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Abstract

Your pen, your ink, I know, but somehow the pen becomes mine while I write with it. as though growing out of my hand.¹ J. M. Coetzee's 1986 novel, *Foe*, presents itself as a 'source' or earlier version of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Its fictional premise, which places Susan Barton on the same island *Crusoe* and *Friday* inhabited, uses names and other recognizable details from Defoe to signal the complex literary relationship between the two novels.² *Foe* is a parody of *Robinson Crusoe* in the sense in which Linda Hutcheon defines parody as 'imitation characterized by ironic inversion', or 'repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity'.³ By including 'critical distance' in the very definition of parody, Hutcheon shows that she views all parodies as in some sense critical of their source texts, although in practice there is a great range to the amounts and types of criticism suggested by different parodic texts. Whether a given parody is socially or politically subversive, however,

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Your pen, your ink, I know, but somehow the pen becomes mine while I write with it, as though growing out of my hand.¹

J. M. Coetzee's 1986 novel, *Foe*, presents itself as a 'source' or earlier version of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Its fictional premise, which places Susan Barton on the same island Crusoe and Friday inhabited, uses names and other recognizable details from Defoe to signal the complex literary relationship between the two novels.² *Foe* is a parody of *Robinson Crusoe* in the sense in which Linda Hutcheon defines parody as 'imitation characterized by ironic inversion', or 'repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity'.³ By including 'critical distance' in the very definition of parody, Hutcheon shows that she views all parodies as in some sense critical of their source texts, although in practice there is a great range to the amounts and types of criticism suggested by different parodic texts. Whether a given parody is socially or politically subversive, however, depends not only on the particular features of the parody but also on the parodied text's relationship to the dominant norms, practices, and hierarchies of its social context. What interests me about *Foe* is how it functions as a critique not only of *Robinson Crusoe* but also of broader ideological formations of which *Robinson Crusoe* is only one famous manifestation. Coetzee's novel is similar to some of the more recent critical studies of Defoe, which point out the forms of exploitation and bias in Defoe's writings.⁴ Coetzee seems to see *Robinson Crusoe* as a powerful myth of colonialism: myth because it omits or alters many of the brute realities and immoralities of colonial practice, powerful because the strategies it uses to encourage belief in the justice and profitability of colonialism have in fact held sway for a large portion of European history.⁵ The techniques Coetzee uses to challenge this myth, I will argue, provide readers with the materials to critique both the colonial discourse that makes possible an individual utterance such as *Robinson Crusoe* and the dominating strategies that may be surreptitiously appropriated by the critics of colonial domination.⁶

In this view, the most important feature of Coetzee's parody is its claim of temporal priority. Although more recent, Coetzee's novel creates the

illusion of being first, of being a set of source materials out of which Defoe's work later emerged. *Foe* claims, in other words, that *Robinson Crusoe* is the parody. This framing device has the effect of throwing the whole of *Robinson Crusoe*, with its much-praised 'realism', into doubt. Within the frame, the things Coetzee deletes from the story appear as things Defoe has added, and the things Coetzee adds appear as Defoe's deletions. To the extent that we take Susan Barton's claim of priority at face value, we begin to see Defoe's artistry as a manipulation of 'the truth' rather than as a monument to realism.⁷ By inserting his novel into the space between the supposed events of the island and the writing of *Robinson Crusoe*, Coetzee focuses our attention on the ideological purposes served by Defoe's authorial choices, or on what Jameson would call the 'political unconscious' of Defoe's novel. For Jameson, interpretations that seek to describe a text's relationship to its historical context must be able to reveal 'terms or nodal points implicit in the ideological system [of a given historical situation] which have, however, remained unrealized in the surface of the text, which have failed to become manifest in the logic of the narrative, and which we can therefore read as what the text represses'.⁸ Since, in Jameson's Marxist approach, social classes are essential categories in every historical situation, and since class discourse is 'essentially dialogical in its structure', we may imagine these 'terms or nodal points' as voices in a dialogue.

The illusion or appearance of isolation or autonomy which a printed text projects must now be systematically undermined. Indeed, since by definition the cultural monuments and masterworks that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class dialogue, the voice of a hegemonic class, they cannot properly be assigned their relational place in a dialogical system without the restoration or artificial reconstruction of the voice to which they were initially opposed, a voice for the most part stifled and reduced to silence, marginalized, its own utterances scattered to the winds, or reappropriated in their turn by the hegemonic culture. (p. 85)

As Foe says to Susan Barton,

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. (p. 141)

Foe is referring here to the silences in Barton's own story, most notably that of Friday, but his words apply also to silences in Defoe's text that are the traces of its political unconscious. What Coetzee does in *Foe* is artificially to reconstruct an oppositional voice and, by means of parody, place it in dialogue with *Robinson Crusoe* so that Defoe's polemic strategies can be seen more clearly. To recover all of Coetzee's parodic messages would require a complete and systematic comparison of the two novels, but if we limit ourselves to those details that relate to the issues of power, obedience, and resistance we can at least clarify what these two 'voices' are 'saying' about colonialism and its justifications.

