is called a pig. A prostitute is called a bitch, and a woman who is thought to change partners frequently is compared to a cow, while a woman who seduces men in a subtle manipulative way is called in Italian “dead cat”. Moreover, in general, when someone is not very good at doing something, he or she is compared to a dog; for instance, an actor who is not deemed a good one is said to “act like a dog”. What is taken for granted in all this system of parallelisms is that human beings are superior to other animals, as if our ability of reasoning automatically implied that we are above them. The further implication is that we have the right to do with animals whatever we like, be it breed them only for them to be the main source of our nutrition, or worse, our fun, or rather treat them like humans, denying the nature of their own existence.

According to O'Hara, in *Lord of the Flies*, we are inevitably drawn to “revise our conventional attitude toward pigs” (1966:416): in fact, Piggy is intelligent, polite and rational. He reflects pigs' harmlessness and innocence, standing against the brutality and cruelty of Jack and his hunters. Therefore, the savagery is not transferred from the island and its animals to the children, on the contrary it already lies inside human beings, being kept under control in a context of Western lifestyle. When deprived of this context, the children start behaving for what they really are, externalizing their true inner instincts without any cultural filters:

The chant was audible but at that distance still wordless. Behind Jack walked the twins, carrying a great stake on their shoulders. The gutted carcass of a pig swung from the stake, swinging heavily as the twins toiled over the uneven ground. The pig's head hung down with gaping neck and seemed to search for something on the ground. At last the words of the chant floated up to them, across the bowl of blackened wood and ashes. “Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood.” (Golding 1954:57-58).

The description of the pig's dead body underlines the cruelty and lack of sympathy typical of hunt. The chant symbolizes the boy's excitement and blood thirst, suggesting that, for Jack's group, hunting has gone far beyond the simple need to provide themselves with meat. The boys, especially Jack, go hunting first of all because they enjoy it, as this passage shows: "His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink" (Golding 1954:59).

According to Afaf Ahmed Hasan Al-Saidi, the excitement displayed by Jack does not correspond to the proud attitude of the one who was able to help his group providing food. Conversely, he feels fulfilled because he has won another creature (2012:130). Therefore, Jack not only enjoys killing animals, he also feels satisfied with it: he can exert control over a living being, thus he feels powerful. Moreover, putting an end to a life is something that gives him pleasure; so much so that, to him, killing the pig feels thirst-quenching. The activity of hunting becomes thereby a sort of nourishment, more than meat itself: Jack needs it as much as he needs food and water. Although eating meat gives pleasure to the stomach, more than eating fruit, it is while performing the hunting ritual that Jack and the other boys really feel fulfilled. What moves Jack is not the idea of tasty cooked meat, but rather that of a defenceless, agonizing creature with a spear penetrating its body.

Discussing British colonization in North America, in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin deal with the topic of hunting. They argue that, although colonists took advantage on Indians' alleged nomadism culture to occupy lands, still there were attempts at compromise by both colonists and native Americans (2010:9). As a matter of fact, Huggan and Tiffin suggest that both British settlers and the native population used to hunt wild animals, element which might have represented common ground (2010:10). Indeed, as Huggan and Tiffin explain, both cultures used to hunt down animals in order to kill them, and both used to practice rituals along with the activity. Moreover, both



displayed a sort of excitement during the hunt, the satisfaction of killing being a universal male characteristic (2010:10). However, they argue, what profoundly differentiated the attitude of Indians from that of the colonists was a typical understanding of the relations between human beings and their preys. In fact, for native Americans, hunting was necessary in order to survive, not a pastime; thus, these populations had a profound respect for their preys, which they did not consider inferior to human beings. Although Indians' way of leaving was based on hunting, their conception of relationship between themselves and animals was not a hierarchical one (2010:10). On the other hand, for British culture, not only hunting was a hobby, it was also based on domination, since Western male human beings were considered superior to other living beings.

