

Foe: The narrative and power

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Summary

What does it mean to narrate? More specifically, what does *literary* narration entail? These are the questions which are tentatively broached in this article. In order to do so, two possible readings of Coetzee's *Foe* are juxtaposed, the first stemming from a Freudomarxist tradition and the second from certain aspects of Foucault's work. The article attempts to show that an understanding of the circulation of narratives necessitates a shift from an analysis of the Symbolic, to an analysis of the mechanisms of power production in narrative discourse. The subject-object-body relation then appears as the nexus of the questions of narrativisation, of power and of resistance to power.

Opsomming

Wat beteken dit om te vertel? Meer spesifiek, wat behels *literêre* vertelling? Dit is hierdie vroeë wat op 'n tentatiewe manier in hierdie artikel aangeraak word. Om dit te kan doen, word twee moontlike interpretasies van Coetzee se *Foe* langs mekaar geplaas: die eerste spruit voort uit 'n Freudomarxistiese tradisie en die tweede uit sekere aspekte van Foucault se werk. Die artikel wend 'n poging aan om te wys dat 'n volledige begrip van die sirkulasie van vertellings 'n verskuiwing van 'n analise van die Simboliek na 'n analise van die meganismes van magproduksie in narratiewe diskoers benodig. Die subjek-objek-liggaam verhouding kom dan voor as die neksus van die kwessies van narrativering, mag en weerstand tot mag.

"The Female Castaway. Being a True Account of a Year Spent on a Desert Island. With Many Strange Circumstances Never Hitherto Related". (Coetzee 1986: 67). Such is the title Susan Barton would give to her narrative. And depending upon the manner of specifying titles in particular periods, Coetzee's book could have borne the title: "Foe. Being a True Account of an Unfortunate History"¹ or "Foe: case history of the failed narrative". *Foe* however, is very definitely written in the twentieth century, and belongs unambiguously in a Western tradition. Its intertextuality with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* sets it within an historical web, the "reference work" itself being only one anchor, but the one which puts it in touch with the genealogy of the novel. Marthe Robert (1972) cites this work as one of the first instances of the form of the novel, and it is perhaps the very genesis and possibility of this form which has attained such unquestionable dominance today, inextricably bound to our very mode of existence, which is explored in the book. Among other things, of course, since the work is more like a symbolic labyrinth, a colossus of allegory, parody, self-reflexivity and pluralism: its tongue-in-cheek postmodernism dares us to apply this label, or to substantially motivate any single reading. The text is always one step ahead of any of its "readings", all of which are ultimately impossible to motivate. Precisely because of this impossibility of reasonable motivation, I would like to use the text as a sounding board for two different possible theoretical "applications", one Freudomarxist and the other Foucauldian, not because these will arrive at a

necessary interpretation of the text, but rather because the bringing together of this particular text with these theories allows us to arrive at certain questions which should be asked of postmodernism itself, of the novel as a form and the power relation it deploys, and of forms of opposition or resistance literatures. No resolution to these questions is posited – indeed it is doubtful that at this point any resolution can be posited – instead the questions are proposed as possible directions for future research. Although the relevance of Foe to the South African context has been vigorously contested, I believe that it is the terms of the judgement of relevance which must be questioned. To be sure, questions are not enough, but they are one possible starting point.

Freudo-marxism, that is, the various attempts at inter-articulating psychoanalysis and materialism, is the problematisation of supposedly ideology-free or scientific models of meaning, via a theory of the subject within a specific social, economic and political configuration. In that it proposes to get at something beneath these models, that is, something which would operate like the condition of possibility of meaning-systems and of their transformation, it has the broadest possible object. However, its limitations are due precisely to those of the theories it attempts to reconcile, both of which, as Foucault shows, share the genealogy of their object.² Insofar as they are able to account for the exchange basis of narratives (for the circulation of narratives within a society), it can be shown that the novel, the most popular form of narrativisation since the eighteenth century, also shares in that genealogy. In this paper I will attempt to shift the emphasis on exchange (of a discourse and of a fantasy) to the relation of mutual presupposition between knowledge and power. In other words, there will be a shift from the Freudo-marxist question – “what is at stake in a system of meaning if not the place/ing of a subject in its (hi)story?” – to Foucault’s restatement of the question in ‘the Order of Discourse’: “What is at stake in the will to truth, in the will to utter this true discourse, if not desire and power?” (Foucault 1981: 56). Ultimately then, the focus will be on the power exercised by the discourse of the novel, and particularly the “realist” novel, by its form and its relation to truth.

