

FROM DEFOE TO COETZEE'S FOE/FOE THROUGH AUTHORSHIP

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Abstract. The article investigates the concept of authorship in the works of two authors separated by three centuries, namely, Daniel Defoe and J. M. Coetzee, both concerned, in different ways, with aspects regarding the origin and originators of literary works or with the act of artistic creation in general. After a brief literature review, the article focuses on Coetzee's contemporary revisitation of the question of authorship and leaps back and forth in time from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) to Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). The purpose is that of highlighting the multiple perspectives (and differences) regarding the subject of authorship, including such notions and aspects as: canonicity related to the act of writing and narrating, metafiction, self-reflexivity and intertextuality, silencing and voicing, doubling, bodily substance and the substance of a story, authenticity, (literary) representation and the truth, authoring, the author's powers, the relation between author and character or between narrator and story, authorial self-consciousness, agency, or ambiguity. The findings presented in the article show that both works are seminal in their attempts to define and redefine the notion of authorship, one (Defoe) concerned with the first literary endeavours of establishing the roles of professional authorship in England, while the other (Coetzee), intervenes in existing literary discussions of the late twentieth century concerning the postmodern author and (the questioning of or liberation of the text from) his powers.

Key words: Defoe, J. M. Coetzee, authorship, canonical/canonicity, self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, authenticity, representation

INTRODUCTION – LITERATURE REVIEW

The critical examination of Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986) is rich and complex, being centred on thought-provoking discussions on a variety of themes and concepts that inform a multifaceted understanding of the novel. An outline of the specialized literature should take into account such issues as (listed chronologically): post-colonialism and counter-discourse (Tiffin, 1987), ideology, politics and censure (Dovey, 1988), intertextual and metafictional resonances (Splendore, 1988), interpretative authoritarianism (Marais, 1989), the notion of

history (Attwell, 1990), margin (Spivak, 1990), the ethics and politics of living in South Africa (Attwell, 1993), voice/voicing vs silence/silencing on the backdrop of apartheid (Attridge in Huggan and Watson, 1996; Head, 1997; Parry in Attridge and Jolly, 1998), the novel as 'a palimpsest Crusoe/Roxanna tale' (Chapman, 1996), textuality, alterity, deception, the mutilation of the colonial Other, the technique of reversal, allusion (Head, 1997), solitude and subtext, adaptation and hybridization, the triad power–language–identity (Caneparilabib, 2005), disruption of the post-colonial canonic discourse (Kehinde, 2006), treatment of the body (Hughes, 2008; Ingram, 2008), duality, silencing the other (Head, 2009), the power impregnated in colonialist writing, discursive worldliness, the power of discourse, similarities and differences between Defoe's and Coetzee's novels, or the notion of mutilation (Poyner, 2009), the question of authorship (Clarkson, 2009), the problem of the novel's representation of reality and truth, intertextuality (and the connection with another text, namely, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (in Hayes, 2010), apart from the obvious connection with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxanna*), the employment of the allegorical and realist modes and the re-evaluation of intertextuality (Uhlmann in Danta et al., 2011), authenticity, the question of authorship and the meanings of Friday's tonguelessness, the concept of (bodily) disability (Hall, 2012), metaphors of the body and the substantiality of the body (Kosecki, 2013), the relation between author and character, the relation between the world and storyworlds, the distinction between art and life (Effe, 2017), as well as authorship and the consciousness of the writer (Attwell, 2015), the island as a trope used to thematize South African economic and moral isolation under apartheid (Harris, 2018) or the types of women in his work (Kossew and Harvey, 2019). We consider that all of these studies outline vital aspects for the understanding of the concept of authorship in the general context of postmodern fiction and the particular case of a novel written by a South-African writer.

Existing scholarship on Defoe's novel is equally comprehensive, including numerous studies that approach the questions of authorship and literary representation, Defoe's founding role in the history of prose fiction being widely recognized. Written in a matter-of-fact way that responded to the calls for journalistic styles of writing, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) seeks to render the impression of authenticity, verisimilitude, and real lived experience in its presentation of events and people. From Ian Watt's seminal study *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) onward, literary criticism on Defoe stressed the numerous merits of the novel. First of all, it set the founding stone of realistic fiction, which was based on the convention that 'the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience' (Watt, 1957: 32). Fiction was supposed to represent only 'the literally possible' and to faithfully render 'a very close physical and social reality' (Doody, 1997: 281-287), or one that could be recognizable to the readers as true. The secret lay in the accuracy of linguistic representation (representing reality by means of a simple, concise and accurate prose style), along with the believability/credibility of the plot (offering comprehensive descriptions based on circumstantial detail). The emphasis on the 'ordinary and

