Home Consciousness in the Works of J.M. Coetzee

Liang Dong

PhD

University of York
English and Related Literature

December 2018

Abstract

This thesis explores the literary representations of home consciousness in the works of J.M. Coetzee. Noting the historical and biographical origins of this concern in Coetzee's authorship, I am interested primarily in how home consciousness plays out in his texts. Tracing Coetzee's life through two recently published biographies, one written by J.C. Kannemeyer and the other by David Attwell, enables us to detect a sense of belonging and alienation in his way of addressing the issue of personal residence and national identification, which I refer to as a Janus-faced attitude to home. This striking feature in his authorship sheds light on the pervasive home consciousness in his fiction where characters wrestle with the tension of home, historically, culturally and ethically.

I unpack my argument on this series of tensions in an eclectic approach. The introduction outlines the general theoretical foundation on which the thesis is premised, namely a frank account of authorship's importance in criticism, especially in Coetzee's case. After tracing Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home in the opening chapter, the thesis primarily considers one novel for discussion in each successive chapter. Chapter Two centres on how "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" becomes an ethical challenge for Coetzee to narrate home consciousness. The third chapter focuses on Coetzee's hostile coexistence with censorship and how Magda from *In the Heart of the Country* grapples with home. My next chapter uses Freud's "The Uncanny" to investigate unhomely authorship and uncanny narrative in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Chapter five revolves around the metaphorical landscapes in *Life & Times of Michael K*. The following chapter conducts a feminist reading of home consciousness in *Age of Iron* and the last chapter addresses Lurie's and Lucy's alternatives to home in *Disgrace* from a postsecular perspective. In the epilogue to the thesis, I propose three trajectories in the development of home consciousness in *Slow Man* and *The Childhood of Jesus*.

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Acknowledgements

Before beginning my doctoral project, I always thought that an acknowledgements section in a book or a PhD thesis was only an academic cliché, so I would not bother to follow suit when I was supposed to do that. However, four years of life and study at the University of York has completely changed my biased opinion since I would not have been able to reach this stage without encouragement and support. This page is, thus, out of not only the requirements for a complete PhD thesis but also my heartfelt gratitude to the following people.

My thanks first go to my supervisor, Professor David Attwell. One could not ask more for such a generous and rigorous mentor. His friendliness, approachableness and patience have helped me, as an international student at York, through many difficult times. I cannot forget his meticulous guidance in, and the informative comments on, every word I have written in this thesis and even various applications for other short-term projects within these four years. He is tolerant but never uncritical so that I could pull myself back on to the proper track when I got lost in my writing. I have greatly benefited from this generosity and rigour as well as the friendship between David and me, and I feel assured that it is still the case in my future academic career.

I also owe a heavy debt of gratitude to Professor Derek Attridge, who never fails to be amiable, insightful and critical. Every time we met, he could point out the problems in my chapters in a tremendously thought-provoking way. It is indeed a great privilege to have him as my TAP member.

Thanks for colleagues and friends in the Humanities Research Centre at the University of York, whose names are too long to be listed here. Without them, the research at York could not have been as productive as it was.

Thanks should also go to the China Scholarship Council who provided financial support for my pursuit of a doctoral degree.

Finally, I must offer my gratitude to my family for their company, support and, most important, love throughout the writing of this thesis.

Declaration

I hereby confirm that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as footnotes.

Part of an early version of the first chapter on J.M. Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home has been published by *Foreign Languages Research*.

Introduction

This thesis stems from matters that have intrigued – and to some extent baffled – me since I began to read Coetzee's novels. The most salient is the question of the way most of his characters are deeply engaged with the issue of home (illustrated for instance in their tenuous relations with the places where they live or are forced to live) in the paradox of their attachment to, and alienation from, the culture and history in which they are situated. The ubiquity of dysfunctional family units among them seems to me a correlative and prominent example of this uneasy inhabitation of home, culture, and history. What contributions can this engagement make to our understanding of these novels' literariness? If the creative work that transforms Coetzee's life into the text is taken into account, what light will it shed on the tensions of home in the narrative?

With the publication of Coetzee's two biographies, J.C. Kannemeyer's *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing* and David Attwell's *J.M. Coetzee and The Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time*, my confusions have been gradually cleared up and, moreover, the interest transformed into a kind of necessity and feasibility that the idea of home in Coetzee's works should, and could, be investigated in a systematic and theoretical way. Kannemeyer's posthumously published book provides a detailed and comprehensive account of Coetzee's ancestry, life, and writing from the moment that the novelist's Dutch forebears set foot in South Africa, to 2011, when an omnibus version of his autobiographical trilogy was published. Attwell's monograph primarily concentrates on, and marvellously succeeds in, associating Coetzee's life with his writings, which includes all of Coetzee's fictions ranging from *Dusklands* to *The Childhood of Jesus* (*CJ)*, and even an unpublished manuscript, "The Burning of the Books", in a more critical manner.[1] These two works were of significant

[1]Briefly speaking, the major difference between these two biographies is that Kannemeyer's writes Coetzee's writing career into his life while Attwell's carves the novelist's creative process out of his life. For more detailed discussions, see Elleke Boehmer, "Reading between Life and Work: Reflections on 'J.M. Coetzee'," *Textual Practice* 30, no. 3 (2016); Liang Dong, "An Authorship-Oriented Approach to Coetzee Studies – A Review of *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time*," *Foreign Literature Studies* 40, no. 1 (2018).

inspiration for my own, especially Attwell's manner of attending to Coetzee's authorship, which means the creative work transforming biography into fiction. My thesis is thus an attempt to narrow down the discussion and focus on the ubiquitous tensions regarding the idea of home, which I refer to as home consciousness, in Coetzee's works, with particular consideration to his authorship. Home consciousness is a direct rendering of a Chinese cultural idiom, *jia yuan yi shi* (lit. *jia yuan* "home", *yi shi* "consciousness"). It is a concept sufficiently broad to embrace the particular ambiguities and tensions in any fictional writings, so it will enable me to explore what interests me in Coetzee's novels. In the early stage of this project, I read a great deal on the subject of home in postcolonial literature, but these discussions tend to be thematic rather than theoretical; in other words, they rarely advance beyond the original concept of home consciousness defined in China. This project, in contrast, is an attempt to discuss home consciousness in Coetzee's works and, at the same time, to explore the phenomenon in relation to Coetzee's paradoxical attitude to home.

The paradox lies in the following observations: on the one hand, Coetzee fostered a strong feeling for South Africa, a country where he was born and had dwelt for approximately thirty years during his writing career; on the other, in spite of being an Afrikaner descendant, he had deep sympathy with the non-whites' sufferings caused by his ancestry's colonial history and the subsequent apartheid policies, both of which he never came to terms with. Thus, for Coetzee, the issue of home is problematic, as both a place, the personal space where one can secure comfort and happiness, and an idea, the sense of belonging via which one will identify with one's national history and culture. The question where Coetzee belongs includes, then, at least two complementary dimensions. Geographically, beginning with a nomadic childhood within his country, Coetzee continued to live a migrant life among South Africa, Britain and America before finally emigrating to, but not really settling down in, Australia; culturally, with a resolute denial of, and alienation from, his Afrikaner identity at the beginning of his writing career (although the resoluteness relented later), he had been keeping a critical eye on settler colonialism and apartheid in South Africa.

As I see it, this paradox is a Janus-faced attitude to home, which involves both a sense of belonging and that of alienation. Though the term "Janus-faced" has two

meanings, one being "having two sharply contrasting aspects or characteristics" and the other "insincere or deceitful" according to *Oxford Dictionaries Online*,[2] I am only suggesting – and, beyond that, underlining – the "contrasting aspects" in the novelist's way of dealing with the issue of home rather than implying any insincerity regarding this question.[3] What Kannemeyer refers to "the twofold nature of [Coetzee's] origin and a measure of ambivalence towards English and Afrikaans" is an essential part of this Janus-faced attitude,[4] and I will argue that the "twofold nature" is also congenial to the correlation between the sense of belonging and that of alienation. Since the word, belonging, clearly connotes a strong identification with the cultural context and the geographical environment one is situated in, there will be little dispute concerning its implication. However, the case is not the same with regard to that of alienation. In my project, rather than standing for, as in its general sense, an isolation from one's visible and invisible surroundings, and a retreat into an indifferent and self-protective state, alienation means a *distance* from what one is supposed to get involved in so that one can keep one's wariness alive and vibrant. Coetzee is reluctant to agree with a common understanding of alienation. When discussing Kafka's novels with Attwell in *Doubling the Point* (*DP*), he observes that he frowned upon the idea of treating alienation "as a *state*, a state of being cut off not only from the body of socially dominant opinion but also from a meaningful everyday life".[5]

The question then becomes why and how this prominent feature in Coetzee's

[2] Oxford Dictionaries, "Janus-Faced," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/janus-faced.

[3] I am not the first to read Coetzee and his fictions in this way. Grounded in his analysis of the eponymous heroine in *Elizabeth Costello*, Chris Danta also adopts this term to denote the contradictoriness of literary authority in Coetzee's writings in a recent essay-collection. As he puts it, "the Janus face of literary authority", to Coetzee, is "the sense in which the writer is paradoxically turned outward his or her community, but also inward towards the higher authority of his or her own conscience". This interpretation mainly refers to Coetzee's endeavour to balance a writer's so-called social responsibility and his artistic pursuits, so it is different from the way I use it as a perspective to address Coetzee's authorship. see Chris Danta, "Introduction," in *Strong Opinions: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, ed. Chris Danta, Sue Kossew, and Julian Murphet (New York: Continuum, 2011), xv.

[4] J.C. Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, trans. Michiel Heyns (London: Scribe Publications, 2013), 59.

[5] J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 203 (emphasis original).

authorship influences his writing. To find a convincing answer, it is worth noting the theory of authorship which my project is built upon. How to conceive the role of author, and the relation between the author and his writings, can be traced back to Plato's notorious banishment of poets and poetry from his ideal community. In Plato's opinion, poets are imitators of the natural world, as what painters are able to do, so their works are far from abstract ideas and truths; furthermore, poets lead the youth astray by inciting their passions instead of reason. "[W]ith his words and phrases," the poet can convince audiences that he has a knowledge of what he is talking about, "such is the sweet influence which melody and rhythm by nature have." [6] Thus poetry, by which we might understand literature in general, is a mimetic reflection of the natural world and merely appeals to emotions. That is why Plato banished not only poetry but also poets from his Republic. The problem in Plato's argument is a valuable topic on another occasion, [7] but what I aim to emphasize here is that Plato, albeit adversely, suggests the importance of authorship.

This tradition of attaching weight to authorship was highlighted in Romanticism where the authorial subject was placed, according to Andrew Bennett, "at the centre of the literary universe". [8] Literary works were regarded as an artistic and innovative expression of the author's imagination and sensibility, so the writer was not, if putting it in Platonic terms, an "imitator" of the natural world, but a creator and producer of a fictional universe. The expressive theory of art, proposed by M.H. Abrams in his seminal book on Romantic poetry *The Mirror and the Lamp,* drew our attention to "the persistent recourse to the poet to explain the nature and criteria of

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[6] Plato, "'The Republic', 'Timaeus', 'Critias'," trans. Benjamin Jowett, 3rd revised and corrected ed., 5 vols., vol. 3, *The Dialogues of Plato* (Oxford University Press, 1892), https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/76 .

[7] The debate about Plato's argument lies in questions about whether literature has, or is able to convey, any ethical and philosophical dimensions. As far as Coetzee's works are concerned, there are at least two essay-collections that comprehensively address the issue: Anton Leist and Peter Singer, eds., *J.M. Coetzee and Ethics: Philosophical Perspectives on Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Patrick Hayes and Jan Wilm, eds., *Beyond the Ancient Quarrel: Literature, Philosophy, and J.M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[8] Andrew Bennett, "Expressivity: The Romantic Theory of Authorship," in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49. In his essay, Bennett examines the dynamics in the origin, and the composition, of poetry in the Romantic expressive mode of authorship by discussing a series of attributes, such as confession, inspiration and imagination, in poetry-writing.

poetry" in most early nineteenth-century literary theories. [9]

However, with the advent of modernism, the recourse was gradually disrupted, subverted and abandoned. T.S. Eliot put forward the concept of impersonality in which poetry was such a self-referential aesthetic object that artistic creation became a process of depersonalization. This observation dramatically influenced the formation of New Criticism, which adhered to a close-reading approach without considering the role of authorship in interpreting literary texts. Worse than that, W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley not only put in question the problem of whether an author's intentions could be known, but also labelled the consideration of authorship the intentional fallacy, namely that what the author might have intended to do was "not a valid basis for critical judgement about a text's relative worth as literature".[10]

The de-privileging of authorship became increasingly aggravated when structuralism and poststructuralism tended to decode literary works into a set of self-sufficient linguistic elements and also to give priority to this ahistoricality in addressing literature. The possibly most powerful challenge came from Roland Barthes' seminal essay, "The Death of the Author", which completely dislodged the author from the throne of authorship. The theoretical foundation Barthes relied on was that of formalism, which proclaimed that narrative was engendered by the internal play of textual languages, independent of the author's sway. According to Barthes, the interference of the author in our reading of the text does not provide any help but prevents us from deciphering a text, because "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing".[11] Thus Barthes forcefully opposed taking biographical elements into account in interpreting literature since "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space where a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[12]

The absence of the author dominated literary criticism from the 1920s until the

[9] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 7.
[10] Ian Buchanan, "Intentional Fallacy," ed. Oxford University Press, second ed., *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (2018), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.001.0001/acref-9780198794790-e-360.
[11] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*, ed. Seán Burke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 128-29.
[12] Ibid., 128.

1980s. According to Seán Burke, it is after the revelation of Martin Heidegger's and Paul de Man's involvement with Nazism that the importance of authorship, or that of its discussion, is reinvigorated in academia.[13] In Burke's systematic account of authorship's origins, historical development and prospects in criticism, his celebrated book, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, can arguably be regarded as the most formidable response to the challenges against authorship. By probing into the contradictions and illogicalities in his three subjects' fashionable attacks on subjectivity, Burke's monograph demonstrates the untenability of dismissing the notion and the practice of authorial agency in literary studies, and concludes that "the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead".[14]

Coetzee himself also explicitly addresses this poststructuralist challenge in his discussion of literary authority. Though the formalists and their poststructuralist followers successively witnessed their heyday in the twentieth century, Coetzee argues with reference to his reading experience about Tolstoy that "the dust has settled", implying a return of authorship in criticism.[15] This observation corresponds to one of his earlier highly quoted remarks, namely that "all writing is autobiography", advocating a principle of life writing (*DP*, 17). Coetzee is both a strong proponent and a devoted practitioner of the principle, with which he writes the series of tensions regarding home to his fiction. In an essay to express acknowledgements of the contemporary writers who have inspired him intellectually, Coetzee poignantly speaks of his dissatisfaction with the then South African literary field: "in 1960 there was no South African writer, novelist or poet, to whom I as a young man could turn for a significant and vital lead in *how to respond to, how to feel about, and therefore how to write about, my homeland*."[16] Thus home, in its most general sense, becomes contested terrain for Coetzee to translate the aforementioned belonging and alienation in his life to his fiction, where this alienation is, as Coetzee remarks with reference to Kafka, "a strategy in the service of skepticism" (*DP*, 203). In this sense, it is Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home

[13] Seán Burke, "The Responsibilities of the Writer," in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 488.
[14] *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, third ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 7.
[15] J.M. Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* (London: Vintage, 2008), 150.
[16] "Homage," *The Threepenny Review*, no. 53 (1993): 7.(emphasis mine)

that generates, underpins, and strengthens home consciousness in his fiction.

However, home consciousness is not a matter that lies in the biography and then becomes a "subject" of the fiction; it is from the very beginning a *literary* question, which affects the form, voice, and textures of the writing. This is the primary concern of this thesis. Coetzee's above self-enquiry into the relation between life and writing also involves an ethical dimension. In the same essay, he continues to question himself: "by what ethic of writing was I living in the late middle years of this century?" [17] The ethic of writing is primarily manifested in his artistic responsibility, on the one hand, to showcase the consequences of political turbulence and social unrest in South Africa, and, on the other, to interrogate one's existence under such historical circumstances. This responsibility is later noted in Attwell's interview with Coetzee on the occasion of his winning the Nobel Prize:

> I would say that what you call "the literary life" or any other way of life that provides means for interrogation of our existence — in the case of the writer of fantasy, symbolization, storytelling — seems to me a good life — good in the sense of being ethically responsible.[18]

Coetzee's pursuit of this ethic of writing means that much of his fiction is highly contextualized. As Attwell puts it in his first monograph on Coetzee, they are "situational metafiction". [19] The fictional characters' home consciousness in Coetzee's novels lies in these historical situations, where they are longing for a home in its geographical sense and, beyond that, a sense of belonging to accommodate their cultural identities. It is this historicity and culturality that home consciousness in Coetzee's fiction is closely bound up with.[20] Thus, the ethics *of* writing turns into

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[17] Ibid.
[18] David Attwell, "An Exclusive Interview with J.M. Coetzee," *Dagens Nyheter* 2003.
[19] *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 17.
[20] By the term "consciousness", I do not aspire to embark on a psychological study of Coetzee, though one of my chapter does turn to Freud's theory, "The Uncanny". The psychological analysis of authors, rather than that of the fictional characters, is tricky and thus not easy to control. As Kannemeyer speaks of the role of the psychological details in his biography, it "can seldom lay any claim to reliability", and he is not engaged in "a psychological study of the man J.M. Coetzee". My critical biographical approach does not depend on such kind of study, either. See Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, 14.

the ethical *in* writing. Differently put, literary writing serves as an imaginative space where Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home is represented, interrogated and deconstructed, historically and ethically.

However, the representation is not as expressive as one can expect from that of the Romantic poets, the latter of which Abrams argued in his remarkable book, but as plausibly ambiguous as any text composed within modernist orthodoxy. This plausible ambiguity is what Boehmer calls "Coetzee effects", namely, strategically blurring the division between life and writing while stylistically encoding the novels to show his detachment.[21] What is important but challenging to me, once more, is to provide a fuller and clearer picture of Coetzee's wrestling with the idea of home both in his life and his writings. Therefore, in my discussion of home consciousness in Coetzee's fiction, I neither refer frequently to the debates on authorship, nor do I theorize the concept of home; what I endeavour to do is demonstrate different literary manifestations of home in his writings, which can hopefully enable us to recognize the dynamics of Coetzee's authorship. Accordingly, what the following chapters offer is a collection of eclectic approaches rather than a single argument. However, it should be emphasized that different aspects of the influence are present in all these novels and there will necessarily be a web of connections cross-referencing all chapters. Therefore, though each chapter concentrates on one particular element to discuss the selected novel, this element may well be present in novels examined elsewhere in the thesis.

The first chapter is a detailed description of the problematic issue of home in Coetzee's life, so it relies heavily on the two excellent biographies of Coetzee by Kannemeyer and Attwell respectively, as well as the novelist's autobiographical trilogy. By discussing the home-related aspects from his childhood and transcontinental moves through South Africa, Britain, the United States and Australia, I attempt to show how Coetzee fosters a Janus-faced attitude to the question of where he belongs, namely that there is always a paradoxical sense of alienation and belonging regarding home-related issues. This prominent feature in his authorship resonates with the literary subject of home in his writing, so the chapter serves as a biographical foundation for the following parts which address the representation, interrogation and deconstruction of home consciousness from different theoretical

[21] Boehmer, "Reading between Life and Work'," 440.

perspectives.

The second chapter mainly pays attention to the novella "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" ("NJC") in Coetzee's debut novel, *Dusklands*.[22] Though this novel had been rejected by some American and South African publishers initially,[23] it drew high attention among literary critics since the fiction could be deemed to be, as one of the earliest reviews notes, "among the first truly modern novels in English written and published in South Africa".[24] Chronologically speaking, Attwell conducts a detailed analysis of Coetzee's narrative strategy against colonialism and imperialism, including the subversion of rationality through historicisation and parody in the American and the South African contexts; he then elaborates on how the text conveys the two protagonists' pursuit of power.[25] Starting with discussing the influence of William Burchell, a British naturalist and traveller in the nineteenth century, on the genesis of "NJC", Kai Easton explores the relation between historicity and textuality in this novel and proposes a reconsideration of the rivalry between fictional discourse and historical discourse in "The Novel Today".[26] In a more recent essay, Hermann Wittenberg focuses on the publication history of *Dusklands*, emphasizing Coetzee's consistent authorial style and his refusal to offer any interpretations on his fiction from the very beginning.[27]

These observations speak of the relation between Coetzee's authorship and the novel in terms of its narrative strategy, genesis and publication, but what demands a second thought is a tension, the tension behind Coetzee's authorship when writing this novella. Thus this chapter will examine this tension and show how the novella presents itself as a rebellious work by an Afrikaner descendant to write against his origins. The paradoxical home consciousness in this novella becomes, then, an ethical challenge for Coetzee.

In the third chapter, by emphasizing and analyzing the frequent appearance of

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[22] J.M. Coetzee, *Dusklands* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982).
[23] For a detailed account of its publication history, see Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, 241-49.
[24] U. A. Barnett, "*Dusklands*," *Books Abroad* 50, no. 2 (1976): 459.
[25] See David Attwell, "'The Labyrinth of My History': J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 25, no. 1 (1991): 7-23.
[26] See Kai Easton, "Coetzee, the Cape and the Question of History," *Scrutiny2* 11, no. 1 (2006): 5-21.
[27] See Hermann Wittenberg, "Towards an Archaeology of *Dusklands*," *English in Africa* 38, no. 3 (2012): 71-90.

the term *nowhere* in the text, I demonstrate, from the interrelation of authorship and text, the close correspondence between Coetzee's unsettlement in South Africa in the 1970s, and that of Magda, the female protagonist in *In the Heart of the Country* (*IHC*),[28] suffering from a failure to pursue an idealistic home on the remote rural farm. Coetzee's paradoxical feelings about South Africa embody themselves in this period in his involvement with the rigorous censorship regime in South Africa and the Afrikaner culture behind the text. By choosing an anti-pastoral genre in an anti-realistic narrative, Coetzee depicts a miserable picture of Magda's struggle with her patriarchal father, rebellious coloured servants, as well as her own identity crisis. The cruel answer for Magda is that *nowhere* could be the very place to accommodate the ethical values in her mind, though she attempts to subvert the patriarchal authority and seek reciprocity with the coloured servants. The tension of master-slave dichotomy will never be resolved due to Magda's reluctance to abandon her mentality of white supremacy. Magda's tragedy provides us with an opportunity to explore the historical and ethical dimensions of the narrative and, beyond that, Coetzee's continued wrestling with the issue of home.

Drawing on Freud's theory of the uncanny, the next chapter investigates the dynamics between Coetzee's unhomely authorship and the uncanny narrative in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (*WB*).[29] After a brief introduction to the theory of the uncanny and the difference between Jentsch's interpretation and Freud's, I attend to the relation between the unhomely and the uncanny, and then move on to the unhomely authorship behind the placeless setting in *WB*, where I take issue with Wittenberg's assumption about the origins and the implications of the placelessness. The topic of torture is then analyzed in terms of the magistrate's double and the dream sequences. In spite of the attempt to explore the uncanny in Coetzee's narrative strategy, I do not think of *WB* as a gothic novel that features the haunting of mysterious supernatural elements in the narrative. Several scholars have discussed these elements in *WB*. Dominic Head notes that Coetzee's Gothicism exemplifies itself in "the ethical awakening of the magistrate" and "the treatment of torture" because "torture is another standard Gothic motif".[30] Gerald Gaylard argues

[28] J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977).
[29] *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Penguin, 1999).
[30] Dominic Head, "Coetzee and the Animals: The Quest for Postcolonial Grace," in *Empire and the Gothic*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (U.K: Palgrave

that *WB* "utilizes and develops the Gothic mode" to explore otherness.[31] Ken Gelder holds that Coetzee narrates the relation between the magistrate and the barbarian girl "in exact Gothic terms".[32] I will not deny the merits of these arguments, but, to me, the uncanny is a better term for the reading of home consciousness in this fiction.

Chapter Five examines home consciousness in *Life & Times of Michael K* (*MK*) from the perspective of literary geography.[33] Focusing on the term literary landscape, I demonstrate how Michael K wrestles with the farm, Wynberg Park and the garden, and how the oppressive landscape registers deception and exposure to K. Furthermore, the encoded landscape in the fiction chimes with Coetzee's observations on South African landscape writing in *White Writing* (*WW*). [34]

Spatial elements have intimately to do with the construction and the deconstruction of the idea of home. Mike Crang, one of the main scholars in cultural geography, reminds us of, among many other things, "the importance of this spatial structure in creating an idea of home" when discussing the narrative pattern of *The Odyssey*.[35] To my knowledge, few critics have explored this importance though some do discuss the spatial elements in Coetzee's writing from other points of view. The discussion of the historical implications of the abounding place-names in the narrative and K's relation with several places contributes, albeit in a small portion, to Stefan Helgesson's Levinasian reading of the novel.[36] Rita Barnard demonstrates the way Coetzee in his (anti)pastoral fiction, with "antimimetic and demystificatory impulses", responds to the two dream topographies Coetzee broaches in *WW.* [37] It is not difficult to follow how she applies theories and concepts from Roland Barthes, such as *atopia*, and Theodor Adorno, such as negative dialectics, to the analysis of

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Macmillan 2003), 230.
[31] Gerald Gaylard, "The Postcolonial Gothic: Time and Death in Southern African Literature," *Journal of Literary Studies* 24, no. 4 (2008): 10.
[32] Ken Gelder, "The Postcolonial Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle and Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 97.
[33] J.M. Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* (London: Vintage, 2004).
[34] *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
[35] Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 1998), 48.
[36] See Stefan Helgesson, *Writing in Crisis: Ethics and History in Gordimer, Ndebele and Coetzee* (Pietermaritzburg: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 228-33.
[37] Rita Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

Coetzee's novels. Meanwhile, she takes issue with, from time to time, both Stephen Gray's failure to accommodate Coetzee's case in his categorization of the sense of place in South African literature, and Teresa Dovey's lack of "a consciousness of the contingency and historicity of cultural forms" in her Lacanian reading of Coetzee's fiction.[38] In Barnard's illuminating view, "a deliberate unsettledness" can be found both in Coetzee's shiftiness in the genre choice all over his oeuvre, especially in his early novels, and the narrative itself imbued with historical and cultural contemplation about this unsettledness.[39] In contrast to Barnard's focus on Coetzee's unsettledness, Carrol Clarkson shows how Coetzee's interrogation between naming and power, geography and history, landscape and community, plays its role in the dynamics of split and fusion between the signifier of the real geographical names and their signified in Coetzee's writings, which can also be viewed as in congenial dialogue with Helgesson's interpretation of place-names. Drawing on Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*, Clarkson regards Coetzee's treatment of these spatial elements "as a postcolonial countersignature to a modernist text".[40]

Coetzee's engagement with the representation of the dysfunctional family in his oeuvre, and especially with that of motherhood in *Age of Iron* (*AI*), invites a feminist reading of home consciousness in this novel. This is what the sixth chapter, entitled "A Maternal Narrative and Beyond", tries to formulate. The novel originates from Coetzee's deepest feeling with his mother, Vera, as Attwell elaborates on in his recent book,[41] but a more personal motivation and origin of the novels does not entail a traditional family drama. Coetzee's literary taste and intellectual pursuits (instead of merely representing his personal life in the novel) lie in introducing the flow of his bereavement and family crises into an ethical and political current, to eventually merge with the historical tide. As other chapters intend to demonstrate, most of Coetzee's novels originate from, and revolve around, a single line of his personal relation with the issue of home, but end with a more complicated net woven by biographical, national, ethical and political factors.

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[38] Ibid., 25.
[39] Ibid., 21.
[40] Carrol Clarkson, "Remains of the Name," in *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*, ed. Attie De Lange, et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 127.
[41] David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 161-76.

A maternal narrative, as the term indicates, should primarily attend to the parent/child relation, and there is actually no lack of discussions on familial bonds in Coetzee's fiction. Paola Splendore contends that the distorted relationship between parents and children in Coetzee' s fiction acts as "a sub-text",[42] which lies under the surface of the narrative without explicit and full development. Her argument that Coetzee makes the ethical and political dimension of the familial relationship outweigh its familial bond is convincing enough, but she tries to attribute the generational conflicts in *AI* to "the failure of parental responsibility".[43] Similarly, in order to back up his argument on the idea of hospitality in Coetzee's oeuvre, Mike Marais remarks that when the protagonists in Coetzee's works seek to find "the lost child", a recurring "self-reflexive metaphor for the invisible" arises, in which "s/he bears a parental responsibility for the child".[44]

Gillian Dooley also has a chapter-length analysis of the relationship between parents and children in Coetzee's oeuvre in her book. By noting that Coetzee shows more interest in "the intergenerational bond" in his fiction instead of family ties,[45] Dooley conducts a systematic and close reading of the texts from *Dusklands* to *Summertime* and takes issue with some of Splendore's points of view. One problem in Splendore's argument, according to Dooley, is that she categorizes all the family bonds in Coetzee's works as a 'sub-text', since three novels, *Foe*, *AI* and *The Master of Petersburg* (*MP*) "explicitly concern a parent who has lost a child in some way"(157). Dooley is surely correct in highlighting the blunt exposure of family feelings in these novels, but she, like other critics at that time, seems reluctant to relate the narrative intensity to Coetzee's authorship.

In this regard, the study is much consolidated by Sue Kossew with her interesting essay on the parental punctum in Coetzee's novels, especially in *The Childhood of Jesus* (*CJ*).[46] Before moving on to the issue of language in this Jesus

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[42] Paola Splendore, "'No More Mothers and Fathers': The Family Sub-Text in J.M. Coetzee's Novels," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38, no. 3 (2003): 150.
[43] Ibid., 152.
[44] Mike Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2009), xiv.
[45] Gillian Dooley, *J.M. Coetzee and the Power of Narrative* (New York: Cambria Press, 2010), 152.
[46] The punctum is a term derived from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and refers to, simply speaking, the piercing and wounding effect caused by some photos on people's emotions. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida : Reflections on*

novel, Kossew observes that Coetzee's novels abound with strikingly touching and emotionally-rich but, in Barthes's words, "piercing" and "wounding", familial moments. Her analysis of the interrelation between the parental punctum and Coetzee's fictional autobiographies can be deemed an attempt to bridge the gap between Coetzee' s life and his writings in respect of the influences of Coetzee's parents on his authorship. This relationship has been thoroughly explored by Attwell in his recent book, where he makes full use of Coetzee's drafts to conduct a genetic analysis of the influence of Vera, Coetzee's mother, and Jack, the father, on the novelist's authorship.[47]

My investigation of home consciousness in Coetzee's fiction culminates in the seventh chapter which reads this compelling and striking feature in *Disgrace* in terms of a postsecular approach. The postsecular reading of *Disgrace* is also seen in Alyda Faber's essay where, borrowing the concept of a poetic of exposure proposed by Eric L. Santner, she discusses Lurie's confessional practice and the novel's dialogical structure.[48] Faber's reading gives impetus to Margaret Herrick's argument in which, though also calling *Disgrace* a postsecular novel, she distinguishes her discussion from Faber's by attending to the different implications of two religious tropes, confession and sacrifice, in Lurie's and Lucy's cases respectively. Lurie's wrestling with these tropes involves, in Herrick's opinion, both their original religious connotations and their secular meanings, while Lucy's situation provides a postsecular possibility.[49]

My understanding of the religious doctrines and moments, including Coetzee's reference to the Rule of St Benedict, Eros, the scapegoat, and Lurie's attitude to Byron's music and the stray dogs, is substantially different from Herrick's. After briefly tracing the history of postsecularism in sociology and literary criticism in this

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Photography, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).Kossew also gives a brief introduction to the theory before applying it to Coetzee's novels. See Sue Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," in *J.M. Coetzee's the Childhood of Jesus: The Ethics of Ideas and Things*, ed. Jennifer Rutherford and Anthony Uhlmann (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 150-51.

[47] As for the role of Coetzee's father in his creative process, see Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 177-86.

[48] See Alyda Faber, "The Post-Secular Poetics and Ethics of Exposure in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Literature and Theology* 23, no. 3 (2009): 303-16.

[49] See Margaret Herrick, "The 'Burnt Offering': Confession and Sacrifice in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," ibid.30, no. 1 (2016).

chapter, I argue how these postsecular scriptures and moments in *Disgrace* are deployed in an ironical way to explore the issue of home when colonial history penetrates, paralyzes and destroys people's intimate lives, specifically speaking, that of Lurie and Lucy. That Lurie turns to animal welfare at the latter part of the novel shows not only Coetzee's sympathy with his protagonist but also the novelist's own unsettledness in the irredeemable history. Lucy's firm attachment to her farm and the land, regardless of what cost she may pay, suggests that her sense of home rarely relies on anything postsecular or transcendental.

While the final chapter focuses on *Slow Man* and *CJ*,[50] it is intended as an epilogue to the thesis as a whole. By proposing three trajectories in Coetzee's post-*Disgrace* novels, namely a shift in the novels' locality, a transcendental turn, and an unlocated cosmopolitan tendency, I try to demonstrate how Coetzee's abiding concerns with the theme of home develop in his later writings. The theme is, as always, closely germane to his authorship.

[50] J.M. Coetzee, *Slow Man* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2005). *The Childhood of Jesus* (London: Vintage, 2014).

1. A Janus-faced Attitude to Home: Coetzee's authorship

The question of where J. M. Coetzee's home is, or where he actually belongs, in both a personal and a national dimension, seems to be a long-standing puzzlement for Coetzee himself and an understated discussion, or at least a topic lacking in systematic research, among critics. Tracing Coetzee's life experiences enables us to discern that there is a Janus-faced tension in Coetzee's attitude towards this question, which involves a paradoxical sense of belonging and alienation to lead him into a self-imposed exilic condition, physically and spiritually. This paradox permeates Coetzee's life from his early years in the Karoo farm to his emigration to Australia, so it is my point of departure to discuss Coetzee's authorship.

I. A memorable home – the Karoo farm

> He must go to the farm because *there is no place on earth he loves more or can imagine loving more*. … Yet since as far back as he can remember this love has had an edge of pain. He may visit the farm but he will never live there. *The farm is not his home*; he will never be more than a guest, an uneasy guest.[1]

The place described in *Boyhood* is Voëlfontein, a Karoo farm where John Coetzee spends his school vacations. The name "Karoo", also spelt "Karroo", refers to "land of thirst" in the Khoisan language. It is precisely defined as the semi-desert land devoid of surface water, though it was an extensive inland sea hundreds of millions of years ago. With the sea drying up, the land has gradually seen the flourishing of sheep-raising, which has become its economic pillar since the mid-nineteenth century.[2] Its harsh weather conditions inhibit soil fertility but endow the land with quietness among the rolling mountains. Readers familiar with Coetzee's works will never fail to connect this scenery to the account of the barren landscape where K repeatedly flees in *Life & Times of Michael K*. It is the very landscape that witnesses

[1] *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1997), 79 (emphasis mime).
[2] For a more detailed discussion of the background, see Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 65-66.

Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home at the early stage of his life: his attachment to the farm arises from the happiness and belonging he gains from the life there while this feeling is simultaneously neutralized by his mother's resentment and his father's non-ownership of the farm.

Many episodes in *Boyhood* can manifest little Coetzee's deep love for the farm:[3] the family reunions over different holidays witness the congeniality among the extended Coetzees (9); John Coetzee is obsessed with hunting there with his father in the winters (87); the fauna and flora, and even the food on the farm, leave such a great impression that he recalls them with strong feelings (80, 101). The love leads to a sense of transience for him, "no time can be enough when one loves a place with such devouring love" (91); and it further results in his wish to be buried on the farm or have his ashes scattered there, both of which indicate an eternal integration with the land.[4]

What complicates this attachment is his mother's disappointment with Voëlfontein. The pictures where Vera played team sports and travelled around Europe show that she had lived a quite leisurely life in Victoria West from the 1920s to 1930s before her marriage (*Boyhood*, 40). However, since Vera and Jack Coetzee tied the knot, they led a nomadic existence because of financial troubles. During their frequent moves, John Coetzee was born in 1940, and Jack even decided to serve in the World War II army in 1942 when Vera was pregnant with David, John's younger brother.[5] Apart from grumbling about the indifference of Jack's family, Vera would keep silent when the rest of the family talked about the farm. Living a miserable life with a scanty military stipend with the two little boys, stuck in a single room in the town of Prince Albert, Vera was in urgent need of assistance from her parents-in-law, who are the owners of the farm at that time. When the belated

[3] Critics have pointed to the inauthenticity of these fictional biographies. It is possible that Kannemeyer places excessive emphasis on them as sources of information; consequently, my reliance on them is selective. See Boehmer, "Reading between Life and Work," 435-50.

[4] In Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy, there are two descriptions of this wish. See Coetzee, *Boyhood*, 97. *Summertime: Scenes from Provincial Life* (London: Vintage, 2015), 108.

[5] According to Kannemeyer, the reason why Jack Coetzee left expectant Vera and little John at that very time lies in the fact that, among others, being an enlisted soldier would exempt him from the accusation against his repeated bankruptcy in business and malpractice as an attorney. See Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 35-36.

invitation from the farm finally arrived,[6] the mother and sons only managed to stay there four months, which unfortunately left an impression on Vera that they were not welcome mainly due to her mother-in-law.[7] Though Vera might misunderstand the Coetzees' reaction,[8] there was no doubt that Vera felt indignant at the farm. Since John spent most of his childhood with, and was also more attached to, Vera, he would be vulnerable to his mother's indignation at the farm. What the novelist says in *Boyhood* will chime with this observation, "but he cannot talk about his love [of the farm], not only because normal people do not talk about such things but because confessing to it would be a betrayal of his mother" (80).

During their childhood, John and David developed strong feelings of closeness to Vera not only because of the intermittent absence the father's role in the family (which I shall turn to later), but also because of Vera's unfailing willingness to support the family and provide the best possible safety and protection. This willingness is fully developed in *Boyhood*: in John's eyes, Vera is "the firmest thing in his life" and "the rock on which he stands" (35); she supports the family "like a rock, like a stone column" (116). The novelist also recalls many moments to show Vera's ubiquitous solicitude: she always follows closely when John is playing around the wild; she buys her sons expensive circus tickets but, due to the family's financial trouble, waits outside alone under the scorching sun. It makes sense that little John says, "he is too close to his mother, his mother is too close to him" (37). Even in the family squabbles, Vera always stops her complaint about her parents-in-law's indifference to propitiate the father and the sons. John appreciated Vera's love, so he claims that he is "her son, not his father's son" (79).

However, Vera's selfless love suffocated John, to some extent. Though any competent mother may act in similar ways, under those circumstances, Vera's reactions sometimes were "over-protective". [9] Then little John longed for independence and escape from this unreserved love.

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[6] The statement in *Boyhood*, "they were not once invited to the farm" (80), is not the truth. See ibid., 625-26.
[7] Ibid., 37.
[8] In Kannemeyer's interview with Sylvia Coetzee, who is John's aunt and the widow of his father's brother, Son, she definitely doubted Vera's stereotyped impression of Lenie Coetzee, Vera's mother-in-law. Based on what Sylvia said, Lenie was a very hospitable and sympathetic person. See ibid., 626.
[9] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 165.

> Her love emerges above all in her watchfulness, her readiness to pounce and save him should he ever be in danger. …It is because he is so sure of her care that he is on his guard with her, never relaxing, never allowing her a chance. …He yearns to be rid of her watchful attention. There may come a time when to achieve this he will have to assert himself, refuse her so brutally that with a shock she will have to step back and release him. (*Boyhood*, 122)

When John became an adolescent, this longing acquired another dimension: he wanted to ease her load and managed to support himself after entering the University of Cape Town, because "he is too squeamish to witness his mother's sacrifices" (*DP*, 394).

The responsibility of supporting the family primarily dependent on the mother implies that John's father, Jack, might not be as qualified as a breadwinner. Though Jack was mainly engaged in an attorney's career from his youth before being deprived of the practice in 1960 permanently, he went bankrupt several times and consequently plunged the family into "an exceptionally nomadic existence", which planted a seed of bitterness in John's understanding of home.[10] The mother and the sons experienced frequent moves in the 1940s, so the aforementioned family farm (considering the happiness John felt there) is possibly one of the few positive memories when it comes to John's sense of home. It is due to Jack's incompetence in the family that little John wished that he had no father (*Boyhood*, 96). Nurtured by Jack's pretence to work and indulgence in word-puzzles in the newspaper without looking for a new job, the seed sprouted with a sense of shame in John during his teenage years: he would rather call his father "that man" in the mother-son's conversation (156). It produced the fruit of anger at the end of *Boyhood* where John assumes that "that man" has committed suicide. The absence of fatherhood during his early years, frequent moves, and recurrent parental fray due to their lingering financial straits overshadow John's upbringing, where he, either as a child or as a teenager, needs devoted paternal protection and a good masculine example to follow. As Attwell puts it, "If Coetzee had come to feel, when writing *Boyhood*, that he had been malformed by South Africa, then in part it is because Jack provided no

[10] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 34.

protection and no entrée as his son made his way in the world."[11] It may partly contribute to the fact that, in Coetzee's oeuvre, there is startling lack of a well-organized family, and the father's role is either omitted, such as in *Life & Times of Michael K* (*MK*) and *Age of Iron* (*AI*), or disqualified, such as in *In the Heart of the Country* (*IHC)* or *Disgrace*.[12] Undoubtedly, committed as he is to the aesthetic ideal of impersonality, Coetzee is close to his writing in his creative process, but the tensions in the family life do leave remarkable traces in his way of addressing the idea of home in his literary works.

Turning back to the topic of the family farm, because Voëlfontein was inherited by John's uncle, Son, after John's grandfather, Gert Maxwell Coetzee, was deceased, besides his mother's influence, the fact that neither Jack nor John could inherit the farm also compromised his attachment to it. Though little Coetzee could not have fully understood the legal implication of the inheritance, the concept of ownership did disturb him. In *Boyhood*, the protagonist never ventures to express the attachment by declaring that he belongs to the farm, since it may be misunderstood that the farm belongs to him; in his mind, the farm "belongs to no one" and "exists from eternity to eternity" (96). Though it is only his wish, the farm gradually takes root in his heart and decades later, when recalling the farm, he notes it is the one that "he had defined, imagined, constructed, as his place of origin"(*DP*, 393-94).

