BODYSCAPES:

READING THE CORPOREAL IN THE FICTION OF J. M. COETZEE

A Thesis submitted in partial requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University by ASMITA BORAL

2016

Certified that the Thesis entitled

BODYSCAPES: Reading the Corporeal in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee

Submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Supriya Chaudhuri**, Professor Emerita, Department of English, Jadavpur University, and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/ elsewhere.

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Introduction

This thesis was prompted by several concerns. As an Indian brought up in a liberal middle class society, I was not unaware of subtle class biases, casteist and racist notions prevalent among the people around me. In polite society they were untold truths though nobody ever admitted to harbouring them, politically incorrect as they were in educated circles. But they reared their ugly heads every once in a while: when dealing with domestic help, when filling out applications for college or university or jobs, when considering prospective grooms or brides for an "arranged" marriage in the family. I have grown up at a time when the country witnessed riots such as those following the Babri Masjid demolition, the Godhra riots in Gujarat, the banning of books such as Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* and *Dwikhandito*, followed by the hounding out of the same author who took refuge in the very city that had lauded her. A few years before I was born, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* had been banned. Around my middle years in school, there was a hue and cry over the "depiction of Hindu goddesses" in the paintings of M.F. Hussain and the celebrated painter banished from the country. It is the same country that prides itself on its integrationist history, its so-called culture of "tolerance". It is a catch-word in India but with Shibaji Bandopadhyay I share a problem with the word "tolerance". Tolerance implies one who tolerates and one who is tolerated. But why should anybody have to be "tolerated"?

When I was growing up, cops in Meerut were harassing couples for holding hands, young boys and girls my age were being killed or persecuted by their very families to

save “honour”, for breaching caste or religious barriers or marrying within the same gotra, and still are, in Haryana, Rajasthan and many other corners of the country. In India, women undergo rapes, gangrapes, marital rapes, incestuous abuse, are beaten, brutalized, set on fire, murdered, trafficked, attacked with acid, threatened with rape or gangrape or murder every second. This is a country that resorts to violence at the slightest of pretexts, a country very sacred and touchy, a country that views the exercise of artistic freedom as radical acts and feels threatened at any breach in the social fabric. Caste biases prevail to the extent that people still serve as bonded labour, men and women of “lower” castes are denied opportunities of every kind, “dalit” women are viewed as easy prey and freely abused. The “Nirbhaya” case is by now well known to people all over the world. A young college going woman was similarly brutalized after gangrape and murdered at Kamduni, in Bengal, close on the heels of “Nirbhaya”. Barun Biswas, a young schoolteacher in west Bengal’s Sutia, who stood up against and brought to book a gang which terrorized a village through threats and acts of gangrape, as well as campaigned against illegal filling up of water bodies by powerful construction syndicates, was murdered by hired goons around the same time. A few months ago two young “dalit” brothers cracked the tough entrance examinations to the prestigious IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) but had to face harassment of every kind in their village for doing so. These are just a few instances that headlined. Atrocities against women across all sections, against dalits, against animals, against advocates of free speech, of free and clean environment, have only increased over the years. Recently, a Muslim man was lynched for allegedly storing beef in his refrigerator, though forensic tests revealed it had been mutton all along.

However, through these years I have also seen the opening up of the economy and the consumerist rush that globalization brought on. We all started living in the American age, spoilt for choice with cable TV and consumer durables with foreign brands that suddenly became part of our consumer basket. The economic reforms in India coincided with another noticeable 'reform': the introduction of South Africa in international cricket hitherto dominated by a handful of countries around the world. To my uninformed eyes it struck as bizarre that a country like South Africa which was supposed to have a black population had an all- white cricket team. We also witnessed the rise of a powerful media that relentlessly badgers till it influences and formulates public opinions, to become a formidable force that politicians and policy- makers scramble to appease. With the gush of gadgets and a population hooked on social media, crime and abuse have taken different turns: along with all the good that has come out of it all, instances of women being photographed and videographed without their conscious knowledge or consent and blackmailed, circulation of private clips as "MMS"es, are all on the rise.

I needed to cover this ground to introduce this thesis, for I think all of this has helped generate my keen interest in J.M. Coetzee. The first book of his I found in my hands was *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). The powerful allegory shook me. His early fiction, some of which I offered a reading of in my dissertation for an MPhil degree, could be historicized in my country as well, for it shares a colonial past with South Africa. A different kind of biopolitics is at play in India, fraught with the tensions of the caste system and snowballing of the issues of reservation into violent riots. India has old indigenous populations, referred to mostly as "tribals" that have endured onslaughts of

invasions over centuries. India's particular fascination with skin colour, which grants fairness creams the lion's share of the cosmetics market runs deep. An informed reading of its classical mythologies and epics reveal race biases so old that they have become a part of the collective unconscious, as it were. Belief systems have been founded on racial oppression, faiths have been based on stories of racial conquest. They bring to mind not only atrocities wreaked by the Third Reich but those that covertly continue in India in the instances of female foeticides, sex selection of fetuses, not to mention certain state sanctioned genocidal exercises that have been kept under wraps, such as the Marichjhapi massacre. Government apathy and inaction glared in our faces during the Godhra riots, as pictures of violence beamed into our drawing rooms. What we call McCarthyism is not alien in India, either, for similar witchhunts have been carried out during the Naxalite uprisings every decade or the other, and people with Maoist sympathies are still being hounded out. Even in the seventy years since Independence from colonial rule areas inhabited by "tribals" and Dalits remain abysmally unederdeveloped, neglected, and more often than not, cheated out of welfare schemes. Corruption rages with the establishment forming a nexus with coal and drug mafia, and protestors are often branded Maoists and persecuted. Thus, double standards prevail in every aspect of political and social life of this country.

As theorists and sociologists have noted over the years, the very practice of Apartheid or segregation stemmed from notions of impurity and contamination. It is the same thought process that spawned the elaborate caste system and practice of untouchability in Hindu society. The lower castes, subjected to performing menial tasks

are often associated with the 'dirt' and the filth they have to deal with, and hence regarded as untouchable. Gandhi, keen to dissociate stigma from them and merge them into the mainstream of society, called them Harijans, 'people of God', though the widely accepted word today is "Dalit", meaning "the oppressed". Although legally abolished, the practice continues in covert forms not only in rural heartlands but also in so-called educated liberal circles. The recent suicide of Dalit student Rohith Vemula, a scholar at University of Hyderabad, a central university in Telengana, prised open a can of worms. Expelled along with four other Dalit students, their stipends withheld, Vemula and the four were forced to sleep in the open in the cold. A year earlier, a brother duo from a Dalit community in Uttar Pradesh were persecuted for qualifying in the tough entrance examinations for the prestigious IITs in India, institutions for engineering studies. Casteism raises its ugly head every now and then in India, even as most events go sadly unreported, and mostly, taken for granted. Perhaps the most telling and recent of these are the still under-reported gang rapes of non-Jat women on highways in Haryana, a state in northern India, in the wake of the Jat agitation for reservation, ringing bells of post-Partition communal violence.

Meat, and particularly the question of whose meat can be eaten and whose not, has gained such mammoth proportion as to lead to the lynching of a Muslim man, who supposedly stored beef in his refrigerator. Muslims are daily being subjected to tests of loyalty, their diet being scanned as well, in the drive to restore the sanctity of "Gau-mata" in tandem with "Bharatmata." It would have been acceptable, perhaps, if the drive towards the ban on cow-meat generated from a genuine concern for animals, and

extended to sheep, goats and poultry, as well. But it stems from misguided notions of endangered Hindutva. I wonder what Coetzee, who, when in India, admired the peaceful coexistence of cows with humans on chaotic Jaipur roads, would have to say about the thrashing of Dalits found skinning cow carcasses by 'Go- Rakshaks' or self-proclaimed protectors of the venerated cow in Gujarat's Una, or the lynching of a young boy for his alleged theft of a buffalo in the fringes of southern Bengal. Or what would his response be to the wanton murder of a poor Dalit couple for failing to pay up the paltry sum of ffiteen rupees to a Brahmin grocer just a month ago, in India' s Uttar Pradesh. These smack of the same flavour as the atrocities wreaked on "barbarians" by settlers in the Cape three centuries ago.

It is the notion of the 'nation-state' and ideas of integrity of the nation as a homogenised body, free of 'alien' intrusions and multiculturalism that has germinated into purist, racist movements like Nazism and wreaked havoc on human rights and life. Colonial oppression and even 'civilising' missions have founded themselves on these premises in addition to trade and religious concerns. Since the 'nation-state' has been identified with the 'pure', impenetrable body that cannot be contaminated, in other words, its borders remain unbreached and its integrity intact. Hence the 'chaste' Virgin Mary, the 'Virgin' Queen, and the sad, assailed figure of Bharat-Mata badly in need of defendants. As I write this introduction, loyalty, allegiance to the nation is daily being questioned and put to the test. In this "nationalist" debate what is sharply emerging is the construct of the "true Indian" which, dissolving all pluralities is coming to indicate a young, right -wing, keenly chauvinistic, Hindu, upper caste able-bodied, heterosexual male, preferably

vegetarian, preferably a Yoga practitioner, who would keenly protect all the "weaker" people in his family (read women, children, the elderly) from all 'external' 'contaminating' influences such as Leftist politics, conversions to other religions, eating meat of prohibited animals, any tendencies of sexual promiscuity or queerness, etcetera, etcetera. What has also gained momentum is the issue around the imaginary concept of Bharat-Mata, once invoked by Swadeshi freedom fighters to mobilize young men and women to fight for their country, in the name of defending their long suffering "motherland". This "motherland" is feared to be threatened by all kinds of "separatist", "unholy" forces and allegedly, needs to be defended, again.

The Author, J. M. Coetzee, and His Work

Dealing with the work of a novelist who is expatriate, a self-styled exile, an immigrant with the peculiar history that being born and bred in South Africa endows one with comes with its own burdens. One has to deal with not only with the complexities of a treble-colonized country, but also the guilt and the sense of betrayal and treachery that the writer being an Afrikaner entails. John Maxwell Coetzee was born in Cape Town in South Africa in 1940. His father, an attorney, was of Dutch ancestry while his mother was a schoolteacher, descended from German and Polish immigrants. The family of four moved to Worcester when Coetzee was eight. This phase of his life is chronicled in the first volume of his fictionalized memoirs, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*. Coetzee did not quite take to this provincial life, particularly because he could not quite mingle

with his schoolmates, as his family did not share a completely Afrikaaner outlook, neither did the Coetzee brothers have a quintessential Afrikaaner upbringing. The family holidays were spent with the extended family in the Karoo, with which, however, he grew a longlasting attachment. The brothers grew up speaking English at home, though their relatives mostly spoke Afrikaans.

In 1960, he graduated with honours in English from the University of Cape Town, and with honours in Mathematics the following year. In 1962, he took up a job as computer programmer with IBM in London. Having escaped to the UK, he was bent on residing in London and rejected any offers that required him to live outside London. But he stayed with ICT (International Computers and Tabulators) in Bracknell till 1965. *Youth*, the second volume of his memoirs, captures this phase. Meanwhile he completed his M.A. from the University of Cape Town, writing his thesis on Ford Maddox Ford (1963).In 1965, he joined the University of Texas at Austin on a Fulbright scholarship. He completed a PhD on the 'computer stylistic analysis of Beckett's works in 1969.

It was while teaching at the State University of New York in Buffalo (1968-71) that he got arrested for joining the protests against Vietnam, along with several other student and facuty members. Though he had applied for permanent residence in the US, this event thwarted his ambitions and his visa was not extended further. He returned to South Africa, and started teaching at the University of Cape Town. *Summertime* (2009) explores some aspects of his life at this stage.

With a literary career spanning from 1974, Coetzee has remained an active academic, teaching and lecturing around the world. Since his move to Australia, he has

been attached to the English Department of the University of Adelaide as an honorary research fellow. He is also Distinguished service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. A recipient of numerous awards, J. M. Coetzee has however collected only a few in person. He is the only other author besides Hilary Mantel to receive the Booker Prize twice, in 1983 for *Life and Times of Michael K*, and for *Disgrace* in 1999. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 2003. In the words of the Swedish Academy, Coetzee, "in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider." He was married to Philippa Jubber from 1963 to 1980. His son Nicolas (b.1966) died in 1989 in an accident, aged 23. He also has a daughter, Gisela (b.1968), from this marriage. His younger brother David Coetzee, a journalist, died in 2010. He shares a life with Dorothy Driver, fellow academic, in Adelaide. He is known to be reclusive in nature.

With Andre Brink, Nadine Gordimer, Breyten Breytenbach, J. M. Coetzee remained one of the foremost of the anti-Apartheid voices in South Africa. In the 1970s, they were all functioning under a cloud of stringent censorship laws. The poetics of their literature attempted to explore both liberal dissenting white voices, as also black. Coetzee, in his essays on Nadine Gordimer[1], critically voices her sentiment, saying, she is effectively caught in the dilemma of which voice to speak in: whether to be addressing the radical black intelligentsia within Africa, or the mostly white, liberal intelligentsia outside it.[2] She was also aware, says Coetzee, of the traditional European model her own writing followed, while at the same time she was sympathizing with black writers (the pronoun she uses is 'he', points out Coetzee) writing homegrown resistance mode.[3] It is this style of writing Coetzee is perhaps conscious of and calls 'white writing', a writing

he is nevertheless critical of even in himself, infused with the consciousness of "not any longer European, not yet African."[4]

Coetzee's preoccupation and engagement with Apartheid is elaborated not only in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988) but also in his essays on censorship (*Giving Offence*, 1996). He probes into the roots of 'Apartheid thinking', in the writings of Geoffrey Cronje (1907-1992). He is particularly concerned with "his madness, and with the question of how madness spreads itself or is made to spread through a social body."[5] More generally, he adds, he is concerned with "the reinsertion of madness into history."[6] J. M. Coetzee is not alone in calling Apartheid a 'madness'. As he notes, Andre Brink also applies the words 'mad' and 'sick' to South Africa. Coetzee critiques madness in his essay on Erasmus, which discusses Foucault, as well in the same collection.

Coetzee incorporates a critique of the rabid fanaticism, readily associated with madness, in some of his works, namely *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). Both the novellas of *Dusklands* trace back to the roots of the paranoia or phobia that engendered violence on an exponential scale and laid the foundations of not only colonial expansion but also neocolonial incursions. The Orwellian absurdity of the Vietnam War, the blatant lies and false justifications for it, are exposed as a 'mythographical' exercise. Similarly, the political arm-twisting concurrent with the 'War on Terror' in contemporary times does not escape Coetzee's scathing scrutiny, either. It is not only extreme forms of state-sponsored violence that Coetzee calls 'mad'. He clarifies, "to call apartheid mad is by no means imply that the liberal

capitalist segregationism that preceded it was sane."[7] Even after the official demise of apartheid, Coetzee has remained unrelenting. In a conversation with Jane Poyner, J. M. Coetzee comments thus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

> 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, 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.[8]

Coetzee's move to Australia in 2002, evoked much detraction from the likes of Nadine Gordimer, but his uncompromising stance should silence them. In 2005, he criticised contemporary anti-terrorism laws as resembling apartheid regime laws:

> I used to think that the people who created(South Africa's) laws that effectively suspended the rule of law were moral barbarians. Now I know they were just pioneers ahead of their time.[9]

Coetzee was one of the sixty-one signatories to a February 2016 letter to the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and immigration minister Peter Dutton, condemning their government's policy of 'offshore detention of asylum seekers'.[10] He has attacked this policy even earlier, through his counterpart JC, in his *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). Needless to say, his more recent engagement with the rights of animals has only established him further as a humanitarian writer.

How can one deny one's past, when the past lives within one. Bernadette Croce's remark that Jameson quotes, all history is present history, seems to have resonances not only in Coetzee's life but in his fiction as well. This is perhaps why he is such a popular writer, appealing to people around the world. Even though some of them are set within fictional frameworks, they carry real time resonances for people somewhere in the world. In the second volume of his fictionalized memoirs, *Youth*, much of which is Coetzee's own *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he repeatedly refers to South Africa as a wound within him, an albatross round his neck, a past he would like to forever wipe away from his diary, yet something that he cannot ever escape. Also, we note how the word "shame" recurs: the shame of living in South Africa, the shame of belonging to it, the shame of what is happening there at his present time, the shame of what has happened there for the past two centuries. It is the shame that has impressed upon him indelibly, that has turned him into a shameful person, he seems to suggest. In his quest for artistic freedom, an artistic, creative self within him, he seems to feel incapacitated by the soullessness of his surroundings in London, even though he craves to live in London to the extent that even as an immigrant he turns down job offers that require him to live outside London.

Coetzee's worlds are real, as are the histories they tell of: USA during the Vietnam War, Africa at different stages of its colonization, its liberation from apartheid, contemporary Australia, the refugee crisis, the 'war on terror'. Historicizing his works is therefore not difficult. J. M. Coetzee's own encounter with evil, pure evil was not

confined to South Africa. It is clear from events in his life where his sympathies lay when the USA was at war with Vietnam, and it was his participation in a protest march that led to his visa not being renewed and his subsequent return to South Africa, in "disgrace" as it were. Perhaps it is not surprising that the thread that ties the two novellas of *Dusklands (1974),* Coetzee's first published novel, is that of pure evil (and J. M. Coetzee's own vicarious, unwitting participation and guilt arising from it): Jacobus Coetzee's active agency in the Namaquan genocide and Eugene Dawn's passive complicity in the Vietnam "Project". Terry Eagleton in *On Evil* reads the evil depicted in William Golding's works as the estrangement of the body and the spirit, as embodied in the curious case of Pincher Martin. Evil is also interrogated to some extent in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: perhaps a fulfilment of this very estrangement is revealed in the portrait which depicts Gray's spirit as opposed to his alluring physical presence, which failed to reflect his spirit. The nihilism that lurks in evil—the thrust towards nothingness, as opposed to being—has been explored time and again in works of note. It is touched upon in J. M. Coetzee's *The Master of St. Petersburg* (1994) in the characterization of Nechaev and the functioning of his organization. The relentless pursuit of evil has defined the Neitzschean Superman on whom 20th century tyrants such as Hitler and Stalin have fashioned themselves, and has brought in its aftermath decimation of entire peoples and civilizations.

This thesis is an outcome of South Africa, of racism and Apartheid, of fascist regimes and imperialist invasions, of contemporary politics and society. This thesis is also an outcome of human beliefs and rituals, prejudices and practices that date back to

the beginning of civilization. This thesis was suggested by our natural fixation with the body and all the unnatural biases that we base on it. Ambivalence towards the body has persisted since Greek and Vedic philosophic schools, Judeo- Christian thought to modern day. Socrates' friend and founder of the Cyreniac school Aristippus (435-366 BC) advocated hedonism ("bodily pleasures are far better than mental pleasures") while Epicurus asserted a life of pleasure with mental pleasures preceding bodily pleasures. Radically opposed to this was Orphism which regarded the body as the tomb of the soul and admitted the dualism of human nature, sought to curb the earthly body through abstention of meat, wine and sexual intercourse. Socrates viewed the soul as a helpless prisoner of the body, regarding the body and soul as diametrically opposed to each other. It is this view which has by and large been held by posterity even though Aristotle, Plato's pupil and a keen naturalist, rejected Plato's body- negativism. But even then, he held that the soul was superior to the body and it is intellect that defines humanity. Needless to say, it is this approach that encouraged the treatment of human beings on an arbitrary scale of "humanism" that was used to justify colonialism, conversion, imperialism, slavery and all the ills that have plagued humankind. The history of oppression in the world ultimately boils down to race discrimination, intolerance of physical differences, justification of oppression through ill-founded notions of racial hierarchy which in turn functions through attributing criminal tendencies, femininity, subhuman qualities to those deemed inferior. Politics of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries have taken such a turn, with covert colonization going hand in hand with tall talk about human rights and liberties, with political arm-twisting and military bullying shadowing peace proposals, that a writer must possess incisive vision.

In this thesis I have drawn upon perspectives of the body in J M Coetzee, that are themselves resultant of and at the same time combat Greco- Roman, Christian and Vedic tropes. Disgust, that has widely ascertained abjection of certain bodies, especially the female, and consequently those bodies that are feminized and deemed female, is explored with its psychological complexities. This thesis is also an attempt to reconcile the estranged body with the ego or the sense of the self, through the medium of Coetzee's works. Illness, incarceration, disability, or abjection in any other form, makes the body assert itself, leading to a much heightened awareness of the body. Through cultures across the world, the body has for long been divorced from intellectual considerations. A unique hierarchization has occured not only with respect to bodies, in the sense of marking able, heteronormative bodies of certain race and sex as superior and others graded according to those scales of demarcation, but also in the sense of the body in itself which has been the subject of medical discourse, but of little else. The body, as Coetzee himself agrees, cannot be missed. It cannot be discounted. It is always there, as matter. Therefore, the body matters. The "body in society" is never simply a biological entity. Race, gender, sex, ethnicity and occupation are superimposed on it to the extent that they come to be viewed as intrinsic qualities of the body. The body in society is also a cultural entity, subject to rights, duties, manners, responsibilities. Stripped of all this, the "bare, forked animal", the human, cannot lay claim to a social life. Thus the body is a conglomeration of physical, cultural as well as professional identities. An athlete is supposed to look a certain way, have certain physical features and carriage that distinguish her from a non-athletic person. A person in a white collar job is supposed to look, dress and behave differently from one who puts in manual labour.

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At first read, J. M. Coetzee's novels seem almost to fall in the well trodden English imperialist tradition of Conrad, Kipling, T. E. Lawrence with a white protagonist seemingly assimilated into the larger native body and yet at the same time holding his own amidst the otherness, conditioning his readers into viewing natives with his eyes. This penetrative incursion was often carried out in the guise of scientific, objective, disinterested research. As Edward Said notes astutely in *Culture and Imperialism*, Hegel viewed the Orient and Africa as "static, despotic and irrelevant to world history", in Engels' view, the moors of Algeria were a "timid race", "reserving nevertheless their cruelty and vindictiveness while in moral character they stand very low."[11] This is inevitably what happens when the colonist presumes to speak for the subaltern: "if the obdurately material natives are transformed from subservient beings into inferior humanity, then the colonizer is similarly transformed into an invisible scribe, whose writing reports on the Other and at the same time insists on its scientific disinterestedness and (as Katherine George has noted) the steady improvement in the condition, character and custom of the primitives as a result of their contact with European civilization."[12] This tradition of quasi- historical fiction writing has served not only to orientalize and exoticize the colonial Other, but as Chinua Achebe notes with respect to Conrad, "is racist and has dehumanised" native populations. In *Dusklands' The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee*, J.M. Coetzee holds this tradition up to moral critique.

The quintessential "white man's burden" receives a twist with Orwell, who was perhaps the first to realize the downsides of colonial oppression. The helplessness of the white man in the east was exposed to satirical gaze and power quotients reversed. It may

not be wrong to say that Coetzee follows in Orwell's footsteps to some extent: his dystopias are not scathing attacks on the future, but have an atavistic quality. In many of Coetzee's novels, it is this same helplessness that is deftly exploited with abjection, sacrifice and related tropes to secure a sense of atonement, to restore a sense of justice. Coetzee has been consistently writing against the grain of what he has critiqued in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*: the racial, colonial thrust, the "biologized history" that erstwhile South African "White" writing was steeped in. He marks a very important shift that the Nuremberg trials initiated in the rhetoric both of politics and of writing, at large. The prefix "blood" in the rhetoric of Nazi Nationalist Socialism, ("blood-consciousness", "pure blood", "tainted blood" and so on) came to be discredited and political correctness the world over dictated a conscious avoidance of such words. Blood matters have been unduly given weightage, or blood has been imagined to matter in discrete ways since Galenic times down to the twentieth century, when Naturalists like Zola propounded that hereditary factors determined character, not to mention eugenicist theories and experiments based on supposed gradations of "blood". J. M. Coetzee mentions as much in his essay on Sarah Gertrude Millin's novels ("Blood, Taint, Flaw, Degeneration") in *White Writing.*[13] The preoccupation with blood is another persistent trope he counters in his own writing. He queers the notions of Flaw, Taint and Degeneration located in bodies identified as "inferior", "defective", "degenerate". His basic position with regard to the body is very clearly revealed in an interview with David Atwell when asked to comment on the centrality of the body in his fiction. Though he concedes that he has stopped short of committing himself bodily to a cause, especially with regard to Vietnam, when his stand on the Vietnam War led to his eventual

deportment from the United States, he feels that the right thing to do would have been to throw himself bodily into the protests. More than a general introversion, what had pulled him back was his lack of belief in cyclical, retaliatory violence. However, what he had not been able to in terms of effusion, he made up for in thrift. *Summertime*, the latest volume of Coetzee's fictionalized memoirs reveals how he had put in manual labour to build an extension to his father's old house, transporting and laying bricks painstakingly. This, in spite of the fact that labour was cheaply available at the time, in Apartheid Africa. He has maintained a frugal lifestyle, abstained from eating flesh of any animal. It is a frugality that shows even in the poetics of his fiction.

A list of J. M. Coetzee's works appears in the bibliography to this work under 'Primary Sources'. A few of his other writings I have listed as an appendix at the end.

South Africa: the Formative Influence

No writer coming from South Africa can be considered apart from its peculiar history and circumstances. This is because existence in South Africa is more of an embodied existence than anywhere else, for one's identity is primarily defined by one's skin colour, one's racial descent. Everything else becomes secondary. Coetzee's own background as an Afrikaner with an English education, his higher education at the Cape that was cosmopolitan and relatively liberal even in his youth. While studying at the University of Texas, Buffalo, he had participated in protests against the Vietnam War, which led to his visa extension being denied and subsequent deportment, as it were, to South Africa. Apartheid rule had been established in South Africa in 1948. J.M. Coetzee's formative years were hence, shaped under Apartheid atmosphere. But it was perhaps the non-Afrikaner attitude that prevailed in his household, with a mother with German antecedents, that set them apart from the common Afrikaner. Coetzee had resented this as a child, this anomaly of sorts that wouldn't allow the family to mingle freely with Afrikaners, or subscribe to the Apartheid ideology.

Introducing *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in Africa,*[14] J. M. Coetzee enumerates three European ideas he addresses in the collection of essays, the first of which is the idea of man. This particular idea is investigated time and again in his early works of fiction, as well. Race, creed, region of inhabitation, religious orientation, apart from cultural differences have all shaped the "idea of the African" man in the European

psyche. It is not just the African man but also the landscape and Africanness that has been held out as an Other that could never be assimilated. Hence, the European consciousness has never tried to imbibe this "Africanness" rather it has been shunned, kept at a distance, and great pains have been taken to prevent any assimilation, growth of any kinship. This urge has been paradoxical, with Europeans claiming the land of Africa without considering themselves African. The paradoxical nature of this habitation is sometimes reflected in the some of the writing of the region, as well: the writing of people "no longer European, not yet African"[15], as he puts it.

Here I attempt a brief sketch of South Africa's unique history, particularly its transition into and out of Apartheid to prepare a ground for the better understanding of J. M. Coetzee's works, which I claim, are embodied narratives. No matter what his place of residence has been the shaping influence of South Africa is undeniable: no matter where he stays, South Africa will remain a cross he would always have to carry, as it were.

Since 1652, when the Dutch East india Company represented by Jan Van Riebeeck landed on the cape, South Africa has been colonized by several imperial powers who, after establishing their settlement on the Cape of Good Hope, increasingly surged inwards. The indigenous hunting-gathering and cattle-rearing peoples, together known as the Khoi-San, were severely disadvantaged with the loss of grazing land. Apart from military onslaughts by the Dutch, the Khoi-San dwindled in numbers due to regular ravages by diseases like the smallpox to which they were more susceptible than the

Europeans. Though groups of resistance formed which stole away sheep and cattle from the European settlements, the native people with their primitive weapons were unable to bring upon a siege on the fortress-like settlements. With their superior arms and brute force, the European settlers pushed inwards till the natives were driven away and almost sequestered in the less productive areas of the land. There was frequent intermingling among the races initially with goods being bartered, but a policy of miscegenation sson began to be followed as the number of mixed race offspring rose. The loss of livelihood following loss of pastures and cattle to diseases like lungsickness gave way to the Khoi San being exploited as labour. The native labour force was also supplemented with slaves brought in from Mozambique and India. The rapidly thriving multi-racial economy soon became a melting pot of habits and cultures. The whites, priding themselves on pioneering and industriousness, began to fear a 'deterioration of stock' through inter-racial relations. Among the slaves, while some men and women obtained freedom upon certain conditions, most remained in a state of slavery or semi-bondage to whites. Women were subjected to heavy labour in the fields as well as domestically, sexually exploited or prostituted to breed a labour force, to keep labour in good supply.

Thus the germs of Apartheid that was to plague South Africa for more than fifty years were sown three centuries earlier. Fences were erected around land occupied by the settlers and increasing dispossession of land by the natives changed the very fabric of land ownership. Annexation did not always come easy. There were some fiercely independent warrior tribes such as the Xhosas and the Ndebele who held their ground for

a long time, before they succumbed to the colonizers' terror. By the end of the 18th century, notes Robert C. Cottrell,[16] the Mthethwa and the Ndwandu tribes of the North had assumed a lot of power and territory in the area known today as Kwazulu. Around the 1820s, the Zulu commander Shaka became a formidable force and unleashed almost a reign of terror, subjugating seceral tribes, and an atmosphere of warfare prevailed, till he was assassinated in 1828 by his half-brothers. Thus, indigenous forces gave stiff opposition to the Boers, the Zulus being the most dominant.

The scamper for land created fierce competition among the settlers themselves, particularly since the advent of the British in the 19th century. Spurred on by British colonial policy, the Boers (as the Dutch settlers called themselves, meaning 'pioneers' in Dutch) started migrating or trekking inwards in the 1830s, countering various obstacles along their way. This sense of persecution created a sense of struggle, solidarity and mission among the Boers. They developed a new sense of identity, pride and belonging towards the land. A group finally settled along the Transvaal, forging amicable relationships with the black inhabitants, initially. They also settled around what is known as the Orange Free State. They managed to defeat further Zulu onslaughts and took over large stretches of pastures. Since Shaka's exploits had left most areas around Natal depopulated, the British feared occupation by ambitious European powers. In 1848 the territory between the Orange and Vaal rivers were brought under British rule, ostentatiously to protect the rights of the native chiefs (Cottrell). By then, however, the Xhosas, too, began to be increasingly disempowered native populations through loss of

pastures and cattle and conflicts with the colony. Disintegration of the Xhosa tribes and their loss of independence came about in the 1850s.

The first few decades of the 19th century saw heavy missionization, especially along the Cape. Missionary activity eased some of the exploitation and barbaric treatment of the blacks even as the missionaries clashed with government officials. Protestants, too, made their way into Africa, with the German missionaries and French Huguenots. However, the states that the Trekkers established excluded the non-whites from citizenship, as noted by Beinart and Dubow.[17] The Great Treks of the 1830s significantly changed the fabric of South African occupation, with the Boers asserting themselves against and free from British authority. The settlers began to resist most policies and measures taken by the British governance towards equity for the natives, insisting on restriction of black settlement to reserves that afforded only a minimal subsistence, which would in turn ensure a ready availability of cheap labour for the whites. The discovery of minerals and ores as well as diamonds led to a fierce scamper for the mining fields. Demand for cheap labour heightened even as wages were kept deliberately low on the pretext of compensating through providing housing for the black labour force. At the time, South Africa accounted for almost 77% of the world's gold production. Britain, however, put checks in place to maintain a gold standard which prevented gold prices from rising. This in turn kept wages for labour stagnant for a long time, even as costs of skilled white labour rose.

The rationale for holding Africans in servitude, notes George M. Fredrickson, is the spurious myth of the curse of Ham or Canaan based on an obscure passage in the Book of Genesis. According to this myth, Ham incurred the wrath of God for mocking his father after viewing him in an inebriated and naked state. For this sinful act, his son Canaan and all his descendants were condemned to be "servants unto servants." He adds, "... to ancient Hebrews it justified the conquest of the Canaannites" and "For medieval Arabs importing slaves from East Africa to the Middle-East the emphasis shifted from Canaan to Ham, widely believed to be the ancestor of all Africans and the physical result of the curse became a blackening of the skin."[18] As the need arose, the curse came to be applied variously to Tartars, Asians, and the people of India. (Racism) Thus, racism came to be firmly grounded in a religious context. Curiously, in "A Letter from Johannesburg"[19] Nadine Gordimer relates how, a son of the family she was visiting, back home from the army for a holiday, reiterated this same sentiment, as late as the 1980s. Blacks supposedly carry the mark of Cain, irrespective of the fact that African religions predated JudaeoChristian by thousands of years. Convenient yarns like these continue to be built around Apartheid, justifying its practice, well into the 1980s. Till as late as the 1920s, notes Alan Lester[20], theories flourished claiming blacks to be racially inferior, backed up by Social darwinism and spurious sciences as phrenology. Though they came to be discredited later on, they were supplanted by new anthropological studies that stressed behavioural, social and cultural differences. Africans were identified with an inherent sloth and indolence that impeded economic growth and development. This is well analyzed in J. M. Coetzee's *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in Africa.*

Though it has been argued that the germs of Apartheid were sown by the frontiering Boers in their 19th C republics, David Welsh claims that Apartheid actually owes its descent to the Shepstonian policies of colonial Natal. Welsh reasons, with Shula Marks, that the demarcation of native reserves, the state's use of chiefs for administrative purposes and the recognition of customary law, were all pioneered in Natal.[21] Incidentally, the principal advocates of 20th century segregation, Maurice Evanbs, C.T. Loram, Edgar Brookes and G. H. Nicholls, were all associated with Natal. With the turn of the century, segregation began to be practised on the pretext of manitaining sanitary ways and hygiene. Black townships were widely viewed as dirty and unhygienic; mingling with blacks therefore meant compromising white standards of health and sanitation. This led to the introduction of segregated toilets in trains, seats in buses, and segregatuin in all other public services. Racism had an uncanny preoccupation with bodily hygiene. Black townships were not provided with proper sanitations facilities and diseases allowed to fester there. Maynard W. Swanson has studied how, "medical officials and other public authorities in South Africa were imbued with the imagery of infectious disease as a social metaphor and this metaphor powerfully interacted with British and South African racial attitudes to influence the policies and shape the insttitutions of segregation."[22] He adds that while overcrowding slums, public health and safety, viewed in the light of class and ethnic differences in other societies, they were perceived along colour lines in South African society. This is what he calls the 'Sanitation Syndrome'. These views were heightened with the onslaught of the Bubonic Plague between 1900 and 1904. Massive relocations of the native African urban

population to hastily established quarantine locations took place under the instigation of medical authorities and government officials.

Segregationary laws soon began to be passed, laying the groundwork for Apartheid. Successive legislations as the 1923 Urban Areas Act, the Native Administration Act of 1927, the 1934 Slums Act, and the Representation of Natives Act of 1936 cemented segregation much before the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. Miscegenation became the order of the day as mingling of races, blood, other bodily fluids came to be viewed with consternation and horror. The mindset of the Afrikaaners developed a collective consciousness when it came to racism. The perceived degradation of European stock had to be prevented at any cost. All kinds of services, basic amenities, and even education was divided along racial lines so as to keep non-whites poorly provided and substandardly educated, and any higher ambition was discouraged. The driving idea was that any non-white person should not consider himself or herself to be the equal of a white person, on any grounds. In his defense of the 1953 Bantu Education Act, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd famously said,

> I want to remind Hon. Members that if the Native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake... There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its ain absorption in the European community... What is the use of teaching a Bantu

> child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?... It is therefore necessary that native education be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the State.

Youthful defiance to this came in the form of the Soweto Uprisings of 1976. Students boycotted schools and were dealt with with an iron hand. But the movement continued into 1977 and paved the way for guerilla training of youth. It spiralled into a vortex of violence with protests, police atrocities, killings, detention without trial. In October,1977, all major Black Consciousness organizations were banned. In his rousing "Letter from Soweto", South African novelist Mothobi Mutloatse, uses an African idiom to sum up the desperation of the Africans at that point: "you don't ask a man whose house is burning to use restraint in putting out the fire. And our house is ablaze."[23] Ten years down the line, the movement still raged, with children taking to the streets and to arms, boycotting schools, wantonly giving their lives. This is the "age of iron", these are the children of iron, that J. M. Coetzee writes about.

There was a hierarchy of privileges granted to so-called 'Coloureds', Indians and Blacks. This differential approach, despite universal deprivation of certain rights, prevented solidarity, unification of interests and grievances among non-whites. The black reserves, known as Bantustans, made up a mere 13% of the total land that could actually be owned and occupied by blacks in a country where they were the overwhelming majority. Apartheid gained leverage on the pretext of preserving African social systems

such as chieftaincy. This concern for preservation of "Africanness" became a convenient argument for the denial of development to native Africans, relegated to Bantustans. The maintenance of borders, boundaries were further enforced through the Pass Laws. Black labour could enter white townships only if they carried passes during working hours and had to leave once working hours gave over, a single stay never exceeding 72 hours without permit. Any violation led to their arrest. More than 2000 blacks were arrested each day on the basis of the Pass Laws alone. The blacks, in particular were reduced to merely a labour class with few rights. Security around the white areas was stringent, and the whites were so cut off from the non-whites that they were hardly in the know about what went on in the black townships, or the various hardships and degradations they endured. The whites resided in an insulated, rarified territory, completely cut off from the majority of the population, yet occupying the major and prime areas, which tantamounted to tacit complicity with Apartheid. Even the more liberal among the whites were ignorant about the atrocities wreaked on rights activists, those who breached security or resisted laws. J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* aptly captures this unwitting apathy on the part of "liberal" whites who had neither knowledge of nor interest in the real lives of the blacks—how they lived or the struggles they had to wage on a daily basis to simply eke out a living. Standards of hygiene, food, health and sanitation were abysmally low in the Bantustans. Forty thousand infants (though no official figures were available) died of Kwashiorkor, the African name for a disease of malnutrition in an otherwise thriving economy, in 1969[24]. It draws comparison to the German populace, apparently ignorant about what went on in the concentration camps, oblivious to the stench of the Holocaust.

The Nationalist Party's determination to maintain white supremacy in South Africa even as uprisings against imperialism and struggles for democracy swept through all the oppressed peoples of the world soon gave rise to a police state as brutal as the Gestapo of Hitler's regime in Germany. Relentless legislation and detention for an undefined amount of time was one of the prime modes of tackling with resistance. Needless to say, South Africa lent support to Nazi Germany and established a similar regime at home, complete with ideals of Euro-Aryan supremacy. Z. J. De Beer analyzes that with the end of World War II, with the wave of liberal thought sweeping through the world, non-whites in africa were rapidly progressing towards western ideals and gaining economic power. If things continued the way they were going, under the Smuts government, it would lead to non-whites gathering increasing influence and integration. Since a "policy of naked repression" could not immediately be brought into effect, the idea of "Apartheid" or "separateness" was conceived. With the end of the Second World War, several things changed. The older or Hertzogian Afrikaner nationalism aimed at the creation of an Afrikaner republic on the basis of Afrikaner national unity and the gradual assimilation of the English-speaking nation and granting them civil rights on that basis. But it took a turn towards a more exclusive and extreme kind. Rising intellectuals within the Nationalist Party like Malan were concerned with the increasing dilution of Afrikaner values and ways of life under the Hertzogian brand of nationalism. He introduced a new kind of nationalism, that came to be known as Krugerism which rested on a strong element of Calvinism and believed 19th century liberalism and individualism as detremental to its cause. It stressed on the individual's duties towards the state rather than on his rights. Differentiating between the Afrikaner and the merely English-speaking South African

with European antecedents who wants to preserve his european bloodline, Malan explained the National Party's stand in 1949 thus:

> (The Afrikaner) belongs to a small naytion in whom the youthful consciousness of his manly power has only just awakened, and who looks towards an eager future. If he would vanish from the stage, who remains to perpetuate his life, his culture?... Can it thus be wondered at that, for the Afrikaner, the matter of survival has become an irresistible life-force, a veritable obsession?[25]

While professing to be democratic, the Krugerian brand of nationalism actually excluded anybody it did not deem worthy of citizen's rights. It was propagated and indeed, kept secure and sanctified by a secret society of elect, the Afrikaner Broederbond (Bond of Brothers) to which every N. P. Leader and South African president till F. W. De Klerk belonged. In 1950, the Prime Minister Dr. Malan, a half of his cabinet and a majority of the N. P. Members of his parliament owed allegiance to the Broederbond. Though it was primarily a cultural organization till 1933, it ventured into the political arena after the "purification' or 'purge' of the Nationalist Party. The Broederbond actually believed Afrikaners to be the New Elect, and surged ahead in their agenda. As their General Secretary wrote: 'The Afrikaner Broederbond is born from a deep conviction that the Afrikaner nation was planted in this country by God's hand and is destined to remain a nation with its own character and own mission.'[26] Thus we encounter the rise of an Afrikaner Nazism through the ideology of the Broederbond. Both Generals Smuts and Hertzog, members of the old school now, condemned the Broederbond. The Afrikaner Party which was founded after Hertzog broke away from the Nationalist Party over rising

ideological differences, advocated granting of equal rights to all sections of European origin, and not just the Afrikaners. The Krugerians, on the other hand, were bent on maintaining 'purity' of the race through racial exclusivism and isolationism in every aspect of life. They aspired towards Afrikaner unity and well-being, rather than South African unity and well-being, as a whole nation. In their vision, South Africa was to be an Afrikaner dominated republic, free from the British Commonwealth. WWII, however gave a new dimension to Afrikaner racism: race considerations now put whites against non-whites, and it were these relations that were to be regulated with the tightest controls.

One of the most effective moves of protest had been the African mine workers' strike of Witwatersrand in 1945 in which over 60,000 unorganised, unsophisticated, tribalised native workers participated, showing that large-scale, concentrated action was indeed possible against the white supremacists. The Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 which killed sixty-nine unarmed black people including women and children, and left more than two hundred injured brought South Africa's plight into the glare of the international community. The United Nations sought to place embargo on trade with South Africa, it was ousted from international organisations and its all white playing teams were banned from participating in international sports. In the Cold War years, South Africa joined America in banning the South African Communist Party, unleashing an unopposed pursuit of Capitalism. Capitalist interests flourished with the Wage Act keeping wages low, even as investments poured into South Africa. W. J. Pomeroy notes American investments actually multiplied threefold in South Africa after the Sharpeville

Massacre.[27] Visitors from Britain noted how British companies in South Africa could have easily made life better for their black labour but did not, in connivance with the Apartheid regime. The Afrikaners were resolutely committed towards maintaining white supremacy, and the Christian National Education they were reared up on carefully weeded out any doubts as to their 'rightful' supremacy. As Saul Dubow points out, the colour bar would be maintained by any possible means, such as manipulation of the Wage Act.[28]

Even though sanctions were imposed, there was tacit support for Apartheid on the part of superpowers like the USA and UK. Apartheid served the economic interests of these countries very well. Their condemnation of Apartheid in the international arena was just an eyewash; their practices and policies proved things to the contrary. This is canvassed by William J. Pomeroy in *Apartheid Axis: United States and South Africa.* In spite of lip service on the part of world powers in favour of sanctions against South Africa, covert trade operations and economic relations actually flourished among South Africa and the USA and UK. Right Wing extremist groups in the USA lent Apartheid moral support. The American South was itself a bastion of racism. In the Cold War years, atrocities against suspected Communists combined with those against civil rights activists in America. The dreaded Ku Klux Klan carried out several terror attacks on the black civil rights leadership in America, notable among which were the assassinations of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Differential treatment of the non-whites, distribution of privileges and allowances along hierarchised lines of colour created a false sense of security among some groups and prevented solidarity among the blacks, the Coloureds and the Indians. Most were wary of losing even the little they had in terms of rights and allowances. Divisions were driven into black communities: blacks inducted into the police force and made to turn informers and act against and arrest their brothers, in what Gordimer calls "the ultimate distortion of their lives by apartheid."[29] The struggle for rights and freedom from Apartheid was besieged not only by stiff resistance from white authorities but also infighting among the black organizations themselves. Infighting was often stoked by the white authorities who used these to their utmost advantage. Alan Lester notes, "there were not only the old divisions of Africanist, non-racialist, nationalist populist-workerist...but also a heightening of disagreement over the acceptable degree of compromise with a government deliberately setting out to co-opt a strategic black social group."[30] This disagreement flared between collaborationist organisations like Inkatha, the 'Coloured' and Indian parliamentary parties and Sofasouk (check), (the Soweto Municipal Party), as well as between them and the wider resistance movements. He adds, "the state attempted to divert as much attention as possible to these conflicts, and away from those between activists and security forces."[31]

Counter vigilante activities by pro-apartheid whites were also rampant, as we find portrayed in Andre Brink's *Imaginings of Sand.*[32]. Nadine Gordimer in her essay, "A Letter from Johannesburg" notes, "young blacks themselves have reached the stage of

desperation that leads them to hunt down and destroy those who are their own people in terms of skin but not of loyalty."[33] She also talks about the stiff resentment for and resistance against the Conscription on part of the white youth: "Resistance to Conscription was suddenly no longer some fringe defection on religious ground by a handful of Seventh Day Adventist, but a wave of revulsion against 'defending one's country' by maiming, killing, and breaking into the humble homes of black people."[34] The End Conscription Campaign underlined the position of the Afrikaaner youth, which was not as pacifist as a refusal to defend Apartheid. Alan Lester points out, in 1987, 57% of the white male students of Rhodes University were about to leave South Africa for these very reasons. Defence Minister Magnus Malan identified this refusal to join the End Conscription Campaign as a national threat.