In *Lord of the Flies* hunting is introduced as a necessity, since a group of children is cast on a desert island and food is fundamental to survive. However, since the beginning, Golding puts emphasis on the importance of fire as a means to be rescued, rather than meat as nourishment. Since fruit causes stomachache and intestinal problems, meat would represent a legitimate desire, and consequential hunting would be an understandable solution out of necessity. However, Jack embodies the Western male individual who performs hunting first of all as a pastime: thus, paradoxically, even in a situation where killing animals would be a necessary way of living, it becomes a cruel act of slaughter which is an end in itself. Jack kills pigs because he feels the urge to exert power and control over other living beings and, throughout the novel, hunting becomes an instrument to establish his leadership. Ralph, by contrast, is not interested in hunting, neither is he willing to establish control over the island and its creatures. He wants to go home and Piggy, the voice of reason, keeps reminding him the importance of smoke. Both Ralph and Piggy gradually realize that, if there is a threat looming on them, it lies within humanity.

## 4.3 The Beast

### 4.3.1 *From Land to Sea*

The threat of a mysterious beast appears when a little boy claims he saw something similar to a snake crawling around: “He says he saw the beastie, the snake-thing, and will it come back tonight? – But there isn’t a beastie! – He says in the morning it turned into them things like ropes in the trees and hung in the branches. He says will it come back tonight? – But there isn’t a beastie!” (Golding 1954:28). The first image the children associate to the best is, thus, a crawling animal: snakes are creepy and often deadly, they move quietly, almost imperceptibly. Furthermore, in our Western culture, the snake is associated to sin: in our imaginary, it was the creature which tempted Eve to steal the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

However, John F. Fitzgerald and John R. Kayser discuss the novel in relation to the Egyptian Osiris myth which, they argue, had a deep influence in the symbolism of *Lord of the Flies*. Indeed, although the snake-thing reminds us of the snake that tempted Eve, in the Osiris myth the demon Set-Typhon is associated to snakes (2002:79).

According to Plutarch, while reigning as king on earth, the god Osiris gave the Egyptians civilisation by introducing laws, worship of the gods, marriage and agriculture. Before Osiris gave them agriculture the Egyptians had been savages and cannibals. Osiris's brother, the daemon Set-Typhon, filled with envy and pride, sought to usurp his throne. Frustrated in his attempt to take his brother's place, Typhon tricked Osiris and drowned him. Isis, the wife of Osiris, searched for the body, regained it and concealed it in the woods. Typhon, while hunting a pig during a full moon, discovered and mutilated it. A war, punctuated with “terrible deeds” and “confusion”, ensued until Horus, son of Osiris, appears to have defeated Typhon (2002:80).

According to Fitzgerald and Kayser, Plutarch illustrates that the myth represents the natural phenomena: Osiris is the Nile, Isis is the earth, and Typhon is the sea. However, they underline that, according to Plutarch, nature contains in itself both the origin of evil and good. indeed, Osiris represents the generosity and fruitfulness of nature, while Typhon symbolizes its destructive power (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:80).

Simon expresses the idea of evilness associated to the beast and, more in general, to the island: “They talk and scream. The littluns. Even some of the others. As if— As if it wasn’t a good island. – Astonished at the interruption, they looked up at Simon’s serious face. – As if, – said Simon, – the beastie, the beastie or the snake-thing, was real. Remember?” (Golding 1954:43). The passage shows how the idea of danger and uneasiness is shifted from a single creature belonging to the island to the entire island itself. While, at the beginning, to the children's eyes the island was a heaven, now the phantom threat of a dreadful unspecified animal is sufficient to turn the island from heaven to hell. The outer space reflects the characters' state of mind, therefore the island is humanized and becomes evil the moment the boys cease to feel safe and start being afraid. We may say that, at this point, the whole island becomes the beast, namely a terrifying, uncanny and unsafe place. Until the moment someone suggests that the beast is a sea creature, turning the perspective:

“He says the beast comes out of the sea.” The last laugh died away. Ralph turned involuntarily, a black, humped figure against the lagoon. The assembly looked with him, considered the vast stretches of water, the high sea beyond, unknown indigo of infinite possibility, heard silently the sough and whisper from the reef. Maurice spoke, so loudly that they jumped. “Daddy said they haven’t found all the animals in the sea yet” (Golding 1954:76).

