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“*Robinson Crusoe Goes Postcolonial:
Re-Writings of the Crusoe Myth
by Derek Walcott and J.M. Coetzee*“

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**Für meine Großeltern,
Die mir immer wieder ein Lächeln auf die Lippen
zaubern.**

**For my grandparents,
For always succeeding in making me smile.**

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1. Introduction

“Mr Jennings, do you happen to be acquainted with ROBINSON CRUSOE?”

I answered that I had read ROBINSON CRUSOE when I was a child.

“Not since then?” inquired Betteredge.

“Not since then.” [...]

“He has not read ROBINSON CRUSOE since he was a child,” said Betteredge, speaking to himself – not to me.

“Let’s try how ROBINSON CRUSOE strikes him now!”

(Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, 378-379)

It is a fact universally acknowledged that Daniel Defoe’s literary classic *Robinson Crusoe*, published on April 25th, 1719,¹ has attained the status of a myth. As Ian Watt has remarked in an essay in 1951, “*Robinson Crusoe* falls almost naturally into place, not with other novels, but with the great myths of Western civilization, with *Faust*, *Don Juan* and *Don Quixote*”² (Watt, “Myth”, 95). Originating from Greek ‘mythos’, denoting ‘word’ and ‘speech’, myths are “stories shared by a group that are a part of their cultural identity” (Gill 2). As it is synonymous with ‘logos’, which appears in the original Greek for the Biblical passage “in the beginning was the *Word*” (“En arche en ho logos”, John 1:1), there has always been a close association between the potent word ‘logos’ and the often misunderstood word ‘mythos’.³ According to Paul Veyne, in *Did the Greeks Believe In Their Myths?* (1988), “[m]yth is truthful, but figuratively so. It is not historical truth mixed with lies; it is a high philosophical teaching that is entirely true, *on the condition that*, instead of taking it literally, one sees in it an allegory” (Veyne 62, cited in Waugh and Wilkinson 237; emphasis added).

Readers may wonder why I decided to write a thesis entitled “*Robinson Crusoe*” *Goes Postcolonial: Re-Writings of the Crusoe Myth by Derek Walcott and J.M. Coetzee*. It is precisely the words of the kindly butler, Mr. Betteridge, uttered “with an expression of compassionate curiosity, tempered by superstitious awe” (Collins 379), in Wilkie Collins’ detective novel *The Moonstone*, cited as an epigraph to this chapter, that puts

¹ Cf. Fitzgerald 183. Unless indicated otherwise, all subsequent references to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (hereafter cited parenthetically as *RC*) refer exclusively to *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Written by Himself* (1719). Its sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and the later, probably separately conceived, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720), will not be considered here; as noted by Downie (“Contexts”, 14-15), *Robinson Crusoe* has increasingly come to denote the first part only, if not the island episode itself.

² *Robinson Crusoe* has become a powerful myth widely known in the whole Western world. So popular was *Crusoe* that “in [1920s] France a large umbrella [was] still called *un robinson*” (Ellis, *Twentieth*, iii).

³ Cf. Gill 2.

my personal interest in Defoe's novel into a nutshell: "Let's try how ROBINSON CRUSOE strikes him now!" Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was amongst my favourite (and also amongst the first) books I read as a child, and I remember how I admired its eponymous hero for surviving against all odds, and succeeding in re-creating English civilisation on a desert island out of next to nothing. However, re-reading the novel now as an adult, I was *struck*, or rather *shocked* to recognise the many ideologies surrounding racism and slavery in the British Empire in the eighteenth century which the novel, upon closer reading, brings to light. Indeed, it is hardly surprising that contemporary critics consider *Robinson Crusoe* to be "the prototypical colonial novel of the eighteenth century, if not in all of English literature" (McInelly 1), which, in the nineteenth century, "became a myth, promoting popular colonialism, representing and legitimating the British Empire to the British people" (Phillips 125).

Even while Brett C. McInelly is certainly right in claiming that *Robinson Crusoe*, "[f]eaturing a British trader as its hero and set on a distant Caribbean island, cries out for study in its colonial contexts" (McInelly 1), the novel has, on account of it being a somewhat 'mixed' form of narrative, been interpreted (and continues to be interpreted) in an intriguing variety of ways, as evidenced by the wealth of critical debate surrounding the question whether the novel might best be described as "a religious allegory, as a survival narrative, an economic parable, or whether the text conveys the spiritual or even mystical dimension of Crusoe's self-discovery"⁴ (D. Sinnewe 62). In a sense, *Robinson Crusoe* became everybody's "bible", "whether they were economic theorists, missionaries, education theorists, or of course, writers of empire" (Logan 29). As such, the novel has been discussed as an example of bourgeois economics, for instance, by Karl Marx, who, in *Das Kapital* (1867), viewed Crusoe as the symbol of 'homo economicus', and, more recently, by Michael Shinagel, in his *Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility* (1968). George A. Starr, in *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (1965), has studied *Robinson Crusoe* as a document in the tradition of religious dissent, as has J. Paul Hunter in *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (1966), who has linked the narrative with Puritan subliterate traditions such as the 'Providence' tradition, the guide tradition, and spiritual autobiography. Rousseau, in *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* (1762), a semi-fictional work on the nature of education and of man, deemed the *Robinson Crusoe* story central

⁴ For an overview of the reception of *Robinson Crusoe* from the eighteenth century to today, including its reception on the continent and as a children's book, see Petzold (1982): 36-63.

for the education of growing boys. Later Robinsonades,⁵ such as Johann David Wyss' well-known *The Swiss Family Robinson* (originally published as *Der Schweizerische Robinson*, 1812), extended its significance, notably to what Freud had called the 'family romance', so that "[w]hole families would be cast away and prosper in isolation – a theme with evident appeal in an age of colonial migrations". (Fausett 2) One of many other well-known readings of *Robinson Crusoe* is Ian Watt's influential *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), which distills *Crusoe's* essence to its 'circumstantial realism', identifying it as the first novel precisely because of the detailed attention Defoe gives to an 'ordinary' individual.⁶ Given my specific interest in Defoe's novel, my own approach to *Robinson Crusoe* will consciously be a selective one: departing from Louis James' observation that "it is partly because of its problematic character [...] that *Crusoe* has remained one of Europe's central texts for nearly four centuries" (James 1), I will focus merely on the colonial themes and issues in *Robinson Crusoe*, disregarding interpretations from various other angles (such as those outlined above) that might also be possible.

This thesis starts out from the crucial assumption that any investigation of "the Crusoe myth" (James 3) *must* begin with Defoe's original due to the latter's 'authoritative' status, which derives, at least in part, from Defoe's portrayal of himself as a 'historian', an impartial 'collector' of facts, who, as is well-known, insists in his Preface that *Robinson Crusoe* was "a just History of Fact" (RC 4):

The Story is told with Modesty, with Seriousness, and with a religious Application of Events to the Uses to which wise Men always apply them [...]. The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it: And however thinks, because all such things are dispatch'd, that the Improvement of it, as well to the Diversion, as to the Instruction of the Reader, will be the same; and as such, he thinks [...] he does them a great Service in the Publication. (RC 3-4)

Such a purported 'realism' is, of course, no more than "a discursive formation, a mode offering the illusion of a transparent representation of a social world, while obscuring the fact that the social reality it purports to represent is linguistically constructed"

⁵ For an overview of the genre along with over 200 versions of *Robinson Crusoe* and historical Robinsonades, see the digital collection of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature (cited in the bibliography under "Baldwin Library").

⁶ In a similar vein, the novel has also been described, as noted by Thieme, as "one of the modern world's first great do-it-yourself manuals" (Thieme, *Canon*, 55), documenting that "every Man may be in time Master of every mechanick Art" (RC 79).

(Thieme, *Canon*, 54). Yet, as Theophilus Cibber [Robert Shiels] (1703-1758) has stated in his article “Daniel De Foe”, published in *The Lives of the Poets* (1753),

Robinson Crusoe [...] was written in so natural a manner, and with so many probable incidents, that, for some time after its publication, it was judged by most people to be a true story. (Cibber 264)

By August 1719, *Robinson Crusoe* had already been reprinted four times, whereafter new editions were published again and again, so that by the end of the nineteenth century, there had appeared “at least 200 English editions, including abridged texts; 110 translations; 115 revisions and adaptations; and 277 imitations” (Rogers, *Heritage*, 11). Certainly, since its publication in 1719, “no single book in the history of Western literature has spawned more editions, translations, imitations, continuations, and sequels than *Crusoe*” (Seidel 8, cited in Nikoleishvili 2). Thus, *Robinson Crusoe* has proved to be “an inexhaustible literary myth” (Spaas, “Conclusion”, 320), a “story [that] has been rediscovered and reinterpreted through successive generations in a variety of variations on the crucial themes of solitude, survival, the relation of man to nature and the relation to others” (Stimpson, “Preface”, viii), whilst remaining faithful to its fundamental paradigm. Robert M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1857), William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Muriel Spark’s *Robinson* (1958), and Michel Tournier’s *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique (Friday)* (1967), and *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage (Friday and Robinson)* (1977) are only some of the most prominent examples of the literary genre Johann Gottfried Schnabel called the ‘Robinsonade’⁷ in the Preface to his work *Die Insel Felsenburg* (1731).

In the following chapter (“Theoretical Background: The Politics of Re-Reading and Re-Writing”), I shall begin by orientating myself on two inter-related themes: the re-reading of literary ‘classics’ from the point of view of postcolonial scholarship and experience, and their re-writing by postcolonial writers. First, I will discuss Edward W. Said’s formulation of a mode of reading called ‘contrapuntal’ (section 2.1, “Edward Said’s Contrapuntal Reading Method”), which will be adopted to facilitate a reading of *Robinson Crusoe* that identifies the deep interrelation between European canonical texts

⁷ A Robinsonade, often also referred to as ‘desert-island romance’, ‘survival story’, or ‘castaway story’ (Siegl 8), might be defined as “a story or an episode within a story where an individual or group of individuals with limited resources try to survive on a desert island” (Bertsch 79). Broadly speaking, the Robinsonade “repeats the themes of *Robinson Crusoe*; usually it incorporates or adapts specific physical aspects of Crusoe’s experience and is an obvious rewriting of the Crusoe story” (Fisher 130, cited in Nikoleishvili 3).

and the imperial enterprise. In fact, Said's contrapuntal reading method is a strategy designed to re-read the "great canonical texts, and perhaps the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" (Said, *Culture*, ii). In particular, Said's related notion of 'affiliation' "releases a text from its isolation, and imposes upon the scholar or critic the presentational problem of historically recreating or reconstructing the possibilities from which the text arose" (Said, *World*, 175). I will then proceed to an outline of the intellectual contexts of postcolonialism (section 2.2, "'The Empire Writes Back': Postcolonial and Feminist Re-Writings of the Canon"), whereby I will concern myself with several key notions such as 'post(-)colonial',⁸ 'writing back', 're-writing', 'canonical counter-discourse', 'pre-text', and 'con-text', all of which can be seen as conceptualisations of postcolonial resistance to canonical discourse. Thus it is not surprising that

it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourse and discursive strategies from its position within and between two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in its colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. Thus the rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the post-colonial enterprise. (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 196)

Furthermore, a parallel will be drawn between postcolonial and feminist discourses to the extent that "feminist work is a constitutive part of the field of postcolonialism" (McLeod 172), resulting from the close intertwining between their history and concerns.⁹ Thus, not only postcolonial, but also feminist critics and writers will be shown to have re-read and re-written the canon. This consistent framework will ultimately help to relate the two postcolonial works chosen – Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978) and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) – to *Robinson Crusoe* and compare them to each other.

In chapter 3, entitled "Re-Reading Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)", I will first proceed to a brief historical sketch of colonialist politics and colonial expansion, which were a topical issue at the time of *Robinson Crusoe*'s publication (section 3.1, "Defoe

⁸ As for much of this thesis, postcolonialism will be considered "not just in terms of strict historical periodisation, but as referring to disparate forms of *representations, reading practices and values*", which "can circulate *across* the barrier between colonial rule and national independence" (McLeod 5), the hyphenless spelling will be used unless when quoting from other critics.

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the various intersections between feminism and postcolonial criticism, see e.g. Gilman (1985).

and the British Imperial Ideology”).¹⁰ In fact, Defoe’s novel was published just before a time Elleke Boehmer terms “high (also called new or forward) imperialism”, reflecting “colonial experiences in India, Malaya, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, Canada, Ireland, Britain, and different regions in Africa” (Boehmer xv). As will be argued, and as Paula Backscheider has stated in her biography of Defoe, Defoe “had been a tireless proponent of colonization and the development of new markets and improved trade routes” (Backscheider 439)¹¹ – an insistence which appears throughout Defoe’s writings on economics, and finds its echo especially in *Robinson Crusoe*. As the real-life adventures of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721) have always been an vital part of the Crusoe myth, a brief account of his life will be given here, too. By adopting Said’s ‘contrapuntal’ reading approach, this thesis will then endeavour to re-read *Robinson Crusoe* in relation to its colonial contexts (section 3.2, “The Imperialist and Colonialist Aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* – A Colonial Myth”), by focusing on the following three broader themes, which help to relate re-writings directly to them: “The Politics of Form”, “The Representation of Imperialism and Colonialism”, and “The Representation and Images of the Other”. Already in 1909, in a lecture on Defoe in Trieste, James Joyce famously read *Robinson Crusoe* as a “prophecy of empire”, and concluded that “[w]hoever rereads this simple, moving book in the light of subsequent history cannot help but fall under its prophetic spell” (Joyce 25):

The true symbol of the British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who, cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman. He is the true *prototype of the British colonist*. (Joyce 25; emphasis added)¹²

In section 3.3 (“The Representation of Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Text”), the connection between the adventure narrative and its cultural imaginary will be addressed. Critics have frequently disregarded sexuality in *Robinson Crusoe* and considered the novel to be profoundly ‘asexual’, with Robert A. Erickson, for instance, emphasising

¹⁰ As the biography of Defoe will not be addressed here, see e.g. Fitzgerald (1954), Backscheider (1989), and Richetti (2005) for standard biographies of Defoe. For a more extensive treatment of the historical background of Defoe’s lifetime and *Robinson Crusoe*, see e.g. Petzold (1982): 9-17 and Kramer 106-133.

¹¹ In *A Plan Of The English Commerce*, Defoe remarked upon the benefits of colonisation through a remarkable use of anadiplosis: “An Encrease of Colonies encrease People, People encrease the Consumption of Manufactures, Manufactures Trade, Trade Navigation, Navigation Seamen, and altogether encrease the Wealth, Strength and Prosperity of *England*.” (Defoe, *Plan*, 367)

¹² Leslie Stephen, too, in his article “Defoe’s Novels”, first published in *Cornhill Magazine* in 1868, called Crusoe “the typical Englishman of his time” (Stephen 52).

Crusoe's "womanless condition" (52)¹³ – claims which will be shown, however, to be not entirely accurate. Whilst it is certainly true that Defoe, in *Robinson Crusoe*, treats the sexual theme in a very different manner than in, say, *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) – novels which place their female narrators' sexual adventures at their centre – it will be argued here that sexuality is latently present in *Robinson Crusoe*, in particular via allusions to Crusoe's potential homosexual desire and his colonisation of land, "the metaphoric virgin whose assets may be culled for man's economic benefit" (Wiegman 43). Moreover, upon closer reading, female figures do appear in *Robinson Crusoe*, even if only very briefly, their presence being dismissed as insignificant.

In chapters 4 ("Re-Writing *Robinson Crusoe* from the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*") and 5 ("Re-Writing *Robinson Crusoe* from South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*"), I will proceed to a discussion of Derek Walcott's 1978 theatrical two-hander *Pantomime* and J.M. Coetzee's 1986 novel *Foe* as two of the more provocative postcolonial works that 'write back' to Defoe's novel.¹⁴ Thereby, I will not strive to arrive at a general definition of 'postcolonial', as many critics before have done, but will rather attempt to locate the two authors in relation to their regional histories. Thus, in sections 4.1 ("Derek Walcott and Postcolonial Literature" and 5.1 ("J.M. Coetzee and Postcolonial Literature"), I will first briefly discuss Walcott and Coetzee's personal backgrounds respectively, as well as attempt to locate the authors in the context of postcolonial literature. Subsequently, in section 4.2, I shall address some of *Pantomime*'s predominant themes, namely "The Uses and Misuses of Language", "Re-writing the Master-Slave Dialectic", "Caribbean Identity and Its Theatrical Expression", as well as "The Gender Subplot as 'Confessional Psychodrama'". In section 5.2, I will take a detailed look at Coetzee's novel as far as "Work, Religion and Society", "The Politics of Authorship and Gender", "The Colonial Other", and "*Foe* as A Postcolonial Utopia" are concerned.

¹³ The absence of women and the sexual theme appears to be a feature shared by many subsequent adventure narratives, including R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954). Even in the case of Elizabeth Whittaker's story of Robina the girl Crusoe in *The Girl's Own Paper* (from 23 December 1882 to 21 July 1883), "[i]t is interesting to note [...] that while the story is written about and for girls, when Robina returns to the island she remains resolutely celibate to the end" (James 3).

¹⁴ My decision to treat these two works chronologically, i.e. according to their date of publication, does not imply any intention whatsoever to show any kind of 'development' in Walcott and Coetzee's treatment of the Crusoe myth; there is no direct evidence in *Foe* that Coetzee was familiar with Walcott's play.

As will emerge from the overall discussion, both Walcott and Coetzee re-politicise the Crusoe myth by drawing readers' attention to the possibility of creative change through modified tropes of race and gender, and the socio-political function of language or textuality.¹⁵ The characters in Walcott's play constantly reverse and thereby revise the roles of white Crusoe and black Friday in their attempts to enact the complex issues of racial identity in the Caribbean.¹⁶ Coetzee questions the authority of Defoe's canonical text by opening the latter to the suppressed voices of the white woman, the Other of gender, and the racial Other, Friday, thereby raising the question of how far Coetzee was making use of *Robinson Crusoe* in order to explore the South African context. As will be suggested in the Conclusion, one major area in which Walcott and Coetzee's re-writings differ from one another concerns the extent to which they make use of Caribbean and South African contexts respectively in order to cross-reference the Crusoe myth; in other words, the writers will be shown to address the present of their particular societies to quite varying degrees in their re-writings. However, Walcott as well as Coetzee's re-writings will be shown to facilitate a 'contrapuntal' reading of the imperial text, so that intertextual comparisons such as those employed in this thesis enable us to see refreshingly new perspectives in the original *Robinson Crusoe*.

¹⁵ See also Burnett, "Redemption", 240.

¹⁶ Cf. James 6.

2. Theoretical Background: The Politics of Re-Reading and Re-Writing

2.1 Edward Said's Contrapuntal Reading Method

The real potential of post-colonial liberation is the liberation of all mankind from imperialism [...] [and the] reconceiving of human experience in non-imperialist terms.
(Edward Said, *Culture*, 274, 276).

Edward Said's classic study *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) has been described as "an extended scrutiny of the literary representation of colonial history" (Lyons 101). Focussing upon the earlier works of the colonial era ranging from Austen to Dickens, Conrad and Kipling, Said here famously argued for what he termed 'contrapuntal reading' (Said, *Culture*, 59), a method of literary analysis that is, in fact, a form of 'reading back' which attempts to bring out elements of the repressed but essential presence of colonial discourse in (pre-)modern European canonical texts,¹⁷ which are revealed to be, for the most part, complicit with the political project of imperialism. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) had already initiated what came to be known as 'colonial discourse theory', examining the ways in which colonial discourse operated as an instrument of power:¹⁸

Colonial discourse tends to exclude, of course, statements about the exploitation of the resources of the colonized, the political status accruing to colonizing powers, the importance to domestic politics of the development of an empire, all of which may be compelling reasons for maintaining colonial ties. Rather it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonized, the primitive nature of other races, the barbaric depravity of colonized societies, and therefore the duty of the imperial power [...] to advance the civilization of the colony through trade, administration, cultural and moral improvement. (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 43)

The essential points concerning Said's contrapuntal reading method, which are spread across several chapters, can be summarised as follows. The term, borrowed from the field of music,¹⁹ suggests a responsive reading which provides a 'counterpoint' to a text, thereby "enabling the emergence of colonial implications that might otherwise remain hidden" (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 55-56). As such, contrapuntal reading "extend[s] our

¹⁷ According to McLeod, the 'canon' of English literature refers to "the writers and their work which are believed to be of particular, rare value for reasons of aesthetic beauty and moral sense" (McLeod 140).

¹⁸ Cf. Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 41-42.

¹⁹ Being himself a devoted pianist, Said's invention of the term springs from his interest in the contrapuntal musical performances by pianist Glenn Gould, in which he found his definition of a 'contrapuntal' relationship between imperial and postcolonial narratives. (Cf. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 93)

reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded”²⁰ (Said, *Culture*, 79). Despite not specifically referring to Bakhtin, Said, in his arguments, does relate to Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony:

As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is [...] an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. In the same way [...] we can read and interpret English novels. (Said, *Culture*, 59-60)

In its essence, contrapuntal reading is a contextual reading, which involves making explicit the ideological *affiliation* between texts, or “forms, statements, and other *aesthetic* elaborations” on the one hand, and historical contexts, or “institutions, agencies, classes, and fairly amorphous social forces” (Said, *World*, 174) on the other hand. ‘Contrapuntal reading’ is thus a form of ‘affiliative’ reading, which, in contrast to ‘filiation’, refuses “the homogeneously utopian domain of texts connected serially, seamlessly, immediately only with other [European canonical] texts”, and instead strives to “make visible, to give materiality back to the strands holding the text to society, author and culture”, including its “diffusion and reception, values drawn upon, values and ideas assumed, a framework of consensually held tacit assumptions” (Said, *World*, 174-175):

In practical terms, ‘contrapuntal reading’ [...] means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England [...]. The point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it. (Said, *Culture*, 78-79)

A contrapuntal reading of, for instance, Austen’s *Mansfield Park* “can reveal the extent to which the privileged life of the English upper classes is established upon the profits made from West Indian plantations, and, by implication, from the exploitation of the colonized” (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 56). Reading the novel contrapuntally thus “not only involves spotting moments when the colonies are represented; it is also to bring to

²⁰ Before its application to literature, Said evoked the concept of ‘contrapuntality’ in terms of the exile’s increased awareness of various dimensions: “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that [...] is contrapuntal.” (Said, “Mind”, 55)

the novel a knowledge of the history of the Caribbean which the novel is not necessarily writing but upon which it ultimately depends” (McLeod 147). In order for a true historical reading to take place, critics must show themselves aware of the “danger of imposing upon the literature from the past the concerns of the present” (McLeod 157) – a critical response described by Said as a ‘rhetoric of blame’ (Said, *Culture*, 115), which condemns *retrospectively* literary works which seem to maintain a colonial world view, and thus does not “see complementarity and interdependence” between history and literature, but “isolated [...] experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history” (Said, *Culture*, 115).

One aspect fundamental to contrapuntal reading is that of achronology. Whereas by the end of the nineteenth century, the texts of European ‘high’ and ‘official’ culture were still “mysteriously exempted from analysis whenever the causes, benefits, and evils of imperialism were discussed” – “culture participates in imperialism yet is somehow excused for its role” (Said, *Culture*, 128) – the wealth of Said’s concept of contrapuntality lies in reading the past through the eyes of the present, that is, reading the major works of imperialism “retrospectively and heterophonically with other histories [...] counterpointed against them” (Said, *Culture*, 195). Thus, we might now read Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) in the light of Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966); Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) through the eyes of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958); Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1860-1861) along with Peter Carey’s *Jack Maggs* (1997); and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1623) in the light of George Lamming’s *Water with Berries* (1971), to name but a few of the best-known examples.²¹

In this thesis, a text that exists in a ‘dominant’ culture, that is, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, will be read together with two texts from ‘othered’ cultures, that is, Walcott’s *Pantomime* and Coetzee’s *Foe*. The juxtaposition of these narratives will show how, despite being distinct on the surface, they are, in fact, connected and mutually constitutive. Since what is left unsaid in the colonial text might be as significant as what is said, *Robinson Crusoe* will be read with a consideration of small plot lines, or even phrases, so that eventually, its simultaneous reading with the two ‘other’ histories will enable a heightened awareness of the marginal voices ‘once forcibly excluded’ from the

²¹ For an overview of (postcolonial) re-writings of *Robinson Crusoe*, see chapter 3 entitled “Subversions” in Spaas and Lieve (1996).

‘metropolitan history’. As Firdous Azim, in *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (1993), has asserted, “[i]t is because the discourse of the novel is based on the notion of a sovereign subject, and the position of that subject is determined within a confrontation with its Other, that the novel of adventure occupies such a significant place in the annals of the English novel” (Azim 37). Yet, as Said has pointed out, cultural identities are “contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions: Greeks always require barbarians, and Europeans Africans, Orientals, etcetera” (Said, *Culture*, 60). Hence, the story in *Robinson Crusoe* is that of Crusoe as well as Friday and, as will be seen in the case of Coetzee’s text, that of a female character, too. Whilst the suppression of ‘other histories’ in *Robinson Crusoe* is inextricably linked with the telling of the main story, literary criticism is compelled to consider both.

2.2 ‘The Empire Writes Back’: Postcolonial and Feminist Re-Writings of the Canon

Many of the most interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending toward a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory taken back from the empire. (Said, *Culture*, 34-35)

It has to be stated that the term ‘post-colonial’, used by Edward Said in the epigraph to this chapter, is, of course, difficult to define and has caused much debate amongst scholars.²² In her essay “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Postcolonialism’” (1992), Anne McClintock, for instance, has criticised the ‘post’ in ‘postcolonial’, which is argued to imply colonialism to be the “determining marker of history” (McClintock 255) and fails to take into account neo-colonial operations throughout the world.²³ Dennis Walder, in his work *Post-Colonial Literatures in English* (1998), an introductory examination of the field of postcolonial history, language, and theory, has used the term “for want of a better term” (Walder 1), as “an acknowledgment of its increasing currency in contemporary literary and cultural theory” (Walder 6). Yet, it is clear that “[p]ost-colonial theory is needed because it has a subversive posture towards

²² According to Walder, “[i]n its simplest, and indeed most familiar meaning, the hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ means post, or after, the colonial period” and can thus be understood to “refer to the writings which emerged in the post-colonial period” (Walder 2).

²³ For further discussion, see e.g. Shohat (1994).

the canon in celebrating the neglected or marginalized, bringing with it a particular politics, history and geography” (Walder 60). As such, one of the main themes addressed by postcolonial literature is

large-scale historical phenomena [...] involving shifting power relationships between different parts of the world, as well as between people within particular territories. It demands a kind of double awareness: of the colonial inheritance as it continues to operate within a specific culture, community or country; and of the changing relations between these cultures, communities and countries in the modern world. (Walder 2)

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in their introduction to *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), the first ‘theorised’ account of the subject, have stated that the term ‘post-colonial’ is used “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 2). Despite having created a “grand theory of post-colonialism”, their work has been charged with neglecting the cultural and historical differences between writers, so that “particularities are homogenised [...] into a more or less unproblematic theory of the Other” (Mishra and Hodge 278). Yet, the book’s main achievement certainly is its highlighting of the importance of the ‘writing back’ process to the canon,²⁴ which has been only *one* out of a variety of postcolonial strategies – albeit a fundamentally important one – employed in order to transform and contest the dominant colonial discourse. A statement by author Fred D’Aguiar seems to be interesting in this context:

My own preference is for a story which is kaleidoscopic, with a number of different voices rather than one character speaking for the entire novel. I suppose it may be a post-colonial viewpoint. (Fred D’Aguiar, “Interview, cited in Walder xiii)

Unilateral representations such as that by Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*, which, in D’Aguiar’s words, is non-‘kaleidoscopic’ insofar as it prioritises Crusoe’s singular narrative voice at the expense of ‘a number of different voices’, have thus provoked a practice called ‘writing back’, ‘re-writing’, ‘revision’, and ‘oppositional literature’, all of which have been used to identify “a body of postcolonial works that take a classic English text as a departure point, supposedly as a strategy for contesting the authority of the canon of English literature” (Thieme, *Canon*, 1). Adopting the notion of ‘counter-discourse’ from Richard Terdiman’s *Discourse/Counter-Discourse* (1985), which had

²⁴ The practice of ‘writing back’ is claimed to have begun with the first writings from settler colonies after the seventeenth century. Cf. Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 133-145.

examined the “capacity of established discourses to ignore or absorb would-be subversion” (Terdiman 13) in nineteenth-century French writing, Helen Tiffin, in the late 1980s, introduced into postcolonial studies the notion of ‘canonical counter-discourse’. Tiffin argued that “[l]iterary revolution in post-colonial worlds has been an intrinsic component of social ‘disidentification’ from the outset” (Tiffin 23), its discursive strategies involving a “mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified ‘local’” (Tiffin 23).

John Marx, in his article “Postcolonial Literature and the Western Literary Canon” (2004), has summed up the production of counter-discourse into three options. Firstly, postcolonial re-writings are held to “*repudiate* the canon” so that “readers have become well practiced [sic!] in treating work from Europe’s former colonies as the antithesis of canonical writing and as an instrumental component in efforts to recover oral and print traditions that imperialism threatened to obliterate” (Marx 83). Secondly, postcolonial re-writings have been shown to “*revise* canonical texts and concepts”, their “critique of Western tradition involving the rewriting of specific works [...] and the appropriation of entire genres (the *Bildungsroman*, for example, or the domestic romance)” (Marx 83). The third option constitutes what Marx (95) calls the ‘mainstreaming of postcolonial literature’. Whilst “some critics believe that re-writings can never fully challenge the authority of the ‘classic’ text”, but instead “continue to invest literary ‘classics’ with value by making them a point of reference for postcolonial texts” (McLeod 169), Marx, on the contrary, has emphasised that postcolonial re-writings are not simply oppositional; despite their apparent ‘subjection’ to the canon, their ultimate aim is seen as introducing heterogeneity into canonical texts:

The fact that a writer’s capacity to represent a place and its people is widely considered relevant to determining canonicity suggests how dramatically postcolonial literature has changed what we mean when we say “the canon.” [...] Even newly celebrated work that emerges from the former colonies or from the migrant populations engendered by imperialism helps to transform the canon into a more heterogeneous archive. Instead of opposing or revising it from outside, postcolonial literature increasingly *defines* a new sort of canon from an established position inside its boundaries. (Marx 85)

Similarly, John McLeod, in *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000), has considered canonical texts as ‘resources’, or ‘points of departure’ with which postcolonial writers can “enter into a productive critical dialogue”: “[w]riters have *put literary ‘classics’ to*

new uses for which they were scarcely originally intended.” (McLeod 143) Re-writings thus go further than merely “‘fill[ing] in’ the gaps perceived in the source-text” (McLeod 168); “they also make available new ways of dealing with the ‘classics’ which make new meanings possible” (McLeod 143). When re-writings “*resist* or *challenge* colonialist representations of colonised peoples and cultures perceived in the source-text and popular readings of it”, these might then be considered ‘postcolonial’, “implicat[ing] the reader as an *active agent* in determining the meanings made possible by the dialogue between the source-text and its re-writing” (McLeod 168; emphases in the original).

Departing from McLeod’s assumptions/observations, John Thieme, in *Post-Colonial Contexts: Writing Back to the Canon* (2001) has used the terms ‘pre-text’ for the canonical ‘source-text’ and ‘con-text’ for its postcolonial re-writing,²⁵ the latter of which is intended

to refer also to the full range of discursive situations (contexts), many of which have little or nothing to do with the canon, from which the counter-discursive works emerge. Often the English pre-texts are only invoked as a launching pad (pretext) for a consideration of broader concerns. (Thieme, *Canon*, 5)

As merely ‘oppositional’ readings of counter-discursive writings fail to take into account their variety of interpretive strategies,²⁶ Thieme has argued that “the limitations inherent in a view that only locates such writing in relation to its English ‘originals’” needs to be borne in mind, especially “when they are frequently disputing the very ground on which any such encounter might take place” (Thieme, *Canon*, 5). Whilst analyses of how postcolonial con-texts *do* ‘write back’ to the canon certainly need to take place, “[t]he extent to which postcolonial con-texts are indebted to their English pretexts varies considerably and the relationship is virtually always complicated by the introduction of other intertexts that unsettle the supposedly direct line of descent from the canonical ‘original’” (Thieme, *Canon*, 7). Postcolonial con-texts thus defy domination by their colonial precursors, constructing instead their “own literary genealogy from a multiplicity of sources” (Thieme, *Canon*, 9). Borrowing Said’s terminology surrounding the ‘family metaphor of filial engenderment’ (*World*, 174, 117), useful for describing how colonised societies substitute filiative connections to

²⁵ Cf. Thieme, *Canon*, 2.

²⁶ Cf. Thieme, *Canon*, 3.

indigenous cultural traditions for affiliations to institutions of empire,²⁷ Thieme proceeds to argue that “filiative relationships are unsettled by affiliative identifications” (Thieme, *Canon*, 7), ultimately resulting in the subversion of the authority of the ‘original’ text:

Straightforward lines of descent, such as one, at least supposedly, finds in canonical English literature, are replaced by literary genealogies that reject colonial parent figures, or at least only allow such figures to exist as members of an extended, and usually hybrid, ancestral family. [...] Problematic parentage becomes a major trope in postcolonial con-texts, where the genealogical bloodlines of transmission are frequently delegitimised by multiple ancestral legacies, usually but not always initiated by imperialism. Orphans and bastards abound in postcolonial texts and the engagement with issues of parentage is often [...] intense. (Thieme, *Canon*, 7-8)

In this thesis, the terms ‘re-writing’ and ‘counter-discourse’ rather than ‘oppositional literature’ will be employed, as, as has been hinted at in the introduction, both Walcott and Coetzee’s re-writings of the canonical Western text, *Robinson Crusoe*, constitute only a ‘launching pad’ in order to consider ‘broader concerns’; postcolonial writers from formerly colonised countries, in Salman Rushdie’s words, ‘write back with a vengeance’²⁸ to the powerful metropolitan centre, making the dominant language and its discursive forms “bear the burden of another experience” (Achebe, *Morning*, 62).

This urge to express the ‘burden of another experience’, that is, the ‘gaps’ and silences in canonical texts with the aim to give voice to those previously marginalised or silenced is, however, not limited to the field of postcolonialism. Both imperialism and patriarchy, that “system of male authority which oppresses women through social, political and economic institutions” (Bhasin 5), can be seen to exert a similar kind of domination, so that the experiences of colonised subjects and those of women in patriarchy can be paralleled in a variety of ways. As Ashcroft et al. have observed regarding gender and colonial oppression,

[w]omen in many societies have been relegated to the position of ‘Other’, marginalized and, in a metaphorical sense, ‘colonized’, forced to pursue guerilla warfare against imperial domination from positions deeply imbedded in, yet fundamentally alienated from, that *imperium* [...]. They share with colonized [...] peoples an intimate experience of the politics of oppression [...], and like

²⁷ Cf. Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 106.

²⁸ Cf. Rushdie 8. Of course, re-writing is not limited to (formerly) colonised countries: “White Westerners, too, seek their identity in response and in contrast to those who have earlier tried to define it for them. Especially later white Western writers, who can be called ‘postcolonial’ based on time though not on space, also seek new possibilities for encounters with the postcolonised.” (Farn 30)

them they have been forced to articulate their experiences in the language of their oppressors. (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 174-175)

Proceeding from feminist criticism of the 1980s, which acknowledged that Western feminism's assumption of a universalist category of the 'feminine' was, in fact, based on a middle-class, Eurocentric bias, Chandra T. Mohanty, in her essential essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1991), has found worrying analytic presuppositions in 'First World' views of 'Third World' women, as "[t]he assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, [...] implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally" (Mohanty 55). Yet, 'Third World' women have been subject to what Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (1986) have called a 'double colonization', that is, a *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchal and colonialist practices.²⁹ As such, feminism as "the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women" (Smith 49) has, just like postcolonial criticism, a significant political agenda in that "both discourses link a disruptive involvement in books with a project towards revolutionary disruption in society at large" (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 177).

In 1985, Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn aptly characterised "the two major foci of feminist scholarship" as consisting not only of "deconstructing dominant male patterns of thought and social practice", but also of "reconstructing female experience previously hidden or overlooked" (Greene and Kahn, 6). Thus feminist, like postcolonial, critics and writers have re-read and re-written the canon,

demonstrating clearly that a canon is produced by the intersection of a number of readings and reading assumptions legitimized in the privileging hierarchy of a 'patriarchal' or 'metropolitan' concept of 'literature'. This offers the possibility of reconstructing the canon [...]. The subversion of patriarchal literary forms themselves has also been an important part of the feminist project. (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 176)

Many European myths and master narratives have been re-written from a feminist perspective. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, being a site of immense cultural power, continues to engage an extraordinarily wide range of scholars, not only, but also because of the debates the novel has encouraged concerning the representation of gender difference in (post)colonial contexts. Jean Rhys, too, in her *Wide Sargasso Sea*

²⁹ On this point, see also Spivak (1985, 1987).

(1966), a prequel to *Jane Eyre*, re-wrote Charlotte Brontë's famous 1847 novel so that "the woman from the colonies is not sacrificed as an insane animal for her sister's consolidation" (Spivak, "Three", 251).³⁰ Similarly, both Carol Ann Duffy, in her poem "Eurydice", from her collection of poems *The World's Wife* (1999), and Sarah Ruhl, in her 2004 play of the same name, have re-written the classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, just like Margaret Atwood, in her 2005 novella *The Penelopiad*, has re-written stereotypes of female passivity and victimisation from the feminist perspective. Moreover, beginning in the 1970s as a product of the Women's Movement in Europe and the United States, feminist discussion began to expound upon the conventions of fairy tales, re-writing Western culture's most popular tales (Andersen, Disney, Grimm, Lang, Perrault) so as to encode discourses that reject or challenge traditional gender roles and biases and norms in society, not least because of their influence on the social acculturation of children.³¹ As Marcia Lieberman argued in her key text "Some Day My Prince Will Come" (1989 [1972]), tales such as the Grimms' *Snow White* "present a picture of sexual roles, behavior, and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex", which "has undoubtedly played a major contribution in forming the sexual role concept of children, and in suggesting to them the limitations that are imposed by sex" (Lieberman 187). As Shawn C. Jarvis, in the article "Feminism and Fairy Tales" (2000) has observed, feminists since the late 1970s have put their fairy-tale collections into three categories:

- (1) anthologies of active heroines to counter the negative impact of passive female stereotypes promulgated by canonical texts on maturing adolescent girls;
- (2) 'alternative' or 'upside-down' stories with reversed plot lines and/or rearranged motifs; and
- (3) collections of feminist works or original tales based on well-known motifs. (Jarvis 157)

The rejection of female passivity³² and the cultural implications for gender found in traditional fairy tales is a trend that became most apparent in the 1980s, with revealing titles such as "The Princess Who Stood On Her Own Two Feet" (Jeanne Desy, 1982), *Rapunzel's Revenge: Fairy Tales for Feminists* (1985), and *The Tough Princess* (Martin

³⁰ Yet, as Spivak has noted, the novel is still written from the perspective of the coloniser, as Christophine, the Martiniquan maid, is still marginal to the text: "she cannot be contained by a novel which rewrites a canonical English text within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native." (Spivak, "Three", 253)

³¹ Cf. Jarvis 158 and Joosen 130. For a historical overview of feminist fairy tale criticism, see Haase (2000).

³² For further analysis of the trope of female passivity, see Kolbenschlag (1979), in which Sleeping Beauty, for instance, is interpreted as "a symbol of *passivity*, and by extension a metaphoric spiritual condition of women – cut off [...] from self-actualization and capacity in a male-dominated milieu" (Kolbenschlag 5).

Waddell, 1986).³³ Further well-known fairy tales that have resonated internationally with late twentieth-century feminist writers are listed by Jarvis: ‘Beauty and the Beast’ has been re-written, for instance, by Sylvia Plath (*The Bell Jar*, 1971), Alix Kate Shulman (*Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*, 1972), and Alison Lurie (*The War between the Tates*, 1974), all three of which “depict women who fall in love with beast-like men without the redemptive denouement” (Jarvis 157); whilst ‘Bluebeard’ has been re-written by Olga Broumas (*Beginning with O*, 1977), Angela Carter (*The Bloody Chamber*, 1979), and Margaret Atwood (*Bluebeard’s Egg*, 1983).

³³ Cf. Joosen 130.