In 1985, 8000 UDF (United Democratic Front) leaders were detained. This figure increased to an unprecedented 17000 by 1986, twelve times that during the violent and game-changing Soweto riots. Most detainees were minors, members of street or area committees (Lester, 1998, 218). Behind these operations was the shady organization, the "Orwellian named" (Lester) Civil Coperation Bureau (CCB). (J. M. Coetzee could well have been thinking of these societies when writing about Nechaev's organization in *The Master of Petersburg,* 1994). The CCB organized hit squads against civilian targets. Alan Lester counts, at the start of 1989 there had been 113 attacks, including bombing, arson, burglaries agaionst oppositional organizations, without a single arrest following these attacks.[35] Alongside the General Buthulezi led Inkatha (who controlled Kwazulu area)

and the Witdoeke warriors, smaller vigilante groups such as Ama- Afrika comprising black policemen, gangsters, small businessmen, traditional headmen, ousted UDF members and squatters denied township privileges, were formed. The Church, too, joined the swelling opposition with ministers like Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane becoming more vocal against the government. In fact, even the most conservative of the three Dutch Reformed Churches admitted the "sin" of Apartheid.[36] Guerilla activity escalated around 1988 and schools were boycotted by over 90% of pupils in the Western Cape. A new resistance front—the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)—moved into the space vacated by the disintegrating UDF, backed by Church and trade union leaders, with a fresh mass defiance campaign.[37]

Thus Apartheid became increasingly unviable with political instability and economic woes adding to it. Pressures kept mounting on the Apartheid government to repeal acts which hampered economic interests. The business sector expressed concerns in 1989 over the impact of consumer boycotts and the implementation of separate amenities. They called for complete removal of the Separate Amenities Act, as opposed to partial removal. Concerns were also expressed about excessive government expenditure which called for rationalization. Sanctions imposed internationally due to Apartheid hurt business interests, reducing growth rates drastically. Remarkably, employers and black unions united against the government's 1989 Labour Relating Amendment Act. This unlikely alliance forged new bonds of solidarity. The administrative costs of occupying Namibia, to add to South Africa's dwindling resources supply, were also proving too high

for profit margins. Adding to these burdens on the exchequer were costs of military involvement against the SWAPO independence movement, which rose when Cuban troops and equipment moved into Southern Angola to resist South African forces. These mounting pressures and the cost of battling them pushed the NP to open negotiations with the ANC.

South Africa's fortunes took a turn when F. W. De Klerk assumed presidency after the resignation of P. W. Botha as party leader of NP. Though De Klerk had earlier maintained a conservative stance and had been known as an Apartheid man, it was he who undertook drastic reforms in the state's policies and steered the country towards democracy. Following the release of prominent leaders from prison such as Walter Sisulu, the ANC, PAC, and SACP were unbanned in 1990, and restrictions on the UDF and COSATU lifted. The state of Emergency as well as restrictions on the press and media were lifted, just as the death penalty was suspended. Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years in prison. Statutory Apartheid came to an end with the repealment of the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts, the Population Registration Act and the Preservation of Separate Amenities Act, each following close on the heels of the other. Black and Coloured members were inducted into the NP. Even as peace negotiations were on, the Inkatha, later known as the IFP, resorted to several violent acts, egged on and aided by the state security police. Among the most condemnable episodes was the Boipatong Massacre of 1991 in which 42 Boipatong residents were killed in a conflict between Inkatha and UDF forces. The Inkatha (IFP) finally toned down their violent activities

when their chief Buthulezi was faced with the prospect of being left out of the new democratic government. He secured a dubious victory in the ensuing elections, becoming Minister for Home affairs.

The transition to democracy did not come without its share of disagreements and dissent among the concerned parties, but all were keen on keeping it as violence-free as possible. They also resolved to ensure that the transfer of powers did not cause economic turbulence. In December 1991, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was established to oversee a smooth transition to democracy. The economic transition was much more difficult to secure than the political. Apartheid had ruined people's livelihoods, economic independence and cultural bases, rendering millions landless and without their farms and fields. The country was faced with financial jeopardy with many Capitalist forces that fuelled Apartheid, withdrawing support. As it is, the country stood with the highest inequality ratio, with two-thirds of the black population surviving below the defined minimum subsistence level. At the time of the transition, an estimated 9 million people were destitute. Adding to these woes were unemployment, TB which claimed 25 lives a day and AIDS (300 people a day became HIV positive).[38] The ANC itself came to be plagued by charges of corruption within it, and reports surfaced of routine torture at an external ANC camp.[39] Its financial arm, Thebe, as well as its Social Welfare Department and Women's League headed by Winnie Mandela have been accused of financial mismanagement. Eyebrows were further raised when President Mandela himself intervened to prevent a police search in ANC

headquarters following an attack on an Inkatha march. With ANC leaders rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty billionaires, they alienated the poor and the commoners in the black townships. Though expectations of economic and material prosperity burden the ANC, there has been loss of resources that kept the nation wealthy. The sustained onslaught on youth during the later Apartheid years, their incarceration and brutalization, have rendered many of them maimed and unemployable. The ANC had a difficult task cut out for itself.

Apart from political and economic healing, another kind of healing came to be the need of the hour: healing the wounds, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, of a country torn asunder by Apartheid. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was constituted to enable this forgetting—a forgetting through re-membering or reconstruction of the atrocities of the Apartheid years. Its intention was distinctly different from that of the Nuremberg trials: it sought forgiveness, amnesty, rather than blind justice which could only push the country into the vicious circle of violence. It sought to unearth the truth, bring forth confessions and catharsis. But, truth, as we know, is never unitary and always evasive. The Commission came under fire for various reasons. Most felt that it was pathetically inadequate to deal with the enormity and heinousness of the crimes committed, and what happened at the sessions of the TRC was a travesty of justice. It was also felt that pardon or amnesty could not/ should not be granted and that criminals should not be spared. Repentance, too, is often false and can never really be ensured. The proceedings of the TRC sessions, with witnesses recounting or reliving past horrors, aften

proved doubly traumatic for victims and witnesses and questions began to be raised about the actual purpose and utility of the procedures. Rosemary Jolly in her essay, "Writing Desire Responsibly" says, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in which, in its crudest form, all that is demanded from a perpetrator who has committed politically motivated crimes is confession and contrition, vocally performed: but who is to say the perpetrator is sincere in the performance of his confession?"[40] Citing the case of Lucy from Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Jolly adds, "Like Lucy, many women refused to testify before the TRC regarding sexual abuse."[41] Further, the TRC did not provide any moral or even judicial closure to the victims. Silence prevailed over speech and speech or disclosure did not resolve anything, did not heal wounds. "One does not cease to be tried in the public court where the alternate morality of honour versus shame prevails, rather than the cause and effect scenario of crime and punishment."[42] In Coetzee's work, it is the public, and even the private moral court one is answerable to, where one must face trial.

In all, the commission, despite its noble intent, proved a failure in many respects and was shelved after sometime. But it was unique in the sense that it did not encourage vengeance, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" kind of payback, did not launch any manhunt or inflict violence of a physical kind. Some may have experienced catharsis or been healed, but the commission managed to inflict and reopen wounds, nevertheless. In fact, "the materiality of the South African body, the space of embodiment it occupies in its ongoing mutilation, or once occupied under the disciplinary apparatus of the Apartheid state (prison-cell, torture chamber, mass grave) constituted a central preoccupation of the TRC", says Louise Bethlehem.[43]

Though many of Coetzee's works do not make any direct reference to South Africa and Apartheid, they nevertheless have both looming in their background. In spite of their allegorical nature they seize upon the historicity of the body. The TRC, incidentally, centred upon atrocities inscribed on the body and functioned on the curious give and take policy of amnesty in return for admissions of wickedness inflicted upon bodies. In the process, it might have even evoked some perverse pleasure and voyeurism even as it denied "justice". It is this same wickedness or evil that Coetzee might have had objections to. In her essay "*Elizabeth Costello* as a Post- Apartheid Text" Louise Bethlehem cites Judith Butler: "Although the body depends on language to be known, the body also exceeds every possible linguistic means of capture."[44] At the visual core of the TRC hearings, claim Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool, and Leslie Witz were "descriptions, representations, and conflicts around bodies in various states of mutilation, dismemberment and internment within the terror of the past." In that sense, the hearings themselves must have had a macabre quality to them, evoking the absurd extremes of the Holocaust or Kafka's nightmare tale, "In the Penal Colony". It is this kind of extreme that Coetzee's fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello objects to, while regarding a book by Paul West. Where does one draw the line when it comes to talking about the body? What is art, what is truth and what could become obscenity are piercing questions that can be raised about Coetzee's works themselves. Even as the TRC regarded the body as the irrefutable document or the archive of wrongs committed, retelling, relating the sufferings of the body is fundamentally beyond the realm of the possible. Further, as Elaine Scarry has pointed out, torture drives a rift between the self and the body; hence, the body can

seldom be reclaimed, reconciled with the self once torture has been inflicted on it. The split remains, and Benjamin says, one becomes an exile within one's body. These several gaps prevent such a commission from fulfilling its intended objectives, which were possibly skewed, to begin with. An oft-quoted passage from *Doubling the Point* sums up Coetzee's standpoint:

> If I look back over my own fiction, I see a simple standard is erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not "that which is not" and the proof is that it is the pain it feels. The body with its pain becomes the counter to the endless trials of doubt... In South africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. It is not possible, not for logical reasons, not for ethical reasons...but for political reasons, for reasons of power... (it) is not that one grants the authority of the suffering body: the suffering body takes this authority: that is its power.[45]

Australias of the Mind?

J. M. Coetzee's migration to Australia in 2002 and subsequent securing of citizenship in 2006 have made matters complex. Why, one would ask, Australia? In what way is it a better country, or a better place to reside in than South Africa, the land of his birth? Australia is not without its own problematic history, being as much a settler colony as South Africa, if not more so. Used for long as a penal colony by the British, it nevertheless promised a fresh start to many penitents. Could that be a possible reason why Coetzee chose Australia, to make a fresh start? Or more pertinently, is it in actuality a form of exile, self imposed to atone, or be at-one-with penitents? Nevertheless, Coetzee secured his citizenship to the country in 2002, the same year that it started granting dual citizenship. The closest we come to a memoir from this stage of his life is the fictionalised *Diary of a Bad Year*. His namesake in the "diary" who also provides the narrative viewpoint is JC. The collection entitled 'Strong Opinions' can largely be taken for his own, thinly hooded as they are as JC's, for it is not the first time Coetzee is speaking through a creation of his. Incidentally, his other professional counterpart, Elizabeth Costello, also belongs to Australia. We find mention that JC has also emigrated to Australia from South Africa, and a passage from the "Diary" perhaps clarifies Coetzee's stance, and move, to Australia.

> The generation of white South Africans to which I belong, and the next generation, and perhaps the generation after that too, will go bowed under the shame of the crimes that were committed in their name. Those among them who

> endeavour to salvage personal pride by pointedly refusing to bow under the judgement of the world suffer from a burning resentment, a bristling anger at being condemned without adequate hearing, that in psychic terms may turn out to be an equally heavy burden.[46]

The burden of shame, of helpless complicity that have sickened the soul, as it were, rests collectively. Collective guilt can be so deeply embedded in one that no matter where one flies, one cannot escape South Africa, as it were. South Africa is a state of mind that he, with many of his compatriots, would like to convert to Australia, another state of mind, perhaps, driven by the "need to save one's soul". The Christian trope of guilt and salvation, the scarring of the soul, recurs in Coetzee's fiction from the earliest times. When we read about Elizabeth Curren's daughter in *Age of Iron* who has abandoned her country and would have nothing to do with it, and who has made a life for herself in America, has she really been able to escape South Africa? It is the same collective guilt and shame that generations of Germans will suffer from. How can one, or a people unload this burden, drop this dead albatross from one's neck, as it were? Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, despairs, "Which way I fly is hell; Myself am hell." There is perhaps no real escape, no release of the entrapped soul from the hell it is confined in, except by suicide. Suicide might provide the only real solution for the guilty soul, "save one's honour". It is honour, it is living at peace with oneself that one has to forego when one comes from South Africa, Coetzee seems to imply. It is perhaps disillusionment with the "reconciliation process", much critiqued, and a certain despair that one cannot really escape South Africa or shed the burden of guilt, but you still banish yourself to the "Antipodes", the "ends of the earth", as it were, performing penance. The

following diary entry by JC might silence those critics who accuse him of "escaping" from South Africa, of abandoning South Africa in its hour of need, when it was reconstructing itself along new lines of "reconciliation".

> One forgets that Australia was never a promised land, a new world, an island paradise offering its bounty to the new arrival. It grew out of a archipelago of penal colonies owned by an abstract Crown. First you passe through the entrails of the court system; then you were transported to the ends of the earth. Life in the Antipodes was meant to be a punishment; it made no sense to complain that it was unpleasant.[47]

Another of JC's entries in the "Diary" he scathingly criticizes America's policies under the younger Bush who declared war on terrorism, invoking "evil" conspiracy to oust the white Christian world. Prophetically, taking a very Classical and Oriental stance, Coetzee anticipates the burden of guilt, the "curse" that future generations of America will freshly have to suffer from, because of him:

> In the outrages he and his servants perform, notably the outrage of torture, and in his hubristic claim to be above the law, the younger Bush challenges the gods, and by the very shamelessness of that challenge ensures that the gods will visit punishment upon the children and grandchildren of his house.[48]

This has already happened with young Germans, he cites, who find themselves inheriting a burden of guilt and protesting, "*We have no blood on our hands, so why are we looked on as racists and murderers?* The answer: *Because you have the misfortune to be the grandchildren of your grandparents; because you carry a curse."*[49] For such a

predicament, there is actually an easier solution, JC offers. One simply has to disown one's forebears and deny any descent and therefore any legacy. Disownment comes easy when you are living in a different world order, in a different century:

> Such people (implying the Germans) might learn a trick or two from the British about managing collective guilt. The British have simply declared their independence from their imperial forebears. The Empire was long ago abolished, they say, so what is there for us to feel responsible for? And anyway the people who ran the Empire were Victorians, dour, stiff folk in dark clothes, nothing like us.[50]

Yet, Australia is not as far removed from South Africa; they share more than a continent. They share a history of oppression and dispossession. Though usurped by the western world as a penal colony since Cook's expedition and 'discovery' in 1788, Australia had been inhabited by more than 250 indigenous tribes for more than 60000 years. However, it had been projected as if Australia, the "new world" had not really existed on the map before its discovery by the Europeans. Since its terrain was not agriculture-friendly, most of the tribes were hunter-gatherers and therefore their land considered by the Europeans as "not settled", "terra nullius" or land owned by nobody. This enabled an easier possession of their lands by the European settlers than in other regions of the world. Trinket treaties were common and formal frontiering exercises were not common. But that did not mean that occupation and settlement was bloodless and devoid of cruelty.

Resistance by the aborigines to settlers was stiffly curbed with gunfire. Several such confrontations resulted in massacres of the Aborigines. Of these, the Myall Creek massacre, the one on Gwydir river in 1838 which gave it the name 'Slaughterhouse Creek', one on Rufus river in 1841 have been much maligned in history. There were several other incidents which were suppressed and unlike perpetrators of the Myall Creek massacre, never brought to trial. Later historians even tried to rubbish claims saying they were all myths, pandering to conservative interests. In the name of redressal and protection following atrocities, Aborigines were rounded up in large numbers and "settled" in reserves, enabling further dispossession. Environmental plundering raged in the form not only of land acquisition for pastures, but also whaling and sealing on a large scale, and 1850s onwards, with the gold rush. It was the gold rush with its promise of a quick and sure fortune, besides sheep farming which catered to a large European market, that brought the maximum settlers to Australia. Chinese and other Asian immigrants were also not left behind, who had to face their own share of racist opposition.

Europeans shared a generally racist outlook towards the Aborigines and built their own mythology of Aboriginal nature and practices. Curiously enough, the Aborigines lost out more as Australia asserted itself and established self government. Civilizing missions did their part in the 19th century to redeem some of the oppression and deprivation, in the form of demanding Aborigines' entitlement to reserves and compensation. However, these began to fade away as Australia gained colonial self-government from the British monarchy in the second half of the 19th century. 1901 proved a turning point as Australia

became a "federation": promises of citizenship for the Aborigines took a backseat. By being denied the vote, Aborigines were effectively written out of the Federation. Incidentally, at the same time, women's contribution to nation building came to be recognized and they were granted franchise. Activist Heather Goodall says citizen rights became the apriori defence of indigenous people's land and collective rights.[51] After as late as 1948, Aboriginals remained citizens without rights, subjected to constant surveillance and policing. Every aspect of their lives-- residence, work, pay, movement, mode of living, family relations, marriage partners and even death—was dictated by state-initiated 'protection' and later, 'welfare' laws. Penalties for protest were severe, and they had no access to benefits of the welfare state.

As the nation-state shaped itself, it projected itself as a white nation, peopled primarily by whites. In keeping with the masculinist ANZAC (Australia and New Zealand Army Corps) tradition since the First World War, the non-Aboriginal soldier was projected as the model Australian citizen. After the war, concerns were raised about the rising mixed race population. Thus race and protecting purity of race and blood became an issue in Australia, as well. Around the same time, dispossessed Aboriginal populations in the south began clamouring for recognition of difference as well as equality. Preservation of their ethnicity became a concern with the Aboriginals even as they struggled for equality. The government's policy had by now changed from 'protection' to assimilation, "from cultural stasis to cultural absorption, or extinction and ultimate denial of aboriginality altogether."[52] Visions of an integrated, homogenised nation threatened

Aboriginal identities and even, existence. As Stuart MacIntyre puts it, "The Australian nation was shaped by the fear of invasion and concern for the purity of the race. These anxieties converged on the female body as nationalist men returned obsessively to the safety of their women from alien molestation, while doctrines of racial purity, no matter how scientific, rested ultimately on feminine chastity."[53] This was in many senses a reworking of the model of the "Angel in the House" which proved a custodian of Victorian values and morals, invested in the body of the chaste, reproducing, house-bound Victorian female of the previous century. Things were however not all rosy with the settlers, many of whom had to work hard for a living, starting from scratch. As the men went away for long stretches of time for droving and shearing horses and sheep, whaling and sealing, working on sugarcane plantations that came up and to participate in the gold rush, women and children were left behind in unyielding farms to slog as unpaid labour.

The state often resorted to violence to effect social cohesion and viewed racial, cultural or political differences as threats to its integrity. The Second World War set convenient precedents for it. Aboriginal peoples were interned in camps for purposes of assimilation, but few survived the travails of the camp, succumbing to diseases they had no immunity against. As in South Africa, the Communist Party, seen as sympathisers with Aboriginal rights, came to be banned in 1950. Camp internment set a precedent that has come in handy in contemporary times in the practice of alien internment: mass incarceration without trial of non-criminal people. Bashford and Strange argue such

confinement finds resonance in mandatory detention of contemporary asylum seekers.[54] In *Diary of a Bad Year*, Coetzee criticizes this very policy, pitting it against American practice of indefinite detention on islands such as Guantanamo Bay. Sue Kossew talks about the oblivion of Australia's own status as sharing a state of shame with the Capitalist world, emulating it in a desperate bid to cut a mark in international power politics.[55]. With ideas of the Australian nation state preferring monoculturalism and homogeneity, the liberal democratic citizenship model is "at best assimilationist and at worst, a racist model of identity", remark Lyons and Russel.[56]

From the 1970s, revisionist histories have uncovered Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal acknowledgement of Aboriginal custodianship of land from 1788. History wars ensued with alternative histories foregrounding Aboriginal settlement and rights which began to challenge settler sovereignty and rights of discovery. Questions also began to be raised about the legitimacy of settler hegemonic rule, occupation of land based on vacant or under-utilised land of the aborigines, and denial of citizenship and welfare to Aborigines, relegated to reserves or dispossessed altogether. Even with sustained activism it was only in 1992 that the Mabo judgement recognizing native title was passed. The controversial notion of "terra nullius" which enabled land of the aborigines coming to be owned by the settler or government was finally rejected by the High Court in Queensland. The successive Wik judgement of 1996 questioned the validity of leased land holdings in Australia. Thus a reconciliation process has been set in motion, which still has a long way to go in the restoration of rights and justice for the original inhabitants of Australia.

J. M. Coetzee's later novels, ostensibly set in Australia, tend a little towards pedantry. Elleke Boehmer likes to read Coetzee's later writings as "Australias of the mind."[57] What is Australia? Australia, then, is a construct rather than a physical space. If not utopia, if not new found land, Australia could still be the land of fresh starts, where "one gets to start zero". The family of Marijana in *Slow Man*, originally from the Balkans, have tried to make just that, notwithstanding that her husband who used to be an inventor in his native country is now a worker in a factory and Marijana herself, a restorer of art, supports her family now by working as a health caregiver. The latent irony does not escape her employer Paul Rayment. As one starts from scratch, one is expected to have left behind all the baggage of one's past life, including one's identity.

Though his legal status as an avowed citizen counters his state of "exile" reading Coetzee as an exile would be in keeping with his ethics, his philosophy which undercut his writings. His refusal to "go with the flow" or be assimilated in any way into the culture of his place of residence is evident in his shirking of meat at his friend's dining table at Texas, just as well as in his joining protests against the war in Vietnam. His move to Australia several decades later has not made him relent his uncompromising stance. His observations regarding Australia's foreign, and refugee policies, through the diary entries of JC, equating Baxter facility to Guantanamo Bay, reveal his steel. He fears Australia is fast falling in line with superpowers such as the USA, given to hegemonic, neocolonial practices. Kristeva qualifies the exile in *Powers of Horror* as "the one by

whom the abject exists is... a deject who places (himself), separates (himself), and strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging... , A deviser of territories, languages, works, the deject never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines—for they are constituted of a anon-object, the abject—constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is, in short, a stray,,, And the more he strays, the more he is saved."[58] Going by Kristeva, J.M. Coetzee can aptly be called a "stray" who takes up residence in different parts of the world, remaking himself, building life anew, in a bid to "save himself" perhaps?

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THE HEART OF THE MATTER: ABJECTION

According to Michel de Certeau, writing is a cadaver that seeks to contain the dead remains of what has already been lived/ has already occurred.[1] Most postmodernists view language as the matrix that seeks to hold together whatever we call civilization: it is what promises, and sometimes delivers. Language, in that sense, is the prison of the body. While it expresses, gives form to utterances, thoughts, it represses, eliminates what is not permissible in polite society. Language participates, or rather, is the main agent in the centuries-old conspiracy to imprison the body, reject it in its wholeness. The body is thus systematically segregated from discussions of intellectual and political life, reduced to mere biological entity; yet paradoxically, it is the body that must bear the brunt of conflict of political, social, economic interests. Hannah Arendt observes in *The Human Condition* that for the Greeks, body comes to represent that mere requirement of biological life which the political space, founded on speech and action, banishes from its domain.[2] Again, Giorgio Agamben notes that for the Greeks from whom the concepts of Western ethics and politics are drawn, there was no term for the concept of 'life', itself or for the living body: "For the Homeric Greeks, the term *Soma* which appears in later epochs as a good equivalent to our term 'life', originally meant only corpse, almost as of life in itself, which for the Greeks was broken down into a plurality of forms and elements, appeared only as a unity after death…"[3] Thus the body in itself had always been something to be rejected, denied, subdued. That is what accounts for its abjection.

In the order of things, the body is never granted sovereignty. It is necessarily subject to certain sociocultural orders. But there are many that fail to fall in line. Such bodies are contentious; they threaten order and harmony; they have dangerous tendencies. Many bodies become tabooed, sometimes by virtue of their tabooed actions (Freud), at others by conditions beyond their control. The integrity of such bodies is called into question because they do not conform, they violate borders, they subvert the "natural order of things". There is an old analogy at work here. Since the human body in particular had been held as a microcosm where all things/organs work according to their designated place, a malfunctioning human body seems to represent the order of the universe thrown out of gear. These bodies are rejected by the larger macrocosms of society or the universe: they are peripheral, belonging neither inside nor wholly outside these borders of city/ nation/ socio-cultural community. It is because bodies tend to veer towards plurality, tend to "indicate a world beyond themselves", that they must be contained, unified, integrated. The ones that stray are stigmatized. These lives are not protected as they do not subscribe to these larger entities: nothing is expected of them in the form of duties, neither do they have rights. They are forgotten abject beings, the sooner disposed of, the better. Suffering, incarceration, insanity, physical difference and social maladjustment, crime, homelessness, anti-establishment attitude and deeds—all serve to render the body abject.

What postmodern writers as J.M. Coetzee seek to do is to reclaim the banished body from its long exile. In this sense, Coetzee's writing is a form of return: return of the repressed, of a memory or a forgotten past. In most of his early novels, a violent past is relived. In that sense he evokes the same logic that Freud's psychoanalysis is based on. In Coetzee's case, it is not the resurfacing of an individual's past, but that of an entire people, of a collective memory, through

an individual's life and actions. It is an exorcism of the ghosts of the past, a penance observed for crimes committed long ago. As Michel de Certeau finds, this past is what is repressed as filth, expelled by the present which dominates the mindscape. The past is, and yet is not what constitutes the present, it must forever be put aside, forgotten, denied, not allowed to occupy the clean space of the present. J. M. Coetzee's work is an effort to reconstruct that past by recovering it from its abjection, blurring the borders between the past and the present so that one cannot be distinguished from the other. De Certeau goes a step further and calls history "uncanny" and "cannibalistic", one that is built on the consumption of bodies. Coetzee's writings often occupy that uncanny space that threatens to submerge the present. While being atavistic on the one hand, he also puts events in the recent past and contemporary present into the bodyscape, as I call it. He uses the abject/ abjected body as a trope in all of his fiction, letting it dominate the narrative, in a powerful subversion.

What is the abject body? What is abjection? This is perhaps best explored in Julia Kristeva's essay, "On Abjection" from *The Powers of Horror:*

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced... the abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I.[4]

She clarifies in the same chapter, "Abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger."[5] In other words, the abject contains within itself an ambiguity. The abject is what, in spite of being inside, contains elements of the outside. The abject is what is shunned as foreign, what is not internalized. It is what does not respect outlines, what threatens borders. The abject is what comes from within but is never owned as such. Hence the abject arouses disgust, horror. It constantly presents a threat to the subject ("I") that it might take over, subsume the "I" into itself. The disgust or horror of the abject is not so much a reaction to the unfamiliar or uncanny, but a refusal to accept the familiar as such. Martha Nussbaum identifies disgust as a refusal or inability to accept the animality or mortality of our (human) bodies. She says, "the core objects of disgust are reminders of mortality and animality, seen as pollutants to the human."[6] The horror towards the abject is therefore a denial of the bodily, of the animal, mortal body. For Nussbaum, it is the refusal to deign as familiar the familiar, a deliberate alienation and separation and cultivation of disgust towards peoples, resultant of "magical thinking" about contamination and purity that influences hate crimes. It certainly influenced Eugenicist experiments conducted by the Third Reich. They covertly conducted sex-determination and other such tests on fetuses leading to prenatal termination of "anomalous" or "malformed" babies. As Agamben observes in *Homo Sacer*, the very pogrom of euthanasia initiated against the incurably ill by the Third Reich served little eugenic or economic purpose, as the old people and the very young children so condemned were in no state of reproducing, anyway. The program was actually "an exercise of the sovereign power to decide on bare life in the horizon of the new biopolitical vocation of the National Socialist state."[7] If each superego demands an abject then J M Coetzee's protagonists represent the collective

superego in a given context and willingly assume the role of the abject, thereby empowering the traditional abject into the dominant voice. novels are set in certain sociopolitical contexts and provide powerful critiques of colonialist, imperialist, racist power-structures which inevitably function as the superegos dominant in such regimes, exercizing sovereign power over "bare life" through incarceration, concentration or isolation, penal action and corresponding humiliation. Whose are these "bare lives"?

What Agamben identifies as "sacred life", or "life that may be killed but not sacrificed", or more precisely, lives whose killing cannot be prosecuted, Zizek sums up: *homo sacer* designated in Roman law, one who could be killed with impunity and could therefore not be considered as a sacrifice. Today it has come to denote exclusion, he observes, and includes terrorists, refugees, as well as those at the receiving end of humanitarian aid.[8] The principle of exclusion is intricately bound up with vulnerability of the bodies/ beings that suffer. Certain lives and certain bodies are deemed more dispensable with than others. More often than not, these are vulnerable bodies; hence they are not accorded rights (by means of which they can be entitled to protection of the state and its machineries), so that their suffering and destruction do not become the state's liabilities. Theirs are what Judith Butler calls "precarious life".[9] She says that the livable, protectable life is defined/ formulated by a normative prescription of what is human, whose life is valuable, which is itself an exclusionary process. Their legal and political status remain suspended; not only can they not take their lives for granted, their lives are perpetually precarious, theirs are "unlivable lives."[10] In this context, she considers the condition of those under the unique policy of "Indefinite Detention", for instance, the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay who are "not considered 'subjects' protected by international law, are not entitled to regular

trials, to lawyers, to due process."[11] Wrenching subjecthood away from a group of people is a two-pronged weapon, as Butler identifies: "a lost and injured sovereignty becomes reanimated through rules that allocate final decisions about life and death to the executive branch or to officials with no elected status and bound by no constitutional constraints… The dehumanization effected by "indefinite detention" makes use of an ethnic frame, for conceiving who will be human, and who will not."[12]

In *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) J M Coetzee's initials-sake and professional counterpart, JC, expresses "strong opinions" on the treatment of refugees by the Australian government. He likens its treatment of illegal immigrants/ infiltrators/ asylum- seekers in its detention centre, Baxter *facility* (Coetzee's emphasis) to that of those incarcerated on Guantanamo Bay by the American government. Their condition is also similar to those transported to penal colonies in previous times. Both "target masculine honour, masculine dignity", he summarizes.

> In the case of Guantanamo Bay it is intended that when prisoners at last emerge from incarceration they will be mere shells of men, psychically wrecked; in the worst cases, Baxter is achieving the same effect.[13]

The destruction of 'masculinity', 'feminization' is a necessary condition of abjection, and of expulsion from, rejection by, the *polis*, as Adriana Cavarero astutely notes, and as I bring up in the context of Magda's state of banishment later in this chapter. Tracing the attitude towards corporeality since Greek antiquity, and invoking the body of Sophocles' Antigone, Cavarero says,

> corporeality as such, in the symbolic representation of the two sexes and as the fleshly component of existence, is assigned overwhelmingly to women. To men falls the more glorious component of the logos: the only characteristic considered to be specifically human... (T)he body expelled from the polis is, in its full and true substance, a female body.[14]

In this context she talks of two bodies: the one banished is essentially female, uncontrolled in its borders, unregulated, "symbiotic and obscure" and the one welcomed into the polis, a male body, "largely static and bloodless" regulated to the diktats of reason.

It is paradoxical that in spite of human vulnerability being the very foundation of human rights, it is the most vulnerable who are ultimately denied rights by exclusionary politics. This exclusion works best when individuals are segregated from community, particularly excluded from the nation-state, which acts as a guarantor of rights, freedoms and what not. Refugees, prisoners of war, typically fit this description for they belong nowhere, they have no claim to the nation-state. The very ambiguity of their status renders them abject. The Vietnamese, the Hottentots, the Namaquas, the barbarians in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the Bantus, native South Africans: all comprise the enigmatic Other through history and Coetzee's fiction, that, even when 'penetrated", cannot be assimilated/ incorporated within the self. The Other is recognized as alien in laws as early as Mosaic: "love thy neighbor as thyself" corroborating the fact that the neighbor is indeed, not loved, but kept separate, "apart". One must transcend one's natural instincts of not loving one's neighbour and go out of one's way to love him. Zizek observes,

> When the Old Testament enjoins you to love and respect thy neighbor, this does not refer to your imaginary semblable/ double, but to the neighbor qua traumatic Thing…Judaism opens up a tradition in which an alien kernel forever persists my neighbour—the neighbour remains an inert, impenetrable, enigmatic presence that hystericizes me.[15]

The camp is by its very definition, a protected settlement that seeks to segregate those residing within it from the elements outside it. In fact, more than enclosing people within, they are intended to keep the "outside" out. They are supposed to function as fortresses of a sort, wherein the inhabitants may feel secure and be safe from perceived threats to life and property from the 'outside'. But when people are forcibly put in camps, camps become prohibitive, restrictive areas which serve as segregated enclosures for the outcast. They cease to participate in the common public life and are in a sense ripped off from the larger macrobody of society, rendered abject. Their freedoms are severely curbed, they must exist with the minimum of bodily wants. Committed to a life of the ghetto, they are set apart from the world at large. The 'inside', therefore becomes the 'outside'. Thus camps are wherein the deprived, the homeless are confined, where even basic human dignity and rights are denied them. In *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben cites Foucault who talks of society's great need to 'contain the outside'. Throughout history and across spaces, camps, particularly, have housed the bodies/ lives that can be disposed of at will, that Judith Butler calls ungrievable lives, "ungrievable" because they have "fallen outside" the predefined limits of the human, as in the case of Jews in the eyes of the Third Reich, as in the case of present day Arab peoples who do not subscribe to Western Christian culture. These are lives that are considered offensive, that are best not lived, that are annihilated at the will of others. These lives are therefore perennially precarious, always vulnerable to violence and

death. Judith Butler brings it down to a question of whose lives are 'real' and probes the rationale behind the violence inflicted on such lives:

> Lives are supported and maintained differently, and there are radically different ways in which human physical vulnerability is distributed across the globe. Certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be radically sufficient to mobilize the forces of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as "grievable"…I am referring not only to humans not regarded as humans, and thus to a restrictive conception of the human that is based upon their exclusion. It is not a matter of a simple entry of the excluded into an established ontology, but an insurrection at the level of ontology, a critical opening up of the questions, what is real? Whose lives are real? How might reality be remade? Those who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization. What, then, is the relation between violence and those lives considered as "unreal"? Does violence effect that unreality? Does violence take place on the condition of that unreality? If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never "were", and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object. The derealization of the "Other" means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral…[16]

Coetzee's fiction astutely focuses on violence-induced abjection: abjection as being reduced to the body, becoming solely the body, void of trappings. Through the assertion of the body, the "unreal" is made into the "real". The abject is realized, retrieved from the realm of the unreal. Thus we encounter subjects/ bodies that deliberately embrace abjection, stigma, sometimes in a conscious bid to atone for wrongs of the collective whole, at others as a mark of protest and deliberate rejection of the existing order of things. Elizabeth Curren says to Vercueil in *Age of Iron* (1990):

> A crime was committed long ago…So long ago that I was born onto it. It is part of my inheritance. It is part of me, I am part of it. Like every crime it had its price. That price, I used to think, would have to be paid in shame: in a life of death and shame. [17]

Shame is what is supposed to arise from a sense of inadequacy within the self, or when one believes one has transgressed the limits of permissibility. Shame isolates, disrupts communication. In fact, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that "like a stigma, shame is itself a form of communication" through its behavioral manifestations, which "express a desire to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge."[18] Martha Nussbaum agrees that shame is a "productive and potentially creative emotion".[19] J. M. Coetzee's protagonists cultivate shame, embrace shame as modes of communicating dissent, and to deliberately excommunicate themselves, deliberately shun identification with, cut themselves off from what they consider shameful behavior on part of their fellow society. Shame can, therefore, be used as a powerful political weapon. Historically, non-violent tactics like Gandhi's Satyagraha, aimed at inducing shame, have secured political objectives that years of violent struggle have failed to. It becomes the sole mode of protest when all else has failed: as in present day India when Manipuri women from different organizations protested nude against the torture, rape and murder of a fellow woman by

the armed forces in 2004. It was not just a protest against a singular incident; it was the desperation of a populace towards an apathetic government that turned a blind eye to the thousands of rapes committed by the armed forces vested with "Special Powers". Shame is paradoxically, both individuating and contagious, Kosofsky Sedgwick observes. It is this quality of shame that political activism hinges on, as does Coetzee's fiction.

> One of the strangest features of shame, but perhaps also the one that offers the most conceptual leverage for political projects, is the way bad treatment of someone else, someone else's stigma, embarrassment, debility, bad smell or strange behavior, seemingly having nothing to do with me, can so easily flood me— assuming I am a shame-prone person— with this sensation whose very suffusiveness seems to delineate precise, individual outlines in the most isolating ways imaginable.[20]

This seems to be the driving idea behind J.M. Coetzee's early novels. Bodily shame, the evocation of disgust through the blurring of the borders of the body, bring Coetzee's characters to the fringes of civilization as well as to the limits of the human, so to say. But bodily shame is only the symbolic garb of the deeper festering shame within: the shame shared with fellow people for acts that shame humanity at large. In Coetzee's fiction, however, collective shame is not shared but is suffered vicariously, concentrated in a single scapegoat figure. "When some men suffer unjustly…it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it," says the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980).[21] In this chapter, I study abjection of the body and its implications in the two novellas of *Dusklands* (1974), *The Vietnam Project* and *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *In the Heart of the Country (1977) and Disgrace (1999).*

The Vietnam Project

A three-pronged method has consistently been followed by First World countries, imperialist powers in earlier times, against their perceived opponents: encamp, torture, obliterate. The U.S. turned an entire nation, Vietnam, into a large concentration camp, systematically wreaking atrocities on the country. It became virtually a perennial war-zone, its very own people reduced to the status of refugees. Eugene Dawn, the protagonist of *The Vietnam Project (Dusklands:*1974*),* a mythographer by training and profession, finds himself in the grip of a nervous breakdown as he delves into the facts and figures of the American onslaught on Vietnam. Morally, ethically, humanly, he cannot bring himself to believe in the task that he is committed to. He is finally driven insane. But insanity is for him a refuge, a place from where he can shut out the barbarity, the monstrosity that the Vietnam Project is, in its reality. The ostensible purpose of the project is telling: "mythography". It intends to distort truth into make-believe accounts that glorify the sovereign voice and justify its actions. Working on the very project comes a sort of refined torture for Dawn. If insanity means the blurring of lines between appearance and reality, between truth and fiction, then Eugene Dawn was headed for it the moment he was engaged. As he pores over details in that bastion of American righteousness, he comes to interrogate his own loyalties, his own humanity. Even though not explicitly interrogated by the powers that be, Dawn's engagement in the project is enough to emotionally batter him to a pulp. He concentrates in his own body the collective guilt of America. His

insanity is an apt response to the shame he feels at the activities in which he is complicit by virtue of not only being a tiny cog in the huge Vietnam Project but by dint of being an American citizen. It is the insanity of the sustained American onslaught on Vietnam, the real Vietnam Project that is reflected in Eugene Dawn's body.

The insane body is perhaps the most forbidden of existences: it breaches all boundaries…physical, mental, societal, political, territorial. Coetzee's repeated use of the trope of insanity pushes his 'bodies' further into abjection. Mental disorder also particularly invites stigma and stigma is the preserve of the abject, and is not without its sexual politics. Insanity feminizes, and thereby further pushes a body into abjection. Insanity, hysteria, irrationality, have long been believed to be the "female condition". Elaine Showalter relates the case of Pinel's unchaining of the inmates of the asylums of Saltpetriere and Bicetre at the time of the French revolution, coinciding with the freeing of prisoners at the Bastille,[22] pointing out that in an engraving depicting the event, it is only female inmates who are shown, though the two asylums housed both men and women, (indeed, men were freed weeks earlier than the women, being "less insane" than women). It gives the impression and indeed goes on to freeze the common misconception that it is women who are prone to madness. Their porous, amorphous bodies are supposedly susceptible to all kinds of inexplicable maladies, demonic possession, insanity, the source of most being their wombs (*hyster*: hysteria). Through this feminization, Eugene Dawn becomes closely aligned with the Vietnamese, who are typically "Orientalised" as a "feminine" people. The pictures of abuse of Vietnamese men and women by American soldiers that he carries with him (bringing to mind the photographs that surfaced on the internet, of abuse at Abu Ghraib, during and after America's war on Iraq) drive home the point of "masculine" conquest of

the "feminine" Vietnamese population further, the master driving the slave, the human riding the animal, impressing upon him deeply. As always in war, sexual abuse of women becomes the primary weapon of assault on the "enemy". Virginia Woolf in her *Three Guineas,* a critique of war, argues that war has a gender: it is a masculine project, a male enterprise.[23] Assaulting women has the added dimension of "feminizing" the men who are not "masculine" enough to protect their women. Through sexual assaults more than any other kind, the "enemy" is rendered abject.

Eugene Dawn's insanity is prompted by anguish and shame at his inadvertent complicity in the crimes against Vietnam. It is an intense personal reaction to the genocidal exercises carried out over a decade, with false justifications, over a people perceived as "enemy" by the American imagination. *A Short History of the Vietnam War*[24] chronicles that "Enemy" was a word frequently used to refer to the Viet Cong forces, along with the epithets "shrewd", "cunning", and so on, all of which "criminalizes the enemy".[25] They imply that the enemy is an invisible yet organized, malevolent force that might take one unawares. Thus perceived, the very word arouses fear and hostility towards this "generally invisible" Other. Coetzee's protagonists respond to abjection of the Other through abjection of the self. This is possible only through identification with the Other, possible on part of the sensitive individual. By aligning himself with the "Enemy", the feminized, other, enigmatic "enemy" through insanity, by signing off from the "polis" as it were, Eugene Dawn secures his non-participation in the pogrom. To quote Soshana Felman, madness "is quite the opposite of rebellion. Madness is an impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation…"[26] Through insanity his body, and in particular, the things he says and the things

he writes, veer out of control. He must be reined in before the secrets spill out. He breaches the boundaries of the masculine American self and spills over into the territory of the Other, the Other, that must be kept separate at all counts. This renders his position further ambiguous: he fails to fall in line with the chauvinistic aggressive approach demanded of an American officer and becomes an embarrassment to his employers. He stands condemned of kidnapping his own son: charges are slapped on him that ensure a long incarceration, away from the polis, from any social activity. Nothing brings about abjection more than commission of crime, especially those that violate the so called laws of nature. Eugene Dawn's apparent attempt to hurt his little son seals his fate in the sanatorium. His predicament can be best understood in the words of Kelly Oliver as she reads Kristeva:

> Successfully negotiating and renegotiating abjection sets up the precarious border between Self and Other; but when the subject remains stuck at the level of abjection confusion between Self and Other can be both threatening to the extreme of phobia and arousing to the extreme of perversion...[27]

The situation is vividly captured in Martin Scorcese's film *Apocalypse Now* (1979),[28] a film that weds 19th century colonial imperialism to twentieth century "interventionist" exercises, one that sets Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* in Vietnam under the American onslaught. It, too, documents the narrator/ protagonist's systematic collapse of sanity as he is drawn further and further into the quagmire of American incursions.

The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee

Shame binds together Eugene Dawn, the magistrate, Elizabeth Curren--- all for wrongs that have been committed by people they must call their own. A "crime committed long ago" is captured in *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,* the second novella in *Dusklands* (1974). The narrative, which claims to be a true account / travelogue of an expedition into the interiors of Africa, historicizes the body of the sojourner/ colonizer as well as the colonized. The events related are in themselves gruesome, and bear testimony to the actual atrocities that were carried out on the bodies of African peoples. Jacobus Coetzee relates with relish how the Afrikaners had managed to trap a couple of the elusive Bushmen and strung them up alive, wounded and bleeding on poles for all to see, and ward off further nightly raids by groups of Bushmen. Interestingly, they are continually likened to beasts: they must be "hunted down like jackals." Along with their lack 3of personal hygiene are added their (reportedly "barbaric") way of treating animals: cutting them open and emptying their entrails while the miserable creatures are still alive. This apparently justifies any amount of cruelty against the Bushmen who must be captured with guile and made spectacles of. It escapes frontiersmen like Jacobus Coetzee that they treat animals with no less cruelty, and while Bushmen hunt for food, Coetzee, a professional hunter, hunts for profit. Violence must be perpetrated on the Other to reaffirm the self. His constant companion through his expeditions is his gun: alone in the world, it bears sole testimony to there being an Other out there that one must contend with. This lack of self-assurance, this unease, insecurity in the wilderness is what the "civilized" man is plagued with:

> The gun stands for the hope that there exists that which is other than oneself. The gun is our last defence against isolation within the travelling sphere. The gun is our mediator with the world and therefore our savior…The gun saves us from the fear that all life is

> within us. It does so by laying at our feet all the evidence we need of a dying and therefore a living world.[29]

Possession of the gun distinguishes the colonizer from the colonized, the master from the slave, the "civilized from the "barbaric": it is a phallic symbol vested with the power to obliterate. Hence the gun is as much an assertion of one's power as an assurance that one is not alone: that there is an Other one must contend with. The gun, therefore, acts as a protector against abjection: something the colonist's superego is constantly threatened with. The gun is, however, also an admission of vulnerability. Jacobus Coetzee contemplates the virtues of the gun, without which "taming" the Bushman or even the Hottentot would have been impossible.

