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J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*
Writing Back To Canonical Pre-Texts

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, J. M. Coetzee'nin **Foe** adlı romanının, bu romanın metinlerarası düzlemde ilişkili olduğu öbür bazı yazın yapıtları ile karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesinden oluşmaktadır. Coetzee'nin romanı bir yandan Daniel Defoe'nun **Robinson Crusoe** ve **Roxana** adlı romanlarının, sömürgecilik sonrası, feminist, yapısökücü ve postmodern kuramlar bağlamında gerçekleştirilmiş bir yeniden yorumlanmasıdır; öbür yandan da, bu iki on sekizinci yüzyıl romanı ile kurduğu belirgin metinlerarası ilişkiye ek olarak, birçok başka metne de, daha dolaylı olmasına karşın süreklilik gösteren göndermeler yapmaktadır. Coetzee yapıtında hem, yeniden yorumladığı bu metinlerden yola çıkarak, her türlü (ırksal, cinsiyete ilişkin, sınıfsal, vb.) ayrımı, eşitsizliği, baskı ve şiddeti eleştirel bir gözle açığa vurmakta; hem de, sürekli olarak kendisinin (ya da tüm metinlerin) işleyiş süreçlerine dikkat çeken üst-metin/kurmaca özelliğiyle, tüm bu olumsuz yaklaşımların bir aracı, bir tür işbirlikçisi olarak işlev gören dil, söylem, anlatma, yazma ve yorumlama eylemlerinin işleyiş biçimini ve gücünü açığa çıkaran ve tartışan bir tarzda ortaya koymaktadır yapıtını. Bu çalışmada, **Foe**'da ortaya koyulan bu karşı-söylem etkinliği karşılaştırmalı bir incelemeye konu olmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

This study consists of a comparative analysis of J. M. Coetzee's **Foe** in relation to some other literary works that it is intertextuality related with. Coetzee's novel is, on the one hand, a postcolonial, feminist, deconstructive, and postmodern revision of Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** and **Roxana**; and on the other hand, in addition to its overt intertextual relations with those two eighteenth-century novels, it also makes more indirect yet constant allusions to many other texts. Coetzee, taking the themes of those texts that it reinterprets as a starting point for his arguments, critically discloses and negotiates not only all sorts of (racial, gender, class, etc.) discrimination, inequality, oppression, and violence but also, through its self-reflexivity and meta-textuality/fictionality that constantly draws attention to its own (or any) text's workings, the mechanisms and power of language, discourse, narration, writing, and interpretation which function as instruments of or accomplices with those violating attitudes. The study presents a comparative analysis of this act of counter-discourse that is presented in **Foe**.

PREFACE

J. M. Coetzee's **Foe** presents a discussion of the crucial subjects of oppression and violence, inequality and injustice in all its forms (racial, gender, class) within the actively dialogic framework of its intertextual relations and meta-textual/fictional methods. With its underlined consciousness of the role of discursive practices in the construction and perpetuation of these forms of violation as well as in (potential) acts of deconstructing and invalidating them, the novel interweaves those main themes with self-reflexive discussions of contemporary theoretical/critical discourses (like postcolonialism, feminism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism), while it also shows a cautious and self-questioning attitude about these discussions as exemplified in the words of the author character in the novel (regarding his and Barton's intensive discussions of the possibilities of giving the subaltern a voice/speech): "as it was a slaver's stratagem to rob Friday of his tongue, may it not be a slaver's stratagem to hold him in subjection while we cavil over words in a dispute we know to be endless?" (*Foe*, p.150). The intellectual, theoretical questionings are problematized in relation to concepts like human (free) will and responsibility.

To work on these themes and issues was especially important for me since they have gained increasing significance in the world and times of global capitalism that we inhabit, in which social, cultural, economic, political injustice, oppression and violence that are underpinned immensely by (deceptive) discursive strategies blurring the very realities of these violations, threaten not only the (individual) inhabitants of the world but their very environment, the Planet Earth itself irrevocably.

I would like to thank everybody – my supervisor, the thesis jury, and other colleagues – who have read and commented on this study. I also would like to give my special thanks to The Tinçel Foundation for Culture for the international research grant that they provided me with and Graham Huggan of the Institute of Colonial and Postcolonial Studies-University of Leeds, for generously providing me with a prolific research period in the institute, which have consolidated my interest and encouraged my studies in the field of postcolonial studies. And I would like to express my deepest love and gratitude to my family, to my friends, to all my loved ones for, in fact, much, much more than their support of my studies; for their constant love and solidarity, for being so considerate, humane, just, and good, for being in my world and making it so meaninful and valuable.

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Starting directly, without any preamble, with the vital struggle for survival of a narrator swimming towards a "strange island", even the first couple of pages of J. M. Coetzee's **Foe** make it clear that we are presented with another version of the mythical desert island story of Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**. However, those first pages also reveal that Coetzee's novel has another significant intertextual relationship, the first indications of which appear in the opening lines with the fact that the narrator (of the whole novel with the exception of only the short final section) is someone with "long hair" and who is wearing a "petticoat", who is a woman, and whose identity is only gradually exposed as another one of Defoe's protagonists: the eponymous heroine of **Roxana**. Moreover, taking into consideration the various other literary allusions made throughout **Foe** (some of which are more indirect and sporadic while some are more constant and obvious), we understand that Coetzee's novel is not only an attempt to produce a new version of Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** delivered this time through the mouth of the protagonist of **Roxana** but the presentation an act of "writing back"[1] to the themes and issues that comprise the major focal points of those works alluded to, that is, a whole history of hidden or overt oppression in terms of race, class, and gender, as well as a whole tradition of writing/representing it.

Foe, through its intensive intertextuality, which, in Graham Allen's words, is "a kind of language which, because of its embodiment of otherness, is against, beyond and resistant to (mono)logic"[2], depicts and negotiates the "other(s)" in the works it revises. These depictions and negotiations in the novel are tightly interwoven with also a concern to disclose the power of language/discourse as an instrument of marginalization, of, in

[1] Bill Ashcroft, **Post-Colonial Transformation**, London & New York, Routledge, 2002 (first pub. 2001), p.102.
[2] Graham Allen, **Intertextuality**, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p.45.

other words, creating those "others", while, by doing this, the novel also exemplifies the kind of language/discourse employed to disclose its own power. As Susan VanZanten Gallagher states regarding the main concerns in Coetzee's oeuvre, "The word can entrap, but it can also free. Coetzee's novels ultimately affirm the value of speaking and storytelling, as long as such discourse is done in a self-conscious and non-authoritative way"[3].

Foe, in Teresa Dovey's words, rather than being a straightforward rewriting of **Robinson Crusoe**, is, in fact, a novel "about the narrator, Susan Barton, and her attempt to re-write Defoe's novel"[4], or, perhaps, about her resultant failure to do so, "her inability to tell the story she wants to tell"[5], in Rosemary Jane Jolly's words. As Steven Connor remarks, "although it is a rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Foe* must also be seen as a 'prequel', whose main concern is not with the events which have taken place on the island, but with the struggles over the narrative of those events"[6]. Rather than delineating merely contrastive alternative versions of the literary works that it is revisiting, revising, and making (constant) allusions to, **Foe** presents its clear concern to draw attention to the (potential) existence of numerous versions for the same story and to the ways those versions are constructed as well as to the production of the criteria (in)validating them, that is, to the processes of canon-construction. Therefore, the novel, while focusing on the concepts of oppression, discrimination, and violence practised by the patriarchal and colonialist systems as exemplified in its canonical pre-texts, pays and draws special attention to the various discursive strategies that are employed in and contribute considerably to those projects. The self-reflexive and intertextual method through which the novel puts forward its postcolonial reaction and resistance to all sorts of historical and textual oppression, to, in Jolly's words, "the multiple violences of

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[3] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context**, Cambridge-Massachusetts and London, Harvard University Press, 1991, p.47.
[4] Teresa Dovey, **The Novels of J.M.Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories**, Cape Town, Ad.Donker, 1988, p.330.
[5] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: André Brink Breyten Breytenbach, and J. M. Coetzee**, Athens, Ohio University Press and Johannesburg, Witwatersand University Press, 1996, p.4.

sexism, racism, and colonialism"[7], is in conformity with what Bill Ashcroft defines as "interpolation", of "writing back", of producing "counter discourses":

> Interpolation is not so much 're-writing' ..., inserting the marginal histories that have been excluded (although this is an important tactic), but 'writing back'. The model for this is 'counter-discourse', which is not a separate oppositional discourse but a tactic which operates from the fractures and contradictions of discourse itself ... *Foe* rewrites the entire Crusoe story on the level of both race and gender, he inserts the post-colonial allegory – and thus, in a sense, post-colonial history – into the elaborately erected myth which the Robinson Crusoe story has become in Western imagination. These 'canonical counter-discourses' are not 'histories' but they show the process of historical re-visioning at work. This kind of 'writing back' has a far more profound effect than 'setting the story straight', tidying up the margins of European history, or simply adding one more voice to a Eurocentred pluralism of narratives. Ultimately, the object of this strategy is to transform the situation in which History simply means 'variations on a master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe"' ... This involves not simply the insertion of a contestatory voice, a different version, or a radical perspective, although it may involve all these, but an entry into the discourse which disrupts its discursive features and reveals the limitations of the discourse itself.[8]

Foe is also a novel about (novel) writing. It is, as Dick Penner comments, "a retelling of *Robinson Crusoe* as well as a self-reflexive commentary on the nature of narrative"[9]. It is, as Benita Parry calls it, "a book about writing a book"[10], about telling and recording (hi)stories, one which is inquiring into the power of speech, self-expression, representation, writing, and interpretation in the acts of domination and colonialism, which are the main themes of its pre-texts. It is a novel discussing colonial/textual subjection. It, in its idiosyncratic form, which Dovey defines as "fiction-as-criticism" or "criticism as fiction"[11], starts with a revision of its obvious pre-texts and gradually widens its focus to cover much more extensive discussions of the whole

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[6] Steven Connor, "Rewriting Wrong: On the Ethics of Literary Reversion", **Postmodern Literary Theory: An Anthology**, ed. Niall Lucy, Oxford and Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 2000 (pp.123-139), pp.134-135.
[7] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.12.
[8] Bill Ashcroft, **Post-Colonial Transformation**, pp.102-103.
[9] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J. M. Coetzee**, Westport, Conn., Greenwood, 1989, p.1.
[10] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", **Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee**, ed. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson, London and New York, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996, (pp.37-65), p.50.
[11] Teresa Dovey, **The Novels of J.M.Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories**, p.9.

literary history and criticism as well as of the nature of non-fictional and non-literary discursive practices working effectively in a much wider cultural area.

Foe, which, as Rosemary Jane Jolly suggests, is "often referred to as the most 'theoretical' of his [Coetzee's] fictions"[12], does foreground remarkably sophisticated discussions of literary and cultural theories and this feature of the novel (together with its emphasized metafictionality and its strong intertextual ties with [canonical] western texts), has been subject to criticisms claiming that it shifts from the actual socio-political, historical contexts, especially those of South Africa, into more abstract, intellectual concerns, even into an indulgence in evasiveness and artistic play[13]. Yet, although the novel, as Jolly, adducing Dovey, remarks, "can be read as an exploration of the relationships among postmodern, postcolonial, and feminist discourses"[14], the employment of these theoretical issues are tightly mingled with the novel's manifest thematic concerns (for colonial, sexual, textual violations) provided mainly by its intertextual relationships, by, in other words, what Nadine Gordimer calls "cross-fertilisation"[15], and do contribute remarkably to the discussions of these themes. As Jolly comments:

> Cruso can certainly be read as a representation of the colonizer, Susan Barton as the representation of the feminist novelist, Friday as a representation of the colonized subject, and Foe as a postmodern representation of the eighteenth-century master-writer. Yet to the degree that these characters exceed their respective qualities as representatives of these discourses, and instead become characterized by their interactions with one another as bodies that are simultaneously racially and sexually differentiated, they sabotage any simplistic interpretations of themselves as representative of distinct critical approaches, and insist instead upon their status as belonging to a novelistic, rather than critical, discourse. In this capacity they act not merely as representatives of various kinds of critical discourses, but rather as a critique of those discourses ... the figures in *Foe* also demonstrate the pitfalls into which the conventions of fictional critiques of racial, sexual, and colonial violence frequently leap.[16]

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[12] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.1.
[13] For some common criticisms see, for example, Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, pp.128-129; Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee"; Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", **Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons**, ed. Karen R. Lawrence, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1992, (pp.212-238), pp.232-233.
[14] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.2.
[15] Nadine Gordimer, Preface, **Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee**, (pp.vii-xii), p.x.
[16] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.2. p.2.

Similarly, Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson state that Coetzee has been charged with "an aestheticism ... considered politically irresponsible, or simply irrelevant"[17]. Yet they also remark that "later critics ... were to counter-argue that Coetzee's narrative strategies involved a radical questioning of the very discourses of power that upheld brutal and unjust social systems, thereby making him a more profoundly political writer than any exponent of Agitprop"[18]. As the fact that the issues of injustice, abuse, and destructiveness constitute the blatantly dominant themes and the major historical framework of **Foe**'s pre-texts shows, the emphasis that the novel puts upon the discussions of linguistic, literary, and cultural theories functions as an indication of its efforts to analyse the nature/power of signification systems and to unveil the important role they play in the production, maintenance, and perpetuation of the established and oppressive socio-cultural, political, and economic mechanisms.

Huggan and Watson comment that "Few writers are more acute than Coetzee in their perception of the materiality of language, or of the susceptibility of words and stories to ideological manipulation"[19]. Therefore the novel's self-reflexivity, rather than being an intellectual, metafictional play, presents an example of what David Attwell defines as "situational metafiction", that is, "a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation"[20]. In his discussion of Coetzee's work within a postcolonial framework, Michael Marais, too, shows his objection to the comments that Coetzee's work is a purely postmodern production by underlining what he calls "the fallacy inherent in labelling certain of Coetzee's novels, such as *Foe* ... postmodernist":

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[17] Graham Huggan & Stephen Watson, introduction, **Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee**, (pp.1-10), p.3.
[18] **Ibid**., pp.3-4.
[19] **Ibid**., p.8.
[20] David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing**, Berkeley and Los Angeles, U of California P., 1993, p.20.

> ... although I would agree with Carusi that in *Foe* Coetzee makes use of those narrative strategies which are usually considered to be characteristic of postmodernism, it does not necessarily follow that this is, as she puts it, a 'blatantly postmodernist' novel ... In this regard, I find support in Helen Tiffin's point that although self-reflexive narrative strategies 'are characteristic of both the generally post-colonial and the European post-modern ... they are energized by different theoretical assumptions and by vastly different political motivations' ... Ultimately, these differences are reducible to different sites of production: on the one hand, post-colonial writing is produced by the colonial encounter and, on the other, postmodernist writing is produced by, in Slemon's terms, the 'system of writing' itself ..."[21]

As the analyses made in the following chapters will show, the harsh socio-political, historical, economic, and cultural realities that victimize the characters in the works that **Foe** chooses to communicate with as its pre/inter-texts, are far from providing a scene where mere artistic/aesthetic plays would be possible.

The first chapter of this study consists mainly of a comparative analysis of **Foe** and its primary inter-text, Daniel Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**. Coetzee's novel, as Bill Ashcroft puts it, "'writes back' to Defoe's imperial classic, *Robinson Crusoe*, exposing its patriarchal and imperialist bases, and thus deconstructing the founding assumptions of English literature"[22]. Accordingly, there is, in this chapter, a discussion of the dominant themes of discrimination, injustice, oppression, and violence as they are introduced and reworked by Coetzee in relation to Defoe's novel within the framework of the colonial encounter which takes place between Cruso(e) and Friday in the familiar spatial context of the renowned desert island. The analysis examines how the auspiciously portrayed and often mythologized themes of Western civilization, development, exploration, expansion, the colonial project, and master-slave relationships are re-presented through a deconstructive and demythologizing revision in **Foe**. In this chapter, there is also an introduction to the themes related to systems of signification (language, representation, writing, and reading) deriving mainly from the topics of Friday's silence and Barton's increasing desire to speak, to tell stories, and to write, which will all be further elaborated in the following chapters. The chapter focuses on the discussions of the nature of language, the problem of referentiality, the relationship

[21] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", **Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee**, (pp.66-81), p.67.
[22] Bill Ashcroft, **Post-Colonial Transformation**, p.205.

between fact and fiction, and the power of the acts of speech, representation, writing, narration, and interpretation as discussed within the context of the encounter between the colonizer and colonized as well as between the two texts (by Defoe and Coetzee) and between the text and the reader.

Another discussion firmly intertwined in **Foe** with the topics of power, authority, and subjection lying at the heart of the colonial experience is that of the disadvantageous position of women inflicted upon them by the artificial and discriminatory gender roles produced and perpetuated by the rigid mechanisms of the firmly established patriarchal order. And this discussion constitutes the main subject matter of the second chapter of this study. The chapter is based mainly on a comparative analysis of **Foe** and Defoe's **Roxana**, the heroine of which, this time presented as Susan Barton, is the main narrator in Coetzee's novel. Through Barton's retelling of the renowned desert island story this time as the experiences of three people – the mythical castaway, his slave/Friday, and Barton herself – and her intertwining of this theme with (her own version of) her own experiences as a woman and a mother in the eighteenth-century England, we are presented with a postcolonial and feminist deconstruction of **Foe**'s canonical pre-texts. Barton's rejection of the conventional female roles imposed upon her (predecessor) go hand in hand with her attempts to emancipate herself through determining her own destiny by "writing". One of the main points of discussion in this chapter is Barton's gradually increasing consciousness of and involvement in the acts and discussions of writing presented within the context of her tense relationship not only with Cruso but also with Foe the author. Thus discussions of postcolonial, feminist, and (postmodernist) theoretical issues merge into one another.

Chapter three comprises a discussion of the predicament and precarious position of Susan Barton in terms of her treatment of Friday. Because, despite her own disadvantageous position within the dominant patriarchal societal order, despite her considerable sympathies with and concern for the victim of colonialism, namely Friday, and despite her overt criticism of the dominant socio-political and cultural systems of oppression, cannot, most of the times, avoid acting in accordance with the biased,

oppressive, and exploitative viewpoint of the Western colonizer. This discussion of Barton's position as "the colonizer who refuses"[23] is based on a comparative analysis made on **Foe** and Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**, the main narrator of which, that is, Charlie Marlow, resembles Barton in that he shares her precarious and in-between position in his encounter with the harsh realities of colonialism. The chapter ends with a discussion of how those two unwilling colonizers, when they are unable to cope with or are unwilling to recognize, the severe reality of colonialism, show a propensity to mystify and ahistoricize the concrete material conditions (as in the case of Marlow) or begin to search for a grand design, a supreme power beyond the workings of the universe (as in the case of Barton). Accordingly, the discussions of language both as an instrument of power in acts of domination and also as means of (self)deception/escape occupy an important place in this chapter.

In the following chapter, there is a discussion of how this in-between protagonist of **Foe**, who, disillusioned with the destructive mechanisms of the colonial system and with her own unwilling yet inescapable complicity with them, searches for some sort of a hidden meaning, some sort of a grand design behind all the chaotic and violent world that she finds herself besieged by. For the (potential) existence of such an overarching power would entail not only a weakening of people's self-control and will but also of the responsibility to face and resolve the wrongdoing. The discussion is presented through a comparative analysis of **Foe** and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", another canonical work of literature which focuses on the themes of guilt and human responsibility. The focal point of the discussions in this chapter is a questioning of the tendency to see/show acts of guilt, crime, destructiveness as inexplicable, dark, as results of universal, ontological concepts which entails a dematerialization and dehistoricization of specific socio-historical and political issues and which, consequently, counteracts and undermines the ideologically and historically conscious approaches of postcolonial readings of fiction as well as of history.

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[23] Albert Memmi, **The Colonized and the Colonizer**, Boston, Beacon Press, 1991 (first pub.1957), pp.19-44.

Then comes the conclusion of this study (which, ironically is based on the analysis of a novel that constantly raises doubts about the linearity of a beginning-middle-end structure and about closures!). In the conclusion, there is mainly a comparative analysis of the novel's nonrealistic, innovative, idiosyncratic final section and Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck". Then the acts of "diving into the wreck", as performed by both the persona in Rich's poem and the unnamed narrator at the end of Coetzee's novel, are examined as their attempts to deconstruct and invalidate, through their feminist and postcolonial approaches, the firmly established cultural myths that make racial and gender discrimination and oppression possible. And the study ends ith a discussion of Friday's silence that closes the novel.

It should be noted that since all the (intertextual) themes, characters, and arguments that **Foe** deals with are tightly interwoven and since the main concerns and points of argument of the novel, namely, as stated above, the questions of historical and textual subjection and power relations, are dominantly present throughout the text within the framework of all its explicit and implicit allusions and references to its various intertexts, to divide the content of the chapters in a clearcut way could not in fact be possible. For instance, although the character of Cruso leaves the scene relatively early in the novel, Friday is, though silently, always present in Barton's experiences. For this reason, discussions related to Friday cannot be limited to the first chapter, where the main theme is the story of Robinson Crusoe's island, but continue all through the chapters. Similarly, with the inclusion of Foe, the author, who is tied to all the characters as his creations, the divisions become even more difficult.

Another note should be made concerning this study's lack of focus on the South African context of Coetzee's novel and on the other works by the author. The framework of this dissertation, which mainly focuses on the intertextual relationships of the novel, has been narrowed down to a discussion of **Foe** in relation to its canonical Western pre-texts as analysed within the framework of the Western socio-political, cultural, historical, and literary conventions and the dynamics of canon-construction. Due to this fact and due to the considerable amount of specialism that a detailed and constant focus

on the South African cultural, socio-political, historical contexts would require, and despite the fact that the novel, written by a South African novelist, includes conspicuous reflections of the South African social, political, historical contexts, the scope of the dissertation has had to be limited as stated above.

Writing Back to **Robinson Crusoe**:
Deconstructing the optimistic story of the mythical castaway

> Like Odysseus embarked for Ithaka, like Quixote mounted on Rocinante, Robinson Crusoe with his parrot and umbrella has become a figure in the collective consciousness of the West, transcending the book which – in its multitude of editions, translations, imitations and adaptations ('Robinsonades') – celebrates his adventures. Having pretended once to belong to history, he finds himself in the sphere of myth.[24]

In Coetzee's **Foe**, one of the most remarkable changes made in Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** is obviously the fact that the story of the desert island is delivered this time by a female narrator, Susan Barton[25], and her narration starts, as Susan VanZanten Gallagher says, "in medias res"[26], with her struggle for survival in the middle of the sea, without any background or contextualization. When Barton arrives on the island, Cruso (as spelled in Coetzee's novel[27]) and Friday are already there. They have been there, as we learn, for fifteen years.

Although in Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**, three fourths of the novel is allotted solely to the solitary adventures of the eponymous hero, most of it set in his isolation on the desert island before Friday's arrival, Coetzee's story begins directly with the interaction of the three characters. This is an early indication that the main concern of this revision of Defoe's canonical work has shifted from tracing and depicting the solitary and solipsistic process and narrative of quest, exploration, and development of

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[24] J. M. Coetzee, **Stranger Shores**, London et al., Vintage, 2002 (first pub.2001), p.20.
[25] A detailed analysis of the identity and significance of this female narrator comprises the second chapter of this study.
[26] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.171.
[27] Frederick R. Karl points out that "Defoe had as a classmate at Morton's Academy one Timothy Cruso" (Frederick R. Karl, **A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century**, London, Thames and Hudson, 1975, p.76). David Attwell, too, states that "Coetzee reverts to 'Cruso', the name of Defoe's long-standing friend Timothy Cruso, a dissenting minister who seems to have provided the name of Defoe's adventurer" and his interpretation of this replacement of the name Crusoe with Cruso is that "Coetzee sheds a 'preliterary' light on his protagonists in order to place the transformations of the 'literary' in question." (David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.107)

the Western male bourgeois individual to his relationship with the two other characters in **Foe**, who are, very significantly, representatives of entirely different and underprivileged groups in terms of race, gender, class, and social status. Cruso cannot survive even until the end of the first one thirds of Coetzee's novel; he dies at the end of section one ("although", as Dana Dragunoiu comments, "his ghostly presence continues to hover over the text"[28]). In fact, he has already died when Barton's retrospective narration starts and he exists only as a character talked about and interpreted by others in his absence, mainly by Susan Barton, who takes over (or, intertextually looking, makes a failed attempt to take over) Robinson Crusoe's position as narrator. This lack of background contributes effectively to the novel's suspicious approach to the period preceding Barton's arrival on the island, that is, the period that Cruso and Friday spent there alone, and to Cruso's (few and contradictory) accounts of it. Due to Cruso's deliberate reticence and Friday's enforced silence we, as Barton herself does, know very little about their history.

However, there are, even very early in the novel, all kinds of indications that the inhabitants of this island are conspicuously different from the renowned characters of Defoe's classical story. The image of a Crusoe whose character, despite his oscillations between contentment and despair, despite his many serious, yet mostly temporary and finally resolved physical and psychological difficulties, anxieties, conflicts, and crises, is in general determined by his unrelenting belief in progress and by his constructive and resolute labour performed in order to achieve it and the image of a vivid, willingly and devotedly loyal Friday, who presents a pure example of the colonialist myth which Graham Huggan calls "grateful servitude"[29], are both unsettled in the opening pages of **Foe**.

It is significant that the first person whom Susan Barton encounters on the island, the first person who helps her, who guides her through the island, is Friday. And

[28]Dana Dragunoiu, "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", **Critique**, Washington, Spring 2001, vol.42, iss.3, p.1.
[29] Graham Huggan, "Philomela's Retold Story: Silence, Music, and the Post-Colonial Text", **Journal of Commonwealth Literature**, 25.1, 1990 (pp.12-23), p.17.

Barton's description which introduces the Friday character shows a sharp contrast to Defoe's Friday, who has been, as quoted below, portrayed as an idealized character, as, in Coetzee's words, "a handsome Carib youth with near-European features"[30]:

> He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight strong limbs, not too large, tall and well-shaped, and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face, and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of an European in his countenance too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not of an ugly yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are; but of a bright kind of a dun olive colour that had something in it very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat like the Negroes', a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and white as ivory[31].

Crusoe's viewpoint, which reveals his dislike for the "wool-like curled hair", "ugly yellow, nauseous tawny skin", "flat noses" and the consequent appropriation of native black features in the delineation of the character who has the significant role of being the sole companion of this young European adventurer on the island, is in line with the prejudiced and discriminatory representations of natives depicted, as Susan VanZanten Gallagher states, in many examples of travel writing written by Western explorers and, very significantly, of history writing. These explorers cannot be said to have been very willing to accept the black inhabitants of the lands that they enthusiastically explored. Gallagher adduces, for instance, the impressions of Ralph Standish of a journey of his to South Africa, written down in 1612:

> The Counttrey being firtille ground and pleasantt ... but the people bruitt and salladg, without Religion, without languag, without Lawes or government ... yt is a great pittie that such creattures as they bee should injoy so sweett a counttry. Ther persons are preporcionable butt ther Faces like an Appe or Babownne, with flat nosses and ther heads and faces both beastlie and fillthye to behoulde.[32]

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[30] Tony Morphet, "Two Interviews with J. M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987", **Triquarterly**, 69, 1987 (pp.454-464), p.463.
[31] Daniel Defoe, **Robinson Crusoe**, London et.al., Penguin Books, 1994 (first pub.1719), p.202. Given hereafter in paranthesis as RC followed by the page number.
[32] Cited by Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.27.

Crusoe's above quoted description of Friday, too, for instance, reveals not only what the colonizer considers unacceptable, that is, the black man's reality/existence, which has been appropriated accordingly in his narrative, but also what he finds absolutely acceptable, that is, the object of wealth, of exploitation, of, consequently, his desire, as attached to the Europeanized figure in the form of a simile: Friday's teeth are "white as *ivory*"[33].

Gallagher emphasizes the dominant propensity in those European texts to overtly depict blacks as uncivilized and beastly: "European visitors often used animal metaphors to describe the native customs, and many early travelers suspected (without grounds) that the blacks were cannibals"[34]. The depiction of the natives as in an extremely deprived state and, therefore, as in need of redemption, which can, no doubt, only be bestowed upon them by the civilized white Christian Western man, functions as an effective means of justifying the white man's presence in the colonized lands. This viewpoint based on hierarchical binary oppositions contributes considerably to the construction of the native figure as totally different, as the completely dark "Other", and serves as a means of legitimization for the whole project of colonization. This prejudiced and partial perspective and its products, which are not presented as works of fiction but records of real life experiences and observations, influence significantly the shaping of cultural receptions as well as the formation of official histories. Thus the native figure is written both into the works of fiction – whether their fictionality is acknowledged or not – and into the grand and authoritative texts/narratives of history as fixed in accordance with those biased descriptions that turn impressions into facts. This is why Gallagher, in her detailed analysis of the ways the history of South Africa and its indigenous people were written, calls attention to the concept of history as myth and to "Coetzee's insistence that 'history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other'"[35].

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[33] Italics mine.
[34] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, pp.26-27.
[35] **Ibid**., 24.

Accordingly, the black man on Crusoe's island has to be appropriated in order to be written into Defoe's text, in order to attain a place within the literary work written by and for the civilized Westerner. Moreover, in addition to that "something very manly in his face", Friday is also almost feminized, in other words, also given the role of another secondary and complementary figure within the patriarchal order, that is, the female, through the depiction of his "sweetness and softness" in Crusoe's story, from which, as Frederick R. Karl remarks, sexuality is excluded and replaced by the "indirect gratification" that "comes in his acquisitiveness"[36]. Friday, as the person who will, no doubt with certain and strict limitations, have access to the solitary life of this mythical hero, needs to be reshaped in a way that he can appeal to the needs of his Master, to be reliably and constantly complementary to him. As Coetzee comments: "Friday becomes inseparable from Crusoe, in more than one sense his shadow. Now and then he is allowed to play Sancho Panza to Crusoe's Quixote, and to express common-sense opinions about, for instance, the more baffling features of the Christian faith. For the rest, he is seen through Crusoe's eyes alone, and treated with self-congratulatory paternalism"[37].

Unlike the physically assimilated Friday of Crusoe's story, the Friday whom we encounter in **Foe** as described by Susan Barton, is a black man, whose identity as a real black native is given back. "[H]e is", as Coetzee remarks, depicted as "an African"[38]. He does not need to be reshaped and westernized in order to be acceptable into Barton's narrative:

> He was black: a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool, naked save for a pair of rough drawers. I lifted myself and studied the flat face, the small dull eyes, the broad nose, the thick lips, the skin not black but a dark grey, dry as if coated with dust ... He smelled of fish, and of sheepswool on a hot day... He was a slight fellow, shorter than I.[39]

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[36] Frederick R. Karl, **A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century**, p.83.
[37] J. M. Coetzee, **Stranger Shores**, pp.24-25.
[38] Tony Morphet, "Two Interviews with J. M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987", p.463.
[39] J. M. Coetzee, **Foe**, New York et al., Penguin Books, 1987 (first pub.1986), pp.5-6. Given hereafter in paranthesis as F followed by the page number.

Through this contrastive (re)definition of the earlier and unrealistically created Friday character, Coetzee's **Foe** starts to draw attention to and problematize not only the issues of racial prejudice and discrimination but also the problem of representation, its influence and power, and its determining effect on identity formation through various strategic discursive practices. Through this denial of the artificially pictured native figure, **Foe** exposes, questions, and invalidates both the oppressive and assimilatory colonialist perspective of Defoe's protagonist and the role played by language, discourse, and narration as its accomplices. (In fact, intertextually looking, that the story presented in Coetzee's novel is put forward as preceding Defoe's story further complicates the situation and strengthens **Foe**'s attempt to dismantle the authoritative narrative of **Robinson Crusoe**. As Marais suggests, "By positing this self-consciously twentieth-century novel in relation of both anteriority *and* posteriority to the eighteenth-century *Robinson Crusoe*, Coetzee not only presents his modern reader with (De)Foe's interpretive colonisation of Susan Barton's story, but also, owing to his novel's temporally ambivalent perspective, with the illusion that Susan Barton's story has palimpsestically reasserted itself".[40] Coetzee's novel requires us to see Defoe's Friday as a later, deviant, and untruthful redefinition of that of **Foe**. So, in fact, every time we mention the characters in **Foe** as rewritings of the characters in Defoe's canonical text or when we refer to Defoe's characters as the predecessors of those in **Foe**, we also always need to keep in mind the irony and the reservation that intertextually, even if not historically/chronologically, the implication is vice versa).

Similarly, the introduction of the Cruso character by Susan Barton in the opening pages of the novel also deviates strikingly from the legendary survivor of Defoe's classical text. He will, with his lack of enthusiasm and energy, obviously be a big disappointment for the reader who is used to and expects a replica of the sturdy, experimental, entrepreneurial protagonist of **Robinson Crusoe**. "Cruso rescued will be a deep disappointment to the world" (F, 34), says Susan Barton, as she gradually loses the hope of finding the mythically strenuous hero in Defoe's novel; "the idea of a Cruso on

[40] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", p.79.

his island is a better thing than the true Cruso" (F, 35). In this case, within the anachronistic framework of the relationship between **Foe** and **Robinson Crusoe**, the Crusoe that we have known through Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** is only an "idea" while this "disappointing" version of him in **Foe** is "the true Cruso".

Unlike Defoe's Crusoe, who rescues from the wreck all kinds of tools and other vital necessaries with which, combined with his "labour and patience" (RC, 115), his "labour and invention" (RC, 119), he builds his kingdom on the island, Coetzee's Cruso is said to have come from the wreck to the island only with a knife with him. In Defoe's novel, too, Crusoe comes to the island with a knife: "I had nothing about me but a knife, a tobacco-pipe, and a little tobacco in a box; this was all my provision" (RC, 50-51). However, since "the good providence of God ... wonderfully ordered the ship to be cast up nearer to the shore" (RC, 130), he saves all sorts of provisions, utensils, firearms and ammunition. As Ian Watt remarks, the shipwreck and the reappearance of the wreck is "a miraculous gift": "The shipwreck accidentally bestows upon him freehold land, and the supplies from the wreck provide the working capital which he can use to exploit it"[41]. Coetzee does not allow such wishful thinking in his version of the story. His marooned character is really left to his own devices and therefore has to start out with really nothing as opposed to his literary predecessor, who himself is aware of the immense help of the miraculous machinery that came in the form of the reappearance of the wreck again and again: "What would have been my case if I had been to have lived in the condition in which I at first came on shore, without necessaries of life...? ... if the good providence of God had not wonderfully ordered the ship to be cast up nearer to the shore ... without which, I had wanted for tools to work, weapons for defence, or gunpowder and shot for getting my food." (RC, 66, 130). That is, perhaps, what Coetzee's Cruso means when he claims that "not every man who bears the mark of the castaway is a castaway at heart" (F, 33). In the middle of an almost barren island, which, in contrast to Defoe's fertile one, does not offer such a wide range of delicious and

[41] Ian Watt, **Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe**, Cambridge-New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.156.

nourishing fruits or other food, trees big and strong enough to make a boat from, and other raw material to make utensils with and deprived of the heritage of the civilized world, Coetzee's Cruso lacks optimism, motivation, energy, and, more significantly, desire for any change or improvement.

Cruso is silent. He is extremely reticent. He usually responds to Susan Barton's eager attempts to communicate, to exchange questions and answers, and, most importantly, to exchange their stories, through gestures rather than words ("he gestured", "he nodded", "he would nod", "he would nod again", "and he fell silent again" [F, 12, 18] are typical words that Barton employs to define his limited acts of communication). And it is noteworthy and ironical that one of Cruso's rare acts of speech, which, moreover, is his first direct speech in the novel – uttered as an answer to Susan Barton's question "Was Friday then a child, when the ship went down?": "Aye, a child, a mere child, a little slave-boy" – is a statement the truth of which will immediately be questioned by Barton in the following sentence: "Yet at other times ... he would tell stories of cannibals, of how Friday was a cannibal whom he had saved from being roasted and devoured by fellow cannibals... So in the end I did not know what was truth, what was lies, and what was mere rambling" (F, 12).

In fact, this distance between Coetzee's Cruso and the act of speech also calls to mind the fact that Alexander Selkirk, the Scottish sailor who is considered to be the model for Defoe's protagonist, could not speak properly when he was rescued from Juan Fernandez Island after the relatively shorter period of four and a half years of stay there. Woodes Rogers, the captain who rescued him, states that "At his first coming on board us, he had so much forgot his Language for want of Use, that we could scarce understand him, for he seem'd to speak his words by halves."[42] And Cruso's taciturnity in **Foe** can be construed as an expression of doubt about and an invalidation of the fluent speech Defoe's Crusoe performs after almost thirty years of solitude.

[42] Extract from Woodes Rogers, **A Cruising Voyage Round the World**, London, 1712, http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellhpj/resources/rogers.HTM, p.3.

Cruso's memory is weak due to, as Susan Barton presumes, "age and isolation" (F, 12). Yet, what is more disturbing for Susan Barton is that Cruso feels no regret for it: "'Nothing is forgotten', said he; and then: 'Nothing I have forgotten is worth the remembering'" (F, 17). While Defoe's Crusoe, throughout his story, tries to report every detail of his experiences meticulously, Cruso, with overconfidence and unquestionable authority, rejects to fulfil Barton's and the reader's expectations for a reliable account of his history from his own mouth. Thus Barton's narrative introduces the issues of accidental (as in the case of the potential weaknesses of memory or the narrator's unconscious choices) or intentional (as the conscious selectivity of the one who narrates) silences, gaps, omissions, and the consequent unreliability in acts of narration. The narrative qualities of Defoe's story, and the character of Crusoe, who has been presented by his author as a non-fictitious man who is merely, and objectively, transmitting what he has seen and experienced through his unmediated reportage, are gradually put into question.

