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POSTCOLONIAL LANGUAGE: REJECTION AND SUBVERSION

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Postcolonial literature is often depicted as a form of cultural translation, a privileged space from which to rewrite history and retroactively reflect upon the colonial experience. Based on this notion of cultural translation, the article seeks to examine, respectively, Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1969) and J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) as regards the "written-back" characters Caliban and Friday. Both characters will be compared and contrasted concerning their peculiar use of language as an instrument of power, subversion, and rejection of the European ruling.

Keywords: Postcolonial Literature, Writing Back, Cultural Translation, Language, Other(ness)

A literatura pós-colonial é muitas vezes pensada como uma forma de tradução cultural, como um lugar privilegiado a partir do qual se pode reescrever a história e retroactivamente reflectir sobre a experiência colonial. Tomando como ponto de partida esta noção de tradução cultural, o presente ensaio procura analisar as obras *Une Tempête* (1969), de Aimé Césaire, e *Foe* (1986), de J. M. Coetzee, no que diz respeito à re-escrita das personagens Caliban e Friday, respectivamente. Ambas as figuras serão comparadas e contrastadas relativamente ao uso particular que fazem da língua enquanto instrumento de poder, subversão e rejeição do domínio europeu.

Palavras-chave: Literatura Pós-colonial, Mecanismo de "Writing Back", Tradução Cultural, Língua, Alteridade

> *Freedom is a word, less than a word, a noise, one of the multitude of noises I make when I open my mouth.*
>
> (Coetzee 1986, 100-111)

Postcolonial literature is often depicted as a form of cultural translation, that is a process of transcultural negotiation and exchange which takes place within a privileged space open to denunciation, criticism, and discussion, a space from which to evoke and rewrite history and reflect upon the colonial experience.

Taking this theoretical dimension as our starting point, the essay will attempt to document the postcolonial representation of two enslaved characters as they take shape in Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête* (1969) and J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). To begin with, both works enact the process of writing back, that is, of reinterpreting and restructuring texts originally from the European colonial canon from a postcolonial perspective (Ashcroft *et al*. 2002, 32). Writing back then consists in "translating" a particular understanding of colonial literature, which in turn reflects the colonial experience as lived from the standpoint of the colonised. This literary device conveys a postcolonial reading of the

colonising Other who is being rewritten, and more often than not parodied, by the former dominated class. Writing back therefore allows expanding on what Ashcroft *et al.* designate as "myths of identity and authenticity common to all post-colonial literatures" (2002, 9), since it could be the symbolic coming true of the "myth of postcolonial identity".

Une Têmpete[1] and *Foe* rewrite, respectively, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11) and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which are both contextually linked to the European discovery of and expansion into new worlds, each pre-empting the nineteenth-century rise of colonial empires. These canonical writers interacted with the world outside Europe from their distant standing thus conveying, in Montaigne's opinion, a biased vision of the Other:

> [...] but somewhat alter the story. They never represent things truly, but fashion and mask them according to the visage they saw them in, and to purchase credit to their judgement and draw you on to believe them they commonly adorn, enlarge, yea, and hyperbolize the matter. (Montaigne 1987, 229)

Colonial literature can accordingly be described as a set of hyperbolisations and masked realities that may convey a negative propaganda of cultural otherness. Inspired on a rather feudally hierarchised system, colonialism mirrors a process of human subjugation always involving some sort of violence dissimulated as "re-education of the savage". Such a re-education programme would be undertaken in the name of the European superior understanding of human commodity and civilised way of being and living in the world. This colonial practice is predicated on the binary notions of Self and Other, dominator and dominated, master and servant or master and slave, voice and silence. It is our purpose to evolve around these interrelated terms that converge in Hegel's "lordship and bondage" paradigm (1998, 111) and examine their impact on language, here implicated as the discursive realisation of cultural translation.

Césaire's and Coetzee's rewritings as well as Shakespeare's and Defoe's canonical works are emblematic of what Homi Bhabha named as cultural translation (1994, 212-235): although he never actually defines the concept, it is said to cover all forms of (self-representation and) representation of the cultural Other resulting directly from intercultural contact. Within postcolonial studies, it is how the colonial Self perceives and translates otherness into his/her own language and culture; it is the product of an unequal exchange based on a vertical, up-down relationship between coloniser and colonised.

Having developed together with the Senegalese poet Leopold Senghor the concept of *Négritude* in the 1930s as the assertion of a Black, African culture, identity, and consciousness, Aimé Césaire argued that his role as a writer was to reinforce national union and deter the imperial Other's intrusion into the African society: "la légitimité de notre activité d'écrivains et d'artistes noirs, et celui aussi, celui complémentaire, des responsabilités qui nous incombent à nous, hommes de culture, dans la double conjoncture du monde et de nos pays particuliers"; "[n]otre légitimité, c'est que nous participons avec toutes nos fibres au combat de libération de nos peuples" (Césaire 1959, 116 and 122).

1 For the purpose of this study we have only used the English translation of *Une Tempête* by Richard Miller.

After nearly two decades Edward Said embodied this humanistic ideal in his *Orientalism* (1978) by claiming himself to be, as a man of letters, a humanist and later referring to his role as an intellectual endowed with the task of representing and giving visibility to human suffering.[2] The South-African J. M. Coetzee can also be featured as a "homme de culture" who tried to literarily recreate a historical past and heritage so as to foresee a better future for the South-African people. Said states that:

> The post-imperial writers of the Third World therefore bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds [...] as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a post-colonial future [...] in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the coloniser. (1994, 256)

Writing back thus means voicing the formerly silent native, a gesture that recreates not only the myth of identity, but also a collective memory of a common past and history. In this study, both past and identity are enacted through a composite cadre of rewritten characters, Caliban and Friday, which will be comparatively and contrastively analysed as far as their particular use of a verbally explicit language and a non-verbal language is concerned.

