



## A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE*, CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE*, J.M. COETZEE'S *FOE*, AND JEAN RHY'S *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

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### Abstract

*Postcolonial literature and criticism challenge the cultural, political, and ideological structures of colonialism, offering new interpretations of canonical texts while amplifying marginalized voices. Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847) are pivotal works in the Western literary canon, celebrated for their narrative innovation and psychological depth. This article examines the postcolonial interpretation of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, J.M. Coetzee's Foe, and Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, focusing on themes of colonialism, identity, and resistance. It analyses how these texts construct and interrogate the dynamics of empire, race, and cultural identity in literature, revealing the ideological underpinnings of imperialism and their subversion in contemporary retellings.*

*Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is analyzed as a foundational text of colonial discourse, portraying the colonizer's dominance over the "other." In contrast, Coetzee's Foe reimagines this narrative from marginalized perspectives, interrogating the silences and erasures inherent in colonial histories. Similarly, Brontë's Jane Eyre is critiqued for its imperialist subtext, particularly in the depiction of Bertha Mason, a figure emblematic of racial and cultural othering. Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea offers a counter-narrative, giving voice to Bertha (Antoinette), and exposing the intersections of race, gender, and colonial oppression. The study draws on postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha to analyze how texts construct and deconstruct colonial ideologies. It highlights the importance of colonial histories in understanding global inequities and the transformative power of literature in reclaiming suppressed voices.*

**Keywords:** Colonial discourse, counter-narratives, cultural identity, hegemony and resistance, postcolonial theory.

### 1. Introduction

Postcolonial theory interrogates the cultural, political, and social structures established by colonialism, focusing on how imperialist ideologies shape identities and narratives. Canonical texts like Robinson Crusoe and Jane Eyre have long been critiqued



for their implicit reinforcement of colonial domination and Eurocentric superiority. However, reinterpretations such as *Foe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* disrupt these narratives, offering counter-discourses that reveal the perspectives of the colonized and the marginalized.

Postcolonial literary criticism explores the cultural, political, and social impacts of colonialism in literature, highlighting how colonial ideologies shape narratives and marginalize certain voices. Canonical texts like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Jane Eyre* reflect imperialist thought, embodying the European project of conquest, civilization, and racial hierarchy. However, these texts also expose tensions and contradictions inherent in colonialism, particularly through their treatment of the colonized "Other." Later works like J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* challenge these narratives, providing alternative perspectives that reclaim silenced voices and critique colonialist paradigms.

*Robinson Crusoe* celebrates European dominance through his mastery of the island and his paternalistic relationship with Friday, while *Jane Eyre* perpetuates colonial hierarchies through the depiction of Bertha Mason, the Creole "madwoman." Coetzee's *Foe* reimagines *Robinson Crusoe*'s narrative, emphasizing the voicelessness of Friday and questioning the reliability of the colonizer's account. Rhys's prequel to *Jane Eyre* humanizes Bertha, revealing the devastating impact of colonialism and patriarchy on her life.

This article examines the transformation of secondary characters in classical British literature into main characters in postcolonial rewritings, using Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, compared to J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. It explores these intertextual relationships through a postcolonial lens, drawing on the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. By examining the intersections of race, gender, and colonialism, this research underscores the enduring relevance of these texts and the necessity of revisiting canonical literature to address historical injustices and reimagine cultural identities.

The significance of this comparative inquiry lies not merely in literary criticism but in the broader cultural and political stakes of representation. As Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), the novel is central to the construction of imperial ideologies it produces and reproduces the cultural assumptions through which domination is legitimized and naturalized. To read these four texts together is therefore to trace the arc from colonial inscription to postcolonial reckoning, from the silencing of Friday and Bertha to the recovery of their voices by Coetzee and Rhys respectively. The article proceeds through the following structure: a theoretical background grounding the study in postcolonial frameworks; a discussion of key themes that traverse all four texts; an extended counter-discourse analysis comparing the two canonical texts with their



postcolonial rewritings; and a concluding reflection on the modern implications of this literary genealogy.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. *Postcolonial Factors in the Topic of the Books*

Post-colonial theory is a collection of theories developed by philosophers, writers, and anthropologists to examine the cultural legacy of colonial rule and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. It originated due to the need for adequate theoretical models to discuss the characteristics of post-colonial literature, as explained by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, who argue that "The idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'" (The Empire Writes Back 11).

