

Animal Fridays in *Robinson Crusoe* and Its Afterlives

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Abstract

Robinson narrates his rescue of Friday in a way that is reminiscent of the saving of the dog ten pages before: he calls them both 'poor creatures' and uses non-verbal communication with Friday at first as he does with his 'pets': all are discussed and addressed as his 'subjects' and possessions, irrespective of their human or non-human bodies. In a number of Robinsonades, the blurred human-animal boundary is translated in the fact that the role of Friday is taken up by an animal, most often a pet, as is the case with Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, in which the tiger, Richard Parker, is subjugated by Pi in a manner reminiscent of imperial control. Following recent critical work on 'Animal Crusoes' in children's Robinsonades as well as the increased interest in ecocritical, posthuman theories and animal studies, this article focuses on animal comparisons and characters as regards Friday in Defoe's novel and *Life of Pi*. It shows that while both texts may depict the subjugation of Friday in the context of colonialism and imperialism, they also participate in the breaking down of the absolute boundaries between humans and non-humans and provide a reflection upon and reevaluation of the nature/culture dichotomy.

Keywords: posthuman; postcolonial; subjugation; pets; *Robinson Crusoe*; *Life of Pi*; ecocriticism

You do great deal much good, says he, you teach **wild** Mans be good sober **tame** Mans. (Defoe 1975: 176, emphasis added)

In this sentence addressed to Crusoe, Defoe's Friday acknowledges his own hybrid status, oscillating between nature and culture, between human and animal, by referring to himself as a quasi-oxymoronic 'wild man' that can be 'tamed'—two words that belong to the lexis of domination and control of man over animal. Indeed, Friday embodies the state of nature, the 'savage' that in *Robinson Crusoe* is synonymous with cannibalism and

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barbarity. In the century of Enlightenment humanism that celebrates the central position of man in the universe, the European Crusoe feels he has to impose order and culture by teaching Friday how he should behave, speak, and eat. Friday not only acknowledges but accepts the fact that Crusoe can tame him as he would an animal, hence the grateful way Friday willingly submits to 'his master' when he sets Crusoe's foot upon his head (Defoe 1975: 161). This voluntary gesture and expression of gratitude takes place when Crusoe meets the Carib for the first time and is thus central to the configuration of Friday: significantly, Crusoe narrates his rescue of Friday in a way that is reminiscent of the saving of the dog ten pages before (Defoe 1975: 149, 160). This animal comparison is also present in a number of Robinsonades in which the role of Friday is taken up by an animal,¹ as is the case with Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001), in which the sixteen-year-old son of an Indian zookeeper, Pi Patel, finds himself sharing a lifeboat with several animals—a zebra, a hyena, an orangutan, and a Bengal tiger. One after the other, the animals die, except the tiger, Richard Parker, a wild animal with a very human name, that is subjugated by Pi in a manner that is reminiscent of imperial control and of the power differential between Crusoe and Friday in Defoe's novel, but that turns out to be far more than just a zoo animal in the novel.

Adding to recent work on the Robinsonade (Lipski 2020; Peraldo 2020), and on 'Animal Crusoes', in particular (Hicks and Pyrz 2021), this article focuses on animal comparisons and characters as regards Friday in Defoe's and Martel's novels. I will use theories and methodologies from the growing fields of animal studies ('an interdisciplinary scholarly endeavour to understand the relationship humans have with animals', Kalof 2017: 2) and posthumanism (an approach that 'removed the human and *Homo Sapiens* from any particularly privileged position in relation to matters of meaning', Wolfe 2010: xii). I will revisit postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives to try to show that while they may depict the subjugation of Friday in the context of colonialism and imperialism, these comparisons also participate in the breaking down of the absolute boundaries between humans and non-humans.

¹ Such examples include, among others, Peter Longueville's *The English Hermit* (1727) and *The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield* (1753) by an anonymous author, and, most famously perhaps, Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1875).