I wish to use Coetzee’s work then as an example of an “unfortunate history”, a “failed narrative”, despite the problems that the literary canon would present in this regard.³ By this, I do not mean simply a bad story, badly told. It is not a system of evaluation I am after. If a narrative fails on the level of technique, it is merely a bad narrative and not necessarily a failed one. The profusion of hack and clichéd narratives is evidence of this.

To begin with then, one would have to define the limits of this failure: let us call it, provisionally, the failure to transform a story into *literature*. When a story fails in this way, we are forced to question the terms of that failure. The failed narrative is the negative underside of all those stories that do “make it” to the shelves. On what terms then does a story become literature, that is, *not fail*? On what condition will its metamorphosis to literature be accepted and applauded? What institution may be said to control, regulate and dispose of the act of telling a story and to guarantee the acceptance and

circulation of stories; the power and truth effects of stories; the subject-positions that these stories necessitate or exclude?

Foe may be used as a lever for the asking of just these questions. For Susan Barton's story is never given the chance to become a narrative, or more specifically, to become *literature*. Ironically so, since one must read to the end of the first part to realise that what one has been reading up till then is not literature – it does not count. Nothing more *written* than its opening paragraphs, the language bears all the signs of construction. Yet the rest of the work is the denial of its literary status, it is the story of its struggle and insistence to become a story, only to be told endlessly: wait.

From a Freudo-marxist perspective, the failure to narrativise has a radical effect on the relation of the subject to its (hi)story, and more specifically on the acceptance or not of that subject by a (hi)story. The symbolics of a psychoanalytic-materialist synthesis are certainly to be found in *Foe*, if one wishes to read the text in this way.⁴ Most significant, from this perspective, is the fact that the contractual basis of Susan's story is made explicit from the beginning of her relations with Foe: in exchange for the writing and acceptance of her story she will receive an amount of money which will secure her livelihood in England, as well as Friday's emancipation and return to his land of birth. The author, Foe, does not however accept her story as is. His non-acceptance is carried out on behalf of a prospective readership, who require not so much the truth as an elaboration of the truth. The denial of fictionality is, as is well known, a standard convention of the eighteenth century novel: in his preface to another intertext of this work, *Roxana*, Defoe goes to great lengths to assert the truth of the story and its moral ends.⁵ While Susan Barton insists that the story of the island where she was stranded with Robinson Crusoe and Friday be told in its truth, refusing to add any ornamental detail or attention-grabbing adventures, Foe informs her that

The island is not a story in itself (. . .). By itself it is no better than a waterlogged boat drifting day after day in an empty ocean till one day, humbly and without commotion, it sinks. The island lacks light and shade. It is too much the same throughout. It is like a loaf of bread. It will keep us alive, certainly, if we are starved of reading; but who will prefer it when there are tastier confections and pastries to be had? (Coetzee 1986: 117)

This all sounds like sound marketing strategy, and the market is certainly what it's all about, at one level. Foe responds to Susan's insistence on truth with an insistence on his part to elaborate: he asks her for details of cannibals. She replies: "All I say is: what I saw, I wrote. I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind" (Coetzee 1986: 54).⁶

However, Susan Barton's intransigent insistence on truth, an insistence matched only by her will to get her story told, goes far beyond the terms of the initial financial agreement: her very existence as a subject, the truth of her body, is at stake:

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. Is that the fate of all storytellers? Yet I was as much a body as Cruso (. . .). Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty. (Coetzee 1986: 51)

The story then makes up a figure as inextricable as the Trinity in its relation to the body, and to truth. This tripartite figure is at the basis of the circulation of narratives – a regulated exchange between individuals and groups. Between a body and its (hi)story. We need not look far for a plausible explanation of this figure; indeed only as far as Freud.

