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NO DESIRE, NO STORIES: A REUNION WITH ANIMALS IN J. M. COETZEE'S *FOE*

Arzu ve Öyküler Giremez: J. M. Coetzee'nin *Düşman* Romanında Hayvanla Buluşma

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Abstract
J. M. Coetzee's 1986 novel Foe, *a rewriting of Daniel Defoe's* Robinson Crusoe *amalgamates the issues of colonialism and the mastery over non-white people with human mastery over animals. The figure that brings these issues together in the novel is the tongue-less and story-less Friday, who is both the colonized other and an animal representation.*
Language as a human capacity has often been used for justifying human superiority and the ensuing cruelty to animals. Yet, language is also shown to be a prison, a closed system with no exit. Therefore, being outside it has more recently been interpreted as freedom, one that humans left behind by separating themselves from animals, as encapsulated in the biblical narrative of the fall. .
Defoe's Crusoe and Coetzee's Cruso stand at opposing ends of the interpretations of language as the human privilege or a prison. Defoe's protagonist owes his superiority over both Friday and the island's non-humans to his capacity for language and storytelling. Unlike him, Coetzee's Cruso relinquishes his superiority over Friday and non-humans with minimal use of language and storytelling. He envisions a place with no stories to compete for primacy, a place where borders do not exist. Thus, the relationship between Cruso and Friday in Foe *represents a return to the pre-linguistic and pre-lapsarian unity between man and animals and to freedom.*
Keywords: *J. M. Coetzee,* Foe, *Animal Studies, Language,* Robinson Crusoe.
Öz
J. M. Coetzee'nin 1986 yılında yayımladığı ve Defoe'nun Robinson Crusoe *adlı romanının yeniden yazımı olan* Foe (Düşman) *adlı romanı sömürgecilik, beyaz olmayan halkların üzerinde kurulan egemenlik ile hayvanlar üzerinde kurulan egemenliği birlikte harmanlar. Romanda bu konuları bir araya getiren figür; bir yandan sömürgeleştirilen insanı, bir yandan da hayvanı temsil eden dilsiz ve bu nedenle öykü-süz Friday (Cuma) karakteridir. Sadece insana özgü bir iletişim aracı olarak görülen dil, insanın hayvan üzerinde kurduğu egemenliği ve bunun sonucunda gelişen şiddet biçimlerini meşrulaştırmak üzere kullanılmaktadır. Ancak dil bir taraftan da dışarıya çıkış olanağı bırakmayan kapalı bir sistem, bir hapishane olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Bu nedenle onun dışında olmak, insanın hayvandan ayrılırken geride bıraktığı özgürlük anlamına da gelir. Defoe'nun Crusoe'su hem Cuma hem de insan-dışı doğa üzerindeki egemenliğini, dile ve öyküye egemen olmakla kurarken Coetzee'nin Cruso'su, insan-dışı hayvanlar üzerindeki egemenliğini, dilden ve öykülemekten vazgeçerek geride bırakır. Cruso, öykülerin egemenlik için yarışmadığı, sınırların olmadığı bir yerin hayalini kurar. Bu nedenle* Düşman *romanındaki Cruso ve Cuma arasındaki ilişki, insan ve hayvanın*

cennetten kovuluş öncesindeki birlikteliğine ve özgürlüğe geri dönüşe işaret eder.
Anahtar Sözcükler: *J. M. Coetzee,* Düşman*, Hayvan Çalışmaları, Dil,* Robinson Crusoe

1. INTRODUCTION:

The critics of J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* have mostly approached the novel from postcolonial perspective, the inability of the colonized subaltern to speak, and the politics of storytelling and rewriting. In addition to these topics, however, it is possible to find in it some early signs of the author's animal rights activism, which became closely associated with Coetzee especially after the publication of *Disgrace* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). Both of his protagonists in these later books try to understand what it means to be an animal experiencing life in an animal's body. It is possible to trace in *Foe*, this subject of becoming animal, interwoven with and scattered around the previously mentioned topics.

With its two male characters, the slightly differently spelled Cruso and Friday, and an additional female character Susan Barton, *Foe* (1986) is a pre-sequel rewriting of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the most definitive and quintessential texts of Enlightenment and colonialism, the period in Western history when reason and, by extension, language, as an exclusively human attribute, were applauded to be the most significant capacities of human superiority. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* demonstrates the dynamics and zeitgeist of colonialism in the white protagonist's treatment of not only Friday but also the non-human nature and animals.

As the prototypical European male colonizer *homofaber'*s successful story of civilization and humanization, this novel has also been interpreted as a rewriting of the story of the fall and its aftermath. Crusoe's success results as much from his wielding of technology and tools as from his capacity for language and masterful storytelling. On one hand, he tries to transform the island into his native Britain with tools; on the other, hoping that he will one day return there, he keeps records of his experiences in order to be able to turn them into a story. Not only does Defoe's protagonist Robinson Crusoe dominate life on the island by language but he also uses language and storytelling to justify his domination.