This emerging sense of doubt and unreliability concerning the experiences and the narrative of Defoe's Crusoe is further elaborated with Susan Barton's most disappointing exploration on the island, which is the lack of a journal that Cruso is expected to have kept, and also that of a calendar:

> What I chiefly hoped to find was not there. Cruso kept no journal, perhaps because he lacked paper and ink, but more likely, I now believe, because he lacked the inclination to keep one, or, if he ever possessed the inclination, had lost it. I searched the poles that supported the roof, and the legs of the bed, but found no carvings, not even notches to indicate that he counted the years of his banishment or the cycles of the moon." (F, 16)

In contrast to Coetzee's Cruso, about whom Susan Barton complains saying "How different would it not have been had he built a table and stool, and extended his ingenuity to the manufacture of ink and writing-tablets, and then sat down to keep an authentic journal of his exile day by day" (F, 82), Defoe's Crusoe prepares his physical conditions as soon as possible and then keeps recording his experiences on the island painstakingly in the journal that he keeps until he runs out of ink: "having settled my

household stuff and habitation, made me a table and a chair, and all as handsome about me as I could, I began to keep my journal". (RC, 72). All the chronological entries in Crusoe's journal, provided carefully with precise dates at the top of them, consolidate the novel's prefatory claim to provide "a just history of fact" in which "neither is there any appearance of fiction" (RC, 7). This temporal contextualization reinforces the novel's assertion that it depicts a genuine autobiographical and confessional account as delivered by a real, historical castaway.

However, it is very significant that Defoe's Crusoe, by starting to present his journal, is, in fact, starting to present a revised and more controlled version of what he, as a first person narrator, has already gave an account of until that point in the novel, that is, in approximately the first quarter of it, as he himself acknowledges: "I began to keep my journal, of which I shall here give you the copy (*though in it will be told all these particulars over again*[43]) as long as it lasted, for, having no more ink, I was forced to leave it off". (RC, 72). He is retelling the same material this time with exact dates and with more care to authoritatively shape, summarize,ÿÿr adÿÿdeÿÿils to the content. Furthermÿÿe, it is noteworthy that he explains, almost confesses, in words that obviously define some constitutive elements of Crusoe's theory of narrative and by giving examples, his reasons for reworking the actual, immediate experiences through a controlled act of recounting:

> And now it was when I began to keep a journal of every day's employment; for, indeed, at first I was in too much hurry, and not only hurry as to labour, but in too much discomposure of mind, and my journal would have been full of many dull things. For example, I must have said thus:
>
> *September the 30th*. After I got to shore, and had escaped drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my deliverance, having first vomited with the great quantity of salÿÿwateÿÿwhich was gotten into my stomach, and recovering myself a little, I ran about the shore, wringing my hands and beating my head and face, exclaiming at my misery and crying out I was undone, undone, till, tired and faint, I was forced to lie down on the ground to repose, but durst not sleep, for fear of being devoured.... Some days after this, ... in hopes of seeing a ship, then fancy at a vast distance I spied a sail, pleased myself with the hopes of it and then, after looking steadily till I was almost blind, lose it quite, and sit down and weep like a child, and thus increase my misery by my folly. (RC, 71-72)

[43] Italics mine.

As demonstrated plainly by Crusoe himself, he does not give the journal directly as it was recorded down as instantaneous expressions of his experiences in his first year on the island but rather employs this previously written account in his present narration (as is obvious especially in the parts where he retrospectively adds to it elements of later times or inserts comments made retrospectively). This case exemplifies the argument of Richetti, who, quoting G. A. Starr, points out that "close examination of [Defoe's] writing reveals that his characters tell us very little in fact about the external world. Instead of being factual or referential, Defoe's style creates a realistic illusion 'by ascribing to the object qualities which the narrator comes upon, not through simple observation,' but by a process of interpretation whereby 'things and events are rendered as perceived, as in some sense transformed and recreated in the image of the narrator'"[44]. Crusoe's journal, as William Ray states, is actually:

> a narrative within the narrative, which backtracks and recapitulates his experience in an effort to situate it within the context of his entire stay on the island, twenty-seven years. This journal underlines the fact that Robinson's story is above all the record of a man's representation of his situation, the story of his learning how to *give an account* of his life that is acceptable to both his eyes and those of society[45].

Therefore, on the one hand, by placing the account of his experiences within the system of a temporal order as provided by the dates that he carefully attaches to his entries in his journal, Crusoe tries to strengthen his claim for the genuineness, truth, and reliability of his report. Yet, on the other hand, his act and open acknowledgement of rewriting what he has already related and the two different resultant versions of narration for the same material, lay bare the concept of narration as production and thus invite a deconstructive reading of the novel's supposedly unmediated and artless narrative and its claim for being only a transparent medium used to impart a series of real occurrences. With that self-reflexive pattern of narrative, Defoe's novel displays the many opportunities in the

[44]John J. Richetti, **Daniel Defoe**, Boston – Massachusetts, Twayne Publishers – A Division of G. K. Hall & Co., 1987, p.64.
[45] William Ray, **Story and History: Narrative Authority and Social Identity in the Eighteenth-Century French and English Novel**, Cambridge-Massachusetts, Blackwell, 1990, p.54.

hands of the narrator as to what to select and how and to what extend to include/exclude it in his/her narration and the ensuing notions of the subjectivity/arbitrariness of the process of narration. It serves to underscore the immense power that the one who narrates/writes possesses.

This depiction of the fact that the one who narrates has always the opportunity to be selective and thus to produce various versions of the same material, as exemplified in Crusoe's journal-keeping, problematizes the nature of (supposedly objective) non-fiction as well and thus serves as a contribution to the introduction of an inquiry into and a discussion of a whole discursive field, which will gradually appear as one of the main concerns of Coetzee's novel. The constant coexistence and interchangeable use of the terms "story" and "history" throughout **Foe** is an indication of Coetzee's concern to open to discussion what William Ray calls "reciprocal delusions", by which he refers, on the one hand, to "the radical claim to historicity, which ... predicates a merely 'imitative' form of narrative as a simple reflection of reality", and, on the other hand, to "the radical charge of fictionality", that is, the belief in "a narrative postulated to have no referent other than its narration":

> The historicist delusion is that there can be an account *of* human reality that is not mediated by an act situated *in* human reality and vitiated by the biases of that situation – that there can be a narrative produced directly by reality that is immune to the processes of change it chronicles. The converse delusion is that there could be a narrative having no origins in reality, but capable of modifying – or, as is generally the charge, corrupting reality. Like the radical claim for historicity, the radical charge of fictionality denies the framing of the text (and its producer) *in* reality or history, and the consequent "representative" nature of that narrator's postulates.[46]

These statements are analogous to what Coetzee himself emphasizes with regard to the relationship between "story" and "history":

> I reiterate the elementary and rather obvious point I am making: that history is not reality; that history is a kind of discourse; that a novel is a kind of discourse, too, but a different kind of discourse; that, inevitably, in our culture, history will, with varying degrees of forcefulness, try to claim primacy, claim to be a master-form of discourse, just as, inevitably, people like myself will defend themselves by saying that history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to

[46] **Ibid**., p.8.

> tell each other – that, as Don Quixote argued so persuasively but in the end so vainly, the authority of history lies simply in the consensus it commands.[47]

Thus the journal that Crusoe keeps is open to all these doubts regarding its claims to being a mere rendition of facts. Defoe's novel, in its own polyphony, subverts its own claims of objectivity, of verity, its own theories of writing/narration/(hi)story-telling. In other words, the latent material is already provided, willingly or not, by the various counteracting layers of **Foe**'s classical pre-text itself as a starting point for Coetzee to elaborate on for his deconstructive interrogation into the nature and processes of narration and writing. In fact there are some other noteworthy elements in Defoe's novel that should be mentioned here as elements which subvert the notion of a firm, stable, and reliable referentiality that the novel so strongly advocates. For example, Crusoe draws attention to the "the usual corruption of words in England", because of which their name was changed from "Kreutzner" to "Crusoe" (RC, 8), which is echoed in **Foe** in Susan Barton's statement regarding her (father's) surname: "His name was properly Berton, but, as happens, it became corrupted in the mouths of strangers"(F, 10). Another example, which is, again, and significantly, related to names, to identity, is the questionableness of what Crusoe's authoritarian act of giving a name to his slave is based: "I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life" (RC, 203), he says. Though he has already realized and confessed that "I found at the end of my account I had lost a day or two in my reckoning" (RC, 105). Was the day really Friday then? One final example, not from Defoe's novels but, this time, from his life is worth mentioning: While we usually think, from our readings, that the author was "christened simply Daniel Foe" and that he "did not change his name to the more genteel Defoe until around 1695"[48], Susan VanZanten Gallagher, who states that "Numerous versions of Defoe's name appeared in documents and publications throughout his life", adduces the following information from J. R. Moore: "It has been supposed that he showed snobbishness in prefixing 'De' to the plebian name of Foe in middle life. Defoe

[47] Cited by David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.16.
[48] Introductory note, **Robinson Crusoe**, p.1.

himself jested about the inconvenience of the name Foe for a man so often engaged in public controversy. But the obvious truth is that he never did change his name. The original spelling was something like Defawe, and that had been anglicized to Foe by his ancestors only a few generations before"[49].

To go back to the journal, in Coetzee's version of the desert island story there is no journal at all, not even a doubtful and unresolved one as discussed above. By asserting that the Cruso(e) character did not, in any way, record his long years on the island, **Foe** takes away the strongest element of Defoe's attempt to present his work as a forthright transmission of reality. For, as Derek Attridge remarks, "Intertextuality of **Foe** also works to unsettle any simple relation between historical report and fictional invention. The Cruso we encounter in this novel appears as the historical original of the fictional Crusoe we already know from our access to the canon"[50]. Consequently, even that controlled sort of journal suggested to have been recorded down by Crusoe is, through that anachronistic intertextual play, implied to be a product of Defoe's imagination. The nonexistence of the journal and the resultant decrease in the temporal contextualization and in its reliability as a real-life account function as a means of drawing attention to the concept of fictionality, which gradually emerges as one of the pivotal focal points of discussion in the novel.

Furthermore, with the words that Susan Barton utters in one of her attempts to convince Cruso about the vital significance of recording one's experiences as a precaution against the inescapable weakness of memory, claiming that "with every day that passes, our memories grow less certain, as even a statue in marble is worn away by rain, till at last we can no longer tell what shape the sculptor's hand gave it"(F, 17), another aspect from which the "truth" of Crusoe's supposedly autobiographical account is opened to negotiation shows itself: even when we presume that Crusoe has kept a journal, we know that, as he too concedes, he was able to keep recording down his experiences only for the first year, and then could afford to continue to write down only

[49] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.232.
[50] Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.218.

very significant events. Knowing this, on the one hand, and having just been reminded of the frailty of human memory by Susan Barton on the other, Crusoe's narrative, which, obviously, has been written retrospectively after around thirty years, with all the incredibly detailed definitions of his experiences day after day on the island, cannot avoid looking increasingly suspicious. Therefore, Cruso's blatant self-confidence, or rather overconfidence, both in terms of his memory and his knowledge ("he had come to be persuaded he knew all there was to know about the world", complains Barton. F, 13,) serves not only as a reminder of the potential and actual forgotten, and consequently missing, points in his accounts but also, due to his unacknowledgement of the case, as also a cautionary indication regarding the uncertainty and unreliability of (his) narrative.

Another point subverting the image of a resolutely industrious and progress-oriented Crusoe figure in Defoe's novel is that Coetzee's Cruso, as opposed to the inventive and productive labour performed by his precursor, exerts all his effort on building terraces, which "covered much of the hillside at the eastern end of the island", and in the construction of which "a hundred thousand or more stones" had been dug out of the earth and carried there (F, 33). And that Cruso has been striving to construct all those terraces without the least hope of ever being able to plant them some day is what turns this immense effort into a wasted sort of labour:

> "And what will you be planting, when you plant?" I asked. "The planting is not for us," said he. "We have nothing to plant – that is our misfortune." And he looked at me with such sorry dignity, I could have bit my tongue. "The planting is reserved for those who come after us and have the foresight to bring seed. I only clear the ground for them. Clearing ground and piling stones is little enough, but it is better than sitting in idleness." (F, 33)

James Sutherland states that: "If ever there was a self-made man it is Robinson Crusoe; he is the sober industrious Englishman, hardened by difficulties but not overwhelmed by them"[51]. Hence that the functional and target-oriented productivity performed by Defoe's diligent hero is replaced in **Foe** by Cruso's glaringly ineffective

[51] James Sutherland, "The Author of *Robinson Crusoe*", **Twentieth Century Interpretations of Robinson Crusoe**, ed. Frank H. Ellis, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1969, (pp.25-33), p.27.

and, consequently, squandered sort of toil carried out merely for the sake of keeping himself busy functions as an ironical subversion of the economic individualism of capitalism and the Puritan myth of redeeming industry as two sources of motivation for the protagonist of **Robinson Crusoe**. This pointless act of terrace construction assiduously practised by Cruso in **Foe** is, in Derek Attridge's words, "a parodic version of the canonic castaway's taming of nature"[52]. And David Attwell names "Calvinism" and "pastoralism" as the "two cultural injunctions from the colonial past [that] are invoked here"[53]. In Coetzee's novel, the colonizer's myth of the redeeming power of the work practised in exploring and taming new lands and the Calvinistic notion of salvation that this hard work is supposed to bring are opened to debate through the sarcastically emphasized futility of Cruso's wasted labour on his barren island. As Gallagher remarks, "The meaningless construction of the terraces lays bare the hollowness at the core of empire building. The simplicity of life on Cruso's island makes his autocratic rule of both Friday and Susan Barton more visible. As Hanjo Beressem points out, Coetzee invades and deconstructs 'the economic utopia of Crusoe's island'".[54]

Cruso gives the utmost importance to this blatantly futile activity to the extend that, when Barton criticizes him for not having recorded the details of his personal history on the island and, as a result, for having nothing to leave to the future as an expression or evidence of his unique experience, he does not hesitate to offer his terraces as his heritage to those who will come after him: "I will leave behind my terraces and walls ... They will be enough. They will be more than enough" (F, 18). Hence Dick Penner traces the elements of the absurd in this activity claiming that these terraces are "the annals of the Absurd" and that "Coetzee's Cruso has little of the vigour and none of the optimism of Defoe's character. His forebearers are more likely to be found roaming

[52] Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.221.
[53] David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, pp.107-108.
[54] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.173.

Beckett's bleak landscapes of the absurd"[55]. Penner draws attention to the similarity of Cruso's labour to that of Sisyphus.[56]

The resemblance of Cruso's efforts to the "futile and hopeless labour"[57] of Sisyphus is noteworthy not only because of the fact that Cruso, like Sisyphus, (is very well aware that he) will never be able to see the ultimate fruits of his hard work but also because of the remarkably concrete detail that both of them have to exert all their apparently unprofitable labour by trying to continuously carry heavy stones/rocks. Yet it is significant that all the frustrating and everlasting sufferings of Sisyphus are, as Albert Camus argues, also indications of a victory won against the despotic attitudes and practices of gods since this punishment has been inflicted upon him for his rebellious behaviour and for his passion, for having ignored and disobeyed the authority and orders of gods, for having subordinated the wishes of gods to the human mind and will, for having humiliated death. Therefore, the pain of seeing the rock roll back every time just before it is about to reach the summit is appeased by the awareness and the ensuing satisfaction that this is the cost of a choice, of trying to exist in a domain exclusive of masters. This is why Camus remarks that Sisyphus "concludes that all is well"[58] in the end. This is why Sisyphus is not disheartened by the vicious circle he is destined to and can find the energy and to go on.

However, although Cruso too is conscious of and still satisfied with his continuous yet incomplete efforts and although he never questions or feels frustration with his fruitless undertaking, he cannot attain the kind of confidence that Sisyphus is provided with by his defiance and the resultant sense of victory. For the context surrounding Cruso and shaping his thought, his behaviour, and his relationships is the one of colonialism, the very framework of which is based exactly on a system of ÿÿpendenceÿÿof inequality, of master-servant/slave hierarchy. Unlike the resistant attitude of Sisyphus disregarding dogmatic hierarchies, the distant hope of Cruso is that

[55] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.114.
[56] **Ibid**., p.115.
[57] Albert Camus, **The Myth Of Sisyphus**, www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/~pwillen1/lit/msysip.htm, p.1.

his efforts which seem to be futile now may be accomplished one day by the potential visitors to the island who are expected to be more proper colonizers that will bring with them seeds to plant the terraces. Cruso is portrayed as a slave-owner, a colonizer, who, devoid of the practical methods of colonialism, fails to fulfil his role, and his inefficient work is, accordingly, defined as totally meaningless by Susan Barton, who, despite her obvious position as a victim, cannot avoid the internalized value judgements of the eighteenth-century European colonialist discourses. Cruso's life and efforts are depicted as all barren. His barren life there lacks all kinds of desire for change or improvement, for human contact, for escape and return to society, to civilization: "Cruso would brook no change on his island" (F, 27).[59]

Cruso's terraces represent "a foolish kind of agriculture" for Susan Barton (F, 34), and their construction is, in her view, far from being a sign of a contribution to the continuity and development of life; far from, in other words, the life-saving labour Defoe's Crusoe performs on his island, but as similar to "tombs: those tombs the emperors of Egypt erected for themselves in the desert, in the building of which so many slaves lost their lives" (F, 83-84). This resemblance can be taken as a symbolic indication of the deadening effects of colonialism; as, in other words, an indication of the fact that the products of the colonizer on the colonized lands, even if they are meant to be or ostensibly look like symbols of development, progress, and a contribution to life, can, in reality, never cease to be the signs of the violence wreaked upon the victims of colonialism whose lands, labour, lives have been taken over and exploited cruelly.

In fact, Terry Eagleton, in his analysis of Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe**, finds the kind of extreme engagement in or almost obsession with work that we observe in Coetzee's Cruso in the unrelentingly target-oriented and efficacious toil of Defoe's "compulsively labouring hero"[60] as well:

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[58] **Ibid.**, p.2.
[59] There is a detailed discussion of Cruso as an existential (anti)hero, as a Camusian character, in chapter 4 of this study.
[60] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel: An Introduction**, Oxford et al., Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p.34.

> Crusoe is not a capitalist – it is an odd kind of capitalist who has no wage-labourers, markets, commodities, competitors or division of labour; but though he has no competitors, he behaves as though he does... What all this unwittingly goes to show is just how futile and irrational the whole process of labour is, however rational it may be in its local details. Crusoe works a lot of the time for the sake of working, as capitalists accumulate for the sake of accumulation. Success in work may be a sign of salvation, but it is also a welcome distraction from the whole vexed business of heaven and hell.[61]

However, despite the moments in which Crusoe's excessive and ambitious indulgence in work is almost obsessive, his determined and rational labour is mostly functional and productive and it definitely provides his performer with psychologically healing effects too. As Watt comments, "Crusoe enjoys what he is doing – or, at least, enjoys its results ... The basic economic processes are turned into therapeutic recreations"[62]. Though, in **Foe**, when deprived of the support of socio-economic, religious, moral explanations, that is, if not underpinned by various self-validating cultural discourses, the work of the colonizer on the faraway and foreign land he colonizes loses from its meaning and strength. In this context, it is noteworthy that religion, in contrast to its constant, even if intermittent, unstable, and dubious presence in the life of Defoe's protagonist, which, as John J. Richetti points out, "form part of Crusoe's instinct for survival"[63], has no place in Cruso's inauspicious life.

It is very important that in **Foe**, as mentioned above, on Susan Barton's insistence that he must record every particular detail of his life as a precaution against the weakness of memory and leave them to the future, Cruso says that he will leave behind his terraces, because thus the journal of Defoe's Crusoe is replaced by the nonfunctional terraces of Coetzee's antihero. And this indicates that without the act of narration, through which one can interpret, manipulate, control, and legitimize the definitions and acts of exploring and taming new lands, the colonial project as well as the identity of the colonizer is destined to remain incomplete. Defoe's Crusoe, by always confidently revising, rewriting, controlling his past and present experiences through his (journal) writing and through his narrative, is in fact writing himself into life. As

[61] **Ibid**.
[62] Ian Watt, **Myths of Modern Individualism**, p.153.

William Ray states, "to recount feelings, actions, plans, or judgements, or even just to describe an event, is to impose oneself on the world"[64]

Especially in the case of a protagonist whose experiences are required to meet the expectations of the 18th century rising middle class English readers, to be, in other words, both entrepreneurial and adventurous and, as the author announces in the preface, to impart moral lessons, this retrospective meaning-making is particularly useful. Eagleton suggests that "[m]orality in Defoe is generally retrospective. Once you have made your pile, you can afford to be penitent. In any case, it is only in hindsight, not least in the act of writing, that you can make sense of your life as a whole. You live forward, but understand backward"[65]. Cruso in **Foe**, on the other hand, without speech, communication, and writing, cannot survive and becomes the subject of others' interpretations and writing. As Kim Worthington comments on the way his identity and life become an element in Barton's narrative, "Following Cruso's death, which ensures that he no longer has a dialogic right to reply to her assumptive interpretations, she gains full power to write him as she desires"[66].

In fact, as Barton later on draws attention to, Cruso's terrace construction itself can be seen as an attempt to write his own text onto the island with stones: "When you see me at Mr Foe's desk making marks with the quill, think of each mark as a stone, and think of the paper as the island, and imagine that I must disperse the stones over the face of the island" (F, 87). "This point of analogy", according to Michael Marais, "is to cast imperialism as a form of metaphoric authorship: Crusoe *rewrites* the alien terrain of the island and, in so doing, restructures this space of otherness in line with the familiar landscape of England"[67]. Yet, despite his assimilation of the island, his work fails to bring about its concrete fruits. When cut off from the requirements of the valid socio-political, cultural, and economic systems and their discourses, from the established

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[63] John J. Richetti, **Daniel Defoe**, p.56.
[64] William Ray, **Story and History**, p.12.
[65] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel: An Introduction**, p.29.
[66] Kim Worthington, **Self as narrative: Subjectivity and Community in Contemporary Fiction**, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p.257.
[67] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", p.68.

traditions, and from the canon, Cruso's text becomes illegible just as his act of colonialism fails. According to Attridge, "Cruso, who shows none of the practical ingenuity or the spiritual intensity we expect from the figure of bourgeois resourcefulness with whom we are familiar, has, by his isolation from culture, lost touch with its founding narratives and its need for narrative"[68]. Moreover, the acts of Coetzee's Cruso, who is deprived of the support of a firm trust in language and discourse and outside the realm of confident and powerful grand narratives, which have all been deconstructed and invalidated in a postmodern climate, cannot avoid looking/being ineffective and meaningless.

Although Coetzee's Cruso shows a sharp contrast to Defoe's hero in terms of his complete lack of interest in speaking and writing, his viewpoint regarding the relationship between Friday and language cannot be considered as different from that of his predecessor. Robinson Crusoe, as soon as Friday arrives on his island, makes it his "business to teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful": "but especially to make him speak and understand me when I spoke" (RC, 206-207). And to speak, for Crusoe, means to *speak English*:

> I began to speak to him and teach him to speak to me; and first, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life; I called him so for the memory of the time; I likewise taught him to say "Master," and then let him know that was to be my name... (RC, 203)

The viewpoint lying behind Crusoe's identification of the act of speaking with the act of speaking English, which Coetzee defines as "the greatest imperial language of them all"[69], also manifests itself in the first messages that Crusoe articulates through that language. Having spent nearly thirty years all alone on a desert island craving for a companion, the kind of relationship that he immediately, spontaneously, tends to establish between the first person he comes into contact with and himself is that one between a master and a slave.

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[68]Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.221.
[69] Cited by David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.33.

That Crusoe himself, early in his adventures, on his second journey to Africa, is captured by pirates and spends two years as a "slave" is very important as a means of exposing his racially biased and discriminatory viewpoint. For despite the fact that he, as he informs his readers, is not treated badly, Crusoe, very understandably, always thinks of escape and he is "resolved to have my liberty"(RC, 28). Though later on, on Friday's arrival on his island, Friday's being a slave, being *his* slave, moreover, being a willing, enthusiastic, and ever-faithful slave, is depicted as something very natural. It is also noteworthy that on those days of Crusoe's slavery, he speaks to his fellow slave, Xury, in English. And Xury, too, later on, when they escape together, will be another one of those willing slaves, ready to sacrifice his life for his Master. Thus being a "master", regardless of Cruso's (temporary) positions, seems to be something immanent, some intrinsic identity in him just as being his voluntary slaves, accordingly, seems to be something intrinsic in those black men around him in their relationships to the white European Christian man:

> Be that as it would, we were obliged to go onshore somewhere or other for water, ... Xury said if I would let him go on shore with one of the jars, he would find if there was any water and bring some to me. I asked him why he would go. Why I should not go and he stay in the boat? The boy answered with so much affection that made me love him ever after. Says he, "If wild mans come, they eat me, you go wey." (RC, 30)

Following the same colonialist attitude as his textual precursor, Cruso too assumes the authority to decide on how much language Friday may need: "How many words of English does Friday know?" asks Susan Barton and Cruso's answer is "As many as he needs" (F, 21). The imperatives that Cruso utters in order to convey to Friday the things that he wants to get done are all that Friday is supposed to need. Yet, one of the most telling alterations made by Coetzee's **Foe** in its portrayal of the character of the slave is revealed when we learn that even that limited amount of language that Friday is allowed to can only be practised in the form of hearing and understanding; for Friday is said to be tongueless:

> Cruso .... beckoned Friday nearer. "Sing, Friday," he said. "Sing for Mistress Barton." Whereupon Friday raised his head to the stars, closed his eyes, and, obedient to his master, began to hum in a low voice ... Cruso motioned Friday nearer. "Open your mouth," he told him, and opened his own. Friday opened his mouth. "Look," said Cruso. I looked, but saw nothing in the dark save the glint of teeth white as ivory. "La-la-la," said Cruso, and motioned to Friday to repeat. "Ha-ha-ha," said Friday from the back of his throat. "He has no tongue," said Cruso... "That is why he does not speak. They cut out his tongue." (F, 22-23)

Through the delineation of that appalling mutilation and of the equivocal explanations for it, Coetzee's novel problematizes further the romanticized depiction of the (supposedly) mutually warm, satisfactory, uncomplicated communication between the master and the slave in **Robinson Crusoe**:

> I stared in amazement. "Who cut out his tongue?"
> "The slavers."
> "The slavers cut out his tongue and sold him into slavery? The slave-hunters of Africa? But surely he was a mere child when they took him. Why should they cut out a child's tongue?"
> Cruso gazed steadily back at me. Though I cannot now swear to it, I believe he was smiling. (F, 23)

While trying to imagine the potential culprits, including not only slave-traders but Cruso himself as well, and the potential ways in which the tongue might have been cut out, Barton cannot help constantly thinking of and visualizing all the precise physical details of the act of dismembering. She tries to imagine the details like what sort of a tool was used for the cutting and how the blood was stopped from running and choking the victim after the mutilation had taken place. She almost envisages the tongue as a suffering being in deadly pain: "the root of his tongue closed behind those heavy lips like a toad in eternal winter" (F, 57), "the thick stub at the back of the mouth ... wagging and straining ... like a worm cut in half contorting itself in death-throes" (F, 119). This concentration on all the concrete particulars of the act of violence that Barton pictures in her mind as being inflicted upon Friday contributes immensely to bring about a complete subversion of Defoe's auspiciously defined master-slave relationship, of, in other words, what Sam Durrant defines as "slavery as benevolent paternalism"[70]. It lays bare the

[70] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Tony Morrison**, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004, p.34.

deceptiveness of picturing the Friday figure in *Robinson Crusoe* as in harmony with the role of the slave and with the language which has been imposed upon him as the only acceptable medium of self-expression and communication and through which he has been (re)named, through which his whole identity has been defined, (re)shaped, determined.

The scene in which we learn through Cruso's words that Friday's tongue has been cut out and in which this character who is unable to speak is ordered to sing ("Sing, Friday", F, 22) is reminiscent of the mythological character whose tongue has been cut out and who, later on, has to continue her desperate efforts to express the violence inflicted upon her through singing (as a bird): Philomela. Graham Huggan, who states that "Philomela's story has become a paradigm for the reenactment of colonial encounter, for the articulation of a violent history of dispossession and deprivation which circumstances dictate must be told in *another way*"[71], points out to the dual effect of silence and music:

> The affiliation between silence and music in several post-colonial texts can be seen in this context as providing alternative, non-verbal codes which subvert and/or replace those earlier, overdetermined narratives of colonial encounter in which the *word* is recognized to have played a crucial role in the production and maintenance of colonial hierarchies of power. But ironically, silence and music may also function as instruments of colonial domination, as collaborative agents of an imposed regime which seeks to manoeuvre its subjects into positions of passive obedience.[72]

Friday's song ("'La-la-la,' said Cruso ... 'Ha-ha-ha,' said Friday from the back of his throat. F, 23), and later on, his flute playing from which he excludes Barton by ignoring her attempts to accompany him, that he fails/rejects to learn the English words Barton tries to teach him, and, towards the end, his use of the slate (the instrument of Barton's attempted session of teaching him English) in order to draw examples of his own system of signification on it all exemplify in a way his resistance to what Huggan names as "overdetermined narratives". However, it is also true that, in a way that exemplifies

[71] Graham Huggan, "Philomela's Retold Story: Silence, Music, and the Post-Colonial Text", p.12.
[72] **Ibid**., p.13.

what Huggan defines as the function of music/silence as "instruments of colonial domination", Friday remains illegible to the eye of those who decide over, shape, and write his life. As Derek Attridge comments, Friday's tonguelessness "is the sign of his oppression; it is also the sign of the silence, the absolute otherness, by which he appears to his oppressors and by which their oppression is sustained."[73] As she becomes increasingly aware of and uneasy about Friday's silence, which, "like smoke, like a welling of black smoke" (F, 118), almost suffocates her, Susan Barton expresses her realization of the importance of having access to speech and stories in order to form and assert one's identity: "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others" (F, 121). Hence Friday's speechlessness is also the beginning of a discussion which will thereafter occupy an immense place in the novel, that is, the (im)possibility for the oppressed, the marginalized, the subaltern, to have speech in the language and the text of the oppressor.

The Friday in Foe is far from representing the happy and enthusiastic slave figure created by the colonial myth. He is far from the "faithful, loving, sincere servant" in **Robinson Crusoe** (RC, 205), who, in their first encounter, kneels down, kisses the ground and puts Crusoe's foot on his head to show his gratitude and to declare his eternal and unconditional loyalty, just as the most renowned literary ancestor of that voluntary servitude, Caliban, did before: "I will kiss thy foot: I prethee be my God ... I'll kiss your foot; I'll swear myself thy subject"[74]. He is far from Crusoe's Friday who, after declaring his unconditional loyalty, "not only worked very willingly and very hard, but did it very cheerfully" (RC, 209), who cannot imagine a life without his master ("Take kill Friday, no send Friday away" RC, 222), and who is ready to die for his master if the situation demands ("Me die when you bid die, Master", RC, 227). In Foe the colonialist myth of grateful servitude, that is, in Benita Parry's words, the "sado-masochistic political nexus celebrated in colonial legend as a natural bond between a

[73] Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.229.
[74] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, the Arden Edition, 6th ed., ed. Frank Kermode, London and New York, Methuen, 1958 (first pub. 1623), Act II, Scene II, p.67.

master-race and peoples born to servitude"[75], is totally invalidated. Cruso's slave is emotionally distanced from him. During Cruso's violent bout he shows, as Barton says, no sign of sympathy or affection: "All this time Friday made no effort to help me, but on the contrary shunned the hut as though we two had the plague" (F, 27). He, silently, unresponsively, fulfils his master's orders. Friday's silence gradually gains power, and becomes the most dominant presence in the whole novel. The ironical fact that this very absence (of speech, self-expression, response, and communication, and of representation) constitutes the most powerful presence in **Foe** strengthens effectively the novel's delineation of all the oppression, violence, and silencing, concealed or overt, in the colonial encounter and in the colonial text.

As Sue Kossew points out, Friday is both "literally and metaphorically silenced"[76]. Yet his silence says a lot. His silence is a representative, for instance, of Friday's mother tongue, of his native language, and his name, which are considered as nonexistent by Defoe's Crusoe when he decides to teach "the poor ignorant creature" (RC, 216) "to speak" and when he "made him know his name should be Friday" (RC, 203) in a way that totally disregards the dialogic nature of communication despite the fact that, in Bakhtin's words, "The speaker is not the biblical Adam, dealing only with virgin and still unnamed objects, giving them names for the first time"[77]. Friday's silence is a representative of the disingenuousness of the words/utterances Friday has been given in the canonical desert island story, and of the violence wreaked upon him through appropriation, through speaking *for* him, through that colonialist ventriloquism. For "acts of narration", as Rosemary Jane Jolly points out, "are always also, necessarily, acts of violation at the figurative level"[78]. Friday's silence, as Dick Penner remarks, "can be read as a symbol of the inexpressible psychic damage absorbed by blacks under racist

[75] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers**, London, Macmillan Press, 1983, p.29.
[76] Sue Kossew, **Pen and Power: A Postcolonial Reading of J.M.Coetzee and André Brink**, Amsterdan and Atlanta, Rodopi B.V., 1996, p.162.
[77] M. M. Bakhtin, **Speech Genres and Other Late Essays**, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V. W. McGee, University of Texas Press, Austin-Texas, 1986, p.93.
[78] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.2.

conditions"[79]. Moreover, within the framework of all the elaborately interwoven issues of patriarchal, colonial, socio-cultural practices of inequality and oppression in Coetzee's novel, Friday, whose silence, in Gallagher's words, "is not so much an ontological state as it is a social condition imposed upon him by those in power", is "a symbol of oppression" and "represents those who have been silenced because of race, gender, and class"[80].

That this speechlessness is a sign of a much wider state of deprivation imposed upon all those who have been marginalized through oppression is reinforced by Barton's doubts about "whether the lost tongue might stand not only for itself but for a more atrocious mutilation": "whether by a dumb slave I was to understand a slave unmanned" (F, 119).

> I have told you of the abhorrence I felt when Cruso opened Friday's mouth to show me he had no tongue. From that night on I had continually to fear that evidence of a yet more hideous mutilation might be thrust upon my sight.
>
> In the dance nothing was still and yet everything was still. The whirling robe was a scarlet bell settled upon Friday's shoulders and enclosing him; Friday was the dark pillar at its centre. What had been hidden from me was revealed. I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them.
>
> I saw and believed I had seen, though afterwards I remembered Thomas, who also saw, but could not be brought to believe till he had put his hands in the wound.

Susan Barton never openly says whether Friday has been unmanned or not. Nevertheless, the analogy that she makes between her case and that of St Thomas is significant because this Biblical reference to Thomas, one of the apostles, who is also known as Doubting Thomas and who rejected to believe in Christ's resurrection until he saw "in his hands the print of the nails and put [his] finger into the print of the nails"[81], implies the existence of a wound that Barton saw and believed though she did not touch it. Furthermore, this analogy made between Barton and Thomas also entails a correspondence between Friday and Jesus Christ, which attaches a religious tone to the

[79] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.124.
[80] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.181.
[81] **The Holy Bible**, John 20:24-29, Tennessee, The Gideons International, 1978, p.1126.

characters and to their experiences and reinforces the concepts of victimization, guilt, and sin in their encounter.

This uncertainty about a potential castration inflicted upon Friday reminds us again of the previously discussed analogy between Friday and Philomela. This resemblance between a woman raped and then mutilated so that she can never tell about the mutilation and a man (perhaps) unmanned and then mutilated so that he can never give his own version of the story[82] strengthens the novel's criticism of the violence and silencing practised by both the patriarchal and colonial systems. Benita Parry, commenting on the silence of the underprivileged, the "figures of silence" in Coetzee's works, "who are outsiders to a patriarchal linguistic/cultural order", draws attention to the association of the "absence or economy of speech ... with sexual passivity or impotence" and states that "These deficits have been read as signalling their location on the fringes of the phallocentric social order, whose dominance through their speechlessness and asexuality they evade"[83]. As Graham Huggan remarks:

> the victimization of a male Philomela whose ambiguous sexuality contributes towards his ostracism from "normal" society, or whose disempowerment is partly dependent on the removal of his manhood – (the case of the "doubly mutilated" Friday) – can be seen in terms of a rigidly conformist patriarchal system which seeks to impose its own male authority on its subjects. That authority is called into question, however, by the discovery in the text of an alternative discursive site from which to challenge the "natural" privileges granted by the male (vocal/sexual) organs, a site in which the silence of disenfranchisement doubles as a silence of *dissent*.[84]

This affinity between speech/language and (sexual) power/desire/productivity as well as domination and colonialism is a continual theme in **Foe**. Cruso, who has no desire to improve his circumstances on the island, to escape from the island, to tell his story, to hear Susan Barton's story, to establish an emotional and/or physical relationship with Barton, is a failed colonizer. Criticizing Cruso's ineffective labour on the terraces, Barton tells Friday: "If your master had truly wished to be a colonist and

[82] "Perhaps they wanted to prevent him from ever telling his story" (F, 23), says Crusoe as a potential explanation for Friday's mutilation.
[83] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", pp.44-45.
[84] Graham Huggan, "Philomela's Retold Story: Silence, Music, and the Post-Colonial Text", p.20.

leave behind a colony, would he not have been better advised (dare I say this?) to plant his seed in the only womb there was?" (F, 83). During the one year that they spend together on the island, Cruso and Barton have sexual intercourse only once, which takes place following one of Cruso's violent fits of fever and is defined by Barton as a chance occurrence, as something casual, as a perfunctory act, and almost as a favour bestowed upon Cruso by her listless compliance. In this sexual encounter, which, in Sam Durrant's words is an "abject experience", Susan Barton, "having allowed Cruso to 'do as he wished' with her body", "negat[es] herself by suspending the question of her own desire"[85]:

> I came to myself in daylight, in an unfamiliar silence, the storm having at last blown itself out. A hand was exploring my body ... I pushed his hand away and made to rise, but he held me. No doubt I might have freed myself, for I was stronger than he. But I thought, He has not known a woman for fifteen years, why should he not have his desire? So I resisted no more but let him do as he wished (F, 29-30).

