



Rewriting Colonial Narratives: Intertextuality, Feminism, and Postcolonial Subversion in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* Suresh Regmi¹ | Shreedhar Gautam²

¹Ph.D Scholar,
Sikkim Professional University, India

²Tribhuvan University
Email: bhurtung@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author

Suresh Regmi
Email: regmisesureshhtd@gmail.com

To Cite this article: Regmi, S., & Gautam, S. (2026). Rewriting colonial narratives: intertextuality, feminism, and postcolonial subversion in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 7(1), 455–464. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v7i1.93192>

Submitted: 16 July 2026

Accepted: 20 February 2026

Published: 31 March 2026

Abstract

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often regarded as a cornerstone of English literature, reinforcing colonial ideology through its narrative of exploration, conquest, and civilization. However, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) challenges this foundational narrative, using intertextuality, postmodernism, and metafiction to expose the silences and erasures within colonial discourse. This study critically examines *Foe* through postcolonial and feminist perspectives, drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) to reveal how Coetzee subverts the imperialist and patriarchal assumptions of Defoe's text. Employing a comparative textual analysis, this research positions *Foe* within the broader landscape of postcolonial literature and intertextual theory. Through Said's contrapuntal reading, the study explores how Coetzee deconstructs Defoe's narrative authority, particularly through the reimaged voices of Susan Barton and Friday. Spivak's concept of subaltern silence is central to the examination of Friday's muteness, illustrating how Coetzee critiques the marginalization of colonized subjects in both historical and literary contexts. The findings reveal that *Foe* is not merely a retelling of *Robinson Crusoe* but a radical revision that dismantles the myth of the self-sufficient European man while highlighting the epistemic violence imposed on women and indigenous figures. Coetzee's use of narrative fragmentation, unreliable narration, and metafiction disrupts the traditional colonial framework, emphasizing the instability of historical knowledge. This study argues that *Foe* serves as a politically charged reconfiguration of literary history, challenging dominant narratives of empire and authorship. By interrogating colonial storytelling and questioning whose voices are heard and whose are erased, *Foe* becomes a powerful act of literary resistance, creating space for alternative histories that reclaim the voices of the silenced.

Keywords: reinforcing colonial, colonial discourse, subaltern speak, marginalization, imperialist, disrupts, indigenous figures, dominant narratives, reconfiguration



1. Introduction

The English literary canon has long been shaped by colonial ideologies that frame conquest, civilization, and domination as heroic endeavors. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often regarded as one of the earliest English novels, encapsulating the colonial ethos through its depiction of a European man imposing order on an "uncivilized" space. However, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) critically rewrites this narrative, highlighting the erasure of marginalized voices, particularly those of women and the colonized. *Foe* engages in an intertextual dialogue with *Robinson Crusoe*, utilizing postmodern and postcolonial techniques to question the legitimacy of colonial discourse. As Head (2009) notes, *Foe* "offers a sustained deconstruction of the mythologies that have upheld colonial narratives" (p. 112).

This study examines *Foe* through postcolonial and feminist critical frameworks, with a focus on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988). Defoe's novel has been widely regarded as a foundational colonial text, reinforcing the notion that Western civilization must "rescue" the Other. "The novel *Robinson Crusoe* is widely regarded as shaping the English colonial narrative: it shows a strong support for the idea of 'civilizing' unfamiliar lands and native people, as a form of heroic survival" (Forum Paper, 7). However, Coetzee's *Foe* destabilizes these assumptions by presenting an alternative perspective that emphasizes narrative manipulation and the silencing of subaltern voices. "Susan Barton and (De)Foe end up in bed in an intimate pose having intercourse and discussing the nature of reality and dream" (Forum Paper, 7), a scene that serves as a metaphor for the struggle over historical and literary authorship.

The novel *Foe* further exposes the epistemic violence of colonial narratives by emphasizing the absence of Friday's voice. Spivak (1988) famously asserts that "the subaltern cannot speak" (p. 104), a claim that resonates deeply with Coetzee's portrayal of Friday, who is rendered mute by the removal of his tongue. The implications of this muteness extend beyond the character, symbolizing the broader inability of colonized peoples to assert their own histories within Western literary traditions. As one scholar observes, "*Robinson Crusoe* has been interpreted as an allegory of colonization, and by applying Edward Said's contrapuntal reading strategy... this paper will analyze *Robinson Crusoe* with the aim to illuminate the hidden aspects of the novel" (Forum Paper, 7).