Standing in stark contrast to Defoe's novel in significant ways, Coetzee's *Foe* deconstructs and lays bare the dynamics of colonial rule and its apparatuses, language and stories. First, *Foe*'s narrator is not Cruso but Susan Barton, a female castaway, a mother in search of her lost daughter.[1]

[1] As a narrative of a mother in search of her kidnapped daughter, it might be argued that Coetzee's *Foe* was written in response to Homer's *The Odyssey*, one of

She is a cross between Defoe's Crusoe and Coetzee's Cruso. Since she comes from the 'civilized' world, her perspective is colored with Western notions of colonialism and the superiority of civilization, but as a woman, she also identifies herself with the silenced and silent inhabitants of the colonized lands. It is perhaps because of her desire to give voice to these silenced beings that she wishes to tell the story of the island. Next, the two Robinsons are extremely different from each other. Unlike the former novel's young Crusoe, whose mission is to shape and effect change, Coetzee's Cruso is an older man who abstains from leaving a mark he deems more than required. Furthermore, and more significantly for this article, Coetzee's Friday bears significant differences from Defoe's: unlike him, Coetzee's Friday is tongue-less. Lacking speech like animals, he makes it impossible for Cruso and Susan to teach him language, one of the most significant acts of colonization. Moreover, unlike Crusoe, Coetzee's Cruso relinquishes his superiority over Friday and non-humans with minimal use of language and storytelling. He envisions a place with no stories to compete for primacy, a place where borders do not exist. Thus, the relationship between Cruso and Friday in *Foe* represents a return to the pre-linguistic and prelapsarian unity between man and animals and to freedom.

2. THE HUMAN-ANIMAL DIVIDE:

Myths and religions refer to a time when humans were part of the non-human world until it was irretrievably changed. Interpreting the Genesis story of the fall as the human separation from animals, Derrida, one of the most outstanding deconstructionist philosophers, revisits the moment before the fall in "The Animal that Therefore I Am" (2008). He points to Adam's naming of animals as one particular point of significance transforming human and animal relationships. This, according to Derrida, signals the genesis of time because God gives Adam this mission "in order to see," a phrase that marks a sequence or time. Before this, however, there is timelessness. Derrida indicates, "

> *God lets Ish call the other … living things that came into the world before him but were named after him. … [M]an is in both senses of the word after the animal. He follows him. This 'after,' which determines a sequence, a consequence, or a persecution, is not in time, nor is it temporal: it is the very genesis of time.* (p. 17)

Derrida connects the story of the fall not only with the genesis of

European literature's founding texts, in which the dominant discourse and cultural continuity are based on the continuity and reunion of father and son.

time but also with human language, which together set a barrier between Adam and animals. Then Adam's naming of animals, that is, man's first linguistic exercise, is closely related to the beginning of time. It is the beginning of a whole new phase that marks "the finitude of a God who doesn't know what is going to happen to [Adam] with language, … what is going to occur between man and animal[2]" (Derrida, 2008, p. 17).

Susan finds the island at this frozen state. The tedium defines so much of the life on Cruso's island that it is as if time has stopped there altogether. Hailing from time and progress, Susan is confounded with this stasis. Seeing Cruso as frozen there, Susan notices that "It was as though he wished his story to begin with his arrival on the island, and mine to begin with my arrival, and the story of us together to end on the island too" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 34). In fact, the time on Cruso's island is so slow that it seems as if it has not yet come into existence, as if it has been frozen after Cruso's naming of Friday[3]: this is the time frozen in God's "in order to see." In other words, this is before man established his domination over animals. The relationship between Cruso and Friday in *Foe* represents this stage of equality and interdependence without domination and rule. Coetzee's Cruso certainly is a representative of the Adam "[b]efore evil [*le mal*] and before all ills [*les maux*]," the Ur of which is the human dominion over animals (p. 21).

Coetzee's deconstruction of Defoe's story is thus the deconstruction of the Western grand narrative of progress. It demonstrates how, as the Western storyteller, the author (De)Foe[4] embellishes Susan's rendering of the story of the island with Western rational expectations and those of colonialism. Since there is no event to speak of on the island during Susan's stay there, the narrative that (De)Foe has eventually created—*Robinson Crusoe*—is shown to be nothing but lies. Since these texts established white men's superiority over non-white people, once the stories fall apart, so is this superiority. Furthermore, since as one of the oldest of these narratives, the

[2] What sets Derrida's thoughts in the direction of animals is finding himself standing naked in front of his cat. At that moment looking into his cat's eyes and grappling with what lies behind them, he returns to this specific moment "when Adam, alias Ish, called out the animals' names *before* the fall" (p. 21).