3. Re-Reading Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

3.1 Defoe and the British Imperial Ideology

There are images and those that make them.
(Raoul Peck, *Lumumba: Death of a Prophet*)

3.1.1 British Colonialist Politics and the Rise of British Imperial Ideology

From a historical point of view, the beginnings of British colonialism and the rise of British imperial ideology can be situated in the late sixteenth century.³⁴ The territories explored and colonised in the West Indies and the Eastern seaboard of North America were, according to Paul Langford, “seen primarily as valuable sources of raw materials, as dumping grounds for surplus population, or as means of adding to the nation’s stock of bullion” (Langford 376). Thus, the rhetoric of justification employed, which cast these early explorations and colonial settlements to be for the ‘good’ of other peoples and cultures, veiled major economic and strategic reasons. This is evident, for instance, in the *First Charter of Virginia* (April 10, 1606), granted by King James I, which gave the Virginia Company of London all territory from the Atlantic to the South Sea and the right to “begin their Plantation and Habitation in some fit and convenient Place, between four and thirty and one and forty Degrees of the said Latitude, amongst the Coasts of Virginia, and the Coasts of America aforesaid”³⁵ (“First Virginia Charter” 1). Interestingly, the first reason stated that made a colonisation of North America seem favourable was that the latter was

so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government: DO, by these our Letters Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended Desires. (“First Virginia Charter” 1)

These “humble and well-intended Desires”, allegedly divinely sanctioned and of purely religious and ethic origin, to bring the light of civilisation and particularly of Christian religion to the ‘uncivilised’ “Infidels and Savages” who “yet live in Darkness” were,

³⁴ Cf. Said, *Culture*, 84.

³⁵ The aforesaid ‘Coasts of America’ include “all along the Sea Coasts, between four and thirty Degrees of Northerly Latitude from the Equinoctial Line, and five and forty Degrees of the same Latitude, and in the main Land between the same four and thirty and five and forty Degrees, and the Islands hereunto adjacent, or within one hundred Miles of the Coast thereof” (“First Virginia Charter” 1).

however, merely a ‘civilising’-mission rhetoric, serving to veil political and economic aims. In Said’s words, it is precisely this view of colonialism as civilising mission³⁶ that

allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjugated, and [...] replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples. (Said, *Culture*, 10)

According to the historian Glyndwr Williams, the motives for colonisation were manifold, but the most powerful one was of an economic nature:

Missionary zeal, intellectual curiosity and flight from prosecution all played a part; but none was as universal a force as the hope of profit and better standards of living. The determination of individuals, companies and nations to enrich themselves by overseas trade and settlement was the mainspring of European expansion, and deeply affected the economies of the homelands. (G. Williams 5, cited in Rogers, *Crusoe*, 42)

In eighteenth-century Britain, an “alliance between philosophy and Empire” occurred, and “Christian providentialism, the ideological taproot of British Imperialism, shaped both the quest for knowledge and the push for trade and colonies” (Drayton 233). On the whole,

Protestantism [...] provided [...] Britishness and the British Empire with a common chronology and a history stretching from the English and Scottish Reformations, through the attempted religious unification of the Stuart monarchies during the seventeenth century, across the Anglo-Scottish Parliamentary Union of 1707 and on to the United Kingdom of Great Britain that sat at the heart of the expanding British empire-state of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Armitage 62)³⁷

By Defoe’s birth, the heroic age of discovery had passed. According to Peter Earle,

[m]ost of them [the latest discoveries] are Australasian discoveries made by the Dutchmen in the early 1640s, though Dampier’s Straits between New Guinea and New Britain (1700) is a sign that the freelance buccaneering explorer still existed. But neither Dampier nor the Dutchmen thought much of what they had seen in Australasia and it was left to Captain Cook a generation after Defoe’s death to fill the gaps. Defoe was aware of these gaps and of the much larger ones that existed in man’s knowledge of the interior of the continents. [...] Since no one else would explore, Defoe had to do it himself. Most of the geographical discoveries made in Defoe’s lifetime were made by his own fictional

³⁶ Nearly three hundred years later, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899), the title of Kipling’s infamous poem, became the polemic motto in the attempt to see imperialism as an altruistic project for the good of the colonised, half demonist and infantilised nations.

³⁷ For a full treatment of the emergence of British imperial ideology from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, see Armitage (2000).

characters.³⁸ Some of these discoveries were so realistic that they were accepted as true long after Defoe's death. (Earle 52, cited in Rogers, *Crusoe*, 26)

Whilst it is true that “discovery as such was not in a rapid state of advance, colonisation and commercial expansion certainly were” (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 26). Major steps were taken towards the ultimate goal of the establishment of English imperial hegemony in the world. The establishment in 1711 of the South Sea Company, which had the monopoly in the southern hemisphere of the Pacific, of territorial colonisation and all kinds of trade activities including the slave trade, helped support these steps, which the mercantilist policies of both the Tory and Whig governments under the Hanoverian dynasty of George I aimed to achieve through new capitalism and laissez-faire commercialism.³⁹ Even the collapse of the ‘South Sea Bubble’ in 1720, “a rush of investment in the expected commercial opportunities under a new financial System [sic] created by John Law” (Fausett 5), which caused a national economic catastrophe, did not restrict the revolutionary process of the British imperial ideology. What Said has aptly called “the British mercantile ethos” (*Culture*, 14) dominated at the time and provided the enterprising British merchants with the prospects that the unexplored and uncolonised overseas lands offered, including “unlimited opportunities for commercial advancement abroad” (*Culture*, 14). According to Fausett,

[f]rom the late seventeenth century onwards British and French commercial interests had focused on the American and South Seas trade routes to the east, seeking to displace the Spanish hegemony there. This led to officially-condoned piracy, and many maritime careers [...] straddled both the navy and the life of the privateer [...]. Highly individualistic men were thus active in an enterprise of economic piracy, which was an extension of trends at home in the direction of laissez-faire capitalism. [...] This matrix of real events and underlying socio-economic causes was a major element of the background to *Crusoe*. (Fausett 5)

3.1.2 *Robinson Crusoe* as ‘Energizing Myth’ of English Imperialism

Interestingly, the tendency to infantilise the *Robinson Crusoe* story produced a *Robinson Crusoe in Words of One Syllable* (1868) by Lucy Aikin (‘Mary Godolphin’), or *The Robinson Crusoe Picture Book* (1879), both of which Rebecca Weaver-Hightower has taken to “suggest that [...] three groups (children, the poor, the colonized) would have been targets for such imperial propaganda and asked to model

³⁸ These fictive explorations are headed, of course, by Captain Singleton's crossing of central Africa, a distance estimated at 1,800 miles. An even more detailed treatment is found in *A New Voyage Round The World* (1724), which contains voyages from Polynesia to South America.

³⁹ Cf. Langford 364 ff.

their behavior after the industrious, forthright, and pious, castaway colonist” (Weaver-Hightower 38-39). Indeed, Manuel Schonhorn, in *Defoe’s Politics: Parliament, Power, Kingship and “Robinson Crusoe”* (1991), has described Defoe’s novel as “a political fable” (Schonhorn 141) and observed that despite this, “given the scholarship of the past fifty odd years, Defoe’s great fiction appears to have everything in it but politics” (Schonhorn 141). Subsequently, postcolonial theorists have drawn attention to the colonial and imperial subtext inherent in *Robinson Crusoe*, notably Edward Said, who, in *Culture and Empire*, has pointed out that Crusoe “is virtually unthinkable without the colonizing mission that permits him to create a new world of his own in the distant reaches of the African, Pacific, and Atlantic wilderness” (Said, *Culture*, 75). In reiterating this view in the broader context of the emergence of the novel as a literary form in eighteenth-century England, Said further argued that

the novel is inaugurated in England by *Robinson Crusoe*, a work whose protagonist is the founder of a new world, which he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England. [...] Crusoe is explicitly enabled by an ideology of overseas expansion – directly connected in style and form to the narratives of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century exploration voyages that laid the foundations of the great colonial empires. (Said, *Culture*, 83)

Similarly, Martin Green, in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979), has suggested that it is the 1688 Glorious revolution and Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* which yield a useful starting point for a full account of British imperial ideology as reflected in English literature:

There are reasons for dating the British empire’s rise at the end of the seventeenth century, in fact at the Union of England with Scotland, in 1707; which is to say, at the very historical moment when the adventure tale began to be written, since *Robinson Crusoe* appeared in 1719. Defoe was one of the English government’s agents in negotiating that union.⁴⁰ And Defoe, rather than Shakespeare [*The Tempest*], is my candidate for the prototype of literary imperialism. (Green, *Adventure*, 5)

By celebrating the possibilities of deeds of manly heroism, the adventure tales that began with *Robinson Crusoe* were, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “the energizing myth of English imperialism”:⁴¹ “[t]hey were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night; and, in the form of its dreams, they charged

⁴⁰ To Defoe’s mind, the union of England and Scotland was an extension of the empire and also an improvement of Scottish life, despite strong Scottish opposition. (Cf. Green, *Adventure*, 68)

⁴¹ Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), followed one of the main sources of modern European racism through the myth of the hero to be found in the adventure story.

England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule.”
(Green, *Adventure*, 3)

3.1.3 The True Life Story of Alexander Selkirk as Inspiration for the Crusoe Myth

Given the historical background outlined above and the preceding quotes, it seems surprising that until today, criticism has tended to view *Robinson Crusoe* merely as a fictional attempt to embellish the real-life adventures of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721).⁴² Of course, *Robinson Crusoe* had a variety of other, including literary, precursors, too, such as the Sindbad story in *The Arabian Nights*, the Philoctetes story in the *Iliad* (around 1100 BC), and several less literary stories dealing with exploration and travel in the century before Defoe's works.⁴³ Yet, Selkirk's particular adventures have been regarded as having had the most profound influence on Defoe's writing of *Robinson Crusoe*, with some critics going so far as to speculate about Defoe actually having met Selkirk.⁴⁴ It is certainly true that Defoe was aware of Selkirk's account, having read about it either in Edward Cooke's *A Voyage to the South Sea* and Captain Woodes Rogers' *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (both of 1712), or in Steele's paper/periodical, *The Englishman* (no. 26, 1-3 December 1713)⁴⁵, written upon Selkirk's return to England in 1711 and spreading the latter's fame. However, it will be argued here, along with Pat Rogers, that Selkirk's story “served only as a trigger to Defoe's imagination” (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 17), providing him with useful material in order to expand upon his own ideological project, which is embodied in the character of Crusoe, who is “the vanguard of a commercial and imperial enterprise” (Flynn 13). Defoe thus used either of the accounts mentioned above, disguising this source by altering the location and making the marooning last for twenty-eight years. Furthermore, according to Richetti, Defoe's

main motive for producing extended imaginative writing like *Robinson Crusoe* was surely economic, since in 1719 Defoe was as necessitous as ever, with his large family and expensive way of living always in need of extra income. Travel

⁴² For instance, Angus Ross, in his introduction to a 1965 edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, has argued that *Robinson Crusoe* was “based on the central incident in the life of an undisciplined Scot, Alexander Selkirk” (Ross 301, cited in Wheeler, “Multiplicity”, 853).

⁴³ Cf. Green, *Story*, 17-18. For an extensive account of *Robinson Crusoe*'s literary, religious, and economic sources, see Fausett (1994).

⁴⁴ According to Rogers, “[b]iographers have not scrupled to imagine scenes in which Defoe conducted a personal interview with Selkirk, and these are generally set in 1711 or 1712” (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 17).

⁴⁵ Cf. Green, *Story*, 17. Rogers's and Steele's accounts of Selkirk are reproduced in Rogers, *Crusoe*, 155-159 and 160-162. The 1712 London edition of Cooke's *Voyage to the South Sea* has been reprinted in Da Capo Press, 1971.

books, both real and embellished or even fictitious voyages, were very popular and obviously a good commercial proposition. (Richetti 175)

In 1703, Selkirk set sail as master on the *Cinque Ports*, one of two privateering ships under the command of William Dampier (1651-1715), who was on an expedition to harry Spanish and Portuguese shipping. In September 1704, after they had reached the South Sea, Selkirk, following a violent dispute with his captain, Thomas Stradling, insisted on being set down from the ship, fearing that it would sink due to damage incurred during a battle with Spaniards. By his own will, he was thus left behind alone on Más a Tierra (now called Isla Robinson Crusoe), one of the islands constituting the Juan Fernández Islands, situated approximately four hundred miles off the coast of Chile, in the latitude of Valparaiso.⁴⁶ Pat Rogers, in his work *Robinson Crusoe*, the most comprehensive critical introduction to Defoe's novel, described the island as

a rugged volcanic outcrop, [...] 15 miles long, less than half of that in width. There was a large bay on the eastern side, and there were extensive woods to the north. It was not a desperately inhospitable place; the earth was fertile and the climate by no means extreme [...]. Selkirk was provided with a good stock of basic equipment, ranging from a gun, a knife and navigation instruments to his tobacco and a Bible. (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 17)

In February 1709, Selkirk was rescued by another privateering expedition under the lead of the renowned Bristol mariner Woodes Rogers, who, in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (1712), provided an account of Selkirk, thereby confirming the inventory described above:⁴⁷

[O]ur Pinnace return'd from the shore, and brought abundance of Craw-fish, with a Man cloth'd in Goat-Skins, who look'd wilder than the first Owners of them. He had been on the Island four Years and four Months, being left there by Capt. *Stradling* in the *Cinque-Ports*; his name was *Alexander Selkirk* [...]. He had with him his Clothes and Bedding, with a Firelock, some Powder, Bullets, and Tobacco, a Hatchet, a Knife, a Kettle, a Bible, some practical Pieces, and his Mathematical Instruments and Books. [...] [F]or the first eight months [he] had much ado to bear up against Melancholy, and the Terror of being left alone in such a desolate Place. He built two Hutts with Piemento Trees, covered them with long Grass, and lin'd them with the Skins of Goats, which he killed with his Gun as he wanted, so long as his Powder lasted [...]. (Rogers, *Voyage*, 124-126)

⁴⁶ Cf. Green, *Story*, 17; Richetti 175; Rogers, *Crusoe*, 17. There had been at least one other incident of a solitary survivor on Selkirk's island; in 1681, a Mosquito Indian named William was abandoned there accidentally and was rescued by another buccaneer ship led by Dampier three years later. In the crew was the Indian's brother, and the pair were reunited with much emotion – a fact that may be echoed in Friday's joyful reunion with his father. (Cf. Fausett 5 and Wheeler, "Multiplicity", 823)

⁴⁷ Cf. Rogers, *Crusoe*, 17.

As becomes obvious from Captain Woodes Rogers' account, several elements of Selkirk's experiences found their echo in *Robinson Crusoe*, including similarities in the topography of Más a Tierra and Crusoe's island, their survival kit and goatskin dress. Moreover, Selkirk, too, "had helped himself in his conquest of his condition by reading, prayer, and the singing of psalms. He claimed that in his solitude his Christianity had been more real than before or, as he reckoned, in future" (Little 69-70, cited in Rogers, *Crusoe*, 18). However, as none of the assumed sources for *Robinson Crusoe* was of very recent date in 1719, "[i]t would [...] seem that Defoe kept Selkirk's adventures at the back of his mind until professional necessity drew the work out of him" (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 20). As John R. Moore has argued,

[f]or Defoe at the beginning of 1719, the great fact was not that Selkirk had returned to England seven years before but that in the new war with Spain [in the summer of 1718] the South Sea Company's trade with Spanish America had come to an abrupt end. (Moore 57)⁴⁸

3.1.4 The Appropriation of the Selkirk Story for Advocating the Commercial and Imperial Enterprise

The fact that Defoe situated Crusoe's island far from Más a Tierra, namely in the South Atlantic, somewhere near the Spanish dominions – in the vicinity of the mouth of the Orinoco River, east/south-east of Trinidad, according to Crusoe⁴⁹ – along with the fact that the Amerindians featuring in the book, including Friday, are all referred to as 'Caribs', constitutes a point of great importance in this respect, making *Robinson Crusoe* in a more significant sense than usually seen 'a Caribbean book', and not simply the story of a man on an island – *any* island.⁵⁰ According to Richard Phillips, Defoe's specific location of the island is an indication of the fact that "Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* with a particular colonial project in mind – British colonisation in Spanish America", as "[t]he British never colonised Spanish America quite as Defoe wanted them to" (Phillips 124). In fact, Defoe had proposed schemes for British colonisation many times, his favourite location being Patagonia.⁵¹ However, shortly before the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe, in the *Weekly Journal* of 7 February 1719, shifted his attention to the Guianas; the adjacent mainland of Crusoe's island, from

⁴⁸ For further information on the war between Great Britain and Spain ("The War of the Quadruple Alliance", 1718-1720), see e.g. Rogers, *Crusoe*, 20.

⁴⁹ Ellis states that "as he wrote Defoe had before him charts of the river and its shores" (Ellis, *ABC*, 108).

⁵⁰ Cf. Hulme 176.

⁵¹ Cf. Downie, "Imperialism", 80-81.

which the savages endangered Crusoe, was an area more suitable to Defoe's continuing interest in creating a British enclave amongst the Spanish and Portuguese colonies:

We expect, in two or three Days, a most flaming Proposal from the South Sea Company [...] for erecting a British Colony on the Foundation of the South-Sea Company's Charter, upon the Terra Firma, or the Northermost Side of the Mouth of the great River oronooko. They propose, as we hear, the establishing a Factory and Settlement there [...], and they doubt not to carry on a Trade there equal to that of the Portuguese in the Brazils, and to bring home an equal quantity of Gold, as well as to cause a prodigious Consumption of our British Manufactures. This, it seems, is the same Country and River discovered by Sir Walter Rawleigh, in former Days, and that which he miscarried in by several Mistakes, which may now easily be prevented. (*Weekly Journal*, 7 February 1719, p. 56; cited in Novak, *Master*, 546)

In his *Historical Account of the Voyages and Adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1719), published in the wake of *Robinson Crusoe* and addressed to the South Sea Company, Defoe, too, advocated undertaking Raleigh's plans of exploring and settling Guiana, an area believed to be rich in gold. Unlike the North American Indians or the Africans, the natives of South America were, so Defoe, "Populous even to Multitudes, and above all, [...] a Sensible, Sociable People, addicted to Pomp and Magnificence in Building" (Defoe, *Raleigh*, 44, cited in Downie, "Imperialism", 77). Their mineral wealth and "the Richest [...] and most Fertile Country in the World" (Defoe, *Raleigh*, 41, cited in Downie, "Imperialism", 76) promised nearly incredible trade possibilities of the most valuable kind: they would pay in gold and silver. As Frank H. Ellis has observed, "[t]he gold-mines of Guiana were soon worked out, but the by-product, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, proved to be infinitely more rewarding" (Ellis, *ABC*, 108). Defoe concluded his *Historical Account* with an address to the South Sea Company, pointing out to them that their charter began at the Orinoco River and that he was

ready to lay before them a Plan or Chart of the Rivers and Shores, the Depths of Water, and all necessary Instructions for the Navigation, with a Scheme of the Undertaking, which he had the Honor about thirty Years ago to lay before King *William*, and to demonstrate how easy it would be to bring the attempt to Perfection. (Defoe, *Raleigh*, 55, cited in Moore 57)⁵²

In one passage in his *Plan of the English Commerce* (1728), Defoe gave his fellow countrymen advice for the expansion of their trade:

⁵² According to John R. Moore, "[i]f the company declined this, he [Defoe] proposed that they give leave to a society of merchants (perhaps including himself) to undertake it for them" (Moore 57).

What then have the people of English to do but to encrease the colonies of their own nation in all the remote parts, where it is proper and practicable, and to civilize and instruct the savages and natives of those countries, wherever they plant, so as to bring them by the softest and gentlest methods to fall into the customs and usage of their own country, and incorporate among our people as one nation. (Defoe, *Plan*, 341)

To reiterate the words of Maximillian E. Novak, “in whatever form, Defoe propagandized for travel, foreign commerce, and colonization” (Novak, *Economics*, 146, cited in Downie, “Imperialism”, 83). Even if from Defoe’s point of view, Crusoe might not be “the prototype colonist, because he never has the opportunity to trade with the home country” (Downie, “Imperialism”, 77), he still, after his twenty-eight year-long stay on the island, leaves behind him “an idealised British colony” (Phillips 126), having, in fact, recreated, to the best of his possibility, an English environment, even down to a town house and a country house.⁵³ At the same time he tells the new colonists left behind “the Story of [his] living there” and “all that was necessary to make them easy” (RC 328): “I [...] shew’d them my Fortifications, the Way I made my Bread, planted my Corn, cured my Grapes.” (RC 328) Clearly, with “[t]he island and the adventurer represent[ing] Britain and British colonialism – including colonial land grabs and colonial violence – in the best possible light” (Phillips 126), it is not only for the colonists, but also for Defoe’s British audience at home that Crusoe’s story was intended. Hence, subsequently “*Robinson Crusoe* inspired many colonial acts” (Phillips 126). Indeed, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the prominent English author George Henry Borrow called *Robinson Crusoe*

a book, moreover, to which, from the hardy deeds which it narrates; and the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise which it tends to awaken, England owes many of her astonishing discoveries both by sea and land, and no inconsiderable part of her naval glory. (Borrow 20, cited in Saul 127)

Thus, it can be stated that to nineteenth-century British readers, “Crusoe’s island became an image of Britain and the British Empire, not as they had been when Defoe wrote, but as they had become by the nineteenth century” (Phillips 126). It may well not be an overstatement to describe *Robinson Crusoe* as “an allegory of the imperial prospects of the period” (Umunç 8), with Crusoe representing the many adventurers who participated in the colonial and commercial activities of Defoe’s time. Yet, as Peter

⁵³ In the *Farther Adventures* this is taken even further: the island is sub-divided into three “Colonies”, and Crusoe’s “old Habitation under the Hill” even becomes the island’s “capital City.” (Cf. Defoe, *Farther*, 138).

Hulme, in *Colonial Encounters*, based upon an earlier observation by John H. Parry (289), has pointed out, some seemingly realistic details of *Robinson Crusoe* favour colonialist ideology over historical facts. As such, *Robinson Crusoe*'s construction of a rather lonely Caribbean island, one which "the Caribs use [...] only for periodic picnics, and other Europeans mak[ing] only a belated appearance, leav[es] Crusoe to live out alone his repetition of colonial beginnings" (Hulme 186) and thus contradicts the fact that in the mid-seventeenth century,

the only uninhabited land in America tended to be uninhabitable: the Amerindians would certainly not have ignored Crusoe's remarkably fertile island unless they had been driven off by the European competition for Caribbean land which was in full swing by 1659. (Hulme 186)

Thus, *Robinson Crusoe* works out a "reconstructed mythology of origins" (Wiegman 44), characteristic of colonialist discourse, that has to do "with the primary stuff of colonialist ideology – the European hero's lonely first steps into the void of savagery" (Hulme 186); here, as will be seen in the next section, the white European's role in the enslavement and colonisation of distant lands can be raised to a narrative of 'civilising' influences and of course to the myth of terra nullius.

3.2 The Imperialist and Colonialist Aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* – A Colonial Myth⁵⁴

[H]e [the English gentleman] may make the tour of the world in books, he may make himself master of the geography of the Universe in the maps, atlases and measurements of our mathematicians. [...] He may go round the globe with Dampier and Rogers [...]. He may make all distant places near to him in his reviewing the voyages of those that saw them [...] with this difference, too, [...] [t]hat those travellers, voyagers, surveyors... etc., kno' but every man his share [...]. But he recievs the idea of the whole at one view.

(Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, 225-226, cited in McInelly 3)

3.2.1 The Politics of Form

Defoe's English gentleman, in his *The Compleat English Gentleman* (1727), is the quintessential traveller of the mind, capable of mastering his environment through reading and imagination, precisely the qualities Robinson Crusoe displays in his

⁵⁴ This section assumes familiarity with Peter Hulme's (1992) chapter "Robinson Crusoe and Friday" (175-222), which has been crucial for an understanding of *Robinson Crusoe*'s colonialist discourse.

mastery of the island. For to a great extent, it is through his imagination and language, including the creative act of naming, that Defoe's eponymous hero "reveals something of the nature of colonialism in general, namely, that it involves an assembly of images and cultural constructs, as well as material practices and circumstances" (McInelly 5). As Firdous Azim has argued, a contrapuntal mode of reading appears to be particularly relevant to reading novels due to their unique relation to the imperial process. In fact, not only is the emergence of the realistic novel contemporaneous with the rise of the British Empire, but the novel is formally linked with the imperial project:

[I]t [the novel] [...] was part of a discursive field concerned with the construction of a universal and homogeneous subject. This subject was held together by the annihilation of other subject-positions. The novel is an imperial genre, not in theme merely, not only by virtue of the historical moment of its birth, but in its formal structure – in the construction of that narrative voice which holds the narrative structure together. (Azim 21)

Even though the novel cannot be said to have 'caused' imperialism, Edward Said has maintained that "imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible [...] to read one without in some way dealing with the other" (Said, *Culture*, 84). In support of this argument, Said has observed that "[t]he prototypical modern realistic novel is *Robinson Crusoe*, and certainly not accidentally it is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island"⁵⁵ (Said, *Culture*, xii-xiii). Brett C. McInelly, too, has stated that

it is not surprising that *Robinson Crusoe*, with its bold assertion of colonial authority by means of a single individual, emerged in England when it did. At a time when the British were [...] competing with other European powers for territory [...], *Robinson Crusoe* effectively defused insecurities relating to Britain's colonial endeavors by affirming, through Crusoe's character, the exceptional nature of the English subject. (McInelly 6)

What appears to be especially interesting when considering the 'Politics of Form' in the context of the imperial and colonial subtext of *Robinson Crusoe* is the narrative strategy employed. According to Lennard J. Davis, "[c]olonialism [...] produced the narrative techniques that quite literally compose that novel" (Davis 241). As is well known, *Robinson Crusoe*, with its wealth of circumstantial detail and anxiety about authenticity, is presented as a 'factually true' story,⁵⁶ that is, as a text "which has been published as

⁵⁵ Said was not the first to relate Defoe's novel to the history of empire. See e.g. Anderson (1941), Downie (1983) and Hulme (1992).

⁵⁶ The difficulties Defoe had to contend with are reinforced by the Puritan ban on fiction. For an examination of this problem, see e.g. Hunter 114-24. In *The Serious Reflections* (1720), Crusoe even defends his story's truth, which, "though Allegorical, is also Historical" (Defoe, *Reflections*, image 4):

the character's own story" (Hulme 179), consisting of a twofold narrating: firstly, a journal in the present, written by Crusoe during his island sojourn; and secondly, Crusoe's reflections, written in retrospective, years after his return to civilisation. Apart from variations such as "But to return to my Journal" (RC 92), Crusoe's departure from the journal form is mostly uncommented upon. Beginning after nearly one fourth of the text with a new title ("*The JOURNAL*"; RC 81) and successive dated entries, Crusoe's journal interrupts and, for some time, dominates the narrative until Crusoe, "for having no more Ink [...] was forc'd to leave it off" (RC 81).

It is after having secured "Pens, Ink, and Paper" (RC 74) from the wreck that Crusoe "began to keep my Journal, of which I shall here give you the Copy (tho' in it will be told all these Particulars over again)" (RC 80-81).⁵⁷ Strikingly, this copy also includes hypothetical versions of journal entries that were never written, the most evident of which are the four slightly differing accounts of Crusoe's first few days as a shipwrecked person: the main account in Crusoe's narrative, two journal accounts, and Crusoe's reflection upon his and the English mutineers' first landing upon the island.⁵⁸ When beginning "to keep a Journal of every Days Employment" (RC 80), Crusoe notes that had he kept such a journal "at first", when he "was in too much Hurry [...] as to Labour", and "in too much Discomposure of Mind", "[his] journal would ha' been full of many dull things" (RC 80):

For Example, I must have said thus. *Sept.* the 30th. After I got to Shore and had escap'd drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my Deliverance, having first vomited with the great Quantity of salt Water which was gotten into my Stomach, and recovering my self a little, I ran about the Shore, wringing my Hands and beating my Head and Face, exclaiming at my Misery. (RC 80)

Curiously, this reconstruction of what Crusoe would have written had he not been in "too much discomposure of mind" hints at Crusoe's terrified and self-destructive nature; it reveals discrepancies to the immediately following journal entry itself, from which Crusoe's vomiting is edited, and in which he sleeps in a tree rather than on the ground:⁵⁹

"there is a Man alive, and well known too, the Actions of whose Life are the just Subject of these Volumes" (Defoe, *Reflections*, images 4-5) – a comment many readers have taken to allude to Defoe having composed his own spiritual autobiography under the 'pseudonym' of Crusoe. (Cf. Brown 564)

⁵⁷ Before Crusoe begins the journal proper, he writes "a kind of doubleentry book-keeping" (Marshall 900), a two-column accounting of the "Evil" and "Good" of his condition. (Cf. RC 76-77)

⁵⁸ Cf. Brown 585.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hulme 191-192.

September 30, 1659. I, poor miserable *Robinson Crusoe*, being shipwreck'd, during a dreadful Storm, [...] came on shore on this dismal unfortunate Island, [...] all the rest of the Ship's company being drown'd, and my self almost dead. All the rest of that Day I spent in afflicting my self at the dismal Circumstances I was brought to [...], and in Despair of any Relief, saw nothing but Death before me [...]. At the Approach of Night, I slept in a Tree for fear of wild Creatures, but slept soundly tho' it rain'd all Night. (RC 81)

As Homer O. Brown has noted, “[t]he differences between these accounts [...] are less significant than the fact that there are differences” (Brown 586), which seriously call into question the truthfulness of even the facts of the narrative. The present entry, then, despite purported to have been written at the time, can, according to Crusoe, only be a retrospective one, written perhaps six weeks after the shipwreck, on November 12, after Crusoe, “having settled [his] household Stuff and Habitation, made [himself] a Table and a Chair” (RC 80).⁶⁰ This “strange interweaving of Crusoe’s past and present autobiographical narratives” (Marshall 903), of course, creates a temporal, spatial, and above all psychological distance, enabling the ‘civilised’ Crusoe of the present to reflect upon the ‘primitive’ Crusoe in the past. Crusoe’s day-by-day journal eventually enables him to write a retrospective account of his stay on the island, revealing “a strange Concurrence of Days, in the various Providences which befel [him]” (RC 157)⁶¹ – so ‘strange’ indeed that these ‘Concurrences’ might be taken to undermine the validity of the entire narrative. For instance, Crusoe’s use of the first person singular pronoun to describe events involving both himself and Friday – Crusoe states that during the rainy season, “*I* had stow’d our new Vessel as secure as *we* could” (RC 272; emphases added) – reveal that Crusoe cleverly manipulates the grammar of his writing so as to keep the authorial ‘I’ in the subject position and erase Friday’s agency.⁶² Thus, as will be seen in section 3.3, similar to the way in which women’s subjectivity is denied, Friday’s version of his (Crusoe’s) story is subject to Crusoe’s white masculine point of view and commonly not accepted as the ‘official’ story.

⁶⁰ Cf. Brown 586.

⁶¹ For instance, Crusoe notes that “the same Day that I broke away from my Father and my Friends [...] in order to go to Sea; the same Day afterwards I was taken by the Sally Man of War, and made a Slave”, or that “[t]he same Day of the Year I was born on (*viz.*) the 30th of *September*, that same Day, I had my Life so saved 26 Years after, when I was cast on Shore in this Island, so that my wicked Life, and my solitary Life begun both on a Day.” (RC 157)

⁶² Cf. Doyle 208.

3.2.2 The Representation of Imperialism and Colonialism⁶³

There are, of course, critics who argue against an explicitly imperial/colonial reading of the text. Martin B. Green, for instance, has described *Robinson Crusoe* as carrying convincingly ‘anti-imperialist’ signs and has noted that the story’s adventurous individualism cannot be interpreted as the voice of official ‘colonial’ authority,⁶⁴ though curiously he seems to concede that “the Robinson Crusoe story, and the adventure story as a whole, has been racist” (Green, *Story*, 23-24). It is certainly true that a point might be made for Green’s anti-imperialist signs insofar as the novel (whether consciously or not) portrays Crusoe’s seemingly strict sense of difference from the ‘savages’ as being completely incidental. Most notably, Crusoe’s assertion of himself as master can be maintained only with the help of the tools salvaged from the wrecked ship. Crusoe, too, shows an awareness of this when he wonders: “how I must have acted, if I had got nothing out of the Ship. [...] That I should have lived, if I had not perish’d, like a meer Savage. That if I had kill’d a Goat or a Fowl, [...] [I] must gnaw it with my Teeth, and pull it with my Claws like a Beast” (*RC* 154). Crusoe’s conversion of Friday into “a good Christian, a much better than I” (*RC* 261), leads Crusoe to an improvement of his own faith, so that “[i]n laying Things open to him, I really inform’d and instructed myself in many Things” (*RC* 260). Even the sensitive theme of cannibalism is indicated as a potential for the survival of Europeans: on the occasion of a shipwreck off the island, Crusoe fantasises that the crew was cast “into the great Ocean, where there was nothing but Misery and Perishing; and that perhaps they might by this Time think [...] of being in a Condition to eat one another” (*RC* 221). This possibility is later reinforced upon Crusoe and Friday’s witnessing of the brutal treachery of the English mutineers, when Friday says, “O Master! *You see English Mans eat Prisoner as well as Savage Mans.*” (*RC* 298) Yet, as will be argued here, both imperialism (as an ideological force) and colonialism (as the practice of imperialism) play a major role in *Robinson Crusoe* – a work which is, as Mawuena Kossi Logan has put it, “anything but anti-imperialist inasmuch as it contains the seeds of the fiction of empire: racial hierarchy, material acquisitiveness, and allegedly cannibalistic natives” (Logan 30).

⁶³ In this subsection, both imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” and colonialism as “a consequence of imperialism”, “the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (Said, *Culture*, 8), will be considered.

⁶⁴ Cf. Green, *Story*, 23-24.

After some years, Crusoe, in his first “Survey of the Island” (RC 115), discovers the site of what is to become his “country house” (RC 168, 187) and, by right of nature, claims the island for himself and England: “to think that this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as compleatly as any Lord of Mannor in *England*.” (RC 117) His grain growing into something “of the same Kind as our *European*, nay, as our *English Barley*” (RC 90), the island becomes England’s by the Roman Law of *terra nullius*,⁶⁵ according to which “unoccupied lands [...] remained the common property of all mankind until they were put to some, generally agricultural, use” (Pagden 76, cited in Flynn 19). Crusoe’s absolute authority over the island is emphasised by his later declaration that “I was Lord of the whole Mannor; or if I pleas’d, I might call myself King, or Emperor over the whole Country which I had Possession of. There were no Rivals. I had no Competitor, none to dispute Sovereignty or Command with me” (RC 151-152). Finally, Crusoe, sitting down to dinner accompanied by his first ‘subjects’ – a parrot, a dog, and two cats – reflects: “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 175) These metaphors of a king without any subjects, of a king without any rivals, and lastly, of a king who rules only over animals, indicate, according to James Egan, Crusoe’s indulging in a “fantasy of power” (Egan 454).⁶⁶

Crusoe’s fear of being on ‘uncured’ land leads him to his colonisation and fortification of the island. He thereby rehearses many of the stages of civilisation, moving from hunting and gathering to domesticating goats, farming crops, and various other practical acts such as making pots and baking bread. Yet, Crusoe’s first considerable activity is to secure himself “from ravenous Creatures, whether Men or Beasts” (RC 67); here, the ‘savages’ are equated with ‘beasts’, both regarded by Crusoe as being part of his fight against ‘nature’. Crusoe embarks upon a year-and-a-half-long project of constructing a fort, which he refers to as his “Castle” (RC 182), a large cave dug into a cliff face, and

⁶⁵ For Defoe, the possession of land legitimates juridical rights: “the Freeholders are the proper Owners of the Country; it is their own, and the other Inhabitants are but Sojourners, like Lodgers in a House, and ought to be subject to such Laws as the Freeholders impose upon them.” (Defoe, *Power*, 18, cited in Schmidgen 49)

⁶⁶ Crusoe’s later address of the English mutineers in Spanish, a language likely to be spoken by the colonial authorities around that area, hints at his awareness that the island is, in fact, not his, but a European rival’s.

fortified against the outside world, so that “no Men of what kind soever would ever imagine that there was any Thing beyond it” (RC 191), before beginning to enclose the island’s arable fields, his goats and cattle, and his “two Plantations” – the “Castle” and the “Country Seat” with a “little Bower” (RC 179).

Significantly, Crusoe’s dominion over his “pets” and his native companion Friday – who, as James Joyce has put it, is “the trusty savage who arrives on an unlucky day”, and who becomes “the symbol of the subject races” (Joyce 25)⁶⁷ – is not modified with the arrival of his “two new Subjects” (RC 287), the Spanish sailor and Friday’s father, for they “all owed their Lives to me” (RC 286). Crusoe, the “sovereign monarch”, rules over a “grateful and dependent community” (Schonhorn 152), upon which the former reflects with satisfaction:

My Island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look’d. First of all, the whole Country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Domination. *2dly*, My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Lawgiver. (RC 286)

Very much in the manner of a theocratic king, believed by the English captain to be “sent directly from Heaven” (RC 301), Crusoe commands submissive compliance from his subjects, who all have to promise to be “ready to lay down their Lives, *if there had been Occasion of it*” (RC 286), for the *Generalissimo*,⁶⁸ the King, the *Commander* of the island.⁶⁹ Upon the advent of the group of English mutineers Crusoe is assigned the new title of “Governour” (RC 323) of what he calls “[his] new Collony” (RC 362) and acts accordingly, helping to restore the deposed captain to his rightful place⁷⁰ and settling the island through organising the various peoples (Carib, Spanish and British) into a structured hierarchy.⁷¹ The notion of a triumphant ‘bestowal’ of the blessings of civilisation upon an unoccupied and undomesticated territory, so typical of European colonial thought, is thus inherent in *Robinson Crusoe*: the island soon becomes a flourishing community with women and children. The fiction of a British governor in

⁶⁷ Due to the importance of the Friday character in the two postcolonial re-writings, the representation of Friday will be dealt with separately in the following section.

⁶⁸ Cf. RC 316. As pointed out by Schonhorn (152, n. 51), Prince William of Orange was called “generalissimo by sea and land” by James II, though it might be doubted whether Defoe meant the title as an allusion.

⁶⁹ Cf. RC 318.

⁷⁰ The ‘restoration’ of the English captain might be an echo of the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Cf. Donoghue 6.

⁷¹ Cf. Spaas, “Narcissus”, 49.

this far-off land is of course intended to adumbrate the very real conquest and colonisation of foreign lands that Defoe anticipated, with missionaries, according to Green, even taking copies of *Robinson Crusoe* (along with their Bibles) to the colonies.⁷² For many Britons during Defoe's time, Crusoe's narrative was not only "a powerful geographical fantasy but also a colonial myth [...] that represented British colonialism to the British people" (Phillips 126).

3.2.3 The Representation and Images of the Other

As has been shown in the previous section, even if *Robinson Crusoe* carries 'anti-imperialist signs', as Green claims, these are far from being persuasive. Indeed, the suggestion that *Robinson Crusoe* upholds a savage/civilised dichotomy⁷³ is nowhere more apparent than in the Crusoe-Friday relationship, which Stephen Hymer, for instance, has interpreted as reflecting "the actual procedures of colonization used in the last two hundred years" (Hymer 26): procedures such as naming the Other, teaching him the English language, instructing him in Christianity, and initiating him into the use of firearms.⁷⁴ As both Walcott's *Pantomime* and Coetzee's *Foe* accord a central position to the character of Friday in their re-writings of Defoe's novel, the representation of and images associated with Friday will be focused upon here, before proceeding to a discussion of the representation of Xury and the other 'savages', in particular, their practice of cannibalism.

Interestingly enough, in favour of Green's argument, it has to be conceded that several of Friday's characteristics unsettle the dividing line between 'civilised' self and 'primitive' Other, for Crusoe's physical description of Friday prepares the readers to view Friday not in contrast to Crusoe, but in contrast to Africans and other Amerindians:

He was a comely handsome Fellow, perfectly well made; with straight strong Limbs, not too large; tall and well shap'd, [...] about twenty six Years of Age.

⁷² Cf. Green, *Adventure*, 12. Samuel Taylor Coleridge has made a similar assertion when stating that Crusoe is "the universal representative, the person, for whom every reader could substitute himself" (Coleridge 197).

