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COLONIALISM AND FEMINISM IN J. M. COETZEE'S *FOE*: ISSUES OF REPRESENTATION THROUGH "VOICE" AND "SILENCE"

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ABSTRACT

In *Foe*, Coetzee writes back to texts like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* which is essentially a colonial text to deconstruct the colonial myth that such texts proliferate. However, in doing so he is conscious of producing a colonial discourse himself as he links authority with authorship. *Foe* questions the ability of the storyteller to represent the marginalized and the oppressed independently of his colonial desires. *Foe* has also attracted euro-centric feminist reading as Coetzee has employed a female narrator in the novel, a figure absent in *Robinson Crusoe* who struggles for authority of her text against the established literary canon.

The paper examines the intersection of colonialism and feminism in *Foe* with its focus on the various patterns of narration, concept of 'voice' and 'silence' and metafiction to associate the reader in the ideological decoding of meaning, to address the issues of representation and to study the role of language in the colonial process. It studies the possibility of giving 'voice' to the 'other' without imposing colonial authority. It also analyses how the disability/inability to speak lends authority to the marginalized figures, here Susan and Friday to represent their position.

Keywords: Colonialism, Feminism, language, representation, voice, silence

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Postcolonial literature is often used as a site to "write back" against the ideological assumptions and dominant discourses of the colonizer. Coetzee's *Foe* falls in the category of postcolonial reworking of colonial texts and writes back to *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. It also contains allusions to other works of Defoe. Like all Coetzee's works, *Foe* aims to reflect the "canonical formulation of the colonial encounter" (Gardiner 1987:74).

Helen Tiffin describes preface texts as "counter discourses" and points out that Coetzee 'writes back' to the discursive area within which

texts like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* operate. She asserts that Coetzee is not "not simply writing back to an English colonial text but to the whole of discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in post-colonial worlds" (23). She also lays emphasis on the continuing nature of colonial appropriation in South Africa in the form of white settler's narrative which continues to proliferate colonial legends. Dominic agrees with her when he asserts that such texts "run the risk of becoming colonizing in their turn" with "their stress on counter-discursive fields of activity" (112). Tiffin maintains;

"The complicity between narrative mode and political oppression, specifically the cryptic associations of historicism and realism in European and South African white settler's narrative, enables Coetzee to demonstrate the pernicious political role of texts in the continuing oppression of blacks and hence the importance of their dismantling" (28).

In *Foe*, Coetzee weaves various patterns of narrations, concept of voice and silence and metafiction to associate the reader in the ideological decoding of meaning, and to investigate the role of language in the colonial process and more generally the issue of representation. The novel does not simply address the dominant discourses of feminism and colonialism but links writing to power. Coetzee investigates the question of the possibility of giving "voice" to the other without imposing a colonizing authority.

The predicament of relating authority and authorship has been a central concern in postcolonial writing. However, the liberal, white South Africa writers have complicated it by writing back to the authority of canon. In *Foe*, Coetzee writes back to canonical text while conceding the possibility of reestablishing the similar authority in the process. Authorship is viewed as a colonizing activity which can be detected in appropriation of the story of a female narrator by male author-figure.

However, it would be unjustified to approach Coetzee's *Foe* as postmodern metafiction focusing on interplay of text and the role of language. In *Foe*, Coetzee blends the critique of colonialism and patriarchy by using both the discourses. All at once, *Foe* is a response to novels that deal with Euro-American hegemony and patriarchy. Lewis Macleod with his post modern approach seemingly suggests the same in "Do We of Necessity Become Puppets in a story?" or "Narrating the World: on Speech, Silence and discourse in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*":

"just as the specificity of the conflicts between Susan and Cruso, and Susan and Foe get lost in the grand narrative of feminist discourse, Friday's position in the novel has been habitually overwhelmed by

the demands of the larger (and less nuanced) narrative of a post colonial discourse." (6)

Countering an overwhelming feminist approach to *Foe* with Susan Barton as its protagonist and narrator, Jason Price in his article, "Coetzee's *Foe*: Susan's un/reliable narration and her revelation through misreading" contends that Susan's narration is not an allegory of feminist discourse but is informed by both feminist and post colonial discourse. Teresa Dovey, as well has considered this amalgamation of discourses in her essay "The Intersection of Post modern, Postcolonial and Feminist Discourse in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*", in which she contends that the novel is an allegory where every character represents one of these discourses. Dovey asserts that Coetzee's '*Foe*' offers both the female perspective and that of a colonized other through Susan Barton and Friday, respectively. Their narrative has been intermingled by Coetzee's strategy of positioning the same 'Foe' for both of them - white male European authority, whom he relates to canon. Thus, Coetzee successfully blends the critique of colonialism and feminism to focus on the white-male European hegemony that has largely dominated the fields of literature and scholarship.