[3] There is no textual evidence in *Foe* as to who named Friday and when and how he lost his tongue. In this case, that Cruso named him is as good as any assumption.

[4] In *Foe*, the author that turns Susan's version into a novel is the author called Mr. Foe. Coetzee's pun on Defoe, the white author, as the enemy of truth is unmistakable.

Genesis story established the superiority of humans to animals, its deconstruction, hidden within the novel, also puts this biblical narrative to the test. It also lays bare how much cruelty and suffering the stories hide. Thus all stories become suspect as instruments of thwarting the truth and justifications for wrongdoings, suffering, and cruelty.

The place where these founding texts have brought Western civilization especially in the last centuries is appalling to Derrida because, based on the license these narratives have given humans, non-humans animals have been facing innovative, increasing, yet sometimes invisible forms of cruelty. From the biblical beginnings, which Defoe's Crusoe reenacts, humanity has reached an unprecedented level of separation from non-human animals in the last two centuries.

> *This has occurred by means of farming and regimentalization at demographic level unknown in the past, by means of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of what can be called the production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale, more and more audacious manipulations of the genome, the reduction of the animal not only to production and overactive reproduction (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning, etc.) of meat for consumption, but also of all sorts of other end products, and all of that in the service of a certain being and the putative well-being of man.* (Derrida, 2008, p. 25)

As to how this can all take place right in front of us, Coetzee, like Derrida, points in the direction of stories and human desire, between which there is a close relationship. The novel makes clear that unbridled human desire to know, to possess, accumulate wealth, and to dominate underlies the existing human civilization. Cruso and Friday achieve an alternative to the present human civilization by moderating their desires. Since Cruso's use of language and storytelling too is curbed by Friday's muteness, their relationship on the island is reciprocal and egalitarian. They hunt or kill the rest of the non-human inhabitants of the island only for food and survival. Therefore, their island is free from dynamics of power and domination. Rather than civilizing Friday, Cruso seems to have chosen to live like Friday and the non-humans of the island. That is how Cruso's and Friday's lives have maintained harmony with the rest of the creatures on the island.

As already stated, in Western thought, stories and language are regarded as the major human capacity separating the human from the non-human and establishing the former's superiority to the latter. As Derrida's questioning of the fundamental Western texts also demonstrates, this tendency has undergone radical changes recently. Especially poststructuralist

and postmodernist thinkers have begun to look upon language rather as a prison or obstacle in front of the Real or what lies beyond language. Philosophers like Lacan clearly identify language by "fall" (Weil, 2012, p. 7). As such, capacity for speech began to be considered, far from elevating humans, as a mark of their exile from their earlier interconnectedness with other non-human forms as creaturely and embodied beings. In other words, locked in the symbolic system of language, humans have lost their connections with the rest of creation.[5]

3. SUSAN'S DILEMMA: HOW TO TURN CRUSO'S ISLAND INTO A STORY?

Foe's setting is divided between the story-less and tongue-less island and the civilized Britain, where authors like Foe turn experiences into stories. Cruso's island is the domain of interconnected life, human or non-human, whereas Britain is the humanized space of culture and language. For Susan, storytelling will bridge this island with England. Although this is not Susan's original aim, the story of Cruso's island, if told, could also shed light on the possibility of bridging the gap and of a reunion between humans and non-human animals, for if Cruso could accomplish such a return to the original interconnectedness and unity, his story could set an alternative and hope for other civilized humans. Thus, divided between the antithetical worlds of the two islands, the novel raises the issue of how the tongue-less world of the former can be represented in the latter. From the perspective of animals, the novel asks whether it is possible to turn animals' bodily experiences into stories.

In general, this question faces the human subject in communicating with animals and, in the particular case of the Western subject, with the colonized and dehumanized native inhabitants, whom Spivak calls the subaltern. Faced with this deadlock with Friday, Susan will test the limits of human language. Friday, however, seems to be content with living without language, which is traditionally synonymous with being reduced to the body, to the level of animals. In the footsteps of poststructuralists, Coetzee thus invites his readers to a more affirmative reevaluation of his muteness. Likewise, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" "Spivak warns that the critical establishment's attempt to give voice to dispossessed peoples will only result in those peoples' speaking the language of Western intellectuals or in their

[5] This new interpretation of possessing language capacity not as a human privilege but as a prison is referred to as the counterlinguistic turn in philosophy, which is also intimately connected to the animal turn (See Weil, 2012, pp. 11-24).

being further dependent on Western intellectuals to speak for them" (Weil, 2012, p. 5). As such, Susan's efforts to get to know Friday "respond to a desire to know that there are beings or objects with ways of knowing and being that resist our flawed systems of language and who may know us and themselves in ways we can never discern" (Weil, 2012, p. 12). However, as long as language and stories remain as the only tools to approach him, Friday will never reveal himself. It is from outside the symbolic systems that he invites Susan to recognize and enliven their creaturely bonds with non-humans.