⁷³ According to the *OED*, the notion of 'civilising' cultures dates at least from 1601: "To bring out a state of barbarism; to instruct in the arts of life; to enlighten and refine." (cited in Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 209) As Marianna Torgovnik has noted, terms such as "primitive, savage, pre-Columbian, tribal, third world, undeveloped, [...] traditional, exotic, [...] non-Western and Other [...] all take the West as norm and define the rest as inferior, different, deviant, subordinate, and subordinateable" (Torgovnik 21, cited in Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 209).

⁷⁴ Cf. Hymer 27-29.

He had a very good Countenance, not a fierce and surly Aspect; but seem'd to have something very manly in his face, and yet he had all the *Sweetness and Softness of an European* in his Countenance. (RC 243; emphasis added)

The remainder of Friday's depiction clearly opposes him favourably to both West Africans (his hair being "long and black, not curl'd like Wool", the colour of his skin being "not quite black", "his nose small, not flat like the Negroes", "thin Lips"; RC 243) and other Amerindians as regards complexion and conduct: "very tawny; and yet not of an ugly yellow nauseous tawny, as the *Brasilians*, and *Virginians*, and other Natives of *America* are", and "not a fierce and surly Aspect" (RC 243). Friday is thus portrayed as an "exceptional Other" (McInelly 20, n. 6), an image of the 'noble savage',⁷⁵ whose superior honesty and morality is contrasted with the depravity of white people such as the English mutineers. Yet, in the novel, Crusoe's implied superiority and hence the legitimacy to 'civilise' Friday remain undisputed. As Roxann Wheeler has stated, it is

[b]ecause Friday becomes the desired other for Crusoe [...] [that] he must be and yet cannot be the same as the Caribs. [...] The text retains the hideous cannibals [...] but puts one of them (who does not resemble the others) in servitude, thereby providing a relationship in which power clearly remains in European hands but allows an individual Amerindian's spiritual welfare to be attended to." (Wheeler, "Multiplicity", 847)

Crusoe's dream of rescuing a savage to become "a Servant, and perhaps a Companion, or Assistant" (RC 240), sparked by his reflection upon his discovery of "the Corps of a drowned Boy come on Shore" (RC 223) from the wreck of a Spanish ship, is realised about eighteen months later in what has been described as "the paradigmatic colonial encounter", or a "key scene of colonial literature" (Marshall 176). After having saved "this poor Creature's Life" (RC 240), Friday, in spite of his courage and strength – "he runs to his Enemy, and at one Blow cut off his Head as cleverly, no Executioner in *Germany*, could have done it sooner or better" (RC 242) – is, oddly enough, portrayed as willingly enslaving himself out of gratitude. Being unable to express his adoration for his redeemer in English, Friday performs "a ceremony of ritual abasement." (Pearlman 45) Kneeling down before Crusoe and kissing the ground,

he lays his Head flat upon the Ground, close to my Foot, and sets my other Foot upon his Head, as he had done before; and after this, made all the Signs to me of Subjection, Servitude, and Submission imaginable, to let me know, how he would serve me as long as he liv'd. (RC 244)

⁷⁵ The idealised idea of the 'noble savage' has been expressed best in Rousseau's *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755). The concept arose in the eighteenth century as a European nostalgia for the freedom and natural innocence of man in a 'natural' state. (Cf. Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 210)

Whilst Friday's 'Carib' gestures might be merely an expression of gratitude, Crusoe confidently takes them to be "in token of swearing to be [his] slave for ever" (RC 241).⁷⁶ Friday's failure to speak Crusoe's language at this point is the cause of his voicelessness and vulnerability, since what the readers are left with is *Crusoe's* interpretation of the scene, Crusoe, in fact, speaking *for* Friday. Whether Friday's supplication is a consequence of Crusoe's superior civilisation or superior firepower is ambiguous, for in addition to his seemingly free-willed acceptance of Crusoe's mastery, he is none the less cognisant of his possessing a superior force. After Crusoe's slaughter of a cannibal foe,

[t]he poor savage [Friday] [...] was so frightened with the Fire, and Noise of my Piece; that he stood Stock still, and neither came forward or went backward, tho' he seem'd rather enclin'd to fly still, than to come on [...]. I cou'd then perceive that he stood trembling, as if he had been taken Prisoner, and had just been to be kill'd, as his two Enemies were. (RC 240-241)

Crusoe's technological power remains at the heart of his civilising mission (he constantly carries "a naked Sword by [his] Side, two Pistols in [his] Belt, and a Gun upon each Shoulder"; RC 300), despite his consistent negations. He himself, of course, prefers to describe his interactions as being based upon loyalty and voluntary submission instead. The fact that "Friday's conformity to Western norms occurs in the shadow of the threat of violence and death" (Loar 15) is most evident when Friday is forced to abandon cannibalism, for "I [Crusoe] had *by some Means let him know, that I would kill him if he offer'd it*" (RC 240; emphasis added). Later on, Crusoe proceeds to impose the English language upon Friday. As Spivak has noted, "Crusoe does not need to speak to the racial other", but "gives the native speech" (Spivak, "Theory", 169):

In a little Time 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 sav'd his Life [...]. I likewise taught him to say *Master*, and then let him know, that was to be my Name. (RC 244)

What is most striking about the passage cited above is Crusoe's re-naming of himself as 'Master' in relation to Friday⁷⁷ whilst "exercis[ing] the divine and sovereign right of

⁷⁶ Friday's obligation to 'glorify' the one who delivered him finds its analogy in the Psalms, where Crusoe, almost nine months after his shipwreck, comes across the following words: "*Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me.*" (RC 186)

⁷⁷ The novel's very first sentence reminds readers that Crusoe himself had been re-named. Born under the name *Kreutznaer*, "by the usual Corruption of Words in *England*, we are now called, nay we call our selves [...] *Crusoe*" (RC 1). According to Ayers (405), Defoe might have been aware of the etymological meaning of the compound 'Kreutznaer', suggesting 'kreutzzug' or 'crusade'.

christening” (MacGrane 48) by naming the native ‘Friday’,⁷⁸ thereby consolidating his resemblance to divine authority by creating the Other on the very same day as God had created man. Strikingly, throughout the entire novel, the word ‘slave’ is used only once in Crusoe’s interpretation of Friday’s gestures upon being saved. As Peter Hulme has suggested in *Colonial Encounters* (1992), this is because the Crusoe-Friday relationship functions as “a veiled and disavowed reference to the more pressing issue of black slavery”; “within the fiction the term ‘slave’ can be avoided because Friday’s servitude is voluntary, not forced.” (Hulme 205)⁷⁹ Crusoe’s reluctance to employ the term ‘slave’ as well as his careless dismissal of Friday’s previous identity can thus be seen as an attempt to deny and re-interpret the actual nature of the colonial encounter, thereby calling to mind the misrepresentation and erasure of the culture and history of the colonised. Crusoe’s explanation of his choice of the name ‘Friday’ – “the Day I sav’d his Life; I call’d him so for the Memory of the Time”⁸⁰ (RC 244) – serves to strengthen Crusoe’s identity as master and ‘saviour’ whilst “providing a weekly mnemonic to remind him [Friday] who was responsible for giving him that second life” (Hulme 206).

Paradoxically, Friday’s later proficiency in English does not empower him, but enslaves him even further; in fact, Friday becomes “my Man *Friday*” (RC 245) and serves his master by obeying his orders to ‘run’, ‘fetch’ and ‘dig’ (RC 250). Thus, Friday’s ‘education’ is a significant instance of “Crusoe (the colonizer or enslaver) let[ting] Friday (the colonized or slave) gain access to Crusoe’s culture (i.e. language, religion) in order to serve him better” (Logan 35). Friday becomes what Spivak has called “the prototype of the successful colonial subject” (Spivak, “Theory”, 169). Having abandoned the life of a ‘savage’ for that of a ‘civilised’ man, Friday can now be entrusted with firearms and, during his and Crusoe’s one-sided attack, “in the Name of God” (RC 277), on the “naked, unarmed Wretches” (RC 275), exactly mimics his master’s actions: he “kept his Eyes close upon me, that [...] he might observe what I

⁷⁸ The fact that the name ‘Friday’ has acquired various negative connotations can be seen, for instance, in a 2008 decision of Italy’s top court of appeals, which banned a couple from naming their son ‘Venerdi’ because the name was too reminiscent of the Defoe character, who, according to the judge, was associated with “subjection and inferiority”. (*Herald Sun*, 25 October 2008)

⁷⁹ Defoe’s attitude towards slavery is ambivalent in that morally, in one of his poems, he criticised people who “barter Baubles for the *Souls of Men*” (Defoe, *Reformation*, 17, cited in Ellis, *Twentieth*, 5), and yet, in a number of economic essays in 1709-1713, maintained that the slave trade was “the most Useful and most Profitable Trade [...] of any Part of the General Commerce of the Nation” (Ellis, *Twentieth*, 6).

⁸⁰ Crusoe’s report that he lost “a Day out of my Reckoning in the Days of the Week, as it appear’d some Years after I had done” (RC 111) suggests that Friday has actually been misnamed.

did; so as soon as the first Shot was made, I threw down the Piece, and took up the Fowling-Piece, and *Friday* did the like” (RC 277).⁸¹

As critics have frequently observed, Crusoe’s relationship to Friday is foreshadowed in his relationship to Xury, a Maresco or Spanish Moor,⁸² during their shared captivity under the Moors of Sallee. After having thrown an elderly Moor overboard, Crusoe demands of Xury an oath of faithfulness. According to Crusoe, “the Boy smil’d in my Face and [...] swore to be faithful to me, and go all over the World with me” (RC 25) – the only way in which Xury, under the threat of death and in fear, could have reacted. When Xury or, as Crusoe calls him, “my Boy” (RC 38) (thereby clearly invoking racially prejudiced images of the infantile nature of Africans) offers to go on shore in order to search for water, his statement that “[i]f wild Mans come, they eat me, you go wey” (RC 28) is (mis-)read by Crusoe as implying unconditional loyalty to him. Yet, Xury’s request to go onto land by himself might equally well be read as an effort to flee from Crusoe. Firman (2007) has even gone so far as to suggest Xury’s exploitation of the stereotypes of the ‘devoted’ slave:

Crusoe’s disregard for this possibility implies that Xury’s intelligence exceeds that of Crusoe’s. Also, it is possible that Xury may have even come from the part of Africa they were now encountering, [...] or that he knew if he met with any natives he would be able to enlist their help in acquiring his freedom in some way. (Firman 2007)

Just as Friday had been of considerable help to Crusoe during the island episode, helping Crusoe, for instance, to repair the ship that was to lead them to their encounter with the Europeans on the mainland (for Crusoe “found he [Friday] knew much better than I what kind of Wood was fittest”, RC 269), and “[taking] his Aim so much better than I” (RC 277) during their rescue of the Spaniard from the cannibals, so, too, Xury’s assistance and courage is crucial for his and Crusoe’s escape from the Moors.⁸³ Yet, despite Crusoe’s promise to Xury that “if you will be faithful to me I’ll make you a

⁸¹ Friday’s final mastery of firearms becomes apparent in the bear episode (RC 348-352), in which Western military technology is combined with savage hunting techniques in order to save the travellers and parody colonial domination. (Cf. Loar 17-18)

⁸² As Roxann Wheeler has explained, Xury is “a European – but not a Christian. In most cases, the Marescos had been violently segregated from the Christian population in Spain since the sixteenth century [...]. Although Marescos often assisted Moorish pirates, they were also subject to slavery in Africa. Marescos therefore occupied a complex position, considered neither fully European nor fully Moor” (Wheeler, “Multiplicity”, 831-832).

⁸³ For example, Xury sees a lion before Crusoe (RC 30), or suggests they go ashore by daylight, an “Advice” which “was good” (RC 27) since they later see beasts there.

great Man” (RC 25),⁸⁴ one of Crusoe’s first actions upon his arrival in ‘the Brasils’ is to sell his servant, along with other ‘goods’ such as his boat and animal skins, into slavery to a Portuguese captain. Though initially hesitant about the latter’s offer of “60 Pieces of Eight” (RC 38) (twice Judas’ figure) – “[he] was very loath to sell the poor Boy’s Liberty, who had assisted me so faithfully in procuring my own” (RC 38) – Crusoe agrees simply because of the captain’s promise to free Xury after ten years, provided that he embraces the Christian religion. Upon Crusoe’s doubtful assertion that Xury was “willing to go to him” (RC 38), Crusoe conceals his return of Xury to slavery through a rhetoric of autonomy and liberty. Crusoe later regrets his sale of Xury not on moral, but on economic grounds. Specifically, once his Brazilian plantations begin to make profit, “[he] found, more than before, [he] had done wrong in parting with [his] Boy Xury” (RC 39).

As becomes evident, for instance, in Crusoe’s transactions with the Portuguese captain, who is a Catholic, in *Robinson Crusoe*, national and religious differences between Europeans are discarded in favour of the significance of a European unity against the ‘savage’ peoples. As Roxann Wheeler, in her article “‘My Savage’, ‘My Man’: Racial Multiplicity in *Robinson Crusoe*” (1995) has contended, “[t]he novel situates Europeans in a kinship by virtue of a *common Christian heritage*, the wearing of clothes, use of firearms, skin color, and linked national economies, especially between the Portuguese and English in Africa, Europe, and the Atlantic empire” (Wheeler, “Multiplicity”, 839; emphasis added). As such, Wheeler has argued that

Xury’s economic mobility and ability to be a “free” subject are silenced by the Europeans’ ostensible concern for his spiritual welfare. The importance of Christianity as a significant bond between Europeans overrides even historical differences between Protestants and Catholics by representing the greater difference as that between Christians and Muslims. [...] Christianity represents the most significant category of difference that excuses European domination and establishes the conditions for enslavement. (Wheeler, “Multiplicity”, 833)

As Derek Hughes a propos Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* has argued, enslavement was justified *not* by skin colour but by *religion*, hence the hesitation or denial of plantation owners to have slaves baptised:

⁸⁴ Similarly, Crusoe vows “to do something considerable” for Friday, “if he out-live’d me” (Defoe, *Farther*, 155); yet, after Friday’s death at sea in *The Farther Adventures*, Crusoe, except for some brief words of compassion, does not care much about his earlier promise: Crusoe becomes “so enraged with the loss of my old servant, the Companion of all my Sorrows and Solitudes, that I immediately order’d five Guns to be loaded with small Shot, and four with great, and gave them such a Broad-side, as they had never heard in their Lives before” (Defoe, *Farther*, 208-209).

[R]ace was not the primary justification for slavery; rather, it was non-Christianity. English colonists refused baptism to slaves because they feared that it would liberate them. In encouraging the baptism of slaves, therefore, North American lawmakers assured slave owners that baptism did not constitute manumission. A Virginia law of 1748, however, admits that it is illegal to enslave a free man who is already a Christian. (Hughes xiv-xv)

Of course, Xury is presented in a different manner from the Carib and African ‘savages’ or slaves, for he shares Crusoe’s fear of the Moors who enslaved them and of being eaten by the ‘wild mans’ on the West African coast, “the true *Barbarian Coast*, where we could ne’er once go on shoar but we should be devour’d by savage Beasts, or more merciless Savages of humane kind” (RC 26). Nevertheless, for Logan, *Robinson Crusoe* not only “foreshadow[s] imperialist tendencies”, but “can also be read as a proslavery document” (Logan 34). It is precisely Crusoe’s activity as an illegal slave trader, following “blindly the Dictates of [his] fancy rather than [his] Reason” (RC 46), that leaves Crusoe shipwrecked on his “*Island of Despair*” (RC 1). Ian Watt has pointed out that Crusoe’s attempt to purchase slaves in Guiana in order to increase his plantations’ prosperity “logically entails a devaluation of other modes of thought, feeling, and action: the various forms of traditional group relationship, the family, the guild, the village, the sense of modes of thought, feeling, and action” (Watt, *Rise*, 64, cited in Logan 31).

As far as the representation of cannibalism in the novel is concerned, Crusoe, after having been isolated for fifteen years on his island, makes an enigmatic discovery: the single “Print of a Man’s naked Foot on the Shore” (RC 181) challenges his sense of authority and security, causing him to live “in the constant Snare of *the Fear of Man*” (RC 193). Crusoe’s terror at the sight of this sign of the Other even banishes “[his] [...] Confidence in God” (RC 184), making him consider destroying his two cornfields, letting his tame cattle loose, and throwing down his enclosures.⁸⁵ Crusoe’s reaction thus shows the close intertwining of identity construction and land cultivation, despite Crusoe’s conviction that he is a sovereign monarch who dominates his land.⁸⁶ Two years after this troubling event, Crusoe’s fears of encountering the cannibal Other are provoked once more upon the discovery of human remains, which he suspects to be the grim traces of a cannibal feast:

⁸⁵ Cf. RC 188.

⁸⁶ Cf. Marzec 146.

I was perfectly confounded and amaz'd; nor is it possible for me to express the Horror of my Mind, at seeing the Shore spread with Skulls, Hands, Feet, and other Bones of humane Bodies; and particularly I observ'd a Place where there had been a Fire made, and a Circle dug in the Earth, like a cockpit, where it is suppos'd the Savage Wretches had sat down to their inhumane Feastings upon the Bodies of their Fellow-Creatures. (RC 194-195)

Whilst Crusoe's first reaction is to decry the "inhuman, hellish Brutality" of the act, proof of "the Horror of the Degeneracy of Humane Nature" (RC 195), he soon thanks God "that had cast my first Lot in a Part of the World, where I was distinguish'd from such dreadful Creatures as there" (RC 195). In MacGrane's words, "the dark and dangerous region of this geography of evil" is thus posited "as distinct from the island of England, of Europe, of Christendom" (MacGrane 51). However, Crusoe soon progresses from feelings of moral superiority, thinking of "how I might destroy some of these Monsters in their cruel bloody Entertainment" (RC 199), to a withdrawal from European ethnocentrism caused by his reflection upon the historic Spanish conquest of the Americas. The distinction between Spanish and English colonialism is crucial to Defoe's narrative: while the former is marked by bloody avarice the latter is shown to proceed from an earnest desire to ameliorate the lot of the colonised: "I found all the Foundation of his [Friday's] Desire to go to his own Country, was laid in his ardent Affection to the People, and his Hopes of *my doing them good.*" (RC 269; emphasis added) It is at this point that white solidarity breaks down, for Crusoe realises that by killing the cannibals, he would merely reiterate and thereby "justify the conduct of the *Spaniards* in all their Barbarities practis'd in *America*, and where they destroy'd millions of these People, who [...] were yet, as to the *Spaniards*, very innocent people." (RC 203) The English rhetoric of The Black Legend, dating back to the sixteenth century and representing the Spanish conquest as much harsher than English imperialism⁸⁷ or, as Crusoe says, a "meer Butchery, a bloody and unnatural Piece of Cruelty" (RC 203), allows Crusoe a display of moral resentment.

To conclude, there is thus a double binary opposition at work in *Robinson Crusoe* – that of a Christian/cannibal and a British/Spanish divide structuring the text – which is

⁸⁷ Cf. Richetti 202. As Novak has stated, "Defoe was thoroughly familiar with the black legend of Spanish cruelty toward the Indians, [...] but the story he wants to tell is not that of conquest but that of colonialism, of the advantages of exploiting foreign lands" (Novak, "Friday", 114, cited in McNelly 13). Crusoe later states that his fear of the Spaniards is greater than that of the cannibals: "I had rather be deliver'd up to the Savages, and be devour'd alive, than fall into the merciless Claws of the Priests, and be carry'd into the *Inquisition.*" (RC 290)

contradictory and used by Crusoe in whatever way is convenient at a given moment. As for the ‘Christian/cannibal’ dichotomy, there are hints throughout the text that it is the savages’ cannibalism which makes of them a savage just as much as it is the Europeans’ Christianity which makes them civilised. The practice of cannibalism⁸⁸ is certainly at the core of the novel and justifies Crusoe’s mastery of the ‘primitive’ Others. Significantly, it is Crusoe’s recognition that the Spanish captive shares his *Christian* background that provokes him to his massacre of the cannibals during the Spaniard’s liberation. Crusoe’s intervention might be explained by the fact that the act of cannibalism would irrefutably lead to a “dispersal of corporeal integrity” (Hulme 194) which, at a time when the resurrection of the body at the Last Judgement was taken literally, poses a great threat to a Christian. However, the ‘British/Spanish’ dichotomy, that is, Crusoe’s portrayal of the Spanish as ruthless colonisers, enables him to insist upon and to excuse *his* ‘proper’ (English) colonial policies. In Peter Hulme’s words, “[t]he Spaniards are allowed to be like Crusoe – only not as efficient; and they are chosen to bear the brunt of the undeniable similarities between European and Carib” (Hulme 200).

Notably, postcolonial theorists have suggested that the figure of the ‘cannibal’, “an icon of primitivism” attributed “to those we wish to defame, conquer, and civilize” (Lindenbaum 491), was a palliative creation which served to “support the cultural cannibalism of colonialism through the projection of Western imperialist appetites onto cultures they then subsumed” (Kilgour vii). As the anthropologist William Arens, in his provocative study *The Man-Eating Myth* (1979) has argued in view of the lack of reliable first-hand reports, institutionalised cannibalism never existed as an accepted form of behaviour in any culture. In fact, the central argument put forward is that “the cannibal epithet at one time or another has been applied by someone to every human group” (Arens 13), making “[t]he *idea* of ‘others’ as cannibals, rather than the *act*, [...] the universal phenomenon” (Arens 139). Thus, much to our convenience, the debate

⁸⁸ Originally the ethnic name of the Caribs in the Antilles, who were identified as *anthropophagi*, the word ‘cannibal’ is a legacy of Columbus’ voyage to the Caribbean in 1493 and was extended for eaters of human flesh in other populations. (Cf. Hulme 16) For a more detailed examination of the accounts of cannibalism in the novel alongside records of Captain Cook’s voyages, see Ellis (1996). As Pearlman has argued, writings such as Montaigne and Hakluyt’s was available to Defoe, which proved that the cannibalism of the Caribs was religious and ceremonial. (Cf. Pearlman 50)

surrounding the practice of cannibalism is habitually limited to far-off lands just shortly before or during their ‘civilisation’ by an assortment of agents of western civilisation.⁸⁹

3.3 The Representation of Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Text

To begin with, the exclusive and dominating masculine ethos of the original novel can easily be demonstrated.
(Ian Bell 30)

3.3.1 The Adventure Narrative and its Imagining of Masculinity

As Graham Dawson, in his revealing work *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (1994) has shown, the word ‘adventure’ has always intimately (though not exclusively) been associated with masculinity;⁹⁰ originally referring to a ‘peril’ or ‘risk’ abroad, that is, ‘out of one’s house’, and, by the mid-fifteenth century, extended to include ‘out of one’s home country’ as its location (*OED*, cited in Dawson 58), the concept has, in the words of another critic, been “the liturgy of masculinism” (Green, *Story*, 6), relating stories of men’s acquisition of power in their relations to other men in friendship or in war, whilst women have been compelled to be either absent or play insignificant roles.⁹¹ According to Dawson,

[f]rom the mid-sixteenth century, *an adventurer* was a soldier: a volunteer who enrolled for military service of his own free will [...], especially a ‘soldier of fortune’ or mercenary who risked death [...] in anticipation of material reward. In the early seventeenth century, the particular combination of risk and fortune in commercial undertakings within a developing capitalist economy, especially those involving overseas trade, has produced the *merchant adventurer*, who either took part in trading expeditions or had a share in their financing. (Dawson 58)

It is precisely this aspect of pecuniary venture or speculation that was to gain a specific relation to colonial undertakings:

The historical importance to British national development of the acquisition of an empire can be seen here to have become deeply embedded in the English language, giving the cultural significance of ‘adventure’ in Britain explicitly militarist, capitalist and colonialist connotations that run right through to the present. (Dawson 58)

⁸⁹ Cf. Arens 18.

⁹⁰ Cf. Dawson 58. For an investigation of the often overlooked history of women’s embarkment upon ‘masculine’ forms of adventure, see e.g. Wheelwright (1990).

⁹¹ Cf. Green, *Story*, 6.

Whilst *the adventurer*, in the later seventeenth century, came to denote someone without a fixed place/class in society, able to master a wide range of perilous activities due to personal qualities of intelligence and ‘enterprise’⁹², *the adventuress*, by the mid-eighteenth-century, was attributed similar characteristics that were, however, much more closely associated with “the manipulation of sexual favours in order to secur a social niche [...] in polite society” (Dawson 59). As such, one might therefore be driven to conclude, along with Dawson, that

[t]hese gendered connotations of *adventurer* and *adventuress* register the historically limited opportunities for women to become involved in adventures and their close association with sexual forms of risk, excitement and disreputability. The wider opportunities for adventure – in socio-economic as well as imaginative terms – fell to men, in a masculine world of risk and enterprise in the pursuit of fortune. (Dawson 59)

As such, Defoe’s narrator has been described as the paradigmatic hero of the modern adventure tale, with Crusoe “defeat[ing] the challenges he meets by the tools and techniques of the modern world system” (Green, *Adventure*, 23, cited in Dawson 59) in order to establish order on his island and bring its natives under his will. On the other hand, the novel’s lack of prominent female characters has prevented it from coming into real focus of much feminist analysis of eighteenth-century fiction.

3.3.2 The Fleeting Presence of Female Figures in *Robinson Crusoe*

Exploring the passing mentions of women at the fringes of the novel, Ian Bell, in his article “Crusoe’s Women: Or, the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time” (1996), has undertaken the interesting paradox of focussing on the rudimentary appearances of female characters in Crusoe’s life. Tellingly, in the sketch of the Crusoe family at the opening of the novel, the males are described in somewhat detail: Crusoe’s father originated from Bremen, then moved to Hull and York, where he changed his last name from ‘Kreutznaer’ to ‘Crusoe’; Crusoe’s younger brother was killed in a battle with the Spaniards in France, whereas the fate of his second brother is unknown to Crusoe.⁹³ In contrast, Crusoe’s two sisters, mentioned only upon his return to England,⁹⁴ are beneath notice here.⁹⁵ Also, Mrs. Crusoe occupies a much less prominent

⁹² Cf. Dawson 58-59.

⁹³ Cf. *RC* 3.

⁹⁴ It is when seeking any surviving family members that Crusoe states that “my Father was dead, and my Mother, and all the Family extinct, except that I found two Sisters, and two of the Children of one of my Brothers” (*RC* 331).

position within the patriarchal organisation of the Crusoe family than her husband. Of her origins, it is said only that she came “from a very good Family in [York]”, and that she had relatives called ‘Robinson’ (RC 1). After having failed to persuade his mother to convince the more authoritative father to let his son follow his “wandering Disposition” instead of attending to the middle station of life, Crusoe writes:

This put my Mother into a great Passion: She told me, she knew it would be to no Purpose to speak to my Father upon any such Subject; that he knew too well what was my Interest to give his Consent to anything so much for my Hurt, and that she wondered how I could think of any such thing after such a Discourse as I had had with my Father [...]. That for her part she would not have so much Hand in my Destruction; and I should never have it to say, that my Mother was willing when my Father was not. (RC 6)

For Bell, this passage is an indication of Mrs. Crusoe’s quiet acceptance of her subordinate role within the family.⁹⁶ As she no longer is of use to Crusoe, she completely vanishes from the narrative at this point. *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* is, after all, an account of one singular *man*’s extraordinary adventures, posited as having been “Written by Himself” on the title page. As is well known, Defoe, in his Preface, pretends to be merely the editor of Crusoe’s text, doing the world or, more precisely, the audience of “wise Men”⁹⁷ a great service in the publication of “[t]he Wonders of this Man’s Life”, as these “exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant” (RC Image 3). In such a tale, there seems to be no place for women.

During both his activities as a mariner and his enslavement in North Africa, women are remarkably absent from Crusoe’s life. One notable exception is when Crusoe, sailing along the coast of Guinea, encounters some natives, but comments only that “[t]he Women were as stark Naked as the Men” (RC 35). Thus, “an occasion when differences might well have been noticed is narrated as one where only similarities are seen” (Bell 34). Interestingly, in a psychological reading of the novel, E. Pearlman has argued that this “[i]nattention to sex is an indication of Crusoe’s immaturity”, “a symbol of the

⁹⁵ Cf. Bell 31-32.

⁹⁶ Cf. Bell 33.

⁹⁷ As Bell points out, “[s]uch a deliberately gendered interpellation of the text and its presumed readership is by no means unusual in the self-presentation of British fiction, then or now” (Bell 30): The story history of *Moll Flanders*, for instance, is, at one point in the narrative, presented as “a fair memento to all young Women, whose Vanity prevails over their Vertue” (Defoe, *Moll*, 25).

persistent childishness which in times of stress erupts to govern his action” (Pearlman 40).⁹⁸ Similarly, Ian Watt has written that

Crusoe’s attitude to women is [...] marked by an extreme inhibition of what we now consider to be normal human feeling. There are, of course, none on the island, and their absence is not deplored. When Crusoe does notice a lack of “society,” he prays for company, but it is for that of a male slave. With Friday he is fully satisfied by an idyll without benefit of women. (Watt, *Individualism*, 169)

In fact, the relationship is, at least for Crusoe, the most supportive and satisfying one he has yet experienced: “for never Man had a more faithful, loving, sincere Servant, than *Friday* was to me; without Passions, Sullenness or Designs, perfectly oblig’d and engag’d” (RC 247). What Crusoe does, of course, not state explicitly is who, in his view, would have these “Passions, Sullenness or Designs”, thus making us wonder whether these are “the attributes of disloyal servants, or might this be a suggestion of the qualities of the unseen other – are these what Crusoe thinks of as the attributes of *women*?” (Bell 36)

Extending Pearlman and Watt’s argument concerning Crusoe’s ‘inattention’ or ‘inhibition’ towards sex, Ian Bell has suggested that “Crusoe and Friday seem to have embarked upon one of these pristine and ageless ‘buddy’ relationships which are so common in male-oriented popular fiction” (Bell 37). Whilst being quick to point out that “[t]he orthodox master-servant or dominant-submissive relationship between the two male protagonists is maintained, and the two characters are never entirely equals” (Bell 37), Bell maintains that *Robinson Crusoe* “places the ‘buddies’ in a wholly desexualised culture of their own, not in one where sexuality is rigorously suppressed. [...] Crusoe [...] remains a character without sexuality, and the narrative does not feel the need to excuse or even to acknowledge this absence” (Bell 37-38). Thus, Crusoe’s lack of attention to human sexual relations does not hint at (suppressed) sexuality, but might rather be understood as signalling his privileging of “contractual, hierarchical and functional relationships” over “emotional ties” (Bell 34).

⁹⁸ Joyce has argued for “[t]he whole Anglo-Saxon spirit [being] in Crusoe”, in which he includes “the manly independence and the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; *the sexual apathy*; the practical, well-balanced, religiousness; the calculating taciturnity” (Joyce 25; emphasis added).

Eventually, upon Crusoe's return to his native England, an exclusively male population is left behind on his island colony; the Spaniards who had been abandoned on Friday's island and the overpowered English mutineers both being communities without any visible women. It is only after Crusoe's establishment of a chiefly self-sufficient colony that women are permitted to reappear in the narrative. In the very last pages of the first part of his adventures, Crusoe records the fate of his new colony: the Europeans invade the mainland to capture slaves and sexual partners in order to expand the settlement. Of his own provisions for the island, he tells us that

[f]rom thence I touched at the *Brazils*, from whence I sent a Bark, which I bought there, with more People to the Island, and in it, besides other Supplies, I sent seven Women, being such as I found proper for Service, or for Wives to such as would take them. As to the *English Men*, I promised them to send them some women from *England*, with a good Cargoe of Necessaries, if they would apply themselves to Planting [...]. I sent them also from the *Brazils* five Cows, three of them being big with Calf, some Sheep, and some Hogs, which, when I came again, were considerably encreas'd. (RC 363-364)

Evidently, the women mentioned in this paragraph are considered merely as commodities by a 'mysogynist' Crusoe,⁹⁹ casually mentioned (and probably also valued) alongside "other Supplies" such as a "Cargoe of Necessaries", cows, sheep, and hogs. Though not stated explicitly, "[t]he casual juxtaposition of sending goods and women, of kidnapping a subjugated workforce and securing women, all as necessary to the future of the colony, suggests the importance of reproduction (in both senses) to the continuation of the colonial settlement" (Wheeler, *Complexion*, 138). As such, they are to be 'used' either "for service", that is, as servants, or as "wives" – a wide range of possibilities. After learning that he has gained an incredible wealth thanks to the benevolence of the Portuguese Captain and the unnamed and largely unmentioned widow, Crusoe himself, at the age of nearly sixty, marries, his depiction of his espousal reading as follows:

In the mean time, I in Part settled my self there; for first of all I marry'd, and that not either to my Disadvantage or Dissatisfaction, and had three Children, two Sons and one Daughter: But my Wife dying, and my Newpew coming home with good Success from a Voyage to *Spain*, my Inclination to go abroad, and his Importunity prevailed and engag'd me to go in his Ship, as a private Trader to the *East Indies*. (RC 362)

⁹⁹ This is not to suggest a confusion of the author, Defoe, with the character Crusoe. As Frank H. Ellis has pointed out, Defoe, in his 1697 *Essay Upon Projects*, proposed the building of a college for women, as "'tis the sordid'st Piece of Folly and Ingratitude in the world, to withhold from the Sex the due Lustre which the advantages of Education gives to the Natural Beauty of their Minds" (Defoe, *Essay*, 294-295, cited in Ellis, *Twentieth*, 7).

Thus, “[h]aving continued Crusoe’s line by bearing his children and so providing him with heirs – fortunately the male children outnumber the female – his wife is of no more use” (Bell 40), and in order for the adventure narrative to continue, Crusoe’s nameless wife simply has to be skipped over in a subordinate clause.¹⁰⁰

3.3.3 *Robinson Crusoe* – ‘A Case History of Homosexual Repression’?

As has become evident in the discussion so far, of the critics who discuss the sexual theme in *Robinson Crusoe*, most proceed from the assumption that sexual desire is limited to being an exclusively heterosexual one.¹⁰¹ However, recent critical readings and re-writings of the novel have gone so far as to treat Defoe’s novel as “a case history of homosexual repression” (DeLuna 69), suggesting, for instance, that “the true romance in *Robinson Crusoe* is between Crusoe and Friday” (Hulme 212). The ‘domestic bliss’ which can do entirely without women is evident, amongst others, in Crusoe’s portrayal of the “all-male master-servant relationship” (Bell 36), which he describes as being virtually perfect:

the Conversation which employ’d the Hours between *Friday* and I, was such, as made the three Years which we liv’d there together perfectly and compleatly happy, if any such Thing as compleat Happiness can be form’d in a Sublunary State (RC 261).

According to one provoking suggestion by Srinivas Aravamudan, Crusoe’s likely homosexual orientation was repressed by a prudent Defoe, who “understandably felt that once at the pillory was sufficient”¹⁰² (Aravamudan 69). As one striking example of this, Peter Hulme cites Crusoe’s jealousy (which he, very frankly, calls thus), a feeling triggered by Friday’s “extraordinary sense of pleasure” and “his Eyes [which] sparkled”

¹⁰⁰ It is only at the outset of *The Farther Adventures* that the readers get to know the name of Crusoe’s deceased wife, Mary. Hearing of Crusoe’s yearning to go on wandering, she confides to him that “if Heaven makes it your Duty to go, he will also make it mine to go with you, or otherwise dispose of me, that I may not obstruct it” (Defoe, *Farther*, 5). Her death is understood by Crusoe to be “one Blow from unforeseen Providence [which] unhing’d me at once; and [...] drove me [...] into a deep Relapse into the wandering Disposition” (*Farther*, 7).

¹⁰¹ A notable exception to the trend is Humphrey Richardson’s novella, *The Sexual Life of Robinson Crusoe* (1962), which, according to Minaz Jooma, “has received little scholarly [...] notice because its graphic sexual violence invites analyses of hetero- and homo-erotic violence in *Robinson Crusoe* and, indeed, in Richardson’s pornographic novella itself” (Jooma 76). The issue was also treated by Michel Tournier in his 1967 novel *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*.

¹⁰² According to Jooma, “[t]he closure of all sexual possibilities other than the heterosexual requires the virtual divorce of *Robinson Crusoe* from the contemporary climate of [...] the activities of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, criticism of homosexuality in courtly circles, raids on mollie houses, and documented concerns about sodomy in the Navy” (Jooma 65), sexual practices that social morality renders unmentionable.

(RC 265) when making out his island home in the distance.¹⁰³ Crusoe's resulting fear of Friday returning, "perhaps with a hundred or two" of his countrymen, to "make a feast upon [him]" (RC 265), is highly irrational:

[A]s my jealousy increased, and held me some Weeks, I was a little more circumspect, and not so familiar and kind to him as before [...]; the honest, grateful Creature having not thought about it, but what consisted with the best Principles, both as a religious Christian and as a grateful Friend [...]. While my Jealousy of him lasted, you may be sure I was every Day pumping him to see if he would discover any of the new Thoughts which I suspected were in him; but I found everything he said was so Honest and so Innocent, that I could find nothing to nourish my Suspicion; and in spite of all my Uneasiness he made me at last entirely his own again. (RC 265-266)

Even though the passage cited above is no explicit proof of Crusoe's homosexuality, Hulme states that "at the very least the language of sexual or paternal jealousy can be said to carry and inflect the sentiments of a slave-owner worrying about the loyalty of his slave" (Hulme 212). Another interesting passage occurs in Crusoe's description of his "singular satisfaction in the fellow himself", stating that "I began really to love the Creature; and on his Side, I believe he loved me more than it was possible for him ever to love any Thing before" (RC 253). Significantly, in this context the reading of love as homosexual can be associated with love as acquiescence in colonial rule. As Wiegman has argued,

[t]he unequal evocation of this "love" demonstrates Crusoe's perception of his own supremacy – it is [...] through is ideological point of view that Friday is described as completely committed to the European's colonization project. The "love" that Crusoe and Friday share for one another, then, is merely a romanticized reconstruction of colonial invasion. (Wiegman 46)

3.3.4 The Taming and Colonisation of 'Virgin' Land

Another instance of the, though less obvious, presence of sexuality in the novel can be discerned in Crusoe's relation to his land. In her article entitled "Economies of the Body: Gendered Sites in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana*" (1989), Wiegman convincingly argues that *Robinson Crusoe*

depicts the construction of white masculine sexuality as a displacement from the site of the male body to discursive and political structures of power. In this sense, the seeming banishment of the sexual from Crusoe's island leaves its symbolic trace everywhere, for in his cultivation and domestication of his environment Crusoe is able to reproduce nature in his own cultural image, declaring himself both creator and king. (Wiegman 44)

¹⁰³ Cf. Hulme 212.