Just as his colonial attempt, with its lack of efficacious toil, proves to be an imperfect one, his exploration of the woman's body turns out to be one devoid of reciprocity, (mutual) desire, continuity, and productivity: "Cruso did not use me again. On the contrary, he held himself as distant as if nothing had passed between us. For this I was not sorry" (F, 35-36), says Barton. The word "use" that she employs to refer to the way she was treated in their sexual intercourse is indicative of the objectification and dehumanization that their sexual encounter entails. The insufficiency (Cruso's reticence) or total lack of speech (Friday's silence) in these two male island dwellers parallel their lack of sexual desire: "why did you not desire me, neither you nor your master?", asks Susan Barton to Friday; "Is the answer that our island was not a garden of desire, like that in which our first parents went naked, and coupled as innocently as beasts?" (F, 86). As Gallagher remarks regarding the case of Friday, "Whether or not Friday has been physically castrated, he demonstrates no desire for Susan, in sharp contrast with Caliban,

[85] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning**, pp.34.

and so testifies to Foucault's conclusion that desire is dependent on language, and particularly on writing"[86].

This absence of sexuality in Cruso's life is also a critical reminder of the life of his predecessor, in whose narrative, subjects of sexuality, of emotional and/or physical desire have no place and the news of whose marriage and having three children is given within the shocking brevity of a single sentence (just as the death of the wife will be mentioned in the first part of the following sentence) at the end of the novel:

> In the meantime, I in part settled myself here; for first of all I married, and that not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction, and had three children, two sons and one daughter. But my wife dying and my nephew coming home with good success from a voyage to Spain, my inclination to go abroad and his importunity prevailed and engaged me to go in his ship. (RC, 297)

In Crusoe's story, the subordinate position of emotions, love, sexuality, as well as human relationships in general is conspicuous and in sharp contrast to the dominant place that all the details of his experiences of exploration, production, accumulation or solitary self-questionings occupy in his narrative. Ian Watt, who considers "Crusoe's attitude to women" as "marked by an extreme inhibition of what we now consider to be normal human feelings", states that:

> Crusoe is too completely dominated by the rational pursuit of material self-interest to allow any scope either for natural instinct or for higher emotional needs. Even when he returns to civilization, sex is strictly subordinated to business. Only after his financial position has been fully secured by a further voyage does he marry, "and that not either to my disadvantage or dissatisfaction".[87]

Women, if ever they are depicted in Crusoe's story, are figures who play complementary roles, who somehow contribute to his life, who are useful – handy, like Friday – in some way: his mother, who, despite the disappointment that he feels upon her refusal to act as an intermediary between his father and himself concerning his desire to sail away, is far from being a source of threat and terror as the distanced and rigid

[86] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.181.

father figure is and continues to be; the English Captain's widow, in whom he can always trust; the seven women whom he, after he revisits his island, sends from Brazil to the new male inhabitants of it together with some other supplies and necessaries required for planting and with "five cows, three of them being big with calf, some sheep, and some hogs" (RC, 298). Yet, in addition to his discriminatory and reductive viewpoint that objectifies those women, he does not forget the requirements of the inflexible barriers within races, either; for he acknowledges that the women that he sends to the island from Brazil will not do for the Englishmen there and so they should be sent some women from England. It is also significant that in the opening lines of the novel, where Crusoe is giving some autobiographical information, some details about the origins, members, occupation, etc., of his family, in addition to his father and mother, he tells about his two brothers and it is only at the end of the novel that he also mentions, again within the limited space of only one section of one single sentence, that he also has two sisters.

Despite his uncommunicative and apathetic ways, Coetzee's Cruso tries to preserve his authoritarian point of view and position following the footsteps of his forerunner. When Susan Barton, moved by the potential pathetic versions of Friday's past, questions the justice of God saying "Where is the justice in it? First a slave and now a castaway too ... Was providence sleeping?", his answer shows the glaringly pragmatic and utilitarian interpretation even of a spiritual issue: "If providence was to watch over all of us ... who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane?" (F, 23). Defoe's Crusoe, too, despite his temporary scruples regarding the unjust treatment that the natives receive from life and, consequently, regarding the ways of Providence, is careful and cautious enough to check his momentary and uncontrolled queries:

> This frequently gave me occasion to observe, and that with wonder, that however it had pleased God, in his Providence, and in the government of the works of His hands, to take from so great a part of the world of His creatures the best uses to which their faculties and the powers of their souls are adapted; yet that he has bestowed upon them the same powers, the same reason, the same sentiments of kindness and obligation, the same passions and resentments of wrongs, the

[87] Ian Watt, **Myths of Modern Individualism**, p.169.

> same sense of gratitude, sincerity, fidelity, and all the capacities of doing good and receiving good that he has given to us ... But I shut it up and checked my thoughts with this conclusion, first that we did not know by what light and law these should be condemned; but that, as God was necessarily, and by the nature of His being, infinitely holy and just, so it could not be but that if these creatures were all sentenced to absence from Himself, it was on account of sinning against that light which, as the Scripture says, was a law to themselves, and by such rules as their consciences would acknowledge to be just, though the foundation was not discovered to us. And secondly, that still, as we are all the clay in the hand of the Potter, no vessel could say to Him. "Why has Thou form me thus?" (RC, 205-206)

Cruso's pragmatically this-worldly interpretation of the issue of divine justice is in conformity with Crusoe's fluctuating attitude in matters of religious faith. Throughout the novel we see Crusoe's acts of praying, showing thankfulness, and repentance usually performed in moments of crises like storms, earthquakes, potential threats by natives, etc, which are forgotten with the disappearance of the peril. He, as Ian Watt points out, thinks of accepting to pass "as a Papist when it is economically expedient to do so"[88]. His contradictory and biased interpretations of the requirements of religious faith in the moment of his realization that twenty one savages are about to eat their three victims on the island are noteworthy. He first decides that he has no right or authority to meddle with the course of events:

> It occurred to my thoughts what call, what occasion, much less what necessity, I was in to go and dip my hands in blood, to attack people who had neither done or intended me any wrong; who, as to me, were innocent and whose barbarous customs were their own disaster, being in them a token indeed of God's having left them, with the other nations of that part of the world, to such stupidity and to such inhuman courses. (RC, 228)

But as soon as Friday informs him that one of the victims is a white man, a "poor Christian", he is "enraged to the highest degree" (RC, 229) and immediately changes his mind:

> they were all about their fire, eating the flesh of one of their prisoners; and that another lay bound upon the sand ... which he said they would kill next; and which fired all the very soul within me. He told me it was not one of their nation, but one of the bearded man, whom he had told me of,

[88] Ian Watt, **The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding**, England and Australia, Penguin Books, 1968 (first pub.1957), p.86.

> that came to their country in the boat. I was filled with horror at the very naming the white bearded man... (RC, 229)

Though Coetzee's Cruso, totally out of the self-justifying and empowering mechanisms of self-expression and communication, and devoid of the valid social, cultural, religious, and moral narratives, is also deprived of the ability to manipulate, to polish, and hide the harshness shaping his principles and practices. Even when he is claiming that he does not need to use his authority and laws on the island, Cruso is in fact basing his explanation of the case on his unacknowledged practice of his authority and laws: "One day I asked Cruso whether there were laws on his island ... 'Laws are made for one purpose only,' he told me: 'to hold us in check when our desires grow immoderate. As long as our desires are moderate we have no need of laws.' " (F, 36). As his precursor, who makes his cautionary comments on the dangers of "immoderate desire", in his case that for "rising faster" (RC, 42), Cruso presents *his* idea of the necessity for desires to be moderate as an immanent, universal reality, without acknowledging (or perhaps without even being aware of) the fact that his argument is a "rule", a "law" that he himself has subjectively produced and is imposing on the island.

However, with Cruso's second severe bout and the arrival of the *John* ^{H}*obart*, the merchantman making for Bristol, Cruso's rule over his island and his control even on his own life start to weaken and then totally come to an end. Susan Barton, by co-operating with the crew of the merchantman in order to take him away from his island against his wish, is beginning to assert her authority to make decisions regarding their present lives and their future as well. On board the *John* ^{H}*obart* Cruso is half-conscious, frail, desperate almost like a child. Barton's treatment of him becomes more and more tender, protective, and consolatory. And her awareness and confession that "On the island I believe Cruso might yet have shaken off the fever, as he had done so often before. For though not a young man, he was vigorous. But now he was dying of woe, the extremest woe" (F, 43), can be construed as a symbolic indication of Barton's conscious and deliberate act of taking him away from the only environment where he could survive. Thus, Susan Barton's gradual takeover of authority from Cruso(e) is underscored, first

of all, as we see from early in the novel, by her replacing him as the narrator (of the story of the island), and now with her displacing him (together with his slave) from his environment.

Moreover, another wider discussion regarding the relationship between narration/writing and power/authority is initiated in an unexpected and very interesting way in the last two sentences of the first section of **Foe**. Throughout the first section, all of Susan Barton's story is given in quotation marks, the aim or origin of which we, as readers, cannot easily guess, and which function as some kind of cautionary device, some kind of a question mark in our minds that prevent us from positioning ourselves into a fluent, stable, and unproblematized relationship with the text. They function, in Gayatri Spivak's words, as "an allegory of the guardian that watches over all claims to demonstrate the truth of a text by quotation"[89]. There is also the same uncertainty about Susan Barton's narratee whom she keeps addressing with the pronoun "you". Nevertheless, we tend to take those "you"s as representing the general reader, the reader of **Foe**, that is, us. Yet, on reading Barton's challenging words closing the first section, the identity of the addressee is disclosed surprisingly:

> Do you think of me, Mr Foe, as Mrs Cruso or as a bold adventuress? Think what you may, it was I who shared Cruso's bed and closed Cruso's eyes, as it is I who have disposal of all that Cruso leaves behind, which is the story of his island. (F, 45).

With these words the figure of the author, Daniel Defoe, whose real name, as we know from our readings, was "Daniel Foe" and who then changed "his name to the more genteel Defoe ... around 1695"[90], is introduced into the plot of the novel as one of its fictional characters.

We, as readers, first see the word "foe" on the cover of the novel as its title, and, when we start to read the novel knowing its intertextual heritage, the relation between

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[89] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", **Consequences of Theory: Selected papers of the English Institute**, 1987-1988, New Series, no.14, ed. Jonathan Arac & Barbara Johnson, Baltimore & London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1991, (pp.154-180), p.162.
[90] See page 23 regarding the change(s) in his name.

this word and the surname "Defoe" reveals itself without any doubt; yet it is also inescapable to take into consideration the literal meaning of the word: "enemy". Then, as we continue to read, we encounter the word "foe" when it is used for the first time in the novel by Barton as an antonym for the word "friend": Waiting for the crew of the *John* [H]*obart* to bring Friday on board the ship, she smiles to Friday "to show that ... the seamen were *friends*, not *foes*" (F, 40)[91], with which the literal meaning of the word as denoting "enmity" is accentuated. Therefore, when the character of Foe is introduced, this word, that is his name, has already been negatively loaded. And realizing that the character who has been presented as the narrator, whose words we have heard throughout the first section, and who, as she recounts, sojourned on the desert island together with Cruso(e) and Friday and produced a memoir of that experience, has been totally erased from Daniel (De)Foe's canonical story, this specific sort of introduction designed for the author figure gains very significant cautionary implications. Marais, who points out to the "the occurrence, in Coetzee's work, of what is fast becoming a topos of postmodernist writers: the use of metafictional ploys to expose the notion of 'author' as an expression of subjectivity", states that "Coetzee's use of this topos in *Foe*, for example, is evident on the very cover of the novel, which presents the reader with the names of two authors, Coetzee and (De)Foe"[92].

This display of the author figure among the other fictional characters in Coetzee's novel serves to unveil the fact that in **Robinson Crusoe**, as Lennard J. Davis calls attention to, "Defoe places himself outside the novel – into the prestructure – by the gesture of authorial disavowal":

> The author displaces himself from the central, creative role, and by so doing denies his connection to the work. This act of disownment shifts the focus of narrative to the being of the protagonist, to the authenticity of document, to the verisimilar human life itself"[93]

[91] Italics mine.
[92] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", p.67.
[93] Lennard J. Davis, **Factual Fictions: the Origins of the English Novel**, Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, pp.16-17.

Thus **Foe**, with the inclusion of the historical author figure as one of the fictional characters and especially with the gradual exposition of all the stages of the author's "production" of his story and of his characters, calls attention to the writtenness, constructedness, fictitiousness of the characters whom Defoe, in his prefatory notes, insistently presents as true people whose authentic experiences he, as merely an editor, is objectively carrying to the reader. And this unveiling is remarkably consolidated by the fact that Coetzee chooses as the title of his novel not the names of the characters as Defoe did with his eponymous protagonists (**Robinson Crusoe, Roxana**) but the name of the author who produced them,. And the name of the author, significantly, is employed in its pre-change version, which is, as discussed above, burdened with implications of enmity.

The challenging words delivered at the end of the first section by Susan Barton are the first signs of the fact that Barton is not appealing to her reader in order to recount her narrative to them but trying to convey it to an author, who will, on her behalf, tell it to "his" readers. And with the intertextual implication that this author of vicarious experiences has fulfilled this task by omitting the figure of Susan Barton from the story of the island altogether, the discussion is extended to include a questioning of the efforts of the 18th century autobiographical, confessional, realistic novel through exposing its attempts to conceal its own fictionality, its own authorial choices, its own power; the mechanisms of canon construction; the gaps and silences in literary history. Therefore the appearance of the author figure as one of the characters in the novel functions as a very effective means of throwing doubt on the role of the writer, who, despite his authorial disavowal, his claim for being merely the editor of the story and insistence on the nonfictionality of his work, has had an immense power and authority at his disposal in his production, depiction, shaping of the characters and occurrences which constitute his (hi)story. What Virginia Woolf suggests regarding the irrelevancy of knowing whether Defoe "had a wife and six children; was spare in figure, with a hooked nose, a

sharp chin, grey eyes and a large mole near his mouth"[94] for understanding his novel is definitely valid for the appearance of that historical figure in **Foe** as well. Defoe's personal and private life is far from being the point of interest. As Gallagher points out:

> *Foe* pays particular attention to the role of the storyteller played by Daniel Defoe in constructing *Robinson Crusoe* and potentially by J. M. Coetzee in constructing stories about Africa. Without presuming to speak for Friday or for the oppressed races of South Africa, Coetzee nonetheless explores their silencing and his own struggle to speak on their behalf. To do so from a position that eschews power and authority, he once again takes on the persona of a woman … a character who has been omitted from and silenced by Defoe's account ... By shifting the emphasis from the ostensibly unmediated narrative of Crusoe to the informing intelligence of the author, Foe, Coetzee highlights the way that discourse enables and informs oppression. Coetzee's revision examines the power of the pen … from the perspective of one who does not have a pen or does not know how to wield it effectively, the woman.[95]

In fact, the novel's drawing attention to the change made in the historical author's name by himself (from Foe to Defoe) contributes to the novel's concern to open to discussion the suspicious nature of the process of signification, the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signifieds. David Attwell's remark regarding the name Cruso that "Coetzee sheds a 'preliterary' light on his protagonists in order to place the transformations of the 'literary' in question"[96], is valid for the name Defoe as well.

There is also another significant point regarding the appearance of the author as "foe": Until the end of the first section, until, in other words, the addressee of these "you"s has been disclosed, we, the readers of the novel, tend to take Susan Barton's words as spoken to us, and, consequently, go through some sort of an identification with the person whose name/identity has been problematized with a sense of hostility before he has been introduced into the story. Then the question whether this sense of enmity has been extended to include the reader as well arises. Thus, in addition to the issues of deconstructing the story of the desert island and presenting an alternative, contestatory, anti-colonial version of it, of laying bare the production of the canonical story by

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[94] Virginia Woolf, "*Robinson Crusoe*", **Twentieth Century Interpretations of Robinson Crusoe**, (pp.19-24), p.19.
[95] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, pp. 171, 173.
[96] See footnote 27.

delineating its author among the characters of the novel, of negotiating the acts of narrating and writing, another significant concern of Coetzee's novel, that is the active involvement of the reader within the text, starts to become clearer. Thus we are reminded of the fact that the (potentially oppressive) acts of interpretation and narration are not limited to the field of the author but the receiver of stories, the reader, too, is an active participant of those processes of meaning making. As Marais states:

> Coetzee's use of metafictional strategies differs greatly from the standard postmodernist interrogation of the human subject. The various reflexive strategies [in Coetzee's novels] are calculated to politicise interpretation in such a way that the act of reading re-enacts the political process the fiction represents, namely, the colonisation of colonial space and / or natives. The implications for the reader of this politicisation of interpretation are profoundly disturbing ... the implications of such a politicisation of reading are more disconcerting than standard representations of political oppression in realist texts. In realist fiction, the reader is usually allowed the moral comfort of identifying with the victim and is deliberately distanced from the perpetrators of political atrocities so that he/she can, from a superior ethical vantage point, complacently condemn their actions. No such complacency is afforded the reader of Coetzee's novels.[97]

Kim Worthington, underlining the significant role given to the reader in Coetzee's novel, draws attention to the "increasing endorsement of the reader's creative involvement in the writing of the text"[98] of **Foe**, in a way that calls to mind, especially within the theoretical framework of the poststructuralist climate that is conspicuously influential on the production of Coetzee's novel, the Barthesean idea that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination", that is, in the reader[99]:

> Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author.[100]

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[97] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", pp.80-81.
[98] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p. 264.
[99] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", **Literature in the Modern World**, ed. Dennis Walder, Oxford et al., Oxford University Press, 1992, (pp. 228-232), p.232.
[100] **Ibid**., 231-232.

And if the author, or the Barthesean "scriptor", is, as Barthes argues, someone whose "only power is to mix writings"[101] rather than creating something "original", then the sense of enmity attached in Coetzee's novel to the author figure lies, obviously, not in the fact that the author of the precursors of the characters **Foe** "created" them in some specific ways but in his unacknowledgement of his "construction" of those characters according to the dominant regulatory preferences of his day.

At this point, while the scope of the novel is overtly starting to go beyond the theme and the story of the desert island, and while those first indications of the communication between the author figure and Susan Barton are being introduced into the novel, it would be appropriate to widen our focus to include a detailed analysis of the character of Susan Barton, of her relationship with her literary predecessor, Roxana, as well as her creator, Foe, and to interweave the comparative analysis of **Foe** and **Robinson Crusoe** with that of **Roxana**. For although the theme of the desert island story covers the whole novel, its points of emphasis shift and change. Early in the novel, the character of Cruso(e), who has been provided with an advantageous and privileged delineation in **Robinson Crusoe** by his author, leaves the scene. Then two other Defoe characters who have very little to be content with the kind of identities and lives that they have been provided with, namely, the *other* character of the classical desert island story, Friday, and the representative of the disadvantageous gender, the heroine of **Roxana**, and their creator, the author, come to the foreground for the rest of **Foe**. From that point onward, Susan Barton, with Friday by her side, keeps searching for their author.

The discontentment that Susan Barton shows about the way she has been constructed and her (and Friday's) consequent and determined pursuit of the one who has written them is emphasized with the resemblance of their search for their author to that performed by six earlier fictional characters in a play that openly discusses the production and existence of fictional characters: Luigi Pirandello's **Six Characters in Search of An Author**, which, significantly, depicts the members of a family who state

[101] **Ibid**., 230.

that they have been created but left unfinished by their author and who, consequently, look for an author in order to complete their identities, their lives; in order to realize their existence. It is also significant that Pirandello's play, which the motif of searching for an author as performed by Susan Barton calls to mind, negotiates these very same issues of marriage, family, abandonment of children, the resultant conflicts and tragic psychological experiences, as well as the metafictional and self-reflexive issues of fictional production, construction of characters, and the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction that we all encounter in **Foe**.

Thus start Susan Barton's search for Foe in order to struggle with him over the way she and Friday have been/are being written by him, in order to settle their matters with him, and by doing so, in order to find their own identities. For, as Marjorie Garber states, "The search for an author, like any other quest for parentage, reveals more about the searcher than about the sought"[102].

[102] Cited by Andrew Bennett, **The Author**, London and New York, Routledge, p.2.

Writing Back to **Roxana**:
The Story of a Woman Who "Begs to Disagree"

"The Female Castaway. Being a True Account of a Year Spent on a Desert Island. With Many Strange Circumstances Never Hitherto Related" (F, 67)

As soon as she arrives on the island and is led by Friday to Cruso, Susan Barton impatiently introduces herself, first giving her name, then mentioning her French background, and then telling about her lost daughter, with which we get the first hints of her identity as the eponymous heroine of **Roxana**, whose real name, like that of Coetzee's protagonist, and as it is revealed late in Defoe's novel, is Susan[103]:

> "Let me tell you my story," said I; "for I am sure you are wondering who I am and how I come to be here.
>
> "My name is Susan Barton, and I am a woman alone. My father was a Frenchman who fled to England to escape the persecutions in Flanders." ...
>
> "Two years ago my only daughter was abducted and conveyed to the new world by an Englishman, a factor and an agent in the carrying trade. I followed in search of her ... searched, and waited, but saw no trace of my child. So, despairing at last, and my means giving out, I embarked for Lisbon on a merchantman." (F, 10)

However, while noticing those first hints of familiarity, we also realize that a very significant element of the plot of **Roxana**, namely the fate-determining mother-daughter relationship, is introduced in a reversed version here: the daughter's insistent and desperate pursuit of her mother in **Roxana** is, as will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, replaced in Coetzee's novel with Susan Barton's search for her daughter.

From the moment that she arrives on the island and meets Cruso, Barton is constantly and enthusiastically ready to tell him about herself, her life, her past, her view

[103] Mentioning her maid Amy and her daughter, Roxana says: "Amy and SUSAN, (for she was my own name) began an intimate Acquaintance together". Daniel Defoe, **Roxana**, ed. David Blewett, London et al., Penguin Books, 1987, 2nd ed., (first pub.1724), pp.247-248. Given hereafter in paranthesis as R followed by the page number.

of the present and of the future and to hear about Cruso and Friday. She, in other words, compulsorily attempts to present her own version of the narration of her identity and her background as opposed to that presented by Defoe in **Roxana**. In order to underpin her attempts to invalidate intertextually the story that has shaped the life of her predecessor, Barton also wants to include an analysis, or rather a questioning, of the stories of the two other characters whose lives have similarly been determined by the same author, namely those of Cruso and Friday. However, Cruso, whose 18th-century forebear has less to complain about as far as his privileged position compared to those of a slave and a female is concerned, than does Roxana, prevents Barton rigidly from making any improvement in her efforts to analyse, to question, to interpret. He is willing neither to hear her nor to tell her his own story: "I would have told him more about myself too, about my quest for my stolen daughter, about the mutiny. But he asked nothing" (F, 13). And what he says in his rare moments of talking or answering Barton's questions are far from being satisfactory for her.

> "May I ask, sir," said I, after a while: "Why in all these years have you not built a boat and made your escape from this island?
> "And where should I escape to?" he replied ...
> "Why, you might sail to the coast of Brazil, or meet a ship and be saved."
> "Brazil is hundreds of miles distant, and full of cannibals," said he ...
> "I beg to disagree", said I. "I spent two long years in Brazil and met no cannibals there."

Thus start her objections. "You are mistaken!", she cries, upon Cruso's claim that he has forgotten nothing or that the things that he might have forgotten were not worth remembering (F, 17). Yet she inclines to be hesitant, careful, and cautious in her relationship with him. Her present situation as a helpless castaway makes her totally dependent on the hospitality of this patriarchal ruler of his island kingdom ("I presented myself to Robinson Cruso, in the days when he still ruled over his island, and became his second subject, the first being the manservant Friday." F, 11). Still more significantly, her disadvantageous gender position requires her to be apologetic even for her opinions or arguments that she is entirely confident about.

Some of the conflicts that Barton experiences with Cruso at this early stage of the days she spends as an island-dweller are delineated in allusive patterns that call to mind canonical fairy tales with their established mechanisms of producing and perpetuating artificial and discriminatory gender roles determined through a strictly patriarchal discourse:

> Before setting out to perform his island duties, Cruso gave me his knife and warned me not to venture from his castle; for the apes, he said, would not be as wary of a woman as they were of him and Friday. (F, 15)

The figure of the female being cautioned against leaving the safe realm of the home by the male on his way out to perform his daily tasks (usually in nature), her promise to comply, yet her following disobedience, the violation of rules, the consequent peril and the fatal punishment, or, in some more optimistic versions, rescue arriving at the last minute through a male hero... The model that Cruso tries to impose upon the relationship between himself and Susan Barton fits well the familiar fairy tale models of characters and relationships constructed on the basis of fixed binary oppositions. It is based on the stereotypical female figure as passive, immobile, obedient, and in need of (patriarchal) control and protection due to her innate incapacities and predisposition to wrongdoing/sin as opposed to the stereotypical male figure as confident, outgoing, adventurous, courageous, dominant. The cautionary order Cruso gives in the quotation above is reminiscent, for instance, of the case of Snow White, left by the dwarves in the hut with strict warnings about the potential dangers and evil outside before they leave for the mountains to look for copper and gold as their daily routine. It also calls to mind Little Red Riding Hood being cautioned against leaving the right path and entering the woods, or the story of the Bluebeard's wife, who, similarly, is warned not to enter a certain room by her husband before he departs. And it, obviously, is reminiscent of the primal cautionary order given to Eve about the Tree of Knowledge. It is worthy of note that all those warnings have been violated by the disobedient female figures who have, consequently, been either punished severely and irrevocably or have been saved at the last minute by a patriarchal rescuer and repented for their disobedience.

There is a very significant point that should be taken into consideration regarding the fairy tales which include motifs and patterns that the unequal relationship between Barton and Cruso show a parallelism with: the fact that all these extremely familiar characters we know by heart through the unshakeably established and pervasive western canon of fairy tales (Snow White, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, etc.) and their world-wide known experiences are, in fact, only some specific versions produced for the western audiences. For "the classic fairy tale", as Cristina Bacchilega remarks, "is a *literary* appropriation of the older folk tale"[104]. As Jack Zipes explains, the renowned fairy tales that come to us as classics are in fact what Charles Perrault (in the late 17th century France) and the Brothers Grimm (in the early 19th century Germany) produced by meticulously changing, appropriating, reshaping the (oral) tales they collected on the basis of the moral, religious, economic, cultural, socio-political codes and conventions dominant in the societies that they inhabited and wrote for[105]. The Grimms, who are the producers of the most widespread versions of classical fairy tales as we know them today, "were like tailors ... they kept mending and ironing the tales that they collected so that they would ultimately fit the patriarchal and Christian code of bourgeois reading expectations"[106]. They "eliminated", for instance, "erotic and sexual elements that might be offensive to middle-class morality, added numerous Christian expressions and references, emphasized specific role models for male and female protagonists according to the dominant patriarchal code of that time"[107]. And the

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[104] Cristina Bacchilega, **Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies**, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p.3.

[105] See Jack Zipes, **The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World**, New York & London, Routledge, 1988. See especially the all-inclusive analysis he makes on the evolution of the tale "Little Red Riding Hood" in **The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood**, ed. Jack Zipes, New York & London, Routledge, 1993. In the latter, Zipes follows the process of turning an optimistic oral tale recounting a girl's experience of passing from childhood to the socio-cultural position of an independent and well-equipped adult through some sort of an initiation rite in a rural, secular environment into the didactic story as we know it today, depicting the perilous destiny of a beautiful but inexperienced, gullible, and totally dependent girl figure, causing trouble for herself as well as for those around her because of her disobedience. Zipes, pointing out to the artificial production of discriminatory gender roles, remarks that the modifications that this tale undergoes through time "can reveal to what extent the boundaries of our existence have evolved from male phantasy and sexual struggle for domination", p.xi.

[106] Jack Zipes, **The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World**, p.23.

[107] **Ibid.**, p.14.

resultant role allotted to the female figure in those fairy tales is the one of the silent, obedient, devoted angel of her house, which, obviously, neither Susan Barton nor her 18th-century forebear seem to be ready to accept: Although "the male heroes in the Grimms' tales tend to be adventurous, cunning, opportunistic, and reasonable", the heroines, "[f]or the most part ... indicate that a woman's best place is in the house as a diligent, obedient, self-sacrificing wife" [108].

And it is definitely noteworthy that those appropriated versions of fairy tales, in which the above given artificial, unequal gender roles and "man-made constructs of 'Woman'"[109] have been presented and fixed as what Cristina Bacchilega calls "some unquestionable natural state of being"[110], that is, as the absolutely natural form of existence, as the intrinsic, inborn qualities of human beings, have been so popular that "By the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Children's and Household Tales* [the collection of tales produced by the Grimms] was second only to the Bible as a best-seller in Germany, and it has held this position up to the present"[111]. For it reveals that the stereotypes, role models, webs of social/cultural relationships, etc., in those tales, which the Grimms intended as "an educational manual"[112], continue to permeate cultural consciousness, perceptions, and discourses in some way.

And the unnaturalness and unconvincing quality of this arbitrarily constructed gender difference is articulated openly by Susan Barton upon Cruso's warning regarding the threat of apes: "I wondered at this", says Barton, "was a woman, to an ape, a different species from a man?" (F, 15).

Yet she feels obliged to comply: "Nevertheless, I prudently obeyed, and stayed home, and rested" (F, 15). She desperately fluctuates between acquiescence and rebellion. And she cannot go on obeying this enforced restriction for more than three days; on the third day, after Cruso and Friday leave home for their labours, she goes out to explore the island and comes back "mightily pleased with [her] excursion" (F, 20).

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[108] **Ibid**., pp.64, 65.
[109] Cristina Bacchilega, **Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies**, p.9.
[110] **Ibid**., p.35.
[111] Jack Zipes, **The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World**, p.15.

Cruso, on his return, is furious: "When Cruso returned he knew at once I had been exploring, and burst out in a passion. 'While you live under my roof you will do as I instruct!' he cried, striking the spade into the earth" (F, 20). And Barton, though first she declares that he cannot intimidate her with his violent demeanour, once again, apologizes: "Later in the day, when my temper had cooled, I asked Cruso's pardon" (F, 20).

The confinement that the oppressive patriarch of the island attempts to impose on Barton is, in a way, reminiscent of the case of her predecessor, Roxana, whose life and identity, despite her blatant resistance to the conventional model of the self-sacrificing wife and mother in the limited domain of the home, and despite her continuous mobility, mostly need to be confined, as in the case of her spending years in confinement during her relationship with the French Prince, or as in the case of her constant need to hide herself behind various masks, veils, costumes, and pseudo identities when she is able to be out.

A conspicuously immobilising deprivation that Susan Barton undergoes in her early days on the island is the remarkably fairytale-like case that she has no shoes. She keeps asking Cruso for a needle and guts in order to make herself a pair but Cruso determinedly puts it off with the excuse that he will himself make shoes for her "in due time" (F, 20). Consequently, Barton, who has no intention to act in accordance with the stereotypical female fairy tale character defined by Zipe as a "female protagonist ... reduced to singing a version of 'some day my prince will come' and ... characterized by waiting, suffering, helplessness, and sweetness"[113], commits another act of disobedience by secretly getting some of Cruso's skins and making sandals for herself when she is left alone at home. Cruso is as furious as he was on the day that she went out on her excursion without his permission: "Cruso wheeled about angrily and picked up the skins from which I had cut my shoes and hurled them with all his might over the fence" (F, 25). By providing herself with shoes, Susan Barton counteracts the image of a passive

[112] **Ibid**.
[113] **Ibid**., p.24.

and desperate Cinderella waiting for the prince to bring her the shoe. Nevertheless, once again she has to ask Cruso's pardon for an act that she absolutely believes in: "I made a vow to keep a tighter reign on my tongue ... So I returned in a contrite spirit and went to Cruso and asked his pardon" (F, 25). For in this strictly disciplined order inflicted upon the inhabitants of the island by Cruso the act of speech is reduced to the minimum and words of apology seem to be the only acceptable form of self-expression on the part of the female.

However, that Barton continues to wear her apeskin sandals even after she has been rescued by the merchantman, that the only things that she takes with her from the island are her sandals ("I brought back not a feather, not a thimbleful of sand, from Cruso's island. All I have is my sandals." F, 51), and that, much later, back in England, she goes around barefoot since her apeskin sandals have been worn out and she cannot get used to her new shoes ("the barefoot woman in breeches ... my shoes pinch, the old apeskin sandals are fallen apart" F, 99) are all symbolic indications of the significance of those objects of liberation that she herself provided herself with and is unwilling to give up. And those first overt criticisms uttered by Susan Barton regarding the unequal, discriminatory, oppressive gender roles are in parallel with those of her precursor, Defoe's Roxana, who constantly, relentlessly, rejects the role of the domestic housewife imposed upon her by the dominant socio-cultural codes and conventions of her time, and who, therefore, is defined by John J. Richetti as having "a sort of proto-feminist sensibility"[114].

Having provided herself with the freedom of movement by making herself those shoes, Susan Barton starts to walk the shoreline everyday and she gradually starts to question Cruso's possession of the island: "the island no more belonged to Cruso than to the King of Portugal or indeed to Friday and the cannibals of Africa", "The island was Cruso's (yet by what right? by the law of islands? is there such a law?)" (F, 26, 51). In fact, it is noteworthy that very early in **Foe**, in her narration of her being carried by Friday to the inner part of the island where Cruso is, she utters the first possessive

[114] John J. Richetti, **Daniel Defoe**, p.105.

adjective used for the island in the novel: "if the company of brutes had been enough for me, I might have lived most happily on *my* island"[115] (F, 8). Therefore, the opening pages of Coetzee's novel introduce these sharp conflicts experienced between two protagonists written by the same author but set in the two different worlds of two different eighteenth century novels, this time as interwoven mainly within the familiar temporal and spatial framework of **Robinson Crusoe**. And through the depiction of this combination of the characters and of the harsh disagreements between them is introduced a negotiation of the problems of both racial and gender discrimination, oppression, and violence in relation to the media – language, discourse, narrative – that they are presented through. The story is given, as Gayatri Spivak remarks, through the voice of "the feminist as agent, trying at once to rescue mothering from the European patriarchal coding and the 'native' from the colonial account"[116]. Hers is, in Rosemary Jane Jolly's words, a "rejection of the discursive forms, those of the fallen woman and of the colonizer"[117].

On the island, Susan Barton feels utter frustration with Cruso's rigid patriarchal order, with the lack of energy, of meaningful and functional effort, of improvement, and especially of speech and communication. Her disappointment and anger with Cruso start to soften remarkably only when Cruso, ill, almost unconscious, and unwilling, is taken on board the merchantman in accordance with the decision Barton made for all the three of them. Now she is acting as the determinant of their present and future lives. She, very significantly, knows that Cruso might have recovered if he had stayed on the island. She is tender to him, at times as to a child. She soothes him, calling him "my Cruso". Their togetherness now includes emotions and tenderness as it never used to do on the island and is especially different from the casual and one sided sexual encounter they experienced once before:

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[115] Italics mine.
[116] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", p.165.
[117] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.139.

> I lie against Cruso; with the tip of my tongue I follow the hairy whorl of his ear. I rub my cheeks against his harsh whiskers, I spread myself over him, I stroke his body with my thighs. 'I am swimming in you, my Cruso,' I whisper, and swim. He is a tall man, I a tall woman. This is our coupling." (F, 44).

Hearing Barton's consolatory words that they will some day go back to the island and plant it, Cruso takes her "hand between his huge bony hands and brings it to his lips, and weeps" (F, 44). Their communication, their relationship takes on a shape much different from what it used to be on the island, that is, in Cruso's domain.

Yet, however much control she may attempt to have over their lives, the ship's master, Captain Smith, is quick to remind her of the powerful conventions that rule their lives by suggesting that she should be introduced to the crew of the ship as "Mrs Cruso": otherwise "it would not easily be understood what kind of woman I was" (F, 42). So not only on board the *John* [H]*obart* but also after they reach England she goes "by the name Mrs Cruso" (F, 47). It is, no doubt, significant that Captain Smith listens to her story attentively and shows interest, concern, and encouragement by saying to her "It is a story you should set down in writing and offer to the booksellers ... There has never before, to my knowledge, been a female castaway of our nation" (F, 40). But, upon Barton's hesitation regarding her capability to write, his encouragement stops short and all he can offer is to suggest *a man* to be hired by a bookseller to write her story down for her. Hence her first appeal to the author figure, whom she found on her arrival in London following captain Smith's recommendation, is overtly reactionary:

> If I may be so bold sir," I said (those were the words, bold words). You looked me up and down but did not reply, and I thought to myself: what art is there to hearing confessions? – the spider has as much art, that watches and waits." (F, 48).

Despite her absolute lack of self-confidence at this very early stage of her attempts to get her story told, she is obviously uneasy about the idea that somebody else should record their history vicariously. And, even in this act of yielding, she openly shows the signs of her eagerness to assert her own choices ("You will wonder how *I*

came to *choose* you"[118], F, 47), her own assessment of the experience she is offering to him and of the significance of her role in this (hi)story ("You have not heard a story before like mine ... I am a figure of fortune", F, 48), her own perspective, and, accordingly, her own identity. Starting her communication with her author, she, as she has been before in her relationship with Cruso on the island, fluctuates between modest obedience and defiance. Accordingly, when she finishes the history of the island and attaches it to her first letter to Mr Foe the author, the tone of her discourse is openly assertive and challenging (Do you think of me, Mr Foe, as Mrs Cruso or as a bold adventuress? Think what you may, it was I who shared Cruso's bed and closed Cruso's eyes, as it is I who have disposal of all that Cruso leaves behind, which is the story of his island. F, 45).