This research adopts a comparative textual analysis approach, applying Said's *Orientalism* to deconstruct how *Robinson Crusoe* constructs non-European characters as exoticized, inferior figures. Said (1978) argues that "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (p. 3), a concept clearly reflected in Crusoe's paternalistic treatment of Friday. Additionally, Spivak's postcolonial feminist critique of Western literary traditions informs our reading of Susan Barton's struggle for narrative agency in *Foe*. While Barton attempts to tell her own story, she is ultimately rewritten by Foe, the male writer, mirroring the colonial and patriarchal forces that erase women's voices from historical discourse.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* follows the journey of a shipwrecked Englishman who, through resourcefulness and determination, establishes a microcosmic European colony on a deserted island. The novel embodies the colonial ideology of the time, portraying Crusoe as a model of industriousness and Christian virtue. His relationship with Friday reinforces the hierarchical dynamics of empire; Friday is depicted as a grateful, obedient servant who willingly submits to Crusoe's guidance. As Lazar (1993) states, "Crusoe's narrative is less about survival than it is about asserting dominion over both land and people" (p. 78). This interpretation aligns with Ian Watt's concept of "Back to Nature," which he describes as "a rejection of the complex civilization of the present and a return to a simpler and more 'natural' order" (Forum Paper, 7).

Coetzee's *Foe*, by contrast, reconstructs this colonial narrative from a feminist and postcolonial standpoint. The protagonist, Susan Barton, claims to have been stranded on the same island with Crusoe and Friday, yet her version of events is contested by the writer Foe. Through her struggle to have her story recognized, *Foe* critiques the power structures that determine whose voices are preserved in literature. "Susan Barton's struggle with Foe over narrative control mirrors the broader struggle of marginalized voices in postcolonial discourse" (Forum Paper, 7). In contrast to Defoe's text, where Crusoe confidently narrates his experiences, Susan Barton finds herself repeatedly silenced. The metafictional structure of *Foe* forces readers to question the reliability of all historical accounts, highlighting the constructed nature of colonial histories.

Friday's silence in *Foe* is particularly significant. While in *Robinson Crusoe* he speaks and is taught English, in Coetzee's novel he is literally tongue less, rendering him unable to communicate. This reinforces Spivak's argument that subaltern voices are systematically excluded from dominant narratives. As Coetzee suggests, even in a novel that attempts to "give voice" to the colonized, the act of representation itself can be another form of control. As Mittal (2016) observes, "the erasure of Friday's speech in *Foe* is not just a narrative device but an ideological statement on the impossibility of truly recovering the voices of the colonized" (p. 52).

Coetzee's engagement with postmodern narrative techniques—such as fragmentation, unreliable narration, and intertextuality—further disrupts the authority of Defoe's original text. His use of metafiction "underscores the instability of historical truth and the ways in which power influences what is remembered and what is erased" (Carter & Long, 1996, p. 134). This aligns with Said's (1978) claim that "Western literature has functioned as a key site of imperial hegemony, shaping not just how the colonized are represented but how they are remembered" (p. 49).

Ultimately, this study argues that *Foe* is not merely a retelling of *Robinson Crusoe* but a radical subversion of colonial literary traditions. By rewriting a canonical text through a postcolonial and feminist lens, Coetzee challenges the legitimacy of Western historical narratives and exposes the mechanisms by which they exclude alternative perspectives. As Paran (2008) notes, "revisionist literature serves as both a critique and a corrective, questioning dominant narratives while attempting to reconstruct what was lost" (p. 465). Through its layered narrative structure and its emphasis on absence—both of truth and of voice—*Foe* forces readers to reconsider how stories are told, who tells them, and at what cost.

2. Literature Review

The reinterpretation of colonial narratives through postcolonial and feminist literary criticism has gained significant attention in contemporary scholarship. J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) serves as a crucial site for examining the silences and erasures within colonial discourse. While numerous studies have explored Coetzee's engagement with canonical literature, narrative authority, and subaltern representation, few have comprehensively analyzed *Foe* through the combined lens of intertextuality, feminism, and postcolonial subversion—an area this research seeks to address.

