The deployment of metafiction in an aesthetic of engagement in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*

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Summary

In this article it is argued that, in *Foe,* Coetzee achieves a synthesis of overt metanovelistic practice with engagement – two modes conventionally held to be antagonistic. By means of various metafictional devices, Coetzee establishes an equivalence between the relations of father/child, author/character, master/slave, reader/text and subject/object – thus presenting a critique which exposes the linguistic base of various forms of political domination, and which politicizes both the act of writing and the act of reading.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word aangevoer dat Coetzee, in *Foe,* 'n sintese van openlike metafiksionele praktyk met betrokkenheid bereik – twee vorme wat gewoonlik as teenstrydig beskou word. By wyse van verskeie selfbesinnende tegnieke vestig Coetzee 'n gelykwaardigheid tussen die verhoudinge van vader/kind, outeur/karakter, meester/slaaf, leser/teks en subjek/objek. Sodoende word 'n kritiek bereik wat die taalkundige basis van verskeie vorme van politieke oorheersing openbaar, en wat sowel die skryfproses as die leerproses politiseer.

Metafiction, according to Gerald Graff (1979: 31–62; 63–101; 207–239) and its other detractors, constitutes a retreat from life into mere aestheticism, whereas the opposite is frequently held to be true of the various modes of politically engaged writing, such as social realism. The title of this paper, however, suggests a synthesis of metafictional practice with engagement. Such a synthesis, of course, characterizes the plays of Brecht and is also observable in the novels of more recent political metafictionists such as Garcia Marquez, Fowles, D.M. Thomas, Pynchon, Findley, Kundera and Rushdie, to name but a few. J.M. Coetzee forms part of this growing band of international political metafictionists. By tracing a number of the metafictional devices deployed in *Foe,* such as the fiction metaphor, the child motif and the author's infiltration of the text, it will be demonstrated that, far from simply being examples of textual introversion, these inform the novel's critique of hegemony in its various manifestations. Indeed, it will be argued that this critique extends to and politicizes both the act of reading and the act of writing.

The referential plausibility of narrative in *Foe* is eroded by Coetzee's frequent use of the fiction metaphor, a term denoting the self-conscious use of words like "story' and "tale" which serve to advertise the fiction's fictionality. A pertinent example can be found in Part 1 in the course of Susan Barton's conversation with the captain of the ship:

> "the booksellers will hire a man to set your story to rights, and put in a dash of colour too, here and there." "I will not have any lies told," said I. The captain

> smiled. "There I cannot vouch for them," he said: "their trade is in books, not in truth". (p. 40)

The fiction metaphor serves as an alienation device which precludes a vicarious involvement with the text by jolting the reader into a recognition of the fact that s/he is reading a story and by emphasizing its physical existence as a book. Moreover, it clearly exposes the falsity of fiction and, in so doing, generates a tension between life – the world of fact – and art – the world of fiction, a tension which is provocatively explored throughout the novel.

The fiction metaphor, by exposing art's artifice, also raises questions about the ontological status of characters. *Foe* rejects the conventional conception of character in the novel, that based on the notion of realistic presence, by laying bare the linguistic nature of character by means of the child motif. In a letter to Foe, Susan Barton tells him that she is "a being without substance" (p. 51), and makes the following request: "Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe" (p. 51). The assumption underlying this request is that Foe, the author-surrogate in the novel, can confer "substance", that is, life, through words. As an author, he, according to the metaphor in the following passage, gives birth to characters: "Believe me, there are times when, as I think of you *labouring* in your attic *to bring life* to your thieves and courtesans and grenadiers, my heart aches with pity and I long only to be of service" (my italics, p. 52). The creative process whereby characters are conceived is thus likened to the process of giving birth – the creation of a new life.