The analogy that Susan Barton confesses to have made on their first encounter between Foe and a spider ("I thought to myself: what art is there to hearing confessions? – the spider has as much art, that watches and waits", F, 48; "He is like the patient spider who sits at the heart of his web waiting for his prey to come to him", F, 120) and that she belittles his job for being not inventive but only copying others' experiences are indicative of her disturbance with and reaction to her obligation to yield the material in her hand to somebody who has, unlike her, a right to reshape it and make it presentable. That she likens Foe's method of taking the material of his stories from other people's experiences, that is, his method which, as she sees it, is not based on creativity but on taking advantage of his position in society as a writer who *can* write on behalf of those who *cannot*, to that of a spider calls to mind Virginia Woolf's use of a similar simile, "a spider's web", in order to define the complex ties one should have with society to be able to write, in her **A Room of One's Own**: Trying to find an explanation for the lack of woman writers in the literarily prolific atmosphere of the Elizabethan era through two significant factors, which are deprivation of money and a space in which a woman can write without disruption, Woolf also suggests the indispensability of a place, a position in society, which can provide her with interaction with all the layers and dynamics of

[118] Italics mine.

society and with the knowledge that only going out of the restrictive gender roles and attaining some connection with the active and complex web of relations of social life can bring about:

> it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself; for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in"[119].

Accordingly, Susan Barton, in a way that is openly allusive to Woolf's text, complains about the fact that she does not have a room of her own suitable to write in: "the memoir I wrote for you I wrote sitting on my bed with the paper on a tray on my knees ... in three days" (F, 63), in a room the rent of which is paid by Foe. Moreover, her gender and social status deprives her of all sorts of ties with social life required for her to produce and market her own work. Thus she encounters – though she is unwilling to admit – the harsh reality of her disadvantageous position. In her next letter, she immediately asks Foe's pardon for having mocked the art of writing. She is, as she has been with Cruso before, self-repressive and apologetic.

Starting from those first questionings onwards the dominant issue occupying all of Barton's attention and thoughts gradually becomes the processes of turning experience into writing. For instance, that, in her letters to Foe, she writes even about the incidents that they experienced together, the dialogues that passed between the two of them, which are, in other words, things that Foe already knows and therefore does not need to be informed about, demonstrates her tendency and first tentative attempts to present the events from her own point of view, to write them in her own words.

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[119] Virginia Woolf, **A Room of One's Own** (1929), excerpt in **The Vintage Book of Historical Feminism,** ed. Miriam Schneir, London et al., Vintage, 1996 (pp.344-355), pp. 350-351.

Barton, on the one hand, writes her first letters to her author and tries to imagine the circumstances that he is writing in. At this early stage of their communication, she visualizes a romanticized figure of the artist, who is writing, despite all the hardships of his circumstances, in the isolated atmosphere of an attic; who is, heroically, "as a steersman", "steering the great hulk of the house through the nights and days, peering ahead for signs of storm" (F, 50). In this imaginary scene of writing, the role that she can modestly allot to herself is that of serving the author, who waits for her "to set down the tray and withdraw" (F, 49).

Yet, on the other hand, she is also dropping the first hints of the power of her own imagination, her own creativity: As she imagines the author's house, she pictures "a ripple in the window-pane. Moving your head, you can make the ripple travel over the cows, grazing in the pasture, over the ploughed land beyond, over the line of poplars, and up into the sky" (F, 50). And this ripple, when we see Foe's real house a little later, turns out to be nonexistent and, consequently, to be merely one of the first experimental attempts of Barton to create new and different ways of seeing and reflecting. All these function as ironical instruments of showing (both to her author and to us, the readers) that she indeed has the capacity to invent, to create, and to write, which she, in the beginning, thinks that she is totally deprived of. It is important that, in her first letters to Foe, she is sending not only the history of the island to be converted into a story by the author but also the products of her own imagination, her own fiction, which are indications of her capability of seeing in the mind's eye without the immediate object in front of her. And while on the one hand exalting the figure of the author in her visualization of Foe in that imaginary house, she cannot, on the other hand, avoid drawing attention to and raising suspicions about a chest into which "The story of Cruso's island will go ... page by page" and which she presumes to be filled with "a multitude of castaway narratives, most of them, I would guess, riddled with lies" (F, 50).

As early as her second letter to Foe, Barton starts desperately to question her deprivation of the ability/opportunity to tell her own story, to have a story in which she can fully exist, and her dependence on him:

> When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso. Is that the fate of all storytellers? Yet I was as much a body as Cruso ... Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty. For though my story gives the truth, it does not give the substance of the truth ... To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and a comfortable chair away from all distraction, and a window to stare through, and then the knack of seeing waves when there are fields before your eyes, ... and at your fingertips the words ... I have none of these, while you have all (F, 51-52)

Although in the beginning she was more certain about the almost inborn inability and lack of talent in her character to tell her own story herself, she gradually gains insight into and reveals the concrete external reasons such as the unequal social and economic positions, artificial and discriminatory cultural codes and conventions, which constitute a huge impediment in her way to write. Derek Attridge explains this feeling of insubstantiality, of incompleteness, that Barton suffers from through her lack of self-confidence imposed firmly on her by her disadvantageous position in terms of her gender, her socio-economic status, her ignorance about and distance from the processes of literary production and publishing:

> Barton herself ... feels that she lacks substance as an individual until her story of her year on the island with Cruso ... is written as a legitimated narrative, yet she is barred from the domain of authorship by her gender, her social status, her economic dependence, and her unfamiliarity with the requirements of published narratives ... Human experience seems lacking in substance and significance if it is not represented (to oneself and to others) in culturally validated narrative forms, but those narrative forms constantly threaten, by their exteriority and conventionality, the substantiality of that experience.[120]

Therefore, due to her lack of knowledge about the prerequisites of culturally acceptable forms of narrative; due to, in other words, her unfamiliarity with the canon, she is unable to present her experience in writing. Yet, as Attridge remarks, having access to the traditional realm of narratives will necessitate the appropriation of her experience, her identity, as is obvious in Foe's attempts to modify and to add to the memoir Barton has written down and sent to him, and will, consequently, result in another version of rejecting the reality of her life, of her identity, in, in other words, another version of

"insubstantiality". Jolly, too, underlines this dilemma and draws attention to the "violence" of representation/narration: "the translation of events 'out of hand' into their situation within a master(ing) narrative involves a violence analogous to that of colonization"[121].

In this context, Terry Eagleton's comments on the "insubstantiality" of the events that the characters written by Defoe, including, in this case, Susan Barton's predecessor, Roxana, as well, go through are also noteworthy. For Eagleton's comments here also help us to see how the potential full, substantial identity/self that Roxana/Barton would have liked to have melts within the fast and chaotic traffic of life required by a novel of adventure:

> Defoe's novels display a kind of pure narrativity, in which events are not so much savoured for their own sake as registered for their 'exchange-value' ... life is pressingly material but also fast-moving, events seem both vivid and insubstantial. These novels are fascinated by process itself, not just by its end-product. There is no logical end to a Defoe narrative, no natural closure. You simply go on accumulating narrative, rather as you never stop accumulating capital ... Because of this pure narrativity, few events in Defoe's world are experienced deeply enough to leave a permanent memory or impression. Characters like Moll or Roxana live off the top of their heads ... Coping with a random, shifting world means that the self has to be constantly adaptive. And this, in turn, means that there is no immutable core of selfhood ... Instead, identity is improvised, tactical, calculating. It is a reaction to one's environment. [122]

The correspondence between Susan Barton and Foe is transmitted to the reader only in the form of letters that she writes to the author; we do not read any of Foe's letters and all we know about the content of his letters come indirectly through Barton's mentioning of them. This one-sidedly presented correspondence functions as an emphatic reminder of the privileged position of the one who has the right to narrate, because the reader knows that Susan Barton, who makes this attempt to silence the author, will finally be silenced by him altogether by being totally erased out of her own story. Moreover, Teresa Dovey draws attention to Barton's precarious position in her struggle with Foe, for although she attempts to be dominant over him by silencing him

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[120] Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.221, 224.
[121] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.3.
[122] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.30.

through her exclusion of his letters, she is, at the same time, dependent on this "you", on this "other" person: "Foe, as Author, is situated as *You* in the *I*/*You* relationship constituted by women's writing as speech act. He is destined to be the recipient of Susan's letters, or her story; he is her co-respondent, the Other ... whose response, it is hoped, will constitute the truth of the speaking subject"[123].

Through this one-sided depiction of the correspondence between Barton and Foe, we infer that Foe is not satisfied with the history of the island as Barton wrote it down. We understand that he keeps asking about the muskets that Cruso did not save from the wreck, about the cannibals that they did not see on the island, etc., which are the elements that, obviously, are all present in Defoe's classical text. "What I saw, I wrote", says Barton, "I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind" (F, 54).

According to Barton's account, the footprint, which, by signifying to Crusoe "*You are not alone ... No matter how far you sail, no matter where you hide, you will be searched out*"[124] and with all its implications of conscious or subconscious fears, uneasiness, ambiguities, remarks a turning point in Crusoe's life on the island, does not in fact exist. That way Susan Barton puts into doubt the attribution of Crusoe's moments of terror and crisis to the image, to the imprint of the unknown "other". The footprint, as some other memorable elements in **Robinson Crusoe** which provide the story with many "strange and surprising adventures", turns out to be a product of (De)Foe's imagination. In Barton's version of the story we do not see any footprints but feet themselves, this time in the form of the iconography that Friday produces:

> While Foe and I spoke, Friday had settled himself on his mat with the slate. Glancing over his shoulder, I saw he was filling it with a design of, as it seemed, leaves and flowers. But when I came closer I saw the leaves were eyes, open eyes, each set upon a human foot: row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes. (F, 147)

[123] Teresa Dovey, **The Novels of J.M.Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories**, p.342.
[124] J. M. Coetzee, **The Nobel Lecture in Literature, 2003**, New York et al., Penguin Books, 2004, p.14.

The feet are not the signs of a hazy source of threat which is narrated by the colonizer and through which the colonizer can externalize his own inner conflicts, anxieties, and crises but reminders of the humanity, the integrity, the wholeness of that "other" with his own viewpoint (eye) and his own identity ("I). As Attwell comments, "the body of Friday *and* Friday's silent gaze are conjoined"[125] and the eye that Friday adds to the famous footprint, though silent, watches Susan Barton and Foe. Moreover, when, towards the end of the novel Susan Barton is trying to teach Friday writing, that he draws these figures on the slate instead of the words that Barton is endeavouring to teach him, and that he refuses Barton's wish to see those figures more closely by "put[ting] three fingers into his mouth and wet[ting] them with spittle and rub[bing] the slate clean" (F, 147), contribute to the depiction of the slave figure not as unproblematically in harmony with the master or as obedient but as refusing. In Spivak's words:

> For every territorial space that is value coded by colonialism *and* every command of metropolitan anticolonialism for the native to yield his 'voice', there is a space of witholding, marked by a secret that may not be a secret but cannot be unlocked. 'The native', whatever that might mean, is not only a victim, he or she is also an agent. He or she is the curious guardian at the margin"[126].

Eagleton's below-quoted comments on this most renowned footprint of literary history as we find in Defoe's **Robinson Crusoe** reveal that all those implications of the necessity to recognize the existence and integrity of the other are already available between the lines in Defoe's 18th-century text; however, in **Foe**, it should once again be expressed through the eye/I that owns that foot. "The desire to wipe the historical slate clean and start over again", says Eagleton, "turns out to be doomed to defeat":

> What defeats it in *Robinson Crusoe*, in one of the great uncanny moments of world literature, is a single footprint on the sand. There is, after all, no virgin territory. Someone has always been there before you. There is a threat to your absolute sovereignty known as the Aboriginal. In a similar way, Crusoe has to admit that he would not have flourished on his island without the tools and resources he managed to salvage from the shipwreck. There is no absolute origin, no pure

[125] David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.114.
[126] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", p. 172.

> creation from nothing. You forge your own destiny on the basis of a history handed down to you, which can never be entirely eradicated.[127]

Barton, on the one hand struggles to stand against all of Foe's attempts to modify her story by adding/removing elements, and, on the other hand, tries gradually to enter the author's domain: "Can you not take us into your house? Why do you keep me apart? Can you not take me in as your close servant, and Friday as your gardener?", she suggests in her second letter (F, 49). She also imagines how it would be if he took them in, defines her imaginings in detail and sends them to Foe, too. Yet putting this dream of hers in practice can only be possible when Foe has to leave his house to escape his creditors:

> We have taken up residence in your house, from which I now write ... We will disturb nothing. When you return we will vanish like ghosts, without complaint ... I have your table to sit at, your window to gaze through. I write with your pen on your paper, and when the sheets are completed they go into your chest. So your life continues to be lived, though you are gone. (F, 64-65)

However, she has to hide herself, she has to hide her writing: "All I lack is light", says she, "we must keep the curtains drawn" (F, 65), in a way that exemplifies Woolf's argument that one needs one's *own* room, not *any* room, and also a place interactively tied to society, through which she can declare that she has (a right to have) her own room. Her feeling that "the life we lead grows less and less distinct from the life we led on Cruso's island" (F, 71) is indicative of the fact that she cannot find a space for herself in society and is now experiencing in England the solitude and isolation that they experienced on the desert island. Yet, although first she is worried that in the absence of Foe and of his support "There seemed no course open to me but to take to the streets and beg, or steal, or worse" (F, 66) as in the case of her literary predecessor's selling her body, she gradually starts to feel at home and relaxed: "now that we are in your house, peace has returned ... I feel as we feel toward the home we were born in" (F, 66). For she really was born there; for this is the house in which (De)Foe wrote her (predecessor). And by being there, by having the opportunity to use the author's utensils, she can write

[127] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.40.

for herself lives in which she does not have to steal or do even worse. Despite the fact that she still maintains her doubts regarding her own abilities as a storyteller, she also, by claiming that Foe's life continues to be lived even in his absence, implies that with the required elements like the physical circumstances needed for writing and the material, that is Barton's history, the story can be written, though without Barton (and others who provided Foe with their confessional stories) he would not have accomplished the task of writing. She becomes more and more familiar, intimate, and harmonious with his pen: "your pen, your ink, I know, but somehow the pen becomes mine while I write with it, as though growing out of my hand" (F, 67).

Barton gradually becomes so deeply engaged in the act of writing her own (hi)story that she does not stop writing even after she is sure that her letters do not reach Foe, even after she gives up sending them at all. She writes her letters and puts them into the box; however, she is afraid that, when Foe finds them, he will say: "Better had there been only Cruso and Friday ... Better without the woman" (F, 71-72). It is true that as she starts to occupy the position of the author, Barton too starts to be less certain about the possibility of being able to write a story by clinging to the real events of the island, starts to become aware of the requirements of the literary conventions, as a result of which she also starts little by little to sympathize with Foe's attempts to make changes in the story. However, with this possibility of his exclusion of her altogether from her own story, her tone becomes more reactionary and challenging: "Yet where would you be without the woman? Would Cruso have come to you of his own accord? Could you have made up Cruso and Friday and the island ...? I think not. Many strengths you have, but invention is not one of them" (F, 71-72). However, her premonition turns out to be true; there is no mention of a woman in Defoe's story of the island. As Gallagher states, "Foe has written the woman out of **Robinson Crusoe** only to insert her in two of his other fictions[128]. The woman has no place in the political and religious story Foe constructs for the island; instead, her place is within the psychological drama of mother-daughter

[128] That is, **Roxana** and **Moll Flanders**.

relationship"[129]. And in this context the intertextual irony is further consolidated since **Roxana** is delivered by a first-person narrator, that is, the eponymous protagonist herself, which may ostensibly imply that the female character is given a voice through which she can tell her own story, which "the Relator" of the narrative, as he states in the prefatory note, merely recorded down "as she has told it herself", as a piece of "*Truth* of fact", "*not a Story but a History*" (R, 35-36).

And in the novel of this psychological drama of mother-daughter relationship into which the woman character has been confined, the shipwreck that Susan Barton's precursor, namely Defoe's Roxana, experiences is presented as a moral and metaphorical one as she herself confesses: "the shipwreck of Virtue, Honour, and Principle, and failing at the utmost Risque in the stormy Seas of Crime, and abominable Levity, I had a safe harbour presented, and no Heart to cast-Anchor in it" (R, 202). In the novel that she has been made the protagonist of, Roxana is depicted as a woman who, due to qualities like inexhaustible vanity, ambitions, and avarice, reiterated with emphasis to define her personality and due to her "mortal Aversion to marrying him" (R, 201), rejects the Dutch Merchant's proposal of marriage and the possibility of leading an honest and virtuous life with him and continues her trade as a courtesan. This extremely strong denial of marriage expressed through her "mortal aversion" reflects the denial put forward by a woman entangled within the denaturalized relationships produced by the domineering institutions of the patriarchal system, which totally alienate women from themselves, from their productivity and motherhood, which, in other words annihilate their real selves. Thus, Susan Barton's clinging to the idea of limiting her story only to her experiences on the island despite Foe's insistence that they should make the island story only one of the episodes of their book and that it should be preceded and followed by other episodes constructed by her dramatic family life, her tragic relationship with her daughter, can be construed as a reaction to the strictly discriminatory distribution of roles that Gallagher's above quoted comment points out. It indicates her resistance to being excluded from the story which includes her own experiences and to being

[129] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.178.

confined into other stories which are set restrictively in the domain considered to be suitable for a woman. As Jolly states, Barton is struggling against "Foe's attempt to colonize her story by making it 'fit' a pattern that is largely a composite of *Robinson Crusoe*, the great English colonial narrative of the eighteenth century, and *Roxana*, the great English "fallen woman's" confessional narrative of the same period"[130].

Also, in **Foe**, the female character, the mother, is given her genuine name back. The real name of Defoe's Roxana is Susan and the name Roxana is given to her by one of the men at a mask ball where she dances as dressed in oriental costumes to entertain her courtly admirers:

> At the finishing of the Dance, the Company clapp'd, and almost shouted; and one of the Gentlemen cry'd out, *Roxana*! *Roxana*! by –, with an Oath; upon which foolish Accident I had the Name of *Roxana* presently fix'd upon me all over the Court End of Town, as effectually as if I had been Christined *Roxana*... (R, 217).

Thus in **Foe** Susan Barton is rescued from being an object of male fantasy. David Blewett remarks that "Roxana" is a name which was, in Defoe's day, identified with immorality, that it is "a name that suggests the courtesan" [131]: "by Defoe's day 'Roxana' had become a generic name for an oriental queen, suggesting ambition, wickedness and exoticism. She is known to history as a wife of Alexander the Great and, as Roxalana, as the wife of Suleiman the Magnificent ... Roxalana is used in Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) as a synonym for whore."[132]

However, Foe's determination to give Susan Barton a role which is reminiscent of her textual precursor is exposed clearly with the appearance of the girl figure who, like a fairy-tale heroine, arrives all of a sudden in "a grey cloak and cape, despite the summer's heat, and carries a basket ... with a round face and a little O of a mouth" (F, pp. 73, 75). That the author who writes Susan Barton/Roxana is intent on imposing on her character and life all sorts of material produced artificially and in a discriminatory

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[130] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.139.
[131] David Blewett, Introduction, **Roxana**, p.23.
[132] David Blewett's notes to **Roxana**, pp.394-395.

way by the patriarchal viewpoint is reinforced by the introduction of this daughter figure whose resemblance to Little Red Riding Hood, the fairy-tale character who, in the cautionary texts of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, has been depicted as a symbol of the unequipped, helpless, passive girl in need of protection (by males). That this girl enters the story as a daughter figure relentlessly pursuing her mother, that she mentions a brewer father and her father's obligation to escape because of his debts, and especially their "maidservant named Amy or Emmy" (F, 76) clarify without any doubts the intertextual relationship with Defoe's novel, which has been more oblique until that point. Barton's first shock gradually turns into a feeling of desperateness: "'My name is Susan Barton,' she whispered; by which I knew I was conversing with a madwoman" (F, 73). And as she thinks that it was Foe who informed the girl about her life and set her after her, she is "burning with anger" (F, 75) against Foe as well as the girl.

The heroine of Defoe's **Roxana** is depicted as, following her desertion by her husband in a financially very difficult plight, in a harsh dilemma between, in Blewett's words, "initially, virtuous poverty or sinful prosperity, then later, a respectable marriage or the glamorous but immoral life of a whore"[133]. In addition to her economically severe circumstances, psychologically, too, her case is a difficult one, for she is left alone: "I had not a Friend of my own left me in the World" (R, 46). However, the excessive dominance of financial issues as a major determinant in her life and the blatantly subordinate position of emotions, human affection, filial concerns, and love, show themselves alarmingly, for instance when we only incidentally get the knowledge that Roxana has five children given only as a small detail, as part of a sentence which she constructs mainly in order to support her argument that it has been good that her husband left her trade without losing all that he has: "Also, I was willing he should draw out while he had something left, lest I should come to be stript at Home, and be turned out of Doors with my children; *for I had now five children*; the only Work (perhaps) that fools are good for" (R, 43)[134].

[133] David Blewett's notes to **Roxana**, p.11.
[134] Italics mine.

Roxana gives birth to children one after the other, whose names, identities, details are hardly given, and leaves them behind without the least hesitation. The only concern she sometimes shows for her periods of pregnancy is that the process is a threat for the only capital she uses, that is, her good looks, her body. There are moments of utter insensitivity, of sheer pragmatism, as in the case of the relief she feels at the death of one of the children to whom she gives birth during the grand tour that the Prince has taken her on, thinking about the potential troubles that it could have caused in their travel: "a very fine Boy it was, but it liv'd not above two Months; nor, after the first Touches of Affection (which are usual, I believe, to all Mothers) were over, was I sorry the Child did not live, the necessary Difficulties attending it in our travelling, being consider'd" (R, 142). That she even confuses the number of her children[135] is in sharp contrast to her meticulous and precise reckoning and enlisting of every little detail of the financial assets that she keeps piling, and is an evidence of the insignificant place that they occupy in her life. All these reveal to what extent the artificially produced and rigid patriarchal gender roles and institutions denaturalize woman/mother, how they turn the nurturing, supporting Mother Earth into a negligent, destructive being and confine her into a totally alienated existence.

Barton finds this model of woman/mother totally unrealistic and unacceptable and she openly shows her reaction and anger to her author for attempting to recreate her in that image: "She is not my daughter. Do you think women drop children and forget them as snakes lay eggs? Only a man could entertain such a fancy... She is more your daughter than she ever was mine." (F, 75). As Jolly comments, "The girl is a by-product and therefore victim of the male authorial fantasy and of self-engenderment"[136] For Barton, having failed to convince the girl that she is not her mother and feeling desperate, takes the girl to "the darkest heart of the forest" and says: "I have brought you

[135] Altough we know from what we have been told until that moment in the novel that she has five children by her first husband, on page 109 she says that they are six. Even if this confusion is taken to have resulted from the author's lack of attention, it will still serve Susan Barton's criticism and denial of the kind of depiction of the mother figure in **Roxana** by the author as merely a figment of a man's fancy (F, 75).

here to tell you of your parentage ... Your father is a man named Daniel Foe ... What you know of your parentage comes to you in the form of stories, and the stories have but a single source ... You are father-born. You have no mother. The pain you feel is the pain of lack, not the pain of loss." (F, 90-91). This is the first time that the name Daniel Foe is given in full in the novel and at this significant point of his introduction as an author in his full name (though not yet in its prefixed form), he is portrayed as the author of stories produced unrealistically in accordance with the discriminatory and oppressive patriarchal conventions and imposed despotically upon his characters.

However her encounter with the girl who, as she thinks, is haunting her as part of a plan designed by Foe, takes place in the hazy, dream-like atmosphere of a dark forest covered with so many fallen autumn leaves that she cannot be sure whether they "have not strayed from the path" (F, 90). The girl, in her cloak and with her basket, trying to trot in order to keep pace with Barton into the depths of the forest, and worried that they will never be able find their way back before it gets dark, is reminiscent of Hansel and Gretel taken into the forest upon the step-mother's incessant suggestions to the father, who, in fact thought "it would be better for you to share the last mouthful with your children" since "it had cut him to the heart to leave them behind alone": "'O you fool,' said she [the step-mother], 'then we must all four die of hunger, you may as well plane the planks for our coffins,' and she left him no peace until he consented"[137]. Therefore, Susan Barton is, on the one hand, trying to rescue her life from the destiny imposed upon her literary forebear who, desperate in the extreme poverty she finds herself in after her husband's elopement, says "we had eaten up almost everything, and little remain'd, unless, like one of the pitiful Woman of *Jerusalem*, I should eat up my very Children themselves" (R, 50-51). Yet, she cannot avoid behaving in accordance with those patriarchal models: that of the cruel and selfish step-mother figure of the black and white caricaturization of fairy tales as well as that of the eighteenth-century bourgeois

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[136] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.140.
[137] The Brothers Grimm, "Hansel and Gretel", **The Brothers Grimm: The Complete Fairy Tales**, Kent, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1998, pp.88-89.

woman, who, faced with a dilemma between the roles of an affectionate and self-sacrificial mother and a free and reckless entrepreneur focused wholly on survival, self-centredly chooses to leave behind all her children, and thus, even if she does not eat them up herself, by leaving them alone, without affection and protection, in fact lets them, metaphorically speaking, be eaten up by the cruel mechanism of the unjust social order. In fact, two of Roxana's deserted children can literally not survive the cruel circumstances that they were left in. Moreover, Roxana also suffers from the psychological burden of the murder of one of her children, her eldest daughter Susan, who unrelentingly claims her right to have her mother back. If Amy, whom Roxana defines as "a cunning Wench, and faithful to me, as the skin to my back" (R, 59), can be, in David Blewett's words, construed as "less a character in her own right than an aspect of Roxana's own personality"[138] or, if she is, as John J. Richetti suggests, "a sort of alter ego for Roxana"[139], then Roxana, who for most of the time lets her maid have the initiative and make decisions about and organize their life, has a share in this actual act of murder. And this awareness brings about Roxana's psychological disintegration and ultimate tragedy at the end of the novel.

Despite her openly stated and determined rejection of this version of the mother-daughter relationship, Susan Barton fails to maintain her self-confidence regarding her encounter with the girl, in which she attempts to disclose the unreality of that relationship and the way it has been artificially produced by the author, in that fairy-tale-like atmosphere. For the episode ends up with her doubts whether it has all really taken place or not: "What do I mean by it, father-born? I wake in the grey of a London dawn" (F, 91). Was it only a dream after all? Her weakening self-confidence and increasing hesitations are significant indications of the difficulty of resisting and defending one's life/identity against the normative preconceptions regarding one's role(s) in society established by the immensely powerful socio-cultural discourses and the canon.

[138] David Blewett, Introduction, **Roxana**, pp.17-18.
[139] John J. Richetti, **Daniel Defoe**, p.111.

Having been deserted by her first husband, having witnessed how the financial resources that she had inherited were squandered by the inefficient males (her elder merchant brother and then her own husband the brewer) that she is dependent on, Roxana is constantly, consistently, and adamantly against the institution of marriage. Even on receiving the proposal of the Dutch Merchant, whose immense support she always appreciates and whom she calls "my deliverer", she rigidly refuses entering the institution of marriage: "He cou'd not but see that I lov'd him to an extraordinary Degree, in every Part of my Behaviour to him; but that as to marrying, which was giving up my Liberty ... I had an aversion to it" (R, 185). However, it is noteworthy that the importance of liberty for Roxana is depicted as mainly and obsessively related to her anxieties about losing her money, which Spivak defines as "Defoe's problem of dissimulation of the desire for liberty as a ruse for control of money"[140]:

> ... the divesting myself of my Estate, and putting my Money out of my Hand, was the Sum of the Matter, that made me refuse to marry; but, I say, I gave it a new Turn, upon this Occasion, as follows:
>
> I told him, I had, perhaps, differing Notions of Matrimony, from what the received Custom had given us of it; that I thought a Woman was a free Agent, as well as a Man, and was born free, and cou'd she manage herself suitably, might enjoy that liberty to as much purpose as the Men do; that the Laws of Matrimony were indeed, otherwise, and mankind at this time, acted quite upon other Principles; and those such, that a Woman gave herself entirely away from herself, in Marriage, and capitulated only to be, at best, but *an Upper-Servant*...
>
> That the very Nature of the Marriage-Contract was, in short, nothing but giving up Liberty, Estate, Authority, and every-thing to the Man, and the Woman was indeed, a meer Woman ever after, that is to say, a Slave. (R, 187).

The desire for freedom in Coetzee's female protagonist does not need to hide behind a ruse, it can be expressed for its own sake. She often asserts her freedom though she is aware of the connotations imposed upon this assertion by the conventional patriarchal value judgements: "The Portuguese women", she says, talking about Bahia, "are seldom to be seen abroad ... They have a saying: In her life, a woman has but three occasions to leave the house – for her baptism, her wedding, and her burial. A woman who goes abroad freely is thought a whore. I was thought a whore. But there are so

[140] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", p.164.

many whores there, or, as I prefer to call them, free women, that I was not daunted" (F, 115). And, a little later, in response to Foe's ceaseless attempts to impose upon her the destiny of her precursor, she says: "I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" (F, 131).

As Spivak remarks, "the problem of the representation of the affective value of mothering as opposed to the ambitions of possessive female individualism is dismissed by Coetzee's Susan Barton as Mr Foe's ideas of a woman's dilemma, as merely 'father-born'"[141]. And the artificiality of the kind of mother-daughter relationship that Foe tries to attach to Susan Barton's life is reinforced and exposed through some absurdist elements and dialogues in Coetzee's novel. The girl, desperately trying to convince Susan Barton that she is her mother, is able to see nonexistent similarities between their physical appearances:

> She smiles again and shakes her head. "Behold the sign by which we may know our true mother," she says, and leans forward and places her hand beside mine. "See," she says, "we have the same hand. The same hand and the same eyes."
>
> I stare at the two hands side by side. My hand is long, hers short. Her fingers are the plump unformed fingers of a child. Her eyes are grey, mine brown. What kind of being is she, so serenely blind to the evidence of her senses? (F, 76)

Later on, Susan Barton presents a parodical replica of the dramatic recognition scene that her precursor performed by trying to test the girl through a kiss. She mimics Roxana, who verbalizes the climactic satisfaction that her reunion with the daughter brings as follows:

> notwithstanding there was a secret Horror upon my Mind, and I was ready to sink when I came close to her, to salute her; yet it was a secret inconceivable Pleasure to me when I kiss'd her, to know that I kissed my own Child; my own Flesh and Blood, born of my body (R, 323)

Though Barton's test ends in a way that is totally different from the moving and impassioned encounter in Defoe's novel:

[141] **Ibid**., pp.164-165.

> What other test is left to me? I thought; and took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips, and felt her yield and kiss me in return, almost as one returns a lover's kiss. Had I expected her to dissolve when I touched her, her flesh crumbling and floating away like paper-ash? I gripped her tight and pressed my fingers into her shoulders. Was this truly my daughter's flesh? ... 'She is unlike me in every way,' I murmured" (F, 132).

Another noteworthy element in the failed and blatantly anticlimactic (recognition) scene in **Foe** is the way Amy behaves while watching the (alleged) mother-daughter kiss: "Opening my eyes", says Barton, "I saw Amy's face hovering only inches from mine, her lips parted too as if for a kiss" (F, 132). Amy's show of desire is reminiscent of the more obliquely depicted close relationship depicted in Defoe's novel between Roxana and Amy, which includes a strong, determined, and continuous togetherness, which even includes sharing the same bed. The scene in which the Lord that Roxana has a relationship with finds the two women in bed and tries in a very rude and insulting manner to find out the sex of the maid ("how do I know what *Amy* is? It may be Mr. *Amy*" R, 228) calls to mind the arguments of the poet and theorist whose views on the need for a merging of you and I, of he and she, constitute a constant frame of reference especially at the end of Coetzee's novel: Adrienne Rich and her arguments regarding the socially constructed, and consequently artificial and oppressive definitions of sexuality in her "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"[142].

In that essay Rich criticizes "heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women" and defines "patriarchal motherhood, economic exploitation, the nuclear family, compulsory heterosexuality" as "the institutions by which women have traditionally been controlled"[143]. As is evident in the above given quotation which depicts Barton and the daughter kissing and Amy as desiring a kiss for herself, too, Susan Barton, by openly stating what is only obliquely implied in the novel that her predecessor is the protagonist of, that is, the lesbian relationship between two women, obviously shocks her conventional author. For Foe immediately answers her with a heterosexual performance: "Through all this talk Foe had stood stock still by the

[142] Adrienne Rich, from "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, gen. ed. Vincent Leitch, New York and London, W.W.Norton and Company, 2001, pp.1759-1780.

fireplace. I expected an answer, for never before had he failed for words. But instead, without preliminaries, he approached me and took me in his arms and kissed me." (F, 134).

Extremely dissatisfied with the fiction that Foe (in accordance with the requirements of the valid discourses and the canon) is trying to produce for her experiences on the island and for her whole life, Susan Barton gradually becomes determined to take the responsibility of writing it all herself. While Foe is still absent in hiding, she decides seriously to take up writing their own story: "Tomorrow, Friday, tomorrow I must settle down to *my writing*" (F, 83)[144]. And surrounded by an author's circumstances, with his ink, quill, desk, etc. at her disposal she says: "I had not guessed it was so easy to be an author" (F, 93). Barton's predecessor, Roxana, too, metaphorically speaking, can be considered as attempting and trying to write an alternative destiny, an alternative identity for herself, which shows a sharp contrast to the normative presuppositions of the strictly patriarchal societal order that she inhabits and which, however, ends up in her absolute disintegration.

As she becomes more and more frustrated with Foe's authoritarian and oppressive attempts to change, to control, to reappropriate her story, and consequently to reject her point of view, her whole identity, and as she starts to be more enthusiastic and confident about becoming the author of her own story/life, Barton also starts to express more clearly her awareness of and reaction to the discriminatory treatment of herself as well as of her fellow "underdog", Friday. Her attitude to the plight of Friday and to the violence inflicted upon him becomes more attentive and sympathetic. She decides to take Friday on a journey to Bristol, where she hopes to find a ship to send him back to Africa. And during this journey the issues of oppression in alÿÿits forms – gender, race, social status, eÿÿ. – interweave and occupy all her thoughts. She, for instance, becomes increasingly aware of the disadvantageous position not only of her individual experiences of attempting/trying to determine her own story against the authoritarian

[143] **Ibid**., pp.1762-1763.
[144] Italics mine.

male author but also of *any* woman trying to survive in an oppressive patriarchal society. She realizes that "a woman alone must travel like a hare, one ear forever cocked for the hounds" (F, 100), and having been harassed by two drunken soldiers, she has to continue her journey in disguise: "Now I pin my hair up under my hat and wear a coat at all times, hoping to pass for a man" (F, 101). Her experiences show her that a woman who goes out into society should either be introduced through her relationship with a man (as Mrs Cruso, for instance) or should be disguised as a man; that, in other words, a person who would like to have a right to be present in social life (actively or at least without being disturbed) needs to be either a man or related and attached to a man.

On their way to Bristol, they find "a parcel lying in the ditch", which turns out to be the dead body of a baby girl wrapped with a cloth. Susan Barton leaves the baby behind where they found it but cannot stop thinking about her: "Who was the child but I, in another life?". Spivak comments on these words as "I read 'in another life' as, also, another story, another register"[145]. For Barton's identification with this stillborn baby functions as a symbol of Susan Barton/Roxana's displacement in the fictional world created by (De)Foe, of her being created in accordance with the dominant patriarchal value judgements, and, consequently, of her noncreation in fact. She is, here in Coetzee's novel, trying to introduce the real her, trying to write her real self into the text. However, as is evident in Foe's ceaseless and authoritative attempts to change her (hi)story and in the consequent fact that, intertextually looking, we see that not only has her real story been removed from (De)Foe's final version of it but also that her very identity has been totally erased from the narrative of the island, her efforts to create a place for herself, to create her "self" fail. Thus her case is obviously parallel to the baby that could not be born. Barton fails to assert her full identity as she really is, just as Roxana's attempt to create an alternative identity and destiny for herself proves to be an impossible one and she remains destined to experience a psychological breakdown caused by her failure to come into terms with the image of woman artificially divided

[145] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", p.166.

either as domestic, devoted, submissive, and in full harmony with the requirements of patriarchal norms or as active, independent, self-assertive, and subversive.

The function of this dead baby as a symbol of the oppressed, the alienated, the silenced, who cannot realize themselves/their real selves, who cannot exist as they really are, is also underpinned by what Barton says concerning Friday's silence in an allusive way that ties Friday to this born yet dead baby: "The silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is the child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born". (F, 122)

Their encounter with this dead body of the baby also leads Barton to face and question the colonialist prejudices and the way they condition and shape the common receptions, because she realizes that she cannot help suspecting Friday to be a potential cannibal, that she cannot help wondering whether Friday would have eaten the babe if she had not been there. And she blames Cruso for bringing this idea of "cannibalism" to her mind ("But Cruso had planted the seed in my mind" F, 106) in a way that concedes the power of (colonialist) discourse on the shaping of the mind. Yet she also reproaches herself saying that if people cannot be more tolerant, society cannot continue to exist: "We must cultivate ... a certain ignorance, a certain blindness, or society will not be tolerable." However that she cannot stop herself from thinking that Friday may eat herself too proves the lasting power of the internalized definitions and value judgements while those moments of her anxieties also exemplify her gradual encounter with her position as a colonizer.

Giving up the hope of finding a safe way of sending Friday back to his home continent, she decides to, together with Friday, chase Foe the author and find him in his place of hiding. She sees that Foe is still strongly determined to alter her story. Obsessively concerned to produce the story in his own mind, he can even very openly ignore a very significant and dramatic event in Barton's life by considering it a small, insignificant detail: Talking about how Barton and her daughter fell apart, he says: "Your daughter is *abducted* or *elopes*, I do not know which, *it does not matter*"[146] (F,

[146] Italics mine.

