

*Allusions to British Imperialism in Coetzee's Foe; A Reconstruction of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe*



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**Abstract:** This research study aims to conduct an analysis of orientalist features present within the novel "Foe." The primary objective of this analysis is to highlight the significant role played by orientalism in the context of English Imperialism. Coetzee's approach in *Foe* involves a meticulous reevaluation and reinterpretation of the renowned and widely celebrated work of English Literature, "Robinson Crusoe," authored by Daniel Defoe.

In *Foe*, Coetzee revisits the same characters from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, albeit with subtle alterations. This literary exercise is undertaken to demonstrate the powerful influence of discourse in the construction of narratives according to one's desires. The analysis undertaken here inquires into the strategies employed by colonial powers in their quest for domination and the orientalizing of colonized nations. Furthermore, it seeks to shed light on the pervasive issue of misrepresentation, where the Occident often distorts the reality of the Orient.

This research also explores into the examination of the brutal tactics employed by colonial masters during the era of English colonialism. By thoroughly investigating these historical aspects, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how colonial powers operated and subjugated other nations during this period.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Contrapuntal reading, Edward Said, JM Coetzee

## Introduction

Born in Cape Town in February 1940, J.M. Coetzee, an eminent African-born English novelist, essayist, linguist, translator, and Nobel Prize laureate in Literature (2003), has made significant contributions to the literary world. His literary journey embarked with the publication of "Dusk-lands" in 1974, and he subsequently delved into autobiographical narratives with *Boyhood* (1997), later continuing his introspective exploration through *Youth and Summertime* (2009).

Coetzee's body of work consistently engages with the overarching theme of postcolonialism. In this context, *Foe* (1986) emerges as a seminal

work. It represents a distinctive reimagining of Daniel Defoe's celebrated and influential novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a cornerstone of English literature and a historical artifact that played an undeniable role in the establishment of Eurocentrism and the rationale for British imperial dominion.

In *Foe*, Coetzee undertakes the deliberate reconstruction of this esteemed English literary classic. Coetzee retains the central character while introducing marked alterations. In *Foe*, Cruso, akin to his predecessor, refrains from documenting his island adventures. This deliberate narrative choice allows Coetzee to unveil alternate dimensions of imperialism.

Coetzee's portrayal of Cruso, distinct from Defoe's heroic characterization, is presented as irrational, savage, and emblematic of the capriciousness often associated with colonial-era Englishmen. This shift in characterization serves a dual purpose: highlighting the malleability of narratives through language and discourse, while simultaneously deconstructing Defoe's portrayal of Crusoe as the archetypal colonizer, thus challenging the foundations of Eurocentrism.

An imperative lens through which to approach postcolonial texts in English is to examine the responses they offer to perspectives embedded within English-authored works. This approach vividly portrays how historical actions shaped the world. The plot of *Robinson Crusoe* primarily revolves around colonialism and the construction of the contrived ideology of Englishness. In contrast, Coetzee's *Foe* serves as a meticulous deconstruction of *Robinson Crusoe*, exposing the biases, prejudices, and injustices inherent in Defoe's portrayal. A pivotal character in both narratives, Friday, stands at the forefront. His lack of a tongue symbolizes the suppression of native languages and voices, leaving an unresolved ambiguity regarding the agent responsible for this silencing.

In *Orientalism* (1978) Said adopts a Foucauldian perspective, asserting that *Orientalism* is not an objective representation of the real East; rather, it serves as a manifestation of power. It conveys the notion of "European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (1978, p. 8). Thus, *Orientalism* operates as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p. 4). This perspective is also applicable to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), albeit in a different context.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* similarly mirrors the Eurocentric worldview of the time. The novel reflects the colonial mentality of European superiority over non-European cultures. Set on a deserted island, the story can be interpreted as a microcosm of European colonialism, with Crusoe asserting his dominance over the island,

paralleling the broader colonial endeavors of the era.

The European narrative of superiority and control over the non-European "Other" is apparent in both Said's analysis of *Orientalism* and Defoe's portrayal of Crusoe's interactions with the island and its inhabitants (Said, 1978, p. 7). This Eurocentric perspective remains a recurring theme in colonial literature and discourse from that period.

Foucault's assertion that power involves resistance is a fundamental aspect of his theory. He posits that wherever there is power, there will be a corresponding resistance to it. Said applies this perspective in his work *Cultural and Imperialism* (1978) by stating that "where there is Western aggression, there is resistance." In the face of cultural hegemony, Said advocates for cultural resistance and calls for transcending the rigid binary opposition between the West and the East, drawing on Derrida's theory of deconstruction. In *Orientalism*, Said emphasizes that the Orient-versus-Occident opposition is both misleading and highly undesirable (Said, 1978, p. 193). He also underscores "the actualities of what was later to be called multiculturalism" (p. 335).