the specifically and concretely experiential (along with the everyday language specific to that realm)' (Richetti, 1998/2003: 4) marked the realistic framework on which the novel was set. The novel had a major influence on the emergence of realistic fiction, having 'perfected an impression of realism by adapting Puritan self-confession narratives to suit the mode of a fictional moral tract' (Sanders, 1994: 301). The effects of factuality and verisimilitude also result from the vividness of the adventure story and the translation of ordinary actions to an exotic place (Spacks, 2006: 47), seeking to quench the contemporary audience's thirst for 'circumstantial details of lives lived and for the remote and exotic' (Seidel in Richetti, 2008: 187). Additionally, realism was supported and complemented by other features and techniques, such as the combination of moral and fable elements, in a narrative presenting 'an adventurous, economic, political, religious, and yet ordinary character' (Bacscheider, 1986: 217). All these show Defoe's active engagement in the pervading debate of eighteenth-century British novelists 'about the nature of that evolving narrative convention we now confidently call the novel' (Richetti, 1998/2003: 8).

Many of these studies have also informed our discussion of authorship with the intention of adding to the existing scholarship on both Defoe and Coetzee. On the background of this comparison, the innovative contribution of this article is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at supplementing existing research on the two authors' involvement in the history of prose fiction in relation to questions of narrative representation and authorship. On the other hand, by means of its discussion of the concept of authorship in close connection with other central concepts specific to postmodern literary theory, it intends to make its own original contribution to the understanding of postmodern authorship.

DEFOE AND COETZEE'S LITERARY ENCOUNTER

While it is a fact that Defoe's work served as a source of inspiration for many works of art along the centuries, other literary *Robinsonades* were also written in the twentieth century. Before mentioning some of them, we will define the term Robinsonade as a story of the adventures of a person stranded on a desert island according to Cuddon (2013: 613). Postmodern Robinsonades include William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Muriel Spark's *Robinson* (1958), Michel Tournier's *Friday and Robinson* (1977), J. G. Ballard's *Concrete Island* (1974), all published before Coetzee's. We can observe that in some of these works authors also use some other form of isolated space than the classical island (as in the case of Ballard's novel). But what the South African writer does in this novel is the fact that he goes much further than the traditional Robinsonade: D. Attwell (1992: 10) regards the reconsideration of Robinson's story as a perfect ground for creating an allegory:

In what is perhaps his most allegorical work, Coetzee replays *Robinson Crusoe* as an account of the relations between the institution

of letters (Foe), the colonial storyteller seeking authorization through the metropolis (Susan Barton), and the silenced voice of the colonized subject (Friday).

Despite the (ab)use of circumstantial detail and other components of realism, Defoe's novel also has an allegorical dimension: the author wants to teach his readers aspects of the Christian beliefs inherent in the narrative (rebellion/disobedience, fall, awareness of sin, repentance, recovery, redemption), or reveals at least in part a spiritual journey. Defoe also employs Crusoe as an allegorical representation of the colonizer, whereas Friday stands for the tamed colonial subject. However, as suggested above, Coetzee's allegory goes in different or deeper ways.

Additionally, *Foe* was also seen as Coetzee's most overtly metafictional text, a postcolonial reworking of *Robinson Crusoe* which 'unwrites' his colonial intertexts (Poyner, 2009: 92) or at least transforms them. Attwell (1992: 3) remarked in the early stages of the research on the novel that it engages into an act of reflexive self-conscious analysis in which reflexivity is directed at 'understanding the conditions – linguistic, formal, historical, and political – governing the writing of fiction in contemporary South Africa'. Coetzee himself in an interview given to Attwell admits that *Foe* is 'a tribute of sorts to eighteenth-century prose styles' (Attwell, 1992: 146) and 'an interrogation of authority' (ibid.: 247). Sheila Roberts too (in her study *Post-Colonialism, or the House of Friday – J. M. Coetzee's Foe*) remarks how the novel exploits the relationship between our experiences and our stories; any analysis of the novel looks like 'a hunt, a paper-chase, to discover referents to other texts and to a wealth of characters'. From a colonial perspective, she sees the novel as 'an imaginative rendering of the colonial personality and of colonialism' in their attempt to find 'an authentic, uncolonized mode of discourse' (in Collier, 1992: 335). Anne Haeming, in the essay titled *Authenticity: Diaries, Chronicles, Records and Index-Simulations* (in Boehmer et al., 2009: 174), speaks about 'the compulsive search for authenticity', or truthfulness in the work of fiction. This search makes Coetzee create, according to Haeming, texts which develop from the edges – thus leading to the emergence of texts that function as 'edges between fact and fiction'. Even Susan is perfectly aware of this and directly expresses her pressing desire of having her story authentically told:

