Mouths: Robinson Crusoe's Colonial Fantasy and its Subversion

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Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) can be read as a fundamental text of (Western) European colonisation and naturally, concomitant with this, of the Protestant middle-class *homo economicus*. The novel seems to justify several ideological, historical, political, racial and gender assumptions, which are revealed particularly sensitively in the very first encounter between Robinson and Friday. The study examines this scene, with particular attention to the phrase "a very good mouth." The paper is seeking an answer to the question as to what position the coloniser assigns to the native in the light of the fact that Friday's qualities that appear at first reading seem feminine, and thus, make Friday appear a feminine subject in this 'colonial idyll.'

Keywords: Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe,* colonisation, gender, subject, colonial fantasy

1 Introduction: Masculine 'Mastery' and What Subverts It

In the passage describing the first meeting between Crusoe and Friday (*RC*, 205–6)[1], besides a rather perplexing array of adjectives referring to the native, the narrator uses the term "a very good mouth" in describing Friday (*RC*, 206). It is definitely odd to read this very collocation in a description pertaining to a man, since a male person's mouth would not typically be characterised as "good." This simple but confusing adjective that the narrator uses here might need some explanation, in spite of the fact that at first glance the adjective seems to mean nothing else than 'European-like,' 'well-proportioned,' 'not typical of natives.' Crusoe is probably not an impartial observer here but someone who projects his fantasies and desires onto the native. This paper argues that Crusoe's idea of control is considerably undermined by the feminine appearance of the native, which he first tries to rectify

[1] All subsequent references to *Robinson Crusoe* will be to this edition: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) in the form (*RC*, page number).

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by granting Friday the status of an infant, but due to mutual suspicion, this family idyll is bound to be terminated.

In order to answer the question of exactly what kind of colonial fantasies are enacted in the novel, let us first consider the aspects of Crusoe's economic and colonial position. In the classic interpretation, the protagonist is the prototypical white, Western, Protestant individual who, by virtue of his middle-class values, first achieves business success, then, thanks to his reason and ingenuity, survives some twenty-seven years of his solitary existence on a desert island, bringing a native under his control and making the small Caribbean island his quasi-colonial home. The protagonist's inventiveness is purely empirical: he repeatedly states that he has not learned the skills and tricks of the trade necessary for survival at home, but has acquired them by observation and experimentation. For instance: "I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time by labour, application and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools" (*RC*, 68). These are core values of the Western bourgeois middle class emerging in the 17th and 18th centuries, the backbone of which are hard, persistent work, ingenuity, initiative, optimism, a belief in God and a sense of mission, which compensate for the lack of formal education and represent individualism above all else (see Watt 1976, 67 et passim).

However, Crusoe does not seem to be content with only living modestly and frugally on the island – for it is precisely the "middle station of life," (*RC*, 38) the modest, restrained middle-class life that he rebelled against at the beginning of the novel. Partly guided by the strange logic of capitalism, which, incidentally, also appears in another of Defoe's novels, *Moll Flanders* (1722), he wants to gain more and more.

The colonial authority he exercises over the island is demonstrated by highly controlling and egocentric language. For example, he alludes to a period of his stay on the island as "in the sixth year of my reign" (*RC*, 137). Elsewhere he almost maniacally takes stock of the treasures of his "empire." For example, in one paragraph, he claims: "You are to understand that now I had, as I may call it, two plantations on the island – one my little fortification or tent, with the wall about it, under the rock, with the cave behind me, which by this time I had enlarged into several apartments or caves, one within another" (*RC*, 151). The choice of words is striking because the plantation as an economic unit was typically used to grow crops that yielded high profits (coffee, cotton, tea, and tobacco) and usually required slave labour or wage labour to cultivate. This idiom is the continuation of his earlier discourse on his plantation in Brazil.

