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**Bibliographic citation**

Hartmann, BU (2014). Island fictions : castaways and imperialism. University Of Tasmania. Thesis.  
<https://doi.org/10.25959/23240933.v1>

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# **Island Fictions: Castaways and Imperialism**

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Humanities, University of Tasmania

October 2014

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14 October 2014

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## Abstract

This thesis examines nearly three centuries of island novels by focusing on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and its textual legacy. Fictional islands lie at the heart of this analysis. A broad range of novels are discussed: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Johann D. Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812-13), Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1841-42), R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Muriel Spark's *Robinson* (1958), Michel Tournier's *Friday* (1967), J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), and Marianne Wiggins's *John Dollar* (1989), together with a selection of castaway popular romance novels from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Analytical attention to setting gives original insight into these texts, and provides a scholarly lens through which they are brought together in a new light. Whilst the legacy of *Robinson Crusoe* now includes postcolonial novels, I contend that island representations within the later stories remain largely imperial: characters engage with their surroundings through inherited ideological assumptions and attitudes. Ranging from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, these novels are principally focused on human mastery over, and conquest of, the island terrain.

The examination of insular settings is an invaluable means of understanding *Robinson Crusoe* and the island novels that came in its wake. Such analysis also gives insight into the function of islands within fiction in general. This thesis is located in literary studies, and is informed by scholars such as Martin Green, Diana Loxley, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Rod Edmond, Gillian Beer, and Rebecca Weaver-Hightower. It also speaks to the interdisciplinary field of island studies, which has, to date, largely neglected literary islands. An examination of *Robinson Crusoe*—an archetypal island text—and its legacy provides an opportunity to begin addressing this gap in the

scholarship. Literary islands are brought to the forefront, and their relevance to the scholarly discourse on islands is made apparent. This study of island fictions draws on space/place theory, and borrows from the overlapping fields of island studies, ecocriticism, and cultural geography. Overall, the thesis re-evaluates several significant island novels in order to explore the broader role of islands within fiction.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr. Lisa Fletcher and Professor Ralph Crane, for their invaluable commitment and dedication to the supervision of this thesis. I have greatly appreciated their academic passion, insight, intellect, and advice. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the University of Tasmania's English department (and the former School of English, Journalism, and European Languages) as a whole, with particular thanks to Associate Professor Anna Johnston and the postgraduate community. The university's Dr. Pete Hay has also provided valued collegiality. I extend my appreciation to the University of Tasmania for providing myself with a PhD scholarship, and to the University of Tasmania and Cape Breton University for their provision of conference funding.

I was privileged to spend several weeks at the University of Prince Edward Island's Institute of Island Studies in 2012. My sincere appreciation goes to the Institute: in particular, I would like to thank Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, Dr. Irene Novaczek, and Laurie Brinklow for their kind academic hospitality and interest in my work. I am also grateful for the academic conversations I have had with other scholars in the context of international conference and research trips. Acknowledgement is due, too, to the members of the RomanceScholar listserv for their suggestions in the field of popular romance fiction.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful family and friends—especially Silke, Torsten, Klaas, Kristine, Sophie, and Lucy—for their enthusiastic support and encouragement. I have greatly appreciated their company during the journey of this thesis.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction: The Fictional Island</b>	<b>1</b>
Mythmaking and <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	7
A Legacy of Island Stories	11
The Heart of the Matter: Analysing the Island	16
<b>1. Castaway Roots: Placing Robinson Crusoe and the Island</b>	<b>25</b>
Contextualising a Decontextualised Island	27
Island Mastery and the “Tabula Rasa”	30
From Wilderness to Landscape: Taming Crusoe’s “Kingdom”	37
The Problem of Too Many Places	45
Mapping Crusoe’s Island: Cartographic Mastery	54
<b>2. Enacting the Urtext in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Robinsonades</b>	<b>58</b>
Infinite Exploration: The Unbounded Island in <i>The Swiss Family Robinson</i>	62
<i>Masterman Ready</i> : Cannibals and Death on the Island’s “Other” Side	73
<i>The Coral Island</i> and Its “Story-Book” Crusoe Tale	82
Leaving the Island	91
<b>3. <i>Treasure Island</i>: Adventure and Terror on an Undomesticated Island</b>	<b>93</b>
The Presence of Treasure and the Absence of an Island Home	98
Island Expectations: The Power of the Map	103
Constructions of Terror: Accessing the Island beneath the Fear	114

<b>4. Reinscribing Crusoe's "Kingdom" in the Twentieth Century</b>	<b>126</b>
Using, Abusing, and Loving the Island in <i>Friday</i>	129
<i>Foe</i> : The Near Impossibility of Telling a New Island Story	145
An Absence of Cruso(e)	158
<b>5. From Triumph to Terror: Tainted Robinsonade Terrain</b>	<b>161</b>
The "Good Island" Made Evil in <i>Lord of the Flies</i>	164
<i>John Dollar</i> and Its Constructed Island of Inhumanity	174
Imagined Evil in <i>Robinson</i> : Accountability and the Island	184
<b>6. Escaping Reality in Castaway Popular Romance Fiction</b>	<b>196</b>
The Influential Power of the Island	202
Romantic Insular Classrooms: Discovering Intimacy and Love	210
Twenty-First-Century Popular Romance Castaways and Their Islands	223
The Crusoe Fantasy and the Healing Island	230
<b>Conclusion: Negotiating Spatiality</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>240</b>