



UNIVERSITY
OF TASMANIA

CREATIVE WORK

“ILE DU COEUR”

EXEGESIS

**DEFYING DEFOE:
REWRITING THE CASTAWAY HERO**

by

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Synopsis – “Ile du Coeur”

Risking life, boat and the possibility of safe return, Connolly crosses an infamous sand bar and maroons herself on the remote, aptly named Ile du Coeur. With her craft damaged beyond repair and a year before the tides will allow her to leave, she finds an old sealers’ hut spoken of by her grandfather, the Captain. Accompanied by an inescapable sense of futility and meaninglessness, Connolly hopes that isolation might fix everything—her grief at the recent death of the old Captain, a broken heart from lost love and the tyranny of regret at deeds past. However, she discovers that she is far from alone. Scott of the Antarctic teaches her about heroism and love, and there is the brief, unexpected appearance of the Boat Builder. And, most surprising of all, there is the revelatory company of silence.

“Ile du Coeur” is a short work of original fiction about the transformative power of the island. Though the excerpt does not entirely follow the familiar castaway adventure fiction plot of shipwreck, marooning and rescue, it consciously utilises many tropes of island fiction. It is important to note that “Ile du Coeur” is an island interlude from a maritime novel-in-progress. At the heart of the novel is the project of rewriting the maritime adventure hero to ensure continued cultural relevancy in the twenty-first century. Thus, “Ile du Coeur” contains mention of characters and events that precede this excerpt. For example, there are a number of textual references, most notably regarding Venus and the Pirate, which are detailed in earlier text that is not presented here. However, “Ile du Coeur” has been intentionally structured, for the purposes of this project, to successfully function as a stand-alone piece.

Abstract – Defying Defoe: Rewriting the Castaway Hero

This exegesis explores two questions concerning the adventure hero depicted in island fiction and answers them through an analysis of two works—the early eighteenth-century classic, *Robinson Crusoe*, written by Daniel Defoe, and the contemporary, self-authored “Ile du Coeur”.

The first question is: *what is the heroic template set by Defoe?* Analysis of the *Robinson Crusoe* text reveals a male hero representative of a colonising and hegemonic discourse in relation to both masculinity and heroism. At heart, Crusoe’s heroic practice is colonising, and this outmoded construction continues to influence contemporary adventure heroes, limiting and binding readers in relation to performances of gender and heroism. I argue that the ideologies inherent within the hero’s construction are, in some ways, paradoxically antithetical to definitions of heroism itself.

The composition of Defoe’s hero, and its remnant traces in contemporary island fiction, leads to the posing of a second question, an interesting authorial challenge: *what do I want my island hero to be?* Underpinning the writing in “Ile du Coeur” is a belief that the modern western notion of heroic behaviour is outmoded and requires a subtle but conscious metamorphosis in order to remain culturally relevant. In particular, the piece conveys the assertion that diverse and multiple heroisms are required of twenty-first century adventure heroes.

Authorial aims are principally achieved by destabilising both the conventions and tropes of island fiction, and, in particular, the colonising phallocentrism of the island adventure hero. Accordingly, four characteristics traditionally associated with Robinson Crusoe and the hero of the Robinsonade—maleness, heterosexuality, violence and action—are overtly reworked. In addition, a new heroic behaviour, that of ‘conscious silence’, is

written into “Ile du Coeur” in which the hero seeks self-mastery as opposed to mastery over the other. The trope of conscious silence is intentionally employed to destabilise the destructive mythologies usually associated with the hero of the Robinsonade, and to exemplify a new performance possibility for the twenty-first century adventure hero.

CREATIVE WORK

“ILE DU COEUR”

On the highest tide of the year with the wind rising and not a guiding light in sight, Connolly left the coast and sailed the small boat into the south-facing bay of the small island. Ahead, frighteningly apparent despite the fading light, was a roiling, churning mass of white water which cut across the full width of the bay. Connolly wanted nothing more than to turn back. She gripped the tiller tighter and scoured the long line of foaming chaos, trying desperately to pick a least dangerous point towards which to steer.

She had heard the story from her grandfather, the Captain, of the one legendary soul who had successfully navigated the bar in this uninhabited bay and she knew that she was not, nor ever would be, half the seafarer that Creaky Bill had been.

The mainsail shuddered as a gust hit. *Nugget* surged, leaping forward on the now following sea and Connolly raised the centreboard. She picked a random line and prayed. Closer and closer they ran until finally, just before *Nugget* hit the rearing mountain of surf, she had no choice but to remove the centreboard entirely and cast herself and the boat to the mercy of the sea that thundered onto the bar.

She wondered, yet again, at her decision to come here.

Throughout the night as she lay in the dunes, alone, cold and in pain, she regretted her decision, and the next morning she had even further cause for regret as she surveyed *Nugget's* mast. For the vessel's main spar lay in pieces along the beach, having snapped like matchwood when the boat had come off the final thundering wave that had taken them, careering and mad, in towards the beach. For one exhilarating minute, riding high, Connolly had thought they would make it safely to shore and had a fleeting fantasy of earning the Captain's, and indeed Creaky Bill's, admiration. But then the boat had dropped as the wave disappeared. Then the one hard behind, an even bigger monster, rounded them up, full broach, and rolled them over again and again.

Connolly examined the unsalvageable mast segments, the breaks not clean but ugly and savage—the wood fibres twisted, torn and gashed—and felt nothing but remorse for having subjected her craft, her first boat, built by the Captain in the garden shed all those years ago, to such an inglorious insult.

“What overturns a boat?” the Captain had asked her, time and time again, as he sat on a craypot smoking his pipe, her beside him, small legs dangling in the air. She would at first haltingly and then confidently as the years passed, recite the list he had taught.

“Big waves. Volcanoes.” It had taken a lot of explanation by the Captain to convey the notion of undersea eruptions that lifted ships like corks. “Maybe whales. Icebergs.”

Then came the two the Captain seemed most to focus upon.

“And?”

“Neglect.”

“And?”

“Pride.”

Connolly looked at *Nugget* lying in the shallows, foredeck cracked and open hull filled with sand and water. The tiller had broken, as had the rudder, but the vessel was more or less intact and the bulkheads had held; the Captain’s deft and thorough construction proven. The fore-lockers were covered with sand but the rear less so. If Connolly could bail her, then perhaps tomorrow she could prise open the locker hatch to find a proper bailer and some food. Connolly’s guilt at *Nugget*’s state was somewhat assuaged by the thought, accompanied with relief and a pang of yearning, of her other vessel, a yacht, the *Argus*, safe at anchor in the sheltered bay, back on the big island.

And, as if in punishment for the damage inflicted to her craft, there was her hand, swollen and purple and useless, that had been crushed somewhere in the rolling.

It turned out to be two hungry days of painstaking one-handed bailing, the boat filling again and again with wave water, until she could drag it up near the dunes. The day after, and in the days that followed, she made trips between the boat and the small hollow in the dunes where she had slept, and now stacked supplies—tent, dry foods, water containers, first aid kit, axe, hatchet, matches, barometer, fishing supplies, maps and charts. The triple waterproofing of supplies in the bulkheads had held good.

Then, with *Nugget* fully unloaded, Connolly dragged her back into the water and walked her awkwardly in the shallows to the small lagoon whose outlet was at the beach's western end. Further inland, the lagoon became a brackish narrow backwater, covered, where it grew narrower, in foliage. It was here that she finally left her small, brave craft to rest—two seagulls inquisitively perched on the tarpaulin.

It would be, she had calculated before setting out from the big island, nearly a year, give or take a couple of months, until such weather and tides coincided that the once neat little *Nugget*, if she could manage to rig a new, makeshift mast and repair the tiller and rudder and ripped main, would have a chance of making the journey in reverse. But the thought of the bar filled Connolly with terror.

After the sandbar, venturing any real distance from the small tent in the dunes seemed adventure enough and besides, in those first few weeks developing necessary routines predominated—carting water from the stream that fed the lagoon, collecting wood supplies and fishing. All the while, she carefully watched the habits of the shearwaters, rabbits and ducks—sources of fresh food.

Mercifully, her hand, which she had rigged into an untidy but serviceable sling, was slowly being relieved of its swelling and bruising. What steadily remained was a muted ache at the fourth and fifth metacarpals, which she suspected had suffered hairline fractures.

With her good hand, Connolly traced the island's heart-shaped outline on the chart. Ile du Coeur. A heart within a heart—for it fell within the archipelago which took its name from its largest, heart-shaped land mass, Tasmania. But the name mattered little for, in truth, it could be any island — the Outer Hebrides, the Trinitys, the Faroes or the Lesser Antilles; any of the sea bound, small oases in the midst of any of the great oceans that, when all is said and done, are one sea. For Connolly knew, as everyone does, that it's always an island up whose sands we struggle, coughing and dejected, when the metaphoric boat finally sinks.

She knew the island's northern bay was occasionally visited by working boats seeking shelter in extreme weather, but the steep hills that carved it in two would preserve her from company. From the south, no one risked the bar. East and west were either steeply cliffed or inhospitable to landing by virtue of rocks and reefs.

So she had come here, to the island, alone, hoping that silence might fix everything.

From the headland, black rocks in the low tide water looked like the backs of seals, and the beach grasses caught the late afternoon sunlight. The rocks glinted and the grasses shone like golden webs strung across the dunes. Connolly stayed up there—it was her habit now—and watched the sunset blaze the sky before fading and leaving her and the island in darkness.

The onset of the dark was gradual, like fadeout in a theatre, and the vast stage of sea was devoid of players except those she placed on it in her mind. As the light faded it was the Captain that Connolly chose to see. It was the day they buried her father. Everyone had left and they were finally alone in his cottage, drinking scotch. They did not reminisce about him. The Captain looked across from his armchair and raised a topic, a question, she had asked many years before.

“Remember you asked me back then if you could ever be off the map, and I answered rational and true?”

“Yes, you said there were two ways. But you only told me one. It was the only time you never answered one of my questions.”

“Well, I’ll tell you the second now. It seems like a good time, with your father and all...”

He cleared his throat and stared at his glass.

“There are places where the map or chart can’t go.”

Then he described the night in the treacherous strait, when, in the half light, a sea mist rolling down and him alone at the wheel, the boat entered had entered the secret sea. Connolly sees him standing at the wheel of the beautiful *Persephone*, the yawl skipping along in the half light, the rest of the crew below sleeping.

“There are no words for it. We slipped through. I can’t describe to you how. Nor can I tell you of the peace, the beauty.”

He sat in reverie.

“Now there is nothing to hold you fast,” he continued, making it sound as though family were an anchor, now slipped.

And she remembers thinking, *but you’re still here*.

The Captain finished abruptly, “I would want with all my heart for you to sail there.”

She had been sailing ever since. At first, the voyages were fuelled by the stories told to her when she was a child; a whale winked its eye at him in the Labrador Sea, or he was intoxicated by the heady spice-scented markets of Tangier, or bowled over by the beautiful women of Rio De Janeiro and Cadiz and Gotherburg... the port list detailing women seemed endless. But then, when her own personal lists had been ticked off, adventure by adventure, port by port, lover by lover, her travels became a search. Like a fish darting at skipping silver, she was endlessly lured by that indescribable sea. The Captain had said it was rumoured some had a key and could go there at will but he himself, he knew, had chanced upon it simply by luck, or, he had added, perhaps by the grace of his dead wife.

“When I came back to my senses, which, funnily enough, I also knew that I had never really lost,” he paused, “—it’s impossible to describe. I took out the chart and plotted that spot. I sailed through it time and time again, even choosing jobs on the sole basis they would take me mid-strait even in the foulest of weathers, for which others thought me mad. I can tell you it was as if that place never existed! But even though I went there only once, once was enough, for nothing was ever the same again.”

When he died, the Captain left her four items—the small weatherboard waterside cottage in which he lived, his barometer, his compass and the chart of the strait with the “X” marked upon it. The chart had since sailed with Connolly everywhere; and out of every chart she owned, that improbable one seemed to hold out to her some indefinable hope.

Connolly ascended from the headland and returned to her camp. She thought not of the Captain now, but of Robinson Crusoe. She had contemplated him since she had been here—he seemed a curious man. For what sort of human, cast alone, would fail to immediately mention the sterling, unsurpassable company of a dog? It was two months or so into his ordeal if she correctly recalled, two whole *months*, before he thought to mention the dog.

As she trudged along the beach in the dark, alone, what she wouldn’t give to now feel, and thankfully recount, the soft, cheerful head of a hound under her hand. To be fortified by the unquenchable optimistic shine in its eyes and be invited to smile by its toothy, breathy grin; to feel it nestle in beside her legs and be comforted by its contented snores in sleep. For a dog, the notion of the countless walks she took as she explored the island would be ever exciting. For a dog, unlike a human, would never be limited by the island perimeters but would always find something new to see, to smell, something else to discover—this island’s confines its perfect, uncontained world.

Crusoe. God fearing, eminently practical, Providence-believing Crusoe. How different he and she were. Not only would Connolly be unable to be all that which he had been—

carpenter, potter, architect, the ultimate utilitarian—but she had no desire nor belief in becoming the dominion lord he had considered himself. She was well aware each day that she awoke and explored further afield, ever pleased to return to the tent in the dunes, that it was the basalt rocks, the lichens and mosses, the pacific gulls and skuas, the seals and pademelons that belonged. She was simply a temporary, unaccustomed and unadapted intruder. Out of place and seeking solace. Yet dimly aware that the land, in some ineffable, potent way she could not define, had the ability to quieten and perhaps even heal the cacophony of sounds within herself that shrieked their terrible tune of loneliness, pointlessness and despair.

Connolly crouched and gathered a handful of sand which fell through her fingers like liquid. The island had been here long before her and any of her forebears. It remained, deceptively unchanged but quietly ever-changing, as all across the watery globe her species fretted and waged their tumultuous, endless exertions. And no doubt the island would remain, long after the heavings of her own meagre rib cage had exhausted themselves, long after her senseless kin had finally spent themselves, if ever they would. Increasingly, Connolly could no longer conceive of herself as centre of her own universe. She was barely her own uncertain monarch—nothing more.

What would Crusoe make of this predicament? Most likely he would judge her, after careful and kind listening, to be self-indulgent and suggest she embrace activity, productivity and the gifts of Providence. He would instruct her, not entirely unwisely she thought, to cast away her self-pity, cultivate gratitude and go and build something.

Connolly lay her hand flat on the sand, no longer listening to the echoes of Crusoe's ghost but to the land, as though the island could tap a code deep from within the heart of itself. As though the earth might whisper something old and true into her palm, advice more useful, more trustworthy than that uttered by any forebear. For Crusoe and humanity, herself included—all of them—ultimately, were castaways on the islands of themselves,

unintentionally divorced from...something fundamental. But what that was she could not name. Their lack sending them out on voyages of possession and adventures of distraction that resulted, generation after generation, in a mosaic of history that was undeniably beautiful but which had havoc, dispossession and pain at its heart.

Connolly pressed her hand harder but all she felt was coolness, and the night's cold seeping in to her shoulders. She stood up and made for the tent. How unlike she and Crusoe were! Yet islands, words and memory joined them. A line of tangled history running forwards and backwards down the ages, linking her to him, him to her.

A line. In her hands now.

A month had elapsed when, tired of the confines of the tent and with the weather turning, Connolly ventured further south-west, keen to find the old sealers' camp of which the Captain had spoken. Her assumption that her hand had fractured had been correct, for it had become an uncanny tool by which to forecast weather changes; as moisture in the air increased, the injury responded with a blunt ache.

After two days walk Connolly came across the dilapidated tin and stone two-room, abandoned hut, tucked at the head of a long gulch, unmarked on the map. The roof sagged at one end and there were holes in the wall but it was habitable. Miraculously intact was a glass window. The hut lay a couple of hundred metres in from the coast, on the bank of a small freshwater inlet. From the hill behind you could see the sea and feel the force of the wind but down by the inlet the hut was relatively sheltered. Despite that, draughts blew through sizeable gaps in the walls of the single, mainly undamaged, room in which were a table, a bench along one wall, a cast iron kettle in surprisingly good repair and a serviceable fireplace (which, she was to discover, grew cantankerous and smoked when the wind was south-westerly and over twenty knots—which turned out to be most of the time).

Outside were the remnants of a woodpile, and a disarray of timbers, tin and useful beach debris. And, most surprising of all, as foreign as she, were a hedge of jasmine and a stunted and gnarled lemon tree for which she felt immediate kinship.

At great physical expense, spread over eight lugging trips, Connolly moved her camp. Unpacking, she discovered the two talismans, in addition to compass and chart of the Captain's, which she took everywhere and she placed them on the bench above which she had hung the Captain's barometer (checked each day to ascertain the weather). The knife was a plain, brown-handled thing. She had pestered her mother for consecutive birthdays and Christmases and, despite Connolly being of an age that had made other mothers frown and whisper, her mother had relented. On the end that sported a small leather loop for hanging off a belt, Connolly had tied, aged seven, a ball of sturdy string. For it was the combination of these two items (along with pluck) that managed to get many an adventure book hero out of all manner of tricky scrapes. Skin a buffalo when starving? No problem—pocket knife and string. Rescue a captive woman from a tower? No problem—pocket knife and string. Connolly had kept that knife and its companion string, even after she had graduated to carving and sailing knives and to ropes and hawsers, for the pair had become something of a charm for her voyages. As she placed them down, however, she held no hope in their ability to assist her in solving the conundrum that drove this particular escapade.

It took a week of work to make the shelter weatherproof. As she filled the gaps in walls with stones and attempted to patch the roof with the roughest of axe-hewn shingles, she contemplated how to mend a heart or mend a life that, to outside eyes, required no repair.

But death and loss are irreparable.

Like the line of twine she had unravelled near the woodpile on which to hang drying clothes, out rolled the long line of loss—mother, father, dog. Friend after friend to AIDS, cancer, cancer, AIDS. There at the line's end dangled the new, most recent addition, the dead

Captain. Like line pegs hung out at regular interval were the lovers abandoned by choice. And representing the two lovers lost not through choice but out of fear or arrogance or whatever that concoction of emotions might be called when one loves so recklessly, so wildly and desperately—Venus and the Pirate were each represented by an ugly tangle of knot.

Connolly had interrupted a life of seafaring adventure, which, in the end had masked a search, to come back and sit by the Captain's side. To visit the nursing home and observe—at first each day and then (as her visits decreased with his unexpected longevity) twice weekly—the uncertain rise and fall of his chest, the way his hair had thinned and his skull, pink and vulnerable, showed through, and how his large, adult hands seemed shrunken and frail, the skin papery and contused and the fingers of one hand retracting as though his retreat away from life had begun right there in those hands that had, in the course of her childhood, held her so steady.

To have sat by the bed of the Captain was to begin to see, but not fully understand, the ravages of age, and intuit but not fully comprehend that death was inescapable. And there was plenty of time, there at the bedside, in that airless antisepsis, and in the days between, alone in the cottage that was furnished with the smell of him, to wonder how one prepared for that most inescapable of fates?

After splitting up with the Pirate and throwing the Captain's ashes to the waters, Connolly had put away her charts. Roaming seas seemed no longer like an endless adventure but like an endless, meaningless journey. The search had produced nothing. Yet to stay in one spot, to put down roots, to know and be known by a community—was that, too, not like some sort of slow death and an equally meaningless existence? How to make use of the time between now and a final breath?

What winds propel us? She had wondered, as she tossed the Captain's ashes from the *Argus* and watched them enter the air, the distilled silt of his life so easily spreading and

dispersing. Leaving forever. Yet fine motes of it blew gently back to land on her and the deck. She thought back to his body in the bed. Why, when the functioning body and his personality had virtually gone, did life interminably keep on living through him for another six months? What winds had abated in her life that she now no longer desired to wander? And what force had propelled this particular seemingly off-course journey to the island?

“Can you ever be off the map?” she had first asked that question of the Captain when she was twelve.

He had shot her a sideways glance.

“Most people will tell you no. But my answer is yes. In two ways. You haven’t gotten out your next chart, it’s temporary; a momentary experience of lostness that ends in foundness. And that’s different to being on the chart and not knowing where you are. That’s simply poor navigation and, really, is inexcusable.”

He told her, yet again, by way of a cautionary tale, one of the many maritime disaster stories to which he seemed endlessly privy. And each one of them had upon her the effect he intended. Their loyal captains and stoic crews hanging from the ice-strewn yardarms rounding the Horn whilst it blew to billio made her want to go to sea. Yet simultaneously they cautioned her—about monster waves, the dark of the deep and the endless grey suffocation that is a drowning.

“But don’t be confused with knowing where you are on a chart and the territory around you looking different to what the chart tells you. That’s not lost. That’s the adventure of sailing.”

His eyes grew bright and he was on some ocean somewhere.

“It calls for every ounce of seamanship you’ve ever accumulated. And remember,” he spoke as though it would happen to her, and she had thought him foolish because she knew she would never get herself into such a situation—she would know at all times where she was.

“Remember,” he said, and she tuned back in to hear his advice. “Don’t be disheartened and don’t panic. Remember the rules of navigation.”