How different would it not have been had he built a table and stool, and extended his ingenuity to the manufacture of ink and writing-tablets, and then sat down to keep an authentic journal of his exile day by day, which we might have brought back to England with us, and sold to a bookseller, and so saved ourselves this embroilment with Mr Foe! (Coetzee, 2010: 82)

Benita Parry in the study *Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee* (in Attridge and Jolly, 1998: 149) places *Foe* between the 'self-reflexive novels which

stage the impossibility of representation' and on the background of critical interpretations which pinpoint the novel in the network of fiction. This type of fiction, by use of parody and reflexivity, undermines the authority of colonial narratives through subversive rewritings, thus 'opening conventions to scrutiny and confronting the traditional and unquestioned notion of the canon'. Parry adheres to the opinion of most critics that Coetzee's novels are expressions of the 'critical stances on the instability of language and the unreliability of narration', a type of thinking which leads to the emergence of a highly self-conscious practice of writing 'which displays the materials and techniques of its own process of production' (ibid.: 150). All of these interpretations have as a common denominator the fact that they all regard Coetzee as a master in re-shaping and dissimulating postmodern (temporal and spatial, literary and historical) issues in an apparent overt fiction. Foe, the author in the book, reveals to Susan how he wishes to write her story, according to a conventional recipe of writing:

We therefore have five parts in all: the loss of the daughter; the quest for the daughter in Brazil; abandonment of the quest, and the adventure of the island; assumption of the quest by the daughter; and reunion of the daughter with her mother. It is thus that we make up a book: loss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, then middle, then end. As to novelty, this is lent by the island episode – which is properly the second part of the middle – and by the reversal in which the daughter takes up the quest abandoned by her mother. (Coetzee, 2010: 117)

The novel has also been extensively discussed in terms of space: P. M. Salván (2008) sees the island as a heterotopia, a space whose limits Susan urges Crusoe to go over/beyond; even London is seen as an 'arbitrary limit' that Susan pulls Friday, this time, into considering leaving in search of the author. A similar perspective is introduced by Marion Fries-Dieckmann in her study *Castaways in the Very Heart of the City. Island and Metropolis in J. M. Coetzee's Foe* (in Volkman et al., 2010: 167-178) who discusses 'the topographical setting of the plot and the "virtual" setting of narration in *Foe*' (ibid.: 168). She posits that Coetzee 'puts dichotomies such as periphery/centre and nature/culture upside down' and this is obvious and felt as such even by Susan who remarks on her return to London that the bailiffs coming to Foe's house are, according to their complaints, 'castaways in the very heart of the city' (Coetzee, 2010: 62). Additionally, as opposed to *Robinson*, the topography of *Foe* is differently proportioned as two thirds of the action take place in or around London, in the civilized world. At the same time, there is a blurring of spaces (no clear coordinates are given either about Friday's Africa or about the Americas) in an attempt, perhaps, at signalling the postmodern issue of the blurring of the borders between what distinguishes the moral from immoral, the superior from the inferior, the weak from the strong and so on.

Both colonialism and post-colonialism are central concepts when discussing the temporal context and the thematic concerns of the two novels. The novels deal,

in different ways, with the policies of control and domination and the liberation from them. The British colonial rule of other areas of the world constitutes an important theme in Defoe's novel, whereas Coetzee's novel highlights ideological as well as literary tensions related to the period after colonialism. Even after the end of colonial rule in Africa in the 1950s, policies of control, division, separation, isolation, or segregation were still present in the apartheid period in South Africa (1950–early 1990s), with institutionalized discrimination against and separation of the non-white population from the white one. Officially given no right to speak and decide for themselves, the South Africans felt alienated and very much treated in terms of negative otherness, i.e. seen as (undesirably) different. As we will show further, Coetzee himself (re)presents these issues in his novel, connecting the general literary notion of (the death of traditional) authorship with the particular case of the silenced African other.