In an effort to deconstruct Daniel Defoe's "*Robinson Crusoe*" and the Eurocentric ideological discourse it propagates, J.M. Coetzee takes a page from Said's deconstructive playbook, particularly Said's Contrapuntal approach. By employing Said's method, Coetzee aims to shed light on the deep-seated ideological biases embedded within Defoe's novel.

Coetzee's re-reading of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) through Said's Contrapuntal approach allows him to discern the intricate layers of Eurocentrism that permeate the narrative. Through this lens, Coetzee uncovers the hidden power structures and hierarchies that underpin the relationship between Crusoe and the Other, revealing the colonialist underpinnings of the narrative.

Bill Ashcroft's contributions to postcolonial theory can also be brought into this dialogue. Ashcroft's work emphasizes the importance of analyzing the *Empire Writing Back* (1989),

wherein the colonized subjects challenge and reinterpret the narratives imposed by the colonizers. Coetzee, in his re-reading of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), operates in this vein, exploring how the colonized perspective subverts the Eurocentric discourse and challenges the dominant narrative.

Through the combined lens of Said's Contrapuntal approach and Ashcroft's insights on resistance and reappropriation, Coetzee dissects *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) with a heightened awareness of the power dynamics at play. His examination reveals how the colonized characters and their experiences subvert the Eurocentric narrative, ultimately showcasing the novel's ideological bias.

By weaving together Said's and Ashcroft's approaches, Coetzee not only critiques the colonialist ideologies present in *Robinson Crusoe* but also demonstrates the broader significance of postcolonial literature in exposing and dismantling such biases. This approach underscores the complexity of colonial narratives and the transformative potential of postcolonial discourse.

Furthermore, Coetzee's application of Said's Contrapuntal approach enables him to juxtapose the dominant Eurocentric narrative with the silenced or marginalized voices and perspectives within the novel. This contrast highlights the skewed representations of the "Other" in "*Robinson Crusoe*" and exposes the ways in which the text reinforces colonial biases.

By engaging in this intellectual exercise, Coetzee offers a thought-provoking critique of the ideological underpinnings of Defoe's work and invites readers to reevaluate the Eurocentric discourse that has historically shaped colonial literature and its impact on postcolonial studies.

Edward Said, a preeminent postcolonial theorist, has made seminal contributions to the field. His seminal works, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1978), have been pivotal in advancing critical discourse on these topics. Said's scholarship elucidated how Westerners constructed the Orient, both ideologically and practically, engendering a

binary framework of 'Us vs. Them.' This binary, as Said astutely pointed out, was not innate or geographical but rather epistemological and ontological. Orientalism perpetuated stereotypes, portraying the Orient as inherently lethargic, uncivilized, and inferior, thereby providing a convenient rationale for colonial domination.

Coetzee's *Foe* aligns cohesively with Edward Said's concept of a "contrapuntal" reading. This approach involves reevaluating canonical English texts to unveil their concealed prejudices and biases. Coetzee's retention of familiar characters facilitates this deconstruction. Through *Foe*, Coetzee provocatively presents Defoe, the writer, as an integral character within the narrative. He even alters the spelling of Defoe's name, underscoring the potency of language in shaping narratives. In contrast, Friday, *Crusoe's* subjugated companion, remains mute, emblematic of the linguistic suppression endured by colonized peoples.

In *Foe*, Coetzee's counter-narrative challenges the Eurocentric ideals perpetuated by Defoe, ultimately scrutinizing the inherent power of discourse and its role in subjugation. While Defoe's *Crusoe* ardently embraces the written word, Coetzee's *Cruso* resists, emphasizing the colonial strategy of language manipulation as a tool of control. Coetzee's narrative invites readers to question the innate superiority of Europeans, underscoring the artifice of this self-imposed notion.

In conclusion, *Foe* by J.M. Coetzee constitutes a compelling response to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, embodying a contrapuntal perspective within the realm of postcolonial literature. Through linguistic and narrative manipulation, Coetzee exposes the complexities embedded in the colonial legacy, offering an incisive exploration of postcolonialism's intricate dimensions. This nuanced analysis affirms the enduring relevance of Coetzee's work, which continues to provoke critical discussions surrounding imperialism, representation, and the power of language in shaping historical narratives.

