

Corporeal Frailty in Selected Fiction by J.M.

Coetzee

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Hyun Sook Oh, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

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Abstract

The principle aim of this thesis is to investigate J.M. Coetzee's presentation of corporeal frailty, in the forms of illness, torture, and death, which drives subjectivity to dissolve individual identity and thereby to become an impersonality, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory of the self-affective and associative power of corporeality. As a South African-born writer, Coetzee's oeuvre has frequently been examined in terms of the ethical and political contexts of (post)apartheid South Africa. Recently, with Coetzee's move to Australia, the transpositions of corporeality relating to animals, physical disability and dying bodies have received a greater focus than the foregrounding of the politicized and historicized body. However, commentators on the issues of responsibility and corporeality tend to draw on the theoretical writings of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida and thus address the body as a site of "Otherness" located in a transcendental position, featuring a "traumatic" or "internally split subject" divided between itself and a demand for the Other. However, these theories have not sufficiently dealt with Coetzee's presentation of the self-dissolving and synthetic power of corporeal frailty, which offers the potential for interactions between the subject and the Other. Deleuze's conception of corporeality engages with the non-organic and collective forces of the body without resorting to dualistic negation or dialectical materialism. Specifically, drawing on Deleuze's theories of "masochism", "exhaustion", "impersonality", "the sublime", "meat", "sympathetic imagination" and "becoming", this thesis attempts to articulate how Deleuze's theories break the Otherness of the body and thereby pose the possibility of a dynamic self-differentiating and transformative processes of corporeal frailty. To investigate the issue of corporeal frailty, my thesis aims to explore six of Coetzee's novels through Deleuze's

theories: *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, *The Master of Petersburg*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*. By analyzing Coetzee's six novels, I will demonstrate that the subject's corporeal frailty generates a sense of self-dissolution and thereby its transformation into the becoming-impersonal. Thus, an encounter between Coetzee's and Deleuze's corporeal frailty creates a new configuration of impersonality rather than an "identification" or "resemblance" between the subject and the Other, escaping the logics of sacrifice and revenge, and opening to the community to come.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to investigate the power of corporeal frailty, as presented in J.M. Coetzee's works, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory of corporeality. Both Coetzee and Deleuze seek to create new configurations of corporeal frailty and its transformative forms of embodied experience, whilst challenging the representation and recognition of the body as a marker of race, sexuality and species. Drawing on Deleuze's theories, this thesis attempts to examine the ethical and political needs produced by (post)colonial contexts and to highlight the dissolution and differentiation of corporeal subjectivity in Coetzee's novels. Corporeal frailty offers the power to invent a new configuration of subjectivity and its interactions with the Other for the community to come. The goal of this thesis is thereby to articulate ethical and political as well as ontological approaches towards corporeal frailty, thus radically breaking from the given frames of power, discourse and practice surrounding (post)colonial situations, and accordingly exploring the potential of triggering transformative and interactive forces between the subject, the Other, and the community. Subsequently, this thesis will demonstrate how corporeal frailty generates a new figuration of subjectivity characterized by becoming impersonal or the inhuman being.

The oeuvre of the South African writer, J.M. Coetzee has frequently been examined in relation to ethical and political questions "about colonial history and accountability, about power and powerless, about representation and alterity, about sympathy and

forgiveness”,¹ in (post)colonial and (post)apartheid contexts.² Since his first novel, *Dusklands* (1974), Coetzee’s concerns have been inextricably linked with the (post)colonial circumstances in which racial, sexual and socio-economic “minorities”³ have been humiliated and exploited and the colonizers have been forced to take responsibility for their suffering. These explorations explicitly and implicitly bear close links with an alternative foundation for the ethical and political pitfalls of (post)apartheid South Africa. Apartheid South Africa was, as Susan VanZanten Gallagher in *A Story of South Africa* describes, “a country in which discourse itself has contributed to oppression, a country whose history has been deliberately constructed to maintain white supremacy”.⁴ Gallagher goes on to assert that Coetzee’s response to the oppressive regime of apartheid in his novels has been to “expose and subvert national myths of history, as well as to create alternative narratives, stories to hold up against the nightmare of South African history”.⁵ Criticizing the practices and theories of apartheid, Coetzee notes in his essay “Apartheid

¹ Jane Poyner, “Materials”, *Approaches to Teaching Coetzee’s Disgrace and Other Works*, eds. Laura Wright, Jane Poyner, and Elleke Boehmer (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2014), 3.

² See David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Sue Kossew, *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996). Dominic Head, *J.M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Jane Poyner, *J.M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

³ Gilles Deleuze defines a minority in terms of its level of power in the community rather than its number or quantity. According to Deleuze, “The opposition between minority and majority is not simply quantitative. Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it”. Deleuze also explains that “majority assumes a state of power and domination”. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 105. As Susan VanZanten describes, during the apartheid regime, “five million whites lead a life of privilege, owning most of the land, receiving the best education, managing the nation’s industries, and dictating the country’s political and social policies. In contrast, twenty-eight million people—who have varying proportions of African, Indian, and white ancestry—do not have fully voting privileges, must live in specified areas, receive a vastly inferior education, possesses only 13 percent of the land, and are denied the rights of free speech, assembly, and lawful trial”. Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee’s Fiction in Context* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1. I draw on the Deleuzian terms of “minor” and “major” in this context.

⁴ Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, x.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Thinking” that apartheid “demanded black bodies in all their physicality in order to burn up their energy as labour. In its anxiety about black bodies, it also made laws to banish them from sight”.⁶ In this regard, Coetzee claims that “In South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body ... Its power is undeniable”.⁷ Coetzee’s figurations of suffering bodies in his novels thus evidence his critical inquiries into colonial practices, which exploit and abuse the bodies of the colonized, and into colonial discourses, which focus on neutralizing their suffering in South Africa. However, Coetzee’s presentations of suffering bodies are not merely of racial minorities, but also of the colonizers who are conscious of and sensitive towards their authority over suffering in (post)colonial contexts.

However, Coetzee’s reflections and presentations of suffering bodies in (post)colonial situations could be critiqued, insofar as the style of his writings is non-realistic and even allusive in dealing with the ethical and political issues involved. Rather than focusing on the realistic representation of the suffering body of the colonized in South African situations, Coetzee highlights the corporal frailty of all living beings including the colonizer and vulnerable subjects, such as children and animals by using the narrative techniques of allegory, intertextuality, fragmentary forms, and the narrator without authority.⁸ However, Laura Wright argues that “Coetzee’s novels never exclude this

⁶ J.M. Coetzee, “Apartheid Thinking”, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 164.

⁷ J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 248.

⁸ Drawing on the genre of historiographical metafiction, Linda Hutcheon characterizes Coetzee’s novel, *Foe* as an example of “postmodernism”. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), 107-8. Yet, Dereck Attridge describes Coetzee’s fiction as “an instance of ‘the late modernism’ or ‘neomodernism’”, on the grounds that his fiction “follows on from Kafka and Beckett, not Pynchon and Barth”. Dereck Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and The Ethics of Reading: Literature and Event* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4. Attridge further claims that “within what is called modernism, technical resources—and a certain attitude to the openness and alertness to such modalities of otherness” are key features. *Ibid.*, 6.

historical reality from which they are drawn; instead, Coetzee's rhetorical choices simply deny that there is merely one way to tell any story, including the stories of colonization, apartheid, and democracy in South Africa".⁹ In a similar context, Coetzee, as Anthony Uhlmann claims, reflects political and historical reality through both allegory and realism: "While it is clear that works such as *Dusklands*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and others in Coetzee's oeuvre, have allegorical overtones, it is equally true that Coetzee has taken a strong interest in 'realism' and the potential of this mode, and that this interest has informed much of his work".¹⁰ More convincingly, David Attwell, in *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (1993), describes Coetzee's works as a "situational metafiction" "with a particular relation to the cultural and political discourses of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s".¹¹ Foregrounding "the relationship between *reflexivity* and *historicity*" in Coetzee's works, Attwell goes on to claim that "Coetzee's figuring of the tension between text and history is itself a historical act, one that must be read back into the discourses of South Africa where one can discern its illuminating power".¹² In this regard, despite Nadine Gordimer's famous criticism that "Coetzee's heroes are those who ignore history, not make it",¹³ Coetzee's historical attention to (post)colonial circumstances can be read as a form of metafictional writing. The suffering bodies presented in Coetzee's works undoubtedly refer to his political and ethical involvement with the (post)colonial contexts of South Africa.

⁹ Laura Wright, *Writing "Out of All the Camps": J.M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

¹⁰ Anthony Uhlmann, "Realism and Intertextuality", *Strong Opinion: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, eds. Chris Danta, Sue Kossew and Julian Murphet (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011), 81.

¹¹ David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Nadine Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening", *The New York Review of Books* (February 2, 1984).

In response to the questions of how Coetzee presents suffering bodies, it is necessary to consider the issue of narrators with physical weaknesses, such as ageing and illness. According to Chris Danta, Coetzee's narrators, who are "blind, disabled, disqualified, without authority", reflect his political response to the South African situation.¹⁴ Danta elaborates on this by quoting Coetzee's interview with David Attwell in *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Specifically, in this interview, Coetzee explains his use of a narrator with physical weakness:

In the first half of this story—a story spoken in a wavering voice, for the speaker is not only blind, but written as he is as a white South African into the latter half of the twentieth century, disabled, disqualified—a man-who-writes reacts to the situation he finds himself in being without authority, writing without authority.¹⁵

Concerning the narrator without authority, Danta further explains: "But it is not just that, since it persists in Coetzee's Australian novels. Not simply a political use of the literary, the withdrawal of authority is also for Coetzee constitutional to the act of writing itself".¹⁶ More specifically, Danta asserts that "To write without authority is rather to make authority a question in and through one's writing".¹⁷ Danta's mention of the "act of writing" needs to be further discussed, since he positions Coetzee's "writing without authority" in the "paradox of literary authority"¹⁸ by quoting JC's remark in *A Diary of a Bad Year*: "*Learn to speak without authority*, says Kierkegaard. By copying Kierkegaard's words here, I make Kierkegaard into an authority. Authority cannot be taught, cannot be learned. The

¹⁴ Chris Danta, "Introduction", *Strong Opinion*, xii.

¹⁵ J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 392.

¹⁶ Danta, "Introduction", xii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

paradox is a true one”.¹⁹ From this, Danta explains Coetzee’s writing without authority as being positioned in a space between the social and the transcendental. However, my contention here is that Coetzee’s writing of the narrators without authority is rather associated with the process of self-dissolution through experiencing their corporeal weakness. The narrators, who suffer from physical illness, push back against the limits of subjectivity, which force them to transform their positions of race, sexuality and species and then their relationships with the Other in their respective (post)colonial contexts.

Coetzee’s presentation of corporeal subjectivity marks bodies with suffering, in the forms of torture, mutilation, disability, ageing, illness, and death. The figurations of suffering bodies not only constitute “bio-politics”,²⁰ but also a personal experience of illness, life and death. Hania A.M. Nashef’s discussion of the humiliation presented in Coetzee’s works provides a useful approach for examining the political forces of suffering bodies. As Nashef writes, “In Coetzee’s earlier novels, the individual’s humiliation is primarily induced by a political situation or an external force generally larger than the

¹⁹ J.M. Coetzee, *Diary of a Bad Year* (London: Vintage Books, 2007), 123-4.

²⁰ Michel Foucault describes a transition from sovereign power to biopower and biopolitics in the modern age. Foucault observes that life has been overtaken by regulations and technologies that seek to control the bodies of human beings, rather than merely the power to kill: “For the first time in history, no doubt biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge’s field of control and power’s sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate domain was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even the body” (142-3). However, as Foucault also points out, “It is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them” (143). In other words, from Foucault’s perspective, life has been the object of biopolitics, but it has also escaped the techniques of biopower. In this context, Foucault concludes: “But what might be called a society’s ‘threshold of modernity’ has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle; a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question” (143). Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1*, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 142-143. Coetzee’s novels demonstrate the biopolitics involved in the regulation and controlling of the bodies and the lives of the subjects in (post)apartheid South African contexts, but also describe how bodies and lives may escape from biopower.

person is, but in the later novels, the instigation becomes more personal, arising from a physical disability or the undesired process of aging".²¹ Since Coetzee's move to Australia in 2002, his description of suffering bodies has become increasingly more focused on personal weaknesses such as ageing, disability and blindness. This is evident in novels such as *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), *Slow Man* (2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). Nevertheless, my contention is that the corporeal frailty of the characters in Coetzee's earlier novels, as well as his later ones, involves both political and personal forces and even goes beyond the domain of human beings. For instance, Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace* (1999) describes how a white professor David Lurie has a sexual relationship with his coloured student Melanie Isaacs during the post-apartheid era. In the novel, Lurie's personal act is regarded as a public and political crime relating to white people's exploitation and abuse of the bodies of black people, which is, in turn, linked to the history of South Africa. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, six eminent writers put forward their opinions on political issues, such as George W. Bush, Guantanamo Bay, and terrorism, while an ageing South African immigrant writer JC writes a collection entitled *Strong Opinions* in a separated band of text, one that divides and simultaneously connects political opinions and personal stories.

In order to argue my position on the issue of corporeal frailty in Coetzee's novels, it is necessary to provide here an outline of the relationship between subjectivity and corporeal frailty in his oeuvre. As Coetzee's works are set in (post)colonial backgrounds, corporeal frailty characterizes different aspects of suffering between the colonizer and the colonized or humans and non-human animals. Specifically, Coetzee in his earlier novels problematizes the suffering bodies of both the colonizer and the colonized in the prevalent violent and oppressive systems constituted by (post)colonial and (post)apartheid

²¹ Hania A.M. Nashef, *The Politics of Humiliation in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

circumstances. At first, the colonized in the novels are forced to experience their physical disabilities through the unequal relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the nomads, who are called barbarians, are confined and tortured by the colonizer at the frontier of an unspecified Empire. Similarly, in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), the eponymous protagonist, as a racial and socio-economic other, is continually confined and is then enlisted to carry out forced labour in camps during the turbulent period of apartheid. In *Foe* (1986), a metafictional retelling of *Robinson Crusoe*, Friday labours for his master Cruso, while his tongue has already been mutilated on the desert island during the colonial period. Even though the mutilator is never known, Friday's lost tongue and silence represent the victimization of colonial subjects in the history of colonialism.²² *Age of Iron* (1990) describes the plight of a group of young black revolutionaries and their deaths at the hands of the police during the State of Emergency in South Africa. From this, the death and physical impairment of the colonized are produced by the oppressive colonial regime, which is based on the extreme binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. In these historical contexts, ethical and political questions exist surrounding the limits to which the colonizer is capable of recognizing and empathizing with the suffering of the victims.

In this thesis, I will argue that Coetzee's works articulate the corporeal frailty of the colonizer, who is affected by the suffering of the colonized and experiences his own transformation in (post)colonial contexts. By gaining a perspective on corporeal weaknesses such as torture, illness and ageing, the colonizer is exposed to his own vulnerability and thereby comes to experience the dissolution of his self. This experience of the colonizer is activated by his affective interactions with the suffering of the colonized,

²² Kossew explains that Coetzee's Friday, as "the colonized Other", is "literally and metaphorically silenced by having had his tongue cut out (a stage further on from Michael K's harelip, which 'merely' distorted his voice". Kossew, *Pen and Power*, 161-2. .

which offers the impetus for the radical shift in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This is also why the colonizer's corporeal suffering in Coetzee's works creates ethical and political challenges for recognizing and representing (post)colonial subjectivity. For example, the Magistrate, an old colonizer in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, experiences similar torture and humiliation to the barbarians due to his perception of the pain of the tortured barbarian girl. Mrs. Curren in *Age of Iron* is dying from cancer, as a result of responding to the sickness of apartheid South Africa. In effect, the illness and humiliation that the colonizer suffers epitomize the symptoms of their political crimes and ethical responsibility, in the violent history of colonialism. The dissolution of corporeal subjectivity occurs at the point where the colonizer empathizes with the torment of the colonized. Accordingly, the corporeal frailty of the colonizer affects him/her in such a way that he/she is able to experience the plight of suffering bodies and differentiate his subjectivity from his ego, while the body of the colonized is already wounded.

In the case of *Disgrace*, during the post-apartheid period, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized has changed, which results in them experiencing altered aspects of such suffering. The body of the colonizer is weakened by additional external elements such as attacks or accidents. For instance, Lucy is raped by a group of black African men and Lurie is attacked by them. It is evident from this changing relationship between the colonizer and the colonized that Coetzee's figurations of corporeal frailty articulate a (post)colonial history in which nobody can be free from their humiliation and sickness. As such, it follows that the corporeal frailties of the colonized and the colonizer in Coetzee's oeuvre become transferable and indeterminable bodily states, formed through the interactions between their bodies. This characteristic of corporeal frailty is relevant to Coetzee's presentation of suffering children and animals, who cannot be characterized and

determined in the same way as normal human bodies.²³ Not only the collapse of the distinction between the bodies of the colonizer and the colonized, but also the dismantlement of the relationship between human and animal are presented in Coetzee's exploration of corporeal frailty. This is the potential of corporeal frailty, which is available for the subject to break with his/her position and to ultimately bring about what Deleuze terms "revolutionary-becoming".²⁴

There is another important element to consider in Coetzee's presentation of corporeal frailty, with relation to the dimensions of life and death. Through the process of time, corporeal subjectivity has to encounter its own physical frailty and ageing. This can be identified in the Magistrate's and Mrs. Curren's corporeal weaknesses derived from their ageing as an inescapable force. Ageing, for the Magistrate and Mrs. Curren, is seen as a self-dissolving and self-affective process. Interestingly, the personal weakness produced through the processes of ageing and dying also interweave with political sickness in Coetzee's novels. The corporeal weakness of ageing and dying in their political and personal dimensions are also iterated in the different context of Russia in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994). The fictional figure Dostoevsky, returns to St. Petersburg in order to mourn his dead stepson Pavel. The Tsarist regime of Russia resembles the oppression of apartheid South Africa. In addition to this, an exploration of how to mourn and memorialize the dead is personally and politically offered in the novel, since the deaths of people are

²³ The child in Coetzee's works signifies corporeal frailty. For example, black children in *Age of Iron* and Matryona in *The Master of Petersburg* are more affected and victimized by the political violence than adults. Yet, rather than focusing on the victimization of children's bodies at the hands of adults, the corporeal frailty of the child is often associated with the symptom that the subject experiences as he/she is split from his or her self. For example, Susan Barton's child is described as being lost or unborn in *Foe*. The Magistrate also dreams that the child is being beaten in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, because of his guilt related to the tortured barbarian girl.

²⁴ Paul Patton explains Deleuze's conception of revolutionary-becoming: "This new concept of revolutionary-becoming sought to encompass the multitude of way in which individuals and groups deviate from the majoritarian norms that ultimately determine the rights and duties of citizens". Paul Patton, "Deleuze's political philosophy", *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, eds. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 202.

directly related to the oppressive regimes. This allows for an extended and associated subjectivity as mourners, who are the living dead when viewed as people who memorialize the dead within the living. Thus, the corporeal frailty of ageing, dying and death presented in Coetzee's novels does not solely relate to political and ethical fields, but also to the ontological dimensions of life and death.

Following his emigration to Australia, Coetzee portrays immigrants as “flawed, maimed and dying white heroes”.²⁵ The characters are, according to Elleke Boehmer, “double-sided figures who gesture back at colonial nostalgia for Europe, yet also signify a desire to regenerate as Australian through their suffering and dying”.²⁶ However, rather than there being a disconnection between his earlier and his immigrant novels, Coetzee's figurations of white heroes in the Australian background replicate the corporeal frailty (and its connection to the Other and the community) found in his earlier fictions. In *Elizabeth Costello*, the eponymous protagonist is dying, because of her sympathy with the mass killing of animals. *Slow Man* describes the disability of the old man Paul Rayment, who was once a photographer with a valuable collection of early pictures of Australian settlers, and who has subsequently been hit by the lorry of a young driver named Blight. In *Diary of a Bad Year*, a white male South African-born writer, JC, suffers from fading eyesight as a result of Parkinson's disease and constantly thinks of his death. Yet, the physical illness of these characters enables them to connect to human and non-human others such as immigrants, refugees and animals. Additionally, the physical weakness of the characters associated with their ageing is presented with regard to precarious life. Nevertheless, the characters do not seek to be healed but rather choose to accept their fragile bodies. As such, it follows that Coetzee engages in an ethical and political exploration of personal and

²⁵ Elleke Boehmer, “J.M. Coetzee's Australian Realism”, *Strong Opinion*, 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

political predicaments and their relations to corporeal frailty in (post)colonial circumstances. Above all, corporeal frailty in Coetzee's works breaks the subject position, thereby activating its transformative and associative power.

In this thesis, I will draw on Deleuze's theories of the majoritarian and minoritarian subjectivity, to argue that Coetzee's presentation of corporeal frailty triggers the subject's transformation into an impersonal and inhuman being, in its ethical, political and ontological dimensions. The issue of the corporeal frailty explored by Coetzee and Deleuze, can be examined by considering Deleuze's definition of illness and its relation to literature in terms of a "symptomology". This term is available for the diagnosis of personal and social disease. Deleuze develops this concept of symptomology relied on the works of Nietzsche. Ronald Bogue articulates Deleuze as "a Nietzschean physician of culture, both a symptomologist who reads culture's signs of sickness and health and a therapist whose remedies promote new possibilities for life".²⁷ In literature, according to Deleuze, the illness or weakness that a writer suffers can produce "health" in a Nietzschean sense:

Neuroses or psychoses are not passages of life, but states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked, or plugged up. Illness is not a process but a stopping of the process, as in 'the Nietzsche case'. Moreover, the writer as such is not a patient but rather a physician, the physician of himself and of the world. The world is the set of symptoms whose illness merges with man. Literature then appears as an enterprise of health: not that the writer would necessarily be in good health ... but he possesses an irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless

²⁷ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

giving him the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible”.²⁸

As Deleuze notes above, illness brings an individual into the states of body, mind and life that involve blockage and disruption. However, through illness, it is still possible for a writer to experience “health” as “something in life” that takes him/her beyond his/her personal dimension. For Deleuze and Nietzsche, the concept of health does not necessarily mean “robust health”, but rather “frail health, a weak constitution, a fragile personal life” that artists like philosophers often have “(Spinoza’s frailty, D.H. Lawrence’s hemoptysis, Nietzsche’s migraines, Deleuze’s own respiratory ailments)”.²⁹ From this point, it can be said that it is not necessarily important to distinguish illness from health, but rather to focus on the transformation from a personal illness to an impersonal dimension. It is through the “becoming of the writer”, gained through the experience of illness, that a writer is able to invent new possibilities for life beyond the personal limit of biological and psychological contents. This can be seen as the “power of an impersonal—which is not a generality but a singularity at the highest point: a man, a woman, a beast, a stomach, a child ... It is not the first two persons that function as the condition for literary enunciation; literature begins only when a third person is born in us that strips us of the power to say ‘I’ (Blanchot’s ‘neuter’).”³⁰ Thus, Deleuze’s account of health propels us to discover a new figuration of the subject: “Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing. It is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people”.³¹ Through his experience of illness as a blockage, a writer invents “a minor people, eternally minor taken up in a

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, “literature and life”, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Grace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3.

²⁹ Daniel W. Smith, “Introduction”, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, xv.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

becoming-revolutionary”.³² Accordingly, Deleuze claims that “the ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life”.³³ It follows that Deleuze’s approach to illness does not involve negative connotations but rather the creative power to trigger a new figuration of the subject in the impersonal dimension. Likewise, from the perspective of a writer, illness is not merely actualized as his/her personal experience, but also as his/her impersonal experience, producing a new mode of life. This vision of corporeal frailty clearly diverges from the approaches of psychoanalysis towards the vulnerability and pain of the subject and the Other.³⁴ Rather than the psychoanalytic view of illness, which sees it as being caused by the repression of pain, Deleuze’s conception of corporeal frailty posits that pain can be transformed into a creative power by connecting to something more than the personal in life.

From this brief look at the relationship between illness and health, it is evident that Deleuze’s theory of corporeal frailty is connected to a creative power in the impersonal dimension. This creative power is specifically related to Deleuze’s theory of the body, which contains its frailty as an affective and interactive entity. In terms of its frailty, the body concerns itself with dynamic and sensitive forces, which allow for its encounter and

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ See Gabriele Schwab, “Introduction: Derrida, Deleuze, and the Psychoanalysis to Come”, *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Branka Arsić, “The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida”, *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). As Schwab explains, Deleuze and Guattari in their work, *Anti-Oedipus*, criticize psychoanalysis on the grounds that, “among other things, of Freud’s construction of the subject with the help of the oedipal triangle and the submission to the law of the father this triangulation requires. While this notion of subject formation contains and undermines desire and establishes a fundamental lack in the subject as constitutive, Deleuze and Guattari proclaim the revolutionary power of desire and its resistance against social and psychic repression” (3-4). Concerning the issue of pain that I explore in my thesis, Arsić claims that Deleuze resists any Freudian notion of the “spiritualization” or the “becoming metaphor” of pain (147). Rather than being translated or transformed into its sense of trauma or guilt, Deleuze’s conception of pain refers to the way that it is able to flow between the subject and the Other, as waves and intensities. I will discuss this issue in the first chapter on *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

connection with other bodies. My further exploration of this concept of corporeal frailty needs to specify the term of the body in a Deleuzian sense, given that Deleuze does not offer a coherent conception of the body. As Joe Hughes asserts, “not only is the concept of the body nearly everywhere we look in Deleuze’s work”, but “it has also gone on to inform some of the most influential conceptions of the body in contemporary critical debate”.³⁵ Recent years have seen an increase of interest in Deleuze’s concepts of corporeality, with particular relation to affects, animals and life. In this context, I will describe Deleuze’s theory of corporeality and its affective and associative power, which I will draw upon to analyse the aspects of corporeal frailty as presented in Coetzee’s works. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the generative features of corporeal subjectivity involving the dynamic of autopoiesis. “Autopoiesis” refers, here, to the capacity to produce oneself in living systems, as suggested by H.R. Maturana and F.J. Varela in *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (1980).

Autopoiesis in the physical space is necessary and sufficient to characterize a system as a living system. Reproduction and evolution as they occur in the known living systems, and all the phenomena derived from them, arise as secondary processes subordinated to their existence and operation as autopoietic unities.³⁶

Guattari expands upon Maturana and Varela’s theory of autopoiesis beyond living systems, developing Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of machines as being connected to social,

³⁵ Joe Hughes, “Introduction”, *Deleuze and the Body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 1. Hughes adds that “Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens, Patricia Clogh and Rosi Braidotti, to name only a few, have engaged with Deleuze’s writings on the body”. In addition to them, a range of important critics such as Keith Ansell Pearson, John Protevi, Claire Colebrook and Manuel DeLanda have substantially explored Deleuze’s idea of corporeality or materialism in diverse domains such as philosophy, politics, biology and technology.

³⁶ H.R. Maturana and F.J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), 113.

linguistic and aesthetic components. According to Guattari, “Autopoietic machines undertake an incessant process of the replacement of their components for the external perturbations to which they are exposed”.³⁷ The autopoietic machines are considered as the corporeal subjectivity of undertaking self-transformative processes by interacting with the social and political circumstances.

Deleuzian commentators such as Keith Ansell Pearson, Claire Colebrook and John Protevi have used this idea of “autopoiesis” (or similar biological conceptions) to emphasize Deleuze and Guattari’s biological or vitalistic notions of viral subjects, living systems and life.³⁸ In Maturana and Varela’s account of autopoiesis, the body as a living system tries to maintain itself in relation to outside variables. Colebrook complicates this when she asserts that “life is autopoietic because a living being maintains its own internal relations; a living system must be able—through interaction with its milieu—to sustain itself”.³⁹ Thus, the conception of autopoiesis, as Colebrook explains, refers to the system of “relative closure” so that “a body at once maintains itself but also adapts to changing external perturbations”.⁴⁰ The tension between self-sustainability and adaptability produces self-modification or self-creation. Thus, Colebrook further articulates that the ideal body requires two contrary elements: “A body must complete itself in order to maintain itself: it must not remain as some detached fragment but must be united or coupled with a world, open to what is not merely itself”.⁴¹ In Colebrook’s account of autopoiesis, Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the body can be rethought in relation to the double

³⁷ Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 39.