> Savages do not have guns. This is the effective meaning of savagery, which we may define as enslavement to space, as one speaks obversely of the explorer's mastery of space…He threatens to have a history in which I shall be a term. Such is the material basis of the malady of the master's soul. So often, waking or dreaming, has he lived through the approach of the savage that this has become an ideal form of the life of penetration…[30]

The life of the Boer frontiersman is typically described in corporeal terms as "the life of penetration" into the territory/ body-politic of the 'Other' conveniently pinned down as "savage", who for lack of a gun, cannot go exploring and is enslaved to space. The "savage" is perceived as a threat, and yet, without the presence of the "savage" other, there is no "being"[31] for the Self- - the self of the frontiersman, colonizer, hunter. Exploring with the intention to conquer combines both desire and dread of the Other. What revolts, also oddly attracts. Yet this desire is not driven so much towards assimilation as towards keeping the Other close but separate.

Only through complete sublimation can the threat of the Other be erased. This holds true for all narratives that involve discussion of the native or foreign Other, as the case may be, including that of Jacobus Coetzee. For Jacobus Coetzee, violence is not just the means to an (unjust, colonist) end, it is also his mode of assertion: that he exists, triumphant, of consequence. Hence the violence to which he subjects a straggling lamb when no one is looking, upon reaching his homestead after the difficult, lonely trek back from the land of the Great Namaquas. Violence, Walter Benjamin asserts, is always to make or preserve a law. Jacobus Coetzee acts as a god: a lawgiver, creating his own terms as he proceeds along, calling everything a game, not a task, so that he does not have to adhere to any established rule, but can make them as he goes along for him. The massacre of his own former Hottentot men, cruel and inhuman, testifies to their abjection in the face of their master's immense power over them. Any degree of violence could be inflicted on them, they could be tortured to any extent and there was nothing and nobody to stop Jacobus Coetzee; he himself is struck by the fact, the extent of the abjection of slaves: lives which were ungrievable, of no value whatsoever:

> All were inadequate. There was nothing that could be impressed on these bodies, nothing that could be torn from them or forced through their orifices, that would be commensurate with the desolate infinity of my power over them.[32]

Jacobus Coetzee's statement sums up the essence of "sovereign power" acting upon "bare life" through centuries, through continents, through cultures. The Hottentots' position was that of any slave in the history of South Africa or America, of any inmate in a concentration camp, be it that of the Third Reich, of Abu Ghraib, or of Guantanamo Bay: the absolute abject. The very

precariousness of the lives of the Hottentots, their absolute helplessness, the sense of "their lives being in the hands of another" as Butler defines precariousness in *Frames of War* (in this case, Coetzee's) is what instigates absolute, annihilating violence. It anticipates the Holocaust, the dropping of the Atom bomb, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the numerous genocidal 'missions' that are carried out the world over, with the express objective of "cleansing" or "punishing."

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The racism entrenched deep in the European colonist's psyche draws upon two things: dirt and disgust. The abject is considered "dirty". Dirt is here less of a physical substance than an abstract notion. Purification campaigns that have "sought to cleanse bodies and convert the unwashed to middle-class habits," Masquelier says, "have often served paradoxically, to distinguish the unfit, the poor or the ethnic or religious other."[33] She says this is particularly evident in colonial societies where, "in contexts ranging from living spaces and childrearing to scientific racism, from sanitation works to the codification of customary laws, representatives of the various european empires attempted to classify, cleanse and control the territories they were assigned to administer…. *Cleanliness, here, became central to boundary maintenance* (italics mine).[34] The other/ neighbour is who we actually want to keep separate and never really mingle with. We fear that they are "unclean": they do not take regular baths, are dirty, carry diseases and smell. This "smell", the bodily proof of bestial otherness, helps one identify the Other as separate from oneself. More often than not, they are reduced to just numbers, ripped of identities, selves. William Ian Miller in *The Anatomy of Disgust* identifies "Disgust" as a key player in the civilizing process, "working as it does to internalize norms of cleanliness, reserve and restraint so

as to help create the desire for a private sphere distinct from the public world of shame and humiliation".[35]

The narrative thrives from the beginning on Jacobus Coetzee's sense of superiority and triumph over the "savages": the Bushmen, the Hottentots. He regards them as "dirty", "unwashed", "disgusting". Hence it hits him the harder when he has to bear the stigma of sickness…violent indigestion followed by the development of a painful carbuncle. He initially suspects that the carbuncle might be a cancer, though skeptical whether cancers grew in between the buttocks. H orror, pain, fear of his compromised pride and body leads him to develop an attitude of victimhood—as one tormented by the Namaquas. The allegory that the carbuncle, cancerous or not, proffers is however, lost on Jacobus Coetzee: that he is the cancer, the corrosive intruder in the heart of the country who must be ripped out. Throughout J. M. Coetzee's writings, cancers, carbuncles, have been persistent body metaphors. By their very description, they are the things the body abjects: they are alien insiders that sicken and cause the entire body to mutate, turning the whole body alien. The carbuncle festers, churning Jacobus Coetzee's rage and frustration to an insane vendetta. The very paradoxical fact that a putrid, decaying thing should have a life of its own, growing parasitically, drawing sustenance from his own body, arouses horror and disgust in him. His condition acts as a leveller: it obliterates the divides between the superior, "masculine" colonizer and the "feminine" colonized. To his horror, he finds that the borders between him and the very people he held in contempt have been breached.

Jacobus Coetzee's sickness conflates the private and the public, exposing him to shame. Graphic descriptions of the travails of his body reveal the extent to which his compromised position consumed him. Housed as he is in one of the "menstruation huts" meant for women in their flux, his body is symbolically feminized. Here he comes to be associated with the "dirt", "pollution" and taboo that menstruating women in many cultures over the world are considered to carry. [36] (The female body, perceived for centuries as what was not meant to be: as an aberration, a lack, a deformity, emerging from an incompletely formed embryo is, by its very existence, abject.) Disgust and aversion towards his own abjection crushes his own self-confidence and the colonist's superego he nurtured with such aggression. As if to reassure himself of his superior status, he subjects his faithful servant Jan Klawer to the humiliating, menial tasks of helping him defecate and clean his backside, in addition to his usual job of cleaning his slop bucket. All this he refuses to see as incidental to his condition, blaming the Namaquas for the indignities he has to endure, and the supposed defiance of his men. Of the many "lies" Klawer gives him as reasons for his other Hottentot men not visiting him at his hut, the last convinces him: that they were made to shun the huts at the other side of the stream, one of which housed him. His abjection, that he became a stock for the Namaqua children to tease and laugh at, his inconsequentiality not only to the Namaquas, but also to his own "men", the "tame" Hottentots who accompanied him on the sojourn, is beyond his forbearance. Further, the fact that he meant nothing whatsoever to the Namaquas, a people that he held in utter contempt, his sickness having rendered him inconsequential as an elephant hunter/ raider/ colonizer/ conqueror deals a blow to his "superego" which he must salvage through the savage assaults on and annihilation of the Namaqua people.

Contempt and pity are close allies of disgust cultivated by the classes that consider themselves superior, writes Miller:

> the high fall back on disgust for the low. When the high are securely high the low are objects of contempt or pity. Once the low rattle their chains or are granted political equality the high's complacent contempt gives way to a disgust prompted by a horror of the low...[37]

It is perhaps this emasculating horror that drives him to extreme, premeditated violence. To follow Miller again,

> disgust… operates in a kind of miasmic gloom, in the realm of horror, in regions of dark unbelievability and never too far away from the body's, and by extension, the self's interiors. Disgust deals with harms that sicken us in the telling, things for which there could be no plausible claim of right: rape, child abuse, torture, genocide, predatory murder and maiming.[38]

Jacobus Coetzee stops at none of these acts. The very precariousness of the lives of the Hottentots, their absolute helplessness, the sense of "their lives being in the hands of another" as Butler defines precariousness in *Frames of War*[39], is what instigates crushing violence. This sort of indulgence in total, irresponsible, annihilating violence-- penetration without assimilation-- amounts to a kind of perverse insanity. He becomes the singular prototype of the hunter/destroyer that successive colonial regimes over the world have produced: be it Colonel Joll, that representative of imperialistic authority in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), set in another time, or the Nationalist Party that made Apartheid official and crushed children's protests with iron fists.

Waiting for the Barbarians

In colonized societies, in Apartheid states, societies that practice segregation in various forms, along lines of race, religion, caste and class bodies are shunted from the inside to the outside: plain dwellers, original inhabitants, natives become mountain people moving surreptitiously, "outsiders", settlers, invaders become rightful occupants, insiders. How the inside becomes the outside is well illustrated in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the powerful postmodernist allegory which made Coetzee's name. An aging magistrate in charge of administering a small settlement in a colony is supplanted by military personnel who have 'orders' to rid the settlement of 'barbarian' incursions. As the settlement turns into a concentration camp wherein native people are interned and tortured, along with the nomadic 'barbarians', he is made to confront the helplessness of his situation and the ignominy and shame of colonial conquest. The 'frontiering' Europeans themselves reside within a "camp" or settlement that was administered by the magistrate/ narrator, a civil administrator, from whose charge Colonel Joll, a military man, takes over. This camp doubles up as a defense, with a concentration of Europeans in it fiercely guarding domestic lifestyle against perceived attacks by "barbarian" marauders. It even has walls with gates like fortresses or ancient citadels that regulate the flow of outsiders and insiders. Upon detection of the 'barbarians'' entry into their camp, Colonel Joll orders their capture along with the fisherfolk living on the outskirts of the European settlement. Their internment and persecution subsequently turns into a spectacle.

Each of the camps then become both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ mingling the native and the settler. The first batch of captives that Col. Joll brings into the barracks are defenseless fisher folk who eke out their living in the most non-aggressive of ways. The incarcerated bodies become a site for an obscene, wanton, heady show of power that can scarcely be called a penal action but is rather intended to terrorize, instill a sense of awe and set preventive examples. Among them are a father and son and daughter, accused of being “barbarian spies”. Serial humiliation follows, with lack of privacy, people singled out and tortured to extract ‘information’. This is an old routine that wreaks psychological havoc. When a person is singled out for torture or punishment, the person comes to believe in her condemnation. She, alone, is to be punished, she alone is guilty; there is no comfort in numbers. Punishment inflicts abjection, in a two-pronged fashion. It singles out the condemned person, separating the person from others, thereby severing his existence from a larger body-politic, the collective social body. Through abjection, guilt is imposed; it drives home the point, “I am punished; therefore I am guilty” (as aptly demonstrated by American assaults on Vietnam, Iraq, among others). After her father and brother, it is the barbarian girl’s turn to be tortured and humiliated. Despite the howls of pain of the ones being tortured driving the magistrate to his wit’s end, he is powerless to stop it. When she is ultimately maimed, partially blinded and freed, her people have left the ‘camp’ and she is left to fend for herself by begging on the streets. Because of her stint with Europeans, she is shunned by her tribe. Because she has been stigmatized, she is now an outcast among her own people (since the well- being and integration of the superbody, the macrobody of her tribe, is disturbed by the maimed body). That is when the magistrate picks her up off the streets and houses her in his quarters. What follows is an odd ritual of cleansing and nursing, symbolizing a moral cleansing of the magistrate himself.

As postulated by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, 'justice' in the case of punishment was hardly commensurate with the crime, the measure and degree of 'punishment' by far exceeding the 'crime' itself. In a complete reversal of notions of poetic justice, thus, Truth is not the cause for the 'effect' that is 'torture, which is how codes of Justice are supposed to function, but the 'effect' that the 'cause', torture, is expected to yield. To effect this 'Truth', capture and incarceration of bodies becomes necessary, so that truth, or 'history' can be written, virtually through the tortured body, 'the body in pain', to borrow Elaine Scarry's title. Production of bodily pain therefore becomes a definitive means to yield a conditioned, condemning "truth". Under torture, one will yield anything, will admit to anything. The magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* recalls Colonel Joll's theorizing of the processes of getting at truth: it is not "truth" till the screw has been turned to the very last end. Only the version produced under the utmost pain qualifies as "truth" for him. For him, truth is a matter of degrees, perfectly in proportion to the degree of pain inflicted. Throughout her stay with the magistrate, through which he attempts to restore her health and self esteem, she is aloof and indifferent to what goes on with her body. It is as if the torture routine carried out by Colonel Joll has estranged her from her own body: she has disowned her body and does not care anymore what happens to it. Elaine Scarry in her in-depth study, *The Body in Pain*[40] enumerates several aspects of the body under interrogation and/or incarceration. Bodily pain is an inalterable, irredeemable fact. It is also an experience that can only be comprehended if felt at first hand--- it cannot be articulated in words, cannot be conveyed in any way. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, when the magistrate repeatedly asks the barbarian girl what happened to her in the torturer's chamber, what made her go partially blind, what they 'did' to her, she has no answer.

Scarry points out that a dimension of physical pain is “its ability to destroy language, the power of verbal objectification, a major source of our self-extension, a vehicle through which the pain could be lifted out into the world and eliminated.”[41] Along with the body, then, the torturer targets speech, too, so that the pain he inflicts remains indissoluble, unresolved, unarticulated. It cannot be carried over to the outside but must remain concentrated in the body of the sufferer. Hence, despite his several attempts to feel what the girl went through, to empathize with her suffering, the magistrate fails miserably to comprehend, because the channels of communication are also closed to pain. The girl does not reply, because she knows no language that can accommodate or convey her pain. As Scarry says, pain has no reference point. It is as if the pain stands by itself, a universal feeling, not particularized in her body. By denigrating her pain while cajoling her to reveal what went on in the torturer's chamber, saying “pain is only pain”, the magistrate reveals his ignorance and naivete. Pain has condemned her body to shame, and no amount of cleansing and nursing can wipe off the shame she has been subjected to. Further, pain carries a “double experience of agency”, in Scarry's words.[42] Scarry illustrates,

> Even when there is an actual weapon present the sufferer may be dominated by a sense of internal agency: ... when a knife or a nail or pin enters the body, one feels not the knife, nail or pin but one's own body, one's own body hurting one. Conversely, in the utter absence of any actual external cause, there often arises a vivid sense of external agency, a sense apparent in our elementary, everyday vocabulary for pain: knifelike pains, stabbing, boring or searing pains. In physical pain then suicide and murder converge, for one feels acted upon, annihilated by inside and outside alike.[43]

Pain penetrates the body, violating the boundary between the inside and the outside, in what Scarry calls “an obscene conflation of private and public.”[44] When turned into a public spectacle, pain takes on the added dimension of inducing shame, humiliation, leaving nothing to the imagination: a person's felt, private pain, becoming available for public consumption, feeding on fear, fascination and horror. In fact, Foucault reads torture and the public execution as a judicial and political ritual. It is a naked, overwhelming show of power that effaces all rights, liberties, and even the personal will of an individual. Through pain, the person punished experiences the ultimate humiliation, the ultimate failure of human existence. It is the experience through which one loses one's body to the torturer, its controls are handed over to the torturer to do with as he pleases. It responds to not the owner's will but to the will of the torturer or the offending instrument. Thus, in pain, one's body turns against one. The body in pain stands to be disowned, its integrity shattered. Pain is what cannot be naturally accommodated within the body and yet cannot be ripped out either. It is like an alien invasion disturbing its integrity, taking over the body, rendering it abject.

The torturer also makes sure that pain becomes a spectacle as well as a sadistic exercise on the pretext of reaching out for “truth”. Yet 'truth' is deliberately put off, denied, so that pain can be performed on the body. In fact, in the warped logic of the Empire, it is not “truth” unless it is consequent of pain.

> --this is what happens-- first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth…Pain is truth; all else is subject to doubt.[45]

When pain is Truth, it is the only truth there is, canceling out all pluralities. Beyond pain, and resultant of pain, there can be no truth. Pain turns the body into an Enemy. When a person is bludgeoned to pulp, when a girl is blinded by a red hot fork held at the corner of her eyes, when she is made to witness the blows and humiliation her father is subjected to, her feet maimed so she can never walk straight on her legs again, pain is the only undeniable, unfalsifiable truth. The body cannot transcend pain to yield some higher 'truth'. When pain has obliterated everything else-- honour, dignity, and threatens life itself-- every nerve in the body is concentrated in the pain itself, and reason, logic and every other concern but that of relief from the pain ceases to function. It scarcely matters then for the suffering body what the truth is; it will surrender anything, and everything, to put an end to pain. In fact, pain has the power to obliterate shame, too, and in the process any semblance of personhood that might remain in the sufferer. Pride, honour, all succumb to pain and protecting the body from further pain becomes one's sole concern, as the magistrate comes to understand only too well through the rigours of torture.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, like the barbarian and fisherfolk prisoners, the magistrate, too, is deprived of a trial. He is condemned even before he has been tried. It is only when he himself undergoes torture and interrogation at the hands of warrant officer Mandel that he can begin to comprehendwhat the girl endured. Like the girl, he must bear the stigma of torture. Like the fisherfolk/ barbarian captives, the magistrate, too, is marked "Enemy", the word literally etched out on his back (recalling Kafka's horrific contraption in *In the Penal Colony).* This has a curious purpose: it "others" like no other word; it carries the implications that this "Enemy" is a threat to life and property and must be crushed with all the force of one's defences. It gives visibility, tangibility, concreteness to an otherwise invisible, elusive abstraction, as Zizek[46]

clarifies. The ostensible purpose, of course, is to scar the magistrate, stigmatize him. He is to wear the etching like a tattoo, a scarlet letter. (Erving Goffman relates how tattoos originated as penal procedures, and were used to brand slaves in the ancient world. Branding with hot iron was more prevalent and is the original "stigma" that marked them as "not quite human".[47]) Martha Nussbaum agrees that "central to the operation of stigma is the dehumanization of the victim."[48] which is how shame penalties function. In later times Christianity gave it the holy context of being marked by God. If we read Coetzee's symbols which take off from pagan as well as Christian contexts, the magistrate's marks can be read both as "stigma", rendering him less than human, and "stigmata", making him holier than human. The trope of stigmata, along with the abasement that comes with dirt and pollution are used to full effect in the successive ordeals of the magistrate. He becomes an epitome, as it is, of the "dirty": he does not respect the borders that should be maintained between the native and the foreigner, the "insider" and the "outsider". Denied washing, the magistrate wallows in his own excreta, evoking the conditions of the incarcerated, "encamped" fisherfolk and barbarians. Martha Nussbaum points out that a prime ability by which humans demarcate themselves from other animals is that of washing themselves. She further cites Rozin who marks that conditions in prisons, refugee or relief camps are often such that inmates cannot wash themselves. Just as animal matter and waste products including that of humans arouses disgust, Rozin had experimentally proven that "disgust may be transferred to objects that have had contact with animals or animal products—a major source being contact with 'people who are disliked or viewed as unsavoury.'"[49] This "filthy" aspect dehumanizes them; the 'disgust' they arouse alienate them from the powers that be; they are viewed as filth, pollutants, contaminants. More often than not, they are reduced to just numbers,

ripped of identities, selves. Once ghettoized and stigmatized, they can be maltreated, dispensed with as "vermin".

Citing Victor Turner in the introduction to *Dirt, Undress and Difference,* Adeline Marie Masquelier notes that those who fall "betwixt or between" conventional sociopolitical systems, such as refugees or rebels are considered metaphorically "dirty."[50] The magistrate's situation is doubly "dirty": not only does he politically sympathize with the "barbarian" natives and regard himself and his own compatriots as "foreigners", he has also had intimate relations with a "barbarian" girl, who, incidentally, has given, out of compulsion, sexual favors to many soldiers, men far below the magistrate's station and rank. Having mixed bodily fluids with a stigmatized, alien girl he has himself become pariah in the settlement. Hence his downfall is imminent, even without him challenging the authority of the Empire, as it were. His transgressive acts only increase with his sharing a tent with the girl when she is menstruating (on the trek through the desert to unite her with her people), not to speak of his "treasonous" act of seeking out and suspected connivance with the barbarians. Once imprisoned in the same room which acted as the interrogation cum torture chamber for the barbarian and fisherfolk, the magistrate is forced to come to terms with the needs of his body. It is what a ghetto sets out to do, it is what prison cells do. A person must live with his own dirt, his excreta, and accept the fact that he is no more than a "bare, forked animal". The lines that class, privilege, freedom draws between the body and its mortality get blurred once all else is obliterated and one must come to terms with one's body. One must accept its abjection, one can no longer deny its "bestiality". As he undergoes torture, he realized that "(his) torturers were not interested in degrees of pain. They were interested only in demonstrating to (him) what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain

notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well…" His bodily pollution stands as mark of non-participation in colonizing pogroms, alienation from the keepers of the Empire led by Colonel Joll. It is a veritable protest against the "contamination of the atrocity that was about to be committed" on the captive barbarians, tied neck to neck and pierced by wire through the palm and the cheek. Having freed himself, the magistrate now scampers to bolt himself again, so that he can save himself from "the poison of the impotent hatred" of the torturers. He is keen to save his soul.

Set in the backdrop of an Africa that has rigorously practiced Apartheid, and criminalized the mixing of races, believed native African blood to be a pollutant, regarded people of the mixed races as abject, all this bears significance in ways more than one. When the magistrate turns on his compatriots and is shamed and humiliated to an obscene extent, it is almost like a "dirty protest", one that anticipates the methods employed by IRA prisoners[51]. Only in his case, wallowing in dirt, grime, excreta, not to speak of the torture he undergoes (he is almost blinded like the barbarian girl, a blow on his cheek gives him a gaping wound that leaves a scar, like the twelve barbarian prisoners Joll triumphantly parades, he is paraded naked and made to perform animal tricks in font of spectators including children, he is hung with a noose from a tree and his shoulders almost get ripped off) all cumulate in a shameful abjection that fails to overpower the shame he feels at his compatriot's actions towards the barbarians. He continually alludes to the moral and ethical dirt they are gathering, the scarring of the soul through their "depravities".

Needless to say, in the allegorical scheme of J. M. Coetzee's fiction, the barbarian girl's body stands for the land itself along with its original inhabitants. Feminizing land, feminizing

territory seems to sanction its rape, pillage, plunder. Like her people to the imperialists, the barbarian girl proves impenetrable. Even when the magistrate enters her, she is immovable; the act of intercourse has no effect on her except when she initiates it. Her virtual impenetrability, coupled with her Philomela-like silence, her seeming lack of protest, her lack of a voice, or rather, her refusal to articulate her pain and outrage in speech, seems to condemn the magistrate all the more, overwhelming him with the burden of guilt. The realization of his "heavy slack foul-smelling old body"[52] brings on yet another overpowering realization: how could he ever have pressed against "such flower-like soft-petalled children"[53], implying both the young prostitute he had earlier frequented and the barbarian girl. Though the magistrate desperately wanted to make "reparation", offer her his fatherly protection, take her under his wing, it is too late for him to make amends: he has been proven ineffectual, impotent. After her father's ordeal and hers, the magistrate says, "…she was no longer fully human, sister to all of us. Certain sympathies died, certain movements of the heart became no longer possible to her."[54] Though the magistrate's attentions towards her are well-intentioned and restorative, they are also oddly abusive, incestuous, even: he installs her in his quarters for the express purpose of sexual gratification. Through his rites of nursing and cleansing, however, she endures his attentions as she would endure any of her abusers or sexual patrons. He does not realize that to the girl, he is only a degree above her torturer, Colonel Joll. His is a patronage she has no need for anymore. Pain has had a numbing effect on her: she is unable to experience life anymore. Pain is not only degrading and dehumanizing, it is like a contagion that turns all those who are touched with it into "creature(s) that believe in nothing."[55]

In the Heart of the Country, and **Disgrace**

Violence of a surreal nature pervades *In the Heart of the Country,* Coetzee's second novel, published in 1977. Its narrator protagonist, Magda, is intent on performing that primordial function of patricide. As mythological paradigms go, the patriarch must be killed or castrated or both, to upset the offending order of things and establish a counter-order. With patricide Magda combines incest, or at least incestuous thoughts, and further marginalizes her position. We are reminded here, once again, of mythological paradigms of father/daughter incest which, perhaps by their very nature of being taboo and thereby not falling in the existing order of things, established counter orders. Magda is transgressing borders of the "clean and proper", in both colonial and sexual respects. On the one hand she supplants the traditional adversary of the Father, the son (she tells the reader that her father had always hoped for a son and she had been a disappointment; she also gives the impression that her father's sexual demands, ostensibly for a son, wore her mother out and drove her to her death). This subverts the mythological paradigm which merely supplants one patriarchal order for another. Despite being a woman, and therefore "naturally unclean, impure", she infiltrates the preserve of men, that of holding land (as her father's sole heir after his death). On the other, she seems to be driven by the patriarchal imperative that she marry a suitable country boy and produce offspring to perpetuate the colonial line. She is drawn, in turns, to her father at a subconscious level, to Hendrik, the man servant, and to Klein Anna, Hendrik's young wife and her father's paramour. Her bisexuality, or queerness, as well as a sense of female sexuality "wasting itself away", rotting inside her without a vent or without bearing offspring marks her as filthy, abject, subversive, as a "witch" out to cause harm and upset the "natural" order of things. She ends up both feared and shunned, bordering on the "feminine sacred", the other trope of female abjection, empowered.

The changed order which would challenge master-servant equations would also break taboos social, colonial, racial, as well as sexual. Drawing upon the case of Sophocles' Antigone, Adriana Cavarero says in the preface to her wonderful book, *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy and the Question of Gender*, female bodies were banished from the polis; rather, the body banished from the polis was necessarily female, "inferior" as it was, animalistic in its otherness: "The terrifying nature of the banished body is substantially female. It could not be otherwise within a logocentric (or... 'phallogocentric') polis. In the polis, free males reserve the power of the logos for themselves, uprooting themselves from a carnal existence perceived only as the disquieting attachment to a life that is prelogical, prehuman, and nearly animal: therefore female."[56] In *In the Heart of the Country*, Magda tries to establish an alternate polis, but that is not to be within the limits of civilization and sanity (the patriarchal symbolic order). Hence her narration defies logic, defies chronology, defies meaning as understood in the semiotic order. It offers no certitude, no single central truth or "logos"; it is fraught with pluralities, possibilities, uncertainties.

Magda has to cultivate "the female malady" of insanity, neurotic behavior, to assert her subjectivity in a colonial world that rendered the colonial master's daughter a nonentity. She also supposes that falling into the "order" or pattern chalked out by others before her— marrying a landholder, bearing his offspring— would perhaps sublimate her otherwise inconsequential existence. Thus her rebellion is also a failure; it is no rebellion at all. She seeks definition as a woman by turning herself into a sexual object ("rapeable", if not desirable). Though she penetrates the polis with her fearful queerness, it is, however, subsumed by the time and place she lives in. Desiring to be "made into a woman" Magda breaks race barriers and sleeps with

Hendrik, the man servant, but is least prepared for the serial brutal rape that confronts her. She, too, accepts the concubinage Hendrik thrusts upon her.

We come to question with Rosemary Jolly, if Coetzee indeed "writes desire responsibly". Magda's ambiguous reaction to rape raises the question of how radical Coetzee's fiction is, ultimately. Where male protagonists are portrayed as rebels, opposing the Establishment and social codes, women who get raped are curiously stifled. It is true that women, along with the men in his fiction embrace the abjection that rape entails, but compared to other incidents of abuse and the extent to which they are analysed and philosophized, there is much less reflection on rape. Rape remains largely unarticulated in Coetzee's fiction, except for the one instance where Elizabeth Costello of the eponymous novel recounts an incident in her youth when she got battered for refusing intercourse to a man she allowed herself to be picked up by. Though she identifies "pure evil" in him, for she could see him taking pleasure in inflicting pain on her, rape had been averted. Is it because it had not, indeed, taken place that the act of violence could at all be articulated? It remains shrouded in mystery, with the woman confounded to the point of doubting herself, losing the sympathy of well-wishers, as in the case of Adela Quested in Forster's *A Passage to India*. The other instance where we have a woman narrator talking about sexual compulsions is Susan Barton, who exchanges sexual favors for a safe passage with the captain of the ship she sets on, with Cruso, once again to engage in cordial living relations, and lastly, with Defoe, the "author" she engages to pen her story. Every time, her strained circumstances, her practical sense which Coetzee seems to highlight, hide well the anguish a woman might feel when bartering sexual favours to get her way. The situation becomes more poignant in the case of the Barbarian girl, who, too, once maimed by torture and left behind,

must sleep with soldiers for the shoes on her feet. Strangely, and sadly, these situations are not viewed as rape though they put the woman under equal duress and compulsion.

What they also hide is the power quotient which tips the balance in favour of men. These instances are narrated so subtly that the reader may miss them: definitely, when the perpetrator of sexual abuse is the narrator- protagonist himself, they are either made light of, (he proclaims himself "a servant of Eros") or portrayed as the "rights of desire", to borrow Andre Brink's book title[57]. Consider the case of David Lurie in *Disgrace* (1999) (his very name seems to suggest lurid acts) who never realizes that his unwarranted "liaison" with his young student, Melanie, had been rape. Yes, she had been unwilling, she had not taken any interest, she had gone cold and unresponsive, but he stops short of calling it rape, or even abuse. When called to account for it by university authorities as the incidents (overlooking her absences in class, marking assignments too liberally) come to light, he stubbornly refuses to accept any guilt, see it as a crime, or put his tail between his two legs, as it were. Coetzee resolutely portrays him as the victim of a hypocritical, puritanical society that must chain a man's desires, that refuses to see art or the violence wreaked by an artist as the liberties due to art and artists. Given to the study of the English Romantics, working on an opera depicting one of Byron's love trysts, David Lurie indeed sees himself as the wronged Byronic hero, albeit a bit aged, a libidinous fool who is a misfit in modern liberal society. Patriarchally enough, he has no sense of wrongdoing. Yet, Lurie's anguish and outrage knows no bounds when his daughter is sexually assaulted by three black men but at no time does he associate the crime of those men with his own. Lurie, for all his liberal-academic training, reacts in a typical racist manner: the black man perpetually lusting after the white woman embedded in his imagination is validated in reality. In the subtle equation

of exchanges, of guilt and expiation that Coetzee's fiction always carries, Lucy inadvertently pays not only for the crimes of her colonist forefathers, but also her father who, too, has taken advantage of a woman in his power.

Yet again, his attitude is markedly different when he remarks upon viewing a reproduction of *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (in an art book in Grahamstown library *after* the incident on the farm):

> What had all this attitudinizing to do with what he expected rape to be: the man lying on top of the woman and pushing himself onto her?[58]

It is a deflation in keeping with his character, a romantic condonement of violent crime, but hard to stomach coming in the wake of his daughter's gang-rape. It rouses much outrage even among readers of the book, the book itself running into controversy regarding the depiction of post-Apartheid Africa, accused of reinforcing stereotypes and white anxieties of black men raping white women. It is the same stereotype that Magda contends with in *In the Heart of the Country.* Hendrik is a precursor to Petrus in Coetzee's narrative progression. *Disgrace* can actually be read as an alter-narrative of *In the Heart of the Country.* Magda, holding on to land or rather, default inheritor of the land her father owned, is the new age Lucy here who gives up her land in the end to Petrus. The disgrace that Magda felt but could not escape is willingly embraced by Lucy: her child is also the child Magda wished to bear but could not, in spite of the rape both suffer. Let us not forget that both Magda and Lucy had alternative sexuality: both were homosexual and "deviant" in their own ways. [In her discussion of gendered bodies and subjectivities, Judith Butler identifies a realm of the abject by virtue of the exclusionary matrix

that the heterosexual imperative operates on. This domain of the abject is inhabited by beings "who are not yet subjects but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject."[59]] David Lurie, Lucy's father and a professor of literature is as abusive of his position of power as Magda's father the landholder. For Lurie, it is the right of the romantic libertarian and for Magda's unnamed father, it is the socio-economic right of the colonist- master. Magda's narrative which she ostentatiously "weaves" deprives her father of a name, as well as of closure about his fate. This fate is ultimately granted closure in the narrative of *Disgrace,* told from Lurie's viewpoint rather than Lucy's. Petrus is no longer a dispossessed Hendrik; he is the owner of a farm holding (expanded further by Lucy giving up her stake), and is his own master who would like to have Lurie for a handyman. He has two wives; Lucy would make a third or a concubine. (This is regarded as an abomination by her father: who ever heard of a white Afrikaner woman being wife/concubine to a black man?) Yet it is an "ignominy" Lucy chooses over other options. Unlike Magda, she can make a fresh start, she can put everything behind her, she can leave for Holland, disowning South Africa altogether (as Elizabeth Curren's daughter had done in *Age of Iron*, Coetzee's sixth novel, written in 1990). But she would rather be stripped of all the trappings of her birth, inheritance and even the fruits of her own toil.

> Yes…it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but…No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity… like a dog.[60]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay on Coetzee and Tagore[61] identifies Lucy with Cordelia (*Disgrace* as a father- daughter story as that of *King Lear)* especially her "nothing" with Cordelia's "nothing": a refusal to valuate love in commodifying terms. Lucy refuses to fall in the vicious circle of crime and punishment, violence and retribution; she even refuses to read her

rape as a loss of honour. By choosing the disgrace, abjection of a woman giving in to the demands of her oppressor she wants to break the circle of revenge and violence. She not only decides to give birth to the child engendered by the rape, she also accepts the offer of marriage Petrus makes her: it is something a black woman might have had to accept from her master, only she would not have had a choice. Indeed, it is not an offer a colonizer or a white man would easily make a black woman. Petrus for all his unacceptability (seen through the eyes of David) is the new Peter/ Petrus/ rock that the new South Africa would be built on. It is not a promising vision that holds out justice. But perhaps Coetzee is trying to redefine justice and ethics.

Disgrace drew the ire of many a liberal for its typical depiction of black men as rapists of the white woman. It is the latent fear colonists harbour: it is the weakest link in their secure chain of colonial mastery; hence the many prohibitions against intermixing of the races. The female body, as always, becomes the symbolic carrier of honor as well shame, disgrace. Rape is also in a sense, a cannibalistic exercise. It is not only plunging, plundering and penetrating, it is also partaking of another's body, consuming another's flesh. [Perhaps that is why in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Procne, Philomela's sister, upon discovering the dreadful violence Philomela underwent, takes vengeance on her rapist husband by feeding him his two children (notwithstanding that they are her children, too). No less measure is a fitting reply.] That is why the racial colonial ethos dictates that it is unacceptable that a black man would partake of a white woman. A white woman may be as much food as a black woman, but not so for a black man. Perhaps we can also read as cannibalism the rape of native women by marauders, foreigners, invaders. No conquest is complete until the women of the land have been "sampled", raped. It is like trying out the cuisine of a country one has visited.

The abjection that rape brings on lurks in having been eaten, sampled. One is "taken", "had", "ravished" as food. Rape invades the privacy of the first home a woman or girl comes to know: her body. Rape alienates her from her own body; she comes to regard it as a threat, as an unsafe place. She might develop a disgust towards her own body that has been "ravished" and never be comfortable again in her own skin. Reading phenomenologically, Louise du Toit identifies six elements of "damage or loss" in rape victims' stories: "a) spirit injury, b) victim complicity, c) loss of voice (silencing), d) loss of moral rage and therefore of moral standing and agency…e) homelessness (dereliction) or displacement and f) alienation."[62] The abjection the rape survivor faces is threefold: she is cut off from her own body, from the larger body of the community, and can at times come to suspect her own actions and moral integrity. Once marked as "victim", stigmatized, her socio-political subjectivity is compromised, even erased. Because her ownership of her body is compromised, it becomes in a sense, "bare life": its terms come to be dictated by others, its decisions are taken out of her hands. Through rape, as with torture, one is reminded that one is after all a body, a violable, vulnerable body. "The word Shakespeare's contemporaries often used for a woman's sexual parts, *pudenda*, derives from *pudere*, to be ashamed," points out Coppelia Kahn.[63] By simply being a woman, one has to be ashamed, and this shame is only heightened when one is sexually violated. Violation of male bodies, injuries, mutilations, even, are often worn as badges of honour, but not so female bodies. They must be shrouded in shame and abjection.

Lucy stubbornly refuses to articulate what happened to her, leaving even her own father to speculate as to what really happened, how grievous the harm was. It is as if articulation would

lower the dignity of the body further. Lucy's resolute silence, her refusal to bring into the public scene what happened to her body in private, can be read as a fierce urge to guard the privacy of a body whose privacy has been so ruthlessly violated. Her silence could also mean a rejection of victimhood, a kind of reclamation of power. We get wary that Coetzee is trying to reinforce the mythological rape that new social orders are founded on. Let us not forget that at the same time Lurie also undergoes symbolic castration, a cancellation of masculinity through the attack from which he was unable to protect either himself or his daughter. Coetzee is also in danger of reinforcing the stereotype of feminine victimhood. Lucy's apparent forgiving of, reconciliation with the violence committed against her strikes a discordant note with most readers. It seems she, along with the thousands of other African women, has become a willing pawn in the political sham of "truth and reconciliation." Some critics have indeed read *Disgrace* as a critique of SA's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It evokes the methods of the TRC which strove to make perpetrators and victims patch up through confession and forgiveness (neither confession/ repentance nor forgiveness could be authentic/ adequate when the degree of violence has exceeded all limits) when women were asked to forgive crimes committed against their fathers, sons, husbands, but rarely those against themselves. Rosemary Jolly points out that many survivors of rape refused to open up before the TRC, possibly unsure of what apologies really hold. Apologies do not necessarily mean repentance; confessions are often perfunctory. Yet long after the actual trial is over, it is the victim who would remain on trial in the public consciousness, what Jolly calls "the public court where the alternate morality of honor versus shame prevails."[64]

The "founding stories" of republics, notes Melissa M. Matthes, are often stories of women, the sexual violation of women and "men's intercession with femininity and feminine powers."[65] Citing the rape of Lucrece, which brought on the overthrow of the monarchical Tarquins and established the republic of Rome, Coppelia Kahn says "Rape authorizes revenge, revenge comprises revolution, revolution establishes legitimate government."[66] Because they are always already abject, women become the pawns of political strategy. Coetzee exposes the universality of the female condition, of the violated female body through situations as diverse as those of the barbarian girl, Magda, and Lucy. Although set at very different quasi- historical points, the rape they suffer is both archetypal and redemptive. Lucy offers a reconciliation, a closure to the cycle of violence, just as she shares in the spirit of Ubuntu, of feeling in with the suffering of others, of being alive with others who are in pain like she is. Ubuntu is what Magda could not achieve in her milieu, for her violation offered no redemption, neither did she yield the offspring of reconciliation.

[1] De Certeau, Michel. *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*. Trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 167.

[2]Adriana Cavarero cites Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*, 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) in her chapter, "On the Body of Antigone" in *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy and the Question of Gender.* Trans. Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

[3] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Trans. Daniel Heller- Roazen.Stanford: Stanford University Press, 66.

[4]Kristeva, Julia. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia, 1982, p.1.

[5] Ibid, p. 9.

[6] Nussbaum, Martha C. *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 99.

[7] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 142.

[8] Zizek, Slavoj. "Are we in a War? Do We Have an Enemy?" London Review of Books 24.10 (23rd May, 2002). URL: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n10/zize2410.htm.

[9] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. The word 'precarious' occurs throughout the text.

[10] Ibid, preface, p. xv.

[11]Ibid.

[12] Ibid, preface, p. xvi.

[13] Coetzee, J. M. *Diary of a Bad Year.* London: Vintage, 2008, p. 113.

[14]Cavarero, Adriana. *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy and the Question of Gender.* Trans. Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, Author's preface, p. ix.

[15] Zizek, Slavoj."*From Politics to Biopolitics and Back", the South Atlantic Quarterly 103:2/3, Spring/ Summer 2004* (Duke University Press), downloaded from *Project Muse*, URL: http://muse.jhu.edu.

[16]Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, pp. 33-4.

[17]Coetzee, J.M. *Age of Iron*. London: Penguin, 1998, p. 164.

[18]Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 36.

[19]Nussbaum, Martha C. *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 206.

[20]Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity,* pp. 36-7.

[21] Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians.* London: Vintage, 2000, p. 152.

[22] Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830- 1980.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p. 2.

[23]Woolf is cited by Susan Sontag in the first chapter of *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.

[24] Millet, Allan R. Ed. *A Short History of the Vietnam War.* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1978.

[25] Zizek, Slavoj. "Are We in a War? Do We have an Enemy?", London Review of Books, Volume 24, Number 10, May 23, 2002.

[26] Soshana Felman is cited by Elaine Showalter in her introduction to *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980,* p.5.

[27] Oliver, Kelly and S.K. Keltner, ed. *Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics and Politics in the Work of Kristeva.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009, p. 55.

[28]*Apocalypse Now.* Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall, Martin Sheen. United Artists, 1979. Film.

[29] Coetzee, J.M. *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee, Dusklands.* London: Vintage, 2004, p. 79.

[30] Ibid,

[31] I suggest "Being" here in the Heideggerian sense of "*dasein*".

[32]Coetzee, J.M. *Dusklands*, pp.101-2.

[33] Masquelier, Adeline Marie. *Dirt, Undress and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005 , p.6.

[34] Ibid, pp. 6-7.

[35] Miller, William Ian. *The Anatomy of Disgust.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997, p.20.

[36] Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger.* London: Routledge Classics, 1992.

[37] Miller, William Ian. *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 21.

[38] Ibid, p. 36.

[39]Butler, Judith. *Frames of War.When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009.

[40] Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

[41] Ibid, p. 54.

[42] Ibid, p. 52.

[43]Ibid, p. 53.

[44] Ibid, p. 53.

[45] Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 5.

[46] Zizek, Slavoj, "Are We in a War? Do We Have an Enemy?" as cited.

[47] Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin, 1990.

[48]Nussbaum, Martha C. *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, p. 220.

[49] Ibid, p. 89.

[50] Masquelier, Adeline Marie. Dirt, Undress and Difference: *Critical Perspectives on the Body's Surface*, p. 11. Masquelier cites Turner's chapter "Betwixt and Between: the Liminal period in Rites de Passage" from his 1967 work, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual.*

[51] The case of the "dirty protest" is cited by Adeline Marie Masquelier in her introduction to *Dirt, Undress and Difference*, p. 7.

[52] Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 106.

[53] Ibid.

[54]Ibid, p. 88.

[55] Ibid, p.89.

[56] Cavarero, Adriana. *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy and the Question of Gender,* Author's preface*, p.Ix.*

[57]Brink, Andre. The Rights *of Desire.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001.

[58] Noted also by Lucy Valerie Graham in her essay "Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace" Journal of African Studies,* Vol. 29, No.2, June 2003

[59] Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York: Routledge, 1993. p. 3.

[60]Coetzee, J.M. *Disgrace*. London: Vintage, 2000, p.205.

[61] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee and Certain Scenes of Teaching". *Diacritics*, Vol.32, No. 3/4, Ethics (Autumn/ Winter, 2002), pp. 17-31. The John Hopkins University Press. URL: http:// www.jstor.org/stable/1566443.

[62]Du Toit, Louise. *A Philosophical Investigation of Rape: The Making and Unmaking of the Feminine Self*. Routledge Research in Gender and Society, 1st edn. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 7.

[63]Kahn, Coppelia. "*Lucrece:* The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity" in *Rape and Representation*. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 149.

[64] Jolly, Rosemary. "Writing Desire Responsibly" in *J. M. Coetzee in Context and Theory.* Elleke Boehmer, Robert Eaglestone and Katy Iddiols, ed. York Road: Continuum, 2009.

[65] Matthes, Melissa M. *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli and Rousseau.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 3.

[66] Kahn, Coppelia. "*Lucrece:* The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity" in *Rape and Representation*, p. 141.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: LOOKING AT ILLNESS AND DISABILITY

The organic metaphor of the body has been in use since Classical times, especially when it comes to describing the state or matters relating to it. Imagining a system or an abstract group of ideas as an organic, anthropomorphic being has its advantages: it can then be nurtured, shaped, molded, reared, chastised, pruned, or its 'limbs' amputated as needs and situations demand. Body metaphors abound in philosophical language and political rhetoric, from Plato's Republic to that of present-day politicians. A corporeal view of the state concretizes, solidifies, and legitimizes hegemonic systems of control by appealing to the collective imagination. The state, when viewed as a body, the macrocosmic coordinate of the human body, only larger and thereby having more claims, grows its own set of rights, such as those of self preservation, defense, and unimpeded growth. This in turn allows it to assume popular consent when it curbs, restricts, persecutes and destroys individual bodies or even groups of bodies, in the interests of its own larger 'body', supposedly encompassing the collective will and bodies of the polis. At the same time, it gains for itself a kind of flexibility: it can interact and negotiate with individual bodies on a one-on-one basis, through its representatives. How common and pertinent this still is, is proven by the fact that in established judicial systems the world over, court cases have the 'State' mentioned as plaintiff , aggrieved party (eg. Raghunath vs the State of Maharashtra).

