Revisiting the Colonial Text and Context: Parody in J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe*

Olfa Belgacem
University of Carthage, Tunisia

Abstract

In many novels written by the South African writer J. M. Coetzee, oppression is the background in which he sets his narratives, whether within the general context of colonization or the more specific context of Apartheid. In his novel *Foe*, written five years before the abolition of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, Coetzee revisits a canonical colonial text of the eighteenth century through the parody of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. This time, in Coetzee’s text, it is the female narrator Susan Barton, rather than the male voice of Defoe’s protagonist Crusoe, who tells a story about shipwreck and loss but most importantly she recounts the story of the black servant Friday who, so far, has been silenced by Defoe’s white hero. This paper shall offer a study of the way Coetzee uses parody in his novel *Foe* in order to revisit both the colonial text and context.

Key words: Parody, canon, colonial, postcolonial, subversion, silence
“The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network.” Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge.

When I started researching this topic, I knew that I had to begin with a theoretical framework about “parody” to make sense of how J. M. Coetzee’s novel Foe parodies Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe. However, in doing so, I discovered that the concept has witnessed some change throughout history. For instance, ancient parody varies from medieval and Renaissance parody which, in turn, differ from modern and postmodern parody. I have also noticed that this difference is basically the result of how close the parodic work is to comedy as a literary genre. In other words, ancient and Renaissance parody are only different from modern and postmodern parody in their heavy use of comic devices such as mockery, humor, satire or the burlesque. Such comic devices are found in the writings of Aristophanes (V c. BC) and Lucian of Samosata (II c. AD) where the gods are made to speak “in the manner of mean persons” (Rose 86). Parody, in this sense, is a literary genre that brings the high low by relying on comic imitation.

Mockery and imitation will continue to characterize the parodies written during the medieval age and the Renaissance, but this comic effect will come to an end during the age of modernism, especially with the Russian formalists whose writings paved the way for parody to be severed from its comic nature. Viktor Shklovsky, for instance, discusses the functions of parody in Cervantes’ Don Quixote, Sterne’s Tristram Shandy, and Fielding’s Joseph Andrews without referring to its comic character (Rose 113). More than that, Shklovsky even defines “parodirovaniye”, in the index of his essay on Sterne’s Tristram Shandy, as “priyom ostranneniye” or ‘device for alienation’ (Rose 104). This modern facet of parody as a “device for alienation” leads one to go back to the origins of the word “parody”, where the prefix “para” in Greek means both “counter” and “near”. Therefore, parody imitates the original while alienating us from it by introducing new elements, thus, allowing distance and therefore criticism to take place. It contains, as Bakhtin argues, “internally dialogized discourses” (qtd. in Rose 130) which make of it a “hybrid construction” (Tynyanov qtd. in Rose 131).

These palimpsestic voices inside parody—the voice of the original literary work, that of its criticism or imitation, and a myriad of other untraceable voices—have led to the study of parody as a site for “intertextuality”, a concept developed by the French poststructuralist semiotician Julia Kristeva who argues that any text absorbs then transforms another text (65-66). Intertextuality has influenced not only the definition of parody as a form of intertextuality but that of the “Author- God” himself who, according to Roland Barthes, and building upon the above mentioned Kristeva’s definition of “text”, dies to turn the floor over to the reader who becomes the real source of meaning. The text, accordingly, is made up of “… a multi-dimensional space”, states Barthes, “in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting in a thousand sources of culture”(53). Thus, any text is the intertext of another one, and parody is no exception as it cannot possibly be original, being the imitation of a pre-existing text.

Linda Hutcheon defines parody as “… repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (26). According to this definition, then, parody is a literary form that enacts both continuity and change, i.e., it allows
us to see the difference between the two art works, while at the same time, acknowledging their similarity. “[I]rony”, argues Hutcheon, “mark[s] the difference from the past, but the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm—textually and hermeneutically—the connection with the past” (125), hence the critical function of parody vis-à-vis the past, which lies at the core of the postmodern paradox. Hutcheon conceives of postmodernism as a “contradictory enterprise” allowing postmodern art to use and abuse conventional art forms (Hutcheon 23). Postmodern parody, therefore, seems to have a dialogical relationship with the past by being both conservative and revolutionary (Hutcheon35). According to Edward Said, this relationship between parody and the past is what gives parody much importance. He thinks that its importance lies in its ability to offer satirical appropriation of history and revision of the canon, since postmodern art forms are a tireless reproduction of the past, while “canon form has exhausted all the possible combinations of notes” (qtd. In Sweet 161-162).

