

The Hearerly text: Sea shells on the sea shore

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Summary

This essay is an intertextual approach to J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* through five French texts in the wake of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. A discussion of the departures from Defoe's text in the dating and location of the island adventure as a topos establishes that the French narrative texts eliminate polemic relations. These texts however fail to extricate themselves from the hypotext through the figure of Robinson Crusoe who remains a fiction of the self developing as a subject within the topos of the desert isle.

Emancipation from and subversion of the hypotext is rather achieved through the figure of Friday who emerges as an equal or a desirable alternative to be copied, but remains an object in a white man's discourse. An analysis of the treatment of the black man's language by Defoe and J.M. Coetzee establishes that, in the fiction of Robinson Crusoe, Friday can only be a parrot or a mute. The third (female) figure of Susan Barton in *Foe* allows the South African writer to introduce a "middle voice" partly enslaved to the written word, partly struggling through different communicative modes to be heard.

It is suggested that *Foe* should be read as the voice of a self transgressing the written models and the confining structures of natural languages through slips of the tongue and the phonic materiality of language. Detongued Friday then is in the position the reader is (made) to take, that is, to hear Susan's "otobiographie".

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel is 'n intertekstuele benadering tot J.M. Coetzee se *Foe* aan die hand van vyf tekste wat in die voetspore van Daniel Defoe se *Robinson Crusoe* volg. 'n Bespreking van die afwyking van Defoe se teks ten opsigte van die datering en lokaliserings van die eiland as 'n topos, belig die feit dat die Franse narratiewe tekste polemiere verhoudings uitkassel. Hierdie tekste slaag egter nie daarin om hulself, deur middel van die vergestaltung van Robinson Crusoe, wat 'n fiksie van die self bly en ontwikkel as 'n subjek binne die topos van die eiland, van die hipoteks los te maak nie.

Emansipasie en subversie van die hipoteks word eerder bewerkstellig deur die gestalte van Friday, wat na vore tree as 'n gelyke of 'n gewenste alternatief om na te boots, maar wat steeds 'n objek in 'n wit man se diskoers bly. 'n Analise van die hantering van die swart man se taal deur Defoe en J.M. Coetzee toon aan dat Friday net 'n papegaai of stom kan wees in die verhaal van Robinson Crusoe. Die derde (vroulike) figuur van Susan Barton in *Foe*, stel die Suid-Afrikaanse skrywer in staat om 'n "middelstem" bekend te stel, wat gedeeltelik slaaf is van die geskrewe woord, en gedeeltelik worstel om deur die verskillende kommunikasiewyses hoorbaar te word.

Daar word voorgestel dat *Foe* gelees word as die stem van 'n self wat die geskrewe modelle oortree en wat daarin slaag om die beperkende strukture van natuurlike tale te oorbrug deur glipse van die tong en die fonetiese materialiteit van taal. Friday, wat sonder tong is, is dan in die posisie wat die leser gedwing word om in te neem, om Susan se "otobiographie" aan te hoor.

UNISA celebrated the opening of the new library with a seminar on J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*.¹ The choice of the writer was appropriate: his first fiction starts with Eugene Dawn sitting in a downward expanding library "reached via a spiral stairway and an echoing tunnel plated in battleship-gray" (*Dusklands*: 6). Further in the text we read: "I am in an honourable line of bookish men who have sat in libraries and had visions of great clarity" and "I was a bookish child. I grew out of books" (*Dusklands*: 33, 34).

Book selves

This “fiction of the self” applies particularly well to *Foe* which, through its title and through the figures of Cruso and Friday, appears to have grown out of Defoe’s book. On the library shelves we find a book on (De)Foe by Coetzee, a book on Coetzee by Dovey, and we may, according to the same logical progression, expect a book on Dovey by another. The phenomenon points to the endogamic, even incestuous nature of literary proliferation: books from books, like fleas on fleas, with the extreme of “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quichote*” (Borges, 62 ff). The Library of Babel may be infinite, but it is claustrophobic all the same. We are entitled to ask ourselves whether there are boundaries between fictions and (academic) commentaries on the fictions, and how we are to keep our library in order. This almost domestic question was asked in more academic terms and in academic circumstances by J.M. Coetzee himself: “What is the privilege of criticism by which it claims to tell the truth of literature?” (Coetzee, 1984b). We may keep in mind the figure of the crystal-like proliferation of literary production, or alternatively the ever rising pyramid of books, to sober our academic exhilaration at offering any sort of truth, or way out of the Borgesian a-mazing library, shelf after shelf of fictions.

The second part of *Dusklands* illustrates two forms of the self-perpetuating text through supplements. The Afterword is an academic commentary of Jacobus Coetzee’s narrative by Dr S.J. Coetzee, “father” of J.M. Coetzee. The latter in turn proposes an Appendix, the translation of the *Relaas* of Jacobus Coetzee, the explorer’s deposition penned by the secretary of the Castle of Good Hope and co-signed by the aforesaid secretary and X. Jacobus Coetzee obviously could not write. The Appendix is thus the *translation* from the Dutch text reporting, in writing and with the necessary shift of the “I” of the speaking subject to the “HE” of reported speech, the speech of the ancestor, X. J.M. Coetzee’s first fiction demonstrates how lineages and dynasties can be traced in texts, although one may be unable to pen down the first ever receding original utterance. The subject of enunciation is deposited in the text and the quest(ion) of the “author” takes the form of a *supplement*.

Robinson Crusoe’s Wake

One of these texts which keeps begetting texts, translations, transmigrations across genres and languages, new versions and variations is Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. The London correspondent of our local *Argus* recently suggested that the novel still provides the guidelines of people’s ways and means of relating to the world, with the information: “Female ‘Crusoe’ looking forward to creepy crawlies” (*Argus*, July 1 1989). Subjects are written by texts (Coetzee, 1984a: 12).

In this essay, I would like to look at some specimens of the French lineage of *Robinson Crusoe*. For the sake of convenience, I will occasionally resort to Genette’s terminology of *hypotext* and *hypertext* (Genette, 1982: 14) which

gives a Greek touch to the raising of the pyramid. In her study of Tournier's novel *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*, Sbiroli resorts to dynastic indicators with "Robinson I" and "Robinson II".

Writing may be *palimpsestuous* (the portmanteau is by the critic Philippe Lejeune); it is not *xenophobic*. French poets (Valéry, Saint-John-Perse), novelists (Verne, Giraudoux, Tournier), musicians (Offenbach), critics (Marthe Robert, Macherey, Damish) have produced texts grown out of the English novel. Some have even answered the call for the supplement several times. Verne has produced several novels dealing with Robinson. Tournier has rewritten, and improved (he says) his *Vendredi* for children and has offered an alternative ending to Robinson's *Surprising Adventures* in a short story.