Here evil is shifted again, this time from the island to what surrounds it: the sea is vast, from the children's point of view it looks almost infinite, and above all, it keeps

them as prisoners. Indeed, it is the sea that prevents them to move from the island, capturing them in a small piece of land in the middle of nowhere. While Fitzgerald and Kayser argue that Set-Typhon is associated with the sea (2002:79), according to Sinclair, the ocean becomes the beast that isolates the children and pushes them to embrace a savage life (1982:174). Thus, the sea described by Ralph at the beginning of the novel, the one that conveyed peace and tranquillity, leaves room to another sea which, by contrast, inspires uneasiness and fear.

Furthermore, the last sentence suggests that something is changing about the boys' system of certainties and beliefs, too. In fact, while at the beginning the British kingdom was given an absolute geographical knowledge, so that the children were sure they would be rescued, now that confidence starts to waver. When Maurice claims that there are probably an amount of sea creatures that have not been discovered yet, he is questioning the absoluteness of Western scientific knowledge. As Anderson underlines, the lines "As Piggy says, life's scientific, but we don't know, do we? Not certainly, I mean—" (Golding 1954:76) suggest that the children start losing confidence about what they had learned at school (1967:63).

#### ***4.3.2 The Beast Takes Shape***

The beast finally takes shape when the dead body of a pilot with a parachute falls from the sky and remains trapped on the top of the mountain: the wind makes the body move, thus, when the twins see it, they are persuaded it is alive:

"We've seen the beast with our own eyes. No—we weren't asleep—" Sam took up the story. By custom now one conch did for both twins, for their substantial unity was recognized. "It was furry. There was something moving behind its head— wings. The beast moved too—" "That was awful. It kind of sat up—" "The fire was bright—" "We'd just made it up—" "—more sticks on—" "There were eyes—" "Teeth—" "Claws—" "We ran as fast as we could—" "Bashed into

things—” “The beast followed us—” “I saw it slinking behind the trees—”  
“Nearly touched me—” (Golding 1954:87-88).

The twins are so shocked and scared into believing the beast is real, that their fantasy starts building up images and they are able to describe details about the monster they have not even seen. Now the boys are even more persuaded the beast is real and they assume it lives on the top of the mountain. However, shortly after the twins' account, Simon's thoughts are led to a sort of epiphany:

Simon, walking in front of Ralph, felt a flicker of incredulity—a beast with claws that scratched, that sat on a mountain-top, that left no tracks and yet was not fast enough to catch Samneric. However Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick (Golding 1954:91).

Fitzgerald and Kayser argue that the Egyptian myth of Osiris does not only refer to the natural world, but also to the human soul (2002:80). Indeed, Osiris represents both human reason and creativity, while Typhon symbolizes violence and pride (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:80). As Fitzgerald and Kayser underline, the lines “ the platform there was more enchantment. Some act of God—a typhoon perhaps, or the storm that had accompanied his own arrival” (Golding 1954:6) suggest a parallelism between a divine intervention and the children's arrival (Fitzgerald, Kayser 2002:79). Therefore, like nature, human being contains both Osiris and Typhon: since Typhon's war against his brother was the result of his desire to rule, the Typhonic manifestation for human being is pride (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:81).

With Simon, the identity of the beast is finally detached from the natural world and associated to the human. At first he simply shows perplexities related to the truthfulness of what the twins have told: rationally, a beast that hunts down two boys without leaving tracks and without being able to catch them, sounds highly improbable. However, he then makes a further passage: he does not simply decide

that the beast does not exist and it was created out of suggestion; on the contrary, he implies that the beast truly exists, even though it does not belong to the environment. Fitzgerald and Kayser argue that Simon “represents the antidote for a rationalism that cannot see” (2002:84): indeed, Piggy's rationalism and Simon's ability to see beyond appearance together constitute the Osiris element in *Lord of the Flies* (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:82). Simon's intuition is confirmed by the description of hunting that follows:

The drove of pigs started up; and at a range of only ten yards the wooden spears with fire-hardened points flew toward the chosen pig. One piglet, with a demented shriek, rushed into the sea trailing Roger's spear behind it. The sow gave a gasping squeal and staggered up, with two spears sticking in her fat flank. The boys shouted and rushed forward, the piglets scattered and the sow burst the advancing line and went crashing away through the forest. [...] They surrounded the covert but the sow got away with the sting of another spear in her flank. The trailing butts hindered her and the sharp, cross-cut points were a torment. She blundered into a tree, forcing a spear still deeper; and after that any of the hunters could follow her easily by the drops of vivid blood (Golding 1954:119-120).

