

2009

Silence as Insubordination: Friday and Michael K's Wordless Weapon, A Post-Colonial Approach to J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*

Cody C. Mullins

Follow this and additional works at: <http://mds.marshall.edu/etd>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Fiction Commons](#)

---

Recommended Citation

Mullins, Cody C., "Silence as Insubordination: Friday and Michael K's Wordless Weapon, A Post-Colonial Approach to J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*" (2009). *Theses, Dissertations and Capstones*. Paper 749.

Silence as Insubordination: Friday and Michael K's Wordless  
Weapon, A Post-Colonial Approach to  
J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*

Thesis submitted to  
the Graduate College of  
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English

by

Cody C. Mullins

Dr. Mary Moore, Ph.D., Committee Chairperson  
Dr. Katharine Rodier, Ph.D.  
Dr. John Young, Ph.D.

Marshall University

May 2009

## ABSTRACT

Silence as Insubordination: Friday and Michael K's  
Wordless Weapon, A Post-Colonial Approach to J.M.  
Coetzee's *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K.*

By Cody Mullins

While most critics of J.M. Coetzee's fiction focus on silence as a weapon of imperial oppressive forces to subjugate representations of the "other," this thesis argues that, on the contrary, characters representing the traditional colonially oppressed use their silence as a weapon to in turn oppress the representations of imperial power. Through close reading explication and the use of the post-colonial theories of both Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, I focus on the inverted oppression, the shifting of identity, and the role of authorial authority within the novels, *Foe* and *Life & Times of Michael K.* By engaging in this close examination, I debunk early criticisms of Coetzee's fiction that his work failed to take a formative stance on the politics of the Apartheid. My main focus is the way in which Coetzee chooses his diction to evoke powerful imagery and symbolism, correlating the conflicts, both internal and external, of his characters with the real ideological and physical conflicts that encompassed the Apartheid.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the inception of this project idea, many people have influenced, encouraged, and grounded me that I wish to thank. These people include, Dr. Zakes Mda for introducing the fiction of Coetzee and putting an interesting perspective on the post-colonial text. Dr. Mary Moore for being a genius and encouraging my writing, helping me make it something less than terrible, and keeping me on my toes. Dr. Katharine Rodier and Dr. John Young for putting up with my heinous requests for reading my material, and being unbelievably supportive and receptive. My ladies at the writing center for working through my existential crises with me, and being unbelievably supportive through the whole process. My family for their support and occasional proof reading. Thank you all, without you I would be a lost soul swimming in a fish bowl.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Introduction	1
Chapter One: Colonizing Stories with Oppressive Silence	14
Chapter Two: Silence as Insubordination in and its Spiritual Consequences	34
Conclusion	56
Bibliography	58

---

# INTRODUCTION

---

Silence.

In speech, we use silence as a buffer between words, a gathering of thoughts, or a rebuke to the words of another. This silence is sometimes awkward, sometimes calming, and sometimes pregnant with foreboding menace, quiet triumph, or insubordination and deceit. In writing, silence exists between the words, lines, and chapters and in the reader's subconscious. No matter its form, silence carries with it a power capable of oppressing masses, uniting peoples, and hiding the inner workings of the mind. Devout monks have used silence as a way to achieve divinity and rulers have used silence on their constituents as a mode of political oppression for centuries. In this way, silence exists as a flexible political, personal, and global force. Silence in its sacral form allows the purveyor to achieve a state of unsurpassed tranquility. However, more often than not, silence is used as a weapon by oppressors to quiet the "other" in society. Elie Wiesel, in his 1986 Nobel Prize acceptance speech articulated, "Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." Throughout this discussion, I will test this theory, focusing on the prevalence of silence as insubordination and

the redefining of the roles of oppressor and oppressed in the works of South African novelist, J.M. Coetzee.

The South African apartheid, perhaps one of the least publicized atrocities of the past hundred years, weighed heavily on the minds of the entire population. The term apartheid “means literally ‘apart-ness,’” with the goal being “cooperative co-existence” between the races (Omond 11). However, the lines of demarcation between what differentiated races from one another became skewed and the lands each group was entitled were marked with ambiguity, resulting in violence and oppression that ended the idea of “cooperative co-existence.” The makers of these rules (the whites in power) inevitably used their lucrative positions to raise one race up above the others, breeding hostility and hate. As tensions grew between the races, feelings of guilt and helplessness began to plague liberal members of the ruling class whites, evidenced by progressive white literature at the time. For the years leading up to and during the Apartheid (1948-1990), top literary minds expressed their disgust, sense of hopelessness, and desires for a resolution through their writing. White authors such as Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Michiel Heyns, Troy Blacklaws and Andre Brink struggled, through their prose, with the ever-present emotion of white guilt. Also prevalent in their novels is a sense of entrapment for liberal whites who find themselves caught between the urge to fight for equality with blacks and yet a fear of the perceived violence those blacks represent. Writing anti-apartheid material during this time brought scorn, persecution and danger to these authors whose government

wanted to silence these voices and prevent them from telling their stories, but also world recognition to their work and the situation in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps no other white South African writer has written more extensively on liberal white ideological oppression than Nobel Prize winner, J.M. Coetzee. Almost all his novels wholly allegorize or explicitly symbolize the various oppressions of the Apartheid. Early in his career, Coetzee's work came under criticism for not directly addressing the Apartheid, electing instead to allegorize the conflict through fictional, vague locations, such as in *Waiting for the Barbarians* or through the lens of a commonly known tale in *Foe*.<sup>2</sup> However, with *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, and *Disgrace*, Coetzee firmly places the reader into the confusion, anxiety, and oppression of South Africa during the Apartheid. Moreover, as Attridge argues, Coetzee's allegorical fiction possesses not only the fervor of Apartheidic literature, but also a universality that places him within the literary canon.

I will begin my discussion by exploring the ways in which silence has been used in post-colonial theory over time, primarily in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* and Homi Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." Through this lens, I will investigate commonalities between silence and oppression and test Weisel's theory to determine if "tormentors"

---

<sup>1</sup> This discussion of liberal white authors is influenced by Georgie Horrell's article, "Post-Apartheid Disgrace: Guilty Masculinities in White South African Writing" in which Horrell discusses Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* in terms of white guilt, with mentions of the above authors and the views in their literature.

<sup>2</sup> See Derek Attridge's article, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon" in which he discusses, and argues for Coetzee's place in the canon despite other critics' views pertaining his relevancy in the literature of the Apartheid.



always use silence The examination of this theory will illustrate my argument that Coetzee's use of silence as insubordination demonstrates a role reversal in the discussion of the oppressor/oppressed. Over the course of this thesis, I will consider the implications silence has on the culture within Coetzee's novels, *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*, decode the way the works use language and silence as allegorical symbolism as they pertain to the struggle for freedom in South Africa during the Apartheid, and analyze ways in which authors have used silence as a means of or hindrance to political allegory and poetic revolution.

Silence appears as a formidable oppressor in the literature of oppressed peoples—women, the colonized, peoples of color—who must escape the treachery of silence in order to obtain their freedom, peace, or equality. Likewise, silence and the breaking down of its power exists as an imminent threat to oppressors, both misogynistic and post-colonial. In crude terms, Michel Foucault warns, “if the silence of reason is required for the curing of monsters, it is enough for that silence to be on the alert” (212). Using the terms of the oppressors, the fear of these “monsters” gaining their freedom through the breaking of their silence results in the radical violence, denial of rights, and inhumane treatment of oppressed peoples. In this section, post-colonial criticism of literature from colonial countries will be examined in order to focus on the current trends in silence criticism and its uses in the global political arena.

While looking at the oppression of women in Middle Eastern society through the scope of two Lebanese novels, *Sitt Marie Rose* and *Coquelicot du massacre*, in her essay, “Francophone Literature of the Middle East Women:

Breaking the Walls of Silence,” Mary-Angela Willis articulates the common theme of silence as oppressor. In the first novel, Marie Rose is murdered for bridging the gap of difference between Christians and Muslims and for speaking out against the crimes of Christian militiamen. Willis hints that the importance of Marie Rose and her place in the patriarchal hierarchy of oppression presented in the novel lies in her breaking the code of silence and introducing the truth, which she ultimately becomes a martyr for releasing. Silence in this novel serves to oppress women, who along with minorities of color make up the other half of commonly oppressed peoples. Willis notes that “one must at all costs avoid silence, which is the ultimate failure,” and further, that Marie Rose “is victorious in the sense that she succeeds in piercing the walls of silence with her words” (67). This reading perpetuates the idea that silence serves no better purpose than to oppress those forced to endure it. Likewise, Willis uses Evelyne Accad’s novel, *Coquelicot du massacre* as an example for silence and its symbolic barriers metaphorized in literal barriers preventing women from equality and safety in Lebanon. Unlike Marie Rose, *Coquelicot du massacre*’s main character, Nour, uses action as a means to acquiring voice. She must physically make her way across the line of demarcation that separates the violent oppression of Beirut to the other side of the city, a fantastical realm where difference is accepted and equality reigns true. Both women must overcome the oppression of silence in order to know peace and equality, while their tormentors’ greatest fear lies in the spoken truth these women possess: the equality and tranquility between the sexes and between people of different backgrounds that rightfully should exist.