Before we begin our comparison, there is one more feature of Coetzee's parody we must take into account. While we can gain certain insights from taking Barton's claim of priority at face value, we retain simultaneously an awareness of the claim's emptiness. Like all parodies, *Foe* 'needs' its source or original to work as a parody.⁹ Every reader must know that *Foe* did not actually precede *Robinson Crusoe*, if only because its date of publication is printed on the back of the title page. This knowledge does not nullify Coetzee's ideological critique but places it in a playful context that extends the critique to include its own methods and metaphors. Here playfulness is not a mere adornment to our literary pleasure but a central part of the political message. Readers are given a text that they cannot simply imbibe passively without glaring error. Coetzee invites us to be critical, first of *Robinson Crusoe* and then of Coetzee's own position as parodist, in effect handing the pen and ink over to us just as Barton and Foe hand the pen to Friday at the end of the novel.

I

Coetzee's project involves dismantling the illusion of fullness and accuracy *Robinson Crusoe* fosters by introducing plausible alternatives. According to Susan Barton, for example, the fauna of the island were not as Defoe 'later' described them. Barton tells of the troublesome insects she saw on the island, and many types of birds, but she mentions no goats, yet the goat is one of the most important elements in Defoe's island economy. Crusoe finds them wild, tames them, and breeds them so that he is able to meet a great many of his needs with the milk, meat, and skins they produce. The closest equivalents to the goats on Coetzee's island are the apes. Crusoe makes his fur clothes from apeskins, we are told, but he does not try to tame or eat the apes. He treats them merely as pests and kills them every chance he gets. Why would Coetzee make these changes in Defoe's story? In order to answer, we must look more closely at the ideological purposes the goats serve in Defoe's novel.

Crusoe's dealings with the goats, who are in a sense the real 'natives' of the island, establish a pattern that holds for the human natives he encounters as well. In his journal he tells how he lamed one goat with his gun and then nursed it back to health. 'But by my nursing it so long it grew tame, and fed upon the little green at my door, and would not go away. This was the first time that I entertained a thought of breeding up some tame creatures, that I might have food when my powder and shot was all spent' (p. 92).¹⁰ Later, Crusoe saves a kid from the clutches of his dog, then leaves it penned in his bower for several days. When he returns, the kid 'was so tame with being hungry, that I had no need to have ty'd it; for it followed me like a dog' (p. 124). In these and other instances of taming, Crusoe follows what we might call a script or paradigm of enslavement. He first places the subject in some kind of danger, such as from injury or hunger, and then delivers it from the danger he has himself created. Since the danger arouses fear, the effect of

the deliverance is to make the creature grateful to and dependent upon Crusoe. Significantly, and perhaps miraculously, the creature's loyalty to Crusoe remains even after the danger is gone. Crusoe's script of enslavement, then, has four phases: danger, deliverance, gratitude, and obedience.

Crusoe seems at first to use this script unconsciously but later becomes aware of its great power. Regarding a stubborn old goat that he had to set free, he says: 'I had forgot then what I learned afterwards, that hunger will tame a lyon. If I had let him stay there three or four days without food, and then have carry'd him some water to drink, and then a little corn, he would have been as tame as one of the kids, for they are mighty sagacious, tractable creatures where they are well used' (p. 155). As Crusoe becomes conscious of how danger and deliverance create gratitude, his pattern of action becomes a science. Notice that in this enslaving script the 'savior' is actually a foe because he causes the very danger he later relieves. Salvation from danger is thus an illusion fostered by the master in order to secure himself a loyal servant.

It is no accident that this same script guides the scene of Crusoe's conversion to Christianity, but with Crusoe in a different role. During a long bout of illness, Crusoe dreams that a man descends from a cloud with an ominous message: "'Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance,'" says the man, "'now thou shalt die"; at which words, I thought he lifted up the spear that was in his hand, to kill me' (p. 103). Crusoe clearly believes that this dream comes from God and that his life is in danger, either from the illness or from the dream or both. In a state of great agitation he opens his Bible at random and reads the words of Psalm 50: 'Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me' (p. 108). God brings Crusoe to repentance by subjecting him to danger and then delivering him from that danger, but the deliverance has a price: God expects to be glorified and obeyed in return. Crusoe appears to learn a double lesson from this dream. He learns to be a proper servant to his divine master, but he also learns that threats and violence can be used to gain mastery over others. This is the lesson he applies to the goats and later to Friday and his other human subjects. The conversion scene thus conveniently gives Crusoe a religious justification for his colonizing activities. From now on he can claim that he is merely imitating God.

Why would Coetzee change the goats to apes and make his Crusoe completely uninterested in taming them? In *Robinson Crusoe* the process of taming brings the others – first goats and then humans – into a willing submission, and their willingness is a key factor in the justification of enslavement as a colonial activity. When obedience is given willingly and remains even after the danger is removed, the colonizer appears as a benevolent master who obtains his power by persuasion rather than by coercion. If the persuasion and the willing obedience are removed, as in Coetzee's version, the colonizer appears as a mere tyrant or overseer with no claim to benevolence. Coetzee's Crusoe wants only to (in Conrad's

words) 'exterminate the brutes,' that is, the apes. He attempts to instill fear rather than loyalty.