Since Freud's well-known article on Jensen's *Gradiva*, the idea of the novel as a form of fantasy has often been returned to. One of its more significant developments has been Marthe Robert's (1972: 62–78) postulation that the novel is an elaboration of the family romance, whose one generic specifying feature is a peculiar relation to truth. The central feature of this relation is not its "realism", which is in any case often violated, but more particularly the will to change what *is* (Truth, Law) in favour of a personal or subjective wish fulfillment. The novel is therefore not a reflection of the real, but its *transformation* and modification to personal ends. By extension, it is at once an acceptance and avoidance of the Law, and the Truth it guarantees. That is, if the family romance is the means whereby the child gives the slip to the threat of castration, and at the same time procures a safe passage to the mother – despite the fact that she has been belittled and degraded –, makes a hero of but also distances the father, and guarantees its own claim to heroism, social status and power, it may perhaps be placed precisely in the position of that fantasy which the Imaginary apparatus uses as a "buttress to the subject's question" (Lacan 1978: 16). Lacan has shown, not gratuitously with evidence from a literary text, that the fantasy brings desire in relation to the lack, the sense of which is "experienced" at the moment of the threat of castration, and the mourning of the phallus, and at the same time in relation to the object "a", or the substitutive object. The fantasy (formalised as $\phi \diamond a$), managing in a sense, the play between lack and the substitutive object, is itself dependent upon misrecognition – of castration, of the Law, and ultimately of the lack which makes its desire possible. This is at the same time the reason why the narrative is not simply a repetition of the family romance, but instead elaborates upon it and masks it endlessly.

The closure and communicability of meaning in the narrative thus depends on the elision of the lack of castration – this is the underlying structure of a metaphoric as opposed to a metonymic functioning of meaning, which has its counterpart in, and indeed interarticulates perfectly with the exchange basis of capitalism, and the fetishism of the commodity. The analogy between communicative language and money is well-known⁷ and has been extended to apply to literature as a form, the reading of literature and so on, with interesting results especially in a work such as Barthes' *S/Z* (1970). This interarticulation of forms is made particularly compelling when it becomes possible to fit the two systems into one another through their respective zero-points: the lack and value.⁸ Productivity⁹ is the unifying factor and becomes the only permissible transcendental in the revolution of both the

economic system and poetic language: signification, labour and the subject are held together by an analogy of form and of function (Foucault: 1980). The contract on which the circulation of literary texts depends would then appear to be based on two factors fused in the system of signification: the neutralising of the transgression of the fantasy by a simultaneous elaboration and masking (that is, misrecognition) whereby the text circulates as exorcising agent in order to reinforce the necessity of an oedipalised and oedipalising subject and its relation to signification; an elision of the productivity of signification in favour of an acceptance of the text as consumable product with an affirmation of universal and eternal values, at the cost of historicism and radical politicisation. Despite the disavowal of the absolute primacy of the economic system, and the repeated affirmation that the literary text is relatively autonomous, the contract's relation to the economic base-structure is one of formal cohesion and functional dependence. Formal cohesion since the exchange of meaning in representation, as well as the exchange of the text as product operate in much the same way as the exchange of money and products in the capitalist mode of production. Functional dependence since the model of the fantasy, and the "bottom-line" of the contract appear to be based on a functional necessity to reinforce the capitalist base, which in turn utilises to its own ends the representation, author, creation myths, as well as the thrust towards Truth and Presence.