This delicate sentiment of belonging and alienation inches its way into "Nietverloren", one of Coetzee's recent short fictions. Though Nietverloren, as a geographical name, usually refers to a wine farm in the Western Cape, the story is grounded in the Karoo, where Coetzee's childhood memory resides. Literally, the word, Nietverloren, originating from Dutch and meaning "not lost" in English, is supposed to express one's "relief at having found a home",[13] but the story itself suggests the very opposite: a failure of locating one's memorable home. Though the Karoo farm the narrator and his two American friends drop by in their travelling around South Africa tries to restore the traditional Karoo lifestyle, the farm becomes

[11] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 186.
[12] One may argue that *The Master of Petersburg* does depict a responsible and devoted father, but it has more to do with Coetzee's loss of his son, Nicolas, instead of addressing the novelist's feeling for his father.
[13] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 64.

a place to provide "waiters and whores to the rest of the world".[14] The exaggerated account of the consequences of the farm's commercialization conveys Coetzee's lamentation after seeing his memorable home consumed in an undermined way, the way that these Karoo farms are transformed to cultural tourism sites due to their quaintly exotic lifestyle.

In Coetzee's Janus-faced authorship, if the Karoo farm has a more humanistic dimension since it primarily involves the familial relationships and his carefree or careworn childhood, then the Karoo landscape will constitute a more political and historical dimension. Coetzee is deeply impressed with the empty silence and vast barrenness in the Karoo so that he remarks in an interview with strong emotions: "I do believe that people can only be in love with one landscape in their lifetime. One can appreciate and enjoy many geographies, but there is only one that one feels in one's bones".[15] However, the beloved landscape is also a problem for him. He cannot fully immerse himself in the love since it has been corrupted by colonial ideology: despite colonizing the indigenous South Africans in a brutal way, the colonists and the apartheid authorities also foster a strong feeling for the otherwise emotionless landscape. This is what Coetzee refers to as "a failure of love", which was formed in the history of colonialism and deteriorates under apartheid, and led to pervasive "deformed and stunted" human relations in South Africa (*DP*, 97-98). His attachment to the Karoo landscape echoes, coincidentally and ironically, that of these people, with whom Coetzee never makes peace. In this sense, the landscape "makes things difficult for the cosmopolitan artist-intellectual who wants to escape his natal earth and country".[16] This paradoxical feeling for the farm and the landscape is one of the abiding concerns in Coetzee's oeuvre, and we can see their shadows in *IHC*, *MK*, and *Disgrace*, as my following chapters will investigate.

Actually, what Coetzee is wrestling with is not only this "failure of love", but also his ancestry's colonial history and the subsequent apartheid regime. It is due to this irreconciliation, among others, that Coetzee explicitly denies the label of Afrikaner at the early stage of his writing career, albeit he is of Afrikaner descent. As he puts it, "(n)o Afrikaner would consider me an Afrikaner" (*DP*, 341). However, Coetzee himself is slightly ambivalent on this matter: in spite of a scrupulous

[14] J.M. Coetzee, *Three Stories* (Melbourne: Text Publishing Company, 2014), 42.
[15] Folke Rhedin, "J.M. Coetzee: Interview," *Kunapipi* 6, no. 1 (1984): 10.
[16] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 65.

repudiation of its irredeemable colonial history, he does not reject the label so resolutely later. This is why, in the correspondence between Coetzee and Hermann Giliomee, a South African historian, after the announcement of the former's Nobel Prize, the novelist calls himself "a doubtful Afrikaner".[17] The exemplary writing of this repudiation is, of course, the novella, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee", in *Dusklands*.

II. A self-imposed exile

Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home continues to haunt him in his adulthood. The novelist's transcontinental relocations can be thought of as an arduous journey, both physically and spiritually, to situate himself in "a capsule in which he can live" (*DP*, 393). The awareness of the consequences of historical colonialism and provincialism propels him into a self-imposed exile, but he is fated to be an outsider every time he moves to a new place, suggesting that his attempt to come to terms with South Africa and its colonial history ends with failure. It is this interminable anxiety that becomes one of the fundamental dimensions of his authorship.

i. South Africa

Since beginning his studies at the University of Cape Town in 1957, Coetzee had decided to go overseas after graduation. Coetzee's flight from South Africa, besides the aforementioned family reason, can also be attributed to, firstly, his determination to escape the chaos in South Africa between the 1950s and 1960s and, secondly, his intellectual pursuits.

Since the National Party came to power in 1948, it enacted a train of notorious apartheid laws in nearly all political and social areas to entrench its authority.[18]

[17] quoted in Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 557.

[18] The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949 and successively the Immorality Act banned marriage and sexual relations among different races; the Population Registration Act of 1950 classified South African inhabitants into four groups, namely, black, white, coloured, and Indian, which followed by the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 designating exclusive use of public premises to certain groups; both the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 enforced social segregation of school and university education; in 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act

Though these segregation policies would not victimize Coetzee directly due to his white identity, they exposed him to the rampant racism and repressive regime in South Africa, leading him to reflect on the white's born privilege. Furthermore, his antipathy to politics, among others, accelerated his move to leave this place. His childhood in Worcester saw "enough of the Afrikaner right, enough of its rant, its self-righteousness, its cruelty" which is a lingering concern in the rest of his years in South Africa (*DP*, 394). During his college years, Coetzee was irritated in his mathematical tutoring class when one senior lecturer suddenly interrupted and announced the State of Emergency on campus after the Sharpeville Massacre, where the police shot sixty-nine dead at the scene and injured over four hundred people in a peaceful demonstration against the pass laws. He suspected that fencing the campus off was an attempt to prevent students from joining the march instead of any goodwill for their safety. Several decades later, when meditating on the consequences of the Immorality Act, he notes that it would give rise to the sole vertical orders from the white to the black and reject the horizontal ones between races (97). To put it differently, it demonstrates the white's rejection of the initiative to make peace with the black and their phobia of integration. Nevertheless, at that time, Coetzee did not directly get involved in the range of internal resistance activity sparked by racial discrimination but chose to become an *outsider*, distancing himself from these protests. In his own words, he "moves on the fringe of the left" instead of involving himself in it, an attitude he has fostered since he was a child in Worcester (394).

Besides his reluctance in personal (not literary) involvement in the political chaos and social turmoil, his dream of becoming a poet is another impetus for his escape from South Africa: he was influenced by canonical Anglo-French culture when choosing the life of a poet because, in his words, "civilization since the eighteenth century has been an Anglo-French affair".[19]

The first time Coetzee had been exposed to the appealing power of a classic was when overhearing a recording from a harpsichord rendering of Bach's *The Well-*

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legislated the black could only exercise their political rights in designated areas rather than in South Africa.

[19] J.M. Coetzee, *Youth:Scenes from Provincial Life* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2015), 25.

tempered Clavier one summer afternoon in 1955.[20] Though not leading him to a career in music, the moment serves as a form of enlightenment for Coetzee, revealing a glorious picture of the western canon and traditions, followed by a comprehensive reading of literary classics in his university years. It would motivate him to act on his desire not to be trapped in provincial South Africa but to explore Anglo-French civilization in European metropolises. He designated South Africa as "the peripheries of civilization" where it was impossible for literature's formal evolution to take place and a European metropolis was the "centre of a civilization" to brew these significant changes.[21] Coetzee does realize that he lived a provincial life in and before his education, so his autobiographical trilogy shares the same subtitle, *Scenes from the Provincial Life*. As he puts it,

> I want to assert that our relation in South Africa to the West European and North American center of the dominant world civilization remains that of province to metropolis, to be a provincial literature.[22]

The feeling of detachment from both the political struggle of the time and the provincialism of his roots impels Coetzee to free himself of the inborn shackles. *Youth* is a novel in which a character has a problem in dealing with the relationship to his home in both senses. According to John in *Youth*, "South Africa was a bad start, a handicap" (62), "an albatross around his neck" which is too suffocating for him to breath the fresh air of illumination (101). He is so determined to sever the connection with South Africa that "[i]f a tidal wave were to sweep in from the Atlantic tomorrow and wash away the southern tip of the African continent, he will not shed a tear" (62).

Despite the unswerving determination to distance himself from South Africa,

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[20] For a full account of this episode, see *Stranger Shores: Essays, 1986-1999* (London: Viking, 2002), 9. It is worth noting that both T. S. Eliot and Bach, Coetzee's two subjects in his speech, *What is a Classic? A Lecture,* have experienced a state of being an outsider. Bach saw his gradual reduction from fame to obscurity due to his music being marginalized by the popular neo-classical movement in the eighteenth century while Eliot, instead of breathing a word of his American origin, spoke highly of Roman-Christian civilization in the presidential speech to the Virgil Society in London in 1944.

[21] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 356.

[22] Ibid.

after temporary stays in Britain and America (to which I shall turn later), he returned to South Africa in 1971 and lived in Cape Town for the next thirty years until his emigration to Australia in 2002. This homecoming and long residence is not an incidental choice but, in his own words, "a will to remain in crisis" (*DP*, 337). This is the very reason why he turned down offers from the universities in Canada and Hong Kong when he failed to extend his American visa and had to go back to South Africa. The determination then became *the will*, the readiness to confront the uncertainties caused by the political and social turmoil in his homeland. He notes this readiness in *DP*, rarely and explicitly, albeit with a tone of irony: "a real resolution would have been to hurl myself bodily into the anti-imperialist struggle" (ibid). He began his teaching and writing career shortly after his return to the University of Cape Town and gradually gained glaring international fame as both an academic and a novelist. Hence, there was no lack of opportunities for him to leave South Africa, but his commitment to stay there was not changed during this period. When Dick Penner nominated him for a Chair of Excellence at the University of Tennessee, Coetzee gave him the following reply in a letter:

> I do not need to tell you of the turmoil in this country, turmoil which is reflected in the minds of everyone who lives here. My own feeling is that I want to live here as long as it is possible to do some good, in whatever way I can. As a writer, I don't want to go into exile, if only because I have seen what exile does to writers.[23]

Thus, South Africa, as a home (in a national sense) for Coetzee, provides the most prominent platform for the novelist to address the paradox of belonging and alienation in his literary works, albeit ironically. Though being widely criticized for his elusiveness of writing against the apartheid regime in a realistic way, Coetzee's interrogation of colonialism and apartheid can arguably be discerned in most of his fictions: he manages to express his concerns with these issues in an ethical and self-reflexive way. For Coetzee, writing is "a matter of awakening the countervoices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them" (*DP*, 65). That is to say, the writing is not *for* writing but *against* writing, which is assumed to spark dialogues within the narrative and challenge itself. Coetzee tries to raise his own voice in the dominant

[23] Dick Penner, *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J.M. Coetzee* (U.S.A: Greenwood Pub Group, 1989), 19.

culture of literary instrumentalism, namely, literature as a revolutionary weapon to serve the political struggle, though this culture "regards such acts of self-testimony as crude, gauche".[24] This is Coetzee's way of self-actualization. It is in this sense that the issue of home becomes a literary subject at the beginning of his writing career. Coetzee keeps on reminding those who support popular writing methodology that "its representations *are* representations",[25] suggesting that their way of addressing the urgencies and uncertainties are just as conventional, rather than searching and permanent.

ii. Britain

> "Already his ambitions are more modest than they used to be, much more modest. Londoners disappointed him, at first, with the poverty of their ambitions. Now he is on his way to joining them. Each day the city chastens him, chastises him; like a beaten dog, he is learning. " (*Youth*, 113)

J.M. Coetzee himself has a complicated relationship with the issue of home, which he needs to find a way to work out. *Youth*, an autobiographical account of his attitude to home, lays a biographical foundation for the discussions of home consciousness in his other fictions. Coetzee came to London "as a socially disadvantaged, socially marginal young intellectual" to realize his literary dreams and free himself from South Africa (*DP*, 394). However, the metropolitan city did not come up to his expectations, as the epigraph shows. Before moving on to discuss Coetzee's feelings about this failed homecoming, it is worth noting the then social context in Britain since what disappointed him cannot be separated from this background.

The account in *Youth* tells us that the cultural centre in the world was located in Vienna before the First World War, transferred to Paris in the 1920s until the late 1940s, and finally settled down in London in late 1950s and 1960s. At that time, this metropolitan city held five million young baby-boomers who were overthrowing British conventions with their admiration of the "Beat" culture, an American literary movement to reject traditional narrative values, and the "angry young men", a group of British playwrights and novelists who challenge traditional society. Politically,

[24] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 27.
[25] Ibid.

Harold Macmillan, the then British prime minister, in his famous speech "Winds of Change" in 1960, admitted Britain's willingness to grant independence to its former colonies, which echoes the background of national liberation movements in African countries and hastens South Africa's severance from the Commonwealth in 1961.

In spite of this social turbulence, Coetzee's life in London seemed initially to go as smoothly as he had planned. With his excellent mathematical training, he secured a respectable job as a computer programmer with International Business Machines, and the regular income ensured that he could immerse himself in the metropolitan culture and realize his literary dream in his spare time. However, the monotonous work and a limited social network soon bored him, and he was depressed about the British youth who were inclined to admire American fashion and follow suit rather than demonstrating the vigour and innovation of the global cultural centre. He became so discontented with the miserable life in London that he had to wander forlornly along streets to exhaust himself for a sound sleep. The sense of being an outsider once again occupied him. Worse than that, the life in London could not provide him with any inspiration for writing and the first story he drafted was coincidentally premised on the South African context. Following the resignation from IBM and his marriage with Mauna Philippa Jubber in Cape Town, he returned to Britain to work in International Computers and Tabulators Limited in Bracknell, where an Indian colleague strengthened his detestation for England but alerted him to the possibility of an American life.[26]

Though the London life may not be as miserable as Coetzee describes in *Youth*,[27] it is beyond doubt that he could not totally "shake the dust of the country from his feet" even though he stood on the ground of London (*DP*, 393). The birth of South Africa as a Republic in 1961 was accompanied by deteriorating internal racial discrimination and escalating violent protests. Coetzee surely remained attentive to these dramatic changes in South Africa so that his indignation at the then social disorders was exaggerated into a kind of political fantasy that the Russians should invade South Africa, catch the prime minister and his aides, and then kill them with guns (*Youth*, 100). The weekly letter he received from his mother was not a relief but

[26] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 133.
[27] The correspondence between Kannemeyer and Lionel Knight, whom Coetzee befriended when he was in the reading room of the British Museum, may shed a different light on Coetzee's life in London. See ibid., 135-37.

an annoying reminder of his inextricable links with the past.

iii. The United States

> Does he grow homesick for South Africa? Though he feels at home neither in Britain nor in the United States, he is not homesick, nor even particularly unhappy. He merely feels alien. (*DP*, 393)

If a formidable misery dominates Coetzee's London life, his six-year period in the United States can be arguably described as agreeable and productive. Coetzee indeed enjoyed his stay in America where he completed his doctoral dissertation on Samuel Beckett at the University of Texas at Austin and taught various courses in the literature of Britain, America and South Africa, as well as stylistics, translation and linguistics at the State University of New York in Buffalo. An amiable working atmosphere and a group of stimulating colleagues imprinted on him the dedication to research and voluntary industriousness.

Despite his excellent performance as both a doctoral candidate and a popular competent assistant professor, alienation continued to haunt him. In his own words, he never fails to "feel like a stranger" during the time he has spent in America.[28] His inclination towards "a certain emptiness, empty earth and sky", the landscape of empty desolation rooted in his childhood memory of the Karoo, estranged him from the scrubby hills in Texas (*DP*, 52). The lack of nuance in Texan speech stimulated his yearning for a language with "variations of shade and tone", which he could possibly find in the language of English and Afrikaans in South Africa.[29]

Along with memories of a starkly beautiful landscape and a familiar language, what is more formidable to remind Coetzee of his South African origins is the way he was received by the outside world, namely that he was classified as a South African writer and arguably the representative of a South African literary voice, albeit he consistently refused to accept such a reception. One episode at Buffalo seemed to predict this fatality. When teaching at Buffalo, he was asked to open a course on African literature because of his South African origins. This is quite ironical for him since what he intended to do after these transcontinental relocations

[28] quoted in ibid., 208.
[29] Ibid., 156.

was strip himself of the colonial past and its marginal culture. Years later, Coetzee realizes this inescapabilty, as he puts it in *DP*:

> I had left South Africa to be part of a wider world. But now I discovered that my novelty value to the wider world, to the extent that I had any novelty value, was that I came from Africa.（336)

A more practical and nagging problem for Coetzee's stay in America was that his visa would expire in August 1969. His efforts to explore possibilities to extend his visa were negated by his arrest and subsequent prosecution, on a charge of trespass, which was caused by his involvement in a peaceful demonstration to protest police presence on campus. The campus chaos, the uncertainty of his application for permanent residence in America, and the worry of the issue of home, all of these elements contribute to the writing of his first novel, *Dusklands*, which is based on the historical record of a journey of exploration he has read in the library at the University of Texas, and his resentment of the American authorities' colonial ideology and brutal inhumanity in the Vietnam war.

iv. Australia

According to Kannemeyer, Coetzee's choice of an Australia city, Adelaide, as his permanent residence is primarily the result of, among other things, his gradual emotional identification that the vast and barren landscape of Australia fostered during previous visits, which reminded him of "the Karoo of his youth" (536). Though there may be other reasons for his emigration, such as Australia's relative political stability, less ethnic conflicts, the preference of his partner, Dorothy Driver, Coetzee's attachment to the landscape overweighs these considerations.

Though Adelaide may be Coetzee's final stop on his journey of looking for a home, the city and the country cannot influence his writings as South Africa did and continues to do. To put it differently, his wrestling with the question of home and the problem of South Africa will not be easily smoothed out. Though officially accepting Australian citizenship, he still keeps his South African nationality. As he says, South

Africa is, nevertheless, a country with which he retains "strong emotional ties".[30] Australian elements do appear in, but not dominate, his post-emigration writings, where his ways of addressing the literary home consciousness will present different features.

[30] Ibid. 552.

2. “Self-administered Therapy”: Writing for/against home —“The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee”

> “I read it as a book about cruelty, an exposé of the cruelty involved in various forms of conquest. … the best interpretation I can give the book is that writing it was a project in self-administered therapy” (*Summertime*, 58).

In *Summertime*, after talking about the deceased Coetzee’s temperament, Julia, his ex-lover, makes the above comment on the relation between *Dusklands* and Coetzee’s authorship. “The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee” is indeed (“NJC”), as Julia points out, a book about “cruelty”, namely colonial violence imposed upon the indigenous inhabitants by people reliant on western rationalistic discourses, and “various forms of conquest”, including invading and destroying these inhabitants’ residences. But why is it “self-administered therapy” for the novelist? How is the therapy related to the ethics of writing as far as Coetzee’s Janus-faced attitude to home is concerned?

Dusklands consists of two novellas, “The Vietnam Project” (“VP”) and “NJC”, but their literary connection is, in Coetzee’s own words, “loose”.[1] “VP” is a story about Eugene Dawn, an American military specialist, who is in charge of psychological warfare to undermine their enemies in Vietnam and is consequently reduced into a state of insanity. It was written out of Coetzee’s intense feelings about the social unrest due to American involvement with the Vietnam War in his time in Buffalo. “NJC” is a report narrated by Jacobus Coetzee, a heroic frontiersman and a violent plunderer in the eighteenth century, on his exploration of the South African interior. It was composed in terms of the way John Coetzee, the novelist himself, addresses his ancestry’s colonial history. Thus, the two novellas are juxtaposed, as Attwell notes, in a more “experiential and ethical” sense (*DP*, 5). Since this chapter aims to examine how Coetzee responds to his authorship regarding the idea of home, it will primarily focus on “NJC”.

Coetzee’s interest in eighteenth-century South Africa can be traced back to his

[1] Joanna Scott, "Voice and Trajectory: An Interview with J.M. Coetzee," *Salmagundi*, no. 114/115 (1997): 87.

days in London, the time when he managed to spare enough time in the Reading Room of the British Museum so that he could investigate various travel narratives on the Cape written by earlier explorers, which is the origin of the idea of *Dusklands*. Immersing himself in these travel journals, especially when coming across those familiar geographical names, filled him with exhilaration, which strikes an ironical contrast with his determination to never return to South Africa.

> Patriotism: is that what is beginning to afflict him? Is he proving himself unable to live without a country? Having shaken the dust of the ugly new South Africa from his feet, is he yearning for the South Africa of the old days, when Eden was still possible? (*Youth*, 137)

The exhilarating feeling when recognizing the familiar South African elements is not out of his homesickness but due to the fact that one cannot cut all the cultural bonds with one's past, which the young Coetzee comes to realize among his transcontinental relocations. Among these logs in the British Museum, William J. Burchell's, published in the 1820s, even made him want to "write a book as convincing as Burchell's and lodge it in this library that defines all libraries" (138). The imaginary scenic descriptions closely following the above hope shows that he did attempt to present to western readers what the landscape in his country looks like. However, to describe the scenery would also possibly involve realistic narrative, a form of writing Coetzee rarely comes to terms with in his writing career. Thus, the hope becomes "an urgent challenge" to him.[2] This challenge inches its way into Coetzee's reflection on the literary experimentalism in *Dusklands*, where he remarks that the stylistic innovation in his debut novel is due to his dissatisfaction with the monotony and the dominance of realism in the British and South African literary field. In this regard, American fiction took the lead and accommodated stylistic innovations and "*Dusklands* was representative of that wave".[3]

This representation in turn echoes Coetzee's observation in *Youth* where he soon realizes that "what he is after will not be in history books" (139). Years later, after moving to America, he discovered various kinds of books, including travel writing, ethnography and linguistics, concerning the early exploration of African interiors in the library of the University of Texas at Austin, among which one short *Relaas* by an

[2] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 16.
[3] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory," 88.

ancestor of the Coetzee family became the main source of "NJC".

As we can see, Coetzee's initial attempt was to write his interest in eighteenth-century South Africa, although the literary form was unclear yet, to comfort the homelessness of "a cultural émigré" — considering the fact that he has lived in Britain and America for nearly ten years before returning to South Africa (*DP*, 6). In this sense, Coetzee does write *for* home. However, neither is the published novella a historical record, despite being premised on his ancestor's travel journal, nor is it a book to express any admiration of, or identification with, his ancestry's audacious exploration in the South African interior. It is a denouncement which exposes and criticizes the early Dutch settler's violent and aggressive colonization, which is possibly erased from the archives for the sake of their self-interest. The book becomes, then, a writing *against* home. In Attwell's words, "*Dusklands* is indeed an angry work, the book of a young author who is angry about his origins, and angry about the role that his origins have assigned him in the world."[4]

Attwell's judgement is preconditioned by another prominent feature in Coetzee's authorship, namely the ambivalence about his Afrikaner identity. On the one hand, with an Afrikaans family name inherited from his ancestry, raised in a half-Afrikaner, half-German family, he calls himself "a doubtful Afrikaner" in the correspondence with Hermann Giliomee,[5] a South African historian, after the announcement of his Nobel Prize while, on the other hand, the reasons Coetzee elaborates on in *DP* justify his observation that "[n]o Afrikaner would consider me an Afrikaner" (*DP*, 341). On the same occasion, he makes the following remarks:

> Is it my power to withdraw from the gang? I think not. … More important, is it my heart's desire to be counted apart? Not really. Furthermore – and this is an afterthought – I would regard it as morally questionable to write something like the second part of *Dusklands* – a fiction, note – from a position that is not historically complicit. (343)

Coetzee is indeed a "doubtful Afrikaner" who never fails to challenge Afrikaner nationalism and its colonial history. What is "morally questionable" for Coetzee raises the question of ethics in writing, namely that he, one from the inside of that culture, takes the initiative to lay bare the dark side of his ancestry and, furthermore,

[4] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 58.
[5] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 557.

reject "the judgementalism of the outsider".[6] This initiative and rejection is the "self-administered therapy" for Coetzee's ambivalence about his Afrikaner identity and, beyond that, home.

To be an outsider or an insider does not entail physical presence, so the ethics in writing can be consolidated by the place of writing — Coetzee began to write "NJC" when he had physically escaped the rigid constraints of home; by the time he started to work on "VP", he had left America. Distance enables Coetzee to keep vigilant and reinforces the critical dimension, which chimes with what alienation implies in Coetzee's authorship, as noted in the previous chapter. During the approximately ten years' stay in Britain and the United States, Coetzee can be thought of as, in Attwell's words, "a cultural émigré",[7] but he is still an insider from the culture he never makes peace with. When he began his writing career, not only was the place *of* writing telling, but also the place *in* writing mattered: "NJC" is a novella about the exploration of the South African interior. In this sense, "*place* was starting to reassert itself" at the very beginning of Coetzee's writing career.[8]

Coetzee's "not-historically-complicit" position corresponds to that of one of his precursors, Gustave Flaubert, who was born into a bourgeois family but wrote against his class in the masterpiece, *Madame Bovary*, albeit their literary ways of registering this position are quite different. As Geoffrey Wall, the English translator of the novel, puts it, "it made much better sense, and it would, he [Flaubert] felt sure, be rather more agreeable, to attack his kind not by open rebellion, not in an embittered tirade, but by demoralizing his class from within."[9] Both writers engage themselves with a project of juxtaposing writing and history, and exploring the historical truth aesthetically and ethically. Since history is there and impossible to be changed according to one's will, what matters lies in the way it is addressed, represented and perceived. As the epigraph of *Dusklands*, quoted by Coetzee from Flaubert, goes: "what is important is the philosophy of history" (*Dusklands*, 53).

In "NJC", Coetzee's way of addressing history is to manipulate metafictional narrative strategies, such as deliberately blurring the authorship and the narrative's

[6] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 42.
[7] "Introduction," in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews* ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 6.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin, 1992), viiii-ix.

historicity, to demonstrate how history can be a construction of collective myth. The following statement is how Dr S.J. Coetzee describes the report, actually the main body of the narrative, in the afterword:

> It is a work of piety but also a work of history: a work of piety toward an ancestor and one of the founders of our people, a work which offers the evidence of history to correct certain of the anti-heroic distortions that have been creeping into our conception of the great age of exploration when the White man first made contact with the native peoples of our interior. (108)

What Dr S.J. Coetzee says is a far cry from the truth, and the historicity of his statement is challenged by Coetzee's strategy of literary experimentalism.

Coetzee's strategy is, firstly, to blur the authorship of the novella and editorship of the historical text, ranging from the information on the title page to the end of the appendix. At the very beginning of the novella, the title page tells us: "Edited, with an afterword, by S.J. Coetzee. Translated by J.M. Coetzee" (51). It seems that J.M. Coetzee is the translator and second editor of Jacobus's narrative. Dr S.J. Coetzee, acting as J.M. Coetzee' father, is obviously a fictionalized character since Jack Coetzee, the author's real father, has little involvement with the academy or book-publishing. However, readers may wonder whether the translator, J.M. Coetzee, is the same J.M. Coetzee who is credited as the author of *Dusklands*. As the reading continues, we will get a clear answer: the author puts on a mask and hides behind the so-called translator. Dr S.J. Coetzee, the first editor, publishes Jacobus's narrative written in Dutch in 1951 while J.M. Coetzee, the second editor, makes some changes to the introduction in his father's published version, which is written in Afrikaans, both in the content and its position in the current book.

The epigraph by Gustave Flaubert,"What is important is the philosophy of history" (53), may raise another question: who inserts it between the title page and the translator's preface? It should not be Jacobus Coetzee since his expedition occurred around 1760, dozens of years before Flaubert's statement, so it may be Dr S.J. Coetzee or the fictional J.M. Coetzee, a translator and implicit editor. In so doing, the flesh-and-blood J.M. Coetzee, the author of *Dusklands*, transfers the problem to the unreliability of history in a well-thought-out way. In Susana Onega's words, Coetzee doesn't assess the reader's ability "to discriminate between authorial

identities and ontologies".[10]

The challenge of multi-layered authorship proceeds to the end of the appendix:

> *Related to the Political Secretariat at*
> *the Castle of Good Hope on the 18th November 1760.*
>
> X
>
> *This mark was made by the Narrator in my presence.*
> O. M. Bergh, Councillor & Secretary
>
> *As witnesses* L. Lund, P. L. Le Seuer (*Dusklands*, 125, italics original)

The signature of Jacobus Coetzee, X, indicates his illiteracy, so the deposition is written by "a Castle hack who heard out Coetzee's story with the impatience of a bureaucrat and jotted down a hasty précis for the Governor's desk" (108). In this way, Coetzee calls the subjectivity of the narration into question; as a result, the validity of the text is in doubt.

The multi-subjectivity of authorship not only explains the novella as an interplay of fiction and reality but serves to reinforce the unreliability of historical discourse. The formal and sincere indebtedness to Dr P.K.E. van Joggum and Mrs M.J. Potgieter, the thanks to the members from the South African National Archives in the preface, all of them seem to confirm the authenticity of the narrative at first glance, but they only situate the text on a more perilous foundation since all these people are fictional. There is, actually, no such a text as *Het relaas van Jacobus Coetzee, Janszoon* nor the Van Plettenberg Society,[11] so the narrative is a complete reinvention of the original documents that the real J.M. Coetzee reads, instead of "an integral translation" of its two sources, as stated in the preface (55).

If the fictionalized components are to deconstruct the authorship and the

[10] Susana Onega, "The Trauma of Anthropocentrism and the Reconnection of Self and World in J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*," *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation* (2014): 212.

[11] The fictional Van Plettenberg Society, named after the eighteenth-century governor of the Cape Joachim van Plettenberg, is a reference to the actual Van Riebeeck Society, which draws its name from the colonial administrator of Cape Town in the seventeenth century and is mainly involved in republishing historical primary sources. It may be because the expedition in the narrative takes place in the eighteenth century that the author replaces the actual Van Riebeeck Society with the Van Plettenberg Society to parody the governor.

narrative's historicity, the selection of the time and the place for Dr S.J. Coetzee's lectures speaks volumes. The selected period (between 1934 and 1948) witnesses the blooming of Afrikaner nationalism led by Daniel François Malan in South Africa, from the initial refusal to join Smuts' United Party in 1934, to the final win in the 1948 general election, followed by the advent of apartheid. Founded on the basis of the Victoria College in 1918, the University of Stellenbosch is the first autonomous Afrikaans university in South Africa and also hailed as the leading higher institution in the Afrikaner elite groups; furthermore, its authorities endeavoured to equip the university with a specific Afrikaner identity to distinguish it from other English-speaking ones in Cape Town. Thus, delivering lectures in this Afrikaans intellectuals' mecca is a great privilege for the speaker and a boost to the community's morale. Coetzee's painstaking effort to place the truth-telling narrative in such a critical context is the way he deconstructs the report's authorship and the historical records' reliability, ironically and effectively.

The challenge to the narrative's historicity also works its way into the account of the journey. The most striking proof is the inconsistency among the three versions of Jacobus's expeditions — that in the narrative, the afterword and the deposition respectively. Derek Attridge points out that the novella itself is more "subversive" of these "documentary trappings", which are used to underscore the distortion of certain historical records.[12] Another inconsistency is the deaths of Klawer, one of Jacobus Coetzee's servants. Klawer loses his life for the first time when he is swallowed by the current and gets drowned in the river. Dramatically, he begins to dry his clothes when the group reaches the south bank in the next paragraph. What follows is that Jacobus Coetzee deserts this loyal servant with a promise to seek some help for him, who has caught a high fever and finally become paralyzed. The contradictory accounts of Klawer's death build up the unreliability of historical discourse which is at Jacobus's disposal since he is the sole witness. Nevertheless, we cannot jump to the conclusion that Jacobus Coetzee becomes a controller of the history; on the contrary, the narrator is merely "a tool in the hands of history" since the archival record is written in the interest of the class Jacobus Coetzee comes from, rather than out of his individual benefit (*Dusklands*, 106). Coetzee is not satisfied with one-

[12] Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 16.

sided historical archives, which tend to whitewash the Afrikaner's colonization in South Africa; meanwhile, as discussed previously, he gradually assumes an anti-rationalist philosophical position to resist realism as the stepping stone for writing. *Dusklands* is a joint effort of these two elements.

Jacobus Coetzee's dual role, as both a farmer and a violent plunderer, explains how Coetzee deploys his anger to shape the character. The duality of Jacobus Coetzee's role is not only a window to appreciate Coetzee's consistency in his stylistic choice and the narration itself, both of which provide room to challenge authenticity, but also a point of departure to address the rampant violence in the narrative.

As a farmer of the Dutch East India Company, Jacobus Coetzee has to provide monthly provisions for the staff in the Cape, so his trekking to the interior is mainly out of economic motives. His wagons carry a lot of goods, such as wire, tobacco, tinderboxes and knives, hoping to establish trade with those inhabitants. In other words, his role as one of the early Dutch frontiersmen in South Africa implies that it is not his mission to slaughter the native people as soldiers do to the enemies in a war. On the other hand, he is a pioneer for colonization. It is not as simple as what the colonists claim: "to prove that we came in peace we brought with us many presents for the Namaqua people…." (70). Conversely, what entails the barter is colonization: conquering their land and slaughtering people.[13]Since these frontiersmen set foot in the North interior, their economic exploitation was always accompanied by brutal killing and plundering. The declaration that he is a "tamer of the wild" (78), or "a hunter, a domesticator of the wilderness", is convincing evidence for his role as a pioneer (80). Why does Coetzee, the flesh-and-blood author, juxtapose these two roles in his account? The question will be not difficult to answer when the narrative point of view is taken into consideration. The first role, mainly illustrated in the afterword, is retold by Dr S. J. Coetzee, who is a historian and, beyond that, a fanatic of Afrikaner nationalism, so he makes use of his expertise to ennoble what "this extraordinary man" has done in the journey (121). The second role, narrated by the fictional J.M. Coetzee, aims to tell the truth of history that Coetzee, the author of *Dusklands,* wants to expose.

[13] Etymologically speaking, the word, colonization, is derived from Latin *colere* which means "to dwell or inhabit", connoting contest over the land.

It is the second role that reduces Jacobus Coetzee into a state of displacement where,[14] faced with the strange South African hinterland, driven by the mentality of Eurocentrism and white supremacy, he changes the expedition into an invasive journey to the South African interior, inflicting brutality on the indigenous inhabitants under the guise that he is "performing this sacrifice" for himself and his countrymen (*Dusklands*, 106). His resorting to violence is an attempt to assert the existence of the second role and reconstruct his historical identity.[15] In this frontiersman's eye, the native people are "of limited intellect" and "of limited being" (ibid), so they only deserve to be treated like wild animals which can be slaughtered in any barbarous way; their women, like old rags, can be raped at the settlers' will.[16] In the novelist's words, these colonisers judge the Hottentots "not only by the standard of the European but by the standard of Man" (*WW*, 22). Nevertheless, Jacobus Coetzee tries to justify his expedition by claiming that he is an explorer to "open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark" (*Dusklands*, 106). Losing their equal status in intelligence and culture with the white, the indigenous people become the other. The indigenous people are "heartless" and their culture is backward (58). Everything from the white is culturally advanced: food, religion and even a gun. The biscuits Klawer brings to Jacobus Coetzee in the morning after he demands breakfast from the tired servants are "civilized food" (88); Christianity is "one gulf" that separates the colonizer from the Hottentots (57). The colonizers describe guns in the

[14] Attwell argues that Coetzee's struggle with colonialism in the fiction results in aggressivity and the displaced subject, "who is not one of the primary agents of colonization, but who lives in the historical circumstances created by such figures, and who suffers and has to endure the subjectivity which such a position entails". See Attwell, "'The Labyrinth of My History'," 27.

[15] Critics hold that killing is a way for Jacobus Coetzee to assert his existence. Dominic Head argues that "the idea that imperial violence is a desperate quest for ontological reassurance becomes central to the psychological profile of Jacobus Coetzee." Peter McDonald notes Jacobus Coetzee is one of the "pathological rationalists who attempt, without success, to redeem their solipsistic selves through horrifyingly savage acts of violence". See Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40. Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 307.

[16] These examples can be easily spotted in the text. When talking about how to kill a Bushman, Jacobus Coetzee advises that one "hunt them as you hunt jackals" (59). Their women are "rag(s) you wipe yourself on and throw away" and they are "completely disposable" (61); the ways that Jacobus kills his four servants are ferocious and punitive, leaving them "in the most excruciating pain" (102).

following way:

> The instrument of survival in the wild is the gun, but the need for it is metaphysical rather than physical. … Savages do not have guns. This is the effective meaning of savagery … (80)

According to Jacobus Coetzee, the gun marks the boundary between civilization and savagery. The colonizers are born to own guns because white people are superior. When they begin to explore the South African hinterland, the gun is a weapon not only for survival and self-protection but also, more significantly, for this subjectivity to distinguish itself from that of the indigenous people, a "struggle for recognition".[17] With guns can they gain their "explorer's mastery of the space" (80) — that is to say, they use guns to realize their self-actualization by occupying the space geographically and spiritually. On the other hand, the South African indigenous inhabitants are deprived of owning this culturally advanced weapon because they are "savages"; consequently they only merit "enslavement to space" though they are the original inhabitants of the land (80).

Such a hegemonic cultural mindset misleads Jacobus Coetzee to consider the indigenous South African expression as the inspiration of an original desire. Despite being annoyed at the Namaqua dance, he fancies that the dance originates from the foreplay of doves and then it should be related to human sexuality. That's why he claims that he would not have been more relieved if people "drop their pantomime and cavort in an honest sexual frenzy culminating in mass coitus" (86). The observation corresponds to the protagonist's attitude towards dance in *Youth*, where Coetzee regards it just as a backhanded excuse for people's sexual desire.

> the dance is merely a cover. Inviting a girl to dance stands for inviting her to have intercourse; accepting the invitation stands for agreeing to have intercourse; and dancing is a miming and foreshadowing of intercourse. (89-90)

The echoing is not a coincidence since Coetzee always ties threads among different novels. If the romantic relationship between sexuality and dance is a philosophy of thought left by the frontiersman, John Coetzee does inherit the legacy

[17] Teresa Dovey, "Coetzee and His Critics: The Case of *Dusklands*," *English in Africa* 14, no. 2 (1987): 24.

in the blunt narration in *Youth*. The implications of dance continue to cast shadows on *Summertime*, where Adriana, a Brazilian dance teacher, tells the biographer, Mr Vincent, that John Coetzee attends her dance class for courtship, while she takes it as harassment and totally cuts off their connection. John Coetzee is not a good dancer because he is too "stiff, intractable, unteachable" to make himself feel "at ease in his body" (*Summertime*, 183). His failure to pursue Adriana by learning to dance ironically subverts the previous assumption of the symbolism of dance and, more meaningfully, implies that the Dutch should not come to Africa since it is "the birthplace of dance" (ibid). In this sense, dance can be deemed a metaphor to satirize the Dutch's displacement in South Africa in *Summertime* while, in the novella, Jacobus Coetzee's observation about the authentic form of expression in its birthplace only indicates his arrogance and illiteracy. Therefore, Coetzee's early rebellion leaves its mark on later novels.

Jacobus Coetzee's desperate need to re-establish his subjectivity also takes him on a psychic journey in which the explorer of unknown lands becomes an explorer of his own interiority. Being in the Hottentots' care while nursing his injuries, he meditates on the way he treats them and the way he is treated.

> But were they true savages, these Namaqua Hottentots? Why had they nursed me? Why had they let me go? Why had they not killed me? … What was true savagery …? Savagery was a way of life based on disdain for the value of human life and sensual delight in the pain of others. (97)

The introspection symbolizes a sudden and transient awakening of moral consciousness in this frontiersman, who begins to confess the sins of colonial territorial expansionism. The momentary speculation betrays the hypocrisy of Jacobus Coetzee's first role and then discloses the nature of colonialism. What Jacobus Coetzee reflects on smacks of rationalism, though the wind of European Enlightenment never blows through the Cape during the eighteenth century. On the contrary, in the second expedition to the Great Namaqua, the frontiersman once again poses questions, not from the Enlightenment perspective, but with the tongue of a Romantic British poet after he punitively slaughters the four servants who once abandoned him.[18] Though the implied epistemologies are inconsistent, with one

[18] According to Derek Attridge, Jacobus's question, "How do I know that Johannes

emphasis on reason and the other on emotion, both of them serve the same principle: philosophy is used to justify behaviour. In each case, Coetzee gives the protagonist an unlikely philosophical insight to introduce the question of conscience and ethics. As far as "NJC" is concerned, it ironically refutes Jacobus Coetzee's advertised integrity as a farmer and his heroism as an explorer. Also, by striking a chord with the epigraph, "what is important is the philosophy of history", it enhances "the fickleness of data" to remind readers of the authenticity of the discourse.[19]

The narrative enables us to trace a history of colonial violence and, beyond that, of white supremacy and cultural hegemony, which exerts such dominant and lasting influences in the post-colonial period. If the displacement gives an excuse for the earlier Dutch colonizers' atrocity, it becomes a burden to their descendants with conscience. Coetzee who spends thirty years of his writing career in South Africa is one of them. The novella is indeed a "self-administered therapy" for Coetzee's belonging and alienation, but the efficacy may not last long: the tension on the subject of home consciousness is never truly resolved, albeit constantly addressed in his following novels.

Plaatje, or even Adonis, not to speak of the Hottentot dead, was not an immense world of delight closed off to my senses?", is from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* written by William Blake, a British poet and painter in the Romantic Age, who has a strong opposition to rationalist principles. Attridge notes that it is one challenge both to the discourse of historicity and to realism. See Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 16.

[19] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 45.

3. Nowhere is Home — *In the Heart of the Country*

The inspiration for this title, "nowhere is home", is gained from my observation that the word *nowhere* is not only one of the most recurring motifs in Magda's monologues, [1] but also an appropriate term to summarize the protagonist's ambivalence towards her relations with the land, her father, named Johannes,[2] and the coloured servants, Hendrik and Klein-Anna, as well as her own identity. That nowhere is home precisely embodies Magda's predicament on the farm and, furthermore, reflects the author's paradoxical attitudes to the rigorous censorship regime in South Africa and the Afrikaner culture behind the narrative.