It is within this framework of postmodern parody that J. M. Coetzee’s Foe should be read. This 1986 novel is a parody of the eighteenth century novel Robinson Crusoe written by Daniel Defoe. Yet, Coetzee’s novel uses the frame of Defoe’s narrative in order to question the imperialist framework around which the colonial novel is woven without being comic or humorous. Coetzee uses the Robinson Crusoetale to abuse it, in the very Hutcheonesque sense. First of all, Foe is told from the perspective of a female narrator, Susan Barton, who displaces Cruso(e) both as the story’s narrator and its male hero. Coetzee’s parody offers a relocation of the narrative center that embodies the British imperialist mindset in Defoe’s text. The first person narrator Robinson Crusoe places himself at the center, and being white and English, he associates himself with the good, while placing Friday on the periphery of the tale, allowing him no past history but that of his ancestors’ cannibalism and savagery. In Robinson Crusoe, Friday is presented as a subject that owes his life and faith to Master Crusoe who confesses:

My Island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look'd. First of all, the whole Country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion. 2dly, My people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Law-giver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, if there had been Occasion of it, for me. It was remarkable too, we had but three Subjects, and they were of three different Religions. My Man Friday was a Protestant, his Father was a Pagan and a Cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist: However, I allow'd Liberty of Conscience throughout my Dominions: But this is by the Way. (250)

Ato Quayson sees in such discourse a metaphor of power structures that reflects the hegemonic discourse designed by colonialists who attempt to legitimize their dominance (qtd. in Fulkerson par. 15). Spivak refers to this social role of literature and argues that it has a large influence in the production of cultural representation of Empire and the establishment of imperialist doctrines (qtd. in Turk 307). This is why Coetzee’s revisiting of the Robinson Crusoe tale is much important, as his parody of one of the most famous colonial novels presents what Edward Said calls “a contrapuntal reading”. In other words, Foe not only points to imperialism, but it also resists it through the consideration of the elements that were excluded from the colonial text. In other words, by placing a female narrator and protagonist at the heart of his narrative, Coetzee highlights her sheer absence from the eighteenth century canonical novel where no female voice is found whatsoever. Susan Barton becomes both the castaway and narrator of the Crusoe tale, while the male protagonist remains only as a
reminder of the parodied text, a relic from the canon who loses his “Englishness” and becomes Cruso. The “e” which might stand for “empire” or “England” disappears from his name as Foe’s Cruso is dispossessed of his history of the shipwrecked adventurer and becomes a mere old man who happens to be on a desert island when Susan gets shipwrecked. Friday is also kept from the original tale, but instead of placing his head beneath Cruso(e)’s foot he carries his new master; this time a woman who shares the same condition of silencing and marginalization with him. Friday has no tongue to tell his story, and so does Barton who is deprived of a voice that permits her to write her story according to her wishes.

Coetzee’s parody allows a critical gaze into the colonial world in which Daniel Defoe wrote his novel and divulges the imperialist, as well as the patriarchal, doctrines that characterized it. Susan Barton’s attempts to write her story according to her own terms are constantly hampered by the male author Foe who insists on writing her off a feminist story of emancipation and into a Robinsonade or an adventure tale story faithful to the seventeenth and eighteenth century literary tradition of Daniel Defoe’s world. The female protagonist is aware of her foe’s attempts to distort her story but feels, nonetheless, that her “life is drearily suspended till [his] writing is done” (Coetzee 63). Susan is certainly endowed with the ability to narrate—she has proved to be a good storyteller in Foe—yet, the reader is aware of the mockery lying at the heart of this endowment. As a matter of fact, her-story is suspended until his-story is done. Susan keeps sending letters to Mr Foe, which is a hint at the epistolary novel form that inspired many eighteenth century writers. Among these writers we find Henry Fielding whose epistolary novel entitled Shamelan parodies Samuel Richardson’s Pamela which the heroine resembles Susan Barton in her passive awaiting. J. M. Coetzee seems to find pleasure in revisiting the colonial context through his parody of Defoe’s novel, but also through the numerous allusions to other eighteenth century novels that reflect the period’s patriarchal mindset.