ON AUTHORSHIP, AUTHORITY AND THE AUTHOR

The place of *Foe* in the context of postmodern writing seems to be in line with the type of writings which, despite 'the alleged intolerance for the sentimental humanism', are fascinated by and fixated on 'author-effects and author-figures' (cf. Bennett, 2005: 109). Current studies sometimes equate literary theory with author theory (ibid.: 4) and project the concept of author against the backdrop of literary evaluation and intention(ality). In his seminal study, Bennett registers how after Roland Barthes's essay *Death of the Author* (1967) and Michel Foucault's essay *What Is an Author* (1969) critics have expanded the analysis and understanding of the concept of author, have pushed upon and challenged 'the social, historical, institutional and discursive limits on, and conventions of, the author' (ibid.: 5) as the concept had been understood up to the end of the 60s. This is how the concept of author was subsequently analyzed in conjunction with terms such as: institutions, gender, ethnic, class or racial identifications and identities, intertextuality, parody, representations of the self, limits of authorial intervention, the subversion of authorial powers, etc. This is the perspective from which we intend to develop the analysis of the concept of author and authority further in this paper.

Before this, we need, however, to underline the importance of understanding one other term, i.e. intertextuality. In his study of the term, Graham Allen presents the term in its initial understanding introduced by Saussure and then moves to reconsiderations of or additions to the understanding of the term made by Bakhtin, Kristeva and Barthes. Finally, Allen traces the term up to more recent interpretations which regard intertextuality as a relationship which authors create and readers decode between a text and previous texts. Thus, the act of reading becomes a plunge into a network of textual relations on more levels (linguistic, stylistic, semantic, authorial, ideological, social) and validates an interpretation based heavily on 'relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence' (Allen, 2006: 5).

The question regarding who writes, how stories are constructed and who controls them is announced from the title of the novel and dominates the text (Head, 1997: 115). Coetzee himself makes reference to the centrality of this issue in *Roads to Translation*:

My novel, *Foe*, if it is about any single subject, is about authorship: about what it means to be an author in the professional sense (the profession of author was just beginning to mean something in Daniel Defoe's day) but also in a sense that verges, if not on the divine, then at least on the demiurgic: sole author, sole creator, and the notion that one can be an author as one can be a baker is fairly fundamental to my conception of *Foe*. (Coetzee, *Roads to Translation*, cited by Clarkson, 2009, in Note 14: 199)

The strength of the novel was identified in 'the literary representations of race and personal relations, *not* intertextual relations' (Maureen Nichols, 1987, *If I Make the Air around Him Thick with Words: J. M. Coetzee's Foe* apud Prentice in Mehigan, 2013: 93). It may be that Coetzee's enmity, antagonism or opposition is related to more aspects: to the canonical norms regarding authorship, to racial representations, to traditional employments of intertextuality and metatextuality, to the imperfections in the type of novel construction that Defoe offered and, ultimately, to the whole treatment of the racial/colonial other in history.

The issue of authorship is closely related to metafiction or self-reflexivity of the text as it unfolds the strategies regarding its own writing. While looking for self-consciousness related to novel writing, Coetzee inevitably questions the canon, subverting the tradition and confronting its flaws. As suggested above, it questions the conception of author as deity, just as it denies the (post) colonial ideology and the colonial author figure. By means of various strategies, such as the silencing or voicing of characters or narrators, giving or removing the substantiality of the body of the character and of the body of the story, the doubling-cum-reversal principle, Coetzee's work subverts traditional notions of authority and distorts the original in order to showcase these intentions, confirming Michael Chapman's view (1996: 405) that the novel is 'a palimpsest Crusoe/Roxanna tale about authors and authorities'. As a self-reflexive text, the novel develops around 'discussions, meditation and debate about writing' (Prentice in Mehigan, 2013: 98), stemming from the opposing discussions between Susan and Foe about how and what of the female character's story should be put on page and from the attempts of understanding the true reasons behind Friday's silence. If Crusoe's and Friday's stories are re-written, the introduction of Susan breaks the pattern. The apparent parody extends intertextually to Defoe's *Roxana* and later on the strength of the narration derives from its metafictional outpourings either from the would-be author Susan or from the external narrator.