The resemblance and the discrepancies with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* viewed in the first part of novel is deliberately used by Coetzee as a strategy to reveal the idealistic constructs of colonial text. The most discerning difference in *Foe* is that it is narrated by a woman, a figure absent from *Robinson Crusoe*, whilst Crusoe, the essential colonizer is relegated to margins of Coetzee's story. He dies in early stages of novel and could never make his journey back to London, to fulfill the colonizing promise. Fundamentally, by employing a woman narrator to the story, Coetzee lends voice to a figure which was silenced in the original work. However, this strategy achieves more than that. Gina Wisker points out:

"By focusing on the colonized other and a woman, the novel destabilizes race and gender norms, but more radically challenges that other oppressor, the form of canonical novel" (90).

The original text was read as an autobiographical account of its protagonist, Crusoe. He meticulously records the minutest detail of his colonial adventure giving the novel hyper-realism, whereas Crusoe (Coetzee omitted 'e') keeps himself occupied with building terraces for agriculture. Barton is perplexed at his visible indifference towards recording the details of his life on the island. She even concedes his terraces as "a foolish kind of agriculture" without being cultivated. Watt reads Crusoe's working of terraces in *Robinson Crusoe* as an allegory of economic individualism (62). Dominic Head explains the difference thus; "Where Defoe's Crusoe is the archetypal imperialist, governed by economic self-aggrandizement, Coetzee's Crusoe is concerned merely with subsistence and sterile work" (114). Jane Poyner holds a different view and links it to colonial undertaking when she asserts, "In *Foe*, Crusoe's act of "writing the land" hones the colonialist acquisition of space: fruitlessly staking out his territory, Crusoe asserts his dominion rather than productivity" (95).

Absence of a written account of the island could not prevent Friday's body to be "written upon" by colonial discourse. The signs of colonialism are evident in his status as a slave and his tongue cut out. There are hints of his being castrated as well. In Coetzee's works, sexual potency is correlated with writerly production. As such, Friday's castration can be seen as the attempt to deprive him of the authority to author his life.

Coetzee's mode of narration seeks to deconstruct the colonial 'truths' of the original text. The question of 'truth' in *Foe* focuses not on Crusoe, but the marginalized figures, Susan and Friday. Barton persistently talks about preserving the 'truth' of her account (Foe, 40; 121; 126) which she believes can be accomplished by unraveling the silenced story of Friday's tongue. Her obsession with the idea of telling the truth of her life on Crusoe's island, leads her to seek Foe, a male author who could turn the events on the island into an authoritative story as she feels her language is inadequate for the job. The inadequacy Susan feels, finds parallel in *In the Heart of the Country*, when Magda feels that the "father tongue" is not the language of her heart. This is related to the idea in

feminist critical theory that women have no true language and are forced to express themselves in the language imposed by patriarchal system.

She is plagued by the feeling that her narration could only be given substance by a male author (Foe): "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 substances of the truth." (Foe 51)

As it turned out Foe gradually appropriates Susan's story and establishes his control and power over it as the translator of her story into the language of patriarchy. It is implied in the end that she is completely written out of Robinson Crusoe and is used as a character in another of his novels: *Roxana* (Kossew, 163). Susan renders herself vulnerable due to her desperate attempt to have her story told which leads Foe to use her as his 'muse' to help promote the creative process. Susan thus stands subjugated by Foe who keeps her life in eternal suspension by keeping her at his mercy on the pretext of telling her story. Tired of this Susan pleads, "Bear it in mind, however, that my life is drearily suspended till your writing is done." (Foe 63)

However, Susan realizes that her focus on the representation of the colonial myth, the secrets of which Friday stubbornly guards would simply reproduce colonial text: "If (Friday) was not a slave, was he nevertheless, not the helpless captive of my desire to have our story told" (Foe 150).