*In the context of analyzing J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* through the lens of postcolonialism, Ashcraft's work provides valuable insights. Ashcraft (2011) highlights the intricate interplay between literature and imperialism, shedding light on how literary texts can both reflect and reinforce colonial ideologies. Coetzee's *Foe*, as a reimagining of Robinson Crusoe, becomes a compelling case study in this regard, exemplifying the complexities inherent in the colonial narrative.*

*Ashcraft's research underscores the significance of literature as a medium through which colonial powers often perpetuated their dominance and constructed the image of the Other. Coetzee's deliberate deconstruction of the colonial narrative in *Foe* aligns with Ashcraft's exploration of how postcolonial literature can challenge and subvert the established colonial discourse. (Ashcraft, *Postcolonial Transformation*, 2011).*

*In *Foe*, Coetzee offers a counter-narrative that not only questions the Eurocentric ideals propagated by Defoe but also highlights the manipulative power of language and narrative in shaping colonial perceptions. Ashcraft's work further emphasizes the importance of critically analyzing such counter-narratives to gain a deeper understanding of the postcolonial discourse and the complexities surrounding colonial representations.*

*Moreover, Coetzee's choice to retain familiar characters while altering their roles and characteristics aligns with Ashcraft's examination of how postcolonial literature engages with and reinterprets established literary traditions. By reimagining and subverting the colonial narrative through linguistic and narrative strategies, Coetzee invites readers to question the inherent superiority of colonial powers, a theme that resonates with Ashcraft's research on the deconstruction of colonial ideologies.*

#### **Research Objectives:**

1. To explore the portrayal of imperialism in J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Foe*, and uncover its critical aspects.

2. To analyze the presence of Orientalist features in Coetzee's *Foe* and their role in shaping the narrative.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. How does J.M. Coetzee depict the complex facets of imperialism in his work, *Foe*?
2. What specific elements and characteristics of Orientalism can be identified within the narrative of Coetzee's *Foe*?

*After conducting an extensive review of various articles, journals, and books to gather comprehensive insights into the concepts of Orientalism, binary opposition, and the contrapuntal approach involving the reevaluation of English texts, it becomes evident that these sources have shed light on the historical depiction of the Orient as passive, indolent, barbaric, savage, uncivilized, and uneducated within English literature. These narratives have underscored the role of language in dichotomizing the world into opposing elements: the civilized and the uncivilized, the Orient and the Occident, the educated and the uneducated.*

*This literature review has greatly enriched the researcher's understanding of Post-colonialism as a broad discipline and has illuminated the biased perspectives prevalent in the works of English novelists. Moreover, this analysis of relevant literature has identified a notable gap in the current study, focusing on an orientalist examination of J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* as a reinterpretation of Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe."*

*Azam N. (2018) posits that Coetzee meticulously constructs a narrative in *Foe* where Susan Barton, a prominent female character, appears to lack agency from the outset. Azam contends that Barton's life is characterized by a relentless pursuit of accommodating men's desires to maintain their contentment, avoid conflict, and seek acceptance within the male-dominated society. However, Azam argues that despite her outward display of strength, Barton's voice remains inaudible throughout much of the novel,*

*symbolizing her limited agency in a patriarchal and colonial world*

*At a superficial level, Coetzee presents Barton as a resilient female character engaged in an ongoing struggle to publish her story. Yet, upon deeper examination, it becomes evident that she grapples with the pervasive dominance of men within society. Azam's analysis highlights the complexities of Barton's character, portraying her as a postcolonial woman seeking liberation and freedom. Ultimately, Azam suggests that Barton's apparent silence is not enforced by males but rather is a conscious choice, serving as a commentary on her preference for remaining unheard.*

*The review of relevant literature has provided essential context for the current study, illuminating key concepts and biases inherent in English literature. It has also underscored the need for a nuanced examination of Coetzee's *Foe* through an orientalist lens, with a particular focus on the portrayal and agency of female characters like Susan Barton.*

*According to Han W. (2017), novels serve as methodological vehicles that strategically unfold narratives to represent the nation, often cloaked in a fairy tale-like identity. Among these literary works, *Robinson Crusoe* stands out as a celebrated masterpiece within English literature, with England serving as its primary backdrop. In this context, the novel *Robinson Crusoe* meticulously constructs the image of a colonizer, epitomized by the character *Robinson Crusoe*, thereby crafting a fantastical identity for England and cementing its national character, often referred to as "Englishness."*

*Daniel Defoe's portrayal of *Robinson Crusoe* within the novel presents him as a fortunate, rational, logical, robust, civilized, and almost god-like figure, adorned with all the virtuous qualities associated with strength and resilience. Through narratives such as *Robinson Crusoe*, English readers were encouraged to identify themselves with *Crusoe*, forging a sense of unity and superiority as a community and nation. They came to view themselves as the epitome of civilization, surpassing all others on the global stage.*