Post-colonial literature, as defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, refers to the literature written after the colonial powers' withdrawal from colonies, encompassing literature written both during and after colonization, often viewed from a Eurocentric Western perspective. This pre-eminence is evident in the field of fictional literature, where "authentic" books portray a reality alien from the one the native people and new settlers of the colonial country identify with. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin further observe in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*: "The map of the world can be seen as a palimpsest on which Europe has written its own dominance through the agencies of history" (318). The agency of post-colonial literature is to address this problem by focusing on the feelings of estrangement viewed from the angle of "the Other," the subdued.

Post-colonial narratives offer a unique perspective on colonization, allowing those previously excluded from the literary community to share their experiences. Boehmer defines postcolonial literature as writing that critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship: "To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization the myths of power, the race classifications and the imagery of subordination" (Boehmer 3). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's definition of post-colonial literature includes all literature affected by the colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, encompassing works from African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, and beyond (The Empire Writes Back 2).

The key concepts in post-colonial theory are numerous and interconnected, including colonialism, identity, gender, place, displacement, hybridity, othering, ambivalence, language, and mimicry. Identity, as the cardinal theme in post-colonial literature, encompasses many of these key concepts. Homi Bhabha's contribution to post-



colonial theory centers around ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity in relation to what he calls the colonial identity. In opposition to Said, whose focus is on the differences between the colonizer and the colonized, Bhabha explores the points of similarity between the two groups, arguing that the manifestation of racial stereotypes leads to colonial subjugation of both parties. The crash of cultures affects both sides and produces a displaced, colonial identity what Bhabha calls the Third Space, "a fraught, anxious and ambivalent condition" in which those living between two cultures produce a sense of agency that must constantly negotiate with the symbols of power and authority (Wallace).

The concepts of place and displacement are, according to Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin, of considerable importance to all critical models of post-colonial works of literature. "The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two" (The Empire Writes Back 35). It is in the encounter with the unfamiliar place that the feeling of displacement surfaces, giving rise to the post-colonial crisis of identity the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. This crisis is central to the four texts under examination, from Crusoe's island mastery to Antoinette's alienation in England, and from Friday's muteness in Foe to Bertha Mason's imprisonment in the attic of Thornfield Hall.

## ***2.2. An Introduction to Post-Colonial Literature***

Rather than simply referring to the time period that followed colonization and colonial rule, the term "post-colonialism" is, in the words of Gilbert and Tompkins, "an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures and social hierarchies" (1996: 2). Hence, it is possible to look at contemporary works of literature from a post-colonial point of view and analyze them accordingly, giving the reader the chance to "elucidate the post-coloniality which inheres in certain texts, and unveil and deconstruct any continuing colonialist power structures and institutions" (Gilbert, Tompkins 1996: 3). Post-colonialism's motivation is always political, aimed at uncovering cultural discrepancies between "us and them," "black and white," and "colonizer and colonized."

The reworking of European classics has become an important technique for post-colonial writers. Helen Tiffin (1995) has suggested the term "canonical counter-discourse" when discussing the counter-discursive post-colonial strategy of using a British canonical text, unveiling its assumptions, and "subverting the text for post-colonial purposes" (Tiffin 1995: 97). This strategy involves outlining the dominant discourse with all its underlying assumptions and exposing them dismantling these biases "from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified 'local'" (Tiffin 1995: 98). Post-colonial cultures are always hybridized, which results in a multitude of



influences in the culture-specific post-colonial literature produced, and there is an ongoing process of literary decolonization that attempts to "create or recreate independent local identity" (Tiffin 1995: 95).

Rewriting or reworking a canonical text can be done in many ways, ranging from subtly including themes from canonical works into a new one, to direct quotations and intertextual references to the original works; it can involve keeping the same plot but using a different setting or different characters, as well as imagining prequels or sequels to already existing stories. Sara Suleri aptly captures this condition in *The Rhetoric of English India*: "The postcolonial condition is neither territorially bound nor more the property of one people than of the other: instead, its inevitably retroactive narrative allows for the inclusion both of its colonial past and of the function of criticism at the present time as necessary corollaries to the telling of its stories" (Suleri 1992: 21–22).

### ***2.3. The Inversion of Focus in Post-Colonial Rewritings***

The polyvalent term "post-colonialism" includes a range of phenomena, it refers to culture, history, and their study alike, as well as to an ongoing process of re-shaping cultural identities (Huddart 2007). Jean Rhys and J.M. Coetzee have both written back to novels from the mainstream English literary canon which feature characters from the former colonies. In *Jane Eyre*, we encounter Bertha, the infamous Creole "madwoman in the attic"; in *Robinson Crusoe*, we meet Friday, Crusoe's ever-faithful servant. These secondary characters, whose identities have been established in the minds of readers worldwide, resurface as main characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Foe* respectively challenging our perception of the pretexts and their discursive assumptions.

In Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the inversion of focus in contrast to Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is conducted by "supplying the earlier life history of Bertha Mason" (Müller 2007: 64). In contrast to the raving lunatic we encounter in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys portrays her version of Bertha, Antoinette Cosway, as a misunderstood young Creole woman, drawing "attention to the colonized people who are silenced, dehumanized and mistreated in the earlier colonial text" (Koparanoglu 2008). Antoinette is, in many ways, a manifestation of "otherness": she is a white Creole in Jamaica of the 19th century, which prevents her from fitting in with both the black population and the wave of new, rich English settlers, and on top of that, she is a woman in a patriarchal society. By contrasting Antoinette with the one-dimensional Bertha of Brontë's novel, Rhys suggests that "a personal and human identity might be determined by the politics of imperialism" (Spivak 1985: 250).

The shift from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to Coetzee's *Foe* is an equally significant example of an inversion of focus. In *Foe*, the narrative is not narrated by Robinson but by Susan Barton, a female character. This double inversion presents Susan's narrative alongside a conspicuous absence a lack of narrative from Friday mirroring the imperial practice of silencing the colonized. As Van der Rassel notes, "identity is strongly linked



to narrative" (2006: 36): Susan explores her own identity by trying to be the creator of her narrative, while Friday's inability or refusal to communicate his story positions him as one of the great mysteries of the novel. Coetzee's stance on the treatment of the native population of the colonies' during imperialism is reflected through his portrayal of a traumatized, silenced Friday a stark inversion of the cheerful and devoted character from Defoe's original.

### 3. Key Themes in Postcolonial Readings

Postcolonial readings of Robinson Crusoe, Jane Eyre, Foe, and Wide Sargasso Sea reveal themes that critically interrogate colonial ideologies, imperialist hierarchies, and the marginalization of subaltern voices. These themes serve as focal points for understanding how literature can both reinforce and resist the power dynamics of colonialism.

The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is central to all four texts. In Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Crusoe assumes a paternalistic role, teaching Friday European customs, language, and Christianity, framing his existence as meaningful only through assimilation into Western norms. This dynamic reflects the broader colonial project of domination and erasure of indigenous identities. Voice and silence are interrogated throughout postcolonial literature Crusoe's account dominates the narrative, leaving Friday with no voice or agency, while Coetzee's Foe and Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea invert this power dynamic, challenging the moral and cultural assumptions of colonial literature.

Colonialism's impact on identity is a recurring theme. Crusoe's identity as the self-reliant colonizer is constructed through his domination of the island and Friday, while Jane Eyre's Bertha Mason's identity is fragmented by her racial and cultural otherness. Antoinette's struggles in Wide Sargasso Sea mirror Bertha's plight but are explored in depth, revealing the layered psychic damage that colonial power structures inflict on the colonized subject. Postcolonial readings also emphasize acts of resistance against colonial domination: Friday's obedience in Robinson Crusoe may be interpreted as a strategy of survival rather than acceptance; Antoinette's burning of Thornfield Hall is read not as madness but as the fierce logic of a woman pushed to the edge of annihilation. J.M. Coetzee's Foe and Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea serve as postcolonial interventions that dismantle the colonial ideologies upheld by Defoe and Brontë, respectively, by reimagining the canonical narratives from the perspectives of marginalized characters.

A further overarching theme is the relationship between language, power, and narrative authority. Colonial discourse, as Said demonstrates in Orientalism (1978), operates primarily through representation, it is through the power to name, describe, and define that the colonizer maintains epistemic control over the colonized. In both Defoe



and Brontë, this power is exercised through the very form of the novel: Robinson Crusoe is told entirely from the colonizer's perspective, while Bertha Mason is denied a speaking voice in Jane Eyre. Coetzee and Rhys restore, however imperfectly, the possibility of speaking yet both also acknowledge the limits of that restoration. Friday's tongue has been cut out; Antoinette ends in flames. Postcolonial literature thus inhabits a space of double consciousness, recovering silenced voices while acknowledging that the wound of colonial silence cannot be fully healed.