³⁸ Keith Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Claire Colebrook, “Time and Autopoiesis: The Organism has no future”, *Deleuze and the Body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). John Protevi, “Laval subjects, Atonomous Systems and E. Coli Chemotaxis”, *Deleuze and the Body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

³⁹ Colebrook, “Time and Autopoiesis”, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

movements of autopoiesis: self-maintained movement and the self's openness to a world that is not itself. In this context, the conception of autopoiesis is considered as Deleuze's concept of the self as a modification: the "self does not undergo modification, it is itself a modification—this term designating precisely the difference drawn".⁴²

Deleuze's conception of the body has an obvious relevance to the power of corporeal frailty. In his reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*, Deleuze explains the body as a "mode" of complex relations:

A body, of whatever kind, is defined by Spinoza in two simultaneous ways. In the first place, a body, however small it may be, is composed of an infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speed and slowness between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body. Secondly, a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality.⁴³

Deleuze's definition of the body can be defined kinetically as a "composition of an infinite number of particles" in relation to "motion and rest" rather than its forms (such as being human or animal) or its organs. The body can also be defined dynamically as its affects and its capacities for affecting and being affected. Deleuze refers explicitly to the body in terms of affects produced in and by its encounter with other bodies. This is explored in my thesis in relation to the power of corporeal frailty in Coetzee's novels. From this, the conception of affect and its characteristic of modification need to be clarified. By harnessing Spinoza's definition of affects, Deleuze distinguishes affects or "feelings" (*affectus*) from affections

⁴² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 79.

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 123.

(*affectio*): “The *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies”.⁴⁴ In other words, affections denotes an experience generated by the encounter between affecting bodies and between one’s own body, while affects refer to dynamic forces passaging through changing bodies. Thus, Deleuze asserts: “By affect I understand affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained. . . . (Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, def.3)”.⁴⁵ As the dynamic passages between bodies, affects denote non-personal or impersonal feeling or sensation, and this implies that we never comprehend affects but their effects in a way of affected experience between bodies. In this respect, the body is inextricably linked with its frailty, and it is this frailty which forces the body to become an affective and associative power.

In order to explore Coetzee’s presentation of corporeal frailty, I will further consider Deleuze’s concept of corporeal frailty and its relations to affective and impersonal processes by focusing on the affective and associative characteristics of the body: the body without organs and the synthetic subject of time. Firstly, as I have explained earlier, the body involves the dynamic processes of composing and decomposing its parts or organs through its capacities to affect and be affected by other bodies. However, through suppressing its capacities, the body is regarded as an organism or organization of a whole that is given an identity in advance, for example, images of race, sexuality and species constituted in language and power (or social norms). In exploring ways of dissolving the organization of the body, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of the body without organs in opposition to the organism or the organizations of the body. In their work, A

⁴⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari describe the “body without organs” as one that is available for intensities or waves to pass through.⁴⁶ The organization of the body binds us to the organism, its significance and subjectification, in such a way that the body is organized, articulated and interpreted. The body without organs is thereby related to dismantling its organism, signification, and subjectification, opening the body to connections that presuppose forces and affects as non-personality. There is another account of the body without organs in Deleuze and Guattari’s description of a masochist in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “the masochist has made himself a BwO [body without organs] under such conditions that the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, pain waves”.⁴⁷ Thus, Deleuze and Guattari describe the masochist as “a type of BwO that only pain can fill, or travel over”,⁴⁸ as a rejection of the Freudian masochist that looks for pain in order to gain pleasure. Deleuze in his own work, *The Logic of Sense*, also describes how the body of a schizophrenic can be produced as an instance of the body without organs: “For the schizophrenic then, it is less a question of recovering meaning than of destroying the word, of conjuring up the affect, and of transforming the painful passion of the body into a triumphant action”.⁴⁹ Through destroying words and losing their sense, the body becomes an intensive body, or the body without organs, which also indicates its relation to affects. This is relevant to the creation of language in literature through pushing back against the limit of subjectivity. This is not to say that Deleuze and Guattari deny the existence of organs such as the body, eye, ear, skin, etc., but rather that it opposes the organism of organs.⁵⁰ In all the instances above, corporeal subjectivity

⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 153.

⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 152.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 88.

⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 164-5.

implies the ability to intersect with other bodies through affects, when it is constituted as the body without organs.

Secondly, according to Deleuze's theory of time in *Difference and Repetition*, there are possible ways for the corporeal subject to connect to the past, opening to the future. Deleuze's theory of time is synthetic, since the present contracts the past and the future upon it, which provides the subject with a reflection of its relations to multiple times. Deleuze's assertion of a "passive self" with time indicates the essential condition of living things, which can generate changes over time. To put it another way, against the active syntheses of time based on thought and intention, Deleuze suggests the subject's experience of multiple times in terms of the passive synthesis of time. As Henry Sussaman points out, Deleuze's concept of the body "is not a corpus or a corpse but a marker or placeholder in an assemblage that would presume to encounter the temporality of flow".⁵¹ Deleuze's conception of the body affirms corporeal and incorporeal times, producing three passive syntheses that generate differences: habit (the living present), memory (the pure past) and the eternal return of difference (the future). The first passive synthesis of time generates habits by contracting present instances with past instances. The subject in time is passive and corporeal as a result of the thousands of habits, or contractions. Yet, at the same time, the "habit draws something new from repetition—namely difference".⁵² The second synthesis of time is a more profound synthesis of memory, which causes the present to pass and constitutes the "pure past" in time, or "memorial time".⁵³ The present is always split from itself in order to pass, which allows for the arrival of another present. Likewise, because of the passing present and its relation to the past, the synthesis of memory does not

⁵¹ Henry Sussman, "Deterritorializing the Text: Flow-Theory and Deconstruction", *MLN*, 115:5 (December 2000), 982-3.

⁵² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 73.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

simply recollect the past but rather undergoes a process of changing the past. In other words, memorial time is virtual, since it enables the coexistence of the passing present with the past. In doing so, the subject reflects the past or history in the present. James Williams explains that “History necessarily changes the past, not through some kind of subjective input that could be countered thanks to pure objectivity, but because the past only exists through processes in the present that make the past a changing event in the present”.⁵⁴

We can further consider how the third synthesis of time—the eternal return of the present—involves an impersonal and incessant process of becoming by expelling the visceral time of habit and the reflective time of memory. This third synthesis of time concerns only the future. The eternal return is not only related to the incessant return of difference, but it is about the death that it is not possible to die. Drawing on Maurice Blanchot’s theorization, Deleuze describes two aspects of death: the personal and the impersonal. “One is personal, concerning the I or the ego, something which I can confront in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case encounter in a present which causes everything to pass. The other is strangely impersonal, which has no relation to ‘me’, neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure in a persistent question”.⁵⁵ The latter is concerned with death as the eternal return of difference, of which subjectivity is not part. Thus, Deleuze says that “there is always a ‘one dies’ more profound than ‘I die’”.⁵⁶ The impersonal death cannot be considered as a return of living beings to “an indifferent inanimate matter”, but rather it is present in the living in the pure form of time.⁵⁷ Williams explains this: “Death is in the pure form of time as it makes all forms of the same perish”. In this context, as Williams asserts, the relation between death and life

⁵⁴ James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 19.

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 112.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

cannot be separated: “Deleuze counters any definition of death as negation or opposition: death is not against life, it is in life. Death isn’t non-being, it is being”.⁵⁸ From this, Deleuze’s theory of three passive syntheses of time provides the subject with multiple opportunities to transform the past and open the future into the present. This enables the subject to interact with the Other in the personal and impersonal dimensions of life and death.

The characteristics of inorganic, affective and synthetic corporeality in Deleuze’s theory can be distinguished from the conceptions of contemporary critical theorists such as Judith Butler⁵⁹ and Jacques Derrida⁶⁰. Specifically, Butler asserts that corporeality exists ‘outside’ discourse, as the body is “constitutive” and “performative”—produced by social norms and language.⁶¹ For his part, Derrida attests that corporeality is divided ‘within’ and by “openness to the other”.⁶² As Martin Hägglund observes, corporeality “divided within” is associated with Derrida’s conception of “autoimmunity”: “His notion of autoimmunity spells out that everything is threatened from within itself, since the possibility of living is inseparable from the peril of dying”.⁶³ Catherine Malabou relates this to “heteroaffection” found in Derrida’s theory. According to Malabou, Derrida admits “an unmovable autoaffective dimension of subjectivity” since the subject is affected and altered by itself.⁶⁴ Yet, as Malabou details, Derrida’s theory of subjectivity can be understood as “heteroaffection” rather than “auto-affection”. “Heteroaffection”,

⁵⁸ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Philosophy of Time*, 19.

⁵⁹ Claire Colebrook, “From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens”, *Hypatia*, 15:2 (Spring 2000), 78-9.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. G. Collins (London: Verso, 1994), 216.

⁶¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 30.

⁶² See Simone Drichel, “Towards a ‘radical acceptance of vulnerability’: Postcolonialism and Deconstruction”, *Substance*, 42:3, Issue 132 (2013), 46-66.

⁶³ Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 9.

⁶⁴ Catherine Malabou, *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 19.

accordingly to Malabou, means “*the affect of the other*”, “in the double sense that (1) the one who is affected in me is always the other in me, the unknown “me” in me, a dimension of my subjectivity that I don’t know and don’t perceive, and that (2) what affects me is always somebody other than myself, something else than the feeling of my ownness”.⁶⁵ In the sense of ‘heteroaffection’, Derrida’s concept of subjectivity is affected and altered through his own otherness within himself. Malabou thereby proclaims that “There is always a third term, unknown instance between me and myself” in Derrida’s theory.⁶⁶ The third term refers to difference within subjectivity: “The difference that lies at the heart of the ‘I’ is the difference between me and an ‘intruder’, the other of me in me, ‘the heart of the other’”.⁶⁷ This space of difference in Derrida’s theory leads the subject to an ethics of the Other by opening to the Other. In this regard, there is an affinity between Derrida and Deleuze in their later works, via the concept of life that opens to auto-affection or hetero-affection.⁶⁸ However, Butler’s and Derrida’s radical theories of corporeality are still trapped within the distinction between language and corporeality and between the subject and the Other. Additionally, Derrida’s thought of “divided within” embodies a transcendental dimension beyond our experience and knowledge.⁶⁹ Compared to Butler’s and Derrida’s theories, Deleuze’s conception of corporeality engages with the non-organic

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005).

⁶⁹ Daniel W. Smith offers two different trajectories of transcendence and immanence in contemporary French philosophy: “a trajectory of *transcendence*, which includes Levinas and Derrida, and goes back through Husserl to Kant: and a trajectory of *immanence*, which includes Foucault and Deleuze, and goes back through Nietzsche and Spinoza”. However, he also points out that “immanence and transcendence are both highly over determined terms in the history of philosophy and it is not immediately clear what it would mean to be a philosopher of immanence influenced by Spinoza and Nietzsche”. Daniel W. Smith, “Deleuze and Derrida: Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Thought”, *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, eds. Paul Patton and John Protevi (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 46.

and collective forces of the body without involving dualistic negation or dialectical materialism.⁷⁰

A range of political and ethical readings of Coetzee's works has been taken up in the fields of literature and philosophy. These include: Nadine Gordimer (body politics), Gayatri Spivak (marginality), David Attwell (situational metafiction) and Paul Patton (becoming-minority).⁷¹ Ethical approaches to Coetzee's works have also been conceptualised by Derek Attridge (unlimited responsibility), Cary Wolfe (exposures), Chris Danta (sacrifice) and Mike Marais (hospitality).⁷² These commentators, who focus on ethical reading on Coetzee's works, draw on the theoretical writings of Levinas and Derrida, and address the body in terms of its relationship with an "Otherness" located in a transcendental position or else as a "traumatic or "internally split subject"⁷³ divided between itself and a demand for the Other. However, although these ethical and political readings of Coetzee's works have undoubtedly been illuminating and influential, their approaches to Coetzee's corporeality have focused on the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized or the subject and the Other. When one considers Coetzee's later novels from *Slow Man* (2005) onward, it is noteworthy that issues of corporeality relating to animals, the dying body, physical disability and life have received a greater focus than the foregrounding of the body politicized and historicized in (post)colonial

⁷⁰ See Pheng Cheah, "Nondialectical Materialism", *Diacritics*, 38:1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008).

⁷¹ See Nadine Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture*, ed. Stephen Clingman (London: Penguin Book, 1989). Gayatri Spivak, "Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe*, Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*", *English in Africa*, 17:2 (October, 1990), 1-23. Paul Patton, "Becoming-Animal and Pure Life in Coetzee's *Disgrace*", *Ariel*, 35: 1-2 (2004), 101-119.

⁷² See Cary Wolfe, *Philosophy & Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1-41. Chris Danta, "'Like a dog...like a lamb': Becoming Sacrificial Animal in Kafka and Coetzee", *New Literary History*, 38:4 (Autumn 2007), 721-737. Mike Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

⁷³ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 10-11.

contexts. Recently, Brian May (featureless body)⁷⁴, Laura Wright (performance of the body)⁷⁵ and Alice Hall (physical disability)⁷⁶ have problematized the representation of the body in Coetzee's works by narrating the transpositions of corporeal subjectivity rather than its fixed positions concerning sexuality, race and species. However, neither of these approaches has sufficiently dealt with Coetzee's presentation of the affective and associative power of corporeal frailty. My thesis attempts to articulate how Deleuze's conception of corporeal frailty breaks the Otherness of the body and the Other, and thereby offers the potential to view the body as a dynamic entity, characterized by self-affectation and synthesis. Specifically, drawing on Deleuze's theories of "masochism", "exhaustion", "impersonality", "the sublime", "meat", "sympathetic imagination" and "becoming", this thesis attempts to articulate how Deleuze's theories highlight the body's dynamic relationship with the affective and collective processes of corporeal frailty.

To investigate the encounter between Deleuze and Coetzee, my thesis concentrates on six areas. In the first chapter, through Deleuze's conceptions of "pain and masochism", I will examine the flow of pain between the colonizer and the colonized in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). The pain of the barbarians marks the limit to which the colonizer is capable of sharing the pain of the victims. In this context, I will assert that, rather than experiencing abstractive guilt or pity, the Magistrate becomes a masochist through his own torture and humiliation, which resembles that experienced by the barbarians. The Magistrate's experience of torture and humiliation forces him to dismantle his subjectivity as the colonizer. In turn, I will demonstrate that the Magistrate becomes neither the colonizer nor the colonized, but rather a nomad.

⁷⁴ Brian May, "J.M. Coetzee and the Question of the Body", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 47: 2 (Summer 2001), 391-420.

⁷⁵ Laura Wright, *Writing "Out of All the Camps": J.M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁷⁶ Alice Hall, "Autre-biography: Disability and Life Writing in Coetzee's Later Works", *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 6:1 (2012), 53-67.

In the second chapter, I will investigate the eponymous protagonist's escape from his subjectivity as the racial and socio-economic Other in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) in terms of Deleuze's theory of "movement-image" and "exhaustion". K continues to be confined in camps because he is recognized as his representative image, or the Other in South Africa. However, K endlessly escapes from the camps and also refuses to eat food. In this context, I will explore how his refusal to eat exhausts the logic of the apartheid regime and thereby enables him to regain his movement. Ultimately, I will demonstrate the ways in which K's movements and refusals force him to transform his physical deformity into the imperceptible in Deleuze's sense.

The third chapter will explore the interactions between personal and social illness in Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990) in terms of Deleuze's conceptions of "illness" and "the impersonal death". Apartheid South Africa is described as a dying country in which the police massacre young black revolutionaries, but white people are not capable of empathizing with the suffering of black people. Thus, I will examine how Mrs. Curren's experience of dying and ageing embodies a process of dis-identification with her position as a white liberal humanitarian and thereby enables her to develop an inter-subjective relationship with black people in the dimension of impersonal death.

The fourth chapter will examine how the suspended mourning in *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) creates interactions between the mourner and the dead in terms of Derrida's theory of "impossible mourning". Resting on Derrida's perspective, the role of ethical mourning is to preserve both the memory and the alterity of the Other. In this regard, I will investigate how Dostoevsky's mourning of his dead stepson is impossible, and how this marks him as a representative of the living-dead, a position that dissolves his self. Thus, instead of focusing on the "Otherness" of the dead Pavel as a transcendental position, this chapter attempts to illustrate the intersections between the mourner and the dead in the form

of betrayal in their memories. I will engage with this, through exploring the affinity between Derrida's and Deleuze's theories. In doing so, I will produce a reading, which is different from those of Attridge and Marais.

In the fifth chapter, I will examine the protagonist David Lurie's decline and transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, in Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace* (1999), through Žižek's and Deleuze's theories of the "sublime". Analysing the limitation of Lurie's literary imagination in the changed world, I will examine his experience of sublime sensation of formless fear by the violent attack by black Africans. Drawing on Žižek's work, I will explore how Lurie's traumatic experience gradually produces its ridiculous effect, recognizing the affinity between his sexual exploitation of Melanie and the black men's rape of his daughter, Lucy. Ultimately, I will examine how Lurie becomes inhuman by interacting with the suffering of animals in a Deleuzian sense of the sublime.

In the sixth chapter, I will investigate the configuration of self-differentiating difference as suggested in *The Lives of Animals* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) in terms of Deleuze's accounts of "sympathy", "imagination" and "becoming". The protagonist Elizabeth Costello, in her lectures, refers to the limit of our sympathetic imagination to think of animals, whilst creating a controversial analogy between the extermination of the Jews and animals. From Costello's debatable remark, I will examine how her analogy and sympathetic imagination enable her to generate corporeal interactions between humans and animals. Additionally, I will show how Costello's sympathetic imaginative engagement with Kafka's ape, Red Peter, provides her with a self-differentiating difference, or becoming-inhuman. As a result, I will demonstrate how Coetzee minoritizes the major configurations of literature, through the figurative character of Costello.

Subsequently, my thesis will explore how a Coetzeean and Deleuzian vision of corporeal frailty neither involves an insurmountable binary opposition between corporeality and language or between weakness and health, nor assumes a dialectical materialism that is achieved by corporeality or materialism, via constantly changing processes in the ethical and political contexts in which it engages. The role of corporeal frailty in both Coetzee's and Deleuze's works is rather to affirm its weakness and pain as an affective and associative power in (post)colonial circumstances. Thus, I will argue that, by escaping from the ethical and political logics of sacrifice and trauma, Coetzee's and Deleuze's notions of corporeal frailty unfold multiple transfigurations of the subjectivity in their interconnections with the Other in a cognitive mode and thereby trigger new ethical, political and ontological figurations of impersonal and inhuman beings.

Chapter 1

Suspended Pain in *Waiting for the Barbarians*

I. Introduction

In J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), an undetermined Empire seeks to conquer new territory during an unspecified time period. The narrator, a Magistrate, lives an idle and quiet life, waiting for his retirement at the outpost. However, once the interrogator, Colonel Joll of the Third Bureau, visits the outpost following a rumour of the barbarians' impending threat, the frontier becomes imbued with the suffering and humiliation of the barbarians. The barbarians, as "nomads", "pastoralists", and "tent-dwellers",¹ used to move across the frontier, but their bodies are now relentlessly confined and tortured by Colonel Joll. Evoked here is a figuration of the barbarians as the enemy of the Empire. The technique of torture is thereby effectively used to colonize the barbarians at the outpost by constructing a visible boundary between the bodies of the colonizer and the colonized. The act of torture, conducted by the infliction of violence on the body, is built into the dichotomy of pain between them. As Elaine Scarry remarks in her work, *The Body in Pain*, pain is characterized by "unsharability", since "physical pain has no voice".² Yet, torture, which inflicts pain on a prisoner, aims to make the pain visible, while producing the victim's scream. As Scarry argues, the visibility of pain, during the act of

¹ J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Vintage Books, 1980), 16.

² Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3.

torture, entails a sense of incommunicability between the torturer and the prisoner.³ In contrast to Scarry's theory, Deleuze conceptualizes pain in terms of the interactions between bodies. In this chapter, drawing on Scarry's theory of torture, I will, on the one hand, explore how torture provides a foundation for the Empire to colonize the barbarians by denying their pain. On the other hand, I will also examine how the Magistrate, in a Deleuzian view of masochism, becomes a masochist affected by the pain of the barbarians, and in the process transforms into a new man.

The novel, according to Susan VanZanten Gallagher, provides an "allegorical landscape that loosely suggests the Roman Empire on the verge of collapse but undoubtedly points to South Africa today".⁴ Despite the allegorical description of the novel, this state-approved torture is explicitly related to the brutal reality of apartheid in 1970s South Africa.⁵ Coetzee, in an interview, describes *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a novel about "the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of consciousness".⁶ Coetzee goes on to note that "torture has exerted a dark fascination on many other South African writers" and explains the reasons why:

³ Ibid., 27.

⁴ Susan VanZanten Gallagher, "Torture and the Novel: J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", *Contemporary Literature*, 29:2 (Summer, 1988), 281.

⁵ Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 112-3. As Gallagher describes: "Ever since the National Party gained control in 1948, there have been accusations of state-sponsored torture in South Africa. But the public outcry and debate over the issue of torture reached new heights in the late 1970s. At that time the issue of torture in South Africa filled public discourse of all kinds—from government reports to protest poems, from United Nations declarations to novels" (112). Gallagher further explains that the spark igniting the discourse concerning torture was the "death of Stephen Biko", a young leader of the Black Consciousness. After the "Soweto uprising in June 1976, unrest spread throughout South Africa townships" (112). During the sixteen months of the Soweto uprising, almost 1,000 school pupils were shot by police, and the majority of protesters and many leaders of the Black Consciousness movement were arrested. Among the arresters, Biko died mysteriously after a month in detention (113).

⁶ J.M. Coetzee, "Into the Dark Chamber: The Writer and the South African State", *Doubling The Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 363.

The first is that relations in the torture room provide a metaphor, bare and extreme, for relations between authoritarianism and its victims. In the torture room, unlimited force is exerted upon the physical being of an individual in a twilight of legal illegality, with the purpose, if not of destroying him, then at least of destroying the kernel of resistance within him.⁷

Thus, torture and the torture chamber that Coetzee describes epitomize the strategy of apartheid, which seeks to produce and perform the pain of tortured victims, through the extreme polarity between the oppressor and the victim. In the South African contexts, Coetzee evokes the inability of writers to fully represent the victims' suffering and destruction at the hands of the torturers.

In the novel, like Coetzee's confession surrounding the dark fascination with the torture room, the Magistrate as a first-person narrator becomes interested in what happens between the torturer Joll and the tortured barbarians in the prison. The Magistrate tries to witness and interpret the events related to torture. The truth surrounding the torture room thus occurs in the complex relationship between torturers, victims and witnesses. However, this novel is not merely a story of the Magistrate's witnessing and testimony, but of his experience of torture and humiliation, like that experienced by the barbarians. The Magistrate's indirect perception of torture thus shifts into his own experience of it. Within this context, my purpose is to trace the different ways in which torture impacts on the barbarians and the Magistrate respectively. I seek to trace the different processes by which the barbarians and the Magistrate become the victims of violence in the Empire. From René Girard's perspective, a mechanism of sacrificial victimhood is evident in the victimhood of the barbarians. According to Girard, "The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community

⁷ Coetzee, "Into the Dark Chamber", 363.

from its *own* violence; it prompts the entire community to choose victims outside itself. The elements of dissension scattered throughout the community are drawn to the person of the sacrificial victim and eliminated, at least temporarily, by its sacrifice”.⁸ As Girard emphasizes, sacrifice is regarded as an act of violence inflicted on a surrogate victim, when violence threatens the community. The function of the sacrificial ritual is, as Girard insists, to “‘purify’ violence; that is to ‘trick’ violence into spending itself on victims whose death will provoke no reprisals”.⁹ In Girard’s account, the barbarians become symbols of victimhood, as a means of helping the Empire to release its own violence without triggering a reprisal. In this way, while I argue that the barbarians are constructed as surrogate victims in order to produce a difference between the barbarians and the Empire, I will also trace the Magistrate’s empathy with the barbarians, which he achieves by denying and eliminating his likeness to the Empire and its violence. Yet, it is important to note that I am focusing on the denied pain of the barbarians and the Magistrate’s transformation into a masochist or “a new Man”¹⁰ through their suffering, drawing on the Deleuzian sense of masochism, rather than focusing on Girard’s concepts of sacrifice and scapegoats, which necessarily depend on physical violence as a means of resolving the violence of the Empire.

Concerning the mechanism of victimhood, it is necessary to articulate the relationship between the torture, conducted by the bio-power of the Empire in the novel, and the pain of the victims, constructed through the technique of torture. Torture relies on the discrepancy between the torturer and the victim, and as a primary physical act, it inflicts pain on bodies. Yet, torture as a politics of pain displays the pain of the victim to demonstrate a spectacle of power in a Foucauldian sense.¹¹ Scarry characterizes the

⁸ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 100

¹¹ Foucault explains the technique of torture and its relation to a spectacle of power: “The term ‘penal torture’ does not cover any corporal punishment: it is a differentiated production of pain, an

visibility of the pain produced by torture in terms of three dimensions:

First, pain is inflicted on a person in ever-intensifying ways. Second, the pain, continuously amplified within the person's body, is also amplified in the sense that it is objectified, made visible to those outside the person's body. Thirdly, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency.¹²

In this regard, the physical pain of the tortured is simultaneously visible and denied, which results in the pain being translated as the power of the Empire. The enormity of the victim's pain thus maximizes the discrepancy between the torturer and the tortured.

Another mechanism through which the pain of the tortured is denied is found in the process of making invisible the pain of the victim, as evidenced in the torturer's interrogation. This conflation of pain and interrogation inevitably occurs in part because the torturer and the prisoner each experience them as opposites. As Scarry explains:

For the torturers, the sheer and simple fact of human agony is made invisible, and the moral fact of inflicting that agony is made neutral by the feigned urgency and significance of the question. For the prisoner, the sheer, simple, overwhelming fact of this agony will make neutral and invisible significance of any question as well as the significance of the world to which the question refers.¹³

organized ritual for the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes; not the expression of a legal system driven to exasperation and, forgetting its principles, losing all restraint. In the 'excesses' of torture, a whole economy of power is invested" (34-5). Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹² Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

In this way, the interrogation of the torturer occurs alongside the intense pain of the prisoner, which makes the visible pain of the victim invisible. The confession of the tortured victim is, according to Scarry, “falsified by an idiom built on the word ‘betrayal’: in confession, one betrays oneself and all those aspects of the world—friend, family, cause—that the self is made up of”.¹⁴ As Scarry observes, the inappropriateness of this idiom is accounted for in the prisoner’s feeling of “absence” in the world. In this sense, Scarry claims that “intense pain is world-destroying”,¹⁵ and occurs alongside the dissolution of the self. In short, physical and verbal acts of torture destroy the self and world of the victim, whilst denying his/her pain.

Despite Scarry’s insightful reflections on the mechanism of torture and its relation to denied pain, it is necessary to question whether the denied pain can affect the torturer and other people, since pain is transferable between bodies. In the novel, the torturer, Joll, denies the pain of the barbarian prisoners, but the Magistrate becomes empathetic towards the victims and eventually experiences their victimhood, humiliation and torture. As such, an important question arises: how is the Magistrate as the oppressor able to empathize with his victims and how is his attitude to be distinguished from the torturer Joll? Drawing on Deleuze’s conception of the body, it can be argued that the Magistrate’s body interacts with the pain of the victim instead of his morality, since the body is capable of affecting and being affected by other bodies.¹⁶ In light of a Deleuzian theory of the body, the pain of the tortured, as an integral element can be intensively transformed into the bodies of other people and even animals. The pain of the Other, in Deleuzian ethics, is not just a negative passion that the subject should avoid, but could be seen as an act of exchange, or as a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988), 123.

commonality with the body of the subject. In this context, Rosi Braidotti highlights that pain, in a Deleuzian theory, is premised on the “conditions of possibility of ethical transformation”, which is clearly “an antithesis of the Kantian moral imperative to avoid pain or to view pain as the obstacle of moral behavior”.¹⁷ Basing his idea on the transformation of pain, Deleuze proposes the possibility of resisting the bio-power that abstracts and denies the pain of victims.