*However, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* takes a divergent path, undermining the idealized and constructed attributes of *Crusoe*. In *Foe*, Coetzee reimagines the same character, *Crusoe*, deconstructing him by depicting him as foolish, sexually aggressive, and passive. This deconstruction serves to challenge the inflated notions of Eurocentrism, revealing that such concepts were not inherent but rather constructed. Coetzee's literary revision involves transforming *Friday*, who was originally portrayed as a Caribbean boy in *Robinson Crusoe*, into a negro boy in "*Foe*." This transformation sheds light on various aspects related to African communities and the plight of black individuals, illustrating the suppression of their voices and the destructive impact of English colonialism on Africa.*

*Han W.'s insights, as presented in the article, offer a profound understanding of how literature, exemplified by *Robinson Crusoe* and its reinterpretation in *Foe*, plays a pivotal role in shaping national identities and exposing the artifice inherent in Eurocentrism. This analysis underscores the significance of literature as a medium for critiquing and reevaluating established narratives and identities.*

*In Neimneh S.'s study (2014), the intricate interplay between postcolonialism and feminism is illuminated, with a particular focus on the themes of silence and storytelling. The research delves into an analysis of characters such as *Barton* and *Friday*. It posits that within the framework of postcolonial ideology, silence operates as a dominant force, much like a woman does in society, often marginalized based on racial and other criteria.*

*The researcher contends that *Friday's* silence is primarily attributed to his race, as he lacks access to power due to his racial identity and skin color. In contrast, *Barton's* expulsion from the center of authorship can be attributed to both her gender and her status as the "other." The research ultimately concludes that *Friday's* lack of language represents a reduction imposed by colonial forces, while *Susan* eventually succeeds in having her story told.*

*Bunday G. (1998) explores the themes of self, language, and history writing in Coetzee's work.*

Bunday argues that Coetzee utilizes the character of Robinson Crusoe to deconstruct the concept of self and challenges the idea that history writing should be objective and language neutral. Coetzee transforms Crusoe, who was originally portrayed as a diary writer and control-oriented, into a silent, passive, and indifferent figure in "Foe." Additionally, Coetzee portrays Susan Barton as a powerless woman seeking individualized selfhood, challenging the substantial individuality and power associated with Crusoe.

Furthermore, Peterson C. (2015) addresses the ongoing struggle of Susan Barton to give voice to Friday, a character who is believed to have had his tongue cut out by his previous cruel slave masters, according to Crusoe. However, Susan never examines Friday's mouth to verify whether he truly lacks a tongue when prompted by Crusoe. This symbolic representation underscores Susan's failure to understand Friday's predicament, highlighting her narcissistic tendencies and inability to connect with his reality.

while various researchers have explored Foe from different angles, this research aims to fill a specific gap by approaching the novel from the perspective of Edward Said's postcolonial theory. This perspective offers a fresh lens through which to analyze the complexities of colonialism, feminism, language, and power dynamics within the narrative.

### **Research Methodology:**

During the course of this research study, a qualitative research methodology has been diligently employed. This investigation primarily hinges on textual analysis, serving as the cornerstone for unearthing the myriad allusions to British Imperialism thoughtfully interwoven within the fabric of J.M. Coetzee's literary masterpiece, "Foe." The researcher's mission is to delve deeply into these allusions by means of the discerning framework provided by Edward Said's conceptualization of Orientalism.

### **Data Collection:**

Data collection for this research study has been predicated upon two distinct categories:

primary and secondary sources. At the vanguard of primary data sources resides the comprehensive examination of J.M. Coetzee's magnum opus, "Foe." In tandem with this primary source, the researcher has leveraged secondary sources, which encompass exhaustive internet searches and a meticulous review of a diverse array of articles and books germane to the overarching research theme.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

In the pursuit of this research endeavor, a qualitative research methodology has been meticulously employed. This study revolves around the meticulous analysis of text, endeavoring to unearth the multifarious allusions to British Imperialism intricately woven into the tapestry of J.M. Coetzee's literary magnum opus, "Foe." At the heart of this research lies a profound commitment to explore these allusions by employing the discerning framework provided by Edward Said's seminal concepts of "contrapuntal reading" of canonical English texts and the paradigm of "Orientalism" expounded upon in his groundbreaking volumes, "Orientalism" (1978) and "Culture and Imperialism" (1978). The overarching aim is to illuminate the diverse array of allusions embedded in Coetzee's celebrated contrapuntal reinterpretation of Daniel Defoe's canonical English text, Robinson Crusoe (1719), as encapsulated within his widely acclaimed novel, Foe (1986).