On the one hand, then, Crusoe imagines himself on the island as a plantation owner of the expanding, colonising world trade, and on the other, he continually implants the spatial and eco-social notions that had characterised the life of the English

merchant class back in his home country. For instance, in relation to the previous quote, he reports that he enlarged his cave "into several apartments . . . one within the other" (*RC*, 151). The word "apartment," which had become established by the 1640s, does indeed mean a detached room, but it typically meant a space within a house for the private use of one person or family. Similarly, his economic unit in the woods is called a "country seat" (*RC*, 152), which is a lot more than summer cottage, and bears ramifying cultural and historical implications in the English context. The phrase "happy rural seat of various view" (Canto IV, line 247) can be found in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, among others), and it recalls the genre of the country house poem, and also the establishment called 'country house,' which, with a typical English understatement, denotes a country 'castle,' a mansion, or at least a building of considerable size, a place where wealthy citizens, having become rich from (colonial) trade, typically retired after their careers. Crusoe practically declares himself a kind of prosperous Western European citizen on the island and, as Suvir Kaul notes, "Crusoe's ambition here oscillates precisely between the twin poles of colonial expropriation, the exculpatory legal and ethical illusion of a 'Right of Possession,' and the hope of conveying those overseas properties into the propriety of a manorial estate in England" (2009, 72). Or, inverting the logic, he translates the image of the imagined manorial estate owner into the conditions of the uninhabited island.

Crusoe's ultimate wish is to obtain total control over the island, even to extend it to interpersonal relationships. Perhaps his most frequently used words in the novel are "to obtain," "(to) master" and "mastery" meaning skill, dexterity, deep knowledge, but also dominion, superiority, and power. Watt points out that emotions usually "play a very minor part" in the novel (1976, 77), and even when they appear, they are linked to some economic transaction. It is not surprising, therefore, that Crusoe describes even his encounter with the first man in terms of the linguistic equivalent of acquiring wealth and possessions. In one passage, for example, he writes: "I had been near the *obtaining* what I so earnestly longed for, viz. somebody to speak to" (*RC*, 198; emphasis added). Elsewhere, too, he speaks of the encounter – still, let us add, at the level of fantasy – as the acquisition of something: "as soon as I had gotten this man" (*RC*, 199); "if possible, to get a savage into my possession" (*RC*, 199); "to get one of those savages into my hands, cost what it would" (*RC*, 200). It is typical, moreover, that Crusoe later fantasises that he could acquire not one but two or three savages and bring them under his dominion – "to make them entirely my slaves to me" (*RC*, 200) – with a further manifestation of the logic of early capitalism: "I had no remedy but to go on" (*RC*, 35). Indeed, in the age of original accumulation, there is "no remedy but to go on" with the process, and to acquire more and more – not only objects, but also people. As György Kalmár notes in his analysis of the narrative technique of the novel, it is probably a never-ending

process, for, as Crusoe's desire is always in search of another object, and "in a sense, the story is written not so much by Crusoe as by the metonymic slippage of his desire from one object to another" (2002, 119; my translation). The protagonist is almost maniacally preoccupied with the desire to acquire, to possess, and it is almost with pleasure (in Freudian terms, one might even say, in an "anal-erotic" way) that he counts, lists his possessions, his assets, and their growth.

However, the image of the agile, white, middle-class merchant, coloniser, planter, slave-owner, merchant-adventurer, etc., and the fantasy of desire forged from it, may seem to be a rather precarious construction. It needs to be constantly reaffirmed, and Crusoe needs to constantly prove to himself that he has achieved something. As Christine Owen, quoting Pocock, asserts, the figure of the masculine, conquering hero is a post-Victorian construct. In fact, the 18th-century image of this figure is more of an effeminate figure tormented by anxieties, insecurities, passions and even hysterias (2011, 163). In line with this, Kaul argues that the "anxieties, fantasies, and desires generated in the intra-European struggles over plantation colonies and favourable trading practices swirl into and around definitions of the would-be imperial subject, whether merchant or planter, slave trader or slave owner" (2009, 78).