Inherent to one's identity, language is probably one of the most powerful culture-bound phenomena that help defining one's sense of belonging to a particular community. Languages mirror the power relations and the existing conflicts within society, and the idiosyncratic use each person makes of language reveals the tensions and strains of interpersonal relationships. For all these reasons language is the most evident manifestation of "highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (Pratt 1992, 4). Language is then a highly influential instrument of power legitimation and enforcement.

In the texts under analysis, Caliban and Friday maintain the same marginalised status as their original literary versions, but they no longer portray the prototypical submissive colonised. Both characters will be studied as embodying disparate strategies to criticise the coloniser's imperialist attitude and as claiming their identity against the one the European coloniser imposed on them: on the one hand, there is the rebel who dares to challenge the newly created ruling system to set himself free (Caliban); on the other, there is the Negro who has been forced into silence by that very same system (Friday). If in the first case the so-called civilisation has been imposed on "Caliban the animal, Caliban the slave", in the second case Friday was hazardously driven to civilisation, which he encountered on a desert island that had been the home and kingdom of that who would soon become his master (Robinson Cruso).

Like in Shakespeare's play, Aimé Césaire, though writing in French and for a Francophone audience, makes Prospero impose his native language on Caliban. The story

2 "To this terribly important task of representing the collective suffering of your own people, testifying to its travails, reasserting its enduring presence, reinforcing its memory, there must be added something else, which only an intellectual, I believe, has the obligation to fulfill. [...] to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others" (Said 1996, 44).

begins *in medias res*, the reader having no access to the education process Caliban was subjected to. In spite of having been compelled to learn his master's linguistic legacy, Caliban's proficiency does not restrain him from using his native language, which he frequently articulates with the newly acquired language. Strangeness is introduced into his speech, thus illustrating, in Braj B. Kachru's words, an example of "code-mixing" or, more significantly, of hybridisation. If this exotic code points to Caliban's reluctance to use the coloniser's language, it also turns his speech into an estranged discourse whose full meaning is only disclosed when combined with Caliban's enthusiastic cry for freedom. Such cry is prominently expressed in Swahili through the word "Uhuru!"; it means independence or "Freedom hi-day! Freedom hi-day!" (Césaire 1969, 15 and 44). Soon readers realise Caliban prefigures a hybrid, mixed identity, for he moves and shifts between languages and cultures.

In Césaire's play, the coloniser's language was imposed as the standard language of communication, Prospero banishing all other forms of communication. This exclusive use of language is turned into one "of the main features of imperial oppression" (Ashcroft 2002, 7), which in Coetzee's novel assumes different contours.. As to the linguistic experience of the authors themselves, Césaire and Coetzee ingeniously and subversively appropriated the former ruler's alien language against the ruler himself (Ashcroft *et al.* 2006, 262) by denouncing in their literature the ruler's lack of humanity or justice. As for the reasons why postcolonial writers prefer to write in the coloniser's language, Pascale Casanova argues that

> [...] the literary use of one of the great central languages becomes for dominated writers a guarantee of immediate membership in the literary world and allows the appropriation of a whole stock of technical knowledge and expertise. [...] are able, in effect, to take a shortcut on the road to literary status. [...] it makes them immediately more visible, more in conformity with prevailing literary norms, they are also the first to obtain international recognition. (2004, 264)

More important, I think, is the fact that such a great central language allows the formerly silent writer to show his scars to the whole world, and actually cultivate empathy for his condition. Casanova adds that the mastery of "a dominant language is paradoxical and contradictory, for it is much alienating as it is liberating" (2004, 263-264). Walcott negatively reformulates this argument as "the language of the torturer mastered by the victim [...] is viewed as servitude, not as victory" (2006, 330). The manipulation of the torturer's alien language is shown to be one of the key steps towards visibility outside one's community, in which case it allows for the vindication of human rights. However, as Walcott puts it, it gives rise to a new form of bondage, that is, linguistic servitude.

In *Une Tempête* not only does Prospero institutionalise his mother tongue, but also feeds the illusion that if his servants (Caliban and Ariel) master his language, they might be accepted into his civilised society since the English language would make themselves understood: "as if the real test of their conversion to civilization would be whether they had been able to master a language that 'men' could understand" (Greenblatt 1990, 18). What this acceptance would advantageously imply for the colonised is never stated, be-

cause their position as slaves remains firmly in place. This illusion is credited by the mulatto slave Ariel, often thought of as the hybridised figure par excellence, who unlike Caliban has conformed to his pernicious condition. Caliban rejects and rebels against this "promise" that he is certain to be phoney. Although Ariel and Caliban were tentatively shaped to Prospero's own image, these hybrid characters react differently to that learning and identity construction. Language ideologically becomes Caliban's instrument of resistance, as we will later exemplify, whereas its lack is Friday's personal asset.

Language not only allows us to communicate with the world, but also expresses our view of that world. If in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* Friday speaks a "broken English", a non-standard English language (pidgin), in Coetzee's novel he speaks no verbally explicit language – he is mute.[3] Being mute, how can he contest and resist the colonial world? This linguistic disability makes Susan Barton (the first-person narrator who filters everything through her eyes and forms together with Friday the central characters of the novel) assume that he cannot think.[4] Thoughts are verbalised by means of words, the verbal signs Friday never reveals to master. Friday symbolically stands for language alienation, undergoing the process that Stephen Greenblatt denominates as "the Wild Man shades into the animal [...] Language is, after all, one of the crucial ways of distinguishing between men and beasts" (1990, 23). Friday has no language of his own, except for his silence, so he is bestialised, and being a handicapped beast equals lacking intelligence, self-initiative, autonomy and, more importantly, identity. In addition to these lacks, one should still add the practice of cannibalism, the ultimate trait of the Wild Man.