Edward Said, the pioneering figure in postcolonial literary theory, has bequeathed a profound legacy through his influential works, "Orientalism" and "Culture and Imperialism." These seminal texts mark pivotal junctures in the discourse surrounding marginalized and peripheral subjectivities, shedding light on the intricate processes through which Orientals were subjugated, colonized, and ultimately cast into a stereotypical mold. In Said's narrative, the Orientals find themselves ensnared in a binary relationship with the Occident, perpetually positioned as the inferior, the subordinate, the master and the slave, and the civilized versus the uncivilized. Said's oeuvre significantly advances our comprehension of the mechanisms employed by colonizers to successfully conquer and

*subdue the Other. Furthermore, Said astutely underscores how the imperial agenda was furthered through literature, resulting in the creation of canonical texts within English Literature. His work provides profound insights into the construction of an imaginative identity for the English people, thus underpinning the foundations of English nationalism and imperialism.*

*The concept of Orientalism encompasses a multifaceted array of dimensions. It is emblematic of the construction of the Orient within a rigid, immutable framework that tragically strips the Orient of its inherent humanity. This reductionism devalues the rich tapestry of cultures and the diverse spectrum of individuals inhabiting the Orient, rendering them less significant than their colonial overlords. This portrayal of the Orient as a ripe case for a civilizing mission constitutes a fundamental facet of Orientalism's conceptual framework. In explicating his viewpoint, Edward Said draws upon Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse" (1926) and seamlessly integrates it with Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1891). "Discourse" is characterized as a scenario wherein the powerful wield dominion over all instruments of propaganda, along with military and territorial prowess, enabling them to stifle dissenting voices. Foucault's examination of power dynamics within the context of Empire and the West informs this perspective. He posits that the control over truth is exercised by the powerful through the manipulation of discourse. The West has historically painted white as virtuous and black as malevolent, facilitated by their mastery over the machinery of propaganda, thus suppressing the authentic truth. Edward Said contends that a similar process transpired concerning the Orient, Muslims, and Palestinians, who were unjustly branded as terrorists. This branding was facilitated by America's stranglehold on Hollywood and media outlets, which enabled them to assert dominance over narratives. Muslims, lacking access to such channels, were unjustly cast as terrorists. Foucault and Said concur in their belief that knowledge equates to power.*

*Edward Said asserts that the colonization of minds is easily achievable through the deployment of discourse, a reality substantiated by historical precedent. Orientalism is characterized as a self-proclaimed system of knowledge concerning the Orient, wherein Edward Said observes that it involves the articulation of statements about the Orient and the imposition of authority over it. This portrayal of the Orient by Western scholars starkly contrasts with the lived reality of Oriental societies, challenging the prevailing narratives that depicted them as lustful, indolent, and irrational. Edward Said aptly characterizes this constructed representation as an imaginative territory, a realm shaped by Western authors and scholars. This self-proclaimed scheme of knowledge led European scholars to erroneously believe that they possessed a superior understanding of the Orient. Consequently, the Orient was Orientalized, subjected to Western superiority, and measured against Western standards, diverging starkly from the nuanced reality that belied these portrayals. European travelers, driven by the dual motives of subjugating the Orient and narrating this subjugation, embarked on a mission to represent a people they deemed incapable of representing themselves—a mission succinctly encapsulated by Karl Marx's dictum, "they must be represented because they cannot represent themselves." Said labels this projection of Orientalism as Western cultural discourse.*

*Edward Said postulates that the avenue to mitigating these biases and dismantling the artificial and imagined divisions between the Orient and the Occident lies in the adoption of a contrapuntal approach. This approach, as expounded upon in "Culture and Imperialism" (1978), encourages scholars to cultivate a "simultaneous awareness" of both metropolitan and "other" cultures. The concept of contrapuntal reading is akin to playing harmonious yet distinct melodies in unison. It can be productively applied to the reading, interpretation, and reevaluation of English texts. Through the contrapuntal approach, ideological biases can be discerned and deconstructed,*

offering insights into how dominant discourses have contributed to the shaping of English nationalism and imperialism. Furthermore, this approach provides a foundation upon which new counternarratives can be constructed. It underscores the importance of acknowledging the interdependence between past and present, with an emphasis on the intricate relationship between Empire, culture, and text.