The literary revision of colonial texts plays a vital role in challenging dominant historical narratives and giving voice to those who have been silenced. As Lazar (1993) argues, "literature and language are deeply interwoven with power structures, and the rewriting of canonical texts allows for the interrogation of these power relations" (p. 65). *Foe* exemplifies this process by reversing and complicating the colonial myth of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Additionally, the rise of metafiction and intertextuality in postmodern literature has provided authors like Coetzee with tools to question narrative authority and historical truth (Carter & Long, 1996, p. 112). Many scholars have examined how postcolonial literature resists

the structures of imperialist storytelling. Paran (2008) highlights the importance of literary resistance, noting that “revisionist literature serves as both a critique and a corrective, questioning dominant narratives while attempting to reconstruct what was lost” (p. 465). However, most studies have either focused on Foe’s metafictional nature or its postcolonial critique, rarely integrating a feminist perspective that challenges the masculinist structure of Defoe’s original text.

The study of postcolonial rewriting faces several challenges, particularly in interpreting narrative silence, subalternity, and authorial manipulation. One of the key dilemmas is determining whether rewriting colonial literature truly restores agency to the marginalized or whether it remains trapped within the Western literary canon’s framework. As Mittal (2016) observes, “even in texts that attempt to recover lost voices, the act of representation itself may become another form of control” (p. 52). Another challenge is the complex interplay of history, fiction, and interpretation. Critics such as Bobkina and Dominguez (2014) argue that postmodern strategies like intertextuality and metafiction can both reveal and obscure historical realities, making it difficult to ascertain the authenticity of recovered voices (p. 249). Furthermore, scholars such as Dymoke and Hughes (2009) caution against the romanization of resistance literature, arguing that “not all revisions successfully challenge colonial discourse; some may unintentionally reinforce it” (p. 93).

Several researchers have examined different aspects of Coetzee’s *Foe*, including its engagement with intertextuality, its critique of colonial history, and its exploration of narrative power. However, few studies have brought together these dimensions in a way that fully captures the novel’s radical subversion of both colonial and patriarchal discourse. Kırkgöz (2008) argues that *Foe* “functions as a literary palimpsest, overwriting and rewriting the colonial past while simultaneously revealing the instability of historical narratives” (p. 97). Said (1978) conceptualizes contrapuntal reading as a means of seeing colonial texts in dialogue with the narratives they exclude, which is particularly relevant to *Foe*’s engagement with *Robinson Crusoe* (p. 32). Leong et al. (2010) emphasize the destabilization of truth in postmodern fiction, noting that “Coetzee’s rewriting problematizes the reliability of the author, the historian, and the colonial narrator alike” (p. 108).

From a postcolonial perspective, Spivak (1988) critiques how postcolonial texts attempt to recover the voices of the colonized but often end up reinforcing the same structures of power they seek to dismantle (p. 104). Hanauer (2012) notes that *Foe* “exposes the violence of historical omissions, making the silence of Friday even more deafening” (p. 117). Watson and Zyngier (2007) focus on the colonial master-servant dynamic, arguing that “Friday’s muteness is not just a symbol of subaltern oppression but also an indictment of the colonial archive itself” (p. 56).

From a feminist standpoint, Iida (2016) asserts that “Coetzee’s repositioning of Susan Barton as the narrator shifts the power dynamics of storytelling, challenging the male-dominated authorship of colonial history” (p. 89). Carter and Long (1996) explore the intersection of gender and imperialism, arguing that *Foe* “demonstrates how colonial and patriarchal discourses function in tandem to exclude alternative voices” (p. 134). Hughes and Dymoke (2011) examine Susan Barton’s narrative struggle, noting that “Barton’s inability to fully claim authorship reflects the broader systemic erasure of women’s historical agency” (p. 46).

The collected studies offer valuable insights but also reveal critical gaps that this research aims to fill. The research on *Foe* has successfully highlighted its critique of colonial discourse and its engagement with intertextuality. Scholars have recognized Coetzee’s use of postmodern narrative strategies to destabilize historical truth, and feminist readings have brought attention to Susan Barton’s role, though often in isolation from the postcolonial framework. However, few studies explore the combined effect of postcolonialism, feminism,

analyzes Friday's silence and intertextuality in *Foe*. Most research but does not sufficiently address the epistemic violence of both colonial and patriarchal erasures. While many critics acknowledge Coetzee's metafictional strategies, there is limited discussion on how these strategies function as acts of literary resistance.