She noticed, and stored up the fact, that he omitted to tell her the second way.

Connolly hung her hammock in the plain little hut. Out here, away from lights and people with only the wind, stars and inlet frogs to accompany her, it seemed less certain that she would, after settling herself into her bunk, awaken when the morning came. Back on the large island, in the towns and city, or even when sailing, she could be mistakenly certain of living to see another day. But here, nothing was assumed. Gone the guarantees that she had willingly forsaken. Connolly lay aloft and thought back upon a life that despite an outward joy and the collection of adventure (a life that others would undoubtedly describe as both rich and fully lived) seemed, when all was said and done, characterised by repetition, endless labour and futility. She was kind and had done good, of that there was no doubt; her mother and the Captain had trained her well. Yet how much injury she had also inflicted. *Pale, naked trust. The blade of words. Fist blood red. A stained solitary sea.* Deceit, betrayal, cruelty.

And how many lovers’ beds had she crept from in the pre-dawn hours, no waking them, no thanking them for the brief, or often extended, pleasures of body, hearth and home. Port after port... eager, once more, for only the boat, the throwing of a line and the freedom of sail. Looking back over her life, hardest to bear were the untold harms, consciously and unconsciously performed.

The years spent pirating when she had, knowingly, and not without violence, stolen, plundered and pillaged, justifying the fear and mayhem inflicted with a righteous, simplistic indignation. For, along with the rest of the crew, theirs was an activism that convinced them they were modern, maritime Robin Hoods disabling industry to save the oceans and its creatures, redistributing multinational wealth; upholders of a youthful, zealous justice that just might have been self-obsession or dogmatism clothed in Lloyd or Musto oilskins. How

hard they had worked in those turbulent, exhausting years characterised by a commitment and excitement of which she had grown, in the end, disheartened and wearied. The chest of memory opened wide and out spilled words. *Blood boiling boisterous. Cutlass and hardness. Asunder, plunder. Ripped, rowdy, rollicking. Shagging and frigging. Tankard and drunkard. Mayhem, amok.* Her pirate years, which had resulted, if the truth be told, in her becoming hardened and mean. *Death, death, death.* The history and stain of those years tattooed deeper into her than any ink adornment.

But the sea had saved her. It was the sea and the wind, like a pair of concerned parents that first posed the question. On deck in the morning, hung over and listless, after a night in which they had celebrated the disabling of another whaler, a nameless woman, picked up at the pub, asleep in her cabin below, Connolly had thought she was hallucinating. But it was definitely the elements that spoke, posing an incessant rhythmic question.

How to love?

The unanswerable question grew in her like a tumour, expanding as the Captain's body diminished. The waves and wind posed it more potently with time until, finally, it had driven her here to the island and was borne, still, on the wind that found its way through the cracks she could not fill. It was a simple question that she, who had seen most of the world, who had read so many books, who had loved so many times, could not answer. She knew that were he still alive, the old Captain would shake his head. But whether he would shake his head at her asking or in her inability to answer she could not tell.

Connolly explored the south of the island, but slowly. She walked with chart, map and compass in hand, matching contour and coast curve to the painstakingly rendered lines and symbols on the page. Cliff lines on the chart like teeth in a comb; the tussocked hill behind the hut was ovals on the map, a layered open sandwich with a pickle on top. Replication—

actuality. Theory—experience. One simple, the other complex. And her rising sense of distress as she looked at both and knew she lay somewhere in between.

Don't be confused with knowing where you are on a chart but the territory around you looking different to what the chart tells you. That's not lost. That's the adventure of sailing.

"Can the map lie? Is it ever wrong?" she had asked the Captain when he began to teach her the rules of navigation.

"Common wisdom has it that it never is and you should treat it as though it is correct at all times. But be prepared for rare cases..."

She had looked at him incredulously.

"You mean nothing is certain?"

"Certainty is for fools and the fearful."

"But you can't..."

"Can't what?"

"Go through your whole life being uncertain. Can you?"

He looked stern and sad at the same time, the same way he had when she was eight and he crushed her to his chest the moment before he pushed her off the jetty. She had been too scared to jump and the other kids teased mercilessly.

"Sail and find out."

And she had, as soon as she could. Too early, the Captain had said, but her father had encouraged her. She crewed on a boat skippered by an ambitious friend of the family on which all was well until the weather turned bad and the pressures mounted, and the skipper became prone to landing backhanders on whomever happened to be in his way or attracted his ire.

A fractured cheekbone sent her back to home port.

“What did he teach you?” the Captain asked.

“He was really good with currents.”

“And?”

“How to caulk and splice.”

“And?” he asked angrily.

She returned the stare with one of blank insolence, tired of getting it wrong.

“He taught you how not to be like him.”

And they both knew he was also speaking of her father.

Connolly pulled back the tarpaulin that covered *Nugget* and the pair of gulls who had made the boat into a home screeched a proprietary displeasure. By morning’s end she had determined that the centreboard could be glued. The rudder, although it was less than ideal, could be shortened. The foredeck crack could be both glued and covered with tarpaulin and the fore-locker, though it would take some water, could be bailed from time to time. But the mast... The mast seemed hopeless.

Each day she returned and experimented with rigging solutions. And each day, the pair of gulls grew a little more inquisitive, quizzically tilting their heads, their utterances commentarial as she mocked up possibilities.

Jury rig after jury rig, and when all these failed she spent a week playing at stripping saplings and fashioning a suitable shape to fit into the mast step, all the while knowing it was beyond her.

Without enough sail power she would never get across the bar.

The fatter and bustier gull of the pair, a female whom Connolly noticed bossed the male, and who looked to Connolly like she should be named Marjorie, held her head to one side in anticipation and then clicked joyously as the sixth mast attempt stood tall for a

moment before toppling under the influence of a light zephyr. The second gull (Connolly thought of him as Reuben) magnanimously looked the other way. Connolly imagined them wishing her to fail so that *Nugget*, their former palace, might be returned.

“Fuck off.”

The pair, perhaps realising it was, at a delicate moment such as this, the most diplomatic thing to do, duly turned their backs and strutted a polite but small distance away.

What if she was stuck? To leave *Nugget* would be unbearable (*never abandon a vessel unless the preservation of life calls for it*) but she could always go down to the small northern bay and hail a fishing boat and then come back with someone skilled—someone who could fix the boat and sail the bar and do all that she could not.

From the sea, Connolly could almost hear the Captain groan and, as if sensing the future, Marjorie took to the air, flew a low victory lap and settled back on *Nugget's* deck.

Lonely and bored, Connolly packed a bivvy bag, stove and food for three days and set off. To even venture into that northern half from where, on a fine day one could vaguely see the mainland, felt like breaking her own self-imposed exile and whether she was going just to look, or to hail a boat, she didn't rightly know.

The scrub behind the coast became open woodland and moving through it, fast and hard, felt good. Woodland, in turn, became dry sclerophyll forest on whose floor great scarves of bark lay strewn. At times, the forest thickened into dense pockets of scrub and progress was slow. It might well take her the best part of a day to climb the steep range, depending on the scrub's thickness.

When she eventually made it up, the view from the range's summit was all encompassing but, at first, it was the beach below which most held her gaze. The small crescent bay was paradisiacal in the whiteness of its beach sands, in the blueness of its

shallows. Its north-western corner provided the only lee shelter (and scant at that) for miles. But there was no boat in sight today, the weather too fair.

Eventually, Connolly lifted her gaze and sat for a long time contemplating the vast stretch of circular sea upon which cloud shadows tried but failed to imprint themselves. She studied the island, its fluted cliffs, jagged rocks and rugged features—beautiful in their starkness—and marvelled at its tenacity to hold on out here, to endure. To the far north lay the smudge of land that was the larger island. The view today was astoundingly clear, yet a haze of light and heat combined to be suggestive of a mirage. It undermined solidity of the landscape—that far off mainland seemed to float and tremble—and all was rendered disconcertingly insubstantial. And as though, today, the laws of both matter and time were, in some strange way, actually altered or suspended on this high vantage point, the afternoon passed rapidly and Connolly was forced to search below the peak for an overhang or similarly sheltered nook in which to roll out the bivvy bag and cook a meal. She would go down to the bay in the morning and explore it.

In her sleeping bag, Connolly fixed the features of the bay in her mind, contemplating the day somewhere in the near future when she would wave from its beach to a surprised fishing boat crew. She imagined what it would feel like to watch them lower a boat and speed in towards the sand to collect her. She let her imagination run into that future—saw herself on board the fishing boat as it entered the river mouth guarded by its sentinel light. The eastern and western shores of the river, extending from the heart of the city like welcoming arms, outstretched towards her. Their tree-lined ridges (which had provided a lush and beautiful welcome to the sea-weary eyes of mariners over centuries) would tell her she was home. And then the arch of the bridge would come into view like a tiara worn by an eminently gracious old lady. Castray Point, the jutting jaw of the town, would be rounded and she would see the town's sandstone face, its features pale and tidy, a humble, dignified handsomeness. And like

a mouth in laughter and surprise at her coming, the docks would be open and inviting; but whilst the boat waited for the small dockside bridge to lift, the last barrier to their arrival, the journey of her thoughts suddenly braked. *Theory—Actuality. Replication—Experience.* If she entered, she would be *home*.

Imagining what that might be like proved more difficult. After buying beers for the fishing boat crew in the small pub frequented by sailors, opposite the docks, and in which she would know people (the pub on whose wall hung the wheels and anchors of ships long gone, and for each the Captain could recount their life story) she would walk home alone. How would it feel to inhabit the quayside cottage, to purchase items that would make the cottage hers rather than the Captain's? To get up each day and remain in the one spot, a boat perpetually at anchor? To do what townspeople did—attend daily to jobs, make gardens, find hobbies, visit friends and neighbours? What might it be like to not only take, but keep a lover and perhaps, eventually, create some sort of a family? To know and be known. To live as the townspeople did, not on an unpredictable base but to maintain a life that resembled something like a broad-bottomed stable punt on a constant, wide and slow-moving river. No surprises. To do this day after day and not feel as though one had lost one's way.

Would it be possible to enter the docks, her unanswerable questions unanswered, and then remain in that one spot and be happy? For after opening the door to the cottage (and sinking into a soft bed!) she knew she would still wake up filled with the same questions. Would live with the questions in her eyes and heart and have them seen by friends, by neighbours. Would it be possible to endure these thoughts, and do no harm? And if one did harm, as one inevitably did, stay and deal with the consequences? In short, could she stay and learn to love, day in, day out, through thick and thin?

Connolly slept, waking in the night to see Orion's belt and a sliver of moon hanging low, starkly defined against the soft blue-black sky. They rained down upon her a gentle

clarity, their stellar solution soothing but indecipherable.

In the morning the descent to the beach was steep. When she got there the small crescent bay was indeed a gem, its sandy shallows a stark contrast to the stony southern side of the island. Over the course of the day it was a pleasure to simply play—swim, sunbathe, fossick and wander—as though, ridiculously, she was on some form of holiday from her ‘normal’ island life. The extraordinary capacity of humans, and here she is little different from Crusoe, to cultivate routine. (And how land life, in this one respect only, differed little to life on board the boat where there are, too, daily necessities—oil levels to check, bilges to pump, batteries to recharge, sights to take, logs to write.)

At the day’s end Connolly camped on the sand above the high tide line, strangely restored and happy, knowing she would return to her camp tomorrow as she would run out of food.

The next morning, the reverse climb up the range made her heart pound. On that high point once more she paused and breathed in the space the view afforded. All those blue miles. She scanned the sea for vessels, marine life, life of any sort. Feeling that if she looked long and hard enough, the sea might yield her something, but today her patient wait revealed only a small flock of seabirds far below, their flight low to the water, hurrying east with intent, as though in pursuit of something invisible to her eyes. It made her think again of how her grandfather didn’t tell her about the secret sea. Intrigued, Connolly, still young, had attempted to steer her grandfather back to that first conversation.

“Remember our conversation? About being off the map? You said there was a second way.”

“I hoped your memory was less certain than I know it to be,” he replied, smiling but proud.

“Well?”

“Well.” A long pause.

“People think you mad.” He didn’t go on.

And, in the way of adolescents, desiring freedom but intuitively understanding that

safety had been left too far behind, Connolly had not asked any further.

Four months into the long, solo sojourn, having tried and endlessly failed with the mast, and her time punctuated by trips to the north—sometimes just for a change of scenery, sometimes ambivalently looking for a boat—Connolly found she was, however, not entirely alone.

On the ten mile south-western beach, midway along the vast sweep of windswept sand, lay a mask. It sat upright and faced the ocean, as though a diver, perhaps buried neck-deep in the sand below, watched the ocean out of which she, or he, had laboured to come. But when Connolly got closer she saw that all that remained was a rubber seal, still in perfect mask shape—visor, space for eyes, the distinct outline of nose. It could have been either a diving mask or, more likely, a polar mask, as though Scott of the Antarctic, or someone, had finally made it to land, and like herself, had crawled up the beach and had simply sat and looked out at where they had come from, reflecting on their long struggle with the sea. And sitting so, utterly exhausted, had bit by bit, as the sand blew and piled around, simply crumbled away. This stinging sand, these gale-driven rains, the burning sun had worn them, as though the elements were committed, even after we have survived hardship, to beating us down. And so the inevitable elemental onslaught had continued until all that remained on the beach was not the man and his polar layerings; not his balaclava wrapped head or woollen wrapped torso and legs, but only his mask, now the colour of bleached bone.

The plastic was slightly warped and misshapen from the sun but Scott's nose was straight and where the mask sat on the sand one could imagine, below it, a mouth—perhaps still a bit surprised at having arrived or alternately surprised that the original voyage had not gone according to plan. Or did he smile a grim sort of smile at this final form of survival?

Connolly longed to ask him these questions but the mask did not acknowledge her, it simply sat, staring endlessly out to sea.

Scott, sitting alone in the sand. Or rather, what was left of him sitting alone in the sand, staring vacantly out to sea, a good view from his right eye, the left side of the mask a bit shrivelled and misshapen.

The next day, Connolly returned. She gianted over him, him, poor fellow, who was no more than five inches high. It felt rude, to stand so. And to stare. So she sat down beside him and together they looked, not at one another as new acquaintances might, but instead out at the sea that dashed in and shuddered out.

“Heraclites said you cannot step into the same stream twice. I think about this a lot,” she said.

Then, “My mother predicted I would be a sailor. I always used to think she was right but now I’m not so sure. Did they always say you would explore or was that entirely your own doing?”

Later,

“Do you mind if I call you Scott?”

And then, perhaps an hour on,

“I miss Vegemite, I can’t believe I didn’t bring enough. And lying in a soft bed. What do you miss, Scott?”

Followed by,

“I have no real idea what I’m doing here. It seemed like a good idea at the time. But it does seem wiser to be here unknowing than out there unknowing, but pretending. Do you know what I mean?”

Of course, he never ever answered but still Connolly sought him out. On fine days she took a simple picnic, with food enough for two and laid it around his mask so that he could, should he wish, smell the roasted rabbit and see the glint of sun on the water from the spring. She collected driftwood and shells and built for him a small but beautiful temporary garden

that bloomed with the flotsam and jetsam that became her, and then their shared, treasures.

But sometimes, often for weeks, she left him alone. She sensed his, and perhaps now her own, need for deep, searing solitude. And because she had begun to realise that the best of friendships, be they neighbourly or more, were carved equally, in the end, out of space and silence as much as from idle chat and laughter.

“Hard to tell, Scott, whether I’ve run away or not. From life... or to myself.

“Your motives for going south?” Connolly vaguely recalled something about a stretch of missing weeks, a not inconsiderable gap, expunged from his naval record.

“Were they pure or were you escaping? You know, adventure or wife/life/strife? I don’t trust adventure any more. It just seems to lead to pain and difficulty. Even the good ones. For example...” But Connolly resisted recounting life with the Pirate who had never really believed in their love. Even she was beginning to tire of thinking about it.

“If I *have* run away it’s from...”

It was tempting not to tell the truth, even to a mask. But, in truth, even after all this time, did she really know what it was she had attempted to flee? From exactly what would it bring sweet relief to escape?

“History.”

She thought Scott frowned when he heard that term. Perhaps summoning the noun for such an immensely broad sweep of years to which, for a brief moment, he had so notably contributed, that vague, inaccurate signifier for so many individual experiences, was a cop out.

“OK. Specifics then. Um, a tired and sore heart. Grief. Dissatisfaction maybe? Too many lost loves. But, above all, I’m tired of inflicting pain—on myself and everyone else. At least here there is no-one.”

She wondered if it was too indelicate a thing to have said, did she imagine that Scott winced?

“Except you. And, you, you’re good company.”

“Let’s make a pact, shall we? I won’t hurt you if you don’t hurt me. There, that’s settled.”

She wondered, even as she spoke, if she could manage harmless words, for it was words out of everything that seemed to most lead to trouble. Perhaps Scott knew more than he gave away? Had he learnt some fundamental truth that had led him to this, his vast silence? But a completely silent life, forever looking out to sea, was not for her. And neither did she want to get his hopes up that she might forever remain here by his side, providing the company that surely he must, from time to time, crave?

“Basically, Scott, in conclusion, I am having *respite*,” she stressed the short-term nature of the word, “—from myself. Mostly, it’s a relief. There, you have it.”

Truth was gruelling. Connolly got up. “Good day.”

Thinking as she walked along the long beach that it was a trifle unfair that it was she who did all the talking, she who had to manifest all the self-revelation.

She walked out to Scott and sat down beside him.

“OK. And failure. I thought about it a bit more. I am running away from failure.”

She was conscious, as she said it, that failure was something with which, Scott, too, had been intimate. His, tangible and public. She paused, wondering what it felt like to stagger across those last miles of ice, inching towards the prize—the world’s spinning axis—only to discern, through the fog, Amundsen’s flag triumphant. Was the firm arbor of himself knocked asunder? Painfully aware that there was no room for two on the imperial pole, and the heroic adventure not quite *properly* heroic if you weren’t the first? In that moment he must have witnessed the first, though invisible, bloodshed of that shockingly new colony; his own dream, and the dream of national glory, slaughtered. His disappointment, his defeat and shame staining the snow. Did he wish to lie down there and not turn around and battle back?

Connolly ceased dwelling on Scott's humiliation, and continued.

"Not just of relationships. God knows there have been enough of them. But failure of... a life." She wished she had left some possibility to that last sentence, made it a little less of a statement and more of a question.

"Of not having made one. You know, a *proper* one, whatever that is. An incapacity, I think, to really love; to not inflict pain. I swapped safety and the known for the sea, for adventure. I have wandered the globe, there is scarcely an adventure I have not had, but I'm not furnished with the prize of knowledge.

"Are you?"

"I think all those people who remained in the one place and lived a life of insularity, who stayed on the island, I think they know more about how to be happy, about how to care for other people than I do. Know about a good and satisfying life. Funny isn't it? I used to pity them.

"Well, they appear to be happy. Do you think they are? Or are appearances deceptive?"

Connolly contemplated for some time.

"You see, Scott, for all my widely-lived life, I do not know the terrain of my own heart."

"Love. Does any other combination of four simple letters have such complex meaning? Unleashed such turmoil? Eh?"

She was giving him an invitation but the taciturn man maintained his silence and it was hard to tell if it was an impenetrable wisdom he communicated or a great and private wall, behind which lay unspeakable personal suffering.

"I am very unsure, these days, of how to do it."

She went on, "Such a plain sounding word. Everyone bandies it about... like money, like we all know what's going on. I feel like I'm dealing with multiple, foreign currencies.

No money down south, eh? What a relief...”

Wondering even as she said it if Scott, outside in the snow away from the hut, ever got down on his knees for Bowers or Evans or, on some lonely voyage, took it up the arse for release, connection, revenge, love, or one of the myriad, rarely simple reasons humans couple.

“Shall I give you an example?”

And Connolly told Scott about Venus but Scott seemed unmoved, as though he heard such tragedies every day of the week.

That night, she thinks, *Well, the Pirate years should elicit some sort of response, surely?* So, the next day Connolly told him of the disheartening push and pull of the Pirate who had run Connolly’s heart up and down like it was a common pennant on a halyard. The telling turned out to be detailed and nuanced and was, by turns, painful (and accompanied by tears), dramatic (and accompanied by gesticulation), and self-indulgent (and accompanied by self righteousness). It was also poignant and true, the universal tale told by hearts across centuries and as she told it Connolly disappeared into a past that was long gone, and when she finally re-emerged, the story still not ended, the sky was darkening. She said, as she got up to go,

“I wonder sometimes, Scott, if you know what I mean.”

Left alone on the beach in the dark, mired by her words, Scott recalled his own burden of love. How he had carted the weight of the precious stones when just about all else has been jettisoned. Bearing them over the bitter last miles for the extraordinary woman, not his wife, who eagerly anticipated his return. He had chosen to keep the stones when it could have been food he carried in his pockets, for he did not want to disappoint her.

