

POWER DYNAMICS AND REPRESENTATION IN COETZEE'S *WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS* AND *FOE*: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

*This paper deals with a comparative reading of J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Foe* (1986) in terms of power and representation. This research exposes through representations, how the two novels are informed by and undermine the ways in which dominant spaces assert and maintain power. At the heart of the discussion lies Coetzee's critique of colonial authority and its narrative control mechanisms. The unnamed Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* struggles to reconcile his complicity in an oppressive colonial order with the moral imperative to resist it by exposing how the 'barbarian' is rendered sub-human and the kind of violence that is implicated in imperial projections of power. While *Foe* questions the silencing of subaltern voices, particularly through Friday, whose muteness embodies the erasure of subaltern points of view in canonical literature. It also touches on the interstitiality of language and silence in Coetzee's writing, showing how Coetzee subverts conventional narratives to resolve ethical dilemmas about voice and agency. If *Waiting for the Barbarians* punches on the spectacle of imperial violence then *Foe* tracks the less overt, more insidious power of authorship and narrative manipulation. Collectively, these novels shed light on Coetzee's larger preoccupations with justice, ethical engagement and the politics of narrative. Through this comparative framework, the analysis sheds light on how Coetzee's oeuvre interrogates the limits and potential of representation and illuminates the ways in which literature can challenge and disrupt systems of power.*

Keywords: Power, Foe, Barbarians, Representation, Subaltern, Colonialism, Coetzee, Spivak

Introduction

The research has a specific focus on power dynamics, representation, and subaltern perspectives within the selected novels, prioritizing these themes over a broader exploration of unrelated topics. The historical analysis is limited to the portrayal of historical elements within the novels themselves, rather than conducting an exhaustive examination of external historical events or contexts. The research concentrates on the contribution of the selected novels to postcolonial discourse, avoiding an extensive review of the entire postcolonial literary canon or unrelated postcolonial works. The research deals with the analysis of narrative representation, psychological conflicts and moral dilemmas of specific characters, such as the Magistrate and Friday, within the selected novels, without extending the focus to characters from other literary works. These delimitations help maintain a focused and manageable scope for the research, allowing for a thorough investigation of key themes within the selected novels without becoming overly broad or unfocused.

The significance of researching J.M. Coetzee's works, specifically *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, lies in their exploration of complex themes such as power dynamics, representation, and the impact of historical events like colonialism. Understanding these works provides valuable insights into broader sociopolitical issues and literary analysis. By applying a subaltern lens to these novels, this research contributes to the ongoing critique of colonial narratives and exposes the mechanisms used to marginalize and silence colonized peoples. This has crucial implications for understanding history, recognizing power imbalances, and promoting social justice. This work amplifies the voices and experiences of subaltern characters like the

barbarians in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Susannah in *Foe*. This is essential for recognizing their agency, challenging dominant narratives, and giving them a rightful place in historical and literary discourse.

In the past, a major portion of the planet was ruled by the European nations. The brutality and barbarism that accompanied the taking of land from people with different complexions and flatter noses have been euphemistically referred to as colonialism because of this subjection and the exploitation that followed. It is so magnificently traced by Edward Said (1979) in his books *Imperialism* (1993) and *Orientalism and Culture* (1993). Given the common interpretation of the prefix “post” in Postcolonialism, Postcolonialism is considered to refer to a structural change made in the post-colonial former colonies. The West was driven to seize the “foreign” territory and relocate its people there to protect natural resources, establish a market for Western goods, and make the most use of labor from other countries. By economically using the resources of different countries, colonialism was a hugely successful enterprise that provided money and riches of all kinds to Western nations. Therefore, it may be concluded that “colonialism” and “capitalism” have a relationship based on their mutual support. Naturally, land is the primary object of imperialism; but, questions of land ownership, rights to settle and labor on it, maintenance of the land, regaining it, and future planning of the land were discussed, debated, and for a while resolved through narrative.