It is thus intriguing to examine the cause of the anxieties that Crusoe seems to be compensating for with his never-ending desire to conquer, to make lists and gain possessions. Owen argues that Crusoe's masculine order is destabilised and undermined by subversive forces that are the "archetypically female goddesses of disorder as Fortune, Luxury, and most recently Credit herself" (Pocock qtd. in Owen 2011, 163). Luxury and consumption are, of course, interrelated; after all, the view prevailed in the 18th century that it was primarily women who could be associated with the idea of the consumption of useless luxuries (Owen 2011, 166), and that a luxurious lifestyle was a hotbed of passions. Crusoe's aversion to cannibalism is also understandable from this point of view, since it is, in his eyes, the act of an uncivilised savage, unable to control his passions (and consumption). In an age when speculation, stock exchange transactions and the emergence of the bill of exchange stand in stark contrast to the concrete, empirically tangible landed property and the gold coin, for a Protestant, Puritan person, this is then translated into the opposition between illusion and reality. In other words, the opposition lies between fiction (i.e., Satan's artifice, the world of illusions) and the 'reality' of the possession of real objects (it is enough to think of one of the first speculation scandals, the South Sea Bubble in 1720, in this respect).

Crusoe also wants to stabilise himself in the course of the novel, for he is initially a kind of 'floating' and/or undefined subject. At the beginning, he is neither an experienced sailor, nor a merchant, nor a gentleman, nor a lower-class person – this status is described by his father in the phrase "upper station of low life" (*RC*, 4). He

is, in fact, a nondescript person without individuality. Crusoe's (and Defoe's) aim is to be "a solid" person, that is, avoid losing credibility, often also perceived in that age as a virgin woman (Owen 2011, 171), and to find solid ground under his foot after drifting on the "ocean" of commerce, as Defoe metaphorically describes commerce in *The Compleat English Tradesman*, published in 1726 (see Owen 2011, 164).

2 "A very good mouth": Friday as a Woman?

If, then, Crusoe spends considerable energy to avoid the subverting forces of luxury, consumption, fortune and credit, which all seem archetypically feminine, by trying to stabilise himself by the virtue of control and power over the island, the fundamental question to be discussed in the light of all the above will be why Friday still seems to be endowed with feminine or effeminate qualities at the first encounter in Crusoe's account. Before looking at the specific passage of the encounter, let us consider in detail what happens before it.

After the discovery of the footprints, the excited Crusoe gets into an almost hysterical, feverish state: ". . . this had agitated my thoughts for two hours, or more, with such violence, that it set my very blood into a ferment, and my pulse beat as high as if I had been in a feaver [*sic*] . . ." (*RC*, 108). Then he falls into a deep sleep, and upon waking up, summarises his dream. It is about saving a native who is fleeing from his pursuers. The dream is far from just a vague impression; it is a detailed description of where the pursued man flees to (the thick grove in front of the fortification), what Crusoe does to him ("carry'd him into my cave"), and, as if nothing were more natural, the next co-ordinate clause is: "and he became my servant" (*RC*, 198). Thus, if we are to accept the Freudian interpretation of the dream as a wish-fulfilment, Crusoe explicitly desires a servant, an Other. In other words, he desires a position in which he does something good (he saves the life of the escaping savage) and obliges the Other to become, as it were, his obedient servant out of 'gratitude.' He neither wants to commit violence, nor is he driven by 'racist' considerations; he, for instance, claims that he is horrified by the idea of spilling "humane blood" (*RC*, 199). Instead, he imagines a kind of exchange (or credit transaction) that benefits him: he 'lends' a life to Friday, who 'repays' Crusoe with eternal servitude.

The other main component of this desire is of a different, voyeuristic nature: Crusoe wants to *see* savages. The narrator stresses that he was no longer cautious after five canoes had landed, and that he did not even care if he was noticed; as he puts it: "I was now eager to be upon them" (*RC*, 200). So another main motive

for the encounter is to be able to gaze at the natives (but ideally not to be seen by them). This motif of undetected voyeurism will be discussed in more detail later.