In the context of the eighteenth century—and more particularly, after Descartes' theory of beast-machines in his *Discourse on Method* (1637) and the idea that animals are inferior to humans because they are not rational (Kant)—reducing Friday to an animal is indeed a form of reification and cultural imposition. However, in *Robinson Crusoe's* afterlives, the animals that are compared with Friday evolve and the second section of this article will focus on the shift in symbolism from a dog Friday to a tiger Friday in *Life of Pi*, a change that gives Friday some power back. This will lead me to rethink Friday's transformation into nonhuman animals both in the 1719 text (though a metaphorical configuration) and its afterlives: is replacing Friday with animals a wish to emphasise control or continuity between humans and non-humans?

Animalising Friday as a way of showing imperial control

The context of colonial expansion in the eighteenth century turned desert/ed islands into territories to be appropriated, colonised, and made productive. In that context, everything and everybody had a set value, including both wild and domestic animals, which 'both played a major role in European colonialism' (DeMello 2012: 69), as well as people, who were bought and sold as slaves. For Crusoe, animals, but also Xury and Friday, are all commodities that can be used for money, food, or labour. Indeed, when he comes across a European ship with his companion Xury and is taken onboard by the Captain, Crusoe sells his boat and Xury (whom he has appropriated as he calls him 'my boy Xury', with the possessive adjective that he uses a lot in the novel for everything he appropriates on the island, Defoe 1975: 29) as if they were two comparable objects. This is a clear denial of any difference between a human and a boat in terms of their value: the human body is not considered as a distinctive feature. Xury is a dramatic anticipation of Friday, who is never considered as Crusoe's equal, but always as a subject (subjugated by Crusoe himself) that needs to be 'civilised'. Crusoe teaches Friday 'every Thing that was proper to make him useful, handy and helpful' (Defoe 1975: 164), which reduces Friday to the status of a tool or a domestic animal in his plantation.

Friday's rescue is described in exactly the same terms as the rescue of a dog shortly before. Crusoe calls them both 'poor creatures' (Defoe 1975:

149 and 160)² and uses non-verbal communication with Friday at first, as he does with his other animals ('I made Signs for him to go lie down and sleep', Defoe 1975: 160); they are all discussed and addressed as his 'subjects' and possessions (for example, 'my Man Friday' is repeated 18 times and reminds us of 'my Boy Xury'). Crusoe orders Friday to fetch things or to obey, as can be seen in the causative structures ('making him carry one Gun for me' and 'I caus'd Friday to gather all the Skulls', Defoe 1975: 161, 162) that are reminiscent of the ways a person gives directions to a dog.

Friday is one among Crusoe's 'subjects', composed of his dog, two cats, goats, sea-fowls, and parrot, making him 'King' of the island he has appropriated: 'my Island was now peopled and I thought my self very rich in Subjects' (Defoe 1975: 188). Friday's human body, just like Xury's in the previous example, is not an element that differentiates him from non-human animals. Crusoe already had several animals before Friday's arrival, none of which fully qualifying as pets if we take into account the three criteria for an animal to be a pet listed by Keith Thomas: a pet is named, lives in the home and is never eaten (Thomas 1983: 112–115). Crusoe never names his dog and/or cats but he does name Friday (not with a Christian name, though), and he does name the parrot to which he gives a Christian name, Poll. This shows that the status of animals in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is volatile and unstable. The dog, traditionally considered as the pet *par excellence*, is not considered as such by Crusoe, according to June Dwyer, as he only uses it to scare away birds or to catch a stray kid (Dwyer 2005: 13). However, he personifies it when he calls it his 'trusty Servant' (Defoe 1975: 52), but despite the personification, he compares it to a subaltern, a servant, which is an expression of domination. The parrot has an ambiguous status as it can speak or at least repeat words in an act that is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concept of 'mimicry', used to talk about the way a colonised population tends to imitate the colonisers' ways. As it is named by Crusoe (Novak 1997: 111) and repeats what Crusoe says, the parrot might be the epitome of imperial control and possession as well as another Friday avatar. However, it does not just repeat things Crusoe says—as Friday will do when Crusoe teaches

² For an analysis of the use of the word 'creature' for both animals and Friday, see Jeremy Chow (2019) 'First used by the narrative to signify indeterminate animality, Crusoe's pronouncement of Friday as also belonging to creaturehood bespeaks the slippage between the human and non-human'.

