

The Power of Non-Verbal Communication in J. M. Coetzee's Foe

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Abstract

J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) has been heralded as a record of the trajectory of the English novel and as a postcolonial retelling of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). It is also a testament both to the power and, ironically, to the latent limitations of *language* - language as an expression of truth and as the antithesis of silence. With the sleight-of-hand of a magician, the wordsmith is seen as being divinely inspired. *Logocentrism* is considered as a challenge to *phonocentrism*.

However, Friday's *truth* is witnessed through *non-verbal* communication via the medium of the performing arts, in its variety of forms. In ascertaining his true identity, the reader is taken on a journey through the pain of the *untold* history of slavery and subjugation in the hope of reaching a post-colonial utopia. The divine dimensions associated with Friday - ensnared in a mesh of words - are revealed in the magic of his respectful, Sangha-, or Buddhist-like rituals. Acting as a subaltern, he resorts to mimicry to express defiance of the Other as a muted form of protest. Highly receptive to the dynamic, liberating influence of music and dance, Friday spins - in his dervish-like way - *not* a tale, but an *unnamed jig* akin to the sixteenth-century, African Capoeira; to the *cathartic*, Trinidadian Calypso; and to the venerating, Buddhist Circumbulation.

Indeed, it is Friday's *non-verbal* communicative abilities which empower him to *speak* his mind - *not through words*, but through "the slow stream" of his uninterrupted, syllabic, aquatic messages.

J. M. Coetzee's highly poetic novel, *Foe* (1986) is a testament both to the potency and limitations of language as an expression of truth and as the antithesis of silence. The story behind it is derived not only from what is *not* uttered through the medium of language, but what is conveyed through *non-verbal* communication – through Susan Barton's storytelling leverage and through Friday's dancing and music-making.

In her pursuit of the riddles of the island, it is the heroine, Susan Barton - a phantom from Daniel Defoe's novel, *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) – who, preoccupied with the relationship between fiction and real life, weaves a linguistic web, insisting upon the truthfulness of the story as an art form. However, “the presumed authority of the writer is one that Coetzee plays into, but also challenges [...]” (Clarkson, 2009: 36) Determining language's limits, Susan disputes the emphasis placed by Foe - a professional writer whose surname is Defoe's at birth - on the product and on the consumerization of profit-orientated fiction. In her letters she asserts the importance of integrity for a work of art, undermining her patron by asking: “If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it?” (Coetzee, 1987: 40) Accusing her adversary of lying, she admonishes him by imploring, “Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty. For though my story gives the truth, it does not give the substance of the truth.” (Coetzee, 1987: 50 and 51. See Gallagher, 1991: 171)

Attempting to resist his influence, Susan fortifies her linguistic struggle against Foe's manipulation of fiction's veracity by proclaiming: “I thought... you had no regard for the truth. I forgot you are a writer... It is all a matter of words and the number of words, is it not?” (Coetzee, 1987: 94) This raises the question of a writer's responsibility to convey the truth and the dangers of controlling language in portraying “history”, which “must not only tell the truth about us but please its readers too.” (Coetzee, 1987: 63) In her scepticism, Susan queries: “How long before I am driven to invent new and stranger circumstances?” (Coetzee, 1987: 67) In her role-reversal with Foe, she emphasizes the debasement of literature through the manipulation of verbal communication:

‘It is not whoring to entertain other people's stories and return them to the world better dressed. If there were not authors to perform such an office, the world would be all the poorer. Am I to damn you as a whore for welcoming me and embracing me and receiving my story? You gave me a home when I had none. I think of you as a mistress, or even, if I dare speak the word, as a wife’ (Coetzee, 1987: 151-52).

Nevertheless, in order to be a successful writer, Susan eventually realizes story-making's pragmatism as a means of both verbal and non-verbal communication. The exotic paraphernalia of the eighteenth-century travel narrative is conjured up in her realization that “her story is determined not by herself but by the culture within which she seeks an identity.” (Attridge, 1996: 177. See Jolly, 1996: 5-6) She ultimately recognizes that the writer must have a magician's sleight-of-hand. The creation of visual images is akin to sorcery. She maintains: “Mr Foe, I do not have the skill of bringing our parables one after another like roses from a conjurer's sleeve.” (Coetzee, 1987: 125) Furthermore, she identifies a divine inspiration in the power of communication by conjecturing that “we have all of us been called into the world

from a different order... by a conjurer unknown to us... How rambling an occupation writing is; and conjuring is surely much the same.” (Coetzee, 1987: 135)