Nevertheless, Deleuze does not insist that pain always enables us to resist bio-power. Through the spiritualization and internalization of pain, pain could be reconfigured as “pain transformed into feeling of guilt, fear and punishment”.¹⁸ In relation to Deleuze’s criticism of spiritualized pain, Branka Arsić explains that “the translation of pain into the feeling of guilt (‘second masochism’) is its becoming metaphor”.¹⁹ This feeling of guilt, as Arsić expresses, has a strong relation with the Freudian conception of “moral masochism”, by which masochists do not suffer their symptoms but enjoy their suffering.²⁰ In a Freudian account, a masochist can be considered to enjoy his pain as an act of self-punishment rather than as a method of empathizing with the corporeal pain of the sufferer. Thus, instead of moral masochism, it is important to reflect on a corporeal way of empathizing with the pain of the tortured.

Yet, an important question remains: in what ways can one experience a sense of empathy with the pain of the tortured? Deleuze’s conception of sensation, defined as the vital power of rhythms and forces produced by the subject’s synthesis of sensation, is a useful concept to draw on in attempting to answer this question. Sensation is a bodily

¹⁷ Rosi Braidotti, “Nomadic Ethics,” *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, eds. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 189.

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Huga Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 129.

¹⁹ Branka Arsić, “The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida”, *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 146.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 142-4.

process and is intensively transmitted to the body of the Other, rather than being represented by a concept. Thus, sensation also aggregates variations, because it is “in direct contact with a vital power that exceeds every domain and traverses them all”.²¹ Deleuze describes this power as a “rhythm,” such as “diastole-systole”: “the world that seizes me by closing in around me, the self that opens to the world and opens the world itself”.²² In terms of Deleuze’s conception of sensation, the body of the subject accesses and aggregates the pain of the Other without the abstraction and representation of pain. In Deleuze’s view of masochism, this can be linked to a masochist’s pain of transforming into a great wave of pain, one that affects people regardless of time and place, like “the wave of Cain, wanderer, whose destiny is forever suspended, mixes times and places”, through his own experience of suffering.²³

In this chapter, the blockage and flow of pain between the oppressor and the tortured victim will be investigated by focusing on the Magistrate’s transformation into a masochist. Firstly, by exploring Scarry’s insights on torture and its relation to pain, I will examine how both physical torture and verbal interrogation deny the pain of the tortured barbarians, producing their pain as an abstractive and calculated object in the process of colonization. Secondly, by examining various scholars’ discussions of the Magistrate’s position as a liberal humanist, I will investigate how the Magistrate’s limitation forces a disjunction with his likeness to the colonizer. Thirdly, drawing on Deleuze’s concept of masochism, I will examine how the Magistrate’s suspended pain creates a great wave of pain in a community. This is accompanied by his transformation into a free man through his suffering, rather than remaining a subject entangled with the consciousness of his guilt.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 37.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Gilles Deleuze, “Re-Presentation of Masoch”, *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 55.

II. The tortured body and its denied pain

In order to examine the blockage of pain between the colonizer and the colonized, it is necessary to reflect on the mechanism through which the pain of the tortured is denied in the process of colonization. The frontier in the novel is a site that demonstrates the biopolitics of the Empire, which exerts sovereign power over the lives of the barbarians through the technology of torture. In Giorgio Agamben's view, the Empire politicizes the barbarians as "bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who may be killed and yet not sacrificed" in the process of producing their bodies as the enemy of the Empire.²⁴ As the colonial territory of the Empire, the frontier is relatively quiet under the administration of the Magistrate. The sentry is asleep at the gate and no prison exists at the outpost, since, from the Magistrate's perspective, there is not much crime. Yet, Colonel Joll's arrival at the frontier transforms its lazy and quiet landscape into a space of fear fraught with the tortured barbarians and their anguish. My contention here is that, through pain, Colonel Joll's torture demarcates and strengthens the opposition between the bodies of the colonizers and the barbarians, which has been obscured at the frontier. Thus, I will examine how the pain of the tortured barbarians becomes diametrically divergent from that of the colonizers, which reduces their bodies to images of brutality.

At the frontier, a division exists between the officials of the Empire and the barbarians, but there are also the settlers, who are distinguishable from the barbarians, since they are nomads. Before Joll's arrival at the outpost, the barrier between the settlers and the

²⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

barbarians is not clearly drawn in the dimensions of practice and discourse. In relation to the issue of this barrier, Sue Kossew describes the “paradoxes and ambivalence involved in the colonizer/colonized relationship” in the novel, by referring to the theme of the pre-text, C.P. Cavafy’s poem of the same title.²⁵ From Kossew’s perspective, the boundary between the colonizer and the colonized, or the Empire and the barbarians, cannot be drawn distinctively, but their relationship is rather ambivalent and paradoxical, as shown in both the novel and the poem. It is, according to Kossew, evident in the way that “the poem, like the novel, explores the self-justifying myth of potential invasion by ‘barbarians’ which is used by the Empire to maintain credibility”.²⁶ Kossew goes on to argue: “The fact that the threat does not materialize leads to ‘uneasiness’ and ‘confusion’, and the last two lines of the poem encapsulate the paradox: ‘And now, what will become of us without barbarians? / They were a kind of solution’”.²⁷ The myth of the invasion, as Kossew states, is neither realized in the novel nor in the poem, which implies an ambivalence in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The borderline between the Empire and barbarians is not merely ambivalent, but is also necessary to demonstrate the paradox at the heart of the Empire’s functioning. In essence, the Empire constitutes itself by harnessing the opposite concept to the barbarians, which equates to the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave. On the other hand, in Agamben’s view of the relationship between bare and political life, the Empire separates and opposes its own barbarous aspects at the same time as it maintains itself in relation to the barbarians through an “inclusive exclusion”.²⁸ In this way, a decisive binary opposition does not exist between the civilized and the savages at the frontier, but rather an ambivalent relationship exists between the cultures of the Empire

²⁵ Sue Kossew, *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* See Lois Parkinson Zamora, “Allegories of Power in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee”, *Journal of Literary Studies* 2:1 (March), 1-14.

²⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8.

and the nomads. Yet, the discourse of the barbarians and their threat is used to establish this dichotomy. The rumour of barbarian unrest and a potential attack is prevalent among the settlers, but the Magistrate cannot identify it. Thus, he asserts: “Show me a barbarian army and I will believe” (9).

Similarly, the point of my inquiry is the process of differentiating between the pain of the colonizer and the colonized. I also seek to question how the pain is ignored and denied by other people like the Magistrate, soldiers and settlers. The Magistrate’s and Colonel Joll’s attitudes towards the barbarians’ suffering are quite different. In the past, having encouraged commerce between groups of nomads and settlers, the Magistrate felt pity towards the barbarian victims. In contrast to the Magistrate, Colonel Joll instead inflicts a bloody attack and torture on the barbarians as a pretext for defending the Empire against their potential threat. Joll’s dark glasses symbolically demarcate the boundary between the colonizer and the barbarians: “The discs are dark, they look opaque from the outside, but he can see through them. He tells me they are a new invention. ‘They protect one’s eyes against the glare of the sun’, he says” (1). The opaqueness of the Empire from the outside indicates Joll’s blindness to the pain of the barbarians. Yet, the Magistrate has never seen dark glasses like these at the outpost, which is reflected in Joll’s words: “At home everyone wears them” (1). In this regard, Colonel Joll’s dark glasses signify a blockage in his sympathy for the barbarians.

The barrier between Colonel Joll and the barbarians is explicitly related to his torturing of them. In the novel, a raid occurs during which animals are stolen, before Colonel Joll’s arrival at the frontier. As the Magistrate explains, “this so called banditry does not amount to much” (4). As a result of the raid, the old man and the sick boy, as barbarians, are picked up and are imprisoned in the storeroom by the Magistrate. However, Colonel Joll brutally tortures the two prisoners, even though they insist on their innocence

concerning the raid. The old man dies and his tortured corpse becomes deformed. The brutality of torture is pictorially described: “The grey beard is caked with blood. The lips are crushed and drawn back, the teeth are broken. One eye is rolled back, the other eye-socket is a bloody hole” (7). The boy’s face is puffy and bruised, while one eye is swollen shut. The tortured bodies of the old man and the boy accordingly become deformed and dehumanized. Thus, the pain of the tortured prisoners is visible, but the torturer Joll does not show any pity towards the victims.

Drawing on Scarry’s theory, we can specify the processes through which Colonel Joll denies the pain of the two prisoners. As I mentioned earlier, Scarry explains that torture consists of a physical act—the infliction of pain, and a verbal act—the interrogation. Based on the great discrepancy between the colonizer and the colonized, Colonel Joll inflicts pain on the prisoners and makes their pain and wounds visible. The prisoners’ agony is made invisible and neutral through Colonel Joll’s interrogation as an act of torture. Based on his belief that “Pain is truth: all else is subject to doubt” (5), Colonel Joll produces and interprets the pain of the victims. However, Colonel Joll’s belief in the connection between truth and pain, from the Magistrate’s perspective, seems doubtful, since Colonel Joll reads the pain of the barbarians as a metaphor rather than as a sensation. It is evident that the barbarian boy is compelled to make a confession concerning his clan’s involvement in the raid, following which Colonel Joll and the soldiers take and torture more barbarians. Yet, the barbarians are, from the Magistrate’s view, fishing people who live on the bank of the river, and appear to have no relation to “thieves, bandits, invaders of the Empire” (18). Moreover, being transformed into a piece of dead flesh through Colonel Joll’s torture, the victim is not able to resist the torturer and instead experiences Scarry’s assertion of “betrayal” and “world-destroying”. Regardless of its truth, the boy’s confession betrays his people and brings about his own dissolution. Doubting the boy’s confession, the Magistrate

tells him:

“They say you have admitted that you and the old man and other men from your clan have stolen sheep and horses. You have said that the men of your clan are arming themselves, that in the spring you are all going to join in a great work what this confession of your will mean?” (11).

In the Magistrate’s account, through losing his power to resist against the torture, the boy is forced to falsify his confession concerning the raid. The conflation of interrogation and torture is thus involved in the process of denying the victims’ pain and of destroying their world.

However, it is important to question whether torture might prevent the possibility of a barbarian attack. Concerning this possibility, it is useful to rethink Slavoj Žižek’s discussion of Sam Harris’s defense of torture. In his work, *The End of Faith* (2005), Harris argues that “we run the risk of advertently killing far greater numbers of innocent men, women, and children”, but that “the misapplication of torture should be far less troubling to us than collateral damage”.²⁹ In these words, Harris’s belief is clearly shown: the pain inflicted on a large numbers of people should be counted as more valuable than the pain of a few innocent victims. This utilitarian ethics of pain is applicable to Joll’s torture, although the rumour of the barbarians’ raid seems unreliable. In the Magistrate’s view, the rumor is more like an episode of “hysteria” (9) surrounding the barbarians, which is deeply ingrained in the cultural imaginary, since the colonizer has never seen a barbarian army. However, this utilitarian ethics of pain is caught in what Žižek calls “a kind of ethical illusion”. The settlers’ and soldiers’ ignorance of the barbarian victims, according to Žižek, is grounded in “our abstract knowledge of mass suffering” instead of our instinctive reactions to

²⁹ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (New York: Norton, 2005), 194.

“witnessing the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes”.³⁰ From Žižek’s vantage point, there is a profound gap between the abstractive knowledge of and the witnessing of the victims’ reaction to their suffering. Thus, based on the abstractive calculation of mass suffering, the pain of the tortured barbarians is denied by the soldiers and the settlers.

Nevertheless, we should think of a crucial outcome arising from Žižek’s criticism of torture. According to Žižek, torture eventually leads to “the abolition of the dimension of the Neighbour”: “The tortured subject is no longer a Neighbour, but an object whose pain is neutralized, reduced to a property that has to be dealt with in a rational utilitarian calculus (so much pain is tolerable if it prevents a much greater amount of pain)”.³¹ In this way, the pain of the tortured could be viewed as a minor act of cruelty within the biopolitics of the Empire. Concerning this issue, we can question why the barbarians are regarded as the enemy of the Empire. In fact, it is important to consider that there is no reasoning given for why the nomads are regarded as barbarians, other than the fact that their nomadic life is distinguished from that of the settlers at the frontier. In addition, by trading with these settlers, the barbarians rather “fall victims to the guile of shopkeepers, exchanging their goods for trinkets, lying drunk in the gutter” (41). They become beggars and vagrants on the fringe of the town, thus “confirming thereby the settler’ litany of prejudice: that barbarians are lazy, immoral filthy, stupid” (41). As the Magistrate observes, the barbarians’ virtues become “corrupted” by the settlers, who render them dependent. The barbarians can be regarded as what Žižek calls the “neighbours”, as settlers who can sometimes be contacted at the borders of the Empire.

However, Joll’s inscription of the word ‘enemy’ on the barbarians’ backs whilst

³⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

being watched by spectators, literally demarcates the distance between the barbarians and the settlers: “The Colonel steps forward. Stooping over each prisoner in turn he rubs a handful of dust into his naked back and writes a word with a stick of charcoal. I read the words upside down: ENEMY ... ENEMY ... ENEMY ... ENEMY (115)”. The tortured barbarians are excluded from the community of humans (like the settlers with “rich inner life filled with personal stories”), and are ultimately produced as the bodies of strangers or enemies vulnerable to violence. Subsequently, possible connections between the settlers and the barbarians are broken, and the barbarians are reduced to objects to be dealt with using “a rational calculus”. Without sympathy, the settlers watch the suffering of the barbarians with a sense of sadistic pleasure. Amongst the settlers, the Magistrate watches the eyes of a little girl:

Her eyes are round, her thumb is in her mouth: silent, terrified, curious, she drinks in the sight of these big naked men being beaten. On every face around me, even those that are smiling, I see the same expression: not hatred, not bloodlust, but a curiosity so intense that their bodies are drained by it and only their eyes live, organs of a new and ravaging appetite. (115)

When tired of the beating, the soldiers give their canes to bystanders and a girl comes to beat the barbarians: “She lifts the cane, brings it down smartly on the prisoner’s buttocks, drops it, and scuttles to safety to a roar of applause” (116). In this way, the division between the bodies of the settlers and barbarian victims is made visible through torture, which renders the pain of the victims invisible. The tortured barbarians are reduced to inhuman bodies, ones that can no longer be neighbours of the settlers. In this regard, the settlers, as if they are torturers, are not able to feel pity for the tortured, which leads to their denial of the pain of the tortured. In this context, the colonization of the Empire is processed by

inflicting pain on the barbarians, followed by producing their bodies as the visible enemies.

III. The limits of liberal humanism

In contrast to the apathy of Colonel Joll, the soldiers and the settlers, the Magistrate is continuously conscious of the barbarians' vulnerability. The Magistrate's pity towards the barbarians is generated by his liberal humanism rather than his political position. The Magistrate's humanism makes his position oscillate between that of the colonizer and that of the victims. Nevertheless, the Magistrate is not able to understand their languages and nomadic life, which drives him to interpret their nomadic culture through the use of the imagination. This is explicitly shown by the Magistrate's hobby, archaeology, involving the excavation of ruins and the interpretation of fragments of maps that remain from olden times. He also lays out the characters and imagines various combinations and arrangements (17). In this distance between the Magistrate and the barbarians, my question here is concerned with to what extent the Magistrate's positioning between the torturer and the barbarians, enables him to be affected by and to empathize with the pain of the victims. I will argue that the Magistrate's pity for the victims provides him with a force to escape his position as a colonizer.

Unlike Joll's atrocity, the Magistrate's humanism generates his pity towards the victims. Yet, with regards to his pity towards the tortured boy in the prison, the Magistrate experiences a sense of ambivalence, seeing himself as an interrogator who "can wear two masks, speak with two voices, one harsh, one seductive" (8). However, witnessing the tortured body, the Magistrate feels distant from the torturer Joll: "There is nothing to link me with torturers, people who sit waiting like beetles in dark cellars" (48). His reflection

on the disjuncture between himself and the torturer, thus, signals his gradual turning away from the regime of the Empire. Moreover, as I have explored, the Magistrate also feels distant from the settlers who have apathy towards the suffering of the barbarians. Despite his sensation of his distance from Joll's and the settlers' apathy, the Magistrate can neither find any virtues ostensibly in the lives of the barbarians, nor become assimilated with them. In spite of his pity towards the barbarian victims in the prison, the Magistrate often sees them as unfamiliar idlers "in a state of nature": "For a few days the fisherfolk are a diversion, with their strange gabbling, their vast appetites, their animal shamelessness, their volatile tempers" (20). However, by living with the barbarian girl tortured by Colonel Joll, the Magistrate is internally wavering between the torturers and the victims, while attempting to rid himself of his likeness to the torturer or the Empire.

The barbarian girl that the Magistrate takes into his space enables us to question the extent of his empathy. The girl is not just a vulnerable victim whom he pities, but also an enigmatic one whom he desires. After seeing her distorted body as she sits begging in the shade of the barracks wall, he cannot avoid the girl. He then takes her to his room and shares his bed with her. As I argue here, this act is acquired by his humanism towards the wounded bodies in the prison. As I have asserted, his pictorial account of the tormented bodies in the prison is brutally detailed, but does not create much empathy within him. His distance from the tortured victims gets narrower through his sympathetic gaze. Specifically, seeing the girl's tormented body, the Magistrate arrives at a sudden recognition that the distance between himself and the torturers is "negligible" (29).

"This is not what you think it is," I say. The words come reluctantly. Can I really be about to excuse myself? Her lips are clenched shut, her ears too no doubt, she wants nothing of old men and their bleating conscious. I prowl around her, talking about vagrancy

ordinances, sick at myself. Her skin begins to glow in the warmth of the closed room. She tugs at her coat, opens her throat to the fire. The distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible; I shudder.

“Show me your feet,” I say in the new thick voice that seems to be mine. “Show me what they have done to your feet.” (29)

The girl’s clenched lips and ears are alert to the Magistrate, who realizes that his excuse does not comfort her. In this regard, the distance between the Magistrate and the torturer that he imagines is shattered. The barbarian girl’s clenched lips imply that she does not distinguish between the Magistrate as the colonizer and Joll as the torturer. His “new thick voice” signifies a shift in his recognition of himself as the torturer. It is the Magistrate’s awareness of his position as the torturer that forces him to experience a transformation. Accordingly, the Magistrate becomes a victim of the Empire like the tortured barbarians—he viscerally experiences the humiliation of imprisonment and torture.

However, the Magistrate’s sympathy for the barbarian girl needs more consideration for this analysis. The Magistrate’s recognition of himself as the torturer is followed by his soothing of the girl’s pain through the contradictory gestures of his washing her feet and of his desire for the truth relating to her tortured body. In fact, the washing of her feet ironically gives him satisfaction: “I knead and massage the lax toes through the soft milky soap. Soon my eyes close, my head droops. It is rapture, of a kind” (31). Without words or physical intimacy between them, he washes and massages all of her body parts. The Magistrate’s washing of her feet could be seen as either a ritual of his hospitality towards her, like Christ’s washing of his disciples’ feet, or an act of contrition, which enables him to empathize with the suffering of the victimized barbarians. However, this ritual cannot provide her with any comfort. His washing of her rather seems to be a fetishism related to the tortured body, merely serving as a reminder of the torture inflicted

on the bodies of the barbarians at the hands of the Empire. There are two reasons why we can consider the ritual as an example of the Magistrate's fetishism rather than his hospitality towards the victim. Firstly, no description is provided of her response to his massaging of her body, other than her passive acceptance of it. Secondly, the bodily connection between them is replaced by his questions concerning how the torturer Joll has inflicted pain on her body. Initially, he is not able to know why he desires the girl and her body. This may be an answer that he continues to seek. The girl was just one of the barbarian prisoners whose body the Magistrate's gaze passed over so that "she was still unmarked (36)" in his memory. "His first image remains of the kneeling beggar-girl" (36). He goes on; "I have been trying to remember you as you were before all this happened", I say. 'I find it difficult. It is a pity you can't tell me.' I don't expect a denial, and it does not come" (52). For the Magistrate, the girl's wounded body becomes a metaphor that he desires to interpret. In this sense, his and Joll's goal, as Laura Wright observes, is "essentially the same, to gain access to the 'truth' through the body of the other".³² In this way, the Magistrate regards the tortured body as a source of "mystery" or "blankness". As he asserts: "I slump on the couch, drawing her a mystery of it, pain is only pain; but words elude me. My arms folds around her, my lips are at the hollow of her ear, I struggle to speak; then blackness falls" (34). Despite the Magistrate's reflection that "pain" is only pain", his desire to access the truth seems to resurface her pain through a metaphor to be interpreted.

However, it is imperative to question whether the Magistrate's access to the truth is really the same as his interrogation of Colonel Joll. In his quest for the truth, the Magistrate suddenly realizes that he is dealing with her suffering body "as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry" (46). In this process, he once

³² Laura Wright, *Writing "Out of All the Camps": J. M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 79.

again finds his likeness to the torturer. It is yet clear that his recognition of this similarity, as Wright claims, “ironically saves him from being like Colonel Joll, because he seeks another mode of signification”.³³ This acknowledgment also causes him to revise the question, “Is this how her torturers felt hunting their secret, whatever they thought it was?” From this, he proceeds to feel “a dry pity for them”: “how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other!” (46). Like his perception of his volatile pity, he continues to find his quasi-love in his massaging of her body by creating a parallel with the acts of a torturer in a torture chamber: “I behave in some ways like a lover—I undress her, I bathe her, I stroke her, I sleep beside her—but I might equally well tie her to a chair and beat her, it would be no less intimate” (46). However, even though he thinks of a commonality between his hospitality and Joll’s torture, he once again denies his proximity to the torturer Joll: “I must assert my distance from Colonel Joll! I will not suffer for his crimes!” (48). Unlike Joll’s act of macabre torture, his quest for the wounded body comes through his self-estrangement from his status as the oppressor, a privileged position from which he may turn away. As such, it is actually his self-estrangement that plays a pivotal role in forcing him to transgress the law of the Empire by taking the barbarian girl as part of his own clan and then suffering from his torture and humiliation.

In order to explore the Magistrate’s transgression, it is helpful to now discuss Mike Marais’s, David Attwell’s and Derek Attridge’s arguments concerning his position and its relation to the tortured body. Firstly, with reference to the tortured body in the novel, Marais divides the suffering body into the body marked and the body unmarked. According to Marais, because the girl’s body is inscribed by the Empire, the Magistrate unconsciously and unintentionally wants to see her body “before it was named and therefore ‘known’ by

³³ Ibid.

Empire”.³⁴ In this way, Marais maintains that his desire is to see “beyond the visible marks that Empire has inscribed on the girl’s body in its attempt to render it invisible.”³⁵ Marais stresses here that the Magistrate’s attempt to make the marks invisible is acquired by his ethical responsibility towards the girl. From this brief look at Marais’s claims, it can be deduced that the tortured body is denied, and that the Magistrate desires only the unmarked body of the girl. However, my question here is to what extent this attempt generates an ethical act towards the tortured girl. Specifically, if the Magistrate’s ethical action is, as Marais claims, to attend to the body without its scars, then this would also relate to the question of how he can make the scars invisible in the present and of how his attempt could be helpful in alleviating the pain of other victims. With this in mind, it may be more fitting for him to face the suffering body itself, instead of rejecting the pain of others. To explain the Magistrate’s desire and its connection to his responsibility, Marais proposes a dispossession of self: “Under the burden of a form of responsibility”, he is forced to “act against his conscious intentions” and “becomes a stranger to himself”, which is accompanied by a “dispossession of self”.³⁶ In this context, Marais points out that the Magistrate sees himself as a “servant” of “responsibility” in the moment that he lights a candle in order to massage the girl’s tortured foot: “I light a candle and bend over the form to which, it seems, I am a measure enslaved” (46). In this moment, the Magistrate, from Marais’s perspective, binds himself to an ethical responsibility towards the tortured: “The Magistrate, it would appear, is a servant not of sexual desire, but of responsibility”.³⁷ In support of Marais’s account, the Magistrate repeatedly denies his sexual desire for the girl: “I have no desire to enter this stocky little body glistening by now in the firelight (32).” In

³⁴ Mike Marais, “*Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980),” *A Companion to the Works of J. M. Coetzee*, ed. Tim Mehigan (Rochester and New York: Camden House, 2011), 70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

this regard, the Magistrate's accountability is not limited to the girl, but rather is linked to an ethical response to those who have suffered, which, as Marais articulates, "extends well beyond this character's relationship to the girl".³⁸ However, Marais's account of this responsibility risks rendering the pain and the body of the oppressed invisible and unknowable. As I discussed earlier, this is achieved through the effects of torture, which render the pain of the victim invisible. Given Marais's assumption of the "dispossession of self", it is also problematic that the Magistrate's responsibility should be beyond his intention and knowledge, which implies his inability to account for his ethical actions. Marais's account of his responsibility for the girl thus risks positioning the body and its pain beyond the corporeal dimension.

Attwell's discussion of the Magistrate's humanistic morality towards the tortured girl needs to be further considered in order to fully examine his transformation. Attwell importantly stresses that the Magistrate's washing of her feet has a "parodic link with the moral framework of South African liberal humanism".³⁹ The washing of the girl's feet, as Attwell observes, seems to emphasize a liberal Christian component—inherited from Alan Paton's insistence on "the liberal Christian path of social justice through forgiveness and reconciliation".⁴⁰ This reveals "a critique that repoliticizes and eroticizes it, displaying liberalism's fetishization of victimhood and revealing it as a more humane but still essentially self-validating and dominating form of "soul-formation".⁴¹ From this, liberal humanism seems to be limited by being neither relevant to a reciprocal reconciliation, nor a political resistance to the power of Empire. Yet, it is worth noting that the "parodic link" with liberalism's fetishization of victimhood has an effect, as it leads to the desexualization

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 80.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

of the ritual rather than its eroticization, as evidenced by the fact that the Magistrate does not have a sexual desire for the girl's body: "There is no link I can define between her womanhood and my desire. I cannot even say for sure that I desire for (46)".

With reference to liberalism's fetishism, it is necessary to further discuss Attridge's observations on liberalism's self-deception. The Magistrate's attitude towards the girl is, according to Attridge, rooted in "the self-deception of the liberal conscience in the thinness of the dividing line between overt repression achieved by violent methods and the subtler forms of oppression produced by laissez-faire attitudes, the pursuit of personal gratification, and an unwillingness to rock the boat".⁴² In Attridge's account, the Magistrate's ambiguous and questionable desire for the girl is dependent on a self-deceptive attitude, as a subtler form of oppression. This deceptive humanism rather serves to erotically abuse and colonize the body of the Other for the oppressor's satisfaction. Even though Attridge describes the Magistrate's self-doubt as an ethical "hesitation" in which "he is sick at himself both for his making of excuses, and for his obscure and unnamed desire", Attridge states that the scene is ultimately tied up with "a history of sexual exploitation (of women, of servants, of subordinate faces)", which tends to make it "little more than the repetition of a host of previous such scenes".⁴³ However, Attridge's overarching sense of liberalism's self-deception as a form of sexual exploitation and colonization seems to be achieved by diminishing the transformative factors led by the Magistrate's estrangement of himself from the torturer and his desexualization of the process of washing her feet. From Deleuze's perspective of masochism, the Magistrate's ritual can be understood as a masochist's disavowal and suspension of the reality, which represents a personal ideal.

⁴² Derek Attridge, *J.M Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44.