To colonized peoples, the oppression of silence and the growing uncertainty of identity walk hand-in-hand. Taking from them the ability to communicate in their own terms, in their own language, and about themes or customs traditionally observed in their culture results in a bastardization of culture and ideals that leads colonized peoples to question or search for an ungraspable identity. Jonathan Carr-West's essay, "The Negotiation of Identity in the Francophone African Novel" discusses the corruption of identity among native peoples, most explicitly in the novels, *L'Enfant noir* and *L'Adventure ambiguë*. Carr-West points out that each author's ability to write in the language and learning style of the captors mirrors the conflicts in their novels. Interestingly, the author of the first book, Laye Camara, for years had his first and last names inverted in western bibliographies, appearing as "Camara Laye." Carr-West points out that this seemingly harmless mistake serves as a reminder that colonized people struggle to obtain, withstand, or uphold their identity which many times fluctuates because of their lack of identification with European culture coupled with a European education, and also a growing lack of identification with their own native culture due to the instillation of said European culture and the disjuncture that results in becoming, crudely, an "*evolues*, or evolved, changed, different" as an educated African. Carr-West's discussion goes on to define the importance of narrative texts and the purpose they serve in the formulation of identity to communities, nations, and individuals. He demonstrates that culture and identity can only exist in the gaze and perceptions of those outside of those cultures or identities and are thus subjective to the

minds and perceptions of the onlookers. Therefore, cultures must be experienced or viewed to be defined. Likewise, the meanings and viewpoints of a written narrative are also subjective to its audience and “a text demands to be read, it exists to be read and to some degree it exists only insofar as it is read...like the self, the text is dependent upon its own articulation” (83). Carr-West’s observations demonstrate an important connection between silence and identity, summarily that without articulation, or speech, the idea of identity cannot and does not exist, making silence a force that not only oppresses peoples, but leads to their non-existence.

In the essay, “The Other I: Questions of Identity in *Une Vie de Boy*” Kristin Swenson Musselman discusses the phenomenon of colonial reverse mimicry in which persons of colonial race mimic indigenous peoples’ speech, dress, traditions and customs. The examples she provides from the novel *Une Vie de Boy* demonstrate the alstity of the mimicry, the process that Homi Bhabha explains as “the desire to merge as ‘authentic’ through mimicry...is the final irony of partial representation” (383). Oftentimes, “[postcolonial mimickers’] actions mire them in ridicule, as their audience is entertained by the spectacle” rather than accepting them into their culture (Musselman 133). The goal of any colonial who wishes to mimic any aspect of indigenous culture, to Musselman, exists “in order to secure employment or financial gain...or simply in order to survive in the ambiguous and dangerous space within which the subject exists” (133). In later chapters, the mimicry and identity-shifting of liberal white South Africans will be

discussed in the context of their attempt to obtain the story of blacks in order to better sympathize with the cause.

Silence, the loss and search for identity, and cultural mimicry play important roles in both *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*. However, unlike most of the criticism dealing with silence, this thesis will demonstrate the unexpected results of colonially-oppressed characters using silence as insubordination. Using these two novels as a view into the political arena of the Apartheid, I will examine the ramifications of Coetzee's fiction.

In chapter one, I will explore the way Coetzee re-imagines *Robinson Crusoe* and what it means to truly own our own stories in his 1986 novel, *Foe*. Coetzee conquers Defoe's characters, and adds his own—the narrator throughout much of the novel, Susan Barton, a woman who arrives shipwrecked on the island inhabited by Cruso, survives and wishes to profit off her experiences by entrusting them to “story maker” Daniel Foe upon her return to England, accompanied by Cruso's manservant Friday—in a tale that forces the reader to question authorial authority, possession of the self, and the means by which to protect one's own self-identity. Through allegory and unmistakable symbolism, Coetzee represents the perceived oppression of liberal white South Africans in *Foe*.

Defoe's own character, Friday represents the preeminent colonial oppressed, characteristic of Coetzee's post-colonial novels. Many critics, such as Lewis MacLeod, Derek Attridge, and David Marshall to name a few, read the character of Friday as the quintessential victim figure of native oppression and

Apartheidic segregation. However, this chapter discusses the way in which Friday, through his rebellious silence, subjugates the power of his oppressors and in turn becomes the oppressor. Coetzee's Friday differs greatly from Defoe's Friday in skin color (Coetzee opts for the darkest black skin for Friday to further illustrate his allegory), culture, and most importantly, speech. Daniel Defoe's Friday learns the English language by way of his master, Crusoe, whereas Coetzee's Friday resists the communication attempts of both Susan Barton and Foe.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the novel, the perceived absence of Friday's tongue has allowed some critics to view this tonguelessness as nothing more than an allegory for the stereotypically oppressed native. However, as MacLeod smartly points out, Susan Barton has no proof of Friday's tonguelessness, but merely, "Cruso said so [that Friday was tongueless] and Susan believed," (8). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that Friday merely lacks the physical capability of speech and indeed, human communication, but that he uses his silence as insubordination to protect the only thing that he has: his (hi)story before Cruso and Susan Barton reached the island, or more bluntly, before colonization.

Susan Barton, a character not wholly invented by Coetzee (see Defoe's *Roxana*), but one nevertheless who does not appear in Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, becomes the oppressed. Her need to have her story of the island published—the way she will make a living back in England—only to find that the story she recounts to Foe lacks "substance," forces her to realize that "if the story seems stupid, that is only because it so doggedly holds its silence The

---

<sup>3</sup> Susan Barton tries to communicate with Friday musically; Foe tries teaching him to write.

shadow whose lack you feel is there: it is the loss of Friday's tongue," (117). In this way, Friday uses his silence to both protect his mysterious history and culture and to enslave his would-be captor, Barton. She pays the ultimate price for Friday's silent insubordination, as her story becomes colonized, changed and altered at the will of the oppressive colonizing figure, Foe, so much so that she ceases to exist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and fails to receive her financial freedom.

Additionally, this chapter delves into the symbolism of Susan Barton's character as it pertains to the Apartheid in South Africa. Namely, she represents liberal white South Africans who abhor the Apartheid and wish to help black South Africans on the one hand, but also feel the constraints of their own race and ruling class preventing them, legally, to stand with the blacks. Like the liberal whites, Susan Barton feels a sense of duty toward Friday, yet fears and desires her freedom from him.

In chapter two, I will argue that, like *Foe*, Coetzee's 1983 novel, *Life and Times of Michael K* also forces the reader to question the idea of identity. In this novel, an omniscient third person narrates two of the three sections, following the activities of Michael K, a "coloured" man with a harelip deformity who attempts to transport his dying mother from her place of employment in Cape Town to the place she grew up in the country. Along the way, his mother dies, leaving K alone in the world and vulnerable to soldiers who capture him and place him in a prison camp. During his time in the camp, section two in the novel, the narration shifts to a nameless medical officer who represents liberal whites in the novel. As

aforementioned, white guilt and disillusionment take place within the minds of liberal whites—represented in this case by the medical at the prison camp who views K as both a hindrance and hope for change. Like Susan Barton, the medical officer feels trapped by the circumstances around him. Ensnared in a war of which he cannot remember the reason for fighting, he feels trapped between doing his duty to the cause and his wish to help Michael K—and vicariously through K, himself—escape.

Throughout his time at the prison camp, Michael K refuses to disclose his story to the medical officer, which results in the fabrication of his story and the dangerous premonition that K is a conspiring guerrilla aiding the rebel forces by supplying them with food, shelter and arms. As time wears on, K becomes sicker which in turn causes the medical officer more anxiety stemming from his guilt and disillusionment with the war. Like Friday becomes a burden to Susan Barton, Michael K “become[s] an albatross around [the medical officer’s] neck” (146). Unlike Susan Barton, the medical officer’s interest in Michael K remains surely idealistic in nature, as a representation of the life the medical officer wishes to bestow upon himself. However, because the medical officer views K as a spiritual being, “not wholly of our world,” he desires to know K’s story so he too can achieve this serenity (130).

The medical officer’s concern for K mimics, yet puts an ironic twist on the man in charge of the camp, the medical officer’s superior and co-liberal white—Captain Noel’s—view on the war, namely that “we are fighting this war...so that minorities will have a say in their destinies” (157). The medical officer desires K



to have a say in his destiny, but feels he must fully understand that destiny before he provides the opportunity for K to move on. Because of K's silence, the medical officer is forced to make up his own story, changing K's name from Michael to Michaels (for that is what he truly thinks is his name) and ultimately, fabricating the end of K's life with a fallacious cause of death write-up to cover his tracks after K has escaped. K's story remains unknown to the medical officer, which allows K to continue with his life the way he wants, or allows him to "have a say in his destiny." The medical officer, however, remains inside the prison, trapped within his own guilt and his desire to escape from the realities of his life and war, intimating that, "the night that Michaels made his break, I should have followed" (161). At the conclusion of section two, the only one which the medical officer narrates, he remains stagnated in prison, imagining an encounter with an escaped Michael K in which he clings to the hope that he has understood K as a revolutionary guided by silence. In this chapter I will argue, through close reading and analysis, the medical officer's yearning to escape the confines of the war and his supposed identity within the war represents liberal white South Africans and their entrapment between doing what society expects them to do and their conscience. As in *Foe*, Coetzee uses the silence of the "other" to oppress the novel's moral conscience in *Life and Times of Michael K*.

These two novels represent a sampling of Coetzee's work with silence in his novels, and also a sampling of Apartheid literature written by a liberal white novelist. Through my research of critics, post-colonial theory, and close

reading of these two novels, I hope to demonstrate the profound effect silence had on the politics, literature, and psychology of liberal white South Africans.