Visualizing the Word as non-verbal communication, or language without speech, it is Foe who “reinforces the concepts of Author as God the Father, as full Presence, and thus as the purveyor of ultimate Truth, the Word, the Law.” (Marshall, 1992: 60) In his challenge to the authority of verbal communication, he provides us with a *logocentrism* confronting the perceived predominance of *phonocentrism* (see Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 300-31). He disputes the supremacy of the spoken tongue over writing:

‘Writing is not doomed to be the shadow of speech. [...] We are accustomed to believe that our world was created by God speaking the Word; but I ask, may it not rather be that he wrote it, wrote a Word so long we have yet to come to the end of it? May it not be that God continually writes the world, the world and all that is in it?’[...] ‘God’s writing stands as an instance of a writing without speech. Speech is but a means through which the word may be uttered, it is not the word itself. Friday has no speech, but he has fingers’ (Coetzee, 1987: 142-43).

In so doing, he indicates that writing is not “a fallen manifestation of speech”, but, indeed, precedes it (Marshall, 1992: 65 and 70-71).

Acting as a ‘spy’ for this “‘very secret man, a clergyman of sorts’”, Susan defines the narrator’s role as that of a keeper, or guardian of enigmas (Coetzee, 1987: 120 and 150). She emphasizes that a discerning storyteller “must divine which episodes of his history hold promise of fullness, and tease from them their hidden meanings.” (Coetzee, 1987: 88-89) Hence, the concealed, non-verbal messages must be deciphered in her desire for “meaningfulness” and “closure” in her search for “rational governance” (Hayes, 2010: 126, Marais, 2009: 78, and Hayes, 2010: 120). In “her ultimate allegiance [...] to the strangeness of the island”, she identifies five “touches of mystery” (Marais, 2009: 81 and 79) in this “resistant text” (Macaskill and Colleran, 1992: 436) as:

1. Cruso’s barren terraces.
2. The psychological trauma of Friday’s silent tonguelessness.
3. The mystery shrouding Friday’s submission to slavery.
4. Friday’s and Cruso’s lack of desire for Susan (in a post-Garden-of-Eden world after the ‘Fall’). However, inconsistent and unreliable as she is apropos Cruso, Susan earlier “resisted no more but let him do as he wished”.
5. Friday’s ritualistic scattering of petals.
(Coetzee, 1987: 30, 83-87, 141, and 155-56)

However, most of these riddles are associated with Friday who reveals his spiritual dimensions *not* through verbal communication, but through respect for the sangha’s Buddhist rituals which Susan acknowledges by observing: “This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul – call it what you will - stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior.” (Coetzee, 1987: 32)

It is Susan who insists that the barren terraces, the first mystery of the island, must be decoded. Modelled on Timothy Cruso, a dissenting minister, Coetzee's namesake lacks the Puritan principles of his predecessor, Robinson Crusoe, who regarded "his survival as a result of both Providence and his own endeavour" (Penner, 1989: 114. Consider Attwell, 1993: 107). On the one hand, Daniel Defoe's adventurer "sees in his circumstance a divine purpose: to subdue the savages and civilize the island" (Penner, 1989: 114). He is both energetic and resourceful in his efforts to till the soil, build a fortress, make tools, and teach a parrot to speak. However, on the other hand, Coetzee's 'hero' is minimalistic in his efforts, as his sepulchral, stone terraces remain infertile (see Marais, 2009: 73). He keeps no journal – which, even if he did, would have been unreliable – and does not nurture Friday's non-verbal, communicative skills.

In endeavouring to unlock the past to predict the future, Susan is empowered to reach out to the inaccessibly silent and seemingly tongueless Friday. By constructing a four-dimensional arch, she aims "to build a bridge of words over which [...] he may cross to the time before Cruso, the time before he lost his tongue." (Coetzee, 1987: 60) By recognizing "the secret meaning of the word story" as "a storing-place of memories?", she ingeniously uses pictograms to connect to the homepage of Friday, who mysteriously appears to be intent on withstanding detection (Coetzee, 1987: 59). Rather than being restrained to playing the role of a presence or absence, "Friday is [...] the condition of possibility for the stories that Barton tries to tell." (Marshall, 1992: 76) Hence, he must be her conversant at all costs, if only a mutually intelligible wavelength can be located.