Postcolonialism, according to McLeod (2000), includes ‘writing back’ against colonial methods of knowing and challenging them. The fall of the Empire did not mean the end of colonial methods of knowing and thinking. Their agency is still evident in many circumstances. Even if decolonization resulted in a political shift in the world’s map, physical realities and colonialism-related modes of representation can still be found today. Adding to McLeod’s (2000) definition, the phrase “Postcolonialism” does not mean “colonialism after,” as if colonial values are no longer relevant. It does not usher in a brave new world free from the scars of colonialism or designate a fundamentally new historical era. Rather, ‘Postcolonialism’ acknowledges historical charge as well as continuity (p.33). The history that was stolen from these authors was what these authors initially set out to bring back. Thus, they participated in the power issue/dialectic and protested the colonists’ settlement. Works of “white” and “black” writers all discussed the theme of apartheid opposition. Politics and social issues that affected African society were often topics of debate by these authors. The racial crimes perpetrated on the local people by the White race during the apartheid government was documented by other authors including; Wole Soyinka, Peter Abrahams, Ngugi WA Thiongo and Chinua Achebe. These authors described conflict of White and Black people, which in result in banning of their books. Some of these authors were expelled, imprisoned or forbidden.

Literature Review

The literature review for this research provides an in-depth exploration of key themes within J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, cantering on postcolonial literature, power dynamics, representation, and narrative theory. Scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have significantly contributed to postcolonial literary theory. Their seminal works lay the theoretical foundation for understanding the profound impact of colonialism on literature, setting the stage for the analytical lens applied to Coetzee’s novels. Power Dynamics has been part of literature since ages especially in pre and postcolonial. Michel Foucault’s theories on power, particularly his examination of disciplinary power, offer a relevant framework for

understanding how power operates in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Additionally, the psychological effects of colonialism and resistance against oppressive systems, as explored by Frantz Fanon, contribute valuable insights.

Khan et al. (2021) analyse the nature and role of colonial discourse in J. M. Coetzee's fiction have been appearing regularly since the mid-1990s; the present project, intends to address this problem as well. This paper reads back the concept divergently through two novels of J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (1986) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), to form a contrapuntal negotiation with empire. In summary, the African variants of dystopia are encapsulated in three iconic literary works corresponding with different stages of colonialism: It is thereby subdivided by early stage, developmental and terminal phase respectively. This is how the story goes, there are three ways Coetzee sees apartheid; *Foe* called to uncovering its roots in identity politics (racial or cultural); *Waiting for the Barbarians* that another side of apartheid as a practice and Age of Iron where it intervened at historic political conventions as Africa takes on the new face behind democracy over stood under Mandela. Intra-fracture reading: the contrapuntal reading such as one explored and developed by Palestinian literary critic Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* can be considered a very good technical tool for deciphering mostly, what may seem or remain concealed colonialist master plots within colonial discourses. The native black African has always been depicted in colonial literature as being aggressive, a human eating monster, and bellicose tribes which had to bear the so called 'White Man's Burden' as taken by Rudyard Kipling (1899). Interpreting the Caucasian individuals as the bringers of civilization to the savages, the settlers come into the region only to steal their land and other resources on which they then engorge themselves and exhaust all exploitable resources (Henceforth, p. 11).

Karmim (2022) provides a deep insight into the characters. This article gives a textual analysis of J. M. Coetzee's novel *Foe*, focusing on the theme of truth and its connection to Postcolonialism and postmodernism. The study deconstructs and discusses the notions of nationality, empire, freedom, and happiness, as well as their impact on the protagonist, Susan, and her small entourage. The paper attests to the crucial influence of truth on the characters, how it changes representations and realities, and how it allows readers to manufacture their own interpretations as the novel unfolds.

In Coetzee's novel *Foe*, John Rees Moore examines the strategies of the resistances of Susan Barton and Friday where fighting back of the wretched victim, in the despotic society, struggling to stay alive; more importantly struggling to validate the radical transformations against the significance of social, race, and gender norms. Through the Barton character Beerkenbach amuses the principles of authority established for centuries, castrates Defoe's literary patriarch and testifies that Barton is the natural father of her progeny.