## ONE

---

### “Return to Me the Substance I Have Lost”: Colonizing Stories with Oppressive Silence in J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe*

---

Deeming the work of J.M. Coetzee disconnected, too abstract and intrinsically uninvolved to represent the politics of South Africa would downplay the significance of literary symbolism and intellectual thought, and would ignore the cultural significance that literature plays in politics. While Derek Attridge suggests that Coetzee’s abstract foray into the politics of South Africa keeps him from entering the canon of distinguished authors (219), I suggest that through these abstractions Coetzee demonstrates the full weight of his political message clearly in *Foe*. Coetzee presents the issue of oppression in nontraditional terms in the interactions between the most hotly debated character, Friday, and Susan Barton, Cruso, and Foe. While many critics have formed differing opinions on *who* oppresses Friday, the pervasive theme remains constant: Friday, as the traditional man of color, overwhelmingly represents the oppressed, without regarding the various factors that oppress the other characters, most particularly, Susan Barton.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert Post argues that Cruso is the oppressor; Dana Dragunoiu argues Susan Barton is the oppressor; and Lewis MacLeod argues Foe is the oppressor.

However, a closer reading into Coetzee's politics in the novel tells an entirely different story. Rather than contributing to Friday's oppression, Friday uses silence as a calculated form of insubordination and rebellion. Friday's silence oppresses Susan Barton by not allowing the story of the island to acquire "the substance it has lost" (51). Susan speaks of losing her "substance" at great length, "substance" in this case meaning, "something which can exist by itself, is the substrate underlying the existence of other things, and is the subject of which other things are predicated" ("Substance"). Friday's silence forces Susan Barton to lose her substance because without his story, her story cannot "exist by itself," and in the context of *Robinson Crusoe*, Susan Barton's story fails to exist entirely. Susan's oppression represents the perceived oppression that liberal white South Africans encountered during the apartheid. Coetzee's subtlety in presenting these issues allows us to understand the overwhelming responsibility liberal white South Africans undertook in aiding black South Africans. By supporting the side of the apartheid that opposed the rest of their race, liberal whites endured scrutiny, chastisement, and political danger. Susan Barton, as representative of these liberal white South Africans, finds herself torn between aiding Friday, whom she "does not love" but must care for after the death of his master, Cruso, and the desire to acquire freedom from the burden this responsibility places on her (111).

Susan desires to obtain Friday's story for self-preservation rather than forced colonization. Without Friday's account, the story of the island and

Susan's own personal story lacks substance. Doomed for colonization, Susan's story faces the possibility of change at the discretion of the author, Foe. Almost embarrassedly, Susan Barton relays the notion to Foe that, "if the story seems stupid, that is only because it so doggedly holds its silence. The shadow whose lack you feel is there: it is the loss of Friday's tongue" (117). A "shadow" clings to its dependent being, the being with substance, much like Susan Barton's story clings to Friday and his story, which stands for the being with substance. The notion that, as Lewis MacLeod puts it, "the world wants and expects better stories" (4) drives Susan Barton to the realization that her story lacks the necessary excitement intrinsic to publishable works, and that "we [Susan and Friday] will never make our fortunes...by being merely what we are, or were" (82).

When Susan makes her plea to Foe to restore the substance of life she has lost, she makes reference to being a "ghost" at the side of the "body" of Cruso. She also notes that she was not a "bird of passage, no gannet or albatross," (51). Interestingly, a ghost, damned to haunt in the same place forever, infinitely finds itself bound to the location—in this case the island—where its "soul" remains. She articulates adamantly that she did not "circle the island once and dip a wing and then fly on over the boundless ocean," but rather that she was a physical being on the island (51). She associates birds with freedom, flying freely away from the island without the bodies that live there affecting them. Susan desires her freedom from Friday, a freedom she needs a significant financial gain to acquire. She feels that great financial

success awaits her upon the completion and selling of a book depicting her story and thus commissions Foe to write the story of the island. Ironically, she must depend on her imprisonment on the island to “free” her from her past and the oppressor, Friday. This passage implies symbolically that liberal white South Africans hope to distance themselves from the oppressors who have the same color of skin by pointing to their pasts as sympathetic to the black cause. However, lumped into a group defined only by their skin color, their fight against apartheid lacks substance, making them transparent non-entities in the fight.

Susan’s need to obtain Friday’s story leads to constant attempts to communicate with him. On the island, Friday constantly played the same six-note tune on a crude flute in his leisure, a practice that eventually drove Susan mad. However, once in England and desperate to communicate with Friday in any way, Susan discovers a chest of recorders among Foe’s personal affects and learns to play one of these recorders. Eventually, after playing the same six-note tune along with Friday, Susan begins to change her tune, because she feels

we cannot forever play the same tune and be content. Or so at least it is with civilized people.... I was sure Friday would follow me. But no, Friday persisted in the old tune, and the two tunes played together formed no pleasing counterpoint but on the contrary jangled and jarred. (97-8)

On one hand, Susan creates a divide between her and Friday by referring to herself and people like her as “civilized,” indicative that Friday must represent barbarism. On the other hand, Friday’s refusal to adhere to the change in Susan’s tune demonstrates his rebellion toward her. Further, Susan observes that while she thought “he and I [Susan] made a consort, he had been insensible of me,” (98). After this shunning by Friday, Susan becomes visibly upset and “[begins] to recognize that it might not be mere dullness that kept him shut up in himself...but a disdain for intercourse with me,” (98). Dana Dragunoiu poignantly suggests that “Barton comes to realize that Friday, by means of his silence, has effected a covert rebellion, treating her, his mistress, not only with indifference, but perhaps also with contempt” (317-8). The statement, “we cannot forever play the same tune and be content” also suggests a desire to change the present situation, symbolically, to change the way South Africa is ruled, a notion supported by the line that follows, “or so at least it is with civilized people” (97). Susan woos the sensitivities of the ruling whites, complementing them by distinguishing them as “civilized people,” capable of changing the way they rule.

After spending many weeks isolated with Friday, the power of his overwhelming silence begins to take its toll on Susan:

When I lived in your [Foe’s] house I would sometimes lie awake upstairs listening to the pulse of blood in my ears and to the silence from Friday below, a silence that rose up the stairway like smoke, like a welling of black smoke. Before long I could not

breathe, I would feel I was stifling in my bed. My lungs, my heart, my head were full of black smoke. I had to spring up and open the curtains and put my head outside and breathe fresh air and see for myself that there were stars still in the sky. (119)

She compares Friday's silence to black smoke, indicative of a smoldering anger emerging from Friday's heart and also indicative of black silence. She must put her head outside to breathe in fresh, non-oppressive air, for she feels the symptoms of suffocation under Friday's silence. Even the style of writing, particularly the pacing and intonation of this passage illustrates the power Friday harbors with his rebellious silence. The quickened, short, choppy sentences that Susan uses to describe the smoke force the reader to hesitate. A normal rhythm returns only by the end when she finally throws open the window, enabling her to breathe properly.

At the suggestion of Foe, Susan attempts to teach Friday how to write in hopes to remedy his inability to communicate even though he lacks oral communication skills. Once again Friday rebels, about which Susan wonders, "Could it be that somewhere within him he was laughing at my efforts to bring him nearer to a state of speech?"(146). Back in Foe's chambers, Friday crouches over his slate and begins to compose, however, when Susan tries to force Friday to show her what he has written, "instead of obeying me, Friday put three fingers into his mouth and wet them with spittle and rubbed the slate clean," (147). Directly after this exchange, Susan exclaims to Foe, "I must



have my freedom! It is becoming more than I can bear! It is worse than the island!" (147).

This scene's importance lies in several possibilities. First, it demonstrates that Friday inherently possesses communication capabilities but openly refuses to engage with Susan or Foe. Second, Susan acknowledges her enslavement and that she seeks her freedom from Friday. The seemingly mocking attitude Friday takes toward Susan's instruction greatly infuriates her and causes her to cry out, frustrated by her imprisonment. David Marshall argues that Friday's writing lesson "is located at the nexus of a complex configuration of allusions and echoes that ask the reader to enter into a series of philosophical dialogues about writing, freedom, gender, difference, teaching, learning, and the possibility of knowing others" (227). Marshall's statement demonstrates the many levels of importance Friday's writing lesson attains. Friday's writing lesson forces the reader to think about the implications of Friday's writing ability that not only pertain to the narrative, but the world and its politics. Questions of colonization and its affect on native cultures arise from Foe undertaking the responsibility to prod Friday along, teaching him how to write. His patience and insistence that Friday will eventually get it—the ways of white man writing—suggest a superiority on Foe's behalf, looking down on Friday's meager achievements. Post-colonial theory predicates the feeling that colonizers wish to make the colonized *like* them, but an *imperfect* version of them (Said 28). Susan Barton's impatience and inability to reach Friday works on both a universal

gender level and also a level more specific to the South African situation. First, because Susan cannot effectively teach Friday to write and thus author his story, she faces the danger of Foe stealing her story. The inability of a woman to work to free herself symbolizes the universal plight of women, oppressed by men whom they depend to “share” their stories. Secondly, Susan’s inability to “know” Friday represents the difficulties experienced by white liberal South Africans. Without blacks taking the initiative to “free” themselves, the liberal white’s platform is moot. Ironically, Friday’s abstinence from communication, though he possesses the power to do so, frees him and imprisons Susan.

By applying the postcolonial theory of Edward Said, Friday’s insubordinate attitude toward his would-be oppressors takes on new meaning in viewing the oppressor/oppressed issue. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said states:

After a period of “primary resistance,” literally fighting against outside intrusion, there comes the period of secondary, that is, ideological resistance, when efforts are made to reconstitute a shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system. (209)

In Friday’s world, the “period of primary resistance” ended before Susan Barton arrived on the island, making his “period of secondary...ideological resistance” an effort to maintain and withhold his story and culture from her

and Foe. Friday's unwillingness to communicate with Susan Barton demonstrates the resistance described by Said.