As Tisha Turk (2011) suggests, "It becomes decidedly easier to see *Foe* as coherent if we begin by acknowledging that the novel is primarily *about* storytelling" (p. 300). In *Foe*, Susan Barton, who replaces Defoe's eager narrator Crusoe, is equally enthusiastic for storytelling. However, her eagerness is constantly frustrated on the island, initially by Cruso and later by Friday. Cruso in this novel is an open embodiment of resistance to storytelling. The novel begins with Susan's landing on Cruso's island as a castaway. As soon as she meets Cruso, she enthusiastically begins to tell her story both to Cruso, on the one hand, and to Foe and the reader, on the other. However, she also makes note of Cruso's lack of interest in what she has to tell him: While she bursts into tears overwhelmed with the tragedy that befell her and her near-death experience, she notes Cruso "gazed at me more as if I were a fish cast up by the waves than an unfortunate fellow-creature" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 9). Yet, unmoved by her listener's reluctance, she begins anew in a few minutes: "Let me tell you my story," she says to Cruso, "for I am sure you are wondering who I am and how I come to be here" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 10). Not finding in Cruso an interested listener, she nonetheless admits to Foe and the reader,

> *I would have told him more about myself too, about my quest for my stolen daughter, about the mutiny. But he asked nothing, gazing out instead into the setting sun, nodding to himself as though a voice spoke privately inside him that he was listening to.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13)

When Susan asks Cruso to tell *his* story, she expects him to draw for her a consistent and fixed picture. However, she is perplexed because "the stories he told me were … various and … hard to reconcile with one another. … So in the end I did not know what was truth, what was lies, and what was mere rambling" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 11-12). Friday's tongue-less-ness and Cruso's linguistic reserve and minimalism make conversation on the island almost impossible for Susan. She bitterly comments that "[Cruso] speak[s] as if language were one of the banes of life, like money, or the pox"

(Coetzee, 1986, p. 22). Dragunoiu (2010) comments, "Cruso's taciturnity coupled with the multiple narratives he offers Barton regarding his and Friday's origins reveals a deep-seated distrust of language as an effective medium for knowledge and communication" (p. 317).

At the root of this distrust lies his companionship with tongue-less Friday. Spending long years with Friday, Cruso has become semi-mute; thus, in an ironic twist, in *Foe*, the character who assumes the role of teacher is not the colonizer but the colonized, and what he teaches is not language but silence. This is the lesson that Susan will finally have to learn.

To understand the island, Susan has to depend on its two earlier inhabitants because firstly, her stay there is much shorter than theirs, and secondly and more importantly, nothing important or extraordinary happens there during this time. However, not only does Cruso show any interest in telling his story or listening to those of others' but he has no interest in making an effort either to escape from the island or to change it. He cherishes no memories of the past, nor does he have any passionate projects for the future. To Susan's question why he has not built a boat to escape, he answers: "And where should I escape to?" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13). She also feels

> *[i]t seemed a great pity that from the wreck Cruso should have brought away no more than a knife. For had he rescued even the simplest of carpenter's tools, and some spikes and bars and suchlike, he might have fashioned better tools, and with better tools contrived a less laborious life, or even built a boat and escaped to civilization.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 16)

Thus, as Dragunoiu (2010) convincingly argues, "Cruso's project is a deliberate parody of this colonialist rhetoric": Unlike the former protagonist, Cruso does not seek nor needs tools; he has no interest in planting anything; "he is not a *cultivator*, … he does not make any use of [seeds]"; in short, an antithesis of *homofaber*, Cruso chooses to leave as little mark as possible on his environment (p. 323). Critics refer to the state that dominates the island in such terms as "expressionless … near-lifeless" (Rankin, 1999, p. 314), "stasis," and "inertia." Therefore, frustrated, Susan snippily concludes that "Cruso would brook no change on his island" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 27). She then states,

> *Growing old on this island kingdom with no one to say him nay had so narrowed his horizon—when the horizon all around us was so vast and majestic!—that he had come to be persuaded he knew all there was to know about the world. Besides … the desire to escape had dwindled in him*. (Coetzee, 1986, p. 13)

Susan thus discovers that this is an island with no memories of the past and no projections for the future; suspended in the eternal present, the island can bear no fruit in stories.

While it is possible to interpret Cruso's reluctance to transform the island as reminiscent of Sisyphus's never-ending but futile act of rolling a stone uphill (Dragunoiu, 2010, p. 323), it could also be a reflection of harmony with the cycles of nature "before time," in which early humans lived (Derrida, 2008, 17). His lack of enthusiasm to make radical changes on the island could then be read as his missing or lacking nothing from his past life. His island with its inhabitants is a whole that lacks nothing; therefore, it does not need to be altered by any tools of civilization.