him English—but it repeatedly questions Crusoe’s identity (by calling him Robin instead of Robinson, thus depriving him of his quality as a son) and his place in the world: ‘Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe: poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been?’ (Defoe 1975: 112). While Poll the parrot seems to voice a form of resistance to Crusoe’s domination over the animal world,³ Xury, Friday, and the other animals are reified subjects of colonisation that perform useful functions. Friday is animalised and turned into a passive agent through the comparison with a dog as well as through his willing submission to his ‘Master’. Srinivas Aravamudan says that ‘Friday is Crusoe’s pet, approaching him on all fours, digging a hole in the sand with his bare hands, following him close at his heels, and even calling his own father, Friday Sr, “an ugly dog”’ (Aravamudan 1999: 75). Friday has integrated the animal comparison so deeply that he adopts bodily postures that are no longer human and he compares his own father to a dog, which is one of the results of the system of colonial imposition.

In *Life of Pi*, the same process of control and domination of animal by man is at stake in the new ecosystem that is developing on the lifeboat through the relationship between the tiger Richard Parker—the ‘savage’ Friday made literal through the body of a wild beast—and Pi, the son of a zookeeper that stands for Crusoe. The motif of rescuing animals on a boat is of course a Biblical reference to Noah’s Ark, the story of which can be read as an allegory of the process of domination over animals by man, as these animals owe their survival to a God-sent man, Noah. Richard Parker has been a zoo animal for nearly all his life, which already created a power differential between man and animal, insofar as the tiger has always depended on man to eat, thus conferring power upon the zookeeper. The tiger, which owes its Christian name to the hunter who had picked it up as a cub (Martel 2001: 133), is depicted at first as a fierce creature, as is reinforced by the polyptoton on ‘growling’: ‘Richard Parker started **growling**’ (Martel 2001: 148); ‘Richard Parker let go and **growled**. But a quiet **growl**, private and half-hearted, it seemed’ (Martel 2001: 151). This physical fierceness is put forward to justify Pi’s several plans to subjugate or kill the tiger (Martel 2001: 158) and his insistence on the necessity to tame the tiger, to silence his fierce body: ‘I had to tame him. It was at that

³ Another example of Crusoe’s dominion over animals takes place after the island episode in the bear-baiting scene.

moment that I realized this necessity' (Martel 2001: 64). The same process of self-justification occurred in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, when the eponymous character justified his imposition of his Christian culture onto Friday to fight against his barbarous and cannibalistic drives. In both cases, taming is the answer to the archetypal fear of being eaten, of having one's body assimilated by another body (by a cannibal, a tiger or even algae on the carnivory island in *Life of Pi*).

Richard Parker is continuously subjugated by Pi with tools, such as the whistle that is part of the training program for the tiger ('repetition is important in the training not only of animals but also of humans', Martel 2001: 23). Pi blows the whistle 'to remind Richard Parker of who had so graciously provided him with fresh food' (Martel 2001: 156), which is reminiscent of the 'gratefulness' of slaves towards their owners or Friday's gratitude for being tamed by Crusoe (Defoe 1975: 176).

In both Defoe's and Martel's novels, Friday is animalised in an attempt from the Crusoe figure to dominate him in a way that is clearly reminiscent of imperial and colonial domination. Animalisation is a classic device of subordination by which the 'other' is entrapped in an inferior natural constitution from which humans have managed to escape. However, in both cases, the process of animalisation is ambivalent: with all its fierceness, the tiger is actually what keeps Pi alive ('Richard Parker [... was the] awful, fierce thing that kept me alive', Martel 2001: 285) and the 'savage' Friday becomes a source of happiness for Crusoe.