Not only does Friday possess the ability to communicate, but also, as Marshall suggests, Friday has "earned admission into a guild of authors, artists, and musicians" (227). While this reading of Friday's writing lesson focuses on the physical act of writing as a form of rebellion by the authoring of one's own story, I argue that Friday's knowing how to write, but refusing to satisfactorily do so demonstrates his insubordination by withdrawing his story, never to be told, a stronger form of rebellion than simply being the author of one's own story.

Knowing that Friday possesses the ability to communicate but chooses not to recall his life on the island with Crusoe and Friday's earliest exposure to the English language. Lewis MacLeod acutely recognizes that Crusoe "is an unreliable speaker" (8). Because of his unreliability, we must scrutinize the validity of the claim of Friday's tonguelessness. As MacLeod articulates, "Crusoe said so [that Friday was tongueless] and Susan believed," (8). It appears that Crusoe has created the myth of Friday's tonguelessness to protect Friday. Interestingly, tonguelessness demonstrates a lack of substance, a sure sign of Friday's oppression. However, because of the uncertainty surrounding Friday's tongue, instead of lacking substance, Friday presents a hidden substance, one that Susan Barton lacks. Susan's fear that Friday may not have a tongue stems directly from Crusoe (whom to her own admission, she finds unreliable) telling her so, for when Crusoe tries to show

her Friday's tonguelessness she admits, "when [Cruso] asked me to look, I would not" (85). Cruso does not play a prominent part in Friday's oppression, but rather as a protector and an ally in his silence. Cruso teaches Friday only the components of language necessary for survival and leaves out those that would provide individuality. On the surface, this tactic seems oppressive, however, a closer observation of Cruso's treatment of Friday shows that he appears more omnipotent than oppressive. Friday's story lacks the danger of being colonized because Cruso does not teach Friday how to relate his own story in the terms of the white man.

After Cruso's death, Friday leaves the island reluctantly with Susan. She must send a party from the rescue ship back on the island to retrieve him, because, "Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not abandon him to a solitude worse than death" (39). Susan assumes that Friday stands a better chance with her in a country he has never stepped foot in rather than resuming his life on the island in solitude and thus, in absolute freedom. Susan presents two important notions with her actions. First, she portrays Friday as an inferior being who cannot care for himself and second, she proclaims it the duty of those in power to care for the lesser peoples in their dominion. While these notions appear contradictory, when viewed in the scope of the political arena of apartheid South Africa, both agendas seem pertinent. Because Susan Barton represents liberal white South Africans, Coetzee demonstrates that the white liberals are the ones being oppressed as they are caught between two warring sides: the blacks

whom they feel sympathy for yet fear, and the conservative ruling whites whom they share the color of their skin but not the color of their beliefs. However, while liberal South African whites want to protect and free blacks from apartheid, the freedom they wish to give the blacks represents a freedom of their own design, not necessarily the type or extent of freedom desired by the blacks.

Susan Barton, like her symbolic equals, sympathizes with and fears the “black native,” represented by Friday. She fears that Friday’s supposed cannibalistic past will return to him and he will consume her. However, she also feels the burden of responsibility when she thwarts a slaver’s attempts to re-enslave Friday. She complains, “I do not love him, but he is mine” a lament that assumes responsibility for Friday’s plight, but also ownership (111). However, nontraditionally, her desire for ownership of Friday lacks the inherent desire to reign over him, but rather focuses on the intent of keeping him with her merely to obtain his story. Hypothetically, by selling Friday into slavery, Susan gains her freedom from him, a freedom she ultimately desires. But because her financial freedom depends on the completion of her story, which lacks substance without Friday’s account, she must keep him with her. So to do liberal white South Africans feel these contradictory burdens of responsibility and fear. On the one hand, they sympathize with the cause of the oppressed blacks, but on the other hand, fear the blacks for the association with the unknown that they possess. Ultimately, liberal whites desire a type of ownership over the blacks themselves. In order to

disassociate themselves from the oppressive ruling minority, these liberal whites must obtain the blacks' "story" to sympathize with, in order to free the liberal whites from association with the horrors of apartheid.

While Susan tries to acquire Friday's story, Foe, the godlike oppressor, tries to capture both Susan's and Friday's stories. Susan and Foe discuss Friday's silence extensively while trying to come up with ways to force him to communicate. In this regard, Susan and Foe have in common the desire to colonize Friday. This symbolizes the ties by skin color the white liberals have with the oppressive whites. However, Foe takes colonization a step further. He says,

We deplore the barbarism of whoever maimed him, yet have we, his later masters, not reason to be secretly grateful? For as long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish. (148)

Foe articulates that a silent Friday best serves his and Susan's purposes. However, ironically, Friday's silence oppresses Susan, and to a lesser degree, Foe. In this quote, Foe acknowledges that he plays god in the stories he creates. Indeed, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel [De]Foe creates Friday as a fairer skinned cannibal whom Robinson Crusoe must "tame" through Christianity (Defoe 202). The Friday that Foe captures appears nothing like the Friday represented in *Foe*. In a sense, a tribute to the success of Friday's rebellious silence because Friday has not allowed Foe to colonize his story,

and has thus oppressed Foe into the act of the arduous labor that writing requires, a task made much easier with the acquisition of Friday's story.

Susan Barton encounters a far more severe oppression. Friday's silence, forcing a prolonged imprisonment of Susan in Foe's chambers in which she and Friday depend on Foe's charity for shelter, food, and money which Foe sends to Susan, also allows Foe the freedom to manipulate Susan's story how he pleases. In discussing Susan's story before the island, Foe says,

Have you considered...that in your own wanderings you may...have left behind some such token for yourself; or, if you choose to believe you are not mistress of your life, that a token has been left behind on your behalf, which is the sign of blindness I have spoken of; and that, for lack of a better plan, your search for a way out of the maze-if you are indeed amazed or be-mazed-might start from that point and return to it as many times as are needed till you discover yourself to be saved? (136)

In this whimsical speech, Foe begins to apply to Susan Barton the chains of colonization. He re-writes her story, presenting events in her own life of his own creation as truth, though Susan questions their validity. Because Friday has rebelled with silence, Foe must turn to Susan Barton to colonize a story, which ultimately leads to her omission in *Robinson Crusoe*. She refuses to supplant Foe with all he desires to hear about her time before the island,

which includes losing her daughter in Bahia—her adamant demand that the story only concern the time she spent on the island leads to her refusal to divulge her past life with Foe, even though he continues to press her.

Susan rebels against pleas to tell more of her time before meeting Crusoe and Friday on the desert island, forcing Foe to create his own account of her story. In sending to her a girl claiming Susan as her mother with the name of “Susan Barton” also, Foe makes Susan skeptical of his intentions. Foe’s rewriting of Susan’s story recalls the image of a colonizer rewriting the history of a colonized people, often excluding, rewriting or omitting historical facts of the time before colonization. Like the plight of the colonized, Susan finds herself omitted from the story that “would give [her] substance” (51) and included in the story she adamantly refused to supply to the author: Daniel Defoe’s *Roxana*.<sup>5</sup> What differentiates Susan Barton’s experience from Friday’s lies in the fact that Susan’s insubordinate silence in regard to the details of her story occurs long after she has divulged parts of it to Foe. Friday, on the other hand, remains a complete and utter mystery save that which Susan has offered in conjunction with her own story. Thus, Susan finds herself caught between the desire to “come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale” and the reality that her story frankly lacks the gusto needed for publication (40).

In Susan’s last defense against her oppression by Foe, she says,

---

<sup>5</sup> See Daniel Defoe’s *Roxana*.



There was a life before the water.... All of which makes up a story I do not choose to tell. I choose not to tell it because to no one, not even to you, do I owe proof that I am a substantial being with a substantial history in the world. (131)

Susan mentions “choice” twice in her defense against telling her story, paralleling her discussion of Friday’s inability to “choose” to tell his story, when in fact she harbors no choice in which portions of her own story get published. Friday’s choice to remain silent enslaved Susan Barton to a representation of her story she did not choose. She feels, “all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me” (133). Friday’s oppression has allowed for Foe to change the course of Susan’s life, corrupting and changing the story how he pleases. Susan feels she does not owe proof to Foe or anyone else of her substance, however, in actuality, she (and all colonized peoples) fail to exist other than in the representations of them developed by their colonizers.

Like Susan, liberal white South Africans had a false sense of choice in determining the political stance they would take. The desire to end apartheid led them to sympathize with blacks, however, in the early years, rather than swaying the opinions of the ruling conservative elite, they did more to harm their own standing in society than to help improve the place of blacks in

society. By electing to help the blacks, they forfeited their choice in political elections, and became prisoners within their own stories.<sup>6</sup>

Focusing on Friday's rebellion without concluding where the book concludes would serve no greater injustice to Coetzee's work:

In the last corner, under the transoms, half buried in sand, his knees drawn up, his hands between his thighs, I come to Friday. I tug his woolly hair, finger the chain about his throat. 'Friday,' I say, I try to say, kneeling over him, sinking hands and knees into the ooze, 'what is this ship?'

But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday.

He turns and turns till he lies at full length, his face to my face. The skin is tight across his bones, his lips are drawn back. I pass a fingernail across his teeth, trying to find a way in.