The child motif, consequently, suggests that the characters in the novel are the children of Foe, the author-surrogate. This explains the dream in which Susan Barton tells the girl who claims to be her daughter the following: "Your father is a man named Daniel Foe ... You are father-born" (p. 91). Foe, however, does not bring Susan Barton's story to life. His failure or inability to do so is anticipated by Susan Barton's discovery, *en route* to Bristol, of a dead infant, either stifled or stillborn (pp. 104–105). Given the analogy between artistic creation and birth, the link between this event and Susan Barton's premonition of Foe's failure in the following passage is clear:

> But might the truth not be instead that he had laboured all these months to move a rock so heavy no man alive could budge it; that the pages I saw issuing from his pen were not idle tales of courtesans and grenadiers, as I supposed, but the same story over and over, in version after version, stillborn every time: the story of the island, as lifeless from his hand as from mine? (p. 151)

The fiction metaphor and the child motif interlock in this passage to suggest the reason for Foe's failure. Sexual activity leads to childbirth, that is, the delivery of a human being, whereas literary activity merely results in the artificial illusion of being: characters are words, not beings (Waugh, 1984: 26) – they do not exist. Life or "substance" cannot be bestowed by words. Emphasizing this distinction, Foe asks Susan Barton the following question pertaining to her long-lost daughter: "Did you truly give birth to her? Is she substantial or is she a story too?" (p. 152)

Foe's question refers the reader back to the confrontation in Foe's room between Susan Barton and the girl who claims to be her daughter. During the

encounter, Susan Barton is surprised to find that the girl is "substantial": "Had I expected her to dissolve when I touched her, her flesh crumbling and floating away like paper-ash?" (pp. 131–32). The paper simile shows that, prior to this encounter, Susan Barton has considered herself to be a substantial being and the girl to be an insubstantial character – simply words on paper. A while later, she expresses this clearly: "I thought I was myself and this girl a creature from another order speaking words you made up for her" (p. 133). The realization that she is not on a different ontological plane to that of the girl leads to a crisis: "But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong?" (p. 133). This ontological crisis – her realization that she, too, is a character in a novel – undermines her earlier, confident assertion: "I am not a story, Mr Foe . . . to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world" (p. 131), and shatters the illusion of Foe as author: "And you: who are you?" (p. 133). Both Foe and Susan Barton, like the girl, are words, not beings – characters in a novel written by Coetzee. Indeed, in Part IV, the paper simile is applied to them: "They lie side by side in bed, not touching. The skin, dry as paper, is stretched tight over their bones" (p. 153).

This depersonalization of character is not merely a gratuitous metafictional device – it serves to foreground the way in which authors manipulate their characters. By revealing the characters in the novel as Coetzee's creatures, it implies that they are subject to his arbitrary control. This point emerges clearly when Foe uses fiction and prison as metaphors in a discussion of determinism: "Do we of necessity become puppets in a story whose end is invisible to us, and towards which we are marched like condemned felons?" (p. 135). By having a character in his novel liken the determinism of characters to that of puppets and condemned felons, Coetzee exposes authorial tyranny and establishes it as the central symbol of domination in the novel. The metafictional strategy through which characters are depersonalized forms part of the critique of domination in the novel and is an instance of Coetzee's synthesis of metanovelistic practice with engagement.

This becomes clearer when the domination of Friday by the other characters in the novel is examined. The child motif, previously associated with the author/character relationship, is applied both to Cruso and Susan Barton's relationship with Friday. Cruso refers to Friday as having been a child when he arrived on the island: "Aye, a child, a mere child, a little slave-boy" (p. 12). The relation of master to slave, like that of author to character, is thus analogous to that of father to child. Cruso is depicted as the author of Friday when Susan Barton refers to "the new Friday whom Cruso created" (p. 95), and he, like the author of a character, creates an identity for his slave by naming him "Friday". Moreover, Cruso manipulates Friday in the same way that an author manipulates his characters – through language, as emerges from Susan Barton's criticism of his strictly utilitarian use of language when communicating with Friday (pp. 21–22; 56).

Susan Barton's own relationship to Friday is also characterized by the subject/object dichotomy which pertains between author and character, the

intrinsic paternalism of this relationship being emphasized once again by the child motif in the following passage: "I beseech you to send your men ashore again; inasmuch as Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not to abandon him to a solitude worse than death" (p. 39). As is the case with Cruso, language is of cardinal importance here. Susan Barton argues that Cruso should have taught Friday more language because, in so doing, he "might have brought home to him some of the blessings of civilization and made him a better man" (p. 22). Implicit in this statement is her desire to create, by means of language, a new Friday. She, however, later doubts whether language is a means to educate him "out of darkness and silence" (p. 60) or to subjugate him, and ultimately realizes that, through language, she has become the "author", the determiner, of Friday's existence:

> Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence 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 he is to the world is what I make of him. (pp. 121–22)

The metafictional process according to which the author/character relationship is set up as a paradigm of other forms of oppression is thus an integral part of the novel's engagement with the politics of domination.