When he first arrived, [Cruso] said, [the apes] had roamed all over the island, bold and mischievous. He had killed many, after which the remainder had retreated to the cliffs of what he called the North Bluff. (p. 21)

Although the meat and milk of apes is less useful than those of goats, Cruso still makes use of their skins and continues to kill apes whenever possible, so his actions cannot be explained by a complete absence of economic motive. Rather, this Cruso is not willing to pay the price of living with apes, which is what taming them would involve, to gain easier access to their skins. To be a tamer is, after all, to live in a kind of society with animals, however selfishly that society is structured. This Cruso wants animal by-products without any corresponding responsibility for the animals' welfare and is willing to go to more trouble to avoid proximity to the 'pests'. When we see this sort of attitude applied to animals that seem closer to humans in intelligence and sociability (apes rather than goats), its callousness becomes even more apparent. According to Coetzee's framing device, it was Defoe who changed the apes to goats, making them *less* humanoid, and *added* Crusoe's interest in taming and loyalty. In the presence of Coetzee's text, then, Defoe's authorial choices seem like a systematic attempt to turn a ruthless colonizer into a Christian hero without losing the powers and benefits of colonization. To put it in Jameson's terms, Coetzee's text reveals an ideological possibility of the colonial situation that Defoe's text has repressed, namely the possibility of a violent and selfish colonizer who will not accept any limits on his power or make the least concession to gain a practical benefit. Such a colonizer 'needs' a writer like Defoe, just as Barton thinks she needs Foe, to make his activities palatable to a European audience convinced of its own benevolence and civility. Coetzee suggests that Defoe's novel has more to do with marketing colonialism than with describing it.

Another point of difference between the two novels concerns the cannibals. Susan Barton says of the island, 'As for cannibals, I am not persuaded, despite Cruso's fears, that there are cannibals in those oceans ... All I say is: What I saw, I wrote. I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind' (p. 54). Barton, who was on the island, tells her story to the author, Mr. Foe, who was not, and we are now encouraged to believe that in writing *Robinson Crusoe* Defoe directly contradicted this testimony and inserted the cannibals anyway. Barton suggests at one point that cannibals might be needed simply to make a dull story more acceptable (p. 67), but this begs the question of why a white, European audience would find cannibals acceptable. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the fear of cannibals not only unsettles the master but also helps to solidify his power. When Defoe's Crusoe turns his script of enslavement on humans, the cannibals in the

text play a crucial ideological role. Crusoe has a dream that reveals to him how he will capture Friday. In the dream, eleven natives come to his island with a prisoner 'who they were going to kill, in order to eat him' (p. 202). The prisoner escapes and runs to Crusoe's castle. '[I] showed myself to him, and smiling upon him, encourag'd him; ... he kneel'd down to me, seeming to pray me to assist him; upon which I shew'd my Ladder, made him go up, and carry'd him into my Cave, and he became my servant' (p. 202). Both the dream and the actual capture of Friday follow the danger-deliverance-gratitude-obedience pattern established earlier, with one important difference. In the goat-taming scenes, the apparent benevolence of the master depended on our forgetting that he caused the danger in the first place, on our forgetting, in other words, that the saviour is a foe. Goats, of course, would not notice such a problem, but presumably a human subject would, and so a more elaborate scheme of mystification is necessary. In the new paradigm of enslavement the cannibals provide the danger and the colonizer provides the deliverance and receives all the glory. The native kneels and prays to be saved from the savagery of his own culture; Crusoe saves him and thereby gains a willing slave. The cannibals serve the ideological functions of removing blame from the colonizer, thus fostering his disguise of benevolence, and threatening a grisly death, compared to which slavery seems like the lesser of two evils. They serve the same functions in the later massacre scene, in which Crusoe gains two more human servants, the Spaniard and Friday's father, by rescuing them just before they are about to be eaten.¹¹

As if to reveal how this pattern of enslavement works, Coetzee makes his Crusoe argue explicitly to Barton that Friday's current status is preferable to the alternatives: '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' (pp. 23-24). Crusoe claims to have saved Friday both from savagery and from the worst excesses of civility, but because in this version we do not know how Crusoe acquired Friday or who cut out his tongue, the claim remains doubtful. Friday's silence feeds into Coetzee's parody in interesting ways here. Instead of reconstructing a more realistic voice for the colonized native, Coetzee removes the voice entirely.¹² Although, as Barton later observes, this makes Friday vulnerable to 'being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others' (p. 121), it also removes precisely the possibility of confirming whether or not Friday's obedience to Crusoe, and later to Barton, is willing. In Defoe, Friday's words repeatedly confirm Crusoe's position of mastery, as when we hear him saying things like: 'you teach wild mans be good sober tame mans' (p. 227) and 'Me die, when you bid die, master' (p. 231). Such ventriloquized fawning is merely another way of silencing the colonized. In Coetzee's text we see Friday acting obediently, but with no words and no smiles or other gestures of contentment we dare not conclude that he is a happy or willing slave.¹³ Here again, Coetzee exposes the way

Defoe's version works as a myth of the 'good master' or the 'benevolent colonist.'