...on the one hand the subject is aware of reality but suspends this awareness: on the other the subject clings to his ideal. There is a desire for scientific observation, and subsequently a state of mystical contemplation. The masochistic process of disavowal is so extensive that it affects sexual pleasure itself; pleasure is postponed for as long as possible and is thus disavowed. The masochist is therefore able to deny the reality of pleasure at the very point of experiencing it, in order to identify with the “new sexless man”.⁴⁴

As we have seen above, the disavowal and suspension of reality postpones sexual pleasure for as long as possible and this affects the masochist’s identification with a “new sexless man” who is awaiting pain. In Deleuze’s conception, the Masochist’s ritual can be seen as a process of disavowal and suspension of his identity as a torturer presented by the Empire. This purpose of this is to postpone the Magistrate’s pleasure in expectation of pain.

Before further arguing that the Magistrate’s pain can best be analyzed through the prism of Deleuze’s conception of masochism, it is important, then, that we critically rethink the Magistrate’s self-deception constructed within the colonial discourse of the Empire. The nomads, in this novel, are called barbarians in order to starkly divide them from the meaning of civilization. However, as Marais points out, there are no barbarians, only native inhabitants: “the Magistrate knew that the barbarians do not exist, that words “barbarians” and “enemy” with which Empire identifies them do not fit the native inhabitants of the region”.⁴⁵ In this way, Attwell astutely observes that “It is only *outside* the limits of Empire that he can present her with a free choice”, the choice of returning with him or going to her people in the mountains, but she “naturally” declines because “she knows that this freedom would be undermined the minute she accepts”.⁴⁶ Despite Attwell’s insight into the

⁴⁴ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 33.

⁴⁵ Marais, “*Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980),” 68.

⁴⁶ Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 81.

Magistrate's act of presenting her with a free choice outside the Empire, it is vital to point out that the choice of returning with the Magistrate is expected to be declined by the girl. This is because he has taken the decision of returning her to her clan through a realization that he has failed to be affected by her pain. When the girl asks him if he wants to have sex with her: "Wouldn't you like to do something else? (59)", the Magistrate no longer continues to massage her tortured body: "I am abstracted, lost in the rhythm of rubbing and kneading the swollen ankle (59)". What the Magistrate expects is thus an intense experience of pain rather than any source of gratification from the girl.

By drawing on perspectives from the Western liberal humanist tradition, as discussed by Marais, Attwell, and Attridge, the Magistrate's empathy with the colonized is shown to be deceptive and his transformation is instead set in motion. It is useful to consider here Grant Hamilton's exploration of the Magistrate's transformation, since Hamilton finds in this Deleuzian act of resistance against the Empire. In contrast to the critique of the Magistrate's liberal humanism, presented by Marais, Attwell and Attridge, Hamilton conceptualizes the Magistrate's resistance against the Empire, as entering into a process of "becoming-nomad", which "ultimately casts him in opposition to the colonial power that serves".⁴⁷ This becoming is, from Hamilton's perspective, caused by "his love for a girl beyond the town's borders—a 'barbarian girl'".⁴⁸ Hamilton's account of the Magistrate's "love" implies something more than his erotic desire for the girl. Through his intensive relationship with the barbarian girl, the Magistrate, according to Hamilton, undergoes a "metamorphosis" that "slowly allows him access to this fundamentally different way of perceiving and understanding the world".⁴⁹ The Magistrate thereby moves beyond the

⁴⁷ Grant Hamilton, "Becoming-Nomad: Territorialisation and Resistance in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, eds. Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University of Press, 2010), 183.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 186.

colonial gaze towards the barbarian that the Empire identifies as the enemy. As Hamilton suggests, his movements, “via the barbarian girl” ultimately reach “elsewhere”, a “place that is beyond the ideological and physical space territorialized by the State”.⁵⁰ Yet, the Magistrate’s movement is available, only after he takes the barbarian girl to her tribe. Hamilton claims that “the force of deterritorialization is not realized until he returns to the frontier town after escorting the barbarian girl back to ‘her own people’”.⁵¹ By releasing the girl without the permission of the Empire, the Magistrate becomes a prisoner and a nomad like a barbarian. From Kossew’s perspective, the Magistrate himself “becomes labelled as ‘other’ and as ‘the enemy within’ because of his resistance to the fixity of imperial discourse and practices, as shown in his crossing of the boundary (both literally and metaphorically), drawn between the Empire and the barbarian Other”.⁵² In lines with Hamilton’s and Kossew’s theories, I focus on the Magistrate’s expectation of pain and punishment in order to explore his metamorphosis. Thus, I will examine the Magistrate’s transformation into a new man, with regard to Deleuze’s conception of masochism in order to comprehend the question of his pain.

IV. A masochist’s waiting for pain

As noted earlier, the Magistrate’s desire for the girl is related to the truth surrounding the tortured body. Nevertheless, regardless of his consciousness and intention, the Magistrate’s body is affected by her pain and scars, for example, her “large puffy shapeless ankles and its scarred purple skin (31).” From Deleuze’s perspective, her

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 187.

⁵² Kossew, *Pen and Power*, 86.

wounded body can be sensed as “forces” or “pressures” that act on the Magistrate, rather than merely being represented as scared or distorted. To put it another way, Deleuze’s conception of force is “closely related to sensation: for a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body, on a point of wave”.⁵³ Importantly, both the Magistrate’s and the girl’s bodies and faces are not described. Rather, only the movements and sensations of his touching and massaging are repeatedly depicted. Even when the girl looks at him, his look is perceived through sensations: “When she does not look at me I am a grey form moving about unpredictably on the periphery of her vision. When she looks at me I am a blur, a voice, a smell, a centre of energy that one day falls asleep washing her feet and the next day feeds her bean stew and the next day—she does not know” (31). Moreover, his ritual of washing and massaging her feet generates the rhythms of rubbing beyond his self. He loses himself in the rhythm of the rubbing (32). Thus, her pain reaches him in the form of desubjectification, even though his consciousness intends to decipher the marks of her tortured body. In this context, it is important to question how the Magistrate experiences his transformation in relation to the tortured victims, rather than just drawing on a Freudian conception of the masochist’s guilt.

Masochism, derived from the name of the novelist, Sacher-Masoch, is the search for pain to gain pleasure. The masochist’s noneconomic attitude towards pain provides the subject with ways of experiencing a victim’s suffering. The figure of the masochist, who suffers torture, offers the potential to subvert the relationship between the master and the slave or the torturer and the victim. Moreover, as Deleuze explains, Masoch (as redefined by Kraft-Ebing) is “a clinical entity not merely in terms of the link between pain and sexual pleasure, but in terms of something more fundamental connected with bondage and

⁵³ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 48.

humiliation”.⁵⁴ When we think about masochism in this way, it provides a possible lens through which we can read the Magistrate’s torture and humiliation. Returning to the outpost from the mountains to take the girl to her barbarian clan, the Magistrate suffers humiliation by means of imprisonment and torture. The Magistrate becomes a body marked by torture, and his body is reduced to that of a tortured barbarian. From Joll’s perspective, the Magistrate becomes a powerless and vulnerable old man. From this degradation, we can question whether the Magistrate’s humiliation and torture are regarded as self-punishment because of his guilt for the suffering barbarians. In the Freudian account of masochism, pain is diffused into pleasure in the form of self-punishment or guilt. However, as Arsić says, drawing on Deleuze’s idea of masochism, pain is non-representable, as it “takes place as a literal pain that cannot be metaphorized into enjoyment of pain”.⁵⁵ Pain is found in intensities or waves that pass from body to body rather than in the subject’s appropriation of pain for its own pleasure. With the exploration of non-representable pain, I will examine how the Magistrate might legitimately be considered as a masochist, who “displaces the question of suffering”⁵⁶ and thus subverts the structure of the law.

In order to explore the Magistrate’s displacement of suffering through Deleuze’s conception of masochism, it is useful to begin with Freud’s conception of masochism. Freud, in “The Economic Problem of Masochism”, defines three types of masochism: erotogenic, feminine and moral masochisms. While erotic and feminine masochisms imply pleasure gained through physical pain and submission, moral masochism is concerned with a “conscious sense of guilt,” which implies “a need for punishment at the hands of a

⁵⁴ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 16.

⁵⁵ Arsić, “The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida”, 151.

⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Re-Presentation of Masoch,” *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 53.

parental power”.⁵⁷ Thus, according to Freud, the masochist “creates a temptation to perform ‘sinful’ actions” that must then be atoned for by the reproaches of the “sadistic conscience”.⁵⁸ In order to get the desired punishment, the masochist has to carry out non-economic acts: “the masochist must do what is inexpedient, must act against his own interests, must ruin the prospects which open out to him in the real world and must, perhaps, destroy his own real existence”.⁵⁹

As I mentioned earlier, according to the Freudian notion of moral masochism, the Magistrate’s humiliation may be understood as his self-punishment, brought about through the manufacturing of his pain. Drawing on Freud’s theory of masochism, it may be asserted that the Magistrate’s conscious and unconscious guilt produces his physical and psychological suffering, which ultimately saves him from a sadistic consciousness. One of his recurring dreams is that “Somewhere, always, a child is being beaten (88)”, which has a conceptual overlap with the barbarian girl in Coetzee’s novel, who is hurt before her father’s eyes. In the Magistrate’s dream, she also watches him being humiliated before her, and sees that he knew what she saw. After this condemnation, the father dies. Reflecting on this dream, he feels guilty for her suffering and also identifies himself with the girl’s father, who wanted to protect her but could not stop the torturers’ atrocities. Thus, his realization of impotence and guilt requires his punishment as an act of penance. However, this guilty consciousness, if viewed through a Freudian account of masochism, becomes a reactive force that encourages a retreat into his own internal world, waiting for pain under the power of the Empire, like the blow of the sadistic father. However, from a Deleuzian perspective, his internalization of pain, constructed in the name of morality, also serves to block the

⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 19*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957-74), 282.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 282-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 283

affective flows of his body. While waiting for the wave of pain, the Magistrate transforms the pain of the victim into his own pain, through torture and humiliation. In Deleuze's view of masochism, the resulting suffering of the Magistrate displaces the masochist's relation to a sadistic father: "what is beaten, humiliated and ridiculed in him is the image and the likeness of the father, and the possibility of the father's aggressive return".⁶⁰ Accordingly, it can be said in Deleuze's account of masochism that "*It is not a child but a father that is being beaten*" (original emphasis).⁶¹ In short, if the Magistrate desires to be punished and waits for pain, it is because he seeks to punish himself for his likeness to the Empire. This is relative to the Magistrate's degradation, which is forced by his awareness of his likeness to the torturer Joll.

Another displacement in the Magistrate's suffering can be found in the relationship between the torturer and the victim. Instead of relying on the moral law of convention, Deleuze argues that the perverse structure of masochism troubles the relationship between the torturer and the victim. Above all, Deleuze criticizes the assumption of the pathological unity between sadism and masochism. In Deleuze's conception, sadism and masochism are "different modes of being with differing logics".⁶² According to Deleuze, "the fundamental distinction between sadism and masochism can be summarized through the contrasting processes of negation on the one hand and suspense on the other".⁶³ As Branka Arsić observes, such incommensurability suggested by Deleuze's redefinition of masochism generates an "idea of the 'literality' of pain, which is opposed to what in Freud's theory functions as its interiorization (its becoming metaphor)".⁶⁴ Deleuze's interpretation of masochism is thus concerned with the corporeality of pain between the quasi-sadist and

⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 66.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Jack Reynolds, "Sadism and Masochism—A Symptomatology of Analytic and Continental Philosophy," *Parrhesia*, No. 1 (2006), 89.

⁶³ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 35.

⁶⁴ Arsić, "The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida", 147.

the masochist, removed from a sense of internalized guilt. The quasi-sadist is a woman-torturer who plays the role of transmitting pain to the masochist through the method of suspension. Specifically, Deleuze argues that Masoch displaces the structure of suffering. The self-inflicted suffering of a masochistic hero depends upon a contract or agreement with the torturer-woman. This contract is, according to Deleuze, about a masochist's "submission" to the woman, which constitutes the essential element of masochism.⁶⁵ Deleuze's account of a masochistic contract focuses on a subversion of the law which has produced a master and slave relationship or a torturer and victim structure. By making himself a victim, the masochist mocks and reverses a "master-slave relationship" as well as the status of man and woman.⁶⁶ As Branka Arsić asserts, a masochist's contract, in a Deleuzian sense, is "the very resistance to the law".⁶⁷ However, a masochist's desire still remains enigmatic, because his desire for masochism is separated from pleasure. Deleuze attests that pleasure interrupts his desire so that "the constitution of desire as a process must ward off pleasure, repress it to infinity. The woman-torturer sends a delayed wave of pain over the masochist, who makes use of it, obviously not as a source of pleasure, but as a flow to be followed in the constitution of an uninterrupted process of desire".⁶⁸ Masochistic desire flows and connects with others.

In line with Deleuze's account of masochism, the relationship between the Magistrate and the girl can be reconsidered as that of the quasi-sadistic woman and the masochist with reference to the suspension of pain. This is not necessarily to suggest that for the Magistrate, the barbarian girl is either a torturer or a sadistic woman with a whip. Yet, without sadistic pleasure, the girl allows him to experience the suspension of pain

⁶⁵ Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*, 53.

⁶⁶ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 92.

⁶⁷ Arsić, "The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida", 156.

⁶⁸ Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*, 53.

during the massaging ritual in a masochistic world in which the masochist does not desire to gain power over the victims. As Deleuze asserts, “the woman torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is *in* the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it, a realization of the masochistic fantastic fantasy”. Through the masochistic ritual, the Magistrate does not search for pleasure, but rather for the intense expectation of pain. However, it is important to note that, via a quasi-sadistic woman, a masochist does not desire pain itself, but the delayed wave of pain, as in Deleuze’s account of masochism. Deleuze’s account makes possible the flow of pain between the masochist and the woman. It is here that Deleuze displaces the question of pain through the process of suspension. As I explained in the Introduction, this process is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, related to “a body without organs” where “the masochist has made himself a BwO [a body without organs] under such conditions that the BwO can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, *pain waves*”.⁶⁹ In other words, the body without organs can be constituted through pushing back against the limits of subjectivity, which enables the body to be filled with intensities of pain and to interact with other bodies. This is why waiting for pain is already “impersonal”, since it suspends the “I”.⁷⁰

Deleuze discusses the conventional assumptions of sadism and masochism and their relations to pain before deploying his conception of masochistic pain: “The sadist derives pleasure from other people’s pain and the masochist from suffering pain himself as a necessary precondition of pleasure”.⁷¹ Deleuze stresses that “if pain and suffering have any meaning, it must be that they are enjoyable to someone”.⁷² Pain itself is pleasurable only in the perverted relationship between a sadist and a masochist. Torturers such as Colonel

⁶⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 152.

⁷⁰ Arsić, “The Rhythm of Pain: Freud, Deleuze, Derrida”, 157.

⁷¹ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 118.

⁷² Deleuze, *Masochism*, 118.

Joll and Mandel are presented as sadistic figures who inflict pain on other people and achieve their desired aims through these means. Thus, the scenes involving the torture of the barbarians are rendered obscene when Colonel Joll writes the word “enemy” on the barbarians’ naked backs and beats them in front of people until their backs are washed clean. As I have discussed earlier, the torture seems to voyeuristically and theatrically provides a sense of enjoyment for the spectators as well as the torturers. The sadistic power of Joll seduces the spectators and exposes them to the suffering of the tortured. In the process, they become perverts of obscene pleasure. However, it is clear that the tortured barbarians never enjoy their humiliation and suffering, while the spectators are bound up with sadistic or perverted power because they feel apathy towards the others’ pain. This is why Deleuze’s discussion of masochism has political implications. Deleuze problematizes the strategy of violent power, since he denies sadomasochism, or the conflation of sadism and masochism. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, it is important to consider that the spectators become a masochist body to be waved with the pain of barbarians rather than a sadomasochist body through the suffering of the victims.

However, unlike the spectators of torture, the Magistrate, who becomes a masochist body through the limitation of his subjectivity as a colonizer, interrupts Colonel Joll’s torturing of the barbarians, rather than engaging with the spectacle of torture. During this exemplary spectacle of torture, the Magistrate bursts out with the words, “No!”, when Colonel Joll holds a hammer to the barbarians.

‘No!’ I hear the first word from my throat, rusty, not loud enough.
Then again: ‘No!’ this time the world rings like a bell from my chest.
The Soldier who blocks my way stumbles aside. I am in the arena holding
up my hands to still the crowd: ‘No! No! No!’

When I turn to Colonel Joll he is standing not five paces from me,
his arms folded. I point a finger at him. ‘You!’ I shout. Let it all be said.

Let him be the one on whom the anger breaks. 'You are depraving these people!' (116).

After pointing out that Joll is depraving the people, the Magistrate also shouts at the bystanders, and asserts that the tortured barbarians are equally men like them: "We are the great miracle of creation! But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself! How--!" Words fail me. 'Look at these men!' I recommence. '*Men!*'" (117). His sudden interruption of the torture displays his ethical and political transformation in that he is able to resist Joll's barbarous torture. Yet, it is noteworthy that his resistance is available only after his suspended pain, which was affected by the girl's suffering and his own degradation. His radical break with the torturer Joll results in his atrocious torture and agony. He ultimately becomes an inhuman body: "What I am made to undergo is subjection to the most rudimentary needs of my body; to drink, to relieve itself, to find the posture in which it is least sore" (127). Eventually, the torturer Mandel abuses his body, forces him to strip naked and to run around the yard whilst being watched. Mandel also makes him dress in a woman's frock with his neck and wrists tied to a tree and then orders him to fly. The Magistrate's body as a male colonizer is dismantled and is thereby transformed into a masochist body filled with pain in the suspension of his identity. Moreover, Mandel's theatrical mockery of the Magistrate's extreme humiliation ironically suspends the law. The Magistrate says, "A scapegoat is named, a festival is declared, the laws are suspended: who would not flock to see the entertainment? (131)". From the Magistrate's assertion of "scapegoat", we can consider the Magistrate's suffering as a process of scapegoating that purifies the violence of the Empire. Like the victimhood of the barbarians, the Magistrate, from Girard's perspective, seems to become a scapegoat who submits to violence without provoking a reprisal. There is yet a distinction between the barbarians and the Magistrate as scapegoats. With his recognition of his sin as the colonizer, the Magistrate, in Girard's

view, undergoes “a pattern of transgression and salvation” as presented in Sophocles’s tragedies, *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*: “the hero appears as a redeemer as soon as he has been eliminated, invariably by violent means”.⁷³ In other words, as Girard observes, Oedipus, “while remaining a transgressor, is cast primarily as a destroyer of monsters” (87) such as Sphinx. Similarly, the Magistrate can be seen as a scapegoat who commits a transgression by taking the barbarian girl to her people and is thereby a destroyer of the unanimous and reciprocal violence of the Empire. The Magistrate thus has an affinity with Oedipus, as he engages in a suspension of the “I”, becoming a monster as both a transgressor and a redeemer in the community.

However, in Deleuze’s view of masochism, it is the downward movement of humour and the suspension of the law in masochism that differentiate it from the effect of the scapegoat in Girard’s sense. Concerned with Deleuze’s conception of masochism, “humor—in contradistinction to the upward movement of irony toward a transcendent higher principle—is a downward movement from the law to its consequences”.⁷⁴ Rather than rendering the law and the victim sublime through irony, humour seeks to demonstrate the absurdity of the law. The Magistrate’s extreme torture leads to the subversion of the law of the Empire, through “humor”. For Deleuze, “the masochist aims not to mitigate the law but on the contrary to emphasize its extreme severity”,⁷⁵ by directly performing the social contract that results in our enslavement. Yet, through this ritual, the masochist reveals that the law based on our contract is artificial and subversive. The masochist humorously accelerates the law in order to reveal its extreme severity, as well as the slavery of the subject. Moreover, the acceleration of the law also reveals its arbitrariness, since it is based on documents and contracts. The Magistrate says to Mandel that “I am a prisoner awaiting

⁷³ Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 86-7.

⁷⁴ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 88.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

trial. Prisoners awaiting trial are not required to work for their keep. That is the law. They are maintained out of the public coffer” (137). However, Mandel responds, “But you are not a prisoner. You are free to go as you please” (137), since Mandel and Joll do not have a record of him. Mandel adds that he must be a “free man”, as a means of freeing himself from the boundaries of the law. This is the logic of masochism: the law is implicitly challenged through the Magistrate’s pain and punishment, remaining in a state of suspension. As Deleuze observes, “Even guilt and punishment do not tell us what the law is, but leave it in a state of indeterminacy equally only by the extreme specificity of the punishment. This is the world described by Kafka”.⁷⁶ After having freed himself from his humiliation, the Magistrate becomes a wanderer, waiting for the barbarians “outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects” (169). Through the suspended pain of the barbarians, the Magistrate is thereby transformed into a nomad like “a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere” (170). Like the wandering of Cain punished by God, the Magistrate, as a result of abolishing his likeness to the Empire, becomes a new man, entering into an impersonal realm of fate. Subsequently, the Magistrate experiences the pain of the barbarians through suspension and becomes a wanderer, rather than living with consciousness of his guilt. This enables the Magistrate to experience his transposition into a body without organs filled with pain and a masochist who experiences a flowing a wave of pain like the wave of Cain.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the mechanisms of both blockage and the wave of

⁷⁶ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 84.

pain, drawing on Deleuze's conception of masochism. In the process, I have disputed the techniques of torture produced by biopolitics and masochism, via flows of pain and the suspension of the law. In Coetzee's novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the act of torture represents a pivotal strategy for colonizing the barbarians at an outpost in the Empire, where the boundary between the barbarians and the settlers, or between nomadic and civilized life is obscure. As I have examined, Scarry's theory of torture and pain is useful for conveying the biopolitics of the Empire, which takes sovereign power over the barbarian bodies, as a method of reducing them to the enemies, visibly distinguished from the bodies of the soldiers and settlers. What is noticeable in the biopolitics of the Empire is the way that it produces a blockage of pain between the victims and the colonizers by making invisible the visible pain of the victims as an effect of conflating violence and language or torture and interrogation. The tortured bodies of the barbarians become inhuman bodies, which cannot be regarded as neighbours. This results in the torturer Joll's and the settlers' apathy towards the pain of the barbarians. In this ethical and political context, it is thus crucial to examine how the pain of the victims could flow into the bodies of the colonizers in a corporeal way.

As the biopolitics of the Empire produces an insensitivity towards the victims, I have examined the potentialities of the flow of pain for radically changing the relationship between the barbarians and the colonizers in a Deleuzian sense. The Magistrate's pity for the barbarian victims diverges from the torturer Joll's denial of their pain. However, because of his pity, the Magistrate ironically finds himself identifying with the torturers, when he offers his hospitality towards the barbarian girl tortured by Colonel Joll. It is his self-recognition as a torturer that pushes him to return the girl to her barbarian people and subsequently to undergo his own torture and humiliation. Nevertheless, given David Attwell's and Derek Attridge's arguments concerning the limitations of liberal humanism,

the Magistrate's washing and massaging of the girl's feet could be understood as his fetishization of her victimhood, and his self-deception as a form of exploitation that abuses and colonizes the bodies of the colonized. However, Deleuze's conception of sensation suggests that the Magistrate is affected by the girl's pain in the form of rhythm, when he massages her tortured body. Moreover, Deleuze's conception of masochism, distinct from that of Freud, offers a lens through which we may understand the Magistrate's humiliation.

In Deleuze's theory of masochism, the perverse structure of masochism troubles the relationship between the torturer and the victims. Deleuze achieves this by stressing the incommensurability of sadomasochism. From Deleuze's perspective, the Magistrate does not desire pleasure, but rather the intense expectation of pain, when he massages the girl's feet. Moreover, it is important to note that the Magistrate does not search for pain itself, but rather a suspension of pain, which brings up a flow of suffering between himself and the victims. This is related to what Deleuze and Guattari call a body without organs, or a masochist body that passes the wave of pain. Accordingly, the Magistrate's waiting for the pain of the tortured body forces him into a masochist body without organs to pass the pain of the victims, which is not achieved by his liberal humanism or his morality of guilt but through the suspension of pain. Relating to the logic of colonialism taken by the Empire, the Magistrate's extreme humiliation subverts the law of the Empire by revealing its cruelty and arbitrariness. Thus, in a Deleuzian logic of masochism, the Magistrate is able to become a free man, after his torture, because his likeness to his torturers has been abolished.

Chapter 2

Movement and the Extinction of the Image in *Life & Times of Michael K*

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the issue of the subject's escape from categorization, confinement and signification as a racial minority in J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theories of "movement-image" and "exhaustion". Categorized as a social and economic minority such as a vagrant or a "parasite",¹ the eponymous Michael K is interned in labor camps, but he continues to escape and move beyond the boundaries of an imagined dystopian civil war in South Africa. According to Deleuze, "to leave, to escape, is to trace a line".² "To escape proliferates movements to new terrains, creating an experience of "deterritorialization".³ However, in Deleuze's account in *Cinema I* (1983), movement does not merely imply a geographical space traversed, but it triggers a qualitative, "heterogeneous and irreducible" transformation.⁴ This qualitative movement is also related to Deleuze's question about the

¹ J.M. Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), 116.

² Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, "On the superiority of Anglo-American Literature," *Dialogue II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 36.

³ *Ibid.*, 36-7.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: the movement-image (1983)*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 1.

extinction of subjectivity: “How can we rid ourselves of ourselves, and demolish ourselves?”⁵ Drawing on Deleuze’s theoretical account of movement, I will argue in this chapter, that K’s escape generates a qualitative leap to trigger his transformation rather than just movement within a homogeneous space. My contention here is that K’s escape indicates an active heterogeneous movement rather than simply a passive evasion of the power of apartheid. In this context, drawing on Deleuze’s reading of Samuel Beckett’s works, I will firstly investigate the ways in which K’s escape is intrinsically related to a movement towards extinguishing his representative image or subjectivity. Secondly, I will explore how K’s absolute refusal to eat consumes and exhausts the logic of the apartheid regime, thereby making the representative image mobile.

The life of K is, from Giorgio Agamben’s theoretical perspective, “bare” which means that it is divided from political and qualified life during a time when the turbulence of this imagined dystopian civil war brings individual lives into a state of crisis.⁶ In comparison with the precision of its geographical background, the temporality of the novel is indefinite, depicting a future South Africa, extrapolating the effects of the current political predicament. To be more specific, in the year 1983, when the novel was published, the politics of segregation produced a situation not unlike an undeclared civil war. Coetzee has made this situation more visible. As David Attwell explains, the scenario of the civil war in the novel is “not strictly apocalyptic; rather, it anticipates accelerated militarization in response to sporadic but growing insurrection and guerrilla activity”.⁷ In these

⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 66.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 7. From Agamben’s perspective, K is constituted as a non-human being (or “*homo sacer*”) and is imprisoned in the camp, or a bio-political space in which bio-power decides life and death outside of the laws. This is a politicization of K’s simple life into a bare life by means of the inclusive exclusion of life. In other words, a sovereign power such as apartheid includes K’s simple life within its politics and excludes it as a bare life.

⁷ David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 91.

circumstances, K's mother, Anna wishes to escape from "the careless violence, the packed buses, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars, sirens in the night, the curfew" (8). However, as Dominic Head points out, the novel is not merely a "future projection", but rather, through that projection, "evokes the social breakdown of post-Soweto South Africa in the 1980s, just as the novel's themes represent the governing fears and concerns of the time".⁸ The novel represents a current violent circumstance through its future projection, based on a situation where an individual's movement is restricted by the regime's policy, and its control over people's lives.

In particular, although the racial segregation seems to be down-played in the novel, the lives of racially and economically oppressed groups are strategically confined by a range of regulations. In order to investigate individual life and its relation to the times, it is necessary to briefly look at K's life, focusing on the politics of restriction and confinement. K, as a gardener in the municipality of Cape Town, has to leave, because his ailing mother wishes to return to her childhood hometown in Prince Albert. However, as they do not receive a permit from the police, K and his mother are not allowed to travel across the district. Because of the delay getting the permit, K and his mother start a trip to Prince Albert, crossing the district, with K transporting his mother in a wheel-barrow. Despite his mother's sudden death in a hospital in Stellenbosch on the way to Prince Albert, K continues to move onward with his mother's ashes. During his journey, K is interned in Jakkalsdrif camp, but he escapes and arrives at an abandoned farm in Prince Albert. At the farm, K distributes his mother's ashes over the earth and then cultivates some patches of land. When the grandson of the farm's owner, Visagie, a deserter, arrives, K escapes again and hides in a burrow above the farm. Nearly dying of starvation, K is captured by soldiers

⁸ Dominic Head, *J.M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 93. See Susan VanZanten Gallagher, "Apocalypse: *Life & Times of Michael K*", *A Story of South Africa: J.M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991).

and is imprisoned first in Kenilworth camp and then in a rehabilitation camp. In the camps, suspected as a supplier of food to the guerrillas and an arsonist, K refuses to eat and refuses to tell his story. After successfully escaping once again from the camps, K moves around Sea Point, and thinks of surviving by drinking only a teaspoon of water.