Crusoe's dream is only partly realised. This is perhaps the first subversive element in the lonely protagonist's carefully constructed and ordered world. He saves the native's life by shooting one of his two pursuers and rendering the other harmless; the latter is killed by the native who will be named Friday. During the first encounter, in compliance with Crusoe's dream, Friday immediately submits to Crusoe's will ("swearing to be my slave for ever" [*RC*, 204]), and the protagonist takes the "prisoner" to his cave. In the meantime, he does not forget to note that the dream is not precisely fulfilled (let us recall that Crusoe is obsessed with keeping everything under control), because the fugitive did not seek refuge in the grove (*RC*, 202). As if to remedy this 'defect,' he takes the native straight to the cave, where the latter lies down and falls asleep. It is then that the ominous description takes place. It is important to note that Crusoe, while the native is asleep, can observe the naked savage undisturbed. It is worth quoting the original passage at length here:

> He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat, like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and as white as ivory. (*RC*, 205–6)

Kaul describes the encounter as a "colonial and homosocial idyll," ironically adding that Crusoe, as if running through a checklist, is looking for "offending non-European facial and epidermal features" in Friday (2009, 74). The description is truly unique in that it tries to capture the elusive external features by listing what is found and is not found in the native, perhaps even mentally arranging these in two columns (like in a 'debit–credit' chart). The description moves from the larger units to the smaller parts; first the body structure is assessed, then the face, the hair, the skin, the nose, the lips, and the teeth. Obviously, this description or the kind of perspective would not be far removed from the way a slave trader looks at the exhibited 'goods.'

At the same time, two, perhaps related, aspects are prominent. On the one hand, Crusoe uses unusual adjectives, as he describes a man in a way that the observed person seems almost feminine, or a kind of hybrid (see Owen 2011, 168–69). Friday displays "sweetness and softness," his skin is "of a bright kind of a dun olive-

colour, that had in it something very agreeable," his mouth is "very good," his lips are "thin," his teeth are beautiful and white. On the other hand, the juxtaposition seems to prove that Friday's figure – filtered through the colonial fantasy of desire – is free of excess, of uncontrollable passions. The emphasis on the general, one might say modest adjectives ("handsome," "well-made," "good," "long," "round," "thin," "well-set," etc.) serves this purpose, and the other items of the oppositions denote some exaggerated, nauseating, almost superfluous quality: well-made vs. too large; good vs. fierce and surly; sweet[ness], soft[ness] vs. manly; long vs. curled like wool; tawny vs. yellow, nauseous tawny; small nose vs. flat like the Negroes. References to an excessively robust physique, ferociousness, cruelty, excessive masculinity, the uncontrollable, knotty, unruly, woolly hair, the "nauseating" yellowish skin, the flat nose, all seem to call attention to a deformation that can easily be linked to the above-mentioned forces of luxury, credit, consumption and fortune (as well as passion) that destabilise and contradict Puritan lifestyle, and to the opposing counterparts of modesty, sedentariness, moderation, consistency, and planning.

3 Friday's 'Birth'

Thus, it would be logical to interpret the above description as Crusoe's projection of desire for a feminine Other, in which "femininity can only appear in disguised form, in the form of a man, behind a colonisable male identity that can be disciplined" (Kalmár 2002, 124; my translation). Friday does seem a feminine phenomenon, serving to balance the conspicuous absence of women on the island; Gillian Hewitson, for instance, contends that "a feminine other is necessary for Crusoe's identity. Actual women are absent from the island, but woman is an absent presence; she is present as feminized nature and as the feminized native" (2011, 118).

However, it would be unreasonable on the part of Crusoe to include femininity in this colonial and manorial discourse. The feminine element always carries with it something subversive and undisciplined in the narrative. Crusoe's attitude to women is notoriously modest, almost pathologically reticent; the novel is almost devoid of female characters, or if they do appear, they serve a purely practical purpose (Watt 1976, 75), such as guarding Crusoe's money or, like his wife, bearing him children. As we have seen, femininity is also linked to subversive elements embodying excess, consumption, and luxury.