#### 4. Counter-Discourse

##### 4.1. *Jane Eyre and Wide Sargasso Sea: Similarities and Differences*

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* adds a new layer of meaning to *Jane Eyre* by telling Antoinette's story, creating strong intertextuality between the two novels. Both tell the story of a young woman, following her from childhood to adulthood. However, Rhys roots for the "underdog," Bertha Mason-Antoinette Cosway. Both Jane and Bertha share many similarities passion, a tendency toward madness, and struggles with being locked in yet their ways of expressing themselves and handling rejection are very different. Jane eventually becomes Rochester's equal, while Antoinette loses her mind as Rochester's prisoner, unable to make him love her. Unlike Jane, who gains a fortune, Antoinette loses all her money to Rochester, leaving her with no escape.

Jean Rhys picks up on the similarities between Jane and Bertha in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and gives her young Bertha, Antoinette, a chance to tell her own story. The intertextuality of shared characters between the two novels is referred to as "interfigural" (Müller 2007: 65); however, it is important to note that Rhys "does not just borrow [the characters], but rather constructs her own version of them" (Müller 2007: 65). In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the setting differs from Brontë's English manor *Thornfield* the gloomy countryside becomes a vibrant jungle. Antoinette feels at home in this new environment, while her husband feels trapped. This inversion challenges the established power structures of *Jane Eyre*, where Rochester is in complete control. Rochester's growing sense of "being rejected by his wife as well as by the community intensifies his feelings of superiority before his Creole wife and the racially different natives" (Koparanoglu 2008), a dynamic Rhys uses to expose Rochester as the embodiment of the stereotypical colonizer, not afraid of destroying to control.

##### 4.2. *Critical View of Jane Eyre*

One of the main questions is whether *Wide Sargasso Sea* counters *Jane Eyre*. Following Tiffin's concept of "canonical counter-discourse" "a strategy in which a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes" (Tiffin 1995: 96) *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be seen as a postcolonial text. However, the whole text serves more as an addition to the pretext than as a full challenge



to Brontë's story. Rhys does not change her heroine's final destination but adds stops along the way that make the reader aware there must be more to the story than Brontë's one-dimensional depiction of Rochester's first wife.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers a crucial reading of Antoinette's fate, arguing that the ending of *Wide Sargasso Sea* must be read "as an allegory of the general epistemic violence of imperialism, the construction of a self-immolating colonial subject for the glorification of the social mission of the colonizer" (Spivak 1985: 251). Even the important black character of Christophine is, in Spivak's view, only "tangential to the narrative" a woman who "cannot be contained by a novel which rewrites a canonical English text within the European novelistic tradition in the interest of the white Creole rather than the native" (Spivak 1985: 253). Rhys's main goal was to flesh out Antoinette into a real human being rather than an animalistic madwoman a task in which she succeeded. Yet this very success reveals the limits of the postcolonial imaginary when it remains bound to the structures and characters of the imperial pretext.

#### ***4.3. Robinson Crusoe and Foe: Similarities and Differences***

In *Foe*, Coetzee picks up one of the most well-known novels of classical canonical English literature and adds a layer of meaning to the original. The intertextuality becomes apparent as soon as Susan Barton encounters her fellow castaways Cruso and Friday, yet Coetzee's novel differs from Defoe's in many regards. On a structural level, *Foe*'s narrative pattern mockingly poses as a "postmodernist parody of 18th-century literary genres (travel literature, autobiography, the confessional and epistolary practices, realism)" (Chivite de León 2010: 49–50). Coetzee shifts the focus from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* colonizer and king on his island to Susan Barton, a woman on a quest for an identity independent of patriarchal power structures. Defoe's *Crusoe*, embodying male superiority and colonial power, is reduced to Cruso in *Foe*, sacrificing not only a letter in his name but also many of his redeeming qualities.

Another important change from *Robinson Crusoe* is how Cruso and Friday interact in *Foe*. Defoe's Friday resembles a "Europeanized savage," with "all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance" (Defoe 1719: 131), and his eager adoption of English, Christianity, and civilized servitude reaffirms the supposed superiority of English culture (McInelly 2007: 158). In *Foe*, by contrast, Cruso never teaches Friday how to speak, and Friday makes little progress in adopting communicative skills. Friday's silence, partly due to his missing tongue and partly due to Cruso's disinterest in communication, becomes the novel's central epistemological and ethical problem. As Coetzee writes through Susan: "the story of Friday's tongue is a story unable to be told, or unable to be told by me. The true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday" (Coetzee 1986: 118).



