

Exploration of the Counteractive Strategies against Racial and Gender Denigration of the Other in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*

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ABSTRACT: *This paper focuses on J. M. Coetzee's novel Foe (1986) to elucidate the relevance of language to power, primarily in relation to the most marginalized strata of society. Both Susan Barton and Friday are exposed to the process of othering due to their difference from patriarchal and colonial ideologies respectively. My argument in this paper is that Susan Barton and Friday, who are seemingly powerless do not display an absolute submission to power rather they resist against authority by inventing a counter discourse having strategic political importance. This article aims to decode Friday and Barton's counteractive strategies against racial and gender denigration in order to explicate the relevance of power to language, history and gender as the pivotal instruments in relocating and redefining the power dynamics between the self and the other. Moreover, through extensive textual study and building upon Foucauldian discourse analysis of Foe (1986), this paper highlights the potentialities and limitations of language as a mean of reinventing the subaltern historiography.*

Key words: authority; gender; power; resistance; subject.

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J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) deals with the intricately intertwined relation between language and power. The novel revolves around the dialectics of master-slave relationship which is manifested through the rift between two opposite races and genders. Friday, a black native slave is found as powerless as Susan Barton, an unsuccessful white writer, whose voice is silenced by the patriarchal forces represented by Daniel Foe and Crusoe. The tragic life incidents of Friday and Barton rigorously emphasize the significance of language and speechlessness in determining the power equation. Friday and Barton, who belong to the most deprived sections of society are primarily dominated through the curbing of their linguistic capabilities. Thus, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) builds upon linguistic predation and its utmost defense.

For Barton story-telling is closely related to identity formation and affirmation. Her incessant quest to recount her story projects her untiring efforts to situate herself in the discourse of writing. She wants to conceive a narrative that can declare her identity as a woman writer. In her view, Crusoe is merely sleep-walking in his life due to his rejection to writing. Crusoe's inclination towards controlling instead of creating emphasizes his stereotypical patriarchal hubris that is solely concerned with power possession and its exertion. Instead of asserting his identity through imagination and creativity, he opts for masculine propensity of exerting control and dominance over the powerless.

Kara Blizzard examines intertextuality and its essentiality in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), a novel built around the plot of Daniel Defoe's adventure novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). *Foe* (1986) alters and subverts a few aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and aims to voice those narratives which are silenced by Defoe. According to Blizzard the contemporary reconsideration of canonical western texts aims to analyze "social circumstances and ideological constructs that surrounded the making of the earlier texts" (2). An important aspect of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is the absence of a female voice. The narratorial voice of Susan Barton echoes the adventurous story-telling of Robinson Crusoe and through this revision Coetzee questions the absence of female voice in Defoe's novel. The audibility of a female voice lends many important ideological and social insights into the novel. This narratorial framework tends to decode and verify the relevance of gender to power dynamics and verifies the role and dependence of gender in determining the power equation (4).

Susan Barton as the narrator of an adventurous novel draws attention towards the efforts of a woman, who endeavors to dismantle patriarchal

hegemony over writing. Barton's adventurous story and its rejection by the acclaimed writer Foe sheds light at the silence and absence of women perspective in the history of the discourse of writing.

Coetzee's *Foe* also examines women's struggles, specifically as they relate to constructions of history. The novel criticizes the lack of a women's perspective in works like *Robinson Crusoe* by depicting a female protagonist who is written out of her own story. *Foe's* main character Susan Barton attempts to write about her time stranded on an island but cannot because of her low status as a poor, single woman. (Blizzard 4)

Susan Barton confronts the challenge of unshackling her story from the influence of literary patriarch Foe. Despite being subjugated, Barton devises another strategy to resist Foe's hegemonic power. "She tries to keep some control over it. She says, 'It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all, to withhold. By such means do I still endeavor to be father to my story'" (Coetzee *Foe* 123). Susan Barton assumes that "story production is patriarchal" and she strives to establish her identity as a patriarch (Blizzard 6). Barton denies the stereotypical persona of a mother, who in this context has to foster her story rather she takes up the role of father, who holds a privileged and dominant position in the social and domestic sphere. Through this subversion of gender roles, Susan Barton challenges and resists the power structure which proclaims her as the *other* in the realm of story-telling.