After laying bare the violence and brutality in his ancestry's colonial expeditions to the South African interior during the eighteenth century in "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" ("NJC"), Coetzee continued to focus on Afrikaner history in his second novel by paying attention to the patriarchal tradition of Afrikaner culture and the blatant omission of the black in farm novels. If it is claimed that "NJC" is a work of rebellion for an Afrikaner descendant to challenge his origins anthropologically and, specifically, to challenge the roots of home, then *In the Heart of the Country* keeps the fire of his ambivalence burning by writing against the pastoral tradition in that culture. The tendency of the criticism from an insider, the one "who knew them from inside", [3] is an overriding concern in Coetzee's second novel where Magda, to some extent as a spokeswoman for Coetzee, exemplifies the victimhood of, and attempts to subvert, the patriarchal tradition and the master-slave dichotomy in Afrikaner culture on her way to finding an ideal home.

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[1] According to my statistics, the word, *nowhere*, appears 16 times in the text, to constitute a phrase like "in the heart of nowhere"(4,76), "in the middle of nowhere"(50,71,119,226), "from nowhere to nowhere "(16,50,56,64) and "out of nowhere"(46), "from nowhere" (19), or to function as a separate adverb, such as "go nowhere"(63,115),or a noun, such as "there is nowhere"(99,117). Their different implications will be discussed in the following parts of this chapter.

[2] Her father's name, Johannes, Afrikaans for John, appears only once in the novel. When inviting Klein-Anna to live with her, Magda, out of friendliness, plays jokes with the black servant in the following sentence, "Wouldn't it sound strange if the minister baptized the children like that – Miss Magda, Baas Johannes, and so forth" (102). The Afrikaans word *baas*, meaning boss or master in English, together with the name after it, should refer to Magda's father.

[3] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 43.

However, the cruel answer to Magda's search is that neither her dictatorial father nor the coloured servants can provide her with a promised land, or help her to establish such a place. The reality that nowhere is home for Magda is an impersonalized portrayal of her author's predicament regarding the issue of home in the 1970s, as noted previously. The relation between Coetzee and the rigorous regime of censorship can be thought of as hostile coexistence: though he resented the regime, he was involved in it in his own way.

I. Hostile coexistence with censorship

After returning to South Africa, the harshness of censorship from the 1970s to the 1980s made Coetzee realize that his writing could not survive if he failed to get along with the censorship system, albeit he was repelled by the violation of press freedom under the Afrikaner's governance.[4] All of these conflicting feelings contributed to his sense that nowhere was the right place to appease his dissatisfaction with the political and cultural climate.

Why he picked up a topic concerning censorship soon after *Dusklands* is closely related to the contemplation of this priority of survival as a fledgeling novelist. The idea was directly sparked by a report he was required to submit for an evaluation of the influence of censorship on academic life, conducted by the Committee of University Principals. Though the novel, entitled "The Burning of the Books", regarding a censor's life, was discarded for it was beyond Coetzee to "find a coherent focus",[5] the theme of censorship was driven, deeply and fundamentally, by his Janus-faced attitude to home, since it was a contradictory juxtaposition of his reluctance to stay in South Africa and his committed wish to criticize the publishing environment and, more broadly, the cultural atmosphere. In addition to criticizing the banning climate in his writing, he began to take the initiative to involve himself in censorship, including making an application for a job as a censor, actively learning about the censoring process of his submitted novel, etc. Coetzee knew what it entailed would be a kind of hostile coexistence. As he puts it,

[4] For a thorough account of the history, and influences, of the censorship policy on South African publishing and culture, see Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 260-73.
[5] Quoted in Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 85.

> Working under censorship is like being intimate with someone who does not like you, with whom you want no intimacy, but who presses himself in upon you. The censor is an intrusive reader, a reader who forces his way into the intimacy of the writing transaction, forces out the figure of the loved or courted reader, reads your words in a disapproving and censorious fashion.[6]

Rather than an approval of the censorship system, these moves are his strategy to answer the pressure of South African reality, especially the confinement induced by the censorship regime: not a direct confrontation, but a temporary compromise to balance the tension. Nevertheless, given the explicit interracial sexual behaviours and the subsequent subverting dialogues in the narrative, there is little evidence to indicate that Coetzee was affected or intimidated in writing *IHC*. On different occasions, both Wittenberg and Attwell argue that neither the draft of the novel nor the letter he wrote to Randall betrays Coetzee's timidity.[7] This strategy never hinders his writing but empowers it to narrate against censorship.

Coetzee's engagement with censorship is coincident with his concern with the publication of the novel, *IHC*, in South Africa.[8] At first, the sections 85-94 (according to the Penguin edition) made its debut in *Standpunte*, which is, in Wittenberg's words, "a prestigious and largely Afrikaans literary magazine under the editorship of John Kannemeyer".[9] Then, it is worth noting that, until now, the novel

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[6] J.M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 38.

[7] Quoting some questions Coetzee addressed to Peter Randall, Ravan's editor, Wittenberg points out that Coetzee was fully aware of the potential risk of being suppressed when writing the novel. After exploring Coetzee's papers, Attwell comments that nothing could be found from the manuscript to demonstrate the novelist "was writing in the shadow of this unwelcome intimate". See Hermann Wittenberg, "The Taint of the Censor: J.M. Coetzee and the Making of *In the Heart of the Country*," English in Africa 35, no. 2 (2008): 135. Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 105.

[8] Many critics discuss the details and significance of the publication of this novel. Wittenberg remarks the dual publication history, one English version and the other's dialogue written in Afrikaans, from a book historical approach, namely, considering the book as a socially constructed artefact. Andrew van der Vlies notes that Coetzee's insistence on publishing a local version after the novel came off the press in Britain and the United States echoes "his commitment to a radical politics in the country in the wake of the Soweto riots of 1976". See Wittenberg, "The Taint of the Censor"; Andrew Van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures : White, Black, Read All Over* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 135.

[9] Wittenberg, "The Taint of the Censor," 147. Van der Vlies discusses the *Standpunte*

is the only one in Coetzee's oeuvre published in two separate language versions. Though a British agent, Secker & Warburg, managed to bring the English edition into the international market in 1977, Coetzee persisted in the introduction of a bilingual one by a Johannesburg-based publisher, Ravan. The bilingual version should include Afrikaans dialogues as well as English descriptive and meditative sections. The international attention following the overseas publication enabled Coetzee to reflect on censorship in his native country from a more detached perspective, namely, as "a transnational writer who could make meaning globally while still interpreting the local".[10] The publishing of the double-language version is one of the testimonies of his "interpreting the local". Due to the possibility of being banned in South Africa and Ravan's unwillingness to shoulder the financial risk, Coetzee turned to Secker & Warburg for publication. However, after the book got the approval of the Publication Control Board, he handed the Afrikaans-dialogue version to Ravan. For Coetzee, it was not out of consideration for more economic returns, but, once again, to consolidate his deep engagement with Afrikaner culture, where textures of master-slave relationships "could be properly reflected only in Afrikaans".[11]

As the above discussion attests, Coetzee's attitude to home became more realistic at this stage: he faced up to the censorship regime surrounding his writing and involved himself in the historical particularity and Afrikaner cultural tradition in his fiction. Though, in a talk given at the Weekly Mail's book festival of 1987 in Cape Town, he remarked that novel and history were rivals, or, in other words, the novel should not be written in the service of history,[12] *IHC* indeed conduces to the remaking of the Afrikaner's hierarchical tradition. Coetzee's following novels will put more emphasis on the miserable and distorted lives under, or after, apartheid, rather than withdraw back to the history, but the interrogation never ceases until he emigrates to Australia — only the perspectives of criticism vary.

II. A prelude to anti-pastoral writing

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context more fully. See Van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, 135.
[10] Ibid., 148.
[11] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 90.
[12] See J.M. Coetzee, "The Novel Today," *Upstream* 6, no. 1 (1988).

The logic underpinning the inseparability between Coetzee's attitude to home and his anti-pastoral writing is the more he feels attached to Afrikaner culture, the more reflective attention he will pay to it. Differently put, it is his affinity with Afrikaner culture, among others, that motivates him to undertake research on its history, including the earlier colonization period in South Africa, manifested in "NJC", and the farm novel, a popular literary genre in the earlier twentieth century.

The farm novel, or the *plaasroman* in Afrikaans, was too prominent to be ignored for any writer in the first half of the twentieth century who bore the mark of Afrikaner culture. The farm novel was written under the background that the barrenness, caused by the arid weather, deprived many farmers of their means of living from the 1920s to the 1940s, so it would be inclined to "[celebrate] the memory of the old rural values" and give priority to the reminiscence of natural connection between people and land (*WW*, 63), both of which were the prominent features of pastoralism. Although Coetzee points out that the English farm novels and the *plaasroman* have different orientations,[13] pastoralism is what they are most concerned with in the poetry of landscape.

One aspect in the ethical values advocated by these two genres is that the male, the female and the black farmhand should play their destined roles, implying any trespassing of the boundary will be deemed immoral. In Afrikaner cultural discourse, the man is a paternalistic landowner, who is characterized by his authoritativeness and supremacy in the family while the woman is a peripheral figure, who is usually praised for her obedience, courage and purity. The black servant is always neglected in these writings, although they help to support the running of the Afrikaner rural order with their laborious work. As Coetzee puts it in *White Writing (WW)*,

> Blindness to the colour black is built into South African pastoral. As its central issue the genre prefers to identify the preservation of a (Dutch) peasant rural order, or at least the preservation of the values of that order. (5-6)

[13] In *WW*, Coetzee argues that the Afrikaner farm novels echo the German *Bauernroman* (114). Grounded in what Coetzee discusses, Gallagher points out that the English farm novels rely on "the British aristocratic novel of rural life" (92). Coetzee separately selects two representatives for critical analyses: Pauline Smith, whose work belongs to the genre of the English farm novel, and C.M. van den Heever from the *plaasroman*. See Susan V. Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

The effort to preserve the values of this order is grounded in the Afrikaner's attachment to the earth, specifically speaking, to the farm, which is the root of "their sense of cultural identity" and also related to the rise and fall of farm novels.[14] However, the feeling falls into the realm of "a failure of love" (*DP*, 97), as noted previously, suggesting that the Afrikaner's dark love of the land cannot obliterate, or compensate for, their deliberate indifference to the black.

The circle of logic proposed at the beginning of this section, in which ambivalence drives creativity, can continue in a way that the more familiarity he gains with the Afrikaner cultural heritage, the more critical he becomes in dealing with its essence and dross. What Coetzee wants to maintain in the pastoralism, instead of the patriarchal tradition and the harsh exploitation of the black, is the reciprocal interaction between the farm and the people, exemplified by a lifestyle in his family farm, Voëlfontein. Ironically, Magda, the protagonist of *IHC*, confined on a desolate Karoo farm and going nowhere, is reluctant to give up her mentality of white supremacy in spite of attempting to throw off the shackles of her historical destiny.

Coetzee did not turn his back on the striking phenomenon he found in the research of farm novels, so *IHC* came into being after the unrealized work, "the Burning of the Books". It is arguably held that Coetzee gets the baton from Olive Schreiner and continues to play the symphony of anti-pastoralism,[15] but, as to the position of the novel in his oeuvre, it is only a prelude to his anti-pastoral writings since the issue will also be addressed in *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Disgrace*. As a point of departure in Coetzee's anti-pastoral writing, the novel, firstly, subverts the ethical values held in farm novels, highlighting the theme that these rural farms, whose "social textures are subtle in their own way", [16] are not a home, idealized in the pastoral idyll, for anyone involved in the narration. Magda, under the pressure of

[14] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 72.
[15] Many critics hold that *IHC* is a rewriting of *The Story of an African Farm*. For example, in the first monograph on Coetzee's research, Teresa Dovey suggests this point of view while, in the latest research, both David Attwell and Jonathan Crewe state the same idea. See Teresa Dovey, *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1988), 152. Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 84. Jonathan Crewe, *In the Middle of Nowhere: J.M. Coetzee in South Africa* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2016), 85.
[16] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 73.

patriarchal distortion and the rebellion of the black servant, is no longer a submissive and marginalized woman, nor does her father present us with the image of "a benign patriarch"(*WW*, 6). And the black servant is not a silent noun any more, but rather, a verb, who takes actions to rip off the label of the other (also the space Olive Schreiner does not step into), by raping the white protagonist. Secondly, the narrative style, featuring numbered paragraphs filled with repeated but different narrations of the same event, is Coetzee's metafictional way to write against the realist tradition and, more than that, to articulate his philosophy against the requirement for "a more politically engaged artistic practice".[17]

III. Magda's pursuit of an idealized home

Attwell observes that the earliest manuscripts of *IHC* are entitled "Home".[18] Though the title was abandoned in the published text, one interpretation of the novel's theme could be how Magda suffers and struggles in her home, the rural farm, due to a patriarchal father, rebellious coloured servants and, beyond that, the invisible regime behind them, which further implies the novelist's predicament as an Afrikaner descendant in the 1970s. Different from an ideal home in its traditional sense where family members live harmoniously and respectfully with each other, the rural farm is the very place which witnesses Magda's identity being located "nowhere" and her subversive but failed effort to get rid of master-slave relations.

i. Magda's self-doubt and emptiness

The name, Magda, borrowed from the persevering and brave wife of the Great Trek leader, Piet Retief, symbolizes "one of the 'mothers' of South Africa".[19] Considering the heroic status of the Great Trek in Afrikaner nationalism, Coetzee arguably aims to parody the greatness of the heroic character since Magda's image is a mixture of self-doubt, emptiness and illusion. She repeatedly portrays herself like either "a black widow spider" (39) or "a black flower" (108) to highlight the identity of "an angry spinster" (4) and "a miserable black virgin" (5), meanwhile denies the role of

[17] Wittenberg, "The Taint of the Censor," 134.
[18] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 47.
[19] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 84.

"a happy peasant" (5), all of which are deconstructive of the heroic and submissive label put on women in Afrikaner discourse. She yearns for a life filled with happiness and enjoyment, but the suffocating life on the rural farm reduces her to chains of monologues dotted with illusion. In her fantasy, it is "in the middle of nowhere" that she is able to secure two sharply different positions: either to "expand to infinity" or to "shrivel to the size of an ant" (50). Even after the murders and the rapes, seemingly subversive of the master-slave relations, when Magda invites the black couple to live with her in the house, the state of being "a zero, a null, a vacuum" still permeates her dialogues with Anna (2).

> Do you know what I feel like Anna? Like a great emptiness, an emptiness filled with a great absence, an absence which is a desire to be filled, to be fulfilled. (114)

Magda's emptiness corresponds with the phallocentric thinking in Afrikaner discourse, where a woman is always "an absence", a hole needing to be filled. That is why, at the beginning of the novel, Magda, in extremely calm language, reminds the reader of her mother's unforgivable sin of not giving birth to a son. Johannes's voracious eroticism claims his wife's life during her childbirth, resulting in Magda's motherlessness and, furthermore, setting the tone for her tedium and void on the farm.

Magda's emptiness gives rise to her contemplation on the role of language in the monologues:

> But these words of mine *come from nowhere and go nowhere*, they have no past or future, they whistle across the flats in a desolate eternal present, feeding no one. (115, emphasis mine)

After failing to elicit any resonance during her communicating with Anna, she laments that her words have no origins or directions, leaving no trace either on the farm or on people's minds. The narrative evokes a strong sense of hollowness by emphasizing the word *nowhere*, which lingers to the next scene when Magda's neighbour is querying where her father is, "he has the means but not the words, I the words but not the means; for there is nowhere, I fear, where my words will not reach."(117) The self's emptiness is equivalent to woman's triviality and

powerlessness under the formidable patriarchy, so no one would pay more heed to her and, also, her words are not penetrating at all to reach anywhere. For one of the "melancholy spinsters" like Magda (3), this kind of boredom and languor seems to be her destiny, one of the consequences of the patriarchal tradition.

In addition to the overbearing patriarch, Magda's emptiness also suggests the "unbudgeable void" in colonizers' irresistible desire to conquer alien people and their land, which is powered by Descartes' dualism to separate the self from the external world.[20] Thus, in contrast with the isolation and solitude, Magda, in the very beginning, also states that she is one of "the daughters of the colonies" and tries to make the history remember her name (*IHC*, 3). The irony lies in the fact that the colonists and the Afrikaner nationalists are doomed to step down from the historical stage due to their exploitative ideology and practices. It is this interplay between the emptiness and the colonial mindset that corrupts Magda and makes anxiety and tedium dominate her life. Magda's suffering results in her repeatedly murdering Johannes and the abnormal intimacy with the coloured servants. As discussed previously, these repeated murders are Coetzee's metafictional way to deconstruct the realistic tradition. However, Magda is not only a victim but also an agent of deconstruction, just as Dominic Head speaks of Magda's "ambivalent position", namely, "both victim and perpetrator of colonialism".[21] In this sense, she is a continuation, and a female equivalent, of Jacobus Coetzee.

ii. Magda's conflicting feelings about her father

Magda's predicament leads her into a desperate hunger for a place with ethical values in family life rather than a farm with master-slave dichotomies, imposed by the institutionalized abnormality of colonization. The first dichotomy is the male-female paradigm in Afrikaner discourse, the dynamics of which reside in Magda's attachment to, and resentment of, her patriarchal father.

Magda admires her father, which can be clearly traced in her appraisal of Johannes's gracefulness. In her eyes, the father, with "a fine figure", is quite a gentleman in his manners (31). Her father always comes back "in pride and glory"

[20] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J.M. Coetzee," *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 376.
[21] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 43.

after the day's work, though what he does is a mystery to Magda (ibid). He wears waxed boots and well-tailored dress, uses delicate brandy-glasses and maintains good hygiene practices (e.g. washing his hands with soap). This appreciation results in an exaggerated and cryptic metaphor for Magda's wish to seek identification with her father: the twisting of their excrement after they take regular turns to relieve themselves in the bucket-latrine before Hendrik cleans it. As Dick Penner remarks, instead of "Swiftian scatology", the metaphor would be "a rendering in the most earthy imagery of Magda's ultimate desire" to integrate with her father.[22]

Magda's affection for her father is rooted in her identification with white supremacy, featuring their occupation of the land and the preservation of the traditional Afrikaans family order, which is grounded in the inequality between the white and the non-white. Though some critics argue that Magda longs to break away from the regime her father represents, and gets along well with the coloured servants, [23] it only rings true at first hearing and is worth discussing more critically. Magda's invocation of the pastoral tradition originates from the denial of the blacks' ownership of their own land. It is a penetrating legacy from misdirected love: the love of South African hereditary masters, according to Coetzee, "has consistently been directed toward *the land*, that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers" (*DP*, 97, emphasis original). To Afrikaners, the farm constitutes their way of life, especially from their ancestry's settlement in South Africa in the middle of the seventeenth century to the first half of the twentieth century. It has become, thus, a cultural token for them. A father is not only the bread-earner for an Afrikaner family, but also an embodiment of proprietary ownership of the land, so it is by attaching herself to the father that Magda can reinforce her superiority over the blacks. It is in this sense that she identifies with the old rural values. In *White Writing*, Coetzee poignantly argues that the first dream topography of Afrikaners is "a network of boundaries crisscrossing the surface of the land, marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented and industrious children,

[22] Penner, *Countries of the Mind*, 61.

[23] For example, Derek Wright asserts that Magda's "desire to be rid of her father, and the regime he represents, springs from her white liberal impulse to communicate with and befriend her slave servants Klein Anna and Hendrik" (114). See Derek Wright, "Fiction as Foe - the Novels of J.M. Coetzee," *International Fiction Review* 16, no. 2 (1989).

grandchildren, and serfs" (*WW*, 6). The ideal pastoralism is the place where Magda wants to accommodate her empty self. Nevertheless, nowhere on the rural farm exists such "a benign patriarch". Magda's father, who should have been the powerful pillar responsible for hunting and farming in the family, turns into a domineering and philandering man.

Magda longs for a reciprocal bond between humans and the land. The nostalgia is transformed into her insistence in staying on the farm, reluctant to step out into the outside world.

> It takes generations of life in the cities to drive that nostalgia for country ways from the heart. I will never live it down, nor do I want to. I am corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world. … I have chosen at every moment my own destiny, which is to die here in the petrified garden, behind locked gates, near my father's bones, in a space echoing with hymns I could have written but did not bcause (I thought) it was too easy. (139)

Magda, "corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world", utters her attachment to the land here. Even the house which looks like the shape of letter H is deemed an "[act] of inscription", a way for Afrikaners to write down their laborious history and traditional culture on the land.[24] She declares her love for the farm which is, in Kannemeyer's words, "an Eden" to her,[25] so the idea of flying away with the "sky-god" at the end of the novel never really appeals to Magda.

Magda's yearning for this reciprocity is also related to her wish for a home in a familial sense, so there are "people to talk to, brothers and sisters or fathers and mothers" and, beyond that, "a history and a culture" to allow and even encourage this communication (119). In Magda's monologues, she shows her longing for a marriage, a typical symbol for a happy family life, that "if only I had a good man to sleep at my side and give me babies, all would be well."(41) In her mind, she can still be redemptive "by marriage", in spite of being "a lonely, ugly old maid" (42). However, the family life she has in mind is also impressively miserable. The emotionless husband cares for nothing except for his own eroticism, even during her parturition, which is the same mistreatment her mother has received from her father.

[24] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 28.
[25] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 282.

The children are also hopeless to escape this fatality: they grow up in the way she has been raised and carry on with the monotonous life as she has lived. She once turns to the land for help, hoping to find out her "revelatory, Wordsworthian moments" with the coloured servants on the farm.[26] But the reality reminds Magda of the impossibility to transcend herself,

> There was a time when I imagined that if I talked long enough it would be revealed to me what it means to be an angry spinster *in the heart of nowhere*. […] Aching to form the words that will translate me into the land of myth and hero, here I am still my dowdy self in a dull summer heat that will not transcend itself. (*IHC*, 4, emphasis mine)

Trapped in her father's domineering authority, Magda is immersed in the fantasy that he has brought back a new wife. The phrase, *in the heart of nowhere*, stands for not only her attempt to relate the self to the surrounding land but also the puzzlement over her identity.

The coalition of the father and the daughter will come to a halt, when Johannes presents his abusiveness and aloofness, deconstructing the idealized family ethics. Thus, the other extreme of Magda's feelings with her father is fear and resentment, gradually driving her to murder the latter, firstly with an axe, then with a shotgun (to this anti-realistic element I shall turn in the following). Magda's monologue can display the sharp feeling:

> The boots, the thud of the boots, the black brow, the black eyeholes, the black hole of the mouth from which roars the great NO, iron, cold, thunderous, that blasts me and buries me and locks me up … I squirm, again the boot is raised over me, the mouth hole opens, and the great wind blows, chilling me to my pulpy heart. (51)

[26] J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 23. María J. López points out the Wordsworthian reciprocity in Coetzee's novels, such as *IHC and Disgrace*, which is also "a constant in white South African literature". David Attwell notes that "*In the Heart of the Country* examines the ontological consequences of settler-colonialism's lack of social reciprocity". See María J. López, *Acts of Visitation: The Narrative of J.M. Coetzee* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2011), 74. Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 5.

The boots are not well-waxed shoes any longer; instead, together with the father's hideous facial expression and harsh words, they become forceful weapons to dominate the protagonist. In the following sections, Johannes's aloofness casts its shadow on his attitudes to Magda.

> Therefore I am more than just the trace of these words passing through my head on their way *from nowhere to nowhere*, a streak of light against the void of space, a shooting-star (how full of astronomy I am this evening). (56, emphasis mine)

When suffering from insomnia, Magda turns to Johannes for help but receives a series of scolding and hypocritical consolation from him. The scolding and consolation goes "from nowhere to nowhere", so, to Magda, the words do not sound like comfort at all but the patriarchal order to obey unconditionally. After Magda murders her father, the odd burning-bush dream becomes a parody of "Moses seeing the angel of God in the burning bush", which reminds readers of the "authoritarian, judgemental, retributive" God from the Old Testament.[27] The messages imply more a domineering patriarchal statue to smash than a venerated figure to follow.

The invisible ideology behind this resentment is women's otherness in traditional patriarchal society. As Gallagher claims, "within Afrikaner society the woman is decidedly inferior",[28] they cannot enjoy equality with men not only in social lives, including religious and political spheres, but also in their families. In a review of Sheila Fugard's novel *A Revolutionary Woman*, Coetzee points out that South Africa is "a patriarchal society that worships a patriarchal God, a society whose women are never visible".[29] This is where the significance of Coetzee's anti-pastoral writing partly lies. He makes Magda refuse to wear the label imposed by the traditional Afrikaner discourse and, furthermore, fight for her ideal home in fantasies and actions. As Jonathan Crewe aptly puts it, "unlike the silent, insentient colonial patriarch or empire-builder, [Magda] is hyper-sentient, but at the cost of her sanity".[30] Coetzee enables Magda to vocalize his own repugnance of the Afrikaner

[27] Penner, *Countries of the Mind*, 61.
[28] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 90.
[29] J.M. Coetzee, "Satyagraha in Durban," *The New York Review of Books* 24 (1985): 12.
[30] Crewe, *In the Middle of Nowhere*, 1.

patriarchal culture, so, in this sense, the novelist begins to explore the themes, either explicitly or allegorically set in South Africa, of how the consequences of the legacy from Afrikaner discourse, including the patriarchal tradition, the farm novel, and apartheid, constitute diverse barriers for natural interpersonal communication in the family and the nation. Magda's open-ended narrative suggests that the author's exploration of home consciousness will not stop but continue in his following writings.

iii. Magda's fraternal effort with the coloured servants

More striking racial issues in the colonial period to some extent overshadow the father-daughter dichotomy in Afrikaner discourse. As a white descendant, Magda's close connection with the land, which is as pathological as her extreme self-doubt, relates to the failure of pursuing reciprocity from the coloured servants. Therefore, the second master-slave dichotomy in the novel involves Magda's effort to seek fraternity with Hendrik and Anna to overthrow a long-held value in colonial culture. Coetzee suggests that we should "replace the word *love* with the word *fraternity*" to describe the white's warped feelings with the land and the black people in South Africa (*DP*, 97, emphasis original). By borrowing the term *fraternity*, I attempt to highlight Magda's wish for a kind of reciprocal relationship with the coloured servants, which should be one of social ethical values based on interpersonal equality. It is different from Magda's paradoxical feelings about her father, which is not racial-oriented but gender-centred. Nevertheless, Magda's wish and effort are doomed to fail because there is no so-called equality on the farm.

At the beginning of the novel, Magda indicates that she "[grows] up with the servants' children" and speaks in the same way with her playmates (*IHC*, 6), entailing her craving for the fraternity in the pastoral tradition. The moment that she recalls, "at the feet of an old man I have drunk in a myth of a past when beast and man and master lived a common life as innocent as the stars in the sky" further strengthens this idea (ibid). It chimes with Jacobus Coetzee's statement: "our children play with servants' children, and who is to say who copies whom?" (*Dusklands*, 57). However, Jacobus Coetzee's reminiscence is only a flash of thought,

which is never a problem to his way of colonizing the natives with violence, while Magda's hope for fraternity is fulfilled at the cost of her sanity and virginity.

After murdering her father, Magda seems to have removed the patriarchal block to her ideal home and the dream of fraternity; but the farm, without her father's management, gradually witnesses food shortage and a rebellion of the coloured servants. The collapse of patriarchal authority fails to bring any peace but tips the balance in the new master-slave relation, exemplified by Hendrik asking for his unpaid wages, moving to the farmhouse and raping Magda. Critics argue that the scene in which Hendrik demands payment for his labour is a way of perpetuating the patriarchal system,[31] so Magda's hope for fraternity faces new challenges. Rather than a "shadowy presence" in the novel (*WW*, 5), the coloured servants play subversive roles in Magda's longing, which, together with Magda's resistance against patriarchal authority, contributes to the novel's anti-pastoral features.

The rape, which is narrated twice in different versions to show the novelist's anti-realistic tendency,[32] is the culmination of Magda's striving for fraternity with the coloured servants. As Dominic Head notes: "perhaps the most resonant motif in the book is the recurring image of the body being inhabited by the body of another".[33] The event is the most striking one in Hendrik's actions since the Immorality Act, initially established in 1927, and the sequent legislation prohibited any sexual contact and marriage between whites and non-whites. In Coetzee's opinion, "horizontal intercourse" had been cut off so that there was no space for social reciprocity, including fraternity, to develop. Magda is empowered to try to deconstruct the vertical relation of "giving and receiving orders", the price of which is to have illicit intercourse with Hendrik, either willingly or unwillingly (*DP*, 97).[34] The consequences of these immorality laws are so far-reaching that, even in post-

[31] Both Susan V Gallagher and J.C. Kannemeyer note the idea. See Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 192. Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 279.

[32] Derek Attridge precisely contends that "the rape sequence is not repeated 'several times'", correcting what other critics, including David Attwell, Sue Kossew and Dominic Head, have claimed; he also analyses the significance of the episode to Coetzee's anti-realistic writing. See Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 26-27.

[33] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 44.

[34] If, at first, Magda is said to be raped by Hendrik, it is definitely not out of unwillingness that she waits for Hendrik's regular visits every night in the later story.

apartheid South Africa, the interracial sexual intercourse still has strong political overtones, which makes up one of the controversies in *Disgrace*.

The metafictional elements in the novel, such as different descriptions of Magda murdering her father and Hendrik raping the protagonist, bring us back to what happens to Klawer in "NJC". If the double-death of the Hottentot servant is served only as a starter, the feast of this practice is the numbered paragraphs in *IHC* to enable the novelist to "drop all pretense of continuity".[35]

Though Coetzee's endeavour to write the novel within a historical context can be testified in the theme he has chosen, the narrative, fraught with revisions and Magda's conflicting fantasies, equips the text with some postmodern features, which does not meet what realism requires. This anti-realistic tendency is consistent in Coetzee's earlier and middle writing career in spite of some exceptions. As Coetzee expresses his disapproval of realism in an interview with Tony Morphet: "I don't have much interest in, or can't seriously engage myself with, the kind of realism that takes pride in copying the 'real' world."[36] However, his anti-realism attracted severe criticisms in South Africa since the novels, possessing an allegorical inclination due to this writing strategy, could demonstrate his elusiveness in facing the social reality and his failure to answer the urgent demand of political struggle.[37] Nevertheless, if the authorship and the novels are juxtaposed for further consideration, these criticisms may not be as tenable as they seem.

Coetzee, as "a member of the Western-oriented English intelligentsia", introduced the avant-garde narrative genre to South African writing in his first few novels.[38] Though it diverges from dominant realistic writing, which is canonized as the only effective weapon for novelists to engage themselves with South African discourse, it cannot be neglected that Coetzee also explores the historical complexity and ethical predicaments inflicted by the colonial or apartheid regime in his writing.

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[35] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory," 89.
[36] Tony Morphet, "An Interview with J.M. Coetzee," *Social Dynamics* 10, no. 1 (1984): 63.
[37] Perhaps the most influential criticism is from Nadine Gordimer, who, in a book review of *Life & Times of Michael K*, notoriously proclaims that both Coetzee's allegorical writing and his protagonist, Michael K, convey no political meaning. See Nadine Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening: *Life & Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coeztee," in *Critical Essays on J.M. Coetzee*, ed. Sue Kossew (New York: Prentice Hall, 1998).
[38] Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J.M. Coetzee," 380.

Critics who cast suspicions or complaints on Coetzee's experimentalism are most likely to stick too much to the invariable standard of realism and thus take no notice of the historical and ethical concerns behind the genre. As Derek Attridge notes, the pressure that literature should be responsive to the struggle in realist terms leads to intolerance of anything "hermetic, self-referential, formally inventive" or "distant from the canons and procedures of the realist tradition".[39] Coetzee's anti-realism, instead of a denial of his political involvement in the writing, is in fact his strategy to relate his intellectual pursuits to the South African context, which not only betrays the novelist's deep preoccupation with South African history and reality, but also invites more thought-provoking readings. As Stephen Watson argues, Coetzee was unwilling to allow the fiction to be "easily assimilated and reduced to a single canonical meaning".[40]

The anti-realism also finds its way into Magda's philosophical reflections. After Hendrik and Anna flee, Magda ponders social reciprocity with a host-parasite metaphor: "the host is dying, the parasite scuttles anxiously about the cooling entrails wondering whose tissues it will live off next."(*IHC*, 119) The metaphor is quite poignant if, according to Magda's philosophy of white supremacy (ironically, Magda claims in the latter part that she is not a philosopher), the host refers to herself while the parasite hints at the coloured servants. It is the servants who undertake most of the labour to support their white masters; to put it differently, the whites, like the parasites, live off black labour. The root of Magda's failed efforts to find social reciprocity lies here because "fraternity ineluctably comes in a package with liberty and equality", both of which Hendrik and Anna are deprived of (*DP*, 97). In Magda's hope for reciprocity with the coloured servants, she never manages to abandon her mastership. Though Hendrik conducts a series of subversive actions, it will not change his otherness. Through the questions with which Magda bombards Hendrik, readers can empathize with the protagonist's strong reluctance to eradicate this philosophy.

> I am not simply one of the whites, I am I! ... You know who I am, I don't have to tell you! ... What more do you want? Must I weep? Must I kneel? Are you waiting for the white

[39] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 1.
[40] Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J.M. Coetzee," 384.

> woman to kneel to you? Are you waiting for me to become your white slave? …How can I humiliate myself any further? Must the white woman lick your backside before you will give her a single smile? (118)

The thought necessitates the idea that "this is not Hendrik's home" (18), which manifests that Magda, as an Afrikaner woman, regards the Karoo, or even South Africa itself, as her promised land, and denies the natives' ownership of their territory. However, to some extent, even Magda realizes the land is not acquired with peace and her forebears' life on the farm is not as pastoral as she has imagined.

> Did my father or my grandfather perhaps simply gallop up pistolled and bandoliered to the farmhouse one day, *out of nowhere*, and fling down a tobacco-pouch of gold nuggets, and shoo the schoolmistress out of the schoolhouse, and install his hinds in her place, and institute a reign of brutishness. (46, emphasis mine)

The allegorical monologue implies that "the history of agricultural enclosure, as Raymond Williams demonstrates so well in *The Country and the City*, is a history not just of settlement but of displacement and exclusion."[41] To the native people, Magda's ancestors came "out of nowhere" to their territory with resource-plundering and merciless killing, just like the question raised by Coetzee: "for how can the farm become the pastoral retreat of the black man when it was his pastoral home only a generation or two ago?" (*WW*, 5). Furthermore, Magda even briefly suspects her inheritance of the land by reckoning "but how real is our possession? ... the land knows nothing of fences, the stones will be here when I have crumbled away…" (*IHC*, 114). Both of these moments, manifesting Magda's temporary self-awareness of the concealed truth in her ancestry's colonization, can be thought of as her sincere intention to overthrow the master-slave dichotomy, but it is not strong enough to eradicate her own mastery in dealing with the coloured servants. Coetzee speaks of Magda's incompetence in overthrowing the dichotomy in an interview with Folke Rhedin,

> At a certain point she tries to drop the master/slave relationship in favour of a relationship of equality which I

[41] Quoted in Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 31.

> think is entirely sincerely intended on her part. But it fails, and it fails because a mere effort of the will is not enough to overcome centuries of cultural and spiritual deformation.[42]

It is beyond Magda, not only because she is alone in seeking to transform the centuries-old deformation, but also in her incapacity to break away with the mentality of white supremacy to realize racial equality. In terms of the patriarchal and colonial mindset, Magda's idealistic home with a benign father and fraternal servants is nowhere, leaving only the pathological self to witness her vain efforts in dealing with the master-slave dichotomies.

IV. Conclusion

Magda's tragedy adds another dimension to Coetzee's ambivalence about home, which is an opportunity to "trace the development of Coetzee's self-questioning as a white writer and of his historical consciousness".[43] Under the rampant censorship in South Africa in the 1970s, Coetzee, an Afrikaner descendant with a western-oriented academic background, was wrestling with the issue of home in *IHC*, not in the voice of an explorer of colonialism's history, what he had done previously, but as a gravedigger of the hierarchic tradition in Afrikaner culture. Though the legacy of this tradition will not embody itself in massive violence and brutal killing, it does drive the people confined within it, such as Magda, into madness and make them go nowhere.

[42] Rhedin, "J.M. Coetzee," 7.
[43] Poyner, "Contexts and Criticism", 6.

4. Unhomely Authorship and Uncanny Narrative — *Waiting for the Barbarians*

South Africa saw intensifying social unrest in the 1970s. Following the apartheid authority's tougher policies in military, political and cultural areas, the domestic resistance became intensified and an increasing number of people were arrested under the Terrorism Act. It was the implementation of the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, which forced all black schools to use Afrikaan as a medium of instruction, that directly triggered the 1976 Soweto uprising. Subsequently, a leader of the uprising, Steve Biko, was arrested and finally died of being beaten and tortured by the security police. Internationally, the apartheid government was faced with a wider range of isolation and sanctions, including a sanction imposed by the United Nations and deprivation of membership by several international organizations.

Against the above background, after having resettled in South Africa for several years, Coetzee began to write and finished his third novel. In this chapter, I will analyze the influence of Coetzee's attitude to home from the perspective of the uncanny and further explore how his authorship, or, more strictly speaking, his problematic relationship with South Africa, introduces two challenges into his narrative, namely the placeless setting and the representations of torture. Though incurring a lot of criticism in various fields, Freud's interpretation of the uncanny constitutes a seminal point of departure for the still unsettled discussion of theory in literary criticism. My argument is based on what Freud remarks in his essay and, more than that, supplements the lost meaning of the uncanny. In other words, Freud's definition of the uncanny tackles how the familiar and the strange switch to each other through the recurrence of the repressed; my focus will take advantage of this interpretation, but not be limited by its original context, and investigate the socio-cultural reflection of the uncanny, which, I believe, will benefit the ongoing discussion of home in Coetzee's fiction.

I. The theory of the uncanny

Because straight application of the uncanny to interpretation of home consciousness

in *Waiting for the Barbarians (WB)* and Coetzee's authorship is rare, the term firstly needs some justification and reevaluation to contextualize my use of it. What I try to clarify lies in two overlooked elements in the theory of the uncanny: the unhomely aspect in the translation of the German word *unheimlich* and the authorship behind the uncanny. My basic assertion is that the unhomely, as an integral connotation of the German word, *unheimlich*, to put it in a socio-cultural context, could be a way of describing Coetzee's authorship in *WB* while the uncanny as an aesthetic effect, discussed by Freud and his followers, is a prominent feature in *WB* as far as the placeless setting and the narration of torture are concerned.

It is necessary to briefly explain the different uses of the term in Jentsch and Freud since my argument will draw on its connotations and relations to the authorship. Ernst Jentsch, the first who introduced the uncanny to psychological analysis, holds that the uncanny should be ascribed to 'intellectual uncertainty'[1] — the subject, in either a psychological or a physical context, where he knew what to expect and things would be familiar, was confronted with something beyond this familiarity. As Freud writes, "one would suppose, then, that the uncanny would always be an area in which a person was unsure of his way around: the better oriented he was in the world around him, the less likely he would be to find the objects and occurrences in it uncanny".[2]

However, Freud observes that Jentsch narrows down the preconditions of the uncanny to, and thus limits his explanation within, the domain of intellectual uncertainty. Taking Hoffmann's "The Sandman" as his example, Freud argues that

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[1] Marc Falkenberg critically argues that because Jentsch never used the term "intellectual uncertainty" in his essay published in 1906, it is Freud's misinterpreting "intellectual certainty", the phrase originally adopted by Jentsch as "an insurance against uncanny", that directly lead to his inferring its opposite, "intellectual uncertainty", as "what constitutes the primary cause of the uncanny for Jentsch". Falkenberg thus prefers to call it "cognitive uncertainty", since, if one cannot recognize a phenomenon, it will entail "a potential danger". In my project, I do not attempt to follow Falkenberg's explanation to tell the subtle difference between intellectual uncertainty and cognitive uncertainty, but regard the former as a well-established term to describe Jentsch's definition of the uncanny. What Falkenberg aims to do is re-emphasize the component of uncertainty in the uncanny which, in his opinion, is separate from repression and largely neglected by Freud in his theory of the uncanny. See Marc Falkenberg, *Rethinking the Uncanny in Hoffman and Tieck* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 20-21.

[2] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 125.

though there is no question that Jentsch attributes the effect of the uncanny to the readers' uncertainty about whether Olimpia is a real person or an automaton, it should not be the sole factor resulting in the uncanny. He then analyzes Nathaniel's repressed infantile complexes, which produces a real sense of the uncanny. Seen in a broader light, both interpretations are reasonable and persuasive: Jentsch makes use of the uncanny to build the world of cognitive psychology while Freud takes advantage of the term to contribute to the construction of unconscious complexes, or, in Falkenberg's word, to "establish psychoanalysis as an exact science with status equal to psychology".[3] Considering what Freud tries to emphasize, these definitions function adequately without turning to the original context. In addition to exploring different reasons for the uncanny, as far as the analytical process itself is concerned, Jentsch involves himself in more analysis of the observer's feelings, that of the one who experiences the uncanny, while Freud tends to revolve around the phenomenon itself and discuss how the sense of the uncanny arises due to the repressed recurrence of familiar things. In Freud's mind, the uncanny exists independent of the observer.

Both intellectuals' discussions of the uncanny are closely associated with psychological-literal terms, such as the double, repetitions of the repressed, the omnipotence of thought, the confusion between animate and inanimate, and other experiences dealing with madness, superstition or death. However, in the postcolonial context, what produces the sense of the uncanny lies more in the burden of historical background and cultural heritage than in supernatural mysteries. As Hugh Haughton puts it, "with the death of the supernatural, it is our own and our culture's disowned past that haunts us".[4] The haunting prompts the subject to travel beyond his original boundaries and thus incurs the problem of displacement, which entails the idea of the unhomely, an element discussed but deemphasized in Freud's uncanniness.

What is the relation between the unhomely and the uncanny, then? In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, the original footnote to the translation of Freud's "Das Unheimliche" is quite thought-provoking, and reads as follows: "The German word, translated throughout this paper by the English 'uncanny', is *unheimlich*, literally 'unhomely'. The English

[3] Falkenberg, *Rethinking the Uncanny in Hoffman and Tieck*, 20.
[4] Hugh Haughton, "Introduction," in *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003), xlii.

term is not, of course, an exact equivalent of the German one." [5] Thus, the connotation of the German word for uncanny, *unheimlich*, is so elastic that it invites different interpretations. Morphologically speaking, the word *unheimlich* consists of three parts, namely, a prefix *un*, a root morpheme *heim*, and an adjective suffix *lich*. The tricky thing is that *heimlich* bears two different meanings: on the one hand, it refers to the feeling of comfort and relaxation because of the familiarity and intimacy, which literally corresponds to the meaning of "homely"; on the other hand, its connotation also deviates from the reference to a more metaphorical sense of the hidden and clandestine. Thus *unheimlich*, referring to a secretive and frightening feeling, is the antonym of *heimlich* only in its first sense and an equivalent of *heimlich* in the second one. That is why Freud, after a systematically semantic analysis, equates *unheimlich* with *heimlich*, as he puts it, "[*heimlich*] merges with its formal antonym, *unheimlich*, so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *unheimlich"*.[6] *Unheimlich* is a term to summarize the feeling of estrangement within the home, and the presence of something horrifying, tempting and strange within the boundary of the intimate.