This argument is, I believe, worth pursuing further. It is certainly true that Crusoe attempts to transfer masculine sexuality into metaphors of power and, in the absence of women, dominates over nature, which is refashioned as a symbolic female. According to Wiegman, this ‘taming’ of land is, however, “not a manifestation of Crusoe’s ‘feminine’ nature but a process involved in his subjectivity: he domesticates the island as a way of establishing his dominance” (Wiegman 48). One cause of Crusoe’s effort to remake the island in the model of Europe is his fear of the “feminine (but hardly pure, and unsafe to possess) new land” (Flynn 17). As Anne McClintock has argued in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (1995),

Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination -- a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears. (McClintock, *Leather*, 22, cited in Flynn 17)

Christopher Flynn, in his article on “Nationalism, Commerce, and Imperial Anxiety in Defoe’s Later Works” (2000), identifies the first instance of Crusoe’s battle against the undomesticated feminine space of his new surrounding in his pillaging of the vessel, which “is gendered female and plays out almost like a rape” (Flynn 18): “I now gave over any more Thoughts of the Ship, or of any thing out of *her*, except what might drive on Shore from *her* Wreck, as indeed divers Pieces of *her* afterwards did; but those things were of small use to me.” (RC 67; emphases added) When everything that might be of use to Crusoe from the ship has been exhausted, “her body must be mutilated and discarded. The settlement is too new to allow the dangerous influence of the female” (Flynn 18). Crusoe later builds a cave, enlarging it until he has “work’d quite out and made [...] a Door to come out, on the Outside of [his] Pale or Fortification” (RC 78). This now ‘womb’-like¹⁰⁴ enclosure permits Crusoe to isolate himself, so that “nothing could come at me from without” (RC 93). Yet, the real danger emanates from within his enclosure, “when on a Sudden, (it seems I had made it too large) a great Quantity of Earth fell down from the Top and one Side, so much, that in short it frightened me, and not without Reason too; for if I had been under it I had never wanted a Grave-Digger” (RC 86). According to Flynn,

[t]he idea that Crusoe may have made his cave ‘too large’ seems to show that his enclosure is only safe within carefully prescribed limits. He is allowing the presence of the female, but until he has controlled it, he is in danger of it

¹⁰⁴ On the ‘defense’ of the womb by the solid, surrounding bones, see Graaf, 110.

collapsing on him in a way that conflates the idea of the female with a fear of death. (Flynn 19)

Later on, Crusoe greatly fears to be “swallow’d up alive” (RC 96) when a “terrible Earthquake” strikes, causing even the sea to be “put into violent Motion” (RC 93). It seems as if the “harsh island-mother, like the ‘mountainous’ sea, is now trying to dispel her prisoner man in a violent, annihilating birth thro’” (Erickson 60):

[T]he Motion of the Earth made my Stomach sick like one that was toss’d at Sea; but the Noise of the falling of the Rock awak’d me as it were, and rousing me from the stupify’d Condition I was in, fill’d me with Horror, and I thought of nothing then but the Hill falling upon my Tent and all my household Goods, and burying all at once; and this sunk my very Soul within me a second Time. (RC 94)

What might emerge from the overall discussion surrounding the representation of gender and sexuality in *Robinson Crusoe* is that its female characters, considered obstacles to the continuing progress of the male adventure narrative, are relegated to the position of audience to male heroic deeds and allowed no more than fleeting appearances, which can be summarised in Spivak’s words:

There was the typecast mother, the benevolent widow whose rôle it was to play the benevolent widow, the nameless wife who was married and died in the conditional mode in one sentence so that Crusoe could leave for the East Indies [...]; and last but not least, the “seven women” he sent at the end of the story. (Spivak, *Critique*, 179)

Even though women such as Crusoe’s mother, his wife, and especially the widow manageress are of central importance, they are nonetheless denied an *active* role in the unfolding of events. In fact, female characters are presented as merely impinging upon the fate of the male hero, so that if the influence of the female is to be felt at all, it is through her interaction with males. Interestingly, in the context of Crusoe’s colonisation of his land, Ian Bell’s argument that Crusoe’s women, “[i]n their own quiet and unobtrusive manner, tucked away in the margins of the text, [...] represent the stable and enduring features of a world constantly put out of balance by the aggressive forces of male impulsiveness” (Bell 44), and that it is “[m]ales – or at least young males – [who] are presented [...] as irrational, headstrong, potentially violent creatures, prone to ‘dispositions’ and beset by uncontrollable self-destructive urges” (Bell 43), requires reassessment. As has emerged from the preceding discussion, the exact opposite is true: it is not the male, but rather the female in the form of ‘feminised’ nature that tends to be equated with danger or even death. The novel that begins by unleashing the terrible

threat of destructive nature and demonstrates the helplessness of its central male figure before that power, ends by solving the problem of masculinity by eliminating the female, and even the potentially destructive feminine nature, so that throughout the whole central island episode, we are in a purely male realm. As Flynn has aptly put it,

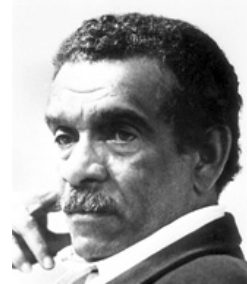
until the colony is ready to function for profit, they [women] are as dangerous to the shaping of “new” worlds as Eve is dangerous to Adamic peace in Milton’s version of the Fall. Crusoe’s sexless colonization of his island points to a model that avoids the weakness apparent in the Miltonic version of biblical paradise, which is woman. (Flynn 15)

It is only when the island is no longer considered as a ‘virgin’ land, but has become Crusoe’s property, and, by extension, the property of England, that women can be sent, like mere objects, to settle the island, now “a safely de-sexed Eden” (Flynn 20) ready to maintain England’s commercial interests.

4. Re-Writing *Robinson Crusoe* from the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978)

4.1 Derek Walcott and Postcolonial Literature

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue
I love?
(Derek Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa", 18)



4.1.1 Derek Walcott: A Brief Biography¹⁰⁵

One of today's major West Indian poets and playwrights¹⁰⁶ writing predominantly in the English language, Derek Alton Walcott (1930-) was born in Castries, St. Lucia, an island which, having long been fought over as a colony between the imperial rivals of Great Britain and France, retains its hybrid British and French culture – even after its independence in 1979 – to this day.¹⁰⁷ As Walcott has put it in his early poem "A Far Cry From Africa" (1962), he is racially "divided to the vein" (Walcott, "Cry", 18): his immediate grandmothers were both West Indians of African descent and poor, whilst both his maternal and paternal grandfathers – a Dutchman from St. Martin and an Englishman from Barbados – were white and rather wealthy.¹⁰⁸ Walcott's mother was the head teacher of a Methodist infant school, and his father a Bohemian artist.¹⁰⁹ Fred D'Aguiar has described Walcott's personal background as "middle class, Methodist and half-white in a St. Lucia dominated by Catholicism and poor blacks" (D'Aguiar, "Ambiguity", 166); Walcott thus belonged to the "brown bourgeoisie" (Baugh,

¹⁰⁵ This section and the following are mainly based upon Mjöberg (2001) and Breslin 11-41. The photo has been taken from http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/index.html. For further biographical details, see e.g. Baugh (1978) and King (2000).

¹⁰⁶ Strictly speaking, the term 'Caribbean' denotes all island nations in the area as well as mainland Guyana and Belize, while 'West Indian' refers only to those nations that were once British colonies. (Cf. Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 31) The two terms will be used interchangeably here. Whilst Walcott's international reputation is primarily based upon his poetry, "by virtue of the appeal of production and the communal immediacy of theatre, the plays have tended to enjoy greater currency within the Caribbean" (Baugh, *Walcott*, 2).

¹⁰⁷ The English occupied the island from 1664 to 1666, then went to war with France over the territory fourteen times before it settled into English possession through an 1814 treaty. (Cf. Cahoon 2000) Due to its frequent alteration between British and French control, St. Lucia is also known as the 'Helen of the West Indies'. (Cf. Burnett, "Epic", 142)

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Columbia Encyclopedia* 50630. In "The Schooner *Flight*" (1979), Walcott's poetic alter ego, Shabine, provides an oft-quoted definition of Caribbean identity: "I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, / and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation." (Walcott, "Schooner", 346)

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ramazani 195, n. 4.

Memory, 9). After graduating from St. Mary's College, Castries, Walcott received a scholarship to the University College of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, from which he received his bachelor's degree in English, French and Latin in 1953. His first play, *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle*, was performed in 1950, the year of his founding of the *St. Lucia Arts Guild*. From 1953 to 1957 Walcott taught at schools on several Caribbean islands and wrote features for *Public Opinion* in Kingston as well as features and drama reviews for *The Trinidad Guardian* before moving to Trinidad in 1958.

Walcott's debut as a writer began at the age of eighteen, with the private publication of *25 Poems* (1948). His first major collection of poems, *In a Green Night* (1962), underlined his primary concern of creating a literature that is truthful to West Indian life. Seeing himself as "not only a playwright but a company",¹¹⁰ Walcott has not only written more than twenty plays for stage and radio, but has also worked as founder of theatre companies and instructor. He remains active with the Board of Directors of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop (founded in 1959; until 1966 called the Little Carib Theatre Workshop), which has produced the majority of his plays and has staged some of them also elsewhere – in Guyana, Jamaica, Toronto, Boston, and New York.¹¹¹ In 1981 Walcott founded the Boston Playwrights' Theatre at Boston University, Massachusetts. The epic poem *Omeros* (1990), a re-writing of the Homeric stories *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which celebrates the multi-racial heritage shared by the inhabitants of his native St. Lucia, is considered his most ambitious work.

When the Swedish Academy announced its decision to award the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature to Walcott, it acknowledged the artist's response to "the complexity of his own situation", pointing out that "three loyalties are central for him – the Caribbean where he lives, the English language, and his African origin" (Swedish Academy 1992). Walcott retired from teaching drama and poetry in the Creative Writing Department at Boston University in 2007 and continues to give readings and lectures throughout the world, dividing his time between New York City and his second home in Trinidad.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Mjöberg (2001).

¹¹¹ Cf. Mjöberg (2001). For further information on the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, one of whose missions is to "[lead] in the artistic development of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural experience" by "bringing [...] relevant and highly diversified productions to all segments of our society", see <http://www.ttw.org.tt>

4.1.2 Locating Derek Walcott in the Context of Postcolonial Literature

Before proceeding to a discussion of *Pantomime*, Walcott's background needs to be considered not only in biographical terms, but also in the context of the social and cultural history of the Caribbean. One of the central themes running throughout Walcott's oeuvre is undoubtedly his search for an identity or, as Jöran Mjöberg (2001) has put it, his "cultural schizophrenia". The truthfulness of Walcott's statement that "[i]t takes a West Indian a long time to say who he is" (Hirsch, "Interview", 281) becomes apparent, for instance, in the words of Eric E. Williams (1911-1981), first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, who expressed the essence of 'man in the West Indies' as being "more than white, more than mulatto, more than Negro, more than Indian, more than Chinese. He is West Indian, West Indian by birth, West Indian in customs, West Indian in dialect or language, West Indian, finally, in aspirations" (E. Williams 210, cited in Breslin 23). Despite Walcott's disappointment at the collapse of the West Indian Federation in 1961, leaving the territories of the West Indies to obtain independence separately (beginning with Jamaica and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 1962), Walcott has remained true to his belief in a unified West Indian life in basically all of his writings:¹¹² "[w]hat we now need to do in the Caribbean is to have a better cultural exchange between the islands, in terms of theatre, in terms of art, in terms of everything, because they really are one region." (F. Sinnewe 5)

Calling himself a "mulatto of style" (Walcott, "Twilight", 9), Walcott "boasts a triple linguistic heritage" (Olaniyan 488), mastering French Creole, the dominant language of St. Lucia; Standard English, the official language of the island; and the English-based Creole of Trinidad.¹¹³ He has written both in Standard English and Creole.¹¹⁴ Notwithstanding some critics' accusation of writers for not using their 'own' language – a charge which, to Walcott's mind, implies that "[they] do not have any right to English [...] or [...] are betraying or ignoring [their] own language" (F. Sinnewe 1), Walcott's claim to the English language is without apology: "I do not consider English to be the

¹¹² Cf. Breslin 14, 19. As Breslin has noted, the beginnings of a pan-Caribbean unity date back to at least the early eighteenth century, when the French Dominican missionary Père Jean-Baptiste Labat observed that "citizenship and race [are] unimportant, feeble little labels compared to the message that my spirit brings to me: that of the position and predicament which History has imposed upon you" (Benítez-Rojo 35, cited in Breslin 300, n. 51).

¹¹³ Cf. Olaniyan 488.

¹¹⁴ According to a census dating from 1946, the beginnings of Walcott's career as a writer, more than 40 per cent of St. Lucians spoke only francophone Creole. (Cf. Breslin 13)

language of my masters. I consider language to be my birthright. I happen to have been born in an English and a Creole place, and love both languages.” (Walcott, in Baer 82) As stated by Edward Baugh in his critical study *Derek Walcott* (2006), for Walcott, “[i]t is a matter of revelling in the potential of English, exploiting, modifying and extending it, and that appreciably by infusing into it the tone and inflection of the vernacular” (Baugh, *Walcott*, 23). Walcott has insisted that his use of English does not diminish his being a ‘Caribbean writer’: “[t]he English language is nobody’s special property”, but “the property of the imagination.” (Walcott, in Baer 109)

What will appear to be especially relevant for an analysis of *Pantomime* is Walcott’s intense feeling of the conflicts between the traditions of the New World and the cultural heritage of the Old World.¹¹⁵ During his travels around the United States and Europe in the 1960s, he became acquainted with a variety of writers; yet, as Walcott said in an interview in 1966, “there is still an isolation in the sense that, as West Indian writers, whether we live in London or the West Indies, we are both cut off from and are a part of a tradition”, that is, “the body of writing in English that we were brought up in” (Walcott, in Baer 3). In his 1970 essay “What the Twilight Says: An Overture”, the preface to Walcott’s first published collection of plays, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, Walcott viewed the dilemma of the absence of a truly indigenous history and tradition – “we are all strangers here” (Walcott, “Twilight”, 10); “[o]ur bodies think in one language and move in another” (Walcott, “Twilight”, 31) – as a potential source for creation rather than desolation, enabling the West Indian artist to write upon a *tabula rasa*. In Walcott’s words, “[i]f there was nothing, there was everything to be made” (Walcott, “Twilight”, 4). Identifying with Joyce, Yeats, and other Irish writers in a 1979 interview, Walcott claimed the Irish to be “the niggers of Britain”, “colonials with the same kind of problems that existed in the Caribbean”; yet, “to have those outstanding achievements of genius [...] illustrated that one could come out of a depressed, deprived, oppressed situation and be defiant and creative at the same time” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Interview”, 288).

In his 1981 biography of Walcott, Robert D. Hamner has remarked that “since he [Walcott] has an affinity for and is educated in Western classics”, it is not surprising that “he should retell the traditional themes of European experience” (Hamner 6, cited

¹¹⁵ Cf. Mjöberg (2001).

in Hannan 578, n. 21). Having received its fullest attention in *Pantomime* (1978), it is the Crusoe myth to which Walcott has repeatedly returned in his writings, of which a brief review shall be given here.¹¹⁶ For Walcott, the *Robinson Crusoe* story, “the first West Indian novel” (Walcott, “Figure”, 36), reflects the West Indian experience of ‘making anew’ the relics of European, Indian, or African culture:

Given a virginal world, a paradise, any sound, any act of naming something, like Adam baptizing the creatures [...] is not really prose, but poetry, is not simile, but metaphor. [...] I am claiming, then, that poets and prose writers who are West Indians, despite the contaminations around us, are in the position of Crusoe, the namer. Like him, they have behind them, borne from England, from India, or from Africa, [a] dead bush, [a] morphology. (Walcott, “Figure”, 36)

Yet, whilst Crusoe’s shipwreck might be a symbol of “the end of an Old World”, “[f]or us in the archipelago [...] arrival must be seen as the beginning, not the end of our history” (Walcott, “Muse”, 41). The metaphor of the shipwreck is thus “[o]ne of the more positive aspects of the Crusoe idea” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Art”, 74), for it enables the various races which “[have] been brought here [to the Caribbean] under situations of servitude or rejection” to “make [their] own tools” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Art”, 74): “[w]hether that tool is a pen or a hammer, [they] are building a situation that’s Adamic; [they] are rebuilding not only from necessity but also with some idea that [they] will be here for a long time.” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Art”, 74) Similarly, in his lecture called “The Figure of Crusoe”, delivered at the University of the West Indies in 1965, Walcott, drawing upon another metaphor, that of a bonfire, articulated his view of Crusoe as

a lonely man on a beach who has heaped a pile of dead bush, twigs, etc., to make a bonfire. The bonfire may be purposeless. Or it may be a signal of his loneliness [...]. Or the bonfire may be lit from some atavistic need, for contemplation. [...] The man sits before the fire, [...] and he keeps throwing twigs, dead thoughts, fragments of memory, all the used parts of his life to keep his contemplation pure and bright. (Walcott, “Figure”, 34)

In Walcott’s 1965 and 1970 volumes *The Castaway* and *The Gulf*, the figure of Crusoe is explicitly evoked in “Crusoe’s Island” (1964), in which Crusoe is associated with the notion of a New World Adam (he is “[t]he second Adam since the Fall”; Walcott, “Island”, 69), and “Crusoe’s Journal” (1965). In the latter, Walcott has drawn attention to the practicality of Defoe’s narrative: Crusoe assumes “Adam’s task of giving things

¹¹⁶ Walcott first encountered Defoe’s protagonist in his childhood, when, in the course of his “sound colonial education” (Walcott, “Schooner”, 346), he was struck by an illustration of the story’s protagonist in his primary school reader: “Crusoe [...] is a part of the mythology of every West Indian child.” (Walcott, “Figure”, 37)

their names” (Carpentier 66) by turning “[e]ven the bare necessities / of style [...] to use, / like those plain iron tools he salvages / from shipwreck, hewing a prose / as odorous as raw wood to the adze” (Walcott, “Island”, 92). At one point, Crusoe’s prose “startles itself / with poetry’s surprise” (Walcott, “Island”, 92), endowing the Caribbean with its “first book, our profane Genesis” (Walcott, “Island”, 92). Whilst Walcott, in the interview with Edward Hirsch referred to above, has insisted on the Caribbean writer’s creation *ex nihilo*, Crusoe’s journal, a canonical ‘pre-text’ (in the words of Thieme; see section 2.2), can now be made use of for the creation of something new: it “assume[s] a household use; / we learn to shape from [it], where nothing was / the language of a race” (Walcott, “Island”, 94). Thus, as Paul Breslin has aptly put it, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* “appears simultaneously as the first New World writing and a salvaged raw material, still needing to be shaped into a New World language. [...] The Old World traditions are necessary as fuel, but they are consumed away in the act of creation” (Breslin 110).

The tools and supplies available to West Indian writers, retrieved from the wreckage of the ship – a symbol of the fragments of the shattered experience of colonialism – prove invaluable to their forging of a new, hybrid linguistic form, one that consists of both Creole, “[t]he dialect of the tribe”, and English, which had been “learnt by imitation” (Walcott, “Poetry”, 3, cited in Olaniyan 488). Considering the ironic reversals inherent in the absorption of previously dominant cultures to create a new one, Walcott views his Crusoe as bearing, like Columbus, “the Word [of Christianity and literature] to savages” (Walcott, “Island”, 93),

its shape an earthen, water-bearing vessel’s
 whose sprinkling alters us
 into good Fridays who recite His praise,
 parroted our master’s
 style and voice, we make his language ours
 converted cannibals
 we learn with him to eat the flesh of Christ. (Walcott, “Island”, 93)

After 1965, the Adamic motif begins to make separate appearances, so that the Crusoe figure, remaining dormant throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, re-emerges only in the play *Pantomime* (1978),¹¹⁷ in which the Crusoe-Friday relationship is explored most fully.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Breslin 102.

4.2 *Pantomime*

My Crusoe, then, is Adam. Christopher Columbus, God, a missionary, a beachcomber, and his interpreter, Daniel Defoe. He is Adam because he is the first inhabitant of a second paradise. He is Columbus because he has discovered this new world, by accident, by fatality. He is God because he [...] control[s] his creation, he rules the world he has made, and also, because he is to Friday, a white concept of Godhead. He is a missionary because he instructs Friday in the uses of religion. [...] He is a beachcomber because I have imagined him as one of those figures of adolescent literature, some derelict of Conrad or Stevenson. [...] [A]nd finally, he is also Daniel Defoe, because the journal of Crusoe, which is Defoe's journal, is written in prose, not in poetry, and [...] the pioneers of our public literature have expressed themselves in prose.

(Derek Walcott, "The Figure of Crusoe", 35-36)

4.2.1 Introductory Remark and Production History

In what Lowell Fiet has called Walcott's "later Trinidad plays" (Fiet 140), that is, "the post-Trinidad Theatre Workshop plays, works written and/or staged after 1976" (Fiet 139), "the act of performance itself, the play and/or plays within the play, rehearsals, creative processes, theatre settings, and actor/writer/artist characters become increasingly prominent metaphors in the interpretation of Caribbean culture and society" (Fiet 139). Published in 1980 together with *Remembrance* (first performed in 1977), a play which investigates Ariel's relation to Caliban after Prospero's departure, *Pantomime*,¹¹⁸ written during Walcott's stay at Crown Point, Tobago, a hotel managed by the retired English actor Arthur Bentley,¹¹⁹ situates Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* "in a gazebo on the edge of a cliff, part of a guest house on the island of Tobago, West Indies" (P 132) and – as a central part of its 'counter-discursive' strategy – re-writes the novel in a different genre, drama, thereby displacing the centralised voice of Defoe's 'original' narrator.

¹¹⁸ All references to *Pantomime* (henceforth abbreviated as *P*) are to the Routledge edition (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹¹⁹ Walcott has frequently stated that he was impressed by the witty, free exchange between Bentley and his employees. (Cf. King 360) The Crown Point Hotel's location, "[s]pread across seven undulating acres of seaside property overlooking the scenic Store Bay Beach" (<http://www.crownpointbeachhotel.com>), vaguely resembles the secluded guest house of *Pantomime*.

Significantly, the play's setting reflects the popular identification of Crusoe's island with Tobago,¹²⁰ thereby alluding to the 'exoticised' vision of the Caribbean in Western discourse as a result of Defoe's novel: even today, one-day trips from Trinidad to Tobago are promoted as 'Crusoe's Dream'.¹²¹ Walcott, too, has shown himself aware of the commercial image attached to Defoe's castaway and, in the passage cited as an epigraph to this chapter, has contrasted the Tourist Board's portrayal of Crusoe's island to the Protean mutability of *his* Crusoe figure, who, like an actor, can take on the roles of Adam, first inhabitant of paradise; of Columbus, the discoverer of a new world; of God in control of his creation; of a missionary instructing Friday in the Christian belief; of the beachcomber of adolescent literature; and, finally, of Defoe himself, who might have composed the story of his own spiritual isolation. Written in a similar comic manner as Trinidadian novelist Samuel Selvon's slightly earlier *Moses Ascending* (1975), which also "disturbs former colonial hierarchies through a playful repositioning of Friday and Crusoe" (Thieme, *Canon*, 58), *Pantomime* draws upon English as well as Caribbean performance traditions in its exploration of the possibilities for restaging identity in post-independence Caribbean.¹²²

The plot, occurring in the course of one day, revolves around the attempts of modern-day protagonists Harry Trewe (a retired English actor, now expatriate owner of the Castaways Guest House) and Jackson Phillip (a native of Trinidad, who was once "a very serious steel-band man" (*P* 135) and now works as Trewe's 'factotum') to work out a skit on *Robinson Crusoe* in the style of a pantomime¹²³ in order to provide the hotel guests who will soon arrive with the "nightly entertainment" (*P* 133) which they have been promised. In Harry's conception of the pantomime, the roles are to be reversed racially, so that the white Harry will play the 'native' Friday whilst the black

¹²⁰ In Selvon's story "Brackley and the Bed" (1957), too, it is said that its protagonist "Brackley hail [sic] from Tobago, which part they have it to say Robinson Crusoe used to hang out with Man Friday" (Selvon, "Brackley", 151, cited in Thieme, *Canon*, 70, n. 7).

¹²¹ Cf. Gilbert and Tompkins 36. According to the website of *Caribbean Collection*, 'Ireland's only Caribbean holiday specialist', "[f]or years Tobago has been called the 'Isle of Robinson Crusoe'[,] the perfect tropical isle that captivates its visitors. Imagine an island that has long stretches of soft sandy beaches caressed by the turquoise waters of the Caribbean, blue skies, balmy breezes, and tropical sunshine. 'Pirates and castaways, merry men and fair maids [...], this is Paradise.'" (<http://www.caribbeancollection.ie/Tobago>)

¹²² Cf. Thieme, *Canon*, 58.

¹²³ The English genre of pantomime, also known as 'panto', is "a play for a mixed audience of children as well as adults; it is usually performed during the Christmas season and based on popular fairy tales and folk legends such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Jack & the Beanstalk*, *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Babes in the Wood*" (Peters 536). Evolving out of entr'actes between opera pieces in Restoration-era England, it incorporates "song, dance, buffoonery, slapstick, cross-dressing, in-jokes, audience participation, and mild sexual innuendo." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantomime>)

‘native’ Jackson will play Crusoe. Despite Jackson’s initial refusal to participate, both characters soon find themselves exploring various facets of the master/servant relationship under the pretence of acting, discussing “whether [they] are locked forever in the stasis of their given roles, superior and inferior” (Baugh, *Walcott*, 132). Their rehearsals, and indeed the entire play, “[become] a kind of cultural laboratory in which identities are tested, remodelled, played out – and played with” (Gilbert 130-131).

Having been described as “one of his [Walcott’s] best and most performed plays” (King 360) by Bruce King in his *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (2000), the first authorised literary biography of Walcott, *Pantomime* was first performed in the Crown Point hotel and was then produced by Helen Camps, a former Trinidad Theatre Workshop actress, at the Little Carib Theatre, Port of Spain, Trinidad. It ran from 12-22 April 1978, directed by Albert LaVeau, with Maurice Brash as Harry Trewe and Wilbert Holder as Jackson Phillip. The play was broadcast by the BBC on 25 January 1979, with Norman Beaton as Jackson, and has been performed in a wide range of Caribbean venues as well as abroad, including Boston and London.¹²⁴

4.2.2 The Uses and Misuses of Language

HARRY Think I keep to myself too much?
JACKSON If! You would get your hair cut by phone. You drive so careful you make your car nervous. If you was in charge of the British Empire, you wouldn’ta lose it, you’d misplace it.
(Derek Walcott, *Pantomime*, 144)

As has been shown in our analysis of *Robinson Crusoe*, the coloniser’s power over language is an essential component of colonial domination, for “[l]anguage becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated” (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 7). Defoe’s Friday is, as critic Bridget Jones has put it, “imprisoned in his master’s discourse, [...] allowed no more than occasional lines of an implausible ‘broken English’ of his own. His reactions are recounted [...] – how reliably we can never discover – by his Master” (Jones 225-226). In contrast, Walcott’s choice of drama as a genre enables a profound questioning of Crusoe’s position as “sole source of [textual] authority” (Jones 226). Contradicting the claim that use of the coloniser’s language inevitably confines the colonised within colonialist conceptual paradigms, it is

¹²⁴ Cf. Gilbert 131 and King 361, 378. For reviews of the play’s performances in Washington, D.C., Brooklyn, England, and New York, see King 401, 445, 446 and 461 respectively.

Jackson's very appropriation of the English language which becomes a tool of potential transformation and liberation. For Wole Soyinka, the forging of a language adapted to particular local circumstances is one of the essential tasks of a playwright:

When we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties in our matrix of thought and expression. We must stress such a language, stretch it, impact and compact, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as required to *bear the burden of experiencing*. (Soyinka 107, cited in Gilbert 4; emphasis added)

In many of his plays, Walcott makes use of a local dialect, or of what Barbadian writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite has called 'nation language'.¹²⁵ In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), Mikhail Bakhtin has used the term 'hybridity' (of which Pidgin and Creole languages are linguistic examples) to suggest the "disruptive and transfiguring power of multivocal language situations" (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 118). For Bakhtin, hybridity describes the way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be double-voiced. As opposed to 'organic hybridity',¹²⁶ 'intentional hybridity' is "an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic*, 304). Homi K. Bhabha has transformed Bakhtin's intentional hybrid into an active moment of resistance against a dominant cultural power. For Bhabha, hybridity is "a problematic of colonial representation [...] that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority" (Bhabha, *Location*, 156).

Whilst the language of the majority of the natives of St. Lucia, Walcott's home town, is a French-based Creole ('patois'), Walcott, in *Pantomime*, uses Trinidadian Creole and its polyglot lexis, evidenced in words employed by Jackson such as 'mama-guy' (*P* 135) from Spanish, 'mama-poule' (*P* 136) from French, and variants of tense markers (for instance, non-emphatic present tense use of 'does').¹²⁷ Thus Jackson is shown to

¹²⁵ Brathwaite has defined 'nation language' as "the language which is influenced very strongly by [...] the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English" (Brathwaite 13, cited in Olaniyan 487).

¹²⁶ In organic hybridity, which is a "mixing of various 'languages' co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect, a single national language, a single branch, a single group of different branches" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic*, 358-359), this mixture "remains mute and opaque, never making use of conscious contrasts and oppositions" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic*, 260).

¹²⁷ Cf. Jones 229. For further information on Trinidadian Creole(s), see e.g. Holm (1988, 1989).

code-switch highly flexibly throughout the play. In fact, Jackson's first speech on stage, in which he mimics the coloniser's language by first adopting, and immediately afterwards departing from an 'English accent', is proof of his linguistic versatility, that is, his ability to speak formal British English whilst maintaining a distinctive Creole accent and syntax:

JACKSON. Mr. Trewe? (*English accent*) Mr. Trewe, your scramble eggs is here! are here! (*Creole accent*) You hear, Mr. Trewe? I here wid your eggs! (*English accent*) Are you in there? (To himself) And when his eggs get cold, I is to catch. (*P 132*)

As will emerge in the course of the play, Jackson's use of non-'Standard' English is strategic, for he creates for himself the image of the amusing because unsophisticated 'stage nigger' in a minstrel show, whose use of vernacular English is supposed to reinforce this image:¹²⁸

JACKON. (*He fans the eggs with one hand*) What the hell I doing? That ain't go heat them. It go make them more cold. (*P 132*)

Eventually, the role of the 'stage nigger' is revealed as a role played by Jackson in order to fool his 'master'. Indeed, Harry, at this point, does not realise that Jackson's use of a vernacular is actually meant to dupe him:

HARRY. Attempted suicide in a Third World country. You can't leave a note because the pencils break, you can't cut your wrist with the local blades...

JACKSON. We trying we best, sir, since all you gone. (*P 133*)

As Walcott has argued, the 'conversion' of colonised people to a religious and linguistic tradition can at the same time be a 'subversion': "[t]he slave converted himself, he changed [...] spiritual weapons, and as he adapted his master's religion, he also adapted his language." (Walcott, "Muse", 48) In his appropriation of his former masters' language, Jackson, too, employs a strategy of subversion. Announcing how he will reenact the part of Crusoe, Jackson mockingly mispronounces 'tragedy' as 'tradegey'.¹²⁹ It is at this point that Harry grows aware of Jackson's *deliberate* mispronunciation of this word, which he compares to a 'smile', or 'bloody dagger', subverting rather than conforming to the imperialist demand for a submissive, yet 'smiling' subject:

¹²⁸ Cf. D. Sinnewe 64.

¹²⁹ Cf. *P 144*. In his subsequent reading of Jackson's "old script" (*P 133*), Jackson again mispronounces a word ('fuflee' instead of 'flee') deliberately, for which Harry reprimands him: "if you're going to do professional theater [...], more discipline is required." (*P 145*)

HARRY. You mispronounce words on purpose, don't you, Jackson? (JACKSON *smiles.*) It's a smile in front and a dagger behind your back, right? Or the smile itself is the bloody dagger. I'm aware, chum. I'm aware.

JACKSON. The smile kinda rusty, sir, but it goes with the job. Just like the water in this hotel: (*demonstrates*) I turn it on at seven and lock it off at one. (P 144)

In an even more comical manner, Jackson, following Harry's correction of his pronunciation of 'marina', comments that "[English] [i]s your language, pardner. I stand corrected. Now, you ain't see English crazy? I could sit down right next to you and tell you that I *stand* corrected" (P 150). The potential for a powerful subversion of the English language is above all evident in the two characters' negotiations of how their Crusoe pantomime – a play within the play – is to be staged. Significantly, Jackson, at one point, adopts a sarcastic, patronising tone which mimics the voice of a British director, if only to mock it:

JACKSON. Mr. Trewe. Now look, you know, I am doing you a favor. [...] [B]ecause he [Crusoe] is naked and he needs clothes, he kills a goat [...]. Now I *know* that there is nobody there, but there is an audience, so the sooner Robinson Crusoe puts on his clothes, then the better and happier we will all be. [...] I am going to look up into the sky. You will, *please*, make the sea-bird noises. [...] I will kill you, take off your skin, make a parasol *and* a hat, and after that, then I promise you that I will remember the song. (P 139)

As Megan K. Ahern has put it, Jackson's "citational, parodic, disruptive mode of speech" (Ahern 4) is "play-acted, with the intent of highlighting the assumptions of its audience" (Ahern 4). Combining exaggerated forms of British diction with a Creole accent, Jackson's skilled use of language thus contradicts the assumption that the (white) British speaker alone is entitled to 'own' British diction. Jackson's mimicry of British diction is, of course, at its best in his impersonation of Harry's British ex-wife, Ellen. Using a photograph of Ellen as a 'mask' and adopting a high-pitched squeal, Jackson role-plays her so convincingly that Harry does not even realise Jackson's recurrent relapses into his own Creole voice:

JACKSON. (*weeping*) I love you, Harold. I love you, and I loved him, too. Forgive me, O God, please, please forgive me... (*As himself*) So how it happen? Murder? A accident?

HARRY. (*to the photograph*) Love me? You loved me so much you used to get drunk and you... ah, ah, what's the use? What's the bloody use? (*Wipes his eyes. Pause.*) (P 149)

As John Thieme has observed in his monograph *Derek Walcott* (1999), “Walcott’s practice in *Pantomime* seems to be grounded in the belief that language is central to debates about subjectivity. [...] Walcott sees the moment of enunciation as crucial to cultural transition” (Thieme, *Walcott*, 128). Indeed, the close intertwining of language and subjectivity is made most obvious when Jackson, parodying the idea of Crusoe as Adam who assumes the right to name the Other, thereby asserting powerfully his own ‘self’ as master, appropriates this power by re-naming the naked white cannibal ‘Thursday’ (*P* 141). Similar to Crusoe’s ‘teaching’ of English to Friday, he then forces an invented African language upon the white savage and, disregarding Harry/Friday’s uneasy demand for subtitles, re-names (or ‘rechristens, shaking or hitting them violently’, as the stage directions put it ironically)¹³⁰ the material objects around him with bold authority:

(*Slams table.*)
 Patamba!
 (*Rattles beach chair.*)
 Backaraka! Backaraka!
 (*Holds up cup, points with other hand.*)
 Banda!
 (*Drops cup.*)
 Banda Karan!
 (*Puts his arm around Harry; points at him.*)
 Subu!
 (*Faster, pointing.*)
 Masz!
 (*Stamping the floor.*)
 Zohgooooor!
 (*Rests his snoring head on his closed palms.*)
 Oma! Onaaaa!
 (*Kneels, looking skyward. Pauses, eyes closed.*)
 Boora! Boora!
 (*Meaning the world. Silence. He rises.*) (*P* 137-138)

In this scene, Jackson’s efforts to bring back to life the language of his ancestors grant him power, for he is able to express a “Right of Possession” (*RC* 117) of his surroundings. Walcott, too, has said that “[w]hat would deliver him [the Caribbean] from servitude was the forging of a *language that went beyond mimicry*, a dialect which had the force of revelation *as it invented names for things*” (Walcott, “Twilight”, 17; emphasis added). Yet, as Harry points out, Jackson “never called anything by the same name twice” (*P* 138). Perhaps unwittingly, Harry then foregrounds the violence inherent

¹³⁰ Cf. *P* 137.

in the Crusoe-Friday relationship: “I’ll tell you one thing, friend. If you want me to learn your language, you’d better have a gun.” (P 138) As Jackson lacks this technological power, he is – at least temporarily – forced to relinquish his authority to his white ‘master’.

As far as the ‘misuses’ of language referred to in the title of this subsection are concerned, the set of shifting variations on the coloniser/colonised relationship allow overt racism (such as Harry’s “Is that one of your African sacrifices, eh?”, P 148; and his disingenuous “the master-servant – *no offence* – relationship”, P 136, followed by a racially offensive statement) as well as historic resentments (“Friday nah t’ief again. Mercy master”, P 149) to be voiced.¹³¹ Moreover, the parrot’s taunting cry of what, according to Harry, is the name of the hotel’s previous German owner, a certain ‘Herr Heinegger’, can easily come across as a racist insult (‘Hey nigger’), which is no longer acceptable in a postcolonial context:

JACKSON. This is my fifth report. I am marking them down. Language is ideas, Mr. Trewe. And I think that this pre-colonial parrot have the wrong idea.

HARRY. It’s his accent, Jackson. He’s a Creole parrot. What can I do?

JACKSON. Well, I am not saying not to give the bird a fair trial, but I see nothing wrong in taking him out the cage at dawn, blindfolding the bitch, giving him a last cigarette if he want it, lining him up against the garden wall, and perforating his arse by firing squad. (P 133-134)

As Graham Huggan (1994) has pointed out, ‘Heinegger’ invokes the name of the German existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger. Drawing a parallel to the original parrot’s uttering of the name of Crusoe’s father, ‘Robin Crusoe’, in Defoe’s novel,¹³² Huggan views the ‘pre-colonial parrot’ as “the surrogate father of Harry and Jackson’s misguided enterprise” (Huggan 648):

[T]he parrot’s mimicry [...] historicizes the absurdity of Harry and Jackson’s existence by placing it within the context of a colonial master-servant relationship which survives into the twentieth century long after it has outlived its original ‘usefulness.’ [...] [T]hat relationship [...] owes its longevity not merely to the perpetuation of an idea of empire but to the continuing credence given to neo-imperialist texts such as *Robinson Crusoe*. (Huggan 648)

¹³¹ Cf. Jones 226.

¹³² Cf. RC 168. Crusoe’s parrot learns to repeat his master’s words, at times even ‘parroting’ back his thoughts: “Poor *Robin Crusoe*, *Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here?*” (RC 168)

After Jackson's strangling of the parrot – '[h]im choke from prejudice' (*P* 148) – Harry reverts to his role as coloniser, reproducing an offensive cliché ("You people create nothing. You imitate everything." *P* 148) which, however, is shown to rebound upon himself. As Jackson suggests in the following exchange, European racism itself might be "a form of mimicry, a mindless acceptance of received attitudes" (Breslin 121):

HARRY. The war's over, Jackson! And how can a bloody parrot be prejudiced?

JACKSON. The same damn way they corrupt a child. By their upbringing. That parrot survive from a pre-colonial epoch, Mr. Trewe, and if it want to last in Trinidad and Tobago, then it go have to adjust. (*P* 134)

What also appears to be highly interesting in the context of the racist misuses of language that occur throughout the play is the various styles of address employed. Harry's forms of address range from the formal 'Mr. Phillip'¹³³ to the informal but possibly cynical 'mate' and 'friend' and the racially loaded 'Friday', 'my boy', 'Big Chief', 'ape', and 'bloody savage'.¹³⁴ Jackson, on the other hand, after habitually though at times ironically referring to Harry as 'Mr. Trewe' and 'sir', also addresses him as 'Mr. Harry', 'Mr. Robinson', 'pardner', and 'Harry',¹³⁵ and devises rhymes which allude to Harry's superior position: "Thank you, Mr. Trewe, sir! Crusoe-soe, *Trewe-so!* [...] Crusoe-Trusoe, Robinson Trewe-so!" (*P* 143) Going even further, Jackson, in Act II, subtly manipulates his forms of address by calling Harry by his surname only. Obviously, this is in order to test his reaction, which is one of shock:

JACKSON. [I]f you say yes, it got to be man to man, and none of this boss-and-Jackson business, you see, Trewe... I mean, I just call you plain Trewe, for example, and I notice that give you a slight shock. Just a little twitch of the lip, but a shock all the same, eh, Trewe? You see? You twitch again. (*P* 144)

Even more strikingly, in a single speech, Jackson slides from 'Mr. Trewe' to 'Trewe' to 'Harry, boy'¹³⁶ – the last word, in effect, suggesting a reversal of Harry's racial insult. In the play's concluding line, Jackson's address of Harry in his (neo)colonial role not as Crusoe, but as 'Robinson' ("[s]tarting from Friday, Robinson..."; *P* 152) might hint at the two characters' growing intimacy and "metonymically registers the precarious gains Jackson has made in the balance of power" (Puri 130).

¹³³ The first time Harry addresses Jackson by his surname it is even wrong, for he calls him 'Mr. Phillips'. (Cf. *P* 135)

¹³⁴ Cf. *P* 143, 138, 138, 133, 136, 137, 147 and 148 respectively.

¹³⁵ Cf. *P* 132, 133, 136, 142, 146 and 148 respectively.

¹³⁶ Cf. *P* 148.

