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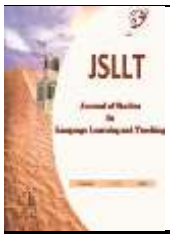

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Reframing Survival: Collective Action and Ethical Engagement in *Life of Pi*

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Abstract

This study examines survival, collective action, and political life in *Life of Pi* through the lens of Hannah Arendt's theory of the public and private spheres. While the existing scholarship explores the religious and philosophical themes of the novel, its political dimensions remain underexamined. This paper argues that *Life of Pi* reframes survival as a structured political and ethical process rather than a solitary struggle. Arendt's framework provides a foundation for understanding how the protagonist's experience moves beyond mere endurance to engage with collective and political realities. Building on this, the discussion will incorporate Jacques Derrida's concept of limitrophy, alongside other thinkers, to further analyze the nuanced portrayal of political life in the novel at the boundaries of human experience.

Methodology: Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, the study conducts a close reading of *Life of Pi*, tracing Pi's survival from instinct-driven struggle to structured coexistence with Richard Parker. It examines how interspecies interactions complicate conventional political subjectivity, challenging the human-animal divide.

Findings: Pi's survival is not an individualistic endeavor but a negotiated process of structured engagement. His relationship with Richard Parker challenges hierarchical survival narratives, demonstrating that necessity and coexistence can generate political and ethical meaning. Derrida and Haraway reveal how interspecies relations sustain collective agency, while Levinas frames Pi's survival as an ethical negotiation with the Other.

Conclusion: *Life of Pi* redefines survival as a politically and ethically charged process, where human-animal relationality structures collective existence. The novel challenges the assumption that survival precludes political action, demonstrating that necessity and cooperation, even across species, can sustain political engagement..

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Survival**,** Collective action**,** Political life**,** Limitrophy.

I | Review of literature

Numerous studies have explored the core themes of *Life of Pi*, analyzing its ecocritical, philosophical, and postcolonial dimensions. Huggan and Griffin (2009) examine the novel's human-animal relationships within a postcolonial framework, arguing that, through the motif of cannibalism, *Life of Pi* critiques anthropocentric notions tied to Western capitalism and its claims of civilization over so-called primitive colonized peoples (pp. 174-175). In his thesis Cannibals and Survivors, Etherington (2013) highlights the theme of savagery through the pervasive fear of being consumed, by humans, animals, and even the algae island. Huggan and Griffin also analyze how consumption patterns, including food symbolism and narrative structures, reflect a materialistic mindset, culminating in the depiction of human consumption and cannibalism in the novel.

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Dina Georgis (2006) interprets Pi as a victim of injustice, arguing that his unheard story reflects broader issues of alterity and marginalization. Pi's survival, she suggests, is contingent upon his recognition of the voice of the other, embodied by Richard Parker. Similarly, Obolewicz (2009) concludes that Pi and Richard Parker's relationship represents a mutual understanding necessary for survival.

More recent studies have explored *Life of Pi* through philosophical lenses. In his article Questioning Rationality: Martel's Philosophy of Transpersonal Self in *Life of Pi*, Ding (2020) introduces the transpersonal self, a concept that transcends individual identity and emphasizes interconnectedness. The novel, in this reading, merges rationality and intuition, thus challenging Western dualisms of nature and culture. Craft (2018) applies Derridean deconstruction, arguing that *Life of Pi* dissolves human-animal hierarchies. He highlights Derrida's hostipitality, the tension between hospitality and hostility, in Pi's relationship with Richard Parker, demonstrating how the novel subverts anthropocentric binaries and portrays survival as interdependence rather than dominance.