The blurring distinction between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* is crucial for Freud's downplaying the element of the unhomely, an insecure and unsettling sense wrestling with the idea of home, in the original German concept. The dictionary entries Freud cited clearly demonstrate that, though realizing the importance of the feeling of home in *unheimlich*, he rephrased it and steered the discussion in the way of psychoanalysis. Though elaborating on the meaning of *Heimlich* in a broad scope of languages in the essay published in 1919, what he tried to conclude could possibly be that, when the subject was confronted with "something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed", [7] the psychological phenomenon would arise. Mark B. Sandberg points out what is lost in this translation should be "the centrality of 'home' in the concept",[8] but he ascribes

[5] Sigmund Freud, *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols., vol. 17, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 219.
[6] *The Uncanny*, 132. Unless otherwise states, all quotations from Freud's "Das Unheimliche" are based on this book.
[7] Ibid., 148.
[8] Mark B. Sandberg, *Ibsen's Houses: Architectural Metaphor and the Modern Uncanny* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19.

the misinterpretation to the English translator, about which I hold a different view. In my opinion, it is Freud's analysis of *unheimlich* that makes a direct and decisive contribution to its English translation. Marc Falkenberg speaks of the importance of the unhomely in the uncanny, as he suggests, "the connection between 'unheimlich' and home indeed exists, the notion of home that 'unheimlich' negates is more generally characterized by everything strange and hostile",[9] but what he reiterates is to restore the status of the uncertainty and then apply it to the analysis of Romantic prose. Based on Freud's dictionary entries, Dwayne Avery argues that "the uncanny is a multifaceted term that is deeply connected to home",[10] but his discussion of the unhomely also does not go beyond the scope of the domestic dwelling space haunted by supernatural horrors. The unhomely, when interpreted from a social perspective, will gain a culture-enriched sense, echoing what postcolonial discourse is involved in. Thus the unhomely becomes an appropriate term to describe Coetzee's problematic relation with South Africa since he never really settled down there.

Among the early literature on this subject, it seems that, by focusing on the aesthetic effect produced by the uncanny, commentators tend to ignore the role of the author behind the uncanny, so this is the point of departure in my reading of *WB*. By separating the unhomely from the uncanny, I intend to apply the former to the analysis of Coetzee's authorship which is saturated with homelessness, and then explore the sense of the uncanny in the narration of torture in *WB* from a Freudian point of view. In short, for Coetzee, it is an unhomely process to explore the uncanny. Nevertheless, I will not deny the inseparable relation between the unhomely and the uncanny, since the uncanny, in Nicolas Royle's words, is "inextricably bound up with thoughts of home and dispossession, the homely and unhomely, property and alienation".[11]

II. The unhomely authorship and the placelessness

When reading *WB*, we face the dilemma that the narrative elements are so similar with what happened in South Africa in the 1970s, such as surveillance, torture, the

[9] Ibid., 25.
[10] Dwayne Avery, *Unhomely Cinema: Home and Place in Global Cinema* (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 12.
[11] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 6.

authority of the police, the oppressive imperial state and terrorizing the colonized barbarian community, while the milieu is so strange and historically nonspecific that it seems to bear little relation to South Africa. One of the ensuing questions is whether it is a South African novel or a parable with wider reference. The key to understanding this dilemma is to take into consideration that, when writing the novel, Coetzee was motivated by his unhomeliness to deliberately dislocate the familiar setting of South Africa; to put it another way, his unhomely authorship stemmed from his displacement in South Africa, but it did not entail reclusiveness. Instead, he kept a vigilant eye on the social reality, with which he was deeply engaged in his writings. The social chaos and racial conflicts, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, together with the Afrikaner's historical colonial burden, haunt his writing and repeatedly recurs in the narrative, either allegorically or realistically.

The archive of Coetzee's papers, including manuscripts, notebooks and other miscellaneous materials, kept at Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, could shed illuminating light on this assertion. In his argument about Coetzee's original attempt to narrate revolution but ending with "a novel about baulked desire" in the creative process of *WB*, [12] Attwell raises an extremely insightful question: "how and why the remote setting of *Barbarians* was a solution to the problem of writing about South Africa".[13] However, we may also wonder: why does writing about South Africa become a challenge to Coetzee?

Though the background of his first two novels was the South African context, with the exception "The Vietnam Project" which is a reflection on American involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s, Coetzee was still struggling with how to write his country, since he failed to "find the connection between place and the kind of fiction he wanted to write" at the early stage of his writing career.[14] There was no proper place for him to accommodate his unhomeliness, either in the reality or in the novels he had written and was going to write. The fact that South Africa in the 1970s witnessed the security police inflict rampant violence on the black people reduces the South African apartheid government to "a state of paranoia", an observation Coetzee made to diagnose the censorship in South Africa of the late

[12] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 106.
[13] Ibid., 107.
[14] Ibid., 106-07.

1970s.[15] Such a place was definitely not what Coetzee was longing for, so in the first draft of *WB*, what he tried to deal with was the people who escaped from a republic in its last days.

It is worth noting that when Coetzee began to write *WB*, the novel was based "in a highly recognizable Cape Town",[16] the milieu with which the novelist was quite familiar. However, as the writing evolved, he abandoned the original geographical setting and defamiliarized it with an invented one. Though, when asked to broadly talk about the genesis of his writing in the interview with Joanna Scott, Coetzee said: "the beginnings generally get abandoned during the course of revision",[17] what matters here is to figure out why he gave up the beginning in the first draft of *WB*. Hermann Wittenberg argues Coetzee's choice of an unspecific background is out of his "personal, aesthetic and political considerations",[18] but, to me, all of these considerations can be attributed to his unhomely authorship.

As far as the personal reasons are concerned, it is his problematic relation with South Africa that prompted him to turn to an indeterminate milieu. The political considerations were entwined with the personal ones. Considering the fact that it was coincidentally on the same day, 11 July 1977, that Coetzee begun to sketch the draft while Customs at Cape Town harbour embargoed *In the Heart of the Country* shipped for distribution in South Africa (and the news reached Coetzee eight days later),[19] it is very easy to jump to a conclusion that the placelessness served as Coetzee's strategy to dodge severe censorship at that time. As Wittenberg argues, the selection of a dislocated setting was to "provide some insulation against banning and reprisals".[20] This observation rings true, but if the creative process of *WB* is taken into account, as Attwell does so in his recent book to argue that little evidence suggested Coetzee's concession to censorship, it will be unconvincing.[21] As argued

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[15] Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*, 34.
[16] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time*, 108.
[17] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory: An Interview with J.M. Coetzee," 95.
[18] Hermann Wittenberg and Kate Highman, "Sven Hedin's 'Vanished Country': Setting and History in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," *Scrutiny2* 20, no. 1 (2015): 107.
[19] For detailed information, see Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time*, 107-08. Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, 296-97.
[20] Wittenberg and Highman, "Sven Hedin's 'Vanished Country': Setting and History in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," 106.
[21] Attwell examines the draft of *IHC* and argues that it is absolutely wrong to identify

in my third chapter, the relation between Coetzee and censorship can be regarded as hostile coexistence. He remained consistent in this attitude and the thoughtful reflections on this topic finally led to an essay collection, entitled *Giving Offense*. In a letter addressed to Peter Lampack on 25 April 1985, Coetzee clarified his position on the selection of the dislocated setting:

> I am not playing one of those East European games in which a writer disguises a political statement about his own country in an allegorical form in such a way that all his readers know what he really means but the authorities cannot pin an offense on him. If I had wanted to write a book specifically about South Africa, I would have written it (which doesn't mean to say that *WB* is not about South Africa).[22]

Besides the personal and the political considerations, the aesthetic aspect should not be overlooked: naturalism, as a branch of literary realism, seemed uncongenial to Coetzee. His wrestling with realism started at the beginning of, and would haunt him throughout, his writing career. As what Attwell quotes from the beginning in the first draft of *WB* shows, the narrative exhibited a strong trace of naturalism.[23] However, if he was committed to naturalism, he had to make the setting as credible as possible. It was obviously not what Coetzee hoped to achieve, though he intended to engage with the historical and ethical questions in South Africa. He acquainted himself with the realistic writing tradition in South Africa, which was always hailed as the most powerful weapon to address the reality by many South African writers, including, but not limited to, Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer and André Brink, but he did not take it as a real solution to those historical and political problems of the country. To Coetzee, the best way of demonstrating the intensity of these questions would be through some form of anti-realism, instead of indulging oneself with the popular realist tradition in South African writing. His repeated resistance to realism was exemplified here so that the early draft set in Cape Town "proved to be a dead end".[24] Although there is still some degree of verisimilitude in *WB* to make the milieu convincing, it will be totally erased in his latest two Jesus novels, namely, *The*

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any causal relationships between the two. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 107-09.

[22] Quoted in Wittenberg and Highman, "Sven Hedin's 'Vanished Country'," 108.

[23] See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 109.

[24] Ibid.

Childhood of Jesus and its sequel *The Schooldays of Jesus*.

In order to cope with the problem of writing South Africa, Coetzee turned to creating a new geographical setting for his narration, which is, in his words, "a heavy concentration" on narrative technique (*DP*, 142). It is no surprise that readers will experience the uncanny feeling due to this deliberate defamiliarization. Peter Wilhelm also claims that "the strange landscapes, part-African, part a country of the mind; the sense of action and thought scarcely disturbing the flux of time… – these will haunt the reader long after the novel has been set aside".[25] The sense of the uncanny is not only to the reader but also to the novelist himself, which is the first challenge for Coetzee to write South Africa. As he observes in *DP*,

> the landscape of *Barbarians* represented a challenge to my power of envisioning, while the Karoo threatened only the tedium of reproduction, reproduction of a phraseology in which the Karoo has been done to death in a century of writing and overwriting (drab bushes, stunted trees, heat-stunned flats, shrilling of cicadas, and so forth). (142)

In addition to the challenge to his literary imaginative capacity, there lies a much deeper tension in Coetzee – his complicated feeling for the Karoo. On the one hand, it is the Karoo, or specifically speaking, the Voëlfontein farm, that saw little Coetzee's happiness in his childhood. His familiarity with the flora and fauna, and attachment to the family atmosphere provided him with inspirational resources, which is, as noted previously, one of the representations of Coetzee' Janus-faced attitude to home. Falkenberg remarks that "home" is uncanny, "not only because it is the place where the family drama of socialization is played out, but also because 'home' in a more universal sense is a secure place".[26] The Voëlfontein farm in the Karoo is such a place for Coetzee. On the other hand, the literary landscape of the Karoo was tediously repeated in South African novels, so the idea of representing the Karoo in a different style found its way into his early writing, with no exception to *WB*.

Therefore, the real challenge for Coetzee lies in how to "construct a landscape… that probably doesn't exist", rather than "describe or represent an

[25] quoted in Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 345.
[26] Falkenberg, *Rethinking the Uncanny in Hoffman and Tieck*, 26.

unfamiliar landscape".[27] The urgency of creating a new milieu is a tactic for Coetzee to make peace with his unhomeliness, which prompts Coetzee to embark on a wide range of reading to look for something uncanny, a mixture of the familiar and the strange, resulting in "a particularly intense experience of strangeness".[28] In this way, Coetzee makes the readers experience, as Nicolas Royle's puts it, "the ineluctable significance of the uncanny" motivated by "a desire to domesticate, order and control that strange stuff called literature … to make strange, to defamiliarize, to make unfamiliar all sorts of familiar perceptions and beliefs".[29]

In Wittenberg and Highman's meticulous and thorough analysis of the genesis of the placeless setting in *WB*, they dig out the invisible but close relationship between Sven Hedin's *Central Asia and Tibet: towards the holy city of Lassa* and that novel, though Hedin's travel writing is not included among Coetzee's extensive reference lists.[30] They draw many similarities between the two books, especially the account of Lou-lan from Sven Hedin's writing and the dislocated setting in *WB*, and then come to the conclusion that "the geography and history of Lou-lan thus cohere significantly with the novel's frontier town setting".[31] Moreover, Lou-lan is not the sole archetype of the unspecific setting in *WB* and several other works on central and east Asia also make their contributions, such as the German edition of a travelling narrative by Russian geographer Nikolay Przhevalsky, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, 1844–1846 (1850)* by the French Catholic priest and traveller, Évariste RégisHuc and *The Pulse of Asia: A Journey in Central Asia Illustrating the Geographic Basis of History* (1907) by the American geography scholar Ellsworth Huntington, etc. The integration of these miscellaneous sources enables Coetzee to craft a symbolically hybrid milieu, which is not accurately incompatible with any single topography. As Falkenberg notes, "the uncanny object possesses a 'quality of

[27] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory," 95.
[28] Haughton, "Introduction," xlii.
[29] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 5.
[30] See Wittenberg and Highman, "Sven Hedin's 'Vanished Country'," 113. They also argue that, though this book is excluded from Coetzee's references, the Swedish explorer's other travelling work, *Across the Gobi Desert* (1931), does appear in Coetzee's notes. See ibid., 119.
[31] Ibid., 117. Lou-lan, an ancient kingdom located in the northwest of China along the Silk Road, was established around the second century B.C. and flourished over 800 hundred years until it suddenly disappeared from the earth.

indefiniteness'",[32] the effect of the uncanny thus comes around when the readers are confronted with the indefiniteness. In this way, it makes an interesting companion to "NJC", which inherits a "pan-European" textual tradition, "consisting of Portuguese, Dutch, English, German, Swedish and French travel writing, ethnography and linguistics".[33] However, the fictional milieu is not a hotchpotch of the fragments from Coetzee's reading, but a convincing and uncanny picture to entice us to wait for the barbarians in the narrative. The reason lies in that, in addition to Coetzee's endeavour to assemble these real geographical elements, the theme of the novel plays a crucial role (and I will return to this debate in the next part.)

It is out of question that, due to its uncanniness, the dislocated setting in *WB* invites an allegorical reading, as Stephen Clingman remarks: "the novel's setting is ghosted, spectral, uncanny, telling its secrets of the 'home'— of many homes, of the world as 'home' under Empire — with extraordinary power."[34] Coetzee himself would never deny this observation, and he has noted: "I want to create characters and a setting that belong to no recognizable contemporary situations. But people who know South Africa will probably pick up allusions."[35] Furthermore, since the allegorical interpretation is usually rewarding, the novel tends to be extended to a universal Hegelian binary opposition, "a universally relevant, time- and place-transcending narrative of human suffering and moral choice",[36] rather than restricting itself within the South African domain. *WB* thus "contributed a powerful and moving voice to the international discourse on torture in the eighties".[37] However, this allegorical reading is always abused upon interpreting the real-world racial issues. Wittenberg's essay is one of the typical examples.

In spite of tracing the genesis of the unspecific setting of *WB* in a rigorously academic way, Wittenberg navigates the discussion of the novel's allusion in a wrong direction, where he aims to draw a parallel between the way that the Chinese government cracks down on the terrorism in its northwest Xinjiang province, where

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[32] Falkenberg, *Rethinking the Uncanny in Hoffman and Tieck*, 43.
[33] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 41.
[34] Stephen Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford: Oxford Uiversity Press, 2009), 221.
[35] Jill Smolowe and Peter Younghusband, "Facing the Enemy Within," *Newsweek*, May 1982, 55.
[36] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 42.
[37] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 135.

most of its Uyghur minority resides and also the dislocated setting in *WB* possibly originates, and the way that Colonel Joll and his soldiers inflict torture on the barbarians in the novel. It is true that the allegorical implication chimes with the political interactions in many other nations, but Wittenberg is equating all forms of state action against insurgency. Nevertheless, the controversy elicited by Wittenberg's argument proves the extensive referentiality of Coetzee's narrative strategy. It is not only out of the experimentalism of new writing styles, but also can be deemed a psychological cure for his problematic relationship with South Africa. This strategy will recur in his recent Jesus novels, but in a very different way: rather than create a new home for the subjects, or for him, it does imply the loss of an old one.

III. The motif of torture and the uncanny narrative

The unhomely authorship not only plays a decisive part in Coetzee's choice of the placeless setting in *WB* but also exerts its influence on the motif and the narrative, which also produces strong features of the uncanny. Torture is a topic that few authors can avoid when writing about South Africa. To some extent, *WB* is a narrative about torture. In this section I will discuss, firstly, how Coetzee's unhomely authorship helps to change the theme from revolution to torture, and then how the narrative itself possesses a feature of uncanniness to solve Coetzee's second challenge in the writing.

Just as the setting moved from a highly recognizable Cape Town background into an unspecific one, the central motif of the novel also experienced a great transition from revolution to torture.[38] Rather than addressing torture directly, the original conception had more to do with the aggressively sexual relationship between Manos Milis, a protagonist whose occupation was firstly a former teacher from Greece and then a guard on the border in the earlier drafts, and his woman against the background of a civil war. Readers can expect where the development of the plot might have led if Coetzee insisted on this motif — a dark romantic narrative, in which the sexual relationship expressed "aggressive, unfocused desires that are

[38] For a more detailed discussion of the transition on the theme, see Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 105-09.

released by a revolution".[39]

However, this was not what Coetzee wanted: the philosophical and ethical issues reflected in the narration might come up to his expectation, but not the story itself. As he noted in the draft: "After 22 pages, no liftoff yet. It would seem that I can get nowhere unless the whole thing turns into a drama of consciousness a la *In the Heart*. But I cannot face the prospect of writing at that hysterical intensity again."[40] There is no doubt that Coetzee tried to avoid the repetition of the narrative rhythm in *In the Heart of the Country*, so the problem for the novelist would be how to find out a plot to match the tune he had composed. It was at this time that the whole country, even the international community, was appalled by the sudden death of Steven Biko, a famous political activist in South Africa, during his custody. The press clippings about Biko's inquest kept by Coetzee suggest that he paid close attention to the event, so Biko's death and torture became a catalyst for the theme and the narration we see in the finished novel, as Coetzee said in his notebook: "This may not be entirely honest, but I must make the relation of the story to the Biko affair, the inspiration of the story by the Biko affair, clear."[41] He incorporates these developments into the developing story of a sexual relationship during a war, or in the aftermath of a war, making it more painful. Since then, the novel would turn to explore "the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience" by describing the scenes of interrogation and their consequences, especially the relation between the magistrate and the barbarian girl (*DP*, 363). In the published version, the account of the old prisoner's death given to the magistrate is directly derived from Steve Biko's inquest report, so Colonel Joll's chicanery is a parody for the subsequent cover-up by the apartheid authorities to conceal the truth, which is abundantly commented on by critics.[42] Even though the detailed plot was abandoned, the tension underlying the aggressively sexual relationship between Manos Milis and

[39] Ibid., 111.
[40] quoted in ibid., 112.
[41] quoted in ibid., 117.
[42] Derek Attridge notes that Colonel Joll's report on the death of the old prisoner "echoes the official account of Biko's death". Stephen Clingman points out the parallel between the fictional narration and the real world: Colonel Joll and the Third Bureau are shades of South Africa's Bureau of State Security of the1970s while the prison's death alludes to "the murder of Steve Biko and all those deaths in South African interrogation rooms". See Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 42. Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity*, 221.

the woman remained consistent, since torture is an extreme version of the situation, a distorted form of intimacy and "an excellent way of unleashing repressed violence into the fictional world".[43]

Torture is an uncanny motif in literature because it is something "that was intended to remain secret" and should be "hidden away" from the public, with no exception for writers.[44] However, some South African writers, including Coetzee, attempted to make it come into the open by describing what had happened in the dark chamber in their writings. To them, the dark chamber is "the origin of novelistic fantasy per se" (*DP*, 364), so that is why Coetzee entertained the idea, and explored the challenge, of representing the torture going on behind the closed door. Aaron Michael Kerner, in his analysis of the sexual abuse and gender politics in torture porn, a film genre, also notes that the torture chamber is "an uncanny site".[45] Though the text Kerner discusses belongs to a different genre, the underlying seduction elicited by torture and pornography is the same, namely, repeated occurrence of violence to satisfy the psychological pleasure of the observers. It resonates with what Attwell observes that Coetzee's discussion of the above challenge in "Into the Dark Chamber" suggests "the temptation to succumb to the pornography of violence".[46] Thus Coetzee's second challenge in writing South Africa, especially in writing *WB*, is how to locate a position to "imagine torture and death on one's own terms" without becoming complicit in reproducing the explicit obscenity of the scene and the brutality of authority (*DP*, 364).

To elaborate on this challenge, in "Into the Dark Chamber", Coetzee discusses the reaction of Rosa Burger, the protagonist of Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*, to the sight of a drunken black man, who has absorbed into himself the brutality of the social environment, mercilessly flogging a donkey. Coetzee adds that

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[43] Head, "Coetzee and the Animals: The Quest for Postcolonial Grace," 230.
[44] Freud, *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, 17, 132.
[45] Aaron Michael Kerner, *Torture Porn in the Wake of 9/11: Horror, Exploitation, and the Cinema of Sensation* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 68.
[46] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 121. The pornography of violence, originally proposed by Karen Halttunen in her monograph which explores the change of nonfiction narrative of murder in America during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, is a term to describe the "deliberate use of pain and horror to generate readers' pleasure, the peculiar 'dreadful pleasure' of imaginatively viewing terrible scenes of violent death" in the gothic narrative (61). See Karen Halttunen, *Murder Most Foul: The Killer and the American Gothic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 61.

the scene almost became emblematic in representing all forms of cruelty at all times of history, suggesting that the placeless setting would allow for such a representation. Instead of intervening in the flogging, Rosa Burger chooses to drive away and then leave South Africa since she cannot bear the ethical burden imposed by torture under the apartheid authorities, nor can she, as a white person, bear being unable to intervene in the suffering meted out by a black citizen; she only returns to the country of her birth much later, awaiting the moment that "all human acts, including the flogging of an animal, will be returned to the ambit of moral judgment" (368). Coetzee's tactic of representing the torture in *WB* predicts the above observation ("Into the Dark Chamber" was published in 1986, several years later than the time of writing *WB*). By narrating the torture from the perspective of the magistrate, Coetzee turns the second challenge of writing South Africa into "a moral problem".[47]

The torture in *WB* is what the Sandman represents in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman* and both of them haunt the characters through the repeated return. The only difference lies in that the former one embodies itself in extreme physical punishment with far-reaching psychological and ethical consequences while the latter, as a virtual presence in one's imagination, will come into existence only with the help of supernatural forces.

There is a tactic of uncanniness underlying Coetzee's representation of torture. Coetzee notes that the flogging in *Burger's Daughter* reminds us of another famous torture episode in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, where a group of drunken peasants whip a little mare to death. Tolstoy, Dostoevsky's contemporary, wrote of flogging in the following way: "[p]eople who have broken the law are denuded, thrown down on the floor, and beaten on their behinds with sticks …. [and] lashed across their bare buttocks"; then he questioned the punishment in a postscript, "why this particular stupid, barbaric way of inflicting pain and not some other: pricking the shoulder or some other body part with needles, squeezing arms or legs in a vice, or something else of this sort."[48] When Victor Shklovsky, a major figure of Russian Formalism, expounds the theory of estrangement in his "Art, as Device", he notes that Tolstoy defamiliarized the customary act of flogging "both by the description

[47] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time*, 121.
[48] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art, as Device," *Poetics Today* 36, no. 3 (2015): 163.

and by the proposal to change its form without changing its essence".[49] It is in this sense that Royle argues there was a desire to propel Russian Formalism to "register and affirm the power of literature … to make strange, to defamiliarize, to make unfamiliar all sorts of familiar perceptions and beliefs".[50] This is applicable to Coetzee's writing strategy in *WB*. The uncanniness in *WB* depends not only on the defamiliarization of the geographical setting due to his unhomely authorship, but also on representing torture in an uncanny way. Differently put, the narration of torture generates a sense of uncanniness during the magistrate's moral awakening.

The novel starts with a sense of the uncanny. In the very beginning, what intrigues and puzzles the magistrate is a pair of opaque glasses worn by Colonel Joll, the chief commander of punitive expeditions against the barbarians. To the magistrate, the pair of sunglasses is "a new invention" and he has "never seen anything like it: two little discs of glass suspended in front of his eyes in loops of wire" (*WB*, 1). Coetzee manipulates a strategy of estrangement to defamiliarize the glasses because "Colonel Joll's vanity and dark glasses are clichés of the security officer familiar with interrogation and torture".[51] What accompanies the unfamiliar glasses, this new invention, is torture, regarded as common practice by the so-called civilized Third Bureau to treat the barbarians.

The familiar scene of torture, especially the ones resulting in the barbarian girl's damaged eyesight and lameness, will gradually come into the reader's sight in the narrative while the magistrate's moral awakening is heavily attributed to his discovery of the truth behind the girl's physical disability. It is through the girl's half-blind eyes that the magistrate perceives his double. When finding out that, because someone has held a hot fork close to the girl's open eyes, she is partially sighted, the magistrate sees his double for the first time, "I take her face between my hands and stare into the dead centers of her eyes, from which twin reflections of myself stare solemnly back" (*WB*, 44). However, the magistrate fails to elicit the answer from the girl to the question what she thinks of the torturer. The second appearance of his double comes when the magistrate contemplates how to establish a reciprocal relation with the girl but ends with her half-blind eyes "from which there comes no

[49] Ibid.
[50] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 5.
[51] David Attwell, "Coetzee's Estrangements," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 41, no. 2/3 (2008): 238.

reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me" (47). These two doubles indicate that the magistrate's subjectivity is duplicated under the gaze of the girl, but neither of them is an identical double of the magistrate, since "doubling always implies displacement, and hence divergence, alteration and transformation".[52] That is the very moment that when the magistrate's ethical transformation takes place, when he identifies the second double. He becomes aware that he and Colonel Joll, or more broadly, the colonial power represented by the Third Bureau, will develop a kind of complicity if he follows the latter's ways to interrogate these nomadic people. As he declares: "There is nothing to link me with torturers … I must assert my distance from Colonel Joll! I will not suffer for his crimes!" (*WB*, 48) To the magistrate, his double is not indicative of "an assurance of immortality" but "the uncanny harbinger of death", a death of his previous self.[53]

When the magistrate learns that the girl is crippled due to the beating on her ankles, he begins to wash her feet, which is "the basic form of atonement or expiation" for his moral awakening.[54] Readers familiar with Coetzee's oeuvre will not fail to recall the similar behaviour in his second novel, where Magda washes her patriarchal father's feet every night. Though both of them are closely related to Coetzee's unhomely authorship, each has its own focus. Compared with Magda, a female narrator for Coetzee to subvert the patriarchal tradition in Afrikaner culture, the magistrate is a man of unhomeliness with awakening ethical consciousness in the colonial discourse. It is also worth pointing out that, though the Magistrate, under such circumstances, "keeps harking back to a pastoral past",[55] it has little to do with what Magda longs for in *IHC*. Coetzee does not continue the pastoral writing to explore the idea of an idealized home on the rural farm but develops his unhomely authorship with an uncanny narrative.

Another uncanny element permeating the magistrate's moral awakening process

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[52] María J. López, "*Foe*: A Ghost Story," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45, no. 2 (2010): 307.
[53] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 142.
[54] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 80.
[55] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory," 96. Examples can be found in "I toyed more than once with the idea of resigning my post, retiring from public life, buying a small market garden" (152) and at the end of the novel, when the magistrate begins to write, he finds what he has finished strikes a pastoral note, "no one who paid a visit to this oasis… failed to be struck by the charm of life here. We lived in the time of the seasons, of the harvests, of the migrations of the waterbirds."(168-169)

is his dream sequence. These dreams beset, or come as a relief to, the magistrate from the beginning of the narrative (*WB*, 10), to its end (170).[56] There are several recurring images in the series of dreams that invite a Freudian reading, including a group of children at play (especially a hooded girl), the construction of a castle (10, 40), a clay oven (119), and a snowman (170), but I will narrow down my discussion to the recurrence of the hooded girl, which is indicative of the magistrate's repressed wish to establish a reciprocal relation with the barbarian girl in his waking life.

In the magistrate's first dream, the hooded girl, as he describes her, "sits in the snow with her hooded back to me working at the door of the castle" (10). It happens before the arrival of the barbarian girl in the magistrate's life, but readers will be able to identify her relation with the barbarian girl later. As Derek Attridge puts it, "a connection is soon established" between the two figures due to their similarity in appearance: black eyes, blank face, a heavy plait, etc.[57] In their first encounter, the magistrate just "[stands] behind her and [watches]" without seeing her face at all, let alone any reciprocal communication (*WB*, 10). In the following dream, when approaching the children at play, they "sidle away or melt into the air, only one figure remains, a hooded child sitting with its back to me", but the magistrate catches sight of a "blank, featureless" face (40). The communication does not happen until the next recurrence of the hooded girl. Though the hooded girl initially also sits "with her back to" him (56), the magistrate manages to talk with the girl without securing a response. In Derek Attridge's words, "part of their haunting power derives from their refusal to succumb completely to the interpretative drive". The mystery and silence of the hooded girl, or the double of the barbarian girl in a Freudian sense, suggests the magistrate's impotency to seek true reciprocity in his waking life. Coetzee negotiates the repeated return of this mysterious and silent image, in addition to the magistrate's double in the barbarian girl's eyes, to act as another decisive stimulus to the magistrate's moral awakening. The hooded girl's refusal to be interpreted enables her to gain "an achieved individuality",[58] so the relationship as envisaged in the dreams becomes redemptive.

Just as Coetzee deliberately detaches the novel's geographical setting from South Africa, he defamiliarizes the image of the girl in the magistrate's dream

[56] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 47-48.
[57] Ibid., 47.
[58] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, 81.

sequence. Though, in the subsequent dreams, the hooded girl is replaced with "the girl" (95, 119), a clear reference to the barbarian girl, the mystery, rather than disappearing, turns to the unfamiliar that frequently "changes shapes, sex, size" (95). Coetzee's uncanny narrative strategy is thus represented in this estrangement since, according to Nicolas Royle, the unfamiliar "is never fixed, but constantly changing".[59] Moreover, the girl's double becomes "an object of terror",[60] as stated in the novel, "in one dream there are two shapes that arouse horror in me: massive and blank, they grow and grow till they fill all the space in which I sleep" (*WB*, 95-96).

IV. Conclusion

Driven by his unhomely authorship, Coetzee wrote his ethical concern into *WB* in an uncanny way. To the readers, instead of "fulfillment of expectations", the novel is "an uncanny startlement", if we put it in Harold Bloom's words in his interpretation of strangeness in the western literary canon.[61] Given the fact that Penguin Books included the novel in its series "Great Books of the twentieth century", I would say that it is the uncanniness, infused with Coetzee's persistent and relentless pursuit of historical richness in the content as well as innovation in the narrative strategy, that dramatically contributes to the novel's canonical status.

[59] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 5.
[60] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 143.
[61] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (U.S.A: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1994), 3.

5. The Landscape of Home — *Life & Times of Michael K*

As noted previously, how to represent landscapes in a narrative is an unavoidable challenge confronting Coetzee in most of his writing career, especially in the early and later stages. If the fiction in the middle stage, such as *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace* and *Slow Man*, does not betray his wrestling with landscape writing explicitly, the historically and geographically nonspecific setting in *WB* and the Jesus series will never fail to trigger relevant discussions. In this chapter, I will fix my attention upon *Life & Time of Michael K* (*MK*), a novel demonstrating so many topographical properties invested with Coetzee's wrestling with home. After managing to invent the placeless landscape in *Waiting for the Barbarians (WB)*, Coetzee admitted in an interview that he was no stranger to the one in *MK*.[1] However, when trying to associate the fictionality with the real geographical locations in South Africa for their relatedness, critics encounter the expected resistance and denial from the novelist himself.[2] In light of home consciousness proposed in this project, these seemingly paradoxical replies arouse my interest in the following questions: how familiar is Coetzee with the landscape in the fiction and, beyond that, with landscape writing in South Africa? How does *MK*, as a novel mixing both realistic and non-realistic elements, embody the sense of home with its literary landscape? Or to put it another way, how does Coetzee make use of different elements of the literary landscape to (de)construct his protagonist's home? How can we appreciate Coetzee's wrestling with the landscape as an important element in the narrative form in this novel?

My basic assumption is that interpreting the novel through a literary geographic perspective would shed some light on the paradox the novelist presents to us as well as the questions I've proposed. *MK* is a story about the eponymous protagonist, not only disfigured by a harelip but also mentally deficient, who copes with various

[1] When asked to comment on his "willingness to accommodate natural description" in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee recognized that he knew the landscape of *Life & Time of Michael K*. See Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 142.

[2] For example, when Tony Morphet tried to confirm with Coetzee whether he wanted a more straightforward conversation with South African context by putting these specified names in the narrative, the novelist denied the hypothesis since he was not interested in the realistic style. See Tony Morphet, "Two Interviews with J.M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987," *Triquarterly* 69 (1987): 455.

places, either private space, such as farms and gardens, or public institutions, such as camps, hospitals, checkpoints and train stations, within a war approaching context during his audacious journey from Cape Town to Prince Albert, a town located in the Karoo, with his ailing mother, who dies en route. The above highly recognizable landscapes, dramatically different from the ones in *WB*, together with the allegorical opposition between the garden and the camp, invite us to explore their literary and authorial significance. It is from this point of departure, I try to argue, that Coetzee's characterizations of these topographical elements are informed by an ethical position derived from his self-consciousness over, and rejection of, a settler-colonial account of South African landscapes. This self-consciousness is apparent, prominently but not exclusively, in *White Writing (WW)*, which betrays that the novelist is well versed in the history of landscape writing by white South Africans, while *MK*, interwoven with these critical opinions,[3] can be deemed to be a textual outcome of the rejection. It will be necessary, before moving to the novel itself, to trace how this interdisciplinary approach develops.

I. Literary landscape: the influence of "two turns"

To treat the subject as fully as it deserves will require an article-length or chapter-length literary review, but a brief introduction can contextualize the textual analysis and make the discussion more theory-oriented. Though landscape, originally a Dutch term widely used in the art of painting, became a loanword in English as early as in the sixteenth century and nowadays generally refers to the visible features of a specific terrain,[4] the exploration of the intricate relation between literature and geography began with the publication of Archibald Geikie's seminal book in 1898, entitled *Types of Scenery and Their Influence on Literature*, where the Scottish geographer and writer discusses, as the title indicates, how different topographies

[3] Rita Barnard also argues that what Coetzee elaborates on in *WW* is closely related to his fiction, especially *MK*, since not merely the time of writing some essays in *WW* and the fiction is concurrent, but also there is some consistence in their concerns. Similarly, Shelley Saguaro notes that "many of the critical formulations Coetzee makes in *WW* are incorporated into … *Michael K*." See Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*, 29. Shelley Saguaro, *Garden Plots: The Politics and Poetics of Gardens* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 143.

[4] Coetzee also briefly traces the etymology of landscape in his first essay-collection. See Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, 37.

find their ways into English poetry.[5] Since then, the critical analysis of the significance of landscape in literary texts gradually became a shared academic concern for both geographers and literary critics.

However, the majority of research in the first half of the twentieth century was inclined to regard these imaginary landscapes as a reliable tool to study the geographical features in the narrative. The tendency, due to the joint influence of the cultural turn in geographical research and the spatial turn in literary criticism, has changed dramatically since the 1970s. The real landscape is thought to be endowed with personal and social qualities and, according to Denis E. Cosgrove, one leading cultural geographer, "denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest[s]".[6] Therefore, there is no persuasive reason for the imaginary landscape, given the sharp differences between geographical reports and literary texts, to merely work as "a separate lens or mirror reflecting or distorting an outside world".[7] With the emergence of humanistic geography, scholars from the related fields rarely allow themselves to be trapped by this instrumentalist orientation but turn to a more humanistic and symbolic approach. More and more humanistic geographers come to realize that landscapes in literary texts should be seen as a way of bridging the gap, or a medium of conducting a dialogue, between the author's sense of place and the narrative characters invested with explicit or implicit literary purposes. It is in this sense that the subjective treatment in both a personal and a social dimension, and consequently the symbolic significance, of landscape writing is proposed and highlighted.

Among the large volumes of research, the one conducted by the American geographers Christopher Salter and William Lloyd is the first systematic contribution to the domain. By proposing the concept of "landscape signatures", they label the writers' personal and unique treatment of geographical elements in their works as a

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[5] See Archibald Geikie, *Types of Scenery and Their Influence on Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1898).

[6] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 13. Cosgrove demonstrates the imbedded social dimension in the idea of landscape at the advent of its birth in the European context.

[7] Crang, *Cultural Geography*, 57.

way to inscribe their idiosyncrasies and intellectual pursuits on the earth.[8] The subjectivity in these imprints is also a point of departure in Mike Crang's frequently-quoted book, *Cultural Geography*. Recognizing the essential but vital role of the subjectivity in literary landscapes, Crang claims that it is through the investment of external meaning on the landscapes that the narrative "speaks about the social meaning of places and spaces".[9] Without confining the relation between literature and geography to a personal level, Crang thinks of the literary landscape as a social product. As he remarks, "literary accounts can thus reveal … how relations to spaces can define social action."[10] Crang's emphasis on its social dimension, as well as his interpretation of literary texts as "ways of looking at the world that show a range of landscape of taste, experience and knowledge",[11] is resonant with Cosgrove's Marxist argument that, as noted above, the idea of landscape should be associated with "social formation". In Cosgrove's opinion, the real landscape can be regarded as "a way of seeing" that witnesses, and thus becomes involved in, the tremendous turbulence in the formations of different social groups.[12] Though Cosgrove restricts his argument within the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism in the Western world, what he has proposed still holds true in the literary context. Emerging against the background of racial liberation and national independence, postcolonial writing has no lack of these struggles and conflicts in terms of its depiction of geographical setting.

This cultural turn echoes the spatial turn in literary criticism. Rita Barnard, among many others, insightfully points out that in recent years "literary critics and theorists have increasingly turned to spatial metaphors to describe their methodologies".[13] The comprehensive list of spatial theories she gives is clear enough for a glimpse of the influence, so what I set out to do is not repeat these theoretical concepts but transfer my focus to Coetzee's *WW*, which presents a general picture, and also the essence, of South African landscape writing. Grounded in the discussion of South African landscape writing by the European descendants

[8] C. L. Salter and W. J. Lloyd, *Landscape in Literature* (Washington: Association of American Geographers, Resource Paper No. 76-3, 1977).
[9] Crang, *Cultural Geography*, 44.
[10] Ibid., 49.
[11] Ibid., 57.
[12] Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 1.
[13] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 5.

travelling to, or dwelling in, the country from the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth, Coetzee provides a lot of illuminating comments, two of which will be mostly related to this thesis.

To begin with, the earlier European explorers, typified in the work of William Burchell and Thomas Pringle, tended to wrestle with the compatibility of European aesthetic schemas, such as the picturesque, the sublime and the wilderness, with South African landscape,[14] and tried to showcase to the European readers what the colonized land looked like in their aesthetic standards. Considering the history of the literary landscape, these writings are ideal as resourceful databases for geographical research. After these travellers' curiosity about the newly discovered land and their nostalgia for the home country had been manifested and, to some extent, satisfied, the modern South African poets and writers, about two hundred years later than the time when colonial pioneers set their first foot in the land, engaged themselves more with representing the relation between the land and its white inhabitants, yet in very different ways, and that is to say, in two "dream topographies" (*WW*, 6-7). Coetzee's interest in, and discussion of, the dream topographies seems to correspond to the impact of the two turns on literary landscape in which he never analysed landscape writing without taking its social, cultural, or the settler writers' authorial, dimension into account.

The first dream topography, which I have elaborated on in the chapter of *In the Heart of the Country (IHC)*, is to suppose that the landscape consists of thousands of harmonious Afrikaner farms. Pastoralists, as exemplified by Pauline Smith and C.M. van den Heever, try to naturalize and "humanize" the relation, built on the ideology that the ownership and occupation of the land is the white's inborn right (7). The other trend is to depict an "alien, impenetrable" landscape where the writer, initiated and typified by Olive Schreiner in her anti-pastoral novel *The Story of an African Farm* in 1883, is grappling with the pursuit of a dialogical reciprocity "that will allow him an identity better than that of a visitor, stranger, transient" (7-8). This

[14] Lewis Nkosi offers a similar argument in his comment on *WW*, where he notes that "they [the white observers] tried to impose on an alien African landscape a European framework and conventions of reading landscape, deriving from the interpretive code built up from the genre of the pastoral and the picturesque." See Nkosi Lewis Nkosi, "White Writing," in *Still Beating the Drum: Critical Perspectives on Lewis Nkosi*, ed. Lindy Stiebel and Elizabeth Gunner (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005), 293-94.

tradition of existential inquiry plays a pivotal part in English writing in South Africa until the 1960s when the country withdrew from the Commonwealth. The political and spiritual umbilical cord of these English writers with their home country, since then, had been cut, so the destiny of these English-speaking whites "was going to depend a great deal more urgently on an accommodation with black South Africans than on an accommodation with the South African landscape"(8).

This will lead to the idea Coetzee advances: in spite of the varieties of representation, dream topographers tended not merely consciously or unconsciously to apply these scenery standards with different degrees of involvement to the portrait of South African landscape, but flagrantly deprived the landscape of its cultural and historical tension, or to be more precise, degraded the black to a "shadowy presence" (5). In other words, their representations of the relation failed to address the alterity of the black people. This observation contributes, albeit partly, to what Coetzee later in extreme langauge asserts in "Homage": when it came to writing his homeland, no man of letters in South Africa could set an example for him to follow in 1960 because their "versions of the land" were "false and corrupt".[15]

There is another essential but complicated aspect behind these dream topographies, namely, the issue of language. From the nineteenth century onwards, landscape art and landscape writing in South Africa, according to Coetzee, "revolve around the question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African"(*WW*, 7). The choice of which language, either English or the indigenous ones, would be appropriate to portray South African landscape, would reduce these settler writers to a double bind. As far as English is concerned, linguistically, the split between signifier and signified incurs the problem of how to negotiate the "ghostly history of past" of the signifier, that is to say, the colonial violence and the hegemonic ideology, with the signified (*DP*, 63). In other words, the daunting task for the settler writers, which they failed to finish, was to enable these two linguistic elements to match each other. Then the socio-political dimension of the language needs to be introduced. As a European language, English can never be an equivalent to the authenticity of indigenous languages because the cultural genes and colonial visions embedded in it are impossible to be modified, removed, and then, assimilated into the body of South Africa. It makes sense that Sydney

[15] Coetzee, "Homage," 7.