The logic of the 'lesser evil' is also at work when Crusoe uses the apes as a threat to keep Barton in a submissive role. 'Before setting out to perform his island duties, Crusoe gave me his knife and warned me not to venture from his castle; for the apes, he said, would not be as wary of a woman as they were of him and Friday. I wondered at this: was a woman, to an ape, a different species from a man? Nevertheless, I prudently obeyed, and stayed at home, and rested' (p. 15). Here the apes are a danger from which Barton can be saved only by remaining Crusoe's obedient subject. This Crusoe attempts to 'tame' the woman by the same means Defoe's Crusoe uses on Friday, but Coetzee does not allow the script to go unquestioned. Barton soon rebels and decides to roam the island on her own, regardless of the supposed danger of the apes. She later concludes: 'In size they were between a cat and a fox, grey, with black faces and black paws. I saw no harm in them; but Crusoe held them a pest, and he and Friday killed them whenever they could' (p. 21). When Crusoe becomes angry at her breach of his authority, Barton's response hinges on the issue of her willingness: "'I am on your island, Mr Crusoe, not by choice but by ill luck,' I replied, standing up (and I was nearly as tall as he). 'I am a castaway, not a prisoner'" (p. 20). Although she has been saved from death, fed, and cared for, Barton does not feel obliged to submit to Crusoe, much less to swear undying obedience. She 'stands up' to him, both literally and politically, rejecting the theory that a lesser evil should be accepted without complaint. It is worth taking a moment to elaborate the elements of Barton's critical thinking here. She questions first the logic of Crusoe's rhetoric (do apes really treat female humans differently?) and then its factuality (they do not look dangerous to me). She senses that her acceptance of Crusoe's food and shelter is being interpreted as a kind of contract entailing her submission ('While you live under my roof you will do as I instruct', says Crusoe), so she argues that there was in fact no moment of free choice in which she entered into this contract. If Barton is a kind of colonial subject, then an important part of her rebellion involves seeing through the script of enslavement that has been used against her.¹⁴ Placed in a situation similar to Defoe's Friday, she retains an ability to doubt that reduces Crusoe's power over her mind and her body. It is precisely this ability of the subjected human to doubt and question that is repressed in *Robinson Crusoe*, where there is no hint of rebellion or discontent among Crusoe's subjects.¹⁵

Coetzee has taken two groups of natives from Defoe's novel, goats and cannibals, and posited a single original, the apes, from which these groups sprang. The force generating this bifurcation is the need of the ideological system for certain functions to be performed so that colonizers can simultaneously dehumanize, vilify, and profit from colonized subjects. What in Defoe appear as different species, later joined in the figure of Friday, are in Coetzee's reading merely literary symbols for the

different roles natives are forced to play in the colonial economy and ideology: they are a source of material comforts, but also a savage threat that supposedly justifies the use of force and hierarchy. Furthermore, in Defoe these two functions are mutually determining. Crusoe's ability to turn Friday into a goat-like domesticated servant depends on the existence of 'savages' who have already placed Friday in danger. If no savages existed, the colonial system would have to invent them in order to reach and justify its goals, and this is precisely what Coetzee accuses Defoe of doing. There are no cannibals, tame goats, or willing servants in Coetzee's version because such beings appear only in colonial propaganda. Coetzee has undermined those elements of *Robinson Crusoe* that, from an anti-colonial perspective, appear most hollow and manipulative: the idea that the colonizer is interested in anything besides power and profit; the idea that humans can be 'tamed' like animals into loyal and grateful subjects.

Viewed from within Coetzee's framing device, the differences between *Foe* and *Robinson Crusoe* appear as a mixture of additions and subtractions made by Defoe to the 'original' Susan Barton story. As I have argued, however, the guiding principle behind these changes is one of strategic repression. The one thing Defoe does not want to admit is the threat of rebellion from colonial subjects. This ideological need leads also to repression of related ideas: that rebellion is possible because colonizers' physical and material powers are limited, and that rebellion is likely because the conditions of colonial subjection (even without the extreme brutalities of whipping, exhausting labour, etc.) are harsh and demeaning. The things Defoe has added – the goats and cannibals, Crusoe's interest in taming, Friday's voice and what it says – are devices to cover over what has been repressed by substituting a mechanism that cuts off the very thought of rebellion at its source in the will of the subject. This mechanism (what I called the taming script) thus entails a psychological theory for both the colonizer and the colonized, a theory of what each would realistically do in certain situations. The colonizer, Defoe suggests, would offer assistance where possible and treat his subjects with kindness and restraint; the colonized would immediately perceive the benefits of living with the colonizer and accept the terms of his subjection willingly. Coetzee's parody involves challenging the psychological theory by creating similar situations in which colonizer and colonized act differently: Crusoe is not interested in improving anyone's standard of living (including his own) or in fostering a benevolent public image; of his two subjects, Barton continually questions and challenges him, and Friday is inscrutable. If we find these possibilities psychologically plausible, then Coetzee has succeeded in calling Defoe's psychological theory, and thus his myth of colonialism, into doubt.