Although the existing scholarship focuses on the religious, ecological, and philosophical themes in *Life of Pi*, political analysis, particularly through Hannah Arendt's lens, remains limited. Arendt's theories of collective action, plurality, and the public-private distinction provide a framework for understanding survival as a political process, not just an individual struggle. Expanding on her theories, Agamben's concept of the "state of exception" resonates with Pi's liminal existence on the lifeboat, where survival challenges conventional political structures and authority. Derrida's idea of "hostipitality" in Pi's relationship with Richard Parker further deconstructs anthropocentric hierarchies, showing survival as interdependent rather than hierarchical. Additionally, Haraway's work on companion species and Levinas's ethics of the Other expand the discussion, emphasizing that Pi's survival, like his relationship with Richard Parker, involves a shared, ethical responsibility. This study integrates these theorists to reframe Pi's journey as a political narrative, where survival is not just biological, but ethical and collective too.

II. Research objective

This study examines how *Life of Pi* reimagines survival as a political process through Hannah Arendt's concept of collective action and plurality. Arendt distinguishes between the private realm, where necessity governs life, and the public realm, where individuals engage in speech and action to create meaning. Traditionally, survival is seen as an apolitical entity, as necessity is assumed to erode the conditions required for public life. However, *Life of Pi* complicates this view by demonstrating how survival, when structured through mutual recognition and interdependent agency, can generate a form of political engagement that reflects Arendtian principles.

To explore these ideas, this study investigates the key questions of 'How does Pi's survival journey transition from individual self-preservation to structured collective action?', 'To what extent does his evolving relationship with Richard Parker resemble Arendt's vision of political life as dependent on plurality and cooperation?', 'If, as Arendt suggests, speech is fundamental to political identity, how does Pi's nonverbal engagement, spatial negotiations and structured interactions with Richard Parker, complicate this assumption?', and 'How do transient survival spaces, such as the lifeboat and the floating island, function as temporary public spheres?'

The study interrogates whether Pi's structured survival alongside Richard Parker and their eventual parting align with Derrida's hostipitality, in which the very act of welcoming or structuring a shared space carries the inevitability of rupture and exclusion. How does Pi's survival resist or reaffirm his reduction to bare life, as theorized by Giorgio Agamben? Does his structured existence on the lifeboat remain trapped in a state of biological necessity, or does it reclaim a political dimension? How do interspecies relationships in *Life of Pi* challenge human-centered models of plurality? Derrida's limitrophy and Haraway's companion species theory highlight how Pi's coexistence with Richard Parker disrupts anthropocentric assumptions about political subjectivity. Moreover, what ethical dimensions emerge in Pi's survival? Levinas's ethics of alterity frames Pi's relationship with Richard Parker as an engagement with the Other, where survival is not merely instinctual but involves responsibility and reciprocity. By integrating these perspectives, this study argues that *Life of Pi* redefines survival as both a political and ethical process, challenging conventional distinctions between necessity and freedom, individuality and collectivity, and human and nonhuman actors. To do so, the novel demonstrates that, even in spaces of extreme precarity, collective identity and

public life can emerge through structured engagement, negotiated coexistence, and ethical interdependence.

III. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach to analyze *Life of Pi* through Hannah Arendt's political philosophy, particularly her concepts of collective action, plurality, and the public-private divide. Arendt's framework serves as the primary analytical lens, with additional insights from Giorgio Agamben's bare life, Jacques Derrida's limitrophy, Donna Haraway's companion species theory, and Emmanuel Levinas's ethics of alterity. These perspectives broaden the investigation of survival as a politically and ethically structured process. The research is conducted in two key phases as explained below.

a. Close reading and thematic analysis

A detailed textual analysis of *Life of Pi* identifies moments where survival transitions into structured coexistence. This includes tracing the shift from instinctual survival to structured interaction, assessing whether Pi's relationship with Richard Parker embodies Arendtian collective action, analyzing spatial organization, routines, and negotiated behaviors that sustain interspecies coexistence, and examining whether survival, rather than eroding public life, fosters political subjectivity.