116). "To elope" and "to be abducted", to act in accordance with one's free will/wish/desire and to be the victim of others' despotic decisions/deeds/violence are, in his view, considered to be not different at all for a girl/woman to experience. The important thing for him is to impose a rationally and linearly developing structure on their story:

> We therefore have five parts in all: the loss of the daughter; the quest for the daughter in Brazil; abandonment of the quest, and the adventure of the island; assumption of the quest by the daughter; and reunion of the daughter with her mother. It is thus that we make up a book: loss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, then middle, then end. As to novelty, this is lent by the island episode – which is properly the second part of the middle – and by the reversal in which the daughter takes up the quest abandoned by her mother. (F, 117)

Yet Barton, as Jolly comments, "rejects the 'daughter' that Foe proposes to her and his recuperative theory of narrative, that of loss-quest-recovery, in one and the same breath"[147]. She expresses her intention to replace Foe's position as author(ity): "It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all, to withold. By such means do I still endeavour to be father to my story" (F, 123). And then comes her intercourse with the author, in which she, now more and more desperate about owning her own story, claims to act as both the "muse" and the "father" of her story, and which, in Dovey's words, can be construed as not an invalidation but only a reversal of patriarchal dominance: "Susan Barton's straddling of Foe ... simply seeks a reversal of positions, a supplanting of men's literary authority by women's literary authority, which in no way disturbs the notions of ownership and mastery"[148]. This attempted gender reversal will be, a little later, also reflected in Barton's likening Foe to a "mistress", to a "wife" and in Foe's own likening himself to a "whore" (F, 151-152). (Also, Barton's calling Foe "my intended", F, 126, inescapably calls to mind the passive and devoted woman, who patiently and willingly waits in her home while her man is away, busy with his colonial adventures, in **Heart of Darkness**: Kurtz's Intended). As Jolly suggests, "the novel potential that her gender holds for her creative future is overwritten by the

[147]Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.140.

predominantly male determined attributes of her racial identity, namely her inheritance of and admiration for the masculine traditions of writing and colonization"[149]:

> I calmed Foe. 'Permit me,' I whispered – 'there is a privilege that comes with the first night, that I claim as mine.' So I coaxed him till he lay beneath me. Then I drew off my shift and straddled him (which he did not seem easy with, in a woman). 'This is the manner of the muse when she visits her poets,' I whispered, and felt some of the listlessness go out of my limbs ... 'It is always a hard ride when the Muse pays her visits,' I replied – 'She must do whatever lies in her power to father her offspring.' (F, 139-140.

Her consciousness concerning the violence of silencing inflicted upon her by the author gradually increases as she tries to defend her (hi)story. Accordingly, her concern for the silence of her fellow victim, Friday, too, comes overtly to the surface and she starts to discuss this subject with Foe commenting that the story of Friday is "a puzzle or a hole" in their story and that, because of this hole, the story, though it has a beginning and an end, lacks a "substantial and varied middle" (F, 121). As Durrant comments, "by positing Friday's story as a hole in her own narrative, Susan allows the emptiness of her own narrative to bear witness to Friday's loss of history – and to the wider history of loss to which the 'fact' of his mut(e)ilation itself bears witness"[150].

However, despite her growing consciousness about the necessity of rejecting all the impositions on her (and Friday's) life/story, since, especially in the beginning, one of the motivations lying behind her attempt to finish their story is financial, and since she cannot totally disregard the internalized conventions of writing/literature, she cannot escape the idea that their experiences on the island do lack adventure. Consequently, she starts to retrospectively search for the potential mysteries, interesting elements of their story. She gradually realizes how powerful the legitimated discourses, such as those in **Roxana**, are in shaping people, events, life, and stories and she starts to fluctuate between opposing views on the relationship between reality and stories. For instance, when she tries to produce an argument against Foe's imposition of the daughter figure

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[148] Teresa Dovey, **The Novels of J.M.Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories**, pp.384-385.
[149] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.139.
[150] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning**, p.34.

searching for a mother, she says "The world is full of stories of mothers searching for sons and daughters they gave away once, long ago. But there are no stories of daughters searching for mothers. There are no stories of such quests because they do not occur" (F, 77-78), by which she shows that she assumes a parallelism between life and stories; though a little later, when the girl says that she was brought up by gipsies, Barton's answer ("It is only in books that children are stolen by gipsies! You must think of a better story", F, 78) is based on her idea of the incompatibility between real life and the world of fiction/stories/books.

As she starts to categorize herself as an "authoress" (F, 126), she also starts to challenge her author, her creator openly by declaring "I am not a story Mr Foe", not "a mere receptacle" but "a substantial being with a substantial history ... I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" (F, 131). However, she still fails to stand resolutely against his impositions and to protect her confidence in her own story and in her own identity:

> "In the beginning I thought I would tell you the story of the island and, being done with that, return to my former life. But now all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me. I thought I was myself and this girl a creature from another order speaking words you made up for her. But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? ... And you: who are you?" (F, 133).

These are the moments when Barton's uncertainties grow threateningly. She, one the one hand, becomes increasingly conscious about the unavoidable power of the dominant patriarchal codes and conventions of her age and the discourses that underpin them as well as the requirements of the canon, which all besiege and threaten her identity and her story. And on the other hand, she gets deeper and deeper involved in sophisticated (and contemporary) discussions of "writing/representation" with Foe: she negotiates with him, for instance, the (im)possibility of making the subaltern speak and of ever being able to finish a story; she hears his Derridean opinions that "Writing is not doomed to be the shadow of speech" (F, 142-143); just as she, before, has explored some contemporary theoretical issues like the notion of "play" in language/discourse: "the

tongue belongs to the world of play", says she, "whereas the heart belongs to the world of earnest. Yet it is not the heart but the members of play that elevate us above the beasts" (F, 85), which reflects the Derridean concepts of "play" and "floating signifiers" in discourse: "If totalization no longer has any meaning", says Derrida, "it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field – that is, language and a finite language – excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions"[151]. These notions of "play" and the "missing center" all add to Barton's increasing doubts and hesitations about (being able to write) her own identity as well as the story that she is labouring to write but fails to do so because of the hole at the "centre" of it that she thinks can be filled only by Friday's story. And then follows what Jolly calls Susan Barton's "postmodern dilemma":

> once Susan Barton is confronted with the "daughter's" and Amy's claims to the "Daughter's" authenticity, Susan Barton doubts her own renunciation of the "daughter" as legitimate, and thus begins to doubt her own, and Foe's, and any other conceivable narrator's, authenticity. This radical questioning of who, if anyone, has a right to speak or write whom, pitches Susan Barton into a kind of postmodern dilemma. She suffers from a growing inability to recognize one narrative as more legitimate than another, even if that narrative is her own.[152]

These are the moments in which Barton's former confidence is increasingly problematized as her questionings regarding her identity and position (as a woman, as a mother, as a subject/character of someone else's narrative, as a writer who attempts to subject others to her (version of)narratives, etc.) and regarding the potential ways/(im)possibilities of representing all these deepen. As Dovey comments: "Susan Barton is thus shown in the process of realizing that gendered identity, indeed, identity itself, is a factor of language, and thus that her own status within writing cannot be

[151] Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", **Modern Criticism and Theory**, ed. David Lodge, London and New York, Longman, 1989 (first pub.1988), (pp.108-123), pp.118-119.
[152] Ibid., pp.141-142.

essentially different from that of the daughter and the maid from *Roxana*: she is neither more nor less 'real' or substantial than they are"[153].

Those moments of utter confusion which Worthington calls an "identity crisis", an "existential crisis", and defines as "Susan's fall from the self-possessed position of authoritative command to the devastating disorientation engendered by wholesale dispossession ... and writtenness" [154], are also the moments Barton is most deeply engaged in the issues of Friday's silence, his (potential) story/stories, potential ways that his story can be heard/read/learnt, etc. Friday increasingly occupies the focal point of her attention and discussions. And especially since we have already been informed that one conspicuous reason for her deep interest in Friday's past/(hi)story/identity is her need for this knowledge as a necessary component for the completion of her own story and since her own growing awareness of this fact simply makes the pressure of her crisis even heavier, Barton's problematic, hard-to-define, in-between position as both the oppressed/exploited/colonized/silenced and the oppressor/exploiter/colonizer, which will be analysed in detail in the following chapter, comes to the foreground.

[153] Teresa Dovey, **The Novels of J.M.Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories**, p.382.
[154] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, pp.267-268.

Stories told by Narrators in-between:
J. M. Coetzee's **Foe** and Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**

Another canonical text of colonialist experience, another sea story, in which, also, the issues of storytelling and narrativization are continually foregrounded, constitutes another source that Coetzee's **Foe** has a more oblique yet constant intertextual relationship with: Joseph Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**. Conrad's story is delivered, except for the frame narrator's opening and closing narratives and his sporadic interruptions, by Charlie Marlow, the main narrator of the novel, who has, like Susan Barton, a "propensity to spin yards"[155]. Both Barton and Marlow are remarkably concerned not only with their own acts of storytelling but with the nature and processes of narration in general. Moreover, they both undergo the predicament of their precarious positions within the framework of the colonial encounter. They both struggle to act and narrate within the quandary created by, on the one hand, their tendency to unveil and invalidate the oppression and destruction practised by colonialism and, on the other hand, by, after a certain point, their failure to avoid the internalized prejudices and attitudes of and the consequent complicity with the colonialist viewpoint. They are exposed to both the appalling plight of the victims of colonialism on one side and to the ferocious, rapacious, inhuman, and dehumanizing methods as practised mainly by the two representatives of Western civilization that they are strongly affiliated with, namely Cruso and Kurtz. And their ambivalent positions and the consequent difficulties that they undergo in perceiving and defining their experiences contribute cÿÿsideÿÿbly to the constant concern they show to (potential) ways of expressing themselves and telling their stories. Each of them is what Albert Memmi refers to as "the colonizer who refuses":

[155] Joseph Conrad, **Heart of Darkness**, London, Penguin Books, 1994 (first pub.1902), p.8. Hereafter given in paranthesis as HD followed by the page number.

> He [the colonizer who refuses] may openly protest, or sign a petition, or join a group which is not automatically hostile toward the colonized. This already suffices for him to recognize that he has simply changed difficulties and discomfort. It is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships. From now on, he lives his life under the sign of a contradiction which looms at every step, depriving him of all coherence and all tranquillity. [156]

Both Marlow and Barton are what Jolly, quoting Watson, calls "reluctant colonizers"[157]. This problematic and precarious position is also defined by Jean Paul Sartre as follows:

> There are neither good nor bad colonists: there are colonialists. Among these, some reject their objective reality. Borne along by the colonialist apparatus, they do every day in reality what they condemn in fantasy, for all their actions contribute to the maintenance of oppression. They will change nothing and will serve no one, but will succeed in finding moral comfort in malaise.[158]

Yet, one thing that remains obvious all through these analogies we can make between the cases of these two characters and makes Barton's plight incomparably more complex and difficult is the fact that as a woman who is also socially, culturally, and economically underprivileged, Susan Barton herself is a victim of the dominant discriminatory and oppressive patriarchal system, the attitude of which to women is summarized patronizingly by Marlow as follows:

> It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over. (HD, 18)

The way that the two women in **Heart of Darkness** – the Intended and the African woman – are depicted in Marlow's story as, in Jeremy Hawthorn's words, either "devoted and chaste spirit", "passive woman" or as "sensual and sexual flesh",

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[156] Albert Memmi, **The Colonized and the Colonizer**, p.20.
[157] Stephen Watson's phrase cited by Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.3.
[158] Jean Paul Sartre, Introduction, trans. Lawrence Hoey, Albert Memmi, **The Colonized and the Colonizer**, (pp.xxi-xxix), pp. xxv-xxvi.

"knowing active woman" exemplifies the process "whereby women are dehumanized by being divided into spirit and body and are denied the full humanity that requires possession of both"[159], which, no doubt, is exemplified in the life of Barton('s predecessor) as well. And this blatant gender difference between Susan Barton and Marlow only makes the fluctuating and ambivalent attitude of Susan Barton much more complex and multilayered than that of her male counterpart. For Marlow is a person who, despite his experiences of disappointment and frustration with the destructive methods of colonialism, does not hesitate to perform the same discriminatory attitude in his treatment of women: "They, – the women I mean – are out of it – should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse." (HD, 69). His words echo those told, in Susan Barton's imagination, by Foe the author: "Better had there been only Cruso and Friday ... Better without the woman" (F, 71-72). Though the world Susan Barton is confined into, outside the male's story, is not "beautiful" at all.

Accordingly, another very significant and conspicuous difference between the cases of Marlow and Susan Barton that should be remembered before starting to compare the similarities of their roles as "reluctant colonizers" is, no doubt, the extent to which their positions as storyteller are (un)certain, (un)stable, (in)firm. For Marlow, despite his constant and self-reflexive doubts regarding his act of narration, is telling his story to a defined audience who give him their full attention and one of his narratees, that is, the frame narrator of the novel, is the one who carries his story to us, the readers of the novel, while Susan Barton always needs to fight for her right to tell her story, to be listened to, to have an audience. Furthermore, in contrast to the frame narrator in Conrad's novel, the person who has listened to Barton's story, the author, Foe, is the one who has erased her totally from her own story.

Yet there are obvious similarities between the ways Barlow and Barton (try to) deliver their stories. As Ian Watt states, Marlow's way of delivering his story is an

[159]Jeremy Hawthorn, **Joseph Conrad: Technique and Ideological Commitment**, London et al., Edward Arnold, 1992 (first pub.1990), p. 186, 191.

impressionistic one. It includes a "narrative device [that] may be termed delayed decoding", which calls attention to "the bounded and ambiguous nature of individual understanding": "Conrad presented the protagonist's immediate sensations, and thus made the reader aware of the gap between impression and understanding"[160]. Hence Conrad's novel draws attention to the potential/actual gaps, misunderstandings, misrepresentations in the narrative of its main narrator. And the notion of stories/narratives as construction is further supported with the existence of multiple narrators. The opening and ending words and sporadic interruptions, and, in fact, the very presence, of the frame narrator, through whose narrative we read that of Marlow, is a constant reminder of the multi-layered determinants of storytelling, of, especially the notions of various viewpoints, various versions, selectivity, etc. And all these characteristics are very similar to the presentation of Susan Barton and her story in **Foe** as always doubtful, always questioning the (in)capacities of herself as a storyteller and of representation in general within a very self-conscious, self-reflexive, intertextual context.

Marlow, in parallel to the case of Susan Barton's constant involvement in and problematization of the issues of storytelling, makes frequent references to and comments on the nature of the act of telling and receiving stories within his self-reflexive narrative. In fact the whole scene that we encounter in the opening lines of Conrad's novel is a microcosmic model, a parody of the process of storytelling, narrativization, and reception with the storyteller, with the four characters representing the receivers of the story, with the interaction between them that contribute to the production/completion of the story. Moreover the fact that we are first presented with the introduction of the frame narrator, who then hands the right of speech over to Marlow only to interfere occasionally and who functions both as a narrator (to us, the reader of novel) and as a narratee to Marlow, draws attention not only to the existence of

[160] Ian Watt, excerpt taken from *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, **Readings on Heart of Darkness**, ed. Clarice Swisher, San Diago, CA, Greenhaven Press, Inc, 1999, (pp.119-126), pp.122-123.

multiple viewpoints with their multiple stories but also to all the actively working dynamics of the act of recounting, receiving, and interpreting stories.

Marlow, with his exposition of the dependence of stories on the selectivity and decisions of the one who narrates, opens to discussion the concepts of transparency and reliability of the stories that the reader/listener reads/hears. For instance, at the beginning of his story, while talking about the Roman conquerors, about whom he knows through his readings of history books, he expresses his suspicious attitude regarding the processes of writing and reading by adding to his account the conditional phrase: "if we may believe what we read" (HD, 9). Both he and the frame narrator are very self-conscious storytellers, who never let the reader forget about the processes of the act of recounting. The frame narrator, for example, comments on Marlow's way of telling his stories and compares it with different and less preferable methods: "'I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally,' he began, showing in this remark the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear" (HD, 10-11).

Moreover, Marlow himself confesses his own unreliability as a narrator by openly stating that he will be hiding things in his narrative: "I believe I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets. Well, I am not going to." and, later on, in a confirming way, "I am not disclosing any trade secrets" (HD, 15, 83). He also reveals that he is constantly selecting from among his material as is obvious in sentences like: "I wouldn't have mentioned the fellow to you at all ..." or "no use telling you much about that" (HD, 26,28). And all these function as indications of the novel's presentation and problematization of the production of stories, as cautionary reminders of stories as construction.

Furthermore, Marlow often expresses his dissatisfaction with the capacity of language and narration to convey the immediate, actual experience: "No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence – that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone ..." (HD, 39). And this attitude reminds us

of the frustrations that Susan Barton experiences and verbalizes throughout **Foe** concerning the handicaps of representation and narration.

Barton, in her first letter to Foe, feels the need to acknowledge the distance she perceives between reality/the actual experience and her narration/(hi)story of it expressing her discontentment: "I have set down the history of our time on the island as well as I can, and enclose it herewith. It is a sorry, limping affair (the history, not the time itself)" (F, 47). She, similarly, goes through another disappointment following her failed attempts made in order to learn about the reasons of Friday's tonguelessness by trying to remind him of the old days, in which she thinks he lost his tongue, with the help of two sketches in which she has drawn images of Cruso and a slave-trader respectively cutting Friday's tongue. She first points out to the picture depicting Cruso as cutting the tongue out and asks "Master Cruso cut out your tongue?" (F, 68). And then comes the second sketch showing a slave-trader at work: "Did a slave-trader cut out your tongue, Friday?" (F, 69). Due to Friday's unresponsive gaze that "remained vacant" (F, 69), due to the failure of her attempt to communicate through visual and (auditory) linguistic systems of signification, she starts to question the (in)capacities or even (im)possibility of representation. Acknowledging that "The world is more various than we ever give it credit for" (69) and underscoring the determining significance of the background, ways of seeing, etc., of the receiver as well, she decides that perhaps the right question would be "Is this a faithful *representation* of the man who cut out your tongue?"[161] (F, 70). But she, desperate, ends up in tearing up the pictures. And her endeavour to teach Friday to write through drawing the pictures of the referents of the words that she is trying to teach ("house", "ship", "Africa", "mother") ends up with a similar kind of disappointment and an interrogation into the subjectivity and relativity of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, into the numerous determinant factors of the processes of signification, representation, reception (F, 145-146).

In addition to the handicaps of the act of recounting, Marlow also draws attention to the concept of reception, the role of the receiver, as another one of the significant

[161] Italics mine.

constitutive elements of storytelling. This concern is obvious, for instance, in the reaction he shows to his audience regarding the requirements of their role as the receivers of his story. He criticizes their inability to fulfil this role, to contextualize the story that they hear, to accomplish the proper processes of reception, to co-operate with the story(teller) in order to co-produce the meaning or the message: "'Absurd!' he cried. "This is the worst of trying to tell. ... Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal – you hear – normal from year's end to year's end. And you say, Absurd! Absurd be – exploded!" (HD, 68)

Susan Barton, too, is always conscious about (the lack of) her (potential) interlocutors, receivers, listeners. She feels utterly frustrated with Cruso's rejection of communication and, later on, when they are left alone, with Friday's unresponsiveness. Her plight is obvious when, for instance, in one of her desperate and failed attempts to communicate with Friday, she says "Oh, Friday, how can I make you understand the cravings felt by those of us who live in a world of speech to have our questions answered! It is like our desire, when we kiss someone, to feel the lips we kiss respond to us" (F, 79). There are many other indications of her continuous consciousness about the process of reception of stories. For instance, she often imagines and draws attention to the potential ways in which various types of readers may respond to stories in general or to her story. She comments on the expectations of traditional travellers' tales, or expresses her anxieties about the dissatisfaction that she thinks her readers might feel because of the difference of her story from those travellers' tales or because of the lack of adventure in their actual experiences, etc.

Moreover, Barton's own narrative invites remarkably active reader participation all through its self-questionings, its attempts to position itself within the intertextual web it is based on, and constantly reminds the reader of her/his (significant) role and required involvement in this act of narrativization. This starts early in the novel, in, for instance, the moments that she addresses her narratee, "you", whom the reader tends to identify with herself/himself especially before the declaration of this narratee as Foe the author.

In Coetzee's novel, which puts great emphasis on the function of the reader, there is, in Worthington's words, "an increasing endorsement of the reader's creative involvement in the writing of the text"[162]: "*Foe* is a typical contemporary novel in so far as in it Coetzee appears to willingly abdicate his role as sole authority for meaning and identity construction, issuing an open invitation to his readers to enter into and co-write the somewhat opaque, fragmented text"[163].

On the other hand, Marlow's dissatisfaction with the capabilities of the language and narration that he deploys increase especially towards the end of the novel, as he tries to relate his complicated experiences, which makes him more and more involved and entangled within the act of colonialism:

> I've been telling you what we said – repeating the phrases we pronounced – but what's the good? They were common everyday words – the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. (HD, 95)

Marlow does not only draw attention to the inherent drawbacks and weaknesses in acts of conveying meanings through language and stories, but he also reveals the deliberate and deceptive (ab)use of language and narration for the purpose of legitimizing "the great cause" (HD, 23), the colonialist mission. He, for instance, articulates for a couple of times his bewilderment of and disturbance by the way the natives are being defined by the white men: "Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers – and these were rebels" (HD, 84)[164]. His reaction to this arbitrary act of naming is very close to that shown by Susan Barton regarding Friday's being artificially and arbitrarily reshaped with every new definition of him:

> Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal; I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman. What is the truth of Friday? ... What he is to the

[162] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p.268.
[163] **Ibid**., p.252.
[164] Also on pp.20 and 22 of **Heart of Darkness**.

> world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence, he is the child of his silence, a child unborn. (F, 121-122).

As Benita Parry comments on the silent characters in Coetzee's novels, including Friday:

> [They] are muted by those who have the power to name and depict them ... the dominated are situated as objects of representation and meditations which offer them no place from which to resist the modes that have constituted them as at the same time naked to the eye and occult.[165]

Marlow also underlines the fact that the very name of the character of colonizer in **Heart of Darkness** is an ironical indication of the discrepancy between words and their referents: "Kurtz – Kurtz – that means short in German – don't it? Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life – and death. He looked at least seven feet long" (HD, 85). And what this figure with a deceptive name is passionately involved in, too, is, as we learn through Marlow's narrative, named in so many different ways according to the viewpoint of the onlooker: "Hadn't I been told in all the tones of jealousy and admiration that he had *collected*, *bartered*, *swindled*, or *stolen* more ivory than all the other agents together"[166] (HD, 67).

There is an overt and disapproving exposure of the practices and discourses of the destructive acquisitiveness of colonialism and high imperialism in Marlow's narrative. He starts by reminding his aunt, who enthusiastically idealizes her nephew's undertaking as "Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle" who will be "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways", that, in fact, "the Company was run for profit" (HD, 18). And as soon as he starts his journey, he expresses his feeling of estrangement among his fellow traders/colonizers/adventurers by pointing out to his "isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact" (HD, 19). Then follows his delineation of the oppression and violence inflicted by the colonizers upon the natives of Africa. For him, the native people of those lands, like the blowing wind, the voice of which "was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a

[165] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", p.41.

brother" and which "was something natural, that had its reason, that had a meaning", were "as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there" (HD, 19-20). This acknowledgement reminds us of the case of Friday, who, from early in Coetzee's novel, is depicted by Barton as a character who is much more in harmony with his natural environment than his European fellow islanders are. It is obvious, for instance, in his climbing up the slope barefoot carrying Susan Barton, whose foot has been pierced by a thorn and hurt badly, on his back without the least disturbance and pain and crushing "under his soles whole clusters of the thorns that had pierced [her] skin" (F,7), or in his calmness through the severe storm that terrifies both Barton and Cruso: "Friday sat under the eaves with his head on his knees and slept like a baby" (F, 28).

Yet Marlow's narration continues with his disillusioned depiction of the natives, those, for instance, who have each "an iron collar on his neck" and all "connected together with a chain" (HD, 22, 24), the scar of which, as we can state intertextually and on a symbolic level, is shockingly exposed at the end of **Foe** around Friday's neck. Those of the "helpers", as the black slaves are named in the Central Station, who can no longer fulfil their tasks detach themselves to a corner: "And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, – nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation" (HD, 24). The words "black shadow", as we remember, are very similar to the first words which Susan Barton uses to refer to Friday on the first page of Coetzee's novel: "A dark shadow fell upon me" (F,5).

Then follows Marlow's blatant depiction of the unproductive, nonfunctional, and deliberately destructive practices of the members of the Company as the representatives of the high ideals of the colonial project. Marlow's narrative underscores that those practices are supposedly based on the target of enlightening and redeeming the ignorant, underdeveloped, and uncivilized peoples through the illuminating and efficient methods

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[166] Italics mine.

of colonialism. He tells about the man-of-war shelling the bush although there is nobody and nothing hostile around: “there she was, incomprehensible, firing into the continent ... there was a touch of insanity in the proceedings, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight” (HD, 20)”. Then the signs of extreme squandering spread all over the Company’s Central Station, which undermine the colonialist myth of efficiency and productivity, enter the scene one after the other: “a boiler wallowing in the grass, ... an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air ... as dead as the carcass of some animal” and some “more pieces of decaying machinery” (HD, 22). The men who, building a railway, keep blasting a cliff although it is in no way forming an obstacle on their way, are not very different from the man-of-war shelling the continent for no obvious reason at all. Similarly, the only potential function that Marlow can sarcastically think of for the “vast artificial hole” dug on the slope is “the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals something to do” (HD, 23-24). And the existence of a “gentlemanly young aristocrat”, who has been there for more than a year as the person responsible for making bricks, contributes to the spuriousness and the absurdity of the supposedly progress-oriented high mission of colonialism; for “there wasn’t a fragment of a brick anywhere” (HD, 34).

Marlow’s ironical depiction of the futility and ridiculousness of the activities of the men in Central Station reaches its high point when he tells us about the tin pail with which one of the men, “the stout man with moustaches”, tries to carry water from the river in order to put out the fire going on in one of the sheds: “I noticed there was a hole in the bottom of his pail” (HD, 33). Moreover, with the comment that this man makes on the situation, which is that everybody is “behaving splendidly, splendidly”, not only the inefficient practices of these representatives of the colonial project but also the discrepancy between words and reality and the false/deceptive use of language are disclosed effectively. The complicity between oppressive powers and the language/discourse that they deploy as an instrument of self-validation and legitimization is foregrounded. The scene defined as one of “splendid” behaviour also includes a black man being beaten by the white men nearby since he is thought to have

caused the fire. In terms of its inefficacious and wasted labour, this sarcastically pictured act of trying to carry water in a pail with a hole at its bottom, brings to mind Cruso's fruitless toil of building terraces in **Foe**.

Marlow's narrative gradually discloses that the efforts of the members of the station to base all their explanations on their discourse of a humanistic, moral and spiritual mission are a mere ruse for their crude rapacity, as is reinforced with Marlow's definition of the "pilgrims", who keep walking around the Station with an air of pseudo spiritualism yet do nothing useful:

> "They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life." (HD, 33)

Marlow expresses overtly his complete disillusionment with and criticism of the unbearable fraud and degeneracy in the whole station:

> There was an air of plotting about that station ... It was as unreal as everything else – as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be held, so that they could earn percentages. (HD ,35)

And at one point, in order to emphasize the immense injustice that he observes around him and to question the presence and horrible practices of these men in Africa, Marlow suggests to imagine the reverse situation through some kind of a defamiliariazation method: "The population had cleared out a long time ago. Well, if a lot of mysterious niggers armed with all kinds of fearful weapons suddenly took to travelling on the road between Deal and Gravesend, catching the yokels right and left to carry heavy loads from them, I fancy every farm and cottage thereabouts would get empty very soon." (HD, 28).

In fact, the "small sketch in oils", which, as Marlow learns, is painted by Kurtz himself and which depicts a blindfolded woman "carrying a lighted torch" (HD, 36), functions as an effective symbolic manifestation of the utter deceptiveness of the

mission of "illuminating" and civilizing. Obviously, this figure of the blindfolded woman calls to mind another image of a woman who is also depicted as wearing a blindfold: the symbol of justice. However, it is difficult to associate Kurtz's "blindfolded" woman with this traditional symbol of justice whose blindfoldedness is a manifestation of her objectivity. Because we are also told that, in Kurtz's sketch, "the effect of the torch-light on the face was *sinister*"[167]. Because all those acts of exploitation, destructiveness, and violence depicted throughout Marlow's narrative demonstrate not the existence but a shocking lack of justice. As Benita Parry comments: "Kurtz's sketch of a blindfolded woman posed against a black background and carrying a torch that casts a sinister light on her face transforms Europe's traditional figure of justice into an image of that continent's arrogant, unseeing and unjust invasion of Africa"[168]. This ironical reference to Lady Justice consolidates the exposition of fraudulence, the *blind* avarice, and acquisitiveness of the colonial project although its monumental representative in Marlow's narrative, that is, Kurtz, "wanted no more than justice – no more than justice" (HD, 106).

In fact, the figure of the blindfolded woman can also be construed as representing the contribution of European women to the Western colonization/imperialism through their conscious or unconscious ignorance of the reality of colonialism. As Jeremy Hawthorn, in his discussion of the position of women in **Heart of Darkness** suggests:

> There is additionally Kurtz's portrait of the blindfolded female, and there are two women knitting black wool met by Marlow in the company's office in Europe, women whose resemblance to the Fates of classical mythology is clearly intended. Their appearance in the novella suggests that women may have a significant role to play in determining various fates in *Heart of Darkness*. The blindfolded woman suggests that this determining influence may not be a knowing or intended one.[169]

Susan Barton, too, despite her gradually increasing consciousness about the issues of gender, race, and culture, undergoes the same hardships as the female characters Hawthorn discusses. She, too, like them, is constantly threatened by the incessant

[167] Italics mine.
[168] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.22.

attempts of the established patriarchal system to modify, assimilate, and silence her. What Hawthorn remarks about the way European women become accomplices in the imperialistic enterprise of the West ("European women – ignorant of what their menfolk are really doing for imperialism – [are] offering powerful ideological support to them"[170]) reflects also the equivocal position of Barton, who, while, on the one hand, fighting against the attempts to silence her, fails, on the other hand, to disregard the colonialist attitudes of those very oppressors in terms of her relationship with the racially other.

On the other hand, the ironical attempt to illuminate others with a torch made by somebody who is blindfolded herself also reminds us of Marlow's ambivalent feelings about and doubtful and uncertain definition of his experiences in Africa: "No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light" (HD, 11). Thus this obviously unfruitful and unconvincing act of Kurtz's blindfolded woman attempting to bring light to a dark environment functions in tandem with the sterile toil of the figure of the man trying to put out a fire by means of a bucket with a hole in its bottom. And the fact that this painting which betrays the failure of the supposedly high ideals of the colonial mission was made by Kurtz, the unrestrained colonizer in the novel, can be construed as an early foreshadowing of his ultimate realization of the crude reality of his engagement and of his life as verbalized at his deathbed.

Having, for a very long time, for more than two thirds of the novel, been presented as only a character, as the almost mythical chief of the Inner Station, that is, only talked, thought, speculated, and written about, Kurtz finally arrives on the stage in person:

> Suddenly round the corner of the house a group of men appeared, as though they had come up from the ground. They waded waist-deep in the grass, in a compact body, bearing an improvised stretcher in their midst ... I saw the man on the stretcher sit up, lank and with an uplifted arm, above the shoulders of the bearers (HD, 84-85).

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[169]Jeremy Hawthorn, **Joseph Conrad**, p.183.
[170] **Ibid**., p.187.

This introduction of Kurtz being carried on a stretcher by the white men from the Central Station, by his fellow Europeans, on board a steamer despite his unwillingness and that, as will be seen a little later in the novel, he fails to survive this voyage, are the first clearly visible parallelisms with the case of Cruso in **Foe**. About one year after Susan Barton's arrival on the island, Cruso is very ill again and, this time, lies silently, "pale as a ghost" (F, 38). Barton, against his wish, co-operates with the crew of the *John* ^{H}*obart*, the merchantman that has anchored off the island, to take him away from "his island kingdom" (F, 13) back to England, the country that he does not want to – and will not be able to – reach:

> Of the arrival of strangers in his kingdom Cruso had his first intimation when three seamen lifted him from his bed into a litter and proceeded to bear him down the path to the shore ... he came to himself and fought so hard to be free ... We were yet three days from port when Cruso died. (RC, 43-44)

There are, surely, many less direct yet strong allusions to **Heart of Darkness**, especially through the constant repetitions of the words comprising the title of Conrad's novel, spread throughout Coetzee's text, starting with Susan Barton's comment that "The heart of man is a dark forest" (F, 10), which she makes with regard to the mutineers that killed the captain and cast her ashore. The allusions continue with various other references to "darkness", as, for instance, later on, back in England, in the case of Barton's taking the assumed daughter figure to the forest, into "the darkest heart of the forest", (F, 90). However all these more oblique references become much more evident in the scene where the seamen from the *John* ^{H}*obart* take Cruso onto a litter and carry him, despite his opposition, on board the ship.

Marlow's first impressions of Kurtz, whom he likens to an "atrocious phantom" (HD, 85), are far from the model of the constructive and sharing representative of Western civilization in the world of the ignorant:

> I saw the thin arm extended commandingly, the lower jaw moving, the eyes of that apparition shining darkly far in its bony head that nodded with grotesque jerks ... his covering had fallen off, and his body emerged from it pitiful and appalling as from a winding-sheet. I could see the cage

> of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arms waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shakinÿÿÿÿs hands with menaces at the motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him. (HD, 86)

The insatiable greed of this character, who has been depicted as morbid, almost inhuman, and as a figure whose very physical existence has been turned into his object of avarice, namely ivory (his head "was like a ball – an ivory ball", HD, 69), is reflected in the possessive adjective "my" that he reiterates: "my intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my – " (HD, 70), "my station, my career, my ideas" *(*HD, 98). This commanding attitude and the extreme acquisitiveness, no doubt, is parallel to the possessiveness of Coetzee's Cruso, who "ruled over his island" (F, 11) as well as, obviously, to that of Defoe's castaway: "me and my little family ... there was my majesty, the prince and lord of the whole island: I had the lives of all my subjects at my absolute command. I could hang, draw, give liberty, and take it away, and no rebels among all my subjects." (RC, 147). And that Kurtz is "stuck to his work for its own sake" (HD, 46), too, reminds us of Cruso's clinging to the notion of work merely for its own sake and of the consequent futile labour on his sterile island as delineated in the ironic construction of his huge terraces.

Marlow's narrative unveils, one by one, Kurtz's acts of destruction and violence – how Kurtz "To speak plainly, ... raided the country" (HD, 80); how the "round carved balls" on the upper ends of the posts around his hut, which Marlow first takes to be "ornaments", shockingly turn out to be human heads, heads of natives, "black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids" (HD, 75, 82); how he does not hesitate to shoot even his most faithful admirer, the Russian young man, for the sake of a little bit more ivory, which, significantly, belongs, in fact, to that young man. Thus the narrative refutes strikingly the auspicious arguments of the myth of the grand mission of the white man in Africa, expressed by Kurtz's own high-sounding discourse: "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing." (HD, 47). Hawthorn, quoting Suresh Raval,

comments on this idealism, as Kurtz's attempt to reach a "symbiosis of trade and idealism":

> It is Kurtz's conviction that every station should be 'a centre for trade of course, but also for humanizing, improving, instructing.' The symbiosis of trade and idealism does not make Kurtz suspicious of the value of idealism which so easily cohabits with commerce and profit. It is logical that Kurtz should be a spokesman for this symbiosis, for the era of great industrial development and imperialist success was also the era of idealism in philosophy and politics. This idealism was profoundly sanguine, and profoundly blind to the social-economic forces operating in the West and, through the agency of the West, in the rest of the world. And it is Marlow's residual idealism which attracts him to the man who is 'equipped with moral ideas of some sort'.[171]

As is obvious in the discrepancy between the discourse and practices of Kurtz, the "idea" and the language that defines it is, as Hawthorn states, "a language without substantial referent"[172].

The report that Kurtz writes, on the request of the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs for its future guidance, with what Marlow defines as "the unbounded power of eloquence – of words – of burning noble words", also turns out to be another shocking refutation of the ideals and discourses of colonialism. For the report ends with Kurtz's horrifying postscriptum: "Exterminate all the brutes" (HD, 72).

One thing that is emphasized again and again as the most dominant distinctive, or even the sole distinguishing feature of Kurtz's character is his voice, the impressive way he uses language, his eloquence. Before he actually sees Kurtz, Marlow realizes that for all that long time that he has been hearing and thinking about and expecting to meet him, Kurtz has existed only as a voice in his imagination. When, for instance, with the death of the helmsman on board his steamer, Marlow somehow imagines a parallelism between this death and that of Kurtz and expresses his disappointment, he also realizes how Kurtz has been for him only someone he can hear, not a flesh and blood, corporeal human being:

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[171] **Ibid**., p.173.
[172] **Ibid**., p.181.

> There was a sense of extreme disappointment, as though I had found out I had been striving after something altogether without a substance. I could not have been more disgusted if I had travelled all this way for the sole purpose of talking with Mr Kurtz. Talking with ... I made a strange discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing... The man presented himself as a voice." (HD, 67)
> ...
> Of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words – the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness". (HD, 67-68).

And, on their first encounter, Marlow expresses his surprise at the strength of that voice: "A voice! A voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper" (HD, 86).

Moreover, as the narrative progresses, we learn that Kurtz's talents in self-expression are not limited to his eloquence. He is depicted as a painter (as we see his sketch in oils of the blindfolded woman). He is depicted as a poet: "You ought to have heard him recite poetry – his own, too", says the Russian young man (HD, 91). Then we see him as "essentially a great musician" (HD, 91), and then as "a journalist", too (HD, 103). He has, thus, all these precious means of (self)expression at his disposal. Yet, as the Russian young man, upon Marlow's question, remarks with a sense of awe, the process of speech that Kurtz experiences with his interlocutors is a one-sided one: "'Don't you talk with Mr Kurtz?' I said. 'You don't talk with that man – you listen to him' he exclaimed with severe exaltation" (HD, 76).