He remembers that night at the ball and the lightness of her in his arms. How she had asked that he take her with him on the expedition. She was a geologist, amongst other things;

so very talented. Her modernness in all things still surprises him! What would it have been like to have had her there with him? Would it have turned out differently? She, who implicitly believed in him; she, who not for a single moment, doubted his capacity to bring them safely home.

“And so I left,” Connolly took up her story again the next morning, scrabbling for a palatable ending that forever eluded her.

“I always leave. Despite the fact that really, she left me because she had never properly turned up in the first place, had she? But leaving this time, I now realise, was a good call.

“It doesn’t help, though, does it? If you’ve loved, if you’ve given something of yourself. It doesn’t really help your heart to know you did the right thing, so to speak. Not that there is a right thing, really. Just choices.”

Scott sorely wanted to tell her that in one thing only is she right. It *is* a choice and one you must make every day. To get up, when all is against you, and inspire those around you. To give them the best of yourself even when there is nothing left to give and, in so doing, make them believe in the best of themselves, too.

“However, that’s not the sort of love I really want to know about. It’s the other one, the harder one. The one I can’t do. You know, the through thick and thin with not just some lover, but everyone and everything. Tricky! The one I think, ultimately, with yourself.” Her voice trailed upwards, a shy invitation.

Scott momentarily wavered but then decided no. He, out of everyone, would remain steadfast and it would be by his actions alone, now, that he would be judged. *Facta non verbis*. Deeds not words. Although no-one truly understood those, either.

So, he said nothing and she was left alone with the enigma. And after she walked away, like she had stones in her own pockets, like, today, this last unburdening to him had

not lightened her but weighed her down, he prayed, as he had never prayed before, not even when he was dying, that she would never ask him to respond to her final thought. For he knew precisely the type of love she is asking about. The inconceivable one. A love that is as improbable as pitching a tent in a force ten gale or freeing an injured ship from its crush of ice. The one as impossible as finding a flower blooming on the frozen wastes.

Scott was right to be fearful of such a question for it began to weigh heavily and disturbingly upon Connolly's mind. He observed as she become increasingly engaged, and then downright burdened, by this Gordian knot of the heart. The question woke her at night and she tossed with it, as though wrestling an intruder. By day, it lay in circles under her eyes and become as persistent and encroaching as a whole-of-body itch.

She returned again and again to him with it, though she never asked him directly (for which he rejoiced) and she soured further at Scott's silences. She tramped up the beach and talked loudly at him and then stomped home. Her inability, or was it her unwillingness?, to answer (and Scott's too for that matter) irked her more and more each day. She began to shout at the wind and throw her fists at the sky until even the skuas took fright and left. The madness, which looked like the madness of a lifetime, grew. Even Marjorie and Reuben left her to stew in her own tart juices.

Everything soured. The ocean, it seemed to her, grew beastly and the sleet stung her eyes. She became discontented and tired of thinking. Tired of being fearful of the bar. Tired of questioning and tired of living alone. Tired of not feeling loving and tired of failing.

Then the bad weather season commenced. When the winds blew part of the hut roof off she took it personally, as though it were a taunt at, a vicious retribution for, this final failure. She cowered and flinched beneath the unwanted opening but did nothing to fix it. Instead, she sat huddled and weeping in a corner of the once safe haven now so terribly exposed.

If it was a tumour in her, it was growing.

And then the weather turned, seriously turned, and she stopped turning up to Scott at all.

Her dishevelled, wild appearance matching the weather, Connolly, taking only a daypack containing two meals, the knife, water, money, and flare, walked to the range with the explicit intent of hailing a boat. She had answered none of her questions, discovered nothing useful, found no peace. And though she had left it a bit long into the slow transit of the low pressure system in which the island, and beyond, was enveloped, she hoped some vessel might still be about to take her off.

Halfway up the range, whilst rounding a rocky outcrop, a noise stopped her. Connolly moved forward quietly, hyper-alert. The noise came from a large crevice between two eight-foot high boulders and as she neared, the noise escalated. In the narrow space was a large kangaroo that squirmed in fear and agitation as she drew closer. Connolly backed off, staring at the large rump and powerful, thick tail, slightly afraid the animal would bolt out backwards. It calmed somewhat as she retreated but still embodied the rigid intensity of the fearful and she quickly left so as not to frighten it further. She continued up but the image of the skittish creature continued to bother her. Somewhere just below the range summit, the dark closing in, she stopped climbing and made her camp in the familiar overhang which had become her favoured resting place up here, uncertain if the question that had stayed with her was foolish. Was the kangaroo in the crevice by choice or by accident? Was it stuck?

In the morning, from the summit, with the wind howling but the rain temporarily ceased, Connolly observed no boat moored in the bay, yet two specks on the southern horizon told her that, of the fleet still out there, some vessels were indeed heading for port or shelter. If this pair were to make for the island's little bay, it would take them the best part of a day and then they would lay up until the weather eased, and there was little sign of it doing that.

Should she use the daylight flare? Her predicament was a distress but hardly the type envisaged by the authorities. Connolly watched as the fog periodically fell and lifted, trying to ascertain the boats' intended course. And as she watched, the disconcerting image of the bewildered, acquiescing roo persisted in her thoughts, as unceasing as the rear and crash of the waves far below.

When she was sure the vessels' course was set for the bay rather than the big island, she repacked the flare, relieved not to have to use it—when word got out amongst the marine community, she would never have lived it down—and calculated she would have time to walk back down and check that the roo had gone. To leave the island with the nagging thought of it being forever stuck, if it was stuck at all, would mar any recollection of her time spent here. If she hurried, there would be plenty of time.

Down by the narrow cavern, Connolly walked in closer. The kangaroo had not backed out. Instead, it again writhed in skittish protest at her presence. Connolly observed the tear and bleed marks along its flanks; heard clearly its violent, erratic breath. She sought a long, thick stick, walked around to the back of the boulders and sought out a route up. It was with considerable difficulty that she climbed and clawed, stick in hand, until she stood on the top of the rock looking down at the near-frantic roo. Battling the condemning wind, she lowered the stick and shooed and lunged at the kangaroo, wincing as it bucked and writhed, gashing deeper its flanks, until, an agonising time later, it had backed its way out and bounded away into the scrub. Relieved, and anxious not to miss the opportunity of a boat, Connolly walked back up the range feeling buffeted and tired, wondering how, why, an animal of that size would choose to enter an opening so narrow? She recalled the fear in its eyes as she wielded the stick, its terror at this new suffering, and her own sick relief as it bounded away. She climbed with certain tentativeness now, wondering how many other dilemmas were dotted, agonising and unseen, around each corner across the island? Whilst glad to have assisted, it

was from precisely such challenges—the vulnerabilities and vicissitudes of a life—that she had wished to escape by coming here. Yet, here they were, right here.

On the summit, thrashed by gusts, Connolly found a barely sheltered cluster of rocks and eyed, with relief, the two craft, still in consort, slowly battling their way across the turbulent sea. The hours passed and the boats, despite being lost between waves for what seemed like forever, got closer. And all the time the wind rose.

The rain turned to a horizontal sleet until she could no longer see and was forced to retreat down to the overhang. She eked out the second meal, wanting to make it last (just in case) and the food was a welcome ally against the bitter cold.

Late into the day the weather eased enough for her to venture out but the view from the top made her shout aloud. The vessels were neither down in the bay nor close to it. They must have changed course right below the south-westerly shore, and were now painfully and inchingly slogging it out to the big island. Most likely they knew from radio forecasts about a small imminent break in the weather before worse to come.

“Fuck! I should have let off the flare. Should have stayed up here instead of going down. Bloody roo. Should have...” But exactly what, she couldn’t identify and, instead, threw off her pack and sat down.

“Shit, shit, shit.”

As if fuelled by her agitation the wind rose around her and the rain set in once more, in distressing earnest. Connolly considered her options, of which the flare was the best. One quick rip of the cap, the request fired skyward, and she could be heading north. She visualised the boats, mandated to respond, toiling back around the treacherous shore, the tired crew, eager for port, concerned as to what they would find. She imagined the plume of thick orange smoke, impossible to ignore, staining the sky—and her reputation.

The rain became a deluge.

Descending with knees aching, cold and still angry, Connolly passed the crevice. The same frantic eyes, now tired. Its rain-stained coat saturated. Had it been back in there this whole time, foodless, freezing? She climbed the boulders, no stick accompanying her, and looked down. The roo clearly had less energy to frighten. Its wounds had worsened. But then, with a sickening sadness, Connolly realised that the lacerations to its paws and along its flanks were perhaps, equally, as a result of having tried to get *in*. For, completely preserved, lying in the dust in the farthest, narrow reaches of the crevice was the small, shrivelled form of a joey. Had the big mother shepherded it in for safety? Or nosed it up the chute in burial? Or... Connolly's mind blanked at the myriad unfathomable reasons that drive instinct and love. The still raw grief for the Captain flooded in but Connolly didn't know if she wept for him, for the kangaroo, or for having missed the chance to leave.

What forces drive togetherness? She put the question to the dark as she walked back to the hut. What force had ensured the Captain had loved her, as much like a mother as any man could, when her own mother had died? What forces, or lack thereof, ensured her father had circled her like a mooring buoy reluctantly returned to after a great voyage, and from which he fled as soon as practicable? What senseless urge sent air fleeing into the Captain's lungs so his derelict chest rose and fell, rose and fell as ceaselessly as the tide? What force had pushed her and Venus apart and thrown her and the Pirate together? And what of her and this island, and even Scott, stuck, it would seem after the day's disaster, together?

Craving the hut's beckoning shelter, the long return walk in the dark felt arduous, and Connolly was further weighed down by the burden of inexplicable unions, least of which was the inseparable mother and joey pair. The further she walked, the gladder she was of the distance between them. She reached the hut but the pair remained. Ghost-like, they huddled together by the fire as, exhausted and hungry, Connolly brewed tea and shovelled down a plate of barely warm beans. Asleep, Connolly dreamed throughout the night that the big roo

stayed exhaustedly awake, retaining its wide-eyed vigilance, prevented from sleep not only by its unerring love but also by the chatter that populated Connolly's dreams. ...*the kangaroo's quiet... love... crossing the turbulent... harms... accept... the captain's... rise and fall...*

The next morning, feeling like she had a massive hangover, Connolly walked out and sat down and after no end of fidgeting and heaping up sand with restless hands, looked out to the mighty sweep of sea and asked,

“So, Scott, what do you know about love? I'm asking you for an answer. Please. I really need something.”

He wished she had not asked it. What is there to say in the face of that mountain of power towering over both of them?

He, of course, did not reply but she thought she sensed a kind of question from him, this time. Something like, what could silence gift you if only you would stop talking?

So she asked again.

Scott had seen the burning question at the beginning, when they had first met. It had come up the beach behind her like some tall bank of wave, daily growing, never ceasing in its inexorable roll forward. And now, here she was, seated beside him on the sand, unknowingly and precariously perched atop its rumbling peak, ignorant of the depths into which, inevitably, she must fall simply by asking. What words could hold her as she dropped, free falling, into that great torrent of potential, that thundering smash of power?

He wished he had hands to pull her into him, like a modern father might, to bury her head into his chest and pray that the beat of a single human heart might be enough for her. To cradle her, and shield her eyes from the onslaught of suffering that the world, relieved and desperate, would throw at one who foolishly pursued such a query. For he had seen by the wave's size, that first day, that she was indeed wondering about that love that is bigger than

just one or two. Courageously but foolishly, she was asking about the singular force of life that moves the whole world—the rhythmic, unstoppable elemental onslaught; birth and destruction in equal measure, ecstasy and violence intertwined—that if she really knew something of, would cause her to love not just one or two but infinite multitudes. The lovely and the unlovely, the destitute and the endowed, the weak and powerful—each miniscule myriad arising—as though they were borne from her very womb. But to see it, to bear it and to survive, whoever did such a thing? What ordinary being knew how?

Would that he had not just hands, but arms, too, and a superhuman strength beyond that ever needed on the ice, to hold her to him, pinned to his chest, rather than pinned, breathless and broken, beneath that churning clout from which only a handful emerged and no-one ever emerged intact. One did not just break down there but necessarily shattered. And if one should miraculously return from that deep it would be bearing the most beautiful but endlessly burdensome of pearls, of prizes. For one could never turn away again.

“Well?” Connolly asked.

Scott could hear a rising volatility in her voice and, behind it, desperation. He is torn. *Facta non verbus*. Yet he was not sure she was foolish enough, or smart or brave enough to see such an undertaking fully through; there is a laziness, an apathy, and an arrogance coupled with resignation in her that made him think, if he maintained his silence, would be enough to slip her off and down into the wave’s backward face where limbs are lost and hearts broken but from which one can still come out alive.

So, instead, considering it wisest, Scott chose to answer about the meeting of hearts, about a great but partial love.

Yet he hesitated before beginning for he had told no one this secret; had kept hidden this deceit, and his foolish pride, or was it love?, that perhaps cost his life and the lives of others. He was also fearful at the prospect of sharing such... well, intimacy. But he wanted,

desperately, to help. So, garnering his courage, and using no words but speaking painfully and haltingly straight from his heart, he told Connolly, in detail (the same detail Connolly had used to describe the exquisite pain of time with the Pirate), about the burden of love he carried in his pockets for the woman not his wife. A weight that both killed him yet released him and which, though his footsteps were heavy, made his heart light.

Connolly, laden as she was with fear, with expectation, and deafened by a growing anger, was unable to hear him. She heard only silence. And, knowing that he had failed yet again, for in not answering he had let her down, left in disappointment and disgust.

Another sleepless night. In the morning Connolly chopped wood in the rain. Impotently and angrily raging at unseeable, unnameable forces, she drove staggering blows into the wooden stumps, and sent chips spitting and flying. Marvelling at how the axe, when used with intent and accuracy, and without restraint, never failed to cleave through. Sweating and spent, when she could no longer heave the heavy tool downward, she sat on the stump by the woodpile and examined the blade, its sharp, hard, uncompromising clarity. Suddenly, she dropped it to the ground and hurriedly trekked to *Nugget* where she fiddled about in the hull space, examining lengths of broken mast.

Up on the range, high in the air, the pair of gulls bore silent witness to a strange, uncertain form of love. Connolly stood on the rock, and, as though it knew, this time the kangaroo did not frighten, this time perhaps it was too weak. She whispered to it and it looked up.

Connolly gripped the heavy segment of mast tight in her wet hands and willed herself to not fail. She raised it high, focusing on the narrow patch of grey, sodden fur between the amber eyes, and all the while, as the club, axe-like, crushed the air in its downward slice, the roo continued to gaze steadily into her eyes.

Scott, or what was left of him (for he had eroded slightly more in the time she had been there), did not turn as Connolly, leaning into the driving wind, approached. Nor did he say anything when she stopped, as though he knew what was to come. He knows she has realised, as he had, that the world is a grim sort of place.

He wanted to say to her, *I thought you were seeking silence*, but would not. Wanted to tell her that yes, he might have failed in some respects but that the expedition had been an unheralded scientific success. That the delicate fossil leaf fans embossed into those rocks in his pocket proved the South Pole was once joined, was part of something much bigger.

He wanted to tell her of his men's hardihood, but would not. He who had forsworn words, words that had led him and others to such a terrible fate. For it was words that had caused such hardship, such calamity, such loss of life. That had caused her, too, so recently, to turn and walk away. He longed to tell her not what sinks ships but what floats them—discipline, care, maintenance. And love.

He thinks of the people who loved him on those icy floes. Not in the “taking it up the arse” way, as she had so crudely termed it but in the myriad small ways that defy smallness. He thinks back to the companionable smokes around stoves, the steaming cups of tea brought to a bedside in the early hours, the sing-alongs into the dark hours after the lamps had been extinguished. He thinks of loyalty. Of the proffered hands across chasms. Of the jokes manfully made when the collective humour was fatigued and frozen. Of quiet, encouraging nods. If it were not for these, his men and their love, he would have been at the bottom of some unfathomable crevasse long before the terrible end.

He wanted to let her know that the grand myth that characterised his, the heroic, age was just that. Mythic. False and fatal. Wanted to tell her to conquer herself, not some far flung land; and he will not budge one inch, now, until he has done just that. Will not risk one more venture until he truly knows himself. But what he wants, as much as self-mastery, is to

have that remarkable woman beside him once more, the rocks he so painstakingly carted weighing lightly in her hands whilst she sits there beside him, sharing his silence.

Connolly, wet hair limp and askew, looked at Scott. A long, unreadable look.

After an extended silence, in which he, of course, remained fixedly looking out to sea, Connolly stepped around him and, somewhat rudely, somewhat cruelly, stood right in front, depriving him of his single remaining freedom—his view. Still he did not speak. He just gazed on at the biting wind and lashing rain.

She hated him for a moment, for not having to move, or battle, or feel the turbulent sea within that threw up feeling. Waves of sorrow, waves of longing. For not having to find words, and choose actions, reach across space with them, and then live with the consequences.

“I am sorry,” she said somewhat obviously and cruelly again. “if I am blocking your view.”

And realised, as she spoke, her sadness at leaving.

“I’m going. Finally.”

Connolly returned to the hut to put things in order, as she knew Scott, disciplined, would dutifully have done. Then she did what Scott would not have done. She said goodbye to the cast iron kettle and its happy voice, and to the cantankerous fireplace. She briefly wished she had fixed the roof for the next person (if ever there was a next person). She closed the door and the air currents invisibly swirled and wrapped themselves around her form for a final time. She patted the worn stone walls and imagined the summer waft of jasmine that would permeate the woodpile. The ever-dipping northern corner of roof seemed to sag even further at her leaving. She did not look back. Could not look back.

She arrived at the beach on which, some miles down, Scott sat. She could not bear the southern beach and its taunting bar, now victorious. She kept her back to the dunes and her

eyes on the grey water beyond. Out of his line of sight, she hoped Scott would not witness this, her ultimate failure.

When the cold of the water latched onto her like a terrier would have bitten a hare, she did not look down, could not look down, but kept her eyes on the fast running mid-channel current. When the water wrapped itself around her chest and squeezed she did not turn back to face the shore but gasped out loud and tried to keep the horizon in sight.

And when her feet finally lifted from the sandy bottom and the water was far above her head, and she could no longer see, Connolly stopped walking. She tried not to think of the gargantuan yawn of shark jaws and the fragility of tendons and arteries, nor of the trailing venom of the box jellyfish, or the tentacles of giant squid. Nor of the heavy drag the cold began to exert on her body. Or, as time went by, of the comforts of sleep. Instead she thought of Scott, and his perhaps courageous, perhaps pointless, fortitude, and started swimming, keeping in her mind the image of the horizon—of reaching, finally, that fine, distant impossible line.

Heraclites. Heraclites.

Connolly came to, stirred by a shrill repetitive sound. All about her seemed strangely light. Was she home? She tried to catch hold of a solid thought from the blurred, mixed whirl of light and thought which spun around and around her head, just out of reach.

Heraclites!

Connolly attempted to raise her head but the effort exhausted and confused her. Was it a name, perhaps hers, being called? It felt strangely like it could be Scott saying something, finally. Or was it just the sounds from the bird that seemed to be swooping down, again and again, at her mouth? She reclosed her eyes and tried to discern the annunciation, for it was, indeed, a voice that communicated.

Remember Heraclites? Those first words you spoke?

She tried hard to focus. Was that Scott in his usual place and her lying hypothermic but uncaring, in the nearby wave wash? She had hoped to awaken somewhere else. She imagined Scott looking dourly at the ocean which, inexplicably, had not claimed her.

I will say it once and once only and I will not say another thing. Heraclites meant, amongst other things, it is not possible to repeat the same action twice. For how long will you persist in believing otherwise?

But she could not properly hear. She wanted only to sleep and to never have to face the bar, the terrible bar that only Creaky Bill could manage. She lay her head down once more.

“Oh dear,” said Marjorie, landing next to the mask, and spent from the resuscitation efforts of channelling air current from her wingtips to the vicinity of Connolly’s nostrils. She called out to her mate who had taken up the mission of mercy dives.

“Reuben, work fast. I think we have something of a situation.”

Connolly avoided Scott and *Nugget* and instead contemplated her plan for a month. Then, just as the westerly storm was blowing itself out, during the lull before another, larger front approached, she resolutely set out for the north. As she walked she imagined herself, standing for a moment on the summit, surveying a last view south. It was down there on those lonely beaches and headlands that she had hoped, but failed, to find an antidote to the unbearable feeling that had pursued her across oceans—that staying afloat without knowing about love was an endless, pointless future.

Her heart beat fast as she navigated the scrub, but she was fit now and she made a quick ascent. As if in favour of her plan to hail a boat, the clouds parted to let a brilliant post-storm sun shine through. Connolly thought of the Captain’s cottage, of fresh vegetables, of

getting a job at the chandlery or somewhere. Of making friends that were not seagulls. As she neared the outcrop it was the smell that brought her to a stop. The dense stench of rotting flesh. There, still wedged in the narrow crevice between the high boulders, was the kangaroo, partially intact from the back but completely eaten out from the front where the feeding flies and writhing maggots had infiltrated its stomach. The mummified joey lay just as it had.