To support this analysis, Arendt's writings are examined alongside Agamben's bare life to determine whether Pi's existence remains depoliticized or reclaims political meaning. Derrida's limitrophy and Haraway's companion species theory frame interspecies relationality as a mode of plurality, while Levinas's ethics of alterity inform discussions of Pi's ethical engagement with Richard Parker.

b. Application of theoretical frameworks

The second phase applies these theories to evaluate how survival functions as a political and ethical process. The key focal points include public-private divide (whether Pi's structured coexistence with Richard Parker disrupts conventional distinctions between biological survival and political action), interspecies plurality (how sustained interactions and negotiated coexistence align with or challenge Arendt's human-centered vision of political engagement), Agamben's bare life and political subjectivity (whether Pi remains within a state of necessity or reconfigures survival into a form of political agency), Derrida and Haraway on nonhuman coexistence (how Pi's survival strategies contest anthropocentric political boundaries), and Levinas's ethics of alterity (whether Pi's ethical recognition of Richard Parker can be understood as a form of political engagement).

By synthesizing these perspectives, the study ensures that *Life of Pi* is analyzed through both Arendt's political lens and complementary theories that refine and complicate her framework. The methodological approach balances textual analysis with interdisciplinary theoretical application to offer a nuanced interpretation of survival as a politically charged process.

IV. Discussion

Pi Patel's survival journey in *Life of Pi* redefines Hannah Arendt's distinction between the private and public spheres, where necessity belongs to the private realm, while public life emerges through speech, action, and collective engagement (Arendt 1998, 7). Traditionally, Arendt argues that political life depends on a space where individuals act in plurality, free from the pressures of sheer survival. However, *Life of Pi* complicates this assumption by demonstrating that, even in extreme conditions, structured interaction and negotiated coexistence can generate forms of collective action. Rather than treating survival as a purely instinctual act, the novel reconfigures it as an ethical and political process. Pi's relationship with Richard Parker forces him to engage in survival strategies that mirror political negotiation. His realization that "It was not a question of him or me, but of him and me" (Martel 2007, 182) marks a turning point, where survival shifts from being an individual struggle to a shared act of cohabitation.

This discussion examines Pi's journey through three phases. First, The Shipwreck as the Collapse of the Public Sphere explores how Pi's displacement from civilization mirrors Arendt's concerns about necessity engulfing political life while also considering Agamben's bare life. Second, Survival as

Structured Coexistence investigates how Pi's interactions with Richard Parker reflect forms of order and mutual recognition, engaging Derrida's limitrophy and Haraway's companion species theory. Finally, Navigating Temporary Public Spaces: The Lifeboat and the Floating Island analyzes how Pi's structured survival strategies on the lifeboat and his eventual rejection of the floating island illustrate both the fragility and transformative potential of public life. The lifeboat, governed by a dynamic of interdependent survival, emerges as a precarious political space, while the floating island, initially offering refuge, ultimately reveals itself as an inhospitable site of illusionary security. Richard Parker's departure and Pi's abandonment of the island underscore the ephemerality of public spaces formed under extreme conditions, reinforcing the novel's meditation on the impermanence of collective existence.

The shipwreck as the collapse of the public sphere

The shipwreck in *Life of Pi* marks a decisive rupture in Pi Patel's existence, severing him from the structured world of plurality, discourse, and political engagement. Prior to the disaster, Pi's life is shaped by a balance between private necessity and public engagement. His family's zoo represents the domain of economic livelihood, reflecting Hannah Arendt's notion of the private sphere, while his religious and intellectual pursuits immerse him in the public realm, where meaning is constructed through discourse and plurality (Arendt 1998, 22).

The very decision that led to the journey, that is, the selling of the zoo and the family's migration to Canada, was itself driven by materialistic concerns. Pi's father, a businessman more concerned with financial security than religious or intellectual pursuits, saw the zoo as an economic asset rather than a space of wonder and learning. This aligns with Arendt's assertion that the economic greed of modernity subjugates public engagement to material necessity, uprooting individuals from their communal spaces (Arendt 1971, 137). However, the shipwreck violently eradicates even these economic structures, leaving Pi in a state where necessity dictates all actions. Arendt warns that, when survival becomes the primary concern, the space for political and ethical engagement collapses (Arendt 1998, 46). Pi's journey exemplifies this collapse as he transitions from a reflective pluralistic thinker into a being governed by the imperative to endure.