Not only does Coetzee’s parody point out to the eighteenth century canon’s silencing of the female voice, but it also seeks to unveil the manners in which the colonized are displaced and relocated both at the narrative as well as at the historical margins. Indeed, Friday’s presence in Robinson Crusoe further decentres him as he finds himself on an island that bears the traces of his ancestors but over which he cannot reign. As soon as Robinson Crusoe, an English mariner, sets foot on Friday’s island, he starts acting like a master, giving orders to Friday and thinking of himself as “king, or Emperor” (119). This sums up best Edward Said’s criticism of the canonical texts which he considers as artifacts of a colonial culture and which he thinks have helped to build imperial “structure[s] of attitude and reference” (qtd. in Turk 307). Daniel Defoe’s novel is responsible for the creation of a discourse that not only legitimizes colonization, but also presents the colonized as people who wilfully turn themselves into subjects to their white masters, and if Friday simply sets his head under Master Crusoe’s foot, the slave in Joyce Cary’s Mister Johnson (1938), as Syed Javed Hussain remarks, feels a rapture when his master shoots him (Hussain). Foe, however, does not offer better opportunities for the silenced woman and the oppressed slave, as they both keep being marginalized by the imperialist figure of oppression in the novel, and Defoe’s substitute Mr Foe, who decides to write Susan’s story according to his taste and to “reshape” Friday as he wishes: “I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal; I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman(…) What he is to the world is what I make of
him” (121-122). Therefore, Mr (De)Foe is the hand with which Empire writes its subjects off history, depriving them of any voice that could speak for them.

Tisha Turk refers to Foe as a “transformative narrative” (295), or what José García Landa calls “counter-narrative”, which “invoke[s] a story in order to subvert it” (qtd. in Turk 295). As a matter of fact, J. M. Coetzee’s Foe subverts the tale of Robinson Crusoe not only at the level of its discourse but also in terms of plot and characterization. As far as the plot of Robinson Crusoe is concerned, Coetzee has kept only a few elements. While the original text is a typical adventure story that tells of a shipwrecked mariner, of cannibals and guns, and of a desert island and a rough sea, its parody can only be called an adventure story in the first two chapters where Susan tells of her shipwreck, her stay on the island and her adventures on the way back to England, along with some mishaps she and Friday encountered on the way to Mr Foe’s house. Another plot element that has been re-visited in Foe is the fate of Cruso who, instead of being rescued and taken back to England as in Robinson Crusoe, he dies en route and leaves his-tory hanging between the voice of the skilful male storyteller of Defoe and that of Coetzee’s female narrator. The latter turns her story into “narrated narrating” (Landa qtd. In Turk 300). The story Barton narrates becomes a narrative about storytelling and the difficulty to mother her story at the presence of the male author, her enemy Mr Foe. She, then, shifts the focus of the tale from the island, its inhabitants and her daughter, to the dialectical relationship between herself and Foe and to how difficult a business it is to write her life-story from her own female perspective (Turk 300).

As regards characterization, Coetzee’s Foe does not invoke a female protagonist, but rather invents one, as such a character is almost absent from the parodied canon, with two female characters who are hardly mentioned. By placing a woman at the center of his narrative as both storyteller and heroine, Coetzee points out to this voluntary exclusion of woman from Defoe’s text, and by the same token, he highlights the fact that she is still silenced in his own text, three centuries after the production of Robinson Crusoe. It is this self-reflexivity that renders Coetzee’s novel a postmodern one par excellence. Coetzee’s ricocheting at the condition of the female writer criticizes the absence of change in the women writers’ status even after the revision of the canon through his parody Foe.