However, in her unsuccessful attempts at unravelling the truth behind Friday's apparent intransigence, Susan reveals more about her own scars and phantoms, her own narrow-minded, "pre-existing conceptual framework." (Marais, 2009: 66) A spider entangled in Foe's web, she admits: "Sometimes I believe it is I who have become a slave." (Coetzee, 1987: 87) Haunted by visions of the daughter whom she has lost in the former Portuguese colony of Bahia (now Salvador in Brazil), she communicates with her apparition. However, it is a confession riddled with Beckettian self-doubt, as she divulges when she declares:

"But now all my life grows to be story and there is nothing of my own left to me. I thought I was myself and this girl a creature from another order speaking words you made up for her. But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you?" (Coetzee, 1987: 133. See Penner, 1989: 113; and Macaskill and Colleran, 1992: 442).

Thus, her dialectic with Foe leads her to reject her *Roxanaesque* daughter-double as an imposter - a fictitious fabrication, or figment of her imagination (see Marais, 2009: 79).

Yet, Susan's ventriloquism is *not* restricted to endless conversation with her Bahian daughter, for she subjects Friday, her canine "shadow", to her volition, assuming the role of colonizer (Coetzee, 1987: 115. See Penner, 1989: 128). Thus, she ensnares her 'slave' – who is "more a symbol than a character" – in a mesh of language "to control

him by gaining access to him through communication on her terms” (Coetzee, 1987: 115 and Jolly, 1996: 11). Indeed, she discloses to Foe her calculative, though unsuccessful use of language as follows:

‘I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will. At such times I understand why Crusoe preferred not to disturb his muteness. I understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner’ (Coetzee, 1987: 60-61).

In his 2003 Nobel lecture, *He And His Man*, Coetzee refers to Defoe’s prequel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), alluding to the dangers of malicious gossip which he condemns as a reprehensible and untruthful mode of verbal communication:

There was too much speech in the world. [...] Plagiarists and imitators descended upon his island history and foisted on the public their own feigned stories of the castaway life, they seemed to him no more or less than a horde of cannibals falling upon his own flesh, that is to say, his life. [...] These cannibals [...] would gnaw at the very substance of truth. (See ‘Man of few words at the podium’. pdf):
[<http://www.smartcape.org.za/articles/index.php?=2&dir=Literature/J.M.%20Coetzee%20\(2\)>](http://www.smartcape.org.za/articles/index.php?=2&dir=Literature/J.M.%20Coetzee%20(2))
 [accessed 4 November 2011].

Hence, it is ironic that, in challenging the belief that “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”, Susan resorts to the medium of speech - rather than writing - to exert authority over her prey (I Corinthians, 4.20, quoted in Smart, 1995: 37). Her justification for manipulatively using the *spoken* tongue as a weapon of “projective intentionality” (Marais, 2009: 76) against Friday is that:

Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal; [...] You will respond: he is neither cannibal nor laundryman, these are mere names, they do not touch his essence, he is a substantial body, he is himself, Friday is Friday. But that is not so. No matter what he is to himself (is he anything to himself? – how can he tell us?), what he is to the world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is the child of his silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born (Coetzee, 1987: 121-22).

It is in her dominion over Friday that Susan, the female conquistador, enslaves him, for “authority is invested in the one who speaks, who takes up the position of ‘I’.” (Clarkson, 2009: 36) This assumption is corroborated by Foe who accuses her of overbearing her subject by professing: “‘Though you say you are the ass and Friday the rider, you may be sure that if Friday had his tongue back he would claim the contrary.’” (Coetzee, 1987: 148) Indeed, in contrast to the sanctuary provided by

Friday's recourse to music and dancing as a means of speech, she emphasizes the potentially deceptive nature of verbal communication:

“The tongue belongs to the world of play, whereas the heart belongs to the world of earnest.

“Yet it is not the heart but the members of play that elevate us above the beasts: the fingers with which we touch the clavichord or the flute, the tongue with which we jest and lie and seduce” (Coetzee, 1987: 85).

Although Foe suggests that Susan make optimal use of her senses to ascertain Friday's true nature, she resorts to compelling her captive to define himself. Taking his mutilation “to be a fact”, she is complicit in insisting that Friday's speechlessness must be broken (MacLeod, 2006: 8). He must speak the unspoken: the truth of his silence must be prized from him by coercion:

‘In every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken, I believe. Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story. [...] I said the heart of the story,’ resumed Foe, ‘but I should have said the eye, the eye of the story. [...]’ ‘Or like a mouth,’ said I, ‘[...] It is for us to descend into the mouth (since we speak in figures). It is for us to open Friday's mouth and hear what it holds: silence, perhaps, or a roar, like the roar of a seashell held to the ear.’