Before the shipwreck, Pi's simultaneous engagement with Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam demonstrates an Arendtian commitment to plurality, where multiple perspectives coexist and shape an individual's public existence (Arendt 1961, 241). As he asserts, "The paths to liberation are numerous, but the bank along the way is always the same" (Martel 2007, 64). This pluralism signifies his immersion in the conditions that make public life possible through deliberation, representation, and exchange. Even his act of renaming himself as Pi, distancing his identity from the teasing associated with his full name, marks his active participation in shaping his public persona. He asserts his individuality in the classroom, inscribing "π = 3.14" on the blackboard to reinforce his self-definition (Martel 2007, 36). However, as soon as Pi is cast into the ocean, this engagement is rendered meaningless. The destruction of the Tsimtsum is not merely a physical event but the symbolic annihilation of Pi's former world too. There is no longer any room for speech or collective action; instead, survival is dictated by immediate physical demands.

Moreover, Pi's experience aligns with Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life, in which individuals are reduced to their most fundamental biological state, devoid of political agency (Agamben & Sacer 1998, 5). His first realization of this condition comes when he must kill a fish to survive: "It was the first sentient being I had ever killed. I was now a killer" (Martel 2007, 200). This moment marks the complete disintegration of his former self. The pluralistic thinker, who once saw the world through the lens of interconnected beliefs, is now reduced to an existence where ethical reflection is irrelevant. Before the shipwreck, Pi's engagement with religion and philosophy suggests an investment in meaning beyond mere existence. His embrace of multiple faiths demonstrates his capacity for what Arendt calls representative thinking, the ability to consider the perspectives of others (Arendt 1961, 241). However, survival allows no space for such deliberation. As Pi encounters the brutal reality of his situation, his bodily survival overtakes all his intellectual and ethical concerns.

Arendt argues that the erosion of the public sphere occurs when material necessity infiltrates and dominates human existence (Arendt 1998, 46). This is precisely what happens to Pi after the shipwreck. Whereas his past life was structured by discourse, education, and faith, the ocean offers only deprivation and struggle. The lifeboat in this phase, far from being a space of negotiation or engagement, becomes a realm governed by instinct and the constant threat of death. The disintegration of Pi's previous identity is further

emphasized when he acknowledges his desperation lamenting his past vegetarian life compared to the Pi as fish-killer and fish-eater: "I descended to a level of savagery I never imagined possible" (Martel 2007, 215).

The materialistic drive that initiated his journey, namely the pursuit of financial stability through the sale of the zoo, ironically culminates in a situation where economic concerns no longer matter. Pi's survival is reduced to the most primal level, mirroring Arendt's critique of modernity, where the encroachment of material necessity leads not to security but to a loss of agency and meaning. This descent into pure survival also reflects Arendt's concern that the modern world risks reducing individuals to biological existence rather than political beings. In Pi's case, this reduction is literal. His actions are no longer shaped by intellectual deliberation but by the immediate demands of hunger, thirst, and self-preservation. The weight of necessity erases all other forms of engagement, leaving only the raw instinct to persist.

The loss of language further underscores the collapse of the public sphere. Arendt maintains that political life depends on speech, which allows individuals to create shared meaning and establish collective identity (Arendt 1998, 198). Pi, however, is left in a space where words hold no power. His isolation at sea strips him of the ability to communicate, reinforcing his separation from public life. He reflects on his solitude: "For fear… shakes you to your foundation, such as you feel when you are brought face to face with your mortal end…it seeks to rot everything, even the words with which to speak of it." (Martel 2007, 179). This linguistic isolation signifies his expulsion from the realm of human interaction, leaving him in a state where survival obliterates all forms of discourse. The physicality of the ocean further reinforces the loss of the public sphere.