The cruelty of this attack is first of all supported by the fact that the victim is a sow surrounded by her piglets. Normally, motherhood provides a connection between animals and human beings, since maternal instinct is a universal force that belongs to every species. Usually, when we see a female animal taking care of her puppies, we empathise with her condition because we know what the natural bond between a mother and her children is and we feel it. However, in this situation, hunters do not feel empathy at all, on the contrary, they are even more excited. We may say that this behaviour is so violent and merciless that it seems inhuman; nevertheless, the point is that this gratuitous violence is totally human.

One among our characteristics as Western individuals, is that when we harm

someone else, being another human being or a creature belonging to a different species, we do not feel guilty as long as we consider the other as inferior to us. Indeed, the moment we recognize that the other is at our level, we find it extremely difficult to hurt him or her, since, in that case, we somehow recognize ourselves in the other. This is the reason why a butcher would kill a great number of pigs, but if he was asked to kill a person he would not be able to do it. It is easy to argue why pigs are inferior to human beings; however, if the same butcher would be asked to kill a dog, he would probably refuse. Dogs are animals as pigs are, still, in our Western society, pigs are inferior to dogs: this is why we keep killing pigs while to kill a dog is considered monstrous. There is a sort of pyramid as far as animals are concerned: cats and dogs stand at the top, breeding stock are below them and insects are at the bottom. This is the reason why we feel horrified when we hear about other cultures eating cats and dogs, we deem it a barbarity. Sadly, the principle of inferiority has been constantly applied to other human beings, too: from African and native American populations which were mistreated and exploited by Europeans, to the Jewish who were exterminated by Nazism and Fascism. The global warming crisis can be associated to this mechanism, too: if we are capable of persuading ourselves that other individuals who belong to our own species are inferior to us, it is not surprising at all that it is almost unimaginable for us to put plants and trees at our level. Jack is obsessed by killing pigs because he needs to establish his superiority; indeed, hunting represents the victory of a subject over another. The description given by Golding is an effective representation of human attempt to subjugate the natural world:

The afternoon wore on, hazy and dreadful with damp heat; the sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and mad, and the hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dropped blood. They could see her now, nearly got up with her, but she spurted with her last strength and held ahead of them again. They were just behind her when she staggered into an open space where bright flowers grew and butterflies danced round each other

and the air was hot and still. Here, struck down by the heat, the sow fell and the hunters hurled themselves at her. This dreadful eruption from an unknown world made her frantic; she squealed and bucked and the air was full of sweat and noise and blood and terror. Roger ran round the heap, prodding with his spear whenever pigflesh appeared. Jack was on top of the sow, stabbing downward with his knife. Roger found a lodgment for his point and began to push till he was leaning with his whole weight. The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands. The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her. The butterflies still danced, preoccupied in the center of the clearing (Golding 1954:120).

The words “this dreadful eruption from an unknown world” underline the opposition between the human and the non human: perceived from the perspective of the sow, the evilness perpetrated by the boys is even more bewildering. The assault is both terrifying and unknown, since the pig is not familiar with human attacks. Furthermore, the expression suggests that what pigs and animals in general do not know is the principle of hurting and killing as a response to a personal desire or fulfilment. As a matter of fact, carnivore species kill other species principally to provide themselves with food. An animal can become aggressive and dangerous when he feel threatened, too, and there are species where male individuals fight and kill one another because one has to win the leadership. However, every time an animal kill another is basically out of an instinctual need, being it food, protection or pack rules. Thus, while in the natural world violence always comes out of necessity, the boys rage against the victim in the grip of a lustful excitement which grows stronger and stronger. The contrast between the bloody tumultuousness of the assault and the peaceful beauty of the environment, framed by flowers blossoming and dances of butterflies, is significant: evil belongs to the human. The final overkill on the victim represents the culmination of an ascending climax of unjustified violence: the boys keep stabbing the sow “whenever pigflesh appears”, until in the



end Jack cuts its throat.

Fitzgerald and Kayser argue that Jack represents the Typhonic element of human nature in *Lord of the Flies* (2002:81). Indeed, he is described as red-haired and ruddy, the same characteristic associated to Typhon according to the tradition. Moreover, Jack often blushes, element which suggests that his pride has been wounded, as well as “he evinces an overweening ambition and a burning desire to be chief” (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:81). This scene is representative of the beast finally being revealed: what comes after is nothing but the inevitable consequence of this revelation.