Furthermore, the novel's critique of domination extends to the notion of "author", thereby establishing a relation between language and hegemony. In Part IV the author enters his text, thereby bridging the ontological gulf between human being and character, and blurring the borderline between "reality" and fiction. By means of this metafictional device whereby the author leaves the "real" world, that is, the domain of "fact" and "history" in which both reader and author interact, and enters the world of fiction, Coetzee ingeniously fuses "reality" and fiction – traditionally held to be mutually contradictory. The basis of this fusion is what McHale refers to as "the general tendency in the intellectual life of our time toward viewing reality as constructed in and through our languages, discourses, and semiotic systems" (1987: 150). In the same way that the novel is created through language, so is the world – the former is merely an alternative linguistic structure.

This conception of the world as text is anticipated earlier in the novel by Foe's words: "We are accustomed to believe that our world was created by God speaking the Word; but I ask, may it not rather be that he wrote it, wrote a Word so long we have yet to come to the end of it? May it not be that God continually writes the world ...?" (p. 143), and by the sustained use of the word "history" in its eighteenth-century sense, now obsolete, of a work of fiction – a sense diametrically opposed to the current one with which the contemporary reader is familiar, namely a record of "things that have happened".[1] In using "history" as a fiction metaphor, Coetzee plays on this ambiguity so as to dissolve the boundaries between fact and fiction and to suggest that contemporary concepts of reality are verbal constructs.

In addition, authorial infiltration of the text complicates the earlier distinction between characters and human beings. The device suggests that

language, which is the medium of the text and its characters, produces the author as much as he produces the language of the text (Waugh, 1984: 133). Lacan's theory of the subject, summarized here by Belsey, clarifies this contention:

> it is only with its entry into language that the child becomes a full subject ... In order to speak the child is compelled to differentiate; to speak of itself it has to distinguish "I" from "you". In order to formulate its needs the child learns to identify with the first person singular pronoun, and this identification constitutes the basis of subjectivity ... Subjectivity, then, is linguistically and discursively constructed (1980: 60–61).

According to this theory, the subject, of which the concept "author" is a manifestation (Culler, 1975: 28–31), is a linguistic construct – "a personal pronoun defined in opposition to others" (Hutcheon, 1983: 36) – similar to a character in a text. Coetzee's metafictional device of placing the author – significantly in the first person – in the text is calculated to reveal this and to show that the subject/object dichotomy which is the essence of authorial manipulation, is inscribed in language. The various forms of oppression with which the novel deals are thus linguistic effects.

What is free must therefore be outside of the "prison-house of language" Jameson, 1972). In the novel, Friday is placed beyond language – he is an alien to, in Susan Barton's words, "the world of words in which you, Mr Foe, and I, and other people live" (p. 60). As Foe puts it, referring to Friday: "some of us are not written, but simply are" (p. 143). This suggests that Friday is immune to domination by the master-figures – he escapes their authorial intentions. This immunity is hinted at by Susan Barton, when she constructs a hypothetical response from Foe to her claim that Friday, having no command of language, cannot escape linguistic reification:

> Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others ... You will respond: he is neither cannibal nor laundryman, these are mere names, they do not touch his essence, he is a substantial body, he is himself, Friday is Friday. (pp. 121–22)

Foe's hypothetical response implies that Friday is a discrete individual with an essence and sense of self which cannot be invaded by language and which is independent of that which Susan Barton tries to impose on him. He is right, for Friday has an independent history stretching beyond his present situation, which cannot be reached by Susan Barton's attempted "bridge of words" (p. 60). Friday's individuality also emerges in his music and dancing: Susan Barton eventually understands that these are "to remove himself, or his spirit from Newington and England, and from me too" (p. 104). In order to escape from his virtual imprisonment, he constructs an alternative inner reality which enables him to break out of the reality which Susan Barton constructs for him. He is therefore not merely a character of her creation, an object in her plot.