All these discursive skills, these many different (visual, auditory, communicative) channels of self expression that Kurtz (ab)uses effectively, constitute a sharp and significant contrast to Coetzee's silent, reticent, introverted colonizer, who practices none of these acts of self-expression and control. He, in contrast both to Conrad's colonizer (who is perfectly equipped with the power of discourse) and to his own predecessor, Defoe's Crusoe, (who meticulously tries to keep everything under control through naming, categorizing, recording) is depicted as deprived of all the potential advantages and power that these discursive practices, these very tools of creating, establishing, and maintaining an order, can bring. For, as Lewis Nkosi points out in his interpretation of the power of discourse in Robinson Crusoe's rule,

"Tabulation, classification: they are at the very heart of civilization"[173]. Thus, by picturing clearly what happens in its absence, Coetzee's **Foe** underlines the strong relationship of discourse to power/dominance/colonialism. Cruso is a failed colonizer; a colonizer who cannot be productive, who cannot leave behind him a civilization created ex nihilo.

Yet, despite the great power of discourse that supports his deeds and his image, and despite, consequently, his difference from the silent figure of Cruso, Kurtz, too, just like Cruso, has been too isolated from the civilization that those discourses have originated in and are expected to contribute to. And he, just like Cruso, fails to survive. He dies on board the steamer. Although he "collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together" before he died (HD, 67), which means that he has accomplished successfully the task given to him by the colonialist and imperialist project – though hidden carefully behind auspicious and high-sounding discourses – before he died, we also know that he has gone too far. As Lawrence Graver comments:

> Kurtz resembles a familiar type in the literature of the past two hundred years – the presumptive outlaw who gains a degree of admiration by crossing the boundaries of conventional morality and exploring the possibilities of living on the other side. But this is not the final image that Conrad wishes us to take away from the story. Kurtz is less an inspiration than a warning. For all its audacity, his life is a chilling demonstration of the destructive extremities of pure ego and the price one pays for trying to live outside civilization".[174]

Having no "restraint, faith or fear" (HD, 96), having been involved in too much chaos and wilderness in his life, such as his close and secret relationship with the natives and in all those "midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites" (HD, 71), Kurtz cannot survive the voyage, which would take him back to the enlightened and civilized Western world, because he can no longer adapt himself to the ordered and controlled society that he left behind so many years ago. In Frederick Karl's words, "Kurtz has risen above the masses – of natives, station managers, even of directors back in Brussels. He must

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[173] Cited by Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.171.
[174] Lawrence Graver, excerpt taken from *Conrad's Short Fiction*, **Readings on Heart of Darkness**, (pp.87-95), pp.92-93.

continue to assert himself, a megalomaniac in search of further power"[175]. Therefore this man, who, in the end, "is crawling on all fours" (HD, 93), who has been almost inhuman, may no longer have a place in the respectable world of high ideals.

Yet, although he has perceived and depicted clearly the unacceptable, inhuman and dehumanizing practises of colonialism and despite his sharp criticism and denouncement of the methods of the Company that he is a part of, Marlow is still unwilling to give up his hopes about the possibility of a better method, a better application of the high ideals of the colonial enterprise. And the figure of Kurtz, the narrated version of Kurtz who has come to him in the form of words alone, and who, as Marlow thinks, "had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort" (HD, 44), provides him with a potential source to turn to. As Karl remarks, Marlow "is drawn toward Kurtz, readily accepting the latter's [Kurtz's] ruthlessness as preferable to the bland hypocrisy of the station manager"[176]. Therefore he starts to present an ambivalent attitude fluctuating between rejecting the degenerated methods of colonialism and still failing to avoid idealizing, admiring, and acting as an accomplice with at least some forms of them. His oscillating tendencies manifest themselves most remarkably in his complicated attitude towards the ideas and practices of Kurtz, in a way that can be considered as similar to Susan Barton's ambivalent reactions and behaviour in terms of the colonial encounter that she experiences on the island with Cruso and Friday. Marlow's narrative starts to be overwhelmed by this tension resulting from the confluence of the two contradictory perspectives, which Benita Parry defines as: "Marlow's two voices speaking in counterpoint, one the sardonic and angry dissident denouncing imperialism's means and goals as symptoms of the West's moral decline, the other the devoted member of this world striving to recover a utopian dimension to its apocalyptic ambitions"[177].

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[175] Frederick R. Karl, excerpt taken from "Introduction to the Danse Macabre: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", **Readings on Heart of Darkness**, (pp.65-73), p.68.
[176] **Ibid**., p.66.
[177] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, pp.38-39.

Although Marlow, in the opening lines of his narrative, acknowledges that "The conquest of the earth ... mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves" (HD, 10), we also see his attempts to distinguish between the Western colonialism that he, too, is involved in and the invasions of the Roman conquerors: "They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind" (HD, 10). He claims that there is a superiority in the enterprise of the Western colonizer provided by "the idea": "What redeems us is the idea only" (HD, 10).

He cannot, for instance, stop admiring the clean and neat clothes of the chief accountant despite the fact that the chief accountant is able to look so nice just because he has been forcing a native woman to work for him against her wish. The difficulty he feels in acknowledging the humanity of the dancing natives ("what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity", HD, 51) while he, on the other hand, recognizes the propensity in himself to go and join the dancing crowd of natives exemplifies those moments of (self)questioning and ambivalent motives that he goes through. Seeing the colonized peoples as inhuman, and consequently as in need of the help of the civilized, is, no doubt, a justificatory act for the existence and continuation of the white man in Africa and thus shows Marlow on the side of the European colonizer. Yet there is also his confession that he himself might, if he did not resist, find himself among them. But we also need to see that this confession is not necessarily an act of making a severe judgement on colonialism, because, as Terry Eagleton sarcastically asks, "It is surely something of a back-handed compliment to inform the inhabitants of Borneo or the Congo that we are quite as brutal and bloodthirsty as they are. Is this supposed to make them feel better?"[178]

[178] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.244.

As he is more and more confused by those counter forces over him, Marlow's search for some signs that can prove the possibility of another more effective, more legitimate, more humane version of the colonial project becomes obvious. His excitement and enthusiasm at finding the Russian young man's book on seamanship shows his need to find a source in which there may be a "singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work" (HD, 54). In his search for some meaning, some functionality for the white man's presence in Africa, Marlow resorts to the concept of work: "I don't like work, – no man does – but I like what is in the work, – the chance to find yourself. Your own reality – for yourself, not for others – what no other man can ever know." (HD, 41) Yet, although Marlow asserts that he employs work as a means of self-discovery, Jeffrey Berman's comments on the function of his work as also a means escape are noteworthy and contribute to the portrayal of the doubtful and uncertain position of Marlow:

> Marlow finds himself retreating from the goal of self-discovery that had initially prompted him into the Congo ... To "know" these experiences, which has been part of Marlow's original aim in undertaking his quest, apparently requires full participation within them, whether it be joining the natives in their unearthly dances or sharing in Kurtz's unspeakable rites. But even as Marlow finds himself dangerously drawn toward these experiences and their incarnate dark knowledge, he prudently holds back before it is too late, thus making possible his continued survival.
>
> Marlow's most frequent method of retreat is the escape into work ... Work becomes as much a moral imperative and psychic restorative as it becomes a physical activity; even if the work accomplishes nothing materially, it remains a life-saving illusion without which we could not exist.[179]

And this emphasis on the concept of work brings Marlow, also, on the intertextual level, closer to the colonizer in Coetzee's novel working resolutely and without hoping much regarding the fruits of his toil. Towson's book on navigation is, for Marlow, an evidence of the possibility of ideas that he hopes to exist. As Homi K. Bhabha explains:

> Caught as he is – between the madness of 'prehistoric' Africa and the unconscious desire to repeat the traumatic intervention of modern colonialism with the compass of a seaman's yarn – Towson's manual provides Marlow with a singleness of intention. It is the book of work that

[179] Jeffrey Berman, excerpt taken from *Joseph Conrad: Writing as Rescue*, **Readings on Heart of Darness**, (pp.48-56), p52.

> turns delirium into the discourse of civil address. For the ethic of work, as Conrad was to exemplify in 'Tradition' (1918), proves a sense of right conduct and honour achievable only through the acceptance of those 'customary' norms which are the signs of culturally cohesive civil communities.[180]

As his search for some potential right application of the supposedly grand mission increasingly fails to provide him with any hope, Marlow's narrative tends to obscure the reality he faces, to blur the whole picture, to create a hazy, mysterious, and perilous environment that can be construed as an excuse for the white man's sliding into extremes, for his losing control: "wilderness had found him [Kurtz] out early" (HD, 83). He prefers, for instance, to avoid hearing the details of the secret ceremonies that Kurtz has been attending: "'I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used when approaching Mr Kurtz' I shouted ... such details would be more intolerable than those heads drying on the stakes under Mr Kurtz's windows" (HD, 83). And that he says to the manager: "Nevertheless I think Mr Kurtz is a remarkable man" (HD, 89, 101) is parallel to the case of Susan Barton in **Foe**, who, despite her frustrations with his despotic ways to Friday as well as to herself, cannot sometimes avoid thinking that Cruso "is a truly kingly figure ... a hero" (F, 37-38).

The ambivalent and staggering position of Susan Barton in terms of her attitude to colonialism, which Jolly defines as "Susan Barton's dilemma as that of the postcolonizer", is a major theme in Coetzee's novel. Her in-between position, her semi-marginality, is, in Sue Kossew's words, the "problematical space referred to by Robin Visel as a 'half-colonization'" in which she is "both colonized and colonizer"[181]. Barton's behaviour is determined by this duality and the novel exposes her growing consciousness of it.[182]

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[180] Homi K. Bhabha, **The Location Of Culture**, London and New York, Routledge, 1995 (first pub.1994), pp.106-107.

[181] Sue Kossew, **Pen and Power**, p.167.

[182] This problematic in-between position of Susan Barton position has been often interpreted by many critics as a reflection of her writer's, Coetzee's, own position as a white male Afrikaner writer writing, with a European literary background and in English, in South Africa. He is, for example, in Jolly's words, "a South African writer who puts it into the mouth of a narrator who is 'related' to him, in that she too wants to retell the history of the colonial encounter, and she too is at once both disadvantaged and privileged in various ways by her status as author" (**Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White**

That on the island Susan Barton undertakes the task of "collecting firewood" (F, 20), which was a duty performed by Friday before ("feeding the fire, blowing it into life" F, 14), and which was, much before than Friday, practised by the canonical prototype of slave, Caliban ("We cannot miss him" says Prospero, "he does make our fire, Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices"[183]), is an overt symbolic indication of Barton's underprivileged position.

However, in terms of her relationship with Friday, starting from the early stages of their communication on the island, Susan Barton's attitude reveals her dilemma. She cannot avoid the colonialist prejudices of her European background. As Dick Penner states, "Anglo-Franco Barton evidences some racial biases"[184]. From this aspect, the very first words that she uses in order to introduce Friday are significant: "A dark shadow fell upon me" (F, 5). And immediately after this first encounter, repeating Cruso(e)'s prejudiced viewpoint, she doubts that Friday may be a cannibal: "'Agua,' I said ... He gave no reply, but regarded me as he would a seal or a porpoise thrown up by the waves, that would shortly expire and might then be cut up for food. At his side he had a spear. I have come to the wrong island, I thought, and let my head sink: I have come to an island of cannibals." (F, 6). Though, in a minute, "a long black-tipped thorn", as if a symbol of her lack of harmony with and inability to adapt herself to the environment, in which Friday moves without the least difficulty, pierces her foot, Friday will be the one to carry her on his back up the hill to Cruso. And upon their arrival in Cruso's presence, whom she defines as "this singular saviour of mine" without any mention of Friday, Cruso, too, gazes at her "more as if" she was "a fish ... than an unfortunate fellow creature" (F, 9) just as she said Friday did before. Yet she does not

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South African Writing, p.xv.). Stephen Watson, too (in a way that is especially relevant to the compared protagonists in this chapter), draws attention to the above mentioned position of half-colonization, which Attwell calls "his [Coetzee's] complicated postcoloniality" (**J. M. Coetzee**, pp.4-5), and, making a reference to the half-English, half-French background of Kurtz ("All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz", HD, 71), comments that: "Like Kurtz, one is tempted to say, 'all of Europe' (and North America) has gone into the making of Coetzee – or at least into the making of his books" ("Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee", p.25).

[182] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, 139.

[183] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, Act I, scene II, p.29.

[184] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.124.

liken Cruso to a cannibal for this though she did Friday. Therefore the way that she defines her being carried on Friday's back is very telling:

> The Negro offered me his back, indicating he would carry me ... So part-way skipping on one leg, part-way riding on his back, with my petticoat gathered up and my chin brushing his springy hair, I ascended the hillside, my fear of him abating in this strange backwards embrace. (F, 6)

However much she may sympathize with Friday's plight, especially because of the fact that she too is in the position of the subaltern, their embrace cannot be a full one; it remains as "backward".

It should also be noted that the words through which she introduces Friday to Captain Smith and his men that come to rescue them from the island are in complete agreement with the colonialist discourse: "There is another person on the island" she tells the ship's master, "He is a Negro slave ... I beseech you to send your men ashore again; inasmuch as Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not to abandon him to a solitude worse than death", for Friday "was a poor simpleton" (F, 39). And her quick and spontaneous identification with the crew of the *John* [H]*obart* in their treatment of Friday shows itself in the pronoun "we" she employs ("When he sees that Mr Cruso is well cared for, he will accept that *we* mean no harm"[185], F, 41), which immediately reminds us of the case of Marlow, whose identification of himself with the European colonizers in Africa is reflected overtly in his adoption and constant use of the subject/object pronouns "we"/"us", one of the most significant examples of which, as discussed before, can be seen in his assertion that "What redeems *us* is the idea only" (HD, 10).

It is also noteworthy that Susan Barton, early in the novel, following the path of Cruso(e), spontaneously defines her relationship to Friday as "master" to "servant" (when she likes her case to that of the free ladies of Bahia and that of Friday to that of their servants, F,14). Moreover, by constantly likening Friday to various creatures and animals ("a dog" (21, 55); "a dull fellow" (22); "a shadowy creature" (24), "a fish" (24),

[185] Italics mine.

"a cat" (27), "a dog or any other dumb beast" (32), "cold, incurious like an animal" (70)), Barton is repeating the colonial myth of the inferior, inhuman native figure as defined by Susan VanZanten Gallagher:

> When the indigenous people of South Africa were allowed into history, they were relegated to a subhuman position somewhere between animals and civilized people. The initial encounters with blacks set the tone and vocabulary for such descriptions. John Jordain wrote in 1608, "I think the world doth not yield a more heathenish people and more beastlie" ... Colonial travel narratives repeatedly note the strange dress, language, and eating habits of the indigenous people. European visitors often used animal metaphors to describe the native customs, and many early travellers suspected (without grounds) that the blacks were cannibals.[186]

Yet Susan Barton, too, like Marlow, shows reluctance to confront the real face of colonial violence. When, for instance, Cruso says that Friday has no tongue and would like her to look into his mouth, and asks "Do you see?", her answer is "It is too dark" (F, 22). Even the idea of Friday's secret mutilation horrifies her:

> I caught myself flinching when he came near, or holding my breath so as not to have to smell him. Behind his back I wiped the utensils his hands had touched. I was ashamed to behave thus, but for a time was not mistress of my own actions. Sorely I regretted that Cruso had ever told me the story. (F, 24)

What she has said before concerning the mutineers' cruel desertion of her in the middle of the ocean – "Why they chose to cast me away I do not know. But those whom we have abused we customarily grow to hate, and wish never to lay eyes on again" (F, 10-11) – seems to explain her own deliberate distance from Friday throughout their encounters on the island. Failing to escape the fact that she herself is a part of the oppressive colonial system, she tends to avoid in every possible way facing the victim of this system. Even the thought of being left alone with Friday on the island terrifies her, as, for instance, when Cruso is ill and Susan, afraid that he might die (F, 28), says that she would have conceived a child from Cruso if she had been to spend the rest of her life there all alone with Friday (F, 36).

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[186] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, pp.25-26.

Even when she is concerned about Friday's speechlessness and criticizes Cruso for imposing this silence upon him and for not having taught Friday more English, there are times that her arguments are obviously shaped by pragmatism and by the colonial myth of illuminating and redeeming the uncivilized native: "Yet would it not have lightened your solitude had Friday been master of English? You and he might have experienced, all these years, the pleasures of conversation, you might have brought home to him some of the blessings of civilization and made him a better man" (F, 22).

Then, back in England, she herself tries to teach Friday to speak English. She keeps repeating the names of various objects around them: "if I make the air around him thick with words, memories will be reborn in him which died under Cruso's rule" (F, 59). She says that she is trying "to build a bridge of words over which, when one day it is grown sturdy enough, he may cross to the time before Cruso, the time before he lost his tongue" (F, 60). Yet, despite those auspicious expressions of her intentions in teaching Friday English, she cannot help confessing that "There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will. At such times I understand why Cruso preferred not to disturb his muteness ... why a man will choose to be a slaveowner" (F, 60-61). Those words of Barton obviously reflect the similarity of her perspective to that of Foe, her oppressor, when he says that "We deplore the barbarism of whoever maimed him, but have we ... not reason to be secretly grateful? For as long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish" (148). Thus her teaching the slave figure her language comes closer to that practised by the colonizer – practiced, condescendingly, by Miranda:

> Abhored slave,
> Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
> Being capable of all ill! I pittied thee,
> Took pains to make thee speak, thought thee each hour
> One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
> With words that made them known.[187]

[187] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, Act I, Scene II, p.32.

In fact, one of the most obvious reasons for Barton's immense efforts to teach Friday to express himself in some way is directly related to her awareness of the incompleteness of her own story without his. As Jolly comments, "As the history of Susan Barton's attempts to 'free' Friday unfolds, it becomes clear that Susan Barton is not trying to liberate Friday at all, but to control him by gaining access to him through communication on her terms"[188]. Kim Worthington's comment that Barton's anxieties about Friday's silence are also a result of her fear that Friday's hidden story may be a threat to hers is also noteworthy: "All books, all histories, and all selves, contain 'empty pages' of unwritten possibility ... Here, then, is another reason for Susan's fear of Friday's silence. It is an analogic expression of all those papered-over textual spaces into which another version of history (or herstory) might be written"[189]. And in this case, the violently reactionary words of Caliban:

> You taught me language; and my profit on it
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language![190]

are replaced by Friday's silent resistance not to learn anything that Barton/Miranda teaches. The narrative in Foe does not speak *for* the colonized.

That Friday discovers the author's, Foe's, robes and wigs and from that moment on insistently wears them and that, towards the end of the novel, we find him sitting at the author's desk, using his papers, quill, and ink all reinforce the representation of Friday as having his own story and as eager to tell his own story, yet unwilling to use the colonizer's language for this. As Parry suggests, "Formerly the pupil of an Adamic language taught by Cruso and a pictographic script offered by Barton, Friday, who had previously uttered himself only in the 'semiotic' modes of music and dance, now takes his seat at Foe's desk, and with Foe's quill, ink, paper, and wearing Foe's wig, he

[188] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.11.
[189] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p.263.
[190] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, Act I, Scene II, p.33.

appropriates the authorial role"[191]. On Foe's paper Friday writes "rows and rows of the letter *o* tightly packed together", upon learning which Foe tells Barton: "It is a beginning ... Tomorrow you must teach him *a*" (F, 152). According to David Attwell, "Friday is writing *o*, omega, the sign of the end, whereas Foe desires that he produces the assimilable story of himself, starting at the beginning with *a*, alpha"[192]. And Dick Penner draws attention to the significance of the letter o in the life of Friday's predecessor on Crusoe's island: "Friday was an enthusiastic fellow full of speech punctuated with expletive *O*'s: in exultation ... in dejection ... in excitement ... ; and in reverence to the creator of all things ... old Benamuckee, who needed no prayers or obeisance because, as Friday said, 'All things said O! To him'"[193]. Penner also states that "One explanation could be that Friday's "*O*" is also a zero, leaving Friday balanced on a pinpoint of time somewhere between the exultation of Defoe's Friday's 'O! O! O!' and Samuel Beckett's favourite quotation from Democritus, 'Nothing is more real than nothing'"[194]. This letter *o* also reminds us of the sudden appearance of the daughter figure "with a round face and a little O of a mouth" (F, 75) and thus brings Friday closer to a character victimized by the stories constructed and imposed upon her by the patriarchal/colonizing author. The letter o, in this case, may be construed as representing the "Other" with a capital O (though in the language of the colonizer). Yet, there may also be seen in this a hint of the victim's need for and intention to find and perform another (potential) means of self-expression. For Parry, in her interpretation of this letter, remarks that "Friday, whose mouth is likened by Barton to an empty button-hole, begins by forming Os, of which Coetzee has written 'the O, the circle, the hole are symbols of that which male authoritarian language cannot appropriate' ... It is intimated, all the same, that Friday will go on to learn *a*, a portant of his acquiring linguistic competence"[195].

The position of Susan Barton as a half-colonizer is also manifest in her failed attempt to manumit Friday. Although she rejects the identity of a slave-owner ("I am no

[191] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", p.47.
[192] David Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.114.
[193] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.123.
[194] **Ibid**., pp.123-124.

slave-owner, Mr Foe" F, 150), as Sam Durrant states, "Susan is guilty of a violent appropriation of Friday as cultural capital; in becoming Friday's self-appointed guardian, she merely takes over Cruso's position as Friday's owner"[196]. She declares that she *owns* Friday and thus has a right to emancipate him ("If Friday is not mine to set free, whose is he?"): "I have written a deed granting Friday his freedom and signed it in Cruso's name. This I have sewn into a little bag and hung on a cord around Friday's neck" F, 99). It is significant that this cord of liberation inescapably, and ironically, reminds us of the "scar ... left by a rope or chain" observed only at the end of the novel around Friday's neck (F, 155). As Gallagher points out, "Susan attempts to atone for the sins of the past. However, the errors of history in this case are not so easily repaired ... Susan is trapped by her responsibility as an oppressor"[197].

Marlow, too, who, within the same precarious position of half-colonization, as soon as he becomes a part of the company, starts to feel "slightly uneasy ... as though I had been let into some conspiracy ... something not quite right" (HD, 15). He starts to experience the predicament of the "colonizer who refuses". Yet, although he says "I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie" (HD, 38), by hiding things from or telling lies both to the characters within the fictive world of the novel and to us, the readers, he protects the image of the violent colonizer figure, Kurtz, until the end. For instance, although he says that he goes after Kurtz when he escapes from the steamer and experiences a "moral shock" at what he sees (HD, 92), he does not give any details in his narrative. "I did not betray Mr Kurtz", he declares, "it was ordered I should never betray him – it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice." (HD, 92). One of the most overt acts of complicity performed by Marlow in order to protect Kurtz is presented in his encounter with the report that Kurtz wrote for "the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs". This report is, for Marlow, made of "the unbounded power of eloquence ... of burning noble words" (HD, 72). Yet it becomes very difficult for him to go on admiring the report as a whole when he reads the shocking postscriptum of it

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[195] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", p.47.
[196] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning**, p.33.
[197] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.182-183.

("Exterminate all the brutes" HD, 72). Hence, when, towards the end of the narrative, he delivers the report to a journalist, he does not hesitate to tear that shocking last sentence of it beforehand.

And Conrad's novel ends with another big lie told by Marlow concerning Kurtz's last words: "The last word he pronounced was – your name", he says to Kurtz's Intended (HD, 110), though a little earlier we have already been informed that:

> I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror – of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than breath – "The horror! The horror!" (HD, 99-100)

Although he has said to his narratees before that Kurtz's last words, were the renowned deathbed exclamation: "The horror! The horror!" (HD, 100) and that for him those last words meant "an affirmation, a moral victory!" (HD, 101), he feels the urge to hide these words, to hide the horrible reality even if it has been regretted. Through those deathbed words, in Edward Said's words, both "Kurtz and Marlow acknowledge the darkness, the former as he is dying, the latter as he respects retrospectively"[198]. This act of lying does not, obviously, consist only of attempting to contribute to the continuation of the devoted intended's "saving illusion" (HD, 108) but also of attempting to protect Kurtz as well as himself: "Marlow, that pillar of truth and morality", says Frederick Karl, "does Kurtz's work at the end, lies to protect the lie of Kurtz's existence, ultimately lies to preserve his (Marlow's) own illusion"[199]. Hawthorn, too, pointing out to Marlow's unwillingness to yield his dreams of "the ideal", comments that:

> Kurtz's own insight comes only at the very last ... And soon after this he dies, having cried out, "The horror! The horror! At this stage the reader surely expects Marlow to be completely disillusioned with Kurtz. And yet this does not seem to be the case ... A very brief, summary answer to why Marlow admires Kurtz for his despairing cry might be that Marlow remains

[198] Edward Said, **Culture and Imperialism**, London, Vintage, 1994 (first pub. 1993), p.33.
[199] Frederick R. Karl, "Introduction to the Danse Macabre: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", p.71.

> convinced of the need for ideals even in the face of their manifest powerlessness or of the self-deception which they involve.[200]

Although Marlow insists on construing those deathbed words as purificatory and redemptive and on retaining the image of Kurtz which Parry defines as "a repentant iconoclast attaining heroic stature"[201], it is obvious that, as R. A. Gekoski states, there are many other significant potential meanings that those last words may signify:

> ... his last words, 'The horror! The horror!', impressive and even terrifying as they are, are nevertheless thoroughly ambiguous. They might represent Kurtz's final desire to return to the scene of those abominable satisfactions, be his judgement on the unworthiness of his end, a comment on the human condition, or a vision of eternal damnation. Marlow, however, is certain of his own interpretation; he sees Kurtz's last words as a confession, as a final attempt at self purification..."[202]

Thus, with his final lie, with this final attempt to exculpate Kurtz and, consequently, the white man's existence in Africa, Marlow tends to hide the harsh and painful reality of colonialism experienced by Kurtz (as well as himself) behind a romantic story of love and loyalty. The authority that Marlow assumes in order to write a fictional end to the story of the character of Kurtz is similar to the case of Susan Barton, who, also, claims the right of legacy for Cruso's story, as presented through her challenging tone while addressing Foe: "Think what you may, it was I who shared Cruso's bed, and closed Cruso's eyes, as it is I who has disposal of ... the story of his island" (F, 45). And just as Marlow tells a lie concerning Kurtz's last words, a lie which attempts to soften the horrifying experience of colonialism, Susan Barton, too, with a lie, attributes an emancipatory and humane behaviour to Cruso's character by saying that Cruso set Friday free at his deathbed: "He is a slave whose master set him free on his deathbed" (F, 107).

Thus both Marlow and Susan Barton, both of these narrators in-between, feel the unease caused by their unwilling participation in/complicity with the colonial violence

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[200] Jeremy Hawthorn, **Joseph Conrad**, p.195.
[201] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.31.
[202] R. A. Gekosky, excerp taken from *Conrad: The Moral World of the Novelist*, **Readings on Heart of Darkness**, (pp.80-85), pp.84-85.

and experience the difficulty of encountering this precarious position that they share. Although he unveils and strongly disowns the colonial violence, Marlow's narrative reveals that his criticism is more directed to that specific, destructive, inefficacious kind of colonial practices that he observes around him, not to the mere presence of the white man in Africa, not to the reality of colonialism and imperialism on their own. And when faced with the insurmountable difficulty of the duality in his position and attitude, Marlow starts to present an overt tendency to gradually mystify, ahistoricize the historical, material conditions that surround them and thus to render the socio-politically and historically explicable practices of colonialism puzzling and mystifying. In fact, he has already prepared his audience/the reader for an exoticized version of Africa when he said that "going up the river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (HD, 48) and that, as "wanderers on prehistoric earth", they "penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness" (HD, 50): "The earth seemed unearthly" (HD, 51). Their voyage is presented as a mythic one on a river "resembling an immense snake uncoiled ... fascinating – deadly – like a snake": "The snake had charmed me" (HD 12, 15).

The way his story depicts Africa and its denizens as increasingly dark, inaccessible, and mysterious helps Marlow to externalize all sorts of evil, all sorts of extremities, by associating them with the unknown and perilous lands and their inhabitants, with the non-European, despite the fact that Kurtz is a representative of the whole Europe: "The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England ... His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (HD, 71). Marlow defines the environment as "so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness" (HD, 79-80). As Parry comments, "together, the effluences from the spirit of the place and the sights of the human inhabitants giving corporeal form to that essence provide Marlow with an explanation of Kurtz's fall"[203]. The intimate and doubt-raising relationship of Kurtz, whose arrival in these lands with high ideals in the beginning is repeatedly emphasized, with the natives and their

[203] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.34.

uncivilized and even unspeakable performances supports Marlow's propensity to associate the wickedness, immorality, and corruption with the "other". As Achebe severely criticizes, "Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray – a carrier onto whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate"[204].

That, for example, Marlow first tends to see natives as intrinsically cannibals and then, trying to find an explanation for these cannibals not to eat the white men there, comes up only with the notion of "mystery" are indicative of the paradoxically co-existent colonial/postcolonial/evasive/escapist tendencies in his personality: "Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they did not go for us – they were thirty to five – and have a good tuck in for once, amazes me now when I think of it... And I saw that something restraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had come into play there ... a mystery" (HD, 59-60). This, no doubt, is parallel to the attitude of Susan Barton, who sees Friday's submission to his master as "a mystery": "Why during all those years alone with Cruso, did you submit to his rule, when you might easily have slain him, or blinded him and made him into your slave in turn?" (F, 85-86). Similarly, that Friday shows no desire for her is another mytery for her: "why did you not desire me ... ? Why did I not catch you stealing glances from behind a rock while I bathed?" (F, 86). The racially prejudiced Barton is surprised at failing to find in Friday the brutal behaviour of the archetypal slave figure, Caliban, who, in Prospero's words, ungratefully "didst seek to violate / The honour of my child"[205]. These remain "a mystery" for Barton, or perhaps, explicable only in terms of the nonmaterial, spiritual grand design, the higher order/power that she increasingly tends to search for: "there is after all design in our lives" (F, 103).

Accordingly, Marlow's story, despite the precise spatial and temporal definitions of its settings in the beginning, gradually shifts into an impenetrable, indefinable, timeless, mythical realm; too dark, too foggy, too misty. As Parry remarks, "the

[204] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, (pp.1783-1794), p.1793.
[205] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, Act I, Scene II, p.32.

landscape is mythic, the scenery surreal, the circumstances grotesque, the peripheral characters iconic and the oratorical delivery of the protagonists remote from ordinary speech"[206]. This increasingly mystificatory and dark story, in which Marlow, in Albert J. Guerard's words, "insists more than is necessary on the dreamlike quality of his narrative"[207], is given through what Parry calls "Marlow's mythopoeic narration"[208]:

> ... in joining an allegory about the destiny of colonialism's meretricious aspiration with a mythopoeic narration of the West's penetration into the estranging world of its other, the fiction paradoxically contains within itself the seeds of an unorthodox apologia for values it has discredited and disowned. [209]

Parry defines this "mythological cosmos" as a colonizer's construct:

> All this is before Marlow and is the 'objective' substance of his graphically told story, but what he *sees*, and this remains uncontroverted by the text, belongs not to history but to fantasy, to the sensational world of promiscuity, idolatry, satanic rites and human sacrifices unveiled in nineteenth-century travellers' tales as the essence of an Africa without law or social restraint, a representation that was embroidered into colonial romances and charted by an ethnography still innocent of a discipline's necessary rules of evidence.[210]

This propensity in Marlow's story to blur the material historical explanations lying behind imperialism is criticized by Terry Eagleton, too:

> The anti-imperialist aspects of *Heart of Darkness* are evident enough in, say, Marlow's withering remarks about those who have slightly flatter noses than ourselves. But there is also something disturbing about the tale's presentation of imperialism. It is not just the reach-me-down racism of its portraits of 'natives', or its apparent endorsement of British as opposed to Belgian colonization. It is also that the whole imperialist enterprise is represented as essentially *absurd*. It is a surreally pointless exercise, symbolized by a ship firing purposelessly into a river bank, a pail with a hole in it, a hollow in the ground excavated for no apparent purpose, a man weirdly garbed in motley, and a chief accountant conducting himself in the middle of the jungle as he might in an English drawing-room.
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> All this makes for powerful dramatic effect; but it also suggests that imperialism is simply a kind of irrational fantasy, a waking nightmare or absurdist theatre, which is far from being the case. On the contrary, nothing could be more grimly rational, at least in one rather

[206] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.24.
[207] Albert J. Guerard, excerp taken from *Conrad The Novelist*, **Readings on Heart of Darkness**, (pp.35-47), p41.
[208] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.31.
[209] **Ibid**., p.20.
[210] Benita Parry, **Conrad and Imperialism**, p.29.

> anaemic sense of the word ... imperialism is seen in *Heart of Darness* not as a purposeful, historically intelligible system but as a kind of nightmarish aberration.[211]

Eagleton's criticism of the tendency to show the materially explicable as simply absurd reminds of a specific situation in which Kurtz acts like a character of a work of absurd theatre: The Russian young man complains that he cannot convince Kurtz to leave Africa and that although he would accept it, he would not perform it:

> "When I had a chance I begged him to try and leave while there was time; I offered to go back with him. *And he would say yes, and then he would remain*"[212] (HD, 81).

Similarly, at the end of Samuel Beckett's **Waiting for Godot**, although Estragon and Vladimir keep expressing their wish/intention to go, the play ends as follows[213]:

> Vladimir : Well? Shall we go?
> Estragon : Yes, let's go.
>
> *They do not move*.

To render the obvious material and historical conditions and realities absurd and irrational entails an inclination to avoid performing a direct encounter with, and, consequently, attempting to find potential solutions to the situation, to the outcome of imperialism. As Eagleton criticizes:

> What is awry, is not political history but the human heart. This makes the whole situation more dramatic and deep rooted, but only at the cost of rendering it unalterable. If it is true, there seems little that can be done about the imperialist system ... if slaving Africans is simply the effect of original sin, it may be as natural and inevitable as it is regrettable.[214]

Despite her constantly questioning and reactionary attitude, Susan Barton, too, in **Foe**, when she is utterly disappointed and frustrated with the harsh scene of oppression, discrimination, exploitation, and violence surrounding her, and when she hesitates to

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[211] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.242.
[212] Italics mine.
[213] Samuel Beckett, **Waiting for Godot**, (translated by the author), New York, Grove Press, 1954, p.60.

face her own doubtful involvement in the systems producing and perpetuating them, presents a similar kind of shift, in her case in the form of a search for a supreme design behind all that corporeal experiences that they go through and witness. This struggle that Susan Barton experiences, the difficulties that she encounters in explaining the guilt/crime of violence, and her resultant propensity to shift into the spiritual will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, where her case will be compared with that of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Yet before going into that section, there is one point which is worth mentioning: the resemblance between the Mariner and Marlow. Because Marlow, too, at the end of the novel, is like another figure of Ancient Mariner, who, pale, dissatisfied and nervous about whether his story is ever able to convey the real experience and message to his audience or not, and meditative, cannot reach any peace of mind and will obviously continue to (attempt to) tell his stories. As Jeffrey Berman suggests:

> Marlow lives, of course, to finish the narration of his story; but the story itself reenacts a horror that has no finish for him. Like [Romantic poet Samuel Taylor] Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, Marlow is fated to tell his story again and again, compelled in the process to suffer and experience a loss of life.[215]

[214] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.243.
[215] Jeffrey Berman, excerpt taken from *Joseph Conrad: Writing as Rescue*, p.56.

Once "There was a ship":
Confessional Stories of Two Desperately Insistent Storytellers

Crime as an ontological concept as analysed in
J. M. Coetzee's **Foe** and
Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

> Mr Foe, do you truly know who I am? I came to you in the rain one day when you were in a hurry to be off, and detained you with a story of an island which you could not have wished to hear. (F, 138)

The figure of a storyteller who stops people on their way to perform their daily (social) activities and desperately tries to tell them her/his story as if under compulsion, as if it is a matter of life and death, even if they are unwilling to listen, reminds us of an earlier well-known storyteller in literary history who feels an inescapable urge to detain potential listeners and to compel their attention, and starts, without any preamble, to relate his story with the words "There was a ship", and whose listeners "cannot choose but hear": the Ancient Mariner in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (10, 18)[216].

There are many noticeable similarities between the predicaments of these two committed storytellers, Susan Barton and the Ancient Mariner, the fact that, as a starting point, both the Mariner and Barton commence their stories by recounting their life-changing experiences that begin or develop or are discovered at sea being only one of them. What A. M. Buchan, regarding the plight of the Ancient Mariner, remarks is valid for the desperate situation of Susan Barton as well: "The one thing with which the poem

[216] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", **Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Selected Poetry**, ed. H. J. Jackson, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp.49-67.
The numbers in paranthesis refer to the lines of the poem.

begins and ends", says Buchan, is "the anguished desire to tell his tale"[217]. And the content of their stories reflect that both of these anxious storytellers struggle with the burden of some specific experience that they have gone through and have been feeling guilty of. It shows that they both have had to undergo a harsh encounter with their practices and have had to experience an intense process of self-scrutiny, of a desperate search for the answers for some crucial existential questions. It shows that they both, despite the various explanations that they attain and the various degrees of insight that they gain, end up with a plight which is far from providing them with the ultimate peace of mind they need to obtain and are destined, like the Wandering Jew, to walk around and try unyieldingly to tell their stories.

In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", although the Mariner and his fellow shipmates set off on their journey southward merrily on a bright day, with their arrival in the Line and the outbreak of a violent storm, by which their ship drifts towards the South Pole, the whole scenery changes into a nightmarish sequence of events delineated through the heightened symbolism of the poem which employs forceful elements of the supernatural. Away from the (supposedly) well-ordered, established, rational, and secure world of the "kirk" and the "lighthouse", isolated from the familiar world of society, and immersed within the fog and mist, snow and ice, within the successively tempestuous and deadly static conditions of nature, "... on a wide wide sea: / So lonely 'twas, that God himself / Scarce seemed there to be" (600-603), the Ancient Mariner has to confront the potential destructive side within himself:

> – with my cross-bow,
> I shot the Albatross (81-82).