His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and

---

<sup>6</sup> Historical perspective and commentary of apartheid South Africa comes from Melanie Samson's article, "Rescaling the State, Restructuring Social Relations."

unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face. (157)

In this passage, the novel's last, Coetzee finishes his narrative with Friday's story finally being released in a wordless symphony that passes over everything. Coetzee uses many images that pertain to a shipwreck and also many images revolving around human skin to focus the plight of Friday in a universal scope. His representation of Friday's home as a shipwreck, not a place of words, but of loss and a place for the diffusion of stories, concludes Friday's rebellion of oppressing Susan Barton.

Up to this point in the novel, Susan Barton narrates, evident by Coetzee's use of quotation marks around every paragraph. However, an ambiguous narrator narrates section four, the concluding section of the novel. The quotations cease in this section and we enter a dreamlike abstract world that could be narrated by Susan, Foe, Cruso, Coetzee, or even the reader. Coetzee uses this ambiguity to demonstrate the universality of the novel's message. Susan Barton, Foe, Cruso, or the reader will never capture Friday's story, as it pours "from inside him...without interruption" never to be heard by human ears. In this final passage, Coetzee completes Friday's mission, to oppress the oppressors, by releasing his story in a place that is "not a place of words."

If indeed the reader narrates the last section, Coetzee uses language to imply that we too oppress and share as much of the guilt as Foe, Susan Barton and Cruso. In the lines "I tug his woolly hair, finger the chain about his

throat. 'Friday,' I say, I try to say, kneeling over him, sinking hands and knees into the ooze, 'what is this ship?'" Coetzee uses several images of oppressive behavior on the part of the narrator-reader. Tugging his hair, fingering the chain about his throat, kneeling over him and even addressing him by the name, "Friday," all represent behaviors of the slave-master relationship. Because of the narrator's ambiguity, Coetzee places the blame not only on the oppressors in his novel (*Cruso*, *Susan Barton* & *Foe*) but also on himself, and everyone who reads his work.

To focus on the idea that in "the home of Friday," a sunken slave ship, his people also dwell, Coetzee uses many words that pertain to shipwreck in this passage. Indeed, "buried," "sinking," "ooze," "ship," and "wreck" conjure images of a shipwreck, but also of loss. These images of loss, combined with language that pertains to human flesh and bones, such as "thighs," "throat," "hands," "knees," "bodies," "face to face," "skin," "bones," "body," and "eyelids," produces for the reader the vision that Friday's calamity—and the calamity of his people—resonates universally within the human condition. Presenting Friday's home as a sunken ship does two things. First, it provides the notion that oppressors, represented by the "diffusing" water, have drowned out the stories of all of Friday's people. Secondly, it serves as a notion of hope, that perhaps like Friday, his people have used the rebellion of silence (in this case through death) to oppress the oppressors by not allowing their stories to be told.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Derek Attridge also focuses on this passage, comparing the shipwreck theme to

Taking in consideration David Marshall's argument that "Friday [enters] into a guild of authors," and also that the section directly preceding the book's last concludes with Friday's writing lesson, perhaps Friday narrates the last section of the book (227). All the characters appearing in the last scene dead, the narrator mentions only Friday by name. Friday knows only his own name, evident in his history regarding the use of the English language, the omission of the other characters' names suggests that he narrates the novel's last section. Friday mimics the writing style of the oppressors to conjure up his own form of oppression by not including their names. When Friday's mouth finally opens yielding to the "slow stream" we encounter the completion of Friday's oppression of Susan Barton, Foe, and even us, the reader. In a novel filled with great imagery and intricate word choice, this passage demonstrates the most delicate handling of Friday's silence, the most well written account of his struggle in abstract terms, and the most beautiful language of all the novel's passages. How fitting and quite telling of Coetzee's motives to give Friday, whose silence dominates the entire story, the loudest, most poignant voice.

Coetzee's work in *Foe* demonstrates the mind of an author well attuned to the political strife in South Africa. While his subtlety may have caused some critics to overlook the relevancy of his metaphors, clearly Coetzee made a seething political statement that transcends literary symbolism into real life

---

lines from *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare.

politics. At the time of this book's publication, the apartheid neared its worst stages of violence and oppression of the majority blacks. His work proves the effectiveness of the act of choosing to remain silent. Through *Friday*, the traditional man of color in postcolonial literature, Coetzee successfully inverted the roles of the colonizer and the colonized, giving hope to a very real oppressed people. Through the plight of Susan Barton, he relayed the senses of anger, helplessness and oppression felt by liberal whites.

## TWO

---

### “A Soul Blessedly Untouched By Doctrine”: Silence as Insubordination in and its Spiritual Consequences in J.M. Coetzee’s *Life and Times of Michael K*

---

Unlike *Foe*, Coetzee’s 1983 novel, *Life and Times of Michael K* delves into the politics of South Africa by immersing the reader in the fictionalized events of a very real human tragedy. Coetzee presents the Apartheid through the lens of a man completely uninvolved in the war. However, as the title character’s experience proves, no one escapes Apartheid. As previously mentioned, critics felt Coetzee skirted around the issue by not setting his novels in South Africa, the way famous voices such as Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer did. However, with *K*, Coetzee erases doubt about his firm place as a voice of the Apartheid. As in chapter one, I will once again focus on the inverted oppression of the liberal white South African by the “other” represented through the use of silence as insubordination in Coetzee’s fiction. Michael K, a “colored” man—neither white nor black—whose mouth deformity represents an otherness that further separates him from either race, oppresses a white medical officer by using silence as active resistance. Also in this chapter, I will discuss the shifting identity of Michael K and the spiritual

dimensions of silence represented in the novel which demonstrates Coetzee's place in and stance on the Apartheid.

Silence as a theme dominates *Life and Times of Michael K*. In all, sixty-eight phrases or sentences contain silence as a subject. The mentions of silence, however, do not appear evenly dispersed between each of the novel's three sections. The first section, narrated by an omniscient third person narrator following K, contains thirty-six mentions of silence in one hundred twenty-six pages. Section two, narrated in the first person by a white medical officer who comes into contact with K at the concentration camp where he works, contains twenty-eight references to silence in just thirty-eight pages. The final section, in which the omniscient third person narrator returns and K experiences relative freedom in telling his story, contains just four mentions of silence in seventeen pages. The significance of Coetzee's use of silence-related diction and themes, and the disparity of their instances between sections, lies in the nature of silence in the post-colonial narrative. As described briefly in the introduction to this thesis, post-colonial works present silence as a weapon used by oppressors or as a barrier over which the colonially oppressed must cross to achieve freedom. What makes Coetzee's use of silence unique, writing as a member of the ruling class about the apartheid, is the inversion of the oppression where members of the "other" use silence as means to oppress the imperial power. The fact that the first person-narrated second section contains the most instances of silence-related diction in a sparse amount of pages supports the notion that the white,



imperial representative, the medical officer, becomes obsessed with and oppressed by Michael K's use of silence. But how does Coetzee's politics as a white novelist relate to his depiction of silence as a colonial oppressor, and where does he view himself in this conflict? To begin to answer this complex question, many factors must be considered, beginning with the examination of narratology in his fiction.

With the shifting between first and third person narrators, questions of narrative point of view and importance arise. As in *Foe*, Coetzee's focus in *K* centers around a character whose "story... had never been an interesting one," and also similar to *Foe*, the story told hinges on the work of an outside narrator (67). In both novels, Coetzee's discussion of authorship and story telling argues that the process of narration requires "interesting" stories, without which publication is impossible. But, if Coetzee expects the reader to believe that his main characters have little to offer in the way of a compelling story, why does he dedicate two entire novels to these "uninteresting" stories? As in *Foe*, Coetzee delegates the narration duties to characters who can, and willingly do, communicate in *K*. Since Michael K in the latter and Friday in the former forego their chances at telling their own stories for lack of interest or otherwise, their would-be oppressors serve the role of creating these stories for the reader. Both imperial narrators assume some importance lies in the stories of the "native" characters they encounter. However, both assume that only through them can this importance be known. In the process of trying to acquire these stories, both Susan Barton in *Foe* and the medical officer in *K*

become so dependent on obtaining these accounts for their own personal welfare that the silence they receive instead serves to oppress them.

Both Friday and Michael K have mouth deformities: Friday with his supposed tonguelessness, and K with his harelip. In both instances, their would-be oppressors, Susan and the medical officer, blame this deformity for an inability to communicate effectively and feel repulsed or perplexed by each deformity. In many ways, Friday and Michael K's mouth conditions lead to their silence, which in turn oppresses Susan and the medical officer. An additional correlation between the two novels exists in the means in which both characters are asked to communicate. When Susan first meets Friday, Cruso commands Friday to sing, which appears to Susan to be barbaric, and she refuses to look when Friday's purported tonguelessness is displayed. Likewise, when workers at the concentration camp try to communicate with him, K once again refuses:

“What was it that he was refusing to do?” I asked.

“Sing,” he said.

“Sing? He's not right in the head, man, he can't speak properly—  
how do you expect him to sing” (144-5).

While in their own minds, Susan Barton and the medical officer view their reactions to their captives' communication attempts as humane and even as an offer of defense to them, in reality their assumptions are more demeaning than the acts of communication Friday and K are being asked to perform. Susan and the medical officer both assume inferiorities about the minorities in

their charge. It is never proven in the novel that Friday lacks a tongue, and because of our knowledge of K in the sections narrated by the omniscient third person narrator, we know for a fact that K communicates intelligibly and with little problem. This is opposed to the medical officer's assertion that "he's not right in the head...he can't speak properly." Because of this lack of acknowledgement of the abilities of Friday and Michael K, Susan and the medical officer underestimate the power they potentially can harness, a failure that ultimately results in their oppression by way of the communication abilities of the "other." Because Friday and Michael K possess the ability to effectively communicate, but choose not to share this ability with their captors, they demonstrate an attitude of insubordination through their silence—and an understanding of the repercussions such action entails. Also, each narrator describes the literal silence they encounter in similar terms.