It is with good reason then that Susan at first mistakes Foe for a man from the Exchange or the Law. The failure of Susan Barton's story would appear to hinge on the failure to abide by the rules of the contract: the symbolics of this reading of the contract trace a definite web of relations in the work, which could be picked up at any point. Indeed, it seems as though this type of symbolicity is being played with, so much is it there. For example, beginning from a random point, Foe's response to Susan's entreaty to "return to her the substance she has lost", is to elaborate a counter-story for her: she had set out for Brasil in search of her lost daughter, and he provides her with a daughter who searches for her mother and finds her in London. His rendering of the story of the island will revolve around the theme of search and discovery. She however refuses his elaboration, and the daughter who goes with it. The basis of her refusal is the fact that "there are no stories of daughters searching for mothers. There are no stories of such quests because they do not occur. They are not part of life." (Coetzee 1986: 77).¹⁰ For Susan, stories and life are completely inter-collapsible: stories are rooted in life and in truth and lives in turn are stories. Once again Susan does not know how right she is. She requires a story in order to live, in order *to be*. At the same time she appears as the voice of reason with her refutation of all that is not proven, logical, truthful – indeed she is the most "reasonable" character in the work, constantly hitting her head against a wall of "unreasonableness". Her exasperation at the girl's insistence that she is her daughter is only one example: "I stare at the two hands side by side. My hand is long, hers short. Her fingers are the plump unformed fingers of a child. Her eyes are grey, mine brown. What kind of being is she, so serenely blind to the evidence of her senses?" (Coetzee 1986: 76). However, it is Susan who is infinitely more

delusional than the girl, since it is precisely her unproblematic claim to Reason that is the index of her misrecognition. Her quest for truth is her particular form of fantasy. The condition of acceptability of the narrative is that it circulate as an exorcised fantasy, whose relation to truth is one of modification rather than of reflection or transmission, but which does not bear the markers of this modification. The implication of the subject, and of its desire must be obliterated: one of the functions of the author myth is precisely to make impossible a personal appropriation of the fantasy by either the writer or the reader. Susan, by obstinately refusing to give up the subjective link with the story of the island – and by this I mean, that which would constitute her as a subject – is not adhering to the terms of the contract. Hers is a refusal to loosen her grasp on the story, as a story in which her body and her desire are implicated, and are in fact retrievable only by the revelation of the truth. Her personal tragedy is then that this truth is bound to Friday's silence.

Susan's refusal may be interpreted as a refusal of castration – or in other words, a refusal to subject herself to Law. And this may be the point of feminist revenge: let us recall that both (De)Foe and Cruso(e) bear the signs of castration. Both are subject to Law, in the same way as the Name of the Father can function as Law only because it has itself been subjected to the threat of castration, and has had to give up its claim to the phallus.¹¹ And it is precisely through these figures that Susan must pass, in order to have a story at all, and in order to make her story acceptable. Susan is in fact surrounded by male figures, with whom she is expected to have a relation: she *is* only in her relation to a (castrated) male. The reversal of gender roles in her efforts to “beget” her story of Foe, the author, who is then reduced to the figure of a whore, in fact only serves to reinforce the imperative of the Law and the absoluteness of the threat of castration.

One could continue along this line of interpretation *ad infinitum* – the symbolic, as we know from *S/Z*, has no closure, no finitude, no order. Susan's insistence on maintaining her existential link with the story/fantasy and her refusal of castration would be sufficient reason for the collapse of the contract whereby stories are transformed into literature. At the same time as the Law is transgressed, and by the same token, there is a collapse of the contract upon which the transformation of a story to literature depends, a collapse of (capitalist) exchange, and a collapse of signification as a finite system of representation.

But what of Friday? What is his place in this allegory? For it is the figure of Friday which is the nexus of any reading of the work. While Susan begins by calling the story “Cruso's story”, it soon becomes Friday's story (since it can never simply be her story). The transformation of the story comes to be entirely dependent upon the revelation of the circumstances under which Friday lost his tongue, and since none but Friday can tell this part of the story, the story as a whole is necessarily impossible. And, as is fitting in an eminently “postmodern” work such as this, Friday's silence is traversed by several meanings – a blind-spot in itself, it can sustain any number of interpretations. Accordingly, Friday's silence (since he is nothing more than

this silence) could be read as a figure of the lack of castration, his mutilation being its very embodiment. Since castration would signify the impossible status of being a non-subject (which is why it is always merely a threat), symbolised by death¹², Friday would be precisely the non-subject of an accomplished castration. And since Susan's subjectivity comes to depend upon the truth of Friday's silence, she too is doomed to non-subjectivity, by a metonymicity which comes to include Foe as well.