Both Caliban and Friday may stand for the rise of the anthropophagus culture: while Caliban's name encodes in an anagram that reality (Caliban/cannibal),[5] Friday is explicitly depicted as a cannibal whose instincts would allow him to communicate "in his own code [...] saying the unsayable or the unnamed" (Martins 2005, 471). Like *Une Tempête*, *Foe* begins *in medias res* when Susan Barton arrives to the desert island where she meets the castaway Cruso and his Negro. Her first suspicion is that she had come to an island of cannibals, which is not at all unfounded. The most famous sixteenth-century cannibal tribe is the Tupinamba, originally from the southeast of the Brazilian coast, in whose vicinity the characters' first encounter takes place. The end of Coetzee's novel is from this perspective rather intriguing, since *Foe* ends with the suggestion of a cannibalistic feast protagonised by the coloniser: "I pass a fingernail across his [Friday's] teeth, trying to find a way in.//His mouth opens. From inside comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. [...] Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face" (Coetzee 1986, 157). This is the coloniser's finale: Susan Barton is victim of a dreadful crime she brought upon her given her careless and unexplainable

3 Muteness, which equals invisibility, is a precious advantage for those who wish to maintain their oppressive ruling without encountering the opposition of dissident voices, for Robinson Cruso builds his "island kingdom" (Coetzee 1986, 13) under his own rules.

4 Friday's behaviour is recognisable as the stereotypical servant masters long for: invisible, not particularly endowed with intelligence, and speechless.

5 See Rob Nixon's article (1987) entitled "Caribbean and African Appropriations of 'The Tempest'", published in *Critical Inquiry – Politics and Poetic Value* 13(3):557-78.

attraction for the exotic Other. After that closing sentence, "[t]he horror! The horror" immediately echoes in readers' minds. Yet the Tupinamba tribe would generally practise cannibalism as sign of respect for the men they praised for their bravery and wisdom. Can this shed a new light on Barton's untold horror and mutilation?

Almost all characters in *Foe* suffer from some kind of mutilation; to begin with, the British eighteenth-century author's name, Daniel Defoe, seems to have been metaphorically mutilated in view of the triply suggestive title *Foe*. Not only can it be interpreted literally, in which case "foe" may either refer to the European archenemy (Susan Barton and Robinson Cruso) or the native Wild Man Friday, but it may also echo the name "Defoe", of whose echo readers only become aware as they dig further into the narrative. Defoe's biography tells us that he decided to add "De" to his last name, Foe, in order to make it sound more aristocratic. From this viewpoint, the tile of Coetzee's novel embodies a deliberate mutilation that returns Daniel Defoe to his humble origins and deprives him of his social superiority. Defoe's fictional character, Robinson Crusoe, is also mutilated when his name loses its final "e". Again, since names define a person's identity, Coetzee is acting as the archetypical coloniser Prospero stands for: whilst the latter imposed on Caliban the name (hence the identity) he chose for him, Coetzee reverses the master/slave roles. The former colonised now imposes a mutilated identity on the colonisers Cruso and Foe. As for Friday, his linguistic mutilation confines him to silence. On the one hand, this confinement is a passive model of resistance; on the other, it prevents Friday from learning the coloniser's language and successfully communicating with the world that language comprises. Friday will never speak the language that Coetzee himself, as a politically conscious writer, uses to construct this anti-colonial narrative where "[t]he invader's language [is] appropriated by the invadee to address the invader; the invadee's [is] expressed in discursive apparatuses adapted from the invader and redirected back at him" (Pratt 1994, 25). Friday's mutilation can yet be perceived as castration for it prevents any possibility of human relationship – "How dismal a fate it would be to go through life unkissed! Yet if you remain in England, Friday, will that not become your fate? Where are you to meet a woman of your own people? We are not a nation rich in slaves" (Coetzee 1986, 80). Furthermore, to be a slave involves the trauma of uprooting from one's native homeland and being relocated to unknown territory where any contact between different racial classes is forbidden. This social mutilation conjures up a gap between cultures that prefigures "that profound silence between cultures which finally cannot be traversed by understanding" (Ashcroft *et al.* 2002, 85). This cultural gap not only compromises cultural translation, or cultural translatability, but it also shapes it and justifies the very existence of the term.

One of the solutions the European foreigner came up with to overcome cultural difference was the linguistic imposition of the foreigner's native language upon the natives. Such imposition enables an interesting game between the use of the adjective "native" and its corresponding noun ("native"), since the colonised native is expected to acquire the native language of the coloniser, thus becoming its non-native speaker – and this is the only situation in which natives somehow traverse their nativeness. According to Ashcroft

et al., "[t]here are several responses to this dominance of the imperial language, but two present themselves immediately in the decolonizing process – rejection or subversion" (2006, 261). Caliban and Friday are each paradigmatic of these two attitudes.

Caliban reacts in line with Walcott's defence of non-native language as servitude. Therefore Caliban will, "in a rage for identity, respect only incoherence or nostalgia" (Walcott 2006, 330). Nostalgia is present through the already mentioned linguistic exoticism and via the profane gods Caliban is constantly evoking. Incoherence gains more visibility through his rage, which makes him sing and dream of freedom and profess a profane, banished religion. Such incoherence can, nonetheless, be read as an act of bravery, for Caliban fearlessly insults his master. The native's insurgency and nostalgia make Prospero regret having provided him with such a powerful tool that instead of making Caliban cautious of what he says reversely finishes off disturbing the coloniser: "[b]ut I don't give a damn for your power/or for your dogs or your police or your inventions!/And do you know why?/ It's because I know I'll get you" (Césaire 1969, 64). Language is the only tool Caliban has at his disposal as member of a segregated minority. Considering himself tasked for the *mission civilisatrice* of domesticating the savage, the coloniser expects the colonised to be indebted for having been taught how to speak, communicate and interact, in a word how to behave. Yet Caliban needs to prove himself to be an enemy to fear, and his (seemingly Bakthinian) goal is to accomplish the uncrowning and fall of the European king. Caliban thus challenges his master by turning an improper usage of a non-native language into a systematic non-physically violent mediation between master and slave.