‘That too,’ said Foe. ‘I intended something else, but that too. We must make Friday's silence speak, as well as the silence surrounding Friday’ (Coetzee, 1987: 141-42).

Recognizing how verbal communication can entrap its captives, Foe concedes: “‘As it was a slaver's stratagem to rob Friday of his tongue, may it not be a slaver's stratagem to hold him in subjection while we cavil over words in a dispute we know to be endless?’” (Coetzee, 1987: 150)

Words bind Susan to Foe, the author of her tale, in another way too: language, as *written* communication, is portrayed as lovemaking. Crossing the threshold, Susan assumes the function of procreator, aided and abetted by her male accomplice:

‘Do you know the story of the Muse, Mr Foe? The Muse is a woman, a goddess, who visits poets in the night and begets stories upon them. [...] When I wrote my memoir of you [...] I wished that there were such a being as a man-Muse, a youthful god who visited authoresses in the night and made their pens flow. But now I know better. The Muse is both goddess and begetter. I was intended not to be the mother of my story, but to beget it. It is not I who am the intended, but you’ (Coetzee, 1987: 126).

Yet, this is an already used ploy, for Foe is not the only subject of her advances, as is evident from earlier indications of her attraction to Friday when she declares: “‘The desire for answering speech is like the desire for the embrace of, the embrace by, another being.’” (Coetzee, 1987: 80) Thus, unable to elicit a sexual reaction from Friday, she sees no alternative but to turn to Foe for gratification of her desires. By comparing love-making to creative inspiration, she reveals an unbridled determination

to secure Foe's favours by declaring: "It is always a hard ride when the Muse pays her visits," I replied – 'She must do whatever lies in her power to father her offspring.'" (Coetzee, 1987: 140)

However, Susan does preserve a degree of independence in her literary liaisons with Foe, for she recognizes the need to withstand his attempts to circumscribe her authorial liberty in this work which "both resists *and* exacts interpretation" (Marais, 2009: 86). Mirroring, even parodying, Friday, she defies Foe's insistence on censoring her writing. Aiming for narrative jurisdiction over Chapter III, she ironically declares independence - a liberty which she would have denied Friday - by proclaiming: "I am not a story, Mr Foe. [...] I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire." (Coetzee, 1987: 131) Moreover, she assumes authorial rights over her version of the truth by contending: "The story I desire to be known by is the story of the island. You call it an episode, but I call it a story in its own right." (Coetzee, 1987: 121) Yet, her compositional proficiency only partially meets the criteria set by Susan Gallagher who deems that "the value of a story", or Coetzee's "storing-place of memories", "lies in its truth, its ability to record reality, but also its ability to reveal meaning." (Gallagher, 1991: 175. See Coetzee, 1987: 59) Hence, influenced by Foe's 'value-added' considerations, Susan Barton is unable to resolve the five, sphinx-like mysteries of the island and, equally important, what they are trying to communicate non-verbally.

Unequipped to relate the wider, colonial context of Friday's enigmatic life-history, Susan is oblivious to the reality of his silence, his acquired mother tongue. Paradoxically, the "magic of words" has led to failure of the spoken language in his case. Susan's written correspondence with Foe discerns: "He has lost his tongue, there is no language in which he can speak, not even his own." (Coetzee, 1987: 58 and 108) Eventually she realizes that another means of representation must be sought to decipher Friday, articulating:

'The story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me. That is to say, many stories can be told of Friday's tongue, but the true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday' (Coetzee, 1987: 118).

If we apply Nicholas Royle's linguistic observations to Coetzee's novel, it becomes clear that *Foe's* potency, as a text for deconstruction, lies in its author's questioning "the ability of language to represent reality adequately" (Royle, 2000: 1). Hence, in his untranslatability, Friday may be envisaged as a subaltern, mutedly defying the Other (see Royle, 2000: 1). Indeed, many critics interpret him as an *African* Other, performing "a voluntary act" as a form of protest (Macleod, 2006: 7). Some contend that his silence is "neither a sign of submission nor merely a strategy of passive resistance, but a counter-strategy through which the other preserves, even asserts, its alterior status and in so doing interrogates the fixity of dominant power structures and positions." (Marais, 1996: 74-75. See Clarkson, 2009: 37). It is conceivable that he *intentionally* evades Susan's censorship by drawing his colonizer as "row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes" (Coetzee, 1987: 147). By employing "this technique of internal mirroring", he assumes authorship over *his* story (Marais, 1996: 72).