The politics of racial otherness in *Foe* is consumed by overt focus on western - centric feminism. Barton, who begins with the belief that her voice, as a female is suppressed, acknowledges Friday's lack and his inability to represent himself. She terms herself as a "slave" and "newborn" in the realm of writing just as she refers to Friday as 'unborn'. In *Foe*, the colonialist discourse is offset by 'feminism' of *Roxana*. Susan Barton is a character borrowed from Defoe's novel *Roxana*, an essentially feminist text. Like Roxana, Susan refuses to acknowledge the daughter figure that Foe invents in the story but also reverses the femininity attributed to her as Muse by assuming the traditionally masculine position of dominance during a sexual encounter with Foe. Linking authorship with sexuality, Susan

attempts to be the 'Father' to her story and 'beget'. She says to Foe:

"It is not I who am the intended (to beget), but you ... I think of you as a mistress, or even, if I dare to speak the word, as a wife."
(Foe 152)

Atwell suggests that both Barton and Roxana wish to be the "author" of (their) lives ... controlling their destiny (110). Foe, remains the master of the story, though, and asserts his masculine authority to completely silencing and subjecting Susan as is evident when he tells Susan, "Wait to see what fruit I bear" (Foe 152). The term 'master' used throughout the text, thus takes on meaning in relation to male authorship and female subjection/enslavement (Kossew 169).

Teresa Dovey, like other feminist critics, asserts that Susan's search for her daughter is allegorical of her "attempts to retrieve women from their representation as items of exchange in men's discourse" (The Novels of J. M. Coetzee 343) and her containment in Foe's house is a metaphor for women's containment within men's texts.

In, what can be termed as feminist reading, Susan, the protagonist of *Roxana*, like Barton chooses the life of deliberate infidelity over marriage by being a mistress to various men, though in Barton's case it is necessitated by her weak economic condition. However, Roxana, after examining herself closely gives up her depraved life for marriage. Barton on the other hand, is not conscious of her femininity and challenges both Foe's authorial and sexual authority.

Entrapped by the authority of Foe and in her search of rendering herself free, Susan embarks on the reflection on the nature of storytelling and the writing process. These reflections enable Coetzee to examine those frameworks which shape stories in general, and underline the selective nature of those stories. Susan compares the author to a painter: "the story teller, by contrast ... must divine which episodes of his history hold promise of fullness, and tease from them their hidden meanings, braiding these together as one braids a rope" (Foe 88-89).

The question that troubles Susan is that of who holds authority in writing or on given story;

Barton is occupied by the question of representation. Brian Macaskill and Jeane Colleran state that:

"What Susan comes to recognize is that she herself can no longer afford to ignore the extent to which representation carries out ideological work in determining the production of meaning" (445).

Questioning the historical accounts, she says, "I ask myself what past historians of the castaway state have done - whether in despair they have not begun to make up lies," (Foe 88). Here, Susan begins to cast a doubt on her own ability to present a "true" account. She herself conceded earlier that "who but Cruso, who is no more, could truly tell Cruso's story?" (Foe 51)

Thus, Susan's initial confidence in her authority on the narrative, gradually wanes and gives way to misgivings about what constitutes 'reality' and 'fiction'. Moreover, she grows increasingly unsure about the boundaries between 'self' and 'character'. She begins to mistrust her own authority as a writer:

"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 a story and there is nothing of my own left to me. I thought I was myself [...] But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt myself. Who is speaking me?" (Foe 133)

Foe, primarily deals with the issues of language, text and authority and the discursive fields within which these operate. It brings forth the complicity between narrative mode and political oppression, particularly the obscure relation of historicism and realism in European and South African white settler's narratives.

It is interesting to note that Susan searches for identity for herself throughout the novel. She assumes several socially imposed identities, which include that of Mrs. Crusoe, to avoid scandal, of Friday's mistress and Foe's muse. Dana Draganoiu discusses the relationship between the identities imposed on Susan by others and her discourse by pointing out the inability of language to express human experience, a theme instrumental in

understanding Coetzee's critique of totalizing structures of patriarchy. These identities have been imposed on Susan by characters other than Cruso and Friday, who express "deep seated distrust in language as an effective medium for knowledge and communication" (Dragunoiu 317). Susan's acceptance of these identities can be read as her acceptance of male hegemony. However, some critics see this as an attempt to subvert the male authority as she positions herself as a masked Other, trying on identities to withhold her private 'self'.

Her search of an identity leads Susan to question the role of language. Like Noelle Bissret Morean suggests "(t) he dominated's search for ego gives rise to passionate interest in the facts of language" (60). Through her exploration of language, Susan concedes male superiority over her. When she compares the author with father, Susan accepts male hegemony and concedes that authorship is beyond the realm of women.

