

# The Muse's Progress: 'Infinite Rehearsal' in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*

Rehearse your story and you will see.  
*Foe*<sup>1</sup>

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I know that in unravelling the illusory capture of creation I may still apprehend the obsessional ground of conquest, rehearse its proportions, excavate its consequences, within a play of shadow and light; a play that is infinite rehearsal, a play that approaches again and again a sensation of ultimate meaning residing within a deposit of ghosts relating to the conquistadorial body – as well as the victimized body – of new worlds and old worlds ... new stars and old constellations within the workshop of the gods.

*The Infinite Rehearsal*<sup>2</sup>

Since this volume contains many eloquent tributes to Derry Jeffares, mine will be very brief though none the less grateful. By inviting me to the 1968 ACLALS conference in Brisbane, he sowed the seed of what was to grow into a major option in English studies at the University of Liège and the founding of a centre for Commonwealth Studies. It was also this unexpected and stimulating opportunity which awakened my lasting interest in Caribbean literature, and Wilson Harris's work in particular, as well as in Australian and South African fiction.

In an earlier comparison between Harris's and Coetzee's fiction<sup>3</sup> I examined their respective use of allegory when expressing their vision of the mystery inherent in history and of the possible transformations of the consequences of history through a conversion or renewal of the imagination. I referred to Magda, the protagonist of *In the Heart of the Country* as the white muse of South Africa though also, in Wilson Harris's words, a 'blocked muse'. I now wish to argue that *Foe* is a rehearsal in depth of this theme, a further exploration of the twofold issue of the potentialities and limitations of language in South Africa and of the continuing oppression of the coloured majority.

The 'Infinite Rehearsal', the title of Wilson Harris's latest novel, describes the creative process in his own fictions whereby the artist, convinced of the metaphysical impossibility of ever reaching final truth, keeps approaching both the 'mystery of intact reality' and the mystery of creation through constantly revised and 're-visionary strategies', and breaks the rigid mould

of history into 'a capacity for another genesis, for regenerative hope, another complex journey into the consumption of cruel legacies'.<sup>4</sup> It applies to the artist's own work since, as Harris explains,

one novel may pick up something in the fabric of a previous work and rehearse its implications anew, revise re-vision itself anew in the body of a character who plays and re-plays his existence in derelict frames that correspond to a vanishing species and returning species.<sup>5</sup>

The 'rehearsal' can also be applied by a writer to the work of his predecessors when, as Harris points out, 'an evolution in form needs to occur', for only through such an evolutionary repetition can the great myths of human experience (whether Amerindian myths or the Western myths worked out, for example, by Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe) acquire a new meaning for modern man when the conflicting traditions of 'so-called savage cultures and so-called civilized cultures'<sup>6</sup> are reactivated and perceived in a new light and a new relationship.

A central theme in both Coetzee's and Harris's fiction is the exploration of the 'obsessional ground of conquest', as described in the epigraph above, a theme which Coetzee naturally approaches from a white South African perspective, aware of the 'blockage' and endless self-deceptions of his own community. Moving from their 'adversarial context',<sup>7</sup> from their opposite 'first' and 'third' worlds (though culturally Harris always had a foot in both), the two writers meet on common ground even if in some respects, such as their use of language and of allegory, they are very different. It is nevertheless a hopeful sign that their approach to the creative role of imagination as a possible source of social and political change can be compared though, inevitably, Coetzee is much more pessimistic than Harris.

Like *In the Heart of the Country*, *Foe* essentially dramatizes the consequences of the encounter between conquerors and their victims while exploring its possible interpretations through a self-reflexiveness shaped by a Foucault-like conviction that language is power and that to control story-telling is to control history.<sup>8</sup> In terms of the conqueror's capacity for self-analysis, it seems to mark a considerable advance on the earlier novel but ends, as we shall see, with a devastating ironical indictment of that very capacity. Though it has been suggested that *Foe* 'does not lend itself as readily as any of Coetzee's earlier novels to a reading of South African or colonial analogues',<sup>9</sup> I believe that it is, on the contrary, his most explicit allegory so far of the colonial situation, particularly in South Africa.