The medical officer describes K's silence in terms that elicit images of suffocation, "a silence so dense that I heard it as a ringing in my ears, a silence of the kind one experiences in mine shafts, cellars, bomb shelters, airless places" (140). The denseness of K's silence conjures images of the "black smoke" of Friday in *Foe*, but here the medical officer uses terms that apply more directly to South Africa and to Apartheid. The mention of "mine shafts" refers to South Africa's rich mining tradition where blacks endured dangerous working conditions, unfair wages, and discrimination to create

wealth for the whites who employed them.<sup>8</sup> Cellars and bomb shelters both describe subterranean refuges or places of safety; however, both terms connote the use for hiding in dangerous situations such as political unrest, war, or Armageddon. The fact that the silence is “ringing” in his ears suggests that an intense, deafening sound *caused* the now dense silence—perhaps a reference to the noise of a falling bomb or the clatter of war, or even the sound of the medical officer’s own self-conscience wrought with a feeling of guilt, as articulated by Glennis Stephenson, in the article, “Escaping the Camps: The Idea of Freedom in J.M. Coetzee’s *Life and Times of Michael K*.” Stephenson notes that the medical “officer slowly comes to believe he is committing a crime against human nature and Michael becomes an albatross around his neck. Unwittingly, Michael becomes the oppressor” implying that the medical officer’s freedom depends on the breaking of K’s silence to rid him of the guilt he feels (79).

To escape the feeling that he is committing a crime against human nature, the medical officer struggles between pleading with Michael K to release his story and the desire to fabricate a story on behalf of K to free him and also to appease the government. He comes to see K as a man outside of the war and the entire world, and feels he is K’s only ally:

You are going to die, and your story is going to die too, forever and ever, unless you come to your senses and listen to me.

---

<sup>8</sup> Information regarding the South African mining enterprise came from Alan H. Jeeves’ book, *Migrant Labour in South Africa’s Mining Economy: The Struggle for the Gold Mines’ Labour Supply 1890-1920*.

Listen to me, Michaels. I am the only one who can save you. I am the only one who sees you for the original soul you are. I am the only one who cares for you. I alone see you neither a soft case for a soft camp nor a hard case for a hard camp but a human soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history, a soul stirring its wings within that stiff sarcophagus, murmuring behind that clownish mask. (151)

First, in this passage the medical officer presumes that only he can save K, a common attitude of imperial-minded whites, indicating that although he may feel the guilt that in a way separates him from the rest of the ruling class in South Africa, he inherently maintains the same prevalent: “saving them from themselves” attitude. The repetition of “I am the only one,” and “I alone” indicates both that the medical officer sees himself as different from his compatriots, but also demonstrates a level of unwanted burden and responsibility, similar to Susan Barton’s lament, “I do not love him, but he is mine” in *Foe*. Second, he proclaims K a “soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, [and] untouched by history,” indicating a spiritual dimension to K’s noninvolvement, an ascension beyond earthly concerns that will be further addressed later in this chapter. Third, the pleading tone of this passage, evidenced by the repetition of “listen to me,” indicates desperation on the part of the medical officer. However, the desperation he presents cannot be attributed to Michael K’s situation as he

wishes it to, but instead to his own circumstances. After all, it would not make sense for Michael K to desire to live, or more specifically, for his story to live if he is already “untouched by history,” and could keep his story that way for eternity. Thus, the pleading by the medical officer for K to release his story exists only as a ploy for personal gain, discussed later in this chapter. Finally, he notes a connection with K, feeling that “I am the only one who cares for you,” and both separates and excludes them from the rest of the world. The misuse of Michael’s name as “Michaels” undercuts this camaraderie, however, demonstrating the hollowness of the medical officer’s understanding. Further, Mark Hawthorne in his essay, “A Story Teller without Words: J.M. Coetzee’s *Life and Times of Michael K*,” explains that the medical officer “refuses to accept that the patient is named ‘Michael,’ not ‘Michaels,’ a form of the name that lets the medical officer speak about K while maintaining distance...still ignoring his actual name,” (123). Not only does the omission of K’s real name suggest the medical officer’s unwillingness to *actually* assist him, instead opting to seek personal refuge, it also demonstrates another key element in the novel’s struggle for a political stance on the Apartheid: the search for Michael K’s identity.

Throughout the novel, those who encounter Michael K morph his identity. They attempt to claim or colonize his story for their own purposes, such as monetary gain; to establish dominance over him, much like an imperial power domineering over a colonized land; or, in the case of the medical officer, as a means to protect his relatively easy life from the

constraints of his job. Over the course of the novel, K takes on many various identities. He is identified as a thief by a soldier on the road, Michael Visagie when he is picked up and put in the camp outside of Prince Albert, Michaels by the medical officer, a guerilla conspirator by the medical officer's superiors, a spiritual leader of revolution—also by the medical officer, Mr. Treefeller by a pimp and his prostitute on the outskirts of Cape Town, and finally, a gardener, the only identity he names for himself. The revelation of Michael K's self-proclaimed identity occurs on the fourth-to-last page of the novel, a resolution to the overriding search for Michael K's identity throughout—a struggle that coincides with, and in many ways is dependent on, the stages of Michael K's silence. With the release of his story, Michael K also enables the truth about his identity, and the truth, I will argue, about the novel's political stance, to be released.

Inherent in the search for K's identity lies the search for a semblance of truth, which like K's identity, becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain in the novel. When approached by a soldier on the road,

K licked his lips. "That's not my money," he said thickly. "That's my mother's money, that she worked for." It was not true: his mother was dead, she had no need of money. Nevertheless. There was a silence. "What do you think the war is for?" K said. "For taking other people's money?" "*What do you think the war is for,*" said the soldier, parodying the movements of K's mouth.

“Thief. Watch it. You could be lying in the bushes with flies all over you. Don’t you tell me about war.” (37)

This passage displays two of the most prevalent themes pertinent to this discussion: both the oral communication fixation and the reassigning of identity. First, K “lick[ing] his lips,” the “silence” and the “parodying the movements of K’s mouth” demonstrates Coetzee’s minute attention to diction, displaying the importance he places on Michael K’s mouth and oral communication ability. While K’s color (he literally is referred to as a member of those South Africans termed “colored” and thus is not white nor black) places him in the middle, and contrapuntally, uninvolved altogether in the conflict, his mouth deformity decisively aligns him with the “other.” This becomes important when considering K’s role in Apartheid, and similarly, Coetzee’s view of his own role in Apartheid, where noninvolvement comes to represent an “otherness” decidedly more potent and convoluted than simple questions of race and affiliation.

Second, throughout the course of this passage, the truth becomes confused. It *is* his mother’s money, and she *did* work for it, however, K’s answer to the soldier comes forth “thickly” as if choking on the words, and the nonverbal gesture of “lick[ing] his lips,” both indicate a lie. The soldier accuses K of being a thief, ironically just before he takes K’s belongings. The soldier “parodying the movements of K’s mouth” assumes his identity and yet mocks his deformity. The mimicry of the movements of K’s mouth by the soldier, in essence the mimicry by the colonial of the other, reverses yet upholds



Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." To Bhabha, "mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal," an explanation which when applied to the above passage suggests that in the soldier's mimicry, Michael K holds some form of power (381). To Bhabha, the colonized people mimicking their colonial oppressors, rather than making them act or appear more like the imperialists, serves as an expression of insubordination and is thus a greater distancing device than a likening of both cultures. As the "other," represented in both his skin color and his mouth deformity, Michael K should be the one mimicking the colonial oppressor, not the other way around. However, in terms of the conflict with the soldier, and most specifically when dealing with the medical officer, Michael K serves the role of colonial, and thus, oppressor. As evidenced in the text, and supported by Bhabha's theory, the inversion of roles in this passage (soldier questions K on thieving while committing thievery himself; K's articulation suggests a lie when what he says undoubtedly is true; the colonial, symbolized by the soldier, mimics the actions of the "other") suggests K holds some sort of advantage. The advantage he holds lies in his insubordination through silence, which effectively holds captive a compatriot of the soldier, the medical officer.

The medical officer finds himself imprisoned by Michael K's silence because without his story the government is poised to take over the camp, ending the life of relative peace and lack of involvement in the war the

medical officer enjoys. Early on in chapter two, the medical officer disbelieves the theory of “Albrechts [a co-worker of the medical officer]” who “sees the case as one of simple insubordination,” (144) instead believing of Michael K that “truly there is no story to be had,” and that he holds no bearing in the war or in the concerns of the medical officer or his camp (141). However, as time goes on, the medical officer realizes Michael K’s unwillingness to cooperate has grave implications on his current way of life and hypothesizes that K is indeed insubordinate. However, unlike Albrechts’ notion that the insubordination is “simple,” the medical officer notes its complexity. Silence is an example of an insubordination of withdrawal, rather than the more standard resistance-based (violence, protests, blatant disobedience) types of insubordination. If K truly desired to simply be insubordinate, he would have actively resisted everything the medical team made him do, but instead, the medical officer confesses, “as time passed...I slowly began to see the originality of the resistance you offered...you did not resist at all” (163). K’s silent insubordination creates the ultimate and unbreakable defense in an ideological war such as the Apartheid. The assertion made by Colonel Noel, the leader of the camp, that “[K] has been telling you stories,” also, in addition to its falsity, demonstrates the type of insubordination Albrechts describes—lying instead of remaining silent (144). The ideological nature of the Apartheid requires a resistance of ideological similitude for those who desire to remain uninvolved with the war—an idea supported here by Coetzee’s fiction.