Coetzee expresses the interconnectedness between language, one of these tools, and desire in *Disgrace*, through his protagonist David Lurie, who traces the origin of language to lack and desire: "… the origins of speech lie in song, and the origins of song in the need to fill out with sound the overlarge and rather empty human soul" (Coetzee, 1999, p. 4). It is this emptiness, this lack in the human soul and the desire to fill it that generates language and turns humans into storytelling animals. Language gives humans the illusion of the power to bring the missing thing into being by conjuring it up by its symbolic representation in sounds and script. Language and storytelling are thus intimately bound up with lack and desire, as well as power and authority.

The balance between Cruso and Friday is kept with moderation of desire, especially desire for mastery. Although Susan habitually calls the island "Cruso's," Cruso does not act as the master or owner of this island. He does not assume the role of master to either Friday or Susan, who are both free to do as they like most of the time. In fact, the only rule that governs this island is one of necessity. Cruso announces to Susan that

> *Laws are made for one purpose only … to hold us in check when our desires grow immoderate. As long as our desires are moderate we have no need of laws. … On the island there is no law except the law that we shall work for our bread, which is a commandment.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 36)

Their diet, which is made up of the simple ingredients of "lettuce, … fish and bird's eggs," is based on such moderation (Coetzee, 1986, p. 9). It is the same principle of moderation that results in his decision that "planting is not for us" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 33).

Cruso's moderation applies also to sexual desire, for during the year-and-a-half that Susan stays there, Cruso makes love to her once, and it

results in no offspring. His reluctance to inseminate both the earth and Susan arises out of keeping his desire at bay. Furthermore, the answer to Susan's question as to what has all these years prevented Cruso (or Friday, for that matter) from acts of cruelty and tyranny on the island *is* also the moderation of desire (Coetzee, 1986, p. 37). Thus, it is this moderation that separates Cruso's island from England or any other civilized place, where desire generates power structures and inequality as well as stories.

While for the two male inhabitants of the island, who have no known memories of a different place, this geography is self-sufficient and complete, initially for Susan, who has comparative references that reach out of it, the island is an imperfect place that needs human control. Complaining about the constant wind, she remarks,

> *In Patagonia the wind blows all year without let, and the Patagonians do not hide their heads, so why does she? But the Patagonians, knowing no home but Patagonia, have no reason to doubt that the wind blows at all seasons without let in all quarters of the globe; whereas* I know better. (Coetzee, 1986, p. 15; emphasis added)

Susan's relationship with the island, thus, is extremely different: She has a remembered past, a lost daughter she seeks, and hopes to be saved and become united with her daughter. In other words, with much that she lacks and desires, she is the most fitting figure for storytelling. Yet she faces the problem to turn stasis into a story; "the burden of [their] story" is the dullness on the island: "We face no perils, no ravenous beasts, not even serpents. Food was plentiful, the sun was mild. No pirates landed on our shores, no freebooters, no cannibals save yourself, [Friday], if you can be called a cannibal" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 81).

When Susan reaches civilization, Cruso has already died on the voyage, and all she is left with is Friday, whose silence will further lock the life on the island into silence. Since she does not have the authority of an author, she seeks the help of Foe, whom she tries to persuade to turn what she tells him about this tongue-less island into a story. However, to a professional author, whose imagination is colored with colonialist notions, the uneventful life on the island bereft of monsters and exotic natives would hardly offer material for fiction. Susan realizes that a professional author has to fit his narrative into the expectations of the publishers and readers, the end result being a text with authority but no authenticity. The relationship between Cruso and Friday, which does not fit into the patterns of colonizer-colonized relationships, does not respond to these expectations. Furthermore, not believing that Friday has anything of value to say, Foe does not share

Susan's impasse, for a tongue-less native's story does not even arouse curiosity in him; in fact, Friday stands in the colonial Western author's blind spot. Left to her own insufficient devices, Susan will desperately try to get past Friday's and the island's silence, but as she will realize, this is an impossible task:

> *To tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty. Yet the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 67)

Thus, Friday's silence takes on meanings that are closely interwoven with the problems of authorship, authority, and post-colonialism. As Marais (1989) argues "all authoritarian practice is made possible and underpinned by language, since domination can only occur once a subject position [the pronoun 'I'] is established in this system of conventions" (p. 15). This subject establishes his domination by defining and naming others. Since "learning a language involves not only having things named but being trained to follow rules" (Greenfield, 1995, p. 224), it is intimately related to establishing and exercising of power over those who lack language or whose language cannot compete with that of the ruler. Marais (1989) also reminds us of the power associated with storytelling and fiction when he suggests that "'shaping' and 'making' are central to the fiction-making process, as is suggested by the etymology of the word 'fiction,' which is derived from the Latin *fingere*, meaning 'to make or shape'" (p. 12). Thus whoever authors a text establishes his authority over those whom he names and whose story he shapes.