It is significant that this act of killing the Albatross follows the abatement of the storm and the disappearance of the disastrous stasis, the splitting of the massive ice around the ship and the return of the ship to its right course with the help of some good

[217] A. M. Buchan, "The Sad Wisdom of the Mariner", **Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**, New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc., 1969, (pp.92-110), p.95.

south wind, for which the Mariner and his shipmates at first likened the bird to "a Christian soul" (65), "hailed [it] in God's name" (66), and took it to be a good omen. It is for this reason that the Mariner's killing of the bird is depicted as a mere reflection of the human capacity for destruction, of the evil, irrational, and dark sides, and the moral corruption of the human being. As A. M. Buchan, who underlines the depiction of the Mariner as a "passive victim of forces more active than he, and the observer of events that determine his fate without his participation"[218], states:

> ... miraculous evil is beyond the power of man to credit except by the agency of devils, and the death of the Albatross is a miracle of evil. If such an act can occur, sanity is threatened and the moral law disappears. For its existence in the hands of man opens up the ghastly prospect that at any moment he may suddenly realize that, by this one thing he has done, though he did not intend or wish it to be done, irretrievable evil has come to pass. Here, sharp and bright and horrifying and complete, is such an act, – "I shot the Albatross." In the stark phrase lurks, even for the ordinary imagination, the stereotyped image of the murderer staring in bewilderment at the weapon in his hand, – the rock, the knife, the gun, the crossbow, – not yet believing he has used it and to such deadly purpose.[219]

Because of the inexplicability of the Mariner's crime, which is further accentuated by the abrupt way in which he suddenly utters it to the Wedding Guest, this act of violence functions for the Mariner as a starting point of a long and painful process of self-questioning and self-accusation, a soul journey, an examination of his conscience, of suffering with the penance inflicted upon him and his desperate struggle to achieve genuine repentance and the consequently expected redemption. That is why he, just as he is doing it with the Wedding Guest now, importunately keeps people with his confessional story. Just as the Ancient Mariner is introducing his story and uttering the shocking news of his unexpected act of destruction to the Wedding Guest, nearby, in the church, a wedding ceremony is taking place with its socio-cultural implications of unification, harmony, order, fertility, and continuity. Being exposed to the sharp contrast between the Mariner's story of a gratuitous act of destruction imposed upon him by this insistent storyteller and the ostensibly more comfortable and optimistic conventional

[218] **Ibid**., p.93.
[219] **Ibid**., p.96.

world of the established society represented by the wedding ceremony, the Wedding Guest (just like the reader of the poem) is forced to question the smooth surface reality and, consequently, share the Mariner's uneasiness, doubts, and desperation pertaining both to his own position in life/the universe and to the human predicament in general.

In J. M. Coetzee's **Foe**, the first scene in which Susan Barton, who, having spent an exhausting and painful process of struggle for survival at sea and having just survived the burning sun and the severe currents, delivers her first words with her "thick dry tongue", is similar to the scene depicting the circumstances of the mariners "With throats unslaked, with black lips baked (157)" in Coleridge's poem. She has been all alone at sea with the dead ship's master lying at her feet with "a handspike jutting from his eye-socket" (F, 9), in a way that is similar to the Ancient Mariner, who had to endure for days the "the stony eyes" of his dead shipmates "all fixed on" him (436). She first asks for water, for, as in the case of the Ancient Mariner, though there is "Water, water, every where, / Nor any drop to drink" (121-122). And after her first vital request (for water), from the moment that she arrives on the island, comes another frequently repeated request from her, which, especially towards the later parts of the novel, gradually becomes the expression of another need almost equally vital: her need to recount her story. "Let me tell you my story", she says to Cruso (F, 10), as she will later on repeat it to Captain Smith, and, finally, to Foe, and without waiting for acquiescence, she starts to recount it.

Susan Barton, despite her continuous efforts to rescue herself from the burden of the identity and destiny of her 18th century predecessor ceaselessly imposed upon her by Foe the author, cannot avoid, gradually, falling into extreme doubts concerning what she has claimed to be her own identity, concerning the fictionality/authenticity of the characters (the daughter figure and Amy) that come from the realm of **Roxana** and keep haunting her, concerning the boundaries between her life and the fictional destiny of her predecessor. For this reason, the pressure of the feeling of guilt that causes the ultimate tragic disintegration of her predecessor, the guilt of abandoning, and more significantly, of causing the death, of her child(ren) can be construed as passing onto her shoulders

from those of Roxana. Therefore this (rejected) legacy is a source imposing a sense of uneasiness, anxiety, compunction on Barton. Yet the colonial destructiveness and violence that she cannot avoid participating in, in other words, her position as a "dissenting colonizer"[220], as the "colonizer who refuses"/"the reluctant colonizer" is, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the most dominant source of her intense self-questionings and her bad conscience. Moreover, by somehow contributing to the continuation of colonialism/imperialism, she becomes instrumental in the consolidation of the oppressive patriarchal system that is a constant threat to her own identity through its extremely discriminatory gender politics. Accordingly, her resultant sense of guilt becomes even more complicated.

Barton, early in their relationship, "had given to Friday's life as little thought as I would have a dog's" (F, 32), but she gradually starts to put her interest in and concern for the identity, the past, the tongue, and the story of Friday at the focal point of the stories that she is devotedly trying and hoping to tell throughout the novel. She only gradually realizes that Friday has a life and a story of his own, which she is not familiar with and has no access to, that the reason why the reality and the story of this marginalized character cannot be told or heard is the overconfidently centralized ideologies of the dominant race, class, and gender, and that she, too, in her relationship with him, fails to avoid approaching Friday in accordance with the victimizing perspective of those dominant ideologies despite her own disadvantageous position in terms of her gender and class. As Dana Dragunoiu points out:

> The irony at the heart of Coetzee's portrayal of Barton is that she, a woman, is the one who objectifies Friday and uses colonialist rhetoric ... Only after she returns to England, where women are distinctly treated as Other and where she is threatened by bandits who want to rape her, refused service by a tavern keeper, and excluded from her own story by an author, does she become aware of the violence of objectification.[221].

And there comes a point in the novel in which Barton admits that she presents an ambivalent attitude in her relationship with Friday by, on the one hand, sympathizing

[220] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee", p.23.

with his plight and trying to be tender and understanding to him, yet, on the other hand, by, quite often, yielding to her overtly biased and exploitative motives even to the extent that she acknowledges that she understands "why a man will choose to be a slaveowner." (F, 61). Thus comes her confrontation with the concepts of guilt and crime. She acknowledges her encounter with the crime committed against Friday, faces the violent and destructive reality of colonialism and becomes aware of her own share and complicity in it, which is a result of her precarious, in-between position. Therefore, in her stories addressed to Cruso, to Captain Smith, to Foe, to Friday, and in the passages where she seems to be rather thinking aloud and going through some kind of a self-examination than entering into a dialogue with others, this confessional tone becomes clearer.

James C. McKusick, approaching Coleridge's poem from the ecological viewpoint, draws attention to the symbolically pictured destruction of nature in the killing of the Albatross. And this, no doubt, reminds us of the extreme destructiveness inflicted by the colonizer, from whom Barton cannot properly detach herself, onto the colonized lands, the environment, and its inhabitants as discussed in detail in chapter three in terms of the practices of Kurtz and the other colonizers in all the stations of the Company. It reminds us of the abused products of civilization, of the misapplication of the machinery/industry/technology, for the destruction of nature:

> The Mariner kills the Albatross with his 'cross bow' ... , a weapon that embodies the relentlessly destructive tendency of European technology at the same time that it invokes, with some irony, the traditional Christian imagery of sacrifice and atonement. If the Albatross is regarded as an innocent emissary from the unspoiled natural realm of the Antarctic, then the Mariner's deed represents an unmotivated act of aggression against all the creatures of that realm.[222]

Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of the wrongdoing, the recognition of crime, and the discomfort and suffering (punishment) that this experience of guilt causes cannot, in either case, bring about a smooth way leading to true repentance ending up in

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[221] Dana Dragunoiu, "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", p.10.
[222] James C. McKusick, James C., "Ecology", **Romanticism**, ed. Nicholas Row, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, (pp.199-218), p.212.

pure redemption. Both the Mariner and Barton have to experience some sort of a revelation in which they gain insight into the real nature and value of the other (human) beings around them, and into the real nature of the victimizing practices inflicted upon these others, which they perform or to the performance of which they somehow, willingly or not, contribute.

In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", the victim of the Mariner's destructive act, the Albatross, is heavily loaded with religious implications: "As it had been a Christian soul / We hailed it in God's name" (65-66). And so are the Mariner's recognition of his guilt ("I had done a hellish thing", 91), and the penance inflicted upon him by his fellow shipmates: "Instead of the cross, the Albatross / About my neck was hung" (141-142). In this context, Bernard Martin remarks that "the Ancient Mariner's crime was nothing less than the wilful destruction of a messenger from God. It was a crucifying of Christ; or at least something akin to Blasphemy"[223]. However, the Mariner cannot pray. Despite his immense agony, he cannot achieve genuine repentance. He cannot take shelter in the comfort and peace that a pure yielding to the benevolence of the Creator is expected to bring. It comes only after he, unexpectedly and spontaneously, realizes the beauty and value of the creatures in water, which he, before, regretted even the existence of by saying: "The many men, so beautiful! / And they all dead did lie; / And a thousand slimy things / Lived on; and so did I". (236-239). Now he sees those slimy creatures, which, in McKusack's words, "unknown to any textbook of natural history, represent with apocalyptic intensity the death of nature as a result of destructive human acts."[224], as "happy living things" that "no tongue / Their beauty might declare" (282-283).Thus:

> A spring of love gushed from my heart,
> And I blessed them unaware:
> Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
> And I blessed them unaware. (284-287)

[223] Bernard Martin, **The Ancient Mariner and the Authentic Narrative**, Melbourne, London, Toronto, William Heinemann Ltd., 1949, p.19.

It is significant that his being able to pray is given as a result of the fact that his "kind saint took pity on" him, not as a result of a personal performance of will. And thus his prayer is, in fact, in Bernard Martin's words, "an *involuntary* prayer"[225]. Yet with this moment of spontaneously and genuinely felt recognition of the value of all living beings and of the human responsibility to the unity of the whole world, of the whole universe, the Mariner seems to be delivered from his sin:

> The selfsame moment I could pray;
> And from my neck so free
> The Albatross fell off, and sank
> Like lead into the sea. (272-291)

With this experience of revelation, the Mariner gains insight into and presents an acknowledgement of the significance of every single being comprising the whole universe. According to McKusick, "'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' may be read as a fictional narrative of ecological transgression" and "The Albatross crosses from the wild ice to the world of men, and its act of 'crossing' the boundary between nature and civilization indicates a possible resolution of the Mariner's epistemic solitude."[226] However, the Albatross's entering the realm of the civilization, this attempted act of union is negated with the destruction that the Mariner practises by shooting the Albatross. And only after his acknowledgement of the value of the slimy things, only after "blessing the water-snakes":

> the Mariner is released from his state of alienation from nature, and the Albatross sinks 'like lead into the 'sea' ..., crossing back from civilization into the untamed ocean. The Mariner has learned what the Albatross came to teach him: that he must cross the boundaries that divide him from the natural world, through unmotivated acts of compassion between 'man and bird and beast'"[227]

In this context, it is also noteworthy that the moment that triggers Susan Barton's first signs of interest in and concern for Friday is one in which she watches Friday

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[224] James C. McKusick, "Ecology", p.212.
[225] Bernard Martin, **The Ancient Mariner and the Authentic Narrative**, p.23.
[226] James C. McKusick, "Ecology", pp.211-212.

scattering "white petals and buds" over the sea, that is, performing an act which is related to nature and which Barton cannot understand:

> After paddling out some hundred yards from the shelf into the thickest of the seaweed, he reached into a bag that hung about his neck and brought out handfuls of white flakes which he began to scatter over the water. At first I thought this was bait to lure the fish to him; but no, when he had strewn all his flakes he turned his log-boat about and steered it back to the ledge, where he landed it with great difficulty through the swell. (F, 31)

Until that moment, Barton has seen Friday as almost inhuman, as a creature trying to fulfil the tasks that he has been ordered to. In other words, she has seen him as a servile being trying to copy the deeds which he has been given instructions for, trying to perform the activities which Barton is already familiar with, and which, for her, indicate the normal, the standard. So now: "This casting of petals", she says, "was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul – call it what you will – stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior" (F, 32). Thus she begins to get an insight to the fact that Friday may have a world of his own that has its own ways of existence, its own habits, its own "normals/standards".

In order to exemplify the vitality of the concept of empathy with the "Other" in Coleridge's poem, Bernard Martin adduces the following lines from a letter written by Coleridge himself:

> It is significant that soon *after* composing *The Ancient Mariner* he wrote to a friend:
> It is easy to clothe imaginary beings with our own thoughts and feelings; but to send ourselves out of ourselves, to *think* ourselves into the thoughts and feelings of beings in circumstances wholly and strangely different from our own, *hic labor hoc opus*; and who has achieved it? Perhaps only Shakespeare.[228]

Yet, in terms of Susan Barton's oscillating attitude to the victim of colonial violence, another episode similar to the Mariner's revelation should take place before she can wholly perceive the actual plight of the "other", the suffering that he has been undergoing, and before she is wholly aware of the quality and intensity of the guilt that

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[227] **Ibid**., p.213.
[228] Bernard Martin, **The Ancient Mariner and the Authentic Narrative**, p.8.

she is carrying the burden of. She needs to give up the rigid reactions and anger she shows when her condescending attempts to "understand" and "communicate with" the other fail because of this other's refusal of her (ways) in contrast to her expectations of a readily and gratefully yielding victim. The harshness of her attitude when, for instance, she fails to enter Friday's world, or rather, when Friday ignores/refuses her in her attempt to accompany him in his flute playing is noteworthy:

> No I knew that all the time I had stood there playing to Friday's dancing, thinking he and I made a consort, he had been insensible of me. And indeed, when I stepped forward in some pique and grasped at him to halt the infernal spinning, he seemed to feel my touch no more than if it had been a fly's ... Tears came to my eyes ... I had to hold back an urge to strike him and tear the wig and robes away and thus teach him he was not alone on this earth. (F, 98)

So, although from early in the novel onwards she experiences momentary insights into the horrible injustice that Friday has suffered, into the discriminatory racist practices of the established socio-political and cultural codes and conventions, into the realities of colonialism, and into her own precarious and desperate position as an (unwilling) accomplice, a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of the "otherness" of Friday will come in a moment of trance, in a moment of sudden disclosure analogous to that of the Ancient Mariner: She is on her way to taking Friday to Bristol, where she will try to find a merchantman to take him back to Africa. Their attempts to find an inn to spend the night at have failed and, wet to the bone, they take shelter in a barn:

> In some despair, and not knowing what else to do, I stretched out my arms and, with my head thrown back, began to turn in Friday's dance. It is a way of drying my clothes, I told myself ... I danced till the very straw seemed to warm under my feet. I have discovered why Friday dances in England, I thought, smiling to myself; which, if we had remained at Mr Foe's, I should never have learned. And I should never have made this discovery had I not been soaked to the skin and then set down in the dark in an empty barn. From which we may infer that there is after all design in our lives, and if we wait long enough we are bound to see that design unfolding ...
>
> Thinking these thoughts, spinning round, my eyes closed, a smile on my lips, I fell, I believe, into a kind of trance; for when next I knew, I was standing still, breathing heavily, with somewhere at my mind's edge an intimation that I had been far away, that I had seen wondrous sights. Where am I? I asked myself, and crouched down and stroked the floor; and when it came back to me that I was in Berkshire, a great pang wrenched my heart; for what I had seen in my trance, whatever it had been – I could summon back nothing distinct, yet felt a glow of after-

> memory, if you can understand that – had been a message (but from whom?) to tell me there were other lives open to me than this one in which I trudged with Friday across the English countryside, a life of which I was already heartily sick. And in that same instant I understood why Friday had danced all day in your house: it was to remove himself, or his spirit, from Newington, and England, and from me too ... (F, 103-104)

Through that mystical act of spinning in Friday's dervish-like style, through that moment of transcendence, her gradually increasing awareness of the difference, the wholeness, the "otherness" of Friday is reinforced. And so is her acknowledgement of this other's right to exist as the "other" and to have a means to tell his own story himself in some way (yet) unknown to her (the story of Friday is "a puzzle or hole" in her story, F, 121; "The only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!", F, 67). Through her gradually deepening understanding of the workings of the oppressive systems of subjection, she starts to give her full attention to the victimizing and dehumanizing effects of those mechanisms of oppression and confronts more fully the damage done.

While trying to retrospectively make sense of and to clarify in her own mind her experiences on the island and those following them in England with the help of Foe the author, Barton, with difficulty, makes an effort to define what she saw when she was exposed to Friday's naked body as he danced and to understand whether Cruso, when he said that Friday's tongue had been cut out, meant something more, and whether that tonguelessness was an indication of a castration, Barton says: "What had been hidden from me was revealed. I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them. I saw and believed I had seen, though afterwards I remembered Thomas, who also saw, but could not be brought to believe till he had put his hand in the wound. (F, 119-120). With this analogy that Susan Barton makes between herself and doubting Thomas, the apostle who did not believe in Christ's resurrection until he saw "in his hands the print of the nails and put [his] finger into the print of the nails"[229], and, accordingly, between Friday and Jesus Christ, she attaches a strong religious tone to herself and to Friday and to their experiences, which is parallel to the religious implications in the

[229] **The Holy Bible**, John 20:24-29, p.1126.

description of the Mariner's crime in Coleridge's poem, where the victim of the Mariner's cruelty, the Albatross, was likened to a Christian soul. This way, the burden of colonial guilt is given an intense spiritual dimension. So all those realizations, dissatisfactions, and anxieties comprise the confessional elements in Barton's story. She starts to devote, especially in the latter parts of the novel, all her effort not only to tell her story like the Ancient Mariner, who keeps on detaining people with his confessional story, does, but also to draw attention to the weaknesses and to what is lacking in her story, namely the voice of Friday, through which alone his true story can be heard. She, thus, confesses the insufficiency of her confessional story.

Both the Ancient Mariner and Susan Barton go through those processes of committing or participating in a crime/sin, acknowledging it, carrying the overwhelming burden of guilt, questioning (themselves), gaining an insight into nature, into the nature of (human) beings that they harmed, and into the wider significance of their acts. Then they make their experiences the pivotal constitutive element of the stories that they start to produce and try to spread determinedly in order to confess the wrongdoing, to impart the messages of their stories to their audiences, and to lighten the burden of that guilt that they carry and to achieve redemption. However, whether their insistent acts of recounting the severe trials that they have passed through will bring absolution with them or will remain as "confessions without redemption or reconciliation" uttered only for the sake of the "heuristic value in the experience and in the retelling of it"[230], as will be discussed below, is another question.

Following the nightmarish sufferings that he is subjected to, and after he manages to pray and his prayer is followed by a disposal of the visible sign of his guilt, that is, the dead body of the Albatross hung round his neck, the Ancient Mariner, as soon as he reaches the shores of his own country, expresses his burning desire to repent, to confess his sin to the Hermit, and to obtain absolution:

> It is the Hermit good!

[230] Comment made on the confessional tone of Susan Barton's narrative by Graham Huggan in my interview with him on 6 June 2006 in York.

...
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood (509-513)
...
'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!' (574)

However, as A. M. Buchan, who underlines the subjection of human will to greater, unknown forces in the poem, comments,

> The one thing with which the poem begins and ends, the anguished desire to tell his tale, might be taken as a rite of confession for the expiation of his sin. Unfortunately for such a view, no hint is given that the hermit is willing to shrive his fearsome penitent, and the confession, if made at all, falls short of achieving its purpose. For the Mariner, though he is convinced of his sin, is far from clear about what it may be."[231].

Moreover, the world surrounding the Mariner does not seem to be compatible with the optimistic definition of the world which is watched over by a benevolent creator, in which the wrongdoing is punished, and after the infliction of the punishment and the moment of actual repentance, the expected redemption can be obtained.

This incompatibility is exposed effectively when, in part III of the poem, a spectre-bark appears with its fatal crew, who are called Death and Life-in-Death, and who are involved in a kind of game that actually functions as much more than a game for the lives of the mariners:

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
`The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice. (195-198)

With this act of casting dice in order to determine the fates of the mariners, the concept of a world in which the lives of human beings are determined by the mere element of chance instead of causality or a certain predictable, explicable design is brought conspicuously to the foreground. That the Ancient Mariner's shipmates, whose crime is that of being accomplices in the Mariner's gratuitous crime of destruction by praising, at

one point, his shooting of the Albatross, have been won by Death in this game, and, accordingly, one by one drop down and die, brings to the mind the question of whether the guilt committed and penance given in return are proportionate. For those mariners are never given a second chance. And since it is Life-in-Death who won the Ancient Mariner, he, although he survives, is far from finding any peace on earth. He is destined to go round from land to land until the end of his life like the Wandering Jew or Cain and desperately try to tell people his story both to fulfil his urgent need to confess his guilt and to teach the others by his example. However, in this world of chance, contingency, and chaos, devoid of divine benevolence, mercy, and justice, repentance and confession do not bring redemption. As one of the spirits that the Mariner overhears in his trance says:

> ... `The man hath penance done,
> And penance more will do.' (408-409)

In **Foe**, too, we frequently observe a tentative attempt to inquire into the principles on which the workings of life and the universe are based, and, at times, to search hesitantly for some kind of an order, a grand design in life, as opposed to the concept of a world determined by chance, contingency, and uncertainty. Susan Barton, at the very beginning of her experiences, while relating her being cast ashore on Cruso's and Friday's island, shows an ambivalent attitude from this aspect: "As *chance* would have it – or perhaps the mutiny had been *so ordered* – I was set adrift in sight of this island" (F, 11)[232], says she. A little after her arrival on the island, Barton learns that Friday has no tongue and keeps asking Cruso questions about the reason of this mutilation. Dissatisfied with the answers that he gives, she starts to question the concept of a benevolent God: "It is a terrible story ... Where is the justice in it? First a slave and now a castaway too. Robbed of his childhood and consigned to a life of silence. Was providence sleeping?" (F, 23). Surely, Cruso's pragmatic and utilitarian answer ("If

[231] A. M. Buchan, "The Sad Wisdom of the Mariner", p.95.
[232] Italics mine.

Providence were to watch over all of us ... who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane?") is far from being satisfactory and helpful for her uneasiness and scruples. Dragunoiu, who defines the character of Cruso as "the existential hero living without appeal" who "harbors no illusion about the overarching structures constituting the faith of his predecessor"[233], comments that his above given answer "echoes the existentialist rejection of metaphysics as a standard for explaining the world"[234]. Yet, Barton, reflecting more Cruso's intertextual forebear, shows a propensity to seek some higher principles that would interfere in the course of lives in order to provide them with what they deserve.

In fact, Barton's search for some higher power, some benevolent Providence, is reminiscent of what Terry Eagleton says concerning the socio-historical context surrounding her predecessor, Roxana, as well as Crusoe:

> ... a form of society is emerging in England which is moving beyond the religious and metaphysical practice, but which still needs to appeal to such principles in theory. Unless it did, it would be hard put to justify its existence. In practice, the world is just one random material situation after another, without overall point or pattern. In theory, it all adds up to some beneficent Providence. In theory, things have God-given values; in practice, their value lies in what you can get for them on the market. In theory, moral values are absolute; in practice, nothing in this mobile, ceaselessly mutating society is absolute at all.[235]

Later on, when Barton is relating her sexual intercourse with Cruso, we see how her confidence in the concepts of plan, intention, and control both in terms of the individual's free will to choose and determine her/his life and from the aspect of the wider workings of the universe is decreasing and is being replaced by a tendency to explain her relationship to Cruso through the concept of chance and to expand this explanation to make wider generalizations on the occurrences in (her) life in general:

> I came to myself in daylight, in an unfamiliar silence, the storm having at last blown itself out. A hand was exploring my body ... I pushed his hand away and made to rise, but he held me. No doubt I might have freed myself, for I was stronger than he. But I thought, He has not known a

[233] Dana Dragunoiu, "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", p.4.
[234] **Ibid**., p.6.
[235] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, pp.27-28.

> woman for fifteen years, why should he not have his desire? So I resisted no more but let him do as he wished... Was I to regret what had passed between Cruso and me? Would it have been better had we continued to live as brother and sister, or host and guest, or master and servant, or whatever it was we had been? Chance had cast me on his island, chance had thrown me in his arms. In a world of chance, is there a better and a worse? We yiÿÿÿÿto a stranger's embrace or give ourselves to the waves; for the blink of an eyelid our vigilance relaxes; we are asleep; and when we awake, we have lost the direction of our lives. (F, 30)

Yet, under the tension of her existential dilemma, Susan Barton cannot give up hoping for a hidden meaning and a transcendent source of arrangement or control on which the human being can rely, for "certain laws unknown to us":

> If I was but a third mouth to feed, doing no useful labour on the terraces, what held Cruso back from binding me hand and foot and tossing me from the cliffs into the sea? What had held Friday back all these years from beating in his master's head with a stone while he slept, so bringing slavehood to an end an inaugurating a reign of idleness? And what held Cruso back from tying Friday to a post every night, like a dog, to sleep the more secure ... ? It seemed to me that all things were possible on the island, all tyrannies and cruelties, though in small; and if, in despite of what was possible, we lived at peace one with another, *surely this was proof that certain laws unknown to us held sway*, or else that we had been following the promptings of our hearts all this time, and our hearts had not betrayed us. (36-37)[236]

Thus, as she goes through a process in which she experiences very serious physical, psychological, and moral difficulties, she keeps subjecting the phenomena that she observes around to scrutiny and questioning and tries to find out a meaning in the occurrences in their lives and tends to reach a model of causality, a well organized pattern, some kind of a unity within "God's great scheme of things" (F, 126). She, at some points, does try to convince herself that this is really possible, as she does in the previously discussed passage, where, having spun in Friday's style, she thinks that she managed to identify herself with him and had an insight into the way he feels, into his aims and wishes and that a specific sequence of events that she went through seemed to have been specially planned for her to be able to achieve that identification and the following understanding: "there is after all design in our lives, and if we wait long enough we are bound to see that design unfolding" (F, 103).

[236] Italics mine.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that she often fails to avoid an ambivalent attitude and Kafkaesque existential doubts that gradually intensify:

> "Cast your thoughts back, Cruso," I would have said, as I lay beside him in the dark – "Can you recall no moment at which the purpose of our life here has been all at once illuminated? ... have you never been struck of a sudden by the living, breathing quality of this island, as if it were some great beast from before the Flood that has slept through the centuries insensible of the insects scurrying on its back, scratching an existence for themselves? Are we insects, Cruso, in the greater view? Are we no better than the ants?" (F, 89)

The theme of a world which is devoid of a transcendent pattern and meaning and in which the individual is left to her/his own devices to cope with that lack of design, with chaos, and with loneliness is depicted with emphasis early in the novel with Cruso's Sisyphus-like activity of terrace-building. Those terraces that Cruso keeps constructing by clearing the ground without any intention or hope to plant them ("'The planting is not for us,' said he. 'We have nothing to plant – that is our misfortune'" F, 33), can have no other function than keeping him and Friday busy ("better than sitting in idleness", F, 33) and, thus, seem to be, in Dick Penner's words, like "the annals of the Absurd"[237]. Dragunoiu explains this act of terrace-construction in terms of the depiction of the character of Cruso as an existential (anti)hero, who acknowledges the absence of higher powers and his consequent loneliness in the world, yet who, instead of falling into paralysis or a crisis of void, takes the responsibility of his freedom and of his obligation to create his own frame of references and go on acting, on existing accordingly. His resolute act of toiling on the terraces reveals that he, like an existential hero, "accepts this life without appeal by embarking upon a seemingly futile but symbolically meaningful project"[238]:

> Stripped of belief in higher principles, higher powers, and the existence of the Absolute, Cruso's attitude toward himself and his world becomes profoundly ambiguous. At the core of existential thought is the absence of absolute values and overarching metaphysical support systems, and the individual's absolute freedom in this new context. The question for each individual becomes how to assume this freedom and perhaps change the world that is partly his or her own creation. The

[237] Dick Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.115.
[238] Dana Dragunoiu, "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", p.6.

> emerging paradox is that although all individual actions are now significant, what the actions are does not matter much because actions are guided by self-determined values that are personal, arbitrary, and provisional. In fact, as long as one assumes one's freedom, it is possible for the authentic individual to do nothing at all and still live a life free of Bad Faith. In contrast to the archetypal hero, the existential protagonist embarks upon a quest that can be evaluated only in relative terms. In spite of being condemned to a futile end, the existential subject is obligated to continue, to carry the burden of the past and responsibility for the future.[239]

The theme of searching for meanings and the anxiety that they may not exist is also reflected in the Beckettian theme of continuous waiting verbalized repeatedly by Susan Barton, which is another element that contributes to the theme of the absurd in **Foe**: "How much of my life consists in waiting!", writes Barton to Foe, "In Bahia I did little but wait, though what I was waiting for I sometimes did not know. On the island I waited all the time for rescue. Here I wait for you to appear, or for the book to be written that will set me free of Cruso and Friday" (F, 66). And little later, frustrated with the failure of all her attempts to communicate with Friday, she complains: "What are we doing here ... waiting for a man who will never come back?" (F, 70). It is also noteworthy that the arrival of Foe, the godly author figure, is expected for he is considered to be the only power that can provide their lives with some meaning, with a sense of substantiality and existence through his ability and authority to shape and design them in valid frames. For Foe's authoritative act of writing has already been associated with God's act of creating: "We are accustomed to believe that our world was created by God speaking the Word", says Foe, "but I ask, may it not rather be that he wrote it ... ?" (F, 143). Therefore he is a part of the potential sources of meaning expected/waited. The life of Susan Barton and Friday in England, as Barton defines it, is "a season of empty waiting" (F, 79).

This constant act of waiting without ever attaining to the object of waiting or, sometimes, without even knowing what one is waiting for, is one of the most familiar experiences the character of the Absurd goes through. Dragunoiu remarks that although Cruso, despite his awareness that the existential individual is left to his/her own devices in this world without any outer frame of reference, can still continue with his activity,

[239] **Ibid**., p.4.

Barton "finds her experience of the existentialist 'being-in-the-world' (Sartre's realite vecue) to be similar to the Beckettian characters' aimless wandering in their claustrophobic rooms and infinite landscapes. And like Beckett's individuals who cannot reconcile themselves to their existential conditions, Barton longs for the putative stability of society and its governing structures"[240]. However, later on in the novel, Foe the author presents Barton with the existentialist idea that the individual has to show her/his strong will to stand and survive this uncertain, chaotic world devoid of a predictable, reliable pattern and continue to exist:

> You and I know, in our different ways, how rambling an occupation writing is; and conjuring is surely much the same. We sit staring out of the window, and a cloud shaped like a camel passes by, and before we know it our fantasy has whisked us away to the sands of Africa ... A new cloud floats past in the form of a sailing-ship, and in a trice we are cast ashore all woebegone on a desert isle. Have we cause to believe that the lives it is given us to live proceed with any more design than these whimsical adventures? (F, 135)

And seeing Barton's doubts and worries about her identity, about the way she feels disillusioned and frustrated when faced with the idea that she has no control over her own life against what is being imposed upon her, Foe suggests that this uncertainty about one's existence and fate does not entail an absolute loss of freedom:

> Let us confront our worst fear, which is that we have all of us been called into the world from a different order (which we have now forgotten) ... Then I ask nevertheless: Have we thereby lost our freedom? Are you, for one, any less mistress of your life? Do we of necessity become puppets in our story whose end is invisible to us, and towards which we are marched like condemned felons? (F, 135)

In this picture of life/universe without order, although the ship which has witnessed it all in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" sinks into the bottom of the sea, just like, a little earlier, the symbol of the Mariner's guilt/sin, the dead body of the Albatross, had dropped off his neck, the Mariner's suffering continues ever after. In **Foe**, on the other hand, Susan Barton thinks or imagines that the boat carrying the dead body of the captain, did not and will not sink; he, whom Barton calls "a kindly man ... who

[240] **Ibid**., p.6.

deserved a better end" (F, 19), will be continuing to struggle with the wild conditions of the South Pole:

> "I dreamed of the murdered ship's master. In my dream I saw him floating southward in his puny boat with the oars crossed on his breast and the ugly spike sticking out of his eye. The sea was tossed with huge waves, the wind howled, the rain beat down; yet the boat did not sink, but drifted slowly on toward the province of the iceberg, and would drift there, it seemed to me, caked in ice, till the day of our resurrection". (F, 19)

With those oars crossed on his chest, the body of the dead captain floats and it seems that he will continue to float southward. Like the shipmates of the Mariner, whose fates were won and, consequently, determined by Death, died, the captain too dies but he cannot, in Barton's mind, sink down into the sea. She cannot stop thinking of him; she cannot leave it all behind. Therefore, it seems that perhaps one side of Susan Barton is already floating in that misty, dark, unknown realm of guilt and suffering. And the scar left by a rope or a chain around Friday's neck, which the unknown narrator at the end of the novel discovers, brings to our minds, in this comparative context, the sign of crime and sin around the Mariner's neck. So the effects of the crime, the colonial exploitation and violence, inflicted upon Friday by the colonizer, to whom Barton herself is related even if unwillingly, do not disappear. They remain even when they are all submerged, even after three hundred years. Looking in terms of this analogy, we can see that the act of diving performed at the end of the novel by the unknown narrator, who is totally familiar with Susan Barton's experiences, words, stories, thoughts, and, thus, is very close to her, is still related to that same land of ice: "Gripped by the current, the boat bobs away, drawn south toward the realm of the whales and eternal ice." (F, 155)

The question that we face, then, when we come to the end of Coetzee's novel, is that these staggering attitudes of Susan Barton, her increasing doubts and uncertainties and her tentative attempts to seek a higher design, which Graham Huggan defines as "an important attempt to develop and organize one's life around a religious vocabulary in a secular text"[241], and which also entails the idea of crime/guilt as an ontological fact in a

[241] Comment made by Graham Huggan in my interview with him on 6 June 2006 in York.

world governed by a supreme power rather than the result of free will, problematize her story's treatment of the historical and material concepts of oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and violence. This is, in other words, a problem arising, in Dragunoiu's words, "at the intersection of radical doubt and political responsibility"[242]. When we start to discover the traces of the tendency to explain the concept of crime as an outcome of the dark and destructive side of human nature, namely, as an ontological concept, then there emerges the risk of taking the subject under scrutiny to an ahistorical point as cut off from the temporal and spatial material conditions of the human being and her/his behaviour. A passage in the novel which exemplifies this argument is Susan Barton's way of perceiving or analysing the colonial destructiveness when she, trying really hard to find out how Friday's tongue has been cut out, tells Friday:

> Is the truth that your master cut it out himself? If so it was truly an unnatural crime, like chancing upon a stranger and slaying him for no other cause than to keep him from telling the world who slew him". (F, 84)

These words exemplify the kind of approach which, by taking the destructive crime into the realm of the inexplicable, of the absurd, or of the unknown, dark, irrational human psyche, blurs its material context and thus dehistoricizes and depoliticizes the colonial problem with an implied generalization of that specific act to the broad category of ontological and existential human phenomena and anxieties. Though the economic and political motivations lying behind the historical reality of colonialism are too obvious to be mystified with those riddle-like games of logic. It is very significant that Barton delivers this sentence when she is retrospectively listing down the "mysteries" about her island experience. That she likens "The heart of man" to "a dark forest" (F, 10) while trying to understand the mutineers' cruel behaviour both to herself and to the ship's master is another example. For this approach, by tending to reduce, or rather to universalize, cruelty, violence, and crime to a(ny) human being's potential destructiveness, obviously functions as a counter force to the story's incisive

[242] **Ibid**., p.2.

postcolonial and feminist deconstruction of canonical works of literature; it undermines the precise ideological handling of the historical themes like racial, gender and class discrimination in the novel. Eagleton's comments on the propensity that he observes in Conrad's **Heart of Darkness** to blur the historical, material conditions of imperialism are applicable to this discussion as well: "beneath imperialism lies the eternal barbarousness of the human heart. What is awry is not political history but the human heart"[243].

And within the framework of this proneness to the inexplicable, to the mystical that emerges in Barton's ambivalent views and behaviour now and then, even the act of recognizing, understanding, and reconciling with the other, is defined as an act of surrendering to the workings of chance, of losing one's control over her/his existence/integrity rather than as a conscious, deliberate, mutual, and dialogic form of communication. For Barton, while expressing her feelings (or rather the lack of feelings) during and after her sexual intercourse with Cruso, says:

> "Chance had cast me on his island, chance had thrown me in his arms. In a world of chance is there a better or a worse? We yield to a stranger's embrace or give ourselves to the waves; for the blink of an eyelid our vigilance relaxes, we are asleep; and when we awake, we have lost the direction of our lives. What are these blinks of an eyelid, against which the only defence is an eternal and inhuman wakefulness? Might they not be the cracks and chinks through which another voice, other voices, speak in our lives? By what right do we close our ears to them? The question echoed in my head without answer." (F, 30)

And to relate the concept of violence with the domain of the inexplicable, mysterious, and irrational would entail a questioning of human responsibility and free will as wellÿÿDragunoiu's comments uÿÿÿÿthe character of Cruso, whom, despite the reflections of his colonizer forebear on his island life, she sees essentially as an existential anti-hero, and upon Barton's gradual process of getting closer to his doubtful viewpoint also end up in a discussion of the above mentioned conflict between an existential and an ideological treatment of the main socio-political, cultural, historical themes in the novel:

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[243] Terry Eagleton, **The English Novel**, p.242. See also chapter 3 of this study.

