



REWRITING BREEDS SILENCES: BEAST OF BURDEN, ANXIETY OF AUTHORSHIP AND THE QUESTION OF TRUTH IN J. M. COETZEE'S *FOE*

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Abstract

Susan Barton, the narrator of *Foe*, idealizes a mode of writing based on bare truth, but she cannot execute her ideals of storytelling in the novella. In a face-to-face meeting with Foe, the English writer of Crusoe's island story, she experiences both the anxiety of influence and, more specifically, the anxiety of authorship that further causes silences in her narration. She revises the canonical image of (De) Foe who is, here, merely a *beast of burden* writing in the attic instead of an intellectual. She withholds details of her pre-island life in the retelling in order to resist Foe's attempts to excite English readers by mispresenting her as a whore.

Keywords

Silences, canonical writings, rewriting, representation, anxiety of influence, anxiety of authorship