My corpus for this study will be confined to the texts Tournier mentions as other French renditions of the theme of his own novel (Tournier, 1977: 211, 213, 225). These texts are in their author's alphabetical order:

Giraudoux: *Suzanne et le Pacifique* (1921). Henceforth SP.

Saint-John-Perse: *Images à Crusoe* (1904).

Tournier: *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* (1967). English title: *Friday or the other Island*. Henceforth FOI.

Valéry: "Robinson" in *Histoires Brisées* (1950).

Verne: *L'Île Mystérieuse* (1875). Henceforth MI.

Through these texts I will make an intertextual approach to *Foe*, accepting Kristeva's view that "la fonction de l'énonciation de l'auteur/acteur consiste à agglutiner son discours à ses lectures, l'instance de sa parole à celle des autres" (Kristeva, 1969: 64), or, as an English equivalent, that enunciation in the novel is a compromise between the voice and the book. As I deal with French texts and would like to show the extent to which the materiality of language can be used to depart from, echo or subvert previous texts, "macaronic" effects in my discourse are unavoidable. They may actually not be alien to the point I want to make about J.M. Coetzee's use of language. I will only propose "translations" from the French with caution.

1 Poetic versions

Regrettably we will cast only a brief glance at the texts by poets in our corpus. Saint-John-Perse's *Images à Crusoe* and Valéry's *Robinson* have one striking point in common: they both use the figure of Robinson Crusoe at the end of his labours and his travels.

Saint-John-Perse's *Crusoe* is back in London longing for the lush green paradise of his island. In the Here and Now of the walled-in city, its stench and decay, *Crusoe* is confined in the adulterated space of corridors, landings, attics, shops and backstreets. Friday in red cast-off attire steals covetous glances at the fat cook who smells of fish. The reiterated vocative "Vieil homme aux mains nues, / remis entre les hommes, *Crusoe*!" (77) ushers images, evocations/invocations of the wedded perfection of the sky and the sea. Cast back among men, *Crusoe* is a figure gazing out to sea beyond the

wall, alert to the amplified roar in the sea depths rising like the waves from a seashell, conjuring images of large moving flowers on a sea voyage. In the last piece, first entitled “L’attente” and subsequently “Le Livre”, Crusoe is running a worn finger between prophecies, waiting for a form of liberation that will supersede the remembrance of things past, yearning to embark on a sea/see voyage with a new language:

alors, ouvrant le Livre,
tu promenais un doigt usé entre les prophéties,
puis le regard fixé au large, tu attendais l’instant du départ, le lever du grand vent
qui te descellerait d’un coup, comme un typhon, divisant les nuées devant
l’attente de tes yeux.
(Saint-John-Perse: 94)

Valéry’s Robinson is at the end of his labours. He sits in plenty and idleness, paradoxically in vacancy, with nothing to desire. He has islands of memories. The larder and the barn are stocked up. He has one book only, a logarithm table, epitomizing the sum total of the knowledge mankind has accumulated and put aside: a patrimony of results. The pages/latrines are being disposed of for hygienic purposes, as the homonymy *feuilles/feuillées* indicates (Pietra, 1984: 75).

Sitting on a pile with no danger of ever being broke, he is a “broken man”, with no story to tell. There is no play in such solid plenitude, no “jeu”, no “jouis/sens”, only the threat of artifice, of the invention of arts and letters.

In his warning foreword (*avertissement*) to *Histoires Brisées* Valéry explains that any literary work is exposed to the initiative of the reader who may operate substitutions. Narrative leaves too many possibilities for alteration, adulteration, bifurcations: “Tout l’art consiste à faire oublier au lecteur son pouvoir personnel d’intervention” (Valéry, 1950: 58).² The poem can achieve the perfection which leaves no room for the reader to intervene. This notion could not be more remote from “the Garden of Forking Paths” as the novel encompassing infinite possibilities (Borges, 1971: 57) and from the potential bifurcations of narrative delineated by Coetzee as early as *Dusklands* (70). In the wild, as on the island, everything is possible.

2. Narratives

2.1 Bifurcating narratives

In the three narratives, the references to *Robinson Crusoe* operate at different levels. In *Mysterious Island* (henceforth MI), there is first an authorial reference to the comforts of Defoe’s castaway hero (chap. VI), then a series of events paralleling Robinson’s circumstances, like the arrival of a chest complete with necessary impedimenta including scientific books, a French atlas and a Bible in English. In Defoe’s narrative, a first random reading of the Bible yields words from Psalm 50 (RC: 75), while Cyrus Smith falls upon Matt. 7, 8 (MI: II, chap. II). In both cases the castaways are promised deliverance for the asking. Book II of Verne’s narrative focuses on Ayrton’s solitary marooning.

Suzanne's shipwreck may be seen as a continuation or a reversal of the stroke of luck which won her a round-the-world trip. For being deferred, the allusion to Robinson Crusoe is no less stressed: first Suzanne finds the traces of a former castaway of Robinson's cast, in the form of Western artifacts (evidence of planting and piping); then Defoe's book itself surfaces from the previous castaway's cache and is avidly read by the castaway of a different sex with a definite penchant for luxury and a great talent for leisure.

The title of Tournier's novel alone is one of the most explicit and most accurate hypertextual contracts (Genette, 1982: 419) relying on the onomastic reference to Friday. In *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*, the technique of *mise en abyme* is used so to speak by default as a good portion of the book consists of the text of Robinson's diary, or *log-book*, as he is writing it: instead of the *Journal* which Robinson quotes, as in Defoe's fiction, we have the story of Robinson, *Homo Scribens*, writing *Robinson Crusoe*.

2.2 Departures: Place and Time

What the three narratives have in common, at first sight, is the topos of the *desert isle*, where castaways escape the mutinous elements at sea. The topos is flexible enough for the island to be anchored anywhere in space on the wide seas. Variations on the location of the island seem to be the rule; we are dealing with a floating island, maybe a floating signifier. In Giraudoux's text, the island wilts in the eyes of the lone islander as soon as Suzanne finds out its geographical points of anchorage in her predecessor's notebook. The Mysterious Island is blown to pieces by the volcano on which Verne has placed it. It is blotted out leaving a blank spot on present charts where its painstakingly established position would place it. Vendredi's island is in the Pacific as well, near Mas a Tierras where Selkirk was once marooned (Steele in Norton: 254). Tournier chooses this doubtful source of Defoe's narrative as the departure point of the story (Tournier, 1977: 211). Moreover the storm and shipwreck occur in the prologue. The bifurcation from the hypotext occurs, so to speak, *ab ovo*.