An ambivalent process of animalisation

Just like Poll, Friday has an ambivalent status in *Robinson Crusoe*. He is considered as a 'savage' by Crusoe, but then why does Crusoe trust him more than the other 'savages'? Friday, like Poll, has an in-between status: he belongs to the 'wild Mans' that can become 'a good sober tame Mans' (Defoe 1975: 176), a 'savage' turned Christian. 'Mutually beneficial exchanges' take place between Friday and Crusoe according to Hewitson, who adds that 'their interaction in the (implied) market has increased their utilities as an unintended consequence' (Hewitson 2011: 123–124). Indeed, Crusoe says that the three years he lived with Friday were 'perfectly and compleatly happy, if any such Thing as compleat Happiness can be formed in a sublunary State. The Savage was now a good Christian,

a much better than I' (Defoe 1975: 172).⁴ Here the double polyptoton 'compleatly/compleat' and 'happy/happiness' reinforces this mutual utility between Friday and Crusoe that resembles the well-being brought by a pet and that 'proves that living with companion animals benefits humans' physical and mental health' (Kalof 2017: 4). Crusoe calls Friday his 'Companion' (Defoe 1975: 164) and expresses the pleasure brought by him through a superlative: 'This was the pleasantest Year of all the Life I led in this Place' (Defoe 1975: 166). He talks in a similar way of his dog: 'My Dog was a very pleasant and loving Companion to me, for no less than sixteen Years of my time' (Defoe 1975: 141). Once again, their (human and non-human) bodies are not taken into account by Crusoe, who treats them both in the same way. So, contrary to what June Dwyer says about Crusoe having a purely utilitarian Enlightenment view of animals and about the fact that the dog and cats are never his pets and companions, my contention is that even if his animals perform functions on Crusoe's plantation, they are nonetheless members of his family ('these were part of my Family', Defoe 1975: 141). So, far from being a mere degradation, Friday's comparison to an animal companion, faithful and friendly to Crusoe, may turn him into a partner capable of having a conversation with him and of improving his physical and mental health, as Linda Kalof said about companion animals. Crusoe is torn between his proto-sentimentalism and his capitalism, as Philip Armstrong argues that 'Crusoe's compassionate sensibility is ultimately contained by the demands of modern enterprise' (Armstrong 2008: 44), which explains his ambivalent attitude towards animals.

If in Defoe's novel, Friday is depicted as a frightened and obedient dog, Martel gives more empowerment to his version of Friday in *Life of Pi*, which suggests that Martel empowers animals more than humans as a way to rethink man's domination over animals and nature and as a way to decentre man. He operates a complete reversal in ascribing strength and power to an animal body, and not a human's. Indeed, the choice of the tiger to represent Friday is interesting: it is not a dog, it cannot become a pet, and it threatens man's life. Moreover, it resists that easy association of Pi with the dominant, controlling man and Richard Parker with the

⁴ On the maximisation of well-being brought about by Friday's presence in *Robinson Crusoe*, see Peraldo (2019).

dominated, subjugated animal. That shift from dog to tiger triggers an inversion of the power differential: the animal fights back and gets the upper hand, representing a looming threat throughout the narrative. Martel goes even further in the ecocritical and posthuman decentering of man by giving agency to non-human and non-animal nature, when the algae island becomes the ultimate devouring threat with its murderous trees and predatory algae that force Pi to flee the island, in an ironic reversal of Robinson Crusoe's appropriation of the island in Defoe's novel.

Despite this sense of threat, a maximisation of well-being and happiness akin to that in Defoe's novel is perceptible in *Life of Pi*, and it is very ironic that Pi, who is afraid of being torn to pieces by the tiger, claims that it is precisely the tiger that brings him a sense of wholeness: 'It was Richard Parker who calmed me down. It is the irony of this story that the one who scared me witless to start with was the very same who brought me peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness' (Martel 2001: 162). His anxiety linked to the potential destruction of his body turns into a reaffirmation of his existence and survival. Whereas Friday's transformation into a tiger on a lifeboat with a teenager could have summoned images of fragmentation similar to the scene at the beginning of the novel, when the tiger devours a goat (Martel 2001: 36), it actually brings about an idea of continuity and mutual teaching between man and beast. The tiger, by the challenge that it represents and by the model of strength and velocity it embodies, teaches Pi to become a better fish-hunter ('I developed an instinct, a feel, for what to do', Martel 2001: 195), and Pi keeps expressing his gratefulness to Richard Parker in direct speech: 'I love you Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No, I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness' (Martel 2001: 236). Teaching appears as a two-way process, as Sarah McFarland suggests, when she writes that 'although Pi coaches Richard Parker to respect his territory on the lifeboat, Richard Parker also trains Pi to read his signals' (McFarland 2013: 158).