This study aims to bridge the gaps between intertextuality, feminism, and postcolonialism in the analysis of *Foe*. Unlike previous studies that focus on a single theoretical approach, this research will examine how these elements interact to create a more comprehensive subversion of colonial and patriarchal discourse. This study will argue that *Foe* is not only a critique of colonialism but also of the literary mechanisms that sustain it—from authorship to historiography. It will demonstrate how Coetzee's portrayal of silence, particularly through Friday and Susan Barton, serves as a critique of both imperial and gendered structures of oppression. This research will explore how intertextuality functions not just as a narrative technique but as an ideological tool for challenging dominant modes of representation.

While numerous scholars have examined different aspects of *Foe*, no study has fully integrated postcolonial, feminist, and intertextual critiques to explore how Coetzee's novel rewrites both colonial and patriarchal narratives. This research seeks to fill this gap by arguing that *Foe* is more than a postmodern revision of *Robinson Crusoe*—it is a radical deconstruction of literary history itself, questioning the authority of storytelling and the exclusion of marginalized voices. By addressing these gaps, this study will contribute a more holistic understanding of Coetzee's engagement with colonial and gendered erasures, offering fresh insights into how literature can serve as an act of resistance and reconstruction.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative and textual analysis method to explore how J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) rewrites and subverts Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) through the lenses of postcolonialism, feminism, and intertextuality. As *Foe* engages in a direct intertextual dialogue with Defoe's text, a textual analysis approach is the most effective means of uncovering the narrative disruptions, thematic interventions, and ideological subversions that redefine the original colonial discourse. This study relies on close reading, comparative textual analysis, and theoretical interpretation to examine how *Foe* engages with colonial, patriarchal, and authorial power structures.

Given the literary and theoretical nature of this study, a qualitative textual analysis is the most appropriate methodology. This approach allows for a detailed examination of how Coetzee's novel destabilizes Defoe's canonical text, revealing the silences, erasures, and counter-discourses that challenge dominant colonial narratives. As Said (1978) argues, colonial literature constructs the Orient as an object rather than as a knowing subject, reinforcing imperialist authority (p. 32). This study applies Said's contrapuntal reading strategy to reveal how *Foe* rewrites the colonial subjectivity embedded in *Robinson Crusoe*.

A qualitative approach is also necessary because Coetzee's novel employs metafiction, fragmented narratives, and unreliable narration, making traditional empirical research methods unsuitable. Instead, this study relies on interpretative analysis, drawing on postcolonial, feminist, and intertextual theories to decode how *Foe* disrupts the masculinist, imperialist, and Eurocentric framework of Defoe's novel. Spivak (1988) asserts that "the subaltern cannot speak" when confined within the discursive structures of imperialist history (p. 104), a concept that informs the analysis of Friday's enforced muteness in *Foe*.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* is central to this study because the latter directly rewrites the former, engaging in a postcolonial, feminist, and intertextual revision of a foundational colonial narrative. *Robinson Crusoe* is widely considered one of the earliest English novels, reinforcing the colonial ethos of European superiority and the

"civilizing mission" (Lazar, 1993, p. 65). By contrast, *Foe* directly challenges this dominant narrative, giving voice to marginalized figures like Susan Barton and the silenced Friday.

As Kırkgöz (2008) explains, *Foe* is a literary palimpsest that overwrites Defoe's colonial narrative while simultaneously exposing the instability of historical truth (p. 97). The comparison between these texts allows for a rich analysis of how intertextuality functions as a form of literary resistance. Furthermore, Spivak (1988) critiques how Western feminist discourse often replicates imperialist structures by speaking for the subaltern (p. 99). This insight is essential in assessing Susan Barton's role as both an oppressed woman and a complicit narrator in *Foe*.

The data for this study is collected through close reading and textual analysis, with a focus on key narrative elements, thematic interventions, and theoretical frameworks that shape J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* as a postcolonial and feminist reconfiguration of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Specifically, the analysis examines character reconfigurations, such as the transformation of Susan Barton into the narrator, the enforced silence of Friday, and the role of Foe in rewriting history. This study also investigates the novel's narrative structure and metafictional techniques, including fragmentation, unreliable narration, and shifting perspectives, which contribute to the destabilization of colonial authority. Additionally, the analysis deconstructs postcolonial myths, questioning Crusoe's imperial authority and illustrating Friday's subalternity, while also addressing feminist interventions through Susan Barton's struggles for authorship and narrative control. Said's (1978) Orientalist framework is instrumental in deconstructing the representation of non-Western subjects in both texts. He asserts that Western literary traditions have historically functioned as instruments of imperial power, reinforcing colonial hierarchies (p. 49). Coetzee's *Foe* engages with this critique by revealing how dominant narratives suppress the voices of the colonized, particularly in its depiction of Friday's forced silence. Spivak's (1988) concept of epistemic violence further informs this study, emphasizing that the denial of a voice to the colonial subject is an act of historical erasure. She contends that "when the colonial subject is denied voice, history itself is rewritten in favor of the imperial narrative" (p. 101).