The location of the desert isle is important in as much as it is a matter of choice on the part of the writer and therefore carries meaning. One notes that Susan Barton is not a victim of the elements but of human mutiny. She joins the previous castaways in the strange island off the coast of Brazil – in the watery expanse where Atlantis once sunk. Just as names become “corrupted in the mouths of strangers” (Foe: 10), the insular offspring of the English writer floats away under the steer/penmanship of our French novelists, who transport their robinsonnades to the Pacific Ocean under various pretexts. The Mysterious Island is reached after the balloonists have been blown away from Richmond by “the great storm from the North East which blew unabatedly for days in March 1865”. Suzanne is on her way to Australia on a cruise offered by the *Sydney Daily* to reward her brilliant aphorism on boredom. Her ship is half way home when it sinks somewhere in the South Seas. In an interview, Tournier mentioned that a Swiss publication on the flora and fauna of Selkirk's island provided the realistic details he finds

necessary to underpin his fiction: the supernatural is to be achieved through hyperrealism (Tournier, 1977: 111).

Naming the island gives onomastic currency to desire, for Yankees, staunch supporters of the cause of abolition and fighting for the Union, it will be "Lincoln" island. Conversely, it is bad enough for Suzanne's island to be in a chartable position; she refrains from giving away the name she gave to it in the island language she has devised. Tournier's Robinson converts the "Island of Despair" into "Speranza", a name in keeping with the feminine gender of *île* in French and with the maternal and uxorial uses to which he puts the island. The name is also in keeping with the vicinity of a Spanish colony (Chile) and has the theological quality of a supernatural virtue becoming a man reborn.

Liberties are also taken with the time of the adventure, its place in time as well as its duration. Verne's story starts on March 24, 1865 and ends with the departure of the castaways on March 18, 1869. The sojourn is said to last five years. Poor arithmetic (RC: 216) is carried over from hypo- to hypertext, as a signal of hypertextuality, perhaps a parodic touch, or as a very visible symptom of the difference between the reckoning of reality and of fiction. Suzanne also stays five years on her Pacific island. The dating of the adventure is deferred until she calls at Honolulu on July 1st 1918, on her way home to France (SP: 273).

The dating of the adventure serves a similar purpose for Verne and Giraudoux. They both exploit the didactic potential of the island adventure, which is the source of *Robinson Crusoe's* fortunes in France following Rousseau's recommendation in *L'Emile* (1762). In view of Verne's ideological project as defined by his contract with his publisher, that is, the conquest of nature by science (Macherey, 1978: 116), the model must be updated. By the end of the nineteenth century, Rousseau's *Emile* has grown up (Macherey, 1978: 201). Nature is no longer about goats and plantations. There are other energies to be tapped. As for Suzanne, like Alice, she might start daydreaming on any drowsy afternoon and the text dispenses with the date of the letter which sends her woolgathering and shell collecting. The novel is Giraudoux's first fully-fledged attempt at fiction. The contemporaneity of the adventure and of the publication may be a last youthful escape into dream or a self-addressed lesson on the attrition the self suffers when transported to exotic climes. The exotic island turns out to be a long but possibly necessary detour to accept the homeliness of matrimony and motherhood (Berthier, 1979: 39), in the sobering form of an Inspector of Weights and Measures: The *Ornitorhynchus* is the didactic tool pointing to the French magpie and the French cow. The eccentricities on the island save Bellac from the boredom prevailing in Yonville and spare Suzanne Bovaryan mishaps.

Tournier's Robinson is washed ashore on 29 September 1759, exactly 100 years after Defoe's Robinson, who came "on shore here on the 30th of September 1659". Tournier corrects Crusoe's arithmetic by adding 28 years, 2 months and 19 days and bringing the rescue ship *Whitebird* (surprisingly translated by *Heron* in the English edition) on the 19th of December 1787. It was indeed a Wednesday (Fr: Mercredi, day of Mercure) as befits the French

messenger of a God. Such manic accuracy is disconcerting in view of the centennial displacement.

Before we start examining Tournier's figures, let us note that *Foe* does not offer any name for the island. The location is in keeping with the hypotext, and the duration of Crusoe's and Susan's respective confinements is vague enough: there is no initial storm bringing Crusoe or Susan to the island, although there is a storm after Susan arrives; through Crusoe's ramblings, Susan construes that he has been on the island for the past fifteen years (12). The *John Hobert* casts anchor off the island "a year or more after [she] became an islander" (38). Susan is cast on an island with Crusoe and Friday already there. She enters the *déjà là, déjà vu*, the wrong island indeed, for one "long(ing) to be borne away to a new life" (63). This strange island turns out to be as old as the hills. Had Crusoe been given enough time to carry on with his labours, he might have come level with the "flat top". But, clearly, terracing had been going on on a giant scale before *he* arrived. Susan is a mere *supplement* in a pre-existing geographical, social and metaphysical configuration. Accordingly, and despite her insistence, the topos of the island cannot accommodate her story. Her story-telling must spill out into other forms and out of island time: dated letters (April 15th to June 1st), undated letters with passing allusions to English weather seasoned with onomastic pointers (Mrs Summers), then unwritten letters (133) and a final undated visit to Mr Foe's refuge, figuring mostly as a dialogue where fragments of her story are exchanged for his more self-contained parables and Susan's exposure to other guest-speakers. The initial story is supplemented by various forms of discourse. The last supplement to her attempts appears as Section IV in the present tense of a discourse by another I.

Defoe embeds Crusoe's *Journal* in his story, but the journal itself adopts a retrospective narrative stance. Verne and Giraudoux stick respectively to the heterodiegetic and autodiegetic narrative modes, whereas Tournier feels the need to resort to the supplement of the *log-book*. The presence of the *log-book* introduces the present of discourse as a supplement to the past tense of the heterodiegetic narration (Benveniste, 1966 (I): 242–243). Intratextual play rests on the opposition of narrative past to present discourse and is added to intertextual relations.

2.3 War and Peace

If the stories are not to fall into the "once upon a time" of fairy tales, they have to be rigged to extra-linguistic time. I would argue that the manically precise dating matches the location of the three islands in the Pacific Ocean.