#### **4.3.3 What is *Lord of the Flies*?**

Wilson analyses *Lord of the Flies* as a representation of Hobbes's *Leviathan*: he argues that, although Hobbes excluded Religion from the political discourse, the materialistic values presented in *Leviathan* can be combined with a model of society based on Religion. Indeed, according to Wilson, the novel “culminates in the establishment of the 'cult' of the Beast” (2014:151-152). Oldsey and Weintraub illustrate how the novel can be read as a religious allegory:

Although Simon, who alone among the boys has gone up to the mountain top and discovered the truth, is sacrificed in a subhuman orgy, those who have seen a religious allegory in the novel find it more in the fall of man from paradise, as the island Eden turns into a fiery hell, and the Satanic Jack into the fallen archangel. But Ralph makes only a tenuous Adam; the sow is a sorry Eve; and Piggy, the sightless sage, has no comfortable place in Christian myth (1963:97).

However, they argue that no one among the children ever pray, neither is a deity ever mentioned. Moreover, they suggest that the island is a hell since the beginning,

thus it cannot represent the garden of Eden (Oldsey – Weintraub 1963:97). However, Wilson refers to Rene Girard's theory, discussing that "Religion is the true foundation of our culture" (2014:152). Quoting *Violence and the Sacred*, Wilson explains that, in absence of a juridical system, the ritual sacrifice becomes an instrument to restore order from chaos. Thus, primitive religion establishes a mechanism of violence as retribution in order to prevent other violence. Which means that the collective violence is transferred towards a scapegoat who symbolically becomes the source of hatred (Wilson 2014:155). Wilson adds that, consequentially, the scapegoat must be "socially marginal in some way, an 'expendable' victim, human or animal" (2014:155), someone whose death nobody would bother to avenge.

As Al-Saidi argues, the most significant element of the novel is the pig's head on the stick, offered by Jack as a gift for the beast. Although the boys are persuaded that the beast is an evil force belonging to the island, nevertheless it is humanity itself the source of that evilness that causes damage to the island (2012:131).

in front of Simon, the Lord of the Flies hung on his stick and grinned. At last Simon gave up and looked back; saw the white teeth and dim eyes, the blood—and his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition. In Simon's right temple, a pulse began to beat on the brain (Golding 1954:123).

When Simon finds Lord of the Flies in front of him, he is forced to face that wickedness that previously he had only guessed. He wishes he could escape, however once the revelation has hit him, he cannot avoid nor ignore its voice:

"What are you doing out here all alone? Aren't you afraid of me?" Simon shook. "There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast." Simon's mouth labored, brought forth audible words. "Pig's head on a stick." "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed

with the parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" The laughter shivered again. "Come now," said the Lord of the Flies. "Get back to the others and we'll forget the whole thing." (Golding 1954:128).

Robert J. White argues that butterflies are presented as opposed to flies, reflecting the central theme of the novel. Indeed, "Just as 'Lord of the flies' is a transition of *Beelzebub*, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Ba'alzevuv*, the Greek word for butterfly is *psyche*, the same word used to designate the soul of man, his center and true moral nature" (1964:167). According to White, when civilisation is won and a wild instinct bursts out, the rational part of human nature can do nothing but helplessly witness and accept the victory of the "dark side" (1964:167). Likewise, butterflies appear several times fluttering and dancing, especially associated to the character of Simon, who is a "spiritual person who loves to retire and be alone with his soul" (White 1964:167). Thus, butterflies are connected to Simon's loneliness, filling the environment without being affected by what happens next to them. According to White, the butterflies indifference reflects human soul alienation to the savagery that it nonetheless contains (1964:168).

Anderson argues that *Lord of the Flies* deals with a "disenchantment with the myth of progress" (1967:64): barbarity takes over and civility is progressively forgotten. As O'Hara underlines, *The Lord of the Flies* is not an animal; rather, it represents "the emblem of man's sadistic cruelty to natural things" (1966:416). He adds that evil belongs to the human and specifically to the mind (1966:417). Violence generates violence, the slaughtering of the pig anticipates first the killing of Simon and than that of Piggy, the two characters who embody respectively intuition and reason. According to Fitzgerald and Kayser, Piggy's rational knowledge combined with Simon's ability to discern beyond appearance, would have defeated Jack's barbarism (2002:85).