There is a reversal in gratefulness: it is no longer the tiger that is grateful for being fed or Friday that is grateful for being taught English and the Christian religion but Pi who is grateful for having the tiger with him and Crusoe for having a companion. Even once the tiger has left, Pi verbalises his gratitude in a way that elevates Richard Parker to the rank of a person, of a real actor in the life of the protagonist: 'I wish I had said to him then—yes, I know, to a tiger, but still—I wish I had said, "Richard

Parker, it's over. We have survived. Can you believe it? I owe you more gratitude than I could express. I would like to say it formally: Richard Parker, thank you" (Martel 2001: 286). This time, it is Friday (the tiger) that saves Crusoe (Pi), and once again, the possibility of talking to that other, whether it be Friday or Richard Parker, is what empowers and re-humanizes them in Crusoe's and Pi's eyes.

That association between Friday and the dog in Defoe's novel or between Friday and the tiger Richard Parker in Martel's can be read through a postcolonial lens as has been shown in the first section of this essay (subjugation of the indigenous populations, enslaving animals as the symbol of all oppression). It can also be read as the expression of a form of inter-species communion in a posthuman way, as the blurring of distinctions between humans and animals participates in this rejection of clear-cut categories that Elisabeth Butterfield calls 'posthumanist humanism' ('[t]he purpose of [...] a new posthumanist humanism is not to delineate the lines of inclusion and exclusion', Butterfield 2012: 4).

A gradual blurring of human-nonhuman boundaries

To come back to the issue of names and naming, it is worth noting that both Defoe and Martel play with the human/non-human boundaries by giving the name of a day to Crusoe's human companion and a man's name to Pi's tiger, but it is precisely where the two novels differ as far as the configurations of animal Fridays are concerned. To Defoe's man without a Christian name, Martel replies with a tiger with a human name and a main character with the name of a swimming pool (Pi being short for Piscine Molitor). This may be analysed as Martel's refusal of the speciesism and anthropocentrism at play in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. By naming Friday that way,⁵ Crusoe wants to signify that there is an ontological difference between himself and a 'savage' or cannibal, that they do not belong to the same category or species, hence the comparison of Friday to a dog in Defoe's novel. According to Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, who have worked on bringing together postcolonial and ecocritical issues, the role of cannibalism is 'foundational in the imperial "othering" of animals and humans' (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 21), and they argue that there is an intrinsic link between racism and speciesism: 'forms

⁵ For an analysis of 'such associative nomenclature' (the choice of the name Friday because he appeared on a Friday), see Dwyer (2005: 13).

of institutionalized speciesism continue to be used to rationalize the exploitation of animal (and animalised human) “others” (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 5). Here again, the body—whether it is black or that of an animal—is used to create distance with what is considered as ‘other’. By denying his new companion a human name and by treating him like a dog or an instrument to develop his plantation, Crusoe fuels an ideology of imperialism and racism and finds justifications and excuses for the exploitation of animals and people in the colonial enterprise. For Crusoe, it is cannibalism that turned Friday into an animal, not his own actions that denied him any human agency or identity. Maximillian Novak analyses how in some Robinsonades, ‘authors desire Crusoe to learn to speak Friday’s language’ (Novak 1997: 117), that is, they want to reverse or counter-balance the process of appropriation and colonial imposition. That is what I believe Martel does when the man in his novel gets named after a swimming pool, while a tiger gets its hunter’s name, who, in turn, gets the name ‘Thirsty’ originally given to the tiger. It is his way of re-empowering Friday by giving him back the human identity and agency that Defoe’s colonial character Crusoe had taken away from him.