Though a re-writing of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Foe* is neither one more *Robinsonade* nor a feminist narrative only, focusing for the first time on a

female castaway who asserts her right to tell her own story and establish her central position in a world so far reserved for men, though it can be interpreted in this light and, of course, has been.<sup>10</sup> Naturally, it deconstructs and parodies Defoe's novel but it also parodies feminist attempts to re-write it, keeping in mind that parody is no longer merely of 'the traditional mocking type' but is used positively to mark 'the intersection of creation and re-creation, of invention and critique'. It is inspired by a 'historical consciousness' which gives it new life and makes it a serious mode.<sup>11</sup> The title of the novel, for example, substitutes for the protagonist's name, with its emphasis on individual character, that of the artist who becomes the real protagonist. But we shall see that his own role is itself ironically undermined.

*Foe* presents the same triangle of major characters as did *In the Heart of the Country*: Cruso (sic), the Portuguese captain killed by the mutineers who cast away Susan Barton on her return from Bahia, and Foe himself are variations on the same father-figure, symbols and servants of their society, whether eighteenth-century England or South Africa, as colonialist, tradesman and artist. Significantly, Susan makes love with all three though none of them gives her the child who, she thinks on the island (p. 36), might give her life meaning. As already suggested, Susan, like Magda in the earlier novel is the Muse and indeed calls herself so in her dialogue with Foe, while Friday, the third character in the indissoluble triangle, has had his tongue cut out and is mute. Although Susan tries hard to elucidate the mystery of Friday's lost tongue, it matters little whether Cruso or the slavers are responsible since it amounts to the same thing and Cruso, matter-of-factly or cynically, argues like a slaver: 'If Providence were to watch over all of us . . . who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane?' (p. 23)

In the first part of the novel Susan writes down the story of their triangle and their respective adventures in the New World. Friday's story, of course, remains an enigma, what Susan later calls 'a hole in the narrative' (p. 121), for even Cruso gives contradictory accounts of how he came by him (p. 12) and pretends not to know how Friday was mutilated (p. 23). Only at the end of Susan's narrative do we realize that it is addressed to Mr Foe, the artist (Defoe's original name), and just as important, that she is writing it in Foe's own quarters in London since, as his muse, she is supposed to inspire him. Though her views are inevitably shaped by the times, particularly in her attitude to Friday, Susan presents her companions without apparent prejudice but rather as an attempt to understand them and portray them objectively, for she is adamant in her insistence on 'truth' in spite of her awareness that anything Cruso told her is open to doubt. His failure to keep a journal or make up a calendar testify to his rejection of the past and of the

need for self-knowledge as well as to his refusal to communicate by making his experience known for, unlike the original Crusoe, he has cut all links even in spirit with his mother country and does not want to be saved. His work ethic,<sup>12</sup> his authoritarianism ('you will do as I instruct' [p. 20]) and his obdurate objection to any change (p. 27)<sup>13</sup> are the only 'principles' he has retained from his 'civilized' existence. Otherwise, he has reduced the world to his island and human relationships to his mastery over Friday. Sleeping with the Muse does not regenerate him. Rather the reverse since she treacherously takes advantage of his illness to put him on board the rescuing ship. Cruso then loses his *raison d'être* both as a ruler whose kingdom is taken away from him and as a fictional character. He fights uselessly to get free and dies in much the same way and for the same reason as Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. As to Friday, in whom Susan had shown little interest on the island except when she heard of his mutilation and then felt revulsion rather than compassion, she feels he must be 'rescued' because he is 'a slave and a child ... a poor simpleton' and 'it is [her] duty [clearly the white man's burden] to care for him in all things' (p. 39).

If Cruso is an obvious replica of the father in *In the Heart of the Country*, Susan is at first very different from Magda. The latter too had repeatedly called herself a castaway in the last sections of her narrative, a 'castaway of history', and with impotent despair she had finally acknowledged that she must die in her paradise turned into a barren 'petrified garden'. Susan, on the contrary, is obsessed with the hope of being 'saved' and never doubts that she will be. She is full of fight, positive and humanistic, if also paternalistic, the white liberal in action. While setting down her story, at this stage still 'the story of [Cruso's] island' (p. 45), she becomes aware of the complexity of truth and is forced to introduce doubt and uncertainty into her realistic account. Gradually she must acknowledge the inadequacy of a narrative mode which claims to be objective, and there are hints in this first part already that she is failing in her creative role. One should remember here that Western man's imagination was fired by the prospect of New World exploration and that his motivations were often an ambivalent mixture of material greed and idealism. As Wilson Harris has suggested, the conquest of the Americas could have broken down the terrible biases of both European and Amerindian monolithic cultures (the Caribs and the Mexicans had their own fierce rituals) and could have led to the regeneration of both instead of the destruction or total eclipse of the American peoples. Susan has gone to Brazil in search of her daughter abducted in London and taken to the New World. Her failure, as the Muse, to find her progeny can be read as a failure to renew herself in the New World. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest

that her constant fear of the wind on the island amounts to a fear of the awakening power of the imagination, metaphorically represented by the wind since Romantic poetry (see Coleridge and Shelley). To avoid hearing its sound Susan makes herself a cap which covers her ears. 'So', she acknowledges, 'I became deaf, as Friday was mute' (p. 35). She thus deprives herself of an essential organ, which makes her unreceptive to the New World spirit. She later admits that Foe can hardly make a story of a 'woman cowering from the wind' (p. 94).

The story Foe is supposed to write never gets written. What we have instead is, to begin with, Susan's rehearsal of her original story with different emphases and her meditation on the problems of story-writing. Through the first two parts of the novel she addresses Cruso, Friday or the absent Foe and gets little or no response, which affects her all the more as she equates 'the desire for answering speech' with physical desire (p. 80). When she complains to Friday (oblivious of the fact that *he* is deprived of all communication) 'I am trying to bring it home to you ... what it is to speak into a void, day after day, without answer' (p. 80), we are reminded of Magda's 'stony monologue'. Susan, however, is not paralyzed within her solipsistic self-reflexiveness. In the diary and letters she writes in the second part she is already aware of the need to re-vise the conception of her first simple factual account (actually, she is only writing it in that second part) and she initiates what might prove an 'infinite rehearsal':

I must go back and laboriously extract the right application [of her stories] and apologize for the wrong ones and efface them. (p. 81)

Susan's original story of the island's sterile colonization now turns into a very different narrative. As she attempts to move closer to Foe and finally settles in his house to write, she is also islanded in London in a solitary life with Friday, an allegory of the black/white relationship in South Africa. Cruso's story recedes and she pays more attention to Friday whose indifference to her she begins to resent. By linking together the island's mysteries, the building of useless terraces, the loss of Friday's tongue, his incomprehensible submission, his paddling out to sea to scatter petals on the water where his ship went down, she unwittingly points to the one motivation of the master/slave relationship: the white man's will-to-power and negation of the 'other' who, as we shall see, resorts to modes of expression incomprehensible to the colonizer. In spite of her apparently genuine wish to emancipate Friday, Susan remains as blind as Cruso was to Friday's real self. She has merely replaced Cruso's words of command '*Fetch and dig*' (p. 149) with '*watch and do*' (p. 56) and she writes to Foe 'I will not

delve while [Friday] spins' (p. 92). This refers to Friday's flute playing and dancing after Susan finds 'recorders' in Foe's attic. She learns to play in the hope that they can form a duet but Friday does not depart from the air he used to play on the island and their two tunes 'jangl[e] and [jar]' (p. 98). She does understand that 'if there were any language accessible to Friday, it would be the language of music' (p. 96). His music and dancing can be interpreted in the same way as West Indian limbo which, as Wilson Harris has explained, allowed the slaves to express in a reduced space the dismemberment they suffered on the Middle Passage after the loss of a common tongue: 'Limbo was ... the renaissance of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of cultures.'<sup>14</sup> But in spite of a few insights into Friday's possible motives, Susan is still as incapable as ever at the end of Part II of understanding his behaviour. She has officially given him his freedom and has taken him to Bristol for ambiguous motives: a self-deceived gesture of good will in attempting to send him back to Africa and an intense wish to be rid of him. When she realizes that this is impossible, she concludes, Prospero-like, 'I do not love him, but he is mine' (p. 111).

Woven into Friday's story is the apparition of a girl, also called Susan Barton, who claims to be the daughter she vainly sought in the New World. Susan's failure to recognize her is a failure in imaginative daring like her narrow conception of truth and story-telling (her insistence that truth is factual and narrative realistic) and her ambiguous wish to give voice to Friday. As in Bahia, it is a refusal to change and be renewed, and this is clearly allegorized in her attempt to lose the girl in Epping Forest (her own unconscious?) as well as in her fear of being associated with the stillborn or murdered baby girl she finds on the road to Bristol. Though sensing that the child is herself in another life (p. 105), she orders Friday to leave it where it was found and leads him away. In Part III, when at last she finds Foe and can no longer escape her daughter nor the maid Amy,<sup>15</sup> who have joined them in Foe's lodgings, the dialogue between the author and the Muse engenders a few rehearsals and fruitful re-visions, in the course of which the need to recognize her daughter ('substantial ghost' and 'child' [p. 132]) and the urge to allow Friday self-expression become more clearly inseparable.