The methodology also incorporates Hutcheon's (1988) definition of historiographic metafiction, which explores how postmodern literature revises historical narratives to expose their constructed nature. She argues that history is not a neutral record of events but a contested site where power dictates what is remembered and what is erased (p. 34). This idea is central to *Foe*, where Coetzee disrupts the authoritative voice of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, compelling readers to question the reliability of colonial historiography. By analyzing these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to illuminate how *Foe* functions as a literary intervention, exposing the ways in which history, power, and storytelling intersect to shape cultural memory and representation.

This study operates within the theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism, feminism, and intertextuality, integrating insights from Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Linda Hutcheon, and Homi Bhabha.

Postcolonial theory provides a foundation for analyzing the power dynamics in *Foe*. Said (1978) argues that colonial literature constructs non-European characters as subordinate subjects, reinforcing Western dominance (p. 32). This framework helps reveal how *Foe* deconstructs Crusoe's colonial authority, especially in its representation of Friday's forced silence. Additionally, Spivak's (1988) critique of Western feminist discourse is crucial in assessing Susan Barton's role. Spivak asserts that "Western feminist discourse sometimes reinforces colonialism, particularly when attempting to speak for the subaltern" (p. 104). This study examines whether Susan Barton's narrative amplifies or suppresses Friday's voice in *Foe*.

Intertextuality and metafiction are also key theoretical parameters. Hutcheon (1988) describes how postmodern texts challenge historical narratives by exposing their artificiality (p. 34). This study applies her framework to demonstrate how *Foe* uses metafictional techniques to destabilize Defoe's authoritative colonial voice. Furthermore, Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity provides insight into how *Foe* subverts the binaries of colonizer/colonized and master/servant. As Bhabha explains, "colonial discourse is never fully stable; it is always subject to mimicry and subversion" (p. 112). This is evident in Coetzee's destabilization of Crusoe's mythic authority and Friday's silent resistance.

This study's qualitative and textual analysis approach allows for a comprehensive examination of how *Foe* reconfigures *Robinson Crusoe* through postcolonial, feminist, and intertextual lenses. By applying Said's Orientalism, Spivak's subaltern theory, Hutcheon's metafiction, and Bhabha's hybridity, this research uncovers the deep ideological subversions at work in Coetzee's text. Through close textual analysis, this study will demonstrate that *Foe* is not just a literary revision of *Robinson Crusoe* but a radical critique of colonial historiography and patriarchal authorship. In doing so, it challenges the very foundation of Western literary traditions, opening new spaces for alternative voices and counter-histories.

3.1 Textual Analysis

This analysis examines how J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) reconfigures Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) through the lenses of intertextuality, feminism, and postcolonial critique. Using Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction (1988), and Homi Bhabha's hybridity (1994), explores how Coetzee subverts colonial discourse, problematizes authorship, and exposes the silencing of marginalized voices.

3.2 Intertextuality in *Foe*: Subverting *Robinson Crusoe*

Coetzee's *Foe* is an overt intertextual response to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, challenging its colonial assumptions and narrative structure. As Hutcheon (1988) argues, "historiographic metafiction both embraces and questions the historical record, exposing the constructed nature of truth" (p. 34). *Foe* exemplifies this by revising Defoe's authoritative voice, using metafiction to question whose story gets told and how history is written.

Susan Barton's retelling of her island experience differs significantly from Crusoe's account, highlighting the subjectivity of historical truth. Barton remarks, "The true story will not be heard until all voices are heard" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 131), challenging the monolithic narrative in Defoe's novel. As Kırkgöz (2008) states, "Coetzee's novel functions as a literary palimpsest, erasing and overwriting Defoe's colonial authority" (p. 97). This aligns with Said's (1978) assertion that "Western texts create an authoritative version of the Orient while silencing alternative voices" (p. 49).