4.2.3 Caribbean Identity and Its Theatrical Expression

It [*Pantomime*] is basically [...] about two actors, and their different racial and cultural origins creating whatever conflicts exist from their approach to theatre, its ritual, its meaning, its style. [...] It may be a political play, with its subject, independence, but that process first has to become human before it can become political. (Derek Walcott, in Stone 126, cited in Thieme, *Walcott*, 128)

As the above epigraph shows, Walcott has described *Pantomime* as a play whose fundamental concern is with two individuals' different, yet mutually constituting approaches to theatre, that is, the performance genres of the English music hall and the Trinidadian calypsonian Carnival. Before embarking upon their rehearsal of a pantomime, both Harry and Jackson have their separate interpretation of Defoe's novel. Harry's is a song about Crusoe's isolation on an island beach for his music-hall skit, the Christmas pantomime *Robinson Crusoe*, whose language is a pastiche of Defoe's heavily stylised early eighteenth-century prose¹³⁷:

Just picture a lonely island
and a beach with its golden sand.
There walks a single man
In the beautiful West Indies! (*P* 132)

Harry views Crusoe as a stereotypical coloniser, a solitary castaway who, in spite of the natural beauty around him, longs for his homeland:

'O silent sea, O wondrous sunset that I've gazed on ten thousand times, who will rescue me from this complete desolation? [...] Yes, this is paradise, I know. For I see around me the splendors of nature... [...] How I'd like to fuflee [flee] this desolate rock. [...] The ferns, the palms like silent sentinels, the wide and silent lagoons that briefly hold my passing, solitary reflection.' (*P* 145)

Yet, as becomes clear with the introduction of the figure of Adam, Harry's interpretation of Crusoe is a projection of himself, an alienated man separated from his far-away home and family, onto the Crusoe character as a suffering romantic figure:

'Adam in paradise had his woman to share his loneliness, but I miss the voice of even one consoling creature, the touch of a hand, the look of kind eyes. Where is the wife from whom I vowed never to be sundered? How old is my little son? If he could see his father like this, mad with memories of them... Even Job had his family. But I am alone, alone, I am all alone.' (*P* 145)

¹³⁷ Cf. D. Sinnewe 79.

Jackson, in his parodic reading of Harry's script, exposes its "rhetoric of pathos, psychological interiority expressed through soliloquy, [...] somewhat cloying sentimentality, and self-aggrandizing comparisons of Crusoe to Job and Adam" (Puri 124). According to Jackson, the speech is "[t]ouching. Very sad. But something is missing" (P 145). Harry's omission of the goats means that Harry's Crusoe "is not a practical man *ship-wrecked*" (P 146): "this man ain't facing reality. There are *goats* all around him." (P 146) For Jackson, it is this practical realism which constitutes the difference between 'classical' and 'Creole' acting:

If he is not practical, he is not Robinson Crusoe. And yes, is Creole acting, yes. Because years afterward his little son could look at the parasol and the hat and look at a picture of Daddy and boast: 'My daddy smart, boy. He get shipwreck and first thing he do is he build a hut, then he kill a goat or two and make clothes, a parasol and a hat'. That way Crusoe *achieve* something, and his son could boast... (P 146)

Contrary to Harry's Crusoe, Jackson's Crusoe is a 'practical' man who is neither white nor black, but "the First True Creole" (P 146) who has to survive not in the "romanticized, paradisaical Eden" (D. Sinnewe 80) of Defoe and Harry's vision, but in the profane West Indian environment. As Shalini Puri has argued, the goats are thus "an injunction for realistic and pragmatic engagement with the prosaic, mundane, and ordinary" (Puri 125). Refusing the pathos and heroism that is so typical of Harry, the goat thus becomes an emblem of both Creole acting and Creoleness more generally.¹³⁸ As Jackson proceeds to show, both 'being' a Creole and 'acting' as one involve pragmatism, self-confidence rather than nostalgia and melancholy, and above all "faith" (P 146) in one's ability to create a new life despite shipwreck, desperation, and hunger:

Robbie ent thinking 'bout his wife and son and O silent sea and O wondrous sunset [...]. [H]e watching the goat with his eyes narrow, narrow, and he say: *Blehh*, eh? [...] [N]ext thing is Robbie and the goat [...] wrestling on the sand, and next thing we know we hearing one last faint, feeble *bleeeeeehhhhhhhhhhh*, and Robbie is next seen walking up the beach with a goatskin hat and a goatskin umbrella, feeling like a million dollars because *he have faith!*" (P 146)

Walcott's Crusoe, then, is both 'classical' and 'Creole': Harry's 'romantic' interpretation of Crusoe is based upon his own agony and solitude: "classical Crusoe is a castaway" (Taylor 297). On the other hand, Jackson's 'historical' interpretation of Crusoe is in terms of the situation in which he finds himself: "Creole Crusoe is a craftsman" (Taylor 297). *Pantomime* eventually becomes, as Edward Baugh has argued,

¹³⁸ Cf. Puri 125.

“a contest [...] of performance styles, music hall versus calypso, which will encapsulate the traditional clash and interplay of cultures in the colonial experience” (Baugh, *Walcott*, 133). Indeed, both characters call their work on the pantomime a ‘game’,¹³⁹ which each wants to win. Jackson wants to re-enact the Crusoe story in calypso style, which involves the spontaneous creation of witty lyrics which are often socially conscious.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, calypso has been “an influential medium in subverting Establishment discourse in the Caribbean” (Jackaman 139), as it articulated “topical political and social commentary directly to a live audience” (Breiner 10, cited in Jackaman 139).¹⁴¹ Jackson’s skill in manipulating language through “double entendre, innuendo, picong,¹⁴² humor, and skilled improvisation” (Puri 124) derives from his experience as a calypsonian and Carnival veteran.¹⁴³ His calypso song about Crusoe – a rock n’ roll performance, in which he uses the goat-skin parasol stage-prop as a guitar – anticipates a potential social re-organisation:

I want to tell you ‘bout Robinson Crusoe.
 He tell Friday, when I do so, do so.
 Whatever I do, you must do like me.
 He make Friday a Good Friday Bohbole;¹⁴⁴ [...]
 But one day things bound to go in reverse,
 With Crusoe the slave and Friday the boss. (*P* 138)

The subversive power of Jackson’s style is, of course, most apparent in the elaborate and highly amusing mime sequence,¹⁴⁵ which illustrates Harry’s version of Crusoe’s shipwreck and capture of a goat to make a parasol and a hat. By acting out Harry’s script with great attention to detail, Jackson is able to show the futility of Harry’s simple reversal strategy, for it maintains racial boundaries:¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Cf. *P* 135, 138.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Lichtenstein (1999).

¹⁴¹ Calypso, a style of Afro-Caribbean music, has its origins in Trinidad and Tobago at the beginnings of the 20th century, when it was developed by the descendants of African slaves, workers, remnants of the indigenes, and Spanish, French and British settlers. According to another version, the calypso competitions which were held at Carnivals (brought to Trinidad by the French) were increasingly popular, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1834. (Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calypso_music)

¹⁴² In Trinidadian Creole, picong “refers to the practice of engaging in witty and stinging insult” (Puri 247, n. 26).

¹⁴³ According to Jones, “the existence of a well-known calypsonian named Tobago Crusoe may have been one element in Walcott’s creative process. This Crusoe, an engaging but not top-flight solo performer, worked as singer and MC in the Mighty Sparrow’s Young Brigade Tent for twenty years in the Port of Spain” (Jones 232).

¹⁴⁴ A Bohbole is “a Judas effigy beaten at Easter in Trinidad and Tobago” (*P* 152, n. 1).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *P* 138-140.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. D. Sinnewe 78.

HARRY. Okay, if you're a black explorer... Wait a minute... wait a minute. If you're really a white explorer but you're black, shouldn't I play a black seabird because I'm white?

JACKSON. Are you... going to extend... the limits of prejudice to include... the flora and fauna of this island? (*P* 139)

What might shed some light on Jackson's excessive miming of Crusoe is what Bhabha, in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984), has called colonial mimicry: "mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. [...] [T]he discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha, "Mimicry", 126). Significantly, mimicry also has the potential to undermine colonial authority: "[t]he *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority." (Bhabha, "Mimicry", 129) In Bhabha's view, the reformation of that category of people which V.S. Naipaul has called "mimic men of the New World" (Naipaul 175), or Franz Fanon has referred to in the phrase "black skin/white masks", means that they become "the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness" (Bhabha, "Mimicry", 129); yet, it is precisely because of the 'menace' of their mimicry that they emerge at the same time as "'inappropriate' colonial subjects [...] [who] [...] [articulate] those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (Bhabha, "Mimicry", 129).

In his critical essay "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" (1974), Walcott has taken up Naipaul's concept of the 'mimic man', which he sees both as a "crippling indictment" and an "astonishing truth" (Walcott, "Caribbean", 53):

To mimic, one needs a mirror, and, if I understand Mr. Naipaul correctly, our pantomime is conducted before a projection of ourselves which in its smallest gestures is based on metropolitan references. No gesture, according to this philosophy, is authentic, every sentence is a quotation, every movement either ambitious or pathetic, and because it is mimicry, uncreative. The indictment is crippling, but like all insults, it contains an astonishing truth. (Walcott, "Caribbean", 53)

For Walcott, the "astonishing truth" of Naipaul's 'insult' is that "mimicry is an act of imagination" and "cunning" (Walcott, "Caribbean", 55), rather than a sign of unoriginality. Walcott thus re-formulates Naipaul's infamous curse – "nothing has ever

been created in the West Indies and nothing will ever be created” (Walcott, “Caribbean”, 54) – as a positive, even creative truth: “Nothing will always be created in the West Indies... because what will come out of there is like nothing one has ever seen before.” (Walcott, “Caribbean”, 54)¹⁴⁷ Indeed, Walcott’s notion of a defiantly creative rather than re- or unproductive mimicry is accomplished through *Pantomime*’s fusion of previously separate art forms (amongst them calypso and pantomime) to create something “one has [n]ever seen before”: a “creolization of the *Robinson Crusoe* pre-text” (Thieme, *Canon*, 58), which reconciles ‘Creole’ and ‘classical’ – now no longer mutually exclusive pairs – within itself. It is only when Harry respects Jackson’s art as equal to his own – that is, recognises him “artist to artist” as “a real pro” (*P* 136) – that *both* men are able to act together with sincerity in their attempts to prepare a show for the new season’s guests, which will be called ‘Pantomime’.¹⁴⁸

JACKSON. Shall we take it from there, then? The paper.

HARRY. I should know it. After all, I wrote it. But prompt. Creole or classical?

JACKSON. Don’t make joke. (*P* 151)

4.2.4 Re-Writing the Master-Slave Dialectic

But if you take this thing seriously, we might commit
Art, which is a kind of crime in this society.
(Walcott, *Pantomime*, 140)

When we analyse the master/slave dialectic as it is re-written in *Pantomime*, it is the play’s character page which first commands attention. It indicates that Harry and Jackson’s identities are to be understood primarily in terms of a series of binary oppositions:

HARRY TREWE English, mid-forties, owner of the Castaways Guest House, retired actor

JACKSON PHILLIP Trinidadian, forty, his factotum, retired calypsonian (*P* 132)

Thus, whilst Harry’s and Jackson’s age and former occupation as performing artists overlap, they are opposed in terms of their nationality (neo-coloniser vs. neo-colonised)

¹⁴⁷ As an example of a form which “originated in imitation [...] and ended in invention” (Walcott, “Caribbean”, 55), Walcott cites calypso, which “came out of nothing, which emerged from the sanctions imposed on it” (Walcott, “Caribbean”, 54): “[t]he banning of African drumming led to the discovery of the garbage can cover as a potential musical instrument.” (Walcott, “Caribbean”, 54-55)

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *P* 152.

and class position (master vs. servant).¹⁴⁹ As David P. Lichtenstein has said of Harry's background,

[it] aligns neatly with that of the traditional roles of empire: he's British, white, wealthy (enough to own a resort), and he has come to the West Indies to exploit the island's natural beauty (and labor) in order to please his (presumably wealthy) European guests. He comes as the figure of the conqueror, the uncouth and privileged man seeking to develop and maintain control on this island of Tobago. (Lichtenstein 1999)

Jackson, on the other hand, is clearly opposed to Harry through his birth place (Trinidad), his occupation (servant/factotum), his language (a West Indian dialect), and his skin colour (black).¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, the two characters' profound and at times dramatic exploration of the Crusoe myth, which provides the material for their negotiations of the imperialist power dynamics that have an impact on their rehearsals of their Crusoe pantomime, are, of course, supported by the play's setting. In fact, their "isolated close proximity" (Baugh, *Walcott*, 132) in the 'safe' space of the 'gazebo'¹⁵¹ – an "empty boarding house" (*P* 143) which is closed for repairs, on a "totally deserted Sunday morning" (*P* 135) – suggests a suspended atmosphere which, as John Thieme has remarked, resembles the milieu of Carnival as portrayed by Bakhtin:¹⁵² "carnival celebrated liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal."¹⁵³ (Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 10, cited in Thieme, *Walcott*, 127) Yet, as Shalini Puri has pointed out in her article "Beyond Resistance: Rehearsing Opposition in Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*" (2004), the play challenges Carnival scholarship's traditional reading of Carnival in its historical Caribbean context "as a respite in the cycle of plantation labor" (Puri 117), for Harry insists on Jackson's participation in the pantomime *in addition to* his fulfilling all other duties as his 'handyman'. When Harry wants to tape-record Jackson's improvised calypso, the latter retorts: "You start to exploit me already?" (*P* 138) Carnival, in the contemporary tourist economy, might then suggest "not a break from exploitative labor, but an intensification of that labor" (Puri 117). As is made clear throughout the play,

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Puri 116.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Lichtenstein (1999).

¹⁵¹ Walcott's choice of a gazebo, a "turret, cupola (small, lanternlike dome), or garden house set on a height to give an extensive view" (*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* 2008), calls to mind Crusoe's view of himself as 'Lord' of all he surveyed. (Cf. *RC* 117)

¹⁵² Cf. Thieme, *Walcott*, 127.

¹⁵³ In *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), Trinidadian author Earl Lovelace "describes the rejuvenating effects of carnival on the inhabitants of a slum on the outskirts of Port of Spain" (Nasta 2002).

Tobago's post-independence reality is one of decrepitude: there are jokes about island-wide shortages, the uncertain water supply, defective appliances, and razor blades too blunt for suicide.¹⁵⁴ As Jackson's appalling description of the servants' lavatories (a pit latrine in an outhouse) in contrast to Harry's bathroom, with its "clean, rough Cannon towels", "lotions and expensive soaps" (*P* 146), and Jackson's reference to the "peanuts" (*P* 133) Harry pays the hotel's carpenter suggest, Harry's material prosperity is not enjoyed by the majority of the local inhabitants.

Crusoe's teaching of English and Christianity, his satisfaction with the company of his servant whilst never fully considering him an equal, as well as his (in the words of Walcott) "honest, tender belief in the superiority of his kind" (Walcott, "Figure", 37) are all aspects of the Crusoe-Friday relationship that recur in *Pantomime*. When Harry first proposes a reversal of the roles of white master/black servant, his claim that he "can bring it all down" (*P* 133) to Jackson's level reflects Harry's view that he is the superior actor – a conviction which, as the ensuing improvisations show, is an illusion. Refusing to perpetuate the binary oppositions upheld in *Robinson Crusoe*, Jackson, in his efforts to expose some of the more complex and potentially "offensive" (*P* 140) implications of their reversed Crusoe story, goes well beyond Harry's original intention to "keep it light" (*P* 137). Abrogating the English language in order to 'strike back' at Defoe's novel, Jackson uses improvisation as a tool for critical analysis. The introduction of an invented language and religion with increasing force allows Jackson to comment on the epistemic violence caused by the coloniser's imposition of his language:

JACKSON. You mean we making it up as we go along?

HARRY. Right!

JACKSON. Right! I in dat! (*He assumes a stern stance and points stiffly*)
Robinson obey Thursday now. Speak Thursday language. Obey Thursday gods.

HARRY. Jesus Christ!

JACKSON. (*inventing language*) Amaka nobo sakamaka khaki pants kamaluma
Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ kamalogo! (*Pause. Then with a violent gesture*)
Kamalongo kaba! (*meaning: Jesus is dead!*) (*P* 137)

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *P* 133-134. Comparing the decrepit hotel to a hospital, Jackson notes that "[t]he toilet catch asthma, the air-condition got ague, the front-balcony rail missing four teet', and every minute the fridge like it dancing the Shango..." (*P* 133)

It soon becomes obvious that it is not only the roles of Crusoe and Friday which are reversed, for Harry's power as to director and author of their pantomime is boldly seized by Jackson. When their playacting reaches the subject of religion, Harry grasps the full implications of his suggestion to reverse roles and becomes increasingly hesitant to continue to work on the pantomime.¹⁵⁵ Recast as a white Christian cannibal, Harry – very much like Crusoe, who is unable to accept a religion practised by “brutish and barbarous Savages” (*RC* 257) – all of a sudden struggles to comprehend the symbolic implications of his reversal concept:

He comes across this naked white cannibal called Thursday, you know. And then look at what would happen. He would have to start to... well, he'd have to, sorry... This cannibal, who is Christian, would have to start unlearning Christianity. He would have to be taught... I mean... he'd have to be taught by this – African... that everything was wrong, that what he was doing... I mean, for nearly two thousand years... was wrong. That his civilization, his culture, his whatever, was... *horrible*. Was all... wrong. Barbarous, I mean, you know. And Crusoe would then have to teach him things like, you know, about... Africa, his gods, patamba, so on... (*P* 141)

As David Ford has pointed out, “Harry's broken speech [...] demonstrat[es] that the biases he denies having are actually there beneath the surface. [...] The dash, and tangible pause, before Harry spits out the word ‘African’ shows that he still falls into the colonizer pattern” (Ford 2000). Drawing upon Crusoe's horror of the cannibals and his concern to convert Friday to Christianity, Jackson imagines a “Sunday morning on this tropical island” (*P* 136), when the flesh of Christ is given in the communion ceremony:

JACKSON. Supposing I wasn't a waiter, and instead of breakfast I was serving you communion, [...] and I turn to you, Friday, to teach you my faith, and I tell you, kneel down and eat this man. [...] What you think you would say, eh? (*pause*) You, this white savage? (*P* 136)

Jackson's comment that the Christian communion is, on a literal level, another version of ‘cannibalism’ – and, in the Christian missionary's eyes, the only legitimate one – reveals Harry's presumptuousness and forces him to admit that his own religion, when not considered in its context, is no more than cannibalism.¹⁵⁶ Significantly, Jackson's earlier joke that he will play “[c]arnival, but not canni-bal” (*P* 133) is one of the many instances which illustrate the play's major strategy: to “say things in fun about this place, about the whole Caribbean, that would hurt while people laughed” (*P* 136).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ford (2000).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *P* 136.

Harry's fear is that their reverse Crusoe plot might no longer be "good-humored slapstick" (Breslin 118) of the genre of 'a little pantomime', but 'a play' (P 141), "a more corrosive kind of satire" (Breslin 118). Thus, as an excuse for why the performance in progress needs to be halted, he cautions Jackson: "if you take this thing seriously, we might commit Art, which is a kind of crime in this society", as it would make people "think too much" (P 140). Towards the end of the first act, Harry's threat of dismissing Jackson if the latter continues his improvised role shows that Harry can abandon the play whenever he fancies and restore his authority as 'master': "Er, Jackson. This is too humiliating. Now, let's just forget it and please don't continue, or you're fired." (P 140) Jackson, whilst agreeing to stop, reminds Harry that what they have just enacted is "[t]he history of the British Empire" (P 141) and expounds:

[Y]ou come to a place, you find that place as God make it; like Robinson Crusoe, you civilize the natives; they try to do something, you turn around and you say to them: 'You are not good enough, let's call the whole thing off, return things to normal, you go back to your position as slave or servant, I will keep mine as master, and we'll forget the whole thing ever happened.' Correct? You would like me to accept this. (P 141)

Yet, Harry's status has been damaged. As Jackson's retort ('Natural'?) in the following exchange shows, their relationship as master and servant has lost its sense of 'naturalness'. Using modals ('you'd better...', 'I'd like...') and verbs of opinion ('I want...', 'I think...') rather than imperatives, Harry can now no longer reply upon his orders being obeyed blindly, but must state them repeatedly:

HARRY. It's not the sort of thing I want, and I think you'd better clean up, and I'm going inside, and when I come back I'd like this whole place just as it was.

JACKSON. You mean you'd like it returned to its primal state? Natural? Before Crusoe finds Thursday? But, you see, that is not history. That is not the world.

HARRY. I just want this little place here *cleaned up*, and I'd like you to get back to fixing the sun deck. Let's forget the whole matter. Righto. Excuse me. (P 141)

Eventually, Harry's efforts to prevent Jackson's vision of the Crusoe plot from developing are futile, for Jackson, revelling in his new role as a black Crusoe, will not be stopped:

JACKSON. You see, it's your people who introduced us to this culture: Shakespeare, *Robinson Crusoe*, the classics, and so on, and when we start getting as good as them, you can't leave halfway. So, I will continue? Please? (P 140)

Taking up Friday's submission to life-long servitude in his 'shadow' speech, Jackson recalls a three-hundred-year history of servitude, during which he attended on 'boss' (South Africa), 'bwana' (Sub-Saharan Africa), 'effendi' (Egypt), 'bacra' (Caribbean), and 'sahib' (India). For Jackson, his and Harry's pantomime is "nothing less than" a re-enactment of "the history of imperialism" (P 140):

JACKSON. For three hundred years I served you. Three hundred years I served you breakfast in... in my white jacket on a white veranda, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... in that sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib... that was my pantomime. Every movement you made your shadow copied... (*stops giggling*) and you smiled at me as a child does smile at his shadow's helpless obedience, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib, Mr. Crusoe... (P 137)

Jackson's manipulation of the imperialist metaphor of the 'sun that never sets' to represent not the British Empire's reach, but the coloniser's incapability of shaking off the shadow, the "dark side of his own consciousness" (Baugh, *Walcott*, 133), is developed further when Jackson, adopting the persona of *The Mighty Shadow*¹⁵⁷ and evoking Hegel's master/slave dialectic, proceeds to prophesy "in a trance-like drone" (P 137) that the coloniser will be haunted by his shadow and that, just as in their pantomime, the social roles will be reversed:

But the shadow don't stop, no matter if the child stop playing that pantomime [...]. He cannot get rid of it, no matter what, and that is the power and black magic of the shadow [...] until it is the shadow that start dominating the child, it is the servant that start dominating the master (*laughs maniacally, like The Shadow*) and that is the victory of the shadow, boss. (*Normally*) And that is why all them Pakistani and West Indians in England, all them immigrant Fridays driving all you so crazy. [...] In that sun that never set, they's your shadow, you can't shake them off. (P 137)

Harry and Jackson, as epitomes of coloniser and colonised, are thus imprisoned in a relationship, constrained by the history of colonisation. Whilst Harry mistakenly believes that he and Jackson might be able to relate to each other 'man to man' (P 143), Jackson knows that any evaluation of their actions as individuals is inevitably 'pre-scripted' by a larger history. As such, when Harry feigns a suicide attempt, Jackson protests, knowing that he will be accused by a discriminatory legal system: "They go say I push you." (P 133) As Patrick Taylor has argued in his analysis of the power relations between Harry and Jackson, "[t]he white rulers may have departed now that

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Jones 235 and Baugh, *Walcott*, 133. *The Mighty Shadow* is "a calypsonian who dressed in dark cloak and shady hat" (Jones 235). A further reference to popular culture might be the *Shadow*, hero of a 1940s comic book series and cinema serial. (Cf. Jones 235)

Crusoe's island is independent, but they are still very much present. The black Crusoes are their agents, their neo-colonial shadows; the reversal is only an appearance" (Taylor 296).

The phrase 'man to man', then, only serves to conceal Jackson's continued experience of subjection and powerlessness. His reaction to the phrase is to expose it as an "alibi for one who is squeamish about *acknowledging* his own power, but not about exercising it" (Puri 120). Thus, when Harry asserts that "we've come closer to a mutual respect, and that things need not get that hostile. Sit, and let me explain what I had in mind" (P 135-136), Jackson observes sarcastically: "I take it that's an order?" (P 136) Harry's power as 'master' thus plays a major role in their conversations; for instance, when Jackson protests at Harry's undressing before him to enter into the role of Friday, the latter's failure to conceive of Jackson as an audience ("There's nobody here"; P 134) merely reiterates the notion of the 'invisibility' of the black man. Similarly, there is Jackson's sarcastic, double-voiced warning that Harry "mustn't rush things, people have to slide into independence" (P 146). For Jackson, the conversations he has with Harry are not 'man to man' at all, but mere play-acting:

We having one of them 'playing man-to-man' talks" (P 144). , where a feller does look a feller in the eye and say, 'Le' we settle this thing, man to man,' and this time the feller who smiling and saying it, his whole honest intention is to take the feller by the crotch and rip out the stones, and dig out he eyes and leave him for corbeaux to pick. (P 144)

Contradicting Harry's use of the phrase to resolve conflict ("Let's have a drink, man to man, and try to work out what happened this morning, all right?"; P 143), 'man to man' is thus revealed to have connotations of antagonism, even violence – a fact which is underlined by Jackson's comic reference to Crusoe's slaughter of a goat "*mano to mano*, man to man, man to goat" (P 146). This *symbolic*, or verbal violence gradually translates into narratives about *material* violence,¹⁵⁸ such as the nursery rhyme "Fee fi fo fum, / I smell the blood of an Englishman" (P 148), Harry's story of taking a wrench to a sergeant who thought he was a homosexual, and Jackson's story of nailing an ice-pick through the hand of an Indian who wanted to "play nigger".¹⁵⁹ Following these narratives are instances of actual *physical* violence, such as Jackson's strangling of the

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Puri 132.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. P 135.

“prejudiced” parrot, and Harry’s chasing of Jackson-as-Ellen with an ice-pick.¹⁶⁰ When Harry, at the beginning of Act II, bolts from his chair when seeing Jackson standing nearby, “shirtless, holding a hammer” (*P* 142) with which he had fixed the sun deck, both characters literally fear an “escalation of violence from the symbolic to the literal, the role to the real” (Puri 133).

Harry’s ‘man to man’ is, of course, echoed by his earlier use of ‘artist to artist’.¹⁶¹ As has been shown in section 4.2.3, before Harry is able to recognise Jackson ‘man to man’, he recognises him ‘artist to artist’, which is “the first step in the levelling of the master-servant relationship” (Breslin 123). Significantly, Walcott envisages this ‘levelling’ not through a simple reversal of the roles of Crusoe and Friday, for such a reversal would maintain the binaries upon which imperialism depends. Instead, in the course of their pantomime, *both* characters act the part of Crusoe and cross over the Crusoe and Friday roles repeatedly, at times blurring ‘art’ and ‘life’ so that it is not clear whether they act in a role, or not:

HARRY. You’re the bloody ape, mate. You people just came down from the trees.

JACKSON. Say that again, please.

HARRY. I’m going to keep that line.

JACKSON. Oho! Rehearse you rehearsing? I thought you was serious. (*P* 146)

Harry, at one point, imitates Al Jolson singing ‘Sonny Boy’ and ‘Swanee’, and assumes the role of the Ancient Mariner,¹⁶² whereas Jackson plays a variety of stereotypical ‘black’ roles, such as the ‘stage nigger’ and the ‘noble savage’.¹⁶³ Thus the variety of roles assumed by both Harry and Jackson points towards the ambivalence produced by colonial discourse, a strategy which “disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizer and colonized” (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 13). As Bhabha has claimed in his collection of essays *The Location of Culture* (1994), there is a space “in-between the designation of identity”, which suggests that a clear-cut division between coloniser and colonised has never existed in the first place: “this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *P* 148 and 150.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *P* 136.

¹⁶² Cf. *P* 133, 138 and 150.

¹⁶³ Cf. *P* 132 and 137.

the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference between an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, *Location*, 4). It is precisely this insight of Walcott that critic Paula Burnett, in *Derek Walcott: Politics and Poetics* (2000), has lauded: “the most secure counter to the binary discourse of empire that deploys alterity to justify material exploitation is not a different binary discourse but one that transcends such classifications altogether.” (Burnett, *Politics*, 129, cited in Ahern 7)

The last few lines of the play command further attention in this respect. Whilst Jackson first rejects Harry’s exploitation of himself (“I going back to the gift that’s my God-given calling. I benignly resign, you fire me. With inspiration. Caiso is my true work, caiso is my true life.” *P* 150), he then reconsiders: “Wait! Wait! Hold it! (*He walks over to HARRY.*) Starting from Friday, Robinson, we could talk ‘bout a raise?” (*P* 152) As it seems, Harry will thus continue to be the hotel owner and Jackson his employee. However, a “mutual respect” (*P* 135) seems to have grown between the two men. Their newfound relationship and its symbolic resonances are addressed in Jackson’s closing calypso or, as it is called here, ‘caiso’, “a term used in the Caribbean for a joyous song” (Peters 533):

Well, a Limey name Trewe come to Tobago.
He was in show business but he had no show,
so in desperation he turn to me and said: ‘Mr. Phillip is the two o’we,
one classical actor and one Creole,
let we act together with we heart and soul.
It go be man to man, and we go do it fine,
and we go give it the title of pantomime. (*P* 151-152)

The two men have changed as they are left, in Bhabha’s words, in positions that are “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, “Mimicry”, 126). As Harry says, with a tear in his eye, “[a]n angel passes through a house and leaves no imprint of his shadow on the wall. A man’s life slowly changes and he does not understand the change. Things like this have happened before, and they can happen again. [...] You see what it is I’m saying?” (*P* 151) Jackson’s response – “[y]ou making a mole hill out of a mountain, sir. But I think I follow you.” (*P* 151) – indicates that, whilst they have indeed reached a new understanding of each other, much remains to be done, as the double meanings of ‘Friday’ and ‘raise’ indicate. Jackson’s request of a ‘raise’ is not only a demand for social equality; it is, at the same time (and perhaps more ‘pragmatically’) a “political demand” (Puri 132) which seeks economic equality not only for Jackson Phillip, who

will act only if he is rewarded accordingly, but, starting from (himself as) Friday, for “all them Pakistani and West Indians in England, all them immigrant Fridays” (*P* 137).

Just as the ‘before’ of the play remains obscure to the readers/viewers (for Jackson, upon Harry’s first mentioning of his idea of a Crusoe pantomime, says: “Mr. Trewe, you come back with the same rake *again?*”, *P* 133; emphasis added), the play’s ending with an unanswered question (“Starting from Friday, Robinson, we could talk ‘bout a raise?”; *P* 152) calls attention to the ‘after’ of the play and the fact that despite a first shift in the balance of power, the inequalities in the Crusoe-Friday relationship persist.¹⁶⁴ “Creole opposition, then, [...] emerges as slow, repetitive, persistent work, a steady chipping away at neocolonial roles, rather than a once-and-for-all definitive overturning of them.” (Puri 134) However, as Jackson’s closing calypso indicates, the two characters’ common project to create a new pantomime – “a new version of the Crusoe story - the story of emergent racial equality” (Loudon 3) – has the potential to fulfil Harry’s intention “to generally improve relations all around” (*P* 136).

4.2.5 The Gender Subplot as ‘Confessional Psychodrama’

JACKSON ‘Tain’t prejudice that bothering you, Mr. Trewe; you ain’t no parrot to repeat opinion. No, is loneliness that sucking your soul as dry as the sun suck a crab shell. On a Sunday like this, I does watch you. [...] Walking round restless, staring at the sea. You remember your wife and your son, not right?
(Derek Walcott, *Pantomime*, 143)

The gender subplot plays a significant role in Walcott’s re-writing of Defoe’s novel. Interestingly, Walcott seems to have taken up the homoerotic undertones of *Robinson Crusoe*, and in the play comments upon these early on. In fact, Jackson objects to Harry’s undressing to practise the role of Friday, insisting that he should not “bother getting into the part, get into the pants” (*P* 134), because “if anybody should happen to pass, [his] name is immediately mud” (*P* 134). Harry responds to Jackson’s protest, arguing defensively:

HARRY. What’re you afraid of? Think I’m bent? That’s such a corny interpretation of the Crusoe-Friday relationship, boy. My son’s been dead three years, Jackson, and I’ve’n’t had much interest in women since, but I haven’t gone queer, either. (*P* 134)

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Puri 133-134.

Moreover, at one point in the play, Jackson, jokingly or not, threatens to resign and provide Harry with “someone more to [his] sexual taste” (*P* 135). Yet, Harry claims that, when he played the Vamp in a Christmas pantomime called “Aladdin and His Wonderful Vamp” for the RAF, he attacked a sergeant who came too close to him and thereby defended his heterosexual honour.¹⁶⁵ Harry’s, just like Crusoe’s, sexual desire thus remains ambiguous, with both *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pantomime* allowing for a reading as “histor[ies] of homosexual repression” (DeLuna 69).

As has been observed in section 3.3.2, even if women in *Robinson Crusoe* do not play an active role in the narrative proper, their influence is still felt, for they provoke key events, with the nameless widow, for instance, allowing Crusoe to return to England as a wealthy man. In *Pantomime*, too, Harry’s ex-wife, Ellen, though never actually appearing on stage, is responsible for Harry’s eventual emotional catharsis. It is due to Jackson’s brilliant playacting of scenes from their failed marriage that Harry, mistaking role-play for reality, confesses his subordination to Ellen both as husband and actor:

All right. I’ll tell you what I’m going to do next, Ellen: you’re such a big star, you’re such a luminary, I’m going to leave you to shine by yourself. I’m giving up this bloody rat-race and I’m going to take up Mike’s offer, I’m leaving ‘the theatuh’, which destroyed my confidence, screwed up my marriage, and made you a star. I’m going somewhere where I can get pissed every day and watch the sun set, like Robinson bloody Crusoe. [...] You always said it’s the only part I could play. (*P* 150)

Harry’s double subordination is humiliating because it contradicts not only the gender ‘norm’ of the dominant husband, but also the artistic norm that, according to the performance conventions of a pantomime, a man plays even the woman’s roles,¹⁶⁶ such as the ‘pantomime dame’ (often the hero’s mother).¹⁶⁷ As Harry gradually opens up, his solitude and the trauma caused by the death of his son in a car crash – caused by the wife’s drunken driving – emerge. Early on in the second act, Harry attempts to apologise to Jackson and admits that his reason for rehearsing the Crusoe pantomime was his loneliness and boredom: “I daresay the terror of emptiness made me want to act.” (*P* 143) In contrast to *Robinson Crusoe*, (neo-)colonialism in *Pantomime* is not based on any ‘natural’ cultural or racial superiority, but is re-written as a compensation strategy for the master’s feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth. In fact, Harry is

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *P* 135.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Puri 122.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantomime>

presented not as a particularly ambitious, adventurous ‘hero’ willing to take risks, but as a mediocre actor and embarrassed husband who has come to the West Indies in search of some recovery from his shattered life. Interestingly, in a 1988 interview, Walcott himself addressed this idea. For Walcott, “Crusoe in relation to Friday is emblematic of Christianising cannibals and converting people from savagery”; yet, “[t]he more involved aspect of it is: How does Crusoe feel? What does he become, isolated from his country and his language?” (Walcott, in King 362) Walcott is thus not concerned with “what empire does to a colony, but rather what a colony does for the empire” (King 362). Harry eventually demonstrates Walcott’s belief that it is not Friday who is being ‘civilised’; it is the “[p]eople who come to the Caribbean from the cities and the continents [who] go through a process of being recultured” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Art”, 74).

Just as Friday’s footprint “is the mark of his [Crusoe’s] salvation” (*P* 150), it is Jackson’s superior artistic and linguistic skills that lead to Harry’s acceptance of the reality of his situation: the loss of his wife and son, and even his failure as an actor:

That’s the real reason I wanted to do the panto. To do it better than you ever did. You played Crusoe in the panto, Ellen. I was Friday. Black bloody grease-paint that made you howl. You wiped the stage with me...Ellen... well. Why not? I was no bloody good. (*P* 150)

As Patrick Taylor has argued, Jackson’s restoration of self-esteem to Harry might be described as the work of a ‘psychoanalyst’.¹⁶⁸ Most importantly, as section 4.2.3 has shown, this is achieved through Jackson’s refusal to play the role of the colonised ‘inferior’, but by offering his ‘Creole’ Crusoe as an archetype of a practical, confident man with a will to survive: “Crusoe must get up, he must make himself get up. He have to face a next day again.” (*P* 150) As Harry’s quotation from Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” shows, it is when Jackson (as Ellen) threatens suicide that Harry is finally able to forgive her, lifting the burden off his past life: “The albatross fell off and sank / Like lead into the sea.” (*P* 150) Walcott, too, has commented upon Jackson’s role as ‘agent’ in the coloniser’s psychic healing.¹⁶⁹ When asked by Edward Hirsch whether *Pantomime* was a “parable about colonialism” (Hirsch, “Art”, 74), Walcott advised against an overemphasis on the racial bitterness between the two protagonists:

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Taylor 298.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Baugh, *Walcott*, 136.

The point is very simple. There are two types. The prototypical Englishman is not supposed to show his grief publicly. He keeps a stiff upper lip. [...] What the West Indian character does is to try to wear him down into confessing that he is capable of such emotion and there's nothing wrong in showing it. Some sort of catharsis is possible. That is the main point of the play. [...] I have never thought of it really as a play about racial conflict. When it's done in America, it becomes a very tense play [...]. When it's done here, it doesn't have those deep historical overtones of real bitterness. I meant it to be basically *a farce that might instruct*. And the instruction is that we can't just contain our grief, that there's purgation in tears. (Walcott, in Hirsch, "Art", 74-75)

Nonetheless, in another interview conducted soon after the play's first performances, Walcott indicated that Pantomime might be much more serious than 'farce', for hidden underneath Harry's "stolid facade" (Walcott, in Guinness 290) of English reserve,

there is much horror and fear and trembling. The cracks appear and it is where these cracks appear that Jackson darts in and widens. The play is about Jackson besieging and darting in and out until [...] the wall is broken down and we look into his room and see Trewe naked and exposed. This is how *confessional psychodrama* works. (Walcott, in Guinness 290; emphasis added)

Both Harry and Jackson, at one point in the play, must, in Walcott's words, "confront the fact that one is white and one is black. They have to confront their history" (Walcott, in Hirsch, "Art", 75). Rejecting American criticism of the play's 'corny' ending, Walcott has observed that "[t]he idea of some reconciliation or some adaptability of being able to live together [...] is sometimes rejected by people as being a facile solution. But I believe it's possible" (Walcott, in Hirsch, "Art", 75). For Walcott, then, acting, and theatre in general, have an essential role to fulfil in order for reconciliation in the post-independence Caribbean to succeed. As *Literary Review* contributor David Mason has put it, Walcott's aim in writing his plays is to create a "catalytic theater responsible for social change or at least social identity" (Mason, cited in *poetryfoundation*, "Derek Walcott").

5. Re-Writing *Robinson Crusoe* from South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986)

5.1 J.M. Coetzee and Postcolonial Literature

[A] story is not a message with a covering [...] not a message plus a residue, the residue, the art with which the message is coated. [...] There is no addition in stories. They are not made up of one thing plus another thing, message plus vehicle, substructure plus superstructure. On the keyboard on which they are written, the plus key does not work.

(J.M. Coetzee, "The Novel Today", 4)



5.1.1 J.M. Coetzee: A Brief Biography¹⁷⁰

One of today's most influential novelists writing in English, John Maxwell Coetzee¹⁷¹ was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1940. Although Coetzee's parents – his mother was a primary school teacher, and his father was trained as a lawyer – were descended from early Dutch settlers dating to the seventeenth century, the language spoken at home was English, indicating Coetzee's linguistic dislocation from Afrikaner society.¹⁷² As Coetzee has said in an interview with David Attwell in 1992, "[n]o Afrikaner would consider me an Afrikaner [...] because English is my first language, and has been since childhood [...]. I am not embedded in the culture of the Afrikaner (I have never, for instance, belonged to a reformed Church) and have been shaped by that culture only in a perverse way" (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 341-342). Yet, strictly speaking, Coetzee cannot be classified as an "English South African" either, since he is not "of British ancestry" (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 342):

I am one of many people in this country who have become detached from their ethnic roots, whether those roots were in Dutch South Africa or Indonesia or Britain or Greece or whatever, and have joined a pool of no recognizable *ethnos* [...]. These people [...] are merely South Africans [...] whose native tongue, the tongue they have been born to, is English. And, as the pool has no discernible *ethnos*, so one day I hope it will have no predominant color, as more "people of

¹⁷⁰ This section is primarily based upon Frängsmyr (2003) and Head 1-9. The photo has been taken from http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2003/coetzee-bio.html

¹⁷¹ As Derek Attridge has noted, the use of names in Coetzee's work is interesting especially due to the "repeated undermining of their supposed simple referentiality" (Attridge, *Ethics*, 94, n. 3). In this respect, Coetzee's decision to withhold his forenames from his readers has led to some uncertainty whether his name is 'John Michael', 'John Maxwell', or 'Jean-Marie' Coetzee. (Cf. Attridge, *Ethics*, 94 n. 3) Throughout the rest of this thesis, the initials 'J.M.' will be used.