Arendt sees the public realm as a space of stability, where individuals come together to create lasting structures of meaning (Arendt 1998, 198). The sea, by contrast, is an unstable, ever-shifting environment where no such structures can exist. Pi is trapped in a space where nothing is fixed, mirroring the way his former identity has been erased by necessity. The endless horizon offers no points of reference, no anchors of shared meaning, only the vast expanse of survival. Pi's recognition of his predicament solidifies the Arendtian collapse of the public sphere. He reflects, "I was alone and orphaned in the middle of the Pacific, hanging on to an oar, an adult tiger in front of me, sharks beneath me, a storm raging about me" (Martel 2007, 124). This moment encapsulates his complete expulsion from the structures that once defined his life. There is no polis, no discourse, no community; it is only the brute reality of isolation and survival. The shipwreck, then, is not just a physical disaster; it is the violent destruction of Pi's connection to public life as well. He moves from a world structured by meaning, dialogue, and plurality to an existence dominated by necessity. Arendt's warning that material necessity erodes political engagement finds its fullest expression in Pi's transformation.

Arendt and Agamben provide the theoretical foundation for understanding this transformation in that the erosion of the public sphere is not gradual but immediate, and, once necessity takes hold, the space for political and ethical engagement disappears.

Survival as structured coexistence

The aftermath of the shipwreck in *Life of Pi* forces Pi Patel into a brutal reality where survival depends on his ability to coexist with Richard Parker. Unlike the immediate collapse of the public sphere, which left Pi in a state of isolation governed by raw necessity, this phase of his journey introduces a new kind of order, one dictated by structured coexistence rather than mere dominance. While Arendt maintains that true political life requires freedom from necessity (Arendt 1998, 32), Pi's experience complicates this notion. Despite the origin of the lifeboat as a space of chaos, he gradually establishes a system in which survival is not merely a matter of endurance but is also of negotiated interdependence.

Initially, Pi perceives Richard Parker as an existential threat rather than a companion. As he reflects, "I had to tame him. It was not a question of him or me, but of him and me" (Martel 2007, 182). This realization marks the beginning of a structured relationship in which power, adaptation, and cooperation shape their interactions. Unlike his earlier existence, where plurality and discourse defined his engagement with the world, Pi now navigates a dynamic in which maintaining a stable relationship with Richard Parker is the key to survival.

His early belief that he must assert dominance in taming the tiger, i.e., "the trainer better make sure he always remains super alpha" (Martel 2007, 58), eventually gives way to the deeper understanding that survival is not about one-sided control but about regulating interactions through mutual recognition. His father successfully integrated a lonely rhinoceros with a herd of goats, proving that survival is often dependent on social adaptation rather than aggression: "Rhinos are social animals, and when we got Peak, a young wild male, he was showing signs of suffering from isolation…Father thought of seeing if Peak couldn't be accustomed to living with goats. It worked marvelously" (Martel 2007, 40). Similarly, Pi recalls scientific cases of unlikely animal companionship, such as a stoat and a rat living in harmony (Martel 2007, 102). The cooperation is further highlighted by Pi's early exposure to religious and cultural plurality, as symbolized by the peaceful coexistence of his two mentors, one an atheist and the other a Muslim sharing a moment at the zoo where they greeted each other and together admired the zebra (Martel 2007, 100).

These examples underscore that survival is not solely dictated by dominance but by an ability to adapt and coexist as well, which is a lesson Pi applies in his relationship with Richard Parker. This interdependence is evident in their regulation of territorial boundaries. When Richard Parker instinctively marks his space on the lifeboat, Pi does not challenge this claim; instead, he respects the division: "Richard Parker's territorial claims seemed to be limited to the floor of the boat" (Martel 2007, 189).

Unlike the violent eliminations that characterized the earlier days on the lifeboat, where animals fought for dominance until only the tiger remained, Pi does not attempt to drive Richard Parker out. Instead, he learns to navigate the tiger's behavior. He had to learn the tiger's language, just as much as he had to learn Pi's (Martel 2003, 141). This mutual adaptation challenges the rigid human-animal divide that Derrida's concept of limitrophy critiques. This concept interrogates the constructed boundary between human and animal, resisting the traditional division that defines animals by their lack of human traits (Derrida, 2008, 29). Accordingly, the boundary between species is unstable. In the context of the novel, the tiger is neither fully Other nor fully integrated into Pi's world; their survival is a product of a shared evolving negotiation of space and power.