II

So far, I have presented Barton as a voice of resistance, as she is for much of the island section of the novel, but this is not the whole story. One of

the most interesting features of *Foe* is that Barton's questioning of power is not consistent *and* she is often aware of the inconsistency yet does not know exactly what to do about it. Her susceptibility to colonialist ideology is seen most clearly in her relationship with Friday, where she slips easily into the role of slave-master vacated by Crusoe but finds that she cannot easily slip out again. Coetzee uses this double aspect of Barton's relationship to power to show further nuances in his parodic project, including the need to consider the larger discursive formations that underlie canonical texts.

Barton's first encounter with Friday sets the tone for what follows. When she sees that the figure who approaches her on the beach is 'a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool' and a spear, she immediately thinks to herself, 'I have come to an island of cannibals' (pp. 5-6). The stereotype that connects Friday's racial features with cannibalism is thus part of the ideological baggage she brings with her to the island. On the next page we see one likely source for this stereotype:

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, ... dotted with drab bushes that never flowered and never shed their leaves. (p. 7)

Barton reveals that she is herself a reader of the 'travellers' tales' that are repositories of some of the West's most persistent colonial myths: desert islands, spear-carrying cannibals, mutineers, and castaways.¹⁶ Although she declares that her experience on this island will be different from the literary model, it will not free her of her prejudices regarding Friday. Her view of him as mentally inferior leads her to interpret him in a very condescending way throughout the novel. During Crusoe's second illness, for example, when a ship arrives to rescue the castaways, Friday does not stay by his master but flees to the north shore of the island where the apes reside. Barton sends a search party to bring him back, on the theory that he does not really want what he has just chosen: 'Inasmuch a Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not abandon him to a solitude worse than death' (p. 39). On the ship, she again translates his silence for the Captain: 'He would rather sleep on the floor at his master's feet than on the softest bed in Christendom' (p. 41). Despite the fact that she herself has chafed at the bonds of servitude, she is, like Defoe's Crusoe, convinced that Friday's subjection has been complete and willing.¹⁷ The double standard signals an ideological conflict in her mind between her personal experience of oppression and the justifications she has imbibed from reading travellers' tales. Barton thus functions as both an alternative voice to *Robinson Crusoe* and a sympathizer, both critic of the typical travel narrative and its heir. She becomes a walking manifestation of the what Hutcheon calls the 'paradoxical essence' of the parodic project (p. 77) as Coetzee shows that the dialogue of opposed classes or positions takes place within individual

minds as well as between people, groups, and texts.

To her credit, Barton cannot completely repress the side of her that is critical of power, but neither can that side completely repress her will to mastery. Unlike Robinson Crusoe, she does not retain her initial confidence in her interpretations of Friday. Coetzee undercuts the colonial arrogance later by making her doubt her own intentions: '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' (p. 60). Similarly, she also comes to doubt the language of gestures by which she thought she had been communicating with him:

How did he understand my gesture of putting out my tongue at him? What if, among the cannibals of Africa, putting out the tongue has the same meaning as offering the lips has amongst us? Might you not then flush with shame when a woman puts out her tongue and you have no tongue with which to respond? (p.69)

Barton even comes to doubt the supposed fact that Friday's silence is unwilling. 'Bitterly I began to recognize that it might not be mere dullness that kept him shut up within himself, nor the accident of the loss of his tongue, nor even an incapacity to distinguish speech from babbling, but a disdain for intercourse with me' (p. 98).

In place of Robinson Crusoe's conversion to Christianity, the spiritual drama we watch unfold is how Susan Barton begins, haltingly, reluctantly, to question certain aspects of the colonialist thinking she has inherited without being able fully to loosen its hold on her mind. Her growing discontent with the role of master leads to her plan to send Friday by ship back to Africa. Although this plan is ultimately a 'castle I had built in the air' (p. 111), her discovery of this fact proves to be both a genuine insight and a new opportunity for mastery. Coetzee symbolizes the role of text-based ideology in her journey by making her sell off the travel narratives she has taken from Foe's library. In Ealing, greatly in need of shoes, she stops in a cobbler's shop. 'I offered him the *Pilgrimages* of Purchas, the first volume, and for that he gave me a pair of shoes, stoutly made and well-fitting. You will protest that he gained by the exchange. But a time comes when there are more important things than books' (p. 100). Later, she sells Pakenham's *Travels in Abyssinia* to a stationer for half a guinea, presumably to be spent on food. Here the travel books are literally baggage that weighs her and Friday down, just as their contents are a form of ideological baggage that chains master and slave together. The shoes and money enable her to make an ostensibly liberating journey in exchange for the vicarious, textual, and politically slanted journey offered by the books. Her selling of the books constitutes, in a sense, a rereading of them, or a new way of understanding their value. Now, after her frustrating experience as Friday's master, she sees the books as valuable not in themselves but only for the other things they can bring her; they are valuable only when surrendered. We may be

tempted to conclude that, as in the island section, personal experience is functioning here as a kind of antidote to the distortions of inherited ideology, but this is true only up to a point.