Hackert advocates that being native "conjures up a sense of being born to a speech community and thus language, which implies a naturally determined, inalienable, and perfect competence and therefore right to *ownership*, and connects linguistic identity and political membership by way of the idea of nation" (2009, 306; my italics). Having a language means possessing both an individual and national identity. As long as Caliban and Ariel as well are deprived of the language of the speech community they originally belong to, they have no right to ownership, no identity, no nation: "in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak" (Spivak 2006, 32). George Lamming stresses that a personal history, or identity, cannot be achieved unless "we show language as the product of human endeavour; until we make available to all the result of certain enterprises undertaken by men who are still regarded as unfortunate descendants of languageless and deformed slaves" (cited in Said 1994, 257). This is the rupture Caliban attempts to cause against Prospero's endeavours "to 'over-write' Caliban's native 'his-story' with the white man's version" (D'haen 2002, 36). It is the white man who denies Caliban any kind of autonomy and inflicts a fictional identity construction on him: Caliban is deprived of his own subjectivity and individual choice. Challenge and resistance are part of Caliban's endeavour at forging a climate of fear by making Prospero wonder *and if...*

As far as these two characters are concerned, their racial, social, and hierarchical positions are too obviously encoded in Prospero's way of addressing Caliban. According to Eric Cheyfitz, in *The Poetics of Imperialism*, the need for differentiation (also present

in *Foe*) within a British microcosms on so isolated an island can be in part explained given the "psychological or sociological survival: the essential need Europeans have to maintain the class status that supports their identities" (1991, 84). Hence it is all about maintaining and recreating a certain status, however dislocated it might seem, that helps the European coloniser preserving his identity and consequently his psychological welfare and sense of cultural belonging. Without the colonial apparatus, Prospero would be a lost and forgotten exile, thus deprived of his European identity. Only on the exilic island can Prospero be master and have absolute power, which needs to be recognised and accepted by his subordinates, otherwise he cannot rule. The more Caliban challenges him and refuses his government, the more he shows that he is not indifferent to Prospero's ruling and the more, contrapuntally, Caliban highlights Prospero's central authority. *Une Tempête* seems to suggest that for the bond between master and servant, coloniser and colonised to be broken a joint revolution must take place:

> […] la décolonisation n'est jamais le résultat d'un "fait" de la conscience du colonisateur. C'est toujours le résultat d'une lutte, toujours le résultat d'une poussée. Même la plus pacifique d'entre elles est toujours le résultat d'une rupture. (Césaire 1959, 116)

Let us now examine how the master-slave bond is verbalised, and how Ariel and Stephano (who in due course will replace Prospero as the island's new governor thus becoming Caliban's new master) refer to Caliban and how Caliban refers to himself:

Table 1. Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*: forms of addressing Caliban

Prospero		**Ariel**		**Stephano**	
"Master Caliban"	(p. 10)	"Caliban"	(p. 20)	"O *brave savage*!"	(p. 42)
"Caliban" (x6)	(pp. 10, 14, 36, 63, 67)	"*Poor* Caliban"	(p. 21) (p. 22)	"our brave savage"	(p. 42)
		"Caliban"	(p. 23)	"brave savage"	(p. 42)
"you *ugly ape*"	(p. 11)	"*brother*"		"My dear savage"	(p. 42)
"you, a *savage*"	(p. 11)			"my *new-found friends*"	(p. 42)
"a *dumb animal*, a *beast*"	(p. 11)			"*monster*"	(p. 44)
"Caliban is the *enemy*"	(p. 15)			"*gentlemen*"	(p. 45)
				"brave savage"	(p. 53)
"General Caliban"	(p. 50)			"the savage"	(p. 54)
				"*my good savage*"	(p. 55)
"Caliban as a dialectician"	(p. 63)				
"*Poor* Caliban"	(p. 65)				
"Caliban"	(p. 67)				

Table 2. Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*: Caliban's forms of self-reference

"dear Caliban [here], my little dear Caliban [there]!"	(p. 13)
"Caliban the animal, Caliban the salve!"	(p. 14)
"Caliban"	(p. 14)
"Caliban"	(p. 15)
"X"	(p. 15)