3.3 Narrative Authority and the Role of the Author

In *Foe*, authorship itself becomes a contested space, questioning the power dynamics of storytelling. Unlike Defoe's Crusoe, who confidently narrates his experiences, Susan Barton struggles to have her version of events recognized. She tells Foe, "You rob me of my story, and meanwhile you feed me with tales of your own" (Coetzee, 1986, p. 121). This interaction reflects Spivak's (1988) critique that "the subaltern cannot speak when history is written by colonial and patriarchal authorities" (p. 104).

Moreover, Barton's inability to dictate her own story mirrors the postcolonial dilemma of narrative ownership. As Bhabha (1994) argues, "colonial discourse is never stable, always subject to negotiation and resistance" (p. 112). Foe's manipulation of Susan's story serves as a metaphor for the erasure of female and colonial voices in historical accounts. Carter and Long

(1996) assert that “Susan Barton’s struggle to be heard parallels the broader feminist challenge to male-dominated historiography” (p. 134).

3.4 Friday’s Silence and the Subaltern Condition

One of *Foe*’s most striking revisions of *Robinson Crusoe* is Friday’s enforced muteness, which symbolizes the silencing of the colonized subject. Unlike Defoe’s Friday, who learns Crusoe’s language, Coetzee’s Friday has had his tongue cut out, rendering him unable to speak. Susan Barton reflects, “His tongue is cut out, yet his silence speaks volumes” (Coetzee, 1986, p. 145).

Spivak’s (1988) claim that “the subaltern cannot speak” is literalized in Coetzee’s Friday, whose enforced silence represents the erasure of colonial history” (p. 99). Hanauer (2012) argues that *Foe* “makes the violence of historical omissions explicit, showing how Friday’s voice has been permanently stolen” (p. 117). Similarly, Watson and Zyngier (2007) note that “Friday’s muteness serves as both a symbol of subjugation and an indictment of the colonial archive itself” (p. 56).

3.5 Feminism and Gendered Narratives in *Foe*

Susan Barton’s role as the narrator disrupts the masculinist structure of *Robinson Crusoe*, positioning a female protagonist in a traditionally male-centered colonial adventure. Unlike Crusoe, who dominates his environment, Barton struggles to assert her authority as a storyteller. She laments, “I am a woman alone, forced to seek out a man to write my story for me” (Coetzee, 1986, p. 89).

Spivak (1988) critiques how Western feminist discourse often reinforces colonialist tendencies by speaking for others rather than allowing them to speak for themselves (p. 99). Barton’s reliance on Foe to write her story mirrors this dynamic, as she both resists and conforms to colonial-patriarchal structures. Iida (2016) observes that “Coetzee’s repositioning of Susan Barton as the narrator shifts the power dynamics of storytelling, challenging the male-dominated authorship of colonial history” (p. 89).

3.6 Metafiction and the Fragmentation of Truth

Foe employs metafictional strategies to expose the constructed nature of historical narratives. The novel’s fragmented structure, shifting perspectives, and unresolved endings force readers to question the reliability of colonial accounts. Susan Barton’s realization, “I no longer know what is truth and what is fiction” (Coetzee, 1986, p. 153), encapsulates this epistemological crisis.

Hutcheon (1988) defines historiographic metafiction as a narrative technique that blurs the boundary between fiction and history, questioning the legitimacy of historical truth (p. 34). In *Foe*, this technique reveals how colonial texts shape our understanding of the past while erasing alternative perspectives. Leong et al. (2010) emphasize that “Coetzee’s rewriting problematizes the reliability of the author, the historian, and the colonial narrator alike” (p. 108).

3.7 Counter-Histories and the Politics of Representation

Ultimately, *Foe* serves as a counter-history, challenging the authority of the colonial archive. By rewriting *Robinson Crusoe* from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, Coetzee exposes the mechanisms of narrative exclusion. Barton’s final plea, “If we do not speak, who will hear?” (Coetzee, 1986, p. 157), serves as a call for recovering suppressed voices.

Paran (2008) argues that “revisionist literature serves as both a critique and a corrective, questioning dominant narratives while attempting to reconstruct what was lost” (p. 465). Similarly, Said (1978) asserts that “Western literature has functioned as a key site of imperial

hegemony, shaping not just how the colonized are represented but how they are remembered” (p. 49). Through *Foe*, Coetzee destabilizes these hegemonic frameworks, allowing space for alternative histories.