Donna Haraway's companion species theory provides further insight into this interdependent dynamics. Haraway argues that human-animal relationships are co-constitutive, shaping each other's behaviors and survival strategies (Haraway 2003, 15). Pi's survival is not simply a result of controlling Richard Parker, nor is Richard Parker's endurance a passive consequence of Pi's authority. Instead, both creatures influence each other's existence in ways that ensure their continued survival.

This is particularly evident in moments of direct protection. In this regard, Richard Parker's attack on the French cook prevents Pi's death, just as Pi's decision to take the tiger with him when leaving the carnivorous island ensures Richard Parker's survival: "I could not abandon Richard Parker. To leave him would mean to kill him" (Martel 2007, 302). These instances demonstrate that survival is not an individualistic pursuit but a negotiated process where both participants play a role in sustaining life. Arendt's distinction between labor, work, and action provides a useful lens through which to examine Pi's evolving role. Labor, in Arendtian terms, refers to the repetitive acts necessary for biological survival, while work involves the creation of something more lasting (Arendt 1998, 7). Pi's early days on the lifeboat are dominated by labor, finding food, securing fresh water, and ensuring immediate safety. However, as he begins to systematize his existence alongside Richard Parker, his actions shift toward structured engagement. Feeding the tiger is not merely an act of keeping a predator satiated; it is also a routine that maintains stability: "Life on a lifeboat …. is like an end game in chess, a game with few pieces… You must make adjustments if you want to survive" (Martel 2007, 237).

This transformation from reactive survival to structured coexistence suggests that even under extreme necessity, survival can take on an organized, rule-bound structure akin to political organization. This structured order is further reinforced through rituals. Pi's method of feeding Richard Parker at the same time each day, maintaining spatial boundaries, and consistently reinforcing their roles reflect the performative acts that sustain political life. "I will tell you a secret: a part of me was glad about Richard Parker. A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and my tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living" (Martel 2007, 182).

Arendt argues that political life is rooted in acting in concert (Arendt 1998, 175), and, while the lifeboat does not resemble a conventional public sphere, its system of structured interactions reflects a mode of political organization emerging even in conditions of scarcity. He had a routine of catching fish, inspecting the boat and making drinkable water by solar stills every day (Martel 2007,207-8). Crucially, Pi's relationship with Richard Parker evolves from fear to recognition. His initial belief that survival is a zero-sum game, either he dominates or he perishes, gradually shifts toward a more balanced view. "I awoke to the reality of Richard Parker. There was a tiger in the lifeboat. I could hardly believe it, yet I knew I had to" (Martel 2003, 103). This realization marks a fundamental departure from a purely hierarchical survival model. While Pi never fully relinquishes his need to maintain authority, his interactions with Richard Parker reflect a shift from conquest to coexistence. The tiger is neither fully subjugated nor fully independent; rather, their survival is contingent on a set of shared behaviors that sustain them both.

Thus, *Life of Pi* presents survival not as a state of randomness or pure necessity but as an enforced coexistence, where structure emerges even in the harshest conditions. Pi's relationship with Richard Parker is not one of sentimental companionship, but neither is it one of absolute dominance. Instead, it represents a carefully maintained system in which each being's survival depends on regulating power, space, and behavior.

Navigating temporary public spaces: The lifeboat and the floating island

The journey through the lifeboat and the encounter with the floating island underscore the transient nature of Pi's survival spaces. While the lifeboat is marked by the fragile coexistence between Pi and Richard Parker, the floating island introduces a new dimension to Pi's experience of temporary refuge. Both spaces function as temporary public spheres, i.e., arenas of structured interaction and coexistence. However, as Derrida's concept of hostipitality suggests, every act of hospitality is shadowed by an underlying hostility. Neither space offers a permanent sanctuary; instead, they must eventually be abandoned, reinforcing the precarious nature of public life and collective action. At first, the floating island appears to be a miraculous reprieve from the constant struggle for survival. Pi believes it to be a promise of salvation, a place where he and Richard Parker can exist without the immediate threats of hunger or thirst. Upon arriving at the island, Pi exclaimed "My God! My God! ... Richard Parker! Land! Land! We are saved!" (Martel 2007, 281)