> Cruso's predicament is paralleled by Barton at the end of the novel. Losing her initial self-assurance and facile optimism, Barton begins to see the world from Cruso's perspective. His question, "How will we ever know the truth?" is echoed by Barton's "Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself" (133). Also, like Cruso, she is now asking extremely relevant questions: "But how is Friday to recover his freedom, who has been a slave all his life? ... Should I liberate him into a world of wolves and expect to be commended for it? ... When I am rid of Friday, will I then know freedom? ... The conflict between existentialist and political freedom, responsibility and overdetermination, knowledge and doubt, are at the heart of the text's ethical dilemmas.[244]

And the way that those gradually increasing uncertainties, doubts, and the consequent hesitancies and ambivalence Susan Barton presents are deriving from the conflicts she faces as she shifts towards the ahistorical, towards a universalized idea of the human condition and predicament and as she, in the end, cannot succeed in coming up with satisfactory solutions to what she finds unacceptable. Dragunoiu comments on these issues of political and ethical responsibilities within the framework of the existentialist philosophy as follows:

> Although Sartre did not abandon his project of formulating an ethics as promised at the end of *Being and Nothingness*, it remains unclear whether it is possible to theorize an existentialist moral philosophy. The existentialists' location of freedom at the core of human existence and their emphasis on responsibility in spite of an absence of absolutes anticipate the crucial dilemmas of the postmodern sensibility. As those on the disempowered side of the freedom divide are right to point out, the individual self as the source of all value systems is a philosophical abstraction, not very useful for concrete political action ... Whatever the intentions behind Cruso's terraces, they remain a fruitless social gesture, as he seems to have known from the very beginning. By staging Cruso's demise before reaching England, Coetzee allows his Cruso to retain the ambiguous integrity of the authentic existentialist: Cruso's idealist Sisyphean project remains intact by escaping the test of the political world.[245]

Yet Susan Barton returns to England to face the blatantly harsh and dominant socio-political, historical, cultural plight there. And, despite all her growing consciousness, her intense (self)questionings, her sincere and constant efforts to comprehend and to improve what she finds in need of change and advancement, stuck within her dilemma, Barton leaves the scene at the end of the novel and hands the narrative over to an unnamed narrator who closes **Foe**.

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[244] Dana Dragunoiu, "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*", p.13.
[245] **Ibid**.

CONCLUSION:

"Diving Into the Wreck"

By the time we come to the surprising and remarkably thought-provoking fourth and last section of **Foe**, which Penner defines as "a Protean dreamlike evocation of the realm of the dead"[246], we understand once again and more clearly that in addition to its conspicuous and direct rewriting/revision of and more indirect allusions to the above discussed canonical texts, the novel also, on one of its various layers, delineates a revision of the history of narrative tradition. As Gallagher, who states that "**Foe** comments not only on the silences of colonialism but also on the silences of literary history"[247], points out, in each of the four sections of **Foe**, a different narrative model is employed, in the sequential construction of which a chronological depiction and reconsideration of some of the stages that the narrative tradition, more specifically the novel genre, has gone through are presented[248]. As Worthington suggests, "Coetzee offers us a mini-synopsis of the historical development of the novel"[249]. And this development is given within the framework of the relevant literary theories.

Those gradually changing narrative forms of the four sections of the novel start with a presentation of some distinctive characteristics of the early 18th century literary traditions and end up with some other narrative characteristics that are mostly associated with poststructuralist and postmodern fiction. The first section of the novel, delivered through the mouth of the first person narrator, that is, Susan Barton's memoir, is written in a way that is closer to the literary tradition in which **Foe**'s two major pre-texts, **Robinson Crusoe** and **Roxana** were written in the early 18th century: the ostensibly

[246] Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.126.
[247] Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, 186.
[248] See Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, pp.186-188.
[249] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p.272.

artless reportage of facts uttered by a supposedly neutral transmitter of history in the form of (pseudo)autobiographical, confessional, first-person narrative technique.

The change in the narrative mode as we move from the first to the second section of **Foe** is parallel to the move from the novels of Daniel Defoe to the epistolary novels of Samuel Richardson: "Susan", in Galagher's words, "like Pamela, seems compelled to write in an effort to control her life, to write her destiny, to assert her identity"[250]. (Yet we need to remember the fact that, despite those parallelisms, Barton's narrative, always self-reflexively doubtful and interrogating, keeps questioning, challenging, and subverting those modes that she is copying, as is obvious in many examples, of which we can mention her juxtaposition, very early in her narrative, of the requirements/tradition of travellers' tales and the atmosphere she depicts in *her* story (of adventure), or, later on, in her epistolary experience of writing, the fact that she continues to write her letters even when she knows that they will not be read by anybody).

In the following section, the narration of Susan Barton, who, despite her considerable hesitations as a woman trying to write her own story, has obviously already assumed the role of an author writing for her readers, this time without the quotation marks at the beginning of her words to show that it is a neutral reportage as in the first section or without the format of letters neatly attached with dates, takes us nearer, as Gallagher states, to the narrative mode of the 19th century realist novel.

And in the final section, we are in the realm of postmodern fiction with its mistrust and questioning of concepts like referentiality, representation, linearity, closure, and authorial/authoritarian self-confidence and presenting, instead, vagueness, tentativeness, experimentation both from the aspects of form and content. "Now we are", as David Attwell suggests, "in the realm of narration per se"[251]. As Kossew says, "after the models of authorship rejected in the previous sections, this model most closely approximates that of Wilson Harris's 'infinite rehearsal' (and the repetition, echoing and

[250] Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.188.
[251] Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.115.

rewriting of previous sections reinforce this reading), which seeks to avoid appropriation, absorption and betrayal of the subject by restructuring patriarchal language"[252]. Thus the narrative modes of the four sections of Coetzee's novel start with that of **Robinson Crusoe**, which, significantly, is considered to be the first English novel just as its author is considered to be the "father" of the English novel, and which is the primary intertext of **Foe**, and ends up with that of its own. Gallagher rightly suggests, "The four chapters of the novel represent four different narrative modes, which parallel the development of the novel and thereby suggest a new feminine literary history"[253]; for it starts with the method of the "father" of the English novel and ends up with that of, as will be discussed below, "écriture fémimine.

In this final section of the novel, where, as Penner remarks, "the themes of narrative art and colonialism coalesce"[254], along with this delineation of certain stages of the narrative tradition, we are also presented with some of the changing definitions and concerns in the field of literary theory and criticism as we observe the changes that Susan Barton's consciousness and discussions of writing go through. The early stages of her endeavours to almost obsessively record her memoir and to transmit it to Foe as truthfully as possible exemplifies her firm belief in the mimetic/reflexive function of language/narrative (for her hesitations are merely due to a lack of belief only in her own capacity to be able to employ those mimetic devices efficaciously). As is obvious in the utmost caution she shows so that no imaginary elements will be added to her history, Susan Barton presents some kind of a Platonic hesitation with regard to the possibility of a truthful imitation or representation of reality.

However, gradually we can observe clear changes/developments in her views regarding her understanding of the definition of narrative. Her previous insistence upon the necessity to reflect facts as faithfully as possible is gradually replaced by a more flexible notion of representation and by her recognition that a certain amount of fictionalization may be inescapable in narration. As, for instance, she acknowledges that

[252] Kossew, **Pen and Power**, p.175.
[253] Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.186.
[254] Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.127.

a painter, "to render his composition more lively... is at liberty to bring into it what may not be there on the day he paints but may be there on other days" (F, 88), she is clearly moving from Plato's strong emphasis on the significance of being as loyal to truth as possible, towards the Aristotalian view that "it is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened, but things that may happen, i.e. that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity. For the historian and the poet do not differ according to whether they write in verse or without verse ... But the difference is that the former relates things that have happened, the latter things that may happen."[255]. Accordingly, she gradually starts to appreciate Foe's willingness to make the story more interesting and pleasing by making imaginary additions to facts if the situation demands. As she tells Foe "More is at stake in the history you write, I will admit, for it must not only tell the truth about us but please its readers too" (F, 63), she is coming closer to the Horatian view that "The man who combines pleasure with usefulness wins every suffrage, delighting the reader and also giving him advice"[256].

Susan Barton becomes, on the one hand, more and more familiar with the requirements of the canon. Yet on the other hand her awareness of the violent mechanisms of canon-construction increases as well, as especially she struggles desperately to defend her own version of and plans for her story against Foe's impositions. She becomes utterly frustrated with the oppression, discrimination, and violence that she suffers within the colonialist system, under the pressure of the patriarchal codes and conventions, and all their dominant discursive practices which constantly attempt to shape and control her life, her identity, and her attempts to express/represent/write herself/her life.

Moreover, she is also increasingly uneasy about and disturbed by her realization that she herself cannot avoid acting in accordance with the appropriatory, oppressive colonialist methods. As she desperately tries to find a way for Friday to, in some way, fill the gap in her story with that of his, her attitude shows that, in Jolly's words, "Susan

[255] Aristotle, **Poetics**, trans. Richard Janko, **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, (pp.90-117), p.97.
[256] Horace, **Ars Poetica**, **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, (pp.124-135), p.132.

Barton conceives of narrative as essentially teleological in both its form and function. Narrative is seen to heal or "fix" events, eliminating all elements of controversy or doubt surrounding them"[257]. Yet, despite the fact that she goes efficiently and fast through the developmental stages of the history of literature/theory/criticism even within her challenging conditions and starts to critically question them, Barton fails to avoid violation both as its victim and as a perpetrator of it and finally leaves the scene to an enigmatic narrator. This unknown and unnamed narrator visits the house of "*Daniel Defoe, Author*", as the plaque on the wall says (F, 155), and, very significantly, puts into practice what Barton has so often dreamt of and suggested before: "diving into the wreck".

This unnamed narrator visits the author's house twice, once at night ("Through a solitary window moonlight floods the room", F, 153), and then "on a bright autumn day" (F, 155), or, perhaps, the same visit is given twice with slight differences in its points of focus and definitions. In the first visit, just before s/he enters the house, s/he "stumble[s] over a body ... a woman or a girl, her feet drawn up inside a long grey dress, her hands folded under her armpits ... Her face ... wrapped in a grey woollen scarf". S/he begins "to unwrap it, but the scarf is endless" (F, 153). The body of the daughter figure is presented this time as obviously reminiscent of the dead babe Barton found in a ditch, unwrapped, and then "wrapped ... again in its bloody winding-cloth and laid ... in the bottom of the ditch ... guiltily" (F, 105). Torn between the conflicting versions of life offered to her by Foe and Barton, between the destiny that the author ceaselessly tried to impose on her and Barton's rejection of her own role (as her mother) in that destiny, the daughter, just like the dead babe who could not be born, and unable to find a place for her "self", lies dead in front of their door.

Then as the unidentified narrator enters the house of Foe, s/he finds the dead bodies of Barton and Foe as well, while, in the alcove in a corner of the room, Friday is lying on his back and his skin, despite his feet "hard as wood" (F, 154), is warm and there is a faint pulse in his throat. The closeness of the words that this unnamed narrator

[257] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.7.

uses while defining the scene that s/he is observing and experiencing to those of Susan Barton is noteworthy throughout the section. Her/his first words are a direct repetition of Barton's words opening the previous chapter with only a change in the tense. And their concerns too are overtly similar; for s/he immediately tries to open Friday's clenched teeth, as if trying to fulfil Barton's previous desire to open Friday's mouth and reach what is hidden there: "It is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds: silence perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear", she has said to Foe before, not knowing, however, how to do it: "But who will do it? ... Who will dive into the wreck?" (F, 141-142). Through the clenched teeth, which open, significantly, not on the narrator's efforts to unclench them but later, when he chooses to part them, "issue the sounds of the island": "the faintest faraway roar: as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell ... the whine of the wind and the cry of a bird ... the chirp of sparrows, the thud of a mattock, the call of a voice" (F, 154).

The second (depiction of the) visit starts not from the stairs inside the building as in the first one but this time from the outside of the house with the full name of the author on one of its walls. This depiction of the same scene this time through a widened perspective and with different choices made about the details to be focused upon underlines once again the novel's concern to emphasize the (potential) diversity of definitions depending upon the onlookers viewpoint. The couple lie again together with slight differences in their position, this time a little closer to each other. Friday, too, is in his alcove again. Yet some detail about his body, which the narrator "had not observed ... before", and which, before, has obviously been left out in Susan Barton's narrative, is given shockingly: "About his neck ... is a scar like a necklace, left by a rope or chain" (F, 155).

That the narrator can see this very important "detail" only on her/his second visit, that, in other words, if we, as the readers, had been told of only the first visit, then this crucial information would not have reached us at all, functions as a reminder of the possibility that there may still be other significant elements that are not perceived now but may be noticed perhaps on a third visit or perceived now but deliberately left out. All

these, in short, serve in a cautionary way to constantly remind the reader of the potential gaps, missing points in this/any narrative. Kim Worthington, who emphasizes the increasing involvement of the reader in Coetzee's novel, in which "we discern a progressive discreditation of authorial power and a corresponding promotion of the reader's creative co-authorial role in the determination of textual meaning"[258], states that:

> ... the unnamed pronominal space denoted by 'I' has been left open to the reader to enter and fill, to self-consciously inpersonate (in Docherty's term) in the act of subjective ventriloquism which *is* interpretation ... the fourth section of the novel can be read as an allegory of the subjective 'descent' which is performed by (writing) readers in any act of textual interpretation ... With the fragmentation and dislocation of the narrative voice, the passive receptivity of conventional reading gives way to the active imposition of meaning... [259].

Thus, the presentation of this unnamed narrator and the reader's potential identification with her/him also leaves the reader face to face with the predicament that Barton has experienced before: "To us, his readers, Coetzee 'leaves the task of descending into that eye', the task of '[speaking] the unspoken' in the colonizing manner outlined by Susan and Foe at the end of the previous section"[260]. In fact, that the narrator keeps referring to Susan Barton's narrative (e.g. "I tug lightly at his [Friday's] hair. It is indeed like lambswool"[261]; "I begin to hear the faintest faraway roar: as she said"[262] F, 154) consolidate Worthington's suggestion that s/he, just like us, is a reader of Barton's (Coetzee's) narrative. It is also noteworthy that, as Durrant too emphasizes, one significant difference between the narrator's first and second visits is that s/he "becomes involved in an act of reading"[263] in this second visit. And after performing the act of reading, after interacting with the opening lines of Susan Barton's manuscript, s/he can

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[258] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p.272.
[259] **Ibid**., p.271.
[260] **Ibid**., p.271.
[261] In other words, Friday is *indeed* "a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool" and he *indeed* "smelled of fish, and of sheepswool" as Barton said before (on p.22 of the novel).
[262] In other words, as Barton said before: "I could hear ... far away, the roar of the waves" (F, 14), and again, as she stated late on, "It is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds: silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear" (F, 142).
[263] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning**, p.37.

experience and express that imaginary, surreal act of diving. This, too, is another indication of the importance that the novel attaches to reading, to the (active) position of the reader.

Just after the appalling exploration of the scar around Friday's neck, the unidentified narrator finds the dispatch box in which the worn out and yellow pages of Barton's letters are kept. And as soon as S/he starts to read the first sentence, the opening words of Barton's memoir ("At last I could row no further" F,155), this time starting with "Dear Mr Foe", we are presented with a dream scene in which s/he starts to "dive into the wreck" mimicking Barton's words opening the novel: "With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slip overboard ... With a sigh, with barely a splash, I duck my head under the water" (F, 255-256). S/he imagines herself/himself just in the moment that Barton starts to swim towards the island, yet s/he is determined to see, find out, imagine, much more than what the versions of (De)Foe, Cruso(e), and Barton provide.

In the wreck, which is submerged within the water, "the same water as yesterday, as last year, as three hundred years ago" (F, 157), s/he finds "Susan Barton and her dead captain", who, as we discern from the description of the environment, is Captain Smith that rescued them from the island. (Have Susan Barton and Friday never reached England and, consequently, never told their stories to (De)Foe and has (De)Foe written the story out of his imagination or from other sources? Is s/he visualizing this scene of submersion as a symbol of the destiny that (De)Foe the author chose for Barton, that is, as a symbol of his total exclusion of her story/identity? Is it visualized by the narrator in order to emphasize the things, like the scar around Friday's neck, that might be left out by Barton's narrative?... Or is it, as Marais states, a "strategy" employed as an indication of "the text's defiance of the reader", or as a means of "protect[ing] it from the linguistic colonisation of being named, described, possessed", which Friday foreshadows when he "thwarts Susan Barton's attempt to read his slate by wiping it clean"?: "By establishing Susan Barton's death at a period that precedes the beginning of the novel, the final scene

negates the events narrated before it: the ending effectively annuls the novel".[264]) Then finally, again in a corner, s/he finds Friday, with whose description the novel ends:

> In the last corner, under the transoms, half buried in sand, his knees drawn up, his hands between his thighs, I come to Friday.
>
> I tug his woolly hair, finger the chain about his throat. "Friday," I say, I try to say, kneeling over him, sinking hands and knees into the ooze, "what is this ship?"
>
> But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday.
>
> He turns and turns till he lies at full length, his face to my face. The skin is tight across his bones, his lips are drawn back. I pass a fingernail across his teeth, trying to find a way in.
>
> His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face. (F, 157)

Both through Barton's words expressing her wish that someone will somehow "dive into the wreck" repeatedly and enthusiastically uttered especially all through the latter part of the novel and through the novel's obvious efforts to deconstruct the firmly established discriminatory and oppressive myths of colonialism, of the patriarchal social, cultural, linguistic and literary systems, of artificial and unequal gender roles, and of the canon that contributes to the production and continuation of them, **Foe**'s allusions to Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck"[265], which Gallagher defines as an "epic of female creativity"[266], come clearly to the surface especially on the closing pages of Coetzee's novel.

In Rich's poem the diver, "having read the book of myths"(1), which are defined by Erica Jong as "the old myths of patriarchy"[267], myths of artificially constructed and then unquestionably validated socio-cultural codes that authoritatively regulate human life, starts to dive into the sea in order to find the wreck. The wreck in Rich's poem is, as

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[264] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-colonial Metafiction", p.80.

[265] This poem is the title poem of Rich's collection of poems, **Diving into the Wreck** (1973). Hereafter cited (from **The Norton Anthology of American Literature**, Vol.2, 2nd ed., ed. Nina Baym et al., New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company, pp.2543-2545) with numbers in paranthesis showing the lines of the poem.

[266] Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.189.

[267] Erica Jong, excerpt from **Ms**, 1973, quoted in "On 'Diving into the Wreck'", http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/rich/wreck.htm

Margaret Atwood remarks, "the wreck of obsolete myths, particularly myths about men and women"[268]. It is, in Judith McDaniel's words, "a layered image: it is the life of one woman, the source of successes and failures; it is the history of all women submerged in a patriarchal culture; it is that source of myths about male and female sexuality which shape our lives and roles today"[269]. However, within the context of Coetzee's novel, which puts all sorts of social, gender, class, racial, and discursive oppression and violence in its focal point through interweaving postcolonial, feminist, and poststructuralist discussions, the wreck in Rich's poem symbolizing the strict and established patriarchal myths also becomes the wreck of the colonial mission.

Rich's diver states that s/he has failed to find her/his name in the book of myths ("a book of myths / in which / our names do not appear" 92-94) in a way that is very similar to the case of Susan Barton, whose name has been erased from the mythical story that has been produced as based upon her own experiences. So now the diver is determined to find out, to see, and to show with the camera that s/he is equipped with the sources and results of the mechanisms that produce and maintain those socio-cultural constructions. This is her/his way of invalidating the myth, of deconstructing those oppressive and exclusionary fictions. This is her/his version of expressing the reactionary cry of the archetypal slave/colonized: "Remember / First to possess his books ... / ... Burn but his books"[270], are the words that Caliban utters regarding the books that has provided his master with the power to dominate and exploit him.

Both Rich's diver and the diver at the end of Coetzee's novel, who tries to find Friday and to open his mouth, are struggling against the deadening silence imposed upon the underprivileged. They both come to explore and expose the marginalization of the Other, the silenced, "the damage that was done" (55). In the short final section of **Foe**, we reach a climactic discussion of what Barbara Eckstein points out as the two central questions which permeate the whole novel: "First, can one comprehend an/other across

[268] Margaret Atwood, excerpt from **The New York Times Book Review**, 1973, quoted in "On 'Diving into the Wreck'", http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/rich/wreck.htm
[269] Judith McDaniel, excerpt from **Reconstituting the World**, (Spinsters, Ink, 1978), quoted in "On 'Diving into the Wreck'", http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/rich/wreck.htm

differences in social positions, such as race, culture, class and gender, and if so, how? Second, can one ever get passed representations to the thing itself; can the signifiers be forced to hand over the signified, and if so, how?"[271] The divers descend into the wreck in search of answers to these questions.

The divers' acts of decending into the wreck is an act of rejection and demythologization of artificially produced power relations inflicted upon the disempowered in all sorts of dogmatic and oppressive systems. Thus, away from the domain where a fresh, unprejudiced, and unconditioned viewpoint is constantly threatened by those social constructs, the divers turn to another realm: "the sea is not a question of power" (40). As Laurel Ruhlen suggests concerning Rich's poem, "the water provides a medium of reality"[272]. The sea, as Ruhlen comments in Lacanian terms, is the realm of the real in order to define which the symbolic register (the book of myths, the logbook) cannot be enough:

> Rich uses this common allusion [to the sea] to construct a Lacanian analysis of how the real, the imaginary and the symbolic intertwine, and how the imaginary and the symbolic fall short in codifying reality's complexity ... As the diver becomes immersed in water, references to the symbolic elements, such as ship's log and the book of myths grow increasingly negative ... the navigational symbols that were designed to keep the ship afloat prove utterly useless: the wreck never reached its destination ... The relationship between the schooner, which clings to the water's reflective surface, and the wreck ... echoes that of the young child with his reflection ... The former corresponds to the ideal-ego, while the latter provides the nautical version of the ego. Without the schooner, the diver would not have access to the older, more 'valuable' boat; without seeing one's reflection, one cannot be aware of one's ego ... once she reaches the wreck and realizes how far it is from the surface, the diver becomes aware of the ideal-egos she has tried to internalize. As she hovers above the ship, she realizes she is "the mermaid ... [as well as] the merman". In other words, she has tried to integrate the gaze of the male Other into her own identity. Only with the awareness foisted on her by the distance between the ships, however, does she become aware of this ... [Rich] expresses problems with adopting imaginary identifications and symbolic linguistic systems. The former, as demonstrated by the two boats and the diver's fractured gender identity, produces a poorly integrated sense of identity. The latter sacrifices accuracy for efficiency.[273]

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[270] William Shakespeare, **The Tempest**, Act III, Scene II, pp.81-82.
[271] Barbara Eckstein, "Iconicity, Immersion and Otherness: The Hegelian 'dive' of J. M. Coetzee and Adrienne Rich", **Mosaic: a journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature**, Winnipeg, March 1996, Vol.29, Iss.1, p.1.
[272] Laurel Ruhlen, "A Real Wreck: Lacan in Rich's 'Diving Into the Wreck'", http://ocw.mit.edu/NR/rdonlyres/Literature/21L-451Spring2004/A4A45F65-D459-4E46-B4F6-8CC58364A386/0/ruhlen_midterm2.pdf., p.1.
[273] Laurel Ruhlen, "A Real Wreck: Lacan in Rich's 'Diving Into the Wreck'", pp.1-5.

The diver in the poem turns to the sea, which hides in its depths those who are (mis/non)represented through the dominant systems of signification as used in the book of myths. Yet this is not an easy task at all. S/he needs to check "the edge of the knife-blade", "put on the body-armor of black rubber / the absurd flippers / the grave and awkward mask" (3-7) beforehand and s/he has to do it all alone in contrast to the case of Cousteau supported by "his assiduous team" (10) and by the established and validating institutions and discourses. As Ruhlen suggests, "There is too much water, too many details, for the diver to handle without the aid of 'a grave and awkward mask'. The swimmer cannot interact directly with reality"[274]. And the flippers that s/he is wearing "cripple" her/him; s/he "crawl[s] like an insect down the ladder" (29-30) just like the diver in Foe, who, "hands and knees ... creep[s]" (F, 156) in the wreck. It is as if the demanding quality of the task that they venture, the difficulty of finding their ways in their attempts to demythologize the books of myth and to find the reality as unburdened from unreliable representations ("to explore the wreck" ... "the wreck and not the story of the wreck / the thing itself and not the myth", 52, 62-63), and the weight of the oppression that they are struggling to invalidate, make them stagger and bend.

S/he is there in order to find "the drowned face always staring / towards the sun" (64-65), which reminds us of the "eye" Foe imagines to be looking up from under the sea:

> 'In every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken, I believe. Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story ... I said the heart of the story', resumed Foe, 'but I should have said the eye of the story. Friday rows his log of wood across the dark pupil – or the dead socket – of an eye staring up at him from the floor of the sea. He rows across it and is safe. To us he leaves the task of descending into that eye. Otherwise, like him, we sail across the surface and come ashore none the wiser, and resume our old lives, and sleep without dreaming, like babes.' (F, 141)

Hence both divers are attempting to do what the author, the writer of the book of myths, is aware of, refers to, but cannot or does not tend to or does not know how to do.

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[274] **Ibid**., p.2.

That we are told nothing about who those two divers are, what their names are, whether they are male or female, can be construed, in terms of Eckstein's first question above, as a step towards demolishing the rigid boundaries between social, racial, gender, and class categorizations. The diver in the poem, in accordance with Rich's discussion and rejection of the socio-culturally constructed oppressive definitions of gender and sexuality in her "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"[275], openly declares herself/himself as both male and female:

> This is the place.
> And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
> streams black, the merman in his armored body.
> ...
> I am she: I am he (71-77)

In her attempts to understand the mechanisms of silencing and to produce a counter version for the discriminatory stories that are being forced upon her, Susan Barton, too, as Eckstein points out, goes through processes of "gender-crossing"[276] as is evident in her becoming first "a muse", but then also a "begetter", "the father" (F, 126) of her story, while Foe the author, through their gradually intensifying interaction and discussions, has to accompany her in that gender-crossing by, at one point, likening himself to "an old whore who should ply her trade only in the dark" and by being likened to a "mistress" and a "wife" by Barton (F, 151-152). Though Barton's efforts to invalidate the discriminatory gender roles take place in the form of a reversal of them rather than being an attempt to go beyond them, to erase those power struggles all together. Her attempt to understand the silencing mechanisms cannot be a full one due to her ambivalent position as a "half-colonizer". For she, at the point when she yields to the story of the daughter figure imposed on her by Foe, concedes that "She [the daughter figure] is substantial, as my daughter is substantial and I am substantial; and you too are substantial ... We are all alive, we are all substantial, we are all in the same world", Foe

[275] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", pp.1759-1780.
[276] Barbara Eckstein, "Iconicity, Immersion and Otherness: The Hegelian 'dive' of J. M. Coetzee and Adrienne Rich", p.8.

needs to reminds her of Friday: "You have omitted Friday" (F, 152). Therefore she needs to leave the scene to another, a new, narrator.

The concern of the diver in the poem is to explore and disclose the damage done by the violence of discourses, the myths that have been used to produce, legitimize, and perpetuate discriminatory, silencing, and exclusionary socio-cultural mechanisms: S/he is there to see the thing itself, not the words through which people/things have been (mis/non)represented:

> We are, I am, you are
> by cowardice or courage
> the one who find our way
> back to this scene
> carrying a knife, a camera
> a book of myths
> in which
> our names do not appear. (87-94)

The main concern of the diver in **Foe**, who is a direct descendent of that of Rich's poem, is to find the colonial other and to hear what he has to say. Yet, as far as the dominant language of the colonizer is concerned, Friday is presented as again speechless. However, that his environment is described as a place "where bodies are their own signs" (F, 157) opens a discussion in terms of the second question that Eckstein puts forward ("can one ever get passed representations to the thing itself"[277]) and makes references to both Kristeva's concept of semiotic discourse as opposed to the symbolic order, and what Hèléne Cixous, in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa", a manifesto of écriture féminine, of feminine writing, suggests as "a feminine practice of writing ... [that] ... will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system"[278]: "Write your self", says Cixous, "Your body must be heard ... Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering ... She does not 'speak', she throws her trembling

[277] See footnote 270.
[278] Hèléne Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", **The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism**, (pp. 2035-2056), p.2046.

body forward ... she physically materializes what she is thinking; she signifies it with her body"[279].

The delineation of Friday at the end of the novel as provided only with a non-verbal utterance, a "stream" coming through his mouth instead of words, instead of his own story expressed through his own viewpoint, has been construed, on the one hand as a deliberate act of authorial disavowal, a rejection of overdetermining ventriloquism and of what Jolly calls a "recuperative notion of narrative"[280]. And on the other hand, it has also been criticized as a perpetuation of the silence inflicted upon the oppressed by the domineering discourses that the novel, in fact, strongly invalidates.

Benita Parry, for example, underlines that although Friday sits at the author's desk claiming, thus, his right to write for himself, he "does not cross the threshold into logical and referential discourse, but remains instead in that paradisal condition where sign and object are unified, and where the body, spared the traumatic insertion into language, can give utterance to things lost or never yet heard: things whose meanings, we are given to understand, will water the globe"[281]:

> This incipient critique of how deprivation inflicts silence on those who are homeless in a hierarchical social world is deflected, however, by the ascription of value to the disarticulated body, since the reader is simultaneously offered intimations of a non-linguistic intuitive consciousness, and is invited to witness the fruits of speechlessness that spring from a failure of the dialectic between the 'Imaginary' and the 'Symbolic' or in Kristeva's vocabulary, between the 'semiotic' and the 'thetic'.[282]

In her discussion of the silent characters in Coetzee's fiction, Parry responds to the critics that comment on the uninterrupted silence of the underprivileged as "intelligible as an emblem of oppression or to be audible as that unuttered but inviolable voice which discourses of mastery cannot impinge and, thus, as an enunciation of defiance" by claiming that the "potential critique of political oppression is diverted by the conjuring and valorising of a non-verbal signifying system ... Coetzee's narrative strategies both

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[279] **Ibid**., p.2044.
[280] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.7.
[281] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", p.47.
[282] **Ibid**., p.46.

enact a critique of dominant discourses and pre-empt dialogue with non-canonical knowledges through representing these as ineffable"[283]:

> ... the consequence of writing the silence attributed to the subjugated as a liberation from the constraints of subjectivity ... can be read as re-enacting the received disposal of narrative authority.
>
> The paradox contained by this hypothesis is that, in the double movement performed by Coetzee's novels, the subversions of previous texts enunciating discourses of colonial authority are permuted into renarrativisations where only the European possesses the word and the ability to enunciate, the lateral routes of the virtually plotless novels taking in nothing outside the narrators' world views and thereby sustaining the West as the culture of reference. A failure to project alterities might signify Coetzee's refusal to exercise the authority of his dominant culture to represent other, subjugated cultures, and might be construed as registering his understanding that agency is not something that is his to give or withold through representation. Yet I will argue that the fictions just do this, and that European textual power, reinscribed in the formal syntax required of Literature, eventually survives the attempted subversion of its dominion.[284]

And Kim Worthington reiterates the fact that "Only *within* a framework of shared signification do we have the potential authority to co-write our meaning and our narratives of selfhood"[285], that only "within shared referential frameworks or signifying communities, hierarchical constitution, like subjective status, is negotiable and potentially open to change and revision – provided, that is, that we recognize and claim the authoritative power of potentially contestational voices"[286]. Worthington sees the non-verbal utterance that Friday is given at the end of the novel not only as an indication of a perpetuation of his silence but also of his depravity of the ability to construct his self/identity through a dialogic interaction:

> The 'freedom' of Friday's (willed or inflicted) exile from discursive community is bought at the cost of a radical solipsistic alienation which, paradoxically, does nothing to prevent him from being read and written by others.
>
> ...
>
> Silent, we are subjected *by* language, remaining victims of a colonizing tongue. Without voice, we remain mute subjects of other speakers' interpretative will-to-power: we must speak (for) ourselves. [287]

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[283] **Ibid**., pp., 43-44, 52.
[284] **Ibid**., pp.39-40.
[285] Kim Worthington, **Self as Narrative**, p.275.
[286] **Ibid**., p.260.
[287] **Ibid**., pp.260, 275.

On the other hand, Friday's speechlessness at the end, have also been often considered as the purposeful hesitation of the narrative to reinscribe the age-old discursive violence inflicted through overconfident acts of speaking on behalf of the (colonized) other. "Coetzee's project", according to Attridge, is, as different from Foe's "project of teaching Friday to write the master discourse", one "of representing the processes of authorship, empowerment, validation, and silencing in a narrative that is constantly aware of the problems inherent in its own acts of representation"[288]. From that aspect, that Friday is depicted as not participating in the discursive practices within the domain of the colonizer's language is considered as an exposition and rejection of all those ceaseless attempts made by (De)Foe, Cruso(e), and Barton to include Friday in their stories by appropriating him (For, as Jolly remarks, Susan Barton's "'failed' narrative proposes that closure is impossible without violation."[289]). Gallagher, for instance, states that "Coetzee speaks as a writer who is an appalled representative of humanity, who hesitates to take upon himself the mantle of moral authority even as he tries to criticize injustice and promote freedom. **Foe** ultimately addresses the issue of how one can write for – in support of – the Other without presuming to write for – assuming power over – the Other"[290]. And David Attwell comments on the final image in the novel as one "in which the absolute limits of its own powers of authorization and signification are defined"[291]. Instead of attempting "to recover the voice of the colonial other", as Sam Durrant states, Coetzee's text "strives to remember the silencing of this other, the history of Forgetting of which Defoe's novel is itself a part."[292]

Parry critically draws a parallelism between the depiction of Africa in **Heart of Darkness** and that of Friday in **Foe**: "It is tempting to associate Coetzee's deployment of silence with the mute Africa of *Heart of Darkness* which, in its 'unkowability' and its own 'overwhelming reality' is resistant to incorporation into European discourse.[293] Yet,

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[288] Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon", p.229.
[289] Rosemary Jane Jolly, **Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing**, p.7.
[290] Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.192.
[291] Attwell, **J. M. Coetzee**, p.117.
[292] Sam Durrant, **Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning**, pp.32-33.
[293] Benita Parry, "Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee", p.51.

there is, on the other hand, the implication that the symbol of the road carrying the colonizer to his destination, that is, "the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth [which] flowed sombre under an overcast sky ... [and which] seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (HD, 111) in Conrad's narrative is replaced in Coetzee's novel by "the slow stream" which comes from inside the chained Friday's mouth and which "passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, ... [running] northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending" (F, 157) in a way that accentuates, especially through the support of all the intertextually provided emphasis on the concepts of oppression and violence, the abundance and power of the things that the silenced has to say against the horrifying and unacceptable treatment they have received. Dick Penner, accordingly, points out "that of all the characters, he [Friday] is the only one still apparently alive" and that "The 'slow stream' emerging from Friday's mouth ... may well foreshadow the impending outrage of all of the silent ones waiting to break their bonds"[294]. In this context, we can say that it is **Foe**'s constant intertextual communication with its pre-texts dominated by themes of oppression and violence that strengthen the novel's critical response even if it is presented in the form of silence. Throughout the novel, the concepts of injustice and exploitation are so strongly emphasized through all its intertextual references and allusions that the "oppressive silence", to use Attridge's terms[295], at the end of the novel functions to even further reiterate the critique of those victimizing mechanisms by delineating not only the concrete results of the damage that was done but also the extremely complex nature of the exploitative practices and of the (potential) methods of recovery. For the very simplicity, the very basic quality of the question that the unnamed narrator, the diver, asks Friday reflects the viewpoint of, as

[294] Penner, **Countries of the Mind**, p.127.
[295] Derek Attridge, Derek Attridge, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon".

Gallagher states, "an appalled representative of humanity"[296]: "I ... finger the chain about his throat. 'Friday,' I say, I try to say, ... '*what is this ship?*'"[297] (F, 157).

Spivak, who comments that "the novel is neither a failure nor an abdication of the responsibility of the historical or national elite", introduces her concept of "the double gesture"[298] that deconstruction might propose and uses this argument in order to explain the novel's deconstructive approach which, through its constant and conspicuous self-referentiality and its relevant discussions, expresses overtly its doubts concerning the possibility of reliable, true, ultimate narratives while these doubts end up not in a mere and abstract poststructural/postmodern playfulness or in a pessimistic and desperate nihilism but in what Spivak calls "productive unease":

> If we want to start something, we must ignore that our starting point is shaky. If we want to get something done, we must ignore that the end will be inconclusive. But this ignoring is not an active forgetfulness. It is an active marginalizing of the marshiness, the swampiness, the lack of firm grounding at the margins, at the beginning and end ... These necessarily and actively marginalized margins haunt what we start and get done, as curious guardians. Paradoxiacally, if you do not marginalize them but make them the centre of your attention, you sabotage their guardianship.[299]

When David Attwell, pointing out to a general criticism of the author's lack of direct involvement in the severe socio-political (post)colonial conditions in South Africa, asks him whether "**Foe** might be seen as something of a retreat from the South African situation"[300], Coetzee's answer shows his concern for and determination to analyze and depict the power relations effectively working in all socio-political, cultural, economic systems of domination and in all sorts of discursive practices through which they are defined: "**Foe** is a retreat from the South African situation in a narrow temporal perspective. It is not a retreat from the subject of colonialism or from questions of

[296] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, **A Story of South Africa**, p.192.
[297] Italics mine.
[298] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Cruso*/*Roxana*", p.157.
[299] **Ibid**., p.158.
[300] Tony Morphet, "Two Interviews with J. M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987", p.461.

power. What you call 'the nature and processes of fiction' may also be called the question of *who writes*? Who takes up the position of power, pen in hand?'"[301]

Consequently, although the acts of diving into the wreck and attempting to provide the silenced with a voice of his/her own are presented as unable to bring about totally unproblematized, satisfactory results, it is obvious that what Eckstein remarks about the diving of the persona in Rich's poem is valid for the last scene in Coetzee's novel: "What we acquire by diving into the wreck is not a place in the book of myths alongside other myths but a place in the ongoing process of revisiting and understanding the thing itself ... the end describes not a static ideal but the necessity to dive again."[302]

[301] **Ibid**., p.462.
[302] Barbara Eckstein, "Iconicity, Immersion and Otherness: The Hegelian "dive" of J. M. Coetzee and Adrienne Rich", p.11.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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