The ascendancy of scientific humanism, its inability to see or posit eternal

verities, leaves modern man free falling in the abyss of nihilism. We confront, through our excavation of Golding's myth, the value problem. Until Simon and Piggy together comprise an Osiris, Western civilisation cannot diagnose, let alone cure, its essential illness (Fitzgerald – Kayser 2002:85).

From an ecocritical perspective, our essential illness corresponds to the damage we are causing to our planet and, as a consequence, to our species. If, as Fitzgerald and Kayser argue, pride has threatened humanity since our original sin, we were moved by pride when we decided we had the right to rule the world through colonialism first and globalization next.

Thus, in the end, Ralph is left completely alone, hunted by Jack and his tribe. The rhythm of the narration increases as the climatic chase grows more and more pitiless, until it culminates in a fire. Flames devour the island destroying what the previous fire had spared, the narration closing in a circle that brings us back to the beginning: “The fire reached the coconut palms by the beach and swallowed them noisily. A flame, seemingly detached, swung like an acrobat and licked up the palm heads on the platform. The sky was black” (Golding 1954:181). Ironically, the fire that destroys the island also saves Ralph and the other boys, since it catches the attention of a warship passing by. However, even though he is physically rescued, Ralph is aware that what has been broken by the beast cannot be fixed: “The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island [...] His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island” (Golding 1954:182).

#### ***4.3.4 The Hunter's Authority***

“One could say that 'politics' is that process by which the threat of violence is transformed and organized into coercion. For Schmitt, the violence that constitutes the political can only be managed by a sovereign authority, in whom the violence is

'vested' and through whom legal jurisdiction is established" (Charnes 2010:69). *Lord of the Flies* differs from *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe* because, while Prospero and Crusoe bring their civilization to the island to domesticate it, Golding's children struggle to keep the memory of that civilisation, until it is completely lost by Jack and his hunters. Indeed, as Wilson argues (2014), they start to build another society which is different from the one they come from, even though the anthropocentric attitude towards the natural world remains the same. We have seen how Jack's ritual sacrifice of the pig, that anticipates the murders of Simon and Piggy, represents a primitive way to direct and organize violence in absence of a system of legislation. Could then Jack be considered a sovereign authority? He never calls himself king, neither he refers to the island as his kingdom. However, by the time he decides to form his own leadership separated from Ralph's group, all the children who join him answer to him and obey him. Moreover, Ralph's children slowly abandon him one by one, since those who do not accept to join Jack die: thus, Jack establishes a strong authoritative power on the island. At the beginning Ralph is the one who detains more power, then slowly the situation is reversed.

If we consider Charnes's argument about the distinction between the power of the place versus the authority of the individual, we may understand why Jack's authority in the end is effectively stronger than Ralph's. Indeed, Jack's power entirely lies on hunting: what is hunting other than the exploitation of natural resources? Meat is what Jack possesses that Ralph does not. At first Ralph is democratically chosen as the leader: when the children's only desire was to go back home, Ralph appeared as the most rational guide. Notwithstanding this, as time passes and the children are forced to establish a new community distant from their homeland, the desire to go back slowly vanishes and it becomes clear that the leader can be only the one who is able to exploit the island resources. Therefore, hunting becomes the instrument that guarantees authority.

Like Prospero and Crusoe, Jack's authority does not result from legislation, rather it appears as the consequence of a character's ability to take advantage of

what the island can offer. According to Charnes “the concept of 'organism' is almost always applied to one unified entity, or groups of unified entities. But we do not think of *places* as organisms or organizations because we do not have a language for discerning their organs” (2010:70). In *Lord of the Flies*, the trees, the pigs, the butterflies and the flies are all organs belonging to an organism which is invaded and attacked by humans. Thus, the island is the character that suffers when the forest is burnt down and pigs are slaughtered; however it is also the character that causes stomachache, sunburn and dehydration to the children, reminding us that nature is never passive and completely subjugated.