The present study constitutes a diligent effort to meticulously evaluate the diverse allusions present in Coetzee's seminal work, *Foe*, drawing upon Edward Said's concept of the contrapuntal approach. The researcher has conducted an exhaustive examination of the novel, plumbing its depths to discern the multifaceted employment of allusions to British Imperialism. This exploration encompasses a comprehensive analysis of how Coetzee artfully reinterprets Daniel Defoe's canonical English text, "Robinson Crusoe."

#### **Discussion:**

J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) stands as a profound counter-narrative to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Coetzee strategically employs Edward Said's contrapuntal approach to artfully rewrite Defoe's iconic tale, with a singular purpose: to unveil the concealed truths.

The title, *Foe*, carries nuanced symbolism, signifying both "enemy" and "false." The term "enemy" resonates symbolically with the renowned English novelist Daniel Defoe, whom Coetzee deliberately transforms into "Foe." This alteration serves as a deconstruction, highlighting the transformative power of words. By rechristening Daniel Defoe as *Foe*, implying an adversary, Coetzee indirectly underscores the notion that the colonizer assumes the role of the enemy (Coetzee, 1986, p. 7).

An alternative interpretation of *Foe* lies in its connotation of "false." In this context, *Foe* casts a critical perspective upon Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, positioning it as a fictitious narrative divorced from reality. Coetzee embarks on a quest for truth, adopting Edward Said's contrapuntal reading. A central debate within Coetzee's *Foe* revolves around Friday's silence, evoking the poignant question: "The slavers cut

out his tongue and sold him into slavery, the slave hunters of Africa. But surely he was a mere child when they took him. Why would they cut out a child's tongue?" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13).

In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the English protagonist, Crusoe, encounters a cannibal, whom he names Friday, imposing his own language upon him without regard for Friday's native tongue. Through language acquisition, Crusoe effectually colonizes Friday, reshaping him into a compliant subordinate. This colonization is a facet of the broader theme of British imperialism. Coetzee, in *Foe*, presents Friday as a tongueless figure, unveiling the harsh reality of British imperialism. Crusoe's tactic of language imposition is critiqued, exposing the darker facets of colonialism. In this narrative context, Crusoe becomes the *Foe*, an enemy, and his account in *Robinson Crusoe* is deemed a false portrayal, concomitant with the imposition of language upon Friday (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13).

Susan Barton, a character in *Foe*, offers a crucial perspective. When she seeks to publish her island story, Mr. Foe, another character, insists on including elements such as Crusoe brandishing guns and besieged by cannibals, as these elements conform to a particular narrative (Coetzee, 1986, p. 14). However, Barton remains steadfast in her commitment to truth, declaring, "what I saw, I wrote, I saw no cannibals" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 14). This divergence highlights Defoe's strategy of implementing Western civilization and superiority on the island by using firearms. Coetzee suggests that British colonization was underpinned by the exercise of power through armed force, a concept aligned with Edward Said's notion of hegemony (Coetzee, 1986, p. 14).

The symbolic act of planting seeds to occupy the blank spaces on the island emerges as another allusion to British imperialism. In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe colonizes the deserted island by cultivating its barren soil, sowing seeds to grow wheat, and taming the local fauna. The act of cultivation becomes a metaphor for colonization, as Crusoe exerts control over the land and its inhabitants.



*In contrast, Coetzee's Cruso in Foe consciously chooses not to plant seeds and reject tools and muskets from a wrecked ship, signaling a departure from Defoe's approach. This deviation underscores Coetzee's critique of British imperialism, challenging the notion that colonization was synonymous with Europeanization. Coetzee's Cruso exemplifies a different perspective, suggesting that the act of planting seeds to colonize and occupy new territories was an intrinsic part of British imperialism (Coetzee, 1986, p. 19).*

*Language assumes a central role in the subjugation and colonization of indigenous peoples and in constructing the imaginative national identity of "Englishness." In Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Crusoe's use of English language symbolizes his rationality, strength, and god-like qualities. It creates an identification point for English-speaking readers, positioning them as superior to other cultures. Language serves as a tool of colonialism, erasing indigenous languages and cultures, and asserting the dominance of English culture.*

*Coetzee's Foe challenges this linguistic imperialism. By renaming Defoe as Foe, Coetzee highlights the power of language to construct narratives. Additionally, Coetzee portrays Friday in Foe as a voiceless figure, deprived of language, suggesting that those who cannot speak for themselves are often silenced by colonial powers (Coetzee, 1986, p. 42). Cruso in Foe refuses to teach Friday, stating that Friday has no need for words, thereby questioning the colonial practice of language imposition (Coetzee, 1986, p. 35).*