Clouts, a contemporary South African poet whose mother tongue is English, expresses his sense of belonging and alienation from the landscape by writing "the burden of finding a home in Africa for a consciousness formed in and by a language whose history lies on another continent"(*WW*, 173).

Since English is too problematic to be a proper candidate, should they turn to African indigenous languages? It is true that these settler writers could not really, before abandoning their European identity, master any African indigenous language and know it "from the inside" (7), but, if they did, they would face an ironic dilemma. On the one hand, when they gave up their European identities to gain an "inside" mode of consciousness of the indigenous language, the language and, by extension, its representation of the landscape, were not convincing any more to European readers. On the other hand, the indigenous languages cannot assume the role of interpreting their own landscapes,[16] which, as Coetzee notes in an interview, "are not only languages without a European past but languages of cultures that don't have a scenic tradition".[17]

The question arises of how one should respond to the dilemma. Actually, as we have seen, Coetzee has translated the notion of "language" into a linguistic investigation of socio-political relations in South African landscape writing. As Sue Kossew puts it, "Coetzee is using 'language' here in a metaphorical as well as a literal sense, as an index of belonging and alienation."[18] Though Coetzee suggests that an "Adamic language", where "there is no split between signifier and signified, things are names" (*WW*, 9), would settle the disputes, this linguistic code is beyond human beings' capacities. Given the novelist's ambivalent attitude to his Afrikaner identity and the issue of his mother tongue, as discussed in the second chapter, his representation of South African landscape as well as its relation with the colonial descendants and the native is not easy to be simplified as scenic writing to display his familiarity with the South African context; rather, it is underpinned by a sense of commitment, no matter how ethically challenging it is, that he takes the initiative to engage himself in the historical discourse. As an Afrikaner descendant steeped in

[16] Afrikaans may also be not the very choice, since it is "as native to Africa as any African language". See *White Writing*, 175.
[17] Scott, "Voice and Trajectory," 97.
[18] Sue Kossew, *Writing Woman, Writing Place: Contemporary Australian and South African Fiction* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 74.

European literary tradition, he does not share the same burden with Clouts, but there is a much deeper tension hidden in, and giving impetus to, his writing, namely his awareness of the guilt of colonial history, which is also apparent in one of the novellas, "the Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee". *MK*, in this sense, is not merely a literary effort to represent the protagonist's longing, and the price to be paid, for locating a geographical and spiritual home in the shadow of colonialism and apartheid, but also the novelist's strategy to deconstruct the tendency the settler writers discussed in *WW* by means of a strong literary self-consciousness.

II. Relations between K and landscapes

Since "a landscape typically consists of several places",[19] the discussion of the geographical elements in this novel entails a symbolic analysis of the farm which accommodates K, the garden which K cultivates, the silent Karoo mountain where he retreats to evade disciplinary control, and the camp witnessing his repeating escapes, etc. The relation between K and the surrounding landscapes of the war-ravaged background, if interpreted from a realistic narrative perspective, can fall into three modes, namely, active, passive and neutral, all of which contribute to the issue of identity formation, individually and collectively. In the active mode, in addition to being a beneficiary of what the landscapes, exemplified by the farm and the garden, can offer, K also takes the initiative to cultivate, and even transform, the land with the attempt to render them legible to him, though he neither wants to appropriate the land nor leaves physical traces. It is through the role of a cultivator that the idea of gardening and that of the farm are intimately interrelated. In the passive mode, the landscape not only denies K's attempt to bring about any change to the existing system but also deprives him of freedom with confinement. K then becomes an interlocutor between his subjectivity and the external environment, the pattern of which includes K's relations with the train, the camp and the hospital. The neutral mode is a little complicated. On the one hand, the Karoo mountain ranges, which accommodate the outlaw in his hiding from the authorities, are neutral to him; to put it differently, K is able to be in conversation with, but cannot inscribe his presence

[19] Attie De Lange, "Introduction," in *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*, ed. Attie De Lange, et al. (U.K: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), xv-xvi.

into, these landscapes. On the other hand, the narrative presents this neutrality in a positive and even liberating light, since it enables K to blend with the natural environment and therefore exist outside history, at least in his own mind.

Though the three-mode model is based on the realism demonstrated in the narrative, given the critical comments Coetzee has made in *WW*, it should also be borne in mind that these realistic relations involve a metafictional dimension, which is apparent in the split nature in K's internal discourse, the allegorical opposition between the garden and the camp, and the interpretative structure projected by the narrative of the medical officer. It is through the realistic mode embedded in such a literary self-consciousness that Coetzee paints an allegorical picture of South African landscape stricken by rampant colonialism and apartheid.

i. The farm, Wynberg Park and the garden

K's relationship with the farm and the garden is never proprietorial; instead, he only attempts to cultivate the land.[20] In the active mode, K's status as a cultivator means that these landscapes would firstly support his biological being's needs, especially food and shelter, which is apparent in the way K treats the farm as well as the wild animals in, or around, it. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of his biological needs is closely associated with the formation of his social being. In other words, what K gets, or refuses to get, from the surrounding landscapes is not merely an arbitrary physical activity but an allegorical discourse saturated with social and cultural dimensions, where K's two beings are interweaved to construct his otherness and, consequently, his unsettledness.

The appearance of the farm in *MK* has stylistic significance. As argued in the previous chapter, Coetzee's attachment to the Karoo farm is a recurrent presence in Coetzee's early writings, so *MK* is no exception. It is through the account of the farm, among others, that we can tell the intertextuality between *MK* and *Boyhood*, which adds more evidence to what Attwell refers to as the "huge existential enterprise" of

[20] Based on the discussion of various views by critics, including Stephen Clingman, Derek Wright, Nadine Gordimer and Dick Penner, Attwell resists the romantic and pastoral interpretation of K' gardening in his monograph. He observes that K is "a different kind of creature from the historical subjects" who seek the proprietorial right of the land and keep the then social relations alive. I agree with, and will expand on, what he argues in the following section. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 96.

Coetzee's writing,[21] or, in Elleke Boehmer's words, Coetzee's "self-masking and self-making" writing scheme.[22] In addition, it also enables Coetzee to remain consistent in his anti-pastoral writing on which he sets off in *IHC*. If *IHC* is Coetzee's satirical textual practice against the unsettled state of white descendants surrounded by a dominant patriarchy and colonial fantasy in those dream topographies, *MK* will be a poignant exposure of the non-white people's suffering in the overpowering shadow of apartheid, the entailing rootlessness of which is reflected in their relations with the landscape.

The unsettledness in the farm of *IHC* where Magda, the white spinster, dwells has been grafted into the feeling between K, a coloured male, as implied by the medical officer's voice, and a farm which he and his mother try to get to in spite of many uncertainties and unexpected developments. At first, the farm seems to be an ideal landscape which the protagonist and his mother are longing for in the war-torn city. It is not only "a whitewashed cottage" with K's congenial mother welcoming him back and providing him food and shelter, but also the place for him to consummate the role of a cultivator and a gardener (*MK*, 9). However, it is ironic that the farm they are trying to reach has neither a precise location nor an accurate name. It is just situated somewhere near Prince Albert and, even worse, Anna K "forget[s] the actual name of the farm" (27), whose owner is "Mr Vosloo or Mr Visser" (50), so what they can know is only a vague image lingering in Anna K's memory:

> There was a chicken-run against one wall of the wagonhouse, a long chicken-run, and a pump up on the hill. We had a house on the hillside. There was prickly pear outside the back door. (27)

The layout of the farm is quite typical in the South African interior, so it becomes "an indeterminate place" which is nearly impossible to locate.[23] The blurring memory of the farm's name speaks volumes since, if the geographical names in *MK*, in Helgesson's opinion, are "markers of an imperialistic and

[21] *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 2.
[22] Boehmer, "Reading between Life and Work," 439.
[23] Helgesson, *Writing in Crisis*, 208.

capitalistic capture of the landscape" and "allegorical signs of history",[24] it is another deconstruction of these markers and an ironic reminder of the triviality of the non-white group in the historical archive written by the white. As stated in the introduction to the thesis, both Helgesson and Clarkson assert that the place names in *MK* bear a much closer relation to its symbolic significance than to the real geographical landscape; that is to say, what matters are the historical and cultural tensions behind these names rather than the names themselves. So too with the characters' names in the story. These names, if they hint at something, will only imply "the moment in history" when the tensions are laid open (*DP*, 199). Hence, when replying to the question of Kafka's influence on his writing, Coetzee notes that "it is as much possible to center the universe on Prague as on Prince Albert." (ibid)

This interpretation can explain the fact that, in clear contrast to the abundance of the geographical names, most characters from the oppressive institutions in the story are nameless and "indicated only by their professions",[25] such as the railway staff, the police, the nurse and the soldier, etc. The medical officers from the camp, who are the main characters in the second part of the novel, are only denoted by their first names, Robert and Noel, so the institutions' oppressive power they are affiliated with is indeed what Coetzee intends and manages to demonstrate (to which I shall turn later).

We have no idea whether the Visagies' forsaken farm in Prince Albert is the one Anna K describes, but we do come to realize that the farm will not relieve K's unsettledness but can only underline his otherness. Both problems are pervasive among the non-whites during the period of colonialism and apartheid. Though K's stubborn persistence to return ailing Anna to the farm represents their attachment, especially K's, to this geographical location, he never conceives himself as the owner of the farm but as a cultivator, who strives to "live off the land" and who regards himself "as a termite boring its way through a rock" with "nothing to do but live" (46, 66). His effort to satisfy his biological needs is manifested, firstly, by carrying plant seeds on his way to the farm and then by hunting and killing a wild goat upon his first arrival at the farm.

There is no doubt that K's carrying various seeds with him is one of the

[24] Ibid., 230.
[25] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 381.

prerequisites to realize his dream, by cultivation and gardening, of establishing a home, which is definitely a fundamental solution to his unsettledness. However, readers may be confused with the detailed account of K's brutal drowning of the goat, since the discourse, together with his successive killing of birds around the farm and eating insects as well as lizards after escaping into the mountains,[26] ostensibly seems to put him in a position of a predator and thus to contradict his victimhood rendered by the narrative, where he himself is frequently metaphorized into small creatures running away from the hunting of the authorities. Critics even remark, by virtue of K's killing the goat, that the protagonist "dominates nature" and shares some similarity with Jacobus Coetzee, who claims himself a "tamer of the wild" and "destroyer of the wilderness".[27]

These interpretations are worthy of further reflections. On the one hand, K is not fond of, and committed to, slaughtering animals or conquering nature. The killing of these animals, I would argue, is K's makeshift way in his survival strategy, just as he broods that "these creatures had to be caught, killed, cut up and eaten if he hoped to live" (52), which is of great difference from the colonist pioneer keen on dominating the landscape and its people. As we see, when it comes to cleaning and slaughtering the goat, his repulsion soon dwarfs the previous famishment — "the urgency of the hunger that had possessed him yesterday was gone. The thought of cutting up and devouring this ugly thing with its wet, matted hair repelled him."(55) It is due to this lesson that he abandons the idea of butchering animals and turns to cultivating the farm, albeit with intermittent bird-hunting.

On the other hand, before admitting the similarity between K and Jacobus Coetzee, we may be puzzled by another question, which is how a slow-witted gardener can conjure up so many well-designed metaphors to contemplate his hardship. The answer lies in the split nature of K's internal discourse, which enables us to move between what are clearly his thoughts, such as the repulsion he has felt when dispatching the goat, and those of a narrator, taking these metaphors as examples. It is the plausible paradox in K's personality that Coetzee makes use of, if one insists on taking it as K's violence and cruelty, to align his physical being's

[26] For the depiction of K's bird-killing, see Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, 63; for that of K eating lizards, see ibid., 65,117; for that of K consuming insects, see ibid., 102.
[27] Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible*, 38.

hunger instincts with the allegorical nature of his social being embedded in, and tortured by, otherness, which further stimulates the readers' thinking about the meaning of the farm and the garden to K. Hence, though the paradox is a contradiction, as Ato Quayson puts it, "between his historicity as a hungry man and the possibility of his dehistoricization and dissolution into the form of fable, parable, and allegory",[28] it converges on K's alterity.

Another telling moment to demonstrate this allegorical nature of the relation between K and the farm is the return of the Visagie grandson, an army deserter, who wants to reduce K to his"body servant" (65). This results in K's quick abandonment of the dwelling and noticeably triggers a Hegelian reading where he resists being trapped in the master-slave binary. The farm, after the Visagie boy claims ownership, is no longer the one he has originally thought about,

> whatever I have returned for, it is not to live as the Visagies lived, sleep where they slept, sit on their stoep looking out over their land. If this house were to be abandoned as a home for the ghosts of all the generations of the Visagies, it would not matter to me. It is not for the house that I have come. (98)

Therefore, upon his second visit to the farm, K chooses to build himself a burrow at a distance from the farm rather than live there anymore. It is quite clear that K's eschewal of the dichotomy alludes to, and deconstructs, the apparent harmony and silence in the farm projected by the dream topographies.

The image of the garden also has a long but colonial history in the South African landscape,[29] of which we could find some indications in *Youth*. The young protagonist, when pursuing his dream of being a poet in London in the 1960s, is always sensitive to, and wrestling with, his Afrikaner identity. The paradoxical feeling is crystallized upon Coetzee meeting the housemaid from Malawi in the Merringtons' house, which leads to his contemplation of colonial history and the idea

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[28] Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 172.

[29] Kannemeyer expresses the similar idea that "the myth of a garden and the return to an innocent Eden, that according to Coetzee in *White Writing* never took hold with the arrival of the Dutch colonists at the Cape, now manifests itself in Michael's impulse to cultivate the land, with which he sense a connection." However, the idea is not fully developed in Kannemeyer's argument. See Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 382.

of the garden-outpost in South Africa:

> […] a handful of Hollanders should have waded ashore on Woodstock beach and claimed ownership of a foreign territory they had never laid their eyes on before; that their descendants should now regard that territory as theirs by birthright. Doubly absurd, given that the first landing-party misunderstood its orders, or chose to misunderstand them. *Its orders were to dig a garden and grow spinach and onions for the East India fleet. Two acres, three acres, five acres at the most: that was all they needed. It was never intended that they steal the best part of Africa*. (*Youth*, 121, emphasis mine).

Actually, the young Coetzee's rumination was expanded more critically in *WW*. Since the original plan of the earlier Dutch settlers, who showed little interest in the interior, was to establish "a trading post, a garden" at the Cape of Good Hope (*WW*, 1), it seems that the idea of the garden in the South African landscape is born with a kind of temporality and transience, therefore doomed to a state of unsettledness. Although the earlier settlers did hold the Cape colony to be a garden, they labelled the vast hinterland "not a Garden but an anti-Garden" (3), where the idleness of the local tribes, together with the barrenness of land, would corrupt them into the lazy and brutish state of the Hottentots. It is the very point that Coetzee underscores in the second dream topography the South African landscape projects. If *MK* is Coetzee's practice of writing against this dream topography, the image of the garden in the narrative will be not merely an isolated geographical place, but also the symbolic space where the author combines his intellectual pursuits with the memory of his family life. The ensuing question is in what way the garden contributes to the narrative of the landscape of home. All through the story, K (and also the narrator) consistently emphasizes his identity as a gardener,[30] but while claiming that he is a gardener, K actually refers to his relation to two different landscapes in the narrative, one the communal Wynberg Park with specific boundaries, the other the garden by the dam built by, and for, himself. This is explicitly stated by his own thought: "I have been a gardener, first for the Council, later for myself, and gardeners spend their time with their noses to the ground" (181).

Not too much information about Wynberg Park is disclosed until K meditates

[30] See Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, 4,59,130,75,81.

on his life as a gardener when hiding in the Karoo mountains. Wynberg, literally translated as "wine-mountain", is a suburban area located in the south of Cape Town. Renowned for its vineyard, its soil is rich and fertile. It is from K's meditation that we know about the "green lawn and oak-trees", a typical suburban landscape in contemporary South Africa (67). These plants, especially the oak-trees introduced to South Africa by the earlier Dutch settlers, are intimately linked with the social formation in the country since the park represents "the social relations relevant to its planting and display".[31] In this sense, Wynberg Park becomes the very tangible heritage left by colonialism and an epitome of "the exotic, Europeanised landscape of Cape Town".[32] K only takes it as a place where he can work to support his physical being and never finds identification with it. Upon hearing the news that Anna K needs care, he gives up the gardening job without any hesitation. Different from the Kruger Park in Gordimer's "The Ultimate Safari", where the artificial landscape is "not just a slice of land, but a decisive physical and cultural barrier",[33] Wynberg Park will not be the obstacle on his way home but does strike a sharp contrast with the more indigenous landscapes of the Karoo. K's decisive separation from Wynberg Park is, thus, consolidated by the aforementioned meditation, where he finds more affinity with the rocks and stones:

> When he thought of Wynberg Park he thought of an earth more vegetal than mineral, composed of last year's rotted leaves and the year before's and soon ... an earth so soft that one could dig and never come to the end of the softness; one could dig to the centre of the earth from Wynberg Park, and all the way to the centre it would be cool and dark and damp and soft. I have lost my love for that kind of earth, he thought, I no longer care to feel that kind of earth between my fingers. It is no longer the green and the brown that I want but the yellow and the red; not the wet but the dry; not the dark but the light; not the soft but the hard. (*MK*, 67)

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[31] Jennifer Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 8.

[32] Michael Marais, "The Hermeneutics of Empire: Coetzee's Post-Colonial Metafiction," in *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee*, ed. Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (London: Macmillan, 1996), 77.

[33] Svend Erik Larsen, "The National Landscape - a Cultural European Invention," in *National Identity and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Mai Palmberg (Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute, 1999), 60.

What is going on in K's mind is revealing, both for the authorship and for K's identity construction. K's desire for a kind of desiccation is in tune with what Coetzee reminds us of in the recurring theme of South African landscape writing, namely that "the true South African landscape is of rock, not of foliage, not a botanical, gaze" (*WW*, 167). Initiated by Olive Schreiner, this "geological turn" claims that "vegetation disguises landscape, that traditional landscape art, the art of the prospect, is superficial by nature, cannot tell the true story of the land, the story that buried, or half-buried, beneath the surface" (167-168). By empowering K with such a line of thought, Coetzee is to lay open what is hidden in the landscape and, more than that, in settler-colonial writing. This also echoes the novelist's deep cognizance of the tedious repetition in writing the Karoo, a point noted previously in this thesis. Therefore, K's thought enunciates the critical comments his author has made elsewhere.

In addition to this compatibility between K's thinking and features of South African landscape writing, the Karoo mountain ranges in *MK* also inch their way into the representation of K's capacities. Like other geographical elements, the mountains, rather than being just a backdrop to the narrative, are reflective of K's personality — "elusiveness, self-sufficiency, resilience", so, in Attwell's words, "the geology of the Karoo in *MK* is not just scene-setting; it is part of K's conception of himself".[34] This is very close to what Yi-Fu Tuan, a leading humanistic geographer, remarks: "physical objects and settings are intimately woven with human moods and behaviour."[35] It is indeed impossible for K to sign the mountains, if cultivation is thought of as a signature, but the mountains inhabit K's unsettledness and otherness. In this way, the mountains, which are neutral to K, turn congenial to the narrative.

To elaborate on the significance of the mountains to the narrative does not overshadow that of K's garden, the small patch of land by the dam, which witnesses "the beginning of his life as a cultivator" (*MK*, 59). Ironically, this lifestyle begins with K scattering and burying his mother's ashes in the land and then planting pumpkins and mealies. This ceremonial action indicates the realization of his

[34] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 77.
[35] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research," in *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems*, ed. David Ley and Marwyn S. Samuels (New York & London: Routledge, 2014), 202.

mother's dream and, beyond that, enables K to secure "a vocation and a home",[36] which has a strong autobiographical implication. It never fails to remind us of, in *Boyhood*, little Coetzee's wish to be buried on Voëlfontein, the family farm, so the wishful integration with the farm demonstrates not only the fictional characters' attachment to the land but that of the novelist, a recurrent theme running through his writing and life, which cements what Attwell speaks of, with K representing "some of Coetzee's temperament and inclination".[37] Furthermore, K's vocation could be partly attributed to Coetzee's translating the cultivating history of the family farm.[38]

If the desolate farm and the burrow are spaces that can merely accommodate K, the garden is the "home" for him to enjoy a temporary freedom and settledness by means of cultivation. K finds his greatest pleasure when irrigating the garden with the water from the dam, because, in his mind, "I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature" (*MK*, 59). At this stage, our reading of the nature of K's gardening relies on his watering the soil and planting the seeds, so K's journey to the farm can be deemed "a homecoming which is consummated at the moment that K begins to cultivate the soil".[39] K's biological need is not a top priority when he initiates the cultivation, since the seeds he carries all the time after Anna K's death will, at least in his opinion, germinate because of his idea of gardening. Upon his second return to the farm, K does not abandon his garden in spite of eschewing the homestead for a burrow. All of these episodes seem to constitute a pastoral puzzle for the protagonist, so K's relation with the landscape falls into "a new mode that the country instills",[40] different from the one with the aforementioned Wynberg Park.

However, it is not very easy for us to categorize this mode due to K's subsequent behaviours, one of which is his camouflaging the vegetables in the garden. It suggests not only the impermanence and destabilization of his cultivation but also his struggling with the long-established social formation in South Africa, and that is to say, the non-white should work on the land without inscribing it. As Rita Barnard puts it, "K's mode of farming rewrites, both despite and because of its

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[36] Engelhard Weigl, "*Life & Times of Michael K* (1983)," in *A Companion to the Works of J.M. Coetzee*, ed. Tim Mehigan (New York: Camden House, 2011), 82.
[37] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 135.
[38] According to Attwell, the idea of K's gardening could be traced back to "Coetzee's part-remembering and part-imagining" the family farm's history. See ibid., 77.
[39] Helgesson, *Writing in Crisis*, 205.
[40] Saguaro, *Garden Plots*, 145.

invisibility, the rules of the game of the South African pastoral".[41] Coetzee proposes that what entails the second dream topography is to ask people to "conceive not a social order capable of domesticating the landscape, but any kind of relation at all that consciousness can have with it" (*WW*, 7), so the garden in *MK* is another powerful weapon to deconstruct the landscape narrative in settler colonial writing, replete with the aforementioned consciousness to erase the trace of the black. This landscape consequently becomes an ideologically-charged and historically-contextualized space, so the nature of K's gardening cannot merely depend on the textual meaning of his seed-planting but lead itself to a more symbolic interpretation.

Against such a background, the growing of the seeds will hint at a different future for the apartheid-riven South Africa. The seed-planting, as Laura Wright remarks, "lays the literal and figurative groundwork from which may grow the options for an alternative South African future",[42] but it has a very slim chance to survive the social breakdown and the political unrest. Nor will a bright future for South Africa easily emerge, given the probability that the rampant chaos will tear the idyllic cultivation apart. K's garden and his vegetables, on which K has pinned the hope of settledness, are shattered by a group of soldiers who explode everything on the farm. It terminates K's pastoral dream, turns the garden into a utopia, and then promises a dim and pessimistic prospect for South Africa. Hence, the pastoralism evinced by K's attachment to the garden makes no sense.[43]

Nevertheless, K's persistence with his idea of gardening lingers into "the most politically naked moment in the novel", when he would rather withdraw into his garden than pluck up the courage to join the rebels (*DP*, 207). To put it differently, his social being is challenged by the appearance of the guerrillas in the mountains. Then the question arises: how should we, when confronted with this critical moment in the narrative, appreciate the interaction between K's gardening and Coetzee's writing strategy?

Coetzee demonstrates K's unsettledness and otherness in the narration of the

[41] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 31-32.
[42] Laura Wright, *Writing out of All the Camps: J.M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (New York & London: Routledge, 2013), 87.
[43] Attwell shows how Coetzee was wrestling not to pastoralize the story in the manuscripts of the novel at this stage: "what Coetzee was certain about was that despite K's attachment to the earth, he would not allow the novel to end up as a justification of pastoralism". See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 145.

protagonist's relation with the landscapes in terms of what Dominic Head calls "revitalized realism",[44] but this representation would always necessitate a Marxist solution: a grand narrative in which the characters should engage themselves with the fight against the oppressive system. Though the title contains the words like "life" and "times", Coetzee does not translate it into the Marxist grand narrative that depicts the magnificent social struggle and fight between the oppressor and the oppressed. K's refusal to fight disappointed many realistic novelists, especially Nadine Gordimer, who criticized it by saying that "Coetzee's heroes are those who ignore history, not make it."[45]

When coming to the issue of joining the guerrillas or not, the dilemma K faces, actually, is the one Coetzee as a writer confronts, and that is, engaging oneself with a particular social movement to answer the call of history and, personally, to pose a revolutionary gesture. To empower K's freedom to stay away from the guerrillas, Coetzee responds to, and writes against the grain of, the Marxist grand narrative dominant in the South African literary field and, by extension, the "very instrumentalised culture" in the country.[46] Though his writing, permeated with his concern with the then social reality, is deeply embedded in the South African context, he deliberately distances himself from any way of kidnapping literature with political demands and historical pressures. He proposes instead: "a novel that operates in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions, not one that operates in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history".[47]

To ask the question what K would bring to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa is thus to trap oneself in the logic that literature should merely supplement and serve history and politics. As I attempt to argue in this chapter, K is only an elusive cultivator in terms of his relation with the landscape, rather than a mediator, let alone a terminator or a subverter, so "if one takes Michael K seriously as a hero, a paragon, a model, it can only be as a hero of resistance against – or rather, withdrawal from or evasion of – accepted ideas of the heroic" (*DP*, 206). In order to

[44] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 58.
[45] Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening: *Life & Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coeztee," 142.
[46] Michela Borzaga, "'A Life in Research' with J.M. Coetzee: An Interview with David Attwell," *Life Writing* 12, no. 3 (2015): 256.
[47] Coetzee, "The Novel Today," 3.

establish such a relation, Coetzee must allegorize South African geographical elements and meanwhile invest his deep engagement with the social reality, as well as his intellectual pursuits. The challenge for Coetzee is thus how to read and write South African landscapes in his own way. If so-called white writing marked with European tradition is "an attempt to come to terms with the landscape",[48] Coetzee's endeavour to venture into this field is to demystify the "ideas through which Europe thought South Africa" and the notions of "South Africa as landscape and landed property" (*WW*, 10). His peers, say Nadine Gordimer and Breyten Breytenbach,[49] have also made similar achievements, but Coetzee's uniqueness lies in that, in addition to the consistent penetration into the traumatic aftermath brought about by the apartheid situation and colonial history, he involves himself more in the ethical and philosophical dimensions of these consequences in a thorough but implicit way against the grand narrative, which strengthens the aesthetic effect of deconstruction and invites different readings. Hence, Rita Barnard asserts that Coetzee's work "cannot fit into any given South African tradition or reflect any historically progressive 'sense of place', because it sets out to dismantle and analyze such matters."[50]

ii. The oppressive landscape

To fully appreciate the aesthetics of this deconstruction also requires us to take another frequently seen feature of the landscape in the narrative into consideration, namely the camp. By contriving such "a counter-motif, set against gardening",[51] Coetzee contrasts the idea of gardening with the oppressive landscape and, beyond that, dramatically consolidates the literary self-consciousness which is evident both in the allegorical opposition itself and in the introduction of the medical officer's voice.

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[48] Cobi Labuscagne, "Representing the South African Landscape: Coetzee, Kentridge, and the Ecocritical Enterprise," *Journal of Literary Studies* 23, no. 4 (2007): 437.
[49] For the discussion of landscape writing in Gordimer's works, see John Cooke, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer : Private Lives/Public Landscapes* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 166-216. For Breyten Breytenbach's case, see Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 377.
[50] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 21.
[51] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 59.

Similar to the symbolism of the garden and the farm, the camp is employed to write against the Afrikaner's idealized topography and expose the unsettledness of K and, more broadly, of the other in their landscape of home. However, different from the farm and the garden, where K develops an active relation, it is beyond him to effect any change to these camps due to the nature of their imprisonment, which impels him to set out on "the great hunger" consuming his physical being in the rest of the story (*MK*, 72). Thus rather than a cultivator, K becomes a victim of the war-embroiled landscape, and the one who is passively reduced to a state of confinement in these camps. Differently put, the landscape poses challenges to, or performs power over, K, and thus these camps become, in Foucault's words, "disciplinary institutions" that exercise power over the body.[52] Since, as Coetzee states in *DP*, Foucault's argument on the relation between writing and power is much more straightforward than the way he treats it,[53] the landscape bridges this plausibly remote distance between literary form and the representation of power.

Like the prison, the camp is also a "protected place of disciplinary monotony" where power is intensely exercised over individuals.[54] Enclosed by fences, the camp is the very landscape to fix people in time and space to regulate their behaviours, which, in the oppressive authority's view, deviate from the established social norms. The regulation of time in the camps is a sharp and ironic contrast to K's feeling in time when he escapes from the Visagie grandson and retreats to the Swartberg mountain range, "when he awoke in the morning he faced only the single huge block of the day, one day at a time" (*MK*, 66). K being face to face with time on the mountaintop suggests his transient state of belonging as well as his attempt to make peace with the landscape, eliciting his essential and ultimate desire — "there seemed

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[52] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), 139.

[53] See Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 247. Though on the same occasion, in his reply to Attwell's questions on the influences of Foucault on his writings, Coetzee remarks, "Foucault's shadow lies quite heavily over my essay about colonial South Africa… [and] the essays on censorship... . but no, there is not much evidence of Foucault in my strictly literary essays", this does not prevent critics from applying Foucault's theories, such as power and the body, disciplinary architecture, institutional control, spectacular punishment, etc., to the interpretation of *Michael K*." See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 95. Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 59. Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 5. López, *Acts of Visitation*, 98-104.

[54] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.

nothing to do but live" (ibid).[55] K's pursuit of freedom is hindered by the camps in a topographical sense. Since Coetzee's writing, as highlighted in my thesis, is a localized allegory positioning itself against the South African context, it alerts us to what Coetzee observes when criticizing the way that South Africa's legislators treat the non-white grassroots poor, stricken by the social breakdown in the 1980s,

> If they have no work, if they migrate to the cities, let there be roadblocks, let there be curfews, let there be laws against vagrancy, begging, and squatting, and let offenders be locked away so that no one has to hear or see them.(*DP*, 361)

K's experiences of homecoming can be the vivid but poignant embodiment of this comment. Though K agrees to his mother's plan of "quitting a city that held little promise for her and returning to the quieter countryside of her girlhood" (*MK*, 7), the precondition for their escape from the war-ridden landscape is to secure a permit. It is a doomed application due to the above-mentioned control of the non-white people — that is to say, they have to travel not with a permit but with curfews and checkpoints surrounding them. All of these disciplinary measures will lead to the most intense crystallization of power – the camp, where the exercise of power and the struggle of the inmates against it (or sometimes their acquiescence to it) depict an institutional and disciplinary South African landscape in this subjection and struggle.

Under such circumstances, K's hope of settling down in any place within the landscape will turn into a utopian dream (the same fate with his sojourn on the farm and his cultivation in the garden) so that he escapes, consistently and stubbornly, from the camps in turn. After his mother' death, K is taken into a railway labour gang, which sets off his experiences of incarceration in several camps. Escaping from the labour gang and then the farm upon the arrival of the Visagie grandson, he is caught by the police and then placed in the camp at Jakkalsdrif where the jobless are interned as a labour pool. After climbing over the fences in Jakkalsdrif and hiding in the burrow around the farm for some time, K, suspected of colluding with the guerrillas in the mountains, is once more arrested by the soldiers and sent to the Kenilworth camp. To the invisible system behind the landscape, K is never a victim

[55] By arguing K's sense of time on the mountain top, I am fully aware of the fact that Attwell subtitles his critical biography on Coetzee, "face to face with time", by quoting the draft paragraph in *Michael K to* indicate the novelist's authorship. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 25-26.

but a destructive potential threat, “an arsonist” who needs urgent disciplinary control (131). The camp, as a disciplinary architecture, is an unparalleled choice since it is designed to “eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation”.[56] K’s hide-and-seek pattern not only suggests his unsettledness but, like the chamber for the magistrate in *WB*, evokes a sense of the uncanny. After Robert preaches at him, K “no longer found it so strange to think of the camp as a place where people were deposited to be forgotten” (*MK*, 94). However, what distinguishes the camp from the chamber in *WB* is the way these landscapes exercise authority over the body: the former relies on distributed power while the latter tends to resort to physical torture and violent attacks. The exercise of power, in Foucault’s words, “does not exclude the use of violence”,[57] but Coetzee, not permitting the appearance of massive or individual savagery in *MK*, underlines the pervasive influence of power on subjectivity by the topographical means of the camp.

It seems that *MK* is the only of Coetzee’s novels to date which offers a critique of South African conditions primarily via the representation of confining landscape, rather than violence among human beings. The other novels within this context rely on either physical torture or violent attack to substantiate the penetrative impact of the authority on subjectivity. The second novella in *Dusklands* has no lack of the brutality and cruelty conducted by the Dutch colonial pioneers in South Africa; *IHC* revolves around, among others, Magda’s fantasy of the murder of her father; *WB* is no stranger to physical torture; *Age of Iron* witnesses the rampant violence in townships while the theme of *Disgrace* is also consolidated by the gang rape in the middle of the story. Nevertheless, by stressing Coetzee’s way of event selection in his writing, I have no intention of advancing his preference for violence and torture to dramatize aesthetic value. In his analysis of the writing process of *WB*, Attwell remarks that Coetzee is cautious of “succumb[ing] to the pornography of violence” when the novelist discusses the challenge of torture confronting writers.[58] This awareness will, if it is too hasty to argue that it runs through his oeuvre, be applicable to, at least, *MK*, because we should bear in mind that the mode of the novel, as Attwell critically illustrates, derives from Heinrich von Kleist’s *Michael*

[56] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 143.
[57] "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 789.
[58] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 97.

Kohlhaas, a story of the violent rebellion against a corrupt government.[59]

That the majority of the story (most of part I and the whole part II) is set around the camp is telling here. The landscape, no matter whether it is in the form of a labour gang, an internment camp or a rehabilitation one, is the geographical space where the dynamic interaction between K's unsettledness and the impact of power on subjectivity takes place, recognizably and implicitly. Hence we can see, if raising the curtain, how disciplinary control pervades and drives the narrative, and how K becomes "a great escape artist" by constantly being put into and getting out of these disciplinary institutions (*MK*, 166). It is in this sense that the camp becomes a public place controlled by a dominating authority to help the formation of the social class. As Cosgrove puts it, "landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world".[60] The camp is the very landscape not only to witness divisions and conflicts among different social classes but also, as an instrument of the state apparatus, to integrate itself into the whole colonial and apartheid system, like the camp doctor's reflection, "camps with high walls will always have their uses" (*MK*, 147). K undoubtedly belongs to the oppressed class and, if we put it in Gordimer's words, is one "of hundreds of thousands of black people in South African squatter towns and 'resettlement' camps",[61] while the aforementioned unnamed characters who work in police stations, checkpoints, trains and hospitals in the story are members of the ruling machinery.

All of these institutional places are interwoven with and separate from each other to dominate the landscape of South Africa. If the landscape of home for Magda in *IHC* is fenced off by patriarchal farms featuring Afrikaners' first dream topography, the one for *MK* is jammed with various institutional machines symbolizing the rampant confinement of apartheid and its consequences in South Africa. There is no more need to reiterate the machine-like quality of the checkpoint and the police station since, by nature, they are built for this purpose. For the implicit disciplinary power behind the school (specifically, Huis Norenius in Faure), the train and the hospital in the story, critics have conducted thorough analyses, which are worth quoting here.

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[59] See ibid., 105-07.
[60] Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 13.
[61] Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening: *Life & Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coeztee," 141.

K, at an early age, is sent to Huis Norenius, an orphanage for poor and abandoned children. The hostile environment of the school initiates his sense of displacement and, moreover, "symbolizes the distortions of power that characterize social institutions, and the extreme vulnerability of a child, his prisoner-like status".[62]The train in *MK* is not only "an extraordinary bundle of relations" but,[63] in Rita Barnard's words, "from the point of view of black South Africans, the train was clearly a tool of oppression, indispensable to the maintenance of residential segregation and to the exploitation of labor".[64] So is the truck, which is used to transport day labourers from the camp.[65] Dominic Head underscores two events, among others, where the hospital is institutionalized in the narrative. Anna K passes away in a Stellenbosch hospital, which, as K muses later on, reflects the culmination of a life of disciplined labour; before being sent to Jakkalsdrif, K is briefly hospitalized during police custody, "a point that hints at another form of institutional control".[66] Only if we take the social context against the writing of *MK* into consideration, can we do justice to the frequent appearance of these spatial elements. Similar to the background of *WB*, as analysed in my previous chapter, *MK* is also a novel completed within the context of great internal unrest, where the apartheid government manipulated these institutions to restrain and contain disorder. These spatial categories become integral parts of the state apparatus, all of which witness identity (de)construction and the division of social classes, and thus have profound social implications and clear referents in South Africa. As Crang puts it, "social values and ideologies can thus be seen operating through spatial categories, moral and ideological geographies, in literature".[67]

iii. Deception and exposure

The ideological conflict and the exercise of power in the landscape is, in some sense, concealed and disguised. Cosgrove, by quoting the comment made by John Berger

[62] Emanuela Tegla, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Power: Unsettling Complicity, Complacency, and Confession* (Leiden & Boston: BRILL, 2015), 138.
[63] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 23-24.
[64] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 7.
[65] See Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, 81,84,95.
[66] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 59.
[67] Crang, *Cultural Geography*, 48.

and Jean Mohr on a picture of a pastoral scene, concluded his book, "landscapes can be deceptive, [s]ometimes a landscape seems to be less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place".[68] The landscape in a spatial sense has the same trait of deception, which, in the story, is manifested in the characters' attitudes to the camp. Those people, except K, underline the difference between the camps they stay in and the prison, unanimously. As part of the institutional control, it is no surprise that the policeman rebukes K's puzzlement at being sent to Jakkalsdrif with the following statements, "that isn't jail, … this is a camp, you work for your food like everyone else in the camp" (*MK*, 77), and the inmates also hold the same idea. During K's brief confinement in the first labour gang before his arrival at the Visagie farm, one of the inmates tries to remind K that "this isn't jail, [t]his isn't a life sentence. … [i]t is peanuts" while K is brooding on the reason why he has to work there (43). In Jakkalsdrif, a similar pedagogy is also presented to K: "this isn't a prison. … This is a camp… A camp is for people without jobs." (78) Moreover, not all entry to the camp is compulsory, since some of them join the camp voluntarily. As Robert, one captive in Jakkalsdrif, retells K what the police have said to him, "you get a choice and you choose Jakkalsdrif" (80). In their opinions, the existence of the camp could provide dwelling places for the jobless and thus support their survival needs, which is the top priority in the war-torn country. This indeed makes the landscape "a setting for the life of its inhabitants".[69] In an ironic comparison, it is something like what the garden in the farm becomes to K. In other words, they are deceived by, and make peace with, the landscape and, furthermore, seek to persuade K to do so. K himself is also curious about and confused by the phenomenon, because he asks, "anyone can climb it [the fence]. A child could climb it in a minute. Why do people stay here?"(*MK*, 78).

Will K fall victim to the apparent coherence and unity due to his political simplicity and his passivity in relation to these institutional places? Or to put it differently, will the institutional power, by means of these settled inhabitants, manage to penetrate and change K's unsettledness? It is no wonder that K's persistent escape, driven by lingering unsettledness, refutes all these possibilities and

[68] Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 271.
[69] Ibid.

develops a forceful reply to the deception; however, by claiming that the authorities' real motivation is to "stop people from disappearing into the mountains and then coming back one night to cut their fences and drive their stock away" (80), Robert does pull the curtain open and bring the flagrant deception to light. Thus Robert's decision to stay in the camp is the result of being stripped of choice. It makes sense then that K is entirely repulsed by the so-called "fixed abode" because of its inherent containment (ibid). Also, on his runaway journey from the Jakkalsdrif camp, he contends that "he could not imagine himself spending his life driving stakes into the ground, erecting fences, dividing up the land" (97).

What complicates the idea of the camp in Kenilworth is the medical officer's invalid attempts to interpret K. Coetzee's decision to insert a metafictional voice in this part of the novel deserves further discussion: in the stylistic sense, it enables him to develop an interpretative structure and "not to lose himself in realist narration, but to find a way of bringing self-consciousness into the text"[70] (I shall come back to the anti-realistic element) while, in the narrative sense, it will dramatize the deception of the landscape and the allegorical opposition between the camp and the garden.

Despite his affiliation with the authorities, the medical officer is also baffled by the landscape.[71] Not merely does he believe that "there are areas that lie between the camps and belong to no camp, not even to the catchment areas of the camps… where human beings may not find it worth their while to live", he also dreams of "looking for such a place in order to settle there" (*MK*, 162). However, the landscape betrays its pervasiveness by denying his wishful thinking, so the medical officer struggles to put K in the position of a mediator who, in the officer's initial thought, can figure out the riddle haunting him. As he says: "I have chosen you [K] to show me the way." (163)

Is K able to assume the role? At least two aspects need to be clarified before we can answer the question. Since K, with his unswerving stubbornness, will not allow himself to be trapped in any binarism of master and servant, to be a guide of the medical officer or to be a servant of the Visagie's grandson makes little difference to him, both of which contradict his principle of freedom. Second, it is indeed beyond

[70] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 139.
[71] It is in this sense that some analogies can be drawn between the magistrate in *WB* and the medical officer, both of whom allude to white liberalism and confession of the colonial guilt in South Africa.