Barton's surrender of the travel books coincides with her questioning of one of their legacies, the assumption of Friday's cannibalism, but the questioning produces no change in actual practice. When they find a dead baby girl in a ditch, Barton's prejudice rushes unbidden to the fore:

My thoughts ran to Friday, I could not stop them, it was an effect of the hunger. Had I not been there to restrain him, would he in his hunger have eaten the babe? I told myself I did him wrong to think of him as a cannibal or worse, a devourer of the dead. But Cruso had planted the seed in my mind, and now I could not look on Friday's lips without calling to mind what meat must once have passed them. (p. 106)

Along with the obvious projection of her own hunger onto Friday is a striking admission of the injustice of this projection. There is also, however, a scapegoating of Cruso that seems designed to absolve Barton herself of any blame for the problem. As we have seen, Cruso cannot be the only source of her cannibal stereotype since Barton thought of Friday as a cannibal before she ever met Cruso. It sprang more likely from her reading of the travel books she is now selling off, but is blaming the travel books really any different from blaming Cruso? What Barton confronts here is the persistence of colonialist ideology despite her awareness of its inaccuracy. There is a part of her own mind she cannot control, she claims, and it 'insisted on [Friday's] bloodlust' (p. 106). The planting metaphor Barton uses to describe this persistence recalls the agricultural image embedded in the word 'colony' (from the Latin verb *colere*, to cultivate), suggesting that colonialist texts and rhetoric perform a kind of mental colonization of their audiences. If true, this would be an indication of the need for parodies like Coetzee's but it is also a potentially unfair appropriation of victimhood by the master. Is Barton really unable to eradicate her prejudice or is she merely claiming that she is? As long as Barton remains impotent in the face of hegemony she also remains in the role of master. This may explain why the solution she does propose here is formulated as a paradox. Barton now sees, she says, that 'in such [prejudicial] thinking lie the seeds of madness' (p. 106), that the fruit colonialist rhetoric produces is not beneficial.

We cannot shrink in disgust from our neighbour's touch because his hands, that are clean now, were once dirty. We must cultivate, all of us, a certain ignorance, a certain blindness, or society will not be tolerable. (p. 106)

Regardless of whether Friday was once a cannibal, Barton implies, she must pretend that the thought has never crossed her mind in order to live peacefully with him now; the same conscious forgetting of past crimes would be required of former slaves and colonial subjects as they look at the 'dirty hands' of their former oppressors. At first, this looks like a reasonable solution. To make new life possible, one must cultivate

ignorance of what one thought one 'knew' about the other. Barton's reuse of the planting metaphor, however, signals that she is still relying on elements of the colonialist ideology she purports to despise. The phrase 'cultivate ... ignorance' (how can you plant an absence?) may suggest the mental process Barton has been attempting on this journey, that of clearing away the concepts and assumptions of colonialist ideology as represented in the travel books, yet her desire for such a solution is at odds with her stated inability to cultivate ignorance of Friday's supposed cannibalism in this particular scene. In other words, Barton describes a solution she cannot or will not use in actual practice.¹⁸ It seems that Coetzee is staging a particular form of white liberal stasis in which the problem of pervasive ideology is acknowledged but at the same time declared to be unsolvable.

Barton's journey to Bristol culminates in her critical reading of the ship master's rhetoric and her abandonment of the fantasy of easy liberation that had inspired the journey in the first place. As soon as the captain promises to set Friday free in Africa, Barton reconsiders. 'Whether it was the captain's manner or whether the glance I caught passing between him and the mate I cannot say, but suddenly I knew that all was not as it seemed to be' (p. 110). She rejects his promise because she becomes aware of a hidden agenda or repressed truth behind his words. She sees that an illusion of benevolence and helpfulness is covering the captain's actual self-interest. We must acknowledge, first of all, that Barton's critique of the captain's duplicity is a genuine advance in her thinking. Having decided that she must liberate Friday, she is beginning to see that her attempts mean little without the cooperation of others in society. Furthermore, even if some honest captain were to take Friday to Africa, there would be other problems with Barton's plan, for it rests on two questionable assumptions: that it is possible to erase the effects of colonial mastery by returning to a pre-colonial condition; and that racial separation is the natural and proper state of humankind. Repudiating this plan, then, looks like a positive step. When we look at the climactic rhetorical gesture of part II, however, we see that a clever recuperating manoeuvre has been performed.

Was I too suspicious? All I know is, I would not sleep easy tonight if Friday were on the high seas destined a second time, all unwittingly, for the plantations. A woman may bear a child she does not want, and rear it without loving it, yet be ready to defend it with her life. Thus it has become, in a manner of speaking, between Friday and myself. I do not love him, but he is mine. That is why he remains in England. That is why he is here. (p. 111)

Barton is making her own claim of 'benevolence' here by asserting that she was too kind-hearted to leave Friday in the hands of someone who only claimed benevolence but really desired mastery. Barton's critique of the captain's benevolence thus becomes the basis of her own claim to benevolence as she jockeys to be seen by her readers as an enlightened and reluctant master who has no choice but to keep Friday as 'hers'. In a

variation of the taming script from *Robinson Crusoe*, the evil captain and his ilk become the new 'savage' threat from which Friday must be rescued by the well-intentioned white woman. As above, whatever insights Barton has had about the workings of colonialist rhetoric have not affected her actual practice because she has exempted herself from the critical gaze. The liberal sentiments result in a renewed defense of the status quo.¹⁹