Prospero draws on a pejorative vocabulary as leitmotif to characterise Caliban – "ugly", "ape", "dumb", "beast", "enemy" (which connote Caliban's untamed nature) –, in addition to making an ironic use of such titles as "Master" and "General", and a depreciative use of the adjective "poor", which does not denote pity but scorn instead. Prospero's "imperial mastery" is verbalised into a Eurocentric language that bolsters "white Europeans *over* black Africans and their ivory, civilization *over* the primitive dark continent" (Said 1994, 33; italics from the original). By contrast, Stephano cunningly uses positive, flattering adjectives to address Caliban ("brave" and "good"), because he wants Caliban to help him reach power. It is in his best interest to flatter this instrument to power, which he manipulates to his sole personal benefit.[6] (Unfortunately, Stephano fails to realise that it is Caliban who is actually using him and not the other way round.) The one who already has the power (Prospero) no longer needs to praise low-class people, while paradoxically it is the lower class that can lead the powerless to power – this is the mechanism of power subjacent to the imperialist campaign. As regards Ariel, horizontal complicity stands out in his way of addressing Caliban. He employs the fraternal noun "brother" in an attempt to identify himself with Caliban and, consequently, engenders bonds of solidarity between each other. He tries to rescue Caliban on behalf of their common condition – "[...] we *are* brothers, brothers in suffering and slavery, but brothers in hope as well" (Césaire 1969, 20)–; Ariel tries to make him adopt his submissive attitude, which Caliban refuses remaining all alone in his fight for freedom. Unlike Caliban, Ariel recognises Prospero's authority, and also enjoys a privileged position to which his skin colour greatly contributes – as a mulatto he is racially closer to his master. Caliban, on the contrary, permissively and disruptively acts in accordance with his free will, respecting no one and nothing except for his ideals. Though sharing the same enslaved condition, Ariel and Caliban react differently to their enslavement, and their servitude is awarded differently as well. Ariel is set free thus returning to his wild self, whereas Caliban can never be promised that joy. Caliban and Ariel are prototypical of what Gilman classifies as the "bad Other" and the "good Other": "The 'bad' Other becomes the negative stereotype; the 'good' Other becomes the positive stereotype" (1985, 20).

The first four formulations (see Table 2) Caliban adopts to refer to himself reboundingly mirror his relationship to his master. It cannot go unnoticed the shift between the caring and diminutive "*little* Caliban" (used when the interlocutor wants something out

6 Indeed, Caliban is perceived as "an occasion, a state of existence which can be appropriated and exploited to the purposes of another's own development" (George Lamming cited in Said 1994, 256).

of him), and the derogatory "animal" and "slave" (when Caliban has been referred to as such by his master). As regards the act of claiming himself as "X", Caliban is trying to enter into a negotiation of his cultural identity with Prospero through a verbally explicit challenge to the representation imposed on him. Renaming himself as "X" is a performative act that clearly defines his role in the colonial plot: "Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name [...] the fact that you've stolen everything from me, even my identity!" (Césaire 1969, 15). Not surprisingly, not even once does Prospero address Caliban as "X"; it stresses his refusal to accept his servant's autonomy and ability to represent himself. Furthermore, the X letter typically refers to "the (chosen) one", which brings into this discussion one of the most prominent critics and outspoken members of the African American Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X. If Caliban is the only one to challenge his master's authority, why cannot he embody the Black nationalist spirit Malcolm X stood for? In this view Caliban proves to be ahead of his time (the sixteenth century) for he undertakes a struggle that is temporally out of place and will have to wait four centuries before the coloniser willingly leaves the place that does not belong to him or sees himself forced to do so.

Coetzee's novel was published before the abolition of the Apartheid, so Friday's silence could be read as a metaphor for what, according to Ashcroft *et al.*, is the reality of South Africa: "in which control of the means of communication by the state gags the voice of the individual. This silence is literally and dramatically revealed in the censorship exercised by the government over newspapers, journals, and much creative writing" (2002, 83). Just like Friday, the South-African nation was during the Apartheid voted to silence and condemned to segregation. Their Malcom X was yet to come.

While Caliban experiences and reacts against a deeply rooted linguistic enslavement, Friday is spared of it. His muteness – indeed a physical "scar", as Said would call it – and alienated indifference cause frustrating feelings in Susan Barton.

According to John Lyons, there are communicative and informative signs, the difference lying on their (un)intentional use on the part of the addresser. Caliban is hardly ever silent; his speech is, thus, entirely communicative and significantly intentional. Friday, in turn, has no tongue and he only communicates with Susan Barton (through non-verbal actions) to make her understand that he is not interested in establishing any kind of contact with her. Friday silences himself before the coloniser; Barton's civilising mission is thus from the outset doomed to fail in view of Friday's intentional failure at communicating. His behaviour becomes informative (unintentional) when Susan tries to make sense out of it without realising it is not intended for her to understand him.

Friday's behaviour intrigues Susan Barton who, given her status as an eighteenth-century learned woman that has to struggle for recognition within a patriarchical society, is closer to Friday than she could have ever imagined. Susan Barton dwells between two worlds – the coloniser's and the submissive servant's. She is an atypical coloniser; hence the strains and tensions of her connection with Friday should be read under the umbrella of gender studies, on which we will not expand here. Prospero is himself a peculiar oppressor, but for different reasons: above all, he has no power by himself. He would be

powerless were he robbed out of his books. This magical source of knowledge, which is synonymous with power, allows him to evoke Nature's anti-agents to help him rule in peace. Humanly he is weak and harmless. Had Caliban been able to obtain Prospero's books and learn its knowledge (had he had the opportunity to be properly educated), he would undoubtedly have surpassed his master in power. The risk of Caliban putting his hand on Prospero's books, which echoes the "and if..." clause, symbolises the epiphany of the rebel savage who will eventually become the savage sage and drive the European outsider off his native land. Does then Césaire's rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* suggest that the linguistic imposition of the master's native language upon the colonised turned out to be the key to resist colonial oppression?