Sometimes, things decay from the inside. The sun was still yellow and happy in the sky, the sea brilliant, but the flies' buzz was grating, disgusting. *Death death death*, they droned. It was as if the space around her had, too, begun to putrefy. The air no longer soft but sharp and critical. Dreams of a future suddenly untrustworthy. Gone, in an instant, the seemingly good idea of escaping what she now finally knew, deep in her guts, to be irrefutably inescapable.

Up on the summit, Connolly sat on the boulders, high above the mother and child haloed in the scent of inescapable suffering. She watched as, down in the bay below, an engine came soundlessly to life and a puff of smoke rose from the sheltering boat. The vessel slowly turned and headed out to sea.

Connolly became accustomed to aloneness.

She mended the hut roof and observed as the good weather slowly returned. And she resumed her visits with Scott, who, despite his continued silence, seemed to bear no grudge—for which she was grateful. Connolly still talked, but had learnt now not to ask him questions nor expect answers.

The questions she had brought across the bar might not have been properly answered but something within her inevitably, painfully and gradually (if not stilled then) eased. As though the tempest, internal, was simply another force, not dissimilar in nature to the south-westerly storms that raged for weeks and seemed like they would never end—but always,

eventually, they abated.

Perhaps it was because she accepted now, in the way one learns to live with an annoying family member, her numerous inabilities. That she was intrinsically uncertain, inept with constancy, and unskilled and lacking in prized and common virtues, was painfully plain. Doubt, fear, rage, loneliness and grief still came knocking at the door of herself and, whilst not yet totally welcomed, were begrudgingly permitted entry, as were pleasure, softness and peace. Suffering and beauty sat each just a little more lightly on her shoulders.

However, she had reached one hopeful, gratifying conclusion. It seemed to her, that, out of everything, and here she thought of the roo, perhaps intention was all.

If it was a tumour, it did not spread.

And in the succession of days that bled into months, she learnt that even the most average of days, grey and overcast, in which it seemed no worthwhile or noteworthy thing could happen, could produce a stunning sunset. Some days, the nearly blinding light raged in a golden, furious splendour and the turbulent seawaters staggered into stillness under the spell of that amazing, transient light. No-one, not Scott or herself, could then say that nothing unremarkable had occurred by virtue of that single twenty minutes of blinding, golden beauty that streamed in from the west and irradiated the waters beyond the headland and caused the multi-hued range to fade into a respectful, monotone ordinariness.

Some evenings at dusk, she welcomingly became a lost speck within the cloak of shearwaters which fluttered from the sky like black ash from a giant fire. On other nights, she watched as liquid lines of light, cast by the moon, swirled on the water's surface like the loveliest of music.

And, occasionally, as though imparting a gift, the heavens danced and Connolly watched swathes of light like great bolts of silk—red, green, silver—unroll, swirl and enfold the ballroom of sky.

Yet even as she grew more comfortable, the call of that other shore never fully left her. The one she was, half consciously, half unconsciously, still attempting to reach, the one some call home. In Connolly's dreams it resurfaced, its treasures and familiar shoreline momentarily lit by the beckon and safety of that long loom of light which, constant and reliable, called her name with a soothing rhythmic luminescence.

However, she was in no hurry now, for the work had been done, or so she thought—failure was not failure outright. It had taught her many things, foremost of which was acceptance. She knew she would get off, sometime, via a boat from the north. There were supplies enough for the remaining months—she could afford to be patient. And, as soon as she had decided this, the pressing need to be gone abated and she knew she would find a boat when the time was right.

Adjusted to her circumstances now, just like Crusoe, Connolly was less visited by that yearning pang for the other side for which, originally, she had set out, her ship laden with expectation. Yet sometimes the tide carries something unexpected. A reminder.

Connolly returned home from visiting Scott to smell smoke. She ran up the gulch, scrambling clumsily and painfully over the mounds of slippery rocks and when she made it to hard earth, she sprinted. The hut was not, as she expected, ablaze. Instead, smoke wafted from the chimney and, sitting on the single stump in the yard was a woman, with dark skin and black hair, who smiled welcomingly.

“You’re just in time for a cup of tea.”

Out of the blankness of surprise, coupled with lack of practice in conversation, and shyness, Connolly simply stared and the woman laughed.

“I’ve caught you by surprise.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll pour it.”

She reappeared, cups in hand, one Connolly’s, one obviously hers, and motioned to the single stump.

“Is there another one?”

When Connolly returned from the woodpile, they didn’t speak but drank their tea in silence. Connolly looked at her closely, as though she truly *were* an exotic creature. Short, compact, with beautiful long dark hair and a sense of being completely at home. But a bit fatigued or puffy around the eyes. Had she been crying?

“You appear tired... around the eyes.”

An obvious gaffe in the conventions of conversation.

The visitor did not bother, or was too well-mannered, to make comment on Connolly’s unkempt appearance.

“I’ve been cutting up onions.”

She was, it turned out, in the middle of preparing dinner.

“Oh.”

Over gentle and halting dinner conversation, the visitor revealed she was on her way to the large island to give a demonstration at a shipwright’s fair; she was a boat builder who travelled widely teaching the craft. That she had successfully navigated the bar seemed of little consequence to her as did why Connolly was on the island in the first place. She did not even ask, for which Connolly felt relief.

As the evening progressed, Connolly observed that the boat builder did not appear to engage in the niceties and expected channels of polite exchange. She was unfailingly mannered, of that there was no doubt, but she said little that was unnecessary. When she did speak she was direct and to the point, yet gentle. And she laughed often.

Far removed from the habits of social intercourse and its accompanying appraisal of

appearance, character and standing that contributed to liking or disliking, Connolly realised she had, until now, simply and unthinkingly accepted the visitor as she was. However, as those ingrained habits and judgements found their way to the surface, Connolly realised just how engaging, and how attractive, the visitor was. And regrettably, Connolly was sure, also straight. Not the straight of many a self-confessed straight woman who had either willingly or invitingly been temporarily and pleasurably disarmed of such a notion, but truly straight.

She returned her attention to what the boat builder was saying—a description of her craft, unharmed, pulled high on the sands of the beach that lay behind the bar.

“You must be joking.”

“No.” The boat builder shook her head.

“How?”

“Practice.”

Again, the boat builder did not ask why Connolly was on the island, as though it were unimportant to her, or irrelevant. She did ask, however, about the bar crossing and Connolly told her of *Nugget*.

“We’ll recharge you.” English was obviously not her first language and Connolly assumed she meant the boat. “All of it.”

Slowly recalling manners, at the night’s end Connolly played the role of host and offered her hammock, assuring the boat builder she’d be fine on the floor. During the night she stayed awake, unused to another’s breathing. Her head spun, as though intoxicated, with two-way talk, her mind exhausted with the effort, far from unpleasurable in this case, of navigating another’s presence.

The next day, they spent the afternoon with *Nugget*, the boat builder inspecting, sighting, measuring. Connolly redundant. When they walked further along the beach of entry, Connolly had no choice but to believe the veracity of the visitor’s bar crossing when she saw

the neat, unremarkable craft from which the boat builder removed a small number of old, beautifully maintained tools. Tools that were clearly made somewhere else. She loaded Connolly up, carried little herself and they returned to *Nugget*.

Sawing, planing, nailing, lashing, glueing and clamping. Connolly, to her surprise and embarrassment, sat by *Nugget* and wept.

“Tell me about it.”

The boat builder listened as she worked.

To her surprise, Connolly talked more about the Pirate than the Captain.

“You got attached,” was all the boat builder said, when all had been said.

And then, “There will be another.”

Connolly said nothing.

She said it again.

“Let it go.” She smiled as though talking to a child. “They come and they go.”

When she was finished she stood back, admired her work, and smiled again. “It’s important not to neglect the timbers.”

“And you,” Connolly asked somewhat audaciously, over dinner. “Love?”

“Fun and games every now and then but nothing serious. I’m too busy.”

Connolly swore she sounded wistful.

“Besides, they all want to own you.”

“My body,” she added, as if in warning (in that predictable, curious manner of straight women either fearful of homosexuality or presumptuously and often mistakenly, though not in this case, optimistic about their own desirability), “is attracted to men. You, have you had men?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

“A hard dick can be a very pleasurable thing. I’m just not interested in relating to all that it’s attached to. Besides, too much of this and not enough of this.”

The boat builder laughed heartily at the accompanying actions.

“You’re right about that! And what is it you like about women?”

“Their bodies.” Connolly imagined the curves that lay beneath the visitor’s unrevealing attire. Isolation had distinct limitations. There was only so much one could do for oneself.

“And their emotional depth and complexity. The risk is, though, you can end up, if you’re not careful, workshopping the grocery list. Half an hour on whether the onions should be French or Spanish, the potatoes Kennebec or Sebago. Tedious, let me tell you. I don’t miss that. And did I say their bodies?”

The boat builder smiled and looked uncomfortable.

Connolly recalled the feel of a breast beneath her hand, the exquisite pairing of soft and firm. “What is it you like about men?”

“Their lack of emotional complexity. No risk with the shopping list. And their bodies.”

Outside, under the expanse of stars, washing the cooking pots and utensils, Connolly realised (desire borne of isolation aside) that she felt comfortable and at home around the visitor in a way she hadn’t experienced in company, with the exception of the Captain, in years. Was it the effects of isolation or had something changed in her? Or was it the visitor, whose name she could barely pronounce?

Connolly returned inside and over numerous cups of tea in which they engaged in conversation about sailing and boats, punctuated with comfortable silence, she caught, or did she imagine it, the boat builder glancing at her, as though an assessment of some sort was being conducted. In any other context, with anyone else, she might have correctly interpreted these looks as the beginning of a game based on attraction. But none of the old rules seemed

to hold with this woman, and Connolly was left uncertain as to just what sort of a survey was being made.

“I’m on the big island for a couple of months,” the boat builder said as she got up to go to bed. “There’s a maintenance weekend and then a series of weekly design and building sessions. You should come.”

“Will you take me off?”

The boat builder stared into the fire and seemed to contemplate something before replying.

“If you can sail in, you can sail out. If I take you off, you’ll always be here. You understand?”

On the beach, the boat builder reached into her bag and handed Connolly one of two deep red plums.

“Wow. Fresh!” Connolly enthused. “It’s been a long time...”

“Full of goodness.”

Connolly held the plum on her palm and offered its blood red vitality up to the sun, as though it were a glass of wine or a jewel that would refract the light. Held it up like something precious.

“You like it! The plum of love.” The boat builder giggled.

They sat on the sand in the sun and ate, Connolly relishing the plum’s firm, wet sweetness. She extracted the seed from her mouth, split into two open halves. The boat builder spat a seed, single and whole, into her palm and passed it to Connolly.

“You deal with it.”

Then she launched into a quick rehash of boat essentials and basic bar navigation.

“It always helps to remember.”

Connolly held the plain little skiff’s bow, the water cold on her calves.

“Are you sure about going?” She stared out at the thundering bar, feeling sick.

The boat builder, readying sheets, smiled.

“Yes. I’m expected.”

“By the way,” she said, “I’m going back to my home port in a couple of months.”

She paused, and added incidentally, “Such a long way off... I miss it. A group of interested sailors is coming for part of the voyage. Think about joining us.”

“I don’t know... I’m kind of done with adventures, and besides I haven’t got...”

She was interrupted.

“Sow the seed,” the boat builder said ambiguously, smiling broadly.

Connolly pushed the craft mightily and, despite the strong following wind, it shuddered and faltered as the first wave hit it. The boat builder sat in the stern, her small body strong and relaxed. Connolly could not tell if she was unafraid or simply did not show any trepidation she might be feeling.

She seemed able to pick, miraculously, some sort of line between the swells as she went. The boat neared the bar and she performed a seemingly reckless, superb jibe that allowed her to nose into the only available chute on the whole foaming horizon. How she could know of or see it out there was incredible—and then passage across the bar itself seemed uneventful. The boat had poked itself over and through in a spectacular feat of seamanship that would have had the Captain in respectful silence.

Walking along the beach, Connolly fingered the plum seeds in her pocket and tried to imagine herself, but failed, in *Nugget* crossing the bar like that. When she got to the hut she placed the two half seeds and the one whole between the knife and string that sat on the bench below the barometer. Inexplicably, they somehow seemed connected. What couldn’t be placed there was the tiny seed of a new question lying dormant in the dark of Connolly’s mind.

That night, Connolly dreamed of the secret sea. Of sailing close but never on it. Of

tacking up and down, as though beating along an invisible line or shore. If only she could nose the bow of the *Argus* near enough, the yacht itself would sense the gap and they would sail through to that place that caused the Captain's eyes, when he had mentioned it to her those few times, to do the opposite of the Pirate's eyes. The Captain's eyes had opened and shined with a melancholic ecstasy such that Connolly knew, even as a listening child, that her life would not be complete until the day she, too, could sail upon those mysterious, impossible-to-find waters.

All night she sailed up and down. *Sow the seed... If you can sail in, you can sail out... The plum of love.* The dream overseen by the boat builder's flash of easy, encouraging smile. Up and down up and down, to wake exhausted.

Each day after the boat builder's visit, after Connolly had stood in front of the bench and tapped the barometer glass, she looked at the seeds and thought of time spent with the visitor. Off the island, there was now the enticing prospect of enjoyable company. Connolly's burning desire to sail like that, confident and unafraid, could be met by the lure, the offer, of further tuition. At the idea of spending more time with her, the seed in the dark split its skin. What *had* the boat builder meant when she said 'the plum of love'? And those glances, what did they mean? Connolly replayed the time again and again in her head, countering riddle-like suggestive memories with the fact that the boat builder was clearly straight. But what the hell then had she, from whom no word was redundant, been on about?

Day and night now, the other shore resoundingly resurfaced. In Connolly's repeating dreams its shoreline was clearly lit by the guardian light which, burning more brightly now, rhythmically entreated. But then, one night, as though in response to that light, the seed in her mind poked its head above ground. And something different occurred.

Connolly slept a dreamless deep sleep and awoke, or so she thought, at three a.m. She got up, walked to the bench on which lay the seeds and over which hung the barometer. The

glass was rising. She looked at the two halves, touched the seed that was whole, then, taking the knife and string she walked down to the beach. There, she tugged at the largest blade and opened it out. The bright light of the full moon glinted off the blade and it was herself, joined with that gleaming, pale soft light that watched as she unravelled the string and, like a surveyor of old, ran it, and fixed it, in lines along her limbs. Then she held up her left palm and sat the blade above the pad of her index finger. *Every hero has pluck*. She paused a moment, marking with her eye the string line that trailed across her palm, over the fragile bridge of wrist with its delicate superficial veins, up the long sweep of forearm to the elbow and up to her shoulder. She took a deep breath and pushed the blade, as though severing a knot, through the resisting skin and then scraped it deeply along the string line. Up her arm she continued, only pausing when the knife had torn across the soft upper flesh of her breast and stopped, left of centre, at her heart. To perform the same act on the other side was difficult as she was right handed, plus there was so much blood. She took a moment to watch it flow onto the damp sand and be absorbed as though the earth itself, parched, was thirstily waiting. But she could not linger long.

When the opposing side lay exposed, torn and bleeding, she sat down and began the very same process, starting with her left foot. From the tip of the big toe across the dorsal surface of the foot with its band of tendons, up the medial side of calf and thigh to the groin. And then again for the right side. As a last gesture, she cut through, needing to be resolute now, for all was pain and fear, the skin at the neck—the big muscles and tendons obstinate—until finally her head rolled from its customary position, bounced twice on the hard sand and then, after a moment's indecisiveness, rolled like a large bowling ball down the slope of sand to lie at the water's edge.

Connolly watched some part of herself rummage around within the dark red mangled mess of body, and feel out the long bones of tibia and fibula. She leant heavily on the patella

and tore and twisted but they would not budge from their obstinate union with each other.

Exasperated, she stopped and thought for a moment—surely, to give oneself should not be so hard, should it?—and then gave up on that labour. Instead, she peeled the deathly white flesh until her skin hung from her arms (no longer her arms) in voluminous white folds as though she had picked up a small parachute. She lay it out on the beach, a translucent blanket, far larger than she had imagined.

Connolly picked up the head, scooped out the brain which she set, cake-like, on the sand. Then she turned the emptied skull upside down, packed sand around it until it sat like a bowl of punch. Into this she placed her heart.

“Come. Come,” she shouted at the skies.

“Here.” She shouted at the surf as she rolled the bloody, flesh-covered, headless skeleton to the water’s edge. She sat and watched as crabs hurried to the sand surface, and mites crowded, and fish darted in to the shallows to drink the blood. And then larger fish and sharks and giant unknown creatures thrashed in and tore at it until all that remained were chunks of floating flesh and snapped bones, some washing back up the beach atop the waves, some floundering in the whitewash. Birds swooped from the skies, competing for the brain, and creatures lolloped down from the dunes and drank from the skull. Reuben and Marjorie were there, as were the kangaroo and joey and they were slowly joined by all the hungry people from her past and all the diverse, ever-hungry beauty that would be the future. On they came until, in time, a small universe partook of the feast.

The sun was rising when she watched herself methodically roll up the ball of string, squat at the water’s edge to clean the knife blade and then, when she had snapped the blade shut, walk back towards the hut.

If it was a tumour, it was gone.

The next morning, when Connolly reached Scott she sat down and, choosing her words carefully, told him of her plan. For some reason, she did not mention the visitor. And when she had finished she got up and walked away.

It began to rain. She stopped walking and turned back.

“Thank-you. For listening to me all this time.”

“Endure.”

“I beg your pardon?” she said, although she had clearly heard him.

It was some time before he said it again.

“Endure. To endure and endure and endure until endurance itself is beaten into joy. It is not something you tell your men but you think it again and again in your own heart.”

He said no more even when Connolly moved from his view and sat down beside him. Together they gazed at the unrelenting sea and bore the bullets of rain.

Eventually, after a long silence, he began to speak and even though she would miss the tide, drinking in each word, Connolly simply listened.

“Clever Heraclites,” he said, eventually, winding up. “To know that all appearances are liquid.”

His mask appeared to run as if it, too, were in motion (or were they tears?) then he shook his head resolutely and the mask resumed its natural shape as he said, somewhat wistfully,

“All those frozen lifetimes.”

Together they simply sat on.

At first it was not silence Connolly heard, but the chatter of her own ceaseless thoughts. Then it was silence, broad, hollow and unyielding, in which she felt cold and lost and desolate. Then it was a silence deafening and frightening. She resisted the urge to flee. If Scott could bear it, so could she.

Then it became the sound of Scott in his wisdom.

Then even Scott fell silent and it became the pulsing tones of the ocean slipping in and out and the gulls keening a curious and beautiful song of welcome and farewell and setting out and return. It was the grasses in the dunes behind living and dying, and the sound of the great expanse overhead believing in and rebirthing itself time and time again.

It was the moon arcing its way across the night time sky, which in turn wheeled and spun magnificently and then it was the moon passing its baton to the sun which blazed gloriously and furiously on its stellar mission and then died a splendid and silent death.

Then even the elements themselves shushed and the silence was pure, vast and luminously empty. It was nothing and it was everything. The sound of all laments lay therein and the sound of all joys inextricably linked into this one endless soundlessness. And within it the island's separateness was mere surface and watery illusion. For it was joined, as everything was joined.

Scott and Connolly sat unmoving before this searing display that was, above all else, peaceful and kind. Until, finally, they were of it, too, and it became the most expansive, profound and simplest of silences.

Connolly stood in front of him one more time before she left. She fingered the seeds, two halves, one whole, in her pocket.

"I have brought you this."

She set down beside him, not the seeds, but weighted down with the most beautiful stone lugged from near the woodpile, the Captain's chart with the X upon it.

"Wish me luck with the bar."

Nugget was waiting on the beach, fully loaded, along with two extra pieces of cargo. Despite Connolly's protestations, Marjorie and Reuben had refused to leave their home and

were, clearly, going wherever the boat went.

But Scott did not reply.

Connolly looked at him one more time before she walked away for this, the final time.

His blank eyes were patient, she thought, despite their warpedness, but still she would not have said he looked joyful.

EXEGESIS

DEFYING DEFOE: REWRITING THE CASTAWAY HERO

Introduction

This exegesis explores two questions concerning the adventure hero depicted in island fiction and answers them through an analysis of two works—the early eighteenth-century classic, *Robinson Crusoe*, written by Daniel Defoe, and the contemporary, self-authored “Ile du Coeur”. *Robinson Crusoe* is chosen as a baseline text as it inspired genre rules for the series of Robinsonades which followed and which have continued to influence all forms of subsequent island narrative, particularly those containing an adventure element. Well known examples of Robinsonades include *The Coral Island* and *Treasure Island* and many of the tropes replicated in these novels continue to appear in modern island narratives, including *Lord of the Flies*, Muriel Sparks’ 1958 novel *Robinson*, Sam Selvon’s *Moses Ascending*, Michel Tournier’s *Friday*, Douglas Glover’s *Elle* and J.M Coetzee’s *Foe*. Emulating Loxely, I therefore focus on *Robinson Crusoe*’s “implicit legacy... and the importance of its meanings and motifs” (6) specifically in relation to the construction of the island adventure hero.