In *Foe* (1986) Coetzee does not command power through language instead he endows it to those who are voiceless and devoid of political power. "Issues of personal identity and political power have been increasingly expressed in issues of language. Susan, Friday, and Foe are a culmination of Coetzee's attempt to tell a story without asserting himself in the novel" (Bishop 56). Coetzee tilts and subverts the power equation by rendering his authorial position powerless and equipping Susan Barton with the power of language which she employs to compile her own text.

The impediments in Barton's story telling primarily result from misrecognizing the intricately intertwined relation between authority and truth. The authority required to authenticate truth is an important issue pertaining to Susan Barton's search for identity. She mistakes authority as truth instead of recognizing truth as authority. Susan Barton firmly believes that Daniel Foe by virtue of his identity as a male author can write stories that reveal the truth about experience and above all give experience the

substance of truth. For this reason, Barton's identity as a woman deprives her of the authority to reveal the reality. Despite experiencing the truth she has to rely upon Foe, who can infuse the essence of authenticity and legitimacy into her work. She submits to the dominant idea that authorities are truthful, solely for the reason of being in authority.

When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso. The island was Cruso's (yet by what right? By the law of the islands). [...] Return me to my substance Mr. Foe: that is my entreaty. For though my story gives the truth, it doesn't give the substance of the truth. (Coetzee 51)

It is important to note that instead of truth Barton seems more preoccupied with the quest for substance of truth. She is acquainted with the reality of experience however she possesses no command over the substance required for its authorization. This substance is not a property of truth itself rather it is a hallmark of the voice that enunciates its authenticity and substantiality. As a matter of fact, while looking for substance Barton aims to achieve the vantage position that allows temporal and spatial freedom to converge her thoughts and share her experience. "To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and a comfortable chair away from all distraction; and a window to stare through; [. . .] I have none of these, while you have all" (Coetzee 51). Susan Barton reflects that women lack private spaces and uninterrupted flow of thoughts which leads to their artistic failure. Her claim for the lack of substance underscores that women, who do not have a room of their own and the time to write will always depend upon men as they do not confront temporal and spatial challenges. However, the substance sought by Barton is concerned with something more than just the chair, silence, window etc. The space she longs to have serves as a symbol for many other issues such as privacy, spare time and financial independence. All these factors create inequality between men and women. The creativity of women like Susan Barton is stifled due to the powerlessness inherited from social customs and traditions. Her struggle for freedom is multi-dimensional; she longs for temporal, spatial and intellectual liberation from men, so that her dependence for the sake of 'substance' finally comes to an end.

The essay "Truth and Power" that is an excerpt from Foucault's interview outlines the intertwined relation of truth and power to the history of human knowledge by elucidating the role of an intellectual. Foucault contends that

every historical event deals with the exercise and exchange of power however the authoritative organizations use various strategies to create a façade of truth. Therefore, truth and power are not divorced from each other rather every constituent of truth is deep down a manifestation of power politics. In such circumstances, the intellectual also becomes a component of the truth apparatus. He argues that an author should not be restricted to a specific field as he is the one bound to universality. "The intellectual par excellence used to be the writer: as a universal consciousness, a free subject, he was counterposed to the service of the State or Capital- technicians, magistrates, teachers" (qtd. in "Michel Foucault: Truth and Power" n.p.). Hence, genuine intellectuals or authors are not cloistered in certain specific fields rather their search for discovering the truth lends them an aura of universality. Likewise, Foucauldian discourse analysis of Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) emphasizes the role of an author in disproving the exploitative hypothesis of author-ity. The efforts of Susan Barton to compile her narrative by rejecting all external influences reflect the unsuppressed voice of an intellectual, who in search of truth refuses to align herself with the hegemonic power structures. Moreover, as an intellectual her search for truth is not related to the domains of science, technology or ideology instead her quest relates to the nexus between truth and power.

According to Foucault, "Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" ("Truth and Power" 1669). The quest for truth is a war waged in the battlefield of politics where one is bound to confront many battalions. Susan Barton's story beginning right from the search of her abducted daughter reflects the exposition of truth after passing through many complex stages. Barton has to face many impediments in the process of uncovering the truth such as figuring out the meaning of Crusoe's meaningless stories, coping up with Friday's inaccessibility and combating against Foe's patriarchal and literary hubris. However, she does not surrender to anyone of them and above all she outrightly refuses to mould her narrative in accordance with the demands of the literary patriarch, Foe.