Eventually, one can understand that *Foe* is a novel which cannot be considered fully in one study or one article since this literary work contains many features and aspects in which it is necessary to see and analyse the postmodern and postcolonial elements of the writing manner. The analytic of the truth as well as the way it is embodied in the main characters, especially when seen through the eyes of Susan Barton, entail the image of postcolonial and postmodern truth.

Khan et al. (2021) critically analyse the horribly ugly aspect of the empire in their paper. The colonial strategies which the colonizers employed with an aim of dominating their colonies are revealed in the research. Thus, postcolonial literature stands as a counter-discourse that goes deeper than post-colonial discourse to reveal such subtexts. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Said recommends a certain way of reading that he defines 'contrapuntal reading', to search out the

colonial strategies of the Empire and how the forces rationalized their violence in the name of civilization.

Dibavar et al. (2022) explore the canonicity of *Foe* and *Robinson Crusoe*, using cognitive poetics to analyse Susan Barton's narrative, which assimilates the colonizer's narrative into a dialogic, multivocal exchange in the postcolonial world.

In his work, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (2009), Dominic Head highlights the significant impact of Coetzee's ethnicity on his literary identity in South Africa. Coetzee's reliance on English language placed him in an ambivalent or transitional position between white and black South Africans, with criticism for not addressing their desired contexts or historicizing them. However, Coetzee was aware of his ambivalent or marginal position, as his background distanced him from English and Afrikaner affiliations. Thus this literature review proves that there are no researches available in context of comparative studies of both these novels in the light of subaltern studies. This paper fills the current research gap.

Materials and Methods

This comparative analysis of power dynamics and representation in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe* follows an inductive and theoretical approach. The study uses aspects of postcolonial, feminist, and narrative theories to analyze the thematic and formal ideas embedded in both novels, especially its critiques of colonial power, ethics of storytelling, and the muted voices of those traveling under the radar of imperialism. The main method is close reading, focusing on language, structure, and symbolism. Key passages from the two novels are examined, seeking to open them up to reveal ways in which Coetzee melds a critique of control of narrative power and colonial power. For instance, the Magistrate's meditations in *Waiting for the Barbarians* are speculations on the psycho-moral implications of complicity, "I wanted still to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even on its lost subjects" (Coetzee, p. 78).

The critique of colonialism in both novels is based on the foundation of postcolonial theory. Based on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), this study deals with how *Waiting for the Barbarians* portrays the "barbarians" as benefaction of imperial imagination, which justifies domination in the light of fear about the "barbarians." Said's claim that the Orient is a "silent Other" constructed through Western discourse (Said, p.21) tangentially relates to Friday's representation in *Foe*, where his muteness encapsulates colonial erasure.

Gayatri Spivak's idea of the subaltern's voicelessness (Spivak, p. 28) is also central to the analysis. *Foe*'s silence on Friday, and the mute "barbarians" in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, are both stand-ins for underrepresented groups at the margins of dominant narratives. Through its juxtaposition of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*, the study notes thematic and formal similarities that are illuminating to Coetzee's shifting critique of power and representation. For instance, the Magistrate's acknowledgment of his own complicity in empire mirrors Susan Barton's disconcerting conscious realization of her contribution toward silencing Friday. This comparative framework highlights Coetzee's preoccupation with the ethics of storytelling in diverse historical and cultural circumstances.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's landmark essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) elucidates the marginalization of specific groups that colonial and patriarchal systems perpetrate by narrowing their voices within dominant discourses. The subaltern in Spivak's terms are those that are left out of systems of hegemonic power—those whose voices go unheard; those who exist outside of representative systems, those who are systematically denied agency. Spivak's framework critiques colonial power as well as Western intellectual traditions as severely lacking in representing the subaltern. According to Spivak the subaltern is a person who cannot speak, not