*Furthermore, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe employs the motif of journal-keeping as a means of chronicling adventures and asserting control over the island. Crusoe meticulously records his experiences, positioning himself as a colonist by nature and nation.*

*In contrast, Coetzee's Cruso in Foe dismisses the notion of keeping journals or utilizing tools such as muskets. He articulates, "The ship lies on the bed of the ocean, broken by the waves and covered in sand, what has survived the salts and*

*sea-worm will not be worth saving. We have a roof over our heads, made without saw and axe. We sleep, we eat, and we live. We have no needs of tools" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 19). This rejection challenges the conventional narrative of colonization and the need for technological advancement. It suggests that British imperialism did not always rely on advanced tools and that survival without such tools was possible (Coetzee, 1986, p. 19).*

*Coetzee deconstructs the constructed notions of English superiority and the imagined identity of "Englishness" by examining how Defoe's writing contributed to these constructs. The narrative of colonization is reshaped in Foe, revealing the ideological biases present in Defoe's work. It prompts readers to reconsider the history and legacy of colonialism, emphasizing the interdependence of past and present and the role of language, power, and technology in shaping imperialist narratives.*

*Coetzee's choice of the title Foe encapsulates the essence of his narrative. It underscores the dual nature of the term, serving as a potent symbol for the adversarial relationship between colonizers and the colonized. By renaming Defoe as Foe, Coetzee engages in a literary act of subversion, suggesting that the colonizer is, in essence, the enemy of those they colonize (Coetzee, 1986, p. 7). This renaming also alludes to the constructed nature of narratives and identities in the context of imperialism.*

*The portrayal of Friday in Foe as a voiceless character, one who has been deprived of his tongue, holds a mirror to the oppressive practices of British imperialism. In Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Friday is subjected to language imposition, symbolizing the erasure of indigenous languages and cultures. Crusoe's act of renaming and teaching English language to Friday epitomizes the colonizer's attempt to assert dominance (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13). In Foe, Coetzee challenges this practice by presenting Friday as a character who cannot speak, highlighting the silencing effect of colonialism (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13). The absence of Friday's voice becomes a powerful commentary on the historical injustices committed against indigenous populations.*

Furthermore, the act of planting seeds to occupy the blank spaces on the island serves as a metaphor for British imperialism in "Robinson Crusoe." Crusoe's cultivation of the land signifies the colonizer's drive to assert control over new territories, rendering them productive and habitable (Coetzee, 1986, p. 19). It represents a form of colonization by transforming the barren landscape into a space of English civilization.

In *Foe*, Coetzee's portrayal of Crusoe's decision not to plant seeds and his rejection of tools and muskets from the wrecked ship challenges the conventional narrative of colonization (Coetzee, 1986, p. 19). It suggests that colonization did not always require advanced tools or the imposition of European agricultural practices. This departure from the established narrative invites readers to question the historical accounts of colonization and to consider alternative perspectives.

The role of language in shaping the narrative of imperialism is a central theme in both *Robinson Crusoe* and "*Foe*." In Defoe's work, Crusoe's use of English language symbolizes his rationality, strength, and superiority. It constructs an imaginative national identity of "Englishness" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 42). Language becomes a tool of colonization, erasing indigenous languages and cultures.

Coetzee's renaming of Defoe as *Foe* highlights the power of language to construct narratives. Additionally, the portrayal of Friday as voiceless underscores the silencing effect of colonialism (Coetzee, 1986, p. 42). Crusoe's refusal to teach Friday further questions the colonial practice of language imposition (Coetzee, 1986, p. 35). Language, in *Foe*, is presented as a means of control and subjugation, challenging the constructed narratives of English superiority.

In conclusion, *Foe* by J.M. Coetzee provides a critical reevaluation of British imperialism and colonial narratives. Drawing on Edward Said's contrapuntal approach, the novel challenges the established notions of English superiority and imperialism. Through nuanced interpretations

of the title, linguistic symbolism, character dynamics, and the act of cultivation, Coetzee invites readers to engage in a reflective examination of the history and legacy of colonialism. *Foe* serves as a powerful literary critique that unveils the ideological biases present in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, prompting a reconsideration of the interplay between language, power, and technology in shaping imperialist narratives.

### **Conclusion:**

The sentence "Your pen your ink, but they become mine when I write." (Coetzee, 1940) encapsulates J.M. Coetzee's profound exploration of the power dynamics inherent in language and storytelling. Within the context of Coetzee's reinterpretation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in his novel *Foe*, this sentence serves as a poignant commentary on the manipulation and exploitation of language as a tool of colonization.