Observing that he has transformed into a scribe to mimic Foe, Susan declares, “the man seated at the table was not Foe. It was Friday, with Foe’s robes on his back and Foe’s wig.” (Coetzee, 1987: 151) Hence, Friday can find a method of communicating “in his own idiosyncratic terms” (MacLeod, 2006: 12).

Written dissemination is adopted by Friday to express himself. Towards the end of the novel, we glimpse him “writing the letter *o*” (mirroring the initial letter of the word *omega*). It is accepted by Foe as a new “beginning”, if we “resist the urge for closure.” (Coetzee, 1987: 152 and MacLeod, 2006: 13) It provides an alternative to the letter “*a*” (for the “alpha” which commences Coetzee’s novel), suggesting that he has a *written* means of communication to match Susan’s. It is in desperation that she substitutes words for the babble of his sounds: incoherent to her, she ascribes meaning to them: “He does not understand that I am leading him to freedom. He does not know what freedom is. Freedom is a word, less than a word, a noise, one of the multitude of noises I make when I open my mouth.” (Coetzee, 1987: 100-01)

Unlike Susan, Friday is highly receptive of the dynamically liberating influence of music-making and dancing. Witnessing the power of non-verbal communication, she realises that “Friday did not understand the words. [...] Friday understood tones.” (Coetzee, 1987: 41) Hence, the key to decoding his identity is hidden in the gestures and movements which depict the story of his suffering: “He utters himself only in music and dancing, which are to speech as cries and shouts are to words’. [...] ‘How can he write if he cannot speak? Letters are the mirror of words’. [...] ‘Nevertheless, Friday has fingers. If he has fingers he can form letters.’” (Coetzee, 1987: 142) We visualize him spinning *not* a tale, but an unnamed jig, reminiscent of the Capoeira, a sixteenth-century, African slave-dance and now a Brazilian martial art. It is not surprising that this sight unsettles Susan who admits: “I shiver as I watch Friday dancing in the kitchen, with his robes whirling about him and the wig flapping on his head.” (Coetzee, 1987: 94)

It is Friday’s cadences which shamanically enable him to travel to another world, defying Susan’s sway, as she realizes when she remarks: “I understood why Friday had danced all day in your house: it was to remove himself, or his spirit, from Newington and England, from me too. [...] We dance and spin and transport ourselves.” (Coetzee, 1987: 104) Indeed, he emancipates himself by parading like a Trinidadian Calypsonian. Bringing to our attention Friday’s mastery of music and dance, Coetzee conjures up a “multiplicity of cross-cultural influences” (Cowley, 1996: 232), akin to the Calypso’s coupling of West Indian songs to African rhythms. Although now associated with carnival, this masquerade-festival is rooted in slave culture. With elements of male sexual exhibitionism in the Calinda and of magical possession in Bel Air, it provides Friday with a cathartic escape from a repressed existence, facilitating spiritual self-transcendence and socio-political criticism (See Rohlehr, 1990: 1-2 and Warner, 1982: 3 and 59-61). With its sacred, oral (i.e. non-scribal) folk-tradition and its popular blend of song and story, it bestows “a voice and a platform” – precisely those attributes which he lacks (Warner, 1982: 87).

A major facet of Friday’s dancing is his apparent attempt to communicate to us something enigmatic. Susan suspects that there is an ulterior motive in his spinning and humming, for, to her mind, these actions unveil unbelievable scars, revealing the

traumatic, “atrocious mutilation” of a “slave unmanned” (Coetzee, 1987: 119). His dark secret is interpreted by her in a sexualized manner:

‘He would spend entire days spinning and dancing and singing, after his fashion. What I did not tell you was that for his dancing he would wear nothing but the robes and wig. [...] The purpose of his dancing was to show forth the nakedness underneath. [...] Friday was the dark pillar at its centre. What had been hidden from me was revealed’ (Coetzee, 1987: 118-19).