On the surface, it is possible to approach the dilemma Susan faces as the dilemma that every author faces: how to turn life into words. For Coetzee, fiction cannot be separated from the life of its author: "All autobiography is storytelling and all writing is autobiography" (Coetzee, 1992, p. 391). Therefore, Susan's dilemma in fact is one in which Coetzee himself is caught up as a South African white author when he says, "The white writer in South Africa is in an impossible position" (qtd. in Spivak, 1990, p. 176). Critics, who tend to read Coetzee's fiction from postcolonial perspectives, refer to this linguistic dilemma as existing between the colonizers' language as an inadequate tool to convey the experiences of the colonized, problems that deal with the unspeakable and unspeaking subaltern. Yet the postcolonial issues besetting a white author in the South African context are only part of her/his tribulations. Rankin suggests, "The [more fundamental] issue which arises concerns 'the history of an on-going problem: how to use one medium—language—to represent another

medium—*being*'" (Rankin, 1999, p. 308; emphasis added). In other words, the dilemma is how to bridge the gap between language and bodily experiences.

To represent this dilemma, Susan compares the heart, the organ essential for living, and the tongue, the organ not essential for living but one that makes language possible. She notes that in its "softness and wetness" and

> *helpless[ness] … before the knife, …[t]he tongue is like the heart, … is it not? Save that we do not die when a knife pierces the tongue. To that degree we may say the tongue belongs to the world of play, whereas the heart belongs to the world of earnest.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 85)

It is with the tongue, the vitally superfluous part of the body, that humans have left behind animals and entered the human domain of language and stories. Likewise, Susan notes, "it is not the heart but members of play that elevate us above beasts." Therefore, both as the name of an organ and also a synonym of language, the tongue stands at the crossroads of the body and the sign/symbol, the animal and the human. In its former meaning, as a sensory organ processing taste, it belongs to the body, just like the heart. Yet it is its latter meaning that poses problems for both Susan and Coetzee as they try to understand and linguistically codify the world of the body and the world of the animal, which defies language.

When there is neither desire nor language, life is concentrated on the body and its needs. Lacking a tongue thus brings humans to the level of animals. Susan thinks, "Lacking members of play, what is there left for beasts to do when they are bored but sleep?" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 85). This is the world inhabited by Friday, who speaks only *through* his body. However, his world is no less rich than the world expressed in language. Unless one opens herself into this world of senses with Friday, as the unnamed narrator of the last chapter tries to do, no one can achieve any understanding of this world.

Experiencing this frustration with Friday, Susan can neither bring him to her world of signs nor visit his world of the body. He resists all her efforts to teach him letters and writing. As she thinks he is too dumb to learn anything related to language, she herself is more puzzled with him than he probably is with her. Friday's tongue-less-ness has kept him outside the realm of not only stories but also desire. Susan connects his lack of a tongue with a possible lack of male genitalia several times in the story. Both related to lack and desire, the parallels between the genitalia and the tongue are quite self-evident in *Foe*. Susan tells Friday, "the desire for answering

speech is like the desire for the embrace of, embrace by, another being." But just as Friday knows no desire for the embrace of another body, he has no need to reciprocate speech with speech. Unable to understand such desire-less-ness, Susan asks, "why did you not desire me, neither you nor your master?" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 86). When she admits her failure to make any sense to him, she also uses a sexual metaphor: "You are very likely a virgin, Friday" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 80). Friday's virginity, however, differs from Cruso's willful sexual restraint. His case represents a total impossibility, not a choice. Therefore, he stands in complete opposition to all civilized efforts of leaving behind a trace other than himself. Like animals, Friday is in a very special way locked inside his body.

If Friday comes close to any form of language, its meaning is intrinsic to his body. Once on the island, Cruso tells him to sing: "Whereupon Friday raised his face to the stars, closed his eyes, and, obedient to his master, began to hum in a low voice." Cruso calls this singing without a recognizable tune and without words "the voice of man" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 22). It is the sound of a human body produced by the lungs, vocal chords, and air passages in the throat and the mouth, but not the tongue. Its meaning is not in symbols but inherent and immediate in the body. Unlike the sounds of language, this voice has no meaning outside itself. Friday plays the flute in the same way. He plays "a tune of six notes, always the same" in such a tedious manner that unnerves Susan (Coetzee, 1986, p. 28). If for Friday sounds or acts are simply sounds or acts with no reference to anything outside themselves, it is impossible for him to learn speech or writing. Trying desperately to teach him writing, Susan asks herself