This exclusion of women from authorship results in difficulty Susan experiences in writing and her frustration as an author. It has also been extensively discussed that Coetzee used Susan's figure, the mad woman in women's literature, as a double of unreliable narrator, the author's double to reflect his own anxieties. Susan's misreading and her ambiguous descriptions attempt to deceive readers and questions reliability of her narration. These narrative techniques have been employed by Coetzee to simultaneously critique patriarchy and colonialism. At the same time, Coetzee employs the concept of learning how to be free through an acknowledgement of misreading.

Susan endeavors to exercise silence as a means of subverting patriarchy and empowering herself. Silence in Foe has been used as a way to usurp power. By portraying Susan's narration in this light, Coetzee enables an outlook with possibility of freedom and change, freedom from oppressive structures and institutions founded on the violence of language - the canon, orientalism and patriarchy.

Coetzee describes canon as an establishment that leave out many people based on its own constructs of gender and race thus causing more pain than enlightenment. Foe explores these canonical forms and Susan's attempt at freedom,

results in a narrative that is representative of both feminist and postcolonial discourses. Her initial belief that writing will free her undergoes a transformation after she understands the violent nature of language. She responds to canonical discourse by holding her silence.

These feminist readings throw light on the nature of authority, both of patriarchal structures and the canon but they fail to take into account the role of Susan in the colonial narrative. Susan, as a white woman occupies the ambivalent status of the colonizer and the marginalized other. Her position is further complicated owing to her "ambiguously empathetic relationship" with Friday. Her attitude towards him is a mixture of revulsion and fascination and like Magda she never entirely escapes her role as mistress to her slave. She denies her role of colonizer "... Friday was not my slave but Cruso's (Foe 76) and again "I am no slave-owner, Mr. Foe" (Foe 150). Foe makes her realize to the contrary when he says, "Nevertheless, Friday follows you, you do not follow Friday. The words you have written and hung around his neck say he is free, but who looking at Friday will believe them?" (Foe 150) Susan acknowledges that though Friday is no slave to her yet she keeps him captive in her desire to tell the island story. She strongly feels a sense of ownership of Friday, "I do not love him but he is mine" (Foe 111).

Although Susan suspects Cruso of causing Friday's mute condition, he appears to be a benevolent master: "There's no call to punish Friday. Friday has lived with me for many years. He has known no other master. He follows me in all things" (Foe 37). Realizing that Friday has never been without a master and would be helpless on his own, she assumes the position of his master and takes complete care of him. She says to the captain of the rescuing ship, "Friday is slave and child; it is our duty to care for him in all things" (Foe 39).

The ambivalence attributed to Susan's relationship with Friday emanates from the realization of the burden of her obligations as master towards Friday and a sense of responsibility for the act of colonizing Friday. She reflects, "I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There

are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will" (Foe 60).

Here, Susan assumes the identity of Mrs. Crusoe who bears the colonial burden of Friday which was once Mr. Crusoe's. In order to relieve herself of the burden, she endeavors to send Friday back to Africa, but finding no safe way to free him, she ventures out to unlock the secrets of his mind. In her desire to have her freedom, she likens Friday to "the old man of the river" (Foe 147). She explains, "There once was a fellow who took pity on an old man waiting at the riverside and offered to carry him across. Having borne him safely through the flood, he knelt to set him down on the other side. But the old man would not leave his shoulders; no, he tightened his knees about his deliverer's neck and beat him on his flanks, to be short, turned him into the beast of burden" (Foe 148).

Despite her tendencies to establish *laissez faire* and her empathy for Friday, Susan is prepared to exploit Friday's story for money and fame so that they can live in a manner. Susan here displays the colonist absorption of the voice of colonized. Thus, her attempt to tell Friday's story is an act of colonizing. According to Sue Kossew "Her very desire to make him into a story parallel's Foe's turning her into a story, they thus both take on the role of patriarchal authority in terms of betraying Friday's silence and speaking for him" (Foe 70).

The struggle of narrative power between Susan and Foe also exists between Friday and the oppressive force, represented by Susan and Foe. Friday's presence in the novel is that of silence. Susan and Foe's attempts to impose meaning on that silence have been linked with the theme of appropriation through language (Kossew 162). Susan describes Friday's silence as a "button hole carefully cross-stitched around, but empty, waiting for the button" (Foe 121). The "button" here implies Susan's interpretation of his silence. She asserts:

"Friday has no command of words and therefore no defense against being reshaped 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 laundry man and he becomes a laundry man. What is the truth of Friday? You will respond: he is neither cannibal nor laundry man, they are mere names, they do not touch his essence, he is a substantial body, he is himself, and Friday is Friday. But that is not so. No matter what he is to himself (is he anything to himself?-how can he tell us?), what he is to the world is what I make of him" (emphasis added, Foe 121-122).