At first Foe and Susan talk at cross-purposes: he wants to know more about Bahia and Susan's quest for her daughter. Novelty, he says, lies in reversal when the daughter takes up the quest her mother has given up. Susan remains deaf to his argument and rehearses again Friday's story, confessing that when he danced in a trance, a naked 'black pillar' in the 'scarlet bell' of Foe's robes, thus music itself expressing his plight,<sup>16</sup> she had the revelation

of his unmanning.<sup>17</sup> Yet seeing in Friday a terrible *living* metaphor does not help her understand his language, just as later she has no inkling what the walking eyes he draws might mean (the stare of his victimized people?). Her assertion that 'the true story will not be heard till by art we have found a means of giving voice to Friday' (p. 118) is well-intentioned enough but blindly paternalistic. In spite of another rehearsal (p. 121), she still fails to grasp the applications' (p. 81) of her own stories; in Harris's terms, her fiction does not 'consume [its] own biases',<sup>18</sup> which should be the purpose of such rehearsal. She nevertheless begins to lose her self-assurance. In two other rehearsals, both literal story-telling and imaginative exploration ('slipping overboard' [p. 131], 'I slipped overboard' [p. 133]), she first claims that she is not 'a story' but a 'free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire'.<sup>19</sup> By the end of her argument, however, she acknowledges: 'now all my life grows to be story ... Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? (p. 133) Though she can speak for herself and will not, like Friday, be 're-shaped ... in conformity with the desires of others' (p. 121), she is beginning to experience what it means to exist only through someone else's will and her doubts at last weaken her obstinacy.

At one stage in their dialogue Foe tells Susan the story of a mother sentenced to death, who could not resign herself to her execution until she had found someone to look after her child. She then felt she could die for, like a butterfly, she was merely leaving her 'husk' behind and lived on through her daughter. His parable recalls the 'resurrection child' who, in Harris's fiction, represents the rebirth of imagination, a new kind of fiction and a potentially new world. Susan answers with the story of the Muse claiming that *she* is the begetter and fathers stories, a direct though unconscious acknowledgement that she is indeed the parent of her 'father-born' (p. 91) daughter. Only when they make love does each grasp the meaning of the other's story. Their love-making may eventually produce the germ of a 'true' story but begins rather inauspiciously with a reciprocal vampirization or cannibalism (p. 139) suggesting that each lives off the other but also that their obsession with Friday's cannibalism is a projection of their own instincts. Susan then claims the right of the Muse to straddle her lover to 'father' her offspring. Immediately after their love-making, Foe is inspired into telling her of the *kraken* (octopus) or monster living on the floor of the sea under the beds of seaweed where Friday used to scatter petals over his drowned fellow-slaves, while Susan at last recognizes the substantiality of her presumed daughter. Friday, whom she is teaching to write, endlessly

draws 'o' and will move on to 'a' (possibly from Omega and Alpha or from the nakedness of his end to his beginning).

At the centre of the narrative is the haunting question of the true nature of reality, of the distinction between ghost and substance. Susan keeps claiming substantiality, though she also says that she is a ghost haunted by ghosts (p. 139).<sup>20</sup> Both she and Foe see in desire (hence also in the physicality of experience) the origin of creation (pp. 86, 88, 149), which is substantiated by their love-making, though this does not lead to creation itself but is a stimulus to vision. While she admits at the end of Part III that all actors in their story are substantial, and therefore equally 'real', she does not pronounce herself on Friday and the major rehearsal is not performed by her in the eighteenth century. Foe explains that writing stories one gets lost in a maze of doubting, so that one must return again and again to a mark left behind by oneself or another as 'a sign of blindness' (pp. 135-136). In Susan's story the 'sign of blindness' is her lasting incapacity to understand Friday in spite of the rehearsals which have forced her to re-consider the 'truth' of her story. The effect of these rehearsals has been to dismantle Defoe's novel yet also to throw doubt on her own story since her changing approach to experience traces the shift from eighteenth-century self-confident realism to the questioning uncertainty characteristic of twentieth-century fiction. Nevertheless, as we have seen, whatever progress in consciousness and method the muse achieves, it does not benefit Friday. As far as he is concerned, the fruit of her love-making with Foe is the artist's realization that he (the artist) must descend into 'the eye of the story' (dive into the wreck) in order to face 'the unspoken' (p. 141)<sup>21</sup> and to 'make Friday's silence speak' (p. 142). This is as far as their progress takes them.