The first question driving this research project is *what is the heroic template set by Defoe?* Analysis reveals a male hero representative of a colonising and hegemonic discourse in relation to both masculinity and heroism. I argue that in these two areas, Defoe’s hero is rendered, from a contemporary perspective, severely ‘bound’ or limited. In turn, the parameters of his construction reciprocally bind and limit not just female readers but readers of all genders in relation to performances of gender and heroism. I argue that the ideologies inherent within the hero’s construction are, in some ways, paradoxically antithetical to definitions of heroism itself.

The composition of Defoe’s hero, and its remnant traces in contemporary island fiction, leads to the posing of a second question, an interesting authorial challenge: *what do I want my island hero to be?* The motivation to rewrite the island adventure hero is twofold, being personal in the first instance and political in the second. From a personal perspective, it

is a creative and playful response to all those reading years where I, as a female and gay reader, was not represented. It also reflects, and indulges, a long held fascination with islands both real and imagined, and with island metaphor in general. In summary, I am writing an island narrative that I might have wished to read, with the sort of adventure hero that interests me. From a political perspective, however, underscoring the writing is a belief that the modern western notion of heroic behaviour is outmoded and requires a subtle but conscious metamorphosis in order to remain culturally relevant. Underpinning “Ile du Coeur” is the particular assertion that diverse and multiple heroisms are required of twenty-first century adventure heroes.

These authorial aims are principally achieved by destabilising both the conventions and tropes of “island narrative” (Weaver-Hightower ix) and, in particular, the colonising phallocentrism of the island adventure hero. Accordingly, four characteristics traditionally associated with Robinson Crusoe and the hero of the Robinsonade—maleness, heterosexuality, violence and action—are overtly reworked in order to “inscribe other values without sacrificing richness” (Hourihan 205). In addition, a new heroic behaviour, that of ‘conscious silence’, is written into “Ile du Coeur” in which the hero seeks self-mastery as opposed to mastery over the other. The trope of conscious silence is used to destabilise the destructive mythologies usually associated with the hero of the Robinsonade, and exemplifies a new performance possibility for the twenty-first century adventure hero.

Part One – Why Defy Defoe?

Why Rewrite the Adventure Hero of Island Fiction?

The desire to rewrite the hero in island fiction was borne from early reading experience, both of adventure fiction (in the broadest sense) as well as from wide-ranging reading across varied genres. From my first *Dick and Jane* reading experiences where Dick got to throw the ball and Jane got to catch it, to being a slightly older child immersed in *White Fang*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *The Hardy Boys* or *Nancy Drew* adventures, I unconsciously recognised that the roles of female characters were markedly unadventurous in comparison to those of male characters. Why were female characters invariably ‘at home’ or written passively whilst the boys were out gallivanting and written actively—appearing, to this reader, to be having a much better time? Female characters, like Anne in *The Famous Five* series, were depicted as slightly pathetic or wanting; as not having the inherent wherewithal to participate in adventurous activity. That lack seemed specifically related, by inference, to not simply Anne’s personality but to her gender. Girls who *did* venture out and embroil themselves in adventurous activity were seen as highly unusual and their behaviours painted as idiosyncratic or bordering on aberrant. In *The Famous Five* series, George’s commitment to gaining physical freedoms was portrayed as somehow not validly female, her gender performance written as somehow suspect. And Nancy Drew’s adventurous but still relatively demure and conventional behaviour drew censure from the matronly Hannah. The nearest I got to a desirable adventure hero who did not pay either heavy social price or cultural/gender consequence was someone like Emily of New Moon. However, whilst her adventurous world was written beyond the domestic, it was still confined to the personal. The borders of the New Moon farm and her world were demarcated and rarely merged with those of the wider community in Blair Water. Female heroism could exist, but did so in private.

As I became older, my reading experience widened across genres yet I continued to ingest a diet of adventure and island stories, now reading back through time—Kipling, Henry Rider Haggard, C.S Forester and Herman Melville. When reading R.M Ballantyne's *The World Of Ice*, abridged versions of *The Odyssey*, or *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island*, I saw again that women were simply not present or were marginalised, peripheral presences—I describe this as a profound and paradoxical textual 'absent presence'. Where were the females who successfully adventured?

The overwhelmingly pointed underlying message gained from my first fifteen or so years of reading was one which exacted a profound psychological cost—the realisation that socially acceptable femaleness and heroism rarely coexist. Or, one could be female and heroic but only in socially sanctioned, domestic ways. As a result, throughout my formative reading years, like many of my reading cohort, I was left to imagine myself as a male protagonist. It could be argued that this is exactly what all good fiction should make us do—inhabit the shoes of someone else. However, in terms of heroics, the gendered template presented to me as a female reader never quite fitted. This is understandably so if Millman is to be believed when he asserts that “the origins of the male novel [are] in the desire to establish a male fiction impervious, if not hostile, to the demands of women” (qtd. in Kestner 11). Not only did the hero have a male body but he took actions or thought thoughts, specifically about women, the environment, other non-human species, less manly men, indigenous races and the concept of home that, as a female, I knew I would never make or think. I was in a dilemma—if I didn't subscribe, I could not be heroic. But, more importantly, and insidiously, if I did subscribe I was in a truly unenviable and unpalatable position. To be a hero by osmosis, I was forced, via inhabiting his worldview, to be an active participant in maintaining the systematic reduction of myself as a female (or the less valued other). His thoughts, which represent the privileged binary, constantly reduced me to something defective, limited, less

than, not valuable. As a female reader of adventure and island fiction, there was always an unbridgeable disjunct, not in the integrity of the fiction's construction but rather in the ideology underpinning the fiction's creation. It was simply not possible to fully translate heroism from fiction into the lived experience of the female reader. If there had been alternate fictions to read this may not have been so problematic, but there were no unproblematic, rounded and nuanced female adventure heroines (as there are now for younger readers to delight in).

In his encompassing turn-of-the-century cultural history, *Modern Times, Modern Places – Life and Art in the Twentieth Century*, Peter Conrad notes that due to the work of Einstein and Freud, humanity in the twentieth century reached a new stage in its development. Accordingly, modern men [sic] were “no longer able to believe in their own rational sovereignty” and “had to contemplate the possibility of their wholesale destruction” (7). These two features—a lack of belief in one's rational sovereignty and the very real possibility of self-destruction—are antithetical to the traditional adventure hero. Consequently, his place and function in the reader's world is unravelling, and the hero's own textual world, by association, becomes a place of contestation and stress. If the twentieth century “saw the greatest rate of destruction of the environment in all recorded history” and if it were “also the cruellest, harshest and bloodiest century in history” (Hawken 17-18) then the need for a new heroic becomes patently clear.

A mere decade on into the twenty-first century little has changed. And, particularly with regard to environmental issues, the situation has only intensified. Hawken concurs, “global conditions are changing dramatically and becoming more demanding” (13). This then begs the question—in a time characterised by globalism, financial greed and inequity, the rise of militant and/or divisive religious fervour, and mounting environmental crisis, what would constitute truly heroic behaviour? What changes do our literary heroes need to embody in

order to remain culturally and philosophically relevant? As readers in these current times, what do we require from literature's heroes?

Hay considers "alternatives are needed to the cultural, biological and spiritual impoverishment that characterises globalisation and the tyrannical hegemony of its values" (Williams and Hay 10). One such alternative is a hero that is emblematic of the issues and challenges of today. And, to avoid the hegemonic limitations that traditionally characterise the island adventure hero, we require, as Stuller suggests, a multiplicity—"heroes and heroisms" (162). However, to successfully rewrite the island adventure hero it is necessary to examine some of the relevant ideologies underpinning the construction of both the hero and the island.

Theoretical Basis and Definitions

When conceptualising how the adventure hero of island fiction might be rewritten, and in ideas concerning the construction of the hero and heroism, I rely principally on the work of Margery Hourihan. Whilst her domain is children's literature, I transpose her ideas regarding subversion in stories for children to the arena of adult island fiction, and, in the process, rework and extend them. Overall, however, theory is collected and integrated from across disparate but relevant disciplines—geography, gender and island studies, and post-colonial, queer, literary and psychoanalytic theories.

Adventure Fiction

The concept of 'hero' and 'adventure' go hand in hand. *Robinson Crusoe* is both a seminal example of island narrative and of adventure fiction, and continues to powerfully influence the identity of twenty-first century island heroes and adventure heroism. It is Crusoe as the adventure hero of island fiction on which this exegesis focuses.

Definitions of ‘adventure fiction’ are numerous, and are both compatible and competing. Definitions have been posited by Batchelor, Dryden, Dawson, Rivière, Simmel, Peck, and others (qtd. in Kestner 3-12). For example, Green defines it thus:

Adventure seems to mean a series of events, partly but not wholly accidental, in settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilised (at least in the psychological sense of remote), which constitutes a challenge to the central character. In meeting this challenge he/she performs a series of exploits which make him/her a hero, eminent in virtues such as courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership, and persistence. (*Dreams of Adventure* 23)

Green states that any of his seven adventure category types, one of which is castaway fiction, is “in collusion with the idea of adventure itself—teaching the adventure virtues, such as courage, cunning, leadership, fortitude, perseverance, and so on” (*Seven Types of Adventure Tale* 54).

Zweig defines adventure as “an anarchic dream of heroic energies and escape” (14). And traditionally, anarchic aspects of adventure fiction seem to manifest most pointedly through violence. However, almost antithetically to its definition, Phillips maintains that for the most part, “adventure stories reflect entrenched ways of seeing”; that writers of them follow formulae, borrow images and respect conventions thus making adventure stories “overwhelmingly conservative” and that readers of the adventure genre, “generally find their world view re-affirmed in its bold images and uncomplicated terms” (*Mapping Men and Empire* 89). Clearly, there is a paradoxical tension in the genre’s intention and its actual practice. Rather than achieving the anarchic dream of heroic energies and escape, in its very form and content the genre safely remains within known bounds and maintains a status quo. Particularly so, I argue, with regard to depictions of masculinity and heroism. However, in “Ile du Coeur” I demonstrate that this tension between cultural replication and Zweig’s desire

for change can be used to good effect in the mission of re-writing the hero. Accordingly, there is no definition as useful to the purposes of this discussion as that offered by Zweig.

Hero

Adventure fiction is predicated upon the common usage of the term hero, namely “a person noted or admired for nobility, courage, outstanding achievements” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 551), and Robinson Crusoe is an unambiguous example. This usage is opposed to the hero in a work of literature who is simply the protagonist, male or female, a usage carrying “no connotations of virtuousness or honour” (*Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 378). However, Hourihan declares heroism to be gendered (68) and Le Guin notes that heroes are traditionally male and the hero myth “inscribes male dominance and the primacy of the male enterprise” (8).

Hegemonic masculinity, like gender, is as Moore notes, “a system of social power” and defines not only what it is to be male, but also what it is to be a ‘successful’ male (1). If, as Wetherell maintains, one of the more powerful “imaginary positions” that men use to construct themselves as masculine beings is that of hero (342) then the construction of the adventure hero in island fiction becomes a powerful vehicle for a conservative ideology concerning masculinity and heroism. In summary, hegemonic masculinity defines heroism and a host of readers are thus excluded or must acquiesce to that conservative ideology.

In order to challenge that discourse, and to make sense of Connolly, the protagonist of “Ile du Coeur”, who does not appear to fit the heroic prototype, it is crucial to “re-familiarise the English word hero and trace it back to the semantics of ancient Greek heroes” (Nagy 87). The genesis of the hero, and the associated cult of the hero, is in the Greek epic. In general terms, in Greek antiquity, a hero was a woman or man “of superhuman qualities, favoured by the gods, a demigod” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 551). If one looks at the notion of

demigod, it is a “partly divine being” (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 308). Tellingly, with regard to these general definitions, a hero is of either gender and, equally significant, is a partly divine being.

Nagy details three characteristics that apply to the epic hero—s/he is unseasonal, extreme and both attracted and antagonistic toward the divinity that s/he is like. In addition, the epic hero was associated with *sema*, one of the meanings of which is “a sign that signals a critical point in the hero’s life” (86). *Sema* is also a marker of the hero’s tomb. Contact with such a place, in the cult of the hero, made local people prosperous and blessed. Nagy notes that in order to have understanding of her/his own *sema* (which one could understand as both life and death), the epic hero had to have *noos*, “a special type of mentality that enables the hero to see more than one side of reality” (86). As in all good adventure stories, the epic hero took a journey to achieve this *noos*, and then made a successful return (the precursor to the quest story). In other words, the hero must experience a “journey of a soul” (86).

I will employ textual examples that demonstrate Crusoe’s confinement to the common usage of heroic definition, largely evidenced through his predominant commitment to outer activity. This contrasts to my positioning of Connolly, via the depiction of a predominantly inner journey, in a heroic performance that both references and seeks to contemporarise the *sema* and *noos* aspects of the epic hero.

For the purposes of this exegesis, I choose four areas of foundational heroic identity and practice upon which to focus: gender, heterosexuality, violence and action.

Island Narrative

Van Duzer maintains that “the romance of islands has been part of Western literature since its origins” (143). And, Weaver-Hightower says we are “fascinated with islands, both real and imaginary” and that the “lure of islands permeates literature” culminating in what she terms

island narrative. In this:

a person—most often a single man—...is stranded on an island... forced to survive, usually on wits and coconuts alone, the perilous situations that island life often brings: hunger, loneliness, madness, fierce weather, cannibals, pirates, and monsters, real or imagined. (ix)

The standard tropes of colonial island narratives, according to DeLoughrey, are accidental arrival, lack of inhabitants, domestication, empirical observation, fear of the arrival of cannibal islanders, fear of regression, display of force, uncomplicated assimilation of the islander, the hero's abandoning of island servant/mistress/wife and his return to the metropolis (13-14). The return is often by way of rescue and the hero is usually lauded upon return and profits in status and/or material wealth (the prize). These tropes continue to powerfully inform post-colonial island fiction.

Together, the hero and the island form the hallmark of the island fiction genre, and it is on this characteristic double that this exegesis focuses. So integral to the genre is this pairing, so inextricably linked are the two elements, that to answer the question '*what is the heroic template set by Defoe?*', one must also investigate the island template. And it follows, therefore, that any remaking of the island hero entails a remake of island identity as well. (That discussion deserves an in-depth analysis of its own; in this exegesis it will be rendered highly condensed as my ultimate emphasis concerns the hero.)

Down through the ages readers have been captivated by hero/island pairs: Odysseus and Ithaca, Atlantis and Timaeus, Bran and the Island of Joy (part of the Immrama of Irish Literature), Sinbad and the various unnamed islands in *The Arabian Nights*, Prospero and the uninhabited island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Robinson Crusoe, a tale inspired by the real life marooning experience in 1704 of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor, is a landmark text. It became and remains *the* example of

island narrative and, arguably, of adventure fiction. First published in 1719, and coinciding with the early period of British high imperialism, the text was immediately popular. *Robinson Crusoe* has been countlessly reprinted for both adults and children, has been rewritten for a variety of media and is endlessly employed by advertisers. It is a text that has not only survived and endured, but thrived. Loxley maintains that it is this “reformulat[ion] and renewal which has made *Robinson Crusoe*—and the entire [desert] island tradition—perhaps more than any other single text so deeply ingrained within our culture” (9).

It is important to note however, that the text itself alone, or some universal characteristic within it, is not responsible for its astounding three centuries of popularity. According to Loxley, by the end of the eighteenth century “a strong—and what would prove to be a long-standing—discursive relationship between the [desert] island motif and children’s literature and education was granted sanctity of origin” (8-9). Thus ingrained, even those who have not read *Robinson Crusoe* can, if asked, recount the salient elements that characterise the genre—a man is shipwrecked, survives and is washed up on a deserted island. With the remains of the vessel, which he puts to good use, he not only survives but thrives, subjugating any foreign people, women, less manly men and the island environment in the process. He is eventually rescued and when he returns to ‘civilisation’ he is hailed a hero.

Clearly, island narratives, and *Robinson Crusoe* in particular, are deeply in us; they are psychologically embedded. Whether we are reading or not reading about heroes and islands, multiple internal and external voices—authorial, textual and cultural—continue to powerfully speak to us about these constructions.

Rewriting

Taken literally the term ‘rewriting’ means to “write again or differently” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1032) and it is this latter characteristic which is the intent of “Ile du Coeur”.

Phillips articulates a number of ways by which rewriting might be approached. Using three recent island narrative rewrite examples, he contends that in *Moses Ascending*, Sam Selvon begins to “dissolve the dualistic identities and spaces of *Robinson Crusoe*, and to undermine the language in which it was written” and “attacks some of the foundations of *Robinson Crusoe*” but that he mainly appropriates rather than deconstructs the white British colonist’s story (*Mapping Men and Empire* 155). Michel Tournier, in contrast, “steps outside Defoe’s setting—outside Robinson Crusoe’s realistic island—by exploring a number of points of view but exposing each as a textual construct” (155) in *Friday*. A third approach is that of J.M. Coetzee, in *Foe*, who attempts to break down the narrative altogether and this means “subverting adventure rather than writing critical adventures” (156). Specifically, Coetzee attempts to “undermine the project of appropriating [the story] from any perspective” (157). But this results in his “straying too far from adventure...to really subvert (rather than comment on) adventure” (159). I also note that Douglas’ *Elle* retells *Robinson Crusoe* from a doubly marginalised perspective, from the point of view of a woman who, as a result of her island circumstances, is forced also to experience the indigenous viewpoint. Phillips states:

To unmap fundamentally the worldview of adventurers like... Robinson Crusoe, it is necessary to not only re-enter and subvert their narratives, but also to contest the terms – the language and the geography – in which those narratives are constructed... but in so doing, it is not necessary to abandon adventure; it is possible to unmap particular adventures by writing new critical adventure stories. (*Mapping Men and Empire* 152)

This particular methodology highlights the approach I undertake, in which meanings and ideologies are interrogated, and performance boundaries contested, yet the identity of the genre itself remains identifiable.

A common term associated with rewriting is “writing back” (Gilbert and Gubar;

Ashcroft, Griffiths and H. Tiffin and Lawson and C. Tiffin qtd. in Barbour 129-139; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire* 147). Weaver-Hightower associates writing back with the idea of “dismantling” tropes (3). In this sense, the rewrite uncloaks or uncovers embedded (often colonial) myth, makes it visible and in so doing divests it of power. Writing back implies responding to an original text, as if in dialogue, and thus necessitates speaking a similar language. In this way, writing back also implies a linear relationship with the original text and in that schema ‘writing forward’ would be its logical counterpart. Whilst I employ various writing back techniques, I also posit a new approach, termed “writing out”, which explicitly acknowledges relationship to the original text whilst extending beyond a mere linear and oppositional relationship to it. In contrast, writing out invites a circular, non-combative affiliation with the original work/s.

Part Two – The Historical Template

Crusoe as Masculine Hero

Even if they have not read *Robinson Crusoe*, members of the public, using a list of adjectives that have come to represent hero, can confidently depict the novel's protagonist. He is white, manly, heterosexual and usually Christian; using the commonly ascribed attributes of a hero they conjure him up as anything but ambiguous, describing him in terms of strength, action, resilience, ingenuity, resolve, bravery, and so on. The text bears these imagined readings out. That Robinson Crusoe is a hero is self-evident. The Spaniard tells Crusoe "they were all under the greatest distress imaginable" and if he would undertake their relief "they would live and die" by him (334). Crusoe's heroic status is further highlighted when the Captain, traditionally a hegemonic symbol of male power and autonomy, is "perfectly at a loss what measures to take" (350) and it is Crusoe who instructs him as to a plan of action. Crusoe clearly outranks the Captain and supersedes him in heroics when he is described as the leader or generalissimo of the combined party, itself described as an "army" (359).

Hourihan declares that the "centrality of the hero story in our culture is unarguable" and that it "inscribes the set of related concepts, the fundamental dualisms, which have shaped Western thought and values" (2). Plumwood comprehensively lists these (43) and theorises that the effect of such dualistic thinking is to "naturalise domination, for it becomes part of the identities of both the dominant and subordinate groups" (Hourihan 17). The hero predictably embodies the favoured or superior terms of these dualisms and, accordingly, is written as male, white, heterosexual, rational, civilised, ordered, self-controlled, courageous, extroverted, active, aggressive etc. By extension, the hero exerts dominance, in what is seen to be a 'natural' way, over the less valued binary state; that is, females and less manly men, indigenous peoples, homosexuals, emotion, wilderness/nature, the body, other species,

chaos—the list similarly goes on. Hourihan thus rightly maintains that the hero story “reinforce(s) the standard perceptions and prejudices of our culture” and its formulaic approach provides readers with a reassuring predictability that does not challenge our interpretative or critical skills; in particular, it assures the “...Western male reader of his innate superiority” (9).