Body-symbolism has been practised in literature through early modern times, in Shakespeare, Jonson, right down to Dickens as well as implicitly in modern literature. The House of Alma in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596) presents an analogy between Elizabeth's corporeal body and the "corpus mysticum" of the realm. Conversely, in John Donne's poetry, the corporeal body is expressed in conceits of "new-found lands", in keeping with the spirit of voyage and the new art of cartography of his day. Lady Macbeth's de-sexed body, the witches' androgynous bodies, for instance, are a mark of disorder, or disruption of the patriarchal order while Scotland, ruled by Macbeth, is depicted as a diseased state, or body-politic. In Dickens and much of 19th century literature, disabled people are often villains, or putting it another way, villainous people are often found to be disabled or deformed. Hence, Uriah Heep in David Copperfield has a muscular disorder, dystonia, which makes his movements rather shifty, suggesting his hypocrisy. More explicitly, bodies fitted with prostheses, be it Captain Hook in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* or Long

John Silver in R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, seem to suggest their fractured existence, severed from the body-politic. Moralistic devaluation of their bodies renders their pasts shady, suggesting a degeneracy of nature, as well as their disability is just retribution for misdeeds they may have committed.

In the words of Paul Robinson, "the disabled, like all minorities, have... existed not as subjects of art, but merely as its occasions."[1] Profiling of bodies according to set standards of aesthetics continued well into modern literature. For instance, in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, short stubby fingers (*Preludes*) seem to suggest a lack of refinement and sensitivity. Rosalind Garland-Thomson in her study *Extraordinary Bodies* notes how cultural encodings of "different" bodies have been naturalised in society and the popular imagination, to be reinforced time and again in literature and other representational arts. She argues, "disability is the attribution of corporeal deviance-- not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do."[2] "Disability" is more a matter of perception, located outside the concerned body than within it as an intrinsic property. Disability then, has more to do with how others perceive difference than with the subjects themselves. Dis-ability is the loss of subjectivity interpreted as 'ability', disability lies in being othered.

Closely aligned with perceptions of disability are perceptions of ugliness. Debilitation implies a lack of integrity as far as the anthropomorphous ideas of the body are concerned, and date back to Plato and later, Aquinas, as Umberto Eco notes in *On Ugliness.*[3] Lack of bodily integrity is related to lack of spiritual integrity, suggesting moral degeneration. He further cites Karl Rosenkrantz, *The Aesthetics of Ugliness* (1853), the first work of its kind, which identifies ugliness with moral evil ("ugliness, naturally, becomes even more pronounced when people want evil in and for itself", in *The Aesthetics of Ugliness*, "Introduction", 1853). Eco notes that while Rosenkrantz starts with the traditional notion that ugliness is the opposite of beauty, he moves on to examine ugliness as a singular, autonomous idea/ aesthetic as"the absence of form, asymmetry, disharmony, disfigurement and deformation (the wretched, the vile, the banal, the fortuitous and the arbitrary, the gross), the various forms of the repugnant: (the ungainly, death and the void, the horrendous, the vacuous, the sickening, the felonious, the spectral, the demoniac, the witchlike and the satanic..."[4] For Rosenkrantz, , what is ugly is, as opposed to the beautiful:

repellent, horrible, horrendous, disgusting, disagreeable, grotesque, abominable, repulsive,

> odious, indecent, foul, dirty, obscene, repugnant, frightening, abject, monstrous, horrid, horrifying, unpleasant, terrible, terrifying, frightful, nightmarish, revolting, sickening, foetid, fearsome, ignoble, ungainly. Displeasing, tiresome, offensive, deformed and disfigured...[5]

There are several things we can note here. First of all, the string of epithets that seem to qualify or define the ugly are all subjective notions, how the "ugly" is perceived by the Other, rather than qualities of the-thing-itself. Ugliness is therefore completely a matter of perception and not a standard that can be fixed. And inevitably, these notions seem to rest on a body that is sick or disabled. How deeply ingrained this horror is in society is proven by the fact that till as recently as the mid-1970s "ugly laws" had been in force in the American states of Illinois, Ohio, California and Nebraska which prohibited persons with "unsightly or disgusting" ailments from appearing in public. In fact, the Chicago municipal code, sec 36034, had an ordinance which read,

> No person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly, disgusting object or improper person to be allowed in or on the public ways or other public places in this city, or shall therein or thereon expose himself to public view, under a penalty of not less than one dollar nor more than fifty dollars for each offense.[6]

Disabled people have been the targets of Eugenicist experiments, not to mention having been subjected to compulsory sterilisation. Guilty parties include not only regimes like the Third Reich, but even Japan's of the 1990s. Perhaps what lay behind the practice of scapegoating, the actual rationale of sacrifice, had always been eugenicist: the objective that the "defective" or the "malformed" drop out of the mainstream, out of the breeding population. Further, physical inadequacies have led to the general assumption that affected persons are also mentally deficient or even, delinquent, at times. Consider the case of Quasimodo from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831), ostracized and demonized for his shape, or for that matter, of Ephialtes, the hunch-backed Spartan traitor in the film *300*, based on Frank Miller's comic book series. "To have a disability is to be an animal, to be part of the other", notes Lennard J. Davis.[7] In this context, he also notes the treatment of Hippolyte, the stable-boy from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) whose club-footedness worried Emma, the novel's heroine, to such an extent that she forced an operation on him which botched up and actually disabled him. His "equine" ways, which helped him handle horses with ease, aligned him uncomfortably close to horses. This was intolerable to Emma. It was his animal "otherness" that she sought to mend.

In many cultures of the world, in Hindu society, for instance, any sort of physical anomaly, mutilation, has been variously viewed as the reaping of sins committed in an earlier birth, depending on the degree of "ugliness", of course, or as manifestations of a divine being. In the 1985 Hindi film *Debshishu* (dir. Utpalendu Chakraborty), the latter instance is poignantly portrayed. As in western societies, such "freaks of nature" have been exploited, displayed for public entertainment, and have often provided a means of survival for a family, or sometimes even an entire community. Such people exist, challenging the thin line between the sacred and the profane, abject, yet powerful, evoking the "powers of horror", to use Kristeva's term. In this sense, the body has occupied central position in the theory and praxis of ethics: for any 'sin', bodily or otherwise, penitence must be observed through pain, mutilation or incarceration of the body. Hindu religious notions of 'karma', as well as Western classical culture identifies chronic illness and disease as divine punishment for sins committed. Being ill or disabled or in pain has therefore been a state of condemnation, a penal existence. Psychologist David Bakan says, "Pain has played a central role in the religious thought of Western civilization. For her disobedience in the Garden of Eden, Eve is condemned to bring forth children in sorrow (*The Book of Genesis*, 3:16); and the central image in the history of the western world has been that of a crucifixion, undoubtedly one of the most painful forms of execution ever devised...Pain must, in some sense, be a touchstone for ultimate concern."[8]

Sacrifice and Scapegoating: a brief review

Indeed, in the Christian world, punishment for treason, heresy, blasphemy has been located in the body, even when the crimes committed have been ideological, and have caused no bodily harm. Self-observed notions of wrong-doing have led to self-inflicted bodily harm (the classic archetype of which is Oedipus' gouging out of his own eyes) as practised by Calvinists, and some strict orders of Catholic monasticism. While body-symbolism, the use of "illness as metaphor", to borrow Susan Sontag's term, has been a staple of literature, in contemporary times, however, there has been a revaluation of different bodies, and much of the conventional symbolism has been subverted. Whereas attitudes to disabilities and impairments of the body were essentially negative earlier, in postmodern, indeed, "posthuman" times, they have been turned around. With the insertion of implants and pacemakers, replacements of hip and knee, transplanting of organs, not to mention the use of external prosthetics, the postmodern body can hardly be said to have maintained what had for long been viewed as its "integrity". It has been invaded, colonized, subjected to "alien" occupation in ways unimaginable till the late 20th century. A lot of these fulfill not only biological/ physical needs but cosmetic ones as well. Therefore, it is a kind of reclamation of rights,

the rights of the body. As with disabled women in Toni Morrison's works, the disabled body in Coetzee's fiction gets empowered, elevated much above the pale of whole/ ordinary/ normal bodies. In J. M. Coetzee, the disabled or diseased body is as much a mark of the times as a metaphor for exorcism. It serves as a means of vicarious expiation, with a "scapegoat" figure voluntarily or without implicit knowledge, offering him/ herself up for sacrifice. In J.M. Coetzee's moral scheme of atonement, sacrifice and scapegoating function sometimes overt, sometimes latent manner. The setting varies from novel to novel but the underlying rationale remains the more or less the same: that of remission of sins committed in the past, answering for a history of oppression and injustice.

The notion of the "scapegoat" itself has undergone changes since ancient times and Coetzee himself gives it several dimensions. In modern societies, though 'scapegoating' is still practised in obscure ways, the notion of "sacrifice" has been shorn of its original meaning. Since Coetzee's works are situated in different time frames: some are set in contemporary times, set against 20th century events, while a couple hark back to 17th and 18th centuries (*Foe* and *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,* respectively), the concept of 'sacrifice' has to be rediscovered with all its modern implications. As explored by anthropologists and sociologists, sacrifice is not a purely religious phenomenon. It is a socio-political and sometimes economic exercise. The object of sacrifice often occupies a zone of danger, which she/ he may share with the sacrificers. This zone of danger may be socio-political, related to ethnic or economic identity (consider Shakespeare's Shylock in this case, a Jew reviled by Christians and a usurer as well as hoarder of money). Sacrifice is carried out to concentrate this danger/ peril in a single entity/ group, by whose elimination the danger is thought to be warded off. As William Beers points out, "the victim is the substitute for the one guilty of transgression, moral confusion or impurity."[9] He further notes that Hubert and Mauss insist that "the sacrifice intends through exchange through substitute one moral condition for another."

Sacrifice therefore begins with identification with the victim of sacrifice and through the often tormenting/ painful process of sacrifice the process of de-identification or distancing with the sacrificers is initiated. Once the sacrificial ritual is complete, the de-identification is also complete. Beers observes that it is a universal psychological phenomenon that when suffering increases, one identifies more with the destroyer than with the destroyed, in keeping with instincts of self-preservation. Hence, victors and conquerors score better with the conquered than with the ousted, no matter where sympathies might have lain to begin with (consider the commons in *Julius Caesar*,

with their "fickle loyalties", or those in present contexts, for that matter). The scapegoat concentrates in himself the "dirt", "impurity", "sins" of the community, and therefore, must be expelled/ eliminated, for the well-being of the community. Also operative here is the concept of the purge: the scapegoat figure is already socially or physically compromised; hence more dispensable with than any other normative person in the community. Through the mechanism of sacrifice, the scapegoat is conveniently disposed of, and the community thereby purged of a less than perfect entity. In a film like Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, or even Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*, we can note how this works. The champions/ saviors are all surrogates who are to face danger in exchange of the community at large. They are usually outsiders, stigmatized for some reason or the other: Veeru and Jay are jail-breaking convicts who seek shelter in a village without realizing that it is a hunting ground for deadly dacoits. Once there, they are trapped in a mesh of unexpected human relations which nevertheless do not spare them from being chosen as the sacrificial lambs. The community has least to lose when the victims at stake are outsiders, with little to their name.

The demigod heroes of mythology possessed superhuman traits, but they also carried the marks of abnormality that set them apart from the community, both of gods and of humans: Achilles' heel as well as that of Karna, provided a point of weakness that made them mortal. Their very in-betweenness, their ambiguous status among gods and mortals, singled them out to be champions/ surrogates. Ultimately they lost out, pawns in the hands of both gods and mortals. Achilles, warrior par excellence, was used by Agamemnon for his political ends. Karna, though the eldest of Kunti's sons sired by none less than Suryadev, the sun-god, was never granted the status of a prince like her other sons were, and his resentment and sense of deprivation— (he was refused even by Draupadi as a suitor for his "low caste origins" as he was brought up by a charioteer)— were skillfully manipulated by Duryodhana against the Pandavas in the decisive battle of Kurukshetra. Even Jesus, with his spurious birth through "immaculate conception", was marked out as the scapegoat. The crucifixion enabled a painful and prolonged process of bloodletting, also viewed as a purge for the sins of humankind, as it were. It was therefore a physical solution to a spiritual problem, effected only through "incarnation" of divinity. Victor Turner's extensive research finds that sacrificial victims are generally liminal people: it is their very liminality that would enable them to change states of being more easily, it is supposed. Turner calls them "threshold people."[10] For him, liminality is "frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and an eclipse of the sun or moon."[11]

Sacrifice involves a change of state: through the elaborate rituals the human/ non-human victim is consecrated and transposed to the state of a god, or apotheosized. Liminality may be indicated by idiocy, illness such as epilepsy or other neural disorders, or bodily deformity, extreme religiosity, ambiguous sexuality or more commonly, simply the fact of being women. Thus it is not an alpha being chosen as the vessel for the ills of society, but one who is deemed disposable/ dirty. This strikes us as curious when we consider the fact that it is kings/ rulers who often had to bear the brunt of sacrifice in certain societies as extensively researched by James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. The very totemic basis of sacrifice seems to crumble at such times. The notion of victimhood can also be questioned as in cases of the Hindu practice of *Diksha* (as pointed out by Mauss and Hubert)[12]. The *dikshita* is a consecrated being, having attained a status of privilege at the end of successive rituals. H/she becomes a god-like being, far elevated above normal people, h/she adopts a new identity and is known by a different name. Such a person becomes a liminal or threshold entity, as Victor Turner identifies "neophytes in initiation or puberty rites" who "may be represented as possessing nothing. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing or even go naked, to demonstrate that they have no status, property, insignia... It is as if they are being reduced or groomed down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life."[13]

Genealogically speaking, sacrifice and scapegoating had their origin in myths and rituals of primitive and pre-modern societies. Rooted in the basic concept of 'give and take', they nevertheless take on complex forms and purposes through the ages. Nancy Jay finds their purpose to have been two-fold: simultaneously segregating and integrating, enforcing communion as well as expiation.[14] On the one hand a sacrificial ritual serves to suture a community, reinforce bonds of kinship on the basis of shared beliefs, dangers, threats, defences through communal feasts, dances, rites. On the other, it establishes divides, marks those excluded from the ritual or from partaking of the food, as unwanted, undesirable, dispensable. The system was originally formulated to rid society of myriad evils like flood, famine, drought, infertility (of soil or humankind), disease or epidemic (afflicting human, animal, or plant life), to ensure protection against such ills, and later on, observed and practised simply to perpetuate rituals that bind a society together even after belief has ceased (as is the case in much of Hindu society today). In modern Western societies, ritualistic sacrifice is rarely practised, though 'sacrifice' as a concept prevails among religious believers (for instance, among Islamic mujahideens and Hindu *tantrik* cults). Consecration or apotheosis of the victim of sacrifice is much contested. More often than not, it is just a ploy, a feeble construct to find willing victims, or a poor consolation for the victims who, unlike the 'sacrifier' or the 'objects of sacrifice' (Hubert and

Mauss' terms), gain nothing from the sacrifice. Sacrifice in modern societies is often hooded in "nobler" intents and purposes (Vietnam is a glaring example; the capture and subsequent trial of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussain, more recently, may be another case in point).

One individual, or sometimes even members of a certain tribe or community, or those following certain beliefs and customs are chosen out from among many to serve as scapegoats. René Girard in his wonderful work *The Scapegoat* traces scapegoating of persons and peoples at different points in history and works out the social psychology behind acts of persecution targetted against them. The system is a curious departure from the system of crime and retribution in that the person(s) held guilty or responsible is/ are not the one(s) punished, though the suffering undergone by the scapegoat is very similar to a sentence carried out. The guilt might as well be collective, or borne completely by persons other than the scapegoat, if a guilty act has, indeed, been committed. The onus of responsibility is however, conveniently transferred to the most vulnerable, and hence deemed disposable, member of the society. In this context, Girard cites Jean La Fontaine whose fable *Animals Sickened by the Plague* illustrates the machinery of scapegoating. A plague is identified by the animals as divine punishment for a guilt that is not equally shared. The guilty must be identified and punished, or "dedicated"(La Fontaine's word) to the god. The beasts of prey, the first to be interrogated, are excused, their behaviour justified by their ferocious nature. The last to come is the ass, "the least bloodthirsty of them all, and therefore the weakest and least protected"[15], who is designated to be the scapegoat. The disabled or the ill, the unarmed, the non-violent, hence become the obvious targets. This is how societies function, and this is what rules popular psychology. The Crucifixion stemmed from a similar rationale, and Jews have been massacred during the Black Death in the fourteenth century, and in the Holocaust and atrocities perpetrated against several religious and ethnic minorities with the same justification, or rather, the lack of it. Even though scapegoating is quite distinct from a punitive action, the body of the scapegoat is no less condemned. This is because the scapegoat figure is held accountable for the moral and organic afflictions of the society. It is this accountability, as also the imagined concentration of all evils of the society in the body of the scapegoat that renders it "homo sacer" to use Agamben's term. The scapegoat can be killed, but not sacrificed, for the very reason that his is too profane a body to be sacrificed, representative of the society's ills (as Nancy Jay argues in *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity)*.

In Coetzee's fiction

This chapter examines the trope of sacrifice and scapegoating as embodied in ill or disabled, condemned or 'Othered' figures in J.M. Coetzee's fiction, presented as redemptive messiahs. Sometimes they merge into one, and at other times they switch roles. The body in illness is not just an allegorical representation of a troubled state with its warped machineries, it doubles up as a means for redemption through suffering, working in Classical and Christian tropes. In *Age of Iron* (1990), Mrs. Curren's companion through all her suffering is the destitute, seemingly insensitive Vercueil. He has lost a finger, and draws a pension for his disability. Immune to insults and offensive in his habits, Vercueil is a shadowy figure, read by critics as an embodiment of death. His missing finger is an advantage: he lives off his pension for it. He is more empowered than he appears, for his needs are few and wants, even less. Immune to the goings on around him, the race riots, the children's deaths, the police atrocities, he nevertheless agrees to be Mrs. Curren's emissary to her daughter after her death. Like Friday in *Foe* (1986), the maimed Barbarian girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians*(1980) and Michael K (*Life and Times of Michael K*, 1983), narrator/ protagonists in Coetzee have often been found in the company of people with a "lack", conjoined with an Other, an empowered "other" in most cases. Through the course of the narrative the protagonist is then unified with the Other in a shared disadvantageous condition or sickness or disability, cancelling out the "otherness" of the Other, rendering the Self/protagonist as the Other. Coetzee's protagonists are all misfits in a world that differs from theirs in its ethics, morals, rationalities and modes of functioning. Be it Eugene Dawn in *The Vietnam Project* (*Dusklands,* 1974), the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Michael K, David Lurie in *Disgrace* (1999), or Paul Rayment in *Slow Man* (2005), they all stand apart and alone, singular against the mainstream. Since the thematic concerns overlap, I have not discussed all the relevant novels in a single chapter, but take some representative novels in each. Here I take up the figures of Friday (*Foe*, 1986), Michael K (*Life and Times of Michael K*, 1983), and Paul Rayment (*Slow Man*, 2005) to argue my case.

Foe

Foe (1986) has lent itself to much critical commentary: not only is it a retelling of the 'first' English novel ever written, Daniel Defoe's *The Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (1719), it is expressly metafiction, exploring the genesis of a novel. Defoe's Crusoe had survived shipwreck, mutiny, enslavement, torture, capture by pirates, fought off cannibals and then gone on to own sugar plantations and become a slave owner himself. *Foe's*

departure from the 'original' narrative is that it tracks the adventures of a female picaro, Susan Barton; the figure of Crusoe is a reticent one, more of a staid settler not given to industry, than a swashbuckling pioneer. *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* has the dubious distinction of being the first novel ever written in English, though some insist that it is not a novel proper, but a prose work of some length. Though often panned by literary critics as being uninspired and unimaginative, written by an author of limited creative talent, it nevertheless caught the fancy of generations for its simple yet unique presentation of man on a lone island: it was the ultimate story of survival. *Foe* reveals the struggle behind the writing of the first of its kind, the sputters and birth pangs of the genesis of the first novel, of a genre that would spawn thousands in its wake. As late as 2000, *Castaway,* a film based on a similar concept became a box office success, securing two Oscar nominations.[16] As a critic points out, Coetzee's point in writing *Foe* was to raise the question that such a long narrative as *Robinson Crusoe* could ever be written glossing over the latent violence inherent in the settlement of the island. Its merit lies perhaps in the portrayal of Friday, still a mute and mutilated servant, but the novel is in quest of his subjectivity, completely erased in Defoe's. Susan's character is itself a take-off from Defoe's Roxana of the eponymous novel (*Roxana, or the Fortunate Mistress*, 1724), a woman who employs her sexuality to make her way in the world, but whose sexual and marital escapades separate her from her children.

In *Foe*, Coetzee explores four marginalized positions, contesting one another as "authors" of the story. The first is of the single woman, fending for herself across different lands, shipwrecked on an island. Another is of a solitary settler, also fending for himself on an inhospitable island. The third is of a supposed native of the island, a man unimaginatively named Friday by Cruso, hampered in his social interactions by a missing tongue. The last and more obscure one is of Foe, a hack writer approached by Susan to pen down the story of her adventures. Susan is the proposed writer of her adventures on the deserted island, centered around her quest for her lost daughter. She is effectively, the Crusoe-substitute, even as she supplants Defoe, assuming "authority" over the novel, and labours to give birth to it. She is not interested in telling any other story than that of her stay on the island: it is to be a selective, partial memoir. Contrary to Defoe's Crusoe, Coetzee's Cruso is averse to any kind of record-keeping, or even the marking or counting of days. Cruso is steadily discredited as a reliable storyteller by Susan who suspects that his long stay in solitude on the island has rendered him unstable. He gives various accounts of his past and "no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy."Hence he can be safely put outside the ambit of authorship. Susan wrests this role from Cruso on the premise of lending authenticity to their account. Susan is herself

an unreliable narrator: several of her claims strike one as spurious. Her very circumstances are improbable and her mysterious quest often gets diffused by other concerns. She seems to feel an even stronger urge to have her story told than to find her trafficked daughter. Though she finds herself in adverse circumstances in the course of her quest, she does not seem to be putting in any particular effort to trace her lost daughter.

Thus the "original" narrative's patrilineal parentage is challenged. But though the novel is largely filtered through Susan Barton's enlightened, skeptical consciousness (very similar to a man's and not quite gendered), Friday's presence problematizes the whole endeavour. His deaf-muteness renders him 'inscrutable' to Susan; he is "like a child" to her, his expressions and wants limited by his forlorn situation on a desert island and his disability, as much as by his race and condition of slavery. Once she discovers him to have been mutilated, (Cruso tells her his tongue had been cut out) he becomes a source of horror to her, she shrinks from him. Lennard J. Davis finds that Defoe, in whose work Friday first appears, writes of Duncan Campbell, a deaf man, as a "godlike, superior being" with unusual gifts of discernment. He further says that Defoe's attitude towards disability differed from the typical Johnsonian attitude which regarded the deaf as incapacitated in "social intercourse, civilization and humanity"[17] However, deaf persons as possessed of their own integral language was also an idea that came to be accepted in the 18th century. Hence the idea emerged that deaf people would be naturally gifted in alternative forms of social discourse, such as writing. Authors are, in a way, mute, because traditionally, they play the part of mute observers or dreamers and write, without themselves participating in what they write about. Friday's disability, indeed, lies in being othered, for he does not seem, at least in Susan's eyes, to feel any sense of lack. Moreover, his muteness is not congenital, but consequent of an act of violence, and he is not necessarily deaf. He plays on the flute, though a single, monotonous tune, and often plays at being deaf, as Susan suspects. When she tries to join him in playing the flute, or plays a different tune, he remains quite unmoved.

This hints at a power shift in the novel, however subtly. Susan is dismayed to find that Friday's disinterestedness does not stem from incapability, or lack of appreciation, even, but a total obtuseness towards what Susan might have to say. He is not keen to be represented, he does not find it imperative to have his story told. We cannot even say he is Caliban to Cruso's Prospero, for the island is so often referred to as Cruso's island, and his place of origin is as shrouded in mystery as the circumstances around his mutilation. This, perhaps, problematizes his representation, for he

does not quite fit into the category of "the deaf and mute", neither does he evoke any Coleridgean sense of the Shamanic creator. His very naming, Friday, which may or may not be the name with which he identifies himself, usurps his authority. Susan Barton identifies the island as Cruso's by dint of Cruso having "colonized" it, and herself and Friday as his subjects. But Cruso casts a cloud on Friday's origin by suggesting that he and Friday were the only ones to be saved when their ship sank. At times he would claim to have rescued Friday, a cannibal, from his fellow cannibals. Friday's cannibalisation is a typical colonizing trope that Defoe used to sensationalize the work as well as justify Cruso's mastery over him. As Coetzee writes in his essay, "Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe"*,[18] the very notion of two creations, whereby Friday is a specimen of the unfallen species of a second or primal creation, not marked by Adamic disobedience, makes colonization problematic, for the simple reason that Friday is in no need of redemption or salvation. Hence, cannibalism and savagery have to be imposed on a native people to introduce the notion of sin, fallibility, unsanctified behaviour.

Coetzee's most telling alteration / addition is Friday's muteness, replete with all its symbolic, postcolonial meanings. Susan has mused often, she confides to Foe, if Friday's muteness/ mutilation suggested an even more heinous mutilation, or "lack", horrifying because of its implications of "unmanning", revealed when Friday dances with abandon, wearing the "livery" he found among Foe's costumes. The suggested lack of a phallus, considered more monstrous than any other physical lack in the 18th century, is equated with the lack of speech, or in other words, the phallus stands for speech itself. It is reiterated that where Friday's story should be, there is a gaping hole, a gap in the narrative. This gap can only be filled with Friday's dancing body, not with words. Bereft of speech, Friday is subject to representation, but as Coetzee interrogates, is he not empowered by his speaking body? Thus we encounter the problem of representation at several levels. Friday, on account of his muteness, must suffer the pitfalls of representation by Cruso, as also by Susan. Cruso, because of his age and lack of initiative, suffers the same fate. Whether this disempowers them or whether they remain empowered by dint of their bodily presence is what only the final work can reveal. The narrators, themselves, do not quite assume omniscience in the text. That leaves it open to all kinds of interpretations. In Susan's story, not only Friday, but Cruso and Foe, too, remain shadowy beings. They all suffer a lack of substance, as well as subjecthood. They remain phantom-like, as it were. Coetzee/ Susan's Cruso is not so eager to be "saved" as Defoe's. Both Cruso and Friday had grown so accustomed to the island that their "rescue" by a ship to England seems almost like an injustice. It is Susan who cannot withstand the island with its noises; she even tries to shut her ears to the wheezing winds. Yet the noises stay with her even in England.

She imagines they stay with Friday, too, who must struggle to shut out all other noises, so that he can protect the sounds of the island within him.

The "home of Friday" is the "place where bodies are their own signs", as Coetzee asserts in a 1990 interview[19] and there is no need for the act of nomenclature to be exercised. He belongs to that pre-lapserian age and country in whose language "there is no split between signifier and signified, and things are their names", the same words Coetzee uses to explain the dissatisfaction with English as a language to express the African consciousness, as experienced by Europeans and Africans alike.[20] It is Friday's disability, his muteness, that lends meaning to the text. As Coetzee reminds us in that same interview, (*Doubling the Point*),[21]Friday can be mute, but he does not "disappear, because he is body."

The novel is hardly about Cruso's adventures or even Susan's. If the unacknowledged author is indeed Friday, then Susan, Cruso and even Foe are unwitting characters in the work. Is Friday really without agency, as Cruso and Susan believe? He fits the Rousseauvian picture of the noble savage perfectly: he is happy in his own world, a world devoid of guile and complications, at one with flora and fauna. Though the world outside is besieged with colonial incursions, with ambitious voyages of discovery, with political and social intrigue, he remains aloof and unaffected. Even when he is transplanted from his native region to England, as Susan brings him along, he retreats into a shell, making little effort to get along with the new world. Confined indoors, he is without any of the occupations that kept him busy on the island. Interestingly, once in England, Susan has to take care of Friday; she does not feel he would be safe by himself or would be able to fend for himself. He might easily be captured as an escaped slave or sold into captivity or transported to Jamaica. It is what she suspects to be the intention of most of the ships' captains who agreed to lend Friday passage to Africa. She feels tied down to him, enslaved even, and longs to be free of Friday. It is Foe who points out to her that he might be taken in by his own kind, for there were more "negroes" in London than Susan imagined. He might even make a living as a gardener, offering his services with the hoe. Foe insists on Friday's learning to write and entrusts Susan with the task of teaching him, but it is a futile exercise. All Friday learns to write is endless rows of "o"s.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests this "o" could also mean omega[22]. Or the end. But Foe instructs Susan to teach him "a" the next day, suggesting "alpha" or the beginning, perhaps, or how

to begin or open a story, which is something that plagues all writers, including Coetzee. Friday's power lies in the act of withholding. He is not an open book. There are no openings to him; he does not speak. This is a power even Susan asserts, when she insists that the only story she is interested to tell is of her stay on the island, not of her stint in Bahia, or England, or any other aspect of her past life. Foe probes on, saying that the reading public would demand some answers to obvious questions. But these Susan would deny her readers, and wear no scarlet letter, choosing instead to concentrate on her stay on the island. For her, it was as much a life-altering incident as the loss of her daughter. Indeed, she wears her castaway status as a badge and hopes to be recognized on the streets as "Susan Barton, the castaway", once the book is published. But her story, as written to and told Foe is "too much the same", if not dull, says Foe. The sameness of her story, its monotony is much like the monotonous tone Friday keeps playing on his flute. We must remember here that it is Susan who was set adrift by mutineers on her ship and Cruso is portrayed as a shipwrecked man, not one marooned like Defoe's hero. She has usurped Cruso's history, in a way, and made it her own.

The real twist in the narrative is reserved for the end when it is revealed that the ship which "rescued" Susan, Cruso and Friday from the island and was sailing to England, had indeed sunk. The gentlemanly captain who had wished for Susan's company had probably been indulged, contrary to what Susan told Foe. Susan had censored her own tale. Her tale actually lay embedded in the ship's wreck in the sea. All she had wished for, her adventures-- had all been manipulated by a master/ maverick writer, Foe. Foe was, indeed, Susan's foe in the sense that he had usurped her authorship, while at the same time, indulging her phantom. At the end of the novel, Susan, who had never doubted her own substantiality, is reduced to a phantom. Foe, at times, transposes her into the character of Roxana, lending her similar circumstances. Roxana, one of Defoe's fictional heroines with her checkered history of abandonment by her husband and multiple lovers, had also been guilty of abandoning her children to make her own ends meet. Susan is made to confront another character from Roxana's life, Amy, who accompanies the girl who claims to be her daughter. Susan doubts the substantiality of all these personae, even suspecting them to be actors at Foe's disposal, but never suspects that she, too, may be a mere creation of Foe's. Foe is dallying with Susan's fate: he is throwing options at her and waiting, watching which ones she chooses.

Ultimately, the novel plays on power and control: how much, really, is in the author's control and how much is really, the muse's will? Do characters chart out their own lives or visit their chosen, elected, "intended" authors to bring them to life in letters/ words? These are questions

Coetzee visits again and again, particularly through the intermittent appearances of Elizabeth Costello, his fictional counterpart, in his later novels. She visits her characters, often feels tied down to them and compelled to tell their story; her attempts to manipulate their lives and courses of action are often thwarted by her assertive, disobedient characters. She insists that they ”come to her”, even though her characters protest that she is an intrusion, a meddler in their lives, as is the case with Paul Rayment (*Slow Man,* 2005). Foe surrenders not so much to Susan (their love making with Susan riding him makes him uncomfortable), as to Friday. He will write the ultimate story, the actual truth, once he masters the art of writing, Though Friday would like to close things with his “omega”, Foe insists that he start anew, with “a” or alpha” and alerts Susan against her dismissal of Friday as writer/ author, saying he might “yet be visited by the Muse”[23]. The novel, therefore is not Susan’s, not Foe’s, certainly not Cruso’s or even Friday’s. It is the reader’s novel, who discovers these people in the wreck at the bottom of the sea, pregnant with tales untold. Indeed, Friday’s obscure “muteness” anticipates Coetzee’s own strategy at literary meets and lectures that he is invited to deliver. He does not speak, but reads from his own works. He becomes a *reader,* effacing his authorial role, in a sense. Though there is much ado about the writing of the “novel”, the final draft never really gets written.

Though Friday is mute, he is not quite silent. Cruso assumes several pasts for him, which he conveys to Susan and Friday supposedly appropriates. Friday sings, or at least he has music, and plays on the flute: music that sounds monotonous to Susan and Cruso’s ears. His very “muteness” projects him as a probable author, and make us wonder, with Susan, if his inscrutability is not a deliberate distancing. The actual author of the story would then be not Cruso(e), not (De)foe, not Susan either, but Friday with his lost tongue, Philomela-like, singing the song of violence done to him. The very mystery of how he came to lose his tongue gives rise to endless speculation and possibilities as to what could have happened. Cruso, and with him, Susan, imagines macabre acts to build on the horror of his mutilation. And indeed, in those possibilities, a wide range of atrocities actually inflicted upon native tribes spread in the reader’s imagination. That is, perhaps, the author’s role: not to tell, but to make his readers imagine. And this role Friday properly fulfills: not with his words, but with his body. He is resistant to communication in all its forms. He does not use gestures; his sole form of expression is music and dance. In a way it reiterates stereotypes of the quintessential African, barbarous to the extent of being deprived of speech, deprived of the “word”, spoken or written. As to Friday’s story, there can only be endless speculation and surmise, never certitude or closure. Indeed, Foe opens Susan’s eyes to yet another possibility: when Friday rowed his skiff to the vortex of the sea where the ship’s wreck lay and scattered petals there, he could have

been paying respect to his fellow slave prisoners, chained to their narrow bunks who were not so lucky as Cruso or Friday. This adds another dimension to Friday's "story".

In his essay on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*[24] Coetzee also points out that Crusoe is marked by his disobedience, both to his father in not joining the family profession and becoming a sailor, and as a mutineer on board the Hispaniola. This becomes all the more telling because he tries to impose a culture of obedience on Friday as the anarchist/ prodigal son/ sailor turns colonist/conformist. Defoe's Crusoe is, in Joyce's words, a perfect symbol of the British empire, complete with his enterprise, industriousness, resourcefulness, tenacity in the face of adversity, and dogged perseverance, not to mention his asexual nature. He is not bereft of "unconscious cruelty", though: if Defoe's Crusoe deals savagely with the human, "cannibal" inhabitants of the island, barring Friday whom he rescues from being devoured, Coetzee's clobbers to death menacing monkeys on the island he inhabits. Coetzee strips this Robinson Crusoe of his romantic trappings and turns him into a morose, unenthusiastic, aging man who survives on frugal means, and does not wish for any more. He has no ambitions towards pioneering, and does not even bother to salvage basic tools from the wreck, which could have made his life easier. Defoe's Crusoe turned into a plantation owner after his rescue from the island after 28 years, but Coetzee's develops an attachment to the island and scarcely wants to be rescued; in fact, he dies on the passage back to England. Coetzee's Cruso laments that he had not brought seeds, but nevertheless spends his time cutting out terraces on the rocky island for any future inhabitant who might remember to bring seeds. He is, perhaps, more a settler who adapted to the ways of the island, than a mere coloniser who tries to convert his "discovery" into the land of his origin.

Life and Times of Michael K

This "idea of gardening"[25], of frugal, *Walden*-like living, is one that Coetzee picks up again, in a different allegory, in *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983). Set in a backdrop of civil war which we can assume is taking place in a country in Africa, the novel charts the displacement of people and their internment in camps. Caught in the crossfire between the establishment and the resistance groups is its chief character, Kafkaesquely named Michael K. Born with a harelip, and 'soft in the head', he shuns society just as he is rendered invisible to society at large. The jobs he takes up, that of a janitor and as gardener, all require the element of invisibility to some extent. It is perhaps his lack of social intercourse that renders him an outsider, while still residing physically within society. His isolation puts him at an objective distance, making a piercing criticism of civil war in Africa, and a powerful pacifist statement, as Michael K gets shunted between freedom and imprisonment,

between Walden-like idyll and camp existence and hospitalisation. Michael K's journey and quest motif in the novel is centered around restoring his invalid mother to the farm in the country she thinks of as home. Like a dutiful son, he takes care of her needs and even carries her physically when she cannot be wheeled anymore. But she dies on the long arduous journey intercepted by hostile forces and Michael K scatters her ashes at the farm he thinks to have been their destination.

Coetzee uses some strong tropes here. Being born with a cleft lip, Michael K is different, his body lending itself to superstition and ostracism. Claude Levi-Strauss in *Myth and Meaning* charts how in various cultures all over the world, twins and persons with a cleft lip have been equally ostracised, the "harelip" conceived as an "incipient twin", or "halfway to becoming a twin"[26] and marked as a problematic character that causes splits: be it in the body of the mother while being born, or in the fabric of society.[27] His findings suggest that the place of the hare in Algonkian mythology is between the Messiah or the unique intermediary, and the heavenly twins, and the hare is thus an ambiguous god in their mythology: "sometimes he is a very wise deity who is in charge of putting the universe in order, and sometimes he is a ridiculous clown who goes from mishap to mishap."[28] To Algonkians, the hare is both a single beneficient deity as well as twins, one of whom is good and the other bad. Caught in this dilemma, the harelipped person, from a mythological viewpoint, is sacred, yet profane, both feared and revered. Mythology and beliefs apart, there is ostracism of the person with a cleft lip on account of being "ugly" or "grotesque" and hence, socially undesirable. The cleft lip posed a duality of the Word, suggesting trickery, falsehood; it instilled fear, distrust. 20th century eugenicist exercises included termination/ sterilization of those having a cleft lip. Karl Pearson, an early champion of the brand of eugenics practised by the Third Reich defined as unfit to live "the habitual criminal, the professional tramp, the tuberculous, the insane, the mentally defective, the alcoholic, the diseased from birth or from excess"[29] Headed by Pearson, the Department of Applied Statistics which included the Galton Biometric Laboratories at University College in London collected eugenicist data on the inheritance of physical and mental traits including "scientific, commercial and legal ability but also hermaphrodism, hemophilia, cleft palate, harelip, tuberculosis, diabetes, deaf-mutism, polydactyly (more than five fingers) or brachydactyly (stub fingers), insanity and mental deficiency"[30] The wide-ranging list, cruel and absurd, cuts down "normalcy" to a very narrow definition. Through the lone figure of Michael K, an insider yet an outsider by virtue of his bodily deformity and simple reasoning devoid of guile, Coetzee carves out a fine commentary on modern politics that justified eugenics on lines of bodily features, race, origin.

Set in an African state that has become a police state in a desperate bid to maintain segregation, the life and times of Michael K are played out without Michael K ever engaging in war, without ever coming to understand its rationale or its implications. The "coercion to speak", in Arnd Bohm's words[31], recurs in *Life and Times of Michael K.* K is a quiet man, but his body carries out an outspoken protest against war, against camp existence, against consumerism, against all the frills that civilisation has added to human existence. On the one hand, he is what Giorgio Agamben calls "homo sacer", or the sacred body, the body that can be killed but not sacrificed, existing both inside and outside the margins of civil society. Michael K literally lives out such an existence, fending for himself at an abandoned farm, craving no human society, growing his own food, rearing pumpkins as his own "children", (leading an almost Crusoe-like existence) sleeping in the open or in a shelter built for himself that could house only a body and no more. He does without the appendages of home and family, without power stemming from social standing or property, without connections, without what we understand to be the support system of an individual. He defies the concept of "societas generis humani", or "society of man-kind" which, Hannah Arendt points out in *The Human Condition*[32], has come to be generally accepted as the fundamental human condition. Michael K does not feel the need to communicate with the people surrounding him. He has no need for company. As far as the Aristotelian definition of man as 'a living being capable of speech' (*zoon logon ekhon*) is concerned, he is an aberration, for he does not feel the imperative to talk with others as a condition for his existence. Speech is not a way of life for him as it is for most people. Michael K adopts an extreme form of frugality, reducing the needs of his body to the level of mere subsistence. He is not driven by ascetism, he is not starving for a cause, there is no spiritual transcendence he wishes to attain through his Walden-like existence. Yet Michael K conveys a sense of intense living-in-the-body, feeling its needs and whetting them, cutting down on any excess and yet extracting sensuous pleasure from the bare minimum. It is almost an experiment in primitivism, frugality and monasticism, without being bound by any ideology or cause. Further, his location on the fringes of civilisation, outside the 'polis' per se, renders him abject: he can be bypassed as a non-entity, he can be forgotten, abandoned, he can have never existed at all. In a sense, he is 'bare life', in the words of Agamben, shorn of rights, at the mercy of the socio-political machinery of the country, to be employed and disposed of at its will.

In the second half of the novel we find Michael K in the care of a kind, young doctor trying to salvage a forgotten individual, about whom nobody has cared. It is almost as if even to himself,

Michael K is a forgotten entity. The doctor has to fight to keep Michael K in his care, and wonders at the tenacity of his body that is able to survive on so little as to survive on nothing. To the doctor, nursing Michael K becomes a self-defeating mission, as if a means to the salvation of his soul, bloodied with the atrocities of Apartheid. It is interesting that Coetzee seizes upon the surname K to apply to Anna and her son Michael, for since Kafka, it has come to symbolize the postmodern human condition: the individual at insurmountable odds with the system/ establishment, where there is complete incomprehension of the logic that drives that latter and a total breakdown of communication. In spite of the deceptively passive objectivity of its tone, *The Life and Times of Michael K* is not a reductionist tale. In this novel, much more so than in others, there is assertion of the body through a sublime non-assertion. It is through his body that Michael K is finally able to exercise choice, and his unique self in civil war-torn Africa in which all rights and liberties are suspended, where they have camps for all sorts of offenders and non-offenders. The bleak Orwellian dystopia of the world of Michael K is a world easily recognisable in 20th century Africa. A character remarks towards the end of the novel that the war was being fought so that minorities could have a say in their future. Now, in Africa, it is the white settlers who are numerically the minority, but they enjoy rights and privileges of being a majority which itself, borders on the absurd but is yet a living reality. In certain regions, there are native ethnic minorities who may number less than another ethnic group. Territorially speaking, however, it is the native Africans who, at the time this novel is set, occupied a minor portion of the land. Coetzee does not elaborate who these minorities can be. If race is a subtext in this novel, it is so much a given, that Coetzee deliberately, makes no issue of it. The reason could be that irrespective of race, people are oppressed in this dystopia where nobody really remembers why the war is being fought. Also, Coetzee does not want issues of race to cloud/colour our understanding of the novel.

In such a world where all are victims of war, both those incarcerated and those guarding them, a world of high walls and barbed wire fences and curfews and shoot-at-sight orders, Michael K is the only person we cannot label a victim. He is both inside and outside the war. He is not fighting it, and refuses, time and again, to be bothered by it: that seems to be the best way to defy it. It is a pacifist statement, only Michael K is not an ideologist. If he is making a pacifist statement, he is making it unawares. He does not accept, and quite really, does not understand why he should be put in a camp, why anyone, should be put in a camp, and is ever on the lookout for the slightest chance to scale the fence and escape. And escape he does, notwithstanding that he might not get food outside the camp, and might get shot when discovered, if not hauled to a worse camp. These fears and anxieties make most of the men stay put inside the camp, accepting their fate, working for

minimal wages, sleeping in bunks reminiscent of the slave ships of the Middle Passage. Michael K, otherwise a diligent labourer, refuses to work here. He does not feel he has to earn his keep here. He does not subject himself to the command of the camp authorities.

Life and Times of Michael K is a study of the frugal body, its needs reduced to such a bare minimum that the very boundary between death and life seems to be threatened. Michael K is a part of the times that he lives in and yet outside it. He rejects all that human society has to offer him, and is content only when he feeds on food he has grown himself on a patch of earth by a deserted farm. His body grows to be so attuned to the sparse food he grows that it rejects any other food offered him, to the point of starving continually when that food is not available. Though Michael K is a "simple", he is no Everyman, asserts Nadine Gordimer ("The Idea of Gardening" *The New York Review of Books*, February 2, 1984) marked as he is by his cleft lip. But she nevertheless identifies the novel as an allegory: Michael K can be seen variously as a representative of all the black peoples of South Africa, as an inmate of Auschwitz or Stalin's camps, his cleft lip read as "the distortion of personality that South Africa's race laws have effected "on blacks and whites alike[33].
In the second part of the novel, narrated in the first person by the camp doctor of the rehabilitation centre which houses sick men and helps them get back on their feet so that they can join the labour force again, we get a more objective view of Michael K, seen through the eyes of another. Observing Michael for days and months, the doctor is forced to change his beliefs about the human body's urge to survive. After prolonged futile attempts to get Michael to eat, who starves in front of his eyes, not for lack of food but of a will to eat, the doctor is confronted with a dilemma: whether to save a life by force-feeding, or to respect its wishes.

> Now I had been taught the body contains no ambivalence. The body, I had been taught, wants only to live. Suicide, I had understood, is an act not of the body against itself but of the will against the body. Yet here I beheld a body that was going to dierather than change its nature...It was not a principle, an idea that lay behind your decline. You did not want to die, but were dying. You were like a bunny-rabbit sewn up in the carcase of an ox, suffocating no doubt, but starving too, amid all those basketfuls of meat, for the true food.[34]

This "true food" is, possibly, not only the "bread of freedom" as the doctor conjectures, but also food reared without violence of any kind, food produced with love and care.