It would be more reasonable to argue that the figure of Friday appears in this fantasy as a child, an undeveloped and sexless human being. This is also confirmed by the positive connotations of the adjectives quoted above, which do not suggest

attraction or eroticism but rather proportion, neat, almost classicist arrangement ("well-made," "well-set"), smoothness ("long and black" hair), underdeveloped qualities ("small nose," "round and plump" face), kindness or innocence ("smiled," "sweetness and softness"), not to mention the evenly set ivory-white (milk) teeth. The native will be suitable for participation in the colonial scenario because, according to Crusoe, he does not possess the (feminine) qualities that would only confuse him in the construction of a fantasy of desire. Rather, the native serves as a pleasant sight, and as an androgynous, infantile creature.

There would certainly be nothing surprising in treating the colonised subject (or more precisely, the subjugated non-subject) as an infant, an uncivilised, undeveloped non-subject without culture and speech. In fact, reversing the logic, one could argue that Friday as a female subject could be presented as an incomplete adult. However, the rest of the narrative supports the idea that the fulfilment of Crusoe's wishful fantasies is the assumption of the role of the father. This is nothing new either, since there is hardly a critical study of the novel that does not mention the process by which Crusoe 'civilises' the savage and in the process symbolically becomes a 'father.' Jean-Jacques Hamm, for instance, points out that "[l]ike a creator, a god, or a father figure, Crusoe shapes Friday into a 'faithfull, loving, sincere Servant.' Friday, by his behaviour, becomes a model, the epitome of the good pupil, a good companion and the good and honest servant" (1996, 117). Crusoe dresses his 'child' up, feeds him (typically with bread dipped in milk), gives him a name – characteristically Friday, which, as Robyn Wiegman argues, is exactly the day when God created the first man, so with it Crusoe again asserts himself as a paternal divinity (1989, 45). Indeed, Crusoe teaches him to 'speak': first makes the native call him "Master," then goes on to draw a line between right and wrong with the words "yes" and "no," and finally sets up a clear cultural boundary by letting him know that eating human flesh is a taboo.

It is revealing, however, that even in his dream, before their meeting, Crusoe imagines taking the native into his cave first. The cave is a 'loaded' symbol in many respects, since in the classical Freudian interpretation, it could represent female genitalia, on the one hand, and on the other, it is the place where the old goat, which had previously represented the Father, passed away (see Kalmár 2002, 129–33). Although Crusoe justifies taking Friday to the cave and not the "fortification" by wanting at least part of his dream fulfilled (*RC*, 205), another possible reading of the episode can be that the time has come for the birth of the 'child' now that the death of the symbolic Father has allowed Crusoe to make his (the Father's) previous possession his own. Crusoe then begins to think about how to "accommodate" the native, so he constructs a small tent between the two fortifications, in front of the mouth (!) of the cave. Yet, its entrance only opens inwards to stop Friday from

coming out at night (*RC*, 202): "As there was a door or entrance there into my cave, I made a formal framed door-case, and a door to it, of boards, and set it up in the passage, a little within the entrance; and, causing the door to open in the inside, I barred it up in the night, taking in my ladders, too; so that Friday could no way come at me in the inside of my innermost wall, without making so much noise in getting over that it must needs awaken me" (*RC*, 208). It is as if Crusoe relegated Friday to an embryo position inside the symbolic womb and controlled when he is due to be born (i.e., come out).

Once Crusoe is convinced that Friday is harmless (i.e., not a threat to his paternal status), he allows him to 'exist,' and goes into a lengthy speech on how he has never had such a good servant: "never man had such a more faithful, loving, sincere servant than Friday was to me; without passion, sullenness, or design" (*RC*, 209). It is again important to take a look at the discourse into which the three nouns (passion, sullenness or design) fit. They seem to be excessive qualities going against the "middle station of life" Crusoe's father designed him for. Passion as such is to be avoided as much as possible in the Puritan way of life, since the denial or transcendence of passions is a prerequisite for a sober, moderate lifestyle. Stubbornness and obstinacy can also signify a lack of discernment, while malice and sullenness a lack of piety, according to contemporary standards.