in a literal sense, but in the sense that they cannot communicate in the dominant systems that exist because the dominant system will always exclude from representation or reflexivity the subaltern. She argues: “The subaltern cannot speak... representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she should not disown in a flourish” (Spivak, p. 308). Colonial power produces the subaltern in discourse as a silent, passive ‘other,’ and provides no agency for it, instead subsuming its will to its systems of control and representation. Using “subaltern,” in part borrowed from the writer Antonio Gramsci by the way of Marxist theory to describe the crushed and contemptible classes, Spivak reminds us that colonialism not only exploits but also silences the colonized. She writes: “The subaltern is erased because the Western subject of knowledge constitutes itself through defining its others as non-subjects” (Spivak, p. 271). Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* makes this process of erasure clear, as the imperial regime constructs the so-called “barbarians” as a voiceless threat with imperial fear and propaganda as their only currency. She also discusses the interplay of colonialism and patriarchy, accentuating the idea that subaltern women undergo a dual erasure. Her analysis of the sati (the Hindu custom of widow immolation) shows how women are silenced by competing colonial and indigenous patriarchies. She writes: “White men rescue brown women from brown men” (Spivak, p. 297).

Spivak’s work also queers the idea of resistance. She shows how subaltern resistance is often misunderstood or overlooked in the frameworks of power. The subaltern may be denied a voice, not only because their speech is misinterpreted or ignored, but because they speak in ways that are not interpreted as speech—a form of feigned or blacked out speech. She contends: “Silence itself can serve as a form of resistance, but a resistance that is not co-optable into dominant discourses” (Spivak, p. 289). This insight is key to understanding Friday’s silence in *Foe*. The fact that he refuses or is unable to speak is more than a disempowerment — it’s an interference in the colonial narrative that wishes to co-opt his story. The ending of *Foe*, in which Friday’s silence is made the center of attention, dramatizes both the limits of language and the ethical quandaries that surround the representation of the subaltern.

Textual Analysis

This section of the study investigates Coetzee’s novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe* explores the static power structures and showcases their fluidity and vulnerability by employing Gayatri Spivak’s subaltern lens to scrutinize the marginalized perspectives. In the realm of literature, however, Postcolonialism, deconstruction, and subaltern study are not thought to have reached their full potential. It is grounded in a philosophical perspective and outlook. Following the development of structuralism in the year 1960, a new school of thought known as deconstruction emerged. The purpose of the theory is to show the hidden meaning of the text that is absent in the text. As deconstruction increases, some terms are used in practice: self and identity, logocentrism, phono-centrism, binary opposition, difference, trace, and arche writing. Similarly, Spivak in her groundbreaking work *Can the Subaltern Speak* talks about the oppressed and marginalized colonized. The analysis focuses on deconstruction, subaltern lens, and post-colonial perspective present in the novel. The answer to the research questions remains the major focus of the analysis.

In the novels *Waiting for Barbarians* and *Foe* by Coetzee, there are opportunities to reflect on these interpretations of power relationally between those with potential agency/power against others in clear subjects without it or who may be able to resist further oppression within colonial contexts. This examination uses close textual analysis with citations from these novels to show

how Coetzee uses them both as criticism of the power and colonial structures while emphasizing voices marginalized.

In *Foe*, Coetzee retells the story of Robinson Crusoe in terms of a repressed character named Susan Barton, and an extra figure called Friday who is enslaved. Grounded in the struggle for voice and agency within colonial contexts, this retelling subverts conventional narratives. The mediated necessity of Susan Barton to articulate her tale similarly captures the political issues at stake over-representation, who gets to write or speak. As she contends to find *Foe* wherever he dictates history, it telegraphs the greater struggle for dominion over historical narrative: But this is not Susan Barton's story. It likewise belongs to the story of a woman beached in an alien land, (Coetzee, p.123). It encapsulates the divide between personal agency and colonial narrative.