Caliban resists and rejects colonial oppression by constructing a discourse tentatively more powerful, because of its aggressiveness, and more symbolic than Prospero's speech. His delirious belligerence generates particular discursive frames:

> "May he who eats his corn heedless of Shango/Be accused! May Shango creep beneath/His nails and eat into his flesh!" (1992, 20)
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> "Weakness always has a thousand means and cowardice is all that keeps us from listing them." (1991, 21-2)
>
> "Watch out, he's powerful." (1992, 43)
>
> "Prospero! Unimaginable! Prospero is the Anti-Nature! And I say, down with Anti-Nature! And does the porcupine bristle his spines at that? No, he smoothes them down! That's nature! It's kind and gentle, in a word. You've just got to know how to deal with it. So come on, the way is clear!" (1992, 52)
>
> "[...] and worst of all, more degrading than all the rest,/your condescension./ But now, it's over!/Over, do you hear?/[...] underdeveloped, in your words, undercompetent/that's how you made me see myself!/And I hate that image... and it's false!/But now I know you, you old cancer,/And I also know myself!" (1992, 64)

Caliban's aggressive use of the imperial language is mainly due to its unexpected explicitness, frequently dissimulated behind suggestively vivid images, as well as to the absence of euphemisms, his constant tendency to curse and blaspheme, and the recurring presence of irony and sarcasm. Caliban is always looking forward to shocking and provoking his master. He can, therefore, be thought of as a synecdoche of all those who actively oppose imperialism, him representing "the unspoken language of the island, of the natural world, indeed of Caliban's speech" (McCorkle 2000, 492). Contrary to Shakespeare's character who, according to Greenblatt, "even with the gift of language, his nature [Caliban's] is so debased that he can only learn to curse" (1990, 25), Césaire's Caliban, rather treacherous, does much more than simply cursing. He knows he cannot overthrow the coloniser by himself and thus tries to trick Prospero's own kind (from his linguistic and cultural background) against him. This reveals Caliban to be simultaneously a proactive and linguistically reactive character whose witty manipulation of the

coloniser's language proves him to be more than a marionette in Prospero's hands. Caliban is unable to simply toss aside history and remain passively silent. He needs to provide himself as an engine of history and claim his place in history. Instead of a revengeful anti-hero, Caliban incorporates the colonial hero who fights back against the enslavement the European coloniser brought upon him: Caliban features in a visionary way the decoloniser who is still to be born and set his people free. But when Caliban thinks of freedom does he actually share a collective understanding of the term as comprising all subjugatee or is he only thinking of himself? Caliban haunts the coloniser with his ideals of freedom and becomes a threat to the stability of his kingdom and the perpetuity of his European power, hence resisting to an extrinsically imposed servitude.

By contrast, in *Foe* Friday avoids interfering with the outside world keeping confined to his inner self, from which the reader is always kept apart. His silence is part of his corporeal language and allows him to master his own thoughts, history and identity. Friday communicates through his gestures, actions, and most importantly through his silence; he communicates and represents himself through the words he cannot pronounce. As regards Susan Barton, he communicates nothing to her except for his indifference to the coloniser's presence and his clear understanding of (or resignation towards) his status as slave: "With sunken shoulders and bowed head he awaited whatever was to befall him" (Coetzee 1986, 40-41). The lack of initiative to enter into social relations with the coloniser mirrors his rejection of the European culture. A rather significant episode of Barton's failed attempt to communicate with Friday is when she tries to join Friday's dancing ritual and he clearly shuts her out. This episode further alludes to the unsuccessful transgression of the frontier between coloniser and colonised. Roles have reversed: it is no longer the servant who tries to please his master and engage in an advantageous relationship with him – like Ariel in *Une Tempête* does –, but it is the civilised coloniser who tries this engagement. Mention should here be made of other episodes that reinforce Friday's dismissal of the colonial culture: for example, Friday refuses to wear shoes. As a product of material civilisation, and one of the ornamental items that distinguish human beings from animals, shoes may also symbolise imprisonment since they limit a person's freedom by constraining him or her to follow the path society has chosen. This refusal to wear shoes is a conscious refusal at any future possibility of acculturation.[7] Friday also parodies Foe's way of dressing: "It was Friday, with Foe's robes on his back and Foe's wig, filthy as a bird's nest, on his head. In his hand, poised over Foe's papers, he held a quill with a drop of black in glistening at its tips. I gave a cry and sprang forward to snatch it away" (Coetzee 1986, 151). This parody perspires exoticism – Foe is Friday's exotic Other, and through parody he exacerbates this exoticism. Yet this is not the first time Friday histrionically mimics the Other, who is appropriated through mimicry and

7 Friday's insurgent behaviour is particularly evident at the end of Coetzee's novel when Friday bluntly refuses any kind of communication with Susan Barton: "Glancing over his shoulder, I saw he was filling it with a design of, as it seemed, leaves and flowers. But when I came closer I saw the leaves were eyes, open eyes, each set upon a human foot: row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes. I reached out to take the slate, to show it to Foe, but Friday held tight to it. [...] Friday put three fingers into his mouth and wet them with spittle and rubbed the slate clean" (Coetzee 1986, 147).

parody. He is no longer the slave who, like Ariel, is programmed to faithfully follow in the coloniser's imperative utterances.

Friday's lack of "programming" troubles Susan Barton. Although his silence is constant throughout the novel, Susan's feelings towards him are not stationary, since they evolve from indifference – she only pities him for being a boy slave – and contempt into a mixture of fear, sense of owning, and even preoccupation: "A woman may bear a child she does not want, and rear it without loving it, yet be ready to defend it with her life. Thus it has become, in a manner of speaking, between Friday and myself. I do not love him, but he is mine. That is why he remains in England. That is why he is here" (Coetzee 1986, 111). In the light of this "possession statement", Susan Barton seems to be divided between the need of protecting a soul that is spatially dislocated and the colonial duty of setting the limits between the European and the native. As soon as Barton discovers Friday to be a cannibal, suspicion mounts; fear and horror take over her, and pity gives place to dreadfulness and helplessness. But all these feelings are likewise the bursting source of a strange curiosity and unavoidable attraction. The Self has always felt attracted to his/her most radical opposite Other, especially when otherness openly challenges the Self's authority and is perceived to be irremediably different.