This reading would appear to tie up most of the loose ends in the allegory: except for some remaining questions, of which I would like to pick out two: why is there such a deliberate ambiguation of Friday's castration? Why is there an ambiguation of the reasons for the loss of his tongue? The fact that these questions are "left over" as it were, show that the psychoanalytic-materialist reading in itself is not sufficient.

To go back to the first question: why is there such a deliberate ambiguation of Friday's castration? Susan asks at a certain point "whether by a dumb slave I was to understand a slave unmanned." (Coetzee 1986: 119) She then proceeds to answer this question in terms which are simultaneously a covering and a dis-covering, such that the reader is left as much in the dark as before:

... I was so confounded that I gaped without shame at what had hitherto been hidden from me.

... What had been hidden from me was revealed. I saw; or, I should say, my eyes were open to what was present to them.

I saw and believed I had seen, though afterwards I remembered Thomas, who also saw, but could not be brought to believe till he had put his hand in the wound. (Coetzee 1986: 119-120)

In this passage a statement appears to be made which is at once erased, such that one no longer knows whether to believe the statement or its erasure. There is a play on presence and absence, between saying and taking away, that can only cause us the utmost uncertainty concerning Friday's castration. This uncertainty is extended into the possible reasons for Friday's mutilation. Two possibilities are put forward: one which would reinforce the fact of castration and which would signify punishment or retribution (Friday was punished for cannibalism); the other which would signify generally "repression" and subjection (slavery). It is the very impossibility of answering either one of these questions definitively that forces us to relocate the site of failure.

A shift to another paradigm of explanation is necessitated: that of *power*. Foucault has shown in the *History of Sexuality* that far from being a universal and eternal condition, the Oedipus complex itself, and therefore psychoanalytic knowledge generally, are made possible by the sexualisation of the family in the late eighteenth century. He also shows that psychoanalysis reinforces the concept of a pre-existing and determining Law, and therefore plays a part in legitimating and maintaining it. Marxism, as the other part of this synthesis, is similarly shown to be dependent on the notions of production and of labour originating towards the end of the eighteenth century. In other words, Foucault shows that the validity of both these discourses is based on the fact that they share the genealogy of their respective objects, and that

both are in fact based on a repressive model of power, as opposed to a productive one. Therefore the two contradictions between Freudo-marxism and a Foucauldian discourse analysis would be 1) the adherence to Law as a primordial given and 2) the formal/functional dependence on the economic base. However the word "contradiction" is erroneous: in fact it can be shown that the second theory englobes the first by the postulation of factors which have necessary primacy. Robert has shown that the novel as a genre originates at the same time as the inception of a bourgeois economy. This is also postulated by Kristeva in *Le texte du roman* (1970). At the same time it coincides with the sexualisation of the family, which Foucault places between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is therefore not gratuitous that story-telling in the novel should have the fantasy, with its simultaneous transgression and reinforcement of Law, as an underlying structure. Foucault postulates also that an economic structure may at any point take advantage of a particular articulation of Truth in any given discourse, although it may not have formal or functional primacy. It would not then be far-fetched to postulate that the burgeoning form of the novel developed to the extent that it is now the most prevalent form of literature due to an investment in it by a) forms of sexualisation of the subject and b) a mode of production based on exchange and the accumulation of capital, with the ideologies of the individual and of rights necessitated by it.