Moreover, at the beginning of *Life of Pi*, the reader does not know that Richard Parker is not a human being; the narration maintains confusion to fight against pre-conceived ideas of what it is to be a human and what it is to be an animal. Pi explains how, in the zoo, he had a tendency to anthropomorphise all animals and to make them speak English in his imagination. By the time the reader understands that Richard Parker is a tiger, ‘he has already been sufficiently humanized for the reader to have placed him on a continuum with the novel’s human characters’ (Cole 2004: 22). The mental image the reader has is that of a human body, not a tiger’s, and this determines his perception of Richard Parker even once he knows it is not a human. Whereas Crusoe insists on differences and boundaries (whether they be enclosures, barricades, or distance between himself and Friday), Pi sees proximity and continuity between himself and the tiger, as when he sees their respective bodies as those of ‘mammals’: ‘we were two emaciated mammals, parched and starving’ (Martel 2001: 239). Kalof explains that ‘acknowledg[ing] our corporeal similarity to animals is what is needed to regain an appreciation of other animals’ (2017: 5), and yet, Pi never forgets the nature of Richard Parker, such as when he says that ‘an animal is an animal, essentially and practically removed from us’ (Martel 2001: 31). This awareness of the differences

between species while at the same time acknowledging that these differences do not represent strict boundaries and oppositions is what is at stake in the double dialectics of Martel's novel: the tiger becomes more and more humanised while Pi becomes more and more animalised ('I ate like an animal, [...] this noisy, frantic, unchewing wolfing-down of mine was exactly the way Richard Parker ate', Martel 2001: 225). Pi compares himself to an animal and to Richard Parker, whom he imitates in a way that is reminiscent of Bhabha's mimicry. Man imitates an animal this time, not the other way round. In parallel to Pi's animalisation, whereas vegetarian Pi ends up eating raw fish and killing a turtle and drinking its warm blood, Richard Parker is humanised. 'Prusten', Pi explains, is 'the quietest of tiger calls, a puff through the nose to express friendliness and harmless intentions' (Martel 2001: 163). They work as interconnected vessels: the tiger has human feelings and sensibility ('friendliness', 'harmless intentions') while Pi has animal instincts and turns from being a vegetarian to a carnivore. Huggan and Tiffin say he 'reinhabits his own animality but this animality is also normalised as a mode of being' (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 172).

By displacing the concept of norm and by abolishing boundaries between species, Martel questions traditional Enlightenment humanism and proposes a 'posthumanist humanism' (Butterfield 2012) in his rewriting of the relationship between Crusoe and Friday. He even goes further in the ironic reinterpretation of Defoe's text by rewriting his own story at the end, in Part 3, when the Japanese do not believe the story with the tiger. Pi then narrates a second version in which he replaces animals by people: the second version becomes 'one of murder and cannibalism' (Huggan and Tiffin 2010: 172) and people behave like animals, according to the stereotypes that have been fuelled by centuries of anthropocentrism. In an ultimate reversal, Pi occupies the role of the tiger and shows how brutal and violent man can be. Right from the beginning of the novel, Pi had warned us that 'the most dangerous animal in a zoo is Man' (Martel 2001: 29). Not tigers. Man. The point of having Friday embodied by an animal in *Life of Pi* is to create a mirror effect, an inversion of the human-animal violence, as we can see in the new version of the story, in which man is considerably more violent than Richard Parker ever was. 'We look at an animal and see a mirror' (Martel 2001: 39): Martel uses the figure of the animal to discuss the nature of humanity, something Defoe was already doing in *Mere Nature Delineated* (1725) in the story of Peter, the 'wild

boy' discovered in Germany in 1725 and brought to England by George I, which can also be an interesting intertextual figure for Friday. Defoe wanted to 'delineate his Condition' (Defoe 1725: 17), and by this, he meant to analyse the two categories of man and animal through this 'poor abandon'd Creature' (again, he uses the word 'creature' to talk about the indeterminate nature of that 'wild boy', as he had done in *Robinson Crusoe* to talk about Friday and the dog). For him, it was an impossibility, as Peter was 'not qualify'd for a beast, but ill to be a Man' (Defoe 1725: 9). Keith Thomas points out that 'brute creation provided the most readily-available point of reference for the continuous process of human self-definition. [...]. It was as a comment on human nature that the concept of animality was devised' (Thomas 1983: 40). So, when he discusses the possibility that Peter may or may not have a soul, Defoe is interrogating the boundaries between human and non-human characteristics, and questioning reason as the main characteristic of humans.