Robinson Crusoe is a character that has travelled from Daniel Defoe’s tale and reached J. M. Coetzee’s novel. During this voyage, he has gained some years by becoming an old man, but has, nonetheless, lost the “e” in his name, which “orthographically mark[s]” the difference between Robinson Crusoe’s Crusoe and Foe’s Cruso (Macaskill and Colleran qtd. in Turk 300). In fact, Cruso has lost many things on the way to Coetzee’s narrative, including his centrality as the narrator and hero of his tale. Being English, born in “the city of York”, as he tells his readers in Defoe’s novel (1), he places himself in the center of the novel, “within a national and historical tradition”, as Fulkerson states (pars.12-13). This tradition is built on a binary mindset that, according to Fulkerson, places the British Empire as the epitome of law, order and God’s blessing, while the rest of the world is defined as evil, chaos and God’s punishment. Fulkerson gives the example of Robinson Crusoe who challenges his father’s will for him to study law and chooses the sea, and away from England, she explains, his punishment is to be shipwrecked and cast on Friday’s island (Fulkerson par. 12). Such binarism overwhelms Defoe’s discourse and prepared for what Elleke Boehmer calls “high
imperialism” as a reference to the vast wave of British colonization in such a short historical period as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Boehmer qtd. in Fulkerson par.12).

In Foe, however, we read about a Cruso whose stories about Friday are not credible; he is not even the storyteller. Coetzee has substituted Defoe’s narrator for Susan Barton who tells us more about Friday than about Cruso. Dispossessed both from the role of the story’s narrator and that of the hero, Cruso has nothing else to do but tend infertile rocky plantations without even sowing a seed in them. He cannot impregnate the land and make it prosperous because he is no longer its “king” or “emperor”. The island itself becomes barren, hostile and full of thorns and unfriendly insects. It is so different from Robinson’s idyllic island which is the incarnation of Paradise awaiting the British settlers to regain it. This island seeks no owners, no masters. It is an island that makes the setting for a postcolonial narrative where Cruso has lost the power to own the island as he is not the narrator of that same colonial narrative whose center is Crusoe. Coetzee’s Cruso finds himself in an ironic parody that seeks to subvert Crusoe’s tale, to subvert history itself. Hence, the readers find only the name of Cruso familiar, not the essence of the character.

Friday is another character who travels from Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Cruso and inhabits Coetzee’s novel to become African, “… a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool” (Coetzee 5), whereas in the genuine text he is Indian. This drives Susan Barton to think that she has come to “the wrong island” (6), which is an allusion to Defoe’s tale, as if, like the readers, she is aware of the existence of the original Robinson Crusoe and of how different her story is from it. Indeed, she says it plainly in a direct reference to the classic tale:

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, where no more is asked of him than to drowse the days away till a ship calls to fetch him home. (7)

This is definitely the summary of Robinson Crusoe’s life-story; Susan’s story, however, is a different one. The setting itself is different and the narrator draws our attention to this fact when she describes the island:

But the island on which I was cast away was quite another place: a great rocky hill with a flat top, rising sharply from the sea on all sides except one, dotted with drab bushes that never flowered and never shed their leaves. Off the island grew beds of brown seaweed which, borne ashore by the waves, gave off a noisome stench and supported swarms of large pale fleas. (7)

Susan Barton refers to the other desert isle because she knows well that the readers are familiar with it, that they must have read about Robinson’s prosperous island, his adventures and the ship that saved him. This literary knowledge shared between the story’s narrator and the readers involves the latter in what is called “readerly activities” that drive them to consider both the elements belonging to the “transformed text” on the one hand – in this case Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Cruso, by relying on their memories – and the elements constituting the “transformative text”, on the other hand. Thus, the readers become “co-constructors” of the text, as Tisha Turk calls them, and the meaning of the transformative narrative cannot be reached unless the readers react to the intertext. Turk also argues that: “Part of the transformative narrative’s meaning therefore lies outside the text, in the space between text
and intertext” (296). The readers, therefore, understand the text by considering the gaps and blanks, as well as the “surplus” elements found in the parody. Yet, what is different about Coetzee’s parody is that the narrator directly refers to this “space between text and intertext” by pointing to the gaps as well as the additional elements in Foe.