Susan Barton subverts the discourse of male domination by acquiring the power to speak as the *other* and thereby exposing the truth of her story. The unabridged version of truth that she strives to tell highlights that instead of writing an autobiographical account of her adventures, Barton is mainly

interested in addressing the universal issue of overcoming the silence of the subaltern. Despite being powerless, she rejects all outward influences to modify her story and thus keeps the integrity of her narrative intact. She nurtures her narrative both as mother and father so that the truth of her story is not suppressed and thereby heard by all. Susan Barton does not let knowledge and truth fall prey to political action. Thus, she maintains her intellectual integrity by refusing to become a dupe in the hands of the hegemonic power structures. "It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time" (Foucault, "Truth and Power" 1670). Cruso autocratically curbs Barton's intellectual and creative freedom and impedes her journey towards authority. However, Barton's implied silence over Cruso's atrocities does not suggest her resignation by abandoning the pursuit of writing. Instead by maintaining silence over Cruso's gender prejudiced actions, she fights back against his patriarchal domination in the discourse of writing. Her silence over story-telling implies that she does not aim to fill in the holes and spaces of her narrative by Cruso's false prejudiced accounts. The desire for truth and authenticity in her narrative, motivates her to equip Friday with language. " 'I would rather be the author of my own story than have lies told about me,' I persisted – 'If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it?'" (Coetzee 20). Thus, by detaching truth from the power of hegemonic structures, Barton devises a new strategy for the production of truth.

The speechlessness of Barton and Friday differs greatly and implies different meanings within the discourse of narrativity. The palpable silence of Barton and Friday illustrates the ability of the subaltern (Spivak 2197) to speak in the respective discourses of feminism and colonialism. "Subaltern means of 'inferior rank'.[...] The term can refer to any group that is collectively subordinated or disenfranchised, whether on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, religion, or any other category of identity" (Deal and Beal 148). Barton and Friday's subalterity stems out of gender and race respectively that consequently leads to their exploitation. By giving vent to Barton's narrative, the novel resolves to speak for her. She resists and subverts the masculine discourse of suppression and subjugation by acquiring the power to speak as the *other*. The unabridged story she strives to tell becomes a feminine discourse that not only lends her the authority to speak but also to challenge the masculine discourse. "I am not, do you see, one of those thieves or highwaymen of yours who gabble a confession

and are then whipped off to Tyburn and eternal silence, leaving you to make of their stories whatever you fancy. It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all, to withhold. By such means do I still endeavor to be father to my story” (Coetzee 123). Despite being powerless, Barton rejects all outward influences to modify her story and declares her narrative as her own possession. She nurtures her narrative both as mother and father so that her voice is not suppressed and thereby heard by all. “I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire” (Coetzee 131).

For Susan Barton power is directly related to the subversion of gender dynamics. Her preoccupation with story-telling is in fact a multifold effort to shatter and supplant Foe's authority as the literary patriarch by equating herself with the mythological matriarch. Therefore, Susan Barton seems not only interested in proclaiming her freedom but she also endeavors to elucidate the feminine essence of all stories beginning from their conception. By depicting the link between femininity and divinity, she shatters the authorial hubris of Foe who doggedly attributes the entire process of storytelling to his name. In order to subvert the gender equation, Barton illustrates narrative conception as a feminine tendency possessed by the Muse of writing. Through the persona of a woman Muse, she tells Foe that the heavenly Muse of story and poetry writing is a woman, who inspires the writers with stories and ideas which enable them to get through the phase of impasse in writing. “Do you know the story of the Muse, Mr Foe? The Muse is a woman, a goddess, who visits poets in the night and begets stories upon them. In the accounts they give afterwards, the poets say that she comes in the hour of their deepest despair and touches them with sacred fire, after which their pens, that have been dry, flow” (Coetzee 126). Barton identifies herself with the Muse, who possesses the strength to shape and sharpen the creativity of men and inspires them to write. Prior to her encounter with Foe, she believes in seeking inspiration from Man-Muse, who can motivate her to write. However, it is only after her confrontation with Foe that she recognizes herself as the power she has been looking for. So, precisely the social and literary prestige of men as writers is incomplete without the aid of feminine Muse. For that matter, the universal acclaim and reputation won by Foe as the man of letters can be rightly attributed to the *other*. His writings have been inspired by the woman Muse who adds spark and vigor to his dull and drab writings.