K to negotiate the crisis between the medical officer and the landscape because he is, when it comes to the relation with the garden, only a cultivator, whose gardening resides, as discussed previously, more in his mind than in any actual South African landscape.

K's unwillingness to be a mediator, as desired by the medical officer, is one of the epitomes of his incomprehensibility. The second part of the story witnesses the medical officer's consistent but invalid efforts to interpret K, which climaxes with his harangue after K's flight from the camp. These hypothetical dialogues with K (actually, his monologues) reveal his recognition of and confusion about K's resistance to being understood. Thus it is through both the narrative technique and the content itself that Coetzee highlights K's incomprehensibility, which is also confirmed by Attwell's argument on the writing process of *MK*. When discussing how Coetzee carved out "a suburban bandit", K, from "a disaffected member of an emerging middle class", Michael Kohlhaas, the critic remarks that, given the determination to write "the powerful, prodigious figure that he [K] would become, Coetzee had to make of him a hyper-outlaw whose resistance confounds all attempts to understand him".[72]

Coetzee's strategy of making his "other" characters refuse any kind of authoritative interpretation pervades his oeuvre. We can also find examples in, besides *MK*, the barbarian girl in *WB*, the muted Friday in *Foe*, and the mysterious vagrant Vercueil in *AI*. However, by highlighting their alterity, Coetzee never attempts to impose his own authority on them; instead, he returns the right to the narration itself, which always invites an allegorical reading. As John Thieme, following his analysis of *Foe*'s deconstruction of English canonical discourse, points out, Coetzee involves himself in "demonstrating his sensitivity to the need to give voice to silence black subjectivity, but refusing to render such discourse himself".[73]

The medical officer's final attempt at interpretation is to burst K's pastoral bubble. It is the camp-like institutions that tear K apart from his garden and squeeze the very landscape into an impossible idea, but in the medical officer's mind the landscape could bear a totally different meaning to K,

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[72] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 135.
[73] John Thieme, *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon* (London & New York: Continuum, 2001), 69.

> Let me tell you the meaning of the sacred and alluring garden that blooms in the heart of the desert and produces the food of life. *The garden for which you are presently heading is nowhere and everywhere except in the camps*. It is another name for the only place where you belong, Michaels, where you do not feel homeless. (*MK*, 166, emphasis mine)

With the voice of the medical officer, Coetzee therefore reasserts his intentional deployment of the two opposite landscapes in *MK*, enabling the narrative to speak more than its textual meaning. The juxtaposition reveals and underlines properties of Foucauldian heterotopia, which, unlike utopia, refers to real places in society. The camp in the story is not only one of the "heterotopias of deviation" to hold in captivity people whose behaviours disaccord with social rules (such as people who are against curfews, travel with permits, etc.),[74] but also a place invested with the traits that the garden, the converse of the camp, designates: a final destination of K's journey to the dreamed farm. Thus the camp is "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible",[75] which makes the two heterogeneous places complementary to, and integrated with, each other. In the medical officer's opinion, K's staying in the camp is the same as his cultivation of the garden since the camp is the exact place to accommodate his sense of belonging. Only by doing so could the camp "suspect, neutralize, or invent the sets of relations" where the political control and the economic exploitation behind the curtain are miraculously crossed out and replaced with apparent harmony. [76]

However，the ideological veil of this landscape cannot completely interrupt, prevent, or dismiss K's self-reflection and the pursuit of freedom. In a metafictional way, Coetzee makes K recognize the ubiquity of the camp, despite his imbecility. K's unsettledness in, and the social implication of, the landscape would not be reasonable without a ubiquitous distribution of these institutional places, which is also how the authorities maximize disciplinary control. As the medical officer notes: "though this is a large country, so large that you would think there would be space for everyone, what I have learned of life tells me that it is hard to keep out of the camps" (*MK*,

[74] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 25.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 24.

162). His monologue is in tune with what K, at the end of the story, muses with a strong sense of self-consciousness,

> they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and people with little heads, camps for people with no visible means of support, camps for people chased off the land, camps for people they find living in storm-water drains, camps for street girls, camps for people who can't add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night. (182)

K's contemplation is reminiscent of his previous puzzlement before arriving at the Visagie farm: "he wondered whether there were not forgotten corners and angles and corridors between fences, land that belonged to no one yet" (47). After experiencing various kinds of containment, K seems to understand that such places could not survive the rigid control of colonialism and apartheid because, as Coetzee maintains, "the whole surface of South Africa has been surveyed and mapped and disposed of".[77] Only the institutional places, always prettified as the equivalent of home where the oppressed can experience the sense of belonging, are left in the South African landscape, which will finally dwarf, intervene, and destroy K's garden, so "the opposition that the garden provides to the camps is at most a conceptual level".[78]

III. Wrestling with realism

The editors of *Literary Landscape: from Modernism to Postcolonialism* observe that "if landscapes and cityscapes are important to the 'classical realist' novelists of the nineteenth century they are also important to… postcolonial writers such as J.M. Coetzee and Zakes Mda",[79] but they also recognize that this importance takes different forms in terms of these writers' various narrative techniques and writing contexts.

To the classical realist novelists, it is often through verisimilitude, namely, the

[77] Morphet, "Two Interviews with J.M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987," 456.
[78] Ibid.
[79] De Lange, "Introduction," xii.

detailed and vivid account of these landscapes as well as the objective representations of the human-landscape relations, that they transform their belonging with, and alienation from, the very places both in the narrative and in real lives. As Yi-fu Tuan puts it, "an author's skill was demonstrated by his descriptive prowess".[80] Tuan exemplifies, from the nineteenth-century novelists, "Dickens' London fogs, Emily Bronte's moors, Hardy's heath and vales, Melville's Pacific", to show the writers' descriptive adeptness.[81] This echoes, for me, the crux of Stephen Gray's scheme for the sense of place in South African literature, where he treats the geographical accounts in literary texts as a mirrored reflection of real spaces, "as though scenic description were the defining issue in South African literature and, indeed, in the literature of all settler colonies".[82]

What distinguishes Coetzee from these classical realist novelists in terms of landscape writing resides in, among other things, his awareness that writing means "a certain play of signifiers with their own ghostly history of past interplay" (*DP*, 63), though all of them are attached to the place they write about. Coetzee's way of negotiating the "ghostly history of past" is to allegorize the topographical signifiers in the aforementioned revitalized realistic narrative, involving a manipulation of literary self-consciousness. As Coetzee notes, a self-reflexive question such as "what kind of text it is they seem to be inhabiting", would never occur to Defoe's Moll Flanders and Hardy's Jude.[83] K's self-reflexivity is, as I have tried to argue, apparent in his internal discourse with regard to his relations with the landscapes and strengthened with the interpretative structure.

Nevertheless, there is yet another dimension, equally important, where the convincing representation of these signifiers would require registering the realistic experiences of sufferers and victims under institutional control, that is to say, manifesting the consequences of colonialism and apartheid but denying any unnuanced, uncomplicated and uncontested representation. To inhabit such an ethical position is to resist the naturalistic description both in the topographical setting and the human-geography relation.[84] The final scene of the novel, in which K imagines

[80] Tuan, "Literature and Geography," 202.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Quoted in Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, 9.
[83] Quoted in ibid., 23.
[84] Attwell shows how Coetzee in the manuscript attempts, and then abandons, the use

scooping water from the exploded dam with a teaspoon and a line of string, is further evidence of Coetzee seeking to intimate his distance from verisimilitude. His strategy is, then, to transform the real landscapes into literary vagueness, even if the signifiers have clear names (as the case in *MK*). The vague signifiers, however, will not refuse the historical and social marks imprinted on, and represented by, the signified. It is in this way that Coetzee brings the crisis of colonialism and apartheid from the realistic upheaval into literary practice. In her review of the two latest Coetzee's biographical studies by Attwell and Kannemeyer respectively, Boehmer observes that the novelist, not interested in "scene-setting, in description, or even in character", manages to reiterate "suffering, violence, truth, and identity, as filtered through the circumstances of his own life".[85] All the landscapes discussed in this chapter are, thus, instead of demonstrating his "descriptive prowess", replete with Coetzee's Janus-faced attitude to home, to map out the tension between history and text, between life and writing.

The tension could cause disturbing ripples in readers' minds and invoke endless thinking about the social chaos succeeding colonialism and apartheid. It will not be easy to read the novel with any tranquillity, so what haunts us turns out to be the entanglement of different landscapes together with the unsettledness, and the survival strategy, of the protagonist, which, I would say, could be one of the most valuable legacies of the writing.

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of Afrikaans in K's discourse due to the naturalism of Afrikaans. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 140.

[85] Boehmer, "Reading between Life and Work," 440.

6. A Maternal Narrative and Beyond — *Age of Iron*

In Coetzee's oeuvre, *Age of Iron (AI)* literally, and perhaps most explicitly, exhibits the idea of home in a maternal narrative with regard to both the narrative itself and the influence of Coetzee's authorship. By calling it a maternal narrative, I premise my argument not only on the fact that the story is told by a mother to her self-exiled daughter, but also on the recurring moments of motherhood, the prominent absence of a husband-like figure and the implication of the filial duty of the children. Meanwhile, the fictional parent/child bond serves as a channel to integrate the stream of personal feeling with the historical tide, ethically and politically. Differently put, the narrative transcends, as always, the personal losses and gains when dealing with the family issue by involving itself in, and placing a heavy weight on, different kinds of alterity within a highly political context. I will try to test this assumption in my following reading and dig out the influence of Coetzee's authorship behind these tensions.

I. Familial bond and authorship

As the literature review in the introduction to this project shows, by developing the intricacy of the literary familial bond, critics reach a consensus that the family unit, arguably the most prominent field where the idea of home is practised and enacted, is dysfunctional in Coetzee's works: none of the protagonists seems to deserve a complete family.[1] The fictional characters include not only the lost child but also the widowed parent. The dysfunction can always be ascribed to, and, in reverse, manifest the dynamics of, the ethical and political dimension interweaved with the familial bond. This explains, albeit partly, why it is so hard to resist the temptation of attending closely to the familial phenomenon in his works. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to generalize the feature of the familial bond in Coetzee's fiction. Take parental responsibility for example. It is true that some of the works, such as *Foe*, *MP* and *Disgrace*, are profoundly concerned with parental responsibility, as what

[1] Kossew clearly traces the distorted parent/child relation in Coetzee's oeuvre from *Dusklands* to *CJ*. See Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 153-55.

Paola Splendore and Mike Marais argue respectively,[2] but the judgement will be problematic when it comes to *AI*.

AI is a story about Mrs Curren, a single mother, who, upon being told that her breast cancer has reached an advanced and fatal stage after it spreads to the bone, writes a long letter to the absent daughter about her craving for familial care, her encounter with an unexpected derelict, Vercueil, and the township people, Florence's extended family, and John. There are, thus, at least two narrative lines: the family ethics and the ethics of alterity (to which I will return later).[3] As far as the family ethics is concerned, as I see it, it has more to do with filial duty than parental responsibility; that is to say, the tension that leads Mrs Curren to reminiscence about the childhood of her daughter, of herself, and of her mother lies in the filial duty of the younger generation. If there are any parental responsibilities in the novel, we should take the conflict of different attitudes to the young generation's response to apartheid, either self-exile or militant fight, into consideration.

If what I refer to as the dysfunctional family is also prone to generalization, in the following sections I will narrow down the topic and argue how the pervasive fictional motherhood is associated with the novelist's attachment to his mother, Vera.[4] Furthermore, it is because of the authorship's influence, or specifically speaking, the "historical guilt" of Vera's political standpoint,[5] that the novel develops its second narrative line.

II. Motherhood

Although the distorted parent/child relationship is well discussed, one phenomenon that has received little critical attention is Mrs Curren's memory of the intimacy between herself and her daughter, which resurfaces frequently in the novel. My point

[2] See Splendore, "'No More Mothers and Fathers'," 152; Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible*, xiv.
[3] By referring to it as the ethics of alterity, I am deeply informed by Derek Attridge's insightful reading of Coetzee, especially that of *AI*. See Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 91-112.
[4] Attwell's analysis also indicates that the representation of Mrs Curren arises directly from Coetzee's engagement with the memory of Vera. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 161-76.
[5] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 168.

of departure in approaching motherhood is, since Mrs Curren's clinging to these happy memories sounds most intriguing to me, to explore the interaction between these episodes and the novelist's authorship. Actually, at the beginning of the novel, upon hearing the tragic news of her terminal disease, Mrs. Curren trudges to the "empty house", [6] though accompanied by a mysterious vagrant, Vercueil, who intrudes into her life (I will come back to this below), and outspokenly expresses her yearning for her daughter and the real meaning of home: "we bear children in order to be mothered by them. Home truths, a mother's truth: from now on to the end that is all you will hear from me. So: how I longed for you!" (5). This straightforward monologue, as we can see, extends across the narrative (50, 66, 72, 117, 127). Furthermore, Mrs Curren is frequently overwhelmed by scenes from her family life (minimizing the role of a father here), such as waking the daughter up in the mornings of the school day (5, 52), and rushing to the emergency department in the hospital when the daughter slices her thumb in the bread machine (57). All of these moments contribute to the novelist's endeavour of depicting the mother's longing for the daughter, but one will wonder why, if it is claimed that the dysfunctional family unit lies all over his oeuvre, Coetzee highlights these happy memories in *AI*. One reason, one may argue, is out of the necessity of the fictional plot, but, if we take Coetzee's authorship into account, the question may not as simple as it appears at first sight.

The dedication of the novel could be a good and first clue to the puzzlement. Since *AI* is one of the few to carry a dedication,[7] it is understandable that Gillian Dooley, partly based on this reminder, asserts that "*AI* was written in the shadow of personal bereavement and is dedicated to Coetzee's mother, father, and son". [8] Coetzee began to write a draft later developing into *AI* one year later than the time when Vera died in 1985, so the shadow, as Attwell advances, should mainly be attributed to the death of Vera; differently put, the novel was written for his mother so that it would revolve around the maternal narrative. Attwell's genetic criticism illuminatingly reminds us of the influence of Vera on the creative process of *AI*,[9]

[6] J.M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1990), 4.
[7] Kannemeyer notes that the other works with a dedication include *WB* and the collected edition of Coetzee's fictional memoirs. See Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 443.
[8] Dooley, *J.M. Coetzee and the Power of Narrative*, 162.
[9] See, Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 167-76.

which I fully endorse.

The influence can be traced back to Coetzee's attachment to his mother which developed during his early age, as noted in my second chapter, and continued to haunt him in his later life. The emotionally charged Nobel banquet acceptance speech, as one of the noticeable examples, stunningly betrays this feeling.[10] However, it was Vera's death that became a direct trigger for Coetzee to begin this novel since it "revived the problem of historical guilt".[11] One may feel that this point of departure is quite ironic since it seems to contradict Coetzee's deep love for Vera, but the problem he addresses in the novel is the tension between love and shame over Vera's attitudes towards Africa and Africans (which I will turn to later). This tension serves as a foundation for the development of the narrative.

What I want to emphasize here is that this foundation is inseparable from the explicit family bond on the surface of the narrative. Because the novelist, during his writing, "circled back repeatedly to the contradiction between love and ethical misgiving, as if the novel would have to be a family row in some sense",[12] it is not fanciful to claim that the intensity of Coetzee's love for his mother has been translated into the personal feeling in the narrative expressed by the dying mother towards the self-exiled daughter. The motherhood is, thus, not "a sub-text" in the narrative,[13] as Paola Splendore puts it, but a prequel, because the earlier draft began with the letters from a son to a departed mother.[14]

I do not intend to establish any linear causality between these sequences and Coetzee's attachment to his mother or, more broadly, between Coetzee's writing and his life, because that is what the novelist objects to. Not only Mrs Curren's learned knowledge in classical literature is transplanted from the novelist himself,[15] but also she is a more liberal figure than Vera was. Coetzee is a strong advocate for and

[10] Both David Attwell and Sue Kossew have embraced the tribute the banquet speech paid to Coetzee's mother. See ibid., 161-62. Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 149-50.
[11] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 168.
[12] Ibid., 169.
[13] Splendore, "'No More Mothers and Fathers'," 150.
[14] See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 169.
[15] The European canons, including Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Zola and Bach, etc., constantly appear in Mrs Curren's narrative. For a detailed discussion, see María J. López, "Miguel De Cervantes and J.M. Coetzee: An Unacknowledged Paternity," *Journal of Literary Studies* 29, no. 4 (2013).

adherence to impersonality, which, for him, is "a point of *arrival*" and "the result of a progressive writing-out of the self".[16] Therefore, politically speaking, Coetzee is closer to his fictional creation than to his mother. The account of these fictional family intimacies is motivated by, rather than merely replicating, the novelist's attachment to his mother. The traces of Coetzee's wrestling with the maternal bond run through the novel, which enables us to witness its variations in several impersonalized ways. As Kannemeyer claims, the reader could "deduce a longing for the dead mother".[17]

Correspondingly, Mrs Curren's remembering her mother's childhood would make sense since it corresponds to, among many other things, the aforementioned happy moments and subsequently becomes integral to the maternal narrative. When our protagonist drives Vercueil along Boyes Drive to appreciate the scenery over Muizenberg, she tells the derelict the story of her mother's childhood (*AI*, 15). It is about Mrs Curren's mother who recalls, during the family's journey from Uniondale to Plettenberg Bay for their Christmas at the seaside, the nights she spends with her family at the ox-wagon in the open air. The episode gives the readers a vivid account of the mother's worry about an accident caused by the uncontrolled wagon and the rolling stars, which is actually the fantasy of a carefree child. Mrs Curren, after witnessing the violence and Bheki's corpse in the Guguletu township, reiterates the significance of the story to her, "I have held on to that story all my life. … it is there that I come from, it is there that I begin" (110). Both Kannemeyer and Attwell have analysed how the biographical materials evolved into the above final version, so there is little point in turning over the soil again. Nevertheless, there is another popular interpretation which regards the reiteration as, in Dominic Head's words, "the acceptance of the story of childhood insecurity" and, further, "an acceptance of complicity" with the dying colonial system.[18] This view, to me, overemphasizes the political dimension of the novel and consequently takes less notice of the familial bond embedded in the story. Head casts a bright light on the mode of Mrs Curren's confession, but it is too hasty to make a political inference here and attribute the

[16] David Attwell, "Reading the Coetzee Papers," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 58, no. 4 (2016): 375 (emphasis original).
[17] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 443.
[18] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 135.

recollection of these memories to her reluctance in relinquishing the "entrenched ideas" of liberalism — most typically about childhood (130), in spite of the political orientation gradually conveyed as the narrative develops.

Mrs Curren herself clarifies the reason why she attaches so much importance to the memory of her mother: "For if she did not give me life, no one did. I cling not just to the memory of her but to her herself, to her body, to my birth from her body into the world. In blood and milk I drank her body and came to life" (*AI*, 101). The blood-tie underscored in the impulse is indubitably a feeling translated from the novelist's longing for his mother.[19] In the passages following this clarification, Mrs Curren delves into the memory of a family photo taken in her childhood. Head, by the same token, though conceding that the moment implies "a sense of lamentation for the loss of childhood innocence" and partly contributes to "the novel's elegiac tone", considers it as a reflection of Mrs Curren's wrestling with the idea of the childhood which is further related with "her political progression".[20]Again, I will not deny the connection between the episodes with Mrs Curren's ethical and political awakening, but it is more existential and personal than political and confessional, which will subsequently strike a sharp contrast with the dysfunction of her nuclear family.

The following scene is another example of family moments which bear more relation to the authorship than to the confessional dimension. Mrs Curren, shortly after recounting her mother's childhood memory along Boyes Drive, speaks out her love for the country directly: "These seas, these mountains: I want to burn them upon my sight so deeply that, no matter where I go, they will always be before me. I am hungry with love of this world" (*AI*, 16). The gush of the emotion is of little relevance to Mrs Curren's complicity with, and confession about, the colonial order and the apartheid system; instead, it is "existential, and unrelated to unresolved questions of political morality". [21] Also, the personal weight carried by these statements reveals a great affinity with Coetzee's love for the geographical feature discussed in my second chapter. As Kannemeyer puts it, "These words are reminiscent of Coetzee's own declaration of love for the meagre landscape of the

[19] Sue Kossew also holds a similar view when discussing this moment. See Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 155.
[20] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 136.
[21] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 172.

Karoo and the rude beauty of the Cape Peninsula".[22]

As a maternal narrative, *AI* also features the absence of a husband-like figure. The novel makes little mention of Mrs Curren's husband except for some slight references to his situation. In their initial conversations, Mrs Curren tells Vercueil: "My husband and I parted a long time ago. … He is dead now" (*AI*, 10). Then after experiencing the violence in Guguletu and driving home with the shattered windscreen, Mrs Curren bemoans the fact that she is engulfed by coldness and loneliness: "sixteen years since I shared a bed with man or boy. Sixteen years alone" (99). To be a single mother means to deprive the daughter of the paternal care in her daily life. This echoes fatherless Michael K in *MK* and widowed Susan Barton in *Foe*, where there is also a lack of a fully-fledged paternal figure.[23] If the recurring memories of the maternal narrative are transposed from Coetzee's longing for his mother, it will be true to say that the absence of a paternal figure is also associated with the authorship. The exaggerated rift between the father and the son staged in *Boyhood*, as noted in the second chapter, is the dimension of alienation in his Janus-faced attitude to home, which minimizes the paternal role in the novel written within that period. Though the following novels, such as The *Master of Petersburg* and *Disgrace* pay consistent heed to fatherhood, it has more to do with Coetzee's feeling towards his children, rather than the feeling from the novelist to his parents. The gap between the father and the son in *Boyhood* could not be healed until *Summertime*, which is deemed "a restoration" of this relationship.[24]

The lack of a paternal figure also has its significance at the narrative level: it makes Mrs Curren more vulnerable and exposes her to the outside world, since the protective role is traditionally, albeit stereotypically, assumed by men. Even though there is an imaginary paternal figure, he fails to fulfil what he is supposed to do: "'Father, can't you see I'm burning?' implored the child, standing at his father's bedside. But his father, sleeping on, dreaming, did not see" (*AI*, 101). Though Coetzee, referencing Freud's dream of the burning child, depicted Mrs Curren's

[22] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 379.
[23] Dooley pays attention to the phenomenon, but she infers that, based on the relative neglect of the paternal characters in Coetzee's fiction from the 1980s to the1990s, the resentment disclosed in *Boyhood* may be due more to "the preoccupation of the author at the time of writing than with the actual attitudes of his younger self". See Dooley, *J.M. Coetzee and the Power of Narrative*, 157.
[24] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 186.

inner life after she witnesses the burning amphitheatre and Bheki's corpse in an abandoned hall, the novelist did not confine himself to a Freudian interpretation of the dream, namely, to regard it as a wish-fulfilment to prolong the "life" of the dead child in the father's dream.[25] Rather, Coetzee might want to express "the Lacanian Real", as Slavoj Žižek observes, "the reality of the child's reproach to his father".[26] It corresponds to what Mrs Curren says later: "That is the reason — I bring it forward now for you to see — why I cling so tightly to the memory of my mother" and then she immerses herself in recollecting the memory of her mother and the family photo (*AI*, 101).

Given all these personal considerations in the maternal discourse, Mrs Curren reiterates the importance of children to mothers, such as, by giving birth to and raising a child, a mother prolongs her own life. When Florence and Bheki are looking for the injured John at Groote Schuur, she addresses Vercueil in the car,

> I don't know whether you have children. I don't even know whether it is the same for a man. But when you bear a child from your own body you give your life to that child. Above all to the first child, the firstborn. Your life is no longer with you, it is no longer yours, it is with the child. That is why we do not really die: we simply pass on our life, the life that was for a while in us, and are left behind. (69)

Ironically, the absence of the daughter, especially at this critical stage, paralyzes the value of bearing younger generations. That is why Mrs Curren, in the latter part of the novel, uses harsh words to blame her daughter: "Is this an accusation? No, but it is a reproach, a heartfelt reproach" (127). Several sentences later, the reprimand re-emerges: "Is this an accusation? Yes. *J'accuse.* I accuse you of abandoning me" (127).[27] These words are the plainest expressions conveyed by an abandoned mother,

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[25] See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and on Dreams*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols., vol. 5, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Lodon: Hogarth Press, 1953), 510.

[26] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, second ed. (London & New York: Verso, 1989), 45. There are also some allegorical interpretations of this reference. See Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 205. Jane Poyner, *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 124-25.

[27] We should not ignore the term, *J'accuse*, before Mrs Curren's emotionally-charged monologue. The reference to Emile Zola's *J'Accuse* is one of several literary allusions in the fiction, which clearly indicates a much broader political context. See, Craig Smith, "Flinging Accusations into the Teeth of the Wind: J.M. Coetzee's *Age*

who is left alone to cope with the personal tragedy and national chaos. As Jane Poyner puts it, this blame is out of the "anguish of a neglected mother".[28] The anguish is in ironic contrast to the happy moments in the novel, which manifests Mrs Curren's failure to rejuvenate the family ethics — "I cannot live without a child. I cannot die without a child" (*AI*, 127).

So what happens to the daughter? Why is she absent? Does she share the same family ethics with Mrs Curren? This is one of the most intense ethical conflicts in the narrative: the mother's strong yearning for her daughter and the daughter's absence. However, the daughter clears out of South Africa and settles down in America because of her resentment of the apartheid regime. In Mrs Curren's words, "she had simply had enough. She went away" (69) and "she will come back when they [the apartheid governors] are hanging by their heels from the lamp-posts" (68). Recalling the moment when she sees her daughter off at the airport, Mrs Curren says: "you shook the dust of this country from your feet" (127). The daughter's decisive determination to flee from South Africa diminishes the filial duty she should fulfil in her mother's advanced years; that is to say, her resentment of the apartheid regime is the top priority in her decision-making, where she may have little thought of the prospect that the mother will be left alone in her final days.

I do not mean to draw an inference of, and then find fault with, the daughter's callousness from this discussion. Nevertheless, it is Mrs Curren who refuses the idea (suggested by Vercueil) of telling her daughter the truth on the phone and calling her back; instead, she insists on trying to make her daughter read the posthumous letter, which can also be thought of protecting her daughter in a maternal way. Until now, to describe *AI* in this manner is to underscore the texture of motherhood, but this tension is one of ways in which the narrative goes beyond the personal struggle. To put it the other way round, the political dimension finds its way into the family ethics.

The informed reader will detect the intertextuality between the daughter's escape from South Africa with Coetzee's own case described both in the interview and his fictional autobiography. Shortly after the publication of *AI*, Coetzee states in *DP* in a third-person perspective, "he departs South Africa, very much in the spirit of

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of Iron and Emile Zola's *J'accuse*," *English Studies in Africa: A Journal of the Humanities* 56, no. 2 (2013).

[28] Jane Poyner, J.M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship, (Ashgate, 2009), 119.

shaking the dust of the country from his feet" (*DP*, 393). Then in *Youth*, which came out over ten years later, the protagonist, sitting in the reading room of the British Museum, contemplates whether he can "[shake] the dust of the ugly new South Africa from his feet" (*Youth*, 137). It is more interesting to look at the young generation's reaction when they hear from their mothers. Though regarding the letter as the daughter's "inheritance…coming from this country" (*AI*, 28), Mrs Curren thinks, if she flies Vercueil to America to deliver it in person, then her daughter may murmur to herself with a sense of irritation, "I do not need this, … this is what I came here to get away from, why does it have to follow me?"(178). In a similar manner, the fictional Coetzee from *Youth* also views the weekly letters sent from his mother as an annoying reminder of his connection with South Africa (*Youth*, 98).

The episodes in which the younger generation free themselves from their home country, either in the narrative or in real life, show the youth's alienation from South Africa. It also echoes what the novelist observes in the "Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech". Before discussing how colonialism and apartheid corrupt literature, Coetzee firstly analyses such influences on people's inner life:

> The deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life. (*DP*, 98)

The "deformed and stunted inner life" leads to, and accounts for, the young generation exiling itself from the problematic political discourse. It is not difficult to find other examples in South African literature to attest this direct consequence. In *The Conservationist* and *Burger's Daughter*, Gordimer tells the reader why her two protagonists, Mehring and Rosa Burger, respectively, escape South Africa due to the distorted human relationships under the apartheid regime. The disillusionment of Mehring, a wealthy white industrialist and dilettante farmer, in possessing the land without recognizing the legal rights of, and the equality with, the blacks forces him to leave the country, which displays the complicity of the white liberal with apartheid. Rosa Burger, who, despite being a descendant of political activists, is also a white liberal, temporarily goes into exile in France because, upon seeing an old black man mercilessly thrashing his donkey, she is aware of her inadequacy in the anti-apartheid struggle. It is from these flights that Gordimer registered the impotence of

liberalism and thus she adopted, as we could see, a more radical attitude to the apartheid government, both in her life and her writing.[29]

In this regard, though never declaring support for any political party, Coetzee also demonstrates the failure of liberalism, especially in his writings before the official demise of apartheid.[30] The novelist not only criticises Alan Paton and his "politics of innocence" displayed in *Cry, the Beloved Country*,[31] but also puts the issue on the table in *AI*. Thus, Coetzee's description of the daughter's exile, besides the familial dimension, also indicates the inability of liberal ways to cope with the problem.

However, different from Gordimer's attempt to evoke a Marxist orientation and advocate revolutionary solutions to deconstruct the idea of home in her writing, Coetzee responds to the issue in a more ethical way where he invests, thematizes and performs different modes of alterity in juxtaposition with an interrogation of the idea of home. To readers who are either involved in or deeply concerned with the struggle against apartheid, Gordimer's writing is, of course, an encouraging call to arms while Coetzee's work is more like a ruthless interrogation of conscience with its pessimistic but penetrating intensity. This interrogation involves an adaptation of the inheritance of a European literary heritage in the South African context as well as technical narrative innovations.[32] In relation to *AI*, it is through Mrs Curren's responses to alterity and her subsequent ethical awakening, without doing away with

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[29] As a member of the political party ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa, Gordimer adheres to the principle that the essential gesture of a writer is a "revolutionary" one. See Nadine Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics, and Places* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 296.

[30] For a general discussion of Coetzee's challenge to the liberal tradition in South African writing, see Peter Blair, "The Liberal Tradition in Fiction," in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, ed. David Attwell and Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 488-89.

[31] Coetzee, *Stranger Shores*, 263.

[32] The debates about the relation between Coetzee's writing and liberalism have never been rare in criticism. In his review of *DP* and David Attwell's *J.M. Coetzee and the Politics of Writing*, Jean-Philippe Wade prejudicially attributes Coetzee's ineffective modernist attempt to, among others, resist the liberal tradition of South African literature to the novelist's own liberalism. In his reply, Attwell perceptively points out the flaws in Wade's accusation and underscores Coetzee's endeavour to demonstrate the political, historical and ethical tensions with his narrative experimentalism. See Jean-Philippe Wade, "Doubling Back on J.M. Coetzee," *English in Africa* 21, no. 1/2 (1994): 191-21. David Attwell, "'The Naked Truth': A Response to Jean-Philippe Wade," ibid.22, no. 2 (1995): 89-97.

the connection with motherhood, that the narrative gains this intensity.

III. Beyond motherhood: out of the ethical predicament

Let me move on to the other narrative thread, namely, the ethics of alterity, which, according to Derek Attridge, refers to the assumption that "the fullest acceptance of the responsibility to and for the other may indeed be to trust the other".[33] Attridge's engagement with the issue of alterity is quite thought-provoking, but I would like to add two more points related to this discussion. To begin with, it seems that Mrs Curren is, before this responsibility is brought into being, not prepared to welcome the vagrant, so there is a subtle change of her attitude to Vercueil, where her ethical predicament is enacted. Secondly, the home consciousness inherent in the narrative enables us to explain the change, which furthermore makes the narrative circle back to, among others, the maternal narrative.

With just a glimpse of the implication of his name,[34] his incomprehensibility (on most occasions we could only read Mrs Curren's monologues with little access to what is going on in Vercueil's mind) and his disfigured hand, we can recognize that Vercueil's explicit otherness is analogous to the tortured barbarian girl, the slow-minded Michael K, and the tongueless Friday in Coetzee's other novels. However, this alterity does not necessitate Mrs Curren's "responsibility to and for the other". Mrs Curren is repulsed by Vercueil, at least at the beginning of the story, in many different ways. Vercueil's intrusion into Mrs Curren's life is unexpected, as we could tell from the very beginning, which is further confirmed by Mrs Curren's opinions on Vercueil — "[a] man who came without being invited" (*AI*, 165). Our protagonist

[33] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 103-04.
[34] A few critics points out that "verkul" in Afrikaans means "to cheat" while "verskuil" means "to hide or conceal", which the name of Vercueil is assumed to originate from. See Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 140. David Attwell, "'Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*," in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 176. Poyner, *J.M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship*. 116. Many names in the novel have the implication of alterity. John and Florence may be the fake names which are only used by the white people, as Mrs Curren says: "Perhaps I alone in all the world called her Florence. Called her by an alias. Now I was on ground where people were revealed in their true names" (93).

does not welcome the unexpected guest at first, so her account of this man begins with strong derogatory connotations. In Mrs Curren's eyes, Vercueil is 'an insect' (12), 'a ragged stranger' (13), and a thief who steals an obedient dog from a good family (17). She also raises some eyebrows at Vercueil's hygiene and his sluggishness. [35] These depreciative labels, though one may argue that these descriptions are attributed to Vercueil's otherness, suggest, to me, something stronger: Mrs Curren's repugnance for him.

Then it is rather abrupt and even confusing for readers when Mrs Curren, just after introducing the basic information about her family to Vercueil, springs the question of whether Vercueil can, after her death, send the letter she is writing (actually the novel itself) to her absent daughter. Attridge is correct to attribute the imprudence to the story itself, since it "happens to someone who accepts it, without calculation, without forethought",[36] while my point is that, if we would do justice to this case, the idea of home inherent in this retired lecturer in Classics and, more broadly, in the narrative, must be considered.

Home consciousness entails an attempt to interrogate and reconstruct, whether it succeeds or not, the idea of home both literally and liberally. In terms of Mrs Curren, as one who is burdened with a fatal disease, a dysfunctional family and an apartheid–riven society, her wish to manipulate the interrogation and reconstruction is much stronger and more explicit than other characters in the novel. The coincidental arrival of Vercueil is the very option Coetzee arranged for his protagonist to deal with. It is by this option, then, that the alterity becomes, in Attridge's words, "a product of the identical constituting act that has produced the self/same which perceives it as other".[37] To put it the other way round, Vercueil is an essential part of Mrs Curren's world, primarily including her reflections on the daily routine and ethical values she is used to.

Then we can see that Mrs Curren's attitude to Vercueil changes from repugnance to, among others, reliance, to secure comfort and companionship. If the idea of home collapses in the dimension of the maternal narrative, one of the ways

[35] Mrs Curren makes lucid complaints or scolding on Vercueil: "the worst of the smell comes from his shoes and feet" (17); "you are wasting your life" (7) and "in the South Africa of the future everyone will have to work, including you [Vercueil]" (65).
[36] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 103.
[37] Ibid., 99.

that Mrs Curren tries to reconstruct it is to trust Vercueil both as a messenger and a nominal family member. As López puts it, “If Mrs Curren’s act of hospitality towards Vercueil is absolute and radical, it is because she has welcomed him as one welcomes a child”.[38] Home consciousness underpins, thus, the ethical thinking around alterity in the novel.

There is a recognizable lucidity about Vercueil’s substitutability in Mrs Curren’s family life. Differently put, Vercueil interchangeably plays the role of Mrs Curren’s daughter and her husband. Our protagonist is desperate to talk with her daughter: “There is no one I am ready to speak to except you and the fat man in the picture, the fat man in heaven; and neither of you will, I think, call” (*AI*, 22). The secular liberal does not believe in God and just awaits the long-expected call to soothe her loneliness. In their journey to look for the injured John in the hospital, Vercueil’s response to Mrs Curren’s talking about her absent daughter transiently relieves this solitude: “He was learning to talk to me, [h]e was learning to lead me on, I felt an urge to interrupt: ‘It is such a pleasure!’”(69). Mrs Curren also invites Vercueil to sleep with her in a platonic way and thinks that they are a couple. In this way, “the absence of a family is… reinvented through surrogate relationships”.[39] Mrs Curren compares their relationship to a familial one, symbolizing that Vercueil is on his way to becoming a nominal member in Mrs Curren’s concept of family.

> I don't see what you need me for," he [Vercueil] said.
> "It is hard to be alone all the time. That's all. I didn't choose you, but you are the one who is here, and that will have to do. You arrived. It's like having a child. You can't choose the child. It just arrives." (*AI*, 65)

Coetzee prepared a dual approach to alterity for readers to appreciate Mrs Curren’s wrestling with her ethical predicament. One part is, of course, Vercueil while the other should be the black people, including Florence’s extended family and John. However, these two parts are different from each other, which, as Attridge critically observes, are revealed in the “hostility between the township people and Vercueil”.[40] In addition to their physical and vocal conflicts, the distinction also lies

[38] López, *Acts of Visitation*, 274.
[39] Splendore, "‘No More Mothers and Fathers"' 150.
[40] Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 106.

in, narratologically speaking, the ways in which they play out the otherness. To put it differently, what marks the significance of alterity in the form of the black people from that of Vercueil lies in the historical and political tensions indicated in a series of encounters between the dying lady and the township community.[41] It is in this sense that "the alterity is given a social intensity".[42]

The sequence manifesting the hostility between the two modes of alterity, despite being engaged with the parent/child relation, is indicative of this social intensity. Mrs Curren feels irritated when seeing the physical attack on Vercueil initiated by the township boys, Bheki and John, who successively seek sanctuary in her house. Though the brawl is finally stopped with Florence's help, Mrs Curren later tries to challenge Florence's pride in, and indulgence of, the children's aggressive behaviour. However, Florence rebuts this preaching: "It is the whites who made them so cruel" (*AI*, 45). Though the debate alludes, in Splendore's words, to "the failure of parental responsibility" (considering the blame Mrs Curren lays on Florence's acquiescence in the children's violence), the focus should be on the militant and rebellious young blacks under apartheid, who are "children of iron" in this ruthless "age of iron" (46). And then Mrs Curren compares her self-exiled daughter who settles down in a secure environment, and her own childhood when brainwashed by nationalist patriotism:

> My only child is thousands of miles away, safe;…Did we not have Voortrekkers, generation after generation of Voortrekkers, grim-faced, tight-lipped Afrikaner children, marching, singing their patriotic hymns, saluting their flag, vowing to die for their fatherland?... How fortunate you [the daughter] are to have put all this behind you. (46-47)

The comradeship popular among the black community, according to Mrs Curren, bears a striking resemblance to Afrikaner nationalism dominant in her own

[41] I will not deny the allegorical meaning in Mrs Curren's relation to Vercueil, but I would like to pay attention to the difference in their focuses. The political implication of their relation can be found in the following example. When Mrs. Curren and Vercueil sit together in the car while they are looking for the wounded black boy in the Groote Schuur hospital, Mrs. Curren compares her gradual adaptation to Vercueil's smell with her relation with South Africa: 'Is this how I feel toward South Africa: not loving it but habituated to its bad smell?' (64)

[42] Attwell, "'Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*," 168.

childhood. In addition to the mother/daughter relation distorted by apartheid, this debate once more makes Mrs Curren's craving for her daughter transcend the private relationship and gain obvious ideological implications. The ethics of alterity in the form of the township people and the family ethics have integrated into one penetrating thread to expose Mrs Curren's ethical predicament.

The debate between Mrs Curren and the township people continues as the narrative proceeds. When finding John has escaped from the hospital with his injured head, Mrs Curren argues over the phone with Mr Thabane, the ex-schoolteacher, about comradeship as advocated by the township people. In her mind, John's case is not alone but stands for "the rising generation" to answer calls for sacrifice in the name of the truth and justice (74). It alludes to a slogan, namely "freedom or death", which also plainly appears in Mrs Curren's reflection on this debate with Mr Thabane (149). The slogan draws our attention to a special period in South African history, that is, the State of Emergency (SOE).[43]

As Coetzee tells us at the end of the story, the narrative was set during the period from 1986 to 1989,[44] a time when South Africa was in a second SOE in the 1980s.[45] As a draconian tool of the apartheid government, SOE was targeted at the widespread insurrection of the black people to counter the social chaos and disorder caused by their resistance. The chaos began with violence in townships where black people lived and extended to the school boycott in some parts of South Africa in 1985. The first period of SOE in South Africa ended with a short-lived lifting of the policy from March to June in 1986, but it was then extended to cover the whole

[43] Dominic Head also gives a brief introduction to this general background. See Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, 67.

[44] There is another palpable clue to indicate the period the story writes about. On their way to finding out where Bheki is upon hearing the news that there is some violence in Guguletu, Mr Thabane tells Mrs. Curren: "I was born in 1943 … I'm forty-three." (92). Thus, the time should be the year of 1986.

[45] There is another SOE in South African history in the 1960s following the Sharpeville massacre. At that time, Coetzee was in London. Though Coetzee did not respond directly to the first SOE in his writing, these events, as I argued previously, contribute to the development of his Janus-faced attitude to home. The second SOE was also triggered by something related to the Sharpeville massacre; or, specifically speaking, it was on the Sharpeville day that police killed twenty people who were in a funeral procession. It soon spurred school boycotts and clashes between the police and the black, especially the young. Then the president P.W. Botha declared a SOE. See Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy*, fifth ed. (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 139.

country and remained in force until 1990 when the new president F.W. de Klerk came to office. Under SOE, the security police were granted extraordinary powers to detain and kill any suspects without resorting to the legal process, meanwhile, the coverage of the violence and SOE in the media was accordingly blocked.

It would make sense, then, that in the novel the township youth's attitudes and behaviours foreground their more militant actions to fight against the apartheid government, instead of Vercueil. Bheki is found to be involved in battles with the w*itdoeke*, "a conservative black vigilante group known by the white strips of cloth that they wear to identify themselves" (*AI*, 83). When Mrs Curren drives Florence and Mrs Thabane to look for Bheki in Guguletu, she experiences for herself the dreadful violence in the township: the burning shacks, the gunfire and the corpse of Bheki in a deserted building. John is later suspected of smuggling weapons and shot to death in the servant's quarters of Mrs Curren's backyard. All of these moments contribute to, and cannot be separated from, the social intensity of alterity.