In this way, the silence of Friday speaks with conviction to the silence colonized peoples have been put through. 'Friday has no command of words and therefore no defense against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others.' (Coetzee, p.154) This is an example of how power structure works in a narrative controlled by colonizers. The story Susan Barton attempts to tell shows us how complicated relationships between representation and power can be. Susan Barton tries to get *Foe* to write her version of the story but cannot control it: But this is not the story of Susan Barton. It is the story of a woman cast on an island in which she finds herself unknown country (Coetzee, p.60). Her struggle epitomizes the larger colonial history's fight for narrative jurisdiction. In *Foe*, Friday embodies the colonized peoples who have been muzzled. His silence embodies the silencing of Indigenous voices and histories, as *Foe* suggests when he observes that "Friday has no words at his disposal, so is helpless: can offer no resistance to whatever view dispenses with words on a scale large enough" (Coetzee, p.35). The void in the voice that would exist shows an example of power structures of its roots with colonizers getting to say so and needing nothing added.

Further, looming over the island is an invading neighboring empire, one by a certain Crusoe - yes styled as Emperor of this domain where already once Africans lived. In this form of settlement, he does not remain battered over occupying Africa and its inhabitants. He spews lies to hide his ulterior motives behind the guise of land rights. He lies more than once to Susan Barton (the book's narrator) and tells her whatever he believes she either wants or needs to hear in order for him not simply go free but also, beneath his actions — killing or otherwise eliminating anyone who comes too close either human or imitable animal. Like that quote: "the stories he told me were so numerous, and so divergent from one another, that I could only decide further weakness of mind on his part had erased the distinction between fact and fiction in him. And so, at one time he would claim to be the son of a millionaire, who had left his office when just fifteen years old for unknown reasons....and at others that they hadn't seen another soul since their shipwrecked and been alone on this island with Friday, who likewise was never better explained as after around flourish (Coetzee, 1986, pp. 11-12).

In this passage, readers notice some very glaring contradictions in Crusoe's words, and how he modifies his statements on himself and Friday). Here Coetzee convinces that Empire is all a liar that makes different stories with time for its benefits. For him, it had long ago lost its moral or ethical standing, but here is the Empire still spinning lies about itself and the land they usurped. The natives are written about as cannibals in many colonial texts like the Africans depicted by Joseph Conrad also known through his famous novel *Heart of Darkness* who eat rotting flesh that stinks, a proposed sign of irrationality and madness. Similarly, in *Foe*, Coetzee exhibits how the Empire (Crusoe claims that he has saved Friday from cannibals) made itself intrinsically necessary.

Colonialism through Writings

Writing is impeccable in itself and just to include their preferred consecrated words colonial writers scammed entire lies of the colonies. As Francis Bacon in his essay *Of Truth* says that a mixture of lies adds pleasure to truth, they believe in the Machiavellian philosophy and hence lie. When Susan Barton says, “I will have no lies told,” and a captain smiled then said, ‘There I cannot be answerable of them,’ but continued on to say that ‘their commerce is not truth’’, (Coetzee 40). This quote from the text refers to how colonizers have then lied about it — as when Daniel Defoe imagines an alternative reality not-over-there, false-exotic image for a story of their African island in *Robinson Crusoe* which has its very own Friday and also that Africans eat flesh like cannibals. This is a fact that he mimics by imitating Friday while on civilization camp with Crusoe.

Through adept means, Coetzee in *Foe* places the story of Denial Defoe on shaky ground. The cannibals of Africa are often seen through the eyes of colonial writers, along with some wild animals. So much so, the colonizers work hard to enforce them on their land and through them but still they cannot override reality. Ultimately the reality has to come out as the empires will no longer be able to suppress it for a long time. While she is living there, Susan Barton asks Crusoe if it is really true that on an island like this, where no danger occurs, how will they answer questions from people in England who believe in the existence of Cannibals, and where everyone knows, Cannibals are everywhere in all lands beyond; (p. 187). Susan interrogates Mr. Crusoe What sort of island is it where not a single danger appeared during the time she was there; she might well ask about snakes and lions. “Whence came such strange fruits, serpents, lions. How come the cannibals never showed? Regularly folk in England are asking to come over so they can be moved. How will we look a neighbor in the eye when they ask this again? (p. 43). Generating a hypothetical scenario in her letter to Mr. Foe, for example Susan Barton writes: ‘You asked how it was that Crusoe did not save a single musket from the wreck; why a man so fearful of cannibals should have neglected himself’ (Coetzee, 1986, p-49).