Furthermore, all three traits can be linked to Crusoe's childhood/youthful self. It is not so much, as Kaul claims, that "Crusoe looks to Friday for a confirmation of a particular version of himself" (2009, 75), and it is not, either, that these are some kinds of 'barbaric' qualities to be eliminated from Friday. Rather, Crusoe wants to see his 'son,' the infant version of himself in the native, the very subject that his father would have wanted to see in him. First, a subject with no passions, without the desire to travel, a 'bound' subject. Second, he wants him to be obedient and pliable, not bad-tempered or sullen, so that he can accept the paternal (divine) authority. Finally, he wishes to see Friday to be "without design" (i.e., not having plans, not plotting against him). The word "design" here refers back to the beginning of the novel, when Crusoe recalls that his father "design'd [him] for the law" (*RC*, 3), destined him for a career in law ("designed" him), and when the father advised him against "what he foresaw was [Crusoe's] design" (*RC*, 4). The imagined wishful fantasy is thus a child who has no plans, no intentions, no vision of the future, but who can be formed, moulded, "planned," "designed" and set on some course by his father. Briefly, the coloniser Crusoe wants to recreate in Friday the very infant subject he refused to become, a subject tied to a place, without passions, living a comfortable but mediocre life, obeying his father's word, and having no autonomy.

Crusoe tries to assert his 'paternal' authority in other ways, too. A rather overloaded symbol in this respect is the rifle, with which Crusoe, as if with a phallic symbol,

"takes possession" of the native (see Kalmár 2002, 123). It is significant that Friday is terrified of the weapon, and is not aware of its function; moreover, Crusoe consciously conceals this knowledge from him: "I took this advantage to charge the gun again, and not let him see me do it" (*RC*, 212). That is, to return to the motif of the uninterrupted gaze: Crusoe's ideal is the situation in which he can gaze at naked natives but the other cannot see or understand. In the passage analysed, one morning he and Friday go out to kill a goat of the flock, but on the way they catch sight of a female goat and two of her young goats beside her, consistently referred to as "kids" (*RC*, 211). Crusoe shoots one of them, but before doing so he orders Friday not to move or speak (i.e., to remain a fixed, bound, disciplined, desire-less subject). Then the passage goes like this: "I catched [*sic*] hold of Friday, hold, says I, stand still; and made signs to him not to stir, immediately I presented my piece, shot, and kill'd one of the kids" (*RC*, 211). Although in Early Modern English, *piece* did indeed mean cannon, gun, rifle (Hoad 2003, 352), the phrase can also be interpreted as *I presented my rare treasure* (in this sense, the threatening phallus), as well as "I presented my piece," in the sense of *I played my part*, meaning that Crusoe acts out his wishful fantasy of paternal authority in order to secure Friday's submission and subservience. It is also remarkable that Crusoe singles out a kid of the goat family to shoot, and after the act, the native is "sensibly surpriz'd, trembled, and shook, and look'd so amaz'd that I thought he would have sunk down" (*RC*, 211). Thus, what the scene alludes to is that Crusoe could eliminate Friday from the 'family idyll' any time he wishes.

4 "and make a feast upon me"

What ends this 'idyllic' situation is actually the dynamics at the root of the colonial encounter; namely, the master–slave scenario as summarised by Hegel. Although Tamás Bényei warns in his very detailed summary (2011, 52–88) that "the Hegelian narrative cannot be seen as a critical tool that can be brought in from the outside to interpret colonial texts or phenomena," it can be read as "one of the fantasy scenes that define the imaginary of colonising Europeans" (2011, 65; my translations). The paradox of colonial recognition (the recognition of the master by the slave, but at the same time the recognition of the other by the master) lies in the fact that "as the indigenous are stripped of their humanity again and again at every moment by the dehumanising colonial rhetoric, [...] in the colonial hierarchy, the native person is not a real subject, not a real other, that is, not someone whose submission and recognition would yield the coloniser real satisfaction, with irrefutable certainty of