Let us go back for a moment to the ambiguation of Friday's castration and the reasons for it. If Friday is not castrated, the entire psychoanalytic allegory would fail, since it would not account for all points in a coherent manner. If he is, it would appear to signify that castration is indeed an all-powerful threat, and that the Law is indeed a primordial given, and that the narrative does indeed depend on the elision of a fantasy. We are however doomed to not knowing: and in the end we must ask ourselves, *does it make any difference?* The story is not told in any case, since the essential point is that Friday does not speak (does not wish to speak?) whether or not he has been castrated. As to the reasons for the loss of his tongue: whether as a form of punishment or as a more effective form of repression, it makes no difference, for Friday is *now* neither obedient nor rebellious, as he is neither a desiring nor a productive subject. Friday is none of these because he is simply a neutral¹² which being neither positive nor negative in itself, cannot be subject to neither positive nor negative action, that is to neither an inciting nor a suppressing power. If power is primarily the possibility of affecting another body, or singularity¹³, and thus depends upon the existence of bodies onto which it must attach itself, and Friday refuses to be, or simply is not, just such a singularity – *but he is at the same time the locus of Truth* on which the truth of other bodies comes to depend, the entire power chain will collapse. Friday will then be beyond the threat of castration; he cannot be subject to its Law, not being subject to the "diagram of power" (Deleuze, 1986) which has set it in place. In fact Friday *is not a subject* on those terms. In this case, the hypothesis of Law and Exchange as the two controlling factors of narrativisation is insufficient to account for its failure. Instead it appears that where the Truth of a story coincides with such a non-subject, or neutrality,

signification collapses, desire has no consequence, and the contract (exchange) is not upheld.¹⁴ Where a body has no possibility of splitting off into a representation, that is, where there is no possibility either of grasping it within a subject-object relation, and therefore nor of signifying it by means of a signifying and signified unit (a code), that body is totally outside of our intelligibility: it is for us, nothing other than the void of death. The "alternatives" supplied at the end of the book, evoke just such a void, both times concerning a reality which will not split off, which is only density of existence, with no signification. The first time, this "thickness" issuing from Friday is the island: "From his mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island." (Coetzee 1986: 154). The second time it is the body itself:

But 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: 157)

Where the body is its own sign, there is an impossibility of transforming it from its own self-enclosed existence into anything else. It is completely intractable and refractory to any affect whatsoever, and therefore to any deployment of power. If there is any victory here then, it is Friday's victory, won by his recalcitrant silence. It is not gratuitous that the figure of the woman comes to be crossed with that of the Black man, and must find its truth there. In this respect however, Susan's character is divided: a "victim of oppression" on the one hand and, in terms of the imposition of a discourse on an-other, an "oppressor" on the other. From Susan's description of Friday on her first encounter with him, it is evident that this is White discourse which operates by the separation and exclusion of Black discourse. Yet, in order humanely to free him, a discourse must be extracted from him, he must produce a story, and a Truth. He must, in other words, become a productive, signifying and truth-full body in terms of a dominant (White) discourse, be it that of well-intended humanist liberalism. This has certain repercussions not only for resistance discourse but for what is called "post-modern" literature generally.

Underlying the failure to adhere to a taboo and the concomitant collapse of an implicit contract which permits the narrative to circulate and to be exchanged, is the much more incapacitating insistence to locate the Truth of one's story in a body which, instead of being a point of attachment, a fullness, is a gaping hole. A body which does not split off into a signifying double, which does not divide itself into subject and object is entirely unintelligible to us: it is the point of collapse of the power/knowledge relation. It is *this* impotence that invalidates Susan Barton's story, much more than any threat of castration. For the emptiness of this threat has its a priori in the neutralisation of the power/knowledge configuration. The latter necessarily has primacy over the former: without the possibility of exerting power over bodies in terms of a knowledge and a truth, it would be impossible to subject that body either to Law or to Exchange; similarly it would be impossible to extract a story from it, or to impose one on it. It is finally the question of this imposition that locates *Foe* in what can tenuously be called the political life of

South Africa, while it is at the same time embedded within Western literary traditions. For the latter there can be no apology: what can we say of Africa which is truly *of* Africa? With the teasing and self-conscious usage of typically post-modern strategies, Coetzee has woven together and called into crisis at least three contemporary discourses: that of post-modernism, that of the commentary and theory concomitant with it, and that of resistance. It is the much vaunted political effectiveness of all three that is at stake – the very tenability of *any* political position is not impervious to the tricks of irony in *Foe*.