To accept that they might lie there uninvited even at night with the dark everywhere and sour smelliness, writes again whereof she speaks she tells Mr. Foe, ‘What I saw, I wrote. ` I saw no cannibals and if they came after dark and disappeared before dawn, then it was with such stealth that the process of arriving or departing had not left so much as a footprint upon the floor’ (Coetzee, 1986, p-54). Nevertheless, whereas right keepers remained at times to overcome using their clear rebuff with the colonizers which this lady won’t quite possibly acknowledge any presence of cannibals over the area and she produces, “As intended for cannibals I have always been certainly not influenced, irrespective Crusoe’s uncertainties could very well be solely aren’t whatever man-eaters inside Algona: (Coetzee t 54). While Coetzee subtly deals with the colonial narrative by making up an English woman in Susan Barton who is not the one. Throughout the novel, she resists colonialisms rather than becoming a legacy of colonizers.

The way the jungle Empire silences natives’ tongue, so does Crusoe who chopped off Friday’s tongue to mold him a speechless as he could not speak their history - no records and storyteller- what Spivak names it ‘Epistemic Violence’.

Comparative Analysis of the Dynamics in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*

Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) and *Foe* (1986) offer complex critiques of colonial authority and the politics of narration. These novels interrogate how power functions through overt mechanisms of oppression as well as more subtle modes of erasure in narrative via thematic concerns and through their forms. Such a reading circumscribes the extent to which Coetzee interrogates systems of domination and presents his reader with the challenge of coming to terms with her or his own role in the erasure of silenced voices. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, he makes the complicity of imperial power vivid through the dynamics of the Magistrate and the ‘barbarians.’

The Empire controls by dehumanization of the barbarians and as looming existential threats. As the Magistrate reflects: “We have no indication that they are planning against us. But as a rule of imperial strategy never to be taken on faith” (p. 56). This excerpt was a reminder of the paranoia that are impossible to avoid with colonial systems, on the other hand fear of the other was used to justify violence and domination. What Tomkins describes as the Magistrate’s increased consciousness of his complicity with these systems mirrors Coetzee’s larger critique of empire: “The crime that is latent in us we must do unto ourselves or to others” (p. 87).

In *Foe*, the embodiment of colonial power comes through both muscular domination and the manipulation of narratives. Friday, as a subaltern figure, is silenced, mouth less, by the colonial violence that has amputated his tongue, an act of literal and symbolic erasure: “His speech is closed to me: his mouth opens and I hear nothing” (Coetzee, 1986, p.122). The silence of Friday reinforces the colonial impulse to silence the subaltern, to deny to her the space to tell her own story. Both novels wrestle with the ethical questions of representation, with the underlying question of who has the right to speak on behalf of the marginalized. The Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* somewhat resembles the gentleman who wants to “humanize” the barbarian girl — when in fact, his behavior becomes paternalistic. His thoughts on her silence reveal his failure to understand her point of view at all: “I was never sure what she thought of me. Was I her enemy? Her savior? Her jailer?” (p. 103). Likewise, *Foe*’s Susan Barton struggles with the challenge of telling Friday’s story without imposing her own readings on it. Her frustration indicates the impossibility of recovering or capturing the experience of the subaltern: “Friday possesses not words and has consequently no defense against being re-cast on a day-by-day basis in submission to the will of others” (p. 150). Both texts, then, expose the shortcomings of narrative as a method for conveying the voices of the oppressed. Coetzee’s fragmented storytelling mirrors this ethical impasse, taking us out of the realm of closure and inviting readers to brazenly confront the complexities of representation. Spivak’s claim that “the subaltern cannot speak” (p. 308) echoes ...’ resonates profoundly with what Coetzee does with Friday and the barbarians. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Empire’s language fashions the barbarians as menacing while their voices are actively erased from the story. This silencing is reflected by the Magistrate’s failed attempts to communicate with the barbarian girl: “I was no more than a child trying to decode a message written in a foreign script by running my pencil across the letters” (p. 108). In *Foe*, Friday’s muteness is at once a mark of his subjugation and a kind of resistance. Susan overlays his silence with a rejection of colonial and patriarchal systems of representation: “His silence is a denial of complicity in the story that is not his” (p. 157).