For the first time in his experience, the doctor is faced with an almost biological wonder, Michael (called Michaels here). He is intrigued by Michaels' rejection of food which is not so much a deliberate, willful act, but an act of the body. His body has a will of its own. It makes a powerful yet pacifist assertion of life—authentic living. Michael K has effaced his existence so much so that rationalized that his raison d'etre while his mother was still living was to take care of his mother. After she passes away, he struggles to find a meaning for his own existence. Coetzee, much influenced by the writings of René Girard, could well have conceptualized Michael K as a "sacred being". Explicating the concept of the "sacred", Rene Girard points out that the "sacred" belonging to the Oedipus archetype is above and beyond the ordinary laws of nature. Hence he cannot be subject to the common laws of the land even if he is a parricide and has committed incest. Rather, it is because he has dared do the unthinkable that he is accepted as king (though the story goes that it is because he correctly answered the questions put to him by the sphinx). The violence that he has dared wreak will of course be addressed, but that will be done by divine, or supernatural forces beyond the power of man. In postmodern socio-political structures Michael K is the closest we come to that "sacred". For Coetzee Michael K embodies that sacred: the hare-lipped man, within and yet without the confines of society, slave to none, not even to the laws of nature. He has "no location in the world which is properly his own" since he has nothing, owns nothing, takes up almost no space in the world, makes no claim for it. The doctor who takes up the narrative reins in the section two of the novel remarks once, "I am not sure he is wholly of our world..."[35]

Slow Man

The last work I discuss here belongs to J. M. Coetzee's 'Australian' phase. Set in contemporary Australia, in peacetime, *Slow Man* (2005) offers a comment on the modern condition. Disability forms the subtext of *Slow Man* in which Paul Rayment, the protagonist, a man of sixty, suffers an accident which causes him to lose a leg. An able-bodied man for his life of sixty years, he must now come to terms with a different body, renegotiate with himself and the world his sense of self and identity. Coetzee deals here with the finer nuances of amputation: the missing limb, the ignominy of losing one's self-sufficiency, of needing assistance for even the most private of functions. *Slow Man* examines corporeal life in flux, how one copes with a changing body-image. Phenomenologically read, the body is the space where self and society intersect and interact. With the accident he meets, Paul Rayment suffers a fault, or is rather, jolted into confronting the dysjunction that lies between his own set of values and ethics and those of the younger generation. The fracture suffered by his limb renders his own existence a fractured one, with daily habits becoming chores, the smooth flow

of his life ruptured by the compulsion of dependence. To his anguish and outrage, Paul finds that even after the accident, he has been denied the right to make decisions about his body. So, as he lies injured in the hospital, he is already infantilized, treated as disabled and as incapable of making judicious decisions about his own body. It galls him to no end that his leg was amputated without consulting him (the cursory signature on the "consent form" does not count with him). He reads it as a further violation of his body after the initial violence of the accident. Doctors treating him usurp his rights and presume to know what he might want. They act on the presumption that he would choose to live with a "truncated" body rather than die of gangrene. Thus, it is also a denial of the choice to live or die. Death to the body is somehow always stalled, somehow inconceivable. Clinical death must be postponed, forestalled, even when to all ends and purposes, death has already occurred. It is as if the onus for bringing death to a body is one that anyone would like to avoid. Paul Rayment feels that he would have chosen to die of gangrene rather live as an amputee if he had been given the choice, but the choice was not allowed him. Right to death and euthanasia have been the subject of much debate and discourse of late. Films like *The Sea Inside*[36] and *Guzaarish*[37] have brought these issues to general public scrutiny.

How far the belief in the perfectibility of the body goes, what happens to desire when the body is "compromised" in some way, how far the notion of the perfect body hits not only self esteem but one's perception and relation to the world at large: these are some of the questions pointedly raised in *Slow Man*. Note how the title reads like that of a superhero film (*Superman,Spiderman*, *Batman*, *Ant-Man* to name only a few) in a postmodern, almost anticlimactic sense. It is a little girl, Ljuba, of Croatian descent, who giggles that Paul Rayment is "slow man" when he is about to be presented a specially converted bicycle marked "PR Express". Rayment lives up to his title: he is a remnant of the old world, he misses the old ways of socializing with people, such as dropping in for tea, he does not know his way around either computers or the internet, he treasures photographs in their first impressions, among other things. He can hardly keep up with the fast pace of the world, the change in people's outlook. He holds on to an old fading world as a man holds on to his last pleasures. He cannot adapt to new ways of living, or thinking, a lot of which involve artifice, in his opinion. He is rather mortified to find some vintage photographs in his collection digitally altered by Drago Jokic and his friend.

Rayment's rejection of prosthesis is a rejection not only of something new-fangled but also something he views as dishonest or false ("crutches are at least honest"), since they will hide the

reality of his being. It can be seen as a lie, a pretension: a limb pretending to be there when it really is not. With the aid of this artificial appendage, he would be masquerading as an able-bodied man. Paul Rayment is rejecting that lie. Much as he mourns the loss of his leg, he can never bring himself to accept a prosthesis as its replacement. Neither his doctors, nurses, physiotherapist, nor even the old-world Marijana whom he trusts so much and believes shares a worldview with, can convince him of the virtues of a prosthesis. The contraption Drago skillfully devises for him, a hand-pedalled bicycle, is appreciated but also rejected for the same reasons. He would rather be a doddering old fool than appear to be "normal", competing with able-bodied people and their vehicles. In a breathlessly long sentence in his eponymous work, David Wills identifies prosthesis thus (and I quote only a part of it):

> ...across that ghost of a space there comes the change, where once there was only shifting there is suddenly a beast rampant in triumphant otherness, all fluid and gleaming the throes of a cataclysmic future convulsion in which metal fuses with flesh, the cyborg synthetic ecstasy that is the fiction of a science or the science of a fiction and the love of a machine past all fear of rejection, all the way across some still-retreating threshold or barrier...[38]

Perhaps Paul Rayment is rejecting this alien appendage to his body; the object that he feels he would never be able to accommodate/ assimilate as his own in his body, the 'other' limb that would supplant his former limb, pretending to take its place, yet never quite becoming his own. He rejects that "spectre" that Umberto Eco identifies as the "ugly". He rejects that cyborg existence that has become so much a part of the human condition that it is difficult to separate it from natural physicality. He would rather get used to the "stump", all that is left of his amputated limb and try to not alienate it from his body, reclaim what is abject, accept it in its ugliness and the horror of mutilated flesh. Paul weighs his stump against the proposed prosthesis, considering his own lack of exercise:

> Is this ugly half-limb becoming even uglier?
>
> If he were to give in and accept a prosthesis there would be a stronger reason for exercising the stump. As it is, the stump is of no use to him at all. All he can do with it is carry it around like an unwanted child. No wonder it wants to shrink, retract, withdraw.
>
> But if this fleshly object is repulsive, how much more so a leg moulded out of pink plastic with a hinge at the top and a shoe at the bottom, an apparatus that you strap yourself to in the morning and unstrap yourself from at night and drop to the floor, shoe and all! He shudders at the thought of it, he wants nothing to do with it. Crutches are better. Crutches

are at least honest.[39]

Like Mrs. Curren's cancer (*Age of Iron*, 1990), Paul Rayment likens his stump to an unwanted child one must lug around. For him, prosthesis is deception: to himself, to his body, to the self he projects to the world. He will have none of it. To him prosthesis is more of a "monstrosity" than his own mutilated limb. He would rather hobble along on crutches, embracing the role of the physically impaired, a lone crusader of old world values and systems than be the postmodern cyborg. He embraces the grotesque, the "ugliness" of being with the thing-that-should-have-been-there-but-is-not. Consciousness of the missing limb is not only a disruption of one's notion of beauty, of "integrity", but also a fear of confronting the Other, especially when that Other is identified within oneself. That Other causes the breach in integrity, aligns one with the "ugly", with one's own twilight. In *On Ugliness* Umberto Eco cites Nietzsche's views from *Twilight of the Idols*:

> ...When it comes to beauty, man posits himself as the norm of perfection... he worships himself in this... at bottom man mirors himself in things and sees as beautiful all things that reflect this image... Ugliness is seen as a sign and a symptom of this degeneration... Every suggestion of exhaustion, heaviness, senility, fatigue, any sort of lack of freedom, like convulsion or paralysis, especially the smell, the colour, the form of dissolution, of decomposition... All this provokes an identical reaction of value judgment "ugly"... what does man hate? There is no doubt about this: he hates the twilight of his own type.[40]

Eco observes how the notion of what is "ugly" was derived from Aquinas' *Summa Teologica* where Aquinas defines as "shameful" those beings which were "diminished" even in the sense of lacking a limb or having only one eye, or, as Eco notes, as William of Auvergne was to put it in his *Treatise on Good and Evil*[41]. More than the management of an incapacitated/ challenged body as a biological entity and issues relating to identity and self esteem, it is the management of a disabled body as a social entity that becomes the bigger challenge.

This is where author Elizabeth Costello's advent into Paul Rayment's life plays a crucial role. She claims that he "came to her" (suggesting not only a flash of inspiration but also seductive coercion) as the "man with the bad leg". All the other aspects of his life and identity-- photographer, collector, son, brother, divorced husband, friend-- fade as his physical condition of having a bad leg becomes his single defining feature. She makes inroads into his life, seems to know him better than he does himself, and even holds his hand guiding him through the maze of his new-found love for his nurse, Marijana, a married woman of Balkan origin. Costello even tries to manipulate his life

somewhat by arranging for a meeting between Rayment and Marianna, herself a blind woman looking to recover her self esteem, perhaps in a bid to quell his thwarted/ unrequited desire for Marijana. But Rayment, and particularly Marianna become sort of test subjects for Costello. She plays god, bringing characters together, making their paths cross and then watching what they make of those opportunities.

In *Slow Man* Coetzee moves away from his time-tested paradigms. Paul Rayment is no victim of "collective violence"; the violence wreaked on him is a freak accident. But there is a suggestion that violence is implicit in modern society which in its Wayne Blights breeds indifference and callousness. He is reduced to a patient on the operating table at the mercy of doctors who wrest away from him his right to make decisions regarding his own body, a curiosity for an old lover, Margaret McCord, who would like to test his sexual prowess after the accident, a case of charity or pity or both for his nurses. The accident itself, "frivolous" in the modern world, makes him reevaluate his body, unlearn its old habits and take it less for granted. He falls in love with his Croatian nurse Marijana (a relic of the old world to him in her care and sensitivity). His love goes unrequited, but he extends unconditional support to her children, indulging their excesses, financing their education, playing the benefactor/ godfather, sometimes unacknowledged, sometimes unapologetically exploited. Moving on from the initial disintegration that sudden disability brought on, *Slow Man* is about Paul Rayment's reconstruction of his life, a reintegration of his selfhood through love and acceptance of his altered body and constructive engagement with his practical surroundings. In his "diminished"state, with his surroundings indifferent to what happens to him or with him, from the boy who knocked him down to the doctors and nurses who treat him, and even Marijana, the woman he loves, Paul Rayment is a subject to none but Elizabeth Costello, the writer who wrests her way into his life, chronicling him. The insertion of Elizabeth Costello into Coetzee's master narrative brings into relief Paul Rayment's subjectivity in a world that has left people like him much behind. It is a work of mourning a world where photographs have given way to the "monstrosity" of digital prints with fluid, violable borders which only heighten the sense of mutability, flux, the vulnerability of things old.

Contrary to his other works, where he employs subversive biopolitics, in these later works set in Australia (*Elizabeth Costello, Slow Man, Diary of a Bad Year*), J M Coetzee appears all too conscious of the body and preoccupied with Enlightenment notions of its perfectibility. His protagonists crib about the ailing body, have difficulty coming to terms with non-normative figures

of the desiring and the desirable body. His gaze on the female body, it seems, is particularly harsh and patriarchal. This is the gaze that his woman protagonists turn on themselves, too. Costello views herself critically as an aging woman, and reminisces about the days of her youth when she evoked the desire of men like Emmanuel Egudu, a writer from Nigeria. The curious case of Marianna who feels the need to be desired and to be paid for sexual services as a ratification of that desire lends a telling comment to Rayment's situation. His anxieties are similar but not the same. He does not really question his own desirability though he cannot be assured of his own performance. For him, it is another arena where his body might turn against him. He does not take Marianna's route to reassurance of his sexual prowess but instead is content yearning for Marijana, playing out his love through indirect means, and seeking approval.

In Coetzee's fiction, a certain aura of bleakness surrounds the body of the aged and the ailing, the maimed, the less than "perfect" body. Consider Rayment's approach to both Costello, and Marianna, the blind woman in search of sexual gratification. A similar scathing gaze is directed upon Marijana and her daughters, too, as also by Fyodor Mikhailovich upon Anna Sergeyevna in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994). A kind of paranoia accompanies the consciousness of age and diminishing desirability, both of men and women. This is particularly evident in the second part of his fictionalized memoir, *Youth (2002*), where Coetzee himself features as a young romantic in search of the woman of perfect beauty who would perfectly deserve his love. It therefore becomes revelatory when these same "compromised" bodies become vehicles of rebellion, protest.

Coetzee presents the ailing, disabled body as endogenic to the body-politic. The body is woven into the allegorical schema of his novels. Problematic political systems, such as those operating under apartheid, totalitarian, colonial or imperialist regimes, the injustices and abuse of rights that characterize and sustain them, find potent metaphors in the diseased, disabled or maimed body. In this context, the organic body is not used merely as a mirror for society's ills but with its sickness and its infirmities, becomes a veritable weapon of protest, an empowered entity. By assuming agency of the body, the protagonist makes a bid to wrest agency over the larger body-politic. The power of self-destruction is probably the inevitable transitional stage before complete empowerment is secured. It is perhaps the necessary precondition in a pacifist struggle: that the body be annihilated. This is the rationale that drove women to commit suicide as they ushered in the Russian Revolution. Where women's bodies are concerned, a larger biopolitics comes into play for they are trapped in the discourse of procreation, never separated from their biological condition of

being female. Read in the context of South Africa's warped race relations and history of oppression and misappropriation, the body takes on several significations. Coetzee in his novels *The Vietnam Project* (the first novella within *Dusklands*), *In the Heart of the Country* and *Age of Iron* suggests that it is the outer societal forces that bear upon the sensitive individual, whose response is corporeal, through bodily disease. Eugene Dawn and Magda suffer nervous breakdowns, collapse of sanity. Elizabeth Curren gets cancer of the breast. Since the physicality of the body can never be denied, since the body is what can bear witness, what can bear within itself the marks of history, the body has authority beyond any other agent. The afflicted, non-normative, suffering body is even more palpable and assertive in its presence. Hence it is the most concrete means by which moral conflicts can be resolved. Coetzee reconciles Judaeo- Christian notions of the culpability of the body with older pagan, Vedic and Classical ideas of sacrifice and scapegoating that recruit, through rituals, the diseased or disabled body as the carrier of the ills of society as well as the vessel for its redemption.

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[1]Paul Robinson is quoted by Rosalind Garland Thomson in *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 9.

[2] Garland- Thomson, Rosalind. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, p. 6.

[3] Eco, Umberto. *On Ugliness.* Trans. Alastair McEwen. London: Harville Secker, 2007, p.15.

[4] Ibid, p. 16.

[5] Ibid, p. 16.

[6] Ibid, p. 263.

[7]Davis, Lennard J. "Constructing Normalcy" in Lennard J. Davis ed. *The Disability Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge, 21.

[8] Bakan, David. *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice: Toward a Psychology of Suffering.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1968, p. 58.

[9] Beers, William. *Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of Religion.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992, p. 27.

[10] Turner, Victor W. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti- Structure.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 95.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function.* Trans. W.D. Halls. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964, p. 63.

[13] Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, p. 95.

[14] Karen E. Fields points this out in her foreword to Nancy Jay's *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992, p. xiv.

[15] Girard, Rene. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 3.

[16] *Castaway*. Dir. Steven Spielberg, Robert Zemeckis. Perf. Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt, Paul Sanchez, et al. Dreamworks Pictures and Twentieth Century Fox, 2000. Film.

[17]Davis, Lennard J, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 114

[18] Coetzee, J. M. "Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*". *Stranger Shores: Essays, 1986- 1999,* London: Vintage, 2002

[19] Coetzee, J.M. *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. David Attwell, ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 247.

[20] Coetzee, J.M, in his introduction to *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 8-9.

[21]Coetzee, J.M. *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews,* p. 248.

[22] Chakravorty Spivak, Gayatri. "Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/ Roxana*" in *English in Africa,* Vol. 17, No. 2, Oct. 1990, (p.15 in content downloaded from JSTOR)

[23] Coetzee, J. M. *Foe*. London: Penguin Books, 1986, p. 147.

[24] Coetzee, J. M. "Robinson Crusoe" in *Stranger Shores: Essays, 1986-1999,* p. 25.

[25] This phrase occurs in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and is also chosen by Nadine Gordimer for the title of her review of Coetzee's book, in *The New York Book Review*, February 2, 1984.

[26]Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*. London: Routledge Classics, 2001, p. 14.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Citation from Kevles, 1985, 33 by Lennard J. Davis in "Constructing Normalcy", in *The Disability Studies Reader*. Lennard J. Davis, ed. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 17.

[30]Karl Pearson is quoted by Lennard J. Davis in "Constructing Normalcy", in *The Disability Studies Reader*, pp. 17-8.

[31] Bohm, Arnd. "The Coercion to Speak in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*" Carleton University, Ottawa

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PARABLES OF THE WOMB: THE MATERNAL AND THE FILIAL

Filial love is not something J. M. Coetzee embraced in his life, if we are to judge by his "autrebiographies". One gets the impression that from a very young age J.M. Coetzee was a loner; he longed for more "ordinariness" that would prevent their family from sticking out among the Boers, and even blamed his mother for their "extraordinariness". His mother had German antecedents and a formidable personality. In many senses, she was a rebel who would not follow the typical pattern of life that Afrikaners led in South Africa but had her fair share of biases and prejudices. While her elder son John (Coetzee) cared deeply about her, he also wanted to be unattached, to be free of what he perceived to be her stifling mother love that he felt to be pinning him down. Perhaps that is what drove him to his recurrent stints of exile. Leaving South Africa meant not only a rejection of all that South Africa stood for but also of what tied him down to it: the land, his family. A reading of *Summertime* (2009) reveals his deep attachment to the bleak *karoo*, just as *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002) express his need to be free of his mother's influence. His urge to leave was Joycean, in a sense: he had to leave the sordidness of Apartheid South Africa to come into his own. It was a choice much disapproved by the likes of Nadine Gordimer. But we would have to be blind to the latent activism, the socio-ethical and moral stance of his fiction to accuse him of escape. An exile would also suggest self assertion in one's own right, weaned away from the overpowering influence of the mother/land.

There are recurrent musings in his fiction, which suggest almost a hankering for love. In Coetzee's fictional oeuvre, however, protagonists are often solitary figures, without steady

partners or familial ties that bind them to familial responsibilities. Hence their affections are sometimes directed towards unlikely offspring- substitutes. With Elizabeth Curren (*Age of Iron,* 1990) it is the "unlovable" boy, Bheki's unnamed comrade while with the colonial magistrate (*Waiting for the Barbarians,* 1980) it is the captive barbarian girl for whom he develops an almost incestuous passion. Many of his characters rue the fact that they are childless, or have lost their children. Notable among them, of course, is Fyodor Mikhailovsky (*The Master of Petersburg,* 1994) who loses his foster son Pavel in a revolutionary confrontation or conspiracy. While the young man had been alive, Mikhailovsky had never been effusive in his show of love which he laments at his passing. His characters always stop short of admission of love, of affection, as though a sense of un-belonging, or a fear of being disowned hold them back. Thus the objective distance that they cultivate, prevails. Paul Rayment (*Slow Man,* 2005) is keen to adopt the son, Drago (it is a male child he longs for) and in extension, as a gesture befitting a benevolent godfather, the other children as well, of his nurse, Marijana, with whom he falls in love. A similar yearning for a son is shared by JC, Coetzee's initial-sake in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), who even advises his neighbour, a young woman he is infatuated with, Anya, not to put off childbearing for too late. Mother- daughter ties are dwelt on, often wistfully, through the eyes of a narrator- figure, an outsider who feels left out of the equation. Anna Sergeyevna, with whom Mikhailovsky has a liaison (*The Master of Petersburg*) and her daughter Matryona, Marijana and her daughter Ljuba are marked as mothers passing on their skills and through them, parts of themselves on to their daughters. We have a mother embarking on an odyssey to look for her lost daughter (Susan Barton in *Foe,* 1986), another, yearning for an expatriate daughter (Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron*), and a daughter craving for a dead mother (Magda in *In the Heart of the Country,* 1977).

Formulations of the Maternal: a brief review

The immortality of the soul and the extension of the self through one's offspring, are ideas as old as creation itself. Perfecting the body, resisting time through procreation is not only the preserve of eugenics but finds its way into religious and secular texts as well. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night or, What You Will*, for instance, Viola rebukes Olivia for her celibacy, calling it cruel of her to "leave the world no copy" of her famed beauty. It is not mere courting with *carpe-diem* concerns but more a rebuff for shirking her social duties of procreation that attest to notions of perfectibility of the body. In Coetzee's fiction that preoccupies itself with the body and its lacks, notions of perfectibility of the body take on added nuances. They carry resonances of primordial mythical patterns by which having children comprises an important aspect of being a man.

Discussing the rationale of sacrifice in *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice*[1], David Bakan argues that "the desire to have children and the desire for immortality are part of a male psychological constellation involving the envy, desire and fear of women."[2] He implicates Christian beliefs saying, "there is hardly a page in the Bible on which it is not asserted in one way or the other that the male can have children."[3] Motherhood has often been undermined and indeed, the woman is often reduced to simply a bodily vehicle, a medium of giving birth and her role relegated to a subservient position in the miracle of life. To be free of "birthing" through a female mother is the ultimate patriarchal fantasy. The process of bearing a child which involves "abominable" bodily transitions and therefore threatens the sanctity of the immediate society, is a tabooed phenomenon: hence the elaborate prohibitions, taboos, rites and rituals around birth.

In this context, it becomes interesting to note how J. M. Coetzee negotiates with the fallacies of mythical patterns while at the same time subverting conventional expectations of the mother, and the maternal. In his fiction, the maternal is a negotiable drive: it need not be contained in female bodies. Yet, the absence of a mother figure imbues some of his characters with destructive death drives, as we see in the case of Magda (*In the Heart of the Country*) or Pavel, Dostoevsky's adopted son who reportedly has committed suicide (*The Master of St. Petersburg*). Eugene Dawn (*The Vietnam Project*, *Dusklands,* 1974) develops a neurosis and goes mad and even tries to kill his own son, when denied refuge by his wife Marilyn, a mother substitute for his troubled mind. Elizabeth Costello's son (in *Elizabeth Costello*) John, rues the absence of his mother, a famous writer who remained immersed in her work, in the years when he and his sister were growing up; he feels resentful towards her even in middle age. There seems to be an undercurrent of missing mothers or children going missing or moping in the absence of the care of mothers in J. M. Coetzee's fiction. The thrust towards the father is not as strong as it is towards the mother. Could Coetzee be suggesting that mothers and mothering be responsible for setting things right in the world? Could it be Coetzee attempting to make amends towards his own mother whom he tried to distance/ disown in his youth? Could it be introspection and re-interrogation of the role of his mother, and of mothers in general that manifests itself in his fiction?

In quite a few novels, J. M. Coetzee engages with the Maternal as well as the figure of the Mother as not only the agents of genesis but also potent bearers of change in a subversion of primordial patterns ordained by myths. It becomes a sort of reaffirmation of faith in the mother, in the maternal, restoring to the maternal its lost, denied *jouissance* (sexual pleasure). The 'Great

Mother' is actually an archetype that can be found in the collective consciousness of several communities around the world; it primarily features in infantile imaginations, often taking on theriomorphic forms of huge animals. In psychoanalytic terms, it is the "mother imago"[4]. In at least three of J.M. Coetzee's novels, this mother imago is exploited in varying degrees, jostling with the absence of filial love. His fiction makes a bid to reclaim the lost *jouissance* of the maternal, the power that systematically got undermined since Classical times down to Freud. A reading of Robert Graves' anthology of myths reveals a common factor in creation myths of different cultures and communities: creation rose from either the Great Mother, or the "goddess of all things", or mother symbols as the earth or sea. Mother archetypes range from Demeter to Kali, from Eurynome to Eve, from benevolent to vindictive, each accompanied by a story of disempowerment, of awful power harnessed by a patriarchal figure. The mother's supremacy, however, was soon usurped by paternal figures such as the sky or the winds. The shift from polytheism to monotheism played a crucial role in drowning out the cult of the mother and matriliny in the history of humankind, note feminists.

Patriarchal civilization not only sets maternity as a socio-biological imperative, it also ensures that motherhood does not give way to matriliny by the immediate imposition of nomenclature. In Biblical mythology, when Adam came upon the rest of creation he started giving them names, thus establishing his supremacy over all other species. This power of nomenclature, which is authoritative if not generative, established the symbolic code of language, which determined the existence and nature of all things. As interpreted by language, so things were. Multiplicities were cancelled, differential perspectives were cancelled, and all of creation fell prey to patriarchy: subject to the language of the father. Adrienne Rich has found

that "ancient motherhood was filled with a 'mana' (supernatural force)" that has been explored in the works of Joseph Campbell, Erich Neumann and the like. But, she rues,

> the idea of maternal power has been domesticated. In transfiguring and enslaving woman, the womb—the ultimate source of this power—has historically been turned against us and itself made into a source of powerlessness.[5]

Needless to say, fathers committing infanticide abound in mythological stories which are also manifestations of the fear of woman, particularly, fear of the Mother, the procreative capacity of women. David Bakan finds "the infanticidal impulse in the male to be associated, in western civilization, with patrilinearity and the assumption by the male of the responsibility of caring for the children…"[6] This impulse is suppressed in Judeo-Christian tradition, finds William Beers, through the mechanism of sacrifice[7]. It is simply the channelization of a destructive impulse in a different mode but with the same results. At its heart, therefore, even the practice of sacrifice is motivated by usurpation of the role of the mother. Nancy Jay in her sociological study of the role of gender in sacrifice argues that sacrifice works as evidence of, and therefore as a means of constituting, lines of patrilineal descent.[8] Psychologist Karen Horney opines that men fear and resent women because they experience them as powerful mothers.[9] Nancy Chodorow also feels "belief in the all powerful mother spawns a recurrent tendency to blame the mother on the one hand, and a fantasy of maternal perfectibility on the other."[10] Kelly Oliver points out that even for Sigmund Freud, who describes the uncanny as 'unheimlich', both at home and not at home, an ambiguous mix of good and evil, the most uncanny figure is that of the mother, "because she is associated with both life and death, with both

plenitude and nourishment and threats of withholding nourishment."[11] She reads, "for Freud, the life-giving power of the mother is the uncanny double of her death threat."[12]

Luce Irigaray bases her theories on the notion of a primal matricide that laid the patriarchal foundation of society: Clytemnestra's murder by Orestes preceded by the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon, Parashuram's murder of his mother, several other mythical lore. All these instances have served to further the cause of patriarchy. She elaborates,

> (T)he womb is never thought of as the primal space in which we become a body. Therefore for many men it is variously phantasized as a devouring mouth, as a sewer in which anal and urethral waste is poured, as a threat to the phallus or, at best, as a reproductive organ. And the womb is mistaken for all the female sexual organs since no valid representations of female sexuality exist… The only words we have for women's sexuality are filthy, mutilating words. Consequently, the feelings associated with women's sexuality will be anxiety, phobia, disgust and the haunting fear of castration.[13]

This "haunting fear" has throughout the ages led to the representation of woman as lacking (a penis), therefore a nullity, a nothingness, an abyss, and as patient of "penis envy" and "castration complex" (Freud). Adriana Cavarero points out that in the discussion in Plato's *Timaeus*, "women occupy the first step of (this) degenerating series in which the perfection of the original male prototype is progressively destroyed."[14] Corporeal binaries were made clear: the male body as rationalized, orderly, contained and

the female body as its disorderly, uncontrolled, irrational Other, signified by its "lack". The womb or the uterus was slammed as an "animal desirous of procreation", "an autonomous beast that, when not bearing children, "wanders in every direction through the body, closing up the passages of breath". So enduring is this idea and image that we find the female womb frequently depicted as such in Hollywood films of the 90s such as *Species*.[15] As if in keeping with male fears and fantasies, this female representative of "species" often devours men after the act of copulation. In John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Jimmy resentfully imagines his wife, Alison, as a giant python devouring him in bed.

However, this all-powerful, dreaded image of the Mother, the preserve of psychoanalytic theories, is curiously at odds with the actual bodily phenomenon of maternity. Maternity is fraught with tensions: not only does it threaten the selfhood of the incumbent mother, it endangers life and well-being as well. Maternity is in itself problematic for an individual human subject because of the many transgressions of boundaries it entails. It carries the threat of abjection by virtue of its ambiguous nature in pregnancy (the experience of another body, an Other, within one's own parasitically drawing nourishment off from it); it raises insecurities and fears due to changing body-image (with the subject viewing herself as "grotesque"). As Robyn Longhurst sums up, "Pregnant women undergo a bodily process that transgresses the boundary between inside and outside, self and other, one and two, mother and foetus, subject and object."[16]

Maternity is also the occasion for abjection of the female body in its being rejected, cast out once the foetus is ejected. The very process of giving birth entails a splitting of body and of

subjectivity, both finding a symbolic extension into another self, another being. Yet patriarchal pressures across cultures ensure that this extension is ripped away from the maternal, rendering both subjects incomplete in a way, demanding that selfhood be formed through denial, rather than incorporation of the maternal. Indeed, the personhood of the mother is denied in the sense that once a woman becomes a mother or even conceives, all her needs, wants, desires, inclinations as a person are made secondary, or even non-existent to the fact of her impending motherhood and the safety of the fetus. Susan Bordo in her essay "Is a Mother a Person?"[17] cites several instances and judicial cases where mothers or expectant women have been punished severely, or at least held guilty for indulging in their own wishes and "jeopardizing" the health of their unborn fetus. Motherhood, as controlled by patriarchy, thereby turns women into mere breeding vessels, reducing them to their wombs, and wrests control of their own bodies from themselves.

While erecting impossible, abstract ideals/ fantasies of the perfect mother on the one hand, patriarchy shears motherhood of libidinal power (*puissance*). Julia Kristeva argues that maternity should be seen not just as a socio-biological function, as reproduction merely, but as a bodily experience that lends *jouissance*, sexual pleasure, strengthening personhood for a subject.[18] In fact, Kristeva not only lays stress on phallic *jouissance* of maternity as a bodily phenomenon, but in her 1987 work, *Black Sun*, suggests that sexual difference is a result of differing relations to the maternal body.[19] Matricide, she says, is a vital necessity, for the infant has to be weaned from the maternal body, thus abjecting the maternal body further. But then again, the female infant cannot abject the maternal body without abjecting herself, whereas the male infant can abject

and eroticize the maternal body to develop a heterosexual sexuality.

Simone de Beauvoir notes, "It was as Mother that woman was fearsome, it is in maternity that she must be transfigured and enslaved." This "transfiguration" has occurred by the disempowerment of woman through the devaluation of the womb, reducing it to a mere functional organ of breeding, as well as through confinement of woman indoors for purposes of child-rearing. Adrienne Rich observes in the foreword to *Of Woman Born*:

> In the most fundamental and bewildering of contradictions, it has alienated women from our bodies by incarcerating us in them. At certain points in history, and in certain cultures, the idea of woman-as-mother has worked to endow women with respect, even with awe, and to give women some say in the life of a people or a clan. But for most of what we know as the mainstream of recorded history, motherhood as institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities…Under patriarchy, female possibility has literally been massacred on the site of motherhood.[20]

In the Biblical creation myth, motherhood and its accompanying labours come to Eve as a punishment, as *fall*; she is *condemned* to bear children in pain. By marking motherhood as the fallout of sin, as social duty, as the doom that Christian women should embrace, Christian thought strips it of the pleasure/power quotient, what Kristeva calls "jouissance". Judeo-Christian tradition with its emphasis on monotheism and rejection of all pagan gods, nature figures, concentrated creative force in a single paternal figure so much so that even the agency of the mother in birth was denied. The maternal function

was swiftly appropriated by the figure of male omnipotence, sexuality itself became a "sinful" condition, sex came to be deemed a sin unless resulting in procreation. The Biblical women, Leah, Rachel, and Rebekah, are at first portrayed as barren and then "with child" with the intervention of God. In the Bible, therefore, women are particularly rendered impotent, without their own capacity for motherhood. Elaine Scarry says here that their bodies are denied the power of being unalterable, for to be barren would mean unalterably barren unless altered by radical means. She says, "God in changing the body from barren to fertile is not simply changing it from being unpregnant to pregnant but changing it from being "unchangeable" to both changed and pregnant."[21] Thus the power of procreativity is wrested away from humans to God, the omnipotent male. Mary was deemed a "parthenos" (A Greek term for virgins, or rather, young married women who were assumed to be virgins) and hence her sexuality and procreative role denied in the birth of Christ. Commonly referred to as the "Virgin", a term that cancels out any possibility of Mary having played a part in Jesus' birth, she is also called a "bond", a "medium", an "interval", the maternal function reduced to a mere transition. Only asexual creatures were deemed pure and since woman by her very birth, her very existence was a "sexual" creature she was, therefore, naturally impure. Perhaps this accounts for the negligible role of women in the Christian orders. The maternal source, the origin, is thus devalued, rejected rather than allowed to rear stronger selfhoods, resulting in insecure subjectivities that nevertheless, subconsciously long for the maternal.

Reinstating the Maternal

In the following section I focus on the dismantling of established maternal imperatives in a few of Coetzee's works, *Dusklands* (1974)*, In the Heart of the Country* (1976), *Age of Iron* (1990), and *Disgrace* (1999). To make the study thematically cohesive, I have not discussed the novels in order of their date of composition.

The Vietnam Project

Fractured subjectivities that subconsciously long for the maternal are revealed in both *Dusklands*, and *In the Heart of the Country*. *The Vietnam Project* has Eugene Dawn as its protagonist, ostensibly a mythographer by training, working on a 'project' commissioned by the American government. He slogs away by himself in the Truman library and as he probes deeper into the American activities in Vietnam, he realizes he has become a cog in the wheel of the Vietnam onslaught without his conscious knowledge or will. The novella has a Kafkaesque quality: Dawn becomes increasingly disturbed, and ultimately suffers a nervous breakdown. The characters Eugene Dawn (*The Vietnam Project, Dusklands*) and Magda (*In the Heart of the Country)* are driven towards real or symbolic patricide. The murder of the father, Irigaray says, is not so much a desire to replace the father as a rival but rather to "do away with the one who has artificially severed the bond with the mother in order to take over the power of creating any world, particularly a female one."[22] The establishment of a colonial order in Africa and Asia, or the quelling of communism in Vietnam have all orientalized the native

population, constructed a feminized notion of them to justify the imposition of a paternal rule. The lands and their inhabitants in question have systematically been perceived as "virgin territories" to be raped and conquered, "hearts of darkness" to be penetrated, slave populations to be harnessed and mastered. It is not only metaphors of the Maternal that Coetzee draws upon, but also maternity in its physical aspects. He sometimes employs the demoniac images of maternity to drive home the atrocious nature of military incursions. At the same time he points to the patriarchal hunger for conquest and pillage that are the driving forces of war. As Virginia Woolf opines in "The Three Guineas", war is essentially a masculine enterprise, the drive towards annihilation as opposed to the life instinct posited by the mother[23].

The structure of *The Vietnam Project*, the first novella within Coetzee's first novel *Dusklands*, is quasi-mythological. The voice that opposes the Father, read here as the father nation USA, which carries on its onslaught against Vietnam over years, is finally silenced and submerged in insanity, as is the case in so many narratives of the world. Vietnam, the nation seen as the hotbed of Communism is quintessentially orientalised by the machismo projected by the conquerer USA; the onslaught upon it thereby justified by the typical logic of patriarchy that USA has since perfected: it is saving the world from the tyranny of Communism. *The Vietnam Project* is ostentatiously, "mythography". Since the time the project is commissioned to Dawn, he experiences symptoms of withdrawal, of retreat into a shell, manifested in bodily gestures like the involuntary curling of his toes inwards, the clenching of his fingers (which he becomes acutely conscious of and struggles to curb). He complains against the "indiscipline" of his

body. An otherwise obedient, pliable, almost "spineless" character such as Eugene Dawn who scarcely has it in him to protest against anything, finds his body in revolt. The dissent he cannot express verbally or in his work is expressed through his bodily symptoms. He experiences his body as an *Other* that he struggles to contain, that continually threatens to give way to involuntar actions and in his dreams, takes the shape of theriomorphic creatures. As Jung corroborates, hybrids and monsters that often appear in people's dreams are but theriomorphic representations of the libido, which often gets repressed due to social, moral or political factors. To follow Jung, this is "a symptom of a neurotic attitude which prefers to overlook unpleasant facts and unhesitatingly risks a whole chain of pathological symptoms for the sake of some small advantage in the present."[24]

Dawn feels as if the project he is working on is a monstrous birthing in gestation: consuming him, feeding on him parasitically, something that has unmanned him, "eaten away (his) manhood from inside, devoured the food that should have nourished (him)".[25] The image is reminiscent of birthing metaphors that abound in mythology, drawing upon the image of the maternal body, the body pregnant, albeit with a monstrous child. This is an image that recurs in Coetzee's dystopias. The trope of maternity is queered here: on the one hand, Eugene Dawn is usurping for himself the act of giving birth, biologically the preserve of women, while on the other, it is the birthing of a Frankensteinian monster: *The Vietnam Project* itself. The west, proverbially "duskland", bearing promise of a new, capitalist dawn in the east, hands over a mutated, monstrous dawn, rewriting myths, exchanging truth for myth. Dawn's feelings of insecurity stem from his growing

understanding of the massive genocidal US project in Vietnam; his helplessness within this 'master' project merges with his guilt in his passive complicity in it. His response is what I would like to read as counter-mythical. Basing my reading on the theories of Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous, I argue that Eugene Dawn's progression as a psychological entity is a retreat into the maternal "chora" or space, as appropriated by Kristeva from Plato's *Timaeus*. The Father narrative can be countered only by an equally vehement mother-narrative, defying the "reason and rationalism" that justifies the war machine, the pogrom of genocide in the name of combating communism. Communism itself is built up as a bogie, a destructive demon that must be quashed, fairy-tale-like, by the matricidal hero, America, that awful manifestation of the libido.

Trapped in the dystopia of the Truman library, Eugene Dawn yearns for a utopian world devoid of colonial or neocolonial incursions; perhaps he wants to rewind to a time before the Vietnam Project, and tries to relive his time differently, using his son as an aid. Perhaps he regards his son Martin as his own uncorrupted self, in renewed form, and this leads to his abduction of the child, to shield that new self from the onslaught of the world, from the influence of his mother. Father and son take walks in the woods, in an unconscious attempt to return to a romantic pastoral world. He feels his wife, Marilyn, is void of sympathy towards him, and does not provide him with the sanctuary he seeks; she does not support the urge he feels to retreat into that primal space, the maternal "chora". This "incestuous" urge, as Jung identifies it, is resultant of the desire to find a way back into the mother so as to be reborn through her. Eugene Dawn would like to reject the life and circumstances he was born into, for another. In the absence of a mother, the wife

becomes the most convenient mother-surrogate.

Closely entwined with the trope of maternity are those of bodily fertility and barrenness, related to land or culture. Marilyn has physical features closely epitomizing American culture at the time, those of the cultural icon Monroe (in being blonde, having long legs, etc.), but in spite of being the mother of a son, is regarded as barren by her husband, because of her unconscious refusal to accommodate him within the fortress of her womb. For the disturbed Eugene, this spells as a rejection, leading him to be further alienated from her. (We remember Shakespeare's Lear who, seeking refuge in his daughters, goes raving mad when he is refused "accommodation"; particularly when Cordelia, his youngest, refuses to cord-a-Lear as it were: thwarting his subconscious urge in old age to be reborn through his daughters). The opening to the mother, the falling back into the mother, "appear as threats of contagion, contamination, falling into sickness, madness, death," Irigaray asserts [26]. This "rebirth" into an alternate "logos"phere, as "sick" or "insane" can be interpreted as a falling into abjection, as "freakish", as a "monstrous" rebirth, as signified by his dreams (since this urge towards the maternal space has always been repressed by society, there are no positive images for the chora, the maternal).

Eugene Dawn's fear and disapproval of his wife Marilyn stems, in part, from Romantic binary extremes of motherhood which he seems to believe in. According to Julie Kipp, in the19th century,

> mothers were held to be either naturally bad, in so far as their bodies were

> represented as potentially pathological, conduits of infectious diseases or unwholesome character traits; or dangerously good, given their innately sympathetic natures often overruled their abilities to think and act autonomously and to govern their children reasonably.[27]

These notions of, and fear of, the maternal were derived largely from the ideas of Rousseau: the overly fond mother was a *bad* mother for she endangered the child's growth into a responsible citizen. The detachment from the mother seems to be the ultimate prescription for producing good citizens: hence, the children of Sparta were separated early from their mothers to be trained into fearsome warriors. Regarding his toddler son Martin as an extension of his own self, Eugene Dawn frantically tries to distance him from his mother, Marilyn, prevent his dependence on her, something he has himself fought to recover from.

We can read Dawn's relinquishing of his sanity as a sacrifice, sacrifice itself being a way to counter woman's preserve of the maternal function, as aptly noted by Nancy Jay. As William Beers reads Jung, "sacrifice symbolically reflects a confrontation with and renunciation of the desire to return to the womb. Such renunciation… (comes from) the desire to be free from the original state of consciousness within the primal or archetypal mother, which is prior to the individual experience of the human mother."[28] What we sense in Dawn is a fear of The Terrible Mother (a Jungian archetype we live by). His rejection of Marilyn can be read as fear or repugnance towards the maternal feminine that he has buried deep into his unconscious.[29] His insanity can also be read as

'dis'-integration into a maternal narrative, unable to keep to the laws and codes of the 'Father', revolted as he is by the excesses of the 'Father' in Vietnam. Luce Irigaray points out, "When Freud, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, describes and theorizes about the murder of the father as the primal act for the primal horde, he is forgetting an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city."[30] The very basis on which culture and society rests is the negation of the mother, the ties to the mother's body, starting right from the severance of the umbilical cord. Reiterating her point, in the introduction to *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Nancy Chodorow cites researcher and theorist of separation-individuation Margaret Mahler:

> One could regard the entire life-cycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from and introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasied "ideal state of self", with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the "all-good" symbiotic mother, who was at one time part of +the self in a blissful state of well-being.[31]

Likewise, Irigaray argues that the womb has never been given its due place in the genealogy of humankind, regarded only as a receptacle, a passive vessel to shield and rear the embryo, rather than being acknowledged as the very being which brings into body into being, which gives the body, makes the body. This denial has been two-pronged: on the one hand, female sexuality has always been reduced to the womb, to the biological function of child-bearing; on the other, child bearing is not believed to be an act providing female *jouissance*, seen merely as a socio-biological activity (Kristeva).

Denial of the mother is an ancient phantasm: in Greek mythology, for instance, Athena springs from the head of Zeus, owing no debt to a mother, to serve Zeus's patriliny and further the cause of patriarchy (being sexually ambiguous, she cannot be mated with). But as Irigaray points out,

> (W)hen the father refuses to allow the mother the power of giving birth and seeks to be the sole creator, then according to our culture he superimposes upon our ancient world of flesh and blood a universe of language and symbols that has no roots in the flesh and drills a hole through the female womb and through the place of female fertility... The fertility of the earth is sacrificed in order to establish the cultural domain of the father's language (which is called, incorrectly, the mother tongue). But this is never spoken of. Just as the scar of the navel is forgotten, so, correspondingly, a hole appears in the texture of the language.[32]

As language, couching his mythographical exercise, becomes weaponry for war, justifying it, rationalizing it, it represses the urge towards the *chora* (drawing upon Kristeva's term, which she reinterprets from Plato's *Timaeus*). What for Plato is that primal space, the "receptacle", the "nurse of all generation" is, for Kristeva, the space between instinctive knowledge and language, a space with no fixities, where ideas are yet mobile, not ordered by the paternal "logos". Eugene Dawn's reluctant engagement in the war-machine as mythographer, his very condition, becomes an attempt at recovery of the maternal ethos for the macrocosm at large. Dawn's regression can be read as a movement away from the paternal symbolic space of ordered language and repressed drives to the maternal space of the semiotic "chora": the space that exists between the sign and the

signified. It is the preconscious space that nurtures, nourishes the subject, womb-like, that protective shell which instinctively all human beings turn to, till that urge is completely quelled by cultural conditioning, the demands of societal existence. (Irigaray says that this movement towards the symbolic realm of language, superimposed by culture, distances the subject from the body, weans the subject away from the maternal space). The relapse or lapse into madness, the refusal of his brain to function according to the logic of the Father, the refusal to speak the language of the father, is Dawn's new dawn: the return to the maternal, the symbolic realm.