Susan acknowledges that Friday has been denied speech or language in literary form and is prohibited from expressing "urgings of his heart". She recognizes Friday's "unmanning" as authorial appropriation just as her story has been appropriated by Foe. In Barton's opinion Friday's apparent mutilation implies a more atrocious mutilation: "Whether by a dumb slave I was to understand a slave unmanned" (Foe 119). Lewis Macleod argues that the novel lacks "proof that Friday has no tongue" (Foe 7). In the same vein, Susan's description of Friday's apparent castration is vague and unclear: "What had been hidden from me was revealed I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them" (Foe 119). Susan's fascination with the idea of Friday's possible castration conveys her acceptance of patriarchy. Inquiring into the 'facts' of his tongue and his genitals, she correlates the two. From her patriarchal view, a person's genitalia inform the authority of a speaker or non-speaker. She classifies Friday as being a non-male and thus explains why Friday, a male character does not tell his own story or possess greater authority. The scene represents the confluence of post colonial and feminist discourse in the novel. However, she sees her subjection as different from Friday's and contrasts her own silence as deliberate.

"Therefore, the silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born. Whereas, silence I keep regarding Bahia and other matters is chosen and purposeful, it is my own silence" (Foe 121-122).

Nevertheless, both Susan and Friday met with same fate in the hands of Foe, the patriarchal author figure who marginalizes the female voice and that of the colonized other. As figures on the margins, Barton and Friday lack substance in discourse because the power of self-representation is denied to them, yet they are substantial in their suffering. However, Susan's chosen silence implies that she assumes the subjugated role in order to have her story written. She actively participates in the colonial system instead of speaking out against the dominating patriarchy to change the undesirable aspects underlying the system.

Here, Susan correlates bodily substantiality with textual substance. Since she is a substantial body with a "substantial history", she asserts her freedom to tell her story. However, she doesn't have the same views regarding Friday. Friday, though a substantial body, cannot be substantial because he does not possess the tools of language to lend authority to his story. Disagreeing with this, like many critics, Jane Poyner contends: "Friday, in his pain, is a substantial body, yet he resists being reduced to a story or being defined/confined by (western-centric) discourse" (110).

Realizing that Friday's substantiality is worthless unless he gains access to language and learning, Susan embarks on her project to teach him how to read and write. She soon realizes the futility of her efforts. The language she teaches Friday is indeed the colonizer's language which would only inform Friday of his status as slave. Further, Friday resists learning to read and write and chooses silence. Exercising her authority as a colonizer, she quickly assumes that Friday is nothing but "only a turmoil of feelings and urges" (Foe 143). Friday's and Susan's silence find metaphor in the incident where they discovered the corpse of a baby on their way from London to Bristol. Susan finds similarity in Friday and the dead baby in the sense of Friday being "unformed and lacking substance." She also describes herself as "ignorant as a newborn baby", thus bringing forth their shared fate of being excluded from the colonial discourse (Foe 126).

The theme of silence has been extensively studied by critics. Gayatri Spivak interprets Friday's silence as a means to resistance to colonial

discourse. Spivak argues that "the 'native', whatever that might mean, is not only a victim; he or she is also an agent, he or she is a curious guardian at the margin" (172).

Resisting any kind of learning, Friday draws a series of "O's" and "rows upon rows of eyes upon feet: walking eyes. Friday's drawings have been interpreted differently by critics. Spivak has contended that the letter "o" in *Robinson Crusoe* stands for "prayer" and therefore suggest a gesture for remembering pre-colonial culture, or in other words of anti-colonial resistance (171). However, it is futile to find meaning in Friday's "O's" as they refute all reasoning. Best interpretation of these could still be his attempts to resist being figured in colonial discourse. Critics have also endeavored to unfold the secret contained in Friday's drawing of eyes upon foot. While Atwell reads it as signature of Friday in *Robinson Crusoe* (114)), Poyner suggests that the eyes represent his watchfulness and his freedom to 'read' his environment and feet represent his ability to escape (104).

Hena Maes-Jelinek speculates that the eyes might signify the stare of Friday's victimized people- it is the history of repression that resonates (238). Barbara Eckstein interprets it as "literal vantage point of slaves in hold ... beneath the sailor's feet (8). Whereas, Spivak again relating it to resistance says: "secret [is] that they hold no secret at all (171). A deeper analysis suggests, that his walking eyes convey displacement of those enslaved and colonized but also of being witness to the same.