Yet, as Derrida warns, the very act of offering hospitality contains an implicit limit; hospitality is never unconditional but is always accompanied by a form of control or exclusion. As Derrida states, "The law of unlimited hospitality encounters its limit in the law of justice, of duty, of the citizen, of the subject" (Derrida 2000, 55). The island, far from being a permanent sanctuary, harbors its own dangers, the seemingly life-sustaining algae turns carnivorous at night, threatening both Pi and Richard Parker. This revelation mirrors Derrida's assertion that hospitality always carries the potential for hostility, as the guest may overstay their welcome, or the host may impose conditions that ultimately undermine the act of welcoming itself. Pi's realization that the promise of safety on the island is an illusion marks a critical moment when he understands the impermanence of all such refuges: "my grim decision was taken. I preferred to set off and perish in search of my own kind than to live a lonely half-life of physical comfort and spiritual death on this murderous island." (Martel 302).

Just as Derrida's hostipitality suggests that the host's welcome is always conditional, the island's offer of shelter is ultimately withdrawn. Pi recognizes that what seemed like an act of generosity from the island, namely offering food, fresh water, and rest, was always accompanied by a hidden violence; that is, the transformation of algae into a deadly force at night. As Derrida argues, "hospitality… always holds the promise of arrival and departure at the same time" (Derrida 2000, 75). The island, like the lifeboat, is a temporary refuge that must eventually be relinquished, reinforcing the idea that true unconditional hospitality is impossible. Richard Parker's role in this moment further reinforces the hostipitality of the island. While Pi initially perceives the tiger as an adversary, their relationship on the island shifts; Richard Parker, in his continued presence, forces Pi to maintain an awareness of the dangers on the island.

The tiger's dependence on Pi, and vice versa, disrupts the idea of a clear host-guest dynamic. Pi is neither fully the guest nor the host of the island; he is a transient figure, much like Richard Parker himself. When Pi ultimately decides to leave, he does not abandon the tiger but ensures their continued

shared journey, an act that challenges the island's deceptive offer of stability. Pi explicitly states, "I could not abandon Richard Parker. To leave him would mean to kill him" (Martel 302), emphasizing that his survival is inextricably linked to the tiger's, reinforcing Derrida's notion that, even in moments of apparent hospitality, power and interdependence complicate the boundaries of host and guest.

However, the most striking example of hostipitality in *Life of Pi* occurs not on the island but in the moment of Richard Parker's final departure. The lifeboat, like the island, has served as a temporary public space, a precarious sphere where Pi and Richard Parker engaged in structured coexistence, maintaining a fragile order necessary for survival. Yet, the tiger's abrupt departure upon reaching land reveals the transient nature of this public space. Pi had anticipated a moment of recognition, a final acknowledgment of their shared journey. Instead, Richard Parker simply walks away into the jungle without turning back: "He disappeared forever from my life" (Martel 304). This moment encapsulates the fundamental instability of public spaces formed in extreme conditions.

The structured coexistence on the lifeboat, like the deceptive hospitality of the island, was always temporary. Richard Parker's departure mirrors the departure that Derrida describes in hospitality. This is the inevitable moment when the guest, who has been welcomed, must also leave. Just as Pi had to leave the island despite its initial generosity, Richard Parker must leave Pi despite their deep interdependence. In both cases, the space of collective survival dissolves as soon as it reaches its limit. Moreover, Richard Parker's disappearance signals the end of the Arendtian public space that Pi had forged at sea.