In the Heart of the Country

The colonial condition is given a different historical context and perspective in *In the Heart of the Country,* Coetzee's second published novel. But it, too, challenges the father-narrative and exposes the flip side of colonial occupation and racial oppression. The narrative voice here is that of Magda, an unmarried woman cloistered, as it were, in the bleak African countryside. She is trapped in the neurotic haze of her own imagination, bound as she is by patriarchal and colonial imperatives to her father's house and servants she cannot socialize with. She imagines she has killed her father, or actually acts upon the idea, and has been raped by the servant Hendrik, who, she had imagined, would return her advances with love making. Thus the narrative has a surreal quality, and has counter-narratives which usurp the reality of Magda's. The blurring of the lines between reality and imagination is rendered poignant as the text steers away from patriarchal control, or

even the control of ‘Logos’ or Truth.

In *In the Heart of the Country*, Coetzee draws upon the Hegelian notion that the master/ slave equation is mutually damaging., Here, the master/ owner/ usurper of the land, Magda’s father, like most colonial occupants, is ultimately estranged from the mother/ land they live off. The denial or repression of the maternal, nevertheless, forms the subtext of the novel. The detachment of the colonial master/ Father towards the land/ mother he owns is sharply contrasted with the attachment the natives have with it (Hendrik, the servant, comes with the land, as had his father before him, and as will his son after him... they will stay on the land no matter what, and live off it). The protagonist, Magda, embodies with her fractured subjectivity this lack of connect with the land she is born into and will inherit one day. The novel is, perhaps, an attempt to reestablish this connect with the land (which Magda reads as her mother). The novel reads like an interior monologue, barely veiling the frantic search for the maternal in the consciousness of Magda, its protagonist. She speaks the language not of the father but of the mother, hence there are gaping holes in her narratives, which are multiple and have no crux, or centre. There is emphatically, no ‘logos’ or truth, or unifying force in her narrative which denies debt to the father; hence it reads as the ravings of a madwoman, unused as we are to such narratives that make no claims to “logos” or veracity. The language she employs is her reclamation of the maternal, as she tries to fill in the holes in the narrative by the many possibilities, probabilities that she suggests in the reconstruction of her history, or herstory.

Perhaps in answer to the many omissions that the mother has suffered, she plots

her father's murder, to avenge the symbolic murder of her mother. She variously suggests that her mother died in childbirth, out of neglect, for the doctor came too late, and because she had no strength left after meeting the relentless sexual demands of her father. The absence of her mother is not pinned down to one reason. Her mother could have simply left, or died, or been murdered. No closure is offered to whet the reader's curiosity. She reads her father's presence as nullifying her mother's, in a curious either/or extreme situation, recalling myths of Classical times. The mother's presence must be obliterated to establish the authority of the Father over the Freudian primal horde. What we encounter in the novel is a counter-myth of the *Oresteia*: Magda pitches herself as the new Electra, keen on avenging her mother's death by killing her father, rather than it being the other way round. To her, the maternal presence is the only positive she can imagine in her life: she yearns for a mother, suggesting often through the novel that her life might have been different if only her mother had been around. She has been weaned away early from her mother, she seems to suggest, and Proserpine-like, like Kore, has been exiled to her father's dark territory of the colonized African countryside. She is what is "in the heart of the country", at the "core" of Africa.

But there is no one to deliver Magda from her father's kingdom: she must secure her freedom herself. She refuses to grant her father the ultimate authority and tries to negate his role and influence in her life in the most primal of ways: murder. She reads her father as a death-dealing negative force that has quashed all that was good, kind, comely and positive, holding him responsible not only for her mother's death but for the "death" of the maternal in her:

> My father creates absence. Wherever he goes he leaves absence behind him. The absence of himself above all-- a presence so cold, so dark, so remote as to be itself an absence, a moving shadow casting a blight on the heart. And the absence of my mother. My father is the absence of my mother, her negative, her death. She the soft, the fair, he the hard, the dark. He has murdered all the motherly in me and left me this brittle, hairy shell with the peas of dead words rattling in it.[33]

As she plots the graph of her *herstory* (unlike history, it makes no claims to truth, but leaves it to the imagination of the reader), she repeatedly imagines her father, possibly a white colonial settler, bringing home a Black woman as wife. She finds herself torn between the urge to embrace this mother-surrogate and the anxiety she feels at her position as the mistress of the household being threatened by a rival contender. Yet at the same time, she tries to establish a communion of women in her household: a triad constituting herself, Anna, the older servant, and Klein Anna, Hendrik's new wife whom her father seduces, reiterating yet another custom of abuse prevalent in the colonial ethos. But the bonding of women is disrupted and jeopardized by the men-- her father and Hendrik-- as the master-servant/ rival-mistress dynamics come into play. Magda even tries to play surrogate mother to the much younger Klein Anna, helping her wash and dress, caressing her, but she cannot rise up to protecting her from her father's advances. To Magda, this is yet another lapse of the maternal in her. Yet her strongest sense of herself is maternal: as an empty matrix, longing to be filled with something wholesome, constructive, positive as opposed to the destructive phallus her father's race represents:

> But I have quite another sense of myself, glimmering tentatively somewhere in my inner darkness: myself as a sheath, as a matrix, as protectrix of a vacant inner space. I move through the world not as a knife-blade cutting the wind, or as a tower with eyes, like my father, but as a hole, a hole with a body draped around it… I am a hole crying to be whole.[34]

Magda's reading of her body and the "lack" she feels, is derived both from Aristotelian and Early Modern constructs of the male and female body, backed by Aquinas (woman as occupying a low rung on the scale of bodily perfection where the unitary standard of bodily perfection was the male, or man as the perfect "whole" and woman as the inferior "hole", waiting to be filled, incomplete till she is completed by man. Reading her body as a metaphor for the colonial Africa, which yields nothing constructive, where human relations are subject to draconian, inhuman laws, she despairs of herself as a body incapable of production, most clearly because her situation as the "master's" daughter or the mistress of the household puts her out of reach of the only men around her father's estate, and prevents her from intermingling, as well. The novel stands on the premise that the colonial ethos has rendered everything sterile in Africa: the land, the daughters, especially those of the master class. The situation resonates with that in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: in this fallen countryside, Coetzee's dystopian tale of the aftermath of colonialism, the master's race faces extinction, with their daughters rendered partnerless. Magda's fantasy of experiencing maternity can be read as a longing for fecundity, not only for herself but for the decadent Africa wrapped in the coils of colonialism. She sees herself as a "jagged virgin", producing "rat children" if she

ever comes to reproduce at all. She has internalised for herself the patriarchal imperative that a woman's raison d'etre is looking after the home and hearth, breeding progeny and furthering the family line to ensure the protection of land and property (in this case, also perpetuate colonial rule). She interprets her virginity as a failure, as a malcontent--something that marks her out as deviant, abject, in the colonial society she belongs to.

In Magda's case, virginity stands for the very obverse of that famed virgin-birthing: the one celebrated all over the world and one that has lent meaning to centuries of Western history. In Christian society and myth, till after medieval times, virginity was extolled; it was widely believed that "God revealed to virgins what he did not, to men." It was a position of privilege, for given the aggressive populating of the Christian world, and options of livelihood being limited, few women could afford to remain virgins. Since it was a rare and luxurious condition, virginity lent women a curious liminality by virtue of which they achieved a closer communion/ communication with the divine/ the supernatural. Theirs was a curious status within early Christian community. Peter Brown finds that virgin women, however, had been a part of the timeless religious landscape of the classical world. Since the majority of women, rather girls were married off by puberty and dedicated themselves to childbearing and rearing, virginity, or retention of virginity by virtue of being dedicated priestesses till the age of thirty was deemed an aberration, an exception, and oddly, also a privilege, a luxury afforded to few. The message conveyed by such women as the Vestal Virgins at Rome and the virgin priestesses and prophetesses of the Classical Greek world was that their state was of crucial importance for the community precisely because it was anomalous.

In her small isolated land holding in the heart of Africa, Magda is mistress of the manor house: it is the only thing that lends her an identity, and what she draws economic and emotional sustenance from. In her search for identity, subjectivity, her raison d'etre, she evokes comparison with the Victorian stereotype of the 'Angel in the House', positioning herself as the keeper of her father's conscience; only she hardly manages to keep anything, since in the heart of the country, morality is shaped according to the whims and fancies of the master. As the virgin daughter of the colonial master, she is, in a sense, the custodian of her father's power and territory, though stripped of the paternal identity, she is nothing. On her father's land, she is a petty tyrant. But she knows that the foundations of this identity are weak; she is mistress only as long as she is obeyed and obeisance is not always absolute, and that her authority does not stem from real power but only what is derived from the colonial imperative, subject to her father's whims. For her to secure her position as mistress and landholder, she must do away with her father. This is the Uranus myth reiterating itself. But much more than the fantastical murder attempt that she carries out on her father, the ritual castration is carried out symbolically: when she catches a glance of her father's genitalia, she finds it hard to believe that she could have been engendered by the organ.

> Poor little thing. It is not possible that I came from there, or from whatever that puffy mass is below it… I am better explained as an idea I myself had, also many years ago, and have been unable to shake off.[35]

Alongside an utter deflation of the paternal function, paternity is queered as she suggests that she could just as well have sired herself. She tries to fit into the two contrary

Victorian models of the 'Angel in the house' and the 'Fallen woman' but falling in line with common perceptions of women who fit into neither of those molds, she identifies herself as "witch". Moira Gatens identifies two strategies for "silencing those who have dared to speak in another voice, of another reason and another ethic":

> The first is to animalize the speaker, the second, to reduce her to her 'sex. Women who step outside their allotted place in the body-politic are frequently abused with terms like harpy, virago, vixen, bitch, shrew; terms that make clear that if she attempts to speak from the political body, about the political body, her speech is not recognized as human speech. When Mary Wollstonecraft … had the audacity to address the issue of women's political rights, Walpole called her a 'hyena in petticoats'. The other strategy, of reducing woman to her 'sex', involves treating her speech and her behavior, as hysterical. The root of 'hysteria' is the Greek 'hystera', meaning uterus. Disorder created by women in the political body, is thus retranslated into a physical disorder thought to be inherent in the female sex…[36]

Seen in this perspective, Magda is, in a way, released from the maternal imperative, she is free from what Nancy Chodorow calls "the reproduction of mothering". Bereft of options for mating, she is unable to establish a counter order of matriarchy which would have been a just solution for the dystopia that *In the Heart of Country* is. Her narrative is a disordered whole, the musings of a 'hysteric/ neurotic' who refuses to be cured through the maternal imperative. She wrests control of her story by becoming the active agent of her future/ destiny. Surreal or real, the murder of her father is a distinct rejection of

patriarchal order, and paves the way for the construction of a new matriarchal order, helmed by herself, the "jagged virgin". In Coetzee's postmodern mythology, it can be hailed as a kind of Second Coming, not of the Lord, but of the Virgin, hardly a pristine, benevolent, angelic one, but one old and ruthless. All she wants to be, she declares, is "the medium—the median": "Neither master nor slave, neither parent nor child, but the bridge between, so that in (her) the contraries should be reconciled!"[37]

Magda's isolation, her fringe-existence, the abandonment and neglect she feels she has faced as a child, perhaps makes her liminal in the sense of being prone to neuroses. Interestingly, maternity has widely been seen as a cure for women suffering from neuroses, particularly in the sense of the womb being a gaping maw and the root of all female maladies, waiting to be filled with a foetus. Much of what happens in the novel as narrated by her is enacted in the theatre of her subconscious, which she brings to surface/ narrates as an alternate reality. There are multiple stories woven together in her narrative that seem to not synchronize: they are all possibilities, realities that the South African countryside throw up. It is not only her own story, but the stories of discrete countryside girls. Her narrative is decentred, unhinged. She does not have to conform to the male writer's imperatives of "chronology", "rationality". Coetzee structures her narrative with a female voice, but she has not been able to absolve herself of the male gaze that she directs upon herself. She is effectively, the other trope of the madwoman in the attic: the subversive, unruly entity that must be kept cooped up, hidden from public gaze, (well delineated by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*[38]*)*, in a subversion of common rites of sacrifice. Nancy Jay marks out the rationale for sacrifice as expiation for the sin of having been born of woman. Rites of sacrifice effectively seek to subvert the role of woman in birth: in many

senses, it is a reenactment of the birthing ritual, only one that cancels out the role of women. Sacrifice is offered as a remedial measure for the misfortune of being born of woman, or, in Nancy Jay's words, it is "birth done better"[39]. She notes that in many cultures around the world, women in the child-bearing age group are often prohibited from participating in rituals of sacrifice, such as "havans" in Hindu communities. I recall from Hindu mythology, the births of superheroes: owing little to mothers, for instance the birth of Rama, said to be an avatar of Vishnu. His earthly "father", king Dasaratha, was childless when he performed a "yajna" which resulted in the birth of Rama. Similarly, in the *Mahabharata*, the childless Drupad of Panchal extricated his son Dhristadyumn and daughter Draupadi from the fires of a "purificatory" yajna. In *In the Heart of the Country,* Magda can be said to be performing a reverse sacrifice. She must wipe out all remnants of the father-born", (to borrow Susan Barton's term from *Foe*), as well as destroy the poetics of the colony before she can establish a new order.

Disgrace

Filial bonds find a twist in *Disgrace* (1999), where a father seeks solace in the daughter/mother. David Lurie, professor of literature, moves to his daughter's farm after the ignominy of a scandalous liaison with a young student. He is socially and professionally ostracized, morally chastised for having violated the sacred bond of teacher and pupil, not to mention having slept with a woman younger than his daughter. Perhaps this is significant as a rebound: rejected by the young Melanie and hounded by the morally-consternated academia and the local media, Lurie subconsciously seeks refuge in his daughter's life. Single and possibly a lesbian, Lucy is a self-fashioned

farmer, who lives off the produce of her land and labours. Lucy's life is insular in many ways, hemmed in as she is by the local country culture, with a limited circle of friends and well–wishers. It is far away from the bustle of the city with its cosmopolitan culture spread out well beyond the locus of the university. Lurie plans only a short visit, the farm is to be a getaway, but he ends up staying much longer than he had initially intended, sharing his daughter's life in ways he had not imagined. Lucy here serves as a surrogate mother to Lurie, not only accommodating him in her life, but also teaching him to make himself busy and useful. In a sort of reversal of roles, the child becomes the "mother" of the man, as she shows him how to be self-reliant and most importantly, regain his self-esteem, as well.

Lucy can be read as the new–age Magda, farming land she has bought for herself with a little help from her father and grown her roots in. She works with her hands, relying on few but herself, grows crops, makes jams and preserves, and keeps dogs. The irony is thus stark when she is attacked by a gang and raped, her father and even the dogs assaulted. In that land forever fraught with racial tensions, Lucy has to answer for the sins of generations past. A white woman by herself, with no husband or master, owing allegiance to no patriarchal authority, cannot be claiming African land for her own, no matter how much she loves it. Her sense of belonging, her right to farm the land and till the soil, is always in question. Perhaps to teach her a lesson or to simply frighten her away, the attack is carried out. Petrus, Lucy's employed help as well as co-owner of part of the land, is suspected by Lurie to be the mastermind behind the attack, especially since his young nephew is one of the perpetrators, but neither he nor his nephew can be

prosecuted for lack of evidence. It is a case of history replaying itself with roles reversed. But more than colonial/racial forces asserting themselves, it is the patriarchy clamping down its iron hand over the frontiering woman who dares to farm land. Lucy, shaken though she is to the core, however, cannot be cowered into leaving her farm, or selling away her land. She even refuses to abort the foetus consequent of the rape, despite the repeated entreaties of her father. She repeatedly asserts her right to making decisions about her own body, uninfluenced by any moral outrage or social codes.

However, by choosing to become a mother, Lucy incorporates an Other, assimilating it within herself, proclaiming "I-a(m)-other". By dissolving boundaries and breaching taboos she renders herself abject. The fortress that her body should have been, not only as that of a white woman in South Africa, out of bounds for native men, but also, by virtue of her being a lesbian, closed to all men, is breached. It is a hate crime perpetrated against her not only for daring to farm land, but also for closing herself off to men, for living on her own terms, without a male protector. It is committed to remind her of male control of her body. In another sense, the very foundation of marriage as marked out by Marx, the stamp of ownership and the ploy by which a woman's sexuality is owned so that property can be passed on to one's own progeny, stands challenged. Lucy's child is to be born out of wedlock, owing no allegiance to a father. The male role of siring a child is inadvertently subverted as Lucy chooses to ignore the paternal "descent" of her child. Her child will be born "of her" and not of the violence done to her. Nancy Jay notes in *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion and Paternity* how descent through women has always been undermined in favour of patriliny; indeed, it has

always been an area of anxiety and threat for it would dismantle the capitalist foundations of society. In the foreword to Jay's book, Karen E. Fields points out that Jay "noticed that in ancient Israel the tension of patriliny with latent recognition of descent through women is reflected in differences between the Genesis sources." The Bible prescribes sacrifice as a "remedy for having been born of woman."[40]

Lucy's childbearing is thus also a blow to the atonement imperative, by which one must atone for the very act of taking birth, resultant of 'original sin', through sacrifice. The borders of her body become fluid and transgressive as her orifices perform multiple symbolic functions: she is penetrated, impregnated, and by bearing the child in her womb she has, in a sense, eaten of, gorged on, Africa. Her situation is "grotesque" in several senses. In spite of having the choice of abortion, unavailable to a generation before hers, she would rather have the child than not. She decides to bear the fruit not only of an act of violence but also of an act that is transgressive along racial lines in Apartheid-torn Africa. To follow Bakhtin, "In the example of the grotesque, displeasure is caused by the impossible and improbable nature of the image. (It is unimaginable that a woman could conceive from a monastery belfry), and such an absurdity creates a strong feeling of vexation… In the example of grotesque the object of mockery is a specific negative phenomenon, something that "should not exist", "*nichtseinsollendes"*.[41] Lucy's situation is the very reverse of what had been rampant in colonial South Africa—the native woman raped by the white master. In the history of South Africa such a situation as Lucy's would have been improbable to the highest degree. In the context of South Africa, Lucy represents the grotesque, the absurdity, the improbable phenomenon of the white settler

woman abused by native men. In so far as the woman's body is the site for marking breach of borders of property, land, and wresting ownership of the same, Lucy's reaction to her rape in a sense thwarts the very intention of the rape.

Lucy's motherhood can also be read as a vicarious atonement for the sins of her ancestors. For Lucy, maternity becomes a way of embracing Africa in its entirety, even with its violence. For her, bearing the child of her rapists bears the curious impact of somehow belonging more to Africa than she will otherwise ever manage to. Bearing the child of Africa's violence gives her a stronger claim to Africa. She reminds one of Shakespeare's Caliban (*The Tempest*) who would assert his birthright on his native isle by "peopl(ling)" it with Calibans. It is a transgressive act, but a necessary one to break the vicious circle of hate and revenge. Maternity thus serves as a means for internalizing a country like no other: it is not just a process of harbouring and ejecting an Other within and out of one's body. Maternity becomes a subversive act, an act that throws a challenge to the centuries-old history of racial conflict in South Africa, in *Disgrace*. By allowing her body to be the site for a positive action, a sort of truce as well as harbinger of a new dawn in hate-singed Africa, Lucy questions established codes of ethics, morality, and gives humanity a new dimension.

Age of Iron

Set a decade or so earlier than *Disgrace*, in South Africa of the 1970s and 80s, in the turbulent times of the Soweto riots and their aftermath and reverberations, *Age of Iron*

(1990) can be read as a kind of prequel to it. The narrative voice here is that of an aging professor of the classics, representative of the quintessential liberal, intellectual South African, who nevertheless kept a 'decent distance' from the business of Apartheid. She is, however, forced to confront it in all its sordidness and cruelty when her domestic help, Florence's young son, Bheki and his friends join the resistance movement led by schoolchildren. She further discovers that she is afflicted with breast cancer, and in the absence of her daughter who will not return to South Africa, must die alone. *Age of Iron* presents the actual state of disgrace that SA lay in for decades, the state of Apartheid, following two centuries of rampant colonization. Dispossession of Africans from their native land, the stripping of their rights, their enslavement and dehumanization, all came to a head when the Nationalist Party came to power and legitimized racism, segregation, disenfranchisement through the regressive stroke of Apartheid, in 1948. This novel has a mother yearning for refuge in her expatriate daughter. It shapes as a journal kept by Elizabeth Curren for her daughter, to be delivered to her after her imminent death from cancer. Though she herself is a liberal, she has nevertheless acceded to the state of affairs in South Africa, something her daughter could not. She represents many of SA's liberals, the same liberals Nadine Gordimer is critical of, who know things are wrong in their country, but accept them nevertheless, and do not do enough to change things. They would like to believe things are not as bad as they are made out to be, and yet in their heart know they are wrong. They manage to keep guilt at bay, removed as they are from the hotbeds of violence.

Mrs Curren treats her help Florence as her equal, though she knows that outside

the four walls of her house Florence and her family get a raw deal, and they have to carry a pass, like all native Africans, to cross over into white territory to come to work, from their ghettos or Bantustans. The novel is a kind of reckoning for all the liberals in SA.
Mrs Curren's disease corresponds to the diseased Africa and she can be read only too easily as one of Coetzee's staple redemptive figures. Having said that, it is curious to note how Elizabeth Curren reacts to her disease, and in extension, to South Africa. Unlike her daughter who has left the country for good, unable to tolerate its injustices, unable to reconcile herself to its policies, and settled in America, Mrs Curren chooses to live out her days in that blasted nation, living literally through her body, its destruction. It is as if she is embracing all its sordidness, and trying to capture it within her own body. It is as if South Africa is getting etched within her body. After the initial incomprehension, the alienation of the body, the refusal to believe it is part of oneself, its abjection, Mrs Curren accepts cancer, accommodating it within her body as an expectant mother with a child in her womb.

Yet again, Coetzee empowers the maternal body, queering its functions to turn it into a body of protest. We may note that Mrs Curren has cancer of the breast. In popular imagination the female breast is immediately identifiable with the life-force, with maternity, with giving birth, even when conception is “immaculate”. Cancer renders the same breast that feeds, nourishes, injects life, an aberration. Much like Lady Macbeth's invocation to “take her milk for gall”, a horrifying “queering” of the function of breastfeeding takes place here. All the more so perhaps, because, like Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth, Mrs Curren has given birth, has nourished life. It is a powerful image: the

cancerous growth growing inside her like a “monstrous” child, parasitically, gnawing at her insides, yet refusing to be born. Unlike other growths, there is no outlet for cancer, cancer is what cannot be cut or ripped out, what must be *borne* to the very end, because *it will not be born*. It is maternity at its most queer, most aberrant, most horrific, most tabooed. She is carrying death in her body, sheltering the tumours of death. To Vercueil, the homeless man in whom Mrs Curren confides, she says,

> I have a child inside that I cannot give birth to. Cannot because it will not be born. Because it will not live outside me. So it is my prisoner. It beats on the gate but it cannot leave. That is what is going on all the time. The child inside is beating at the gate...the afterbirth, the unwanted.[42]

By drawing upon the metaphors of maternity, the case of Mrs. Curren and subsequently of South Africa is rendered further 'monstrous': though a woman past the age for biological maternity, she has become 'pregnant', the 'growths' inside the female body that are supposed to bring life, perverted into generating death instead. She even calls her cancer “my daughters death” in a bizarre internalization/ acceptance of her cancer, developing a curious love/hate relationship with it. In her hands it turns into a potent weapon of protest: convenient arms when all other instruments of defense have failed. Perhaps in a desperate bid to gain control over what is happening inside her body, she starts nurturing it even, undergoing no treatment for it, almost deliberately allowing it to consume her body. It is as if Mrs. Curren, by a symbolic dismemberment of her body, by allowing cancer to consume a part of her body, is taking a chance at renewing life-forces for her country. And regeneration is possible best after total annihilation.

In *Age of Iron*, metaphors of maternity mingle with significations of bloodletting. Commenting on the ways of her country, Mrs Curren calls it a land "prodigal" of blood. A country that spills blood so prodigally, will one day run out of young blood, she seems to suggest, and indeed, it is the young, the "children of iron", who are dying first in South Africa. In a twist of the Adonis myth, South Africa is not gaining fertility by such spillage, rather it is being rendered sterile. It is because of its unchanging separatist ways that Mrs Curren's daughter has left the country for good, adopting a foreign country as her own, "bleeding every month into foreign soil"[43] (Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, 64), as it is. Another country is reaping life from her blood, symbolically speaking, but not the land of her birth. The association of blood with fertility, both of the land and the tribe, particularly menstrual blood, that is both "sacred" and "abominated", is ancient; in fact, bloodletting as a version of menstruation has persisted since the ancient Egyptians[44]. The draining of young blood desolates South Africa, isolates it, cuts it off from life supply, renders it sterile. Menstrual blood has been tabooed in most cultures of the world. Indeed, as Mary Jane Lupton points out, it has been called "the most virulent of all taboos". The belief that women renew themselves monthly through menstruation, like the phases of the moon, has both empowered and tabooed female bodies, made them both sacred and profane, occupying an ambiguous twilight zone. It is definitely among the most rigidly enforced taboos to this day, explained perhaps best with Mary Douglas' observations in *Purity and Danger*. She notes how among the Maoris, and so perhaps in many communities of the world, "menstrual blood is regarded as a human being manque"[45]: that would have been a human being had the blood not flowed, hence representing a marginal state, a transitional state which is dangerous, tabooed, abject. Rene Girard reasons that the menstrual taboo could well have been in place because of its suggestion of cyclical bloodshed, vio lence[46]. But it is interesting how

Coetzee reclaims tabooed people and material, reinstating them to their proper function in the fabric of social life. In a complete subversion of the taboo leading to menstruating women being shunned, it is a young, fertile woman who has rejected the homeland that breeds a vicious circle of violence, seeking a peaceful life in another country. It is bloodletting she abjures on her native soil. Since antiquity, bloodletting has been a mainstay of bodily purgation, practised in spheres as diverse as medicine and religion. From Galenic medicine through Christian legend and ritual, bloodletting abounds as the chosen mode of purge, mainly because blood, the essence of life, is also the first to be infected, contaminated, become the carrier of germs. Bloodletting has also been a standard Christian trope for redemption, the bodily purge standing in for spiritual cleansing drawing its archetype from Christ's wounds at the Passion and the Crucifixion, welling blood, symbolically standing in for all humanity. At the same time, wanton spillage of blood has brought on destruction through revenge and divine retribution, as in Shakespeare's Macbeth. But in a subversion of that trope and canceling the menstrual taboo, Coetzee seems to suggest that it is because of this prodigality of lifeblood that South Africa is losing out on fertility: its children are dead, its women have left. There can be no renewal of life in South Africa; it cannot be purged; it is beyond salvation.

Grappling with Authority/ 'Maternity'

This section looks at J. M. Coetzee's challenges to the paternal imperative and 'author'-ity as implied in a few of his novels, *Foe* (1986), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), and *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013). Along with challenging paternal authority, this last section also briefly scrutinizes relational maternal-filial ties in them

The father-narrative is challenged and maternity constructed in a different vein in *Foe* (1986), which seeks to deconstruct the adventure narrative as initiated by British writer-cum journslist cum spy, Daniel Defoe (1660- 1731). *Foe* is a retelling of Defoe's *The Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) through the narrative voice of a shipwrecked woman, Susan Barton as well as ostensibly, metafiction, a novel about the labours of writing a novel. It distinguishes itself by problematising the 'silent' figure of Friday, whose 'mute-ilation' and enslavement goes strangely unaddressed in Defoe. Coetzee's Foe is also qualified by a quest-motif: Susan Barton is searching for her lost daughter through shores and across seas. *Robinson Crusoe* holds the dubious distinction of being arguably, the first English novel, relating the misfortune of a young British sailor shipwrecked on an island by himself and battling and surviving the odds for. In the course of his twenty four years' stay, he rescues a native from fellow cannibals, names him 'Friday', and remains assured of his lifelong loyalty and servitude. It is the quintessential adventure story, celebrating the spirit of pioneering and colonizing. Perhaps that is why Coetzee has seized upon this primal, first narrative.

Coetzee further strips Defoe of the fancy French prefix "De", reverting the 'original' author to his 'original' surname, the humble "Foe". At the same time, the novel proclaims its identity as 'Foe'-- the adversary: standing in opposition to, contrary to common suppositions, established notions, practices. Coetzee interrogates the origins of the novel, questions its paternity, revisiting the story of Robinson Crusoe through his protagonist Susan Barton, a mother in search of her daughter, as well as a medium, an interpreter, who will put her story into words for the public. Through this quasi- adventure narrative, Coetzee sets into relief the role of the

maternal, working his fiction outside and around the 'original' episodic novel. Authorship has always been viewed as a paternal function; a text is 'sired' through creative inspiration, the "labour" gone into producing a text has always been denied, undermined. Creation as produced through possession by divine frenzy that Socrates questioned in Plato's *Ion* is a much debated myth, but contested only infrequently by the likes of T.S. Eliot who asserted it was a conscious craft that must be perfected through practice. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out how the pen has been regarded through centuries as a "metaphorical pen", by poets such as Hopkins, and writing, a virile act of creation, indeed, a solo act requiring no female agency at all.

Interestingly enough, Susan Barton is alone in her mission: a father/ husband or any kind of patriarchal figure is absent throughout the novel. Susan claims to be a widow, Crusoe remains in the shadows, deliberately denied a more prominent role in the narrative (his character is sketched as a reticent one), and Defoe, too, is a shadowy existence pushed to the sidelines as one merely penning down Susan's story, distorting it somewhat to make it more marketable. Curiously enough, through all her musings, very little is revealed of her daughter. She hardly reminisces about her, or talks about any of her traits. The reader comes to learn very little of her daughter through Susan. If she had indeed been a missing person, we get no sense of her personhood. We suspect this daughter is as yet unborn, perhaps it is this very daughter that Susan is seeking to engender with Crusoe, and later, Defoe. When at her lodgings in England she is visited by a little girl claiming to be her daughter, also named Susan, she denies any recognition. G. C. Spivak notes this refusal to acknowledge the girl as her daughter and a dream Susan has of a dead child in a ditch as flashes from her own past which she cannot remember

anymore. She is, for Spivak, possibly an unreliable narrator, having delusions, gone insane[47]. But we forget here that Susan does not have to subscribe to a patriarchal poetics of "reason" and "rationality" as Foe would have to. She can employ a different poetics, breaching time, space, chronology as she is delving into the "cave" of her memoirs/ memories. Gilbert and Gubar point out "where the traditional male hero makes his 'night sea journey' to the centre of the earth, the bottom of the mere, the belly of the whale, to slay or be slain by the dragons of darkness, the female artist makes her journey into what Adrienne rich has called 'the cratered night of female memory' to revitalize the darkness, to retrieve what has been lost, to regenerate, reconceive and give birth."[48] In a sense, the belly of the whale, the dragon's lair, the centre of the earth, are all metaphorical wombs, and this has been subjected to various psychoanalytic interpretations. Susan's "lost daughter", the product of her unreported, arduous journey is the as yet unwritten travelogue/ history, or rather *herstory*. Her real or imaginary daughter could also have been one born out of wedlock, or the outcome of what Kristeva calls an "amorous disaster", which could explain her solitary claim on her daughter. No male progenitor can stake a claim to this daughter of hers. Her prime reason for repulsing the girl who claims to be her daughter, Susan Barton (the name is significant, here), is that she is "father-born" and therefore, cannot be her progeny.

Maternity is queered this time, in a different fashion. Refusing to be constricted by her gender, Susan Barton takes on a phallic role, engendering *herstory*. Only then, she feels, she can complete the story of her missing daughter. The story must be created, as well as carried or borne, since the simple truth lacks appeal, if not veracity. She surges

on, plodding through her story, labouring to give birth to it. As Susan takes on the narrative, she strips it of its commercial trappings, keeping the narrative as bare and sparse as Defoe's was long-winding and detailed. In her narrative, there is space and subjectivity for Friday, who otherwise survives merely as the mute slave in Defoe's novel. Initially repulsed by his "savage" ways, as also the horror of his mutilated state (his tongue has been ripped out, rendering him mute), Susan grows to care for him. His inscrutability makes it difficult for her, but her maternal instincts make her sense his needs and fears, especially when he accompanies her to the "civilized" world after their rescue from the island. She provides him support and protects him from the unfamiliar humdrum of this "other" world. Coetzee seems to be building up on the binaries of romance and realism in his metafiction. There is a creative tussle between Defoe and Susan: the one insisting on fluffing it up with romance and the other on paring it down, preserving the truth of the matter, without an eye on the market. Depending on the perspective, either Defoe or Susan Barton is the "foe" of the title: Susan, for challenging the "paternity" of the male adventure-story; Defoe, for denying characters their subjectivities, privileging one story while suppressing another.

Coetzee as a writer has always tried to steer clear of 'authority' in the sense of being omniscient or having the last word. His stance on this is so strong as to efface the author's presence altogether. In *Slow Man,* a novel I discuss in greater detail in a previous chapter, as Elizabeth Costello, the character of another of Coetzee's novels, a writer, struts into Paul Rayment's life, she declares that he "came to her" as a character. Paul raiment, a retired photographer in Australia, suffers a freak biking accident and comes to

lose a leg. His struggle with coming to terms with his disability, and subsequent falling in love with his nurse, Marijana, a married woman of Balkan origin, forms the storyline of the novel. The question how the gap between Elizabeth Costello's dream or vision and the reality of the novel's shore gets bridged, how she makes a personal entry into Paul Rayment's life, is a further comment on the unreality of the author. She is like Lewis Carroll's Alice, who falls into the rabbit hole and discovers the world of Rayment and Marijana. She would rather not have anything to do with them, Rayment himself finds her intrusive and meddlesome, but she is compelled by some unseen authorial force to write her novel on him, observing him at first hand.

Costello's own authority is tenacious, to say the least. She tries to give direction to Rayment's life by diverting him from his futile passion for Marijana with Marianna, a blind woman looking for self- reassurance, but things do not go the way she wants. The novel therefore takes a course that is not designed by Costello, the purported author of this episode of Rayment's life. We must remember here that Marianna, too, she says, "came to her" the way Rayment "came to her". The innuendo in these words is unmistakable. They did not simply occur to her, she might imply, but that she had been lured, seduced, by the advances of these "characters" who were 'in search of an author'.
As Chris Danta, Sue Kossew and Julian Murphet state, "To write without authority is rather to question authority in and through one's writing."[49] In *Foe* (1986), as also in *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), Coetzee "exposes the paradox of literary authority"[50]. The self-conscious, problematised, opening of *Elizabeth Costello*, in particular, reveals the hesitant position of the author to the extent

that the reader does not know where she stands--if at all, she is standing on "the far shore of literature." The beginning of *Foe*, however, hints at a shore right at the outset when Susan's narrative reads, "At last I could row no further." There is a sense of closure here, of having arrived, of having begun as well as ended.

The Master of Petersburg (1994) reveals a side of the author Fyodor Dostoevsky, featured in the novel as Fyodor Mikhailovsky, not dwelt on earlier. This quasi- historical narrative seeks to reconstruct the circumstances around the death of Dostoyevsky's foster son, as well as reveal the moral degeneracy of the resistance movement building up against the monarchy in Russia. The novel portrays his anguish at having lost his son, and helpless anger as he wades through the political maze of late 19th century St. Petersburg. Though a foster father, Mikhailovsky had stood in for a mother for the young Pavel but had failed to understand him, perhaps, for his son was estranged from him at the time of his suspicious death. It is perhaps as a mother that he mourns Pavel, though he had not given birth to him, not even sired him. Renting for himself the same room that Pavel had lodged at, he keenly soaks in whatever is left of his son's physical presence there: the bed, the linen, his clothes. It is like a desperate bid to live through him again, live in him, live with him, notwithstanding the fact that he was no more. He realizes that he had known very little of him, and had underestimated him in many respects. He strikes up a friendship with the child of his landlady, Matryona, particularly because she had been close to Pavel. He tries to wheedle every word of exchange between her and Pavel, so as to get to know his foster son again. As for his landlady herself, Anna Sergeyevna, still a young woman, he discreetly woos and sleeps with her. In a way, he tries to become Pavel

and live his life, however vicariously. While investigating the circumstances around Pavel's death, he gets embroiled in the political intrigue around the rebel figure Nechaev and even feels the sinister threat of death himself, but pursues the case nevertheless. Coetzee, here, is driving at the curious connect that father and son share, despite there being no biological ties between them.

A similar scenario is explored in his later novel, *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013). It is, apparently, a retelling of the Biblical narrative in a different setting. Simon, an elderly man, is left in charge of a little boy he calls David whose mother is supposedly lost in passage. A part of the novel engages with finding a mother for the boy. When a woman, Ines, is designated to the role of his mother, Simon disagrees with several of her ways. Unlike in the 1986 *Foe*, where a mother goes in search of her daughter, here a boy is in search of a mother. Coetzee would have his readers believe that this boy is the child Jesus, only now called David, or, there is some analogy to be drawn between Jesus's fabled childhood and David's. Like Jesus, David has a father surrogate in Simon, a padrino, and a mother surrogate in Ines. Concepts of fathering, and mothering are explored through their trials and foibles. It is difficult to pinpoint the setting as either utopian or dystopian: it is a grey world which runs on a rationale of its own. It is a world not quite primitive and yet not very modern. It is not a classless world, and manual labour is much in demand. There is the distinct presence of a bourgeoisie alongside some commune-like living spaces. Not much is available in terms of food. Choices are very limited in all aspects of life: a spartan lifestyle is encouraged by the state, it would seem. Simon and the boy, used to a non vegetarian diet, struggle to cope with the meagre fare of

bean paste and bread they are doled out at most times. It is a vision of an alternative world which struggles to keep itself free of violence, notwithstanding the episodes with Ines' brothers or a less placid, dissatisfied labourer at the docks. There seems to be a suggestion that frugality is the means to peace. It is want for more, greed, that fuels war and breeds discontent.

The Childhood of Jesus is peopled with men and women, who seem to be asexual in some senses: at least, they are not driven by desire or do not feel the need for sexual fulfilment. Even though another child of David's age, Luke's mother Esther sleeps with Simon, it is not out of an urge but only a courteous offering. The good looking woman at the Relocation Center who sets them up at her house (in a very inhospitable manner, outdoors in her shed), as well as Ines, the "mature" woman Simon picks to "be" David's mother, apparently do not have any sexual interventions in their lives. There seems to be an uncanny attempt here to absolve potential mothers from "original sin" as it were, making the women asexual creatures, as it was in the case of Mary, mother of Jesus. But Jesus is more his father's son than his mother's. Throughout Biblical history, he was deemed the "Son of God". That was his claim to sovereignty, as also his claim to be scapegoated. His particularity could be dissolved if only the maternal tie could be severed. Paternity, in olden times, was much less ascertainable than now, for obvious reasons. One could be any man's son, just as well as one could not. But the mother tied one down to birth and origin. By claiming to be the son of God and therefore to stand in for all humanity, Jesus could break out of the particular into the universal. Further, the reader is drawn into judging the qualities of mothering required for a boy of David's age.

It raises the old conflict between nature and nurture in the rearing of a child. David is to be taken in by a woman who would stand in for his mother but need not be his biological mother.

For the child David, as with Jesus and Moses before him in Biblical myth, biological motherhood is undermined in favour of a surrogate. There is the age old conflict between nature and nurture. As with Christianity which has always deprived and denied maternal authority, by reducing Mary to "parthenos" or virgin, devaluing her maternal functioning in the bearing of Christ, there seems to be here a reassertion of the rights of the non-biological mother, the nurturer who cares for the divine child, irrespective of his origin. If ripping the child away from the overbearing presence of the maternal had been the project of patriarchy, encouraging the symbolic matricide, in Simon's quest for David's mother, the mother is restored to her place of importance. The choice of Ines' would seem arbitrary: she is as "inexperienced" in mothering as Mary had been, if not as young. She is unengaged, and ready to move out of the 'Residencia' where children are prohibited, into the more spartan Relocation Center. It is reminiscent of all the rejection Joseph and Mary faced before they found sanctuary in a manger, where Mary gave birth to Christ. The La Residencia, it would seem, is as against life and the newborn as the Roman king Herod, of Judea, from whose persecution Jesus had to be saved. This country, too, is against the young: it discourages intercourse and therefore, rarely breeds life, it seems. In its dystopia, everything functions by the rulebook, but life does not thrive.

An unmistakable aspect of J M Coetzee's fiction is the touch of the young, youthful body, seen as regenerative, redemptive, holding out the promise of a healed world. Hence the old magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) longs for the touch of the little boy who brings him food from the cook in his prison everyday. His passion for the young barbarian girl is also not unmixed with fatherly affection and more than copulating with her, he enjoys ministering to her wounded, traumatized body. Mikhailovsky's (*The Master of St. Petersburg,* 1994) interactions with little Matryona, the daughter of his son Pavel's landlady, are also not devoid of an almost paedophilic attraction, but what draws him to her is not only her beauty but youthful presence. This attraction he whets somewhat through making love to her mother, Anna, also a woman much younger to him, though mature. The old, the dying, and the body in pain all seem to be comforted by the touch of the young. Eugene Dawn clutches on for life to his little son Martin, whom he kidnaps. Magda lures little boys to herself, simply to touch them, and draw a fresh lease of life in her deserted, decadent manor life in the heart of the country, and gets branded as a witch, a cannibalistic woman who devours little boys. JC, the aging author-narrator of *Diary of a Bad Year*, seems almost to be a lecher, drawn as he is to his young Philippina neighbor, Anya. Though she has no credentials, he engages her as his typist, just to soak in her physical presence around him. For Paul Rayment, the nurse with whom he falls in love, Marijana's touch is not only soothing but also life-sustaining. A partiality towards the young, and detestation for bodies that are aging or aged often surfaces in his fiction. The young often hold out the last straw for a dying, sinking person or inspire, literally, in the sense of breathing life into, a decaying soul.

Much more than filial or blood ties, Coetzee seems to be stressing the adoptive roles of motherhood which these 'mothers' don, in the absence of their biological children. Susan Barton plays a surrogate mother to Friday, grown up though he is, but inexperienced and alien to the ways of the western world. For Mrs Curren, mothering the vagrant Vercueil, or the hunted teenaged boy, Bheki's friend, shielding him from the persecution of the law are transgressive acts in themselves, based on a human code long forgotten in the modern world. Both are found to be casting a protective/ maternal shield over their wards. Ultimately, all these novels rue the lack of a world of women, with a different system of language and ethics in play. Irigaray bemoans that women who have been mediators for engendering worlds, who have given birth (miraculous and biological) to reformists (incarnations of the world and of the divine), have been left without a world that they may call their own, or that which revolves according to their interests and ethics. Susan Barton is incapacitated by the lack of language: a system of language that clothes/ informs her own narrative. Hence she is compelled to approach Defoe, who has his own commercial interests at heart, to tell her story. Magda's claim to the land has been wrested from her by the language that alienates her from the land. In many senses she is the new Antigone: she too is left without a city to call her own. Exiled, as it were, in the heart of the country, she too is forbidden to speak, to marry, to have children, by patriarchal ethics that define womanhood, eligibility of marriage and childbearing, and easily brand one who does not conform as an outcast or witch. Whereas patriarchy has often sought to bear the potential hero off from the influence of the mother, his belief in mothering makes Simon give over David to Ines. This is something Kristeva points out

time and again in her works, notably *Stabat Mater*, and *Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini*.

In many senses, J. M. Coetzee is falling in line with feminists, ecofeminists, cultural feminists who advocate the revival of the cult of the Goddess, goddess worship, and strive to restore balance in the universe. As Adorno and Horkheimer pointed out as early as 1944 in their "dialectic of enlightenment", Bacon's prescription "of the chaste and lawful marriage between the mind of man and the nature of things" was fundamentally patriarchal.[51] It is because of ecofeminist incursions that seek to preserve and conserve nature against the destructive forces of science and development. Movements such as the 'Chipko' movement against rampant deforestation in the Doon valley of North India, the role men and women are playing in the Narmada Bachao Andolan, to save livelihoods and land resources in the Narmada river valley against powerful government authorities, and several such endeavours are increasingly being made in the bid to save the earth. Merchant and others have suggested, point out Frances Devlin-Glass and Lynn McCreddon, that emergence of the scientific view of nature coincided with the devaluation of traditional knowledge of women and their subsequent demonization as witches. On the one hand, while scientific interventions are freeing women from the biological clock, even from the confines of the womb, science is developing ingenious ways for the destruction of life such as chemical and biological weapons. To celebrate the feminine sacred, to move towards a politics of peace, Sara Ruddick suggests people develop "maternal thinking". In J. M. Coetzee's fiction there are recurrent suggestions of "maternal thinking" as a remedy for evil, as a balm for the soul

weighed down with guilt. "Maternal thinking" involves an ethics of care, caring for *and* caring about, as well as a complex set of prudential calculations, Joan C. Tronto clarifies, citing Ruddick[52]. Caring for has been relegated to the domain of the feminine and limited to the personal and the particular, while caring about has traditionally been labeled a masculine preserve, devaluing the function of caring for and stripping it of moral or ethical aspects. Care for and of others is intricately bound up with the affect of "sympathy"-- sympathy that allows a person to inhabit the being of another-- a kind of Keatsian "feeling-in"-- that J. M. Coetzee's fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello insists on, in the eponymous novel. She is at odds with the philosopher Thomas Nagel who thinks it is not possible for one being to be at one with another, leave alone one of a different species, for instance, for a human to feel-in with a bat. But, as Costello asserts, sympathy is the one affect that does enable, indeed, empower us to do so. Maternal thinking is an orientation, a practice, a way of living: it involves this very sympathy that can be cultivated irrespective of sex, race, class, creed or sexual orientation.