In his discussion of Tournier's novel, Genette dismisses the "translocation" of the hypertext, claiming it is of no thematic significance (Genette, 1982: 420). He sees Tournier exploiting the stereotype of the paradise island inescapably linked to the South Seas. Indeed as demonstrated in an article devoted to the use of "island rhetoric" (Freyssinet, 1979: 119 ff), one might even think that South Seas/island/woman is a dream package. "La femme est une île", where *île* is felt as the agrammatical feminine of "il", endowed with

the exotic seductions of a non-person. Suzanne buys this dream package. Tournier's Robinson, however, is an Englishman, like Defoe's. Their island is an I-land, the territory where they can define themselves as subjects according to the puritan ethos of hard labour. For a large part of the adventure, Speranza is hardly a paradise island in the South Seas. Genette thinks the deferment is also gratuitous. It is worthwhile examining whether translocation and deferment do not contribute further to the dislocation of the hypotext, already split by the narrative/discursive opposition.

Tournier's manipulation of dating makes Robinson II's adventure contemporary with Rousseau's *Emile*. The deferment may simply enable Tournier, who has strong views on education, to endorse or mock Rousseau's precepts by rewriting the first book given to Emile. Undoubtedly Tournier would encourage Emile to play more and to think less about the true relations of things (Rousseau's text quoted in Macherey, 1978: 200). Furthermore, the deferment of the adventure makes it contemporary with Bougainville's travels (1766–1769), published in 1771, and with Diderot's *Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville*, written and circulated in 1773. Diderot adopts the form of a dialogue, and casts doubt on prevailing Western beliefs in God and matrimony, while allowing Orou, the ancient savage, to speak and to be heard. Lastly the deferment places the island adventure, like Bougainville's world-girdling voyage, in a period pregnant with revolutions. One of the short-lived achievements of the French Revolution was the abolition of slavery. The treatment of Friday in the text is consistent with late eighteenth century views of the savage, and certainly departs from the abstract view of "le bon sauvage". In Tournier's text, the departures from the hypotext serve educational, anthropological and ideological ends.

The updating of the adventure, together with the translocation, moreover allows a fresh look at the three Pacific isles. Considering the dates of the three adventures, these islands not only save the castaways from the elements, they also keep them apart from a world of strife and war. Cyrus Smith and his party leave the United States a prey to Civil war, and go back to a "pacified nation". Suzanne would be by-passed by WWI, if the corpses of eighteen dead soldiers, complete with uniforms and a copy of *Le Petit Eclairer de Shanghai* (a minor publication admittedly, but well informed on La Marne battle) were not washed ashore like a school of dead whales. The *Whitebird* ironically brings the news of the American War of Independence. Captain Hunter has derived "a lively hatred of the French" (FOI: 210) from his involvement with battleships; now in command of a merchantsman, he roams the seas to air his bitterness on a vessel festering with the "brutality, the greeds and animosities" (FOI: 213) dividing the crew. Clearly Speranza stands as the desirable alternative to this world of strife, and accordingly Robinson chooses to stay on the island.

The three French novels develop a little-noticed motif at the beginning of Defoe's text. Robinson had two brothers; one of them vanished; the other "was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards" (RC: 5). Robinson's taking to sea severs him from the World at War. Significantly the French hypertexts isolate the island episode – as does Susan Barton – and

delete encounters with the Moors, the final episode of the mutineers and the fighting for control of the island. The casting off of the polemic world of war and trade has its counterpart in the positive project(ion) of an island of peace and harmony where discord, and differences are absent, kept at bay or assimilated. The topos of the exotic island is made to yield a way of relating to otherness and difference without enmity. To this purpose the three texts resort to the same device: multiplication of the island. "The world is full of islands" indeed. The fictional image does not have the stability of a geographical unit.

2.4 Island upon Island

Between the poles of island and continent (MI: chap. IX), the archipelago is a compromise where the crucial issue of encounter and intercourse with Otherness can be negotiated. Suzanne's (mini)archipelago figures a neatly scaled world, from Island I for the fowls, through Island II for the mammals to Island III for the gods. The latter is not unlike Cruso's "great rocky hill with a flat top" (*Foe*: 7) where Susan signals no statue. Suzanne occasionally visits this forbidding, barren and windswept plateau bristling with menhir-like statues to be reached by degrees; a natural staircase makes it easier for the lady to reach the top than terraces fit for giants. You'd think yourself on Easter Island. The second island hosts mammals; it rustles with the scurrying of feet and bears traces of a previous castaway of badger-like, Robinsonian tendencies who wasted his time digging, planting, building and laying pipes when shelter was available in well-tempered grottoes and where one could choose from a whole range of brooks to quench all degrees of thirst. Predictably, salvation, in the form of eclipse-watching amateur astronomers, will come on this viviparous island. On Suzanne's island, the first, fowl and fish share the bliss of the fifth day of creation (Berthier, 1979: 44). Suzanne takes like a duck to water to this island and becomes "bird of a feather" to the fowls (SP: 100–107). But she soon becomes bored with the sameness of the hencoop. Fortunately her flutterings about are dogged by the ancient egg-laying mammal ornitorhynchus, a dowdy and harmless emissary of a differentiated world à la Galapagos. Neither a sea thing, nor a foolish fowl, she can regain her pedestrian footing on the homely shores of Les Charentes, declining American riches.

The Mysterious Island has a twin: a three days' voyage can take the Lincolnians to Tabor Island where Ayrton has been marooned to expiate the sin of mutiny. His regression to animality and the radical Otherness of speechlessness debunks the myth of appropriation of the wild with bare hands. Redemption through marooning à la Selkirk is shown to abort on Tabor, a locum of transfiguration fit for gods (Jeremiah: 46, 18; Hosea: 5, 1), not for men. Ayrton's transgression into the Otherness of mutiny and of animality is reversed through the workings of brotherly love and solidarity. The palindromic treatment of his very name spells out the object of desire: Notrya, the strange-looking but orthodox French derivation for the names of utopian countries, is the name of the land that is ours, *la nôtre*.

Nemo's confinement in the *Nautilus* is yet another configuration of the island in Verne's novel: the island within the island, like Russian dolls. There is no need here to repeat Macherey's demonstration (Macherey, 1978: 222–229). We can only endorse his view that Nemo "is both Crusoe and a false god: he has appropriated only the setting and the solitude of deity" (Macherey, 1978: 226). From his abyss under Granite House, he is the agent who annuls the common conquest of the island through science and solidarity and transforms it into a treasure hunt with the ordeal of decipherment. His underwater cave is indeed the deepest hole in any (island) story. His self destruction is the logical price to pay for the mistake of believing one can live alone and impose on the condensed universe of the island a system of signs. He nobly takes himself to still lower depths, whereas Defoe's Crusoe first sat smugly on his estate, later paying a second visit on the island (*Farther Adventures*) to make sure that the sign system is working according to his design. With the treasure of the suicide the colonists are to exit from the insular fiction to face the realities of Iowa. In the meantime Verne's fiction has exploded Defoe's. Nemo does not burn his ship or his books, he sinks them.