## CONCLUSION

In *The Tempest* the storm introduces the theme of unpredictability connected to the natural world: human and non-human are immediately put one against the other and, in parallel, the ocean is anthropomorphized. This dichotomy suggests a more general attitude embodied by Western individuals towards the natural world: when we are afraid we tend to distance ourselves from natural phenomena, though, more often than not, we are inclined to attribute human characteristics to the non-human. However, soon we learn that the storm was the result of Prospero's manipulation, element which introduces another crucial theme, namely human intervention in the natural world. If we compare Prospero to a scientist, his art can be associated to the power of progress: while new lands were discovered and conquered by Western individuals, new instruments were invented to control and exploit the natural world. Although Prospero owns the island, his power is mediated by Ariel and Caliban, characters who both represent the island itself: indeed, we can analyse them in view of James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis. With his music, Ariel represents the soul of the island, a poetical force that governs all the natural elements; meanwhile, with his ecological knowledge, Caliban is part of the living process, embodying a primitive and profound interaction between the human and the non human. In this environmental context, Prospero shows a quite ambiguous behaviour: on the one hand he does not seem particularly interested in the ecology of the island; on the other, he carries on an activity of deforestation. Thus, *The Tempest* portrays the island as a living organism that interacts with human beings through the mediation of Ariel and Caliban, figures who stand at the edge between human and non-human. However, the interaction between one species and the other cannot be positive, since Ariel and Caliban are both slaves and the environment is exploited by Prospero for the benefit of his aims. Prospero's grip on the island is never completely released, considering that although Ariel is openly set

free, Caliban is not. Prospero's island is a space that undergoes human supremacy, but it is also an environment that rebels against its oppressor. Although in *The Tempest* there is no space for catastrophe, nevertheless a feeling of uneasiness accompanies the reader through the whole play.

Differently, in *Robinson Crusoe* the sea storm is real: Crusoe's island is a natural prison that separates him from the rest of the world. However, Crusoe does as much as he can to bring his own Western culture into the island and recreate a British environment. Indeed, at first he is uneasy at all the wilderness that constitutes the island ecology, thus he feels the urge to organize space and time. In conformity with the enclosure movement imposed by British government, Crusoe starts enclosing the island: at first building fences and walls around his habitations, later creating plantations and farms. Crusoe never really meets the natural world: he rejects wilderness, imposing order and civility to whatever element he encounters. Moreover, he soon gets persuaded that to create a civilized world out of the island wilderness is a sort of mission for which he was chosen by God. Religion is a central theme in *Robinson Crusoe*: distant from his country and completely alone, the protagonist finds comfort in the Bible. Gradually, he convinces himself that his initial thirst for exploration and travel was a sin that prevented him to appreciate what he had and feel satisfied with it. Therefore, his stay on the island is a way to atone for his sinful past, taming the wilderness and creating a micro-society where he is the master. Crusoe embodies the "good" colonist who brings his superior culture to the new world in the name of Christianity: his impositions are only betterments for a culture which is clearly inferior and which should be thankful for being converted. Becoming a British garden, Crusoe's island is subjugated, in the same way as the native inhabitant is converted and becomes a servant. However, what is not British remains inferior and different: the island is not really a British garden and Friday is not a British citizen. Exploited by the ideology of Western superiority, both the natural world and its inhabitants are deprived of their essence, meanwhile never being accepted as completely Western. Thus, Crusoe's island is destined to be a



fruitful plantation: an object in Western hands meant to enrich Western individuals. Although the initial hint of an oceanic environmental force that exceeds human control, resumed from time to time throughout the novel, the island becomes the subject of a British colonizer.