To describe *AI* in this way is to highlight its political and realistic dimension, so a question arises: how does it lay bare Mrs Curren's ethical predicament? As noted previously, when remarking that she may not live long enough to see the horrendous scene of children throwing petrol on, and laughing at, a burning woman, Mrs Curren is reminded of the root of the indifference and callousness, namely, the whites' guilt. However, there is still a long way to go before Mrs Curren, as a white woman, recognizes this complicity. As we could see from the narrative, there is a sense of in-betweenness in Mrs Curren's responses to apartheid and to the black youth, and it is here that her ethical predicament lies, in addition to the change in her attitude to Vercueil. Mrs Curren is cognizant of the social chaos and inequality caused by the implementation of apartheid, but it seems that she still set her hopes on justice prevailing over apartheid. The dying lady, upon the shattering of her illusion, initially holds the view that she may not be relevant, before she realizes her complicity with apartheid and makes a series of subsequent confessions.

It is worth elaborating on Mrs Curren's ambivalent attitude towards apartheid. On the one hand, she is modestly aware of the rampant social chaos within the apartheid regime. That is why she refuses to watch TV and read newspapers, which are no more than propaganda instruments for the authorities to whitewash their governance and policies. Thus what dominates the media are a staging of "the parade

of politicians" (*AI*, 25), glossing over the social disorder (36) and presenting "a land of smiling neighbours" (49). The ban on public access to this information in the media is just a direct reflection of the policy implemented during the second stage of 1980 SOE.

On the other hand, this awareness is compromised by the trust she puts in apartheid though she does not support the authorities. What she has experienced is reminiscent of friendliness and peacefulness before the chaos: "In my day, I thought, policemen spoke respectfully to ladies. In my day children did not set fire to schools" (48). After Bheki and John are seriously injured during their attempt to escape on a bike from a chasing police van, Mrs Curren insists that she lay a charge against the police and, more broadly, the "men in power", for their intentional or unintentional dangerous action (60). Florence does not agree with Mrs Curren's proposal and later Bheki also despises Mrs Curren's trust in the police. The police refuse to investigate the case since Mrs Curren is not one of the "parties directly affected" (77).

All in all, it is Mrs Curren's liberal humanism makes her inhabit such a position, which reduces her into a morally exiled state, albeit she is physically in South Africa. Vercueil, upon hearing Mrs Curren speaking of the reason of her daughter's absence, defines her daughter as an exile, but Mrs Curren denies the interpretation right away, saying: "she [her daughter] is not an exile, but I am" (69). To claim that she is an exile is to admit her in-betweenness, which her ethical predicament rests on.

The problem is also staged in her attitudes to the township youth, especially John. Though annoyed by John's trespassing on her property and his subsequent rebellious behaviours, Mrs Curren exerts herself to help him after seeing the bicycle accident (55-63). When she and Vercueil pay a visit to the hospitalized John, Mrs Curren feels quite upset by, and expresses her dislike of, the "stupid, obstructive, intractable" boy: "I look into my heart and nowhere do I find any trace of feeling for him" (71). In the next scene, when the unrecovered John, who is unaware of Bheki's death in Guguletu, returns to Mrs Curren's house to look for him, Mrs Curren again admits that the boy "is not lovable" and she "want[s] him to go away and leave me [Mrs Curren] alone" (124). Paradoxically, when the police come to arrest and then kill John in her house, she desperately tries but fails to protect him from danger (138-142).

While the above moments suggest Mrs Curren's in-betweenness, they

conversely challenge, shake and subvert her liberal humanism. On their way to Guguletu to look for Bheki, it is the first time Mrs Curren has been confronted with so much violence. Mrs Curren is appalled at, and scared of, "this looming world of rage and violence" (89), so what she wants is to go home. When questioned by Mr Thabane if she knows where these people whose homes are burned out should go, Mrs Curren realizes that this is "my business, their business, everyone's business" (90) and later reiterates that it is not "a personal thing" (114).

After Bheki's death, Mrs Curren begins to reflect on the relationship between individual responsibility and collective guilt. When Vercueil closely follows Mrs Curren one morning in the house, she takes all her confusion and disgrace out on him: "But why should I bear the blame? Why should I be expected to rise above my times? Is it my doing that my times have been so shameful? Why should it be left to me, old and sick and full of pain, to lift myself unaided out of this pit of disgrace?" (107) Mrs Curren raises the issue of why she, as a dying individual, should inherit the guilt of colonialism and apartheid, because in her mind the ones who should be blamed are those "who have created these times" (107). Then she accuses those who have spoiled her life "in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food without even eating it, simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its bodily functions on it" (107). Again, Mrs Curren relates her personal life to the national situation and that is why her terminal disease is inclined to be interpreted as an allegory of the national fate, so to speak, the ending of the apartheid regime.

John's death is the last straw for Mrs Curren's liberal humanism. From then on, the narrative begins to enter into a totally confessional mode about complicity. She meditates,

> A crime was committed long ago. How long ago? I do not know. But longer ago than 1916, certainly. So long ago that I was born into it. It is part of my inheritance. It is part of me, I am part of it. (149)

In her opinion, she, as a white descendant, has to pay the price not only "in shame; in a life of shame and a shameful death, unlamented, in an obscure corner" (ibid), but also with a recognition of the impotence of her liberal humanism:

> What I did not know, *what I did not know*… was that the price was even higher. … It had something to do with honour,

> with the notion I clung to through thick and thin, from my education, from my reading, that in his soul the honourable man can suffer no harm. (150)

This confessional mode is to some extent a reflection of Coetzee's shame over Vera's attitude towards South Africa and South Africans. In a series of dialogues with the psychotherapist Arabella Kurtz, Coetzee reflects the "puzzling moral material" provided by the family in his childhood when Afrikaner nationalism was dominant in South Africa,

> I think most immediately of my mother, whose relations with other human beings at a personal level were (I thought) morally admirable but who was nevertheless a supporter, if not of apartheid as a social system, then certainly of the people who ran the country.[46]

Since apartheid is notorious for its institutionalized racial discrimination and segregation, its supporters advocated inequality between human beings. What puzzled Coetzee is the incompatibility between Vera's amiability with people around her and her siding with "the people who ran the country". Vera's in-betweenness provokes the novelist to contemplate, as Attwell notes, "the problem of historical guilt" after her death.[47] It is reasonable, then, that in addition to the maternal discourse, *AI* will develop around another narrative thread, that of "historical guilt". As Kossew puts it, "his [Coetzee's] combination of moral ambivalence and emotional intensity in relation to mothers has left a subtle but discernible and affecting trace in his fiction".[48] Thus, as my argument tries to demonstrate, Mrs Curren's ethical predicament is consistent with the novelist's attachment to his mother, one of the most intense feelings in the idea of home, and what inches its way into the narrative is an impersonalized representation of Vera's moral ambivalence.

[46] J.M. Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz, *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 110.
[47] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 168.
[48] Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 154.

7. Alternatives to Home: *Disgrace*

The issue of home, as the previous chapters show, continues to be a dominant topic in Coetzee's settler colonial project and eventually culminates in *Disgrace*. Though the novel has been discussed many times as evidence of Coetzee's lack of confidence in post-apartheid South Africa, my reading of the novel will pay more attention to how it explores the limits of the efforts people will make in accommodating oneself to a new country. When history is too irredeemable for people to find their positions in both private and social spheres, they have no choice but to turn to different alternatives. Lurie commits himself to and is overwhelmed by sexuality as a substitute for a deeper belonging, and then he dramatically makes a private adjustment by devoting himself to animal welfare. [1] His daughter, Lucy, is attached to the "smallholding" which she is determined to live off, and pays the price for this determination due to the consequences of this irredeemable history (*Disgrace*, 59). By reading the novel in this way, I attempt to address the following questions: how Lurie justifies sexuality as an alternative to home in various postsecular discourses, such as the Rule of St Benedict, Eros, and the scapegoat; whether these justifications register a full investment on Coetzee's part in postsecular discourse; how Lurie's later engagement with caring for stray dogs transfers his sexual desire to ethical concerns; combined with this ethical turn, especially the shift of the opera's focus from Lord Byron to Teresa Guiccioli, what role of Lurie's aesthetic pursuits plays; how Lucy's alternative home is interrelated with, and opposed to, Lurie's effort to compensate for his loss; to what extent Coetzee distances himself from, and sympathises with, Lurie as far as his authorship is concerned.

I. Postsecularism

[1] In my reading, I refer to David Lurie as Lurie because the family name signifies his position in society and, moreover, the name in the narrative originates from Lucifer, a biblical figure generally equal to Satan or the devil. Without gender discrimination, I use Lucy for Lucy Lurie to show her familial relationship with her father; moreover, the name comes from Wordsworth's poem.

While introducing the concept of postsecularism to my discussion, I am deeply cognizant of the abundance of clashing views on the subject. It is largely beyond the scope of this thesis, let alone one chapter, to discuss the genealogy and development of the term in detail, so the following paragraphs only serve as a general overview of these provocative debates, and provide a way to contextualize my argument.

Despite its relatively long history in both the East and the West, secularism is a term coined by George Jacob Holyoake, a British writer, in 1851. Originally, the term was not against Christianity but proposed that there was secular truth in social life, so it did not interrogate whether or not God exists but suggested an alternative to the way people could understand social phenomena. Secularism is, thus, not equivalent to atheism. The advent of secularism is germane to the rise of modernism, which challenges the ubiquitous conviction of religion in social life. Modernism in this sense is a process of disenchantment, which is deemed a way for people to free themselves from the confinement of religion. Max Weber's "disenchantment of the world" is an exemplary representative of this category. As far as literature is concerned, Matthew Arnold observes that literature serves as a substitute for religion.[2] James Wood also argues that modern literature is "the enemy of superstition, the slayer of religions, the scrutineer of falsity".[3]

However, modernization did not bring the promised peace, prosperity, and progress as much as people had expected, so its theoretical models, including secularism, were consequently challenged, which partly contributes to the rise of postsecularism.[4] Despite many controversies in its definitions and connotations, it is universally agreed that postsecularism is not a denial, or a replacement, of secularism, just as what postcolonialism is to colonialism. Both "posts" do not indicate a time

[2] Quoted in Michael W. Kaufmann, "The Religious, the Secular, and Literary Studies: Rethinking the Secularization Narrative in Histories of the Profession," *New Literary History* 38, no. 4 (2007): 610.

[3] James Wood, *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (New York: Picador, 1999).

[4] If modernity is a process of disenchantment, postmodernity, in alliance with Christianity, as John Milbank notes, is confronted with "the common enemy of Enlightenment reason, empiricism, positivism and science". In this sense, postsecularism echoes some nature of postmodernism. See Arthur Bradley, Jo Carruthers, and Andrew Tate, "Introduction: Writing Post-Secularity," in *Spiritual Identities: Literature and the Post-Secular Imagination*, ed. Jo Carruthers and Andrew Tate (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 2.

frame after a certain event but a process of readdressing the existing problems encompassing the nature of the terms with and without a "post".[5]

Scholars from different fields have made many influential arguments to side with postsecularism. Talal Asad, a cultural anthropologist, objects to a simplified distinction between the secular and the religious, and investigates "how the sacred and the secular depend on each other" in his book.[6] Jürgen Habermas, one of the leading European philosophers, argues that secular people in the modern world should not be blind to religious influence and they need "a complementary learning process" from religious people.[7] John McClure challenges the idea of secularism in his systematic discussion of distinguished novelists from different continents.[8] Amardeep Singh notes that more attention should be paid to the modern novelists' ambiguous attitudes to religion in both their writings and lives, namely, "a nuanced, ambiguous relationship to religious texts, themes, and institutions".[9] Similar arguments can be found in *Spiritual Identities: Literature and the Post-Secular Imagination*, where the editors perceive that literature is "a privileged space in which the return of the religious can take place" so it is "neither an alternative to, nor a substitute for religion, but a way in which religious experience can happen".[10]

Based on the above brief tracing, I will argue that the advent of modernization does not entail the extinction of religion in literary writing but replaces it with different forms. Then, if secularism is not a denial of religion but a displacement of religion in literary criticism, postsecularism is definitely not a revival of religion but a reiteration of the religious dimension in narrative. As Manav Ratti puts it, "the

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[5] For a more detailed discussion on this issue, see Graham Huggan, "Is the 'Post' in 'Postsecular' the 'Post' in 'Postcolonial'?," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 56, no. 4 (2010). Manav Ratti, *The Postsecular Imagination : Postcolonialism, Religion, and Literature*, Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 21.

[6] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 26.

[7] Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 28.

[8] See John A. McClure, *Partial Faiths : Postsecular Fiction in the Age of Pynchon and Morrison* (Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

[9] Amardeep Singh, *Literary Secularism : Religion and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2006), 2.

[10] Bradley, Carruthers, and Tate, "Introduction: Writing Post-Secularity," 3,5.

postsecular is caught in a double bind between religion and secularism".[11] In this sense, the secular or the religious is not an either/or question but a both/and issue that will integrate the two aspects of a seemingly binary opposition. This is what I mean by postsecularism.

II. Lurie's postsecular excuses

The relation between Coetzee's attitudes to religion and his writings seems unworthy of a chapter-length investigation at first sight, or at least, as Alicia Broggi puts it in her doctoral dissertation, it "does not amount to anything as coherent or schematic as a 'project'".[12] A biographical survey can demonstrate that religion did not exert much impact on Coetzee's life. On the one hand, considering the influence of Coetzee's non-religious parents in the family, which I've discussed in the previous chapter, religion "played no part" on little Coetzee.[13] If we can take the scenes in *Boyhood* as a genuine reflection of his life, we will know that the novelist felt alienated and, when surrounded by a group of classmates whose parents are members of the Dutch Reformed Church, declared his conversion to Roman Catholicism during his primary school years (*Boyhood*, 18-20), but he did not really know what it meant to drift between different religious faiths. [14] In *DP*, he also remarked that "I am not a Christian, not yet" (*DP*, 250).

On the other, Coetzee went to a Catholic high school and, as Broggi exhibits in her study of the novelist's manuscripts, a large body of his literary formation involved exposure to Christian traditions, a point which can also be proved by what Coetzee recognized: "I would not be who I am without … that aberrant Jewish prophet Jesus of Nazareth".[15] Drawing on Charles Taylor's theory, Broggi addresses how Coetzee responds to five religious interlocutors in different novels. Her thesis investigates a more obscure, but inseparable, dimension in Coetzee's oeuvre, namely,

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[11] Ratti, *The Postsecular Imagination*, xxii.
[12] Alicia Broggi, "J.M. Coetzee and the Christian Tradition: Navigating Religious Legacies in the Novel" (University of Oxford, 2017), 4.
[13] Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee*, 54.
[14]David Attwell notes that "the child in *Boyhood* is directionless, fearing Afrikanerdom, not knowing whether he is a Jew, a Catholic or even a Christian". See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 160.
[15] Paul Auster and J.M. Coetzee, *Here and Now: Letters (2008-2011)* (London: Penguin, 2014), 146.

the historical awareness in the novelist's engagement with Christianity. Her surprising omission of *Disgrace* leaves space for further discussion on the topic. In my thesis, I will use this novel as the very example of Coetzee deploying religious motifs to explore the theme of home.

As far as modernist writers are concerned, the paradox between one's apparently secular authorship and the frequent occurrence of religious moments in his writings is not unusual. Though demonstrating his strong belief in the secularism of modern literature by seeing modern fiction as "the slayer of religions", in his own novel, *The Book against God*, James Wood ironically conveys his belief in God. Similar cases can be found in James Joyce and Salman Rushdie: though both of them are publicly committed atheists, some of their writings freely use religious motifs.[16]

Hence, for writers without religious convictions, postsecular discourse is more a literary and cultural instrument than the devotion to these doctrines. In *Disgrace*, the postsecular moments and scriptures are deployed in an ironical way to investigate the issue of home when colonial history penetrates, paralyzes and destroys people's intimate lives. Living in such an irredeemable situation, Lurie frequently refers to religious discourse, but ironically against their original meanings, sometimes to justify sexuality as an alternative to home in the campus-based part of the novel. This process is accompanied by his intermittent aspiration to write an opera about Byron and his mistress in Ravenna in Italy, with a kind of spiritual belonging lingering until the very end of the narrative. After his failure in justifying sexuality, Lurie is then engaged with animal welfare, another form of alterity, at Bev Shaw's clinic in the farm-based part of the novel, transcendentally and postsecularly. Compared with the postsecular discourses Lurie is dependent on, Lucy's concept of home is primarily associated with the farm lifestyle she chooses. Her attachment to the farm, together with the shocking price she pays to accommodate herself to South African reality, dispels Lurie's postsecular illusions and draws him back to the distorted social relations overshadowed by colonial history. Thus, for the father and the daughter, home is never a noun, a fixed category of dwelling, but a verb, a homecoming and a homemaking to settle themselves down in both a secular and postsecular sense. In so doing, Coetzee demystifies the legacy of Christianity (and Calvinism) in the white intellectual, and demonstrates how ordinary whites explore

[16] For a more detailed discussion, see Singh, *Literary Secularism* 71-97, 117-35.

the possibility of balancing their personal lives and the consequence of colonial history in post-apartheid South Africa. Coetzee's writings then become, in Colin Jager's words, "resources for negotiating a world that constantly subverts easy distinctions between religious and secular, home and homelessness, exile and belonging".[17]

This negotiation, embodied in Lurie, is his wrestling with the state of homelessness. Lurie does not have a home in the campus-based part of the novel: his unsuccessful marriages and the separateness from his family, together with the collapse of his teaching career, deprive Lurie of a home in its most common sense. This homelessness exacerbates his restlessness, so he speciously takes, and religiously rationalizes, his sexuality as a substitute for home.

At the very outset, we are clearly reminded that Lurie's marital status is divorced, which directly contributes to his "problem of sex" (*Disgrace*, 1). It is when the divorced man meets his second ex-wife, shortly after the university informs him of a charge of sexual harassment brought against him and the subsequent inquiry procedures, that we learn that from his first marriage he still has a daughter who lives on a farm in the Eastern Cape (43). In addition to his unusual family's composition, we can also discern his displacement from his profession, an academic home for Lurie, especially after the rationalization of the university (3-4).

However, in Lurie's opinion, his weekly transaction with the prostitute, Soraya, is a perfect solution to the problem, which makes him relinquish the idea that "he needed a wife, *a home*, a marriage" (5, emphasis mine). Lurie's affair with a student originates from this mentality in which he simplifies, and then reduces, the full meaning of home to the satisfaction of sexual desire. In order to underpin the sexuality, he consistently quotes religious discourses as a shield against any secular reading of his sexual pursuit, equipping the sexuality with a sense of righteousness, so the alternative he seeks is more cultural, possibly even transcendent, than literal. The irony lies in the paradox that he is not in compliance with the disciplines required in the religious context. Differently put, most of the religious scriptures he cites seem to be misread. Since there is little doubt that Coetzee has a deeper knowledge of the implications of these religious discourses than his character does, a

[17] Colin Jager, "Reconciliation in South Africa: World Literature, Global Christianity, Global Capital," in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Mark Knight (London: Routledge, 2016), 442.

question then arises: why does the novelist deliberately put the misreading of these religious moments into the mouth of a professor in Romantic literature?

Scholars have addressed these frequent religious moments, but they tend to ascribe them to Lurie's profession as a professor in Romantic poetry. Sue Kossew, for example, when discussing Lurie's defence in front of the inquiry committee, in which he links his behaviour to Eros, the god of sexual and romantic love in Greek mythology, notes that it is the excuse "one might expect from a specialist in Romantic poetry".[18] A similar inference can be seen in Gary Hawkins's argument on Lurie's attempts to justify himself, where Hawkins attributes Lurie's referring to religious codes, among others, to the protagonist's "remnant Romantic temperament".[19] This interpretation is effective when it comes to Lurie's large and generous references to different Romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, but it cannot provide an adequate explanation of the religious dimension embedded in the narrative. Though Coetzee is a non-believer, his skilful deployment of these religious references invites me to conduct a postsecular analysis on how his characters are wrestling with the issue of home in a post-apartheid context. Lurie consistently rationalizes his promiscuity in a religious way while refusing to pay the price, which is contextualized in my argument as compensation for his loss of home, though he suffers from successive disgraces.

i. "The Rule of St Benedict"

The first religious discipline appears when Lurie tries to persuade himself that he should follow his "temperament" as strictly as a rule requires, "like the Rule of St Benedict" (*Disgrace*, 2). Lurie's "temperament", namely that he casually thinks about the possibility of a private transaction with Soraya to spend some of the night or the whole but no later than next morning (ibid), which explicitly discloses his loneliness and desperation to find an alternative home.

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[18] Sue Kossew, "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 2 (2003): 158.

[19] Gary Hawkins, "Clerk in a Post-Religious Age: Reading Lurie's Remnant Romantic Temperament in *Disgrace*," in *Encountering Disgrace: Reading and Teaching Coetzee's Novel*, ed. Bill McDonald (New York: Camden House, 2009), 149.

The alternative is, of course, his absurd and dogged search for sexual satisfaction. Lurie does not elevate it into "a philosophy" but deems it "a rule" (ibid), which one must abide by no matter whether one likes it or not. "The Rule of St Benedict" is presented in the narrative to justify his choice of this alternative to home. The Rule of St Benedict was written by Benedict of Nursia, a Christian saint in the sixth century, to set forth principles to regulate the monastic life. One core principle of these rules was to enable the Christian monks, by living an ascetic life, to "make progress in the Christian virtues and to gain eternal life", and thus create "a harmonious community of individuals",[20] so there is little hint that it advocates sexual indulgence; rather, it implicitly rejects it. Lurie indulges himself, as Hawkins notes, in "an epistemology of a new kind of bliss".[21] Moreover, he decides to make his sexual desire dominate his life as the rigorous doctrines outline the monks' life modes. The ironical contrast is telling because, firstly, it puts more weight on the absurdity of Lurie's claims; and, secondly, it implies that his violation of the original requirements of these doctrines will eventually be punished, just as the Rule of St Benedict addresses the question of discipline: a monk's wrongdoing will be corrected by a series of measures, ranging from private reprimands from the abbot to expulsion from the monastery. As we can see, after refusing to make public confession for the charge pressed against him, Lurie is expelled from the academic community and retreats to stay with his daughter, Lucy, on her farm near Salem in the Eastern Cape, a home of a different kind.

This retreat reinforces the frustration in his homecoming, however, both spiritually and materially. After spending several months with Lucy on her farm and then returning to his house in Cape Town, he finds that not only is the house wrecked, but also "it does not feel like *a homecoming*": he is ostracized by former colleagues, snubbed by neighbours, and still has nowhere to settle down after the roaming (*Disgrace*, 175, emphasis mine). His banishment from his community and academic career in the university is also in tune with his feeling of being "out of place" after he is rationalized from being a professor of modern languages to adjunct professor of communication (4). With this background, the futility of his academic learning and lack of authority gives Lurie enough reasons to deride himself as one of the "clerks

[20] Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, (New York: Penguin, 2008). EPUB. 9.
[21] Hawkins, "Clerk in a Post-Religious Age," 151.

in a post-religious age" (4), who feel displaced in the current of university transformation sweeping South Africa in the 1990s, a campaign mainly aiming for economic and political rationality.[22] For Lurie, teaching, as he tells Bev in the farm-based part of the novel, is "never a vocation" (*Disgrace*, 162), but a way of earning his living and of recognizing his value in the secular world. In the narrator's words, it "brings it home to him who he is in the world" (5), rather than "teach[ing] people how to live" (162). Without any identification and enthusiasm in his teaching career, especially after the transformation, Lurie is eager to find compensation in his private life and it makes sense that every Thursday when he and Soraya meet, it becomes "an oasis of luxe et volupté" "in the desert of the week" (1). To put it differently, he seeks the comforts of home and, more broadly, his hopes for a fulfilled life, in a weekly meeting with a prostitute.

Though he thinks of himself more a scholar than a teacher, his publications and academic achievements are not well recognized. Should there be anything in the academic life that deserves his devotion, it will be an opera about Lord Byron's days in Italy, where the exiled poet has an affair with Teresa Guiccioli, his 18-year old admirer. Unsurprisingly, this opera is "a meditation on love between the sexes" (4). It corresponds not only to Lurie's mentality in the exchange of a home for sexuality, but also, as Kai Easton observes, to "the historical and fictional implications of Coetzee's authorial choice to situate Byron during the time of his exile in Italy".[23] The process of opera-writing runs through the fiction, but it is never finished. This narration is symbolic because, on the one hand, in the campus-based part of the novel, the aesthetic solution to his homelessness primarily acts as a way for Lurie to sympathize with himself and signifies the intertextuality between himself and Byron; and, on the other, in the farm-based part, it is gradually juxtaposed with his ethical concern of animal welfare to become another available alternative to history.

Lurie's smooth relationship with Soraya is clouded by the episode in which the two bump into each other in the town, a hint implying Lurie's further invasion into, and his being unwelcome in, Soraya's private life. The incident leads to the end of their transactions but later Lurie acts as an intruder into Soraya's home by hiring a

[22] David Attwell gives a detailed discussion on how *Disgrace* addresses these transformations. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 215.
[23] Kai Easton, "Coetzee's *Disgrace*: Byron in Italy and the Eastern Cape C. 1820," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 42, no. 3 (2007): 115.

private detective to track down Soraya's personal information. The intrusion reaches its climax when Lurie shamefully enquires into further meetings with Soraya by phoning her home. Soraya's harsh warning that "you are harassing me in my own house" haunts the narrative, and is transformed into more catastrophic disgraces in the subsequent cases of Lurie's illicit affair with Melanie Isaacs, his coloured student, and the three black men's gang-rape of Lucy.

Given Lurie's stubbornness in the justification and pursuit of sexuality, his story with Soraya is not either his first or final attempt to find an alternative to a home. Soraya's story works only as an episode, perhaps the most impressive one in his life since readers can tell Lurie's promiscuity from his affairs with faulty wives, tourists, and the new department secretary. He does disclose a sense of regret for this lifestyle and even thinks of castration (*Disgrace*, 9), a topic which is developed fully in terms of his caring for the stray dogs after exiling himself to Lucy's farm. At this stage, the promiscuity makes him think about self-castration, an extreme way to exercise asceticism, though the Rule of St Benedict rarely ordains monks to do so. Lurie quotes another early Christian theologian, Origen, to contemplate the idea of asceticism.

Origen, an ascetic living three hundred years earlier than Benedict of Nursia, was, according to Susan Ross, "one of the most significant Platonists of the early church",[24] which indicates this ascetic's endorsement of Plato's dualism regarding the relationship between body and soul. In Origen's opinion, the body becomes an obstacle for one to attain the salvation of the soul, thus "abstinence from sex would hasten a person's progress" (20). Though there are lots of controversies whether Origen's self-castration is true or not, it is beyond any doubt that Lurie, as a secular professor, has little hope of following these models of martyrdom. These models of righteousness are so transient that they are dwarfed by his commitment to the idea of "temperament" and his compliance with his own version of the Benedictine rule.

Due to the obvious contradiction between the ways Lurie uses this postsecular doctrine and its original implications, it is truer to say that Coetzee's manipulation of postsecular language is out of irony rather than being fully investigated in terms of religious scriptures. In so doing, he manages to frame a cultural way of being — that

[24] Susan A. Ross, *Anthropology: Seeking Light and Beauty* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 20.

is to say, Lurie is a carrier of cultural tensions incurred by colonial history, rather than an incarnation of Christian faith. It not only answers the above question concerning Lurie's misreading of the religious discourse but also enables the discourse to act as a writing strategy for Coetzee to dramatize the theme of home, transcendentally and culturally. This dramatization conveys, and conversely deconstructs, Lurie's colonial mentality, a legacy of white supremacy closely tied with the dissemination of Afrikaner Calvinism. As one of the foundations for Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid, this Calvinism significantly contributed to racist sentiment,[25] a submerged thread in both Lurie's relationships with Soraya, a Muslim prostitute, and Melanie Isaacs, a "dark" student in his Romantics course (*Disgrace*, 18). With the decline of apartheid, this white supremacy was greatly challenged, but Lurie still stubbornly holds on to his own principle of sexuality without reconsideration of the racial issue. The pretension will find its way into his following sexual adventures, continuously and religiously.

ii. "The servant of Eros"

Then we see Lurie's next prey, Melanie Isaacs, step into his life. He sacralises his motives for having an affair with the student by saying that they arise from the need to serve Eros, a Greek god of attraction. Before moving on to discuss how Lurie virtuously describes himself as "the servant of Eros" (52, 89), it is worth noting that Coetzee intentionally situates his protagonist in a Christian context in various aspects.

In addition to the episode involving artistic project on Byron's days in Italy, one of the poet's spiritual settlements, Lurie is also an admirer of Bryon's poems. The moment that he explicates Byron's *Lara* for the class chimes with the issue of home religiously in two ways, at least. To begin with, the poem itself is coincidentally about the eponymous protagonist's fateful homecoming after travelling in the East for many years. Then, that Lurie identifies Count Lara as Lucifer, another name for the Christian Devil (besides Satan), indicates the analogy between him and this biblical figure: his family name is derived from Lucifer and, in addition, Lurie recognizes, and probably admires, Lucifer's impulse that Count Lara follows in the poem. To Lurie, Count Lara "doesn't act on principle but on impulse", a point which

[25] See Blake Williams, "Apartheid in South Africa: Calvin's Legacy?," (2014).

"we are invited to understand and sympathize" (33). In Margot Beard's words, Lurie "reads Byron's creation, Lara, not only as an alter-ego of Byron but also of himself".[26]

The garden where Lurie and Melanie Isaacs meet in non-class time on campus, a place which witnesses the beginning of their story, should remind us of the Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis where Eve is seduced by the serpent into eating the forbidden fruit. Melanie is more like the innocent Eve while Lurie himself becomes the evil serpent,[27] so we are presented with a variation of this biblical story: Melanie tries the forbidden fruit and has sex with Lurie. To some extent, it sets the tone for the postsecular and confessional tone of the story, as Sue Kossew maintains, "with Lurie as a repulsive/ attractive 'serpent' corrupting innocence while excusing his actions via confession".[28]

There are several other moments in the narrative that allude to the biblical background. Upon seeing Melanie's younger sister, Desiree (another hint at desire), Lurie thinks that the sisters are "fruit[s] of the same tree" (*Disgrace*, 164). The essence of the metaphor lies in Lurie's sexuality aroused by their bodies, so the sisters become an emblem of desire while he again acts as the serpent to coax the innocent to recognize the desire and then follow their bliss. This assumption will be further testified by the episode when Lurie prostrates himself in front of Mrs Isaacs and Desiree. Though Lurie insists that he make a formal and sincere apology, this declaration is greatly compromised by "the current of desire" striking him when he meets Desiree's eyes after the prostration (173).

Besides the allusion to the garden, Melanie's family name, Isaacs, gives us further indication of the postsecular implication. Abraham's decision to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to show his faith in God in the Book of Genesis, is contextualized in the

[26] Margot Beard, "Lessons from the Dead Masters: Wordsworth and Byron in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *English in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2007): 71.
[27] Several other details also imply Lurie's role as a serpent. When Mr Isaacs comes to the university to question Lurie's misbehaviour as a professor, he says that Melanie is in "a nest of vipers", a label Lurie cannot deny (38). Even Lurie's sexual intercourse with Soraya is described as "copulation of snakes" (3).
[28] Kossew, "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," 159.

narration that, as Lucy Graham argues, "Melanie *Isaacs* becomes David Lurie's sacrifice to Eros".[29]

All these allusions pave the way, and make it more reasonable, for Lurie to reiterate the role of Eros in his interpretation of the affair with Melanie. Confronted with the university's disciplinary committee, he defends himself by saying that, after he and Melanie meet on campus, "Eros entered" into his life, which suggests that, instead of being "a repulsive/ attractive 'serpent'", he becomes "a servant of Eros" (*Disgrace*, 52). If Lurie's transactions with Soraya cannot be dignified as love, which may be "affection" and equals "a cousin of love" (2), he attributes his affair with Melanie to answering the call of Eros. Lurie's reference to this religious concept once again leads to its opposite implication. Traditionally, Christianity opposes heterodox forms of sexuality; if there is a proper place for Eros, it should be reserved for marriage, or to contextualize the statement, for family life, whose territory is home.[30] Lurie attempts to depict his sexuality in the name of spirituality while Christian discourse usually separates these two concepts. The absurdity of his argument is noted right away by one of the disciplinary committee who refers to it as "ungovernable impulse" (*Disgrace*, 52).

The contradiction between Lurie's religious quotations and his secular practice becomes more complicated when he challenges the requirement from the disciplinary committee which, in Adriaan van Heerden's words, "claims for itself a quasi-religious status by demanding demonstrations of remorse, repentance, confession, and reformation of character".[31] The "quasi-religious status" of the

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[29] Lucy Graham, "'Yes, I Am Giving Him Up': Sacrificial Responsibility and Likeness with Dogs in J.M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction," *Scrutiny2* 7, no. 1 (2002): 8 (emphasis orignial). More recently, Andy Lamey also remarks Melanie's last name "recalls Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in the Book of Genesis". See Andy Lamey, "Sympathy and Scapegoating in J.M. Coetzee," in *J.M. Coetzee and Ethics:Philosophical Perspective on Literature*, ed. Anton Leist and Peter Singer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 183.

[30] Even now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, major sections of the church are defined by their opposition to various forms of sexuality. Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestant Christians are at the forefront of fights against homosexuality, sex between teenagers, and other forms of non-marital sex. This also explains why Lucy's alternative home is more secular in terms of her homosexuality. For a more detailed discussion, see David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

[31] Adriaan van Heerden, "Disgrace, Desire, and the Dark Side of the New South Africa," in *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics: Philosophical Perspectives on Literature*, ed.

disciplinary committee is mainly represented by two of its members: Farodia Rassool, who insists that Lurie show "contrition" (*Disgrace*, 54), and Manas Mathabane, a professor of Religious Studies and chair of the hearing. After the impasse when Lurie rejects Rassool's demand for public confession, Mathabane phones Lurie and tries to persuade him to accept a draft statement which can betray his "a spirit of repentance" (58). Again, Lurie brushes aside the suggestion and states that he makes "a secular plea" in front of "a secular tribunal" (58); he never makes repentance because "[r]epentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse" (58). Lurie comes to realize that the committee blurs the distinction between the requirements of the rules and spirituality of religion, so this confessional requirement is inappropriate and misplaced.

Given the background that Coetzee wrote against in the 1990s, Rassool's insistent demand for Lurie's "contrition" and Mathabane's suggestion that Lurie acknowledge his "repentance", albeit Mathabane reiterates the hearing is not a trial but an inquiry (47-48), evoke the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). According to the TRC's Chairman, Desmond Tutu, "there was not a requirement on perpetrators to express remorse or to ask forgiveness but only to make a full disclosure of their crimes before the TRC in order to qualify for amnesty."[32] Although some TRC members might ask for public confession, the essential position of the TRC, as Attwell observes, was that of "restorative justice" rather than "retributive justice".[33] Thus the moment that the disciplinary committee in the narrative, especially Rassool and Mathabane, either require or suggest religious remorse, with a promise of not dismissing Lurie, indeed goes against the TRC's principle. It is in this sense that Coetzee shows his concern and alerts us to keep vigilant in the jubilation of the South African transition period: the TRC may become "an exercise of power in the hands of those in authority".[34]

Anton Leist and Peter Singer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 49.

[32] Quoted in ibid.

[33] Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 223.

[34] Ibid., 215. Coetzee also expresses this concern in the interview with Jane Poyner: "In a state with no official religion, the TRC was somewhat anomalous: a court of a certain kind based to a large degree on Christian teaching and on a strand of Christian teaching accepted in their hearts by only a tiny proportion of the citizenry. Only the future will tell what the TRC managed to achieve." See Jane Poyner, "J.M. Coetzee in Conversation with Jane Poyner," in *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual* ed. Jane Poyner (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 22.

In addition to the political dimension embedded in Lurie's refusal to make his confession, his affair with Melanie acquires more historical implications when Rassool in the hearing blames him for having made "no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part" (*Disgrace*, 53). In other words, Lurie is complicit in this "long history" because Melanie is implicitly marked as a coloured student, as noted previously. To Lurie, his search for a substitute for a home is a quite personal choice and he does not care who the sacrifice to his Eros is, but he is blind to the racial dimension involved in the affair due to his white mentality. Thus he holds that the disciplinary committee exaggerates the consequence of his affair with Melanie, which turns his personal shame into a public disgrace, so this period is, as Lurie notes in a conversation with Lucy just after he gets to the farm, "puritanical times" when "private life is public business" (66).

What Lurie says recalls Hester Prynne's story in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which is frequently used as a touchstone in Coetzee's writings. This influence can be traced back to "Into the Dark Chamber", where Coetzee quotes the very beginning of Hawthorne's novel to remark that a prison, the one he focuses on, together with a cemetery, is an inevitable outcome of setting up a colony (*DP*, 361). Though Hawthorne's story was set against the Puritan culture of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the seventeenth century, there are indeed parallels between this novel and *Disgrace*.[35]

Hester is impregnated through an affair and then conceives a daughter while waiting for her long-lost husband. The adultery is legally wrong and morally unacceptable in the Puritan culture, so Hester is required to show her confession to the public on the scaffold for three hours and wear a scarlet A on her dress for the rest of her life, which is probably a sign of humiliation for adultery. In this sense,

[35] The following details may be another link, or possibly a coincidence, between these two narratives: it is in the town of Salem in Massachusetts in 1694 that adultery was recognized as a crime, where *The Scarlet Letter* is based, while in *Disgrace* Lucy's farm is also located in Salem in Eastern Cape of South Africa. Since there is a real village called Salem near Grahamstown, Gareth Cornwell investigates the origin of this name and observes that, for the naming of Salem in Eastern Cape in South Africa and in Massachusetts in America, both display "the hope that the remoteness of their [the British settlers'] new habitation had brought these hardy Methodists closer to their God". See Gareth Cornwell, "Disgraceland: History and the Humanities in Frontier Country," *English in Africa* 30, no. 2 (2003): 44.

Hester's "private life" becomes "public business". Thus the first parallel between Hester and Lurie is that both rule-offenders face the punishment of expulsion and disgrace. Lurie is banished from the university while Hester lives at the fringe of the society. That Lurie is pictured with a demeaning dunce hat corresponds to the humiliating letter A on Hester's dress. Hester is exposed to public humiliation on the scaffold, but it is not public remorse, or to put it in Lurie's terms to describe what the disciplinary committee requires, "a spectacle" (66). The second parallel is, then, grounded in the plot that, despite receiving punishment, both Hester and Lurie refuse to make their confession. In the conversation between Coetzee and Arabella Kurtz, they refer to *The Scarlet Letter* as an exemplary instance of confession and truth-seeking. According to Kurtz, Hester "both embraces and defies her censure".[36] This is confirmed later by what Coetzee notes: "Hester never acknowledges any criminal act, never confesses" (41).

The parallel lies not only in the similarity in the consequences of the two protagonists' transgression, and their subsequent attitudes to it, but also in the complex historical and ethical engagement the two novelists convey through their characters. On the one hand, Coetzee perceives that, on another occasion, Hawthorne regarded the novel as "an act of expiation" which is "to acknowledge inherited guilt and to put a distance between himself and his Puritan forebears".[37] By distancing himself from his Puritan ancestors, Hawthorne was not sympathetic to "the policing of morals" at all because "the inhuman cold-heartedness of the Puritan temperament in its New England manifestation" punished the sexual transgression (12-13). In other words, Hawthorne showed his compassion for Hester. This is also true when it comes to Coetzee's attitude to Lurie: the character's artistic engagement and his ethical turn to animal welfare do disclose the novelist's sympathy with him (to which I will come back later).

On the other hand, though we can recognize the distance, the one between oneself and one's problematic ancestors, which can also be identified in "NJC" in *Dusklands,* Coetzee also alienates himself from the long tradition of ecstasizing sexuality in English language culture through the postsecular discourse Lurie depends on in *Disgrace*. This tradition can be dated back to the Romantic era and

[36] Coetzee and Kurtz, *The Good Story*, 37.
[37] J.M. Coetzee, *Late Essays: 2006 - 2017* (London: Penguin, 2017), 15.

continues into the modern period, especially represented by D.H. Lawrence where sexuality is depicted as an expression of one's vitality and existential reality. Coetzee is acquainted with that tradition but does not wholly approve of it, so the narrative implies, to a certain degree, "the dismantling of Romanticism".[38]

The exchange on the consequences of the affair between Lurie and Lucy also recalls what happens to Hester. For me, Lurie may intend to take advantage of the lessons in Hester's example to excuse his sexuality in a postsecular world, likening the present to Puritanical times. He tries to make the scandal a personal matter, but the story will not develop as he has wished. By complicating the consequences of Lurie's alternative choice of a home, Coetzee again associates a personal issue with a more historical and political topic. However, there is one significant difference from Hester's story in Lurie's self-defence: the victim, Melanie Isaacs lays a complaint against his sexual harassment while Hester's charge is from the Puritan community. That is to say, we should not ignore Melanie's feeling in Lurie's case. As females in both cases, Hester is the one who is willing to shoulder, and is brave to confront, the consequences of the affair while Melanie, though what is going on in her mind is withheld from us most of the time in the fiction, is thought to treat it as harassment and turns to the university for help.

We can get more indications about Melanie's attitude to the affair near the end of the novel. After watching Melanie's drama when he returns to his burgled house in Cape Town and then being taunted by Ryan, Melanie's boyfriend, Lurie has sex with a streetwalker he meets on his way back from the Dock Theatre. He thinks that it is "the night of revelations" because he does not realize, or expect, that Melanie hates him like that until Ryan tells him that Melanie "will spit in your eyes if she sees you" (*Disgrace*, 194). This truth is not from Lurie's communication with any deity or supernatural entity, but from someone he grumbles about.[39] He may need to follow Ryan's threatening advice, which is to "find yourself another life" (*Disgrace*, 194). Where does his "another life" lie? It is definitely not in the streetwalker he

[38] Jeffrey Cass, "Rape as Debt: The Incineration of Romanticism in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *CEA Critic* 75, no. 1 (2013): 38.
[39] Ironically, the name Ryan typically means "illustrious". See Ida Grehan, *Dictionary of Irish Family Names* (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Madison, 1997), 299.

chooses but in the work at the animal clinic he is engaged with after exiling himself to Lucy's farm.