his own superiority" (Bényei 2011, 60; my translation). The paradox here lies in the fact that the master or 'parent' has to deny the other their humanity in order to prove their superiority. But at the same time recognition can only come from a human being, so they have to 'elevate' the other to be seen as a master. This can never be fully achieved, however, since the slave (the colonised) is, by definition, incapable of legitimising authority. This is why Crusoe tries to reach a compromise by not denying Friday's human status, and therefore 'elevating' him, but only partially, granting him a childlike status. Nonetheless, a *tabula rasa* subject, deprived of his language and culture, cannot legitimise Crusoe's authority, however much the coloniser wishes to "imprint right notions" (*RC*, 217) on his mind.

The impossibility of affirmation leads to paranoia of power, as the native is unable to give the 'right' answers and to justify colonial narcissism. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "the native refusal to unify the authoritarian, colonialist address within the terms of civil engagement gives the subject of colonial authority – father *and* oppressor – another turn" (1994, 141). The colonial believes that the native hates him, and, as a result, he begins to hate the other. The logic goes something like this, according to Bhabha: I want him to love me – he does not love me – he hates me – I hate him (1994, 141). Friday, in Crusoe's eyes, remains in some ways a 'superfluous,' 'subversive' factor on the island, especially when he (the native) begins to ask surprising and perplexing questions about Christian faith. For example, he raises the question that if God is so all-powerful, why does he not kill the devil (*RC*, 218). Thus, the "very good mouth" of Friday becomes a 'bad mouth' and the servant/son/student seems to outdo or at least question the master/father/teacher. This failed mimicry, "almost the same, but not quite," as Bhabha puts it, "does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence" (1994, 86). Despite the 'colonial idyll' of filial affection, there is a lingering suspicion in Crusoe that he has failed to eradicate the 'barbaric'/childish customs in Friday, which logically leads to a sense of menace and a fear of the return of these 'barbaric' practices. As Bhabha formulates, "the authoritarian demand can now only be justified if it is contained in the language of paranoia" (1994, 141). At one point Crusoe fantasises about being killed and eaten by savages:

> and this observation of mine, put a great many thoughts into me, which made me at first not so easy about my new man Friday as I was before; and I made no doubt but that, if Friday could get back to his own nation again, he would not only forget all his religion but all his obligation to me, and would be forward enough to give his countrymen an account of me, and come back, perhaps with a hundred or two of them, and make a feast upon me, at which he might be as merry as he used to be with those of his enemies when they were taken in war. (*RC*, 224)

This danger is definitively removed with Friday's reunion with his real father, when the native fulfils the status of a child not only in Crusoe's wishful fantasy, but also in reality.

5 Conclusion

One way of interpreting the description of Friday that uses the expression "a very good mouth" could be that despite what the phrase would suggest, the coloniser, instead of regarding the native as a (non-) subject endowed with feminine characteristics, sees the colonised as a childlike, sexless, submissive being whom he can dominate with his paternal–colonial power. In Crusoe's fantasy, the "mouth" is open in only one direction on the part of the native, just like the tent at the mouth of the cave, whose door opens only inwards. That is, it can be fed – as Crusoe writes: he had "two mouths to feed instead of one" (*RC*, 213) –, just as ideas can only be planted in the native, childlike mind, conceived as *tabula rasa*, from the outside. In this sense, Friday's mouth initially appears to be "good," i.e., obedient and receptive, like Moll's, the parrot's mouth, which is able to repeat prefabricated items. However, Friday is clearly unable to legitimise Crusoe's power, for he emerges from the cave and dares to ask questions of his own which the coloniser is unable to control. The native seems to hold, through some hidden similarities, 'a mirror up to' the coloniser, so he becomes a subject of suspicion and is written out from the story.

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