Coetzee in no way suggests, however, that the white artist can speak for Friday at any time. Susan (as much a 'foe' as the artist she visits, since she is prepared to exploit Friday's story for her own purposes) is incapable of doing so and experiences the sense of impotence of the white South African artist who wants to tell the story of her/his country. The last part of the novel consists in two more rehearsals, this time by an anonymous twentieth-century I-narrator who repeats Susan's experience and climbs the stairs to Foe's attic, stumbling first on Susan's daughter, now mere straw, then coming upon Foe and Susan lying side by side. The visitor, who could be any artist (possibly Coetzee whose reversed initials Susan found on a trunk in Foe's attic (p. 93) or a present-day Muse, does what Susan never dared to do and opens Friday's mouth. He alone still lives and from his mouth comes 'the roar of the waves in a shell' (p. 154) as well as the sounds of the island.

The second rehearsal is a deeper exploration still, for the visitor finds Susan's manuscript which (s)he begins to *live*: 'With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slip overboard' (p. 155). This time, (s)he reaches the great bed of seaweed and plunges under the water where Friday's petals are scattered. At the bottom of the sea (s)he comes upon the slave-ship or 'leviathan' (p. 156) and enters the hole (the hole in Susan's narrative) through which (s)he will face the *kraken* or monster. In the captain's cabin Susan Barton and her dead captain float 'fat as pigs ... their hands held out in blessing' (p. 157). The stagnant water around them is the same as three hundred years before. In other words in all this time the Muse has not moved an inch; she and her captain are bloated literally and figuratively. This climactic discovery is a fiercely ironical comment on the whole narrative that precedes it. In my opinion, it means that, for all her good will and intentions, Susan remained self-deceived to the end. She did achieve partial insights and *Foe*, the artist, did see that it was necessary to face the monster. But Friday's condition is still the same. Just as he was 'allowed' to sleep 'under the transoms' (p. 41) on the ship taking him to alleged freedom in England, so now, after all this time, he is found still chained 'under the transoms' (p. 157), so that the last part of the novel deconstructs the deconstruction and re-writing that precedes it.

The first three parts of the novel certainly lend themselves to interpretation in the light of recent critical theory: feminism, post-modernism, post-colonialism. But Coetzee's allegory clearly shows that no new critical discourse or theory has as yet been able to free Friday, South African Friday in particular, from his chains or to give him voice. *Foe* tells Susan:

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? (p. 150)

The self-reflexiveness of the novel is not just aesthetic comment but also a white artist's self-examination. I think that, like Wilson Harris, Coetzee makes a distinction between discourse and 'living text'<sup>23</sup> which does not imply the old-fashioned equation between language and experience but the pregnant silence of those 'waiting to be born' (p. 122). When the artist or Muse faces chained Friday half-buried in sand, (s)he comments: 'this is not a place of words.... This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday' (p. 157). Interestingly, Coetzee's text ends where Harris's *The Infinite Rehearsal* begins since this novel opens with 'Ghost' arising out of the sea. From Friday's point of view, it is a long way ahead of anything

that takes place in *Foe*. But opening Friday's mouth, the explorer in Coetzee's novel at last faces the chained man's silence and is directly, individually affected by the stream that runs out of his mouth 'to the ends of the earth':

Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face. (p. 157)

For all its ambiguity,<sup>24</sup> this ending may suggest a renewal of imagination on the part of the twentieth-century white South African who is *sensitive* enough to the running stream (which contrasts with the stagnant water above) released out of Friday's silence. There, I would say, lies the source of change in South Africa as presented in this novel. In so far as Coetzee's twentieth-century Muse is no longer locked in her 'petrified garden' but allows the stream of life issuing from Friday's mouth to envelop her, his fiction is for the first time genuinely open-ended.