One additional element in Foe is Friday’s missing tongue, while, he is considered the gap in Susan’s story. When we read Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, we notice that there is no reference to Friday’s past history; his story starts with the arrival of Crusoe. Friday’s story is ignored by omission, as Fulkerson states (par. 22). More than that, he is further alienated from himself when Crusoe pushes him to embrace two British meta-narratives: the English language and Christianity. Judith Fetterly refers to this phenomenon as “the division of the self against the self” (qtd. in Fulkerson par. 20) whereby the subject forcibly adopts “a language and religious culture”, explains Fulkerson, “that has been structured to call those not-British “savage” and “barbaric”” (par. 21).

If Friday’s history is voluntarily excluded from Defoe’s novel by omission, it is kept so from Coetzee’s parody by rendering him dumb. In fact, Friday’s tongue has been cut out by Cruso, slave traders, or moors. We have no exact account about that, except for Susan’s fantasies about what might have happened to him. Friday cannot tell his story because he is physically maimed. Coetzee has chosen to make him as such because his parody does not claim to change things, but rather to expose the narrative and historic wrongs that wrote the black subject off the canon and history. The novel’s narrator is aware that Friday is the gap in her narrative, that he is the hole that makes it incomplete. Her literary male counterpart Foe is also aware that there is a “silence surrounding Friday” (142) and that they must give voice to this silence.

At one moment in the novel, Foe and Susan discuss the latter’s account of how Friday paddles his boat through seaweed and Foe is surprised that Friday “floats upon the very skin of death and is safe” (141). He imagines a big hand that reaches out and draws Friday down, but Susan does not believe he would die. Foe, then, tells her another scenario to her account of how Friday floats upon the wrecked ship. He imagines Friday’s “fellow-slaves” dying in that wreck while Friday sinks “to settle among the bones of the dead” (141). Mr Foe finds the survival of Friday quite striking and he imagines another scene:

I said the heart of the story,’ resumed Foe, ‘but I should have said the eye, the eye of the story. Friday rows his log of wood across the dark pupil—or the dead socket—of an eye staring up at him from the floor of the sea. He rows across it and is safe. To us he leaves the task of descending into that eye. Otherwise, like him, we sail across the surface and come ashore none the wiser, and resume our old lives, and sleep without dreaming, like babes. (141)

To speak the unspoken, for Foe, is to get to the eye of the story. This eye spares Friday because he knows the truth, he has a story, only it is an untold one. It is the task of Foe and Susan to get to the eye in order to know Friday’s story. The eye in this case may well be the eye/ I from which Friday’s story is told. If the white authors do not see Friday’s story from that eye, the eye lying at the bottom of the sea, the one that swallowed the wreck of slave ships, the one that witnessed what really happened, they will miss the point and continue their lives as innocent as babes, untouched by the bitter truth behind the silence of Friday and of his “fellow-slaves”. The eye is nothing but a mouth, as Susan tells Foe. She says: “It is for us to
descend into the mouth (since we speak in figures). It is for us to open Friday’s mouth and hear what it holds: silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear” (142). Therefore, the eye/I is Friday’s voice which will allow him to speak and make the story complete.

Yet, Coetzee seems to be determined to remind us that it is not a clear voice, but a roar, for his novel’s purpose is not to give voice to the silenced, but to give the readers “reared on travellers’ tales” the opportunity to review their understanding of those tales, to revisit the canon and see through that eye lying at the bottom of the sea that those travellers created a different version of the story of the oppressed, and wrote tales that justified and legitimized the exclusion of women and blacks out of literature and history. In Coetzee’s novel, and upon their encounter, Susan and Friday become inseparable. Susan becomes Friday’s “mistress” instead of Crusoe and instead of the scene where the slave places his head beneath the master’s foot, we see him carrying her on his back, for they both share the same literary and historical demise. They have both been silenced, but they are themselves the silence that makes both narratives incomplete, i.e. Robinson Crusoe as well as its parody Foe cannot reach any closure if the story of the silenced has not been told. Fulkerson states that: “By denying Friday a tongue, Coetzee asks if the identity of the colonized is ever recoverable” (par. 27). Coetzee does not intend to recover the identity of the colonized but to “demythologize” history (Coetzee qtd. in Turk 307). Turk, however, argues that by pointing out to the suppression of woman and slave, Coetzee criticizes textual production itself. In other words, in order to make some narratives more coherent, some characters need to be suppressed or silenced (306), as is the case of Foe whose aim is to disclose the patriarchal and colonialist structures that denied access to women and the colonized more than three centuries ago. It is coherent as a parody that revisits the transformed text in order not to correct but to destabilize it.