Coetzee's narrative strategy in *Foe* involves revisiting and reevaluating Defoe's classic work through a contrapuntal lens. He delves into the complexities of narrative construction, revealing that language is not merely a means of communication but a potent instrument of control. By stating, "Your pen your ink," Coetzee acknowledges the tools of writing, traditionally associated with the author. However, when he asserts, "but they become mine when I write," he underscores the transformative power of storytelling.

In the colonial context, language was often used as a means of subjugating and erasing indigenous cultures and identities. English imperialists, like Crusoe in Defoe's work, imposed their language on colonized populations, thereby asserting dominance and control. Coetzee, in *Foe*, challenges this narrative by demonstrating how storytelling can be a means of resistance and reclamation.

Through the character of *Foe*, who renames Defoe as the "enemy," Coetzee highlights the adversarial nature of the colonizer-colonized relationship. He suggests that the colonizer, in manipulating language and narrative, becomes the true *Foe* of those subjected to colonization.

*The act of renaming the author symbolizes the subversion of colonial narratives and the exposure of their inherent biases.*

*J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* offers a profound critique of British imperialism, skillfully employing Edward Said's contrapuntal approach to reexamine Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe." Through meticulous analysis of the text, this study has unveiled several allusions to British imperialism, shedding light on the selective and biased representations of the Orient by English imperialists.*

*Coetzee's narrative underscores the pivotal role of language in colonization. Language, symbolized by the absence of Friday's tongue in *Foe*, stands as a cornerstone in the construction of imperialist power dynamics. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Friday's identity is systematically deconstructed as he is forced to adopt English language, manners, and habits without regard for his own cultural identity. Coetzee's portrayal of Friday's voicelessness in *Foe* serves as a powerful symbol of the silencing effect of colonialism.*

*The title *Foe* itself carries symbolic weight, as it renames the iconic English author Daniel Defoe as *Foe*, highlighting the antagonistic relationship between colonizers and the colonized. Coetzee's choice of this title underscores the constructed nature of colonial narratives and identities and prompts a critical examination of English imperialism.*

*Furthermore, the contrast between Defoe's rational, educated, and civilized Robinson Crusoe and Coetzee's subverted and unconventional Cruso in *Foe* challenges established notions of the ideal English hero. Coetzee's Cruso rejects conventional practices associated with imperialism, such as keeping journals, sowing seeds, or subjugating indigenous populations. This departure from the norm encourages readers to question the traditional narrative of colonization.*

*Moreover, Susan Barton's refusal to fabricate stories of cannibals in her narrative, as suggested by *Foe*, emphasizes the importance of truth in storytelling and critiques the*

*manipulation of narratives to suit imperialist agendas.*

*In this research study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the allusions to British imperialism in "*Foe*." It has explored how Coetzee's contrapuntal approach deconstructs and challenges the biased representations found in Defoe's "*Robinson Crusoe*." While this study has focused on specific aspects of the novel, *Foe* offers a rich tapestry of themes and allegories that invite further exploration, particularly from a postmodern perspective. Future research could delve into these unexplored dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Coetzee's intricate critique of imperialism in "*Foe*."*

*The research on J.M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* and its critique of British imperialism, as well as its exploration of the power dynamics inherent in language, holds significant relevance for Pakistan and its broader society. While Pakistan has a unique historical and cultural context, there are several key takeaways from this research that can be applied to understanding and addressing issues within Pakistani society.*

*Coetzee's exploration of how language was used as a tool of control and dominance is relevant for understanding the impact of colonialism on Pakistan's languages, cultures, and identities. Pakistan, having experienced British colonial rule, shares a postcolonial legacy with many other countries in Asia and Africa. The legacy of British colonialism can still be felt in various aspects of Pakistani society, including language and cultural impositions.*

*In the context of Pakistan, where media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions and narratives, Coetzee's insights into how narratives can be constructed and manipulated through language and storytelling are particularly pertinent. Media representation in Pakistan often involves the portrayal of certain groups or regions in ways that may be inaccurate or biased. Understanding the power of language can lead to more critical media consumption and a demand for fair and accurate representation.*

Pakistan's diverse society, with various ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, can benefit from Coetzee's examination of how narratives shape cultural identity. The country's cultural diversity is a source of strength, and understanding how narratives can impact the construction of cultural identity can lead to greater appreciation and preservation of Pakistan's rich cultural heritage.

The role of language as a tool of power is a topic of relevance in Pakistan, where debates over language use, including Urdu, regional languages, and English, have been ongoing. Coetzee's exploration of language as a mechanism of control underscores the importance of linguistic diversity and the need to ensure equitable access to education and resources for all linguistic communities within Pakistan.

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