While drawing upon the flux of power relations in the postcolonial world, John Rees Moore looks into the resistance strategies adopted by Susan Barton and Friday in Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986). Moore analyzes the

dynamics of antagonism that involve resistance against dominance at all levels. This perusal basically focuses on the fighting back of a wretched victim in a hostile society who struggles not only to survive but also to endorse a paradigmatic shift. For that matter paradigmatic shift is the finest solution to combat against the conventionality of social, racial and gender narratives. In Coetzee's *Foe* "we see a special aspect of that foe against whom Coetzee's protagonist typically must struggle. The tyranny of conventional wisdom, whether it shows itself in impersonal bureaucracy, domestic domination, the police power of the state, or more subtly in the traps of language itself, must be resisted" (Moore 159). In order to do away with the ossification and conformity of narratives, Barton brings about a paradigmatic change. By subverting the long-established and unquestionable paradigms of authority, Barton denies Defoe's literary patriarchy and proves herself as the father of her story. Barton does not assert her stereotypical identity of a mother instead she aims to patronize the domain of writing by resisting against Defoe's monarchy. She does not comply with the established conventions of society that silence women writers by the load of their archetypal identity. However, the magnitude of power possessed and exerted by her resistance is palpable as it overpowers even Coetzee's authorial voice in the novel.

Cruso's correspondence with Friday follows the dialectics of colonizer-colonized relationship. Cruso neither desires to teach Friday the use of language nor attempts to unshackle the mystery behind his enforced silence. Barton inquires Cruso about his slave's lingual prowess. "'How many words of English does Friday know?' 'As many as he needs,' replied Cruso" (Coetzee 21). Cruso does not desire to educate Friday by aiding him in language acquisition rather he suffices to teach him only a few words that can help in master-slave interaction. Susan Barton is highly critical of Cruso's account regarding Friday's loss of tongue. She is skeptical of believing in Friday's tonguelessness as an outcome of cannibalism rather she believes that the brutal act of chopping off his tongue has deeper implications.

Friday's tonguelessness and detachment from language embeds strong undercurrents of the colonial agenda of linguistic dispossession of the natives. His aloofness from language not only curbs his lingual abilities but it also mutilates his perception and discernment. Friday's enforced detachment from language connotes his unfamiliarity with any medium of communication or self-expression. "He has lost his tongue, there is no language in which he can speak, not even his own" (Coetzee 108). Hence, Cruso as being the perpetrator of colonial ideologies asserts Friday's

regressive evolution. Lingual estrangement imposed upon Friday verifies the colonial stratagem of regressive evolution as it not only aggravates his linguistic deficiencies but also blinds his cognition and perception and thereby turns him into a "slave unmanned" (Coetzee 119).

Cruso, as being Friday's master also proclaims mastery over history by formulating assumptions about his past that may or may not be authentic. "He would tell stories of cannibals, of how Friday was a cannibal whom he had saved from being roasted and devoured by fellow cannibals" (Coetzee 12). As the subaltern cannot speak so the dominant western discourse speaks on his behalf and fashions the subaltern history in the most befitting manner. Friday's history of barbarianism and his rescue by western civilization is emblematic of prejudiced colonial imagination about the history of the colonized. Such monolithic account of history is an outcome of politics of representation that envisages the colonized as barbaric, savage, uncivilized brutes, who are brought to the light of civilization and progress through Western canons. The novel forces us to "confront the brute, indigestible materiality of the suffering that began with European colonization" (Meskell, and Weiss 97). Friday's history suffers from the politics of representation at the hands of Cruso. For that matter Susan Barton expresses her distrust over Cruso's version of history. "So in the end I did not know what was truth, what was lies, and what was mere rambling" (Coetzee 12). Cruso dominates Friday by virtue of the power of knowledge. This prerogative enables him to produce knowledge that aligns with social, cultural and above all imperialistic import of civilization. As the authority to document history lies with Cruso so he steers its course according to his own will. Such autocratic flow of history verifies that the authority to document the past is a fundamental component in galvanizing power relations. Moreover, this overpowering control over knowledge production is pivotal to determine the identities of oppressor and the oppressed.

The association between power and knowledge is integral to the discourse of history. Susan Barton emphasizes the detrimental ramifications of this equation and says, "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defense against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal; I say he is a laundryman and he becomes a laundryman. What is the truth of Friday?" (Coetzee 124). The history of subalterns is a raw material in the hands of powerful forces which fashion and modify it according to their colonial impulses. As the discourse of history does not recuperate itself from epistemic violence so truth remains undiscovered. However, the re-

interpretation of history liberates it from the influence of hegemonic powers that autocratically galvanize its flow. For that matter subaltern historiography invites “contrapuntal reading” (Said 1954) which initiates an inter-cultural dialogue by portraying the two civilizations running parallel to each other which eventually spurs an investigation and analysis of the authoritative structure of the history. By drawing upon the silence of a black native slave, Coetzee fashions a novel that is layered, complex and about historiography as much as it is about history.