Coetzee's novel seeks to dismantle the colonial ideology of its source text by destabilizing the authority of the colonialist author-figure embodied by Defoe, Cruso, but also Barton and Coetzee himself (Poyner, 2009: 97). In fact, Coetzee's

concern with the troubling issue of authorship started in childhood after he read Defoe's novel, assured that it was written by the character himself, as his autobiography, because this is what was stated in the book (Attwell, 2015:124). In effect, it was the product of Defoe himself, a literary embodiment of many of his literary, social or political beliefs. In opposition, Coetzee denies the authorial authority upon a text in that he purposefully reveals the tensions, doubts and questions of a narrator in telling a story, in preserving its authenticity, the (im)possibilities or limitations of performing the act of narrating, and the very refusal to do so. All these lead to the understanding that language itself is unstable, the reality of things is equally interpretable or that the understanding and, consequently, representation of reality can be partial, biased or misleading.

In so doing, Coetzee imparts independence to the text, speaks only of what is speakable, brings forth questions about the literary act of writing or representing and leaves greater room for a special type of verisimilitude that emerges from the independence granted to many of the narrative components. Coetzee shows interest in reclaiming the authority of the story over itself and of the colonial other's own story. The issue of authorship in conjunction with authenticity is also central to Coetzee, and Haeming (in Boehmer et al., 2009: 175) observes that his

writing questions whether humans can have authority over ontic reality. He examines this through the prominent appearance of diaries, travel-writing, letters and archive material in his work. The human being is cast as *homo faber*: a producer of 'worlds' which always refer to an existing author, initiator, cause or index. This locating as such elucidates Coetzee's repeated emphasis on verifiable references, traces and inscriptions. In their analogous relation to the absent physical cause, I suggest that these traces are essentially messengers of authenticity.

The question of authorship is, for instance, put forward by Susan's meditation about the conditions of writing, which triggers the idea of the speaking subject and the written text as 'creating a place in which the writer becomes the "I" of the utterance' and the 'agent of the action' (Clarkson, 2009: 87). From the early stages of her existence on the island, Susan is aware that a would-be-author has to develop a power of recording which is bound to come from the ability of remembering details and particulars; she explains that originality and authenticity are achieved through the author's power of individualization and strong pen in rendering events:

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 today may seem of no importance, such as: When you made your needle (the needle you store in your belt), by what means did you pierce the eye? When you sewed your hat, what did you use for thread? Touches like these will

one day persuade your countrymen that it is all true, every word, there was indeed once an island in the middle of the ocean where the wind blew and the gulls cried from the cliffs and a man named Cruso paced about in his apeskin clothes, scanning the horizon for a sail. (Coetzee, 2010: 18)

Later on in her journey of becoming an author, Susan, now self-invited in the author's (Foe's) house becomes aware of the power of representation, the importance of perspective and the ability/talent of putting everything into words: 'Does it surprise you as much as it does me, this correspondence between things as they are and the pictures we have of them in our minds?' (Coetzee, 2010: 65)

As an agency interior to the text, the writer invites the reader to get engaged in a dialogic interaction, using the Bakhtinian terms (Clarkson, 2009: 88). Muteness is thus related to both Susan and Friday: he cannot deliver his own story, and this incapacitates her to write, too (*ibid.*). Also, by using the third person, Coetzee intentionally subverts the authority of the speaker/narrator traditionally assigned to the 'I', signalling that 'the position of authority with respect to the utterance is one that has been destabilized' (*ibid.*: 37). Or, in Attwell's words (2015: 129), he was concerned with getting the author involved in his story, in what he writes about, as opposed to the eighteenth-century separation between author and character, despite the trick of verisimilitude and plausibility and the use of the first person narrative, and for this he had to find ways to introduce 'greater self-consciousness' into the novel. In so doing, what we are offered is 'a story of Coetzee's search for himself among his materials' (Attwell, 2015: 130). Coetzee's seems to be using Susan to speak on his behalf on this matter when she declares to Captain Smith of the ship that rescues her and Cruso from the island:

'I would rather be the author of my own story than have lies told about me,' I persisted – 'If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it? I might as well have dreamed it in a snug bed in Chichester.' (Coetzee, 2010: 40)

Authorship can also be discussed in connection with doubling. For instance, the final section of the novel offers 'a new narrative' (Uhlmann in Danta et al., 2011: 93) in a new temporal frame than that of Susan's story, and with alternate/double ending. If most of the novel is delivered between quotation marks and is credited to Susan Barton, who writes in the first person, the short *fi* section removes these quotation marks and surfaces an anonymous narrative voice. This narrator resumes the story from where it had stopped and offers a narrative which 'doubles and distorts the first, just as the novel as a whole doubles and distorts Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, just as, perhaps, that story doubled and distorted the stories of Alexander Selkirk, whose story Defoe was accused of plagiarizing, and even that of Defoe himself' (*ibid.*).