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[2] Ibid, p.11.

[3] Ibid, p.119. Bakan is also cited by William Beers in *Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of*

Religion. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992, p. 116.

[4] A term which Carl G. Jung rejected in favour of "archetype", but taken up and developed later by Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan

[5] Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1986, p. 67.

[6] Bakan, David. *Disease, Pain and Sacrifice*, p. 104. Bakan is cited by William Beers in *Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of Religion,* p. 11.

[7] Beers, William. *Women and Sacrifice*, p. 11.

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[9] Nancy Chodorow reads Karen Horney in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 6.

[10] Chodorow, Nancy. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, p. 80.

[11] Oliver, Kelly. *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex and the Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 21.

[12] Ibid.

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[26] Irigaray, Luce. *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 15.

[27] Kipp, Julie. *Romanticism, Maternity and the Body-Politic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 25.

[28] Beers, William. *Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of Sacrifice,* p. 81.

[29] Irigaray, Luce. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 90.

[30] Irigaray, Luce. *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 11.

[31] Chodorow, Nancy. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory,* p. 10.

[32] Irigaray, Luce. *Sexes and Genealogies*, p. 16.

[33] Coetzee, J. M. *In the Heart of the Country.* London: Vintage, 2004, pp. 40-1.

[34] Ibid, p. 44.

[35] Ibid, p. 75.

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[40] Karen E. Fields, in the foreword to Nancy Jay's *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Religion, Sacrifice and Paternity,* p. xv.

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[47] Chakravorty Spivak, Gayatri, "Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/ Roxana*", *English in Africa,* Vol. 17, No. 2 (Oct 1990), pp.1-23. (Content downloaded from *jstor*, 210.212.129.125).

[48] Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* p.99.

[49] Danta, Chris, Sue Kossew and Julian Murphet, ed. *Strong Opinions: J. M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, p. 13.

[50] Ibid, p.12.

[51] Devlin-Grass, Frances, and Lynn McCreddon, ed. *Feminist Poetics of the Sacred: Creative Suspicions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 31.

[52] Joan C. Tronto cites Sara Ruddick in "Women and Caring" in Susan Bordo and Alison M. Jagger ed. *Gender/ Body/ Knowledge, Feminist Constructions of Being and Knowing.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1989, p. 175.

EAT/ PRAY/ LOVE: THE BODIES OF ANIMALS

> A day will come when the thought that to feed themselves, men of the past raised and massacred living beings and complacently exposed their shredded flesh in displays shall no doubt inspire the same repulsion as that of the travelers of the 16th and 17th centuries, facing cannibal meals of savage American primitives in America, Oceania or Africa—
>
> Claude Levi- Strauss in *La Republica*, an Italian daily

A similar sentiment seems to drive J.M. Coetzee. A childhood memory that opens the pages of his earliest memoir, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* (1997) [1] is that of his mother grabbing chicken one by one between her legs, prying open their beaks to burst the horns under their tongues. She was following her sister's advice, to punish the chicken for refusing to lay eggs in the coop that his family put in the backyard. They had just moved to Worcester, their house was one among many identical ones in the colony, and soil there was an unyielding red clay. When it rained, the water refused to seep in, forming puddles and swamps. The chicken that the family had penned in their backyard developed swellings on their feet, got upset and stopped laying eggs. As a child, John Coetzee watches his mother at the bloody deed, and then imagines her making steaks out of the chicken, piece by piece. The account stops there, but nevertheless starts the narrative on a note of violence, on part of the mother. Throughout *Boyhood*, Coetzee's mother is presented as a strong-willed woman, (she was of Polish- German descent), with the inbred prejudices of a European but with an inborn grit that defines their family and sets it apart

from other families. It is just as well, he remarks, that his mother dominates the family for if his father had done it, they would be rendered all too ordinary. The incident must have left a deep imprint, for in his 2003 novel, *Elizabeth Costello*, his mouthpiece Costello describes a similar experience Albert Camus had had in his childhood which led him to write, in his adult years, an impassioned plea against the guillotine. Consequently, capital punishment had been abolished in France: all because of the shrieks of a chicken being bled to death.[2]

The closest relationship the larger part of humanity has with animals is with their death or rather, corpses. The ingestion of corpses of animals is 'unnatural': death is abjection, a decaying, decomposing corpse is untouchable to most people and yet their primary relationship with animals is gastronomical. We hunt/ rear/ breed them for food. Among secondary and tertiary uses are as beasts of burden, as locomotive, for wearing as items of clothing, accessories and luxury, as entertainers, as guards or herders or police aid, and finally as companions. In all these 'interactions', animals-- their bodies and services-- are consumed and abused to varying degrees. The keyword here is *use*: we *use* animals, as we also use certain human beings belonging to certain races, regions, and to certain economic, political or social conditions, thus bridging conceptual differences/ oppositions between human and animal. It is therefore just a matter of interests of the group applying these differences for their own benefit. According to Thomas LaMarre, speciesism is a displacement of race and racism onto relations between humans and animals. LaMarre shows how in pre-wartime animation films such as the Norakuro series, different races of the world were often depicted with racist associations related to different animal species.[3] Speciesism, in turn, is a matter of blatant discrimination against animals, which

comes of attributing "bestial" qualities, that is negative characteristics to non-human animals, *and extending these negative characteristics to humans*... (italics mine).

Discussing the word 'species' and its usage, Donna Haraway makes the same connection:

> The discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the non-citizen, and the animal—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution—is at the heart of racism and flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism.[4]

Secularization of animal killing from the sense of sacrifice to mere killing for food, with the shift from polytheistic religions to human-oriented monotheistic religions, could have led to the killing of animals in masses. Removed from a religious context, the reverence for the lives of animals diminished by a considerable degree. It was with the desacralization of animal flesh with the advent of Christianity that the religious and moral value of animals diminished, as Ingvild Saelis Gilhus points out.[5] Animal killing continued with apparently no dietary changes among Christians in spite of animal sacrifices no longer being the order of the day. Gilhus traces the devaluation of animals also to the increasing importance of the arena. She further notes, "

> The lowering of the status of animals is reflected in philosophical debates between Aristotelians, Epicureans, Platonists, Neopythagorians and Stoics in which the Stoic position gradually became dominant. According to the Stoics, logos is the categorical boundary marker between humans and animals, animals are *aloga*— creatures without reason.[6]

There have also been defenders of animals in antiquity, in the likes of Plutarch and Porphyry. Though there was in general no sense of oppression or sympathy for the oppressed, there have been philosophers who have urged kindness toward human slaves and beasts of burden alike. Here we must remember that in the Roman empire human slaves and non-human animals often shared the same kind of chores, and they are often talked of in the same breath without any distinction. The prime marker of difference between humans and animals, "reason", however, ceases to matter as the cause of apathy and ill-treatment when humans also are regarded as animals. Ingvild Gilhus perceptively traces the shift from polytheistic to monotheistic religion as movement away from animal sacrifice to bloodless sacrifice; yet at the same time, she notes, Christians had continued to employ sacrificial terminology (Christ had been the "lamb" who was sacrificed), as Old Testament notions of sacrifice dominated their beliefs.

We must accept the huge difference that we have made to the concept of animality, brought out by our constant reference to animals as "the animal", clubbing all species of animal into the umbrella term, ignoring even species differences. I would even say, with Kelly Oliver (*Animal Lessons*), that animals have been more abused through the nurturance of a mistaken, misplaced notion of animality than by any other means. "It is not the Jewish character that provokes anti-Semitism", says Jean Paul Sartre, "but rather, it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew."[7] This takes off from Frantz Fanon's remark: "It is the settler who has brought the native into existence, and who perpetuates his existence." This had in turn drawn upon Richard Wright: "There is no Negro problem in the United States, there is only a white problem." Following their cue and drawing upon literary suggestions of centuries, I would say it is the human who has created the animal. I must agree with Zizek that the "animal", is a construct[8] just as the

"Chinese"[9] or for that matter, the "Jew", is. The "animal" does not exist really, except in the collective imagination, the collective unconscious. Hence all the attributes that are assigned to non-human animals which they hardly ever display, foremost of which is their supposed propensity towards evil. In fact a differentiation emerged in the human consciousness between the animal and the beast: the one benign and the other coarse, aggressive and evil. The "Yahoos" of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, 1735) would have qualified as beasts as opposed to the more refined and sensitive, yet animal, "Houyhnhnms".

Through more means than one, Kelly Oliver suggests, we become humans through animals, humanity is offset through animality. Humanism had drawn sustenance from the difference between the animal Other and the alpha species: the human. The animal is at once, within, and without. The suppression of the "animal within" (read sexual drives, spontaneous, instinctual activity, biological functions, intercourse) maketh the better hu-Man. Those that let the animal "within" out, therefore, are less human (read Other: woman, racial/ regional/ colonial…) For Georges Bataille, the distinction humans are bent on proving and maintaining amongst themselves and non-humans is premised on the convenient forgetting of us being fleshly… hence the erasure of all evidence and the keeping in the dark of all matters relating to biological activity that inescapably pins one down as animal. He notes that prohibitions such as that of incest, taboos on menstrual blood and the horror of excreta have to be inculcated (they are not naturally inborn), and the cultivation of labour to control and dominate nature, serves to suppress the animality of humans: "the abhorrence of animal needs, together with the repugnance for death and dead persons, on the one hand, and the experience of work on the other marked the 'transition of animal to man'…"[10]

Transmutations into animal selves abound in mythology and folklore the world over. Most interestingly, what is considered taboo in most societies, "lying" with animals, or "unnatural" intercourse with animals find freeplay in mythologies, suggesting that sex with animals had, once upon a time, not been considered taboo, but had had rather empowering consequences. Intercourse, interaction with animals, had produced empowerment. Yet the bodies of animals have been so shunned that in Coetzee's 2003 novel *Elizabeth Costello*, where Coetzee's fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello attends a dinner on the eve of her lecture, the hostess for the evening, the Dean's wife, remarks that the single demarcating feature of animals is that humans do not have sex with them.[11] (This distinction had already been postulated by Georges Bataille in *Death and Sensuality: A Study in Eroticism and the Taboo* and *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, Vol.2.)

In the first chapter of *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben relates how the wel*tanschhaung* of humans had been theriomorphic at some point of time in most cultures.[12] Myth-making has been theriomorphic in Greco-Roman, African and Oriental civilizations. This had not only been a totemic symbolism attached to non-human animals allegorized and typified, but a real acknowledgment of superior abilities that humans aspired to. This is true of Natïve American culture as well where people have names such as "dances with wolves."[13] Steve Baker has argued that representations of animals in a particular culture serve as an indicator of how animals are treated in that culture.[14] This is largely true. In a letter to Paul Auster J. M. Coetzee observes that of all things, what struck him about India (when he visited Rajasthan for a literary fest) was the coexistence of non-human animals among humans, cows and sheep occupying as much of the streets as humans, blocking and delaying traffic, and humans tolerating it in all

patience, without resorting to cruelty of any sort. He contrasts this with South Africa where cruelty to animals is common, not to speak of First World countries where animals are conveniently shunted out of any interaction with humans, into factory farms and slaughterhouses till they appear on tables as meat.[15] Cultural representations of animals in art and literature often confine them to a totemic significance. In India, while some regard the cow as a universal mother, feeding humanity with her milk, others argue that the cow is held to be holy not because it is respected in its own being, but it is viewed from an utilitarian perspective for the many uses it can be put to while alive.

Yet, through all this, human beings have not always been averse to imagining themselves as animals: animal costumes are the most popular at "fancy dress balls". Artist Jordan Baseman put up a scalped pair of an Alsatian's ears on exhibition at human head height, as his piece "Be Your Dog." He found to his astonishment that visitors were aligning their head to the ears on the wall and getting their picture taken.[16] It was a clear case of imagining oneself as animal, and evidently, a popular exercise. Through folklore and mythology, transformations/ metamorphoses into animal bodies have bound the imagination of generations: sometimes for the freedoms they entail and at others, depicting a state of condemnation. To be considered an animal or reside with animals or to have to contend with animals for food or survival is a condition few human beings desire. Peter Singer says that no matter how much the stretch of imagination, no human would actually exchange an animal's body or life for her / his own, for all the freedoms in the world.[17] The sport of the Romans where gladiators-- starved, enslaved men-- had to wrestle with hungry lions, was a form of punishment for men taken captive. It entailed a battle where one must prove oneself to be the equal of a lion or stronger. It meant both glory and dishonour: but perhaps what

it entailed the most was a test of one's own animal powers. So too in ancient Sparta, which engendered the most ferocious of warriors: boys as young as seven, were taken away from their families and exposed in the jungles to learn survival skills, to learn to grapple with the wild. Thus it is through direct encounters with non-human animals that human alpha males were reared. And it was by "becoming animal", by learning to cross the threshold between "human" and "animal" that they became invincible, a single man equaling the strength of ten. Even the bullfights Spain nurtured till very recently, produced matadors more ferocious than the bulls they fought.

In the 19th century, on the one hand, there have been philosophers like Rousseau who have romanticized animals, just as "savages" have been romanticized as "noble". In *Emile*, he had emphasized the lessons humans learn from animals. Bentham and Mill had postulated that animals be spared cruelty by asking the by now iconic question: "Can they suffer?" For Alexander Kojeve, human animals are distinguished from the non-human by dint of their desire: desire for the unreal. Non-human animals desire only what can be achieved, what can be realized, whereas human beings' desire is ultimately just an abstract idea, not a tangible thing, therefore, in reality, nothing.[18] Human beings' desires are directed towards "nothings". However, for most people, the distinction is quite simple: animals comprise food; human beings don't. Emmanuel Levinas answers the question, "how are animals animalized by humans?" in a brutally simple way: *we eat meat*. Giorgio Agamben notes,

> not only theology and philosophy, but also politics, ethics and jurisprudence are drawn and suspended in the difference between the man and the animal, (in which) the

> cognitive experiment...concerns the nature of man... the production and definition of this nature...an experiment 'de hominis natura.[19]

He adds, "When the difference collapses then the difference between being and nothing, licit and illicit, divine and demonic also fades away, and in its place something appears for which we seem to lack even a name." He argues that concentration and extermination camps are also such 'cognitive' experiments, "an extreme and monstrous attempt to decide between the human and the inhuman..."[20] Jacques Derrida explains this difference in attitude through the clear distinction that Hermeneutics makes between "Being" and Beings: those with "being" (in the Heideggerian sense of Dasein) are not to be eaten while "beings", devoid of "being" can be eaten.[21]. With Kelly Oliver, "to eat or not to eat" is a simple question of what is considered food and what is not. Humans eat animals because they consider animals to be food.

However, there is a sense in which this distinction breaks down, the relation of consumption in which humans stand with each other in respect of desire. Novalis considers all human interactions to be acts of consumption: of eating.[22] Spending time with a friend is eating of a friend, reading books, garnering knowledge are all expressions of our innate cannibalistic desires. For Derrida, too, we are all, vegetarians or not, "carnivores in the symbolic sense": we assimilate, incorporate into ourselves all that we consume, cannibalistically. The Feast of Corpus Christi provides a Biblical analogy: by consuming meat and wine, one partakes of the body of Christ (as conceived) and is thus in the closest communion with the divine.[23] In that sense, human beings, their work and services are all food, as is music. Women are commonly conceived as "food" for the senses, "meat" to be sexually consumed, to be pursued as quarry.

Distinguishing between animals and human beings does not translate into humane treatment of either. If anything, it incites violence towards both: abject animals, and abject human beings, "precarious", "bare lives". In this regard, Rousseau's position is worth noting which Kelly Oliver sums up thus: "Barbarity towards animals begets barbarity toward fellow humans; hunting and killing animals is a training ground for hunting and killing men; war is a natural outgrowth or at least a side effect of slaying animals: flesh eaters make war."[24] Kristeva marks human vulnerability as stemming from the fact that humans are embodied "speaking" beings. This grants them personhood as well as vulnerability as opposed to animals who do not "speak", but Oliver refutes this. It is animals who supposedly "do not speak" that are the most vulnerable of creatures in the modern world. Speech, therefore, prevents/ protects one from being eaten/ being considered as food. At the same time, disgust towards what is not considered as food, can become a potent weapon of torture: feeding prisoners human waste, or, forbidden animal flesh as Oliver notes in the case of Iraqi prisoners who shun pork. Rousseau's position of 'you are what you eat' or 'you become what you eat' is not only a strong belief in some faiths, it also derives its ideational content from disgust towards what is considered 'base'. Martha Nussbaum marks how Rozin had conducted successful experiments proving this content of 'disgust' in food choices, driven by the idea 'if you ingest what is base, this debases you.'[25] She further notes that Angyal had argued strongly that the centre of disgust is animal (including human) waste products which are viewed as debasing. Rozin has also added, (and I quote this in another chapter too), that "disgust may be transferred to objects that have had contact with animals or animal products—a major source being contact with people who are disliked or viewed as unsavoury."[26] It must be this line of thinking that fuels practices of "untouchability" in India towards 'Dalits' or 'downtrodden' tribes, who, out of poverty and scarcity have dietary

habits different from the prosperous 'upper castes', and follow professions such as tanning, hiding, skinning, and working with leather products.

Kelly Oliver and Derrida point out the omission of the animal Other in 19th and 20th century discussions of the abject Other. Even those philosophers who have tried to decenter man and emphasize his dependence on the Other have stopped short of putting non-human animals in the same category. Philosophers right from Aristotle, Porphyry and Plutarch to Descartes, Bentham, Mill, down to deconstructionists Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Kelly Oliver, Cary Wolfe and Donna Haraway have written extensively on animals and their relationship to humans. For Descartes, they don't think, therefore don't "exist" in the real sense. For Bentham, they should be spared cruelty for the sole reason that they "can suffer", not because they are "alive" and can experience the world with their being. From being labelled as beings without "soul", and without "existence" (since they supposedly do not think), they seem to have even regressed in human esteem in the last century: Levinas dismisses Bobby the dog (who visited Jews interned in camps every morning, bringing cheer despite their state of humiliation) as ultimately without discernment, despite its innate companionability and empathy. Perhaps, its very mirroring of the camp inmates' abjection, its very approach on terms of equality irked Levinas and other humans. To Levinas, animals are "face"-less; therefore, non- persons.[27] Even Derrida, deconstructing humanism, cannot rise above the reductionist notion of "the animal"; he is not comfortable with the question of rights for animals, and questions their subjectivity. Derrida who feels shame when nude in the presence of his female cat, does not really credit her with a *gaze* that would make her a subject (as Kelly Oliver notes in *Animal Lessons*[28]). While dissecting the works of Rousseau on the origins of language and on animals, Derrida repeatedly substitutes "animals" for "the animal", thereby disregarding difference between species and

singular animals, and typecasts them under the notion of "the animal." But I would say that Derrida takes a step ahead of Levinas in the sense that by feeling "shame" he acknowledges the face of his cat, which Levinas denies the dog. The shame-affect that Derrida feels is caused when, as Silvan Tomkins puts it, "one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or, one wishes to look at, or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange, or one expected him to be familiar but he suddenly appears unfamiliar, or one started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger."[29] The cat therefore, was taken for granted by Derrida as a familiar, but under her gaze, felt shame for she showed no signs of familiarity. Therefore, on her part there was a de-familiarizing of the familiar; hence Derrida's sense of the uncanny when caught off guard in undress in the presence of his cat. What shall we call this? It is both assuming personhood for his cat and at the same time feeling himself as a vulnerable object, an object-that-can-be-gazed-at by a non-human animal. Is this perception what is called for, then, when we regard the Other, not as familiar, but as Unfamiliar (Freud's *unheimlich*), for us to give the Other his/ her due respect? It is the Unfamiliar that is *visible* and not so much the familiar that becomes so much a part of the surroundings as to be invisible.

Crowds are invisible, as are groups of refugees, as are religious and cultural minorities. The more they are shunted out of the mainstream, the more invisible they become in spite of the knowledge that they are there. It is the same attitude at work when hegemonic groups typecast peoples of certain races, regions, and thereby turn them into a faceless crowd, enabling and discounting crimes against them. In contemporary times, we see this taking place against Arabs, Iraqis, Palestinians, to name just a few "faceless" entities. To have a 'face' and therefore to claim a cognitive identity is the marker of personhood, then. But as Agamben reminds us, even at the

peak of Humanism, Pico's oration, "Manifesto of Humanism" presents the unflattering, deflationary thesis that man, "having been molded when the models of creation were all used up...can have neither archetype, nor proper place, nor specific rank...(S)ince he was created without a definite model...he does not even have a face of his own... and must shape it at his discretion in either bestial or divine form."[30] This is what prompted Linnaeus, three centuries later, to classify man among the 'Anthropomorpha' or 'manlike animals', says Agamben.[31] Unlike other species, therefore, man is without rank, without a species identity, without uniqueness. Perhaps this is why Levinas urges that we should stop "taking the name of a dog in the figurative sense". Discussing Levinas' viewpoint, David L. Clarke observes that "figuring animals, we configure the human. But at what cost to the animals? What is more violently exclusionary: that the Jews are animalized by the Nazis or that the animal has for so long been used as a marker by which ferociously to abject Other?"[32] The very terminology used to relate events and victims of the Holocaust ("they went to their deaths like lambs to the slaughter") hark back to sacrificial terminology. Animals are the absent referent. The very notion of sacrifice itself is "inauthentic", opines Slavoj Zizek, since it is based on a supposed lack, based upon envy, whether the lack exists or not.[33] Following this line of thought, the offering to the gods or whatever it may have been, had never really been a sincere offering, but only a fulfillment of vested interests, of greed. So it is just as well that the secularization of societies have done away with the disguise, the inauthenticity of sacrifice. But the flip side is that murder has become more banal, more blatant, unapologetic, commercialized factory produce.

In his 1998 essay "Meat Country" J M Coetzee talks about the inescapable condition of "meat eating" in a state such as Texas in the US in the 90s. Choosing to avoid meat could even

translate as going without food, for a hostess would not serve anything but meat, even after knowing his and his partner's preference. He then attributes the seemingly peaceful conditions of living, the apparent contentment to the ready availability and low price of factory produced meat. People from all classes, conditions and ethnic backgrounds had access to meat in America: life was good… there was meat enough for all. To this we must add Carol J. Adams' observation of the racial politics of meat eating: "… if the meat supply is limited, white people should get it; but if the meat supply is plentiful all should eat it… the hierarchy of meat protein reinforces a hierarchy of race, class and sex."[34] Over the centuries, a carnivorous appetite has defined masculinity, denoted a macho people, virility, invincibility, so much so that non-meat eating cultures have been designated as feminine, weak, vulnerable, conquerable. American leaders and incumbents are often shown hunting, 'testifying' to their 'virile' capability to lead, note both Derrida and Oliver.

This is part of the 'sexual politics of meat'[35] as observed by feminist animal-rights activists such as Carol J. Adams and Catherine McKinnon. They contest the widely accepted notion that meat is a man's food, as opposed to vegetables, which comprise a woman's plate. Unless there is meat on his plate, a man is not appropriately fed/ satiated. It is a dietary requirement he cannot go without, but which a woman may just as well forego. In cultures all over the world, in times of scarcity, it is the woman who must forego the meat. Meat is identified as the "active" man's food whereas vegetables, passive things, are identified with the passive, placid woman. In addition, Adams identifies animals as the "absent referent" when it comes to meat. By removing the connotation of dead flesh/animal corpses from the word "meat", by endowing it with a positive reverberation, by equating it to good food, the uncanny, the familiar is removed, distanced, conveniently forgotten. All this is possible through the language of

patriarchy, of course. The privilege of naming that man has usurped for himself, in exclusion of all other creatures grants him that power.

In *Mechademia: The Limits of the Human*, Thomas Lamarre declares that "speciesism is a displacement of race and racism onto relations between humans and animals..." (S)peciesism is a matter of blatant discrimination against animals, which comes of attributing "bestial" characteristics , that is negative characteristics to non-human animals, *and extending these negative characteristics to humans*... (italics mine)... "Speciesism thus comprises violence to non-human animals *and* to those designated as racial others."[36] By the same rationale, theriomorphic gods were demonized, as were their worshippers, who were therefore apt targets for colonist incursions, "civilizing" missions. This posed a crucial dilemma to Christian missions. If the concerned inhabitants are bestial, how could the light of Christianity be brought to them (since Christianity is meant for the salvation of humans)? On the other hand there was no Christian justification for the often barbaric treatment these "demonic" peoples were subjected to. The refusal to recognize the other as kindred/ as of one's own kind demonizes just as it exoticizes. This stems from intolerance of differences in look, culture, customs. In Jean Paul Sartre's essay "From One China to Another", he recounts how as a child he had come to fear and shun the Chinese as "Chinese", i.e. Other, strange, exotic and indeed diametrically opposite in nature and habits to the average European, in other words, typically Orientalized. And these notions were reinforced by writers, tourists, soldiers, and indeed photographers who were bent not so much on capturing reality but on projecting the "Chinese-ness" of the Chinese people so as to highlight differences. There was also a keenness to generalise, homogenise the Chinese people so as to make them indistinguishable from one another, literally rendering them "faceless". It is the human being's (read Caucasian/ European man's) claim to a cognizable,

distinguishable "face" that allows him/ her membership of the species, so to say. Models were used for photographs who "looked more Chinese" than the average Chinese person, posing in acts and costumes that exoticized and reinstated stereotypes. The European is expected to wonder how one Chinese person is to be distinguished from another, for they all supposedly look the same. Sartre counters, how one cannot, for every person has a face distinct from another. It is the very face that is marked out as a distinguishing human feature. Hence since antiquity, notes Martha Nussbaum, punishments that have involved shaming, have intended to stigmatize offenders, have concentrated on the face: the offense or the punishment itself tattooed on the forehead of offenders. She cites Constantine who says it is the face that bears the mark of our humanity and individuality.[37]Apparently, it is the lack of a face that "bestializes" non-human animals and opens them to abuse. Is it really that non-human animals are faceless or is it our blindness and obtuseness that we cannot detect their faces?

Barbara Smuts vouches for this, for while living with gorillas and baboons in their own habitats in Western Tanzania and Kenya respectively, she experienced not only their gaze but also came to recognize faces.[38] The very premise of facelessness is turned on its head. It is the "facelessness" of Bobby that made Levinas deny him the status of a thinking animal, despite his good humour, his indiscriminate kindness, his unrestrained affection. It is the same "facelessness" that humans like to see in animals of other species. Unlike Smuts, there were others such as Johannes Herder who, in spite of close study of animals, could not shed the blind of human superiority over other primates. Kelly Oliver points out that the similarity apes and other Simians had with humans struck Herder as "gross" because of the peculiar ambiguity they represented. They were and yet were not humans, in a sense: unnatural, monstrous, grotesque:

abject. The farther non-human animals were in their appearance and characteristics from humans, the more "animalistic" they were, the less uncanny, the less "monstrous" in his estimation. He drew aesthetic and moral differences between the shape of the human head and the erect posture humans have and that of apes. In this context, I must mention the pseudoscience of phrenology that emerged towards the end of that century which studied the shape and size of skulls of humans of different races and postulated a hierarchy of races. All this, obviously, went into justification of colonial rule over people belonging to the "lower" races. Interestingly, this sort of parallel is drawn to this day, as Cary Wolfe notes in his introduction to *Zoontologies*. Hierarchical divisions along racial lines have not been solely the preserve of colonial societies or settler colonies.

Mary Midgley in *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*[39] cites Ramona and Desmond Morris who have found that apes were regarded as "evil and ridiculous" in the medieval imagination. This was probably due to the ambiguity they presented in their form: a kind of cross between human and beast. Their "ridiculousness" stemmed from their tendency to imitate Man, and here we may associate the Freudian notion of the "uncanny" with the familiar yet strange behavior they exhibited towards humans. Kafka's Red Peter (*A Report to an Academy*) is a fitting reply to such anxieties; only we see that once in the human realm, even the ape cannot escape the human condition. Linnaeus, however, refused to concede to the theologians that apes, like other *bruta*, were essentially different from man in that they lacked a soul, notes Agamben. In fact, Agamben adds how, in a note to the Systema Naturae he dismisses the Cartesian theory that conceived of animals as if they were *automata mechanica* with the vexed statement: "surely Descartes never saw an ape!"[40]

J.M. Coetzee's fiction makes frequent and deliberate reference to the bodies of animals, drawing the issue of human animal vs. non-human animal repeatedly into his work. Perhaps that is why he does not stop short of comparing animal slaughter to the Holocaust through his fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello (*Elizabeth Costello*, 2003). The death of animals inevitably brings us to their dead bodies and how they end up as food. However, Coetzee's concern for animals extends beyond animals as food or quarry: he bothers also about bodies of dead animals that cannot be eaten. In that respect, he is as concerned about the body of non-human animals as he is about the body of humans: their torture, mass slaughter, wanton murder, their pain, their death, desecration of their corpses. For Coetzee, as for Rousseau, the discernment of food is based on the principle of "we are what we eat" which infers that the cruelty that is meted out to animals directly translates into cruelty against human lives. Here he is in concord with feminist activists. Kelly Oliver, along with Elizabeth Costello, notes how human beings and animals have been treated the same during the Holocaust, as also in prison camps like Guantanamo Bay as part of explicitly sanctioned state policy. It is the same principle on which humans slaughter animals for consumption. It is also what causes outrage among humans: to be equated with animals is taken as a form of verbal abuse. Costello sums up the human stance (welten) to her son John: we treat animals as prisoners of war, as "bare life".

Costello's primary argument is that if we can think our way into the consciousness of fictional beings which never even existed, then we can surely think into the consciousness of other animals. She cites Thomas Nagel ("What is it like to be a bat?") and her own work, *The House on Eccles Street*, a retelling of James Joyce's *Ulysses* where she inhabits the

consciousness of Molly Bloom, as examples. She is also appreciative of the poetic tradition of Blake, Lawrence and Ted Hughes who exact a reverence for animal forms by compelling their readers to feel themselves in the body of animals, to cohabit as it were, the Tyger, the Jaguar, the Tortoise, the Snake. At the same time she is critical of stances that typecast animal forms, distancing humans from the real animals all the more. Mary Midgley has also warned us against the idea of the animal as embedded in the collective unconscious through folk and fable figures. Such preconceived notions of the wolf, an instance put forward by Midgley, leads to unnecessary cruel treatment of wolves by people. As Claude Levi- Strauss opined, animals are "good to think" which had indeed been the basis of totemism. In fact, Costello echoes Midgley when she talks of the poets and the animals: how animals such as the jaguar or the hawk have served as symbols, epitomes of certain qualities and not regarded as animal persons themselves, their individuality obscured as in the fables. The same anthropocentrism that is attributed to gods has also been applied to animals. In fables and folktales, they have only substituted the human, caricatured the human, served to impart lessons for the growth of moral character.

Undercutting this whole treatise is yet another narrative: that of Costello herself being a circus animal her son must "train" to perform her part at the American award ceremony and seminar she comes to attend. Animal metaphors abound as the dutiful son weighs her as woman, mother, writer. Old and haggard, particularly after a tiring flight across the world, she is like an old sluggish circus seal pulling herself up for yet another strenuous performance. As a writer she is, if not as bloodily destructive as a shark, at least as incisive as a cat who has clawed open the entrails of her prey. Under his unrelenting gaze, she is variously, Daisy Duck, Mickey Mouse: cartoon characters who are also animals, only fabulous. She too is Red Peter, being paid for her

performance throughout her life. At the cruise where she joins fellow author, Emmanuel Egudu, again, she is a paid entertainer. It is not as if she is unaware of the similarities, in fact, she does compare herself to Kafka's ape, wondering if we all are not, indeed, apes put to the performance of being "humans". We also remember here the old magistrate of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) made to perform "tricks" like a monkey, clad only in a woman's shift, while being whipped at the same time, with almost the whole camp watching: only a part of the humiliations he is put to by Mandel. His identification with circus animals does not end there. Once released, he goes around "singing for his keep", narrating his ordeals and his tryst with the Barbarian girl to whoever would listen and feed him in exchange.

In the end, however, Costello herself stands accused of caring little for individual animals, because the only ones she actually interacts with are her cats, as mentioned disparagingly by her exasperated son. She spares a lot of thought for animals, but only in the abstract, at a distance, be it the frogs of her country childhood, or the ticks or rats she feels have held out fast against the onslaught of humanity. She runs the risk of belonging to the group of people who sympathize from a distance but do not engage first-hand with the lives of animals. For Deleuze and Guattari, Donna Haraway notes critically, "little house dogs and the people who love them are the ultimate figure of abjection... especially if those figures are elderly women."[41] Cats are typically an elderly woman, an unmarried woman, or a widow's companions: the company of cats implies one is retired from life, retired from sex. Is that why Coetzee chooses so often members of the feline and canine species as companions, as his characters' fellow abject empathizers? Many of Coetzee's protagonists seem to share an affinity with other animals at some point in his novels. Like Levinas' Bobby, animals accompany the dying and the suffering

in Coetzee, as with Mrs. Curren (*Age of Iron,* 1990). Sometimes it is an easy companionship with dogs, as in Michael K, or that of Vercueil in *Age of Iron*, and at others it is care of animals, as with David Lurie in *Disgrace* (1999).

Yet, wanton cruelty towards animals crops up indecently, disturbingly, in Coetzee's fiction from time to time. These highlight the common abjection 'precarious' human beings and 'precarious' animals share. In *Foe* (1986), the island Cruso is wrecked on used to be inhabited by apes, whom Cruso found to be "pests". He killed many (clubbing them to death and then skinning them) and drove the rest away to what he called the North Bluff. Even his solitude (the island was uninhabited by other humans) could not prompt him to grow an affinity with the apes or find them companionable. At the corner of his hut Susan finds several cured apeskins that he fashions into clothing, shoes, blankets. This is in sync with his attitude of classic utilitarianism towards Friday whom he has enslaved but not befriended in his years on the island. Undercutting Susan's counter- narrative of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is the obvious implication that it had actually been possible to write as long a narrative as Defoe's only by completely ignoring the violence embedded in such an 'idyll', completely repressing the violence on Friday's body and on those of nameless others who might have also inhabited the island once upon a time. Defoe's text is also dismissive of the rampant cruelty toward animals Crusoe's survival on the island as an imperialist must have wreaked.

In this context, let me bring up Wendy Doniger's essay in *The Lives of Animals*. Aligning herself with Coetzee's mouthpiece Elizabeth Costello, she challenges her opponent, Thomas O'Hearne's statement that treating animals compassionately is a "very recent, very

Western, and even very Anglo-Saxon". Yet it appears that colonists who have been "Western" and often "Anglo-Saxon" have particularly treated animals very cruelly. Another instance is provided by the actions of the frontiersman Jacobus Coetzee (*Dusklands,* 1974). He seems to take an almost sadistic pleasure in killing animals, he is a hunter, and needless to say, he massacres his "Hottentot" servants in the same wanton manner in which he slaughters animals.

Once again, the abjection of animals, animals as bare life that can be killed without fear of prosecution, life over whom anybody has sovereign power brings to mind Elizabeth Costello's comment in the eponymous novel: "we treat animals as prisoners of war". Well before Coetzee/ Costello, Isaac Bashevis Singer had remarked in *Enemies: A Love Story*:

> As often as Herman had witnessed the slaughter of animals and fish, he always had the same thought: in their behavior toward creatures, all men were Nazis. The smugness with which man could do with other species as he pleased exemplified the most extreme racist theories, the principle that might is right.[42]

How telling this comment becomes when we think of the pictures that surfaced on the internet (posted by the abusers themselves in a spirit of play!) of atrocities committed in Abu Ghraib on Iraqi prisoners of war! She seems to be echoing Costello in her contention that it is not right that humans be treated as animals, but it is equally wrong that animals be treated the way they are.

This brings us back to where we started: do not human beings of certain "orders" get treated/ terminated the same way? Ultimately, it is circumstances that determine the degree of resistance or acceptance of death. How many sent to death camps could actually resist their fate? Did not they walk to their death chambers "as lambs to the slaughter"? Coetzee deftly brings us

to the full circle to the primary debate: how does denial of human affinity with other animals stand against the debasing treatment of humans, just as well as animals? Vulnerability of groups of humans is undeniable just as that of animals. Cruelty towards animals and humans alike cancels out speciesistic assumptions. The awareness of death and the abjection of their bodies aid in the distancing of vulnerable groups and individuals. The defamiliarizing of the familiar, the denial of the objective correlative, the "absent referrent", as Carol Adams puts it, is applicable therefore to animals and to humans whose lives the dominant groups do not consider to be worth living (Butler's "ungrievable lives"). Whenever we talk of ethnic cleansing the Holocaust springs to mind, but it is indeed a fact that's ritually been carried out over the centuries by different regimes, in different parts of the world. Africa is witnessing such genocidal exercises every year, it happens in mid-western countries and even closer home. Amitav Ghosh chronicles in his novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004), the state sanctioned exile and extermination of a community of refugees on the island of Marichjhapi in the Sundarbans in West Bengal in the late 70s.

The denial of particularity, individuality, deprives humans of certain orders of "being" and therefore renders them dispensable. Refugees, prisoners, members of tribal communities and other such marginal groups, are all subject to the vagaries of hegemonic rule. Women since times primordial have been equated in cultures the world over, to animals: trophies, commodities, rewards, items of barter. Indeed, feminists such as Carol Adams directly link cruelty towards animals to cruelty towards women. Most serial killers (their victims are women much of the time) have exhibited cruelty towards animals since early life. Men who have maltreated women have also battered animals. Carol Adams cites the case of a man separated from his wife who, while returning the kids after his visit with them, deliberately ran over their pet dog and

repeatedly kept driving over it, to the horror of his children. Abusers have threatened their victims with the same dire consequences that they have dealt the children's pets or favorite animal, if they "tell". With Peter Singer and others who campaign against factory farming methods, Adams has noted the unspeakable cruelty dealt to sows and other female animals, "breeders". The equipment used for forcible impregnation is called a "rape rack", among other things. The identification with human females is unmistakable here.

Feminist animal rights activists such as Catherine Mackinnon, Andrea Dworkin and Carol Adams contend that this works conversely as well: that women are seen, and consequently treated as, animals. Needless to say, it is in animal terms that women, abject beings by their very nature, are often referred to—-"mouse", "cow", "bitch", "pussy" to cite a few—- and some of the terms are not even counted as abusive: "bunny" for example. The cruelty that pornography often showcases and men watching pornography tend to act out on real women, stems from a similar attitude towards animals: if animals can be treated that way, then so can women, for are they not the same? Many abusive acts are carried out with the fantasy/ impression working in the male mind that the acts are being carried out on animals. Since many shy away from "unnatural" sex with animals, they prefer sodomizing women, who are easier, more pliant substitutes for animals.[43]

Cruelty toward women may be reduced if cruelty toward animals lessens, these activists suggest. In this regard, Kelly Oliver brings up the issues of "snuff" and "crush" videos that are, interestingly, not thought of as "criminal" or even "illegal". A "snuff" video shows a woman being sexually assaulted and then tortured to death, (it is a reality show and not make-believe) and in crush videos, animals such as mice are tortured by women and then "crushed" to death.

Any questions raised are resolved with the simplistic, convenient answer that the woman participating has "consented" to such treatment. There ends the issue of rights for women, as does the issue of cruelty towards women. MacKinnon points out that since animals cannot sign forms of "consent", animal rights activists clamour against their cruel and inhuman treatment whereas women have even less going for them. By signing the form of consent and the implied death warrant, women sign away their rights too.

Elizabeth Costello, subtitled *Eight Lessons,* is a veritable treatise on human cruelty to other animals, lectures of the eponymous character forming a more powerful part of the novel than the story it tells. In her talk at an American university she rejects the language of philosophers and writers and instead resorts to rhetoric that makes people squirm in their seats. Her comment that the crime of the Third Reich was to treat people like animals provokes howls of outrage from among the audience, which includes some survivors of the Holocaust. This outrage reflects the deeply ingrained speciesism that we all suffer from. Her explicit "error", what another professor calls "blasphemous" was to liken people to animals, but in her view, the outrage is misplaced, because to her, no animal, human or not, should ever have been treated that way.

Elizabeth Costello likens the slaughter of animals to the slaughter of Jews, and does not say it the other way round, i.e, does not liken the slaughter of Jews to the slaughter of animals, which is what earlier commentators on the Holocaust had done. By making such a statement, she places animals in the position of subject, while taking away subjectivity from Jews. The "error" or "blasphemy" is deliberate on her part; she means her words to cut to the bone, as she

announces at the very beginning of her lecture. Without mincing any words she equates the Germans and Polish citizens who lived around the thousands of camps in Nazi occupied times (who are deemed less than human for having cultivated a willing ignorance as to what went on in the camps) with people in general who cultivate a similar apathy towards what is done to animals in production facilities (she refuses to call them farms anymore) and laboratories. She feels it also diminishes humanity. It is for the sake of their soul that they could not afford to know, but it is for the sake of our souls that we should own up to knowledge, confess our tacit complicity in the crimes against life.

Her comment, however, has cut deep. A professor boycotts the dinner hosted in her honour, refusing to "break bread" with her. To him, Costello's stance is anti-Semitic, an insult to the victims of the Holocaust. He is quick to take offense, because for two millennia, the Jews have indeed been a "question", their beliefs, habits, ways, and very existence put to the test. William I. Brustein in the introduction to *Roots of Hate: Antisemitism in Europe Before the Holocaust* asks a critical question: *"*How does antisemitism differ from other forms of religious, racial and ethnic prejudice? …Is Jewish hatred similar to the antipathy manifested towards the Arabs in Israel, the Blacks in the United States, the Chinese in Indonesia, the Gipsies or Roma throughout Europe or the Irish in Great Britain?"[44] The Holocaust of WWII times was only an extension of hate pogroms planned, and sometimes executed well before the 20th century. The early church fathers had worked towards diabolizing the Jews to the Christian masses, calling them Christ's murderers. They carried the blame for the Black Death that swept through the Middle Ages, accused of poisoning Europe's wells. They were even thought to murder Christian children for their ritual of Passover.

It goes without saying that myth-making about the Jews had taken place in the same manner as myth making about animals. A prototype is created and all individuality, all subjectivity is submitted to that prototype. And sermons, literature, cultural activities all nurture that prototype. For instance, the "tongue of blaspheming Jew" is one of the ingredients of the witches' cauldron in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* where the witches represent the forbidden, evil forces to be conquered before goodness and divinity can prevail. It goes in with other curiosities like parts of toad, newt, lizard, and an infant strangled at birth…. standard objects that fired the medieval imagination about witches' activities. The depiction of Shylock and the impossible deal he makes (a pound of flesh hacked from the Christian merchant Antonio's body is he fails to repay a loan in time) have served to freeze the archetype of the bloodthirsty usurer, the cannibalistic, hook-nosed, cruel Jew. And this notwithstanding the fact that Antonio often abused Shylock on the streets with choice epithets such as "cur", meaning dog, and even spat on him. The bestialization of the concept of the Antichrist (elaborated not only in Biblical texts such as Genesis and Leviticus but also popularized in Hollywood films such as *The Omen*) have identified a host of animals, predators such as wolves, jackals, reptiles such as toads and serpents, and scavenging birds with the Anti-Christ and by default, identified Jews with them as well.

For our present purpose, we note two things: in the popular imagination since the Middle ages, Jews had spilled the blood of Christ and had been rendered bloodthirsty, for which they indulged in ritual sacrifice of Christian children. The trope of cannibalism and hence bestiality served to further demonize an already implicated people. In spite of the explicit prohibition of consumption of any kind of blood they continually stood accused of blood sacrifices: they were

supposed to have replicated the crucifixion of Christ once a year over a Christian child, preparing unleavened bread for Matzoh and Purim pastries with Christian blood. The underlying irony of course, as Jewish commentators point out, is that blood is taboo for Jews and they cannot eat anything with claws or even a trace of blood, hence the painstaking methods of draining out blood from the animals they do consume. Further, the custom during Eucharist to symbolically consume the flesh and blood of Christ was a Christian one. The cannibalistic Other who ingested Christians or parasitically fed off them (Jewish businesses and usury) was therefore the object both of horror and hatred. Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer distinguish medieval antisemitism from 20th century antisemitism: If Jews had been "Christ-killers" or the people who committed deicide for the medieval Christians, modern-day antisemitism was more along racial lines than religious: they were an "alien", "inferior" race that infiltrated and thereby contaminated the "purer" racial strain of Christians. Despite the massive contribution of liberated Jews to the fields of education, economics and science, they stood unredeemed of their imaginary sins. We understand here that modern antisemitism was therefore based on who or what Jews were, their very nature, than what they did or committed which was what medieval antisemitism was about.[45] Therefore the hatred towards them could never be mitigated. Seen as a disease that sickened the larger body of the nation, a cancerous ingrowth, they had to be exterminated with the zeal of eradicating a disease. The culling of the Jews was the modern world's eugenicist hope of a prosperous future.

