

## Topics for the fourth essay (due 12/10)

Part I will be the body of your essay; conclude, draw a line, and add part II.

### Part I (~4-5 pp)

1. Give a careful account of the ways in which Crusoe's life on the island changes when "Friday comes"; you might begin with what's literal and obvious (how does Crusoe spend his time before and after?) before thinking about, for instance, how Crusoe's sense of himself changes. What needs does Friday's presence satisfy for Crusoe? Since Defoe's own source story the narrative of Alexander Selkirk, printed in the Norton *Crusoe* was a story about complete isolation, we have to ask ourselves why one would choose to imagine a companion for Crusoe in the first place, and then, why this companion. Is Friday a projection of Crusoe/Defoe's fantasies, or do we also get a sense of his subjectivity, his "side of things," as we do with Caliban? Do the later works by Coetzee or Walcott give you any sense of Friday's subjectivity and what is that sense?

2. Take a passage from either *Foe* or the Walcott poems on Crusoe where the later author seems to alter, and in altering, to comment on a moment in Defoe's novel. (For instance, "Crusoe's Journal" describes Crusoe "bear[ing] ... the Word to savages"; compare Defoe's account of Friday's religious instruction by Crusoe). How are these passages most importantly connected to each other (briefly)? How does each text approach this common topic or topics (more detail)? What are their important differences? In conclusion, how do these differences implicitly serve as Coetzee's or Walcott's response to or commentary on Defoe?

3. Coetzee's novel is especially concerned with language: the characters' ability or inability to speak for themselves, to speak with or to others, and especially to tell their stories. In earlier readings, we've seen stories and the power of expression more generally being exchanged, given, or appropriated: for instance, Montaigne's claim to represent America by recording the speech of a "simple man", Miranda and Caliban's agreement that she "gave [him] language" and Seaver's use of the illiterate Jemison's recollections "to perpetuate the memory of the atrocities of the savages in former days" (Introduction), a story it's hard to believe she would have endorsed. What kinds of power does language give to different characters in this novel? Do you see connections with other texts we've read?

### Part II (~1-2 pp.)

In all the previous assignments, I've given you directions about what kinds of topics to address. This is your turn. Which of the texts or films from the course made the strongest impression on you, for better or worse, and why?