Coetzee’s *Foe* (1986) qualifies as a historiographic metafiction because of the multiplicity of narratives and the unmonolithic account of history incorporated in it. “The erosion of the boundaries [...] and the development of numerous hybrid genres” (Geyh n.p.) is a dominant feature of postmodernism. According to Linda Hutcheon “the term *postmodernism*, when used in fiction, should, by analogy, best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional *and* historical in its echoes of the texts and contexts of the past” (3). . . Historiographic metafiction, like the nonfictional novel, however, does turn to the intertexts of history as well as literature” (15). Through the employment of intertextuality, postmodern fiction challenges the notion of linear and centralized knowledge and promotes plurality of meanings. The technique of historiographic metafiction projects the interplay of various narratives in the novel. Historiographic metafiction manifests one of the main concerns of postcolonial literature which is to dismantle hegemonic boundaries as it undercuts the supremacy of narratorial voice by the induction of other voices or narratives in the text. The process of reinventing unshackles history from the totalitarianism of hegemonic powers that steer its flow.

Susan Barton adopts a bifocal lens to view Friday’s history. She does not rely on historical import of representing the *other* rather re-invents history by looking at the past. The study of history as a non-linear and critical discourse enables Barton to liberate Friday from colonial perceptions. She goes beyond the persona of a soulless cannibal and projects him as a thinker, who was a spiritual man in the inner most quarters of his life. “This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul - call it what you will - stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior” (Coetzee 32). By exposing the multifaceted personality of a mute savage slave, the novel questions the authenticity of Western hegemony over the discourse of Oriental history. Friday’s non-verbal communication carries pivotal importance in exposing the man behind the image of a voiceless cannibal and to answer back the misrepresentation of history. Barton strives to uncover Friday’s past in order to rehabilitate his future and suggests that

Friday is not someone devoid of history instead he is as much a part of history as any other individual. However, the excavation of subaltern history is important to reconcile his past with present.

Macaskill and Colleran contend that language is the medium of Susan Barton's resistance against power. She relies on the vigor of language to fight her battle against power monopolization. Both Barton and Friday hail from the most deprived sections of society and it is precisely for that matter Barton puts all her effort to equip Friday with language.

It is for us to descend into the mouth (since we speak in figures). It is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds: silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear. [...] There are times when I ask myself whether in his earlier life he had the slightest mastery of language, whether he knows what kind of thing language is. (Coetzee 142)

She strives to put words into Friday's mouth so that he can opt for language as a defensive tool. "Susan continues her struggle with language, a struggle anteceded by her resistance against *Cruso* and *Foe*. Confronted with that which Friday cannot express, she comes to understand the inexpressible as a ground against which what she can express takes meaning; the key, finally, is possession of power" (Macaskill, and Colleran 447). Barton's untiring effort to make him speak illustrates language as a mean of contestation which empowers the subjugated and allows him to challenge the discursive practices. Therefore, the strategic use of language renders it as a weapon of powerless against the powerful. Language acquisition and its application enable Susan Barton to construct counter-narrative to state narrative. Through the strength of words she simultaneously represents and resists the hegemony of power structures.

Unlike Susan Barton, Friday is exceedingly sensitive to the liberating influence of non-verbal communication. He rejects language as a mean of communication and opts for music and dance as the means of expressing himself. Barton affirms his inclination towards non-verbal interaction, "I knew of course that Friday did not understand the words. But it had been my belief from early on that Friday understood tones" (Coetzee 41). Moreover, the mystery behind Friday's silence and above all his identity is intrinsically intertwined with his gestures and movements. Friday's distrust on language as a mean of communication followed by his resort to non-verbal means of correspondence such as music and dance implies strategic political importance.