> *how can I be sure he does not think I am chattering to myself* as a magpie or an ape does, *for the pleasure of hearing the noise I make, and feeling the play of my tongue, as he himself used to find pleasure in playing his flute*? (Coetzee, 1986, p. 57; emphasis added)

Deciding at one point that "if there were any language accessible to Friday, it would be the language of music" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 96), she begins to play the same six notes along with him. In this she finds a conversation of sorts, not in words but in bodily exchange, like lovemaking:

> *Are not both music and conversation like love? Who would venture to say that what passes between lovers is of substance (I refer to their lovemaking, not their talk), yet is it not true that something is passed between them, back and forth, and they come away refreshed and healed for a while of their loneliness? As long as I have music in common with Friday, perhaps he and I will need no language. And if there had been music on our island, if Friday and I had filled the evening with melody, perchance—who can*

> *say?—Cruso might at last have relented, and picked up the third pipe, and learned to finger it, if his fingers had not by then been too stiff, and the three of us might have become a consort (from which you may conclude, Mr Foe, that what we needed from the wreck was not a chest of tools but a case of flutes).* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 97)

Soon she realizes, however, that it is only her projection that there was anything of substance in their flute playing. As product not of Cruso's self-contained island but of England, she cannot continue endlessly with the same tune: "we cannot forever play the same tune and be content. Or so at least it is with *civilized* people" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 97; emphasis added). When she changes her tune, however, "the two tunes played together formed no pleasing counterpoint, but on the contrary jangled and jarred" (97-98). Finally, Susan admits her failure:

> *bitterly I began to recognize that it might not be mere dullness that kept him shut up in 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.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 98)

In addition to music, Friday expresses himself through dancing. Donning Mr. Foe's robes, he begins to dance and becomes a writer of sorts. Susan writes to Mr. Foe that "The robes have set [Friday] dancing" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 92). Instead of letters, however, he uses his body as a sign. At another instance, Susan declares, "He utters himself only in music and dancing, which are to speech as cries and shouts are to words" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 142). Though Friday becomes a writer with his music and dancing, the meaning of his special writing mystifies and excludes Susan. "In the grip of the dancing he is not himself. He is *beyond human reach*. I call his name and am ignored, I put out a hand and am brushed aside" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 92; emphasis added). According to Dragunoiu (2010), "Friday's silence in *Foe* is different from the silence of the oppressed for his silence is a way of indifference and contempt" (pp. 317-8). Likewise, Greenfield (1995) observes,

> *In the end Friday's passive silence proves more powerful than Susan's "chosen and powerful" withholding. Whatever indignities he suffers, his internal life remains inviolate because language has no power to penetrate it. Susan and Foe can tell stories about him, but he does not understand the stories. They cannot replace his sense of identity with a scrap of writing; at most they can paste a label on his forehead. Friday's figurative castration, his inability to use language, gives him a strange power.* (p. 229)

As in his flute playing, he disdains having any intercourse with Susan during his dancing. She notices also that "All the while he dances he

makes a humming noise in his throat, deeper than his usual voice; sometimes he seems to be singing" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 92). Unlike Susan, for whom sounds are laden with more meaning than their vocal qualities, Friday might probably be making sounds only "for the pleasure of hearing the noise [he makes], and feeling the play of [his]tongue" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 57) and spinning for the pleasure of feeling his body move. She announces,

> *I shiver as I watch Friday dancing in the kitchen, with his robes whirling about him and the wig flapping on his head, and his eyes shut and his thoughts far away, not on the island, you may be sure, not on the pleasures of digging and carrying, but on* the time before, *when he was a savage among savages.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 94-95; emphasis added)

Where Friday is carried with his dancing is not a place but a state where there is no language but only bodily senses. This "time before" is no other than what Derrida refers to as the genesis of time or before time, a state of existence without borders between the human and the non-human. Susan notices, "when he spun, the robes would stand out stiffly about him, so much so that one might have supposed the purpose of his dancing was to show forth the nakedness underneath" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 118). With his nakedness, Friday is a reminder of animality, an existence that humans have been trying to cover in themselves with clothes and with language.

4. CONCLUSION

The confounding last chapter of the book is narrated like a dream, in which a variety of images from Susan's story are intermingled. Swimming down into a sunken ship lying in the depths of the sea, she sees Friday and asks him "what is this ship?" Yet, realizing that they are surrounded with water, she says, "this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. *This is a place where bodies are their own signs*. It is the home of Friday" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 157; emphasis added). Finally, Susan senses, from inside Friday's mouth

> *comes a stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face.* (Coetzee, 1986, p. 157)

Giving herself to the richness of this sensory world, Susan *is* finally in the home of Friday. "Here in the home of Friday," comment Daragmeh and Shehab (2012), "there is no need for either speech or writing" (p. 193). She can only cross the gaping gulf between them when she relinquishes words

and language and enters into the corporeally rich state of existence humans lived in before the fall, before their separation from animals.