Barton's recuperating gesture allows us to reread the journey to Bristol as a new entry in the travel narrative tradition. While on her journey, Barton sells off Foe's old travel books but continues to produce the letters to Foe that constitute part II of the novel, so that Barton's own narrative grows in size as her library of travel books diminishes. Instead of relinquishing the ideology of the travel books and producing a genuinely liberatory narrative, however, Barton's story is merely the record of a failed liberation whose rhetorical purpose, we can now see, is to explain or rationalize the fact of Friday's continued enslavement. The travel books do not lose their value but are merely exchanged for another form of travel narrative with the same ideological thrust. The books quite literally finance Barton's journey, which masquerades as a journey of liberation, but whose real goal is to arrive at the moment in which Barton can deploy a new form of the old justifications for slavery (i.e. the myth of the 'good master' and the accompanying theory of the lesser evil), in exact repetition of both Cruso and Crusoe. What makes her story different is that it adapts the old paradigm to a new environment that expects 'politically correct' repudiations of prejudice and dominance. In this environment, the colonizer's duty to stage his/her attempts to critique and surrender power becomes the new 'white man's burden', the new mask of selflessness.

The questions Coetzee raises about white liberal writing in part II must ultimately extend to Coetzee's novel itself and to much of the post-colonial criticism and theory that has arisen in recent decades (including this article).²⁰ By making *Robinson Crusoe* the primary target of his parody, Coetzee introduces a danger that readers will locate the problem of colonialist ideology only in *Robinson Crusoe* and not in other texts, in broader social practices, or in themselves. He addresses this danger first by extending his critique beyond *Robinson Crusoe* to include the broader travel literature tradition of which it is a part, and then by showing that even this critique may be insufficient to change social practice. Identifying an intangible and culturally embedded ideology as the real target, however, brings us up against a major problematic of post-colonial writing generally. How can we understand the strength and pervasiveness of a dominant ideology without letting that understanding paralyze political action?²¹ More specifically, because the pose of benevolence is a key part of the colonial ideology under attack, any declaration of an intent to liberate the oppressed, including the post-colonial critic's, becomes rhetorically suspect as just another benevolent pose. If the need for rigorous suspicion dissolves into cynicism, however,

there is no hope for positive social change. That Coetzee is aware of these issues is reflected in the discussion between Barton and Foe in part III. 'You must ask yourself, Susan,' says Foe, 'as it was a slaver's stratagem to rob Friday of his tongue, may it not be a slaver's stratagem to hold him in subjection while we cavil over words in a dispute we know to be endless?' (p. 150). As long as the voices in this 'dispute' are only white ones, it will not be surprising if it remains 'endless.' At some point, whites must stop talking about surrendering power and simply surrender power. Barton and Foe agree, therefore, that they must teach Friday how to write so that he can become part of the discussion about liberation. As part III ends, Friday's writing lessons have only begun, and Barton still prefers the role of tyrannical teacher (p. 151), but she and Foe have at least started learning how to listen to the voice that they have until now marginalized and repressed.

In the final analysis, is Coetzee doing anything more than demonstrating *his* benevolent concern for colonial victims in a narrative whose ultimate effect is to make Coetzee himself wealthy and famous, just as Susan Barton hoped to become from her story? If *Foe* prompts us to ask this question, then perhaps it succeeds after all in the task of fostering a critical consciousness in its readers, one that extends not only to Defoe and Barton but also to the seemingly liberal text they hold in their hands. Coetzee invites an active, participatory reading like that of the unnamed narrator of part IV, who finds Susan Barton's manuscript on a table and reads its opening words: "'Dear Mr Foe, At last I could row no further'" (p. 155). Coetzee's text then continues without quotation marks: 'With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slip overboard' (p. 155). Reading is a form of diving here, and to dive is to merge with the narrator of the story, taking over the pen and the observing 'I'/eye. Although this reader repeats Barton's experience, however, he or she also alters it by exploring the wrecked ship Barton herself does not explore in *Foe* but only speculates about. The novel's final image is of a physical effort to recover Friday's voice and perspective. While strikingly original, this section is also a parody of some of the most memorable passages in *Robinson Crusoe*, in which Crusoe explores two wrecked ships off his island and salvages tools and materials that enable his colonial project. The work of salvage pictures what every parodist does with her/his literary precursors. Coetzee's version, however, suggests that the most valuable sunken treasure lies not in the literary canon but in the mouth of Friday.²²

NOTES

1. J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 66. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
2. Most critics mention some points of comparison between the two novels, though not all use them as their primary focus. Among the more extended comparisons, see: Peter E. Morgan, *Foe's Defoe and La Jeune Née: Establishing a Metaphorical*

