

Bettina Schötz**PS****(Re-)Reading Daniel Defoe's
*Robinson Crusoe*****Mon (5)****W 48/101**

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is unanimously regarded as a milestone in the history of English literature. Not only does the text's realist aesthetics mark the beginning of the 'modern novel', but its thematic complexity has also invited various interpretations throughout the centuries. *Robinson Crusoe* has been read, amongst others, as adventure story, as religious parable, as study of an individual consciousness, as political allegory of Stuart despotism, as depiction of the *homo economicus*, and as prophesy of (British) imperial expansion. Crucially, the novel has been popular with both eminent writers as well as cultural theorists, who have diligently commented on its value, and the reading public, who have devoured the innumerable 'Robinsonades' or imitations that were to follow in literature and film.

In the first part of this seminar, we will conduct a close reading of Defoe's text. With the help of essays by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Karl Marx, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce, we will trace and critically discuss different approaches to the novel. In the second part, we will pursue Joyce's path further and study the novel from a postcolonial perspective. This can most fruitfully be done by addressing the postcolonial rewritings the novel has sparked off. In particular, we will read and analyse Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986) with a view to the following questions: How is the colonial relationship between Crusoe and Friday depicted? What does Friday's tonguelessness signify? Why is it important for Susan Barton to come into representation? Which role does Foe play? In what sense does the novel 'write back' to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*? And how do the events depicted in *Foe* relate to the South African context of its creation?

Please buy and read before the beginning of the summer term:

- 1) Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Oxford World's Classics. Ed. Thomas Keymer. Oxford: OUP, 2007. ISBN: 978-0199553976.
- 2) Coetzee, J.M. *Foe*. London: Penguin, 2010. ISBN: 978-0241950111.

All additional material will be made available via OPAL.

Please note: You are not required to enrol for this seminar in advance. If you would like to join this course, simply turn up at the first session and sign up then.