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### The Castaway Child: Dialogical Subjectivities

The subjective contours of the castaway child within fiction are intrinsically linked to the seven seas. Following on from John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* authors have utilised bodies of water to set the stage for adventure and involuntary displacement while exploring how these liminal spaces are conducive to dialogical narratives of identity regarding the self and other. This paper examines the way the castaway child, suspended between land and sea, represents these discourses as paradigm shifts from Enlightenment pedagogy to post-World War II dystopia. The trajectory of texts includes *The Swiss Family Robinson*, *The Coral Island*, *A High Wind in Jamaica* and *Lord of the Flies*.

The word 'is-land' as Gillian Beer notes referring to its meaning in the Oxford English Dictionary is a compound word that includes both elements of water and land: 'water- surrounded land.'<sup>1</sup> Pete Hay elaborates on the influence of such a space on subjectivity in *What the Sea Portends*. Hay states that the sea is the element that distinguishes island psychologies, from other metaphorical spaces such as urban ghettos, mountains and desserts that convey an 'island effect' through ideas of isolation and remoteness. Both sea and island, Hay argues are intrinsically linked to the development of bounded sensibilities and identities that are neither confined nor delimited entirely, due to the ongoing process of geological change. 'The Ocean's very restlessness, the retreat – and – advance rhythm of its tides, moving the land-sea edge forward and back, accentuates the temporality and contingency of island boundaries.'<sup>2</sup>

This transitory and ungovernable nature of the sea destabilises Enlightenment pedagogy's essentialist claim that the island represents a steady boundary on which steady identities can be constructed. Although the genesis of the castaway genre in children's literature developed through this analogy between the 'knowable' child and the manageable island setting, the discourse which prevails is that of the liminal child subject and its epistemological assimilation into socio-cultural dialogues of subjective influences and negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> Beer, Gillian, "The Island and the Aeroplane: The Case of Virginia Wolf." *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi. K. Bhaba, Routledge, 1990, pp. 265-90. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Hay, Pete. "What the Sea Portends: A Reconsideration of Contested Island Tropes." *Island Studies Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2013, pp. 209-32. 215.