Given the turbulent times in South Africa, which frame the novel's plot, it is necessary to consider K's flight and refusal in that political context. K's escape could be regarded critically as a passive and individual retreat from political engagement rather than as an active resistance against the regime or as a preparation for political revolution. In this context, Nadine Gordimer's critique of the novel and her view of K's apathy towards the political predicament is worth noting: "the political statements are made implicitly through the situations and reactions of Michael K that have no obvious political meaning".⁹ However, from Gordimer's perspective, this leads to the judgement that "Coetzee's heroes are those who ignore history, not make it".¹⁰ The characters, for example, the white doctor and nurse in the 'rehabilitation' camp are "living in suspension", while for both 'history hesitated over what course it should take'.¹¹ Gordimer goes on to say that "No one in this novel has any sense of taking part in determining that course; no one is shown to believe he knows what that course should be".¹² In fact, confined in the rehabilitation camp, K seems to willfully ignore the political crisis, when he asserts that "I am not at war (138)". In line with Gordimer's critique, rather than being an act of political resistance, K's escape could be considered to be an elusive flight from reality. Accordingly, Gordimer concludes that "beyond all creeds and moralities, this work of art asserts, there is only one: to keep the earth alive, and only one salvation, the survival that comes from her".¹³ Subsequently,

⁹ Nadine Gordimer, "The Idea of Gardening," *The New York Review of Books* (February 2, 1984), 4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

Gordimer's contention is that there is not any political or ethical signification to be found in K's flight, but only an ecological concern for an earth left to be cultivated for the hope of salvation.

However, in contrast to Gordimer's position, it is possible to rethink K's flight and its ethical and political transposition. Thus, many critics find in K's escape political and ethical as well as literary implications for resisting the classification and normalization of apartheid. Among these critics, Dominic Head regards K's elusiveness as a political challenge against the oppressive regime, arguing that it is "a way of resisting the classifications of apartheid, specifically the Population Registration Act (1950) (which required the population to be classified by race)".¹⁴ When he is arrested in Prince Albert, K is recorded as "CM", or "coloured male" (70) in the charge sheet. This evokes his internment in the camps, but it is also the first explicit acknowledgement of racial categorization. In this context, Head convincingly highlights the potentiality of K's escape, by asserting that it denotes resistance against the violent policy of classification under the regime. Derek Attridge similarly finds "a profoundly ethical awareness", in K's thought and behavior, since K resists "the urge to apply preexisting norms and to make fixed moral judgement".¹⁵ Attridge refers to this as "one form of allegorizing reading".¹⁶ From this perspective, K's thought and behavior are relevant to a literature that involves an "ethical response" to the Other, rather than having a relationship with allegory or dealing with "the *already known*" (Attridge's emphasis).¹⁷ In line with Attridge's reading, Attwell considers K's "evasiveness" as a condition that "the novel itself enacts".¹⁸ However, the point Attwell makes is that, instead of his own transformation, K organically deconstructs the

¹⁴ Head, *J.M. Coetzee*, 97.

¹⁵ Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee & the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁸ Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*, 100-1.

dominant discourse he is imbedded in: “K is not a representative figure who models certain forms of behavior or capacities for change; rather he is an idea floated into a discursive environment that is unprepared to receive it”.¹⁹ From the differing perspectives of Head, Attridge and Attwell, we can understand K’s movement as a resisting force to the categorization and signification constructed by the regime.

Despite theorizations concerning the political and ethical validity of K’s elusiveness, which a range of critics have engaged with, the active mobility of K has not been sufficiently discussed. In order to explore K’s movement, it is firstly useful to rethink a living being as a body or a source of matter that enables movement rather than as an abstraction of the self. This point is important for understanding how Deleuze’s conception of movement can be distinguished from the representation of K’s movement. This may also be related to the reason why K’s escape should be seen as inextricably linked with his body and movement. Grounded in Henri Bergson’s theory, in *Matter and Memory* (1912), Deleuze proposes a connection between image and matter, which is differentiated from the traditional concept of the image, or a false image as a representation of a thing.²⁰ In short, for Deleuze, image is identified with matter and movement. In this regard, instead of the usual dualism between movement and image, consciousness and thing, Deleuze offers a new concept of the identification between movement and image, through which they produce their immediate actions and reactions. However, K’s movement in the novel is

¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

²⁰ Deleuze proposes his version of materialism, following Bergson’s conception of image and matter. Yet, their positions on materialism are subtly different. Focusing on the issue of the image, both Deleuze and Bergson radically highlight its mobility and materiality, which is divergent from the traditional conception of the image as the representation of a thing. However, Deleuze, in *Cinema I*, supposes an identification between image and matter, while Bergson, in *Matter and Memory*, regards the image as an existence between a representation and a thing. According to Bergson, “Matter is in our view, an aggregate of ‘images’. And by ‘image’ we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than which the realist calls a *thing*—an existence placed half-way between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation’. (the original emphasis) Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Dover, 1912), vii-viii.

blocked by the power of apartheid that categorizes him racially and economically. For this reason, it is even more important to ask how K can move away from his representative image or subjectivity.

In this chapter, drawing on Deleuze's theory of movement, I will argue that K's flight modifies his interactions with other bodies and articulates a connection with the variable nature of images, by extinguishing and exhausting his representative images of the Other. K's flight can be considered in comparison to white intellectuals' experiences of corporeal suffering, such as the Magistrate's experience of torture and Mrs. Curren's suffering through illness, in order to escape the violent political structure of exploiting the bodies of the colonized in an oppressive regime. In order to analyze this issue, I will firstly examine the false images surrounding K, notably the representation of his physical features as disfigured and his characterization as a "simpleton", before examining how he escapes from the images of his false appearance. I will also show how K's false images of the disfiguration and the simpleton are connected to his representation as a racial and economic other in the regime in South Africa. In order to elaborate on this issue, I will draw on Deleuze's theories of faciality and movement-image. Secondly, through Deleuze's reading of Beckett, the extinguished images of K will be explored in comparison with Gordimer's and other commentators' debates on the characteristics of K's elusiveness. Thirdly, K's refusal to eat and to speak will be examined through Deleuze's theory of "exhaustion". Consequently, I will demonstrate the ways in which K's flight becomes a movement from the false appearance to the imperceptible.

II. K's representative images

In terms of Deleuze's reflections on movement and image, K's body could be regarded as the "flowing-matter" of acting and reacting images.²¹ K's body encounters images, proliferating connections with other bodies. However, as I have mentioned earlier, despite the apartheid state fraught with political problems, K's escape does not seem to bring about any changes involving historical and political revolution. In this context, Stefan Helgesson argues that "the historical drama is unfolding around him", but his life is "quite bare"; "If the times are unbearably full, K's 'life' appears empty".²² However, my contention is that K's escape can be seen as a movement created through fleeing from his false image, which is negatively represented by the power of language. In order to develop this argument about K's movement, in this section, I will explore how K's false image is constituted through a racial category, resulting in the suppression of his voice in South Africa. In addition to this, I will discuss how Coetzee effectively uses free indirect discourse in order to allow K's muteness to be released like flowing matter.

The world in which K lives is manipulated by the power of language, and K's voice is oppressed in its personal and social dimensions. K's silence is initially represented through his physical deformity and simple mind, which are marked by his lack of language. At birth, K's hare lip is perceived by the midwife: "the first thing the midwife notices about K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had a hare lip. The lip curled like a snail's foot, the left nostril gaped" (3). Because of K's deformed lip, his mother Anna does not like his mouth. This significantly forms a mode of his existence as a deformed figure in the earliest stage of his life. In addition, K's mother keeps him to watch her work as a servant instead of allowing him to play with other children: "Year after year Michael K sat on a blanket watching his mother polish other people's floors, learning to be

²¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 59.

²² Stefan Helgesson, *Writing in Crisis: Ethics and History in Gordimer, Ndebele and Coetzee* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 182

quiet (3-4)". As Head observes, in these circumstances, "his language acquisition is expressed in the negative, the cultivation of silence in the face of oppression".²³ Because of his deformed appearance and simple-mindedness, K is taken out of school after a short trial period and then becomes a municipal gardener in Cape Town. Gardening allows K to maintain his silent life. In this way, the image of K's physical deformity constitutes his silence.

In addition to his deformity, K's representative image is also systematically classified and constituted in terms of a racial category. It is necessary to consider the classification of race, as articulated by the policeman, when K is captured in Prince Albert in order to examine this. The policeman records K as follows: "No one knew where he was from. He had no papers on him, not even a green card. On the charge sheet he was listed 'Michael Visage—CM—40—NFA—Unemployed' and is charged with leaving his magisterial district without authorization, not being in possession of an identification document, infringing the curfew, and being drunk and disorderly" (70). Because K's personal details are incorrectly recorded on the charge sheet in terms of his name and age, there are doubts also about the accuracy of his racial categorization: K's race is identified with the initials "CM", which refers to a "coloured male". There have been debates surrounding K's race, since the narrators (first and third narrators) never clearly describe his race. Gordimer, for example, describes K's race as black because of his mother's social and economic position. Attridge accepts K's race as a coloured male (CM), but he emphasizes that "the absence or uncertainty of racial reference is typical of Coetzee's novels: both Vercueil in *Age of Iron* and the Isaacs family in *Disgrace* can be said to be 'probably' coloured, but to discern this the reader has to be familiar with the niceties of

²³ Head, *J.M. Coetzee*, 98.

South African racial groupings under apartheid”.²⁴ Attridge goes on to claim that “the uncertainty of categorization exposes, of course, the groundlessness of the racial discrimination which determined all South African lives during the era of state racism, and which, regrettably, have not disappeared”.²⁵ The uncertainty of race produced by Coetzee may thus effectively display the groundlessness of racism. However, it is important to note that, without any further specific references to K’s race, others, nevertheless, perceive him in a racial sense.

Because I am concerned with the mechanism of perception, I raise the question of how K is seen by others to be a member of a specific racial and social group, in the absence of any specific reference to his race. This question can be rethought in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of “faciality”. Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, suggest that the face does not merely indicate “an envelope exterior to the person who speaks, thinks, or feels”, but it rather refers to “facial expressions” such as smiles and frowns producing signification.²⁶ As Ronald Bogue expounds, the speech-acts performed in facial expressions are, for Deleuze and Guattari, “sorted, regulated and normalized in accordance with dominant systems of signification”.²⁷ The facial expressions also form subjectivity or certain “loci of resonance that select the sensed or mental reality and make it conform in advance to a dominant reality”.²⁸ In Deleuze and Guattari’s sense, the face functions in accordance with both “signification” and “subjectivation”, thus confirming and enforcing a given mode of reality. The face is thereby facialized and gains an identity by means of the dominant regime of signs in a society. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari

²⁴ Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and The Ethics of Reading*, 59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 167-8.

²⁷ Ronald Bogue, “The Landscape of Sensation”, *Image and Text*, eds. Eugen W. Holland, Daniel W. Smith and Charles J. Stivale (London: Continuum, 2009), 10.

²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 168.

assert that the face is a politics constructed by an “*abstract machine of faciality*”.²⁹ As Simone Bignall recounts, for Deleuze and Guattari, “the facial system produces an abstract model of identity that is generalized and standardised; the face enables a ‘computation of normalities’”.³⁰ Bignall goes on to say that faciality corresponds with a politics of representative identity, in which the recognition of difference is achievable only in relation to that identity”.³¹ Thus, the politics of the face is, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, associated with racism—which “operates by degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face”.³²

In line with Deleuze and Guattari’s account of faciality, K’s disfigured face is recognized as a difference through the standardization and normalization of the White-Man face. As we have seen, the charge sheet functions through the generalization and normalization of the face, thus marking vagrants and the coloured as different. The faces of prisoners in the camps are also perceived as diverse negative images differentiated from the normalized face. As Robert, one of the prisoners says, prisoners are facialized as “disease”: “No hygiene, no morals. A nest of vice” (81). There are other ways in which this “difference” is asserted. The vagrants in the camps are also called a “parasite” by the police captain at Jakkalsdrif who thinks of the camp as “a nest of parasites hanging from the neat sunlit town, eating its substance, giving no nourishment back” (116). In this way, K’s race is not specifically described, but his face is recognized through racial and social categories. The faciality of K ultimately implies a signification of his body. Thus, from Deleuze’s theoretical perspective, it can be concluded that K’s negative and fixed images are formed by his deformed figure and faciality. This perception blocks K’s movement of image and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Simone Bignall, “Dismantling the White-Man Face: Racialisation, Faciality and the Palm Island Riot”, *Deleuze and Race*, eds. Arun Saldanha and Jason Michael Adams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 79.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 178.

body, causing the suppression of his voice.

However, although K's voice is oppressed and his movement is blocked, interestingly, we can hear his mind by means of a third-person narrator in the first and third sections of the novel. K does not speak directly, but his inner thought is described through free indirect discourse. In literature, free indirect discourse, as a narrative device, is used to describe the character's speech and thought, and allows the character's thought and feeling to emerge more directly. As Joe Hughes notes, free indirect discourse "gives the reader a sense of unmediated access to the consciousness of the character, and it is usually accomplished through a blurring of the first and third person".³³ In *Michael K*, K's consciousness and emotion are indirectly expressed by fusing with the thought of the narrator. In his works, *Waiting for the Barbarian* and *Foe*, Coetzee uses the characters of the Magistrate and Susan Barton as a first-person narrator to describe the suppressed voices of the colonial subjects, the barbarian girl and Friday. However, from the Magistrate's and Barton's points of view, the barbarian girl's and Friday's thoughts are obscure. In particular, because of his mutilated tongue, Friday's voice is absolutely silent. Nevertheless, a third-person narrator releases Friday from muteness in the last section of the novel.³⁴ Similarly, in *Michael K*, Coetzee's usage of free indirect discourse allows the reader to hear K's silenced voice more effectively. Specifically, the first section of the novel is narrated by a third-person narrator, who gains access to K's thought and feeling. For example, while waiting for a permit for Prince Albert, K and his mother come to the devastated flat where

³³ Joe Hughes, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2009), 15.

³⁴ Friday's scream is oozing from his mouth and body, through a third person narrator. Although Friday's scream is not distinctively articulated, his sound affects the reader and the narrator, and bring them to hear and sense his suffering, or the suppressed voice that Susan Barton cannot perceive and narrate: "His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it bears against my eyelids, against the skin of my face". J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin, 1986), 157.

she had formerly worked. When K pins the curtains to the gaping window frames in the flat, K's inner thought is woven into the narrative: "I do what I do, he told himself, not for the old people's sake but for my mother's (15)". By contrast, K's thought is rarely revealed in the second section narrated by the first person narrator, in which K has a conversation with the medical officer of the rehabilitation camp. During this conversation, the medical officer continues to talk to him and tries to interpret the meaning of K's behavior. The medical officer's perception of K is limited, and this is suggested by the fact that he consistently calls K "Michaels" instead of "Michael". In the final section, when K's inner thought is more expressively released, the third-person narrator describes K's drifting life in a suburb of Cape Town after his escape from the camp. In this part, K's monologue frequently intersects with the third-person narration.

Focusing on the abyssal distance between K's inner mind and the description of the third-person narrator, Attridge argues that free indirect discourse is "most suited to conveying an individual's inner mind while remaining in the third person".³⁵ However, the point Attridge emphasizes here is that this style ultimately reminds us of the Otherness of K: "the phrases like 'he thought' are frequently resorted to, continually reminding us that we are outside Michael K's consciousness".³⁶ Attridge goes on to say that "this stylistic choice—altogether with the use of the past tense—allows Coetzee to sustain throughout the fiction the Otherness of K's responses".³⁷ The following example, provided by Attridge, is taken from a passage where K's inner world is described in the cave above the Visagie farm, as he thinks about pumpkins that are beginning to wilt.

He thought of the pumpkin leaves pushing through the earth.

³⁵ Derek Attridge, "Against Allegory", *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, ed. Jane Poyner (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 73.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Tomorrow will be their last day, he thought: the day after that they will wilt, and the day after that they will die, while I am out here in the mountains. Perhaps if I started at sunrise and ran all day I would not be too late to save them, them and the other seeds that are going to die underground, though they do not know it, that are never going to see the light of day. There was a cord of tenderness that stretched from him to the patch of earth beside the dam and must be cut. It seems to him that one could cut a cord like that only so many times before it would not grow again. (65-6)

The sentences of this paragraph, according to Attridge, “lead from a simple thought about the distant pumpkin plants into an extraordinary conceptual and emotional realm that—at least for the duration of the sentences—we share, yet one that retains its foreignness”.³⁸ However, in the paragraph Attridge quoted, rather than a realm that retains “its foreignness”, we can find a connection between K’s thought, pumpkins and earth through the cord that stretches from him to the patch of earth. Moreover, we can also find a mixture and intersection between subjective (“I”) and objective (“his thoughts”) discourses in the quoted passage. This interaction can be understood in terms of Deleuze’s claim of “the double becoming” of free indirect discourse in which “The author takes a step towards his characters, but the characters take a step towards the author: double becoming”.³⁹ K’s thoughts and feelings, which are presented as if they are “flowing-matter”, interplay with those of a third-person narrator. In fact, the “foreignness”, or “Otherness” of K can be more easily located in the distance between the narrator’s (and K’s) and other people’s perceptions (including the medical officer’s recognition of K). Before I further consider this distance, it would be useful for us to look at Sue Kossew’s discussion of this issue.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: the time-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 222.

Kossew, in *Pen and Power* (1994), stresses how K releases his voice via “the narrator’s supplying of details, contrasting with the way others see him”: “The contrast is drawn here between the way others respond to him and the way K responds to his surroundings, between his outward silence and his inward eloquence”.⁴⁰ Consider the following passage that Kossew discusses.

Because of his face K did not have women friends. He was easiest when he was by himself. Both his jobs had given him a measure of solitariness, though down in the lavatories he had been oppressed by the brilliant neon light that shone off the white tiles and created a space without shadows. The parks he preferred were those with tall pine trees and dim agapanthus walks. Sometimes on Saturdays he failed to hear the boom of the noon gun and went on working by himself all through the afternoon. On Sunday mornings he slept late; on Sunday afternoons he visited his mother. (4)

In the above paragraph, Kossew argues that K “responds negatively to unnatural light, positively to natural light and shade; his internal time does not respond to the imposed time of society” while “his own simple routine and solitary life have a rhythm of their own”.⁴¹ Accordingly, in contrast to K’s voicelessness in the city, Kossew claims that his voice is released by connecting with the earth at the farm in the later part of the novel. In relation to Kossew’s reflections on the difference between K’s voicelessness in the city and his voice at the farm, I want to focus on K’s body and its interactions with other bodies in the parks. Moreover, regardless of the spaces of the city and the farm, as I have discussed, K’s voice is released through the mobility of his body via a third-person narrator. However, although K’s body has the potential for mobility, it is perceived by other people and by

⁴⁰ Kossew, *Pen and Power*, 141.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

society as a representation of disfigurement, which brings about his voicelessness. In this context, it is necessary to examine Deleuze's theory of the mobility of the body.

From Deleuze's theoretical perspective, K's body as an image has the potential to transform itself rather than having to remain as a representation of the deformed body, since the body and image are identified with movement. Yet, a question remains: How can an image be mobile? Firstly, for Deleuze, an image exists in itself like matter: "This in-itself of the image is matter: not something hidden behind the image, but on the contrary the absolute identity of the image and movement".⁴² On the basis of this assertion, Deleuze compares two different perspectives of consciousness taken by Husserl and Bergson: "all consciousness is consciousness *of* something (Husserl), or more strongly all consciousness *is* something (Bergson)".⁴³ On the basis of this comparison, Deleuze asserts that, rather than being a secondary or intellectual form of matter, consciousness is matter itself. Thus, in his reading of Bergson, Deleuze's argument here is that the living being can be understood as matter, image and movement. Secondly, for Deleuze, an identification between image and movement is made available by the actions and reactions of images. Specifically, from Deleuze's perspective, the body is an infinite set of images, which references the intersections between various images of bodies. In this way, the body as an image, is an aggregate set of actions and reactions, which also implies a variable flux of movements. In Ronald Bogue's account, for instance, "the living image may be viewed as a system for relaying movements—for receiving movements from outside and generating its own movements from within".⁴⁴ Thirdly, the movement-image thereby constitutes an infinite set of images, which comprises a "world of universal variation, of universal undulation, universal rippling: there are neither axes, nor centre, nor left, nor right, nor high,

⁴² Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 59.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁴ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 30.

nor low...”.⁴⁵ This flux of images is associated with what Deleuze calls the “plane [*plan*] of immanence”. The plane of immanence is an open and changing whole, since the movement “is established between the parts of each system and between one system and another which crosses them all, stirs them all up together and subjects them all to the condition which prevents them from being absolutely closed”.⁴⁶ Thus, the plane of immanence, is “the *machine assemblage of movements*”.⁴⁷ In line with Deleuze’s idea of mobility, I deduce that living beings are mobile, connecting to images, bodies and matters in the plane of immanence.

However, in Deleuze’s account, a human being’s perception of the body and image is limited. In fact, from his grounding in Bergson’s theory, Deleuze suggests a potentiality for seeing the object as a movement-image in the cinema, producing the “*machine assemblage of movement-images*”. Yet, the societal humanistic perception of movement is a process of subtraction.

In perception thus defined, there is never anything else or anything more than there is in the thing: on the contrary, there is ‘less’. We perceive the thing, minus that which does not interest us as a function of our needs. ... Which is a way of defining the first material moment of subjectivity: it is subtractive. It subtracts from the thing whatever does not interest it. But, conversely, the thing itself must then be presented in itself as a complete, immediate, diffuse perception.⁴⁸

Within a Deleuzian framework, K’s movement can thus be perceived as a complete, immediate, diffuse process, but the other characters’ perception of K’s image is subtractive

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 58-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

and distorted, producing the signification of a racial category. As mentioned above, consciousness is related to the process of the perception of the image. K is recognized as various negative images such as a “simpleton”, a “parasite” and an “arsonist”. One example of K’s false images is that of a servant, which is also a replication of his mother’s social position. Visagie’s grandson as a deserter sees K as a servant on the farm, asking: “Do you work here? (60)”. The grandson adds that “My grandparents were lucky to find you”. He goes on to say that: “People have a hard time finding good farm servants nowadays (62)”. However, K laments the grandson’s recognition of him: “He thinks I am an idiot who sleeps on the floor like an animal and lives on birds and lizards and does not know there is such a thing as money (62)”. In this way, the grandson’s perception of K as a servant is immediately denied in K’s inner mind. Nevertheless, K’s mind is not audible to the grandson, since his false image causes him to lose his voice as well as his mobility. In this context, the question of K’s movement escaping from representative images needs more elaboration, as will be undertaken in the next section, by examining how K’s image gains its movement.

III. The extinction of the image

The question of how K flees from his representative identity, which is attached to the images of the simpleton, parasite and arsonist, is brought into focus through Deleuze’s discussion of image and movement. Deleuze’s reflection on Samuel Beckett’s *Film* (1964) provides us with an exploration of how we can demolish representative identity and extinguish our subjectivity by focusing on the relation between perception and image. According to Deleuze, taking up Bishop Berkeley’s familiar formula, the Beckett of *Film*

declares “*Esse est percipi*: to be is to be perceived”.⁴⁹ To be perceived, for Berkeley, is to make a living being a perceptive centre or frame, which is related to the joy of perception. In contrast, Deleuze and Beckett problematize “the happiness of the *percipere* and the *percipi*”,⁵⁰ by proposing the demolition of subjectivity and suggesting a frame through which we may perceive ourselves. The extinction of the image is thus related to the movement of erasing ourselves of our subjectivity as represented by the facial form, the body and space. Alongside this demolition of subjectivity, Deleuze tries to show a movement, or transformation from “one Irishman to another, from Berkeley who perceived and was perceived, to Beckett who had exhausted ‘all he joy of *percipere* and *percipi*’”.⁵¹ In this section, drawing on Deleuze’s reading of Beckett, I will examine how K’s representative image is extinguished in the three dimensions of perception: the perceptions of action, perception and affection.

Deleuze’s exploration of the extinguished image in Beckett’s *Film* is useful for thinking of ways of escaping perception in the three steps. The problem, for the character O, in *Film*, is caused by an unbearable perception, but there is not a particular person looking at him in the screen. In the first step of action, the character O flees horizontally along the wall and climbs a staircase. The character O escapes, or “acts”, from the perspective of the camera, which represents perceptions of people and society: that is, in terms of the perception of action or an action-image. Yet, the character O suddenly stops action, by “hiding the threatened part of his face”.⁵² As Deleuze asserts, the perception of action can be “neutralized by stopping the action”.⁵³ In the second step of perception, the character O enters a room. The camera perceives the character in the room, and the

⁴⁹ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 66.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze, “The Greatest Irish Film (Beckett’s “Film”)", *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 23.

⁵² Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 67.

⁵³ Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*, 24.

character perceives the room: all perception becomes double. The character O subjectively perceives the things and the animals in the room, while the camera objectively perceives the character O perceiving them: this is the perception of perception or a perception-image. After that, the character O takes the animals out, and covers up “all the objects which can act as mirrors or even a frame”, in such a way that subjective perception is eliminated and only the camera perception remains.⁵⁴

In the third step, the character O sits on the rocking chair and looks at photos from the past. The photos of his family and himself are a kind of frame imposed on his identity, but the character O tears up the photos. He closes his eyes, while rocking in the chair. In this moment, there is only one perception surviving, what Deleuze calls the perception of affection: the perception of self by itself. The camera perception comes to face round and closer to him, and then the camera perception reveals itself to be the “double” of the character O. In this instant, the subjective perception of the character O is identified with the objective perception of the camera. The perception of self will also disappear when the movement of the rocking chair stops and the character O dies: “This is what the end suggests—death, immobility, blackness”.⁵⁵ At last, the character O closes his eyes and the screen ends up empty and black. Through the extinction of the action-image, perception-image and affection-image, the character O, as Deleuze claims, demolishes his self, while moving towards a zone of indiscernibility. Eventually, the character O no longer moves, but becomes an element that moves: “Becoming imperceptible is Life, ‘without cessation or condition’ . . . attaining to cosmic and spiritual lapping”.⁵⁶

In the light of Deleuze’s theory of the extinction of the image, we can better understand K’s escape and its affinity with the erasure of the character O’s identity. As we

⁵⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema I*, 67.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁶ Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*, 26.

have seen, K as a living being is movement in a Deleuzian sense, but his mobility is regulated and blocked under the regime of apartheid during the turbulent times of civil war. In this regard, it is necessary to examine K's escape in relation to his suppressed mobility within the regime. K's escape can then be rethought by linking to Berkeley's formula of perception and Deleuze and Beckett's subversion of that formula. Firstly, K's endless movement is associated with the perception of action systematically worked on and controlled by the regime. As I have mentioned earlier, people's movements are controlled and blocked by a range of regulations such as curfews and permits. These regulations ceaselessly function as inspections, which enact the surveillance of power everywhere. However, through his travels with his mother on the wheelbarrow, K begins to leave the permitted district and to cross prohibited spaces. This can also be seen as K's movement to avoid the gaze of apartheid. Nevertheless, K is interned in the labor camp on the way to Prince Albert. The camp is, from Michel Foucault's perspective, a space of the "Panopticon", or an architecture for surveilling inmates. According to Foucault, the major effect of the Panopticon is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power".⁵⁷ Foucault goes on to say that "To achieve this, it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so".⁵⁸ In the enclosed and segmented camp, vagrants (including K) are visible to armed guards on the porch of the guard house. The formerly invisible vagrants of "No fixed abode" (80) are now fixed and imprisoned by the gaze of power. Nevertheless, K escapes from the camp and its surveillance, which, from Deleuze's and Beckett's perspective, can be seen as an escape from the perception of action.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 201.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

K thinks that the farm in Prince Albert may be an ideal place to escape from surveillance. At the farm, he finds his voice that he has previously suppressed: “It was the first time he had heard his own voice since Prince Albert. He thought: Here I can make any sound I like” (56). Thus, feeling “as insubstantial as air”, he “sang to himself and heard his voice echo from walls and ceiling” (58). After that, K distributes his mother’s ashes over the earth, thinking that his mother had grown up there. And then he immediately thinks of cultivating the farm rather than moving on: “This was the beginning of his life as a cultivator” (59). K goes on to think: “It is because I am a gardener, he thought because that is my nature” (59). However, as we have seen, when Visagie’s grandson turns up, K is perceived as a servant. This man also regards the farm as a hiding place. As if the grandson is the double of K, he escapes from the war and arrives at the farm. Yet, perceiving the perception of the grandson, K flees from his eyes. This is the “perception of perception” like the mirror of Beckett’s character O. K digs a burrow above the farm in order to hide his body, and thinks: “Now surely I have come as far as a man can come; surely no one will be mad enough to cross the plains, climb these mountains, search these rocks to find me, surely now that in all the world only I know where I am, I can think of myself as lost” (66). K’s digging of a burrow is an attempt to find a way out of perception, generating his transformation in a new environment: “He thought of himself as a termite boring its way through a rock. There seemed nothing to do but live. He sat so still that it would not have startled him if birds had flown down and perched on his shoulders (66)”. In this way, living in the cave, K transforms himself into a “different kind of man” (67). Nevertheless, K can no longer hide his body, since he is captured by soldiers, and is once again confined in the labor camp. His body is once more visible under surveillance. Subsequently, K’s movement within space is faced with the limit of escaping from the perception of the regime. This is also interconnected with a weakness of movement from the perception of action.

