



Empire Islands: Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest

Rebecca Weaver-Hightower

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Through a detailed unpacking of the castaway genre's appeal in English literature, *Empire Islands* forwards our understanding of the sociopsychology of British Empire. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower argues convincingly that by helping generations of readers to make sense of—and perhaps feel better about—imperial aggression, the castaway story in effect enabled the expansion and maintenance of European empire. *Empire Islands* asks why so many colonial authors chose islands as the setting for their stories of imperial adventure and why so many postcolonial writers “write back” to those island castaway narratives. Drawing on insightful readings of works from Thomas More's *Utopia* to Caribbean novels like George Lamming's *Water with Berries*, from canonical works such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Tempest* to the lesser-known *A Narrative of the Life and Astonishing Adventures of John Daniel* by Ralph Morris, Weaver-Hightower examines themes of cannibalism, piracy, monstrosity, imperial aggression, and the concept of going native. Ending with analysis of contemporary film and the role of the United States in global neoimperialism, Weaver-Hightower exposes how island narratives continue not only to describe but to justify colonialism. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower is assistant professor of English and postcolonial studies at the University of North Dakota.

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