Friday's escape from Susan Barton's authorial control is analogous to the way in which the novel escapes its author's intention. The metafictional

debate on authorial intention, part of the plot of the novel, enters the dialectic between freedom and determinism, and should be considered in the context of Roland Barthes's pronouncement on the "death of the author":

> The Author, when believed in . . . is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text . . . is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here* and *now*. (1977: 145)

In pronouncing the death of the author, Barthes declares the liberation of the text. The debate in *Foe,* however, is only in partial agreement with Barthes's views, as is testified to by the fact that the very model of composition which Barthes refutes is a central motif in the novel and, as such, is a formal device, an intentional strategy on the part of the author, which (to a certain extent) controls the reader's interpretation of the text. This, however, does not imply that the text is arbitrarily controlled by the author and that the reader is a victim manipulated by determinate structures and formal features, but rather that, though an author may nourish his book as a father his child, "once the child leaves home – the book is published – a different situation obtains" (Lodge, 1984: 110).

In the novel, Coetzee uses *mises en abyme* (McHale, 1987: 124–128) to demonstrate this freedom of the text. Susan Barton, presented in the novel as the writer of the story of the island, tells Foe, her reader: "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 confessions whatever you fancy. It is still in my power to guide and amend. Above all to withhold. By such means do I still endeavour to be father of my story" (p. 123). Susan Barton wishes to anchor the intention of her story, despite the fact that earlier in the novel she exclaims: "Alas, my stories seem always to have more applications than I intend, so that I must go back and laboriously extract the right application and apologize for the wrong ones and efface them" (p. 81). After learning of her desire to exert authorial control over her story, Foe responds by telling her an anecdote, drawn from his experiences as a visitor to Newgate prison. This story, about a female convict's confessions to a minister before she was removed to Tyburn, functions as a *mise en abyme* of Susan Barton's story of the island which, in turn, is a *mise en abyme* of the story proper, that is, *Foe.* Foe concludes the story with a statement clearly intended to convey a reader's freedom to interpret a text, to allow it infinite plurality of meaning: "You are free to give to the story what application you will" (p. 124).[2] Susan Barton responds with a statement which implicitly conveys her assumption that authorial intention should serve as a guarantee of a text's single authoritative meaning: "If I were the Irishwoman, I should rest most uneasy in my grave knowing to what interpreter the story of my last hours has been consigned" (p. 124). This view is immediately countered by the *mise en abyme* about the condemned woman whose child is adopted by one of the gaolers – another of Foe's anecdotes.

The presence of the child motif in this story points to its "right application" – in the same way that a child leaves the control of its parents, a story escapes the intention of its author.

The relation of this *mise en abyme* to the story proper is made clear by Susan Barton's quest for her daughter who either eloped or was abducted to the New World (pp. 10; 116). Despite her search, her daughter continues to elude her and escape her control. In terms of the child motif, this daughter and the story of the island are analogous, as is indicated by Foe's words, quoted earlier: "Is she substantial or is she a story too?" (p. 152). This analogue suggests that Susan Barton's story of the island will escape her control as well. Evidence that it does is provided by *Robinson Crusoe,* a novel in whose context *Foe* must be read. Indeed, the differences which Coetzee constructs between Susan Barton's story and *Robinson Crusoe,* in which she does not even appear as a character, indicate that she is ultimately unable to control Foe's interpretation of her story – he makes of it what he fancies.[3] The *mises en abyme,* together with the child motif and *Robinson Crusoe,* thus illustrate the freedom of texts from authorial control.

This concern with the freedom of the text extends to the reader of the novel and his or her stance in relation to it, as emerges upon a consideration of the implications of the link between Friday and the novel formed by their mutual characteristic of silence. Susan Barton refers to Part 1 of the novel as follows: "In the letters you did not read ... I told you of my conviction that, if the story seems stupid, that is only because it so doggedly holds its silence" (p. 117). Later in the novel, Foe says, "in every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken, I believe" (p. 141). These quotations are from passages of metafictional commentary in which Susan Barton and Foe try to "make sense" of the "story" of the island, and of Friday. Such attempts by the characters in the novel to "make sense" of Friday reflect the reader's attempts to "make sense" of the novel. The reader is thus identified with Susan Barton and Foe, and the text with Friday.