In line with Deleuze's account of both the perceptions of perception and affection, we can see how K extinguishes his subjectivity. Firstly, K renounces his affiliation with his family. K's lack of a family name implies his ambivalent pedigree. His mother Anna, who alludes to his social and economic position, dies in the earliest part of the novel. His scattering of her ashes is comparable to O's tearing of the family photos. His mother never told him about his father, but K rather perceives his father as "Huis Norenius", namely "the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, the twenty-ones rules" (104-5). In this regard, K erases "the perception of affection" related to his family, distributing his mother's ashes and escaping from the rules of his father. K also thinks about his own lack of progeny:

How fortunate that I have no children, he thought: how fortunate that I have no desire to father. I would not know what to do with a child out here in the heart of the country, who would need milk and clothes and friend and schooling. I would fail in my duties, I would be the worst of fathers. Whereas it is not hard to live a life that consists merely of passing time. I am one of the fortunate ones who escape being called.
(104)

K's affiliation with the family is thus disconnected from his escape from the perception of affection.

Secondly, there is also the extinction of K's identity in relation to the medical officer's perception. The medical officer, as the first-person narrator, persistently tries to let K tell his story and attempts to interpret it. However, the medical officer's quest to interpret K fails. Sympathizing with K's starvation, the medical officer doubts the categorization of K recorded in the register: an arsonist, an escapee from a camp, an illegal runner of the abandoned farm and a supplier of food to the local guerillas. However, as an interrogator whose role is to interpret K and make him visible, the medical officer only

finds him indiscernible like a “stone, a pebble” (135). Thus, from the medical officer’s perspective, K remains obscure in relation to the expected categories of human being: “No papers, no money; no family, no friends, no sense of who you are. The obscurest of the obscure, so obscure as to be a prodigy” (142). From the medical officer’s perspective, K comes to be indiscernible: “a human soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history, a soul stirring its wings within that stiff sarcophagus, murmuring behind that clownish mask” (151). He concludes: “You are precious, Michaels, in your way; you are the last of your kind, a creature left over from an earlier age ... orphanage” (151). K is ‘a prodigy’, a relict, something that escapes classification. Yet, the extinction of K’s subjectivity needs further exploration, which can be achieved by discussing his refusal to eat in the camps, since his refusal signifies the demolition of his body and life. In the next section, drawing on Deleuze’s and Beckett’s reflections on “exhaustion”, I will argue that K’s refusal consumes and exhausts his subjectivity.

IV. The exhausted man

Compared to Herman Melville’s character of Bartleby in “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wallstreet”, who presents the extreme of immobility, Michael K can be seen as a figure of nomadic mobility. According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Bartleby is “immobile, almost petrified in his pure passivity”, whereas K is, “always on his feet, always moving”.⁵⁹ More importantly, Hardt and Negri describe K as a “figure of absolute refusal”:

⁵⁹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 203.

K “does not keep moving just for the sake of perpetual motion. The barriers do not just block motion, they seem to stop life, and thus he refuses them absolutely in order to keep life in motion”.⁶⁰ However, in spite of their praise of K’s mobility, Hardt and Negri believe that K’s refusal to eat has an affinity with Bartleby’s refusal on the grounds that their behaviors are passive, and not fully resistant against the regime. Thus, Hardt and Negri critically suggest that “The refusal certainly is the beginning of a liberatory politics, but it is only a beginning. The refusal in itself is empty”.⁶¹ Additionally, from Hardt and Negri’s perspective, it is more problematic that K’s and Bartleby’s refusal will end up with their biological death, as a kind of social suicide. As the medical officer in the rehabilitation camp says, K’s refusal to eat may be an act of freedom, but it will cause him to starve to death (146). However, I will propose here that this can be rethought by means of Deleuze’s conception of “exhaustion”, developed through his reading of Beckett, and that K’s refusal can be linked to the infinite movement through Deleuze’s conception of “exhaustion”.

In order to explore K’s exhaustion as conceptualized by Deleuze, I want to begin with K’s diet as an ethical mode of bodily transformation. Before K lives on the farm in Prince Albert, his diet is not very distinctive. This is illustrated in a description of K’s desire for the luscious food shown in the photos of a magazine. Absorbed in the images of the food, K shows his mother “a picture of a gleaming flank of roast pork garnished with cherries and pineapple rings and set off with a bowl of raspberries and cream and a gooseberry tart” (16). However, K’s diet dramatically changes when he moves to Prince Albert. Because of his hunger, K hunts goats running on Visagie’s farm. Yet, K decides not to eat animal meat, following his distressing experience of killing the goats at the farm. Seeing the corpse that he had killed, K thinks: “The urgency of the hunger that had

⁶⁰ Ibid., 203-4.

⁶¹ Ibid., 204.

possessed him yesterday was gone. The thought of cutting up and devouring this ugly thing with its wet, matted hair repelled him” (55). Thus, this killing of the goat brings about K’s feeling of repulsion towards eating meat.

Another change in K’s diet comes about during his imprisonment in the forced labor camp, where K’s appetite gets smaller and smaller. Interned in the Jakkalsdrif camp that forces vagrants to work for food, K does not want to become a servant or to feel hunger again. Compared to the prison, the labor camp is regarded as a place set up to provide for vagrants who need food, jobs, and houses: “A camp is for people without jobs. It is for all the people who go around from farm to farm begging for work because they haven’t got food, they haven’t got a roof over their heads” (78). The logic of the camp is thus inextricably linked with both labor and hunger. However, K refuses food in the camp. When he hides his body in the cave, he thinks: “Hunger was a sensation he did not feel and barely remembered. If he ate, eating what he could find, it was because he had not yet shaken off the belief that bodies that do not eat die” (101). K’s sensation of hunger may be understood as his physical reaction to food, but it is also associated with his ethical way of dieting and its relation to the milieus that force him to be immobile. Significantly, his sense of taste is recovered when he grows and eats pumpkins: “He chewed with tears of joy in his eyes. The best, he thought, the very best pumpkin I have tasted. For the first time since he had arrived in the country he found pleasure in eating” (113). The pumpkins K grows could thus be seen as the “bread of freedom” (146). In this context, we could also think that, having fled again from the camp, he becomes an object of pity under the care of beach nomads in Sea Point, where he thinks of living on just a spoonful of water: “there would be water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way he would say, one can live” (184).

However, his refusal to eat cannot be seen merely as a resistance against the camp or as an act of freedom fleeing from the limits of his movement in space, but it can also be

associated with a stoppage of any movements related to the logic of the camps to achieve another kind of mobility, or a qualitative leap. In order to further explore this issue, it is necessary to rethink the medical officer's question regarding K's refusal to eat:

Your body rejected the food we fed you and you grew even thinner. *Why?* I asked myself: why will this man not eat when he is plainly starving? Then as I watched you day after day I slowly began to understand the truth: that you were crying secretly, unknown to your conscious self (forgive the term), for a different kind of food, food that no camp could supply. Your will remained pliant but your body was crying to be fed its own food, and only that. Now I had been taught that 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 die rather than change its nature. (163-4)

From within the frame of the medical officer's logic, it can be seen that K's refusal is an act against his body and the survival instinct of the body, even if the refusal also embodies his will protesting against the violence of confinement. In other words, K's will ignores his body's need, in contrast to the medical officer's belief that the hierarchy of the body over the will is unquestionable. Rather, K prioritizes another kind of need, as his appetite integrates and interplays with his will to eat his favorite food: pumpkins that he grows himself. Moreover, K clarifies the purpose of his refusal by not referencing the will to die but rather by stating that he cannot eat the camp food (146). From this, it can be concluded that there is a difference between K's refusal and the medical officer's understanding of his diet. Fleeing from the immobility arising from hunger, K stops his movements concerned with the needs of the body, opening up a zone of indeterminacy. This leads us to an ontological approach towards the issue of K's refusal, as his refusal marks the impasse

between movements and meanings.

Deleuze's reference to "exhaustion" in his reading of Beckett's works provides us with an ontological way of approaching K's refusal to eat. According to Deleuze, "Being exhausted is much more than being tired".⁶² With this claim, Deleuze further distinguishes an exhausted person from a tired person:

"It's not just tiredness, I'm not just tired, in spite of the climb".⁶³
The tired person no longer has any (subjective) possibility at his disposal; he therefore cannot realize the slightest (objective) possibility. But the latter remains, because one can never realize the whole of the possible; in fact, one even creates the possible to the extent that one realizes it. The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible. The Tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize.⁶⁴

In this paragraph, Deleuze explains how a tired person exhausts the realization, while an exhauster exhausts the possible. One example of the realization described by Deleuze relates to the selection among possible variations and substitutions: "when one realizes some of the possible, one does so according to certain goals, plans and preferences; I put on shoes to go out, and slippers when I stay in".⁶⁵ Yet, the realization of the possibilities "always proceeds through exclusion, because it presupposes preferences and goals that vary, always replacing the preceding ones".⁶⁶ Thus, a tired person becomes tired of realizing these specific variations, substitutions and exclusions, but possibility as such always

⁶² Gilles Deleuze, "The Exhausted", *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Anthony Uhlmann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 152.

⁶³ Samuel Beckett, *Texts of Nothing*, in *Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1980* (London: Calder, 1984), 72.

⁶⁴ Deleuze, "The Exhausted", 152.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

remains.

However, instead of the selections and exclusions of a tired person, Deleuze proposes that an exhausted person exhausts the possible, and the exhaustion of the exhausted person expands the possibilities into the impossible circumstance. Exhaustion is, according to Deleuze, a state that combines the set of variables in a situation, “on the condition that one renounces any order of preference, any organization in relation to a goal, any signification”.⁶⁷ Thus, the following statement becomes a combination of exhaustion: “shoes, one stay in; slippers, one goes out”. Yet, Deleuze clarifies that these combinations of exhaustion are neither used for contradiction nor for passivity, but instead as a method of remaining active for nothing. Deleuze goes on to say: “One was tired of something, but one is exhausted by nothing”.⁶⁸ An example that Deleuze gives is Beckett’s “I gave up before birth”⁶⁹, where the character is exhausted before birth, before realizing anything. Drawing on another example from Beckett’s *Murphy*, Deleuze recounts how the hero, Murphy multiplies the combinations of five small biscuits, yet “on the condition of having vanquished all order of preference, and of having thereby conquered the hundred and twenty modes of total permutability”.⁷⁰ In order to explain Murphy’s combinatorial exhaustion, Deleuze provides the following analysis:

Overcome by these perspectives Murphy fell forward on his face in the grass, beside those biscuits of which it could be said as truly as of the stars, that one differed from another; but of which he could not partake in their fullness until he had learnt not to prefer any one to any other.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Samuel Beckett, *I Gave Up Before Birth*, in *Collected Shorter Prose: 1945-1980* (London: Calder, 1984), 197-8.

⁷⁰ Deleuze, “The Exhausted”, 153.

⁷¹ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Picador, 1973), 57.

As a result, the movement of the exhauster is inaccessible to its realization. Instead it becomes the infinite in the realm of the possible.

In his account of exhaustion, Deleuze's view of K's refusal is reflected in his affinity with Beckett's characters, as they renounce and exhaust "all need, preference, goal or signification" (154). As we have seen, K's refusal is absolute, as he attempts to flee from all categorization, confinement, hunger and care, and thereby to exhaust any significations concerned with his movements. This can be found in K's exhaustion as an example of his preference for nothing, which can be seen as divergent from tiredness. Before excavating the issue of his preference for nothing, it is worth considering again K's escape, or movement from the camps, in order to delve into K's exhaustion. Fleeing again from the camps, K's running away does not make him tired: "He walked all night, feeling no fatigue, trembling sometimes with the thrill of being free" (97). Passing the boundaries without a permit, he becomes "a trespasser as well as a runaway" (97) within a society. This is a point where K moves into a qualitative leap rather than involving a movement traveled in space. K's flight neither just resists against, nor runs away from the rules of apartheid that dominate and block his movements, but rather it is a move into "nowhere". In this way, K says "I live in the veld", and immediately adds "I live nowhere" (120). K's preference for "nowhere" displays his exhaustion as an unlimited movement towards utopia.

K's refusal of a place of residence can also be linked to a motionless mobility by means of an exhaustion of any meanings and significations, and this is relative to Murphy's development of a preference for nothing: "not to prefer anyone to any other". K's refusal is thus connected to what Deleuze calls "Bartleby's Beckettian formula" of "*I would prefer not to*".⁷² Indeed, K's refusal to eat can equally be conceived as a Bartleby's Beckettian formula of "I would prefer not to eat". The issue here is the question of how this formula

⁷² Deleuze, "The Exhausted", 154.

is distinguishable from Deleuze's account of tiredness. In his essay, "Bartleby; or, The Formula", Deleuze suggests several variants of Bartleby's formula, as if Beckett's characters play with the combinations, producing their preference for nothing: "I prefer to give no answer", "I would prefer not to be a little reasonable", "I would prefer not to take a clerkship", "I would prefer to be doing something else".⁷³ After these variations, Deleuze adds Bartleby's phrases of "*I am not particular*" (Deleuze's emphasis): "but I am not a particular case", "there is nothing particular about me".⁷⁴ In Deleuze's reference to Bartleby's formula, it is evident that its variants are not alternatives to or preferences among the combinations of possible selections. The formula instead exhausts all alternatives. Deleuze explains the concomitant effects of Bartleby's formula:

It implies that Bartleby stop copying, that is, he stops reproducing words; it hollows out a zone of indetermination that renders words indistinguishable, that creates a vacuum within language [*langage*]. But it also stymies the speech acts that a boss uses to command, that a kind friend uses to ask questions or a man of faith to make promises. If Bartleby had refused, he could still be seen as a rebel or insurrectionary, and as such would still have a social role. But the formula stymies all speech acts, and at the same time, it makes Bartleby a pure outsider [*exclu*] to whom no social position can be attributed.⁷⁵

As Deleuze suggests, Bartleby's refusal generates a hole within language, constituting a zone of indetermination or indiscernibility. Deleuze does not make him become a rebel but "a pure outsider. In this regard, it is important to note Deleuze's quotation of Mathieu Lindon's remarks, "the formula 'disconnects' words and things, words and actions, but also

⁷³ Gilles Deleuze, "Bartleby; or, The Formula", *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

speech acts and words—it severs language from all reference, in accordance with Bartleby’s absolute vocation, *to be a man without reference*”.⁷⁶

As I have suggested, K’s refusal exhausts the variants of preference in accordance with Bartleby’s formula of “I prefer not to”. As a result of his refusal, K becomes “a pure outsider” as a man without reference rather than a rebel or a revolutionary. In line with Deleuze’s analysis of Bartleby’s formula, K also makes a hole in the logic of the medical officer and other people. K’s formula of “I prefer not to” causes the medical officer to create a hole within the logic of reason and the body that he relies on. As we have seen, while the medical officer thereby thinks that K’s refusal refers to an act of searching for the bread of freedom, he can never comprehend K’s refusal to eat when he faces starving to death. For the medical officer, K becomes an “albatross” around his neck (146). In this sense, K’s refusal is infectious for the medical officer. The issue of K’s refusal is thereby linked to the medical officer’s own matter. For this reason, the medical officer begs K: “I appeal to you, Michaels yield! (152)”. Nevertheless, it is here that I need to evoke Hardt’s and Negri’s argument relating to Bartleby’s and K’s absolute refusals and their effects of biological death in order to conclude my argument concerning K’s mobility. Similar to Hardt’s and Negri’s assertion of Bartleby’s immobility, K’s decision to live on a spoonful of water seems irrelevant to corporeal mobility. Rather it characterizes immobility. However, as Deleuze notes, Bartleby is “someone who is born to and stays in a particular place”,⁷⁷ but his refusal contaminates others and proliferates their mobility, opening up a zone of indetermination:

It is the attorney who broke the arrangement he himself had organized, and from the debris Bartleby pulls a trait of an expression, I

⁷⁶ Ibid., 73-4. Mathieu Lindon, “Bartleby”, *Delta* 6 (May 1978), 22.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 76.

PREFER NOT TO, which will proliferate around him and contaminate the others, sending the attorney fleeing. But it will also send language itself into flight, it will open up a zone of indetermination or indiscernibility in which neither words nor characters can be distinguished—the fleeing attorney and the immobile, petrified Bartleby.⁷⁸

In this context, compared to Bartleby's immobility and its contamination, K transforms his mobility into immobility through the dimension of geography. K, as a racial and social other in apartheid South Africa, searches for his endless mobility, but K's flight is, as I have argued, eventually blocked by the logic of hunger. Thus, K stops moving and eating in the space of South Africa, in order to regain his mobility as matter and image. This is, as I have examined, relevant to K's exhaustion of the possibilities concerning an oppressive society. Accordingly, the implausibility of Hardt and Negri's claim that K's refusal is empty, is shown, since K's refusal actually makes impossible the structures of classification, confinement and signification under apartheid. This impossibility creates unlimited movements within the enclosed systems and logic of power, which proliferates a flow of movement in an oppressive society. Consequently, through the extinction of his representative identity as the racial and social other, K becomes the imperceptible in an oppressive South Africa, whilst enabling his unlimited movements in the field of immanence.

V. Conclusion

⁷⁸ "Bartleby; or, The Formula", 76.

In this chapter, I have explored the protagonist K's representative image and his movement towards extinguishing the image, drawing on Deleuze's account of the "extinguished image" and the "exhaustion". The novel demonstrates the strategies of power used to control the lives of the vagrants in apartheid South Africa, by means of both classification and confinement. K, as a nomad, is confined in labour camps, but he endlessly escapes. The escapee also refuses to eat or to speak in the camps. I have described how many commentators have been concerned with K's escape and refusal, and the elusiveness of his categorization, confinement and signification. These commentaries have engaged with both the virtues and the weak points of his escape. On the one hand, although he escapes from the camps, K neglects the issue of political transformation under the apartheid regime. On the other hand, K's escape has ethical and political implications, marking a limit to the logic of classification and confinement. In this context, I have argued that other theorists have not sufficiently explored K's active movement grounded in the mobility of his image, the extinguished image, and the exhaustion, a deficit that has been addressed in my chapter.

In order to examine K's movement, firstly, I have discussed how K's identity is constituted as a representation of his disfigured body and race. Rather than being seen as a mobility of matter and movement, K's body is perceived as a negative image because of his deformed lips and more broadly through racial and social categories, which cause his internment in the camps. Drawing on Deleuze's theoretical perspective of the identification between matter, image and movement, this chapter has also considered the process of the abstraction or representation of K's face and body, through the subtraction of its movement. The representative image of K's body is also relevant to Deleuze's conception of faciality, or a signification of image. K's face is facialized as a coloured vagrant or parasite, which blocks his movement. Secondly, I have put forward a theory of the extinction of K's

representative image by means of Deleuze's reflection on Samuel Beckett's *Film*. In his analysis of Beckett's work, Deleuze proposes the extinction of the three perceptions of action, perception and affection. From Deleuze's perspective, K's escape from the camps is related to the demolition of the surveillance of power that perceives action as taking place everywhere. Recognizing the negativity in Visagie's grandson's perception of him as a servant, K flees from the perception of perception. After that, K erases the categorization of self, extinguishing his affiliation with the family. Thirdly, I have delved into K's refusal, drawing on Deleuze's and Beckett's perspectives on "exhaustion". As Deleuze notes, an exhauster makes realization impossible, drawing the preference for nothing, rather than for selection and exclusion among the various combinations. K's refusal to eat and speak involves an exhaustion of all needs, preferences and significations and thereby has an affinity with Bartleby's absolute refusal—"I would prefer not to". Because of his absolute refusal, K becomes a pure outsider and escapee, by creating the exhaustive terms within the dominant logic and power. As a result, K becomes indiscernible from the perception of power, whilst regaining the movement of his body and image. In this context, his becoming-indiscernible can be seen as a demolition of his subjectivity constituted by the regime, which is similarly found in the Magistrate's and Mrs. Curren's dissolution of their subjectivity, despite the difference between their racial and social positions in the regimes. K's escape, subsequently, becomes an ethical and political movement, by exposing the limits of power under the apartheid regime. Also, K's refusal to eat displays an ontological movement that exhausts the possibilities concerning oppressive discourse in apartheid South Africa, thereby making his unlimited movements in the field of immanence.

Chapter 3

The impersonal power of illness in *Age of Iron*

I. Introduction

This chapter will explore the inorganic and generative power of illness that forces an individual into a collective and impersonal subjectivity in J. M. Coetzee's epistolary novel, *Age of Iron* (1990), with particular reference to Gilles Deleuze's conceptions of illness and death. Illness in our culture is viewed as life-threatening and destructive, and thus embodies negative connotations. However, the core of weakness or disease, in a Deleuzian vein, enables us to engage with the inorganic processes of self-dissolution and affectivity rather than with the self and body bounded as a unified whole, namely, organism. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari do not deny a conception of the body as an assemblage of organs. Rather, they attempt to criticize an organization of the organs of bodies into an entity called an organism. As I have discussed in the Introduction, the body is, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, an assemblage of organs, with the capacity for motion and rest, as well as for affecting and being affected by other bodies. However, rather than its mobility and affectivity, the body can be organized or stratified as a centralized, hierarchized, self-directed form. From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, the inorganic processes caused by physical weakness can provide us with an experience of cracking and fragmenting the organized body and self, which generates a state of impersonality or a non-personal mode of self. In this chapter, I will investigate the sickness of the protagonist Mrs. Curren in the novel as an example of

this impersonality, thus creating an associative link between her personal frailty and the societal illness of the apartheid regime in South Africa. I will suggest that Curren's witnessing of the horrors of the regime generates the conditions of potentiality for an ethico-political transformation on a personal level. In this context, relating the inorganic nature of illness and death in the novel, I will explore the transformation of personal frailty and death into an impersonality that creates the potentiality for a new vision of the apartheid regime.

Personal frailty and death in the novel are explicably caused and influenced by the growing risk and violence of the apartheid regime. Mrs. Curren, a retired Classics professor, is dying of terminal cancer in Cape Town, due to the "accumulation of shame she has endured"¹ in living under the violent regime. Her sense of shame entails her "self-loathing", and in response her body "turns malignant and begins to eat away at itself" (145). While she is dying, Mrs. Curren writes the letter describing her sickness to her daughter in America. However, she requires a homeless man, Vercueil to post the letter to her daughter, only after her own death. Around the same time as she is writing a letter, young black revolutionaries, who proclaim "liberation before education", are massacred by the police. These events take place in the particularly agitated years of the second State of Emergency (1985-1989).² David Attwell describes the South Africa that was at stake in the context of Coetzee's novel:

¹ J.M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 145.

² Graham Huggan calls this novel an "elegy," as Coetzee mourns the tragic deaths of his own family members and black people: "Written between 1986 and 1989, the novel is also set in that turbulent period of South Africa's history; years which were to witness the tragic deaths of his family members—his mother Vera, his father Zachariah and his son Nicolas, to whose memory the novel is dedicated—but also, in violence of cataclysmic proportions, the deaths of thousands of blacks in the cities and townships of the embattled Republic". Graham Huggan, "Evolution and Entropy in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*", *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 191.

...the police have a free hand under emergency regulations to dispense casual injury or death at random, and they do so; on the other side, the young militants of the townships have resorted to a hardened rhetoric of absolutes, sacrificing their youth to the all-encompassing demands of the struggle.³

In a dying country, which resembles a “sinking ship” (22), the pathological symptoms of Mrs. Curren’s emotional and intellectual anguish are detailed alongside black people’s torment and deaths. In particular, black people’s voices are directly heard, which is not seen in Coetzee’s earlier fictions: the eponymous protagonist in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) is compelled to silence, while the slave Friday’s tongue in *Foe* (1986) is already mutilated. In this way, Jane Poyner asserts that “for the first time in the oeuvre black voices are portrayed with tangible (political) agency”.⁴ Similarly, Dominic Head points out that the novel “seemed to represent a clear departure for Coetzee, his most ‘realistic’ novel evoking the Cape Town unrest of 1986”.⁵ Head goes on to assert that “There is certainly a brooding anger and immediacy in this novel”.⁶ Subsequently, through Mrs. Curren’s corporeal frailty, the novel responds to the suffering of black people beyond the personal domain, while embodying collective black voices and speaking out against the malignant regime.

However, with regard to the political predicament in South Africa, it is critical to question why Mrs. Curren’s pain is able to function as an integral element. Taking Mrs. Curren’s position into account is an important point for characterizing her shame and illness in the particular years of the apartheid regime. As a white liberal English-speaking woman, Mrs. Curren’s position is located between the apartheid regime and the black people. As Patrick Hayes observes, in this context, at work are “two competing forms of a difference-

³ David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 120.

⁴ Jane Poyner, “Writing in the Face of Death”, *J.M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 114.

⁵ Dominic Head, *J.M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

based politics”⁷: the apartheid regime, which refuses equal recognition of the majority of the population, and the members of the fractured black family, whose lives are dominated by the need to resist this regime. Taking the position of a liberal humanitarian, Mrs. Curren strongly criticizes both these forms of politics: the apartheid regime and the acts of the black revolutionaries. While criticizing the racial discrimination of the regime, Mrs. Curren also blames the black revolutionaries, since black youths are forced to sacrifice their lives in the name of “comradeship” (150). Nevertheless, her criticisms of the revolutionaries often reveal her own limitations, since she has never observed or experienced black people’s struggles and deaths directly, but rather has heard of them from Florence, her black maid. For this reason, as Hayes rightly asserts, Mrs. Curren’s voice “is pointedly ignored, both by the South African police she encounters and by the black people she knows, and is without any practical influence in the events that unfold around her”.⁸ In this context, the limitations of Mrs. Curren’s liberal humanism for comprehending the suffering of black people in the apartheid regime has an affinity with that of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which I have discussed in the first chapter. The corporeal torments that both suffer enact their transformations, which enable them to develop an ethical relationship with the Other.

However, with reference to Mrs. Curren’s illness, it is important to note that Mrs. Curren’s corporeal frailty is associated with self-dissolution, as she responds to the suffering of black people under the State of Emergency. As I have asserted in the Introduction, Coetzee, in an interview with Attwell, places an emphasis on the authority of the suffering body: “Not grace, then, but at least the body. Let me put it baldly: in South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body. ... the

⁷ Patrick Hayes, *J.M. Coetzee and the novel* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 131.