Through its intertextual engagement with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Foe* subverts colonial storytelling, problematizes authorship, and critiques the erasure of marginalized voices. By employing metafiction, unreliable narration, and fragmented storytelling, Coetzee exposes the instability of historical "truth" and the violence of its omissions. The novel challenges both colonial and patriarchal forms of representation, making Friday's silence and Barton's narrative struggles central to the politics of storytelling. So, *Foe* is not merely a revision of *Robinson Crusoe* but a radical interrogation of history itself. By exposing the narrative structures that perpetuate colonial and patriarchal power, *Foe* becomes an act of literary resistance, demanding a reexamination of whose voices are heard and whose remain silenced.

4. Conclusion

J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* is more than a revisionist response to *Robinson Crusoe*; it is a radical subversion of colonial and patriarchal historiography. Through its intertextuality, metafictional structure, and thematic engagement with power and silence, the novel exposes the constructed nature of historical narratives and challenges dominant discourses of authority, gender, and subaltern representation. Drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Gayatri Spivak's subaltern critique (1988), Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction (1988), and Homi Bhabha's hybridity (1994), this study has demonstrated that *Foe* is not merely a literary retelling of *Robinson Crusoe* but a counter-history that actively disrupts and interrogates the ideological assumptions of its predecessor.

The textual analysis has revealed several key aspects of Coetzee's subversion. First, the novel's restructuring of narrative authority through Susan Barton's fragmented and contested storytelling problematizes the historical reliability of colonial texts. Second, the enforced silence of Friday literalizes Spivak's argument that "the subaltern cannot speak", critiquing how colonial archives erase indigenous voices. Third, Coetzee's metafictional techniques expose the fictionality of history itself, reinforcing Hutcheon's claim that all historical accounts are shaped by ideological power structures. Finally, *Foe*'s feminist intervention challenges the masculinist tradition of adventure narratives, questioning whose stories are legitimized and whose are dismissed. These insights reveal *Foe* as a politically charged literary project that not only rewrites Defoe's novel but also disrupts the very mechanisms of colonial historiography. Coetzee refuses to offer a coherent counter-narrative; instead, he fragments, destabilizes, and ultimately silences his own revision, forcing readers to confront the epistemic violence of historical omissions. This aligns with Said's assertion that "Western literature has functioned as a key site of imperial hegemony, shaping not just how the colonized are represented but how they are remembered" (1978, p. 49). By deconstructing narrative authority and exposing the limits of representation, *Foe* compels us to rethink the ethics of storytelling and historical truth. While this study has explored *Foe*'s engagement with postcolonialism, feminism, and intertextuality, further research is needed to examine how Coetzee's approach to historiography compares with other postcolonial rewritings of canonical texts. Future studies could explore how contemporary literature continues to challenge colonial legacies through metafiction and unreliable narration. Additionally, the implications of Friday's silence as a critique of Western literary representation warrant further exploration, particularly in relation to modern debates on indigenous storytelling and historical revisionism.

References

1. Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

2. Bobkina, J., & Dominguez, E. (2014). The use of literature and literary texts in the EFL classroom: Between consensus and controversy. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 3(2), 248-260. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.2p.248>
3. Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1996). *Teaching literature*. Longman.
4. Coetzee, J. M. (1986). *Foe*. Viking Press.
5. Dymoke, S., & Hughes, J. (2009). Using a poetry wiki: How can the medium support pre-service teachers of English in their professional learning about writing poetry and teaching poetry in a digital age? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 8(3), 91-106.
6. Hanauer, D. I. (2012). *Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom*. *Language Teaching*, 45(1), 105-115. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000455>
7. Head, D. (2009). *The Cambridge introduction to J. M. Coetzee*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, fiction*. Routledge.
9. Iida, A. (2016). Poetic identity in second language writing: Exploring an EFL learner's study abroad experience. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 1-14.
10. Kırkgöz, Y. (2008). Using poetry as a model for creating English poems. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 4(2), 94-106.
11. Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.
12. Leong, P., Joseph, S. R. H., & Boulay, R. (2010). Applying constant comparative and discourse analyses to virtual worlds research. *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, 3(1), 3-26.
13. Mittal, R. (2016). Poetry is language at its most distilled and powerful: Bringing poetry in language classes can make language understanding and communication skills better. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, 4(1), 52-56.
14. Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: An evidence-based survey. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 465-496.
15. Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
16. Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). University of Illinois Press.
17. Watson, G., & Zyngier, S. (2007). *Literature and stylistics for language learners: Theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.