Attempting one last effort to acquire K's story, the medical officer writes a formal letter to K, which he concludes, "no one is going to remember you but me, unless you yield and at last open your mouth. I appeal to you Michaels: *yield!*" (152). The use of the command, "yield" and the continued use of the name "Michaels," a created identity, instead of "Michael" shows the imperial nature of the medical officer, demonstrates the medical officer's attempt to control K and makes apparent K's insubordination because of the firm, pleading nature of the command evidenced by the italics and the exclamation point. He also tries to persuade K that only he holds the key to K's freedom because "no one is going to remember [K] but [the medical officer]" a point further illustrated here:

"And why are you treating us like this? Don't you see we are trying to help you?...What are you protesting against? Do you want your freedom? If we turned you loose, if we put you out on the street in your condition, you would be dead within twenty-four hours" (145).

In this passage, the medical officer raises two pertinent issues for this thesis. First, he acknowledges Michael K's insubordination, inquiring, "why are you treating us like this," placing K in an active role as the subject in the sentence, "treating" the object, "us." The grammar of the sentence mimics K's relationship to the medical officer in this case; K acts, the "us" (the medical officer and his compatriots) are acted upon and are thus cast into a subservient, oppressed role by K.

Second, he assumes that K protests against something beyond his scope of understanding and also that if left to his own devices, K would surely die without the medical officer's help. This parallels Susan Barton's feeling that Friday could not survive alone on the island, resulting in her decision to capture him to transport him to England with her. In both instances, white colonial characters, though more liberally minded than others of their race and situation, do more harm than good due to their inability to grasp an understanding of the people they wish to help. This is an important issue concerning the politics of this novel and the politics of Coetzee's fiction in general. If in the end, as I am arguing, a desire to assist oppressed peoples results ultimately in the oppression of whites willing to help, Coetzee's fiction suggests remaining obtusely uninvolved—like Michael K—is the best course of action. Remaining silent, encased only in one's own concerns and mysteries, allows Coetzee's characters a sense of freedom. However, the "freedom" achieved by Michael K is one of starvation, lethargy, homelessness, and destitution, resulting in a decision between what is more important: freedom or relative ease in life. Once the medical officer acknowledges K's insubordination, he shifts his focus from trying to learn K's story to trying to join him in his insubordination.

The medical officer comes to view K as something more than just a raggedy man with the looks of "someone out of Dachau" who *disobeys* him through silence, but as a spiritual revolutionary who *leads* men through his silence (146). The medical officer laments, "the night that Michaels made his

break, I should have followed,” indicating K as a man who took initiative, distinguished from the medical officer who remains in the camp. This creates the vision of Michael K as a leader of men, and interestingly promotes various views that conflict with reality: he interprets the simple as grandiose, the follower as a leader, and the beyond uninvolved as involved.

Using language that borders on the religious, he marks K as a leader of men, pontificating, “I have chosen you to show me the way” (163). The medical officer depicts K as Christ-like, stating that K is “chosen” to show the “way.” In fact, the medical officer’s language toward the end of the section when he has a vision of K on the lam from camp suggests signs of religious devotion. First, he repents:

“Michaels, forgive me for the way I treated you, I did not appreciate who you were till the last days. Forgive me too for following you like this. I promise not to be a burden...My need is a very simple one.” (162).

This passage focuses on the medical officer’s feelings of guilt and his need for salvation, a state of which, until this point in the novel, he felt he held the key. Interestingly, this passage parallels a passage from section one of the novel when Michael K encounters a group of guerillas camping on the land he is farming. He expresses his desire to “trot along behind them like a child following a brass band,” and his desire for the men to “give [him] a pack to carry; let [him] chop wood and build fire at the end of the day” enables him to fulfill his very simple need (109). Like the medical officer in the above

passage, Michael K's need is to "have stories to tell long after the war is over, stories for a lifetime, stories for their grandchildren to listen to open-mouthed" (109). Both men wish to follow people who will lead them out of their current situation in hopes of living a life worth telling about, and both men offer their services to "not be a burden" to their idealized leaders. However, as K realizes, "there must be men to stay behind" and he resolves himself to gardening, and—because of his lack of exciting stories—silence, whereas the medical officer's vision of following K is also only a dream and he remains within the camp (109). Through this religious rhetoric, the medical officer interprets Michael K as a leader when textually he is identified as a man with such a lack of initiative that he is less than a follower. The medical officer claims to have not appreciated who K was until recently, indicating that he now understands what K is about. However, in the same sentence he addresses K as "Michaels" once again undercutting his understanding of K's identity.

Continuing with the religious rhetoric he uses when talking to his spiritual vision of K after the escape, the medical officer questions his faith of his vision but then resolves:

if it were a mere craving of meaning that sent me to Michaels and his story, if Michaels himself were no more than what he seems to be (what you seem to be), a skin-and-bones man with a crumpled lip...then I would have every justification for retiring

to the toilets behind the jockeys' changing-rooms and...putting a bullet through my head. (165)

The medical officer clearly indicates his need for the story he has invented, or claimed to "understand" about K to be true, without which his own life becomes inconsequential and without hope, resulting in suicide. Interestingly, for the first time in the novel, the medical officer accurately describes the truth about K: he is "a skin-and-bones man with a crumpled lip," seemingly uninvolved in the world, let alone the bothers of the medical officer or the war at large. In this instance, the medical officer interprets the simple (K's appearance and significance) as grandiose, equating K with something more than what he appears to be, a greater meaning of which the medical officer's life depends. He comes to view K as a revolutionary, whole-heartedly involved in the affairs of Apartheid, and the holder of absolute truth.

As evidenced by the above discussion, Michael K represents a beacon of hope for the medical officer, who depends on his understanding of K's insubordination to keep him going in the camp. At the conclusion of section two, the medical officer's final pleas to K demonstrate his anxiety about perhaps misunderstanding him:

'Am I right?' I would shout. 'Have I understood you? If I am right, hold up your right hand; if I am wrong, hold up your left!' (167)

The question of whether his interpretation of K as a spiritual revolutionary, a leader of men and the key to his own salvation is left unanswered by the text. However, as we, the reader, with our omniscient knowledge of what occurred

before and after the camp can deduce, K is not in any way a spiritual revolutionary or a leader of men. Truthfully, K only desires solitude, remains silent because of his uncomfortable mouth deformity, wishes to stay out of the way, and finally, identifies himself only as a gardener. In many ways, K's desires directly parallel those of the medical officer's, but the medical officer's sense of obligation and responsibility (he holds a post in the war), prevent him from being uninvolved like K, returning to basic survival, and embracing silence.

Silence ultimately allows K to be a free man because he withstands the assaults against his story from the camps and medical officers and is granted legal freedom when the medical officer invents a death notice story about him. When K finally does reveal his story in section three and the omniscient third person narrator again resumes, its sparseness bores those around him, allowing K's story and his freedom (even though he is no longer silent) to remain intact. Officially, K's "real" story—the one written by the medical officer—is that of a man who dies in camp, rather than the story of a simple man with a harelip who "was a gardener once, for the Council...then had to leave and take [his] mother into the country for her health" and who "didn't always get enough to eat," K's own account of his simple journey as told in section three (176). However, even in the act of releasing the much sought after true story of his life, K comes to feel that the telling of his story has become something of a farce, an act put on to appease others:



They want me to open my heart and tell them the story of a life lived in cages. They want to hear about all the cages I have lived in, as if I were a budgie or a white mouse or a monkey...if they had me practise the story of my life every day, standing over me with a cane till I could perform without stumbling, I might have known how to please them. I would have told the story of a life passed in prisons where I stood day after day, year after year with my forehead pressed to the wire, gazing into the distance, dreaming of experiences I would never have, and where the guards called me names and kicked my backside and sent me off to scrub the floor. When my story was finished, people would have shaken their heads and been sorry and angry and plied me with food and drink; women would have taken me into their beds and mothered me in the dark. Whereas the truth is that I have been a gardener, first for the Council, later for myself, and gardeners spend their time with their noses to the ground...It excited him, he found, to say, recklessly, *the truth, the truth about me. 'I am a gardener.'* (181 italics original)

In this potent speech, Michael K illuminates numerous points. He demonstrates his intelligence and understanding of the politics of oppressor/oppressed relationships, the falsity of sympathy, and the pride in self-proclaimed identity.

Michael K compares the act of telling his story to the humiliation of being a caged circus animal, “practis[ing] the story” of his life to meet the satisfactions of his masters and those onlookers who would give him false sympathy. In this comparison, K parallels the oppressor/oppressed relationship he encountered in his real life. The fact that he uses caged animals—pets—in a unique way demonstrates the view of the oppressors, that K and others in his situation are less than human. His comparison of a life in cages to the life of a “budgie” evokes images of a man in captivity who only can mimic what others have told him similar to this parrot-like bird, and suggests that the story of his life, caged in camp after camp, is not his own because it is the story of a life lived against his will. The second animal mentioned in K’s metaphor, a white mouse, is quiet, unassuming and easily dominated, a version of the species often domesticated and dependent on the humans who care for it. This comparison demonstrates the oppressors’ wish for cooperative captives who come to depend on their captors to survive. The final animal mentioned, a monkey, conjures particularly racist images of minorities commonly represented in this manner by oppressing propagandists. The monkey, human’s closest relative, represents a nearing to humanism in the captive, but not quite acquiring the qualities to be deemed human, reminiscent of Bhaba’s “almost, but not quite white” discussion of colonial mimicry alluded to earlier. All of these comparisons to animals in cages demonstrates a man capable of an intelligence and understanding far beyond the scope which the medical officer viewed Michael K. It also

discloses Michael K's view of those who provide sympathy and the hollowness of their outrage and attempts to comfort the captive.