⁸ *Ibid.*

suffering body *takes* this authority: that is its power”.⁹ In this interview, Coetzee’s assertion of the suffering body is related to the bodies of black people exploited by white people in South African history. Compared to the suffering of black people, Mrs. Curren’s ailment seems to be personal, since her cancer does not lead to her activity against the apartheid regime. A question here arises surrounding the suffering of white people, especially in relation to whether or not Mrs. Curren’s ailing body could have an undeniable authority in the ethical and political dimensions that Coetzee suggests. My contention here is thus that, by coming to terms with her illness, Mrs. Curren is immanently capable of partaking in the shifting politics of South Africa and is also capable of transforming her shame into impersonal disease and death. In terms of Deleuze’s theories, illness provides Mrs. Curren with an experience of dis-identification, which ultimately brings her to revise her perceptions of the black revolution.

In order to examine the impersonal power of illness and weakness, it is useful to draw on the Deleuzian conceptions of illness and death, as Deleuze describes them in *The Logic of Sense* and *Critical and Clinical*. An illness such as cancer is generally thought to be “intractable and capricious—that is, a disease not understood—in an era in which medicine’s central premise is that all diseases can be cured”.¹⁰ However, Deleuze characterizes illness as the inorganic life of the body, which is available for the self to enter into a process of impersonal life. In this way, one “no longer has a Self by which it might distinguish itself from or merge with others”.¹¹ Yet, it is also crucial to note that an impersonality “is not a generality but a singularity at its highest point”.¹² Deleuze draws

⁹ J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 248.

¹⁰ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor & Aids and its Metaphors* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 5.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

on an example of impersonality in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* to illustrate this: in the interval between life and death, the disreputable Rogue Riderhood's life "gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life".¹³ Deleuze goes on to explain this moment:

... a "*Homo tantum*" with whom everyone empathizes, and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer an individuation but of a singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular life essence, a life ...¹⁴

Through a process of "im-personalization", Riderhood, according to John Rajchman, becomes our "common friend" beyond good and bad. In a Deleuzian view, the process opens up a "'virtuality' in the life of the corresponding individual that can sometimes emerge in the strange interval before death".¹⁵ As Clare Colebrook points out, an "anti-Deleuzian Deleuze"¹⁶ emerges in his vision of "the virtual", which has problematically been discussed by critics such as Alain Badiou.¹⁷ However, Deleuze's conception of the virtual does not exist beyond a reality, but rather both composes reality and contains all possible realities. Specifically, Deleuze describes the virtual as "not something that lacks

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman, intro. John Rajchman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-9.

¹⁵ John Rajchman, "Introduction", *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman, intro. John Rajchman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 14.

¹⁶ Clare Colebrook, "Anti-Vitalism: Kaufman's Deleuze of Inertia", *Postmodern Culture*, 23:1 (September 2012), 1.

¹⁷ Alain Badiou criticizes Deleuze's conception of the virtual on the basis that it is a sort of Platonism: "I would readily state that, whereas my aim is to found a Platonism of the multiple, Deleuze's concern was with a Platonism of the virtual. Deleuze retains from Plato the univocal sovereignty of the One, but sacrifices the determination of the Idea as always actual. For him, the Idea is the virtual totality, the One is the infinite reservoir of dissimilar productions" (46). Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 46.

reality but something that is engaged in a process of actualization following the plane that gives it its particular reality".¹⁸ Deleuze also highlights the reality of the virtual in *Difference and Repetition*: "The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realization'. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualization".¹⁹ In this context, the virtual enables us to experience our openness to the Other through the process of impersonalization. In Deleuze's ontology, the virtual is composed of "the pre-individual singularities" that are not actualized by an individual. This conception of the virtual makes possible impersonal or non-personal singularity.

A further example of illness as an impersonality can be found in Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche. Deleuze, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, posits illness as an inorganic force that separates us from the organic action of the body and which may even act as a source of resilience:

Illness ... separates me from what I can do, as reactive force it makes me reactive, it narrows my possibilities and condemns me to a diminished milieu to which I can do no more than adapt myself. But, in another way, it reveals to me a new capacity, it endows me with a new will that I can make my own, going to the limit of a strange power.²⁰

Illness as a reactive force is thereby able to guide us to witness "something in life" beyond the personal domain. In particular, great authors, in literature and philosophy are, according

¹⁸ Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 31.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 211.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 66.

to Deleuze and Guattari, often fragile, “not because of their illness or neuroses” which causes them to escape from life, but because they have witnessed and experienced “something in life that is too much for anyone”.²¹ As a result, the authors may write of personal sickness, but what is diagnosed in their writings is less a personal affair than something impersonal. In the same way, Mrs. Curren’s writing of personal sickness offers the possibility for transforming her personal affairs into an impersonal dimension, drawing on a new mode of inter-subjectivity that the subject coexists and interacts with the Other in the corporeal and incorporeal dimensions. This mode of inter-subjectivity can provide ethico-political implications in South Africa where an interaction between black people and white people has been blocked.

In this chapter, I will explore how Mrs. Curren’s sickness under the apartheid regime has ethico-political implications in terms of Deleuze’s theory of illness and death. Firstly, I will examine how Mrs. Curren’s terminal cancer provides her with an experience of being split in and through the Other, by drawing on Deleuze’s conception of corporeal and incorporeal cracks. Secondly, the deaths of the black revolutionaries will be examined in connection with Mrs. Curren’s state of dying, utilizing Deleuze’s theory of the dual natures of death: personal and impersonal deaths. Finally, Mrs. Curren’s epistolary form of writing will be discussed in terms of Deleuze’s conception of an impersonal writing. Subsequently, rather than reading her illness as a metaphor for the virulent regime in a turbulent age, my approach will be focused on Mrs. Curren’s corporeal frailty and its relation to an inorganic and generative power. In the process, I will thus suggest an impersonal singularity for apartheid South Africa, whilst providing an ontological vision for a new state.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 172.

II. Subjectivity as a crack

Disease in the novel can be read, as Michael Neil and Mike Marais suggest, as a metaphor for the breakdown of South African society. Neil attests that Mrs. Curren's sickness "appears as much metaphorical as medical", because her disease ultimately represents an act as a "rehearsal for death rather than the real thing".²² Relating Mrs. Curren's personal frailty to the malignant regime, Mike Marais interprets disease as a metaphor that signifies the "deformation of the state's power structures" that "deform and brutalize whoever is exposed to them".²³ Marais also points out that *Age of Iron*, as the title suggests, draws on the metaphor of the "classical myth about human decadences and anarchic self-destruction".²⁴ In relation to South African politics, Mrs. Curren's disease can be thus metaphorically characterized as not only a personal pain, but also a political crisis. However, my argument here is that, rather than acting as a metaphor for political deformation, Mrs. Curren's sickness is inextricably linked with the process of her corporeal dissolution and its transformation into an impersonality, which brings about a sense of cohesion between black people and white people within a racially segregated culture. Thus, I will show how Mrs. Curren's disease produces a new figuration of subjectivity as a crack.

²² Michel Neil, "The Language of the Heart", *J.M. Coetzee's Austerities*, eds. Graham Bradshaw and Michael Neil (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 90. Interestingly, Neil suggests the reason why Mrs. Curren's illness can be read as a metaphor for her rehearsal of death: "in the closing sentence in the novel, she gives herself to the cold embrace of Mr. Vercueil"; "for to read it otherwise would be to destroy the novel's foundational fiction—that it has been written as a letter from a living woman" (90).

²³ Mike Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), 98.

²⁴ As Mike Marais asserts, the title alludes to Hesiod's description of the "age of the iron race," in which "The father will quarrel with his sons, the sons with their / father, / guest will quarrel with host," and "Might will be justice". Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible*, 98.

The novel begins with Mrs. Curren's sense of an unsavory smell from a vagrant man in her house and her acknowledgement of cancer within her body. Mrs. Curren thinks of these as "Two things, then in the space of an hour, the news, long dreaded, and this reconnaissance, this other annunciation" (5). The vagrant Vercueil haunts Mrs. Curren's house, whilst she recognizes herself as an ailing and dying woman, living in a regime of death. Yet, it is her illness that leads to her thought of Vercueil's unfamiliar and bad smell as an annunciation. Mrs. Curren's perception of her cancer creates a pivotal moment where her identity shifts into what Deleuze calls a 'crack' in *The Logic of Sense*. As Aidan Tynan explains, the crack is, for Deleuze, "the line of separation which splits us from ourselves, which splits up the organic and personal unity with which health, in the popularly accepted sense, is identified".²⁵ Deleuze's pathology of the crack is related to a phrase from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Crack Up*: "Of course all life is a process of breaking down".²⁶ From this phrase, Deleuze articulates distinctive processes for the two different kinds of cracks in life: the corporeal (noisy) and the incorporeal (silent). With reference to the corporeal crack, the heroes and heroines in Fitzgerald's novel, for example, see happiness as being embodied in looks, charm and riches, but "something happens that shatters them like an old plate or glass".²⁷ In contrast to this, the incorporeal crack is "another type of cracking"—"micro cracks, as in a dish": The crack up "happens almost without your knowing it but is realized suddenly indeed" (*Crack Up* 69).²⁸ This micro crack is silent and imperceptible, and it happens virtually. Put it another way, whilst the corporeal crack is related to a personal crack actualized within the body, the silent and incorporeal crack is processed through an

²⁵ Aidan Tynan, *Deleuze's Literary Clinic: Criticism and the Politics of Symptoms* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 42.

²⁶ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 154. *The Crack Up*, 69.

²⁷ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 155.

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 198-9.

impersonal dimension.

Drawing on Deleuze's thoughts concerning the two different types of cracks, we can further examine how Mrs. Curren's corporeal frailty triggers these cracks. As I have asserted earlier, Mrs. Curren suffers from the accumulated shame she has endured in the apartheid regime. The regime's sickness has silently invaded both the inside and outside of Mrs. Curren's body through an incorporeal crack, but her endurance of this shame is suddenly actualized as a corporeal crack in the form of cancer. Accordingly, Mrs. Curren's sickness threatens and destroys her organic body, which causes a split between herself and her organic and healthy body. Mrs. Curren expresses her torment as follows:

The sickness that now eats me is dry, bloodless and cold, sent by Saturn. There is something about it that does not bear thinking of. To have fallen pregnant with these growths, these cold, obscene swellings; to have carried and carried this brood beyond any natural term, unable to bear them, unable to sate their hunger: children inside me eating more every day, not growing but bloating, toothed, clawed, forever cold and ravenous. Dry, dry: to feel them turning at night in my dry body, not stretching and kicking as a human child does but changing their angle, finding a new place to gnaw. My eggs, grown within me. *Me, mine*: words I shudder to write, yet true. (64)

Her mortification has become incarnated inside her body. With the spread of cancer, her body, similar to a pregnant one, also becomes swollen, creating unbearable pain every day in both corporeal and incorporeal dimensions. Her physiological deformation on the inside and outside of her body sets in motion a process of generating the unbearable other (or the malignant tumor). This is associated with the reason why her sickness could be seen as more desirable than her health. The cancer, although it invades her body, constructs an unfamiliar form: the body growing the eggs of death. Her body becomes a new figuration

through living with cancer: “I have a child inside that I cannot give birth to. Cannot because it will not be born. Because it cannot live outside me. So it is my prisoner or I am its prisoner” (82). Accordingly, Mrs. Curren’s body becomes “death in life” (86). In this context, Deleuze claims that “health does not suffice, but the crack is desirable” for particular people: “it is perhaps because only by means of the crack and at its edges thought occurs, that anything that is good and great in humanity enters and exists through it, in people ready to destroy themselves—better death than the health which we are given”.²⁹ Thus, by pushing herself to the edge of personal unity, Mrs. Curren becomes de-personalized, in a state of dying: “I am dying because in my heart I do not want to live. I am dying because I want to die (137).” In this sense, by cracking her body, Mrs. Curren’s sickness produces a new figuration of intersubjectivity that coexists with the unbearable other such as illness and death. Thus, bearing cancer in her body, Mrs. Curren embodies the living dead as a figuration of intersubjectivity.

This new configuration of intersubjectivity in terms of illness has ethical and political implications under the apartheid regime. In order to examine this issue, Mrs. Curren’s illness as corporeal and incorporeal cracks can be rethought in terms of its relation with temporality. These cracks, through Mrs. Curren’s dying, are the fundamental conditions of subjectivity with time, because the “I” is in time and is constantly affective. In other words, the self is affective within time. It is a formal relation of time that splits the “I”. Specifically, for Deleuze, the “I” is bisected into two modes of time: a present time (*Chronos*) and a past-future conjunction (*Aion*). Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* explains the opposition between *Aion* and *Chronos*:

Chronos is the present which alone exists. It makes of the past and

²⁹ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 160.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 154. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack Up* (New York: New Directions, 1945), 69.

future its two oriented dimensions, so that one goes always from the past to the future—but only to the degree that presents follow one another inside partial worlds or partial systems. Aion is the past-future, which is an infinite subdivision of the abstract moment endlessly decomposes itself in both directions at once and forever sidesteps the present.³⁰

In other words, whilst Chronos is corporeal and present, Aion is incorporeal and unlimited, “stretching out in a straight line, limitless in either direction”.³¹ Thus, the time of Aion allows for an event that never actualized as the present, but which has: “always already passed and eternally yet to come”.³² The event is “always and at the same time something which has just happened and something about to happen; never something which is happening”.³³ In this way, one lives dual times: one lives in the corporeal and present time and in the incorporeal and non-present time. In this context, in a crack such as “alcoholism”, it can be seen that the “I” loses the sense of the present moment. Deleuze claims that “the hardening of the present (I have) is now related to an effect of the flight of the past (drunk). Everything culminates in a ‘has been’”.³⁴ However, Deleuze goes on to assert that “this effect of the flight of the past constitutes its depressive aspect, represented by the loss of the object or the present moment in every sense and direction”.³⁵ Nevertheless, the effect that this flight yields is the greatest force of the eternal return. In other words, an alcoholic repeatedly returns to the past not to live only in the present moment, which produces multiple cracks inscribed in the body. Deleuze further articulates that “each time must double this painful actualization by a counter actualization, which limits, moves, and

³⁰ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 77.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

transfigures it”.³⁶ In this way, Mrs. Curren’s loss of health like Gatsby’s loss of love in *The Great Gatsby* entails the alcohol-effect. Mrs. Curren’s cancer is actualized as a corporeal crack in her body, but it separates her from the moment in which she was healthy. With her loss of health in the present, Mrs. Curren is also able to experience the flight of the past and an eternal return from the past to the future. From Deleuze’s perspective, the actualization of Mrs. Curren’s cancer allows her to experience the incorporeal cracks of embracing the past and unfolding the future in South Africa.

When receiving the news of her cancer from Dr. Syfret, Mrs. Curren thinks of her sickness as a sort of wall or blockage, which isolates her from the world, yet tries to accept her own sickness: “it was mine, for me, mine only, not to be refused” (4). However, although Dr. Syfret says that: “we will tackle this together” (4), Mrs. Curren finds her ailing body divided from the living: “His allegation to the living, not the dying” (4). Her physical pain undoubtedly indicates a limitation she cannot share with other people—not even her daughter. Perceiving an abyssal gap between the living and the dying, Mrs. Curren decides to endure her sickness without letting her daughter know: “The first task laid on me, from today: to resist the craving to share my death. Loving you, loving life, to forgive the living and take my leave without bitterness. To embrace death as my own, mine alone” (6). However, without betraying her willingness to deal with her illness on her own, Mrs. Curren exposes her desire to share her pain with her absent daughter:

“How I longed for you to be here, to hold me, comfort me! I begin to understand the true meaning of the embrace. We embrace to be embraced. We embrace our children to be folded in the arms of the future, to pass ourselves on beyond death, to be transported. That is how it was when I embraced you, always. We bear children in order to be mothered

³⁶ Ibid., 161.

by them” (5).

In the passage above, a synthetic subjectivity is evidenced as a form of “embrace”. Mrs. Curren’s personal dying paradoxically enables her to realize intersubjective relations with the Other in time, like a mother embracing her children folded into the past and unfolded into the arms of the future. Mrs. Curren’s self is fractured through temporality into the “I” of the present and a mother embracing her child in the *past perfect* as well as the *future perfect*. In this sense, Mrs. Curren comes to think of her sickness as a form of impersonal life: “Mommy should not be sad, for she would not die but live on in you” (6).

Through her sickness, Mrs. Curren ultimately recognizes herself as an impersonal wound in relation to the oppressive history of South Africa. Thus, her illness is diagnosed as the collective and impersonal crimes that white people have committed:

A crime was committed long ago. How long ago? I do not know. But longer ago than 1916, certainly. So long ago that I was born into it. It is part of my inheritance. It is part of me, I am part of it. ... Though it was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name. I raged at times against the men who did the dirty work—you have seen it, a shameful raging as stupid as what it raged against—but I accepted too that, in a sense, they lived inside me. So that when in my rages I wished them dead, I wished death on myself too”. (164)

Mrs. Curren’s incorporeal wound is linked to the history of South Africa and is actualized by her corporeal illness or crack. In this regard, rather than personifying a sense of guilt for the victims in South Africa, Mrs. Curren embodies the crimes that white people have committed in history. As Deleuze notes, “my wound existed before me” on the grounds that “a wound is incarnated or actualized in a state of things or life: but it is itself a pure

virtuality on the plane of immanence that leads us into a life".³⁷ From this, it is important to note that Mrs. Curren's wish to pronounce the crimes dead does not imply her suicide or corporeal death, but it rather refers to her state of dying, or living dead, since her body, which committed the crimes in the past will be folded and unfolded into the arms of the future. In this sense, in terms of the interactions between corporeal and incorporeal cracks, Mrs. Curren recognizes herself as a wounded woman in South Africa.

III. From a sacrificial death to an impersonal death

Despite her perception of an intersubjective relation between herself and her child, Mrs. Curren is not able to extend her embrace to black people and their children. Because of her position as a white liberal, Mrs. Curren still does not see the need to create something impersonal beyond her personal affairs. There are profound gaps between black people and white people in the apartheid regime. Grounded in a system of racial inequality, their great economic and political difference can be grasped in terms of the contrast between the residences of Mrs. Curren and the black families. Florence, as a servant, lives in Mrs. Curren's house, which is big like a "boarding house" (10). The segregated residences for black people are represented by squatter shacks, which are burnt in the township of Guguletu. A majority of the black people are homeless, roaming and begging, thus demonstrating a great divide between their lives and those of white people:

And on the other side of the great divide their white cousin's soul stunted too, spinning themselves tighter and tighter into their sleepy cocoons. Swimming lessons, riding lessons, ballet lessons; cricket on the

³⁷ Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 31.

lawn; lives passed within walled gardens guarded by bulldogs; children of paradise, blond, innocent, shining with angelic light, soft as *putti*. Their residence the limbo of the unborn, their innocence the innocence of bee grubs, plump and white, drenched in honey, absorbing sweetness through their soft skins. Slumberous their souls, bliss-filled, abstracted.

(7)

In this segregated society, black children are forced to sacrifice their personal lives, but only to live their political lives for a struggle against the apartheid regime. Mrs. Curren conceptualizes this brutal plight as “a thanatophany: showing us our deaths. *Viva la muerte!* Their cry, their threat. Death to the young. Death to life. Boars that devour their offspring. The Boar War” (30-1). In this death-driven and merciless society, black people are compelled to abandon their lives. Whilst Mrs. Curren suffers from anguish and shame, Florence has to deny her motherhood for black liberation. This denied motherhood affects both sides: Mrs. Curren’s daughter left the dying country as war broke out, whilst Florence’s son Bheki protests against the State and then sacrifices his life. Seeking a radical shift in relation to racial discrimination, black youths proclaim “freedom or death!” (163). Their deaths depicted in the novel ultimately play a crucial role in radically changing Mrs. Curren’s perception of the black revolutionaries. In this section, I will argue that their death functions as an event, drawing on the difference between a sacrificial and an impersonal death, which connects apartheid South Africa to the community to come.

Taking the position of a white liberal, Mrs. Curren strongly criticizes both the oppressive apartheid regime and the black revolutionaries on the grounds that both rely on the politics of death. On the one hand, her aversion to apartheid is often revealed through the symptoms of her sickness and its relation to the regime: an ailing old woman and a dying country. In the years of war, policemen massacre black insurrectionists. Land is taken by force and is “despoiled, spoiled, abandoned in its barren late years” (26). Also, the

message of the politicians never changes and “turns people to stone” (29). The message, from Mrs. Curren’s point of view, deprives people of their thought and emotion by raising stupidity to a virtue: “To stupefy; to deprive of feeling; to benumb, deaden; to stun with amazement. Stupor; insensibility, apathy, torpor of mind. Stupid: dulled in the faculties, indifferent, destitute of thought or feeling” (29). On the other hand, Mrs. Curren also keeps a distance from the black militants gathering in the black townships. The black children are educated as warriors: “being careless of their own lives and everything else” (48). Their parents, like Florence, send their children to death. Thus, Mrs. Curren thinks of Florence as a Spartan mother in the age of iron: “A Spartan matron, iron-hearted, bearing warrior sons of the nation. ‘We are proud of them’. We. Come home either with your shield or on your shield” (50). From Mrs. Curren’s perspective, both the politics of the regime and the black revolutionaries cause people to resemble iron, thus calling for the deaths of the younger generations.

However, with her experience of the deaths of black people, Mrs. Curren radically changes her perspective on the black revolutionaries. This change in perspective is brought about by the death of two black youths: Florence’s son Bheki and his friend John, whose deaths Mrs. Curren witnesses. It is helpful to look at Mrs. Curren’s perspective on the black youths, before examining the two deaths as an event. Bheki and John are militant revolutionaries who partake in a school boycott, and who are temporarily staying in Mrs. Curren’s house. Yet, they, as the new Puritans, push their creed to be afraid of nothing and to act violently towards anyone, which is the opposite of their central conviction. For instance, Bheki finds Vercueil drunk in Mrs. Curren’s house, as he tugs at a bottle of brandy in his pocket. Shattering Vercueil’s bottle of brandy, Bheki says, “they [the white people] are making you into a dog!” (45), and then takes out a belt from his trousers and begins to lash him. Alongside his calling Vercueil a dog, Bheki’s attack on him resembles white

people's colonial discourse and violence, as represented by the colonizer's categorization of black people as inhuman beings and their lashing of black slaves in the past. Yet, Florence is openly proud of Bheki's violent action against Vercueil. Shocked by his violence and Florence's response, Mrs. Curren claims that Florence's acceptance of her son's violence could push him to become callous, while retelling Florence a story she had once told. Florence had previously witnessed children in the townships who had laughed at a burning woman who was screaming for help. Furthermore, they threw more petrol on her (49). Nevertheless, Florence blames white people for making the children so cruel. In this context, whilst struggling against the oppressor, the black revolutionaries repeat the ideology and violence of the colonizers in history. Accordingly, Mrs. Curren observes that the revolutionaries, through their lack of mercy and emotion, have become monsters.

Mrs. Curren criticizes the term "comradeship", a central concept drawn on by the black revolutionaries in the novel, because of its resonance with fascist politics. Mrs. Curren, whilst debating with Florence's relative, Mrs. Thabane, claims that:

"Comradeship is nothing but a mystique of death, of killing and dying, masquerading as what you call a bond (a bond of what? Love? I doubt it). I have no sympathy with this comradeship. You are wrong, you and Florence and everyone else, to be taken in by it and, worse, to encourage it in children. It is just another of those icy, exclusive, death-driven male constructions".
(150)

Despite Mrs. Curren's criticism of the affinity between the revolutionaries and the Nazis in terms of this comradeship, it is also important to acknowledge the great difference between these groups on the grounds that the black people in apartheid South Africa are victims of an oppressive regime, which denies fundamental rights of equality, whilst the Nazis were the oppressors. Without a sort of comradeship that could work towards liberation, the status

of black people was confined to slavery. That is why the younger generation of black revolutionaries in the novel is required to be puritans and their parents oppress their emotions, even when they face their own children's deaths. In a segregated society, black people are seen as non-human beings, and thus are forced to sacrifice their personal and emotional lives, which have already been denied by white people. Mrs. Curren initially does not understand that the black revolutionaries' comradeship requires the politics of sacrifice. However, her position radically shifts to support for the black revolutionaries, after witnessing Bheki and John's victimization by the police. In one incident, the police deliberately push the two boys, causing them to crash into a truck. After the crash, Bheki quickly recovers, but John lays sprawled on his back, bleeding over the pavement. Mrs. Curren then pinches John's bleeding parts tightly to stop the blood, although she does not like him. At that moment, she feels herself tied up with him in terms of the flow of blood: "Because blood is one: a pool of life dispersed among us in separate existences, but belonging by nature together" (63). Mrs. Curren's witnessing of their deaths immediately affects her transformation into inter-subjectivity and then impersonality.

Amongst the two deaths, Mrs. Curren observes Bheki's dead body shot in the township of Guguletu during black faction fighting:

Against the far wall, shielded from the worst of the rain, were five bodies neatly laid out. The body in the middle was that of Florence's Bheki. He still wore the gray flannel trousers, white shirts, and maroon pullover of his school, but his feet were bare. His eyes were open and staring, his mouth open too. The rain had been beating on him for hours, on him and his comrades, not only here but wherever they had been when they met their deaths; their clothes, their very hair, had a flattened, dead look. In the corners of his eyes there were grains of sand. There was sand in his mouth. (102)

The pictorial description of the dead body of Bheki represents an instance where Mrs. Curren faces death. Seeing Bheki's body, Mrs. Curren says: "This is the worst thing I have witnessed in my life. And I thought Now my eyes are open and I can never close them again" (102-3). It is here that we need to rethink the nature of death in order to understand Bheki's death and its effect on Mrs. Curren. The death of Bheki affects Mrs. Curren by forcing her to experience a conjunction between her terminal condition and Bheki's death.

However, a question arises from Mrs. Curren's opening her eyes and its relation to her terminal condition. After her revelation, Mrs. Curren chooses to become a sufferer like black people. Rather than engaging with the black revolution or addressing a public criticism of the regime, she passively witnesses and bears their suffering. Witnessing John being killed by the police in her house, Mrs. Curren goes out to the street, saying that "It's not my home anymore" (157). As a result, sleeping on the street, she becomes a wanderer like Vercueil and has to endure pain and humiliation. She has to urinate where she lies. The black boys creep over her body and press a stick between her lips and gums to find the golden teeth: "With the tip of the stick he lifted my upper lip. I pulled back and tried to spit. Impassively he stood up. With a bare foot he kicked, and a little rain of dust and pebbles struck my face" (159). Yet, she cannot prevent the black boys from attacking her. Rather, she passively undertakes her suffering. After her eyes open, the wandering and the humiliation she experiences have an affinity with those of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the barbarians*. The processes that both Mrs. Curren and the Magistrate suffer on a personal level, are thus connected with ethical and political implications. Their processes foreground the colonizer's transformations through their corporeal frailty. Nevertheless, compared to the Magistrate, Mrs. Curren's ailing and dying create an impersonal death in its ontological dimensions.