It is on Lucy's farm that the religious doctrine, "servant of Eros", reappears in Lurie's interpretation when the father and the daughter talk about the scandal at the university. Lurie highlights in his affair with Melanie "the rights of desire": because he is "*a servant of Eros*", "[i]t was a god who acted through me" (89, emphasis original). In a later attempt to rationalize his sexual drive, Lurie ironically turns Lucy's (and readers') attention to a case of a golden retriever in her childhood, when the neighbour's dog is always beaten by the master when it gets excited at the smell of a bitch. He feels sorry for the dog since "[n]o animal will accept the justice of being punished for following its instincts" (90). This example is symbolic because, firstly, it corresponds to the topic of self-castration mentioned earlier, the extreme way to punish and eradicate sexuality, and gives more hints at Lurie's later engagement with animal welfare at Bev's clinic; and, secondly, it is too realistic to bear any postsecular sense and thus works as a sharp contrast to the previous religious discourse to justify the righteousness of his exchange of home for sexuality. However, just as the implied connection with Hester neglects the feeling of the victim, juxtaposing the instance of the beaten dog and his case ignores the latter's ethical dimension, which is demonstrated in Lucy's refutation: "males must be allowed to follow their instincts unchecked? Is that the moral?" (90). Lurie confirms Lucy's challenge and then observes that it is not the ethics he wants to underline but the proper treatment of the desire, or in other words, in both cases, people do not do justice to the nature of sexuality.

iii. "Scapegoat"

The above analogy Lurie draws is not convincing at all. His efforts to justify the sexual drive come to a halt when the religion-charged word, "scapegoat", becomes one of the key elements in the following conversation between the father and the daughter. Sharply different from his attempt to rationalize his sexuality in a postsecular context, he never appreciates the idea that his expulsion from the university is an equivalent to ritual sacrifice. When Lucy compares him to a scapegoat, he immediately denies the label, because it is not "the best description"

(91). It is worth quoting Lurie's explanation at length to figure out his ambiguity in paying the price for regarding sexuality as compensation for the loss of home:

> Scapegoating worked in practice while it still had religious power behind it. You loaded the sins of the city on to the goat's back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to read the ritual, including the gods. Then the gods died, and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help. Real actions were demanded instead of symbolism. The censor was born, in the Roman sense. Watchfulness became the watchword: the watchfulness of all over all. Purgation was replaced by the purge. (91)

Lurie emphasizes that it is a secular world and the gods have died, so he challenges the religious ritual and its connotations, which is also demonstrated in his refusal to conform to the norms of the inquiry committee. Lurie holds that he is not, as Patricia Casey Sutcliffe points out, "a sacrificial victim" in the ceremonial purification — purgation, but "a dangerous element" rooted out by an actual expulsion.[40] This punishment is retributive, rather than restorative, so it circles back to its relation with the TRC.

As noted before, that Lurie intentionally mingles his sexual epistemology with religious doctrines implies, among others, the white postcolonial mindset and his subsequent blindness to ethnicity in a post-apartheid context. This blindness will vanish when the home-invaded attack takes place on Lucy's farm because, as we can conceive from the fiction, he is crystal clear about the historical nature of the crime in this atrocious situation. Though Lucy insists that the gang-rape is her personal business, she confirms her role as a scapegoat with the enigmatic choice of a polygamous marriage with Petrus. It recalls Magda's submission to Hendrik in *In the Heart of the Country* where she deems it "purgatory we must pass through on the way to a land of milk and honey" (*IHC*, 129). In this sense, purgatory becomes a kind of atonement, which is how Lucy addresses her case.

The narrative then moves on to another disgrace, namely, the home-invaded attack by the three black men who ransack the house, gang-rape Lucy, shoot the dogs

[40] Patricia Casey Sutcliffe, "Saying It Right in *Disgrace*: David Lurie, Faust, and the Romantic Conception of Language," in *Encountering Disgrace: Reading and Teaching Coetzee's Novel*, ed. William E. McDonald (New York: Camden House, 2009), 186.

and steal Lurie's car. During the attack, Lurie, after being knocked unconscious, is dragged into the lavatory and locked there. When waking up and being forced to hand his car's key to one of the criminals, the professor meditates on the uselessness of his intellectual knowledge: though he can speak several languages, it "will not save him here in darkest Africa" (95), a reminder of Lurie's previous sense of displacement in the university rationalization. If the rationalization in the university described at the beginning of the story is a symbol of Lurie's lack of authority, the unprecedented challenge of how to construct a new country and negotiate the hatred among different races in post-apartheid South Africa resumes the powerlessness and displacement of Lurie's intellectual knowledge.[41]

A more ironic episode appears when Lurie is doused in methylated spirits and set alight (96). Because Lurie is burnt with his passion caused by the fire of Eros in his relationship with Melanie, or more broadly, in his promiscuous lifestyle, that he is set on fire in the lavatory is another implied moment to register the disgrace caused by Lurie's sexual self-indulgence.[42] In terms of the racial implications, it also recalls what Mrs Curren says to Florence in *AI* in their argument on the education of the young black generation in the apartheid-era. When Florence helps Mrs Curren to stop Bheki and his friend in their attack on Vercueil, Mrs Curren retells one moment the maid has told her: Florence "saw a woman on fire, burning, and when she screamed for help, the children laughed and threw more petrol on her" (*AI*, 45). This passage is played out again here with startling resemblance. Luckily, the fire is not lethal, but it is also out of hatred and revenge. The consequence is that "everything is burned" and it is not until Lurie finds his salvation in dealing with the dog corpses that he begins to gradually remove the scar (*Disgrace*, 97).

In addition to their failure to reach agreement in their interpretations of the scapegoat, the father/daughter's difference in approaching the issue of home is more striking and intense. After the violent attack, when Lurie and Lucy are arguing whether they should return to the farm, Lurie remarks that "it's not a good idea" due

[41] Another moment also displays this displacement that Sesotho and isiXhosa, the language of communication in the local black community, are totally beyond Lurie's understanding while Petrus, Lucy's local assistant, does enjoy the soccer match with the Sotho and Xhosa commentary. See Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 75.

[42] There is one more episode for the symbolism of fire in the narrative: when Lurie pays a visit to the Isaacs, he identifies his affair with Melanie as a fire, "[s]he struck up a fire in me" (166).

to the safety concern while Lucy insists that "it's not an idea, good or bad, I'm not going back for the sake of an idea" (105). The argument is an evocative example of their divergent understandings and pursuits of home. For Lurie, home is more spiritual than materialistic, so that it can be practised in his constant sexual predatory behaviours, his devotion to writing the opera, and turning into a belief in animal welfare after the shocking assault on the farm. Lucy's home rarely relies on an abstract sense but a kind of "secular atonement" by "making private accommodations with a legacy of horror".[43]

III. Lucy's "secular atonement"

This principle will help to explain Lucy's enigmatic choices in the novel. She earns her living by running a kennel, and selling produce and flowers at a local weekly market. Neither getting along with her stepfather in the Netherlands nor enjoying an urban life with Lurie in Cape Town, Lucy chooses farm life because she "loves the land and the old, ländliche way of life" (113). Her attachment to the land inevitably corresponds to the "dream topography", an ideal pastoral life Coetzee discussed in *White Writing (WW)*, and the lonely neurotic Magda in *IHC*. The brutal assault on the farm shatters Lucy's pastoralism and reminds her of the lingering racial conflicts during the transition period after apartheid. The narrative becomes, thus, an anti-pastoral farm novel. [44]

After the attack, Lucy is reticent about the gang-rape and refuses to report it to the police in their investigation. She then accepts the degrading offer from Petrus, namely, becoming Petrus's third wife and ceding the farm to him for her own safety. The way Lucy responds to the attack and its consequences is certainly out of her unswerving belief in her farm lifestyle, though the farm has become contested territory and an epitome of ethnic conflicts in post-apartheid South Africa. As

[43] Elleke Boehmer, "Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender Implications in *Disgrace*," *Interventions* 4, no. 3 (2002): 349.
[44] In this regard, both Rita Barnard and, Wenzel and Smit-Marais conduct detailed analyses. See Rita Barnard, "Coetzee's Country Ways," ibid. Marita Wenzel and Susan Smit-Marais, "Subverting the Pastoral: The Transcendence of Space and Place in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, comparative linguistics and literary studies* 27, no. 1 (2006).

Wenzel and Smit-Marais put it, the farm is "neither a mythical nor religious space".[45] Thus, Lucy's choices are not religious but a secular firmness to pay the price for her homecoming. Even the baby conceived in the attack Lucy decides to keep is "a child of this earth" (*Disgrace*, 216). In Nishtha Saxena's words, this decision "has no transcendent or metaphysical connotations".[46]

By focusing on the characters' responses to the series of disgraceful events, Coetzee strikes a contrast between Lurie's indulgence in his sexuality and Lucy's suffering in the assault. That is to say, if we recognize any righteousness in Lurie's religious self-justification, the recognition will be dramatically challenged by the hatred and excitement the three rapists feel towards Lucy. As Derek Attridge puts it, "any temptation to exaggerate the positive side of this force [desire] is challenged by its other significant manifestation in the novel, the desire that — whatever other motives are at work — stiffens the penises that enter Lucy Lurie's unwilling body."[47] At this stage, Lurie ceases to justify the desire but tries to convince Lucy of the futility and the foolishness of her decision, postsecularly:

> "Do you think that by meekly accepting what happened to you," he angrily asks, "[you will receive] a sign to paint on the door-lintel that will make the plague pass you by? That is not how vengeance works, Lucy. Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets." (*Disgrace*, 112)

Lucy's reticence after the terrifying experience and her refusal to report it to the police, in Lurie's mind, will not work as "a sign to paint on the door-lintel" to save her from trouble. This biblical allusion is from Exodus, a section related to the theme of homecoming, where the Israelites were instructed to paint their door with the blood of the lamb to make God only kill Egyptians and save themselves. Lurie challenges Lucy's silence in this matter, but Lucy furiously rebuts the tropes of the plague and fire, and tells Lurie that it is only his fabrication: "If that is what you think, you miss the point entirely."(112) When Lurie borrows the word "salvation" to

[45] "Subverting the Pastoral," 28.
[46] Nishtha Saxena, "J.M. Coetzee's Aesthetics of Ahimsa: Towards a Gandhian Reading of *the Lives of Animals* and *Disgrace*," *English in Africa* 44, no. 2 (2017): 131.
[47] Derek Attridge, "Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 34, no. 1 (2000): 116.

interpret Lucy's solution, Lucy repudiates it again by saying: "[g]uilt and salvation are abstractions. I don't act in terms of abstractions." (ibid) Poignantly, Lucy's secular interpretation of the homecoming reduces her to a scapegoat of historical hatred. When Lucy is puzzled over the motivation of the rapists, Lurie replies that "[i]t was history speaking through them" (156), which manifests the scapegoatship in Lucy's case.

When Lurie returns to the farm due to his concern about Lucy's safety, Lucy warns him that one of the rapists, Pollux, the black boy who has kinship with Petrus, has returned to join Petrus's family. This, to Lurie, is "a new revelation" (199). As discussed previously, one "revelation" to Lurie is the harsh warning from Ryan to tell him to find his own life. This "new revelation", functioning as a shock to our protagonist, makes him contemplate how Lucy and Petrus's family can get along with each other after the former's assent to the latter's degrading offer. The following incident confirms Lurie's worries. Pollux peeps at Lucy when she is taking a shower and then Lurie, together with the bulldog Katy, strikes him severely. In spite of Lurie's outrage and Pollux's swearing revenge, Lucy tries to make peace with the case. This leads to his decision to move away from his daughter and rent a room in a house in Grahamstown.

The difference in Lurie and Lucy's attitudes toward selecting an alternative to home partly results in the troubled parent-child relation in *Disgrace*.[48] Moreover, at the end of the novel, when Lurie pays a visit to Lucy, she treats him as a guest and asks him if he wants some tea: "[s]he makes the offer as if he were a visitor. Good. Visitorship, visitation: a new footing, a new start."(218) The troubled relationship between the father and the daughter echoes the thread of the familial bond in Coetzee's engagement with home, which I have elaborated on in the chapter of *AI*. The dysfunctional family suggests, as Elizabeth Lowry puts it in her review of *Disgrace*, "the fundamental flaw in the colonial enterprise".[49]

IV. to be "a Dog-man": an ethical turn

[48] Lurie is also strongly against Lucy's way of life and feels that Lucy's farm is "a foreign land" to him. See Coetzee, *Disgrace*, 197.
[49] See Elizabeth Lowry, "Like a Dog," *London Review of Books* 21, no. 20 (1999).

Lurie's new footing relies more on his engagement with caring for the abandoned dogs at Bev's clinic, an enterprise at which he initially feels surprised because "animal-welfare people are a bit like Christians of a certain kind" (*Disgrace*, 73). The seemingly powerful religious doctrine never finds its way into Lurie's relationship with Bev, but it is through Bev, who is "not a veterinarian but a priestess" (84), that Lurie finally settles down to the business as "a dog man" (146). In Kossew's words, Bev is Lurie's "redeemer" but in an "unlikely form", and the dogs finally provide a solution for Lurie to "[discuss] the soul and [share] his own disgrace".[50] Differently put, it is by euthanizing the dogs and ferrying the corpses to the incinerator that Lurie eventually finds the possible alternative to home. He takes care of these corpses neither for the sake of dogs nor for saving Bev's labour, but out of a belief that there is "a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing" (146). His previous Eros is indeed elevated into an ethical state, a more sacred feeling to sympathize with the suffering of the other embodied in animal corpses.

By focusing on the alterity in such a transcendental way, the postsecular language becomes a space for Lurie to muse on the possibility of how to live in a situation where the social relation seems irredeemable. This irredeemablity arose out of the long colonial history, which was too corrosive to allow South Africa to achieve a healthy state by means of its own self-reconstruction. The failure in this self-reconstruction inched its way not only into people's most intimate lives, as discussed earlier, but also into the available alternatives for one to redeem oneself. Thus, after his futile pursuit of sexuality, what Lurie tries to reach is another kind of home that is not determined by history, represented both in his aesthetic devotion and ethical concern.

The music he has wrestled with returns at this stage in a way of echoing the process, rather than that of dignifying sexuality as he has done before. When he is back in the looted house in Cape Town, he aborts the previous draft of the opera, the Byronic one, and rewrites it into a work revolving around Teresa in her middle age. In the new version, Teresa is "a dumpy little widow installed in the Villa Gamba with her aged father" longing for her one-time lover, desperately and melancholically (*Disgrace*, 181-83). The rewriting signifies Lurie's "empathetic identification" with

[50] Kossew, "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," 160.

the lonely woman, a feeling chiming with what he begins to share with dogs in the latter part of the novel. [51]

Lurie is indeed on his way to redemption. When helping Bev at her animal clinic to kill the unwanted dogs, he is capable of "giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (*Disgrace*, 219). The trope in the last sentence is significant in the postsecular sense. When Lurie decides to abandon the last crippled creature he has a particular attachment to, he bears it "like a lamb" to the killing table, alluding to the sacrifice of the lamb in the Bible (220). This sacrifice is part of his effort to "[work] through the endlessness of his skepticism and towards repentance"[52], an ironical response to what Lurie refers to as belonging to "another world, to another universe of discourse" (58).

The ethical turn betrays Coetzee's sympathy with Lurie's plight at some deeper level, though the novelist reveals many contradictions and self-serving arguments his character has made. This sympathy bears two symbolic meanings. To begin with, because of the ethical dimension the narrative suggests, the novel is not one with total negativity but with a degree of positivity. Though we cannot tell whether Lurie's final alternative is promising or ominous, a question beyond literature to answer, the novel will not, at least, "merely become a part of the darkness it describes".[53]

Undoubtedly, Lurie's final available alternative to home is a very personal and liberal one, just as most Coetzee's characters do, including Michael K, the Magistrate, Mrs Curren and so forth, when facing the historical crisis incurred by settler colonialism. To Coetzee, any social answer, such as revolution, democracy, etc., may not be the ideal solution to such a crisis because the deep-structured colonial mentality is impossible to be rooted out overnight. To put it differently, the fate of settler colonialism is doomed. The ethical concern is one of the ways for Coetzee, via his characters' cultural displacement, to explore the possible alternatives, to which the postsecular discourse in *Disgrace* contributes. Thus, the collapse of the settler-colonial project reaches its culmination in this novel. The vision of society in *Disgrace* is definitely that of a man who is about to abandon the attempt to make

[51] Beard, "Lessons from the Dead Masters," 73.
[52] Kossew, "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," 160.
[53] Salman Rushdie, "May 2000: J.M. Coetzee," in *Step across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (London: Vintage, 2002), 340.

South Africa a home and move somewhere else. Coetzee is indeed on his way to exploring a habitation beyond the reach of history, one filled with postsecular longing and imagination. As Attwell puts it, it is "an afterlife of sorts: one's formative experiences lie elsewhere and one enters a realm of private accommodations".[54] This is why postsecular discourse becomes so important in Coetzee's later fiction while the South African context is intentionally omitted, ranging from a plausible Adelaide-based *SM* to the historically placeless Jesus novels.

[54] David Attwell, "Coetzee's Postcolonial Diaspora," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 57, no. 1 (2011): 11.

Epilogue

Coetzee's pre-*Disgrace* fiction, which constitutes the majority of his opus, gravitates around the characters' efforts, and also that of the novelist, in addressing the issue of home historically, politically and ethically within the places they are premised on, so it is true to say that his primary artistic engagement is with South Africa. Beginning with writing against his colonial ancestors in the novella, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" ("NJC"), the novelist embarks on a magnificent project to explore home consciousness in different textual practices. No matter how complicated the relations between the neurotic Magda and other characters on the remote farm are, no matter how placeless the setting is, like the indeterminate milieu in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (*WB*), or how ambiguous the allusion suggests, as in Michael K's refusal to join the guerrillas and his insistence on cultivating the garden, or how personal the reason that the narrative stems from is, or how the characters like Lurie and Lucy are struggling with, and seeking alternatives to, home, nearly all of these observations originate in the novelist's concern with the ethic-political urgencies incurred by South African colonial history and then apartheid. And this positionality has been confirmed by Coetzee's two biographies, one by Kannemeyer and the other by Attwell, both of which are frequently quoted in my thesis.

It is by situating his South African writing firmly within the context of these historical, political, and ethical experiences that Coetzee exhibits the destabilization of home and dramatizes dilemmas, tensions, and contradictions in the settler-colonial project. These writings are his decisive engagement with, but an open resistance to, the legacy of South African colonialism and apartheid. He is, thus, a devoted, thoughtful and sceptical interpreter of the ubiquitous consequences of the legacy. This interpretation unswervingly focuses on the wrestling with home literally, in terms of the characters' inability in settling down in their geographical homes; culturally, with regards to their inescapable displacement; individually, in respect of the novelist's and the character's personal loss of home; and collectively, in the matter of the group to which they belong longing for identification.

The sources of Coetzee's anxiety about home lie in the paradoxical interaction between this sense of belonging and alienation. One the one hand, he is cognizant of

the settler-colonial project's being doomed and of the profound historical crises, neither of which one can solve, so he writes his way out of the sense that his own history is not supportable. On the other hand, as I argued at the end of the last chapter, Coetzee does not offer any social vision for those crises identified in his novels, because he is most interested in, and thus puts great effort into, exploring the way that people live under such extreme conditions. That is to say, to Coetzee, a writer is primarily responsible, accountable, and answerable to his craft, rather than to the necessity to find historical solutions, a point of view which he once clearly explained in *Doubling the Point* (*DP*). Though endorsing Attwell's observation that contemporary white South African writers have achieved more in deconstructing colonial traditions than in envisaging a possible "moral community" to replace them, Coetzee expressed reservations regarding the obligation of this vision (*DP*, 339). In his opinion, there were two kinds of duty: one is "an obligation imposed on the writers by society" while the other is "something constitutional to the writer" (340). Without denying the writers' social duty, he did not claim that this duty should outweigh "a transcendental imperative" (340). Differently put, it is not the writer's position to provide a social answer to all these problems and, in this regard, politicians and social philosophers may be better to assume the task, so he himself is more invested in the literature which investigates "the fact of the suffering in the world" (248).

This investigation reaches its apotheosis in *Disgrace* and, more than that, a watershed since then. There are, thus, at least three trajectories in his post-*Disgrace* novels relating to the writing of home consciousness, namely, a shift in the novels' locality, a transcendental turn, and an unlocated cosmopolitan tendency.

Coetzee's novels have a tactile sense of place. One of the direct influences of his migration on his writing is that readers can easily tell Adelaide's background in his first Australian-based novel, *Slow Man* (*SM*).[1] Does the geographical similarity register similar historical and political dimensions as his pre-*Disgrace* novels do, which I've discussed earlier in this thesis, especially in the chapter on *Life & Times*

[1] There are many geographical names which have their real counterparts in Adelaide, such as Magill road where Rayment's bike accident takes place, the Barossa Valley where Margaret and Paul want to drive out, the State Library in Adelaide which Rayment will make a bequest of his photo collections to, Tunkalilla beach in which Drago and his friends spend weekend. See Coetzee, *Slow Man*, 6,37,49,74.

of Michael K (*MK*)? Probably not. *SM* is a story about immigration and the body where a French expatriate, Rayment, is reduced to a disabled life after the amputation due to a bicycle accident, and falls in love with a nurse, a Croatian refugee, Marijana Jokić, who takes care of him. Despite living in Australia for quite a long time, Rayment still feels homeless. In a reflection on his immigrant experience, he suspects that nowhere can be called his home: "Is this where I belong? I asked with each move. It this my true *home*?" (192, emphasis mine) And English, the language he can speak without any problems, can never be his mother tongue (231). Rayment is, in the words of Elizabeth Costello, the enigmatic woman who wants to write his story into her fiction, "a foreigner by nature" in the country he lives in (ibid). Thus, in no way does the geographical correspondence to Adelaide suggest Coetzee's fervent engagement with Australian history (to which I will turn to later).

In a recent interview, when talking about the relation between his novels and reality, Coetzee says: "If the world of my fictions is a recognizable world, that is because (I say to myself) it is easier to use the world at hand than to make up a new one."[2] To relate this remark to *SM*, the "recognizable" context is only one of the direct influences of the migration on his writing, but he is not interested in "bringing contemporary Australia to life through the lives of their characters" with these references.[3] That is to say, the geographical similarity does not mean an evocative response to, and then an identification with, the contemporary Australian milieu Coetzee is living in; rather, it serves as a literary device to foreground, among others, the paradox between one's effort to secure belonging in a foreign culture and the subsequent alienation emerging from that process. The photo collections Rayment keeps can shed light on this argument.

The collections, filmed by Antoine Fauchery, a French adventurer and writer who ran a photographic studio in Melbourne, Australia, in the middle of the nineteenth century, consists of "hundreds of photographs and postcards of life in the early mining camps of Victoria and New South Wales" (*SM*, 48). Though it doubtlessly shows one's connection to history, the point is that it is not a history of Australian native tribes but that of foreign immigrants. We are told that the most

[2]Coetzee and Kurtz, *The Good Story*, 69.
[3] Pieter Vermeulen, "Abandoned Creatures: Creaturely Life and the Novel Form in J.M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*," *Studies in the Novel* 45, no. 4 (2013): 656.

impressive photo for Rayment is the one with a black labourer's family who stand in the doorway of a shabby cabin in one of the mining camps. Why does this picture make the deepest impression? It is out of Rayment's sympathy for their visible poor living conditions and, much more than that, his empathy with what is behind these people on the picture, "[a] people with a story of their own": blood, sweat and tears involved in their effort to earn a living and also, probably, the hope to assimilate into an alien culture (52). This empathy makes Rayment wonder: "Is the history that he wants to claim as his not finally just an affair for the English and the Irish, foreigners keep out?"(ibid).The detachment from an alien history is so arresting that the cultural assimilation these photos try to negotiate becomes fragile enough — the episode in which Drago steals some of the photos and replaces them with fake ones does echo this fragility.

Therefore, the geographical correspondence to Australia is not a signal of Coetzee's settledness in the new environment but another poignant reminder of his homelessness. Rayment's diaspora corresponds to what Martin tells Vincent in his recalling Coetzee, whether fictionally or biographically, in *Summertime*, "Whatever the opposite is of *native* or *rooted*, that was what we felt ourselves to be. We thought of ourselves as sojourners, temporary residents, and to that extent without a home, without a homeland." (*Summertime*, 210, emphasis original)

Since Australia cannot be a place for Coetzee to situate this unsettledness, his engagement with its context is not sustained. [4] After *SM*, he began to "make up a new one" in his writing. *The Childhood of Jesus* (*CJ*), his recent novel, is based on an unspecified time and an imaginary place, reminiscent of that of *WB*. Whether it is valid or not to argue that the uncertain Spanish-speaking milieu in *CJ* "resembles Latin America but cannot be strictly identified with it",[5] we can be confident of the following observation, at least: compared with *WB*, though this narrative in no

[4] Until now, there are two other novels, besides *SM*, bearing a loose connection to the Australian context in Coetzee's later writings. *Elizabeth Costello*, the first novel Coetzee published after his immigration, is made up of a series of lectures the eponymous Australia-based character makes in an international setting. *Diary of a Bad Year* is a novel about an aging South African writer, Señor C, living in Sydney, who makes comments on wide-ranging topics. It tells the story between him and the hired typist, Anya, and witnesses Anya's own narration.

[5] Jennifer Rutherford and Anthony Uhlmann, "Introduction," in *J.M. Coetzee's the Childhood of Jesus: The Ethics of Ideas and Things*, ed. Jennifer Rutherford and Anthony Uhlmann (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2.

longer uncanny, the authorship is still unhomely. The dominance of the torture theme, the dream sequences in *WB*, and the ethical investment in South Africa are hardly seen here while the unhomely authorship seamlessly merges with what happens to Novilla's residents: everyone has to be "washed clean" and to sever their connections to the past (*CJ*, 24), a hint that the novelist may face the similar conundrum in negotiating his insupportable history and new home.

This negotiation is never easy in terms of one's relation to the past and the present in the fiction. On the one hand, the residents' pastlessness is fated and irrecoverable. David loses the letter which may prove his identity when he and Simón are on board, so the hope of finding out his true biological mother becomes so dim that it only depends on immediate and instinctive recognition: Simón insists that he, albeit never seeing the woman and even her picture, and David should recognize her at first sight (22-23, 34). Simón is also unable to recall any details of his previous life. Besides the transcendental dimension (to which I shall turn later), these moments also imply that the past is too trivial for one to take it seriously or even into any consideration, and the past being inaccessible. If one's attachment to the past is epitomized into photo collections in *SM*, such attachment is totally discarded in *CJ* to mark a new beginning, the beginning located in an entirely fictitious, possibly utopian place, Novilla, which can provide almost all of the people's material needs.

On the other hand, though people who come to Novilla are expected to, and some of them do, live a completely new life in their new homes, it is not always the case. Simón is not satisfied with the life of being immune to passion and appetite in Novilla while David's talent is not treated positively and even fairly in its schooling system. At the end of the novel, they head to Estrellita, possibly another utopian place, to "[look] for somewhere to stay, to start our new life" (329). Homelessness becomes, then, an eternal state for these people. Though the homeless state continues, the dynamics between belonging and alienation is addressed in a more transcendental way in both novels, a tendency I've discussed in the chapter on *Disgrace*.

Rayment's immigrant experience is always mingled with a religious aura. His upbringing is deeply influenced by religion: he used to be "a pukkah little Catholic boy" and, when his stepfather, "the Dutchman", brings the family to Australia, he is surrounded by, and possibly engaged in, Christianity, despite saying that he has "put

the Church behind himself"(*SM*, 156). When he claims that he will not be reticent about his attitudes to the bike accident and the traffic offender, Wayne Blight, the first thing that comes to his mind is whether Jesus approves or not (ibid). The postsecular sense also finds its way into a later moment when Rayment regards his philanthropic endeavours for the Jokićs as a blessing: "I want to extend a protective hand over them, I want to bless them and make them thrive" (198). Surprisingly, the Jokićs rarely disclose their sincere thanks to him (before they manage to build a recumbent bike for Rayment in the end), so, to Rayment, these philanthropic endeavours become a kind of charity. In this sense, the novel, according to James Wood, "enacts a kind of religious correction" to make Rayment realize that "true charity expects nothing in return".[6]

Rayment's blessing to the Jokić family is mainly materialized as his financial support for Drago's expensive boarding school, and also as buying off the manager of the shop who will prosecute Blanka, Drago's elder sister, for her shoplifting. However, these assistances bring about friction among the Jokićs, who suspect that Rayment's help is conditioned with, or will be in return for, a love affair with Marijana. The religious correction eventually leads to a solution, at least on Rayment's side, that our protagonist proposes to become a godfather to Drago. In the long letter to Mr Jokić to disperse these misunderstandings, Rayment writes:

> *The godfather is the man who stands by the side of the father at the baptismal font, or hovers over his head, giving his blessing to the child and swearing his lifelong support. As the priest in the ritual of baptism is the personification of the Son and intercessor, and the father is of course the Father, so the godfather is the personification of the Holy Ghost. At least that is how I conceive of it. A figure without substance, ghostly, beyond anger and desire.* (224, italics original)

It is not only a proposal Rayment makes to the Jokićs but one he makes to explore the possibility of making peace with the homelessness that is brought on by immigration: to be "a figure without substance, ghostly, beyond anger and desire", an ontological quest of his existence.

[6] James Wood, "Squall Lines: J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*," *The New Yorker*, December 24 2007.

This ontological quest becomes an abiding concern in another postsecular context, that of *CJ*, where, as argued earlier, everyone is deprived of his or her past memory. Readers are easily perplexed by the contradiction between the explicit religious indication in the title and the absence of postsecular dimensions in the life in Novilla, but the perplexity can be alleviated with the following observations.

To begin with, the narrative is not analogous to any biblical canon but to *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, a biographical gospel of Jesus' childhood when it comes to David's particularity and rebellion, a point that Robert B Pippin has elaborated on.[7] Though it is difficult, due to the limited access to the manuscript of his recent novels, to investigate whether *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is one of Coetzee's references during his writing, these bearings are tempting for me to assume that the novelist is engaged in describing David as an ironic Biblical figure. As Pippin puts it, "these cannot be accidental and they go beyond irony". [8]

Then, if the assumption is not sufficient to demonstrate the narrative's religious dimension, the discernible allusions, and direct references, to Christianity will be persuasive for readers to recognize how Coetzee explores the ontological quest in such a new home within a postsecular context. People who come to Novilla are "washed clean" to begin their new lives, signifying baptism of those new residents; the way Simón and David recognize the latter's mother is too transcendental to allow any room for realism; Inés's virginity, which is implied in the narrative, together with her willingness to be David's mother, hints at the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Jesus. The phrase, nowhere to lay your head, appears twice to indicate the risk of isolation and homelessness,[9] echoing what Jesus reminds an eager scribe, who wants to become his follower, of the entailing unsettledness:

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[7] See Robert B. Pippin, "What Does J.M. Coetzee's Novel, *the Childhood of Jesus*, Have to Do with the Childhood of Jesus?," in *J.M. Coetzee's the Childhood of Jesus: The Ethics of Ideas and Things*, ed. Jennifer Rutherford and Anthony Uhlmann (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 14-15.

[8] Ibid., 15.

[9] The phrase is mentioned on the following occasions: in a conversation between Simón and David about why they must speak Spanish, Simón warns David that, without speaking the same language with others, he will become isolated and "have nowhere to lay your head"; Because David is a little confused when Inés assumes that, due to their plan to flee from Novilla, they may live a life like gypsies, Simón tries to solve David's confusion by saying "[b]eing a gypsy means that you don't have a proper home, a place to lay your head". See Coetzee, *The Childhood of Jesus*, 223,73.

"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."[10] Another indication is that, when asked to demonstrate his literacy, David notes down "*Yo soy la verdad*, I am the truth" instead of obeying Señor León's instruction to write "*Conviene que yo diga la verdad*, I must tell the truth" (*CJ*, 266). Not only is the ontological quest explicit in David's rebellious behaviour to regard him as an embodiment of the truth, but also it alludes to what Jesus says to his disciples: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." [11]

Let me add one more remark to the postsecular dimension regarding the idea of home, namely, the way Coetzee deals with desire in these two novels. Desire is not as serious "a problem" for Rayment in *SM* and the characters in *CJ* as it is for Lurie from *Disgrace*. The tension around sexuality is, if not totally resolved, at least toned down in his later fiction, which is also negotiated transcendentally but not in the way that, as *Disgrace* does, the uncontrollable and dominant desire propels the character into a postsecular discourse.

Rayment does not extirpate sexuality but indeed downplays its position in his life, "being a lecherous old goat is part of the game, a game he is declining to play" (*SM*, 14). This sets the tone for his relationship with the women. He does not respond actively to Margaret's flirts, so his ex-lover distances herself from him (ibid). Rayment does have a passion for Marijana, but he admits that the relation can be "platonic if need be" (72). Though the narrative does involve romance since he develops love and emotional attachment with the Croatian nurse, it does not have too much to do with desire but a charitable return for the sense of belonging he gains from her care. When his assistance to the family is misunderstood, Rayment assures Mr Jokić in the letter: "That part [sexuality] of my life is behind me." (144)

However, this love cannot be applied to Rayment's relation with Elizabeth Costello. He is resentful of her and consistently refuses her interference in his business with the Jokićs. His feeling for Elizabeth Costello is, as the last scene of the

[10] Matthew 8:20. Ileana Şora Dimitriu maintains that this reference implies "an ancient cyclical condition of human existence", which shows the cosmopolitan tendency in Coetzee's later writings (which I shall turn to later). See Ileana Şora Dimitriu, "'Attachment with Detachment': A Post-Secular Reading of J.M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction," *B. A. S.: British and American Studies/Revista de Studii Britanice şi Americane* 21 (2015): 140.
[11] John 14:6

story tells, “not love” (263). Actually, the enigmatic woman plays a more significant role as a metafictional device than someone Rayment will develop any personal relationship with. What Coetzee wants to express via the metafictionality is, among other things, to resist the authority of writing and challenge the limits of textuality, a topic much beyond the scope of this chapter.[12]

It is through Elizabeth Costello, who tries to distract Rayment’s affection for Marijana, that Rayment and Marianna, “the first woman to provoke his sexual interest since the accident” when they unexpectedly meet each other for the first time on their ways to the hospital, have their first, and only, sexual encounter.[13] Stylistically speaking, the Beckettian account of the encounter, as Derek Attridge contends, “evinces a comic appreciation of the business of sex while retaining a humane understanding of bodily needs”.[14] It may come as a surprise to many readers that the sexual activity takes place in a totally “blind” state: Marianna loses her sight due to a tumour while Rayment’s eyes are covered with a mixture of flour paste before this erotic meeting. To me, these kinds of symbolic blindness suggest that the novelist, Coetzee, with the hand of the metafictional author, Elizabeth Costello, intentionally minimizes Rayment’s desire in his maimed life. Though “the sight of the beautiful calls eros into life”, it does not carry the similar satirical dimension as it does in *Disgrace* but works as a preparation for “a philosophy class” where the two parties can “[discourse] about beauty, love, and goodness” (*SM*, 108).

Thus, Rayment, the sixty-year-old divorced French expatriate in Australia, lives a relatively sexless life. If the fifty-two-year-old divorced Lurie in *Disgrace* is resting the alternative to home on his sexuality, which is deformed by, and saturated with, the consequence of colonialism, Rayment invests his sense of belonging, the homelessness evoked by immigration, in the hopeless passion for the Croatian nurse. In this sense, the narrative is driven by this homelessness in a more transcendental

[12] This analysis is also true for the following moment: when Rayment expresses his resistance against the impact of Christianity to Elizabeth Costello — “Are you trying to tell me that God had some plan in mind when he struck me down on Magill Road and turned me into a hobbler?”, it betrays his unwillingness to become a puppet of any author. See Coetzee, *Slow Man*, 198.

[13] See ibid., 36,108-14

[14] Derek Attridge, "Sex, Comedy and Influence: Coetzee’s Beckett," in *J.M. Coetzee in Context and Theory*, ed. Elleke Boehmer, Katy Iddiols, and Robert Eaglestone (London: Continuum, 2009), 86.

way.[15]

This transcendental indifference is dramatized in *CJ* where people in Novilla are stripped of not only their ties with the past but also their sexuality. In other words, Novilla residents tend to embrace a kind of sexual abstinence. Ana, a civil servant and part-time life model for the arts centre in Novilla, is hostile to sexuality. When Simón discusses with her the attraction and beauty a man and a woman find in each other, she deems the subsequent desire "absurd" — as she tells Simón, "absurd for you to want to perform and absurd for me to permit" (*CJ*, 39). Other residents may not have such strong hostility as Ana does, but the abstinence is also discernable, especially in the description of the class, Life Drawing, offered by the arts centre. When exploring the arts centre, Simón bumps into Ana, which makes him aware of Ana's part-time job, and then finds out that Life Drawing enjoys great popularity. To Simón's surprise, one of the students there explains the reason for the popularity is that "people want to learn about the body" (146). In Simón's eyes, it should be attributed to the erotic feeling suggested by the course instead of their interest in knowledge about the body. Simón's challenge to this explanation, by advising that one learns about a body better and more easily by sleeping with a woman, embarrasses the student and, possibly, readers.

Another resident, Elena, the mother of David's friend, Fidel, is also indifferent to desire since sex is "[a] strange thing to be preoccupied with", albeit she is not repulsed by it (69). However, what is stranger is that she has a temporary relationship with Simón. The strangeness of this loveless intimacy between the two can be appreciated when we bear in mind that Simón is a rebel in Novilla. Thus the sexual intercourse between the two imparts more significance to Simón, who regards it as a "resuscitation" to resist the oblivion of the natural bodily needs, than to Elena, who "has little sexual feeling for him [Simón]" (72).

Simón is a window through which we can see how desire is made complex and spiritualized in the novel, which is complementary to the postsecular dimension regarding David, Inés and the narrative itself as discussed previously.[16] The

[15] In this regard, I do not agree with what Rosemary Jolly, based on her analysis of the parting between Rayment and Elizabeth Costello, argues that "the act of novel-making itself is sustained by desire". See Rosemary Jolly, "Writing Desire Responsibly," ibid., ed. Elleke Boehmer, Katy Iddiols, and Robert Eaglestone, 93.

[16] It makes sense that the narration regarding the childhood of Jesus and, possibly

complexity also lies in the fact that there are comfort centres, somewhat state-sanctioned brothels to provide sexual services, in Novilla. If people are expected, or required, to eradicate their sensual pleasure in their new homes, what is the purpose, and the meaning, for the existence of such brothels? Though the authority of Novilla has such expectations on people, it is difficult for people to do so, especially the new-comers, just as what Elena tells Simón: "It's a fact of life: men need relief, we all know that" (161).

But Simón is unsatisfied with his relationship with Elena. This dissatisfaction indicates that his urgent needs are not merely physical pleasure during lovemaking but also "true intimacy", which "can unburden oneself", and "[f]eminine beauty", which "awakens awe and also gratitude" (164). All these elements, including genuine intimacy, heartfelt gratitude, etc., are the core attributes that constitute the sense of home, which the life in Novilla lacks. It echoes what Eugenio, Simón's fellow stevedore, refers to as "the womanly ideal", a perfect but abstract state of satisfaction in sex, when the two argue whether it is effective to satisfy one's desire by joining a comfort centre (167). However, "the woman ideal" is so transcendental that Eugenio, possibly together with other residents in Novilla, is reluctant to pursue it any more while Simón is determined to do so, which contributes, indirectly and partly, his eventual fleeing to Estrellita.

The change of geographical setting and the transcendental tendency in these two novels demonstrate that Coetzee is on his way to transforming from a South African writer, as my previous chapters show, to an unlocated cosmopolitan one, whose writings are not premised on any local or national categories and thus are more inclined to allude to universal values in the world. This cosmopolitanism is, as Sheldon Pollock puts it, "[a] literary communication that travels far, indeed, without obstruction from any boundaries at all, and, more importantly, that thinks of itself as unbounded, unobstructed, unlocated".[17] However, it is a double-edged sword for Coetzee. On the one hand, though his earlier works are inclined to be read as an allegory of both South African colonial history and, beyond that, some universal values, such as caring for the other's suffering which is highlighted in our globalized world, the allegory is deeply rooted in, and thus never separate from, his engagement

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and allegorically, that of David, is impossible to touch on this matter deeply.

[17] Sheldon I. Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 599.

with the settler-colonial project. No matter how modern or postmodern the narrative form is, the aesthetic value and the literariness will not be as immense as it is without these cultural and historical dimensions. The post-*Disgrace* fiction manifests that Coetzee has demarcated that project and begun to situate the idea of home in a postmodern ahistoricity, rather than in the metropolitan Australian city, Adelaide. That is to say, from *SM* onwards, South African elements have been deliberately erased from his fiction in such a way as to evoke a strong sense of cosmopolitanism, a sense this thesis can hardly detect in his previous novels. As Julian Murphet puts it, the immigration has "[debilitated]…the mechanics of national allegory" in his later writings.[18]

On the other hand, this debilitation implies that there is a plethora of tensions one could acknowledge and empathize with in his grappling with South African political traumas and ethical conundrums. Though home consciousness is still prominent in his later fiction, the intensity inscribed in the previous ones is nearly wiped off and replaced with more spiritual dimensions. In an essay on Beckett, Coetzee makes a comparison between his subject and Melville's *Moby Dick*, and points out that what was absent from Beckett's writing was, among others, "the whale".[19] "The whale" is the very tension both novelists are situated in when confronting the Janus-faced attributes of home in the aftermath of colonial history and registering it through their writings. As the previous discussion demonstrates, Coetzee's later writings do not witness this tension, or, in Attwell's words, "that sense of crisis has gone."[20]

[18] Julian Murphet, "Coetzee and Late Style: Exile within the Form," *Twentieth Century Literature* 57, no. 1 (2011): 101.
[19] Coetzee, *Late Essays*, 205.
[20] David Attwell, interview by Jennifer, Jun 6th, 2016.

Abbreviations

AI	*Age of Iron*
CJ	*The Childhood of Jesus*
DP	*Doubling the Point*
IHC	*In the Heart of the Country*
MK	*Life & Times of Michael K*
SL	*Slow Man*
MP	*The Master of Petersburg*
"NJC"	"The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee"
"VP"	"The Vietnam Project"
WB	*Waiting for the Barbarians*
WW	*White Writing*

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