The entire project of "silencing/enabling" or "voice/writing" is thrown in doubt in the final section of the novel, demanding reader to reassess the truth of preceding narrative. A new narrator, replacing Susan emerges, which critics speculate to be Coetzee himself. Dominic Head contends: "the appearance of voice representing Coetzee permits the author to occupy the "privileged position of the ultimate focalizer of the previous three levels" (123).

Barton's narrative, offering female perspective is completely displaced in the last section, which in Kirsten Holst Peterson's view is Coetzee's endeavor to show that there is no special insight to be gained from a woman's point of view or woman's writing. He therefore, concludes that

Coetzee himself is the 'foe' to the feminist reading or the role of female view of literature and history.

Since, in the previous sections Barton has already been associated with colonial authority, being half-colonized and Friday emerging as genuine other, such a contention stand refuted. Coetzee has been accused of establishing or imposing authorial authority in the last section, which in Dominic Head's view is only "to offer a compromise" (123).

The necessity of revealing Friday's story and to make his silences speak makes the new narrator enter Foe's house twice. Both the attempts represent a strong reverberation of defined post-colonial moment. On the first occasion, the narrator finds Barton and Foe, in bed and apparently dead and Foe lies nearby, barely alive. Head reads this as postcolonial metaphor, where Friday, the colonized outlives his oppressors who unsuccessfully endeavored to give him 'voice'. The narrator forces his mouth open to hear him speak but all he could hear is "the sounds of the island". Poyner warns against reading this as his "emotional, cultural and spiritual attachment for the island; it perhaps signifies a place of bondage (107). Dominic Head contends: "The association of Friday merely with the sounds of the island can be seen as a continuing marginalization, a stereotypical identification of the 'native' with 'native culture'" (124).

Failing in the first attempt, the narrator approaches Defoe's house the second time. This time, the narrator observes a plaque on the wall with 'Daniel Defoe, Author', inscribed on it. Atwell argues that this is a detail which positions us in the world of the original Crusoe's story, in the realm of literary history we knew before the appearance of *Foe* (115). This time, the narrator passing a cursory glance to the dead couple, concentrates on Friday and observes 'a scar like a necklace, left by a rope or chain'. The mark in itself comes to represent the "history of colonial slavery and subjugation, the mark of Friday's identity, together with his mutilation (s)" (Head 125).

The novel has a metafictional ending with the narrator diving into the ship wreck which could be anyone of the three ships: Crusoe's ship, the ship from which Susan is originally set adrift or the one which rescues her. He found bloated corpses of

Barton and the captain. Yet again, it is Friday who exhibits signs of life. Author's attempt to make Friday speak, fails again when he asks Friday: 'What is this ship?' He realizes its futility: "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" (Foe 157). The chained and mutilated body is a sign in itself and mark the history of colonized other. In his colonial effort to give him speech, the narrator passes a fingernail across his teeth "trying to find a way in".

"His month 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" (Foe, 157).

The voice that flows out of Friday's mouth as "slow stream" is a literary gesture where the narrator is challenged and silenced. Friday's silence has a moral compulsion which compels the narrator to cease his narrative. Friday's voice usurps all other voices as it runs towards the ends of the earth. The implication here is that Friday's story is the one which cannot be repressed. Poyner also suggests, "If Friday's autonomy is limited, the symbolic resonance of this scene, as Friday's voice lyrically embraces the world, is not" (108).

The metafictional dimension of resemblance between Susan Barton and Foe becomes clear as the third section comes to an end. Sue Kossew confirms that the closing section might be read as an attempt by the text itself to extract meaning from Friday "in the name of interests that are not his own" (115). There is a clear acknowledgement of the "danger of new colonization" in this venture, as is clear from Foe's warning to Susan. "You must ask yourself, Susan: 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 150). Here,

Coetzee recognizes the sterility of language. Coetzee's solution to the predicament has been of the process of decentering succeeded by "recentering", where the colonizer is decentred and the colonized is redeemed from the margins" (Head 128). This interim position enables the author in complicity to write about- without writing for the Other. Spivak concludes: "Friday is affirmed to be there, the margin caught in the empire of signs" (174).

Foe throws light on the process of writing a colonialist book and power imbued in it. Coetzee may well attempt to refuse to exercise the authority of dominant culture to represent others and the subjugated cultures, the fictions do just that, as is reaffirmed by Said, "texts are fundamentally facts of power".

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