¹⁷² Cf. Poyner, "Introduction", 3.

color” drift into it. A pool, I would hope then, in which differences wash away. (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 342)

In 1948, Coetzee’s father, who supported the United Party, lost his position in local government when the Nationalists took power and replaced English-speaking civil servants with their Afrikaner supporters.¹⁷³ After spending three years in Worcester, South Africa, the family returned to Cape Town in 1951, where Coetzee (as a Protestant) attended a Catholic high school run by the Marist Brothers, which once more reinforced his sense of alienation from the community around him. Coetzee entered the University of Cape Town in 1957, from which he received B.A. and M.A. degrees in English and Mathematics. From 1962 to 1965, he worked as a computer programmer in London, at the same time doing research for an M.A. thesis on the English novelist Ford Madox Ford. In 1963 he married Philippa Jubber, with whom he had two children. In the mid-1960s Coetzee moved to the United States and studied for a Ph.D. in literary linguistics at the University of Texas in Austin. His doctoral dissertation was on the early fiction of Samuel Beckett – an acknowledged influence, amongst others, on his fiction.¹⁷⁴ From 1968 to 1971 Coetzee was assistant professor of English at the State University of New York, Buffalo. After the denial of his application for permanent residence in the United States due to his involvement in anti-Vietnam War protests, Coetzee returned to South Africa where, from 1972 until 2000, he held a series of positions at the University of Cape Town, the last of which was as Distinguished Professor of Literature. Between 1984 and 2003 he also taught frequently in the United States: at the State University of New York, Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University, Harvard University, and the University of Chicago. Upon his retirement in 2002, Coetzee emigrated to Australia, where he was made an honorary research fellow at the University of Adelaide’s English Department. On 6 March 2006, Coetzee adopted Australian citizenship.

According to Stephen Watson, Coetzee “has produced by far the most intellectual and indeed intellectualizing fiction of any South African or African writer” (Watson, “Colonialism”, 380). Coetzee’s first work of fiction, *Dusklands*, “an oblique commentary on the Vietnam war and on the arrival of Dutch settlers in Africa” (Cowley 18), was published in 1974. Since then he has published more than 10 novels, including

¹⁷³ Cf. Chettle 195.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Poyner, “Introduction“, 17, n. 4.

In the Heart of the Country (1977), which was awarded South Africa's CAN prize; *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980); and *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), winner of Britain's Booker Prize and France's Prix Etranger Femina. These were followed by *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), and *Disgrace* (1999). Coetzee also wrote two fictionalised autobiographies, or 'autrebiographies' (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 394): *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002). *The Lives of Animals* (1999), a fictionalised lecture, was later absorbed into *Elizabeth Costello* (2003).¹⁷⁵ Coetzee has also had a distinguished career as a scholar and critic. His book-length work of criticism, *White Writing* (1988), is a collection of essays on South African literature and culture. *Doubling the Point* (1992) consists of essays and interviews with David Attwell, and *Giving Offense* (1996) is a study of literary censorship. *Stranger Shores* (2001) and *Inner Workings* (2007) collect Coetzee's later literary essays. Coetzee has also published translations from Dutch and Afrikaans literature. When Coetzee won the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature, making him the second South African (after Nadine Gordimer) to be so honoured, he was praised for "in innumerable guises portray[ing] the surprising involvement of the outsider" (Swedish Academy 2003).

5.1.2 Locating Coetzee in the Context of Postcolonial Literature

As Dominic Head has pointed out, much of "Coetzee studies concerns the question of historical engagement, and the appropriate fictional response to the apartheid regime" (Head 8). Indeed, whilst apartheid as a system of legalised racial segregation, enforced by the South African National Party government between 1948 and 1990, belongs to the (recent) past,¹⁷⁶ many of Coetzee's works were written under the hegemony of apartheid, whose legacies continue to shape South African politics and society. Evidently, as a white South African writer, Coetzee inhabits, however reluctantly, a position of power in relation to the majority of black South Africans.¹⁷⁷ As Coetzee has put it in *Doubling the Point* (1992), "[t]he whites in South Africa participated, in various degrees, actively or passively, in an audacious and well-planned crime against

¹⁷⁵ The persona of Elizabeth Costello allows Coetzee "to fictionalize the writer-as-public-intellectual": "[o]ne may see her as a compromise and a surrogate: a compromise because through her Coetzee goes some way toward meeting the demands placed on him to step into the public limelight, and a surrogate because [...] when called on to speak publicly, Coetzee ushers her into sphere 2 instead." (Attwell, "Elizabeth", 33-34)

¹⁷⁶ For a collection of some of the most important essays on apartheid and racial segregation in South Africa, see e.g. Beinart (1995).

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Egerer 94, n. 2.

Africa. Afrikaners as a self-defining group distinguished themselves in the commission of that crime. [...] Is it in my power to withdraw from the gang? I think not” (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 342-343).¹⁷⁸

Some, especially neo-Marxist, critics in South Africa have attacked Coetzee’s fiction and charged him “with an aestheticism which they considered politically irresponsible, or simply irrelevant; they demanded of him an explicit form of commitment which his novels evidently eschewed” (Huggan and Watson 3). Brian Macaskill and Jeanne Colleran, too, have noted that “[t]he charge most commonly leveled against Coetzee by South African critics is that of political quiescence, of producing novels that neither sufficiently address nor affirm the contiguities between the literary domain and historical-economic-political realities” (Macaskill and Colleran 432). Because of his “refusal to accept historical responsibility” (JanMohamed 73) both during and in the wake of apartheid, Coetzee has thus been faulted by such critics for producing only an ineffective postmodernism “destined to remain the vehicle for expressing the cultural and political dilemmas of a privileged class of white artists and intellectuals” (Rich, “Revolt”, 73). In this context, it is interesting to note that Coetzee’s relocation to Australia mentioned earlier was not without controversy, with some literary critics (such as Rachel Donadio in the following) speculating about it being a symbol of Coetzee’s break with, or even escape from his home land:

Why would a novelist who has written so powerfully about the land of his birth pack up and leave? Were his 2002 move and his taking of Australian citizenship [...] a betrayal of his homeland [...]? [...] Or was it a tacit acknowledgment that Coetzee had exhausted his South African material, that the next chapter in the country’s history was the rise of the black middle class, and what did an old resistance writer, with his aloof, middle-aged white narrators, know about that? (Donadio, *The New York Times* Sunday Book Review, 16 December 2007)

Whilst writers such as André Brink have been regarded as embodiments of the dissident Afrikaans intellectual, “consistent, principled and uncompromising in an exemplary way” (Coetzee, “Brink”, 59), Coetzee “does not strike one primarily as an ‘anti-apartheid’ writer” (Huggan and Watson 3). It is, of course, true that Coetzee’s novels

¹⁷⁸ André Brink, in *A Dry White Season* (1979), too, has pointed out the privileges enjoyed by whites in social contexts: “[W]hether I feel like cursing my own situation or not, I *am* white. And because I’m white I am born into a state of privilege. Even if I fight the system that has reduced us to this I remain white, and favored by the very circumstances I abhor. Even if I’m hated, and ostracized, and persecuted, and in the end destroyed, nothing can make me black. And so those who are cannot but remain suspicious of me.” (Brink 304)

never caught the attention of the censorship apparatus:¹⁷⁹ “[b]esides coming too late in the era, my books have been too indirect in their approach, too rarefied, to be considered a threat to the order.” (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 298) Yet, Coetzee is certainly not politically ‘neutral’. Major Coetzee critics such as Derek Attwell and Susan Van Zanten Gallagher have sought to re-historicise Coetzee’s oeuvre, underlining its discursive relevance to the material conditions of apartheid. In his book-length study, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (1993), Attwell has argued for a reading of Coetzee’s novels as “situational metafiction, with a particular relation to the cultural and political discourses of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s” (Attwell, *Politics*, 3). For Attwell, “Coetzee’s novels are located in the nexus of history and text; that is, they explore the *tension* between these polarities” (Attwell, *Politics*, 2-3). In fact, Coetzee is “the first South African writer to produce overtly self-conscious fictions drawing explicitly on international postmodernism”, importing “contemporary Western preoccupations which produce a stress on textuality to a degree not previously seen in his country’s literature” (Head 1). In Gallagher’s account, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee’s Fiction in Context* (1991), Coetzee’s novels need to be understood “in terms of their universal qualities, as aesthetic objects that contain transcendent truths” (Gallagher 11); Coetzee “opts for a non-realistic, self-referential fiction that constantly highlights its own unreliability” (Gallagher 44). As Judie Newman has argued,

[p]aradoxically it is this self-consciousness which makes the political point. Whereas the British writer can merge with his or her society, since that society has, in a sense, appropriated reality, the postcolonial writer must avoid any loss of self-awareness. Postcolonial writers are therefore often at their politically sharpest, when they are also at their most ‘literary’. (Newman 4)

Coetzee’s address at the 1987 Weekly Mail’s book festival in Cape Town, published as “The Novel Today” (1988) and never subsequently collected, is probably his most widely cited statement outside his fiction.¹⁸⁰ Here, Coetzee defended his novelistic practice and commented upon the critiques directed against him and other South African novelists for their refusal to position their texts overtly in the South African historico-political context:

¹⁷⁹ A consignment of one of Coetzee’s books was shortly impounded by customs, and a poem was banned along with the entire issue of the magazine in which it appeared. (Cf. Attwell, *Doubling*, 298) Apart from that, Coetzee, in an interview conducted in 1996, stated that he “do[es] [not] [...] want to say that [he] suffered under the South African censorship” (*World Literature Today* 108). Peter D. McDonald, in an essay on Coetzee and the South African censorship apparatus, has stated that “his novels’ *potential* undesirability was mitigated by their manifest literariness. They were not banned because they were *sufficiently* literary” (McDonald 49).

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Attwell, “Elizabeth”, 28.

What is it that I and other writers are doing [...]? Are we trying to escape historical reality, or, on the contrary, are we engaging with historical reality in a particular way, a way that may require some explanation and defence? [...] In the position I am calling into question, then, the novelistic text becomes a kind of historical text [...] with a truth-value [...]. Because at certain times and in certain places – and this is one of those times and places – the novel that supplements the historical text has attributed to it a greater truth than one that does not. (Coetzee, “Novel”, 2)

According to the dominant view, only those novels which ‘documented’ the pressing political reality of 1980s South Africa in a realist mode were considered to be of value. Yet, Coetzee argued against the demands placed on South African writers by many political activists to use their literary works as weapons in the struggle against apartheid.¹⁸¹ For Coetzee, the novel, “[i]n times of intense ideological pressure like the present [1988], when the space in which the novel and history normally coexist like two cows on the same pasture, each minding its own business, is squeezed to almost nothing” (“Novel” 3), can either ‘supplement’ or ‘rival’ history. Rejecting “supplementarity”, a process whereby the novel “operates in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history (as a child’s schoolwork is checked by a schoolmistress)”, Coetzee identified himself with a “rival” practice, in which the novel “operates in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions” (“Novel” 3). Thus, the discourse of fiction is “another, an other mode of thinking” (“Novel”, 4), distinct from the discourse of history. Opposing what he pointedly called “the colonization of the novel by the discourse of history” (“Novel” 4), Coetzee is committed to “the discourse of the novels and not [...] the discourse of politics” (Coetzee, quoted in Kossew 23). As he argued in an interview with Jane Poyner, “[i]t is hard for fiction to be good fiction while it is in the service of something else” (Coetzee, in Poyner, “Conversation”, 21).

The argument pursued here is that Coetzee is far from being insensitive to the socio-political pressures of history. As Robert M. Post has argued, Coetzee, writing within the politically charged context of South Africa, can hardly steer clear of its all-pervading political resonances: “it is only natural that, when considering a South African author writing about victimization, we think specifically of the persecution implicit in the system of apartheid in South Africa” (Post, “Oppression”, 67). Yet, it is vital not to fall

¹⁸¹ Cf. J. Petzold 5. In “Preparing Ourselves for Freedom”, a paper written in 1989 in the course of discussions within the African National Congress on the role of culture, Albie Sachs similarly demanded that ANC members “should be banned from saying that culture is a weapon of struggle” (Sachs 19).

into the trap of reading Coetzee's novels solely within *national* terms, for this would fail to acknowledge the global historical process with which they are concerned: "being so closely stuck in a particular social and historical situation" would inevitably mean that "as soon as history moves even a centimeter, very little of the book is left" (Sévry 5). Coetzee himself has insisted that South African apartheid needs to be understood in the larger context of the history of colonialism, to which his choice of "real or imagined spatiotemporal displacements – into South Africa's past or future, into a universal contemporary situation, or into the realm of pure imagination" (McDonald 51) in much of his fiction testify. In an interview conducted in 1978, Coetzee advocated a view of "the South African situation as only one manifestation of a wider historical situation to do with colonialism, late colonialism, neo-colonialism", adding: "I'm suspicious of lines of division between a European context and a South African context, because I think our experience remains largely colonial." (Coetzee, in Watson, "Speaking", 23-24)

5.2 *Foe*

'At last I could row no further. My hands were blistered, my back was burned, my body ached. With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slipped overboard. With slow strokes, my long hair floating about me, like a flower of the sea, like an anemone, like a jellyfish of the kind you see in the waters of Brazil, I swam towards the strange island, for a while swimming as I had rowed, against the current, then all at once free of its grip, carried by the waves into the bay and on to the beach.'

(J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*, 5)

5.2.1 Introductory Remark and Reception

As suggested by the title, *Foe*¹⁸² is a novel about antagonism, about how "the voice of the elite culture of patriarchal power", that is, the imperialist author (De)Foe, "comes to marginalise the vernacular voice of the woman, the Other of gender, and to 'drown' out completely the voice of the racial Other, Friday" (Burnett, "Redemption", 245). As a fiction about the origin of Defoe's novel, *Foe* "speculate[s] on the omissions, silences and pointed constructions involved at the notional moment of the 'fathering' of the novel as a genre" (Head 114). Defoe, concealed behind the persona of Crusoe, is

¹⁸² All references to *Foe* (henceforth abbreviated as *F*) are to the Penguin edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

“[exposed] [...] for what he is, the ‘foe’, Mr Foe, the giver of false witness” (Burnett, “Redemption”, 244).¹⁸³ His novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, is revealed to have been inspired not by the historical castaway, Alexander Selkirk’s, adventures,¹⁸⁴ nor by other travel accounts, but by information obtained from a secondary witness, Susan Barton, who arrives on the island in the final year of Crusoe’s (spelt without the ‘-e’) reign. As John Thieme has noted, “[f]rom the outset this shift from Defoe’s method of male fictional autobiography suggests the intertwining of feminist and postcolonial concerns and, as the text develops, it implies that colonial and patriarchal societies operate similar, though by no means identical, discursive hegemonies” (Thieme, *Canon*, 63-64).

The harsh criticism of Coetzee’s novels mentioned earlier has also been directed at *Foe* for, as Attridge has noted, the novel “is further removed in time and place from present-day South Africa” (Attridge, “Oppressive”, 217) – its location being an unnamed island and eighteenth-century England – than Coetzee’s previous novels. Several South African critics and readers have charged *Foe* with an aestheticism which they considered politically irresponsible. Speaking of the anger, even hostility with which the publication of *Foe* in 1986 was met, Michael Marais has stated that “[w]hile the country was burning, quite literally in many places, the logic went, here was one of our most prominent authors writing about the writing of a somewhat pedestrian eighteenth-century novelist. Nothing could have seemed further removed from the specificities and exigencies of life in the eighties in South Africa” (Marais 83). Michael Chapman, too, objected to the novel in the following terms: “In our knowledge of the human suffering on our own doorstep of thousands of detainees who are denied recourse to the rule of law, *Foe* does not so much speak to Africa as provide a kind of masturbatory release, in this country, for the Europeanising dreams of an intellectual coterie” (Chapman 335, quoted in Marais 84). Obviously, charges such as these imply that Coetzee is guilty “not only of bad politics, but also of bad ethics. He is seen to have abnegated his social responsibility through failing to respond to the suffering of his fellow human beings in

¹⁸³ ‘Foe’ is, of course, a play on the name ‘Defoe’, who gentrified his patronymic of ‘Foe’ (a synonym for ‘enemy’) with the prefix ‘de’ in his middle age. (Cf. Burnett, “Redemption”, 245) The title *Foe* is also a homophone of the French adjective ‘faux’, meaning ‘false’. As Maximilian E. Novak has noted, when Defoe’s “bones were disinterred on 16 September 1871 for the purpose of erecting a monument to his achievements, newspaper accounts seemed to be incapable of agreeing above very much. Was there a plaque on his coffin with the name ‘Daniel Defoe’, as stated by the *Daily News*, or did it, as the *Daily Telegraph* insisted, merely say ‘Foe’?” (Novak, *Master*, 2-3)

¹⁸⁴ Susan does, however, speculate on Foe’s ownership of “a multitude of castaway narratives, most of them, I would guess, riddled with lies” (*F* 50).

his time and context. On a fundamental level, according to this line of thinking, Coetzee is guilty of a lack of respect for the other person” (Marais 84).

As Coetzee himself admitted in an interview with Paul Smith, “*Foe* might be seen as something of a retreat from the South African situation” (Coetzee, in Morphet 461). Yet, according to Coetzee, this ‘retreat’ is a retreat only “in a narrow and temporary perspective. It is not a retreat from the subject of colonialism or from questions of power. What you call ‘the nature and process of fiction’ may also be called the question of *who writes?* Who takes up the position of power, pen in hand?” (Coetzee, in Morphet 462) What is also interesting in this context is that Coetzee, in his 2003 Noble Prize lecture entitled “He and His Man”, Coetzee’s further re-writing of *Robinson Crusoe*,¹⁸⁵ presented a brief anecdote pertaining to Defoe’s presentation of *Robinson Crusoe* as “a just History of Fact” (RC 4), “Written by Himself” (title page), that is, Crusoe: “as a child he read *Robinson Crusoe* avidly, and then later, in a children’s encyclopedia [...], discovered that behind it there was an author, Daniel Defoe. Who was this Defoe, when Crusoe so clearly spoke in his own voice about real adventures?” (reported by David Attwell, in Attridge, *Ethics*, 199) As Per Wästberg of the Swedish Academy reported in his presentation speech, Coetzee has once said of *Robinson Crusoe* that “[t]he myth of the survivor on a desert island is the only story there is” (Wästberg 2003). However, the myth is open to re-writing. As Coetzee put it in his lecture, “it seems to him now that there are but a handful of stories in the world; and if the young are forbidden to prey upon the old then they must sit forever in silence” (Coetzee, “His Man”, para. 35)

5.2.2 Work, Religion and Society

“[I]f we were nearer the heavens there, why was it that so little of the island could be called extraordinary? Why were there no strange fruits, no serpents, no lions? Why did the cannibals never come? What will we tell folk in England when they ask us to divert them?”
(J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*, 43)

As Claudia Egerer has noted, *Foe* might be described “as a palimpsest where the ‘original’ story is still visible enough to make strange what appears to be familiar at first

¹⁸⁵ “He and His Man”, with its “fiction-as-lecture format” (Attridge, *Ethics*, 196), will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter 6.

glance” (Egerer 112). Indeed, *Foe* – certainly one of Coetzee’s most obviously metafictional texts¹⁸⁶ – “self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact” (Waugh 2) in its creation of “alternative linguistic structures or fictions which merely *imply* the old forms”, and which “[encourage] the reader to draw on his or her knowledge of traditional literary conventions when struggling to construct a meaning” (Waugh 4). In this sense, *Foe* might be considered ‘postmodern’: the novel demonstrates what Lyotard has called “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard xxiv), since it speculates about the truthfulness of its eighteenth-century ‘colonial’ predecessor. Strictly speaking, however, it is only Part I of the novel which is a (though markedly different) version of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*.

Upon reading *Foe*, the reader might first be struck by Coetzee’s spelling of ‘Cruso’. Expanding Derrida’s concept of ‘différance’, Coetzee replaces the ‘e’ in the name of the urtext’s ‘Crusoe’ not with a different, but an absent letter. This ‘silence’ can only be read or written, and yet serves as a crucial distinguishing feature: “the movement of difference, as [...] that which differentiates, is the common root of all oppositional concepts that mark our language.” (Derrida 8) Significantly, the characters of Cruso and Friday and the island episode itself emerge to be fundamental ‘distortions’ of their counterparts in *Robinson Crusoe*. At the opening of *Foe*, when the first-person narrator, Susan Barton, swims towards a “strange island” (*F* 5) to be greeted by a black man who is apparently incapable of speech,¹⁸⁷ her as well as the readers’ ‘romantic’ fantasies of travellers’ tales are undermined:¹⁸⁸

For readers reared on travellers’ tales, the words *desert isle* may conjure up a place of soft sands and shady trees where brooks run to quench the castaway’s thirst and ripe fruit falls into his hand [...]. But the island on which I was cast away was quite another place: a great rocky hill with a flat top, rising sharply from the sea on all sides except one, dotted with drab bushes that never flowered and never shed their leaves. (*F* 7)

As Patrick Corcoran has noted, “[t]his comparison between an ostensibly fictional version of reality [i.e. the novel *Robinson Crusoe*] and events purported to be taking place in the supposedly real world, is omnipresent in the novel” (Corcoran 258). Cruso

¹⁸⁶ The term ‘metafiction’ has been defined by Linda Hutcheon as “fiction about fiction – that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity” (Hutcheon 1).

¹⁸⁷ The character of Friday and the complex issue of his mutilation will be addressed in sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.5. I use the word ‘apparently’ here because, as will be argued, there is the far-reaching possibility that Friday is not tongueless after all, but has merely been *constructed* by critics to be so.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Lane 20.

differs from the canonic castaway in various ways. Though as authoritarian and patriarchal a figure as his literary model (at one point he is described by Susan as “king of his tiny realm”; *F* 14), Crusoe is a worn-out, old man (estimated by Susan to be approximately sixty years old – roughly Defoe’s age at the time of *Robinson Crusoe*’s publication), who seems to live in self-chosen exile:¹⁸⁹ he is indifferent to salvation (“not every man who bears the mark of the castaway is a castaway at heart”; *F* 33)¹⁹⁰ and does not build a boat, or salvage tools from the wrecked ship (“We sleep, we eat, we live. We have no need of tools”; *F* 32). The only tool he saves from the wreck is a knife, leading Susan to wonder, after her return to England, whether it was Crusoe who cut out Friday’s tongue, “thereby enacting colonial domination and cannibalising Friday’s story, controlling his narrative” (Wright 23): “A knife, let us remember, was the sole tool Crusoe saved from the wreck.” (*F* 84) Crusoe sees no need for progressing from his state as ‘hunter-gatherer’, and rejects Susan’s proposition to make candles in a rather irrational manner: “Which is easier: to learn to see in the dark, or to kill a whale and seethe it down for the sake of a candle?” (*F* 27) As Susan says, “[t]he simple truth was, Crusoe would brook no change on his island” (*F* 27), for “he had come to be persuaded he knew all there was to know about the world”; “his heart was set on remaining to his dying day king of his tiny realm” (*F* 13-14).

One further marked difference between Defoe’s Crusoe and Coetzee’s Crusoe concerns the area of religion. Whilst Providence plays a major role in Crusoe’s life (for instance, he attacks the savages pursuing Friday only when he felt that he “was call’d plainly by Providence to save this poor Creature’s Life”; *RC* 240) and Crusoe immediately starts converting Friday to “a good Christian” (*RC* 261), Crusoe has no trust in providence and completely ignores Friday’s religion. However, as becomes evident from Crusoe’s reply to Susan’s notion of a ‘sleeping’ Providence, which has allowed for so much woe to befall Friday, Crusoe shares his namesake’s belief in slavery:

“If Providence was to watch all over us, who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane? For the business of the world, Providence must sometimes wake and sometimes sleep, as lower creatures do. ... But perhaps it is the doing of Providence that Friday finds himself on an island under a lenient master, rather than in Brazil, under the planter’s lash, or in Africa, where the forests teem with cannibals.” (*F* 23-24)

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Egerer 113.

¹⁹⁰ In contrast, Susan’s desire to escape “burns in [her] night and day, [she] can think of nothing else” (*F* 36) – an idea Crusoe discards by pronouncing it to be “not a matter of the island” (*F* 36).

As María Luz Suárez has summarised,

[h]is [Cruso's] values and his island domain are certainly not emblems of omnipresent Empire. None of the myths of the eighteenth-century Protestant society consolidate his 'kingdom': hard work, conquering spirit, piety and faith in the progress of civilization. Unlike his ideological father, instead of progressing materially and spiritually, Cruso sinks into silence and sleep – significantly the only piece of furniture he has made is a bed. (Suárez 85, cited in Thieme, *Canon*, 64)

In *Foe*, Cruso's bed clearly stands for sleep, and even death, something Susan also recognises when she reflects retrospectively, saying to Friday: "How easy it would have been to prolong our slumbers farther and farther into the hours of daylight till at last, locked tight in sleep's embrace, we starved to death [...]! Does it not speak volumes that the first and only piece of furniture your master fashioned was a bed?" (*F* 82) In contrast to Defoe's Crusoe, Coetzee's Cruso is shown to be mortal: he has decaying teeth¹⁹¹, and upon the return journey to England, he dies of "the extremest woe. With every passing day he was conveyed further from the kingdom he pined for, to which he would never find his way again" (*F* 43). Cruso's reaction might indicate his reluctance to accept the end of his imperial rule. He is carried aboard the rescuing merchant ship ostensibly against his will: "when he was hoisted aboard the *Hobart*, and smelled the tar, and heard the creak of timbers, he came to himself and fought so hard to be free that it took strong men to master him and convey him below" (*F* 39). Friday, too, is captured by the sailors at Susan's request and brought aboard "[w]ith sunken shoulders and bowed head" (*F* 40-41). Susan thus subjects both characters to her will, with "[h]er victory [...] [being] tantamount to a usurping of the role of the protagonists, Cruso and Friday, in their own narrative" (Corcoran 260).

Most strikingly, of course, Cruso is (unlike Crusoe) no longer the narrator of his story, for he refuses to keep a written record of his stay on the island. This is contrary to Susan's expectations, who, playing on the 'desert island' conventions familiar from *Robinson Crusoe*, imagined that Cruso would act like his literary predecessor:

What I chiefly hoped to find was not there. Cruso kept no journal, perhaps he lacked paper and ink, but more likely, I now believe, because he lacked the inclination to keep one, or, if he had 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)

¹⁹¹ Cf. *F* 19.

To Susan's suggestion that he record his experiences as a memorial so "that they will outlive you; or [...] to burn the story upon wood, or engrave it upon rock" (*F* 17), Crusoe objects by saying: "Nothing I have forgotten is worth remembering" (*F* 17). For Crusoe, the barren terraces and walls he and Friday have been constructing laboriously, though in vain, "will be enough. They will be more than enough" (*F* 18). Thus, as Dominic Head has suggested, "[w]here Defoe's Crusoe is the archetypal imperialist, governed by economic self-aggrandisement, Coetzee's Crusoe is concerned merely with subsistence and sterile work" (Head 114). In an ironic reversal of the original Crusoe as 'homo economicus', who harvests from previously infertile land, Crusoe is no 'true' coloniser, for he has no seed to sow, and in "a year, in ten years, there will be nothing left standing but a circle of sticks to mark the place where the hut stood, and of the terraces only the walls" (*F* 54).

In contrast to Crusoe's indifference to language, Susan holds the view that the recording of memories is "a way of preserving [them], perhaps even a way of endowing them with the status of reality which they would otherwise never achieve" (Corcoran 258). According to Susan, without its 'thousand touches' and details, their 'island tale' becomes one of archetypal generalisations and will not be considered truthful:

[S]een from too remote a vantage, life begins to lose its particularity. All shipwrecks become the same shipwreck, all castaways the same castaway [...]. The truth that makes your story yours alone, that sets you apart from the old mariner by the fireside spinning yarns of sea-monsters and mermaids, resides in a thousand touches which [...] will one day persuade your countrymen that it is all true, every word. (*F* 18)

Upon Susan's arrival on the island, she tells Crusoe her lineage, her quest for her abducted daughter in the New World, and her abandonment by mutineers: "With these words I presented myself to Robinson Crusoe, in the days when he still ruled over his island, and became his second subject, the first being his manservant Friday." (*F* 11) The two characters' differing points of view about where the limits of their respective stories are to be located, and who has the authority to set those limits, foreshadow Susan and Foe's later power struggle:¹⁹²

When I spoke of England and of all the things I intended to see and do when I was rescued, he seemed not to hear me. It was as though he wished his story to begin with his arrival on the island, and mine to begin with my arrival, and the story of us together to end on the island too. (*F* 34)

¹⁹² Cf. Corcoran 259-260.

Unlike the ‘garden of Eden’ of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Cruso’s island is “a barren and silent place” (F 59), aside from the shrieking of the apes (whom Cruso has driven back) and the howling of the winds. The scarcity of human voices is a source of pain for Susan: “[i]f the company of brutes had been enough for me, I might have lived most happily on my island. But who, accustomed to the fullness of human speech, can be content with caws and chirps and screeches, and the barking of seals, and the moan of the wind?” (F 8) With Friday apparently tongueless and Cruso a “tight-lipped and sullen” (F 35) man with “no stories to tell” (F 34), Susan’s reaction is to withdraw into herself. Fashioning herself “a cap with flaps to tie over [her] ears [...] to shut out the sound of the wind” (F 35), Susan reasons that she may as well be deaf: “what difference did it make on an island where no one spoke?” (F 35)

Susan considers herself an intruder on Cruso’s island, for “[a]fter years of unquestioned and solitary mastery, he sees his realm invaded and has tasks set upon him by a woman” (F 25). From the very beginning, Susan’s gender justifies Cruso’s patronising treatment of her in his eyes. He excuses his order for her to remain in the hut with the apparent threat posed by the apes: “the apes [...] would not be as wary of a woman as they were of him and Friday.” (F 15) Yet, Susan exposes Cruso’s absurd argument, according to which female sexuality is a source of danger for the female, when she wonders whether “a woman [was], to an ape, a different species from a man?” (F 15) When Susan, without Cruso’s permission, ventures outside to explore the island, wearing a pair of shoes she has made herself (for Cruso would not provide her with any), Cruso’s response is that of a despot: “While you live under my roof you will do as I instruct!” (F 20) His very command, of course, aims at preventing Susan from discovering (as she does later on) that Cruso’s warnings of the dangers of the island are no more than myths, invented in order to keep her in place: “I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind.” (F 54) Thus, the Christian/cannibal dichotomy (as part of the contradictory binary opposition identified in section 3.2.3) in *Robinson Crusoe* is revealed to be no more than a projected justification for Cruso/e’s colonisation. Surprisingly, Susan’s resistance contrasts starkly with her later submission to Cruso, who (like the Portuguese captain and Foe) ‘uses’ her to fulfil his sexual needs.¹⁹³ The love-making scene in *Foe* thus undermines

¹⁹³ Susan asserts that she did not resist out of sympathy for Cruso: “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, so why should he

the original Crusoe's recalling of 1 John 2:16 to comment upon his lack of sexual desire whilst being on the island: "I had neither the *Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*. I had nothing to covet; for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying." (RC 151) Crusoe is shown to have concealed the truth, or at least to have given away only part of the facts of his island life, when he declared that he merely wished for a male "Servant, and perhaps a Companion" (RC 240).

To conclude, Cruso's style of governance on his island might be described "anti-Enlightenment and feudal" (Hayes 282). A "truly kingly figure", in command of his "kingdom" (F 37, 39), Cruso bans Susan from venturing outside his 'castle' (F 15). When Susan, as an enlightened subject, wishes to know whether there are any laws on the island ("How do you punish Friday, when you punish him?"; F 37), she learns that the island is not governed by any system of law. Instead, the laws are founded upon the coloniser's or male's 'natural' superiority. As Susan realises, Cruso is a mythic embodiment of power: "One evening, seeing him as he stood on the Bluff with the sun behind him all red and purple, staring out to sea, his staff in his hand and his great conical hat on his head, I thought: He is a truly kingly figure." (F 37) Susan's horror at the "lack of rational governance" (Hayes 283) ("It seemed to me that all things were possible on the island, all tyrannies and cruelties, though in small"; F 37) anticipates the power struggle that is to follow between her and Foe, in the course of which 'all tyrannies and cruelties' on the part of Foe will be put into practice in his appropriation of the story of the colonial subject and his elimination of the female from the 'male' adventure genre.

5.2.3 The Politics of Authorship and Gender

Falsehoods all, but he gave his falsehoods
all the ring of truth.
(The Odyssey Book XIX)

Foe has frequently been described as a "recharting of *Robinson Crusoe* from a feminist perspective" (Macaskill and Colleran 437), or as "feminist revisionism, a critique of the male appropriation of women's writing" (Wright 21), which is "presented through Coetzee's appropriation of Defoe's 'master narrative', a narrative, in Coetzee's telling,

not have his desire?" (F 30) Friday, on the other hand, shows no sexual interest in Susan, who asks him: "Why did I not catch you stealing glances from behind a rock while I bathed?" (F 86)

that ‘belongs’ to Susan Barton” (Wright 21). Indeed, one of the novel’s central concerns is the *gendered* negotiation of a position of authorial power. Coetzee himself has described *Foe* as an “interrogation of authority” (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 247), that is, as a questioning of the ‘realist’ model of authorship in *Robinson Crusoe*, which Defoe, as mere ‘editor’, presents as a “just History of Fact” (RC 4). In an interview with Tony Morphet one year after the publication of *Foe*, Coetzee stated that “[his] interest clearly lies with Foe’s foe, the *unsuccessful* author – worse, *authoress* – Susan Barton” (Coetzee, in Morphet 462): “How can one question power (‘success’) from a position of power? One ought to question it from its antagonist position: namely, the position of weakness.” (Coetzee, in Morphet 462) Susan’s ‘position of weakness’ seems, of course, to result in part from her status as *authoress*: she is excluded from the domain of authorship not only by her social status and her inexperience with the conventions of published narratives, but also by her gender.

Part I of the novel, which might be considered the ‘narrative’ proper, ‘prints off’ the manuscript of Susan’s account of her sojourn on Cruso’s island, penned by herself and bearing the title: “The Female Castaway. Being a True Account of a Year Spent on a Desert Island. With Many Strange Circumstances Never Hitherto Related” (F 67). It is this and the following Part, addressed to the renowned, though bankrupt male author Foe, whom she has hired to write her story professionally, which constitute the *ur-text* of *Robinson Crusoe*, the material out of which (De)Foe will create his tale: “I have set down the history of our time on the island as well as I can, and I enclose it herewith.” (F 47) Significantly, the unidentified familiar ‘You’ of Part I is followed by the formal ‘Dear Mr Foe’ in Part II, with the recurring quotation marks drawing attention to the existence of a ‘fiction within a fiction’:

[Q]uotation marks before each of her [Susan’s] paragraphs [remind] us continually that this is not the mysterious immaterial language most fiction uses as its medium, nor even a representation of speech, but a representation *in writing of writing*. And it is presented not as a simple day-to-day record of experience, as in a novel of letters or diary-entries, but for the explicit purpose of proffering a narrative – the story of Barton’s year on an island with another, earlier castaway named Robinson Cruso – for insertion into the canon of published English texts. (Attridge, “Oppressive”, 218)

Fearing that she, as an individual, lacks ‘substance’ and meaning, Susan longs for her experience to be recorded as a culturally validated, lasting narrative: “Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe.” (F 51) Captain Smith, whose ship later rescues Susan

from the island, immediately realises the uniqueness of Susan's experience, which he advises her to record: "It is a story you should set down in writing and offer to the booksellers", he urged – "There has never before, to my knowledge, been a female castaway of our nation. It will cause a great stir." (F 40) When Susan objects, saying that she lacks literary skill, he suggests she "hire a *man* to set your story to rights, and put in a dash of colour too, here and there" (F 40; emphasis added). The captain's warning that their "[t]rade is in books, not in truth" (F 40) foreshadows Susan and Foe's subsequent struggle over who is in control of the narrative. Despite Susan's initial assertion that she "will not have any lies told" (F 40), she calls herself 'Mrs Cruso' onboard the rescuing ship in order to save her reputation.¹⁹⁴ Susan soon comes to realise that her story, lacking in narrative incident, requires "strange circumstances" (partly derived from *Robinson Crusoe*) to 'sensationalise' it, for "what we can accept in life we cannot accept in history" (F 67), that is, fantasies and lies:

Are these enough strange circumstances to make a story of? How long before I am driven to invent new and strange circumstances: the salvage of tools and muskets from Cruso's ship; the building of a boat or at least a skiff, and a venture to sail to the mainland, a landing by cannibals on the island, followed by a skirmish and many bloody deaths? (F 67)

Wondering what kind of story Foe will create out of her account, Susan rightly predicts her exclusion from Defoe's adventure tale, suspecting that he, (De)Foe, will betray her by writing her out of her island tale completely: "Better had there been only Cruso and Friday', you will murmur to yourself: Better without the woman." (F 71-72) Susan's understanding of the activity of writing is a fairly conventional one. Not trusting in her authorship, Susan believes that she needs a professional writer such as Foe to 'set right' her 'limping' narrative.¹⁹⁵ Ironically, Susan's account of her time spent in London and her description of Foe keeping a distance from her is far from being 'limping'. Yet, according to Susan, she lacks both the economic means and imagination necessary in order to put her adventures in writing, while she falsely assumes that Foe can give meaning to her experience:

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 of feeling the tropic sun when it is cold; and at your fingertips the words with which to capture the vision before it fades. I have none of these, while you have all. (F 51-52)

¹⁹⁴ Cf. F 42.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. F 47.

In the series of letters addressed to Foe, which relate her search for the elusive author and her futile attempt to set Friday free by sending him back to Africa, Susan answers questions Foe has asked upon reading her version of the island story (“You remarked it would have been better had Crusoe rescued [...] a carpenter’s chest as well”; “You asked after Crusoe’s apeskin clothes”; *F* 55). Later on, Susan adopts a mixed epistolary and journal mode,¹⁹⁶ for it is unclear whether Foe, having gone into hiding from the bailiffs, still receives her letters. Interestingly, whilst Defoe himself probably hid from his creditors for a period in 1692, his report *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs Veal*, which was published in 1706, makes its appearance in *Foe*, making it difficult to locate the events of *Foe* at a particular moment in Defoe’s life.¹⁹⁷ As Derek Attridge has remarked, “[o]ne effect of this chronological uncertainty, germane to the novel’s concerns, is that it remains unclear whether Foe’s reputation is as a reporter of fact or, as was the case later in Defoe’s career, a creator of fiction” (Attridge, “Oppressive”, 234, n. 10). Waiting for his return, Susan’s “life is drearily suspended till your [Foe’s] writing is done” (*F* 63). Yet, as Susan gradually comes to realise, her dependence upon the process of writing carried out by another individual questions her very 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.” (*F* 133)¹⁹⁸ Thus, Susan comes to accept her role of storyteller and takes on the ‘burden’ of writing the story herself: “Had I known, on the island, that it would one day fall on me to be our storyteller, I would have been more zealous to interrogate Crusoe.” (*F* 89) Taking up residence in Foe’s deserted house and appropriating literary power in the form of the male author’s pen as phallus, Susan’s process of entering into the ‘male’ realm of storytelling involves her physical substitution of Foe:¹⁹⁹ “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* 65) Here, Susan finds access to a mode of expression that seems to permit her to write ‘herstory’: “your pen, your ink, I know, but somehow the pen becomes mine while I write with it, as though

¹⁹⁶ The format employed by Susan parodies Samuel Richardson’s ‘sentimental’ eighteenth-century novels such as *Pamela* (1740), a novel innovative in its representation of immediacy. (Cf. Lane 23)

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Attridge, “Oppressive”, 233-234, n. 10.