2.5 Monsters of the Deep and Uncle Tom's

Before abandoning Nemo's ship on the lower seabed, a word must be put in for Prince Dakkar, the earlier name of the submarine's Captain. When Nemo allows the colonists to his secret abode, he is not interested so much in confessing his manipulations as in telling of his life as a defeated rebel against English colonization (MI: III, chap. XVI). Nemo's deliberate withdrawal and his dark doings on the *Nautilus* may well have seemed reactionary in the era of positivism and in view of Verne's utopian vision of conquest of nature by men's joint efforts. The novel articulates on a minimal phonemic opposition: soliTary/soliDary. Appropriation of knowledge for solitary ends may at the time have deserved dispatch with the krakens, dakkars and other monsters of the deep. Yet one notices that *Nemo* is the erasure of *Dakkar's* name and that the Deep, art and knowledge are the last refuge of an Indian refusing British rule. His name can of course be connected to Dacca in India. But in 1875 the name *Dak(k)ar* had Senegalese connotations which could not have escaped Verne (see Picard for illuminating documentation of the French colonial concerns at the time, 1974: 99–100). Through the duplication of islands, Verne's novel offers the alternative of either integrating (Ayrton) or eliminating (Dakkar) the Other. The inland colony to be developed in Iowa with Dakkar's treasure will flourish on the wealth of a suppressed Other, quite an acceptable thought at the peak of France's (and England's) colonial expansion.

The positive model offered by the emancipation of Nab, the former Negro slave fits into the strategy of integration. Nab devotedly endorses the socio-political system engineered by Cyrus Smith. Equality in the service of progress does not alter the antecedent of the Scriptures: Cyrus killed Nebuchadnezzar's son (Fr: Nabuchodonosor) to liberate Babylon (Daniel: 5).

Nab is not doomed to have his dwelling with the beasts (Daniel: 4), but he is integrated in a scale of beings rising from Top the dog, through Jup(iter) the ape turned pipesmoking butler, then Nab himself. From Nab up, the members of the party have either a surname like Pencroff the sailor, or both first and family names, with Cyrus Smith at the top. Verne may dismiss Daniel Defoe's fiction of solitary mastery of the island. He shares his deep-seated fears of the beasts, like the prophet (Daniel: 7), and extends the colonizing process applied to Friday to some of God's creatures of the sixth day of Creation who have a place in the engineer's gang.

2.6 From Book to bouc

Tournier's novel attempts a more radical elimination of enmity on Robinson's island while declaring greater enmity to Defoe's book. The English title of the novel *Friday or the Other Island* is misleading – the fate of translations? – because it gives the name of the game away from the start and eliminates the undecidability conveyed by the French “Limbes”, limbo.

The story tells of the metamorphosis of Robinson I (Defoe's) into Robinson II (Tournier's). Cast away on the island by the elements Robinson goes through an elemental re-education process, starting out of the water, at the elementary *degré zero* of the mud/mire, through the earth and the test of fire, to end up as a solitary aerial of mankind, erect on a rock catching cosmic waves, a Bachelardian progress (Glenn, 1986: 98) from animality to Sungod, consummating the marriage of Ge and Ouranos. Robinson establishes his presence to the world by eliminating polemic forms of inscription of the self on the surface of the earth, especially the prescribed Robinsonian activities of farming and labour generally. The splaying of the text between narrative and discourse allows reciprocal and ironical gloss and signals the progressive bifurcation from the hypotext. Enmity with the old Robinson is spelt out through the caricaturing enlargement of the colonizing strategies, and through the repeated transgressions of prescriptions.

The New Robinson can emerge only if he extricates himself from the old book, and indeed references to the English novel are so pervasive and obvious that it did not occur to Tournier to acknowledge Defoe in a dedication (Tournier, 1977: 229). There are recognizable and dismissive allusions to other versions of the island story as well, to the regression of Ayrton or the return of Suzanne to Weights and Measures. The log-book itself calls up Valéry's *Monsieur Teste* and his attempt at a cerebral view of things. But Tournier traps his castaway in a much larger intertextual web, larger but blank, in the form of the washed out pages of the *Virginia's* library on which he can write his log-book. The *mise en abyme* of the palimpsest – ironically a double allusion to Gide – is an opportunity for Robinson to transit from the *readerly* to the *writerly* (Barthes, 1975). In view of the taste for the occult and unholy games demonstrated by Captain Van Deysse, one wonders what Satanic chapter and verse underline Robinson's fresh writing while he has the mate's Bible at hand for his readerly exercises.

Eventually Robinson sheds his writerly self: the he-goat dies to his telluric

self and ascends to aerial kite life. Tournier resorts to a translingual form of transgression to get rid of books and of the Book of Books: the old *bouc* [buk] has to die for Robinson to take the air. A Germanist, Tournier has a good ear for the very few phonemes shared by English and French, although the popular etymology of French *bouquin*, a book covered with goat-skin, may have induced the rapprochement. Robinson is thus made the scape-goat of our suffering under the burden of the Book. It is only fair to reward him with an escape and make him a kite, a goat-kite, or translingually, a bookkite. The process has involved more visible destruction of the Book of Books: the explosion of the cave leaves only a few scorched pages rustling in the wind together with what is left of the old log-book, dead wood fit for the fire. The flying goat/bouc episode leads Robinson to his Solar self. One may doubt, however, whether the aerial/Ariel mode is in keeping with the Tarot [taro] cards used by Van Deysse. It may just be an inverted motif which does not eliminate Scriptures. The metathesis of [taro] is [tora]: Tora(h). The final radiant figure also smacks of the transfiguration motif (Matt.: 17. 2; Mark: 9. 3; Luke: 9. 29) favoured by Tournier (1977: 62) in the Scriptures. Inverting the Old Testament or illustrating the New, Robinson is a bookkite indeed. The emergence of the subject on the island remains a pipe dream, un *Jeu* rather than a *Je*. Whether predicted by the father or written in the Book, it was on the cards, and Robinson is left to play King of the Castle in the air – *Châteaux en Espagne* is the French version of the fictions of the self. Island Speranza is indeed the appropriate place name. Like Giraudoux's, Tournier's enmity to Defoe is play-play and done tongue in cheek.