Hence, the foundational elements of island narrative—hero and island—carry profound ideological meanings that appeal to, and shape, readers; and, in turn, this process reinforces broader cultural mores. In this way, literary notions of ‘hero’ and ‘island’ have become mythic in the way Barthes views myth, that is “transform[ing] history into nature” (129). For myth “points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us” (117). Butler reinforces this idea, “Myth justifies the way the world is, and disguises the operations of ideology” (445). If, as Hourihan attests, “no text is innocent: all stories are ideological” (4) then island narrative, and within it the adventure hero and the island, are laden with myriad, well-disguised ideologies. Therefore, in order to remake both hero and island it is also necessary to understand something of the metaphoric and ideological elements embedded within these two literary and cultural constructs.

It is unsurprising that a host of theorists identify adventure literature, *Robinson Crusoe* included, as imprinting codes of masculinity (Blackwell 1; Kestner 1; Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale* 65; Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire* 17; Weaver-Hightower 43). Blackwell bluntly declares *Robinson Crusoe* a “manly” adventure (5). Indeed, the text itself is virtually devoid of human female references, leading Green to describe it as a book in which “no woman appears and no need for a woman is felt during the more than twenty years Robinson spent on his island” (Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale* 57). This female absence, or severely marginalised presence, is contingent upon the fact of “the conceptual centre of a hero story consist[ing] of... binary oppositions” (Hourihan 15). In this manner,

Robinson Crusoe is clearly a powerful eighteenth-century repository of ideals concerning masculinity and heroism; via its textual constructs the systematic organisation of male power underpinning hegemonic masculinity preserves and invests authority in its own definitions.

Textual examples illustrating Crusoe's heroic performance in relation to my four chosen modes of heroic practice abound. Crusoe is unambiguously male and his gender is easily and unquestionably discerned, both from the text itself and via accompanying textual illustrations across various editions. Gender is strongly conveyed by Crusoe's industrious undertaking of traditionally manly pursuits—he hunts (169, 171), deforests (172, 190), manipulates the land for food production (172-175), constructs (152), explores (162) and invents (177). Despite the blatant hegemonic overlay of the text in relation to gender, Crusoe does not lack dimensionality as a character. He is variedly emotional (136, 142, 169, 367), contemplative (145), and struggles with nuanced ethical dilemmas in relation to his use of violence (345, 356, 358) and his administration of justice (369-371), plus in his pedagogical relationship with Friday (303). He is also required, driven by practical requirements of the narrative, to perform tasks traditionally associated with femininity—cooking (135, 184), sewing (197), tending himself in sickness (139)—but so pervasive and total is his heroic masculine performance that, with regards to the domestic, his masculinity is never called into question.

Crusoe is also unambiguously heterosexual. Interestingly in *Robinson Crusoe*, no female comes on to the island, precluding the commonly used device by which the castaway hero asserts his dominant masculine status via sexual conquest. Various critics have raised homoerotic questions as to Crusoe's relationship with Friday which is painted in admiring (288), often tender (292) and domestic (291) terms despite the clear power and status difference between them. But there is no definitive textual support for anything other than the celibate heterosexuality of both men over an extended period of time (as challenging as this

may be to some readers from a purely carnal perspective).

Violence is a commonplace occurrence for Crusoe the hero. It is routinely employed to procure food (112, 117, 142) and as pest control (154). However, Crusoe, having just killed a goat of necessity, does not think twice in taking the life of a parrot to demonstrate firearm usage to Friday. After coming upon the remains of a cannibal feast, Crusoe dreams often of “killing savages” (266) motivated by both self-defence and as retribution for their godless violation of European mores and taboos. In his twenty-fourth year on the island Crusoe resolves to capture a savage with the purpose of making them “slaves to me” (279), and in order to assist him to leave the island. A year and half later he gets the opportunity to put this plan into action when five canoes land and he ends up rescuing Friday (285). Later, he and Friday, employing violence, rescue Friday’s father and the Spaniard (332). Thereafter there are “continual apprehensions” (333) in maintaining his dominion of the island over which “I was the absolute lord and lawgiver” (332). There is a final violent exchange when Crusoe assists the Captain to deal with a mutinous crew. However, once again, Crusoe is not a uni-dimensional hero in this respect. With regards to the expedient option of using firearms in the denouement violence scene, “I was willing to spear them, and kill as few of them as I could, being unwilling to hazard the killing any of our men” (358). Crusoe uses violence routinely, but not wantonly.

It is in the sphere of action that Crusoe is depicted most strongly as the model hero. He rarely ceases from an almost endless activity and productivity. Kestner describes it as the “cult of action” (17). Crusoe hunts (169,171), explores (118), plants (123), salvages (133), surveys (147), forages (150), reads (140), writes (110), pots (178) and sails (201). He is mechanic (112), carpenter, excavator and timber-feller (114), candle maker (121), salvager (132), fisherman (132), basket maker (162), tailor (197) and boat builder (200). He finds “much employment” and indulges in “hard labour and constant application” (159). He remarks

of himself, “It may be observed that I was very seldom idle” (171). His capacity for action is summarised thus, “I put myself into all the same postures for an attack that I had formerly provided, and was just ready for action, if anything had presented” (280). Crusoe is never not ready for action.

We see in these four areas of traditional heroic practice that Defoe, whilst writing Crusoe as a relatively nuanced character (and moderate character with regard to sexuality and violence) gives unqualified sanction to these foundational characteristics by writing an active, heterosexual male who enacts violence. Without them, Crusoe would not be Crusoe—or properly heroic. That Defoe, and subsequent writers, construct their island adventure protagonists to be reliant upon these four characteristics demonstrates these traits were considered essential to the identity of the traditional hero. They remain so.

Crusoe also embodies the lone wolf hero. Germaine de Staël’s critique of elements in Romanticism that were “inimical to the interests of women” included “the cult of the solitary (male) hero” (qtd. in Harland 214) and Stuller notes that the “Lone Wolf” model of heroism “is rooted in traditional uber-masculinity and isolationism” (87). This heroic characteristic is a foundational feature of *Robinson Crusoe* and has profound implications, discussed later, for, amongst other things, the metaphoric deployment of island in the text.

If heroism, like masculinity, is “interpolated by cultural, historical and geographical location” (Beynon 1) then expressions of heroism may differ somewhat for subsequent island heroes compared to that embodied by Crusoe. However, these enactments remain forcefully linked, across the divides of centuries, cultural norms and geographies, by the ideas and practises of hegemonic masculinity. This enduring influence seems curious given the magnitude of intervening social and cultural change—for example, industrialisation, the rise of capitalism, feminism, and the gay movement, and a consumer and technologically driven society connected by social media. But whilst other genres such as crime, romance and

science fiction have accommodated challenges to patriarchal gender-role expectations, Santaula`Ria i Capdevila notes that “adventure remain[s] recalcitrantly impervious to change” (216). She concedes that whilst it has altered some of its narrative conventions, most notably more internalised male heroes and the addition of fantasy figure heroines (politicised visions of the “New Woman in society”) it remains “reluctant to alter its essentially masculinist policies” (223). Yet, Kestner contends that “contesting the values conveyed by the genre is not new” (2) and, in the introduction to his book, *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction: 1880-1915*, he maintains that there has been an ongoing historical subversion of the genre, a concurrent historical interrogation of codes of masculinity as well as imprinting of them, due to the fact that the masculinities depicted in adventure fiction have always been “regarded as conflicted and problematical” (2).

Cornwall and Lindisfarne in Moore argue that “there is no necessary connection between men and masculinity: in any particular context, cultural idioms and history define the categories through which gender is embodied” (3). (Two important qualifications immediately arise from this. Firstly, Hourihan’s assertion that heroism is gendered, despite appearing in direct conflict to this argument, remains coherent as both adventure fiction and the quintessential hero story have both relied upon the historical, seemingly inherent connection between men and masculinity. Secondly, there is also no similar necessary connection between women and femininity. This will be further explored in Part 3 – Rewriting.) Extending Cornwall and Lindisfarne’s thesis, it can then be argued that there is no inherent connection between men and heroism—the terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘heroism’ simply convey multiple states and ways of being which are neither fixed, natural nor innate, and both terms have become mythical in the Bartheian sense. Both are simply “performative acts”, as envisaged by Butler—a series of signs that are performed, the performance of which varies with context and is dependant, amongst other things, on who is viewing and what is at

stake (qtd. in Beynon 11). Beynon also notes, critically, that “in terms of enactment masculinity is a diverse, mobile, even unstable, construction” (2). And Andersson acknowledges that masculinities are in competition and that they are “contradictory and mutually undermining” (140). Therefore, if masculinity is unstable, conflicted and in crisis as critics contend, it logically follows that so, too, is heroism—for, as demonstrated earlier, the constructs that tenuously underpin hegemonic masculinity also, by association, underpin heroism.

The inherent instability of these fabricated constructs, the erroneous presumption of their solidity, and the blurred boundaries produced by contestation, renders them in radical flux and so malleable. It is not at all unthinkable, in a context of crisis and its resultant fluidity, that hegemonic constructions under stress might completely fall apart. Heroism could thus be reshaped and/or completely dissociated from masculinity.

Toerien and Durrheim view masculinity as a “field of conflict that men have to traverse in a quest for coherence” (36). I argue that the twenty-first century has inherited a raft of perhaps increasingly ‘incoherent heroes’, outmoded male adventurers written for another time and place. New performances are not only possible, they are called for. The values and mores of the twenty-first century radically differ from those of the late nineteenth century. To have an island adventure hero who still believes in the superiority of the favoured binaries on which he was originally constructed perpetuates a twenty-first century version of colonisation that has problematic effects both for the reader and the world.

Woolf notes that “values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction” (74) and a similarly reversible relationship exists (neatly evidenced by the pedagogic purposes to which, historically, *Robinson Crusoe* was systematically put)—values are transferred from fiction to life. Thus, we continue to see modern day ‘heroic’ behaviour, not necessarily in literature but in the ‘real world’, that is still, at heart, if not colonising, then certainly power hungry,

dismissive of rights and equities, disrespectful of diversity and intent on hegemonic perpetuation. It was, amongst other complex causes, heroic notions of corporate gain and corporate glory, colonising in ethos and practice (and neatly summarised in the film documentary *Inside Job*), which fuelled the global financial crisis of 2008. Heroic notions of justice fuelled the carnage of 9/11. And in adventure fiction, heroes continue to indulge in quaint or beyond-belief escapades that “impose the values of the culture of mastery” (Hourihan 2003). Relatively unchanged, they continue to demonstrate how to get the loot and get the girl at the expense of someone or something else.

Returning to the four domains of traditional heroic behaviour discussed in *Robinson Crusoe*, to continue to write heroes who believe in the supremacy of maleness and heterosexuality, who use violence as a ready means to solve conflict and who incessantly ‘act’ (perform/do/manufacture/kill), is to perpetuate an outmoded construct that risks creating a mere, though potentially dangerous, caricature—a bit like James Bond. There is clearly a limited role for a Robinson Crusoe type hero in a post-colonial world and the perpetuation of such an island adventure hero invites, amongst other things, continued inequality, environmental degradation, and suffering. As a result of the hero’s actions, those colonised are limited and bound in myriad ways, notably with regard to rights and freedoms. But suffering is not limited to just those dominated by the hero. The hero, too, is equally bound and equally limited in inverse reciprocal ways, not least with regards to his own capacity for rounded self-expression, and for constructive activity in the world.

It is the inherent crisis of the masculine island hero and his outdated heroism that enables the birth of a new, more liberated, culturally congruent heroic identity. Fittingly and humorously for a genre that formulaically requires an action response to a crisis, the hero is currently being called to respond to a crisis like no other—the crisis of his own identity! And therein lies potent scope, recalling Zweig’s definition, for an anarchic, if not heroic, rewrite

via which the hero escapes from a bound historic state. These changes are possible because of the problematisation of both hegemonic masculinity and heroism—it is the anxiety, shakiness and contestation, and the fluidity resulting from these, which enable metamorphosis.

The Separate, Contained and Limited Island

Whilst ‘hero’ is imbued with masculine ideologies, Hay says that ‘island’ does not have “a single metaphoric connotation” (*A Phenomenology of Islands* 27). However, like the hero and the hero story, the motif of island is also central to western culture, leading Hay to reflect that “the metaphoric deployment of ‘island’ is, in fact, so enduring, all-pervading and commonplace that a case could reasonably be made for it as *the* central metaphor within western discourse” (*A Phenomenology of Islands* 26). Island and island metaphor, like the castaway hero, are deeply embedded in our consciousness. Hince observes, however, that prevailing Western views regarding islands are not necessarily universally shared (26).

Unlike the singular limitation of heroic identity, the island can be conceived as a “convenient platform for any whim or fancy” (Baldacchino 165). In literature, islands represent many things or states: they are “freeze frames for history” (Polack 218), “tips of hills based deep in the oceans of subconsciousness” (Waterson 273), places of “origin and rebirth and of stultifying and fatal stagnation” (Williams and Hay 10). Equally, they can be “quaint bastions of conformity and antique traditions, savage gardens of sexual delight, archetypes of human adaptation, social backwaters, impoverished step-children of colonial empires...” (Terrell 7). Islands are often stand-ins for states of loss, exile and isolation; they are depicted as prisons or utopias, and can represent psychological remoteness or radical individualism (Hay, *A Phenomenology of Islands* 27).

What is starkly apparent is that these metaphoric uses of island are blatantly rooted in dualisms. Perhaps this is why the island metaphor is so attractive to western discourse—

because it encapsulates our most fundamental way of thinking. The island, or so it appears, can be written as starkly one thing or the other. And, in making it what we want, either this or that, prison or paradise, utopia or dystopia, the island complies without ambiguity. To illustrate this, Beer summarises two potential island states:

One prominent metaphor based around the figure of the heroically resourceful castaway links the island trope to ideological discourses of radical individualism, wherein the uniquely gifted and courageous individual rises above the constraints imposed by the mediocrity of the many. (16)

Robinson Crusoe is one such character, and in his success at creating an island utopia the text can be interpreted as radical political comment by Defoe upon, amongst other things, colonisation (Weaver-Hightower 10) and a “dissenter’s criticism of institutionalised religion” (Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire* 262).

However, Hay continues, and in so doing highlights the island’s paradoxical malleability: “But the island abstraction can also connote the precise opposite, serving as a metaphor for a lost relationship between the individual and community.” He further notes that “through the man-against-nature and man-against-society heroism, the island metaphor is wedded not just to conservatism but to masculinity” (*A Phenomenology of Islands* 27-28).

In the *Robinson Crusoe* text what is unambiguous is that the island is *separate*. Separation for islands is, like the masculine identity of the hero, entirely naturalised in Barthes’ mythic sense. Greene concurs: “The dichotomy between islands and continents is a feature of the modern worldview that is so entirely naturalised, it comes to seem inseparable from the world itself—from the way things are” (140). Little wonder then, that the separate island with its defined parameters and clear aquatic (or is that terrestrial?) border seems to be an irrefutable, unquestionable counterpoint to the amorphous mainland.

To my mind it is the island’s very geographic definition—its discrete borders and

unambiguous parameters—which make it so malleable with regard to meaning and ideology. As readers of a text, we value this clarity. For when readers know where the imaginative and metaphoric bounds are, we more comfortably collude with not only the demarcations of imaginative space but the acts that happen therein. When Crusoe tells us the island is “horrid” (100) and “unhappy” (146) and how his head “ran mightily upon the thoughts of getting to that other shore” (188), thus implying the mainland’s adjectival opposition, our dualistic worldview is reassuringly upheld.

But it does not always follow that how we write the island then constitutes a constant identity. For within a single novel, in the parlance of duality, ‘this’ can easily become ‘that’; and what allows that metamorphosis is, once again, the boundary. We can name and make the spaces within island borders *anything*, as long as there is a counterpoint, a counter-place or counter-state against which it is defined, an ‘other’ place that is *not* like that. Thus Crusoe’s island can metamorphose from horrid and barren (83) to “...exceedingly pleasant [and] fruitful” (232) in a way that is more difficult for the fixed mainland.

As readers, we are reassured by this seemingly irrefutable demarcation and containment, and its attendant clarity, which are provided by the island’s borders. These allow us, devoid of the usual crippling anxiety associated with transgression, to assent to taboo, amongst other things. In island narratives, protagonists *can* descend into violence or madness or violate any of the other sacrosanct cultural norms (go ‘native’ for example, or female Robinsons can assume conventionally ‘masculine’ characteristics)—for they and their behaviours are contained. The ‘aberrations’ won’t leach out and spread, virus-like, to infect the privileged binary state, the normalcy of which is uncontested; according to the conventions of castaway fiction, the protagonist will revert to ‘normal’ once off the island. Crusoe, without qualm, abandons notions of being the king or emperor he had once declared himself once he leaves the island (194), as such a mantle would clearly transgress mainland rules.

Hegemonic norms—the artificial privilege on which masculinity, heterosexuality and heroism are based—can remain uncontested by virtue of island boundaries, no matter what the hero actually does whilst on the island.

It is this very containment of islands that allows them, like masculinities, to be viewed, according to Fletcher, as “performative geographies” in which “the meaning of islands is not so much apprehended as produced through language. This is an approach to thinking about islands that refuses to conceive of their meaning as fixed and stable” (27). The island boundary, the limits of the performance ‘stage’, if you like, is what permits such metaphoric malleability and results in such wonderfully diverse and divergent island performances.

The particular island performance I wish to explore, in relation to the rules set by *Robinson Crusoe* and broken by “Ile du Coeur” via its denouement, is that in which the island is written as a discrete and separate landmass representing a bound and limited self. This performance relies for its thesis upon defined and clear edges, and this particular metaphoric deployment also usefully serves hegemonic notions of masculine heroic performance—for it mirrors the hero as ‘lone wolf’ in which he is clearly an independent and autonomous subject entity.

Crusoe is undoubtedly a manly and isolated eighteenth-century lone wolf hero, and the island is clearly employed to symbolically replicate his separateness and independence. This is evidenced when Crusoe, having survived the shipwreck, makes it a priority to know where he is: “where I was I yet knew not; whether on the continent or on an island...” (83). The primary concern is if he is still connected to the mainland or is separate. He determines an answer via a standard island narrative trope, the “Monarch-of-all-I-survey” moment (Weaver-Hightower 9):

I travelled for discovery to the top of that hill; where... I saw my fate to my great affliction, namely, that I was in an island environed every way with the sea, no land to be seen, except some rocks which lay a great way off, and two small islands less than this, which lay about three leagues to the west. (83)

In *Robinson Crusoe* there is no ambiguity, whatsoever, in relation to edge. The island is unambiguously separate to the mainland and Crusoe is therefore unambiguously alone. The boundaries of performative space are clearly defined and as readers we know that Crusoe is physically and emotionally separate. Interestingly, Crusoe notes there is no land despite the fact there are other landmasses [islands] to be seen because any landform other than that of the dominant mainland is, in the dualistic hierarchy, of no consequence. Similarly, he is alone despite the company of his “family” (153)—which extends to goats, cats, a dog and a parrot—also of little hierarchical consequence.

As a separate, lone wolf hero, Crusoe’s heroic mission is to survive and then to thrive by virtue of domination over external ‘others’, be they Friday, resources, the environment, foreign intruders, less educated men or the Spaniard. This dualistic worldview necessitates his quick determination of not only the lay of the geographic terrain, but also “whether inhabited or not inhabited, whether in danger of wild beasts or not” (83). That is, Crusoe calculates the territory of privilege. This quest to know his own status and place is imperative for a solitary hero removed from external validations of hegemonic privilege such as other individual men, texts (other than Crusoe’s Bible) and society, for example; if he is not located on the privileged side of the binary he is not heroic. And, if he is located in the inferior position, the less privileged state, he must immediately set about usurping the other in order to regain status and the known identity. To remain in an in-between state of uncertainty is anathema—anxiety and traditional heroism are inimical; not only is uncertainty personally uncomfortable, it also threatens foundational hegemonic heroic identity. Thus, Crusoe sets

out to maintain and fortify each area of privilege, and for each area of non-privilege he will act or fight, including using violence, so that he secures the privileged position. Clearly, the underlying mission for the conventional hero is none other than the maintenance of male privilege.

As mentioned previously, Crusoe does provide for himself admirably, and, in classic heroic fashion he not only survives but flourishes. In this he is so successful that he creates a complete and independent kingdom over which he is sovereign lord (218). In this way, Crusoe is written as separate to the island itself. He cannot afford to see it as part of himself nor feel kinship with it for if he did he would put at risk his privileged binary position. Were he to see it as a self-existing, autonomous identity, then the island would become capable of undermining his hegemonic privilege and so his heroic identity.

Crusoe's island adventure, therefore, occurs in linear, chronological time and in a place that is written as separate. His discrete, independent, hyper-individualised state creates a normalcy regarding colonisation in which it is seen as natural that the remote and separate island and 'others' on it—Friday, Polly, and the Spaniard for example (any separate, self-less, objectified 'other', remote, in terms of relationship and experience from the hero)—can be manipulated to the hero's own end. This end, ultimately, is to maintain his own subjectivity. Thus can the island, and those on it, be colonised.