Ambiguity is another concept that can also be related to authorship, the ambiguity of critical reception, for instance. Coetzee makes a parody of 'the tendency to read a metaphorical, personal significance into the most physical and material of situations' (Hall, 2012: 167), as it happens with Friday, whose mutilated body becomes a symbol of the muted and mutilated colonial other. Likewise, Friday's stream coming out of him at the end of the novel is equally ambiguous or engenders many interpretations. Hall argues that Coetzee's 'insistence that the bodies he depicts should be read as neither entirely literal nor in exclusively metaphorical terms creates an effect that is destabilizing yet imaginatively generative' (ibid.: 170).

Other important concepts that the author plays with on the edge between authority and freedom are silence and silencing, muteness or having a voice/voicing. Keeping silent may signify the intentional keeping of a secret, as in Susan's case, or the unintentional inability to express oneself, as in Friday's case, just as having a voice implies being able to freely express one's views, opinions, or feelings. At the opposite end of this line of interpretation of the act of silencing his characters, Uhlmann (in Danta et al., 2011: 92-93) observes Coetzee's double play of authority and suggests that Friday cannot or does not wish to tell his story, even though learning Friday's true story becomes, both for Susan Barton, and Daniel Foe, the key. It may be that it is through the kind of thinking possible in writing through, through the powers of imagination, that his story can be given a voice, while Coetzee also hints at the impossibility of an author to do so. Head (1997: 119) also considers that Friday's silence symbolizes 'the repression of South Africa's black majority' and thus, this cannot be redeemed. If the inability to describe the Other is a constant feature of the book's narrative strategy (ibid.: 121), it can equally be true to say that one's genuine or 'true' story can only be given by the one experiencing it, thus leading us to the notion of that which is unspeakable. Ultimately, it is a sample of 'genuine meta-counter-discursiveness. It is the position of Coetzee refusing to write for Friday' (ibid.: 128) or, in Effe's words (2017: xi), 'a metanarrative reflection on the relation between author and character, and on the relation between the world and storyworlds'. However, as Benita Parry highlights (in Huggan and Watson, 1996: 52), ironically, the author's textual strategies of silencing one or more voices (Friday, on a physical level; Susan, on an artistic level) demonstrate his own authorial textual power while ostensibly critiquing these strategies.

Friday and his story signify nothing until or unless 'his discursive worldliness is fashioned in discourse', Poyner (2009: 91) stresses. So, his discursive agency is also mutilated and, as a consequence, the author's ability to deliver his story is also impossible and perhaps even willingly accepted. Coetzee's novel was written in the period of the apartheid oppression, in the years of the States of Emergency, beginning with 1985, so Friday's muteness can be related to the silencing of South Africa's black peoples. Divested of their rights as free citizens, they were left without a voice in state affairs (ibid.: 93). Besides this interpretation of forced silence or silencing, it could also be that Friday deliberately chooses to remain

silent or would remain so even if he were given a choice or a chance to express himself in words or images. Susan is almost certain of such a possibility after seeing Friday's failure in learning the words she wanted to teach him (pivotal words in defining his identity and journey in life: 'house', 'ship', 'Africa' and 'mother'; see Culea and Suci, 2020, p. 67 for further discussion on this): 'Could it be that somewhere within him he was laughing at my efforts to bring him nearer to a state of speech?' (Coetzee, 2010: 146) His refusal or resistance may signify his intentional option to remain silent in a world which would not understand or accurately represent his story. Whether deliberate or not, his (everlasting) muteness is also 'a suggestion of the mutilating anti-humanist outcomes of colonialism and racism' (Poyner, 2009: 93), an effect of past practices and ideologies and an insinuation that the future will look no brighter.