By leaving Friday’s story untold, Coetzee refuses the neat resolution of his silence in Western frameworks, compelling readers to face the opacity of the subaltern experience that remains hidden. If *Waiting for the Barbarians* is concerned with the visible violence of colonialism, then *Foe* unearths the quieter violence of narrative erasure. The Magistrate’s uncomfortable self-awareness of his complicity mirrors the struggle of Susan Barton, as narrator, to reconcile her own narrative voice with her desire to empower Friday. This is not the only way in which both the main characters perform the ethical pitfalls of engaging with the subaltern, and how, through well-meaning acts, power imbalance is so inherently tied to the engagement of the entitled. And the novels’ endings, in particular, reflect Coetzee’s critique of closure in storytelling. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the fate of the barbarians is unclear, warring empires poorly written, so the book says, but what is left behind horror that mimicked and mirrored the darkness and unoriginality: “The frontier has come to signify a place of ambiguity, not of control” (p. 158).

In *Foe*, the splintered story reaches its climax in Friday's ghostly wordlessness, leaving us with questions instead of answers: "He opens his mouth. A trickle escapes inside, faux breath, faux pause. It is as if he's [quoting Octavia Butler] the mouth through which a voice from somewhere else speaks" (p. 157).

Eventually, Subaltern Studies has offered a nuanced analysis of power relations and the issues surrounding representation, set against historical backgrounds in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe*. Through an examination of the victimized voices, this study demonstrated Coetzee's conscious efforts to grapple with the violence inherent to marginalizing others as it banishes their voices into silence and validates their autonomy. Both books show power structures as fluid, and precarious - not monolithic. As Susannah struggles to reclaim her fragmented memories in *Foe*, the novel upsets Crusoe's seemingly authoritative narrative with numerous indigenous perspectives that complicate questions of history and identity.

Conclusion

J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe* offer profound critiques of the discursive intersections between power and representation. They provide powerful tools that shed light on the ways colonial and patriarchal systems discredit the voices of others. The novels examine imperial authority and narrative control, as well as the ethics of storytelling and traditional systems of power. *Waiting for the Barbarians* examines the discourse of colonial power and the way in which the Empire creates the appearance of the "barbarians" to continue instigating fear and justifying cohesion. The novel is unresolved, however, with the novel's various injustices it compares Magistrate's indecent triumph with the real justice. *Foe* presents what might be called the more subtle effects of violence of narrative erasure. It allows the readers to understand feminist concerns about the challenges of representing Friday's story while keeping his own problems in perspective. Friday's permanent silence symbolizes subaltern resistance and the inability of Western masters to imagine his life. Coetzee's *Foe* leaves Friday's voice unheard to confront them with the decision to draw meaning from the meaninglessness from his conditions. Researcher assert that this silence serves as a warning about the limitations of writing and the real limits of authorship. In conclusion, these two novels demonstrate Coetzee's willingness to forge more democratic and self-aware ways to engage with and represent people. Through refusal to make sure that all our questions will answered and the prominence of silence, Coetzee defies the reader to feel the power of language and ethically control their narratives and linguistics. The refrained use of his comparison writer confirms Coetzee's interest in rewriting new ways of representation that challenge and empower the one who writes and the one who read. By abstracting from their own demography, the novels reveal the ethical limits of narrative authority via their representations of muter figures like the barbarians and Friday. In doing so, Coetzee contests his readers on the politics of voice, agency, and representation by resisting closure and privileging fragmentation so that these works will come to be read as contributions to the field of postcolonial literature.

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