K's description of people shaking their heads, feeding and bedding him out of sympathy shows the selfishness of those sympathy providers whose outward demonstration of compassion serves as a way to make themselves feel better about and distanced from the truth of Michael K's existence. He views his role in this ruse as that of an entertainer who must practice his story to get it right, in order to "please them," those who offer sympathy. Michael K disdains the sympathy heaped on him because he understands the falsity of the entire act: he is forced to tell a story about his "life" that he does not feel truly represents his experience to people who do not care about his personal tragedy, but rather about appearing compassionate and thus not affiliated with the oppressors. At this point, Coetzee makes a strong statement about his stance on the politics of the Apartheid: sometimes it is better to be uninvolved entirely (Michael K) than being disingenuous about your stance in aiding victims only because it makes you feel better about yourself (the medical officer). The message here is clear: take care of yourself and yourself alone.

K truly desires to live his life treated like any other man, with no less and no more respect. He wishes to maintain his anonymity and self-reliance, a destiny he can achieve through the discovery of his identity as gardener. The only instances of emotion and pride for K occur when he enjoys the fruits of his labor (113), when he considers feeding the guerillas on his land (109) and when he declares "recklessly...I am a gardener" (181). This

demonstrates the importance of the profession to K and also illustrates the importance he places on being self-identified. Throughout the novel, K's identity is named for him, none of which represents the truth. His gardening, the tilling and working of land—in K's case specifically, the *white man's land*—allows him to rebel in a most profound way: by surviving and using the oppressor's land, education (he was brought up in a government-run boarding school where he learned about gardening) and war—the confusion of which allows him to occupy deserted land—against them. His self-proclaimed identity of a gardener is unique because he earns it, and it represents the clearest truth in the novel.

Coetzee's political scope in the novel offers two confounding and disturbing choices for reacting to the Apartheid. Either remain completely uninvolved with the result of living in starvation, lethargy, homelessness, and destitution; or, become involved in the war and risk your own freedom. Needless to say, neither option looks particularly appetizing, but that's the point. Coetzee understands the sickening truth of the Apartheid: no one can escape it and its effects are devastating. As evidenced in this novel, while potentially more difficult and harmful during the journey, silent resistance allows the achievement of the ideological freedom so sorely sought after by liberal whites instead of failing in attempts to grasp an empathetic understanding of victims of the Apartheid.

---

## CONCLUSION

---

In the last two decades, the committee of the Nobel Prize in Literature has awarded the prize to voices of oppression numerous times. More, now than ever, academic thought on the criteria for important literature has swayed towards writers who write about or within oppression situations. Coetzee is not the first South African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for work concerning the Apartheid. However, like Nadine Gordimer's but more explicitly, Coetzee's fiction addresses both black oppression and white guilt as its own form of oppression. Both *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K* make use of silence as both a tool of oppression and a weapon against it. The idea that whites in the Apartheid cannot fathom the levels of suffering endured by blacks comes forth in Coetzee's characters' attempts to acquire these stories to help alleviate their own psychological imprisonment. Coetzee presents the silences they are met with as smothering, strangulating, and dense.

The idea of using silence as a weapon to combat one's own oppression and to cause the oppression of another is revolutionary and almost wholly neglected by critics of Coetzee. Most focus on the oppressions of Friday and Michael K in their close readings of the text; however, Coetzee's minute attention to diction allows for different interpretations. I believe the importance Coetzee places on silence and the results of this action on characters (particularly white characters) to be too great to ignore. The importance lies in

literature's way of spreading ideas, emotions and stories across continents, persons and dispositions. The Apartheid was one of the greatest human tragedies in history; however, outside of the region the oppression existed as back-page news. To me, Coetzee's fiction enlightens the western world to the horrors of Apartheid and the idea that the conflict was not so simple as merely black versus white. It also allows for personal reflection and consideration on history's most heinous oppressions. Through Coetzee's fiction, I see parallels to the Holocaust (Michael K is presented as a type of musselman, similar to the Holocaust) and personally to the oppression of peoples in my own country and region.

I began this thesis by introducing the claims of scholars that Coetzee's fiction lacks some humanistic substance to join the canon. Admittedly, many of these criticisms of Coetzee come from the 1980s and early 90s, and, as evidenced by his Nobel Prize, it seems that critics have accepted him into the canon. Through my research and study of Coetzee's fiction over the past few years, I have grown to further appreciate his work at every re-reading. My main goal in presenting this thesis is to firmly demonstrate Coetzee's fiction indeed possesses the substantive qualities necessary to be considered one of the greats, explicate some of Coetzee's own ambiguous views on the Apartheid through his fiction, and demonstrate a revolutionary idea on silence and its uses in oppression literature.

## Bibliography

- Attridge, Derek. "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon." Ed. Karen R. Lawrence. *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons*. Urbana, IL: UP of Illinois, (1992): 212-238.
- Begam, Richard. "Silence and Mut(e)ilation: White Writing in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." South Atlantic Quarterly 93.1 (1994): 111-30.
- Beressem, Hanjo. "*Foe*: The Corruption of Words." Journal for African Culture and Society 2.3-4 (1988): 222-35.
- Bishop, Scott G. "J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*: A Culmination and a Solution to a Problem of White Identity." World Literature Today 64.1 (1990): 54-57.
- Bongie, Chris. "'Lost in the Maze of Doubting': J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of (Un)likeness." Modern Fiction Studies 39.2 (1993): 261-82.
- Bonnici, Thomas. "Problematizing Speech in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986)." Acta Scientiarum 21 Mar. 1999: 1-8.
- Coetzee, J.M. *Foe (a novel)*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
- . *Life and Times of Michael K*. New York: Penguin, 1983.
- Dragunoiu, Dana. "Existential Doubt and Political Responsibility in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Critique 42.3 (2001): 309-37.
- . "J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and the Thin Theory of the Good." Journal of Commonwealth Literature 41.1 (2006): 69-92.
- Franssen, Paul. "Fleeing From the Burning City: *Michael K*, Vagrancy, and Empire." English Studies 84.5 (2003): 453-63.

- Gauthier, Marni. "The Intersection of the Postmodern and the Postcolonial in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." English Language Notes 34.4 (1997): 52-72.
- Hall, Barbara. "The Mutilated Tongue: Symbols of Communication in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Unisa English Studies: Journal of the Department of English. 31.1 (1993): 16-22.
- Hardin, Michael. "Colonizing the Characters of Daniel Defoe: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Notes on Contemporary Literature 31.5 (2001): 9-10.
- Horrell, Georgie. "Post-Apartheid Disgrace: Guilty Masculinities in White South African Writing." Literature Compass 2.1: 1-11.
- Macaskill, Brian, and Jeanne Colleran. "Reading History, Writing Heresy: The Resistance of Representation and the Representation of Resistance in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Contemporary Literature 33.3 (1992): 432-58.
- MacLeod, Lewis. "'Do We of Necessity Become Puppets in a Story?' or Narrating the World: On Speech, Silence, and Discourse in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Modern Fiction Studies 52.1 (2006): 1-18.
- Marais, Mike. "Disarming Silence: Ethical Resistance in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." *Apartheid Narratives*. Ed. Nahem Yhousaf. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001.
- . "Literature and the Labour of Negation: J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*." Journal of Commonwealth Literature 36.1 (2001): 107-26.
- Marshall, David. "Friday's Writing Lesson: Reading *Foe*." *Historical Boundaries, Narrative Forms: Essays on British Literature in the Long Eighteenth Century in Honor of Everett Zimmerman*. Eds. Nora Clymer and Robert Mayer. Newark, DE: UP of Delaware, 2007.



- Monson, Tamlyn. "An Infinite Question: The Paradox of Representation in *Life & Times of Michael K.*" Journal of Commonwealth Literature 38.3 (2003): 87-106.
- Murray, Sally-Ann. "The Idea of Gardening: Plants, Bewilderment, and Indigenour Identity in South Africa." English in Africa 33.2 (2006): 45-65.
- Omond, Roger. The Apartheid Handbook: A Guide to South Africa's Everyday Racial Policies. 2nd ed. New York: Penguin, 1988.
- Park, Inchan. "The Other and Silence: A Postcolonial Approach to Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Studies in Modern Fiction 9.1 (2002): 149-72.
- Post, Robert M. "The Noise of Freedom: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Critique 30.3 (1989): 143-55.
- Quayson, Ato. "J.M. Coetzee: Speech, Silence, Autism and Dialogism." *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. New York: Columbia UP, (2007): 147-73.
- Reagan, Timothy G. "The Politics of Linguistic Apartheid: Language Policies in Black Education in South Africa." The Journal of Negro Education 56.3 (1996): 47-67.
- Roberts, Sheila. "Post-Colonialism: Or, 'The House of Friday'-J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." World Literature Written in English 31.1 (1991): 87-92.
- Samolsky, Russell. "Writing Violence: Bodies and Signs in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*." Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies 1.1 (1993): 6-13.

Willimas, Paul. "Foe: The Story of Silence." English Studies in Africa: A Journal of the Humanities 31.1 (1988): 33-39.

Wood, Phillip R. "Aporias of the Postcolonial Subject: Correspondence with J.M. Coetzee." South Atlantic Quarterly 93.1 (1994): 181-96.

Wright, Derek. "Black Earth, White Myth: Coetzee's *Michael K*." Modern Fiction Studies 38.2 (1992): 435-45.