Actually the brunt of the charge against Defoe's novel does not involve Robinson Crusoe who may be thought a fool either at work or at play. He does not really escape the fiction of the island either as a plantation or as a playground: Tournier leaves him there for an eternal holiday with a young galley defector invited to play truant. Robinson immediately gives him a name out of his limited repertoire of weekdays. The French *Jeudi* not only fits the paradigm inaugurated with the naming of Friday, but also refers to the day of the week when (over two decades ago) French children did not go to school. The French near homophony *Je/Jeu* encapsulates the game of playing king with performatives: *Je dis Jeudi* [ʒədizʝədi]. One definition of a *pun* is that it does not translate from one language to the other. The choice of "Sunday" for *Jeudi*, qualified with its resonances of the resurrection (FOI: 224) – not to mention Sunday school – is particularly unfortunate and misleading.

2.7 Friday's escape

Robinson then may be an escapist, but Friday escapes for good on the open-ended voyage which is not part of Tournier's fiction. The hole is not in the middle of the story but at the end. Where are the trade-winds or the winds of change going to take him on the dubious *Whitebird*, (English: *Heron*)?

Whether these various island stories in the wake of *Robinson Crusoe* are serious or playful attempts to settle accounts with a bookish heritage, they

involve the upgrading of Friday. Suzanne finds Crusoe a tiresome drudge who can never sit still and clutters the island with domestic appliances, but she likes Friday. She is worth quoting in French:

Vendredi s'engouffrait en moi jusqu'à mon coeur d'un chemin plus court que celui d'un plongeur de nacre. (SP: 227)³

Before falling back into the readerly in the epistolary genre as soon as she has pen and paper, she attempts a writerly text designing enormous letters with seashells on the seashore which, together with her powdering and body colouring with mother-of-pearl dust, unmistakably links her to the pearl-diver she feels under the manservant in Defoe's novel. She and he share what Tournier calls "*la vénusté*, the natural grace of being at one with the elements, like Venus rising from the waves (FOI: 200, or *Foe*: 86). The French name of Friday, *Vendredi*, day of Venus, allows the linguistic derivation where the goddess can easily be traced, whereas English does not. Suzanne can afford to approve of Friday's initial hunger for human flesh, as there is no ex-cannibal on her island. Nor is there need for one: Suzanne is as close to man Friday as any Westerner can possibly be. She is a female Friday, as opposed to a girl Friday, with no King Crusoe in need of a slave, and no beasts to be afraid of. Friday turns out to be a better fiction of herself than Robinson, the time of a dream.

While Verne banishes the Otherness of Friday in the form of Dakkar or enrolls him as Nab like a domestic animal, Tournier gives Friday his chance of laughing off the laws of the white man and of his gods (FOI: 133), and to turn literally everything on its head. He even replants trees upside down (FOI: 147). Above all he is the agent of Robinson's metamorphosis, with the skills to make goats fly and sing. Tournier's story forks away from the hypotext through "une transvalorisation" (Genette, 1982: 418 ff), whereby Friday's art and play undermine and explode the fiction of Robinson.

Once a student at the Musée de l'Homme, Tournier honestly acknowledges his debt to modern anthropology (Tournier, 1977: 221) which contributes to purging our minds from images of beasts, pregnant with apocalyptic fears of the Savage. Friday may well be the choreographer of Robinson's would-be apotheosis, annulling the Abel and Cain model of the predicted feud (FOI: 150) and the master and slave model replaced by the mirrored playmates in a world of duplicates (Deleuze's Postface). The strategy of "transvalorisation", however, does not rely on "transfocalisation" (Genette, 1982: 424): we keep seeing Friday through Robinson's eye (I/[ai]), and Friday remains a HE in the heterodiegetic narration as in Robinson's log-book. The Biblical prescription is replaced by the Greek figure of the dioscuric twins born of Zeus and Leda. Friday has no say in the story.

In his short story "La Fin de Robinson Crusoe", which deals with Robinson Crusoe as a has-been (to the Pacific), and now sinking in his cups in a sailors' haunt in Brittany, Tournier suggests that Friday went back to the island (Tournier, 1978: 22). The importation of Friday as the Other in our discursive mode cannot be accommodated in the Crusoesque fiction: after a good many years of service Defoe has him die by three savage arrows. He is "thrown into

the sea” in a coffin with due decency and solemnity, as he deserved, we are told (*Farther Adventures*: 179).

Instead of dedicating his novel “backward” to Defoe, Tournier claims he would rather have dedicated it to the present millions of “silent immigrant workers, unseen and unheard Algerian, Moroccan, Senegalese, Portuguese Fridays on whom our society rests” (Tournier, 1977: 230; my translation). In France today Friday is the feared HE/THEY in the likes of Mr. Le Pen’s discourse. Harlem Désir is giving the beur⁴ Other a political voice. With *La Goutte d’Or* Tournier has attempted a fiction focusing on the young North African in France, necessarily in the form of an heterodiegetic narration.

3. *Foe*

3.1 Echolalia, Eloquence and Silence

In his fictions J.M. Coetzee has broached the issue of the language of the Other in the colonial situation. In *Dusklands*, for instance, one reads:

There was no word for “Yes” in Hottentot. To signify his assent a Hottentot would repeat the last phrase of his master’s command. The Hottentot language has perished, but one can still hear these antiphonal closes on the farms of the western Cape, in Afrikaans . . . (122–3)

Echolalia is monotonous but reassuring. The white colonist’s fear of the Other’s competing discourse is registered in *Dusklands* (86): Jacobus Coetzee feels secure at the centre of the annulus, the geometrical abstraction of the geographical island, as long as the gunless savage does not enter the zone of his “I”. But he starts feeling threatened by “Plaatje the newly articulate” (*Dusklands*: 98). Conversely, the notion of a speaking Other is conceivable, perhaps desired, in this early text by J.M. Coetzee. When translating the Deposition of Jacobus Coetzee, J.M. Coetzee, the translator, slips in an adjective which is not warranted by the Dutch text; the far off Damroquas are styled “an eloquent kind of people” (D: 132), still untouched by the white man, not yet echoing parrots. With Michael K., silence has set in: the gardener refuses to eat proffered food and to partake in the doctor’s language. Friday’s silence in *Foe* comes as no surprise. In Crusoe’s island Friday can only be yessing the Master or be mute, detongued.