Defoe posits the island as not only physically separate, an inferior other to be colonised, but also paints the island entity and Crusoe's separation on it as intrinsically associated with limitation. To be on an island, "environed every way with sea" (83) is to be, effectively, bound—the term conjuring negative connotations. (This state is intentionally replicated, in the first instance, in the text of "Ile du Coeur" but is later transformed.) This separation, this loss of privilege, is something akin to an illness. It is an "affliction" (83) and an act not chosen but visited upon him which causes distress. Here, Defoe's language and

inference highlights the common association between islandness and limitation or restriction.

Earlier I discussed the mandatory pairing of hero and island. This usage of island as a bound and limited self in *Robinson Crusoe* replicates an unconscious defining characteristic concerning not just the psychological self of Crusoe and other island heroes, but specifically, too, about the entity of hero. Not only is the hero separate but he, too, is limited or bound both psychologically and emotionally. Walter Herbert, quoted in Weaver-Hightower, argues that males perceive their “self as psychologically enclosed” and “patrol the boundaries of the self more anxiously” (54). The lone wolf hero, represented by Crusoe, is unable to reach out to others in any equitable form, unable to achieve unity with the external other, is unable to sustain a non-heroic quotidian place upon his eventual return to the mainland.

However, theorists (Bongie 18; Edmond and Smith qtd. in Sudo 132; Baldacchino 165 et al) have highlighted that island identity is neither stable nor fixed, rather it is also contested and fluid, similar to the fluidity of the hero in crisis. Hay terms this “the contested status of the edge” (*A Phenomenology of Islands* 21). This state of flux both invites and permits the rewrite attempted in “Ile du Coeur”; there is fertile potential for malleability in performances of island imagery and meaning which could liberate both hero and island from their bound and limited states.

Part Three – Rewriting in “Ile du Coeur”

Writing Out – Embracing yet Beyond écriture féminine

Semantics and linguistics are of utmost importance to any project of rewriting because historically, in a similar way to which masculinity was inextricably linked with heroism, patriarchal values were also seamlessly embedded in both language and concept. Early feminist writers and theorists such as Woolf and de Beauvoir raised this issue; their theories were formulated prior to Butler’s concept of masculinity as a performative act dependent on context, and the then incontrovertible link between females and femininity was in a very early phase of contestation via Existentialist philosophy.

Woolf’s counteractive imperative to female writers was to write *as a woman*. Such an edict ensures a female-authored island narrative will thus be substantially different to that authored by male writers. For if, as Woolf wrote, sentences themselves had been “made by men out of their own needs for their own uses” and were sentences that were “unsuited for a woman’s use” (77), and given the fact (detailed earlier) that adventure fiction has remained relatively slow to culturally metamorphose, then the question should be asked—what sort of language might now be employed to write the adventure hero of contemporary island fiction?

Cixous further progressed this project of écriture féminine. Having considered literary history she notes, “it is all the same story. It all comes back to man... There is an intrinsic connection between the philosophical and the literary (to the extent that it conveys meaning, literature is under the command of the philosophical) and the phallogocentric” (65). How, Cixous asks, may the language of the feminine be recovered or invented? Questions thus abound, and if, as Morgan maintains, “the postcolonial task and the discourse of écriture féminine share... the need for a similarly dramatic revision of history... and a rewriting of literature” (82) then what will the new island story, paying attention to the language and

philosophy that underpins both the hero and the genre, look, feel and sound like? What effect will it have on readers of any and all genders?

In addition to overt and robust commonplace contestation of the historically indisputable connection between men and masculinity, and women and femininity, I argue that perhaps what is fundamentally lacking in writing back attempts within Western literature is a movement away from the dualistic basis that underpins phallogentric thought. Not even the invention of a new women's language, as in the case of Suzette Elgin's *Ladaan*, a direct and literal response to Woolf's and Cixous' invitations (qtd. in Jones and Singh 7-8), necessarily succeeds if it relies upon these original Aristotelian/Platonic roots. For writing that remains couched within the fundamental philosophical underpin of dualism cannot but help replicate power structures inimical to the interests of not only women but also to twenty-first century heroes of any gender.

Clearly, however, "*Ile du Coeur*" does not employ a new lexicon. As in the case of other writing back efforts it, too, uses existing language and, like them, involves a differing approach to the language used—that is, careful choice of individual words and precise intent of those words' meaning. However, in "*Ile du Coeur*'s" silence scene the philosophy that underpins the language of the original text is completely undone (see discussion below). To reflect this difference 'writing out' is the term I have coined to describe the process trialled in "*Ile du Coeur*". That both processes, writing back and writing out, reference an original text is indisputable. However, writing out suggests a freedom from linear and oppositional relationships and posits a circular, non-combative affiliation with the original text. And whilst a new language is not developed in "*Ile du Coeur*", writing out does suggest that the further one moves away from the original text the development of a new dialect becomes possible—a currency of language and meaning that, whilst rooted in the language of the original text, ventures into philosophical newness.

Writing out could be likened to a ripple effect and is best imagined by picturing stones of story dropped into a narrative/genre pond. In the context of this exegesis, *Robinson Crusoe* lies massively and centrally, and examples of rewrites—*Robinson, Friday, Moses Ascending, Elle, Foe* and “Ile du Coeur”—lie at varying positions of closeness or distance to it depending on the criteria of measure, be they date of publication or narrative subversion or contestation of terms. But unlike a sequential trail of rewrites, writing out suggests equally a momentum away from the original text and a movement into new non-linear territory as it does a referencing back. Unlike traditional writing back efforts which seek to distance themselves from the original text and are written from an opposing standpoint, “Ile du Coeur” clearly distances itself from *Robinson Crusoe* whilst simultaneously acknowledging, *enjoying*, and being curious as to its legacy from, and debt to, this text.

What appeals about this approach, and marks it as different, is the notion of space that simultaneously incorporates yet exceeds the boundaries of former related texts. This spaciousness implies an intellectual/cultural/political freedom to cross and blur traditional boundaries. Part of “Ile du Coeur’s” spaciousness lies in its promulgation of ideas as opposed to ideologies. It intentionally seeks to avoid replacing one ‘ism’ (colonialism for example) with another (feminism for example). According to Hawken, “ideas question and liberate, whilst ideologies justify and dictate” (16). Ideologies are borne of dualism, ideas can transcend it. Utilising this approach, what “Ile du Coeur” (still employing the same language) points to is a fertile trans-gender and trans-heroic space. It is neither Freud or Lacan’s ‘lack’ (respectively qtd. in Tolpin 169 and Braunstein 110) or Cixous’ ‘lack of lack’ (Morgan 81), but a spacious performance, both hybrid and new, that is yet to be fully written into. Writing out is therefore metamorphic—of the old into a new, more relevant form even if the new form is not yet able to be accurately named. Each effort is part of an ongoing process/landscape as opposed to an achieved and finite state. In this way, writing out suggests

both evolution and revolution.

If rewriting is to write with difference, and if part of contemporary difference is a quest for spaciousness borne from the fluidity of blurring boundaries, I have employed two main strategies to achieve this when it comes to island narrative. One is to contest and destabilise the characteristic elements of island narrative. The second is to attempt to destabilise the dualistic thought that underpins Western language itself.

Trope Destabilisation

With regard to restructuring familiar elements of the genre, Margery Hourihan's work is of special relevance and necessitates a brief description.

Change to the hero story can be achieved most simply, Hourihan maintains, by inverting the pairs of binary oppositions that underpin both the genre tropes and the identity of hero (16). Thus, a male protagonist becomes female, reason become irrationality, order becomes chaos and so on. In "Ile du Coeur" the technique of inversion has been employed to break some of the rules made by Defoe's text without losing genre congruence. For example, dominant gender is inverted—the protagonist is female. Dominant sexuality has been inverted—the protagonist is homosexual. Whilst some elements can clearly be inverted, it is possibly self-evident to state that some cannot. For example, Connolly must still be marooned on an island, for to be marooned on the mainland would undercut the very basis of island fiction.

However, "the trouble with a dualism is that if you simply turn it on its head it is still a dualism" (Plumwood 3). This fact invites a more subtle and challenging approach to re-writing in which elements of the story are not simply inverted but are, in Hourihan's terms, subverted. However, the experience of writing "Ile du Coeur" demonstrated just how difficult it is to truly subvert binary pairs. What was more achievable was a corruption or

destabilisation of standard elements, a partial subversion if you like.

Hourihan insightfully notes inversion readily lends itself to parody and if one does not wish to intentionally pursue the parodic path, then an alternative to inversion is required. For those binary tropes, essential for genre congruence, that cannot be inverted (lack of inhabitants, for example), this second ‘corruption’ approach proves very useful. The most common form of corruption used in the “Ile du Coeur” text is questioning and contesting the clarity and stringency of the binary opposition boundaries themselves—my aim was to blur boundaries as a means of questioning the solidity of the binary identities and the constructions that underlie them. The technique promotes an uncertainty and attendant spaciousness by which new heroic identities might metamorphose out of the old monolithic, hegemonic heroic performance. For those elements that it was not possible to either invert or blur their boundaries, the alternative technique was to subtly corrupt the actual identity of the element itself. For example, island cannot be inverted nor its conventional physical boundaries effectively tampered with, however the very identity of island itself can be metaphorically rewritten. Following are examples of rewriting technique and effect in “Ile du Coeur”.

With regard to the original list of island narrative tropes, the majority of island protagonists are *marooned* on their island by the forces of fate, and usually whilst on a voyage which is effectively a mission of colonisation, or, at least, material self-gain. Unusually, Connolly chooses to go to an island voluntarily, thus removing herself from the dominant power locus characteristic of the traditional mainland, and thereby critiquing what Roland Greene describes as the “the accumulating and totalising worldview of the imperial and economic centres” (141). She is marooned on Ile du Coeur by force of will alone and chooses to stay on the island and embrace the experience of becoming ‘other’. Bravery, courage and resilience are thus garnered for not only the physical perils of isolation but for

the mental and emotional challenges of aloneness. Radically, for an adventure hero, her unquestionably adventurous mission is motivated not by external gain or conquest. Rather, the intent of her voyage is a voyage purely of self-discovery—it is one of self-colonisation, as opposed to the colonisation of the subjective other in *Robinson Crusoe*. Heroism, in this text, thus becomes associated with choice, self-knowledge and self-mastery.

With regard to *living off wits*, the trope of self-sufficiency and manipulation of the land and its bounty is severely undercut. The fact that Connolly inherits the sealers' hut and lemon tree, and comes prepared with provisions, materials and equipment, is a direct political comment on the current schism between nature and humanity. She has lost the capacity of Crusoe to grow, make and invent as her milieu is the material and technologically driven twenty-first century. That said, Connolly, to a far more limited extent than Crusoe, does live off the land in a traditionally heroic manner. She conducts a share of the requisite hunting, shooting and fishing, and, in so doing, the notion of these being traditionally and exclusively manly pursuits is undermined. However, what is apparent to the reader is that it is practicality combined with emotional intelligence that will assist Connolly's survival, and by inference, whilst aspects of the traditional heroic skill set will always remain relevant and useful in traditional adventure settings, a new set of skills is required of the contemporary hero.

As to *perilous situations*, unlike the traditional text, where all action and happenings are in present time and 'real', Connolly's sojourn on Ile du Coeur is largely an exercise of the mind. Whilst the bar presents a very real and physical outer threat to be overcome, the heroic journey is predominantly, but not exclusively, internal. The 'monsters' are those of Connolly's mind and past, and include her regret at harms caused and her inability to love unconditionally (16, 17, 28). The quintessential, requisite appearance of a pirate occurs. However, the pirate is female, homosexual and recalled only through memory (14, 29). The only tangible intruder is the boat builder (45). Rather than being expectedly male, this

intruder is female. True to standard tropes she is “exotic” or other—she is dark-skinned and English is not her first language. However, the boat builder is an ally rather than a threat, and rather than embodying the passive feminine, she is independent, autonomous, and a skilled expert; her skills exceed those of Connolly’s and in her handling of the bar she is clearly far more heroic. The boat builder’s primary sphere is not the domestic, although, seen cooking dinner, she is clearly comfortable both domestically and in the externalised domains traditionally associated with heroic masculinity. Unlike a traditional island narrative, Connolly does not exert dominance over the visitor, nor is she recognised by the visitor as having sovereignty over the island. It is the visitor who holds the power, which she uses to benefit Connolly.

Whilst there is a sexual undertone to some of the interactions between the boat builder and Connolly (50, 51), unlike traditional island narratives it is intentionally written that Connolly does not sexually dominate the visitor, despite Connolly’s sexual history that infers promiscuity and a history of sexual conquest commonly associated with ‘masculine’ sexuality.

True to genre form, Connolly employs *empirical observation* early in her island stay. She walks about the island with a map in hand and matches landscape to cartographic depiction. However, this trope is destabilised, and the anxiety surrounding some of the genre’s hegemonic underpinnings is alluded to, when the text explicitly highlights the disjunct between empiricism and Connolly’s inability to make sense of experience.

“Replication—actuality. Theory—experience. One simple, the other complex. And her rising sense of distress as she looked at both and knew she lay somewhere in between” (17-18).

The trope of *force* is foregrounded throughout the entire text of “Ile du Coeur” by virtue of the protagonist’s almost obsessive regret with harms historically enacted and a desire to desist from perpetrating future harm. The two instances where force is used destabilise the standard usage in that Connolly kills the kangaroo motivated by a desire to

benefit the animal, to end rather than inflict suffering (38), plus symbolically self sacrifices (a literary nod to the trope of fear of islander cannibalism) as the ultimate twenty-first century heroic act—the relinquishing of ego (53-54).

Rescue usually signifies closure of the island story. Contrary to tradition, Connolly does not get rescued; she has to ‘rescue’ herself. Rather than this being the ultimate extension of the lone wolf mode of heroism, this reworked device signifies a true resolution of her internal dilemma as, in effect, she will only succeed in getting herself off the island when she has undergone the necessary internal transformations that permit her the courage to do so. The boat builder’s refusal to take Connolly off the island also destabilises the expected, standard cooperative relationship between two females. It is only the resolution of Connolly’s internal dilemma of how to love, discovered via a symbolic egoic self-sacrifice, which gifts her courage necessary to risk the bar (54-55). It is this sequence of events that particularly highlights the notion, and nature, of a twenty-first century heroism not tied to masculinity. It clearly differs from Crusoe’s heroism which is largely motivated purely by self-survival and various forms of hegemonic replication.

The prize—usually treasure or the girl—is not represented in the traditional external manner. Rather the text alludes to the prize being internal and, in this instance, is the development of a capacity to love altruistically, which necessitates the ‘loss’ of Connolly’s egoic self upon which the traditional heroic self is founded: “One did not just break down there but necessarily shattered. And if one should miraculously return from that deep it would be bearing the most beautiful but endlessly burdensome of pearls, of prizes. For one could never turn away again” (37).

This breaks the rules set by *Robinson Crusoe* in that the reward, paradoxically, appears to be a non-reward, or loss. Hegemony is premised upon the maintenance and fortification of ego. Readers know that Connolly will not be hegemonically rewarded nor

applauded when she returns to the metropolis, because this type of prize, and the knowledge and resultant actions that stem from it, will lead to a seemingly perennial location, from a dualistic perspective, in the place of a non-privileged other. To applaud it would threaten hegemonic masculinity and heroism and the values of mastery over other that these entail. Carried to its full extent, collective egoic ‘death’ would lead to the extinction of hegemonic privilege overall.

These trope inversions and destabilisations clearly displace the rules of island narrative and begin to invite new readings, both of the island hero and notions of heroism.

Destabilising the Hero: Connolly – A New Performance

Rewritten, the incarcerated hero is freed from the prison of a limited, outmoded identity. Accordingly, “Ile du Coeur” presents an alternative hero, Connolly. In the four focus areas of heroic identity and practice—gender, heterosexuality, violence and action—Connolly’s performance differs markedly from that of Crusoe.

With regard to *gender*, Connolly has an androgynous name. It is hard to identify and categorise her gender from nomenclature alone and, intentionally, there are no physical descriptions of her except a passing acknowledgement of her hair having grown (40). In the space left by descriptor omission, the reader must fill in the gaps, relying on the character’s actions and speech alone; and hopefully be challenged regarding gender constructs in so doing.

A significant corpus of eighteenth-century female Robinsonades in German literature has been detailed by Jeannine Blackwell (5-26) and Weaver-Hightower notes that in female Robinsonades:

It is typical in pre-twentieth-century female narratives to show the female castaway becoming temporarily masculinised and losing the trappings of femininity during her experience on the island, as if required to internalise all of the rules of self-discipline

presented in male Robinsonades in order to enjoy patriarchal rewards. (57)

Weaver-Hightower notes that females then relegate these traits once rescued. However, Connolly and the boat builder exhibit characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity—courage, captaincy and competency in physical tasks and trades for example—prior to coming to the island and we are left in no doubt that they will continue to exhibit them on leaving the island.

In “Ile du Coeur” hegemonic masculinity is no longer privileged but neither is masculinity discarded. The only highlighted male presences on the island, apart from Reuben, are Scott and the ‘ghost’ of Crusoe. Mentions of Crusoe are simultaneously inclusive yet questioning, levelling and interrogative—particularly with regard to his relationship to the island and other forms of life (10-12). “Ile du Coeur” references the fact that, in some respect, Crusoe never made it off the island; a remnant textual version of him forever influences subsequent ‘castaways’, Connolly included. He is there beside her and she, like every castaway who came after him, is never truly alone. “Connolly lay her hand flat on the sand, no longer listening to the echoes of Crusoe’s ghost but to the land” (11).

However, Connolly disavows Crusoe’s heroic template, and acknowledges what Crusoe could not and did not—that a lone wolf hero is an impossibility, a figment of orthodox masculine imagination designed to cement his hegemonic reputation. “How unlike she and Crusoe were! And yet islands, words and memory joined them... A line of tangled history running forwards and backwards down the ages, linking her to him, him to her” (12). “Ile du Coeur” then invites an extended or new heroic performance when Connolly clearly intends change. “A line. In her hands now” (12).

The character of Scott is a more complex portrait. He represents the ‘old’ heroic and its mission of empire, and is written as a remnant of his former heroic self, with that self/identity in constant decay (39). Symbolically, the old heroic Scott represents is depicted

by way of ‘mask’, insinuating that traditional heroism is perhaps an adopted heroic persona, a type of suspect or fake performance. The ambiguity written into Scott’s articulations—does he or does he not speak?—ensures the reader gets to determine how ‘alive’ traditional heroism remains.

Scott is necessary from a practical narrative standpoint alone—he is, for Connolly, “a ready recipient of a dissociated ego state that manifests as the dialogic Other” (Ingram 1); without him, it would be difficult to sustain a reader’s attention for fifty pages of largely internal monologue. More importantly, Scott further links Connolly to Crusoe in an ongoing chain of heroic history. My employment of him as an artefact teacher, a type of antique signpost, functions to articulate and remind Connolly (and so the reader) of the limitations of traditional heroism in the real world (as opposed to Crusoe’s heroism in the fictional realm). In this way, traditional heroism itself is written as a frozen and limited remnant—a partial heroism only.

However, “Ile du Coeur” does not pit the old heroic against the new in simplistic, and blatantly dualistic, terms. Whilst Scott and his heroism may appear redundant (and by extension, so is Crusoe’s) there is a role for this old heroic. Scott, undoubtedly, has much to offer and teach Connolly—the more he decays (in this instance a representation of egoic death) the more accessible and heartfelt he becomes. He offers insights into types of love he experienced and from which he benefitted (39). He advocates the necessity of that perennially relevant and true heroic attribute, endurance. He describes why he is committed now to silence, cautioning Connolly against following his same path where the journey was outward only. He “wanted to tell her to conquer herself, not some far flung land; and he will not budge one inch, now, until he has done just that. Will not risk one more venture until he truly knows himself” (39). In this way, aspects of traditional heroism are depicted as useful, and traditional heroism is written as being open to evolutionary possibility. However, it is clear

that traditional heroism, founded on mastery over others, remains essentially limited. For Scott retains the fearfulness borne of duality (on which his heroic self is still founded) and resists metamorphosis; he cautions Connolly against seeking a means to love in a completely altruistic way when he wants to “shield her eyes from the onslaught of suffering that the world, relieved and desperate, would throw at one who foolishly pursued such a query” (36). Unlike Connolly, Scott (the old heroic) does not have the ability to take his knowledge to the mainland where it can be productive and of benefit in the ‘real world’, and readers infer that he, and thus the stagnant features of the old heroic, will forever remain on the island, further diminishing with time (27).