Through Friday, Coetzee is not only providing the perspective of the colonized as subaltern but also the perspective and perceptiveness of a purely embodied being that is silenced in the symbolic order of humans. Reconnecting with this animal being in the realm of language can be achieved only at the expense of imprisoning him in this world, a possibility that Friday continually rejects. Coetzee offers the opposite direction: from language to the body, from human to the animal, as the only way that will put an end to the suffering humans caused to animals and all the downtrodden and wretched of the earth.

With the connections Coetzee makes between desire and civilization in mind, his invitation to a desire-less world comes at the cost of the civilization as we know it. Although we often focus on the comforts of life and culture it brings, we have to remember at whose expense we have those and how equally we share it on earth. What we call progress has been shown to be a fiction and an ideological tool of oppression worldwide. It is this idea that underlies the exploitation of mostly non-Western peoples and all the non-human forms, living and non-living. Therefore, a world without desire may be a promise for a better, more egalitarian, and a more wholesome world among humans as well as between humans and non-humans.

As a storyteller, it is ironic that Coetzee invites his readers to forego the world of signs and remember their creatureliness. Aware of the ties between language and power, both Coetzee and (gradually) Susan are wary of language. Coetzee particularly, seems to be seeking a state where life would be *embodying* but *not telling* its story. That means for him giving up his authority as an author with a result that will liberate the world and return humanity to the beginning, to the genesis of time, before the fall, before the great chasm was formed between human and non-human animals. Although it seems to be self-defeating act for a storyteller, it is here that the promise of a new world, free from cruelty and exploitation of the weak, is located.

5. SUMMARY:

J. M. Coetzee's 1986 novel *Foe* is a rewriting of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. It has mostly been read from the perspective of colonialism and rewriting. However, it also amalgamates the issues of the Western world’s mastery over non-white people with human mastery over animals. The figure that brings these issues together in the novel is the tongue-less and story-less Friday, who is both the colonized other and an

animal representation. Coetzee focuses on language and storytelling as the major separations between humans and nonhuman animals. After the possession of soul and reason, after the linguistic turn, language is often held by Western philosophy to be the last of the exceptionally human capacities, used for justifying human superiority and the ensuing cruelty to animals. With no tongue to speak and tell his story, Coetzee's Friday represents both the silenced colonized people and animals with no access to human language.

Yet, with the counter-linguistic turn, language is also shown to be a prison, a closed system with no exit. Therefore, being outside it has more recently been interpreted as freedom, one that humans left behind when they were separated from animals. In *Foe* Coetzee raises similar questions about the value of human language.

Deconstructing Defoe's novel, Coetzee employs strategies that destabilize the colonial power over the colonized natives as well as the human superiority over animals and nonhuman life. Defoe's Crusoe and Coetzee's Cruso stand at opposing ends. Defoe's young protagonist owes his superiority over both Friday and the island's non-humans to his capacity for language and storytelling. He is the prototypical image of *homofaber*, who, as an Adamic figure authorized by God, transforms his environment into civilization. Next to technology and Western science, he wields the power of language and storytelling to propagate and justify his efforts. Unlike him, the reader finds that Coetzee's aged Cruso had relinquished his superiority over non-humans. With no ambitions to rule, he needs minimal use of language and storytelling. He envisions a place with no stories to compete for primacy, a place where borders do not exist. Cruso manages this equilibrium by controlling his desire. Once desire is bridled and kept to the minimum, time slows down and competitions come down to the bare minimum for survival. Indeed, the island he has inhabited with Friday seems to be balanced on bare necessities and survival, reminiscent of humans' prehistoric coexistence with nonhuman nature. Thus, the relationship between Cruso and Friday in *Foe* represents a return to the pre-linguistic and pre-lapsarian unity between man and animals and to freedom.

Coetzee's other significant deconstructive strategy is to be found in his employment of a female narrator called Susan Barton, who is a cross between Defoe's Crusoe and Coetzee's Cruso. Since she comes from the 'civilized' world, her perspective is colored with Western notions of colonialism and the superiority of civilization, but as a woman, she also identifies herself with the silenced and silent inhabitants of the colonized

lands. It is perhaps because of her desire to give voice to these silenced beings that she wishes to tell the story of the island. Since Cruso, the only speaking inhabitant of the island knowing its history before her arrival, dies before reaching England, she has only the tongue-less Friday to turn the island into a story. However, Friday defies all her methods to reach her aim, but he dances and plays the flute. The last chapter of the book reveals that Friday's language is the language of the body; therefore, he offers for Susan a way to get out of the prison of human language and reunite with all animal bodies.

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Destek ve teşekkür: Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.