3.2 Misstressing and mastering English

It is worth noting how Defoe actually bypasses the issue of the savage’s language in a brief passage between Friday’s death and the dispatch of his corpse. Here are Crusoe’s comments on a savage taken prisoner in this fatal battle at sea: “his speech was so odd, all gutturals, spoke in the throat in such a hollow odd manner . . .” The savages “might just as well be gagged”, he concludes, as one

could not perceive that they had any occasion either for teeth, tongue, lips or

palate, but formed their words just as a hunting-horn forms a tune with an open throat. (*Farther Adventures*: 178)

The hunting-horn ambiguously links “their” language to music and animals. Fortunately for Crusoe’s ship, the savage subsequently learns some English and is able to explain that his army came near the ship only “to makee to great wonder look”,

whereas it is to be observed, that all those natives as also those of Africa, when they learn English, they always add two e’s at the end of the words where we use one, and make the accent upon them, as *makéé, takéé*. (*Farther Adventures*: 180)

It is comforting to see that Defoe had a good ear for the vocalic slant savages were able to give to the English language, but he is glad to note that after many efforts, at last Friday left this bad habit off. “Odd guttural” sounds or broken, mistressed, mispronounced English is the linguistic range of the savages, as Crusoe heard them. Friday might just as well be gagged then, or detongued, as long as he can hear commands. In this speech-act, intonation is crucial, not the parts of speech. The imperative involves the effacement of the subject in the utterance and privileges the speaker: “Spade, Friday!”, “Dig!”. Naming and ordering are the privilege of the speaking subject.

3.3 Write/right: of stones

The French novels we have discussed do not offer any comment on the various Friday figures’ phonetic performance in English. Nor does J.M. Coetzee, who is not interested in Friday talking Crusoe’s language, but who focuses on the result of the loss of his tongue, namely his silence, versus Susan’s tireless writing. Her writing consists for the most part in reporting her own speech as well as the speech of her various interlocutors, as she sees it herself (*Foe*: 142). She is quite aware of the stoniness of writing

... when you see me at Mr Foe’s desk making marks with the quill, think of each mark as a stone, and think of the paper as the island, and imagine that I must disperse the stones over the face of the island ... (*Foe*: 87)

A farmgirl, Magda, “fail(ing) to make (her) shouts heard” had the strength to actually carry the stones to spell out her appeal to the sky-creatures in macaronic messages. The stone-written poems are the unsatisfactory substitute for “the true language of the heart” (HOC: 133), which ignores word contours, grammar, syntax and boundaries between languages. The heart speaks in tongues, a gypsy chaotic sort of language, unsatisfactory to any task/school master, a babble/prattle unlike the clear language of truth ordered by laws of concord and rules of agreement, a Babel-like versus a godlike language.

Susan embarks on telling her true story, but she wants it in writing with the sterling guarantee of script, authorship and print. She wants it in the form that is available: in the words of God, deposited in scriptures, or the words of an author deposited in books. The initial thorn in her heel and the nightmarish

vision of Friday devouring a babe are two examples of the impregnation of her speech by biblical language and images: what “foe” stung her on arrival, what beast or dragon “stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born” (*Revelation*: 12, 4)? Her various attempts to tell the true story end up in images of damnation, not of salvation. Hence her hope in Mr Foe’s fiction, and his house of fiction, built on confessions. Mr Foe reads her well, it seems. He does not turn her out; he offers absolving wafers and indulges Susan’s choice of the way to Salvation as a spirited Muse who has a place among Greek gods. It is all very fitting in an attic and shows that Susan’s reading has not been confined to the Book of Common Prayer or the Bible. Is not being the “Muse of all Desire, Erato” (*Aeneid*: VII, 47) as good a way of holding her peace as endless confessing?

3.4 Susan’s voice

Mr Foe gives Susan a hearing, but we know what happened to the story the Muse begot. Better without the woman. Rather have the pre-dicted Rebellion-Repentance-Salvation sequence, the old story. Daniel Defoe, Author, was not to sign the true story of Susan, as the prophet ancestor witnessed to the innocence of Susannah. Susan will remain in the suppressed or apocryphal books of Defoe, as Susannah bathes in the largely suppressed Apocrypha of Daniel, the prophet.

Susan’s singular story of confinement and delivery can be read, beyond or under what is written, in what she writes SHE SAID, in her speech, not in the prescribed syntactic arrangement of sentences but in island-words surfacing in her speech out of the grammatical connections, and in their phonic/vocalic materiality, taking into account sound-effects, homonymy, metathesis, paronomasia and the migration of phonemes and morphemes. As she solidifies her speech in writing, visual phenomena like anagrams are relevant. We should consider any sign in the text showing the letter giving meaning the slip. Slips of the tongue are very revealing, psychoanalysis tells us. Lacanian word-play itself points to a different organization of language which yields another truth. Puns hardly have a respectable status in critical discourse, although they have a place in literature. They point to the “shifty relation between letter and sound” and are “illustrations of the inherent instability of language and the power of uncodified linguistics to produce meaning” (Culler, 1988: 3). The decodification of language may involve translingual phenomena, the adulteration of English by French, as we noticed in the impregnation of French with English in Tournier’s novel and in Verne’s palindromic transformation of an English name into a French utopia. Purists, our linguistic fundamentalists, shudder at the ultimate transgression of the mother-tongue being impregnated by the Other of a foreign tongue. Such sound play defeats translation, cutting off meaning, leaving signifiers adrift without referents. *Finnegan’s Wake* is a translator’s nightmare: What is he to do of the (past?) Anglo-German enmity of “he war?”. But the *Wake* may only differ from other books in degree and not in kind.

Is not then the insidious babelization of Susan’s very name, “corrupted in

the mouth of strangers” a figure, a phonetic figure of the forbidden, but desired encounter with the Other? Her name derives from Berton, she says, probably *Breton* through metathesis. But anagrammatically, BARTON spells BON ART. FOE sounds [fo] in French, FAUX, like false and scythe, a grim reaper who did not hear and cut off Susan’s art, spayed [speid] her. She may be calling a spayed a spade. Dig? It is the writing which makes the difference. Lapsus calami. Calamity of the pen.

3.5 Slips of the tongue

I can see two approaches to Susan’s discourse: one may try to decode the slips of the tongue, and the slippages of language and see through the play of words to try and reveal her story. If we destabilize “I am the woman washed ashore”, minor migration of phonemes yields “I the woman whore ashamed”, which makes a different sense of Susan’s “tart” words addressed to Cruso. The anagram of *Hobart*, the ship of delivery, is ABORT, if one drops one’s aitches as the French corruptedly do in English. The letters are in the odd vicinity of “the waters were broken” (*Foe*: 38–39) and the series bed-litter-bear-down. The initial “slip overboard” signalling Susan’s deliberate swimming to the island points to a euphemized transgression, a breach of decorum, or a slip of the tongue which gives one away, or to the premature giving of birth for a domestic animal (OED: slip: 29). The obstetrical grid may be of significance in a text strewn with signifiers like “a stillborn child”, “a newborn babe”, “a lost daughter”, a daughter “expelled”, versus Susan’s wish for Friday to “marry and have children, sons and daughters” (58), with a “woman of (his) own kind”, and with her suspicion that he may be “unacquainted with the parts of generation” (80). All these may be clues. Foe’s Socratic, maieutic method, which leads Susan out of her maze of doubts and brings her to hold her peace (and her tongue) is in itself an appropriate figure of midwifery. He delivers her of the desire to tell by telling mirrored stories of transgression, including infanticide.