It is the sense of disablement of the (white) writer that Coetzee expresses here, through the mutilated figure of Friday, Atwell (2015: 134) also pinpoints. No more interested in Crusoe's story-making, Coetzee would face his own limitations precisely in Friday's figure. This may explain why one of the titles Coetzee had in plan for the novel was *Friday* (ibid.: 130). Friday's silence and its representation does not simply frame 'Coetzee's judgement of colonialism; it is his judgement about the failure of post-colonial nationalism' (ibid.: 133). This may explain his final inability to express words, with only sounds emerging from his mouth, as a suggestion of a perpetual quest for freedom and even a quest for 'understanding that is beyond language's reach' (ibid.: 136). So, we could say that the authorial excursion takes us back and forth in time in relation to representing and understanding the colonial other, from Defoe's times, through the post-colonial ones, to glimpses anticipating the impotence of the future, be it ideological or linguistic, to offer an accurate representation and treatment of the African other.

Other related concepts also shed light on Coetzee's interest in authorship and his discursive powers: the body, bodily substantiality, substance in/of a discourse, or substance of a story, as discussed by Poyner (2009). First of all, what strikes the reader is Friday's bodily mutilation: his tongue had been removed, and he may have even been castrated. The significance of all this may be that he was dispossessed of 'both his sexual potency and the ability to author his own life and story' (ibid.: 96) and, somehow, dehumanized. Even though he is mute, 'Friday, in his pain, is a substantial body, but his story cannot be appropriated by Western discourse' (ibid.: 98). Also, Susan Barton 'insists on her bodily substantiality, which she mistakes for the substance of a story' (ibid.). At the same time, substance in/of discourse relates to the power of discourse: without the gift of language, one cannot have discursive substance. Barton and Friday lack substance in discourse because their powers of self-representation are encumbered (ibid.: 98). For Barton, her adventure on the island, along with Friday's story, would constitute the substance of the story. However, at the end of the novel, Coetzee achieves another kind of corporeality, a state in which 'bodies are their own signs' (Coetzee, 2010: 157) and which seems to be the ultimate state of finding the word and the story:

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. (ibid.)

In an episode built on the main symbol of the (artistic) stream which, in an almost epiphanic manner, 'flows', 'passes', 'runs', 'beats' with the effervescence of a creative force, author and character seem to overlap and become one entity as the character continues to exist through the author and the author gains the life of his character.

Back to Defoe, apart from his spiritual awakening, his narrator showed awareness if not direct care for his body, which he caters for with patient work. The survival theme has long been debated regarding the novel and, implicitly, it was Crusoe's body that was more important than Friday's. Friday readily accepts being dominated, his "tongue" learning the language of his master and subduing instructions. We may say that his tongue accepts the linguistic and, consequently, ideological domination coming from his master. For Crusoe, conversing with Friday and teaching him his language is an occasion to practise his mother tongue, to communicate, to verbalize his emotions and thoughts. At the same time, it allegorically serves the author's ideological purposes: Crusoe/the one who asks questions must unilaterally transmit the ideology of the colonizer to the colonized subject/the one who answers:

[...] I began now to have some use for my tongue again, which, indeed, I have very little occasion for before; that is to say, about speech.
[...] and having taught him English so well that he could answer me almost any questions [...]. (Defoe, 2000: 164)

In contrast, Coetzee has other goals. With Crusoe no longer a necessary tool, who is thus deemed irrelevant if not untruthful, Friday takes central position in the narrative, and though still a cannibal, this time he is a speechless creature. In fact, Barton and Foe are also seen as cannibals (McCorkle in Boehmer et al., 2009: 139) because they seem to consume everything around them in search of their story. Susan even seems to consume Foe in their love-making scene as a succubus that sucks vitality out of the author in the desire of becoming herself an authoress. The body (of the character, of the text, of the story) and the tongue of the character are highly symbolical of the truth: the truth that has been silenced, mutilated, removed altogether, cannot be authentically told. The truth about the colonial other has been distorted and the other now unwillingly or willingly refuses to deliver his story. This, in turn, destabilizes the authorship of the colonial other and this has an impact on the author as well. It is Coetzee's signal that he cannot and does not want to take over Friday's story as long as his power of speech, and therefore his power, his identity, have been disabled.

Both colonial and postcolonial discourses on the other are denied through Friday's mutilation, and the destabilized powers of authorship stand out. So there is silence, a silence that marks the gap that exists between colonizers and the colonized subjects, between past, present and future, between postcolonial writings and the depicted characters and their life stories, between discourses of the West about the African other and their own inability to tell their stories.