Finally, in *Lord of the Flies* the island apparently embodies the dichotomy heaven-hell typical of the island literature. The initial pleasantness and peacefulness conveyed by the exotic beauty of the landscape soon leaves space to an eerie feeling as a result of a mysterious indefinite threat looming in the air. In parallel, all the children's certainties about British geographical and scientific knowledge start to crumble, all the values and beliefs provided by their system of education are called into question. Some characters remain focused on fire as the only hope to be rescued; specifically, reason and civility are embodied by the character of Piggy who, curiously, is also the one who is associated to animals, primarily because of his physical aspect. The nickname "Piggy" immediately reminds us of pigs, which, in turn, represent the focus of the other group of children. Jack is the leader of the hunters, whose only purpose on the island becomes the killing of pigs, as a way to satisfy a profound instinct for violence. Indeed, hunting is not performed as a necessary activity out of a survival instinct: even though the purpose is that of obtaining meat, Jack and his hunters kill primarily because they like killing. Paradoxically, pigs represent civilisation while the hunters become savages who act barbarously: indeed, killing animals as a pastime instead of a necessity is a Western prerogative. Furthermore, the violence perpetrated by Jack when he slaughters the pig suggests a desire of expressing his supremacy over other creatures. Therefore, the increasing level of barbarity evoked by Jack's behaviour is nothing but the typical Western male attitude of subjugating with violence those who are deemed inferior. Reading *Lord of the Flies*, we soon understand that the real beast lies inside human beings, while the non-human undergoes the children's actions from the beginning to the end. A circle that begins with the bursting of a fire, proceeding with the merciless slaughtering of pigs, and closes with another fire, this time fatal,

inscribes the narration of the island destruction. Golding's island is a setting where a group of children project their fears, a dreadful place that reflects the evil nature of human beings. Without human intervention the island would have been left untouched, pigs would have carried on their harmless existence. There is nothing wrong with the island, the beastliness belongs to the human.

*The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of the Flies* are very different texts, the authors belong to different centuries and each one was influenced by the historical context he was part of. However, the three texts all reveal an anthropocentrism that confines the natural setting on a peripheral position, elevating the human beings to a superior and central one. Although the island is a meaningful literary setting which surely influences the characters' behaviour, the protagonists of these texts are never really interested in the natural world that surrounds them, other than they can use it to fulfil their purposes. Prospero liberates Ariel from the tree because he needs a faithful servant who feels obliged to him, and he learns from Caliban about the island ecology because he needs to know the island in order to possess and control it. Likewise, Crusoe explores the island because he has conceived the project to set up plantations, while he studies the movements of the ocean currents only because he needs to know how to move with his boat from one shore to the other. Ralph is interested in fire and Jack in hunting, concentrating respectively on the purpose of being rescued and on the establishment of one's supremacy. Thus, although the islands are presented as dreadful places that evoke fear, mystery and fascination, the dread has nothing to do with the islands themselves. The sea storms in *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, together with the beast in *Lord of the Flies*, are creepy elements which suggest that these places are dangerous and the characters need to be careful. Notwithstanding this, each text makes us soon realize that the power is held by humans: even though Crusoe and Jack do not possess the explicit power to command the natural elements as Prospero does, they nevertheless soon learn how to turn the island into their kingdoms. Prospero and Crusoe use knowledge and rationality to exploit the island for their purposes, while, on the

contrary, Jack lets himself be guided completely by his instinct, abandoning any scruples to establish his superiority. However, as Linda Charnes argues:

Place, above and beyond its historical value as territorial land and its economic value as property, will never be divested of its own peculiar power to shape the character of its inhabitants [...] such ground more accurately represents what we might call the Estates of the Real, which as I have argued here should be considered agents in their own right, although they exist beyond the parameters of our characterology (2010:77).

Providing an ecocritical analysis of three texts set on an island, this thesis illustrated how anthropocentrism is part of our way of thinking. Shakespeare, Defoe and Golding portrayed dreadful islands where the protagonists are threatened by terrible storms, cannibal shadows and mysterious beasts. Only to reveal that there is nothing dreadful in the island itself, since the real dread lies within us and what we are capable of doing to our planet. We feel the need to exert control over the natural world and the more we have the more we grow unsatisfied. We are poisoning our planet and threatening the existence of our species because our greed led us to consider anything absolutely indispensable. Our selfishness brought us to a non returning point, and we cannot think about it because either we do not care or it is something too frightening for us to consider. *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Lord of the Flies* were written before ecocriticism was even given a definition; however, elements such as the opposition between human beings and natural world and the urge to control and manipulate the environment, suggest the recurrence of a behavioural pattern which has not changed over time. Nowadays, we relate to the environment with the same attitude of Prospero, Crusoe and Golding's children: we exploit it to fulfil our purposes, moved by our whimsical desire rather than by a true necessity. Most importantly, we forget that even though we might gain authority exploiting the planet resources, the most powerful force belongs to the non-human: climate change crisis is the environmental response.

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