Friday's recourse to performative arts like music and dance serves as a mean of communication against the potentially unreliable nature of language. Soon Susan Barton comes to know that Friday's story should be heard in another mode of articulation. "The story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me. That is to say, many stories can be told of Friday's tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday" (Coetzee 118). Friday invents an idiosyncratic way to tell the story buried inside him. His recourse to dance and music as a cathartic exercise endows him with the power to reflect and assert himself. Keeping forth Friday's empowerment via non-verbal communication, he can be envisaged as the *other* who defies the authority of colonizer's language to narrate his story. Moreover, the untranslatability of his art connotes that he has devised his own ingenious and idiosyncratic way of expressing himself that lies beyond the semantic space of language. Friday's inaccessibility and silence shows that he does not want to trust anyone with the authorship of his story. By resisting the dominance of *other's* language, he himself becomes the author of his story. Furthermore, Friday's mimicry of Foe is another very potent non-verbal gesture. His sitting on the writing table while wearing Foe's robe and wig connotes that he has conquered and overthrown Foe's author-ity. Thus, Friday's silence coupled with his unsilencing via non-verbal communication exhibits the creation of a counter-narrative to challenge the authority of white man's language. "His silence is 'neither a sign of submission nor merely a strategy of passive resistance, but a counter-strategy through which the other preserves, even asserts, its alterior status and in so doing interrogates the fixity of dominant power structures and positions'" (Foxcroft 7). Besides serving as a resistance strategy, Friday's silence also expresses his distrust over the colonizer's language to expose his predicament and torturous life incidents. His silence can be interpreted as a protest against the inadequacy of the colonizer's language to bear the burden of his sufferings. Hence, he destabilizes the authority of language by opting for other modes of expression. He does not proclaim his identity by using plethora of words but relies on the vigor of musical tunes and gestures to channelize his power and thereby assert his identity.

Linguistic dispossession becomes a mode of resistance to show the vulnerability of colonial language as a tool to civilize the natives. Although Friday's speechlessness rendered by his rejection of the colonizer's language makes him defenseless yet through silence he invents a counter discourse to the colonial discourse. He devises an ingenious

method to express himself which despite being inaccessible to others however, is not imperceptible. Susan Barton is left unsettled by witnessing the cathartic impact of his gestures “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” (Coetzee 94- 95). The untranslatability of Friday's non-verbal communication depicts the subaltern's defiance of the *other*. Friday's speechlessness signifies a voluntary act of protest against the hegemonic power structures upheld by the colonizer among which linguistic superiority is the first and foremost. His refusal to fill in the gaps of Barton's narrative by maintaining silence exhibits his strategic resistance. By doing so he disclaims any foreign authorship over his story. He resists the colonizer's mode of representation and expresses himself in his own idiosyncratic terms. Hence, Friday denounces the authority of language to reveal the truth by asserting the supremacy of non-verbal communication.

Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) adopts the postmodern technique of meta-narration to express disbelief towards grand narratives. Metanarrative offers plurality of narratives which compete with each other, replacing the totalitarianism of grand narratives (Lyotard xxiv-xxv). Furthermore, it also questions the legitimization of various versions of 'the truth' by offering multiplicity of standpoints. Susan Barton and Friday's resistance revolves around dismantling the grand narratives of patriarchy and colonialism. Barton's resistance emphasizes the role of an author in disproving the exploitative hypothesis of author-ity. She subverts the patriarchal discourse by acquiring the power to speak as the *other* and thereby exposing the truth of her story. Her efforts to compile her narrative by rejecting all external influences reflect the unsuppressed voice of an intellectual, who in search of truth refutes the totalitarianism of hegemonic power structures. Moreover, Friday's empowerment by a counter-colonial discourse presents a metanarrative to the grand narrative of white man's burden. His rejection of English language as a mean of communication and his expression through idiosyncratic terms highlights the cultural and lingual gap that exists between the colonizer and the colonized. Friday's non-verbal approach towards asserting his identity questions the authority of English language to civilize the natives. Hence, the novel engages with postmodernist aesthetics in an attempt to produce critical histories and (her)stories that bear witness to those narratives which are silenced in the dominant discourse.

Susan Barton and Friday, who are powerless due to their belonging to the most marginalized sections of society, opt for speech and speechlessness

as their respective counter strategies against domination. Barton and Friday, the objects of patriarchal and colonial powers, demonstrate power dynamics in relation to the potentialities and limitations of language respectively. Friday's character reveals the limitations of language in galvanizing the dynamics of power relations while Susan Barton relies on the potentialities and efficiency of language to declare her emancipation and empowerment. Moreover, Friday and Barton's strategic resistance against racial and gender denigration, elucidates the relevance of power to language, history and gender as the pivotal instruments in relocating and redefining the power dynamics between the *self* and the *other*.

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