- Referent for the Elided Female Voice', *Critique*, 35, 2 (Winter 1994), pp. 81-96; Chris Bongie, "'Lost in the Maze of Doubling": J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of (Un)likeness', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39, 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 261-81; Brian Macaskill and Jeanne Colleran, 'Reading History, Writing Heresy: The Resistance of Representation and the Representation of Resistance in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*', *Contemporary Literature*, 33, 3 (Fall 1992), pp. 432-57; Susan V. Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1991), Chapter 7; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*' in *Consequences of Theory: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1987-88*, Arac and Johnson, eds., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1991), pp. 154-180; Susan Naramore Maher, 'Confronting Authority: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Remaking of *Robinson Crusoe*', *International Fiction Review*, 18, 1 (1991), pp. 34-40. For a discussion of colonialism in Coetzee's earlier novels, see Stephen Watson, 'Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee', *Research in African Literatures*, 17, 3 (Fall 1986), pp. 370-392. For a discussion of *Foe* as an examination of the silencing and violence built into the process of canonization, see Derek Attridge, 'Oppressive Silence: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon' in *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canon*, ed., Karen R. Lawrence (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. 212-38.
3. See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), p. 6.
 4. See for example Abby Arthur Johnson, 'Old Bones Uncovered: A Reconsideration of *Robinson Crusoe*', *College Language Association Journal*, 17 (1973), pp. 271-278 and Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 176-224.
 5. See Helen Tiffin, 'Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse', *Kunapipi*, 9, 3 (1987), p. 23.
 6. I am in agreement with David Attwell when he argues that Coetzee's metafictional reflections do not disarm ethical commitment or political resistance but are in fact carefully crafted strategies of resistance; see *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press; Cape Town: David Philip, 1993), pp. 2-22.
 7. On Defoe's realism, see for example Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1974). For a discussion of Coetzee's personal views against realism, see Gallagher (pp. 18-19) and Attwell (pp. 11-14). Maher argues that Coetzee uses his revision of *Robinson Crusoe* to question the assumptions of the 'ideology of realism' and that he ends the novel with a virtuosic display of anti-realism.
 8. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 48. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
 9. Hutcheon notes this feature of parody in arguing that the 'ambivalence set up between conservative repetition and revolutionary difference is part of the very paradoxical essence of parody' (p. 77).
 10. Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 92. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
 11. For a discussion of a similar pattern in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, see Lorie Jerrell Leininger, 'The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*' in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, eds., Carolyn R. S. Lenz, Gayle Green, and Carol T. Neely (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 285-94; this essay has been reprinted in the Signet Classic edition of *The Tempest*, ed., Robert Langbaum (New York: New American Library, 1987), pp. 206-16.

12. Gallagher discusses Coetzee's struggle with the question of how a white author can speak for blacks without oppression (p. 43); so also does Aleid Fokkema in 'Character as a Subject in Language: Some Reflections on J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*', *New Comparison*, 9 (Spring 1990), pp. 170-79.
13. The fact that Friday flees to join the apes when Cruso falls ill and strangers arrive suggests that he never accepted Cruso's categorization of the apes as pests or dangers. At some level, he seems to view them as allies or companions.
14. Morgan makes a similar point (p. 86).
15. Barton's resistance to colonial authority is complicated by evidence of her complicity with it (something I discuss further below). Notice, for example, that Barton escapes Cruso's restrictions on her mobility by using ape skins to make herself some sandals (pp. 24-5). This particular increase in her freedom thus depends on materials gained through exploitation of the apes and is therefore an extension of that exploitation. Notice also that after 'standing up' to Cruso, she apologizes for her 'tart words' (p. 20).
16. See, for example, Mary Louise Pratt's work on travel writing in 'Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen', in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed., Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 138-162; and *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
17. For a similar interpretation of Friday by Defoe's *Crusoe*, see *Robinson Crusoe*, p. 211.
18. Compare Derek Wright's analysis of planting as a 'positive alternative to history as War' (p. 117) in *Life and Times of Michael K*; 'Fiction as Foe: The Novels of J. M. Coetzee', *International Fiction Review*, 16, 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 113-18. Atwell, also discussing the planting imagery in *Michael K*, connects it with 'the Nietzschean "will to ignorance," standing as the alternative to the devouring "will to truth"' and to Derridean *dissemination* (pp. 98-99). My point is that even if such a 'will to ignorance' represents a positive solution it is one that Barton seems able to describe but not enact.
19. See Jean-Philippe Wade's historical sketch of the alliance between liberalism and British imperialism in South Africa and the subsequent rejection of liberal premises (for different reasons) by both the African National Congress and the Afrikaner nationalist party in 'Doubling Back on J. M. Coetzee', *English in Africa*, 21, Nos. 1 & 2 (July 1994), pp. 197-8.
20. In her discussion of *Foe*, Tiffin notes (p. 32) that in his own literary criticism Coetzee has warned of the tendency of critiques of the dominant replicate the problems they purport to solve: 'Our craft is all in reading *the other*: gaps, inverses, undersides; the veiled; the dark, the buried, the feminine; alterities ... It is a mode of reading which, subverting the dominant, is in peril, like all triumphant subversion, of becoming the dominant in turn', *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 81.
21. Atwell begins his discussion of *Foe* with a similar question: 'whether Coetzee is able to balance the claim of freedom with an equally rigorous acknowledgement of constraint' (p. 103). Jeanne Colleran finds Coetzee to be largely successful in achieving this balance in 'Position Papers: reading J. M. Coetzee's Fiction and Criticism', *Contemporary Literature*, XXXV, 3 (1994), pp. 578-92.
22. Similarly, Atwell, without noting the connections with diving and salvage in Defoe, sees in this ending a 'deferral of authority to the body of history, to the political world in which the voice of the body politic of the future resides' (p.116).