¹⁹⁸ Susan’s insubstantiality is precisely due to her intertextual relationship with Defoe’s eighteenth-century text and its canonic power, so that Susan’s statement that she felt like “a gossamer behind the true body of Crusoe” (*F* 51) simultaneously means “... beside the true body of *Robinson Crusoe*.” (Cf. Lane 23)

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Corcoran 264.

growing out of my hand” (*F* 66-67); “I had not guessed it was so easy to be an author.” (*F* 93)

It is in the third part of the book, no longer in epistolary form, but a conventional first-person past tense narrative by Susan (without quotation marks), that Susan ceases to write letters and communicates with Foe directly, whom (in an echo of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*)²⁰⁰ she calls her ‘intended’, “the one alone intended to tell [her] true story” (*F* 126). Undoing her original ‘unity’ as both subject and object of her writing, Susan is now turned into an object of the male author’s writing.²⁰¹ Foe, determined to write “the history of a woman in search of a lost daughter” (*F* 121), insists on viewing the ‘adventure of the island’ within the context of a larger, sequentially-oriented story, beginning with Susan’s search of her daughter in the New World and ending with a fictional reunion of mother and daughter:²⁰²

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 recovers; 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)

In Foe’s design, Susan’s story is a popular adventure tale, centred around the traditional discourse of motherhood and thus less subversive than her ‘heretical’ account of what has never been recorded before: an “indecent narrative of a woman who abandons the search for her daughter, only to wash ashore on an island inhabited by two men, one of whom is black and the other with whom she engages in a sexual relationship outside of wedlock” (Wright 20). Yet, Susan maintains that her search in Bahia for her daughter, who was abducted by an Englishman “and conveyed to the New World” (*F* 10) two years prior to the narrative, is not an ‘episode’ in the island story, but “a story in its own right” (*F* 121), about which she chooses to remain silent. Claiming her right as authoress of her story, Susan states resolutely that the story she desires to tell and “to be known by is the story of the island” (*F* 121), the story Crusoe has not bothered to record and the mutilated Friday cannot tell:

²⁰⁰ In Conrad’s novella, the ‘intended’ is Kurtz’s fiancée, representing the colonial female who is simultaneously innocent of, yet complicit with the imperial project. In Coetzee’s inversion, the author-figure Foe rather than the colonial female is the complicitous one, “thus blurring the different roles, implying an ambivalence that is shared by Barton and Foe (and Coetzee too).” (Head 117)

²⁰¹ Cf. Lin 134.

²⁰² Cf. Bongie 266.

I am not a story, Mr Foe. [...] There was a life before the water which stretched back to my desolate searchings in Brazil, thence to the years when my daughter was still with me, and so on back to the day I was born. All of which makes up a story I do not choose to tell [...] because to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world. I choose rather to tell of the island, of myself and Cruso and Friday and what we three did there: for I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire. (*F* 131)

For Susan and the reader alike, the ‘substantiality’ of the girl who claims to be Susan’s lost daughter is questionable. As Susan realises, Foe is a creator of both fiction and reality: “if these women are creatures of yours, visiting me at your instruction, speaking words you have prepared for them, then who am I and who indeed are you? [...] Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong?” (*F* 133) For Susan, the ‘would-be daughter’ whom she does not recognise is ‘father-born’ (*F* 91), a girl hired by Foe (as is her maid Amy) whom she rejects angrily: “Do you think women drop children and forget them as snakes lay eggs? Only a man could entertain such a fancy.” (*F* 75) The alleged daughter is thus a symbol of the type of story Foe insists on telling. The reader, too, is aware that the daughter’s pursuit of her mother is told in another Defoe novel, *Roxana* (1724),²⁰³ whose alternative title, *The Fortunate Mistress*, has been evoked by Susan earlier when she presented herself to Foe as a “figure of fortune” (*F* 48). As Judy Newman has put it succinctly, “Foe, then, is an enemy twice over, removing Susan from her own story [...] in order to script her as Roxana, an adventuress who lives by whoring, her life of deceit culminating in the murder of her daughter who threatens to expose her past history” (Newman 96). Thus, through the imperialist author’s insertion of stereotypical images of the Other (such as cannibalism) and the complete erasure of the female from the ‘male’ adventure genre, two distinct stories emerge: the one “a myth of the male pioneering spirit” (Head 115), the other “a ‘dirty’ female story of an adventuress” (Newman 97).²⁰⁴

The reversal of the roles between writer and Muse which Susan seeks in her wish to be “father to [her] story” (*F* 123) is mentioned twice in the context of literary creation.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Further intertextual references include the short story “A True Revelation of the Apparition of One Mrs Veal” (1706) and *Moll Flanders* (1722). The hero of Defoe’s *Colonel Jack* (1722) also makes a brief appearance as a young pickpocket employed by Foe.

²⁰⁴ As Katie Trumpener has observed, “Roxane, the historical figure [...] had by the early eighteenth century become Roxane, the literary character, an oriental queen who always, no matter what the plot in which she appeared, embodied ambition, sexuality, revenge, exoticism; in fact, in the eighteenth century she came to personify womanhood itself” (Trumpener 178, cited in Newman 97).

²⁰⁵ Cf. Corcoran 264.

The first instance occurs when Susan challenges the traditional roles of author and muse: “The Muse is a woman, a goddess, who visits poets in the night and begets stories upon them. [...] I wished that there were such a being as a man-Muse, a youthful god who visited authoresses in the night and made their pens flow.” (F 126) As is implied throughout the novel, Susan’s quest for authorship is linked with sexuality, with Susan striving to be both “goddess and begetter” (F 126), not only a passive and obedient ‘mother’, but also an assertive ‘father’, who still possesses the power to be in control of the story:

“I am not, do you see, one of those thieves or highwaymen of yours who gabble a confession and are then whipped off to Byburn and eternal silence, leaving you to make of their stories whatever you fancy. It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all, to withhold. By such means do I still endeavour to be father to my story.” (F 123)

Later on, in her sexual encounter with Foe, Susan assumes the dominant role, ‘straddling’ Foe, “which he did not seem easy with, in a woman” (F 139), in order to “beget” a story: “I was intended not to be mother of my story, but to beget it.” (F 126) The gender reversal is taken even further when Susan tells Foe that she views him as a ‘mistress’, or even ‘wife’ whom she has impregnated with the seed of her story: “Am I to damn you as a whore for welcoming me and receiving my story? You gave me a home when I had none. I think of you as a mistress, or even, if I dare speak the word, as a wife.” (F 152) In his function as ‘mother’ of the story, Foe replies: “Before you declare yourself too freely, Susan, wait to see what fruit I bear” (F 152). Foe’s ‘fruit’ is, of course, the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*, with its complete silencing of Susan and appropriation of Friday. This happens despite Susan’s illusion that her fate will be different from Friday’s since she can speak English. Susan contrasts her own, willing silence about aspects of her story with the imposed silence of Friday, whom she likens to a weak, dependent child, ‘unmanned’ by authorial appropriation:

Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being reshaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal. [...] What is the truth of Friday? [...] [W]hat he is to the world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of his is a helpless silence. He is a child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born. Whereas the silence I keep regarding Bahia and other matters is chosen and purposeful: it is my own silence.” (F 121-122)

Despite Foe’s assurance that he “would not rob [Susan] of [her] tongue for anything” (F 150), Susan’s story is eventually determined by Foe both in form and content. As Susan

herself suspects at one point, “he has the last word who disposes over the greatest force” (*F* 124). Thus, the voices of both the colonised and the female subject are marginalised or elided from the pages of the colonial novel by the “patriarchal colonizer/author-figure” (Kossew 168). As such, *Foe* can be regarded as a critique not only of “the silences of colonialism but also [of] the silences of literary history” (Gallagher 186). As will be seen in the following section, it is only after Susan and Foe have overcome their belief in the commercial value of writing (for Susan’s initial motive for publishing her story is to become “famous throughout the land, and rich too”; *F* 58) that they grow aware of the urgency of Friday’s supposed silence and that “writing gradually takes on an ethical attribute, giving way to ethical rather than commercial concerns” (Lin 142).

5.2.4 The Colonial Other

The story circulates like a gift; an empty gift which anybody can lay claim to by filling it to taste, yet can never truly possess. A gift built on multiplicity. One that stays inexhaustible within its own limits. Its departures and arrivals. Its quietness.
(Trinh T. Minh-ha 2)

As Coetzee has stated in *Doubling the Point* (1992), “[i]n each of the four novels after *Dusklands* [i.e. *In the Heart of the Country*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, and *Foe*] there seems to be one feature of technique on which there is a heavy concentration. In *Foe* it was voice” (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 142-143). Indeed, one of the novel’s main concerns is the question of whether for an author in general, and for Coetzee as a white South African writer in particular, there is a means of ever recovering, or ‘giving voice’ to the colonised Other – or, in Minh-ha’s words, of ‘laying claim’ to ‘fill’ the Other’s story without inadvertently enforcing a colonising authority. In contrast to Defoe’s Friday, who, according to Crusoe, is “the aptest Schollar that ever was” (*RC* 249) in his learning of his master’s language, Coetzee’s Friday *appears* to be tongueless and thus incapable of speech. Yet, the two Fridays differ in further respects from one another. As we have seen in section 3.2.3, the Defoeian Friday is described as recognisably European (“he had all the Sweetness and Softness of an European in his Countenance”; *RC* 243): he is a “not quite black, but very tawny” Amerindian with “[l]ong and black [hair], not curled like wool”, with a “round and plump” face, a “small” nose, “not flat like the negroes”, “a very good mouth” and “thin lips”. (*RC* 243) On the other hand, his counterpart in *Foe* is clearly

identified as an African: he is “black: a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool” (*F* 5), a “flat face”, “small dull eyes, a “broad nose”, “thick lips”, and “skin not black but a dark grey” (*F* 6).

As might be expected, Friday’s status as a mutilated, tongueless, black African (ex-)slave has invited critics to draw several political parallels. As Dominic Head has pointed out in his reading of *Foe* as “an allegory of modern South Africa” (Head 119), “[t]he obvious allegorical connotation of his [Friday’s] silence is to represent the repression of South Africa’s political majority” (Head 119). In pursuit of this allegorical dimension, Robert M. Post, in an essay entitled “The Noise of Freedom: J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe*” (1989), has argued at length for Cruso as a representative of the Afrikaner government,²⁰⁶ and for Susan, “with her mixture of compassion for the alienated man Friday and her fear of the mysterious man he remains in her eyes, [as] represent[ing] the liberal white South African who sympathizes with the plight of his or her country’s non-whites” (Post, “Noise”, 145). Furthermore, Post has taken Cruso’s recurring fever as a symbol of the ‘diseased’ nature of the Nationalist government, with “his death [...] stand[ing] for hope of overturning that government” (Post, “Noise”, 146). Yet, given Coetzee’s position outlined in section 5.1.2, that is, his “constant plea to interviewers and critics [...] to allow his texts to *speak for themselves* and not to have imposed upon them the discourse of ‘history’” (Kossew 24; emphasis added), it seems worthwhile to examine *Foe* in the wider context of colonialism, or, in Spivak’s words, not to make the two Friday’s racial difference “the tool to an unproductive closure” (Spivak, “Theory”, 169).

In *Foe*, the power (to manipulate, silence, create, falsify, etc.) that the right to speak gives takes centre stage. In this context, it is significant that Cruso has taught Friday only an extremely limited vocabulary and hence does not need to face any linguistic or ‘religious’ challenges from him. To Susan’s question “[h]ow many words of English [...] Friday know[s]” (*F* 21), Cruso replies: “As many as he needs [...]. This is not England, we have no need of a great stock of words.” (*F* 21) Friday is thus initiated into the English language only to such an extent as will make him useful as a slave. In effect, he has been taught to obey the very same words Crusoe’s ‘Man Friday’ has been taught,

²⁰⁶ Cf. Post, “Noise“, 145.

that is, to ‘fetch’ and to ‘dig’.²⁰⁷ Throughout the entire novel, Friday does not ‘speak’ a single word, his literal and metaphorical silencing being explained away by Crusoe in the following manner: “*perhaps* they [the slavers] grew weary of listening to Friday’s wails of grief, that went on day and night. *Perhaps* they wanted to prevent him from ever telling his story: who he was, where his home lay, how it came about that he was taken. *Perhaps* they cut out the tongue of every cannibal they took, as a punishment. How will we ever know the truth?” (*F* 23; emphases added). The series of ‘perhapses’ and the open question, of course, gesture towards the impossibility of ever truly ‘possessing’, or knowing the ‘truth’ about Friday’s hi/story.

As Paula Burnett has argued in her article entitled “The Ulyssean Crusoe and the Quest for Redemption in J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* and Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*” (1996), “[i]mplicit in Defoe’s story of the naming of Friday is the Easter story; Good Friday is the day of suffering which makes possible the day of redemption. But while Defoe intends the naming to signify Crusoe’s missionary act of saving Friday’s soul along with his life, in Coetzee’s text the emphasis is different: here Friday is unmistakably the *sufferer*, the one with *the wounds*” (Burnett, “Redemption”, 247-248; emphases added). Whilst both Susan and Foe, along with nearly all critics of *Foe* (Burnett amongst them), operate under the assumption that Friday is tongueless,²⁰⁸ the argument proposed here is that Friday’s silence might not be a “helpless” (*F* 122) one, in which his “mutilated mouth is a major cause of his remaining a slave” (Post, “Noise”, 147), but rather, like Susan’s, a “chosen and purposeful” (*F* 122) silence. It seems surprising if not disquieting that critics have failed to question Susan and Foe’s assumptions concerning Friday’s tonguelessness, for the precise circumstances of Friday’s horrendous mutilation are never explained. At one point assuming that slavers cut out Friday’s tongue during his childhood²⁰⁹ – an act which would imply that Friday has been a slave for most of his life – Crusoe, at other times, “would tell stories of cannibals, of how Friday was a cannibal whom he saved from being roasted and devoured by fellow cannibals” (*F* 12). The ‘stories’ offered by Crusoe are thus “hard to reconcile one with another” (*F* 11), and given the fact that Susan’s, and our, only source of knowing about Friday’s

²⁰⁷ Cf. *F* 149 and *RC* 250.

²⁰⁸ Some of the writers who have commented specifically on Friday’s tonguelessness are Attridge (1992), Attwell (1993), Bishop (1990) and Spivak (1991). To this day, the only other critic of whom I am aware who does not cast Friday as a ‘victim’, but allows for the possibility of his silence being a ‘voluntary’ act, is MacLeod (2006).

²⁰⁹ Cf. *F* 23.

tonguelessness is *Cruso's* words, Friday's incapacity of speech appears to be questionable. As becomes evident from one of Susan's letters to Foe, in which she recounts Cruso's inability to distinguish 'truth' from 'fancy', Cruso is far from being a reliable 'speaker':

I would gladly now recount to you the history of this singular Cruso [...]. But the stories he told me were so various, and so hard to reconcile with another, that I was more and more driven to conclude age and isolation had taken their toll on his memory [...]. So in the end I did not know what was truth, what was lies, and what was mere rambling. (*F* 11-12)

In the following key scene, Cruso attempts to show Susan that Friday has no tongue, but "[i]t is too dark" (*F* 22) for Susan to see anything, and after this she never ventures to prove whether Cruso's statement is true:

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. Gripping Friday by the hair, he brought his face close to mine. "Do you see?" he said. "It is too dark," said I. "La-la-la," said Cruso. "Ha-ha-ha," said Friday. I drew away, and Cruso released Friday's hair. "He has no tongue," he said. "That is why he does not speak." (*F* 22-23)

Cruso is here speaking *for* Friday, asserting that "[h]e has no tongue" (*F* 22, *F* 23) twice – the repeated insistence upon these words already implying that they might lack in truth. Back in England, Susan admits to Friday that her ideas about his tongue are a "guess merely", for "when your master asked me to look, I would not" (*F* 85). She "averted [her] eyes from seeing" (*F* 119) because "[a]n aversion came over [her] that we feel for all the mutilated" (*F* 85). Given the lack of factual evidence, one might thus proceed from the assumption that Friday, rather than being destined to be mute forever, is indeed capable of speech, but *refuses* to render it. The title of the novel, *Foe*, then comes to denote not only the author-figure, (De)Foe, Susan and Cruso, all of which, whilst aiming at communication, have tried to appropriate Friday's story, but also the unwitting readers themselves, who might be complicit in Friday's voicelessness, 'colonising' him through denying him the right, or power to speak. The *presence* (though concealed, or unknown) of Friday's tongue can be understood as Friday's strategy of locking himself in a position of ultimate resistance to Susan and Foe's attempts to impose the language of colonialism upon him. Indeed, the question arises whether English can be an adequate means of expression for the postcolonial subject.

Susan, too, realises this, for her teaching of English to Friday also means to subject him to her vision of the world:

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. At such times I understand why Crusoe preferred not to disturb his muteness. I understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner. (*F* 60-61)

Susan's relationship to Friday, which might be termed a 'mistress-slave relationship', deserves further attention here. Occupying the problematic position of a 'half-coloniser', that is, of both 'coloniser' and 'colonised',²¹⁰ her relationship to Friday is ambivalent. Despite her sympathy for Friday's longing for freedom ("He desires to be liberated, as I do too. Our desires are plain, his and mine"; *F* 148), Susan recognises the abstract nature of a word like 'freedom' in his case:²¹¹ "how can Friday know what freedom means when he barely knows his name?" (*F* 149) Looking at him "with the horror we reserve for the mutilated" (*F* 24), Susan is never entirely able to rid herself of her role as 'mistress'. The subordination she suffers through her gender does not save her from ideological blind spots. At one point, for instance, she rebukes Crusoe for not teaching Friday more words: "you might have brought home to him some of the blessings of civilization and made him a better man." (*F* 22) Another time, she calls Friday "a man from the darkest times of barbarism" (*F* 94). Susan realises, however, the 'source' of her fears: "Crusoe had planted the seed [of Friday being a cannibal] in my mind, and now I could not look at Friday without calling to mind what meat must once have passed them." (*F* 106)

As Susan's well-meant, but ill-fated trip to Bristol Port, in the hope of setting Friday free by repatriating him to Africa shows, Friday has become rootless. Friday is, in fact, a prisoner on the island of Great Britain as much as he was on Crusoe's island – a fate echoed in Crusoe's words, "[t]he world is full of islands" (*F* 71). Without doubt, confiding Friday to an unscrupulous captain would bring with it the danger of Friday being enslaved once more: "how is Friday to recover his freedom, who has been a slave all his life? That is the true question. Should I liberate him into a world of wolves and expect to be commended for it? [...] Even in his native Africa [...], would he know freedom?" (*F* 149-150) The journey does, however, bring with it a change in

²¹⁰ See Visel (1988).

²¹¹ Cf. Kossew 167.

awareness. It is when Susan, “soaked to the skin and [...] set down in the dark in an empty barn” (*F* 103), falls into Friday’s way of ‘savage’ dancing to warm herself that she discovers the reason for Friday’s dancing in Foe’s robes in England: it gives him the power “to remove himself, or his spirit, from Newington and England, and from [Susan] too” (*F* 104). Other moments when Friday is able to release himself are when he sings (or hums), plays the same tune over and over again on a reed flute, and when, paddling out to the sea on a wooden log, he scatters petals and buds onto the water. This mysterious ritual provides Susan with a first hint that something might be stirring “beneath [Friday’s] dull and unpleasing exterior” (*F* 32). As Susan and Foe suspect later, Friday might be floating above the grave of his fellow slaves. In this case, Friday’s scattering of petals can be read, as Samuel Durrant has done, as an “[act] of silent, inconsolable mourning” (Durrant, *Narrative*, 26), “as the sign of either an inability or a refusal to recover from history” (Durrant, *Narrative*, 35). Friday thus ‘speaks’ with his body through music, singing (a tuneless humming which Cruso calls the “voice of man”; *F* 22) and dancing. Yet, Susan is unable to consider Friday’s forms of expression on their own terms:

All my efforts to bring Friday to speech, or to bring speech to Friday, have failed [...]. He utters himself only in music and dancing, which are to speech as cries and shouts are to words. There are times when I ask myself whether in his earlier life he had the slightest mastery of language, whether he knows what kind of thing language is. (*F* 142)

Susan’s use of the word ‘language’, here and elsewhere, always means *her* language, English. Her desire to ‘fill’ Friday’s silence arises from her need to have questions answered instead of “the long, issueless colloquies [she] conduct[s] with him [Friday]” (*F* 78): “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) Susan here establishes a link between tongue (speech) and phallus (desire).²¹²

Now when Cruso told me that the slavers were in the habit of cutting out the tongues of their prisoners to make them more tractable, I confess I wondered whether he might not be employing a figure, for the sake of delicacy: 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* 118-119)

²¹² Cf. Kossew 165.

It is unclear whether what Susan sees during “the spectacle of Friday at his dancing with his robes flying about him” (*F* 119) confirms Friday’s emasculation or not: “In the dance nothing was still and yet everything was still. [...] What had been hidden from me was revealed. [...] 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) Although the reference to the Biblical account (John 20: 24-29) of Thomas the Apostle, who doubted the truth of Jesus’ resurrection until he touched his wounds, supports the idea of Friday’s mutilation, the allusion to the resurrection, in which the wounds are ‘overcome’, renders the scene ambiguous.²¹³ Friday’s potential ‘double mutilation’ thus acquires a mythic rather than a factual status, once more opening up a space for ambiguity.

As has been argued, there is the possibility of a Friday *with* a tongue. Yet, it is the supposed “loss of Friday’s tongue” (*F* 117) which makes a powerful impact upon Susan, as she confesses to a recurring vision she had, in which Friday’s silence became a thick, ‘black’ smoke welling up through Foe’s house to choke her:

[W]hen I lived in your house I would sometimes lie awake upstairs listening to the pulse of blood in my ears and to the silence from Friday below, a silence that rose up the stairway like smoke, like a welling of black smoke. Before long I could not breathe, I would feel I was stifling in my bed. My lungs, my heart, my head were full of black smoke. (*F* 118)

Both Susan and Foe grow aware of the importance of Friday’s silence, which they relate to authorial power. As Susan says to Foe, “[t]o tell my story and be silent on Friday’s tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet the only tongue that can tell Friday’s secret is the tongue he has lost!” (*F* 67) In Foe’s model of authorship, with its confidence in its authority to ‘speak for’ the Other, Friday’s silence is like a mystery which needs to be solved: “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.” (*F* 141) Susan challenges Foe’s belief that it is his and Susan’s task to ‘speak the unspoken’, that is, to “make Friday’s silence speak, as well as the silences surrounding Friday” (*F* 142). Although Susan, too, yearns to ‘fill’ Friday’s silence (“It is for us to descend into the mouth [...]. It is for us to open Friday’s mouth and hear what it holds: silence perhaps, or a roar, like a roar of a seashell held to the ear”; *F* 142), she is unsure about who is to perform this task: “But

²¹³ Cf. Head 121.

who will do it? [...] [W]ho will dive into the wreck? [...] [I]f Friday cannot tell us what he sees, is Friday in my story any more than a figuring (or prefiguring) of another diver?" (F 142)

As Susan observes at one point, "many stories can be told of Friday's tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday." (F 118) The words 'by art' predict that for Friday, who refuses to speak the language of colonialism, writing in his own language might be an adequate means of expression. However, Susan objects to Foe's proposal that Friday be taught the 'art' of writing, believing that since "[l]etters are the mirror of words", Friday can have no narrative voice: "[h]ow can he write if he cannot speak?" (F 142) For Foe, on the other hand, writing is not secondary to speech:

"Writing is not doomed to be the shadow of speech. Be attentive to yourself as you write and you will mark there are many times when the words form themselves on the paper *de novo*, as the Romans used to say, out of the deepest of inner silences. We are accustomed to believe that our world was created by God speaking the Word; but I ask, may it not rather be that he wrote it, wrote a Word so long we have yet to come to the end of it? May it not be that God continually writes the world, the world and all that is in it?" (F 142-143)

Authors thus find themselves in very much the same position as God, for they are able to 'write the world', that is, to create reality. It is Foe's position which triumphs towards the end of Part III. Seated at Foe's writing tablet, dressed in his robes and wigs and using his quill, ink, and paper, Friday now appropriates the authorial role of Foe, who has sought refuge in the alcove, Friday's earlier sleeping place. Susan realises that Foe, who calls himself "[a]n old whore" (F 151), is worn-out, filthy and ugly.²¹⁴ The roles of author and 'object' of writing are thus reversed, though this time it is Friday, not Susan, who assumes authorial power. Foe's papers are already "foul enough" (F 151), and Friday begins by filling them with "rows and rows of the letter o" (F 152), of which Coetzee has written: "[t]he O, the circle, the hole are symbols of that which male authoritarian language cannot appropriate" (Coetzee, *White*, 411). Earlier, when examining Friday's drawings on a slate, Susan realises that what first seemed to be a design of leaves and flowers are, in fact, "walking eyes" (F 147):

"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, upon

²¹⁴ Cf. F 151.

eyes, each set upon a human foot: row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes.

I reached out to take the slate, to show it to Foe, but Friday held tight to it. 'Give! Give me the slate, Friday!' I commanded. Whereupon, instead of obeying me, Friday put three fingers into his mouth and wet them with spittle and rubbed the slate clean." (F 147)

Significantly, it is when Friday is outside of Susan and Foe's control that he discovers his own mode of writing. In a way, Friday's 'eyes' (perhaps narrative 'I's) correspond to the circular *O*s mentioned above, as well as to the 'hole' in the story, which is Friday's silence.²¹⁵ As Chris Bongie, quoting a passage from *Dusklands* (1974), has pointed out, "[i]n Coetzee's novels, eyes are consistently associated with power and authority" (Bongie 273):

Only the eyes have power. The eyes are free, they reach out to the horizon all around. Nothing is hidden from the eyes. As the other senses grow numb or dumb my eyes flex and extend themselves. [...] Destroyer of the wilderness, I move through the land cutting a devouring path from horizon to horizon. There is nothing from which my eye turns, I am all that I see. (Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 79)

As is intimated in the final scene of Part III, Friday will progress by learning to write the letter 'a': "'It is a beginning,' said Foe. 'Tomorrow you must teach him *a*.'" (F 152) This 'progress' from 'omega' to 'alpha' gestures towards "a break between a canonical/colonial story that has come to an end and the new beginning that a post-colonial literature cannot help invoking" (Bongie 275), thus confirming Foe's prophecy that Friday "may yet be visited by the Muse" (F 147). As Claudia Egerer has suggested in her intriguing reading of Friday's cryptic writing, Friday might be producing not the letter *O*, but instead the sign for zero, *0*, thereby "referring to a system of knowledge that is both anterior to and different from their [Susan and Foe's] own" (Egerer 125). Unsettling their expectations and defying their demand for conformity, Friday's writing is thus "empty only in a world where Susan and Foe set the parameters for knowledge, their knowledge, but full of an other, different knowledge not accessible to a gaze which recognizes only what it already knows" (Egerer 126). In this context, Richard Begam's reading, in "Silence and Mut(e)ilation: White Writing in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*" (1994), is relevant. Recalling the original Friday's worship of the great Benamuckee (in *Robinson Crusoe*, Friday explains to Crusoe that "*All Things do say O to him*"; RC 256), Begam interprets the *O* "not [as] an empty cipher but a divine circle" (Begam 124), "a form of expression that, quite simply, resists classification" (Begam 127). Following the

²¹⁵ Cf. Kossew 162.

argument proposed here, namely the possibility of an *unmutilated* Friday who withholds speech *deliberately*, Friday's disobedience, his erasing of the slate – with his eyes potentially holding “a spark of mockery [...] an African spark, dark to [Susan's] English eye” (*F* 146) – can be read as an unwillingness on his part to communicate. Friday's silence, then, “becomes a kind of heroic restraint, a triumph of individual agency against insistent demands that he participate in some kind of master narrative and the discourse it posits” (MacLeod 12).

5.2.5 Foe as A Postcolonial Utopia

[I]n South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. It is not possible, not for logical reasons, not for ethical reasons [...] but for political reasons, for reasons of power. And let me again be unambiguous: it is not that one *grants* the authority of the suffering body: the suffering body *takes* this authority: that is its power. To use other words: its power is undeniable. (J.M. Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 248)

It is the enigmatic fourth and final five-page Part of the novel which has received much critical attention. Featuring two similar present-tense accounts, which are “narrated without speech marks, as if Susan had relinquished her hold on the narrative” (Durrant, “Witness”, 445), Part IV offers a dream-like quest to release Friday's story, to make his wilful silence ‘speak’ – a project which has been discussed by Susan and Foe before.²¹⁶ An unidentified first-person narrator, who appears to be an ‘author’ figure, visits Foe's house twice, the time and location of his/her visits remaining ambiguous. Susan and Foe, “[lying] side by side in bed, not touching” (*F* 153), are fragile and old, as if they are dead: “The skin, dry as paper, is stretched tight over their bones. Their lips have receded, uncovering their teeth [...]. Their eyes are closed.” (*F* 153) As Spivak has noted, their death would imply that “*Robinson Crusoe* has not been written, and *Foe* is annulled” (Spivak, *Critique*, 193), for (De)Foe will now no longer be able to write his adventure tale – an observation which hints at the utopian status of Part IV.

The narrator's interest clearly lies with Friday. Making his/her way to the alcove, s/he finds Friday, alone of all the characters, still “warm”, with a faint pulse in his throat, “as if his heart beat in a far-off place” (*F* 154). As a “metaphor for the post-colonial moment” (Head 124), it is as if Friday has outlived the late colonisers, who have

²¹⁶ Cf. *F* 142.

struggled, without success, to make him ‘speak’. Forcing open Friday’s clenched teeth, the narrator, “[w]ith an ear to his mouth” (*F* 154), listens carefully until, “[a]fter a long while” (*F* 154), s/he “begin[s] to hear the faintest faraway roar: as she [Susan] said, the roar of waves in a seashell; and over that, as if once or twice a violin-string were touched, the whine of the wind and the cry of a bird” (*F* 154). From the sleeping Friday’s mouth issue “the sounds of the island” (*F* 154). Obviously, the narrator has re-staged Susan’s frustrated attempts to bring Friday to speech,²¹⁷ but the association of Friday with the island sounds remains unsatisfactory, for Friday is still associated with ‘native culture’.²¹⁸ As Dominic Head has suggested, “[t]he inadequacy of the first attempt is tacitly acknowledged by the presence of a second [...], and the existence of two attempts itself implies the unsuitability of this narrator to the task” (Head 124).

In a new ‘section’ of Part IV, there seems to be a sudden shift to contemporary times, for the house now bears a “white on blue” commemorative plaque inscribed “*Daniel Defoe, Author*”, “and then more writing too small to read” (*F* 155):²¹⁹ “Foe, an enemy, has become Defoe, the enemy, de facto – existing in actual fact, though not by legal establishment – author of Susan’s tale.” (Morgan 92) The narrator again enters Foe’s chamber and, again focusing on Friday, detects a detail previously unnoted: “[a]bout his neck – I had not observed this before – is a scar like a necklace, left by a rope or chain.” (*F* 155) The cause of this ‘scar’ might be Susan’s “deed granting Friday his freedom” (*F* 99), which she signed earlier in Cruso’s name and sewed into a little bag that she hung on a cord around Friday’s neck.²²⁰ Significantly, the marks left behind on Friday’s neck foreground “the dangers and (unavoidable) violence of writing” (Bongie 265). As Foe reminds Susan earlier in the novel, Susan cannot deny her role as coloniser (“I have never had a servant in my life [...]. Friday was not my slave but Cruso’s, and is a free man now”; *F* 76), because “Friday follows you: you do not follow Friday. The words you have written and hung around his neck say he is set free; but who, looking at Friday, will believe them?” (*F* 150)

²¹⁷ Cf. Durrant, “Witness”, 37.

²¹⁸ Cf. Head 124.

²¹⁹ Erected in 1995, there is a blue circular metal plaque in Gateshead Borough, marking the place where Defoe lived in London. Its inscription, similar to the one in *Foe*, reads “Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)”, and then, in smaller print: “A prolific journalist, pamphleteer, author and sometime merchant adventurer and government spy, Author of ‘Robinson Crusoe’ and ‘Moll Flanders’. He lived in Gateshead c. 1706-10. It is believed his lodgings were in Hillgate.” (Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, <http://www.bpears.org.uk>)

²²⁰ Cf. *F* 99.

The narrator then heads for a dispatch box containing a copy of Susan's account of her experiences on Cruso's island. Reading the words of Susan's memoir, that is, the opening words of *Foe*, now written in the epistolary form of Part II ("Dear Mr Foe, At last I could row no further"; *F* 155), the narrator surreally slips 'overboard' and is surrounded by "the petals cast by Friday" (*F* 155). Time has thus shifted from modern day (Defoe's plaque) back to the eighteenth century (Foe's room) and to an earlier plot sequence in *Foe*.²²¹ The unnamed 'I' now accomplishes what no other character has been able to accomplish: to descend into the sunken wreck, which is "a distillation of the mechanics of colonization" (Head 126).²²² Evidently, Susan's earlier question ("who will dive into the wreck?"; *F* 142) is an intertextual reference to Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck" (1972), in which an androgynous 'diver', returning to a point in time before language or gender, embarks upon a search for the truth: "the thing I came for: / the wreck and not the story of the wreck / the thing itself and not the myth" (Rich, "Diving", 61-63). Rich's description of patriarchal discourse as a "book of myths / in which / our names do not appear" (92-94) evokes, of course, Susan's omission, according to the logic of *Foe*, from Defoe's master narrative *Robinson Crusoe*.

After pressing ahead into the cabin, where the water is "the same water as yesterday, as last year, as three hundred years ago" (*F* 157) – an appropriate image of the continuity of the 'white' world of slaving imperialism – the narrator encounters Friday, again the only one still alive (Susan and the captain's bodies are "fat as pigs [...], puckered from long emersion"; *F* 157), whom s/he again urges to speak, dislodging but a stream of bubbles:

I tug his woolly hair, fingering the chain about this 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.²²³ This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday. (*F* 157)

²²¹ Cf. Lane 26.

²²² The 'composite vessel' "seems to conflate three different ships: Cruso's wreck (it is located off his island); the ship from which Barton is originally set adrift (she is found with 'her captain'); and the vessel which rescues her (and Friday, who is on board as well)" (Head 125).

²²³ As Michael Marais has observed, this line is reminiscent of a passage in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), in which Dostoevsky, attempting to re-establish contact with his dead son, Pavel, discovers that the realm of the dead is a space without language: "With each cry or call water enters his mouth; each syllable is replaced by a syllable of water." (Coetzee, *Petersburg*, 17)

Significantly, the narrator's question, "what is this ship?" (*F* 157) – the answer to which would solve all the mysteries surrounding Friday immediately – remains *unanswered*. With a self-critical awareness, the narrator, or the 'authorial' voice of Coetzee, resists the seduction of appropriating Friday's story once again by permitting Friday's home to remain a space beyond interpretation, "a place where bodies are their own signs" (*F* 157) rather than 'a place of words'. As Coetzee has said in an interview with David Attwell, cited as an epigraph to this section, the "authority of suffering and therefore of the body" (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 248) cannot be denied, especially not in the political context of South Africa:

If I look back over my own fiction, I see a simple (simple-minded?) standard erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not "that which is not," and the proof that it *is* is the pain it feels. The body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt. [...]

(Let me add, *entirely* parenthetically, that I, as a person, as a personality, am overwhelmed, that my thinking is thrown into confusion and helplessness, by the fact of suffering in the world, and not only human suffering. These fictional constructions of mine are paltry, ludicrous defenses against that being-overwhelmed, and, to me, transparently so.) (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 248)

In the closing lines of *Foe*, the 'I' narrator now becomes the 'overwhelmed' Coetzee, "who, as author, is still necessarily the 'foe' of alterity, but who now situates himself directly in relation to Friday and Friday's *potential for speech*" (Tiffin 31; emphasis added). "[P]ass[ing] a fingernail across his teeth, trying to find a way in" (*F* 157), the narrator, or author figure, is overwhelmed by the wordless, endless flow emanating from Friday's mouth, which, as it seems, will water the entire earth:

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)

The stream of silence emanating from Friday's mouth can be read as a powerful statement of agency, that is, "the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power" (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 8).²²⁴ As Dominic Head has pointed out in his reading of the concluding passage,

[t]his 'slow stream' is uninterrupted, indicating its irresistible historical necessity. [...] It is an unvoiced history which is acknowledged, a silence with a moral compulsion that, itself, silences the authorial figure [...]. The novel ends

²²⁴ For a further discussion of postcolonial agency, see e.g. Bhabha (1994) and Fanon (1989).

by gesturing toward a post-colonial utopia, through the symbolic release of Friday's 'unending' history, filling first the island, and then the earth itself. In the face of this enormous implication, the complicitous author willingly chooses silence. (Head 126)

As the "scream of no-sound from deep within Friday" (Macaskill and Colleran 451), his "inner voice [...] that had up until that point been rigorously denied" (Bongie 278) suggests, Friday has been able to 'speak' for himself all along, even if his utterance is situated outside the conventional, verbal mode of fiction.²²⁵ The only indication of Coetzee's views of Friday's potential for speech is couched in ambiguity. Commenting upon the concluding section of *Foe*, Coetzee has said: "The last pages of *Foe* have a certain power. They close the text by force, so to speak: they confront head-on the endlessness of its scepticism" (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 248) – might the author be referring here to scepticism of the other characters in the novel, and of critics, who, in their *construction* of Friday (as an epitome of the colonised people) as a tongueless 'Other', deny him the ability to have a voice of his own, to speak on his own behalf? (There is, as we have seen, never any explicit proof in *Foe* that Friday is really tongueless.) In an interview with Tony Morphet, when asked why Friday has no tongue, Coetzee asserted that by answering the question himself in place of Friday, "[b]y accepting your [Morphet's] implication, [he] would produce a master narrative for a set of texts that claim to deny all master narratives" (Morphet 464). Thus, nobody (in the structure of the novel itself, and nobody who has read *Foe*) is in a position to ascertain exactly why Friday cannot – or *does not want to* – speak. Coetzee's sentence remains an opaque explanation, leaving open the crucial possibility of Friday having a tongue, in which case Friday's *deliberate* withholding of speech renders him not a 'victim', but a 'victor' "accredited with extraordinary and transgressive psychic energies" (Parry, "Speech", 156).

Spivak's much-quoted essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), which has proved influential in feminist and postcolonial criticism, is interesting in this context. Examining the position of Indian women "both as an object of colonialist historiography and as a subject of insurgency" (Spivak, "Subaltern", 82), Spivak concluded her essay with the assertion that "[i]f, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more

²²⁵ Cf. Thieme, *Canon*, 69.

deeply in shadow” (Spivak, “Subaltern”, 82-83). Whilst Spivak’s essay has frequently been misinterpreted as locating the problem within the general inability of subaltern women, and politically marginalised peoples in general, to ever voice their resistance, critics such as Ashcroft et al., in their reading of the essay, have counter-claimed that

Spivak’s target is the concept of an unproblematically constituted subaltern identity, rather than the subaltern subject’s ability to give voice to political concerns. Her point is that no act of dissent or resistance occurs on behalf of an essential subaltern subject entirely separate from the dominant discourse that provides the language and the conceptual categories with which the subaltern voice speaks. (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 219)

Thus, Coetzee’s *Foe* “refuses to endorse any simple call for the granting of a voice within the existing sociocultural discourses; such a gesture would leave the silencing mechanisms [...] untouched” (Attridge, “Oppressive”, 228). Instead, Coetzee offers the sight of Friday’s body, the exact nature of which is never revealed. Like his earlier thwarting of Susan’s attempt to decipher his writing by rubbing the slate clean,²²⁶ Friday’s ‘slow stream’ resists linguistic appropriation or ‘colonisation’: it refuses to be deciphered, instead “asking to be read in its own right” (Wright 24). Believing that “[t]he only truth is silence” (Coetzee, in Attwell, *Doubling*, 286), Coetzee, as “a purveyor of truths” (Poyner, “Introduction”, 5), thus permits Friday’s body to be its own signifier, “stripped bare of the explanatory narratives of historical discourse” (Durrant, “Witness”, 460). Lewis MacLeod, too, has argued that “the process of pinning down what Friday meant seems to be at odds with his entire function in the book as a marker of fictive resistance. When Friday has struggled so consistently not to give himself away [...], it seems irresponsible for the critic to forcibly take him from himself” (MacLeod 15, n. 7). As Foe says in what might be a postscript to *Foe*, “[t]he moral of the story is that there comes a time when we must give reckoning of ourselves to the world, and then forever after be content to hold our peace” (*F* 124).

²²⁶ Cf. *F* 147.