#### 4.4. *Critical View of Robinson Crusoe*

When looking at Coetzee's *Foe* as a postcolonial text, the question is whether and in which ways the novel attempts to counter its imperial pretext. Coetzee critiques patriarchal power structures and the unjust treatment of colonized individuals in imperialism and literature. However, reading *Foe* as a mere counter to *Crusoe* would be a narrow approach. Coetzee's multi-layered novel seems more focused on "interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which [the hierarchical order between Europe and the colonies] was based" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989: 32) than on fully reversing them. As Lin argues, "Coetzee seems to favor what we may call a rhetoric of simultaneity, one that emphasizes the importance of considering South African colonial trauma not as an isolated and autonomous event, but as one that relates to, and must therefore be juxtaposed with, similar human conditions outside South Africa" (Lin 2001).

By not allowing his Friday to tell his story on his own terms, Coetzee mirrors generations of colonized peoples who have been silenced or forced to use communication not their own. Friday's only means of expression are through art and dance utilizing his body and refusing to adapt to *Foe*'s and Susan's attempts at introducing him to their language. In addition, by introducing Friday as *Crusoe*'s slave from the beginning, "Coetzee refocuses the story on the silences that envelop Friday" (Poyner 2009: 93). Both Friday and Susan ultimately fail to achieve liberation: Susan ends up as a floating corpse under the sea in the final section of the novel, while Friday survives but is forced to give up his story against his will. The novel's ambivalence is its greatest strength and its most honest statement about the limits of postcolonial writing itself.

#### 5. Postcolonial Interventions and Modern Implications

Postcolonial literary studies have significantly influenced the understanding of canonical texts like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Jane Eyre*, challenging colonial ideologies, exposing imperialism's mechanisms, amplifying marginalized voices, and challenging socio-cultural hierarchies. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* glorifies *Crusoe*'s civilizing mission, reflecting imperialist justification for subjugating colonized peoples. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* critiques gender oppression but perpetuates colonial hierarchies through Bertha Mason, representing racial and cultural otherness. J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* reclaim silenced voices and challenge the authority of colonial narratives.

Postcolonial critique extends beyond literary analysis, addressing broader questions of representation, identity, and power in today's multicultural societies. The silences of Friday in *Foe* and Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* highlight the erasure of marginalized perspectives in historical and contemporary narratives, encouraging a reexamination of dominant discourses in literature, media, and politics. In the era of globalization, postcolonial literature emphasizes the importance of decolonizing knowledge systems and fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of history



and culture. Identity and hybridity are central themes in postcolonial literature, challenging dominant narratives of colonialism and promoting a more equitable understanding of history and culture.

The relevance of this postcolonial literary tradition extends into contemporary debates about the decolonization of curricula, the politics of representation in global media, and the ongoing struggles of formerly colonized peoples to assert their histories and identities in the face of neocolonial power structures. When universities revisit their reading lists, when publishers seek more diverse voices, and when movements such as #RhodesMustFall or #BlackLivesMatter articulate demands for the dismantling of colonial legacies in institutional life, they are engaging whether consciously or not with the same intellectual and ethical imperatives that animate the postcolonial literary tradition. Reading *Foe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* alongside their canonical predecessors is thus not merely an academic exercise; it is a practice of critical historical consciousness, a reminder that the stories we tell, and those we refuse to tell, shape the world in which we live.

### Conclusion

Postcolonial readings of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Jane Eyre*, *Foe*, and *Wide Sargasso Sea* reveal the profound impact of colonialism on literature, culture, and identity. These texts highlight how colonial ideologies have shaped narrative structures, silenced marginalized voices, and reinforced power hierarchies. They also demonstrate literature's potential to resist and subvert these ideologies, offering a platform for the recovery and reimagining of suppressed perspectives.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* represents the colonial mindset, celebrating European dominance and the civilizing mission. The narrative, steeped in Enlightenment ideals of individualism and rationality, constructs the colonized as silent and dependent subjects whose value lies in their ability to conform to European norms. *Jane Eyre* reflects the colonial underpinnings of 19th-century British literature, particularly in its treatment of Bertha Mason, a Creole woman who represents the racial and cultural "Other." Coetzee's *Foe* and Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* serve as postcolonial counter-narratives that deconstruct the colonial assumptions of their predecessors.

By revisiting and reinterpreting canonical works, postcolonial criticism amplifies marginalized voices and redefines the boundaries of the literary canon. This engagement affirms the transformative potential of storytelling in fostering critical reflection and imagining more equitable futures. Yet as both Coetzee and Rhys ultimately acknowledge, the silences imposed by colonialism cannot be fully recovered through literary reimagining alone. The muted Friday and the burning Antoinette remain, finally, as witnesses to an irretrievable loss and as enduring challenges to the complacency of a literary tradition that long mistook its own partiality for universality.



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