In their chapter on animal Crusoes, Hicks and Pyrz analyse how in children's Robinsonades, when Crusoe is an animal, he is powerless and the story features a 'stronger and more capable Friday-like companion' (Hicks and Pyrz 2021: 61). Featuring an animal Crusoe in a Robinsonade aims to belittle the power of the coloniser; although, as June Dwyer points out, 'in terms of children's literature, animals have traditionally been treated as equals' (Dwyer 2005: 10). By empowering Friday so much through the choice of a tiger, Martel further challenges the power of the human being: Pi can be devoured in a matter of seconds, and it is through mutual respect and inter-dependence between the two species that he can survive.

As in La Fontaine's *Fables*, where animals are used to teach a lesson, there are many aphorisms in *Life of Pi* that draw the reader's attention to humans rather than to animals, as when Pi says: 'Watch out for Man. He is not your friend. But I hope you will remember me as a friend' (Martel 2001: 286). In this sentence, he refuses categories once more: Pi is not quite in the category of men, just as Friday was not quite in the category of 'savages'. Both are hybrid others that include animality in humanity and vice versa, which may correspond to the definition of 'inclusive humanism' (Dardenne 2020: 117), which 'grants the human being the

paramount value but that does not deny some intrinsic, non-instrumental, value to other animals'.⁶

Conclusion

Whereas Robinson Crusoe says he had to shoot several cats that had multiplied on his island 'to keep them from devouring [him]' (Defoe 1975: 141), or that he had cut the wings of several sea-fowls to tame them, Pi, in Martel's postcolonial Robinsonade, decides to keep the tiger alive (2001: 166), even if that animal represents a far greater threat than cats or sea-fowls. The next threat for Crusoe is about being eaten by cannibals, and yet he decides, just like Pi, to keep Friday alive, even if he repeatedly compares him to an animal or at least suggests they do not belong to the same species. In Defoe's novel, the wish to keep Friday alive seems consistent with eighteenth-century hierarchic society, with the European white man dominating, educating, and Christianising the rest of the world. *Life of Pi* capitalises on the configuration of Friday as an animal to put forward the possibility of an inter-species dialogue and compatibility, and the realisation that the wellbeing of man is tied up with the wellbeing of an animal, and that it is only through inter-species mutual understanding and respect that life is made possible and sustainable.

Comparing animal Fridays in an eighteenth-century novel and a twenty-first-century rewriting of that novel has enabled us to interrogate the articulation between sameness and opposition through the human versus animal as well as self versus other binaries. On the one hand, the eighteenth-century's taxonomic tendency to classify things insisted on differences between species or ethnic groups, so much so that Friday is animalised in Crusoe's eyes. On the other hand, the twenty-first century's posthuman tendency to refuse lines of inclusion and exclusion values the recognition of kinship in difference and continuity between species. In animalising Friday through the body of a tiger, Martel overturns the hierarchy and power differential created by Defoe when he animalised his own Friday. The same process of animalisation is at stake, yet it is not expressed in the same way in a novel published in the period of colonial expansion by an author who had expressed his opinions in favour of

⁶ Original quotation reads: 'L'humanisme inclusif tient l'être humain pour la valeur suprême, mais ne s'interdit pas d'accorder une certaine valeur intrinsèque, non instrumentale, aux autres animaux'.

colonisation⁷ and in a postcolonial novel concerned with the global problem of inter-species relationships. Just as Crusoe, Pi—who was, let it not be forgotten, the son of a zookeeper—wishes to put himself at the centre or at the top of the ecosystem, as when he expects Richard Parker to turn around and express some kind of gratitude in the end. However, this does not happen, suggesting an ultimate deconstruction of centuries-long human domination over animals, and offering instead a celebration of respect for animals and otherness.

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⁷ 'No Man can object against the Advantages of a Collony provided the Place be well chosen' (Daniel Defoe, Letter 170 to Robert Harley, 20 July 1711, 344).

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