## NOTES

1. J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*, first published 1986 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), p. 116, italics mine. Further references are to this edition and are included in the text.
2. Wilson Harris, *The Infinite Rehearsal* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 1.
3. Hena Maes-Jelinek, 'Ambivalent Clio: J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* and Wilson Harris's *Carnival*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (1987), pp. 87-98.
4. Wilson Harris, 'Comedy and Modern Allegory: A Personal View', published in this volume, p. 128.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
7. See Wilson Harris, 'Adversarial Context and Creativity', *New Left Review*, No 154 (Nov./Dec. 1985), pp. 124-128.
8. See Cruso's assertion: "'Nothing I have forgotten is worth the remembering'", p. 17.
9. Dick Penner, 'J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*: the Muse, the Absurd and the Colonial Dilemma', *WLWE*, Vol. 27, No 2 (Aut. 1987), p. 212.
10. See, among others, Hanjo Beressem, '*Foe*: The Corruption of Words', in *Matatu*, Towards Liberation: Culture and Resistance in South Africa, eds. Geoffrey Davis, Matsemela Manaka, Jürgen Hansen, Heft 3/4 (1988), pp. 222-235. See also Teresa Dovey, *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* (Craighall: Donker, 1988). This first full-length study of Coetzee's fiction contains many interesting comments on *Foe* but these are lost among endless quotations of current critical theories.
11. Linda Hutcheon, partly quoting Robert Burden, *A Theory of Parody* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 101.
12. The accumulation of grain for a non-existing population by the original Cruso has been further and more absurdly perverted by Cruso, who builds useless terraces since he has no seed, a symbol of the barrenness of his kingdom.

13. In this as in his authoritarianism Cruso resembles Ayscough, the judge in John Fowles's *A Maggot*. He too objects to any kind of change in eighteenth-century England. Though the territory he rules is Great Britain, he also has the spirit of a colonialist, not just because he represents the authority that sends prisoners to the colonies but in his attitude to Jones, the Welshman, who *because* he is Welsh, can only be in Ayscough's eyes a thief, a liar and a Barbarian who talks gibberish. *A Maggot* can also be compared with *Foe* on other grounds. His Lordship too is in search of imaginative renewal, while his deaf and dumb servant is, like Friday, a sacrificial victim. Fowles's concern is, of course, England's need of regeneration. It is not by chance, I think, that in *The Magus* Alison, who stimulates the protagonist to self-knowledge, is Australian.
14. Wilson Harris, *History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas* (Georgetown: The National History and Arts Council, 1970), p. 10.
15. The quest in this novel is not just that of a character in search of an author. Susan's early quest for her daughter and the latter's quest for her (an indication that, unlike her mother, she is interested in her origins) are as important, while the dialogue in Part III shows that Foe needs them as much as they need him. Susan's daughter and her faithful maid Amy evoke Defoe's *Roxana* while some of her adventures rather recall *Moll Flanders*. Intertextuality is a major feature in the novel. A major effect of Susan's allusions to other characters created by Defoe and her meeting with some of them is to enhance the 'reality' of the fictional world.
16. One can apply to Friday Russell McDougall's comment on the role of Music in the life of the transported slaves: 'Music became posture and gesture translated, a memory of the past and a vision of the future – the essential link with life itself.' See 'Music in the Body of the Book of *Carnival*', Forthcoming in *Kunapiipi*.
- 17 The recognition of Friday's castration, which parallels the denial of significant life symbolized by his lost tongue, is presented as an act of faith and compared to Saint Thomas's insisting on touching Christ's wound, another indication of Susan's literalness.
18. See 'Adversarial Context and Creativity', p. 127.
19. The feminism of this statement and of the woman's right to tell the story of 'The Female Castaway' (p. 67) has, of course, been underlined by previous commentators. While agreeing with this approach at this stage of the narrative, I think that Susan is later a castaway (denied value) in a sense she hardly suspects.
20. In *The Infinite Rehearsal* Ghost says 'I am in all decrepit humanity ... I am in the sad dancers who ride on the waves. I am in all lost loves and lost lovers. I am ghost within ghost within ghost' (p. 45).
- 21 This is very close in spirit to Wilson Harris's *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, in which the I-narrator progresses towards Namelessness and 'the unborn state of the world', trying to understand 'the reality of ... the Well of Silence'. *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 95-100.
22. Cf. Wilson Harris: 'we need to retrieve or bring those "monsters" back into ourselves as native to psyche ... through the ceaseless task of the creative imagination.... Such retrieval is vision.' *The Whole Armour* and *The Secret Ladder* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973, Authors' Note), p. 8.
- 23 Wilson Harris, 'Valediction of Fiction: A Personal View of Imaginative Truth', in *Tibisiri*, ed. by Maggie Butcher (Aarhus: Dangaroo Press, 1989), p. 45.
24. Indeed, the phrase 'to the ends of the earth' echoes the pessimistic ending of *Heart of Darkness*.