This identification politicizes the act of reading since the attitude of Susan Barton and Foe towards Friday reflects the reader's approach to the text, an approach characterized by the division between subject and object. The relation of reader to text is thus similar to that of master to slave. By engaging in an obsessive search for the "meaning" of the work – the implicit assumption being that the novel contains a "meaning" which can be extracted – the reader reifies it, treats it as an item for consumption (Iser, 1978: 4–7).

Not only is the reader's relation to the text that of master to slave, but also that of author to text. This is suggested by Coetzee's "subversion of the disjunction between creative and critical discourse" (Boyd, 1983: 35) which identifies the reader with the author – the text's symbol of authoritarianism. This subversion is achieved by the depiction of Foe as both an author-figure and a reader-figure. It is implied here that *Robinson Crusoe* is Foe's story of his reading of Susan Barton's story of the island – both a creation and an interpretation. As Culler points out, "To speak of the meaning of a work, is to tell a story of reading" (1983: 35). Given this identification of reader and author, it is hardly surprising that Foe's story of reading emerges as an

example of the oppression which the novel, *Foe,* associates with authors. This is particularly evident in his objectification of the characters in Susan Barton's story. For example, Susan Barton is excluded from *Robinson Crusoe* altogether. Cruso becomes a stereotype of man the tool-maker, despite his dislike of tools: "He spoke as if tools were heathenish inventions" (p. 32), and, by keeping a journal and being very loquacious, he is made into a stereotype of *homo loquens,* man the talking animal, despite his laconic dislike of language: "You speak as if language were one of the banes of life, like money or the pox" (p. 22). Friday is changed into a cannibal become Christian convert and faithful manservant. It is thus no exaggeration to say that Foe enslaves and colonizes the text.

It is against the backdrop provided by *Robinson Crusoe* that the reader's story of reading *Foe* is to be measured. This comparison is called for by the close identification of Foe with the reader of the novel – Foe reads much of the documentation which makes up part of the text read by the reader. If the reader reifies the text in the same way that Foe does Susan Barton's story, s/he has failed to establish any relation between the theme of freedom in the novel and the reading process. Such a reader does not allow the novel to modify his or her consciousness – his or her ethics are not challenged by its aesthetics. This, in turn, reflects upon his or her relationship to the society s/he lives in.

If, however, the reader dissociates him- or herself from the orientation offered by the perspective of Foe (the reader in the novel), then a different relationship between the text and reader pertains. The activity of reading the novel is constrained by formal structures such as the imbricated child motif, the fiction metaphor and the *mises en abyme,* which prevent the reader from projecting an arbitrary meaning onto the text and thereby objectifying it. Moreover, they stimulate a constitutive activity on the part of the reader which, according to Iser's theory, "link[s] him to the text and induce[s] him to create the conditions necessary for the effectiveness of that text. As text and reader thus merge into a single situation, the division between subject and object no longer applies" (1978: 9–10).

Apart from the formal structures which prevent the reader from dominating the text, there are also lacunae, what Iser calls "gaps" and "spots of indeterminacy" (Iser, 1978: 169), which preserve its silence – like Friday, the novel resists reification by holding its silence. The reader is directed to this purposeful strategy of openness by Susan Barton's list of the "touches of mystery" in the story of the island (pp. 83–87), in which she directly refers to the reader of the story: "I ask these questions because they are the questions that any reader of our story will ask" (p. 86). Texts such as *Foe,* according to Kermode, "create gaps that cannot be closed, only gloried in; they solicit mutually contradictory types of attention and close on a problem of closure" (1983: 95). The accuracy of this statement when applied to *Foe* emerges upon a consideration of the novel's ending. Part III ends with the following exchange between Susan Barton and Foe, the context of which, in a further development of the child motif, is the attempt to teach Friday to write on a child's slate:

"Is Friday learning to write?" asked Foe.
"He is writing, after a fashion," I said. "He is writing the letter *o*."
"It is a beginning," said Foe. "Tomorrow you must teach him *a*" (p. 152).

