

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Cannibals and Survivors: Narrative Strategies in Third Culture Literature

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters

of

Creative Writing

at Massey University, Manawatu

New Zealand

Bonnie Joy Etherington

2013

Abstract

In this thesis I look at the narrative strategies at work in my own fiction, *The Glass House*, and also those at work in Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, and examine both in light of the context of third culture literature. Sociologically, the term "third culture" describes those people who are raised outside their passport nations as children, in multiple countries, as expats rather than immigrants. Antje M. Rauwerda takes this term from a sociological context and applies it to a literary one and, in doing so, identifies several key concerns which unite third culture fictions. While Rauwerda focuses specifically on these concerns as representing distinct characteristics in third culture literature that set it apart from other international literatures, my project is focused on *how* these characteristics manifest themselves through particular narrative strategies in both my own work and that of Martel's.

To conduct my research I look at the construction of third culture narratives from the perspective of both writer and reader. By writing Part 1 of *The Glass House*, I am able to examine narrative strategies through the writing process itself. Through a critical reading of Martel's *Life of Pi*, I am able to unpick the results and effects of these strategies as a reader. In "Cannibals and Survivors," I argue that by critically examining these strategies, it is possible to see that the freedom to pick and choose the narratives we consume (and how) comes with specific implications for those who have their feet in multiple worlds.

KEYWORDS :

Transnational, Third Culture, Consumerism, Hybridity

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Thom Conroy for all his time, supervision, and support while I worked on this thesis. Additionally, I was the recipient of a Massey University Masterate Scholarship in 2012, which helped me fund my studies and for which I am very grateful. I would also like to thank my parents for taking me to Indonesia in the first place and, in doing so, planting the seeds that would one day compel me to write this thesis. Finally, to the Nggem people of West Papua: Wa, wa, wa. Thank you for welcoming my family and for sharing your stories with us.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Finding a Place in the Universe	1
Life of a Continual Castaway: Yann Martel's <i>Pi</i>	5
Introduction	5
Pi, "that elusive, irrational number"	8
Cannibals and Plagiarists	17
"The Better Story"	24
Conclusion	33
Works Cited	34
The Glass House (Part 1)	36
In the Beginning	38
Chapter 1	41
Chapter 2	45
Chapter 3	49
Chapter 4	57
Chapter 5	62
Chapter 6	66
Chapter 7	74
Chapter 8	79
Chapter 9	85
Chapter 10	89
Chapter 11	93
Chapter 12	96
Chapter 13	99
Chapter 14	103
Chapter 15	107
Chapter 16	112
Chapter 17	118