“All things were possible on the island, all tyrannies and cruelties, though in small” (*Foe*: 37). The abortion, the murder perhaps, of a child born of desire between the tall Anglo-French woman with black hair and dark eyes and the ex-cannibal tongueless Other, the beast, is a possible bifurcation of the prescribed narrative, which Foe’s house of fiction, or his garden, cannot accommodate. Like Scheherazade, Susan is telling a story for a life. It is not inappropriate to remember why the Vizier’s daughter was under threat of death: she was to pay with her life, like the previous girls the Sultan had taken for one night, for the transgression of the Sultan’s wife. The Sultanness, and her ladies, had been guilty of “ungoverned passion” with blacks in disguise. When the Sultanness called him, Masoud descended from a tree. Significantly, Susan, who seems to have read *Arabian Nights* as well as Virgil, prefers to remember the story of Sinbad and his burden. Quite tellingly, she does not seem keen to remember the episode when Sinbad and his companions re-embarked speedily, “for what they took for an island proved to be the back of a sea monster” (*Sinbad’s First Voyage*). Such an approach would deal with

the expression and the censure of desire in language and requires psychoanalytical tools which I have not.

3.6 Friday's ear

I would personally favour another approach. J.M. Coetzee's book makes us wonder about how the tireless woman's voice of Susan might have SOUNDED to Friday's ear, when, as she knows full well, he does not understand a word of what she says. Coetzee takes Friday's tongue away, thus saving him from "the curse of language", but he gives him an ear. Through Friday we are made foreigners to the language Susan speaks. One may note that she seems to have quite a good ear for foreign words herself, Portuguese or French (*Foe*: 122). Her first word to Friday, "Agua", is not in English, but it may not make a difference to one who is out of language, out of the verbal. Friday inhabits the vocal world, as the French anagram of the *ALCOVE* (*VOCALE*) where he is relegated, indicates. An alcove is the proper place for the tongue to reach out in the whorl of an ear. Friday indeed is in the best position to hear and delight in the rustle of Susan's voice, its phonic, metric, vocal deployment (Barthes, 1986: 77), detached from the *meaning* which Susan so desperately attempts to attach to the signifiers.

Admittedly it may be easier for a foreign learner/teacher of the language to hear the Barthesian rustle in Susan Barton's reported utterances. The silent and solitary reading activity cuts us from the sound of language. As someone from another country, I feel it would be out of place to enter the polemical debate about J.M. Coetzee and Dovey on the issue of English Second Language. But as a foreign learner/teacher/hearer I shall slip in a remark from the back row, in peace. Grappling with English phonetics and unpredictably stressed syllables makes one possibly more aware of the materiality of a language than first language speakers. Tongue twisters, nursery rhymes and English verse are part of the learning process with examples like:

Fe Fi Fo Fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman! or:

The isle is full of noises

Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.

Scanning the lines sometimes helps.

I would like to suggest that whereas book-bound Susan emerges from her maze [meiz] to amuse [ə'mju:z] Foe or bemuse [bi'mju:z] (to) him and hold her peace, she has been mus-ic ['mju:zik] to Friday's ears from the start, as he instantly tries to impart to her on the flute, with a little tune of six notes, both on the island and in Foe's house where she attempts a duo:

As long as I have music in common with Friday perhaps he and I will need no language. And if there had been music on our island, if Friday and I had filled the evening with melody, perchance – who can say? (*Foe*: 97).

The flute does not produce the seven notes of Orpheus's lyre, but it is richer than the traditional *a, e, i, o, u*. Friday has a sharp ear which can distinguish more discrete units than the alphabet accounts for. Perhaps this is why he laughs at Susan's efforts to bring him to the state of speech: "Somewhere in

the deepest recesses of those black pupils was there a spark of mockery?" (Foe: 147).

"Pupils" is one of those slippery signifiers playing homonymic games. Does Susan mean the dark eyes? (and Coetzee the learners?) Is she avoiding the word "eyes"? Whose eyes is Friday drawing, "eyes upon feet", "walking eyes"? After he and Susan have tramped around so much, he carrying her in a "strange backwards embrace" (6) and she carrying him as she sees it, roaming town and country in search of a home, what are they but walking eyes/I's [aiz]? Housing for those two is not in our books. Clearly Friday did not make it to vowel "i" under the joint tutelage of Foe and Susan, who shifts (back) to writing and to Foe's bed. They pen him down between alpha and omega and they perish leaving Friday in the alcove or under the transoms.

I would suggest that Susan's true story, her "otobiography", is to be found in Friday's ear, "l'Oreille de l'Autre" (Derrida, 1982), l'Autre-Oreille. To fit in with the translations of Barthes' paradigm, which rules out "audible" text, I shall venture a neologism, to be excused in a French hearer: Susan's story as a Hearerly text. Might not the (w)hole of the story be the shell-shaped whorl of an ear where the tongue slips and plays? A seashell that hears and roars like the waves, does not speak, but may announce the "birth of language" Crusoé, the poet, feels stirring in his heart at the end of Saint-John-Perse's *Images à Crusoé*. What Friday hears may be the mother-tongue, la langue-mère, la langue/mer of poetic language.

Giraudoux and J.M. Coetzee's texts do not only share a name: Suzanne/Susan. They share an exotic reference to Bahia. On her way home, reading the mind of the young man who plays records for her, Suzanne sees:

the two statues of Bahia harbour, whose ears are two enormous seashells – one of them actually was a false shell, and from it the sea could not be heard. (SP: 275; my translation)

From his subsequent version of the island story, it is clear that Foe's ear would not hear the sea, where Susan floated like a flower and where Friday, who smelt of fish, scattered his petals. By the time another inquisitive I/eye gets to the attic dust, the roar of the waves is very faint and the diver searching the vessel's wreck and prising Friday's mouth open can feel only a silent flow.

Notes

1. A first version of this approach of *Foe* was presented at the *Foe Seminar*, held by the Department of Literary Theory of UNISA in March 1988. This is, of course, a supplement.
2. A possible reading: "Art consists merely in making the reader forget his own power to intervene". My translation.
3. I propose: "Friday stormed into me and dived straight to my heart, more directly than a pearl-diver".
4. Beur: children born in France from North African parents

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