Mystery surrounds Friday's character and the notion of power itself takes on new overtones as opposed to the destabilized powers of (discursive) authorship. Friday is not directly presented as loquacious or as witty as in Defoe's work, nor is he tamable. But the mysteries he holds (the mystery of his missing tongue, the mysterious flower sprinkling on the surface of the water, his playing the flute, his mysterious lack of attraction to Susan or his ability to learn writing quickly) create such possibilities as they could be seen, in fact, as signs of power. This is a type of power which does not end with the end of the novel because, though dead, his body continues to exist as a sign, or because this power was transferred to the narrator through the symbolical inspiring 'slow stream, without breath, without interruption' (Coetzee, 2010: 157).

Furthermore, the critique of the colonial mentality is still in place. Susan has an obsessive drive of deciphering and educating Friday specific to the colonial mentality. But Coetzee makes Susan go beyond this colonial type of discourse and, by leading her into the metafictional discourse, he gives her the ability to see the act as a metaphorical one. Thus, by comparing the cutting of the tongue with castration, she steps into seeing the act as a metaphorical unmaning. The castration is later on proven as true when Susan sees Friday dancing in Foe's robe and she sees (or rather does not see) what is there (or rather what should have been there):

In the dance nothing was still and yet everything was still. The whirling robe was a scarlet bell settled upon Friday's shoulders and enclosing him; Friday was the dark pillar at its centre. What had been hidden from me was revealed. I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them. (ibid.: 119)

CONCLUSIONS

Defoe's novel mirrors many of the author's own convictions and pursuits, such as his dissatisfaction with his socio-political exclusion, his social ambition as well as his social insecurity, his yearning for power and social success, his fear of his fellow men, his preference for secrecy, his imperialism, his belief in Providence, as well as his admiration for commercial and technological enterprise (Doreen Roberts in the *Introduction* to Defoe, 2000: XXVII), while trying to produce a narrative that would appeal to its readers due to its promise of authenticity and realism. With the notion of professional novelistic authorship still in the making,

Defoe's fictional exercise sets itself within the limits of formal realism, while framing a spiritual fable with a utilitarian work ethic at the background.

Coetzee shows more concern for the art of writing itself, for authorial self-consciousness, symbolically dismantling the kind of authorship and narrative construction Defoe exemplified, especially regarding the question of who writes, whether this account is truthful or not, or matters related to colonial discourses on the colonial other, the silencing or voicing of the other, the question of narrative agency, and most of all the imperial representations concerning the African other. Mark Mathuray in the essay *Sublime Abjection* (in Boehmer et al., 2009: 159) registers as a major aspect of the authorial intention in 'the figuring of alterity', but also (as a symbolical representation of Friday's dumbness) his 'reticence to speak in the name of the oppressed', while managing nevertheless to make the slave 'embody some form of anti-colonial resistance' – Friday's silence is endowed with power because of the refusal he manifests towards some of Susan's requests or through the disinterest manifested towards some of her (more or less veiled) allusions.

It thus appears that the main coordinates of the novel are the distinct, even opposite concepts of author – character, world – art (or truth – art, not to oppose the so much contested concept of reality to art), substance – spirit, writing – reading, body – text, authority – subjection, which are open to and opened by mutual encounter and transformation, as identified by Prentice (in Mehigan, 2013: 92). Coetzee himself in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize he won in 2003 mentions the oppositional patterns inclusion – exclusion, shaping – framing as capital to the writing and the understanding of his novel.

Ultimately, the novel, as 'a book of ficto-critical concerns' (Prentice in Mehigan, 2013: 91), is as a reworking that analyzes the concepts of character, story, author(ship), process of writing, language within the story, art's contribution to the world and viceversa (ibid.), bringing an important contribution to this type of writing. What is particularly intriguing is, as shown by Parry (in Attridge and Jolly, 1998: 150), that even if *Foe* is a re-narrativization in which only the European possesses the word and the ability to enunciate (cf. Parry in Attridge and Jolly, 1998: 151) and even if the author claims that agency is not his to give or withhold through representation, he does precisely this. The result is 'an artefact contrived by a masculine writer pursuing the possibilities of a non-phallogocentric language' (ibid.: 158).

As we have shown, the historical and literary trajectory sketched in this article from Defoe to Coetzee, on the backbone of the central notion of authorship, records in itself the transformations the term has gone through, along with other components of literary works, in a dynamic process of revisiting literary canons on literary creation. Throughout the entire novel and culminating in the final scene, Coetzee materializes Barthes's concept of the 'death of the author' by destabilizing, through *Foe*, the authority established by Defoe. The illusion of verisimilitude is replaced with a new form of authenticity which exploits the potentialities of the represented world.

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