Thus, if it is to be at all, the narrative must exert power in terms of a discourse which will at some point erupt into a Truth.¹⁵ This discourse is by no means innocent: the investiture in, for example, the novel, by the Western “way of life”, its very genealogy are evidence of this. It is possible then that the relation to Truth in resistance literatures is a guarantee of the continuation and extension of an inherently oppressive discourse into the discourses of resistance, which in this way necessarily spring from it (and maintain it?). And since a power/knowledge configuration is necessarily the *a priori* of all literature, in terms of what power does a discourse as seemingly wary of truth as that of post-modernism function? By playing with the categories of post-modernism and of resistance with the utmost irony, and by crossing them with an interrogation of the very possibility of the narrative, Coetzee is forcing us to ask of our literature: where do you come from? who do you wish to affect? and finally, who is speaking whom?

Notes

1. In contrast to *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress*, another intertext of the work, in which the figure of Susan appears as the daughter who searches for and is rejected by her mother. cf. “‘Better had there been only Cruso and Friday’, you will murmur to yourself. ‘Better without the woman.’” (Coetzee 1986: 72) What is it about the figure of Susan which forces (De)Foe to shift it to another story, in order to be able to tell the story of Robinson Crusoe at all?
2. Although I am using the term generically to mean a system of inserting a subject into a history, the description has been drawn mainly from the particular development of Freudo-marxism found in the work of those associated with *Tel Quel* during the late 1960’s. See Carusi 1987.
3. Throughout this article, it would appear that the terms “literature” and “narrative” have been collapsed onto one another. In view of the fact that the narrative in the form of the novel has come to define literature for our culture, in terms of mass circulation at least, this would certainly appear to be the case. The “canon” obviously exerts a power of its own in what is considered worthy of the label “literature” at all, and therefore presents the opposite problem in some respects.
4. The reader will recognise Barthes’ *S/Z* (1970) as the model for this reading of symbolic functioning.
5. “. . . this Story differs from most of the Modern Performances of this Kind, tho’ some of them have met with a very good Reception in the World: *I say* It differs from them in this Great and Essential Article, *Namely* that the Foundation of This is laid in Truth of *Fact*; and so the Work is not a Story but a History.” (Defoe 1964: 1) Cf. Susan’s words to Foe, “Many strengths you have but invention is not one of them.” (Coetzee 1986: 72)

6. Cf. the "empirical blindness" of the king and then the police in Lacan's *Seminar on the Purloined Letter* (1972).
7. For only one example, see Mallarmé: "Narrer, enseigner, même décrire, cela va et encore qu'a chacun suffirait peut-être pour échanger la pensée humaine, de prendre ou de mettre dans la main d'autrui en silence une pièce de monnaie . . ." (1945: 368). [Translation: To narrate, to teach, even to describe, this goes [on] and yet for each of these it would perhaps be sufficient, in order to exchange human thought, to take or to place a coin in the hand of others in silence . . .]
8. See Deleuze "Da che cosa si riconosce lo strutturalismo?" (1975) as well as Carusi 1986.
9. Althusser: *Lire le capital* commented upon in Carusi 1986.
10. Is her appearance as the daughter in *Roxana* then a punishment for refusal of the story?
11. Lacan on *Hamlet* (1978). It is not surprising that Friday's figure should be intertwined with that of Death.
12. Cf. Deleuze's "empty set" (1973).
13. The term is used by Deleuze in his commentary on Foucault (1986).
14. This can be compared to what happens to the contract in another narrative where this coincidence occurs, viz. Balzac's *Sarrasine*.
15. A further specification of this discourse and its Truth would of course require a study of the author function: this would be necessary not only in defining the parameters of the narrative, but of any other literary genre one would wish to include. Thus the important tradition of oral literature or performance poetry would have to be looked at in terms of the level at which an "author" function would intervene (if at all), and the type of appropriation which occurs.
The question of the author function opens up a new set of interpretative possibilities with respect to *Foe*, that is, an analysis of the several subject positions, their relation to one another, the mutations that occur within these relations, and the discourse which emanates from these positions.

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