Friday’s tongue has been cut out; he has been cast in an impenetrable world of silence. Yet, his silence is much empowering as he holds the meaning of the story Susan Barton wishes to write, and unless Friday speaks, the story will not be complete. His silence displaces the narrator’s authority as he becomes more powerful than those who master the word and wield the pen. His silence even displaces the authority of Crusoe/ Defoe as his empowering silence challenges and unveils the will to omit his story from the literary canon (Fulkerson pars. 17-18).

Tisha Turk argues that Foe “suggests the processes of selection and exclusion by which a narrative—one of many possible narratives—becomes the narrative” (Turk 304). This means that since it is Susan Barton who provides the author Foe with all the elements he needs to write an adventure story—which will be entitled Robinson Crusoe—“the audience can pretend that Foe is ‘the real story’ on which Robinson Crusoe and Roxana are based” (304). In other words, the story Mr Foe wishes to write based on the accounts of Susan Barton is but the story Daniel Defoe wrote more than three centuries ago, as if Foe claims priority over Robinson Crusoe.

Nevertheless, being faithful to the white patriarchal traditions of his age, Foe suppresses her-story from his-story, writing her, thus, off the Robinson Crusoe tale “within the constraints of available roles for women” (Turk 303). Susan imagines his reply to her letter in which she urges him to write her a publishable story as follows: “Better without the woman”
(72). The woman, undeniably, does not figure in Defoe’s story as a character that speaks out for her own. She is a character with a functional role, like that of “mother” or “widow”. Her inclusion in what is called “the classics” is either for the sake of coherence, as Coetzee would suggest, or for the sake of moral preaching, as in the case of Roxana, another classic by Defoe and the “secondary intertext” in Foe (Turk 299). As a matter of fact, Daniel Defoe’s Roxana has echoes in Coetzee’s novel, namely in the character and life-story of Susan Barton who, like Roxana, whose real name is Susan, notes Turk (303), has lost her daughter and started a quest to look for her. Yet, when this lost daughter finds her way to Mr Foe’s house to fetch her mother, this latter denies her and prefers to continue the story without the lost-and-then-found daughter cliché.

The encounter between Susan and the girl springs out of Coetzee’s literary whim to make the text meet the intertext. The result is a violent intercourse where the girl recognizes Susan as her mother, while Susan, who is familiar with the story of Roxana, refuses to endorse that role because she knows the implications of such an act. For Susan to acknowledge that girl as her daughter is to be inscribed not only into the role of Roxana, but also into the whole eighteenth century patriarchal social and literary structures providing stereotypical roles for women as either immoral whores and courtesans or good wives and mothers. Susan refuses to resemble Defoe’s heroine because she contests those structures. Once again, Coetzee’s parody invokes Defoe’s discourse in order to question and demythologize it.

J. M. Coetzee’s novel Foe is one among many re-writings of the eighteenth century novel Robinson Crusoe which was taught in English departments as a literary canon, bearing witness to Defoe’s skilled plume. Yet, Defoe’s novel is now mostly taught as the transformed text that bears eloquent testimony to Defoe’s imperialist gaze and his biased discourse. A novel like Foe has succeeded in displacing the canon without offering a substitute for it. It questions the patriarchal and colonialist discourses nurturing Defoe’s text by pointing out to the mechanisms of silencing and omission of both woman and the slave. These mechanisms render Defoe’s classic a text that preaches and legitimizes imperialism and patriarchy. Coetzee’s parody Foe, hence, revisits the colonial text and context not to correct the wrongs to which slaves and women have been exposed, but to invite the readers to see through the “eye” that looks at Friday from the bottom of the sea and read Robinson Crusoe without an “e” to see whether it makes any difference to read it otherwise.
References