Based on this contradictory framework of feelings, Coetzee's *Foe* allows us several layers of interpretation: first Cruso and then Susan Barton (despite her denial of such a condition) become Friday's masters, and in exchange Friday also becomes their shadow, most particularly Barton's: "Friday has grown to be my shadow. Do our shadows love us, for all they are never parted from us?" (Coetzee 1986, 115). The meaning of the word "shadow" should be taken literally, for Friday represents the darkness that shades his masters and inflicts terror. Not only is his mouth a dark hole from which no sound or light can escape, but he is also metonymically a hole whose depth is unknown and from which one can never predict what to expect. This bondage between Friday and Susan suggests that neither of them is free, and they both act as each other's shadow; they mutually constrain one another, and they have to carry each other's burden. This "dual shadowing" is particularly interesting if we bring forth the female nature of Coetzee's narrator, who together with the servants makes up a social minority.

Foe's point of departure seems to be the hierarchisation of European society: first white men, then white women and, thirdly, black slaves. Coetzee's choice of a female narrative voice who conveys her perception of colonial experience raises suspicion concerning the veracity of her accounts and thus against her as a trustworthy narrator.[8] Her female condition may partially contribute to Friday's lack of respect for and interest in her. Since this Negro native does not act according to her norms, he does not recognise her as an authority. Her persistent curiosity, her growing need to know more about Friday's personal background, and her consequent inability to respect Friday's privacy may equally underlie his indifference.

Who Friday actually is remains one of the unanswered questions. His muteness shades this character in mystery and prevents him from communicating his story (even

8 This distrust echoes the nineteenth-century reception of female travelogues.

if he could speak we cannot be sure whether he would be willing to tell his story to the colonial culture or in which language he would choose to do it). If in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, embedded in an "ideology of overseas expansion" (Said 1994, 83), the eighteenth-century writer builds up an exotic character that literally translates the colonial expectation of what a slave is, Coetzee opts for a character whose exoticism lies in his secrecy. Friday shows nothing, reveals nothing, tells nothing. The coloniser knows nothing about the slave, hence the impossibility of controlling his identity. However, oblivion easily paves the way into speculating over a history the narrator attempts to imprint on the native alterity.

In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* there is an asymmetrical relationship between Crusoe and Friday. Such a relationship is quite visible in the forms of address ("my man Friday" *vs.* "my master") that denote a master/obedient servant relationship. In Coetzee's novel this social hierarchy is particularly visible between Friday and Susan, and it is coded in Susan's particular way of addressing Friday:

Table 3. Coetzee's *Foe*: Susan Barton's forms of addressing Friday

"the Negro"	(p. 6)	"Cannibal Friday [...] like a dog locked up all its life"	(p. 55)
"a mere child, a little slave-boy"	(p. 12)		
"a cannibal"	(p. 12)	"I understand why Cruso preferred not to disturb his muteness. I understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner"	(p. 61)
"Friday was like a dog that heeds but one master"	(p. 21)		
"Is Friday an imbecile incapable of speech?"	(p. 22)	"his voiceless slave Friday"	(p. 67)
"he would sleep curled on his side like a cat, or else play over and over again on his little reed flute a tune of six notes, always the same"	(pp. 27-8)	"like an animal wrapt entirely in itself"	(p. 70)
		"(Friday was not my slave but Cruso's, and is a free man now. He cannot even be said to be a servant, so idle is his life.)"	(p. 76)
"given to Friday's life as little thought as I would have a dog's or any other dumb beast's"	(p. 32)		
		"how unnatural a lot it is for a dog or any other creature to be kept from its kind"	(p. 81)
"When Friday set food before me I took it with dirty fingers and bolted it like a dog."	(p. 35)		
		"a cannibal child"	(p. 81)
"What had held Friday back all these years from beating in his master's head with a stone while he slept, so bringing slavehood to an end and inaugurating a reign of idleness?"	(pp. 36- 7)	"as gelding takes the fire out of a stallion?"	(p. 98)
		"to think of him as a cannibal or worse, a devourer of the dead"	(p. 106)
		"But he was diligent, obedient and asked for no more than to work his passage to Africa as a deck-hand."	(p. 109)
"He is a Negro slave, his name is Friday [...] he has no understanding of words or power of speech"	(p. 39)		
		"like a worm cut in half contorting itself in death-throes"	(p. 119)
"since he was a poor simpleton"	(p. 39)		
"treating him as we treat a frightened horse"	(pp. 41- 2)	"Friday the manservant"	(p. 127)
		"benighted by a lifetime of dumb servitude, to be as stupid as Friday seemed?"	(p. 146)
"a Negro man who can never find a situation, since he has lost his tongue"	(p. 48)		

Most of the above metaphors and similes semantically pertain to the animal realm, thus echoing Prospero's treatment of Caliban. Metaphors in particular contradictorily convey the image of a fragile figure ("cat", "dog", "frightened horse") that is simultaneously a cannibal, such a figure being synonymous with evilness and brutality. It is important to mention here the high rate of rhetorical questions posed by Susan Barton, which remain unanswered in view of Friday's silence. Barton's form of addressing Friday highlights the discursive aesthetics of horror we have now and again alluded to. Still, Barton does question and try to engage in a productive relationship with the unpredictable Friday. Although Susan Barton insists on saying he is a free man – "I am no slave-owner, Mr. Foe" (Coetzee 1986, 150) –, all her speech perspires an imperialist, ethnocentric centrality, for she unhesitatingly states Friday to be hers. Paradoxically, she also manifests her impatience towards Friday's lack of a self-reflective discourse and his inability to take action in order to put an end to his servile condition when, in fact, she is unable to understand his intentional refusal to engage with her as a passive struggle against acculturation and servitude. From this perspective, Friday becomes the *white woman's burden*[9]: "the White Man's authority over and responsibility for the 'silent, sullen peoples' must constantly be reiterated in order to survive" (Spurr 1993, 113). As we have previously argued concerning Prospero, Susan Barton needs the colonial burden so as to justify her own role and also for attenuating her loneliness, as she has nobody in her life: "I talk to Friday as old women talk to cats, out of loneliness, till at last they are deemed to be witches, and shunned in the streets" (Coetzee 1986, 77).