6. Conclusion: A Comparison

A myth is true – that is to say, *operationally* true – insofar as it has predictive force. The more deeply rooted and universal a myth, the more difficult it is to combat. The myths of a tribe are the fictions it coins to maintain its powers. The answer to a myth of force is not necessarily counterforce, for if the myth predicts counterforce, counterforce reinforces the myth. The science of mythography teaches us that a subtler counter is to subvert and revise the myth. The highest propaganda is the propagation of a new mythology. (J.M. Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 24-25)

This thesis has proceeded from the assumption that Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, as Ian Watt has put it more than half a century ago, "cannot be refused the status of a myth" (Watt, "Myth", 96). The novel is, in Biodun Jeyifo's words, "a classic 'megatext' of Eurocentrism" (Jeyifo 382), and has been explored by Martin B. Green (as one of the first critics), in *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979), as "a central mythic expression of the modern system, of its call to young men to go out to expand the empire" (Green, *Adventure*, 83). As Green has argued in *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (1990), Defoe's major motivation was "a furthering of British imperial expansion and of the socioeconomic forces that built it up. [...] They in a sense seized on the Robinson story to serve their purposes" (Green, *Story*, 200). Even today, *Robinson Crusoe* "continues to show rude health" (Rogers, *Crusoe*, 152): either as the subject of critical discussions or as a point of departure for creative re-writings. According to Francis Fergusson, it is "[o]ne of the most striking properties of myths [...] that they generate new forms (like the different children of one parent) in the imaginations of those who try to grasp them. Until some imagination, that of a poet or only a reader or auditor, is thus fecundated by a myth, the myth would seem to exist only potentially" (Fergusson 140, cited in Stimpson ix-x).

As has transpired in this thesis, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* can – precisely *because of* its problematic aspects concerning the themes of racism and slavery in the British Empire in the eighteenth century – be called one of the great myths of Western literature. It is because of its status as "*the* prototypical colonial novel of the eighteenth century, if not in all of English literature" (McInelly 1) that the Crusoe myth has been a recurrent motif in postcolonial re-writings. Indeed, as Mavis Reimer, in *Home Words* (2008), has observed just recently, "[o]ver the last few decades, *Robinson Crusoe* has been studied predominantly in two related registers", namely "as a narrative charting the emergence

of a middle class, mercantile individualism in the eighteenth century”, and “as a narrative that helped both *shape and disseminate the ideology of colonialism* in the eighteenth century” (Reimer 69; emphasis added). Whilst these two readings are necessarily linked, the latter has emerged to be the most significant position in *Robinson Crusoe* scholarship and has had the most influence on recent subversive re-writings of the novel.²²⁷

In this concluding chapter, the two postcolonial works chosen for analysis in this thesis – Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime* (1978) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986) – shall be related to and compared with each other in order to determine whether the central arguments put forward in the Introduction are true: firstly, that the two authors’ re-writings are *political* re-writings of the Crusoe myth, which hint at the possibility of a creative challenging and changing of the myth itself through modifications of the tropes of race and gender; and secondly, that one major difference between Walcott and Coetzee’s re-writings is to be found in their willingness (on the part of Walcott), or reluctance (on the part of Coetzee) to locate their texts within a distinctively Caribbean or South African political context respectively. Also, some examples of other postcolonial and/or feminist re-writings of *Robinson Crusoe* shall be mentioned briefly.

To begin with, referring to Derek Walcott’s oeuvre, poet and Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky, in the *New York Review of Books* (November 10, 1983), described the West Indies as “the place discovered by Columbus, colonized by the British, and immortalized by Walcott” (Brodsky, “Walcott”). As has been shown in section 4.1.2, in contrast to other postcolonial writers (such as J.M. Coetzee in *Foe*) who have made Friday their central figure, Derek Walcott, in his Crusoe poems as well as in his critical essays, has focused upon Defoe’s eponymous hero, who, more than other such figures as Adam, Philoctetes and Odysseus, is an epitome of *Caribbean* identity, the perfect “image of the castaway who must make anew from the shipwrecks of cultures” (McCorkle, “Reconfigurations”). For Walcott, the Caribbean artist – as a solitary castaway ‘deserted’ by history – shares several characteristics with Defoe’s ‘original’, in particular, the latter’s skill as “a utilitarian craftsman, fashioning a culture from primal raw materials” (Thieme, *Canon*, 57) – above all, with his words as tools.

²²⁷ Cf. Reimer 69.

Walcott, too, has defined himself as “primarily, absolutely a Caribbean writer” (Walcott, in Hirsch, “Art”, 73), who uses language ‘anew’ in the ‘Mundo Nuevo’: “what is needed [in the Caribbean] is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew.” (Walcott, “Twilight”, 10) For Walcott, “Crusoe’s triumph lies in that despairing cry which he utters when a current takes his dugout canoe further and further away from the island [...], and it is the cynical answer we must make to those critics who complain that there is nothing here, no art, no history, no architecture [...]; in short, no civilisation, it is ‘O happy desert!’” (Walcott, “Figure”, 40) Thus Caribbean artists “live not only on happy, but on fertile deserts”; they “draw [their] strength, like Adam, like all hermits, [...] from that rich irony of [their] history. [...] [They] contemplate [their] spirit by the detritus of the past” (Walcott, “Figure”, 40).

As far as Walcott’s plays are concerned, it is interesting to note that the only company for which Walcott wrote his plays and the only one that has performed his work is the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, of which Walcott was both founder and director.²²⁸ According to Martínez-Dueñas Espejo, “[t]he author has recognized on many occasions that ‘his’ company is the only one able to present his plays” (Martínez-Dueñas Espejo 27, n. 10). Bruce King, too, in his biography of Walcott, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (2000), remarked that Walcott’s dream was “having his plays performed in the United States with Trinidadian actors” (King 405). Interestingly, in an interview with Wayne S. Turney, when asked who would be the ‘perfect’ audience for one of his plays, Walcott replied:

I once answered that question... But it must be very carefully said. [...] I see a plump [...] black woman from the Caribbean, either laughing like hell in the way that we laugh which is total, or weeping like hell. The person that I have in mind is that sort of person. It’s not an intellectual. It’s *an audience that I can reach*. I think that’s the furthest point of the audience for any writer. Not even the artist, something beyond the artist, which is how you can touch, who can you touch? Can you touch the person who is considered to be illiterate and so on. Because there is *no such thing as illiterate sensibility* in terms of an audience. (Walcott, in Turney, “Pantomime”; emphases added)

Walcott’s works, and his plays in particular, are strongly located within a Caribbean context – a claim which is confirmed by Walcott’s words on the occasion of his acceptance of the 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature. According to Walcott, his work “had

²²⁸ Cf. Martínez-Dueñas Espejo 27, n. 10.

already been written in the mouths of the Caribbean tribe. And I felt that I had been chosen, somehow, to give it voice. So the utterance was inevitable.... I was writing it for the island people from whom I come. In a sense, I saw it as a long thank-you note” (Walcott, in Johnson, “Biography”). Given the observations made above, it does not seem surprising that *Pantomime* has been described as “an anti-(neo)colonial nationalist allegory”, or as a “nationalist revision and reversal of the colonial master-narrative *Robinson Crusoe*” (Puri 117). For Walcott, due to its great power and its status as the ‘first novel’, Defoe’s master narrative *Robinson Crusoe* is the Caribbean’s “first book, our profane Genesis” (Walcott, “Island”, 92), which “became an accepted prototype for the foundations of West Indian culture” (Ford 2000). Indeed, in re-writing Defoe’s literary classic, Walcott achieved his aim to create a “distinctively Caribbean play” (Thieme, *Canon*, 59), which is hybrid in form and represents, through the two characters’ different approaches to acting, the two cultures in the play.²²⁹ Of course, Walcott’s appropriation of the Friday character as a black Creole, the play’s setting (on the island of Tobago in the 1970s) and the themes discussed in this thesis further foreground the particular relevance of the Crusoe myth to the Caribbean.

Significantly, in contrast to Coetzee’s Friday, Jackson Phillip, in *Pantomime*, has a voice of his own, his linguistic and artistic skills excelling Harry’s. In fact, much of the play’s power derives from Jackson’s skilled exploitation of the farcical conventions of the pantomime. In an echo of Yeats’ “[g]ive a man a mask, and he will talk the truth” (Yeats, cited in Walcott, “Figure”, 39), it is the series of role-reversals in their re-enactment of the Crusoe myth which allow Harry and Jackson to overcome the constraints imposed upon them by West Indian colonial history. In the course of their playacting, the ‘naturalness’ of the Crusoe-Friday relationship as depicted by Defoe is exposed as artifice. As Harry says at one point, his life resembles a play: “I’d no idea I’d wind up in this ironic position of giving orders, but if the new script I’ve been given says: HARRY TREWE, HOTEL MANAGER, then I’m going to play Harry Trewe, Hotel Manager, to the hilt, damnit.” (P 136) Obviously, Harry’s statement implies that the coloniser’s dominance has always been no more than an ‘act’, just like the submission of the colonised has been merely imitation: “You mispronounce words on purpose, don’t you Jackson? (JACKSON *smiles.*) Don’t think for one second that I’m not up on your game Jackson. You’re playing the stage nigger with me.” (P 140)

²²⁹ Cf. Peters 537.

No longer an “object of narration” (Jones 226) as Defoe’s Friday, Jackson might be seen as a model of what Ashcroft et al., in *The Empire Writes Back* (1994), have called an “effective post-colonial voice” (Ashcroft et al., *Empire*, 7). Jackson is aware that power is not only socio-economic, or political; it “is also, or aspires to total effectivity [...] in signifying and explanatory systems; [...] it seeks to be an epistemic order of control and manipulation” (Jeyifo 378). As section 4.2.2 has shown, Jackson’s appropriation of the English language (that is, his code-switching and mimicing of his former masters’ language) eventually becomes a tool of potential change, for, as is suggested at the end of the play, the two characters have achieved a new personal understanding. Thus, *Pantomime* “suggests that theatre may not only offer insight into social and cultural relations – in this case between black and white, colonized and colonizer – but actively bring about new awareness, and hence new relationships, through the active power of role-play” (Crow and Banfield 26).

Like Walcott, Coetzee has also registered the mythic aspect of *Robinson Crusoe* as part of its literary legacy: “Like Odysseus embarked for Ithaca, like Quixote mounted on Rocinante, Robinson Crusoe with his parrot and umbrella has become a figure in the collective consciousness of the West [...]. Having pretended once to belong to history, he finds himself in the sphere of myth.” (Coetzee, *Stranger*, 20) As section 5.1.2 has shown, Coetzee is (in)famous for his resistance to “the attempt to swallow [his] novels into a political discourse” (Coetzee, quoted in Kossew 23), and has frequently been accused of political quietism, for his novels “refuse clarity in meaning and do not offer closure” (Poyner, “Truth”, 67); they thereby “[fail] overtly to address the oppression instituted by South Africa’s egregious regime (now passed)” (Poyner, “Truth”, 67). However, as Coetzee asserted in his controversial address “The Novel Today” (1988), this resistance must *not* be misperceived to imply that novels like his, which were not “investigations of real historical forces and real historical circumstances”, somehow “[lack] in seriousness” (Coetzee, “Novel”, 2). Emphasising that he does not want to “distance [himself] from revolutionary art” (Coetzee, “Novel”, 4), Coetzee insisted upon the creation of “a novel that evolves its own paradigms and myths, in the process (and here is the point at which *true rivalry*, even enmity, perhaps enters the picture) perhaps going so far as to show up the mythic status of history – in other words, *demythologizing history*” (Coetzee, “Novel”, 3; emphasis added). In Coetzee’s first novel *Dusklands*, the protagonist Eugene Dawn, a specialist in psychological warfare, in

a similar vein, writes that “[t]he answer to a myth of force is not necessarily counterforce, for if the myth predicts counterforce, counterforce reinforces the myth. [...] The highest propaganda is the propagation of a new mythology” (Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 24-25). Thus, for Coetzee, it is not only a work of art which is dedicated directly to political ends which can make a significant contribution to revolutionary activity.

In contrast to Walcott, Coetzee does not consider himself (as a writer) and his work in national terms. When asked in an interview by Tony Morphet whether he conceived of *Life & Times of Michael K* (1980) “as in any way a task presented to you by history – the history of South Africa specifically?”, Coetzee rejected the label of ‘South African’ resolutely as an obviously ‘exoticising’ commercial strategy: “Perhaps that is my fate. On the other hand, I sometimes wonder whether it isn’t simply that vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing and criticism that is forcing on me the *fate of being a ‘South African novelist’*” (Coetzee, in Morphet 460; emphasis added). As Catharina Hinke has aptly observed,

[i]n his writing, he [Coetzee] addresses issues such as individual responsibility, alienation, guilt and shame. These issues may post to South Africa like signposts, but Coetzee takes a greater interest in depicting the individual’s role in a troubled society (regardless of its location). For Coetzee, the colonial experience and the individual’s role in a system of oppression need not necessarily be connected to South Africa. He prefers to see the South African situation as just one example of such a colonial experience. (Hinke 110)

As regards *Foe*, whilst the presentation of Friday as a black African has encouraged a wealth of critical readings which have reduced the novel to an “allegory or analogy of ‘the South African situation’” (P. Williams 33), the argument pursued in this thesis has been that much of Coetzee’s fiction, and *Foe* in particular, cannot be located within any specific time or place, even when seemingly alluding to a specifically ‘South African’ situation. One prominent example of Coetzee’s evading of specificity in *Foe* can be found towards the end of Part II. When asked by an old man about her relationship to Friday, Susan replies that he is a slave who “will take ship for Africa and his native land” (*F* 107). Coetzee’s deliberate refusal to name Friday’s homeland here clearly serves to “retain the novel’s semantic resilience” (Lin 137). Moreover, it is interesting to note that Coetzee’s Crusoe has ‘degenerated’ from a state of Culture to a state of Nature: he has, for instance, salvaged no tools from the shipwreck and does not engage

in any kind of meaningful practical activities which render him a Caribbean precursor for Walcott.²³⁰

Significantly, as our discussion of *Foe* as a ‘postcolonial utopia’ in section 5.2.5 has shown, Coetzee refuses to recover the voice of Friday, who, at first sight, appears to be unable to speak because his tongue has been cut out. As Spivak has written, “Coetzee as white creole translates *Robinson Crusoe* by representing Friday as the agent of a withholding” (Spivak, “Politics”, 195). Thus, unlike Walcott, who does not seem to share Coetzee’s anxiety about ‘speaking for’ an Other, or giving him/her voice (perhaps because Walcott is black and the voice is therefore not ‘appropriated’), Coetzee, whilst giving voice to one ‘marginalised’ person, Susan, demonstrates his sensitivity to what Tiffin has called “the dangers of writing of Friday and *for* Friday” (Tiffin 32). As Susan says in *Foe*, “[t]he true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday” (*F* 118). Thus, while Walcott lends eloquence to the colonial Other in the ‘art’ of the genres of the English music hall and the Trinidadian Carnival, Coetzee foregrounds the pretentiousness, indeed the impossibility, to represent the Other. Interestingly, Susan sees the author’s (Coetzee’s) inverted initials on a trunk in Foe’s lodgings, indicating Coetzee’s awareness that he, as a white South African, holds the same colonising power of authorship as (De)Foe and, perhaps, critics and readers who, as has been suggested, have mostly taken Friday’s tonguelessness for granted, or have *constructed* him as tongueless. As has been suggested, there is the significant possibility that Friday is not tongueless after all: the only hint at Friday’s potential mutilation is provided by Cruso, who, because of his inability to distinguish ‘truth’ from ‘lies’, is certainly not a reliable reporter of ‘facts’. Thus, as Claudia Egerer has put it,

Foe cannot be reduced to simply another master-slave story where the silenced black slave helplessly awaits his rescue from well-meaning white benefactors. If it were, I would perpetuate the very cycle of tyranny and subjugation it seeks to expose. [...] Rather *Foe* looks for the “foe” in our own tacit complicity in practices of exploitation. (Egerer 137)

Having gained in power, it is the ‘black’ story which eventually usurps the narrative and, as a “symbol of the end of white domination” (Burnett, “Redemption”, 248), is the cause of the narrator’s speechlessness. As Coetzee has said in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988), “[o]ur craft is all in reading *the other*: gaps, inverses, undersides; the veiled, the dark, the buried, the feminine; alterities. [...] Only

²³⁰ Cf. Thieme, *Canon*, 64.

part of the truth, such a reading asserts, resides in what writing says of the hitherto unsaid; for the rest, its truth lies in what it dare not say for the sake of its own safety, or in that which it does not know about itself: in its silences” (Coetzee, *White*, 81). Arguably, Coetzee goes further than Walcott in his counter-discursive re-writing of *Robinson Crusoe*. Given the continuing pervasiveness of the history of colonialism, Coetzee recognises that the simple granting of a voice does not suffice. As Foe suggests at one point, even if Friday were not speechless, he would be part of a social class which is already subdued by the dominant discourse: “There are more Negroes in London than you would think. Walk along Mile End Road on a summer’s afternoon, or in Paddington, and you will see. Would Friday not be happier among other Negroes? He could play for pennies in a street band. There are many such strolling bands.” (*F* 128)

A further crucial difference between Walcott and Coetzee’s re-writings of the Crusoe myth concerns the question of authorship and gender. As has been argued in section 2.2, there are important intersections between the field of postcolonial criticism and feminist theory. In the later stages of *Pantomime*, the gender subplot, in which Jackson acts the role of Harry’s English ex-wife, Ellen, calls into question the lack of female characters in *Robinson Crusoe* and suggests an intertwining of racial and gender binaries. As the readers/viewers gradually discover, the white character, Harry Trewe, proposed the reversal of the roles of Crusoe and Friday voluntarily, and even *insisted upon* it, in order to come to terms with his subordination when he acted the role of Friday in a pantomime he staged with his wife. In *Pantomime*, a ‘healing’ power is thus accorded to ‘woman’ (in the form of Jackson’s acting of the part of Ellen): “You played Crusoe in the panto, Ellen. I was Friday. [...] You wiped the stage with me.” (*P* 150) However, the parallels between the experiences of racial and sexual subordination are only implied and much less unsettling than in *Foe*. Importantly, in her description of Coetzee’s texts, in particular *Foe*, as ‘counter-discourses’, Tiffin has demonstrated that through his production of a counter-discourse, the writer is not “simply ‘writing back’ to an English canonical text, but to the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operated and continues to operate in post-colonial worlds” (Tiffin 23):

Language, text and author/ity and the discursive fields within which these operate, become the subject of *Foe*. The complicity between narrative mode and political oppression, specifically the cryptic associations of historicism and realism in European and South African white settler narratives, enables Coetzee to demonstrate the pernicious political role of texts in the continuing oppression of blacks and hence the importance of their dis/mantling. (Tiffin 28)

By emphasising the fictive nature of his text, Coetzee demonstrates his awareness of the close interrelation between authorship and authority and exposes the violence that is inherent in the process of canonisation.²³¹ that is, the production of silences in terms of both race and gender, upon which the power of *Robinson Crusoe* as a “reconstructed mythology of origins” (Hulme 186) depends. In this sense, Coetzee’s *Foe* is far from being politically ‘irresponsible’, but is, like *Pantomime*, a profoundly political text: its narrative strategies entail “a radical questioning of the very discourses of power that upheld brutal and unjust social systems” (Huggan and Watson 3-4). Of course, an essential part of Coetzee’s strategy of subverting the myth of *Robinson Crusoe* is his narrativisation of its author, Defoe, which allows Coetzee to speculate about the way in which the novel was conceived. As Jean-Paul Engélibert has argued in “Daniel Defoe as Character: Subversion of the Myths of Robinson Crusoe and of the Author” (1996), by conjuring up the mythical persona of Daniel Defoe, Coetzee’s novel ‘forces’ the latter to “take part in the rewriting of his work, not in order that his paternal role may be recognised, but in order to sever the ties linking the text to its author” (Engélibert 279).

Interestingly, Defoe’s appearance in *Foe* as a fictional character is echoed in Coetzee’s inversions of fictional and real identities in his 2003 Noble Prize lecture “He and His Man”, a novella with extensive intertextual relationships to Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) and *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1726). The lecture might be considered an epilogue to *Foe*. Curiously enough, Defoe is presented as sending reports to Crusoe, which are, as emerges later, only inventions of Crusoe’s. Being an elderly and retired man, Crusoe spends his evenings in *The Jolly Tar* in the coastal city of Bristol, where “he has [...] [his meals] brought up to his room; for he finds no joy in society, having grown used to solitude on the island” (Coetzee, “His Man”, para. 15). In Coetzee’s reversal of author and character, Defoe becomes a fictional creation of Crusoe’s – a strategy which, given Defoe’s own successful creation of Crusoe as a fictional narrator, who was believed to be the actual author, seems to be a very fitting one.²³² The text ends with Coetzee’s fantasy, in which “he” and “his man” (referring to Defoe and Crusoe respectively) pass one another on ships that cross a stormy sea:

If he must settle on a likeness for the pair of them, his man and he, he would write that they are like two ships sailing in contrary directions, one west, the

²³¹ See also Attridge (1992).

²³² Cf. Attridge, *Ethics*, 199.

other, east. [...] Their ships pass close, close enough to hail. But the seas are rough, the weather is stormy: their eyes lashed by the spray, their hands burned by the cordage, they pass each other by, too busy even to wave. (Coetzee, “His Man”, para. 41)

As David Dabydeen has observed in an essay entitled “On Not Being Milton” (1990), “European literature is littered with blacks like Man Friday, who falls to earth to worship Crusoe’s magical gun” (Dabydeen 4). Just as there are numerous pictures of subservient colonised characters, there are plenty of postcolonial re-writings of such representations. Walcott and Coetzee’s re-writings of Defoe’s novel are, of course, not the only ones that offer a new and intriguing postcolonial and/or feminist perspective. In her discussion of the anonymous and fairly little known novel *The Female American* (1767), Betty Joseph has pointed out that

[i]t would [...] be a mistake to think that such revisionings are confined to our historical moment [...]. In fact, because *Robinson Crusoe* became immensely popular at a time when the status of both the European woman and the colonial Other were being debated and inscribed into the discourses of the Enlightenment, it is very likely that the novel was easy game for a reader or writer interested in supplanting the white male of property as human norm. (Joseph 317)

In *The Female American*, the fictional narrator/author Unca Eliza Winkfield, early on in ‘her’ narrative, shows herself aware that, as section 3.3.1 has shown, adventures have traditionally been regarded as ‘appropriate’ only for a male readership; their protagonists, too, tend to be exclusively male:

The lives of women being commonly domestic, the occurrences of them are generally pretty, nearly of the same kind; whilst those of men, frequently more vagrant, subject them often to experience greater vicissitudes, many times wonderful and strange. Though a woman, it has been my lot to have experienced much of the latter; for so wonderful and strange and uncommon have been the events of my life, that true history, perhaps, never recorded any that were more so. (*Female American* 35)

Set in the 1630s, *The Female American*, like *Foe*, is situated as a literary precursor to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, which is, it is suggested, but an imitation of Winkfield’s unusual tale entitled “The Female American, or the Extraordinary Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield, Compiled by Herself” (*Female American* 31):

Nor do I wonder that events so extraordinary should attract [...] attention; and if they should be published in any country, I doubt not but they will soon be naturalized throughout Europe, and in different languages, and in succeeding ages, be the delight of the ingenious and inquisitive; and that some *future bold adventurer’s imagination*, lighted up by my torch, will form a *fictitious story* of

one of his own sex, the solitary inhabitant of a desolate island. (Female American 105; emphases added)

As a footnote following this passage (added by a ‘pseudo’ editor from the point of view of the late eighteenth-century) indicates, this ‘future bold adventurer’ is, of course, Defoe:²³³ “Our authoress here seems to please herself, with the thoughts of the immortality of her history, and to prophecy of that of *Robinson Crusoe*, which is only inferior to her own, as fiction is to truth.” (*Female American* 105) Strangely enough, William Cowper, a late eighteenth-century English poet and hymnodist who suffered from periods of severe depression, fancied himself to be Crusoe and composed a poem in the first person: “I am monarch of all I survey, / My right there is none to dispute; / From the center all round to the sea / I am lord of the fowl and the brute.” (Cowper 134).

Of course, re-writings of the Crusoe myth are not limited to the eighteenth century, but may be found in different centuries and in different media. Defoe’s novel was also adapted for the stage (complete with Harlequin Friday, Pantaloon and Columbine) by Richard B. Sheridan as a popular pantomime (*Robinson Crusoe: Or, Harlequin Friday*; unfortunately lost) in 1781; Jacques Offenbach composed the music for an opéra comique called *Robinson Crusoe* in 1867; and Luis Buñuel’s (1952), and George Miller and Rod Hardy’s (1996) *Robinson Crusoe* have been successful cinematic adaptations of the story. In addition to such ‘literal’ filmic adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe*, there have also been features, serials and television series using the Crusoe narrative, such as Byron Haskin’s *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964); *The Blue Lagoon* (1980), directed by Randal Keiser; Caleb Deschanel’s *Crusoe* (1989); Robert Zemeckis’s *Cast Away* (2000); and the popular TV series *Survivor* (2000-present) and *Lost* (2004-present). One example of a “subversively satirical variation on the Robinson Crusoe tale” (rottentomatoes.com, “Man Friday”) is the 1975 British/American film *Man Friday*, directed by Jack Gold from a screenplay by Adrian Mitchell. Here, like in Walcott’s *Pantomime* (published three years later), the roles of Crusoe, a dull and stiff Englishman, and of the much more empathetic and intelligent Friday are reversed: Friday is stunned by the neurotic white stranger who is cast up on his island.²³⁴ Told through the gaze of Friday, the film culminates in Crusoe’s suicide, who is denied his

²³³ Cf. Joseph 319.

²³⁴ Cf. James 5.

request to join and teach Friday's tribe. As Friday claims quite rightly, "the only thing he [Crusoe] teaches is fear."²³⁵

There is an almost inexhaustible range of modern literary re-writings, including texts written in languages other than English. Like Coetzee, Jean Giraudoux, in *Suzanne et le Pacifique* (1921), for instance, introduced the feminine perspective which Defoe had neglected into the Crusoe myth. The poet, playwright and children's author John Agard from Guyana, too, has 'written back' to the colonial novel in his poem "Memo to Crusoe", which attempts to re-create West Indian pronunciation. In *Moses Ascending* (1975), a further re-writing of *Robinson Crusoe*, Trinidadian writer Samuel Selvon has adopted an archaic form of English, juxtaposed with a Caribbean vernacular, in order to ridicule his hero's cultural pretentiousness. In the novel, the narrator/protagonist Moses Aloetta is a member of the 'Windrush generation', the first generation of post-war immigrants from the Caribbean to Britain. Completely acculturated after having spent two decades in London, he is now a 'slum landlord' who rents out rooms to other immigrants, on whom he looks down from his 'penthouse'. Taking on a white "man Friday, a white immigrant named Bob from somewhere in the Midlands" as his "batman" (Selvon, *Moses*, 4), Moses' 'ascension' demonstrates, in Louise Bennett's words, a "colonisation in reverse" (Bennett 179-180, cited in Thieme, *Canon*, 59). In the course of the novel, Selvon offers a parody of some of the stereotypes underlying *Robinson Crusoe*: the 'white man' is illiterate ("but being as he's white we say he is suffering from dyslexia"; Selvon, *Moses*, 128), a sex maniac, and, at one point in the novel, "runs amok" (Selvon, *Moses*, 55).²³⁶ Like Walcott's reversal concept in *Pantomime*, Selvon's inversion of the Crusoe-Friday relationship is foregrounded in a comic manner:

As we became good friends, or rather Master and Servant, I try to convert him from the evils of alcohol, but it was no use. By and by, as he was so useful to me, I allowed him the freedom of the house, and left everything in his hands so I could enjoy my retirement. (Selvon, *Moses*, 5)

As has been mentioned in the introduction, postcolonial re-writings such as those discussed in this thesis allow for surprisingly new meanings to emerge not only within their own boundaries, but also within the works of the past (such as Defoe's 'master' narrative), thereby opening up space for transforming the role these canonical texts are

²³⁵ Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_Friday_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_Friday_(film))

²³⁶ Cf. Newman 7.

to play in the shaping of the future.²³⁷ In this context, Ashcroft et al.'s observations relating to 'counter-discourse' in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998) are relevant:

A term coined by Richard Terdiman to characterize the theory and practice of symbolic resistance. [...] [H]is term has been adopted by post-colonial critics to describe the complex ways in which *challenges to a dominant or established discourse (specifically those of the imperial centre)* might be mounted from the periphery, always recognizing the powerful 'absorptive capacity' of imperial and neo-imperial discourses. As a practice within post-colonialism, counter-discourse has been theorized less in terms of historical processes and literary movements than through *challenges posed to particular texts, and thus to imperial ideologies inculcated, stabilized and specifically maintained* through texts employed in colonialist education systems.

The concept of counter-discourse within post-colonialism thus also raises the issue of the subversion of canonical texts *and their inevitable reinscription in this process of subversion.* (Ashcroft et al., *Concepts*, 56-57; emphases added)

Thus, postcolonial counter-discourse constitutes, first and foremost, a challenge to particular texts and, in the process of doing so, to the 'inculcated', 'stabilized' and 'specifically maintained' imperial ideologies which are hidden in the pre-text. As the last line indicates, counter-discourse also encourages the reader to re-engage with canonical texts. Based upon the re-writings examined in this thesis, I would argue that the relationship between the pretext discussed (*Robinson Crusoe*) and its re-writings (Walcott's *Pantomime* and Coetzee's *Foe*) is, to use Richard J. Lane's term, 'bidirectional' (rather than unidirectional), meaning that the 'new', postcolonial texts are in an 'agonistic', 'dialectical', or 'dialogic' relationship with the 'old' one.²³⁸

[T]he new text may still be regarded as massively critical of the ideology of the old, but it also engages in a 'two-way' process, whereby its new readings add to the experience of reading particular canonical novels [...]. In this latter sense, the canonical novel is *not* seen as totally obliterated by the postcolonial critique, yet the colonial values revealed and rejected still provide a powerful lesson. (Lane 19)

By showing us what the main narrative tries unsuccessfully to repress, Walcott and Coetzee's re-writings of Defoe's novel incorporate profoundly subversive challenges to the main discourse, which are voiced by the 'Other' as 'savage' (Walcott's Jackson Phillip) or 'woman' (Coetzee's author-figure Susan Barton). Significantly, both *Pantomime* and *Foe* have open endings: just as they refer back to Defoe's novel in their questioning of its colonialist discourse and exposing of "other sites of meaning"

²³⁷ Cf. Newman 195.

²³⁸ Cf. Lane 19.

(Bhabha, *Nation*, 4), they also refer forward in their concern for a postcolonial future. Clearly, the critical debates triggered by a re-reading of canonic novels along with their re-writings seem to be fruitful and desirable especially in the context of pedagogical practice: twentieth- and twenty-first-century ‘histories’ need to be included in the syllabus to create (to use Edward Said’s term) a ‘counterpoint’ to the imperial vision endorsed in novels such as *Robinson Crusoe*.²³⁹ As such, the Crusoe myth will undoubtedly continue to fascinate readers and encourage further re-writings which speculate about the relationship between ‘self’ and ‘Other’.

To conclude, this thesis grew out of a desire to encourage more advanced debate of Defoe’s colonial ‘master’ narrative. It seems to me that there is still a need for a more extensive reassessment of the “great canonical texts and perhaps the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture”, in order to “draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented” (Said, *Culture*, ii). Whilst reading these works in the light of subsequent decolonisation is not to “slight their great aesthetic force nor to treat them reductively as imperialist propaganda”; “it is a much graver mistake”, as Edward Said has warned, “to read them stripped of their affiliations with the facts of power which informed and enabled them” (Said, *Culture*, 195). This thesis has sought to make a contribution to such a reassessment.

²³⁹ For an inspiring outline of contrapuntal pedagogy in the context of reading both postcolonial and Eurocentric texts about Asian and Anglo-Pacific peoples and cultures, see Garbutcheon Singh and Greenlaw (1998).

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German Abstract

Mit seinem Werk *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Written by Himself* (1719) schuf Daniel Defoe zweifelsohne einen der fortwährendsten Mythen der modernen westlichen Kultur. Der Roman brachte unzählige Ausgaben, Übersetzungen und Bearbeitungen hervor und verlieh sogar einem eigenen Roman-Typus, den sogenannten „Robinsonaden“, seinen Namen. Die Ambivalenz des Textes hatte zur Folge, dass *Robinson Crusoe* aus diversen Perspektiven interpretiert wurde, wie etwa als spirituelle Autobiographie, als abenteuerlicher Reisebericht, als ökonomische Parabel oder als „do-it-yourself“-Anleitung. Unter der Annahme, dass es gerade die problematischen, im Text implizierten Ideologien in Bezug auf Rassismus und Sklaverei im Britischen Empire des 18. Jahrhunderts sind, welche eine Vielzahl an (postkolonialen) *re-writings* angeregt und somit den um *Robinson Crusoe* entstandenen Mythos aufrecht erhalten haben, liegt der Fokus der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit mit dem Titel „*Robinson Crusoe Goes Postcolonial: Re-Writings of the Crusoe Myth by Derek Walcott and J.M. Coetzee*“ auf den imperialistischen Tendenzen in Defoes *‘master’ narrative*.

In Kapitel 2 werden zunächst die Praktiken des *re-reading* von „Klassikern“ sowie deren *re-writing* aus postkolonialer Sichtweise betrachtet. Dabei nimmt Edward W. Saids Formulierung einer *contrapuntal reading method* eine zentrale Rolle ein. Diese Lesemethode wird im Zuge einer Interpretation von *Robinson Crusoe*, welche die enge Verflechtung europäischer kanonischer Texte mit dem imperialistischen Projekt identifiziert, angewandt. Ebenso werden Leitbegriffe wie „post(-)colonial“, „writing back“, „re-writing“, „canonical counter-discourse“, „pre-text“ und „con-text“ diskutiert. Des Weiteren wird eine Parallele zwischen postkolonialer Kritik und feministischer Theorie gezogen.

Auf Grund des Status von *Robinson Crusoe* als „objektiver Tatsachenbericht“ – nicht zuletzt auf Grund von Defoes Selbstdarstellung im Vorwort als bloßer Herausgeber der Geschichte – beginnt diese Diplomarbeit die Untersuchung des *Robinson Crusoe*-Mythos mit Defoes Original. Im 3. Kapitel wird mit der Absicht eines historisch adäquaten Textverständnisses ein Abriss der kolonialistischen Politik und der kolonialen Ausbreitung zu Defoes Zeiten gegeben. Defoe war ein unermüdeter

Befürworter der Kolonialisierung sowie des Aufbaus neuer Märkte und verbesserter Handelswege – eine Beharrlichkeit, welche in seinen ökonomischen Schriften immer wiederkehrt und ihr Echo besonders in *Robinson Crusoe* findet. Da die Abenteuer des schottischen Seefahrers Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721), dessen Rettung im Jahre 1709 (nach seinem mehr als 4-jährigen Aufenthalt auf einer einsamen Insel im Pazifik) für Aufruhr sorgte, nützliches Material für Defoes eigenes ideologisches Projekt darstellten und ein zentraler Bestandteil des „Crusoe“-Mythos sind, wird eine kurze Darstellung von Selkirks Leben gegeben. Unter Anwendung von Saids *contrapuntal reading approach* wird anschließend versucht, *Robinson Crusoe* in Bezug auf Form, die Repräsentation von Imperialismus und Kolonialismus sowie die Darstellung der „Zivilisierung“ der Anderen/Fremden zu lesen. Weiters wird die oft vernachlässigte Thematik der Sexualität in *Robinson Crusoe* behandelt, welche im Besonderen durch Anspielungen auf Crusoes potentielle Homosexualität und seine Kolonisation des Landes, der metaphorischen Jungfrau, präsent ist. Zudem wird deutlich, dass weibliche Charaktere sehr wohl im Roman vorkommen; ihre Gegenwart wird jedoch im Kontext der „maskulinen“ Abenteuergeschichte als nebensächlich verworfen.

In den Kapiteln 4 und 5 werden zwei der etwas provokanteren postkolonialen *re-writings*, Derek Walcotts *Pantomime* (1978) und J.M. Coetzees *Foe* (1986), diskutiert. Dabei werden die biographischen Hintergründe beider Autoren skizziert sowie der Versuch unternommen, sie im Kontext postkolonialer Literatur zu situieren. Das Kapitel zu *Pantomime* behandelt folgende dominierende Thematiken: den Ge-/Missbrauch von Sprache, das *Re-writing* der *master-slave*-Dialektik, karibische Identität und ihre theatralische Äußerung sowie den *gender subplot* als konfessionelles Psychodrama. Coetzees Roman wird im Hinblick auf Arbeit, Religion und Gesellschaft, die Dynamiken von Autorschaft und Geschlecht, den „Anderen“ sowie als postkoloniale Utopie interpretiert. Sowohl Walcott als auch Coetzee re-politisieren den „Crusoe“-Mythos, indem sie die Aufmerksamkeit ihrer LeserInnen auf die Möglichkeit kreativer Veränderung durch modifizierte Tropen von Rasse und Geschlecht und die sozio-politische Funktion von Sprache bzw. Textualität lenken. Die Charaktere in Walcotts Stück kehren in ihrem Versuch, die komplexe Frage von Identität in der Karibik in einem gemeinsamen theatralischen Projekt umzusetzen, die Rollen des weißen Crusoe und des schwarzen Freitag wiederholt um. Coetzee stellt die Autorität von Defoes kanonischem Text in Frage, indem er seinen Roman aus der Sicht einer weißen Frau,

der „Anderen“ des Geschlechts, erzählt und *Foe* als Ausgangsmaterial für *Robinson Crusoe* situiert. Bedeutsamerweise wird Coetzees Freitag in dieser Diplomarbeit im Gegensatz zu nahezu allen anderen *Foe*-Kritiken nicht als zum Schweigen verurteilter, da zungenloser schwarzer (Ex-)Sklave gelesen, sondern als letztendlicher „Sieger“, welcher den Versuchen seiner wohl gesinnten, weißen „Wohltäter“, ihm ihre Sprache aufzuzwingen, erfolgreich Widerstand leistet.

Wie im abschließenden Kapitel argumentiert wird, liegt ein wesentlicher Unterschied zwischen Walcotts und Coetzees *re-writings* in ihrer Bereitwilligkeit (seitens Walcott) bzw. ihrem Widerwillen (seitens Coetzee), ihre Texte in einem explizit karibischen bzw. südafrikanischen politischen Kontext zu verankern. Walcott sieht sich selbst als primär „karibischen“ Autor, welcher – ähnlich Crusoe, der für Walcott der Inbegriff des karibischen Schriftstellers ist – Sprache in der „Neuen Welt“ aufs Neue benützt. Sein Stück *Pantomime* wurde vielfach als eine anti-(neo)koloniale, „nationale“ Allegorie gelesen. Coetzee hingegen wehrt sich beständig gegen jeglichen Versuch, seine Romane *direkt* in den Dienst bestimmter politischer Zwecke zu stellen und weist das Etikett eines „südafrikanischen Autors“ vehement zurück. Sein Roman *Foe* wird in dieser Diplomarbeit nicht als simple Allegorie oder Analogie auf die „South African situation“ reduziert, welche – so Coetzee – im größeren Kontext des Kolonialismus gesehen werden muss. Ein weiterer signifikanter Unterschied liegt im Selbstvertrauen der beiden Autoren, für den „Anderen“ zu sprechen. Während Walcotts Jackson Phillip sich die Sprache seiner ehemaligen Kolonialherren etwa durch gekonntes *code-switching* aneignet und gar ein wortgewandterer und besserer Schauspieler als sein „Herr“, Harry Trewe, ist, gibt Coetzee lediglich *einer* marginalisierten Person, seiner Erzählerin Susan Barton, eine Stimme und zeigt somit seine Sensibilität für die Gefahr, den ethnisch Anderen, Freitag, seiner Stimme und Geschichte zu berauben, indem er „für ihn“ spricht.

Wie sich letztlich zeigt, eröffnen postkoloniale *re-writings* nicht nur außergewöhnliche neue Perspektiven innerhalb ihrer eigenen Grenzen, sondern werfen auch neues Licht auf prototypische koloniale Texte. Intertextuelle Vergleiche, wie sie in dieser Diplomarbeit angestellt werden, erleichtern somit ein *contrapuntal reading* kanonischer Texte und eine Reflexion der Rolle, welche Texte wie Defoes ‘*master*’ *narrative Robinson Crusoe* in der Gestaltung der Zukunft spielen sollen.

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