In this context, let us consider Coetzee's words in 1998, ("Meat Country", 49):

> It is not death that is offensive, but killing, and killing only of a certain kind, killing accompanied by unnecessary pain. Somehow the imagination

> knows what the other's pain is like, even the ant's pain. What the imagination cannot encompass is death. Death, it says to itself, is the end of pain. Death is relief.[46]

It is therefore not only the means of dealing death —the very fact that death can be dealt by assuming sovereign power— but what is also objectionable is that certain beings are singled out for extermination. In the case of animals it is all the more monstrous because they are bred in large numbers for the sole purpose of slaughtering. Inflicting pain on others is an act of violence not only towards the other, but also toward the self, Coetzee seems to reiterate through his fiction time and again. The more we engage in violence willy nilly, the more we sink into the quagmire of irredeemable evil. In the section "The Problem of Evil" Costello relates an incident in her youth when she had taken up a stranger's offer and gone to his room, but changed her mind and rejected his advances. She recounts the mad glee he had felt when tearing off and burning her clothes and battering her, even after his anger had subsided. She had encountered real evil: evil for the sake of it, hurting someone for the sole purpose of inflicting pain. So concerned she is with evil as a contaminant, evil as infectious, that she shudders to think about the writer's soul when he fills pages with gruesome details of how the plotters against Hitler's life had been executed. That too had stripped the old men of the last vestige of dignity while infecting all around, including the executioner, with evil.

With Costello, Coetzee also seems to be concerned with the well being of the soul, which we can save by accepting responsibility, by ceasing to be blind to wanton evil – such as mass murder of animals – and suffering the consequences. Hence the predicament of the magistrate

who struggles to pacify his troubled soul by ministering to the wounds of the maimed barbarian girl, hence Eugene Dawn retreats into his asylum of insanity, hence Elizabeth Curren feels the cancer in her breast as just recompense for the atrocities of Apartheid. Leaving aside all debates on whether animals have souls, consciousness or not (something philosophers have endlessly speculated on in order to rationalize their killing) Costello insists there should be no "therefore". They should not be killed. Period. Just as human babies are not to be killed. When a member of her audience raises the issue of Jonathan Swift, Elizabeth Costello takes it up eagerly. There have been few antihumanists as Swift in his own time and others. Few have shredded the veneer of humanity to question man's glorified animality, as Swift has done in Gulliver's escapades. Swift also comes in handy when she has to illustrate the point of meat eating. She throws a chilling question to the audience: what if the "modest proposal" regarding Irish children had not been meant ironically at all? What if Swift had indeed proposed that they be eaten to resolve the population explosion? Costello's remarks not only "trivialize" human babies but also proffer the prospect of cannibalism. It shocks, naturally, for humans do not acknowledge that many of their practices are cannibalism in disguise.

If indeed, eating is consuming of bodily presence in any form, then humans have indulged in cannibalism for ages, surviving on slave labour, using slaves for sexual gratification as well as for breeding more slaves. Using slave populations for supply of military personnel, medical experiments, "guineapigs" in fact, have also been cannibalistic exercises, in a sense. Of all species, humans have proven inherently cannibalistic in their urges. Vulnerable and 'compromised' groups such as African- American and Jewish men and indigenous people have all been at some point, test subjects for deadly viruses, vaccines, and other 'advancements' in

medicine, and yet been deprived of the benefits of the same. Though penicillin as a cure for syphillis had been discovered in 1945, it was not made available to affected black men. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer find that a 1930 study aimed at determining the "natural history" of syphilis on untreated black men continued well into the 1970s in Tuskegee, Alabama. In 1964, at the Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital, twenty-two elderly patients were injected with live cancer cells to study the body's immune system. From 1965 to 1971, mentally retarded children at Willowbrook State Hospital in New York were inoculated with the Hepatitis virus.[47]

Ironically, through the pages of history, as with Jews, a similar construct of cannibalism had for centuries been applied to "savages", native inhabitants of countries the west considered far away and foreign. Here we may consider Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) again, where Friday is presumed to have been a cannibal. When Susan Barton, the protagonist, wonders to Cruso (the character recreated by Coetzee as his counterpart for Defoe's fictional Crusoe) as to how Friday came to lose his tongue, he cites four possibilities: the slavers cut out his tongue as they did to all cannibals, or to punish him when he bawled too much as a child, or that they savoured the tongue of a savage as a delicacy, or simply to ensure that he did not speak out his story. It is interesting that of all the possibilities, it is that of Friday as a cannibal that Susan latches on to, and starts cultivating the pet fear Westerners have against indigenous people from foreign shores. The Other is therefore one who has the potential to devour the self, and therefore must be kept either at a distance, or devoured instead. (Stories of gods eating their offspring who pose a threat to their hegemony abound in mythology). Susan is strangely not horrified at the thought of Friday's tongue being eaten but instead starts mulling over what she terms a more horrific mutilation, that of castration. It is curious that she equates the tongue with the phallus, and yet waits for Defoe's

pen to put her tale to paper. It is as if she is questioning her own authority, and when she relates her tale, she must symbolically assume the role of a male scribe (she rides Defoe in their sexual encounter, reserving her authorial prerogative as opposed to the marketable colours Defoe lends her narrative). Defoe would have preferred Friday to have actually been a cannibal, and Susan and Crusoe's relationship to have been more passionate for it would have made the book more commercially viable, Susan understands.

The relationship between artist and muse has often been equated with the act of eating and consuming. It is as if with the ingestion of the Other that one incorporates the skills, the qualities and even to an extent the being of the Other. The Other is assimilated into the being of the subject as food. Perhaps that is why Susan feels threatened by the prospect of being ingested by, being food for, Friday. In that case she would be the being Friday 'others' and not the other way round. Ingestion of the 'Other', assimilation of the 'Other' undergoes a subversion in Coetzee, in curious ways. Like Levinas's Bobby, members of the canine species often become unassuming companions for protagonists in Coetzee's fiction, when reduced to abjection. Many of Coetzee's characters seem to share an affinity with other animals at some point in his novels. Besides being made to perform antics like a circus animal, stripped of the last vestige of his dignity, the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* also compares himself to a dog, as he joins them in scavenging for food. Like a parakeet, he is also reduced to 'singing for his keep' as he goes about telling his tale to eager listeners who would feed him. Elizabeth Curren, the elderly professor dying of cancer in *Age of Iron*, also finds solace in a dog that she expects, along with Vercueil, will ease her into death. Particularly, they seem to provide comfort to troubled souls facing death in some way or the other. David Lurie *(Disgrace)*, used to spending life as a

'servant to eros', comes to term with his own limitations and consciousness of death as he serves animals, ministering to sick dogs, dealing them easeful death, and disposing of their carcasses with dignity. The character of Dostoevsky that Coetzee presents in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), Fyodor Mikhailovich, grieving the loss of his foster son, Pavel, remarks, "Animals do not find it hard to die… Perhaps we should take our lesson from them…to show us that living and dying are not as hard as we think."[48]

This brings us to the question of how we know what they are thinking when they are dying. Once again, it is a speciesist presumption that animals do not care enough whether they live or die. Yet, had they not instinctively cared, they would surely not have had to be chased, hunted, caged, clamped down, trapped, racked and suffer all the other atrocities the humans have devised to break their resistance. On the one hand we have the human denial of the awareness of death, and on the other, in states of abjection, the breakdown of the superego, the realization that we are after all "bare, forked animals", the consciousness of death and acceptance of mortality—what comprises being an animal or a human. Hence the recognition that animals, unencumbered as they are with the superego that defines human existence, find it easier to accept death. Hence the choice of them as companions that might hold one's hand while one is thrust towards death. [In this context one also recalls the epic, the *Mahabharata,* in which the Pandavas, old and decrepit, having served their time on earth, on their trek to heaven or nirvana (*"mahaprasthan*") are accompanied by the god Dharma (Truth, Justice) in the guise of a dog.]

The care of animals and other living beings provide a chance at salvation, Coetzee suggests. David Lurie (*Disgrace*), an otherwise selfish hedonist, develops an unexpected fondness for a dog that arrives at the clinic where he volunteers. It is with much anguish that he

bids goodbye to his canine friend abandoned by its owner. Even the dogs that his daughter Lucy kennelled, cared for, had not aroused much interest in Lurie. The robbery and gangrape at his daughter's farm that is marked by the massacre of dogs, serves as a turning point in Lurie's life. Honour in death, a less violent, less disturbing death seems to be a concern with a lot of animal rights activists and thinkers on ethics. Peter Singer and Jim Mason are vehement against factory farming and its ways. Keeping in mind their natural course of walking, Temple Grandin, autistic animal rights activist, designed for cattle on ranches a course of walking which was circular and not linear. 'Honourable deaths' comprises an integral part of ethics. For David Lurie, the protagonist of *Disgrace*, animals deserved their bodies to be not battered in their deaths, if not in their lives. He joins hands with the local caregiver, Bev Shaw, to arrange for sick and abandoned animals an easeful death. Horrified by the way their corpses were dumped into the incinerator by the undertakers, he takes it upon himself to dispose of the corpses so as to not break their bones unceremoniously. He identifies with a Harijan, an untouchable, society's abject. Perhaps it felt like salvation to him. Perhaps it was a kind of penance for him, for the state of "disgrace" into which he had descended, typical of the South Africa he resided in, demanded abjection before redemption.

Desecration of the dead has often been the ploy of opposing forces in battle: it drives home the inordinate sense of power over another. It is sovereign power being exercised over "bare life". The prime factor distinguishing human from animal corpses, is human habitation within a societal structure that arranges for definitive modes of disposal of their corpses. There is some horror associated with human bodies being torn to pieces or left exposed to the elements, which would equate them with animals' bodies. This seems to be a distinction human beings are

particularly keen to preserve. In *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*, Adriana Cavarero points out Antigone's case: her concern about her brother's body which was cast out of the city and was therefore liable to be torn by the animals. It was a terrifying transgression, something that would dishonour her brother in his death, and something she was at pains to prevent, pleading with Creon. We are also reminded of Achilles' desecration of the body of Hector which brought the proud, aged Priam to the Greek camp, begging for his son's body so it could be decently, honourably buried. This is also the concern that concentration camps and events such as the Holocaust raised: human beings sent unceremoniously to their deaths like animals. Acts of culling, be it of human or non-human entities, inevitably entail shoddy, callous disposal of corpses. Bodies become mere waste, stripped of all trappings, even the acknowledgement that they had ever been living beings.

One can't help but remember the millions of chicken culled from poultry farms when Avian Flu was sweeping across the state of West Bengal. It brings to mind similar events: the thousands of human corpses burnt in huge trenches dug out for the express purpose after each genocidal exercise in Nazi death camps. But it is an association few make; they cannot afford to imagine and connect phenomena on lines of such evil. For most, it is “blasphemy” to equate human corpses for those of animals/ fowl. Most perceive it as dishonouring humans while Coetzee/ Costello insist it is dishonourable to not acknowledge deaths and murders of animals as such, to dishonour their corpses as if they are not bodies, as if they were not alive to the world. Let us not forget the counter- argument to Costello’s stance presented most vehemently by her own daughter-in-law, Norma (who represents the norm, perhaps?). She stubbornly refuses to banish meat from her table, insists that her children eat meat even while Costello is visiting them

and finds it objectionable, and has no patience with what she thinks are an old woman's idiosyncrasies. At no point does Norma concede to indulging evil, indeed she has no consciousness of her act contributing to evil, falling in line with millions of people in the world. That is what Costello, and indeed, Coetzee is up against. Animal slaughter is such an accepted practice, animals are so taken for granted as food, that nobody ever raises a question about it, and its very normativity has erased any sense of evil that might have otherwise accompanied slaughter of a living being.

Coming out in support of Coetzee's stance is his own earlier novel *The Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) which has the most elaborate engagement with food and the most vehement rejection of meat in his fiction, *Elizabeth Costello* notwithstanding. Once handed the ashes of his mother from the hospital where she dies, Michael K treks to Prince Albert to keep her wish. She had grown up on a farm there, and Michael K assumes the Visagie farm to have been the one, and buries her ashes on a patch of earth there. It is the same patch where he plants a bunch of pumpkin and melon seeds which he eats when they ripen. Kyoko Yoshida reads this as an almost cannibalistic exercise: his mother's ashes enriching the very soil where he is growing the fruit that he eats, reared with the sweat of his brow. [49] Coetzee gives a voluptuous account of the succulent pumpkins as Michael K bakes and eats them: it reads almost like cooked meat. Foraging for food out of habit, he catches turtledove, fowls and even an ewe to slaughter for food, but the last act revolts him. He gets little pleasure from its flesh that he burns over a fire. He gives up chasing the goats that had been abandoned on the farm, for butchering them is too much of an ordeal. He gradually finds that he has no appetite for the flesh of animals, or even of

fowls. Apart from what he grew himself, he takes to eating herbs, roots, lizards, insects such as grasshoppers and locusts, and larvae from anthills.

Interestingly, what he eats are the foods man is allowed in the Old Testament (*Book of Leviticus)*: locusts and grasshoppers. But Michael K also eats some that are prohibited such as lizards. Although anthropologists such as Mary Douglas find most prohibitions arbitrary, a deeper probe often reveals them to have scientific basis: they depend on climactic conditions and aim at healthy food habits. Many animals prohibited in Leviticus are anomalies of sorts: they are aquatic mammals, or are cold blooded vertebrates, or are carnivorous animals themselves. Consuming the flesh of animals such as scavenger birds, dogs, wolves, foxes, tigers that consume the dead and decomposed flesh of other animals, is prohibited. Cannibalism is also prohibited for presumably the same reason. Men consume dead rotting flesh of other animals: they are therefore 'unclean' and do not comprise 'food', ultimately resting on the idea of 'disgust', that one would debase oneself if one ingests base things.

As the narrative progresses, we see Michael K gradually withdrawing and finally rejecting food altogether. Once he escapes from the camp at Jakkalsdriff he is drawn to his patch of pumpkins, as a mother is drawn to her children. He had already lost his appetite for food at the camp and now finds that he hardly feels the need to eat, at all. His needs diminish to the extent that eating becomes an arduous task that he would much rather forego. In the second part of the novel we find the camp doctor remarking that he is like an insect, so minuscule are his needs, so unremarkable his existence. Also, in the early work *In the Heart of the Country,* the protagonist Magda compares her abject existence to that of insects. She identifies with a variety of creatures

such as the beetle, the hermit crab, the black widow spider. They go about their self-same activities, toiling to their last breath, creatures enslaved to their nature. Her existence is perhaps of a lower order than that of insects because there are few she can affect with her acts: her 'acts" remain mere "behaviour" or activities, for there is nobody she can act upon, there is nobody who can be affected by her acts, and she cannot change the nature of her existence by her acts. She reads her stake in the world to be as small as that of an insect. In the theatre of her mind, her acts are mere musings, wishful thinking. She is less effectual than even the tick Costello wonders about (echoing Uexkull[50]) who waits for years for the right moment and the right prey to latch on to. However much she scares the people around her as a predatory witch, in reality, she has no prey. "Reducing" to the state of a non-human animal, indeed an insect, adopting the existence of one is not a Kafkaesque absurdity in Coetzee: it is not even an allegory. It is reality as lived under the shadow of war or of hegemonic rule. The best place Michael K can imagine living at is at the dam at the abandoned Visagie farm, where he has his obscure paradise of pumpkins and melons. But war demands that people live obscurely, let no one know they even exist, that people either die or obliterate all signs of existence. Once back at the Visagie farm after his first camp stint, he muses, "What a pity that to live in times like these one must be ready to live like a beast. A man who wants to live cannot live in a house with lights in the windows. He must live in a hole and hide by day. A man must live so that he leaves no trace of his living. That is what it has come to…"[51]

That has indeed been the state of living in times of war in the twentieth century; that is how war-struck people lived during WWII, how they have been living in times of the 'war against terror', in the conflict-ridden zones of Israel and Palestine, as also in Eastern Europe. But

it also gets us thinking about the general state in which animals live, war or no war. In a sense, Michael K embodies how animals live in a perpetual state of war pronounced on them by humans. In fact, it is not war, but massacre, since the animals do not fight back. They must live in "protected" areas, "sanctuaries", camps of sorts, be ghettoized or caged. Once again the spectre of the Holocaust crops up. It is because Michael K shrinks his stake on earth to such a degree as to be almost non-existent, that he is free. In spite of being in the midst of war he escapes it. He has no claims on anybody or anything: even the tools he uses should be of wood so that they are eventually eaten by insects. When the men from the mountains, the revolutionaries, come marauding but miss the pumpkins he had hidden so well, he rues that he could not feed them well. It is only their donkeys who trample over the soil, and the young blood he would have liked to give succour and nourishment to, leave without finding him or eating the food he had grown. In the desert of the Karoo, his pumpkins and melons would have been like manna. He feels like he is chosen for the sacred work of gardening, for "enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over, whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once the cord is broken the earth would grow hard and forget her children. That was why…."[52] Ironically, at the same time he also ruminates that it is just as well that he does not have children, for he would not have been able to provide for them well. He does not suffer from the common hubris of perpetuating himself through his children, for he realizes that this world is not one that one brings children into.

Gardening as a trope has always drawn upon the mythical garden of paradise, the state of prelapsarian innocence. In a discreet manner, Coetzee extols the virtues of honest toil and a

vegetarian diet grown by it. All through the novel Michael longs for one thing only, that is to go back to gardening. Gardening also implies, euphemistically, sowing one's seeds, or offspring on the earth's surface. Only this time, with Michael K, it is not human seeds that will save the world, but the seeds of vegetation. He wants to feel soft earth between his fingers, to make the earth yield where it is hard, to dig and to sow seeds, watch them sprout and wonder at the bounty of the earth that from so little gives so much. Destitute otherwise, he nevertheless carries seeds in his pocket. Contrast this with the seeds Cruso longed for but did not have, and his terraced wilderness was left forlorn for some future wrecked soul who would remember to bring seeds (*Foe,* 1986).

What we witness in Michael K is not only a rejection of life in hubristic and human terms, it could also be read as a development of the *BwO* (Body Without Organs) that Gilles Deleuze talks about.[53] For him existence becomes something beyond embodiment. Unconsciously, he tries to transcend beyond the limits of his bodily functions. Even at the camp hospital where he is taken good care of by the sympathetic doctor (who narrates Part II of the novel) he refuses food, to the doctor's great consternation. It is so difficult to keep him alive that it seems as if his body has mutated into that of some other organism. He is suspected of having kept a garden to supply food to insurgents hiding in the mountains, for no one can imagine why else he could have been gardening. It is also a wonder to them that he survived merely on pumpkins. The doctor conjectures that maybe he eats only the food of freedom. Michael remembers how hungry he had been, like all the other boys, during his childhood at Huis Norenius, yet does not develop an appetite all through his stay at the camp hospital. Once having escaped from there as well, he arouses the sympathy of some drifters who offer him food again.

He eats, throws up, and then eats again, refusing the sausage they offer him. Even when starving to death, flesh of animals is unacceptable to his palate.

This rejection of meat occurs in Coetzee's fiction time and again, notably in his latest work *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013). Having taken on the care of a boy child, the middle-aged narrator of the story locates a woman who will be a mother to him. Entrusting him to her care he starts living elsewhere but meets the boy every now and then. It is on one of these meetings/ picnics that he objects to the boy being given sausage on his plate. The reason behind his objection: no one knows what goes into those sausages. Set in an unknown land, under a kind of regime that rations people's wants and needs and provides only the basic minimum, one that insists on manual labour even while the notion of machines being available to do the same work is present, it is difficult to pin *The Childhood of Jesus* as dystopian fiction. But it is definitely a vision: whether of the future or of a forgotten past is up to the reader's imagination.

Coetzee's own insistence on manual labour, on working with the hands, seems like an almost Biblical approach. Accounts of earning one's bread with the sweat of one's brow keeps recurring in his fiction. Incidentally, he has himself practised what he has preached. In the third volume of his memoir, *Summertime*, a cousin reminisces how he had built his house, or rather, expanded the house of his father singlehandedly, hiring no labour, and even ferrying the building materials himself. This was odd, given how cheaply and easily available labour was in South Africa under Apartheid. It was tedious, painstaking work that took him a long time to finish. But he would still not take the easy way out: he would not hire labour. For Coetzee, too, it had been a statement of Ubuntu, perhaps, of sharing in the misfortune of others, while at the same time

appreciating life, appreciating and utilizing human capacities that if properly realized would yield a better vision of the world.

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2 Coetzee, J. M. *Elizabeth Costello*. London: Vintage, 2003, p. 105.

3 LaMarre is cited by Christopher Bolton in *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*. Ed. Frenchy Lunning. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, Introduction, p. xiii.

4 Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 18. Posthumanities, Vol. 3. Ed. Cary Wolfe.

5 Gilhus, Ingvild Saelis. *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman, and Early Christian Ideas*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, pp. 2-3.

6 Ibid, p. 3.

7 Sartre, Jean- Paul. "Anti- Semite and Jew", 1946. Sartre had so responded to Richard Wright's comment to which Fanon later added his. All three are cited by Robert J. C. Young in his preface to *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. Trans. Azzedine Haddour, et al. London: Routledge, 2001.

8 Zizek, Slavoj. "The Animal Doesn't Exist". K.W. Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin. December 17, 2011.Talk. (Found online at https://vimeo.com/user8888895.)

9 The idea is suggested in Jean Paul Sartre's essay, "From One China to Another" in *Colonialism and NeoColonolialism*. Trans. Azzedine Haddour, Steve Brewer and Terry McWilliams. London: Routledge, 2001.

10 Bataille, Georges, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Volume 2: The History of Eroticism*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1991, p. 61. The idea is formulated and argued in Bataille's *Death and Sensuality: A Study in Eroticism and the Taboo*. Trans. Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights, 1986.

11 Coetzee, J.M. *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 83.

12Agamben, Giorgio, Chapter 1: "Theriomorphous" in *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Atell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

13*Dances With Wolves*. Screenplay by Michael Blake. Dir. Kevin Costner. Perf. Kevin Costner, Mary McDonnell, Graham Greene, Rodney Grant. Orion Pictures, 1990. Film.

14 Baker, Steve, *Postmodern Animal*. Sutton Street: Reakton Books, 2000.

15Coetzee, J.M, and Paul Auster. *Here and Now, Letters 2008-2011*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2013, letter dated March 3, 2011.

16 Baker, Steve. "Sloughing the Human". *Zoontologies*. Ed.Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, pp. 147-8.

17 Singer, Peter. *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

18 Kojeve, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the 'Phenomenology of Spirit'.* Assembled by Raymond Queneau. Ed. Allan Bloom. Trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 5-8.

19 Agamben, Giorgio, "Cognitio Experimentalis" in *TheOpen: Man and Animal*.

20Ibid.

21Derrida, Jacques, "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject": An Interview with Jacques Derrida in *Who Comes After the Subject*. Ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean- Luc Nancy. New York: Routledge. (Found online at fege.narod.ru/librarium/cadava_derrida.htm)

22A passage from Novalis was sent to Derrida in an exchange of letters with Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson, who were compiling a book in the early 1990s. They printed it as part of the transcript of the conversation they had with Derrida. ‹‹An Interview withDerrida on theLimits of Digestion››. October 25, 1990. Trans. Brian Manning Delaney. (Found online at www.e-flux.com/journal/ an interview with-jacques-derrida-on-the-limits-of-digestion/)

23Birnbaum, Daniel and Anders Olsson. "An Interview with Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion." October 25, 1990. Interview. Online.

24 Oliver, Kelly. *Animal Lessons*, p. 60.

25 Nussbaum, Martha C. *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, p. 88.

26 Ibid, p. 89.

27Emmanual Levinas discusses "The Face of the Other" in his *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. The Hague/ Boston/ London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and Duquesne University Press, 1969. 2nd ed, 1979. Springer: 1989 (in English). URL: dbanach_com/ Levinas%20reading.htm.

28 Oliver, Kelly. *Animal Lessons*.

29 Tomkins, Silvan. *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness. The Complete Edition*. New York: Springer Publishing Co, 2008.

30 Agamben, Giorgio. "Without Rank". *The Open: Man and Animal*, pp. 29-32.

[31] Ibid.

32 Clarke, David L. "On Being 'the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany': Dwelling with Animals after Levinas", pp. 44-45. URL:

www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~clarke/documents/courses/767/English767.LastKantian.pdf.

33 Zizek, Slavoj. *On Belief*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 70-72. Thinking in Action. Zizek agrees with Lacan's standpoint on sacrifice as an "inauthentic" act.

34 Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics ofMeat: A Feminist Vegetarian Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2010, p. 53.

35 The phrase is also the title of Carol J. Adams' book, *TheSexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

36 Lamarre, Thomas. "Speciesism, Part I, Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation". *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*. Ed. Frenchy Lunning. Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

37Nussbaum, Martha C. *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*. p. 226.

38 Barbara Smuts discusses this issue in her piece in *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. J.M. Coetzee. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 107-120.

39 Midgley, Mary. *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*. London: Routledge, 2002.

40 Agamben, Giorgio."Taxonomies". *The Open: Man andAnimal*, pp. 23-27.

41 Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. 30. Posthumanities, Vol. 3. Ed. Cary Wolfe.

42Singer, Isaac Bashevis, *Enemies: A Love Story*. Trans. Aliza Shevrin and Shrub. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972.

43 Variously argued by Andrea Dworkin in *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York: Plume (Penguin Group), 1979. Introduction by Andrea Dworkin, 1989.

44*Brustein, William I. Roots of Hate:Antisemitism in Europe Before the Holocaust. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003,* p. 5.

45 Perry, Marvin and Albert M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan , 2002.

46Coetzee, J.M. “Meat Country”. *Granta*. Winter 1995. Url: nbA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk_20150421_111911.001.pdf.

47These three instances are cited in p. 9 of Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, ed. *A Companion to Bioethics*. 2nd ed. West Sussex: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy.

48 Coetzee, J. M. *The Master of Petersburg*, p. 208.

49Yoshida, Kyoko, “Eating (Dis)orders: Metaphoric Cannibalism to Cannibalistic Metaphors”, in Elleke Boehmer, Robert Eaglestone and Katy Iddiols, eds. *J.M. Coetzee in Context and Theory*, New York: Continuum, 2009. Chapter 10. Continuum Literary Studies.

50 Baron Jakob von Uexkull is considered by Giorgio Agamben as one of the greatest zoologists of the 20th century and among the founders of ecology. In *The Open: Man and Animal* (p. 45) Agamben mentions that Uexkull’s books “sometimes contain illustrations that try to suggest how a segment of the human world would appear from the point of view of a hedgehog, a bee, a fly or a dog”. He adds that the experiment has an uncanny, unsettling effect on the reader, who is “suddenly obliged to look at the most familiar places with non-human eyes”.

51Coetzee, J.M. *Life and Times of Michael K.* London: Vintage, 2004, pp. 98-99.

52 Ibid, p. 109.

53The concept of the ‘BwO’ or ‘ Body Without Organs’ is developed at length by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *in Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Preface by Michel Foucault. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Conclusion

Concluding this thesis not an easy task because discourses of and on the body are ever expanding and never conclusive. It is said that J. M. Coetzee's works have churned a mini-industry of literary criticism. Indeed, the plethora of criticism and analyses available on him can, at times, be overwhelming. Yet, there is much that I have left undiscussed and unexplored even as J. M. Coetzee's writings continue to provoke thought and criticism. Here I attempt a brief summation of some of those contentious issues.

As I have argued in my M.Phil dissertation (*"*Fictions of Atonement: History and Memory in the Early Works of J.M. Coetzee*",* Jadavpur University, 2007), Coetzee has ingeniously negotiated with history which is today a fluid and contentious area, rather an idea, than a document. Indeed, Coetzee has interrogated the now problematized notion of the archive in works as early as *Dusklands* (1974). Particularly, if we take his early works, *Dusklands, The Life and Times of Michael K* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* into account, Coetzee has universalized the particular and re-memoried oppression through voices that are sympathetic, if not non-hegemonic. This is actually a valid criticism of Coetzee: his protagonists are not really subaltern. Rather they are hegemonic characters, privileged beings, who, however, lose their positions of privilege once they come to be one with (at-one with/ atone) the oppressed. His is a Christian, almost Calvinist take on the history of oppression: one must perform penance, expiation, however vicarious the guilt, through one's flesh for the wrongs of generations. The body is in retrospect, called to witness.

With the rise of the nation state, the body has increasingly become a biopolitical

subject. Existence as a human being with rights is subject to the precondition of "citizenship". With surveillance mechanisms becoming more and more sophisticated, with biometric tests providing proof of identity, we are all residing in increasingly totalitarian police states. The Social Contract is taking on new guises with rising tax burdens and the many freedom(s) citizens are relinquishing to pay for security, for guarantee of rights and many other basics of living. In this dystopian scenario, the notion of *ubuntu* becomes very important. Cultivating *ubuntu* or the "high ideals of reconciliation, humanity and brotherhood", in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's words, involve participation, belonging, sense of community, feeling-in. It would give rise to a new era of "tolerance" and peaceful coexistence, subscribing to the worldview that "my humanity is caught up, inextricably bound up in yours". It cancels out the Cartesian notion of "I think, therefore I am", replacing it with "I am human because I belong. I participate. I share."[1] Adriaan van Heerden points out that even though Coetzee never mentions *ubuntu* in any of his novels, his mouthpiece Elizabeth Costello expresses a similar sentiment when she refers to the victims of the Holocaust as her brothers and sisters.[2] Ubuntu, it is believed, begins with the ability to feel the pain of the other , to "experience his flesh" as Athol Fugard puts it in his novel *Tsotsi.*[3] We can safely say that Coetzee's novels depict a movement towards *ubuntu*, which involves a miraculous revelation of feeling into another's being, another's suffering being.

In this sense, therefore, Coetzee's fiction can also be called a kind of witnessing: a witnessing across time and space. As a witness, there is no more irrefutable, unimpeachable authority than the body. The suffering body wrests for itself the authority to speak and yet hardly finds a voice to speak in. For the suffering body is subject to several affects like shame and loss of subjectivity. In *Witnessing: Beyond*

Recognition, Kelly Oliver suggests that subordination, oppression and subjectification undermine the very possibility of subjectivity. She adds, "At the extreme, torture and enslavement can destroy essential parts of subjectivity that must be revived or reconstructed in order for the survivor to be able to act as an agent."[4] In a sense, the narrator or storyteller or historian is also performing the vicarious role of witness, reconstructing and reviving subjectivities. Witnessing restores subjectivity to tortured bodies, too, for "through the process of bearing witness to oppression and subordination, those othered can begin to repair damaged subjectivity by taking up a position as speaking subjects."[5] Citing the case of Holocaust survivors, Oliver adds that they seek not only recognition of the horrors they have been subject to, but also to a pathos beyond their objectification: the pathos of their suffering. In *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,*[6]Fiona C. Ross examines witnessing from a different perspective and questions its purpose. While coming to terms with "truth" can be healing, can have cathartic effect, bearing witness to "Truth" is also an act of intimacy, and might shatter one's privacy and others'. Ross also points out critically that the Commission's focus was "body-bound". The TRC's 1998 report talks of rights of bodily integrity, provoking thought on what comprises "bodily integrity" and what, indeed, may be its "rights". Her mention of Mahmood Mamdani's 1996 comment asking, at what point, *reconciliation becomes an embrace of evil* (italics mine) clinches the issue.[7]

In *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, Oliver says, "witnessing has the double sense of testifying to something one cannot see along with the juridical sense of what one knows from firsthand knowledge as an eyewitness and the religious sense of bearing witness to what one believes through faith."[8] "Subject positions and subjectivity", she adds, "are constituted through the tension between these two senses of witnessing."[9]

She challenges the Hegelian notion that subjectivity is the result of hostile conflict or even the logic of exclusion that Judith Butler or Julia Kristeva found subjectivity on. Against the Hegelian grain, Oliver argues that "subordination, oppression and subjectification undermine the very possibility of subjectivity" by destroying response-ability.[10] This is where the role of the witness comes into play. It is through the process of bearing witness that this reconstruction of "damaged subjectivity" can take place. This is, indeed, the premise on which forums like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission operates. Unlike the Nuremberg trials they did not promote retaliatory violence, and many feel, forewent justice and closure. Thus witnessing, and in that sense, writing, is not only a retelling but entails a reliving, a reviving and a recognition of the suffering, the sense of waste. It is a bid to prove, assert against contrary claims, that indeed, certain atrocities took place, through the witnessing of the body in retrospect. For any kind of recompense or plea for forgiveness to take place, there must first be recognition of a history that took place. Since history is only a version, and not an absolute document, the unwritten, suppressed history has to be unearthed.

Though this work does not delve in deeply into the theories of history and the archive, when I talk about the body as witness to a history and bearing witness to expiation for the wrongs of the past, I argue that a critique of history is implicit in Coetzee's works themselves. Derrida defines "Archive Fever" as "to burn with a passion,... to run after the archive... right where something in it unarchives itself...It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for a return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement (1996: 91)."[11]. However, what Derrida calls "archive fever" linking it to Eros, or the drive towards life, is also dependent on what

Paul Ricoeur calls "faithful testimony" and it is implied that the attempt at faithful testimony also aims at justice. But South Africa, like Germany, is driven by the death drive, or Thanatos, as Derrida noted on a visit there, and is trying to wipe out all traces of the archive—all memory—and is faced with the possibility of "burning into ashes the very trace of the past" (Hamilton, et al, 2002: 42).[12] Healing and forgiveness become implied issues in Coetzee's fiction, alongwith the explicit notion of expiation. Paul Ricoeur asserts that forgetting and forgiving , each belong to a different problematic: "for forgetting, the problematic of memory and faithfulness to the past; for forgiveness, guilt and reconciliation with the past."[13] Forgetting is in a sense an assault on memory and memory is resistance against the continuous assault of forgetting. But the right balance has to be struck between memory and forgetting for life to carry on smoothly. Though The Truth and Reconciliation Commission aimed towards restoration of that balance it proved a failure for many reasons. Its express ideal was restorative justice, as opposed to retributive justice, and establishment of *ubuntu*, or love for one's neighbour. Forgetting is also problematic when it is selective and what follows is the erasure of events relating to what Judith Butler calls "precarious lives". Butler argues with regard to past as well as contemporary world events that "a national melancholia, understood as a disavowed mourning, follows upon erasure from public representation of the names, images and narratives of those the US has killed. On the other hand, the US' own losses are consecrated in public obituaries that constitute so many acts of nation building..."[14] There is a differential attitude towards forgetting and remembering and archiving with regard to "grievable" and "ungrievable" lives.

Sam Durrant calls J. M. Coetzee's writing "inconsolable works of mourning"[15]. In my investigation of his works, I find they are, indeed a kind of purge, a ritual

cleansing secured through sometimes obscure, sometimes evident victims of 'sacrifice' (a problematised concept, as I have discussed in my thesis). Though what is presented in much of his fiction is Freudian "speculative history" of sorts, acts of violence are countered by Coetzee's protagonists through mourning, through redemptive acts of healing: hence Michael K's gardening on the patch of soil he has buried his mother's ashes in, hence the magistrate's washing of the tortured barbarian girl's body, hence Mrs Curren's sheltering of hunted teenage rebels, hence Susan's probing into Friday's past and attempt to situate him in history. It is through grieving for those precarious, abject lives and those acts which have been considered "ungrievable for", through mourning, that they can be reinstated in collective memory, or history if you will.

In her book *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex and the Media*, Kelly Oliver says, "Witnessing has the double sense of seeing with your own eyes, as in eyewitness, on the one hand, and being witness to something you cannot see, to something you can only experience, as in witnessing to the atrocities of war, on the other."[16] She adds, "The ambiguity of witnessing helps us to bring back the ambiguities of our experience, a *kind of transfusion of living back into seeing*" (italics mine)[17]. It is this transfusion of living back into seeing that J. M. Coetzee's fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello finds so objectionable and abhorrent when it comes to certain books written in a certain way: as if there is some amusement to be drawn from the evil enacted. But it is also this same transfusion that Coetzee seeks to achieve through his novels. To quote Oliver again, "witnessing involves attending to the past and to the future as they are related to the present circumstances, rather than collapsing both into the perpetual present of most television broadcasts and internet images."[18] Oliver is talking about the infamous photographs from Abu Ghraib that surfaced on the

internet while the US war with Iraq was on. She probes into the alarming fact of young women soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners gleefully, without any feeling of guilt or even any sense of wrongdoing. It is the same kind of evil captured in the photographs Coetzee's Eugene Dawn chances upon (*The Vietnam Project, Dusklands,* 1974). It is the kind of "evil" Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello is wary of. It is the kind of evil that has spread its tentacles all over the globe as people stand "witnessing" harassments and atrocities while filming it all on their cellphones, the kind of witnessing that qualifies as pornography, voyeurism, sadistic violence, evil.

Evil, conscious or unconscious complicity in it, and salvation from evil haunt Coetzee's fiction. Coetzee explores evil in myriad forms, sometimes not explicitly identifying it as so, but leaving things to readers' interpretation. Some of his characters indulge in the relentless pursuit of evil. Colonel Joll in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Jacobus Coetzee in the *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* (1974), are cases in point. Evil becomes a cerebral subject of argument in *Elizabeth Costello*(2002) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) where its many persistent ramifications are discussed. The much contended issue of large scale animal slaughter likened to genocidal exercises such as the Holocaust throws up fresh challenges to the philosophical discourse of evil. Coetzee links it up to all the atrocities carried out in the name of justice, in the guise of peacekeeping today, such as military incursions by powerful nations into Third World countries not under democracy, or indefinite detention on islands such as Guantanamo Bay. Not much has changed in the modern world in spite of the heightened awareness of human rights and what constitutes its abuse, as the 'diary' astutely points out. The Coetzeean preoccupation with how humans treat other humans and other animals notwithstanding, evil is manifested in both subtle and overt ways in *Disgrace*. But at the same time, it manages to steer clear

of the moral stamp of evil and even finds justification for itself. Lurie's advances to his pupil Melanie and sexual exploitation of her (at least he has bribed her with undeserved good grades) for which he has to face a disciplinary committee, finds no compunctious reverberations in Lurie. His sessions with a professional escort, Soraya, having ceased for a while, he turns to Melanie Isaacs (here some critics point out the Biblical significance of the name Isaacs: suggesting the quintessential sacrificial victim). But he always stops short of calling his own actions rape even when he has made love to Melanie's unresponsive body. For him, it is his helpless servitude to Eros and he almost finds a romantic justification for it by drawing comparisons with Byron's sexual escapades. This amoral, evasive stance finds its nemesis in the incident at his daughter Lucy's farm when her dogs are killed, Lucy raped and Lurie himself thrashed. It appears, in *Disgrace*, that Coetzee is in desperate search of an ethics, an ethics that leaves room for desire, moral flaws, and even vengeance. Why else would Lurie be found expiating unconsciously through working as a dog-carcass disposer, finding love for dying dogs, and sympathizing with the dog that learnt to feel desire as guilt? It has been argued that the TRC "masked the moral vacuum left by the demise of apartheid, and this lack of moral sense is another marker of collapse in *Disgrace*."[19] Lucy's predicament and ultimate decision in *Disgrace* raises Mamdani's question again. Does reconciliation mean an acceptance of, a compromise with, evil?[20] Is her body, the site of violence enacted, a reconciliatory ground, as is Eugene Dawn's or Elizabeth Curren's, or the magistrate's? Is it a peace offering, or is it a scapegoat, a repository of the sins of her forefathers? Or is it the ultimate witness, the ultimate assertion of the "ungrievable"?

Coetzee's fictional counterpart Elizabeth Costello regards the writing of some books as 'evil acts in themselves, in the sense that they recount/ bring alive/ sordid

events, evil acts such as bringing fellow beings to ignominy. Coetzee's fiction is historicized but what happens when history itself is evil? Should it be kept under wraps, underground and never brought to the fore if it is found to be evil? What we encounter in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), is surely evil, then? Is not *Dusklands* (1974) an 'evil' book for the same reasons? The characterization of Jacobus Coetzee which is reportedly a transcription of a journal depicts nothing if not evil in action. These are some of the conflicts within Coetzee's fiction. Perhaps the evil effect of pure evil, the contaminating nature of evil is best revealed in the three photographs from Vietnam that Eugene Dawn comes across while working on The Vietnam Project in the eponymous novella. He carries them in his briefcase and I suspect (and Coetzee seems to suggest) it is his physical proximity to the photographs themselves that wreak such havoc on his already fragile psyche. The evidence of atrocities on Vietnamese civilians as well as the brutalization of the 'tame Hottentots', the Griquas and the Namaquas in *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* serve the same purpose: they foreground past evil, narrate sordid events, the brutalization and humiliation of human beings deemed as "Other". Is Coetzee suggesting a trickle down effect of evil in the same way that faults are believed to be carried down generations through genes? He definitely believes in the overpowering capacity of evil to infect, with an almost Biblical veracity. His chancing upon and retelling the transcribed version of Jacobus Coetzee's frontiering adventures would suggest just that. It is not just a remembering, but also a re-membering, a bodying forth of severed pasts in order to bring forth a healing/ a catharsis in later generations (it is suggested that J. M. Coetzee is himself a distant relative of this tyrant). It is a past he cannot really sever from himself, cannot deny, cannot uproot, though it has lain buried for generations. His atonement comes in the form of the narrative he writes, in the sense of the narrative being a historically

and socially conscious act. His situation, if not his sentiment, is shared by numerous South Africans of the present generation who, he suggests, must atone for the sins of their forefathers as well as their own, in 20th century South Africa. Elizabeth Curren, the aging professor of the classics in *Age of Iron* (1990) confesses how she had kept a 'decent distance' from the collective shame of South Africa. But the day of reckoning comes to some, if not to all, who realize, with her,

> A crime was committed long ago... Like every crime it had its price... (which) would have to be paid in shame: in a life of shame and a shameful death, unlamented, in an obscure corner... though it was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name... I wished death on myself too. In the name of honour. Of an honorable notion of honour. *Honesta mors.*[21]

Perspectives on the body are diverging from their focus on the human to the non-human animal, to the machine and thereby definitions of the 'monsters' are also getting diluted. From Mary Shelley's Frankensteinian creation to R. L. Stevenson's sinister Long John Silver, J.M. Barrie's Captain Hook, even fiction has come a long way appropriating 'superhuman' or 'subhuman' bodies, divorcing them from their negative connotations. We have also travelled a long distance from Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) to become cyborgs as we incorporate machines within our bodies, transplant organs of other human beings, embrace plastic and cosmetic surgeries, silicone implants, metal plates and prostheses, without qualms or fear of disturbing bodily integrity. Birthing processes are also increasingly breaching previously held taboos with practices of sperm and egg donation, surrogacy of wombs, test-tube fertilization and gestation under artificial conditions. Sanctimonious ideas of

the body as an inviolable fortress have thus given way to acceptance and embracing of the animal, the machine, the cyborg Other. Thus, the notion of the 'alien' or the 'mutant' does not alarm or threaten anymore. Tattoos and piercings are not stigmatizing anymore, but rather fashion and beauty statements. Radical body modification to achieve an alternate sense of beauty even include alteration or 'deformation' inducing procedures on the ears ('spock ears') replicating characters from film series such as The Lord of the Rings trilogy, and even amputation of body parts.

Even as we handle smartphones, lifestyle gadgets or work at the computer we all become cyborgs, humanoids in a sense. We are all extra-terrestrials, as the absurd, the surreal has turned into the commonplace and the trivial. J. M. Coetzee has already been exploring some of these perspectives through both his fiction and non-fiction, notably in *Slow Man* (2005), *The Lives of Animals* (1999). Becoming animal and becoming machine has already pervaded his works to some extent. The laboring body or the body in performance, or the queer body is yet not a vital part of his concerns. I am sure is work will venture into yet other realms of postmodern, indeed posthuman, existence in the years to come.

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[1] Desmond Tutu in his memoir on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 1999.

[2] Heerden, Adriaan van. "Disgrace, Desire and the Dark Side of the New South Africa". *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics: Philosophical Perspectives in Literature*. Ed. Anton Leist and Peter Singer. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 55.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 7.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ross, Fiona C. *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*, London: Pluto Press, 2003, p. 11.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, p. 18.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid, p. 7.

[11] Derrida is quoted from *Archive Fever* by R. Vosloo in "Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Oct 2005, pp. 379-399.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ricoeur, Paul, *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. London: University of Chicago Press, 2006, p. 412.

[14] Butler, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence. London: Verso, 2004,* preface, p. iv.

[15] Durrant, Sam, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

[16] Oliver, Kelly, *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex and the Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 10.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Heerden, Adriaan van. "Disgrace, Desire and the Dark Side of the New South Africa". *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics: Philosophical Perspectives in Literature*. Ed. Anton Leist and Peter Singer. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 49.

[20] See endnote 7.

[21] Coetzee, J. M. *Age of Iron*. London: Penguin, 1998, p. 164

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