Traditionally, male adventure heroes, products of hegemonic masculinity, are *heterosexual*. The protagonist of “Ile du Coeur” is unambiguously homosexual. However, hegemonically fixed boundaries regarding sexuality are further contested; it is inferred Connolly has had sex with men in the past, and in the fact that the self-proclaimed heterosexual boat builder might feel some degree of attraction to Connolly (50-51). Scott, as is appropriate to the old heroic, is heterosexual but his sexual expression whilst in the field is questioned by Connolly and by extension, so is Crusoe’s relationship to Friday, “wondering even as she said it if Scott, outside in the snow away from the hut, ever got down on his knees for Bowers or Evans or, on some lonely voyage, took it up the arse for release, connection, revenge, love, or one of the myriad, rarely simple reasons humans couple” (28-29). The mythic relationship between heterosexuality and maleness/heroism is destabilised and the reader invited to question heteronormal rules regarding definitions and boundaries of sexuality and sexual expression. In these ways, in “Ile du Coeur”, Phillips’ project of unmapping adventure, whereby the “powerful cartographic logic that relies on the familiar binary of local/global and ascribes [sexual] identity to fixed places” (Wilson 559) potentially succeeds.

In “Ile du Coeur” there are no calls to *violence* by virtue of external events as is customary in castaway narrative, and in this the inference is that both the call and means of violence is, in origin, internal to the character, and so the character must take responsibility for both the impulse and any ensuing action. Having alluded to harms done from a violent past and her regret for such actions, Connolly eschews violence. However, the trope is referenced via the dilemma of using violent means to relieve the kangaroo of its suffering (38). This allows my notion of ‘heroic intention’, an essential pre-requisite for a twenty-first century hero, to be foregrounded—that seeming ‘violence’ may be mitigated by intent. In this Connolly is similar to Crusoe whose usage of violence presented him (in relation to the savages), as it does her (in relation to the kangaroo), with an ethical dilemma. However, she, and thus the new heroism, differs from Crusoe in that violence is used to benefit others rather than protecting and furthering patriarchal interests. This is best illustrated in the ‘self sacrifice’ scene (itself a corruption of the trope of cannibalism) in which Connolly appears to perform a masochistic violence upon herself (53-54) but which actually conveys the egoic self-sacrificing lengths to which a twenty-first century hero must go in addressing the needs of the post-dualistic whole, “the ever hungry” future (54) rather than perpetuating self-interest and egoic fortification, and so the privilege of hegemony.

It is with regard to *action* that Connolly most differs from Crusoe. Like him, she shoots, hunts and fishes (7), sails (5), enjoys geographic freedoms (11, 12) and lacks a traditionally female association with domesticity (22), but neither is she the consummate utilitarian that Crusoe is. Rather, her intent is to divest herself of the ceaseless movement and activities (including adventuring) that have resulted in her perpetuating harm to others and which have led to her current existential discontent. Consequently, her time on the island, whilst marked by the activities required by basic physical survival, is devoted to contemplation and introspection in a variety of forms. Notably, however, this type of non-

action is not a passive act in the traditional sense. Whilst such studied deliberations appear to be the antithesis of action, are associated with internalisation, and employ stillness, they are, in reality, active, dynamic states with productive outcomes. With reference to Dowdell's tradition of the American hermit, Connolly, as temporary 'hermit' "can serve a public and political role by exemplifying a stance of studied deliberation" (138) and exists, usefully for the purposes of this exegesis, "...precariously at the boundary between solitude and society, public and private..." (122). It is this type of 'discovery' or 'exploration' mode, precariously sited, as it is, between dualistic extremes, that is consciously employed by Connolly and which culminates in the novel's denouement, the silence scene (55-56).

Via these processes of inversion, boundary contestation and corruption of identities, heroism in "Ile du Coeur" is freed, according to Pearson and Pope, from "the limiting assumptions about appropriate female and male behaviour" and becomes a step towards "defining a truly human—and humane—pattern of heroic action" (5). In particular, Connolly's performance of the latter two heroic characteristics (violence and action) have corresponding implication for the hero's relationship to the island and to the island's historic written identity as separate and bound, for her performance, unlike Crusoe's, is a connection predicated upon mutual relationship.

The Silence Scene

At first it was not silence Connolly heard, but the chatter of her own ceaseless thoughts. Then it was silence, broad, hollow and unyielding, in which she felt cold and lost and desolate. Then it was a silence deafening and frightening. She resisted the urge to flee. If Scott could bear it, so could she.

Then it became the sound of Scott in his wisdom.

Then even Scott fell silent and it became the pulsing tones of the ocean slipping in and

out and the gulls keening a curious and beautiful song of welcome and farewell and setting out and return. It was the grasses in the dunes behind living and dying, and the sound of the great expanse overhead believing in and rebirthing itself time and time again.

It was the moon arcing its way across the night time sky, which in turn wheeled and spun magnificently and then it was the moon passing its baton to the sun which blazed gloriously and furiously on its stellar mission and then died a splendid and silent death.

And then even the elements themselves shushed and the silence was pure, vast and luminously empty. It was nothing and it was everything. The sound of all laments lay therein and the sound of all joys inextricably linked into this one endless soundlessness. And within it the island's separateness was mere surface and watery illusion. For it was joined, as everything was joined.

Scott and Connolly sat unmoving before this searing display that was, above all else, peaceful and kind. Until, finally, they were of it, too, and it became the most expansive, profound and simplest of silences. (55-56)

The silence scene is the section of the “Ile du Coeur” text where I feel I have most pushed the boundaries of rewriting. For what became starkly clear in the process of both rewriting and considering the invitations of *écriture féminine*, is that to truly subvert the binary oppositions which underpin the adventure hero and island of island narrative then one must contest the dualistic worldview that underpins them. I am, in all of this, in no way arguing for the complete eradication of dualistic thinking (though querying what lies beyond it is an intriguing endeavour), for conflict is the very lifeblood of fiction. “Conflict is drama’s essence: without the clash of opposites—whether personalities or ideologies—there’d be nothing [to see]” (Westwood 15). Rather, in the silence scene a temporary alternate to a dualistic worldview is experienced by the protagonist and by its very nature, this experience

irrevocably and perennially influences Connolly's perception of reality itself.

In this scene, the traditional panoptic gaze associated with the "Monarch-of-all-I-survey" moment of island narrative (Weaver-Hightower 9) is intentionally removed from its mountain top vantage and becomes the egoless, transpersonal gaze in which notions of command of space become redundant because separation—of self, island, other—ceases. Dodwell's binary boundary at which the hermit exists also collapses, and Connolly directly experiences what the poet Mary Oliver calls the world's "endless granular shuffle and exchange" (29). This narrative moment, beyond even monism, is the ultimate blurring of boundaries; subversion is achieved because the dualistic underpinning of conventional western reality is dissolved. Ingram describes it as when "the linearity of modern time collapses into the cyclic existence of pre-modern time" (625). In this state, all that sustains the individual identity of the traditional hero is unmade. As Deleuze would describe it, "who speaks and who acts? It's always a multiplicity, even in the person that speaks or acts. We are all groupuscules... there is only the action... in the relations of relays and networks" (207). As a consequence, Connolly's world, and the manner in which she operates in it, cannot be the same again, for the limiting spell of duality and its oppositional separation (island/mainland, hero/anti-hero) is forever broken. In this scene, and in that particular experience of dissolution and unity, the language of the phallogentric is displaced and the language of the feminine is not just recovered or invented but rather both the phallogentric and the femicentric are contained within, yet transcended by, the transpersonal. The new space contains yet is simultaneously beyond genders, languages and histories—and in this way a fundamental aim of writing out is achieved.

Of course, the western world is couched in dualistic reality and, to usefully operate in it, indeed to operate heroically upon it, Connolly must return to the world from that space/experience. However, having had this fully embodied experience of dissolution her

conventional world cannot be remade in the same old manner. The reader intuitively that Connolly's journey as a twenty-first century hero will, after leaving the island, include learning how to hold and skilfully meld these two disparate but linked realities.

This scene clearly experiments with theory regarding the contested status of the edge. It is the instability of boundary and ambiguity of edge that makes it possible to construct twenty-first-century island narrative in the manner intended via writing out. The silence scene—attempting to subvert boundaries geographic, philosophic and heroic—dissolves the physical boundaries of the island, and so undermines the symbolic edge/divide that perpetuates dualistic perception. In this way, the island is written as unlimited and joined; and the hero, too, is also written as unbound and unified.

Consequences of Rewriting for the Island and the Hero

“Ile du Coeur” contains other metaphoric, symbolic and political implications than those standard to island narrative. The island is written as having agency as well as being unlimited, unbound and joined. As demonstrated above, the silence scene intentionally destabilises the conventional irrefutability of island separation by totally collapsing the island borders and demonstrating its seamless relationship to the mainland.

For this to occur, Connolly, unlike Crusoe, firstly recognises the island's agency. The landmass itself is seen as an entity in its own right—complex, alive, self-dominated—and is depicted as a web of relationships which are mutually interdependent and relational, and which, in turn, are symbiotic with other neighbouring complex sets of relationships, be they Scott's decay (24, 39), the process that is Connolly's psychological and emotional unfolding (43-45), or lunar and stellar cycles (8, 22, 44) for example. Whilst Connolly uses the island, in the first instance, as “a hiding place in which [she] does not at first have to confront the gaze of others and her own self” (Baisnée 66), she slowly begins to recognise and relate to

the painful patterning that had caused her to self maroon. This deepening self-responsibility mirrors her capacity to consciously see the island as a unique and complex set of systems with which she develops increasing relationship:

Connolly lay her hand flat on the sand as though listening not to the echoes of Crusoe's ghost but to the land, as though the island could tap a code deep from within the heart of itself. As though the earth might whisper something old and true into her palm; advice more useful, more trustworthy than that uttered by any forebear. (11)

It is the island's autonomy, its vital animation, not contained or made rigid by conventions of perception/thought/language, which infiltrates Connolly's consciousness and engenders her transformation. This sense of relationship with the island ensures Connolly does not colonise it but instead recognises its independent agency; the feeling of kinship culminates in the experience of herself, the island and mainland as inextricably joined in the silence scene—in which particularity of the island is simultaneously heightened at the same time as its entire identity as a separate landmass and entity collapses. Ile du Coeur is thus written as more than an “ideologeme, a conceptual formation that proposes an imagined resolution to a social contradiction” (Greene 140). In the silence scene, the island *itself* actively produces tangible resolution for the protagonist.

Greene's island, in which insularity “comes to stand for a kind of knowledge, a distinctively partial knowledge that counters the totalities of institutions and regimes” (138) results in his Prospero:

a singular figure who can draw the world together again into a unity—he is the protoglobalist, though whether he represents the capitalist, the humanist, the patriarch, or all of these is left tactically uncertain. However, he can be depicted only within and from the horizon of the island. A mainland Prospero would challenge representation: he would be power itself, seen without shadings or perspective. (139)

Connolly functions in a not dissimilar way to Greene's Prospero but draws the world together into a very different type of unity, one that transcends duality. In that process, "Ile du Coeur" is written as far more than a countering space to the conventional knowledge of the mainland—it becomes a binding place/force/experience by which the two partial and competing knowledges become complementary.

Ile du Coeur, therefore, does indeed undergo the transformation typical of islands in traditional Robinsonades (Baisnée 61), but a non-conventional one. Traditionally written, according to Edmond and Smith, as a place "out of time" (8), this island is textually pushed further to become the place/experience/conduit by which the hero steps outside of the cultural paradigms which have created even time itself. In this way, the island is, compared with Crusoe's island, ultimately unlimited and unbound. Consequently, my choice of diction contrasts radically to Defoe's. Descriptors such as "peaceful", "kind", "expansive," and "profound" (56) are employed along with adjectives devoid of value judgements—"rugged" (21), "steep" (22) and "dense" (20).

If "islands are perfect metaphoric spaces in which to trace the vicissitudes of coming into a Western notion of selfhood" (Polack 220) then I have turned this familiar notion on its head by positing the island as the perfect place by which notions of Western selfhood, and the binding limitations created by that cultural paradigm, are unlearned. Further positing that it is the island itself, functioning as a conduit to, and expression of, the transpersonal, which actively and collaboratively unbinds the protagonist. The island is thus conjured as a space which "favours the exploration of a forgotten or buried authenticity, a return to who one really is" (Rousseau qtd. in Bongie 21). The lack of limitation on Ile du Coeur ensures this return is radicalised—it is simultaneously a return to/birth of an identity beyond dualistic perception. This post-dualistic state approximates that state which Deleuze asserts the island is capable of being, "the origin. Radical and absolute" (10). Ile du Coeur thus becomes "the

ultimate gesture of simplification” (3) but not in the manner Loxely intended the island. Rather, the island of the “Ile du Coeur” text becomes, in quite a new way, “a reiteration making possible what we imagine to be the topographies of our world and our lives” (Conley 208).

Clearly, I am not inviting the total collapse of either the geographical island or island identity in an ongoing way (*quelle horreur* for an islophile!). Rather, the literal and metaphoric deployment of the island in “Ile du Coeur” reflects Hay’s assertion that the act of writing islands is “especially political” (“The Poetics of Island Place” 553). Not only is the autonomous island joined to the mainland but the protagonist and it are shown, via the silence scene, to be inextricably linked in a state/experience that embraces both mainland and island knowledges, whilst simultaneously undercutting the dualisms that create and perpetuate their unique and separate identities.

As mentioned earlier, an intimate and unassailable relationship exists between the island narrative hero and the island. When the island is no longer separate, so too is the hero inextricably joined—to the island, to the mainland, to others, to heroes past and future and to her/himself. Connolly is therefore not alone, and the myth of Crusoe and subsequent island heroes as lone wolf heroes is thereby challenged.

“Adventure is above all a space of possibility and performance” (Horsley 24). By subverting dualistic reality, both hero and island are ‘unbound’ and inherent possibilities lie within this fertile, novel space. Consequently, the adventure hero of island fiction is a perfect vehicle by which to posit a new hero who, in order to exist and exert influence in the twenty-first century must also, I argue, reclaim some of her/his pre-colonial heroic roots.

In order to heroically respond to a more complex world, a twenty first-century hero needs to reclaim Nagy’s *noos*. And, develop a more dimensional *noos* than ever before. Unlike Crusoe and his colonial reality of stark binary oppositions, a twenty-first century hero

must develop the capacity that enables them to see more than one side of reality—and, specifically, it is a knowledge of a reality exceeding dualism and its oppositional power structures that is required. To this end, contemporary heroes like Connolly, are invited to make not only physical journeys, but make Nagy's soul, or internal journey; and have the capacity to recognise instrumental turning points in their lives as opportunities from which truly radical, heroic action becomes possible.

Epic heroes were also fully acquainted with death as much as they were with life. Contemporary heroes of adventure fiction rarely die, either literally or metaphorically. Rather, they make small personal transformations. However, unless the transformations also entail some form of authentic egoic death, the result is limited, much like swapping white pieces on the chessboard of ego for black pieces; the egoic game continues in seemingly different but ultimately the same form. Without egoic death, heroes are unable to truly gift the community as was integral to the cult of the hero. Instead, unwittingly in their fear of death and avoidance of it, they tend to take from the community. And they seem to do this most often and most violently at the moments when binary boundaries are blurred and where dualisms are threatened. When this blurring occurs, there is "anxiety" (Dixon qtd. in Phillips, "Adventurous Reading" 262). Rather than acting to rid oneself of anxiety, the contemporary hero, evidenced in Connolly, embraces it. To sit through the discomfort of anxiety when a traditional identity or mode of being is threatened, and to not habitually act (as Crusoe does), Connolly finally learns to experience a more spacious reality beyond duality—through conscious silence she finds her *noos*. "Ile du Coeur" posits, therefore, that the embrace of anxiety is an essential prerequisite for the twenty-first century hero. More than anything else, perhaps, it is curiosity toward anxiety itself which signifies the first courageous step of the new heroic.

Harking back to the definition of the epic hero, contemporary heroes are invited to

reclaim connection with some form of divinity/ies that do not replicate the historical dogmatisms and corresponding limitations of conventional, systematised religious belief. This connection could be, amongst many things, something approximating Cixous' descriptions of illumination which leave one "crawling in the wake of God" (39), her version of love which "pitches its tents of silence" (112) or Alison Croggon's "stubborn voice casting out its shining length" (90).

As well as being of any gender and conversant with divinity/ies, epic heroes were unseasonal and extreme—characteristics which suggest both being out of fashion and threatening the status quo, if not venturing into taboo. Measured by current social mores that govern fashion, wealth, material accumulation and other dominant signifiers of the purported satisfactory contemporary life, contemporary heroes will indeed be viewed as unseasonal and extreme, if not radically anarchic, as they enact the new heroic—courting egoic death, living with a relationship to the divine, striving to see more than one side of reality and attempting to prosper and bless others.

What is not being advocated is a hero who is reduced to an ever benign, uni-dimensional, bland, safe or simplistic do-gooder. Far from it. The tensions, conflicts and paradoxes on which fiction relies, indeed the overarching requirement that fiction depict "everything in every possible way" (Rushdie 16) will prevent that. Neither would readers tolerate either such reduction or the unimaginative, impoverished writing driving it. Rather, contemporary heroes might be written as conglomerates of ever fluid, ever failing, never fully achieved ideals designed to bequeath to readers all that fiction is capable of—inspiration, questioning, delight, solace, humour, warning, horror, entertainment. Accordingly, heroes will always be extreme, though their extremity in twenty-first century island fiction might be packaged in novel, open-ended and surprising ways.

Conclusion

Readers are ever ready for a new adventure. Heroism is ripe for reinvention. The world, arguably, is begging for a new story to be told. Polack, invoking de Certeau, says fiction is “vitally implicated in the ways in which we live our everyday lives” (228) and Fingerioth writes, “every generation makes the fictional characters it needs. What should inspire—or terrify—us are not the hero’s powers or gender, but what the heroes represent about our needs, our fears, and our attitudes” (95). As the twenty-first century continues and the potential for collapse of the big ideologies increases, so there is space for ideas and action that are apt, local, personalised, contextualised, human and humane; space for something like the poet Mark Doty’s “sense of tenderness towards experience, of being held within an intimacy with the things of the world” (qtd. in Bilson 71). This way of being and experiencing is being written about by contemporary Australian authors both in fictional and non-fictional form. Judy Morris in her screenplay adaptation of Patrick White’s novel, *The Eye of the Storm*, talks about that “vast love”, Genevieve Brookes in her 2011 Boyer Lectures, *The Idea of Home*, speaks of it in terms of beauty and truth (11), and Richard Flanagan calls it variously freedom (75), non-conformity (75), love (77), courage (85) and imagination (92) in his 2011 essay “The Australian Disease: The Decline of Love and the Rise of Non-Freedom”. These writings are not cutesy, utopian, or mere examples of touchy-feely sentiment but, rather, are courageous and robust enquiries into an equally courageous and robust set of values that constitute a philosophical or moral passport required by twenty-first century citizens. To remain relevantly entertaining and useful, island narrative needs to similarly engage.

Perhaps what readers require from their twenty-first century island adventure heroes is a capacity to feel, and to demonstrate through considered action, a sensibility and ethic that goes beyond personal or hegemonic self-interest; to consider and enact a love that transcends

boundaries of gender, sexuality, class, race and religion. A twenty-first century hero might treat the earth as if it were one's own body, love all gods and so none, see themselves as a member of an extended, if disparate, world family such that people encountered fleeing war and trauma might be treated as guests in need of rest. They might choose to reflect before compulsively taking action or choose peaceful collaboration over violence. However, as Stuller notes, contemporary heroism is not simplistic; it needs to reflect the complex, and in order to captivate, it must also intellectually challenge us and inspire (157).

Robinson Crusoe is, as is most adventure fiction, about colonising the other. "Ile du Coeur" disrupts this pattern by positing self-colonisation or self-mastery as the new heroic. It names the limitations of traditional heroism (embodied by Scott) and writes the island as both paradoxically separate and joined. It is in the depiction of heroic non-action that "Ile du Coeur" takes its most radical turn. The silence scene explores duality undercut and in so doing removes the very foundation, the binary oppositions, on which traditional heroism is founded. Whilst all binary pairs are subjected to the annihilating embrace of the transpersonal, the text focuses upon and rewrites island narrative gender, sexuality, action and violence in particular. It posits conscious silence as a tool by which the pervasive, potentially destructive myths of the separate and bound hero self, and separate and bound island, might be dissolved.

This text explicitly lets female readers in. It makes heroism readily accessible to the female reader in ways that are perhaps more politically and emotionally congruent, and it is an invitation to male readers to consider a new heroic unbound from hegemonic masculinity. Particularly via the silence scene, the text also becomes an open invitation to readers of any gender to consider adventures and heroisms, conducted internally, expressed externally, suitable to the twenty-first century. The text acknowledges these heroics will not be neat and enclosed but paradoxical and contradictory and will be characterised by the spaciousness of ideas rather than the enclosure of 'isms'. In these ways "Ile de Coeur" showcases just one

possibility of the myriad exemplar heroes that the twenty-first century invites.

E. M. Forster wrote, “I suggest that the books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little further down the path than we have yet got ourselves” (225).

Inspired by this sentiment, “Ile du Coeur” is intended as an imagined glance around the heroic corner.

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The sentence on page 55 of "Ile du Coeur" "*To endure and endure and endure until endurance itself is beaten into joy*" is a variation on lines from the poem, *Fire on the Snow*, by Douglas Stewart. (Angus and Robertson, 1944. Print.)