In this passage the letters "a" and "o" allude to the alpha and omega of the Greek alphabet which, Biblically, denote the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:13). Foe's reference to the letter "o" as "a beginning" therefore constitutes an inversion and serves to draw the reader's attention to the inversion of the novel's beginning and end in Part IV.

Part IV is divided into two short sections. In the first, the author enters Foe's room where he finds the corpses of Susan Barton and Foe in bed together and Friday, still alive, in the alcove. He presses his ear to Friday's mouth: "I begin to hear the faintest faraway roar: as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell . . . From his mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island" (p. 154). In the second section, the author dives down to the wreck of the ship which brought Friday to the island. In one of the ship's cabins, he finds the corpses of Susan Barton and the captain of the ship in bed together. Upon finding Friday in a corner, he opens his mouth: "From inside him comes a slow 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" (p. 157). Ostensibly, these two sections provide the reader with a choice of endings. Foe's description of the letter "o" as "a beginning", however, constrains the reader to accept the last section as the only ending of the novel because it, by establishing Susan Barton's death at a period which precedes the beginning of the novel, subverts linear narrative and negates the narrated events which precede it thereby positing itself as the novel's beginning – the end of the novel is its beginning.

The spurious nature of the interpretive choice offered the reader by the two sections is also pointed to by the words "as she said", which precede the author's comparison of the sound which stems from Friday's mouth to "the roar of waves in a seashell" (p. 154). These words serve as a cue to the reader, referring him or her back to a passage in Part III in which Susan Barton tells Foe the following: "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" (p. 142). The significance of this cross-reference is that it serves to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the "silence – roar" sequence in this passage is inverted in Part IV, where the sections are placed in such a way that the one which ends with Friday's silence comes last. Not only does this inversion show that the final section of Part IV is the novel's actual ending, but also that the sections, rather than constituting an arbitrary option for the reader, foreground the importance of silence on the level of the novel's structure.

Foe, therefore, does not simply move toward closure and offer disclosure in the manner of "closed" works (Culler, 1983: 70 and Kermode, 1983: 56, 61). Instead of resolving the problem of silence, the novel's ending perpetuates and endorses the enigma. At the same time, Coetzee, by means of the

strategy of the author entering his text and failing to plumb his character's silence, dramatizes his renunciation of authority over the text. This renunciation ostensibly transfers the authority to interpret to the reader, since the ending appears to foreground reading as writing by providing the reader with an interpretive option (Culler, 1983: 37 and Kermode, 1983: 109). As has been shown, however, the text prevents the very choice it apparently urges. The reason for this is not hard to find: a transference of authority from the author to the reader would, by positing the reader as author, contradict one of the major concerns of the work, namely authoritarianism. Instead of allowing this, and thereby promoting the reification of the text by the reader, the ending, by endorsing the text's silence, ensures its continued freedom – the text escapes the reader.[4]

The self-conscious appraisal of the act of reading in *Foe* thus compels the reader to reconsider his or her relation to the text. Owing to the reflexive devices which dissolve the barriers between fiction and reality, this, in turn, causes him or her to rethink his or her relationship to the world as text. Metafiction, when deployed in an aesthetic of engagement, endeavours to change the way in which readers read so as to jolt them into fresh ways of thinking. As Linda Hutcheon maintains: "Art participates in broader social change through its audience: to change the way one reads or perceives may be the first step to changing the way one thinks and acts" (1983: 36).

Notes

1. See L.J. Davis (1983: 67–70); Scholes (1981: 3–4) and titles of eighteenth-century novels such as *The History of Joseph Andrews.*
2. In this fictional presentation of critical theory, Foe represents the post-structuralist position whereas Susan Barton represents the commonsense view (Belsey, 1980: *passim*).
3. Foe, being a fictionalization of Defoe, is the putative author of *Robinson Crusoe.*
4. The equivalences and escape routes identified in the novel can be expressed in the form of the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{SUBJECT}}{\text{OBJECT}} \left[\frac{\text{FATHER}}{\text{CHILD}} = \frac{\text{AUTHOR}}{\text{CHARACTER/STORY}} = \frac{\text{MASTER}}{\text{SLAVE}} = \frac{\text{READER}}{\text{TEXT}} \right]$$

C escapes F S escapes A Sl escapes M T escapes R

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