As for Friday and his dead master, their hierarchical or racial difference was mainly behavioural: Friday obediently performed the tasks he was ordered to perform. Cruso never forced him into any kind of unwanted communication or assimilation of the coloniser's cultural values. If in *Robinson Crusoe* the main character acculturates Friday by imposing his language and his costumes on him, in Coetzee's rewriting Cruso plays a secondary role and does not seem to be interested in forcing the cannibal Friday into an undesired acculturation. Cruso has also grown older in *Foe* (age being synonymous with knowledge and wisdom), and his authority is never at question (since Friday acknowledges his power, there is no need of exerting any kind of physical op/pression). The tension that builds up the relationship between Caliban and Prospero therefore lacks between Cruso and Friday.

Whom to blame for Friday's mutilation remains as a rather uncanny issue in Coetzee's oeuvre: was it Cruso (the master) or slave-catchers whose ethnics is never identified? Should Cruso have himself cut Friday's tongue, he would not only have excluded a prospective opponent to the European ruling, but more importantly denied Friday the ability to communicate and transmit knowledge; he would have robbed Friday out of a place in history. But should this be the case, why would Friday remain faithful to Cruso? From an optimistic (but maybe far-fetched) point of view, Cruso could have cut Friday's tongue to prevent him from being linguistically oppressed by his own culture (and from

9 See *The Rhetoric of Empire*, chapter 7 – "Affirmation: The White Man's Burden" (pp. 109-24) – by David Spurr.

this perspective the coloniser would be regarded as a positive hero who clashed with the values of his class). In either case, Friday stands for an entire nation of oppressed people under the domination of the European master. Since language is a powerful instrument of (social, cultural, behavioural) control and one of the main mechanisms used to acculturate and domesticate the savage, and since Friday does not have the gift of the gab, he cannot supposedly be, at least linguistically, controlled or dominated by the coloniser; Friday cannot be acculturated or tamed.

Friday is, however, subjected to Susan Barton's enunciations on him – as we have also argued for Caliban and Prospero –, because, according to her, he is unable to represent himself, being instead (mis)represented by the female narrator. That forced and biased representation maintains the difference between the enunciator and the one who is enunciated, always positioned on a lower level in relation to Susan Barton. Additionally, readers must be wary of the kind of representation the European narrator conveys that may have no correspondence with the extratextual reality, but only with readers' expectations. We cannot bypass this lack of correspondence between representation and the object represented without referring to Said's *Orientalism*:

> [...] the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. (2003, 272; italics from the original)

The orientalist, acting like the European coloniser, takes on the role of making the oriental speak and building the oriental's own representation: "if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient" (2003, 21). Susan Barton enacts this process of representation thus forming a discursive consistency the European coloniser apprehends as truly mimicking reality and thus shaping the coloniser's expectation. Edward Said adds that "anthropological representations bear as much on the representer's world as on who or what is represented" (1989, 224). The representation Susan Barton builds up for Friday is then the combining result of her European imagination and of the little sense she makes of what Friday decides to convey about himself. In this light let us add that Friday is also depicted as a ventriloquist – Susan Barton articulates the words for him while he simply has to move his lips. Barton wants Friday to represent himself, but she fails to understand that his silence is his self-representation, or that the kind of civilised representation she intends is not the one he is interested in.

Both Friday (through his muteness) and Caliban (through his permissiveness) conjure up Said's "culture of resistance", and do not legitimise any kind of power except for their own. This is chiefly true for Caliban: while the imperialist Prospero has usurped Sycorax's (and thus Caliban's) land (let us not forget that Sycorax is Caliban's mother), Caliban symbolically pre-empts the nationalist movement of resistance to the coloniser's power. Prospero's attempt at translating his language and culture into his servants eventually becomes a total failure as Caliban takes advantage of that knowledge to challenge

Prospero. More telling is the fact that Aimé Césaire rewrites Shakespeare's *The Tempest* turning Caliban into the main character, which is already illustrative of Césaire's belief that the servant can indeed surpass his master and/or at least regain his freedom. Could then this reinvented Caliban partially foreshadow the advent of the American archetype of the self-made man, who is able by his own effort to climb the social ladder and recreate a new identity for himself regardless of the social and racial context he comes from?

All things considered, Caliban is embedded in vitality and visibility. Caliban has not been successfully shaped to the coloniser's image, hence his dangerous rebellion and the coloniser's attempts at repressing it. He is a being "in-between" who dwells on Bhabha's "Third Space" (1994), a hybrid space of cultural and linguistic interaction between the Self and the Other. Friday, on the other hand, is almost like a spectre, whose invisibility is underlined by his tongue having been intentionally cut. His silence is nonetheless a "powerful communicative tool" (Talib 2002, 121). Friday is disfunctionalised, and his tonguelessness prevents him from any contact with the coloniser, except with Cruso, his exilic companion on the unknown island that made them captives of a reclusive life.

Not only "history is fiction" (Walcott 2006), but fiction can also be history, as Aimé Césaire and J. M. Coetzee suggest through their rewritings. Writing back is their privileged strategy of cultural translation and memory revival through which they both try to portray a world, a time and a space of constraints that they try to unveil through a socially and politically engaged writing that is embedded in an overall feeling of solidarity towards those who share the same condition or have undergone the same traumatic experience. Their works revisit and rewrite cultural difference through a transcolonial narrative with which former colonised peoples may identify themselves. In Edward Said's words, "[t]he novel is thus a concretely historical narrative shaped by the real history of real nations" (1994, 92).

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