Notably, Friday’s performance of dervish-like whirling – akin to the venerating, Buddhist dance of the Circumbulation – is matched by musical accompaniment. We learn from Susan that he plays a “tune of six notes” on a soprano recorder, or flute which she “will forever associate with the island and Cruso’s first sickness.” (Coetzee, 1987: 95) Performing alongside him, she claims that their instruments accompany one another, assuming that “if there were any language accessible to Friday it would be the language of music.” (Coetzee, 1987: 96) At another level, she compares their musical twosome with spoken dialogue and love-making. Contending that they “make an irregular couple”, she conceives their connections as complementary (Coetzee, 1987: 107):

‘I found him spinning slowly around with the flute to his lips and his eyes shut; he paid no heed to me, perhaps not even hearing my words. [...] The music we made was not pleasing: there was a subtle discord all the time, though we seemed to be playing the same notes. Yet our instruments were made to play together, else why were they in the same case? [...] Is conversation not simply a species of music in which first the one takes up the refrain and then the other? [...] Are not both music and conversation like love?’ (Coetzee, 1987: 95-97).

It should not be overlooked that certain strains in Friday’s hexatonic music are remarkably Chekhovian in the sense of foreboding imparted. Focus on the image of a violin-string - with its analogy to *The Cherry Orchard* (1903-04) - is an ominous sign. It suggests a past catastrophe, or else an impending period of revolutionary change, as is evident from the narrator’s distraught perceptions in Chapter IV of *Foe*: “I begin to hear the faintest faraway roar: as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell; and over that, as if once or twice a violin-string were touched, the whine of the wind and the cry of a bird.” (Coetzee, 1987: 154) Yet, it is only Friday, as sole survivor, who can unlock this enigma. In the final, cinematic, flash-back and flash-forward sequences, we move from Foe’s “house of sleepers, [...] a site of unconditional hospitality” and “a timeless stasis” to glimpse the true “home of Friday” through the eyes of a new, but nameless narrator (Marais, 2009: 84, Hayes, 2010: 108, and Coetzee, 1987: 157). Slipping overboard, diving into the wreck, and “descending into that eye” (Coetzee, 1987: 141) to restart the narrative, our storyteller effectively turns a range of possible endings into alternative beginnings (see Marais, 2009: 89 and Hayes, 2010: 108).

In conclusion, in Coetzee’s *tour de force*, “impregnated with the novel’s otherness”, we attest to the potency of non-verbal communication in a world “governed by other

rules”, bringing to mind Adrienne Rich’s “Diving into the Wreck” (1973) (Marais, 2009: 90 and Gallagher, 1991: 190). Throughout *Foe*, Friday destabilizes the dominion of language - as an “expression of reason” – “over other forms of consciousness”, proclaiming his truth via the media of music, dance, and writing (Clarkson, 2009: 37). In the coda of Chapter IV we hear the eternal “sounds of the island” (Coetzee, 1987: 154) and dive into Friday’s subconscious mind to confront “the otherness of the other”, “the child that cannot be born” (Marais, 2009: 84 and 92). We discern his mysterious wisdom when his mouth opens (firstly, by force, then, in the second version of the story, of its own accord). Surrounded by “the petals cast by Friday” – a reminder that we are in “not a place of words” – we are prompted by magical, non-verbal symbols beckoning us to locate his wavelength by using “a special type of perception that lies beyond this sphere” (Coetzee, 1987: 155 and 157; and Hayes, 2010: 113). With this Dostoyevskian “wisdom tale” ending, the legacy of his past is diffused by water “in a place where ‘time itself seemed to have stopped’” (Hayes, 2010: 112. See Holquist, 1977: 628). In “the home of Friday” we are in “a place where bodies are their own signs” (Coetzee, 1987: 157). We seek refuge in “a passive waiting without expectation”, where different rules apply (Marais, 2009: 90. See Hayes, 2010: 109). It is those non-verbal, unspoken marks of Friday’s uncontrollable identity which take us on a journey through his life-experiences, encountering “the hermetic difference of the other” (Hayes, 2010: 115. See Coetzee, 1992: 248 and Head, 1997: 125-26). Although it has been contended that his “silence is finally impenetrable” (MacLeod, 2006: 6), we do bear witness to the legacy of Friday, for he does speak to us at long last – *not* through a cacophony of words, but through the melody of *sounds*. Syllables “filled with water and diffused”, they form “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 [...]” (Coetzee, 1987: 157). Friday’s voice is truly intense, ubiquitous, and relentless, revealing sheer magic in the coding of its aquatic, onion-like messages....

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