As Arendt argues, public life exists only so long as individuals engage in collective action; once that engagement ceases, the public sphere collapses (Arendt 1998, 198). Pi's survival had depended not just on his own efforts but also on the structured interactions he maintained with Richard Parker. Their coordinated actions such as establishing territorial boundaries, sharing food resources, and navigating the dangers of the ocean, which reflected the principles of political action in Arendt's philosophy. Yet, as soon as they reach land, the conditions that sustained their public sphere vanish. The tiger, no longer bound by necessity, simply walks away, leaving Pi to confront his solitude. Pi's reaction to this departure underscores its significance. His grief is not just for the loss of Richard Parker but also for the collapse of the public space they had built together: "I wept like a child. … I wept because Richard Parker left me so unceremoniously" (Martel 305). This moment highlights the fragility of public spaces and collective bonds in conditions of survival. Thus, *Life of Pi* presents survival not as an isolated struggle but as a process that unfolds within temporary spaces of collective action.

The lifeboat and the floating island both function as transient public spheres where Pi navigates the paradoxes of hostipitality, engaging in structured coexistence while always facing the inevitability of departure. Richard Parker's disappearance serves as the final rupture, reinforcing the broader meditation of the novel on the impermanence of public spaces and the limits of human and nonhuman collectivity.

V. Conclusion

In *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel redefines survival by framing it as a process shaped by structured interactions, challenging conventional distinctions between private and public realms. This study argues that survival, often perceived as an individual and apolitical struggle, can instead function as a negotiated, ethical engagement when examined through Hannah Arendt's political philosophy. Pi's evolving relationship with Richard Parker illustrates how survival becomes a shared endeavor, with interdependence and negotiated coexistence central to Arendt's conception of collective life.

Pi's lifeboat, initially a space of isolation, transforms as his relationship with Richard Parker deepens. In Arendtian terms, survival is not a purely private concern but involves structured interaction, forming a temporary political space that sustains a form of engagement beyond mere endurance. The departure of Richard Parker and Pi's rejection of the floating island highlight Arendt's view that political spaces are fragile and contingent upon continued participation. Once the conditions that sustain interaction dissolve, the public sphere collapses, leaving Pi in a state of solitude that marks the dissolution of structured coexistence.

Derrida's concept of limitrophy provides further insight into this process, revealing how survival operates at the thresholds between life and death, human and nonhuman existence. Pi's coexistence with Richard Parker challenges rigid species hierarchies, demonstrating that survival is not a solitary act but an ongoing negotiation shaped by interspecies engagement. Haraway's companion species theory further supports this

claim, showing that Pi and Richard Parker's survival strategies reflect mutual adaptation rather than hierarchical dominance. In this sense, survival emerges not just as an instinctual response but as an interactive process too, shaped by shared structures of dependence.

Agamben's concept of bare life, i.e., the condition of existence stripped to biological survival, resonates with Pi's experience on the lifeboat. Although initially reduced to a state where necessity dominates all actions, Pi reclaims a form of agency through his structured coexistence with Richard Parker. His survival is not merely a biological endurance; it is also a negotiated engagement that resists total depoliticization. The lifeboat, rather than functioning solely as a site of bare survival, becomes a space where survival strategies take on structured forms of order and mutual recognition. Thus, Pi's journey complicates the assumption that bare life is entirely devoid of political meaning. This suggests that, even in extreme conditions, structured interactions can sustain forms of agency.

The floating island serves as a final illustration of the precariousness of survival spaces. Initially appearing as a sanctuary, the island ultimately reveals its concealed hostility, reinforcing Derrida's notion of hostipitality, the idea that every act of hospitality contains an inherent limit or condition. Just as Pi must abandon the island upon recognizing its underlying danger, Richard Parker's unceremonious departure at the journey's end underscores the impermanence of survival spaces. Both instances highlight how structured coexistence is inherently transient, shaped by conditions that, once removed, dissolve the framework of collective survival.

In conclusion, *Life of Pi* challenges traditional understandings of survival, demonstrating that it is not merely an individualistic or instinct-driven act but a structured, negotiated process. Through the frameworks of Arendt, Derrida, Agamben, and Haraway, the novel reveals that survival is shaped by shared conditions, interdependent interactions, and temporary spaces of engagement.

Pi's lifeboat is not simply a site of endurance but a space where the boundaries between necessity and political life blur, illustrating how cooperation and structured adaptation sustain existence even in extreme isolation.

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