Specifically, we can rethink Mrs. Curren's experience by drawing on Deleuze's

account of impersonal death. For Deleuze, death always has a dual nature, comprising an actual and a virtual death. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Deleuze explains two aspects of death, which resonate with Maurice Blanchot's notions of personal and impersonal death. One is "personal" concerning "the I or the ego", and the other is "impersonal", "with no relation to 'me', neither present nor past but always coming".³⁸ Blanchot, in *The Instance of My Death*, describes impersonal death as a living in death: "I am alive. No, you are dead".³⁹ According to Deleuze, a personal death "occurs and is actualized in the most harsh present", but an impersonal death, as an event, is "inseparable from the past to the future into which it is divided, never present, 'ungraspable, that which I cannot grasp, for it is not bound to me by any sort of relation, which never comes and toward which I do not go'".⁴⁰ To put it another way, split from a personal death in the present, an impersonal death is a dying, but it is also, as James William explains, "a living on through participation in a cycle

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 112. Drawing on Blanchot's conceptualization of two deaths in *The Space of Literature*, Deleuze quotes the following words from Blanchot: "It is the fact of dying that includes a radical reversal, through which the death that was the extreme form of my power not only becomes what loosens my hold upon myself by casting me out of my power to begin and even to finish, but also becomes that which is without any relation to me, without power over me—that which is stripped of all possibility—the unreality of the indefinite. I cannot represent this reversal to my self, I cannot conceive of it as definitive. It is not the irreversible step beyond which there would be no return, for it is that which is not accomplished, the interminable and the incessant. ... It is inevitable but inaccessible death; it is the abyss of the present, time without a present, with which I have no relationships; it is that toward which I cannot go from, for in it I do not die, I have fallen from the power to die. In it they die; they do not cease, and they do not finish dying ... not the term, but the interminable, not proper but featureless death, and not true death but, as Kafka says, 'the sneer of its capital error'." Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 154-5. Despite the fact that Deleuze describes an affinity with Blanchot's conception of impersonal death in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, Eleanor Kaufman claims that there is a difference between Blanchot's and Deleuze's theories. According to Kaufman: "Maurice Blanchot embraces more fully than Deleuze, at least in the twentieth-century French tradition, a being of pure inertia and immobility, so that, for Blanchot, movement or action ultimately leads to a more radical form of inertia, an *inertia of being* (as opposed to a seemingly more Deleuzian notion of becoming)", since Deleuze's discussion of "Aion" (impersonal time) as the "event" displays "an implicit premium placed on the movement of becoming". Eleanor Kaufman, *Deleuze, The Dark Precursor: Dialectic, Structure, Being* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 111. However, despite Kaufman's claim, I connect Blanchot's conception of impersonal death to that of Deleuze through Deleuze's analysis of death in his works.

³⁹ Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of my Death*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 9.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 156.

of dying”, because although “everything dies we live on in the dying and living of others”.⁴¹ In the case of Bheki, his heartbeat ceases, which identifies his actual and personal death. Yet, Mrs. Curren experiences Bheki’s death as an impersonal one through her connection of his death with the cycle of death and others’ lives from the past to the future.

Specifically, as she confesses to Vercueil, Mrs. Curren identifies a major difference between the deaths of black and white people: “I have not seen black people in their death before, Mr. Vercueil. They are dying all the time, I know, but always somewhere else. The people I have seen die have been white and have died in bed” (124). Compared to white people’s natural dying, the black revolutionaries cannot die gradually, but they are rather massacred and sacrificed. Nevertheless, Mrs. Curren eventually links Bheki’s death to an impersonal death:

It has something to do with his deadness, his dead weight. It is as though in death he became very heavy, like lead or like that thick, airless mud you get at the bottoms of dams. As though in the act of dying he gave a last sight and all the lightness went out of him. Now he is lying on top of me with all that weight. Not pressing, just lying. (124)

Bheki’s death repeatedly returns at every moment of Mrs. Curren’s life, accumulating through the weight of time. As well as affecting Mrs. Curren, this also offers potential for a changing sociopolitical landscape in South Africa.

In this context, Mrs. Curren’s own death in the last part of the novel can be rethought through Deleuze’s conceptualization of an impersonal death.

⁴¹ James Williams, “Never Too Late? On the implications of Deleuze’s Work on Death for a Deleuzian Moral Philosophy”, *Deleuze and Ethics*, eds. Nathan Jun and Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 173.

“Is it time?” I said. I got back into bed, into the tunnel between cold sheets. The curtains parted; he came in beside me. For the first time I smelled nothing. He took me in his arms and held me with mighty force, so that the breath went out of me in a rush. From that embrace there was no warmth to be had. (198)

Because this part occurs at the point where Mrs. Curren writes of her own death in a letter, Jane Poyner claims that “the letter apparently breaks off as Vercueil squeezes out her last breath”.⁴² Poyner goes on to suggest that “the narrator is brought to a close” by an unnamed narrator, or presumably Coetzee.⁴³ However, given Blanchot’s and Deleuze’s conception of an impersonal death, Mrs. Curren’s death can be understood as an impersonal death: “I am dying” rather than her actual and personal death. In other words, as in Deleuze’s account, she wishes to bring about the “coincidence of the two faces of death—of prolonging impersonal death by means of the most personal act”.⁴⁴ As a result, Mrs. Curren does not die as an individual, or as a white liberal, but rather she lives in death in an impersonal dimension. She can participate in the deaths and lives of both black people and white people by drawing a conjunction between the past and the future. In Deleuze’s account, Ms. Curren’s dying can also be seen as an event, which continues to multiply the movements from the past to the future in the virtual dimension.

The event in turn, in its impassibility and impenetrability, has no present. It rather retreats and advances in two directions at once, being the perpetual object of a double question: What is going to happen? What has just happened? The agonizing aspect of the pure event is that it is always and at the same time something which has just happened and

⁴² Poyner, “Writing in the Face of Death”, 117.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 156.

something about to happen; never something which is happening.⁴⁵

In the event, Mrs. Curren's actual death never happens and has yet happened.⁴⁶ This paradoxical time resonates with what Deleuze calls Hamlet's great formula: "Time is out of joint, time is unhinged. The hinges are the axis around which the door turns".⁴⁷ Deleuze goes on to assert: "But time out of joint signifies the reversal of the movement—time relationship. . . . Time is no longer related to the movement which is measure, but movement is related to the time which conditions it".⁴⁸ In paradoxical time, Mrs. Curren becomes another, thus embodying Rimbaud's formula that "I is another".⁴⁹ It is here that we can consider an ethical aspect of Mrs. Curren's impersonal death in the South African context. Mrs. Curren's dying in the time of paradox is linked to the time to come for the community, which is irreducible to the present in South Africa.

IV. A posthumous letter as an impersonal message

After having been diagnosed with terminal cancer, Mrs. Curren starts to write a letter to her absent daughter. She also requests the homeless man Vercueil, as a messenger,

⁴⁵ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 63.

⁴⁶ Jack Reynolds explains that Deleuze's account of "the event" has an affinity with Derrida's conception of "the messianic": "Indeed, according to Deleuze, the genuine Stoic sage must simultaneously wait for the event as something eternally yet to come and always already passed (*Aion*) (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 166). The truth of the pure event is its paradoxical temporal dimension: the waiting expectation of an arrival that is quite closely related to what Derrida calls the messianic, along with the recognition that the event has also already passed". Jack Reynolds, *Chronopathologies: Time and Politics in Deleuze, Derrida, Analytic Philosophy, and Phenomenology* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 118. This affinity between Deleuze and Derrida in terms of temporality can be considered as a possibility of opening to the time to come in South Africa. This will be reconsidered in the next chapter on *The Master of Petersburg*.

⁴⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Continuum, 2008) vii.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, viii.

to post the letter to her daughter, after her death. This posthumous letter can be understood as a sort of document of Mrs. Curren's personal sickness and of her experience of the turbulence within South African society. Yet, rather than acting as a record of a personal story, Jane Poyner characterizes the letter as a confession of the truth through which she "bares her soul": "hers is the confessant's struggle for endings".⁵⁰ However, Mrs. Curren denies that the letter is a confession of her personal conviction: "This letter is not a baring of my heart. It is a baring of something, but not of my heart" (15). Nevertheless, given the fact that Mrs. Curren confesses her shame and torment with regards to living in the regime, the letter might be read as a confession containing self-doubt. As Neil asserts, a confessant "endlessly interrogates not only his own truthfulness, but even the sincerity of that interrogation itself".⁵¹ However, if Mrs. Curren aims to send her addressee a message that relays the truth, Mrs. Curren chooses a strange way of sending it. She requests the vagrant Vercueil to post it to the receiver after her death. We could question why Mrs. Curren chooses Vercueil as a messenger instead of other people such as Florence. Vercueil is basically a ragged stranger: "a derelict, an alcoholic, a lost soul" (14). As Graham Huggan explains, he is the "most treacherous of allies" etymologically: "In French, his name suggests a combination of 'ver' (worm) and 'cercueil' (coffin); in Afrikaans a conflation of 'verkul' (to cheat) and 'cercueil' (to hide)".⁵² In this context, Derek Attridge claims that there is "something absolute about the trust that is called for," because the letter is "posthumous, without thought of return".⁵³ Thus, according to Attridge, Mrs. Curren must trust him as the Other on the grounds that "the recipient of her trust will never be called to account; the daughter will never know of the letter's existence if it does not arrive".⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Poyner, "Writing in the Face of Death", 111.

⁵¹ Neil, "The Language of Heart", 86.

⁵² Huggan, "Evolution and Entropy in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*", 202.

⁵³ Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 93-4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

However, my contention here is that Mrs. Curren's letter represents an inorganic and impersonal form of language, strikingly differentiated from Poyner's notion of a confession or of baring a soul, and Attridge's assertion of the letter as an implication of trust for the Other.

It is necessary to raise a question concerning why Mrs. Curren writes a letter to her absent daughter. In spite of her position as an intellectual, Mrs. Curren recognizes that there are limitations to her knowledge, by virtue of her position as a white liberal within a racially segregated South African society. As I have mentioned earlier, by means of the media, such as TV, the message of the State is unchanging and discourages people from critically engaging with what they see. It thus causes them to lack empathy and petrifies them. In this way, no possibility exists for changing the segregated society, since the message of the State is fixed and is unilaterally sent to the people. Mrs. Curren's theories of classics and morality are also distant from reality, as she cannot properly communicate with Florence and Bheki who often ignore her words. She hears about the situation of the schools and the black rebellion in Guguletu only from Florence. Her insufficient knowledge thus represents a lack of experience concerning the reality. For this reason, on receiving the news of her terminal cancer, Mrs. Curren writes a message concerning her dying to her daughter, because she believes death is not merely a thought but the truth: "Death is the only truth left. At every moment when I am thinking of something else, I am not thinking death, I am not thinking the truth" (26). Accordingly, Mrs. Curren writes a letter and tries to reach out to her daughter: "So day by day I render myself into words and pack the words into the page like sweets: like sweets for my daughter, for her birthday, for the day of her birth. Words of my body, drops of myself, for her to unpack in her own time, to take in, to such, to absorb" (9). In this sense, her letter is filled with the words of her body, drops of herself for her daughter in the future.

However, we can ask to whom Mrs. Curren writes the letter. Poyner insists that the letter “is addressed to both her daughter and to the unresponsive and aloof vagrant Vercueil”.⁵⁵ However, Mrs. Curren interrogates herself and then clearly answers this question: “To whom this writing then? The answer: to you but not to you; to me; to you in me” (6). From this, the addressee is not only Mrs. Curren’s daughter, but also the intersubjective exchange between herself and her daughter across time. The multiple addressees are immediately expanded to encompass Vercueil, his dog and the house, in a form of embrace:

Six pages already, and all about a man you have never met and never will. Why do I write about him? Because he is and is not I. Because in the look he gives me I see myself in a way that can be written. Otherwise what would this writing be but a kind of moaning, now high, now low? When I write about him I write about myself. When I write about his dog I write about myself; when I write about the house I write about myself. Man, house, dog: no matter what the word, through it I stretch out a hand to you. In another world I would not need words. I would appear on your doorstep. “I have come for a visit,” I would say, and that would be the end of words: I would embrace you and be embraced. (9)

Because Mrs. Curren writes about herself, Vercueil, his dog and the house, the addresser rejoins the addressee, becoming an interactive subjectivity, including herself, her daughter, Vercueil and black children.

A final question about the style of the letter can also be raised: why does Mrs. Curren use an epistolary form of writing, delivered through the messenger Vercueil instead of a telephone call or a visit? An epistolary form, what Deleuze and Guattari describe as “a

⁵⁵ Poyner, “Writing in the Face of Death”, 111.

rhizome, a network, a spider's web," is available for a "pack" or a "flux of letters".⁵⁶ How then do these letters function? Taking Kafka's letters as an example, Deleuze and Guattari narrate the duality of the two subjects in Kafka's letters: "a subject of enunciation as the form of expression that writes the letter, and a subject of the statement that is the form of content that the letter is speaking about (even if *I* speak about *me*)".⁵⁷ In Deleuze and Guattari's account, it is the subject of the statement that proliferates a movement, alongside a postman or a messenger that doubles the trajectory of the letter. The number of letters is thus multiplied. In Deleuze and Guattari's account of Kafka's letters, the addressee is not particularly important to the addresser. Individual letters thus increasingly become "social and political contents which force the form to expand into the domains of the stories and the novels".⁵⁸ From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective of Kafka, we can rethink Mrs. Curren's style of letter. Her letter is different from the traditional genre of epistolary writing, for example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, because Mrs. Curren's letter is intended for her daughter, whose response will not be possible. Moreover, the choice of Vercueil, as a messenger makes uncertain her letter's arrival at the intended destination. Mrs. Curren thinks of him as an "insect": "Not an angel, certainly. An insect, rather, emerging from behind the baseboards when the house is in darkness to forage for crumbs" (14). Nevertheless, as I asserted earlier, Mrs. Curren asks him to send her letter to her daughter: "There is something I would like you to do for me if I die. There are some papers I want to send to my daughter. But after the event. That is the important part. That is why I cannot send them myself" (31). By the nature of this request, the letter "will forever be words committed to the waves" (32). Thus, by means of assigning a particular messenger, her

⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 29-30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁸ Tynan, *Deleuze's Literary Clinic*, 34.

personal letter proliferates collective and impersonal contents, by avoiding the letter's arrival at its destination. As a result, the letter as a message, does not end with its arrival at the moment of death, but it increases the potential movements between an addresser, a messenger and an addressee.

V. Conclusion

Personal illness and death are, in *Age of Iron*, immanently connected to the public and collective sickness of South Africa during the apartheid regime. The physical pain that Mrs. Curren suffers is echoed in the sickness of racial segregation prevalent within the State of Emergency in apartheid South Africa. At that time, the black revolutionaries sacrificed their youth to struggle for their freedom, and frequently died at the hands of the police. In these turbulent years, receiving the news of her terminal cancer, Mrs. Curren, as a white liberal English-speaking woman, starts writing a letter and requests the homeless Vercueil to post her letter to her absent daughter, after her own death. Because of her accumulated shame related to living in South Africa, Mrs. Curren gets cancer of the heart, which illustrates a connection between her personal illness and the political malaise. However, Mrs. Curren also initially criticizes the black revolutionaries who pushed the younger generation to death. While at first she could not understand the viewpoint of the black revolutionaries, during her illness Mrs. Curren witnesses the deaths of two black youths, which provokes a shift in her understanding and empathy towards the black cause. In this way, Mrs. Curren's disease can be diagnosed as a symptom of the dying country, alluding to a turbulent vision of the future.

As I have argued in this chapter, drawing on Deleuze's perspective of illness and

death, Mrs. Curren's illness can be seen to designate the inorganic and creative power of the body, which pushes her to witness something collective and impersonal. As I have shown, Mrs. Curren's illness is thereby transformed into a collective and impersonal power, bringing about a new mode of subjectivity through three modes: the crack, the dual nature of death and the letter. Firstly, Mrs. Curren's recognition of herself as an old and ailing woman brings her to experience two sorts of cracks: a corporeal and personal crack and an incorporeal and impersonal crack. Through her personal pain, she becomes a personal crack, or an inorganic and fragmented body. Her experience of dying from cancer also enables her to perceive a new mode of inter-subjectivity, which acts as a form of embrace and being embraced by her children from the past to the future. This is linked to an incorporeal crack, one that allows her to recognize herself not solely as an individual body. Secondly, as a white liberal humanist, Mrs. Curren initially takes the position of criticizing both the regime and the black militants because of the politics of death these draw on. However, facing the deaths of the black children, Mrs. Curren connects their actual and personal deaths to what Deleuze calls an impersonal death. An impersonal death, like an event, relates to a living in dying. As a result of her experience of the deaths of black people, she enables her own personal death to be transformed into an impersonal death as an event: "I am dying". This impersonal death gives her dying body over to an incorporeal event-effect, one that never actualizes her corporeal death but rather opens to the immemorial past and to the future to come.

Finally, contrary to the message of the State, which does not encourage the people to critically interrogate its values and leads people to apathy, Mrs. Curren writes a message for her daughter, relating to her body and death. However, differentiated from the traditional form of epistolary writing, Mrs. Curren's letter does not aim to arrive at its destination, as the addressees are multiplied into herself, her daughter, Vercueil and his dog.

Additionally, the chosen messenger makes more uncertain her letter's arrival at its destination. Yet, through these blockages, her personal letter becomes a form of collective and impersonal writing. Thus, through her sickness, Mrs. Curren is able to transform herself, forming an inter-subjective relationship with both black and white people through a conjunction between the past and the future. This generates an impersonal event-effect of opening the past and the future. Her letter is not only destined for her daughter, but also for people from the past to the future. Consequently, Mrs. Curren's illness, as an inorganic power, offers a vision of great health, or a new mode of impersonal life in the apartheid regime.

Chapter 4

Mourning and Memory in *The Master of Petersburg*

I. Introduction

J.M. Coetzee's novel, *The Master of Petersburg* (1994) is a fictional work about Fyodor Dostoevsky's mourning for his deceased stepson, Pavel Isaev. At the start, Pavel is already dead and absent, and Dostoevsky travels to St. Petersburg in order to collect Pavel's documents and belongings. Accordingly, whilst coming to terms with his grief as a result of the loss, Dostoevsky desires to recollect and resuscitate the dead Pavel. Dostoevsky's mourning is thus related to the survivor's desire to keep the dead alive within memory. According to Sigmund Freud, in "Mourning and Melancholia", "mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on".¹ In Freud's account, the mourner's attachment to the loss of the beloved must be relieved and relinquished in order to reconnect to the world of the living. When "the work of mourning is completed", he claims, the mourner becomes "free and uninhibited again".² This process of mourning involves the interiorization of the dead in the survivor's memory. However, Dostoevsky is not able to complete his mourning for Pavel, but rather suspends it in a way that denies the

¹ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 14*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press), 243.

² *Ibid.*, 245.

death of Pavel. In this context, my question focuses on the impossibility of Dostoevsky's mourning because of the intersection between the survivor's and the dead's memory. Subsequently, drawing on Jacques Derrida's theory of "(im)possible mourning", I will examine how Dostoevsky's suspension of mourning breaks a living being's narcissistic memory of the dead in its personal, political and aesthetic dimensions.

The Master of Petersburg explores the work of mourning by foregrounding the mysterious death of Dostoevsky's stepson Pavel. Set in October 1869 in St. Petersburg, the novel draws on Dostoevsky's novel *Demons* (also known as *The Devils* or *The Possessed*), his biography, and the historical events surrounding the young Russian revolutionary Sergei Nechaev.³ The novel narrates the story of Dostoevsky, who has been living in exile with his wife and child in Dresden, and who secretly returns to St. Petersburg, because of the sudden death of Pavel, his first wife's son. Pavel has fallen from a shot tower in St. Petersburg in somewhat suspicious circumstances. Dostoevsky's sorrow in relation to his stepson's death is shown to be extreme, creating an ambivalent state of mourning that wavers between his affirmation of and disavowal of Pavel's death. For example, at the cemetery, when he visits his stepson's grave, Dostoevsky's grief is deeply performed: "He is crying freely, his nose is streaming. He rubs his face in the wet earth, burrows his face into it".⁴ After that, however, he immediately denies Pavel's death: "He is not here, he is not dead" (10). Overwhelmed by his sadness at the loss, Dostoevsky suspends his return to

³ Sew Kossew describes many intersections between Dostoevsky's life and Coetzee's text and also explains Coetzee's fictionalization of Dostoevsky's life. According to Kossew, "The name Coetzee uses for Dostoevsky's stepson matches that of his real-life stepson, Pavel (known affectionately as Pasha) Isaev, the son of Maria Isaev, Dostoevsky's first wife, a stepson who led a somewhat dissipated life and seemed to have caused his stepfather a great deal of anxiety. By the time of Coetzee's text's chronology, Maria has died and Dostoevsky has married again, this time a much younger woman, Anna Snitkina, whom Pavel, in Coetzee's novel, refers to as 'the Snitkina.' This biographical detail is faithful to Dostoevsky's life, as are the details of his exile from Petersburg because of creditors, his gambling in Europe, and his and Anna's residing in Dresden". See Sue Kossew, "Text/Intertext," *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 216-7.

⁴ J.M. Coetzee, *The Master of Petersburg* (London: Vintage Books, 2004), 9.

Dresden, although there is a risk of creditors finding him in St. Petersburg. As part of the process of coming to terms with the painful loss of Pavel, Dostoevsky takes up his stepson's residence, searching for the traces that Pavel has left. As a result of his refusing the work of mourning to be completed, his grief at the loss transforms into a pathological state of melancholy.

Dostoevsky's ambivalent attitudes towards the dead Pavel can be rethought in terms of Freud's theory of mourning and melancholy. Similar to mourning, melancholy is, as Freud explains, the reaction to the loss of a loved object. However, the mental features of melancholia are characterized by a more profoundly painful sorrow at the loss. The melancholic does not give up the lost object, while the mourner declares the object dead, letting it go. Specifically, melancholy is firstly related to the loss of the unconscious object: "melancholy is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradiction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconsciousness".⁵ Thus, the melancholia does not know "what he has lost in him", but he knows "whom he has lost".⁶ Secondly, the melancholic displays "an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself".⁷ The loss of the ego comes about when the lost object is incorporated into the ego, following the schizophrenic divide within the ego. Thirdly, in contrast to the work of mourning, the melancholic's relation to the object is ambivalent, because of his desire to both keep the lost object and to free its libido. In the novel, Dostoevsky incorporates his son inside himself: "His son is inside him, a dead baby in an iron body in the frozen earth" (52). Additionally, Dostoevsky does not only deny the death of his stepson Pavel, but also thinks

⁵ Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia", 245.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 246.

of himself as a being dead: “I am the one who is dead” (19). Thus, Dostoevsky’s incorporation of Pavel’s death within himself demonstrates a Freudian melancholy rather than a normal process of mourning.

However, in contrast to a Freudian distinction between mourning and melancholy, Derrida depathologizes the work of mourning, providing an integration of possible and impossible mourning in our lives. From Derrida’s perspective of the possible mourning, we are fated to mourn the other, because of the constant threat of death in our life. In addition, Derrida addresses the possibility of mourning in terms of “friendship”:

To have a friend, to look at him, to follow him with your eyes, to admire him in friendship, is to know in a more intense way, already injured, always insistent, and more and more unforgettable, that one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die.⁸

One of the two friends must die before the other. Friendship is thus haunted by the presence of possible mourning. Without this possibility, there is no friendship. This possible mourning of the other is also related to the possibility of my own death. In other words, we are always, already in mourning for the other, which also implies the mourning for my own death on the grounds that the other as the dead is incorporated in myself. As J. Hillis Miller notes, this implies “the permanent incorporation of the other as a phantom, a dead-alive other within myself”.⁹ In this sense, Miller explains that Derrida’s assertion of the possible mourning is a condition of being human: “We are always in mourning for the absent or dead. It is the human condition. To be human is to be in mourning, or, rather, mourning is

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Works of Mourning*, eds. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 2001), 107.

⁹ J. Hillis Miller, “Absolute Mourning: It Is Jacques You Mourn For”, *Re-reading Derrida: Perspectives on Mourning and Its Hospitalities*, eds. Tony Thwaites and Judith Seaboyer (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 16.

melancholic, since you can never get over it, put aside your black crape. To be human is to be perpetually in mourning for one's own death: 'I think about it all the time'".¹⁰

Derrida also affirms impossible mourning by foregrounding the survivor's ethical relation to the other. From Derrida's perspective, a work of mourning can neither be completed nor made possible, as mourning is the memory of the other: "the impossible here is the other".¹¹ Specifically, in a work of mourning, the beloved as the other is preserved and incorporated in me or in us through memory, but Derrida questions what is meant by "in me" or "in us":

Everything is entrusted *to me*; everything is bequeathed or given *to us*, and first of all *to* what I call memory—to *the memory*, the place of this strange dative. All we seem to have left is memory, since nothing appears able to come to us any longer, nothing is coming or to come, from the other to the present.¹²

As Derrida notes, "we weep *precisely* over what happens to us when everything is entrusted to the sole memory that is "in me" or "in us".¹³ According to Derrida, it is through the mourner's memory that mourning is made "possible," by virtue of the interiorization of the other: "we know, we knew, we remember—before the death of the beloved one—that being-in-me or being-in-us is constituted out of the possibility of mourning".¹⁴ However, Derrida argues that the other "in me" or "in us" resists the closure of our interiorizing memory. According to Derrida,

¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 32.

¹² Ibid., 32-3.

¹³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

With the nothing of this irrevocable absence, the other appears *as* other, and *as* other for us, upon his death or at least in the anticipated possibility of a death, since death constitutes and makes manifest the limits of a *me* or an *us* who are obliged to harbor something that is greater and other than them; something *outside of them within them*.¹⁵

In this sense, Derrida affirms impossible mourning as an ethical way of memorizing the other outside of us within us. Yet, Derrida's ethics of impossible mourning confronts us with an aporia of memorization: "The impossible mourning imposes on memory a contradictory injunction: it has to *fail* in order to succeed because it *succeeds* only 'when it fails'".¹⁶ Derrida's contradictory injunction of mourning can be thus understood as (im)possible mourning.

Drawing on Derrida's theory of (im)possible mourning, there are a few issues that can be discussed concerning Dostoevsky's mourning of the dead Pavel in its personal, political and aesthetic dimensions. Firstly, Dostoevsky's mourning is intertwined with his erotic impulses for the landlady Anna and her daughter Matryona. This casts doubts on the authenticity of his mourning, even though his irrepressible sorrow continues to be expressed. In relation to this issue, Patrick Hayes argues that "Dostoevsky is ostensibly grieving for Pavel", but "from the outset his thoughts and actions are troubled by some awkward suspicions", or rather by his suspicious erotic desires for Matryona and Anna.¹⁷ When he sees Matryona for the first time, according to Hayes, Dostoevsky is immediately attracted to her: he "singles out from a group of children a particularly 'striking' girl".¹⁸ Dostoevsky's persistent "male gaze" confuses her¹⁹: "The girl raises her eyes for an instant,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷ Patrick Hayes, *J.M. Coetzee and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 173.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 177.

encounters his gaze exploring her, and turns away in confusion. An angry impulse rises in him. He wants to grip her arm and to shake her. Look at me, child! He wants to say: Look at me and learn!” (13). In contrast to this indirect seduction of Matryona, Dostoevsky is driven to an “acute, fiery” desire to be sexually intimate with Anna (11). Dostoevsky has sexual intercourse with her in the dead Pavel’s bed whilst grieving the loss of his stepson. In effect, Dostoevsky’s mourning for his stepson is contaminated and distorted by his erotic desires for Anna and Matryona.

The second issue concerning Dostoevsky’s mourning relates to the politics of death. A further risk of infidelity to Pavel in Dostoevsky’s work of mourning is highlighted by the revolutionary Nechaev’s attitude towards the dead. In Nechaev’s conception, the dead are to be exploited to advance the mourner’s public and political views, since the dead can no longer respond to the survivor. Thus, to accelerate his revolution, Nechaev seeks to exploit Dostoevsky’s grief by persuading him to write a statement saying that Pavel has been killed by the police. Nechaev says, “We must use his death to light a flame. He would agree with me. He would urge you to put your anger to good use” (179). In a similar way, Dostoevsky’s mourning for the death of Pavel, may be seen as a way of pitying himself. In both cases, the death becomes instrumental, subordinated to another agenda. The work of mourning can thus be exploited for public purposes or for the mourner’s personal needs.

The third issue concerning Dostoevsky’s mourning relates to his writing in the blank pages of Pavel’s diary. Dostoevsky’s writing in Pavel’s diary can be seen as a form of posthumous writing, since Dostoevsky’s writing is incorporated into the dead’s uncompleted fiction. However, Dostoevsky’s mourning is contaminated by his writing of a vile and pornographic story in his stepson’s diary. Moreover, Dostoevsky writes the story in order to seduce and corrupt Matryosha, since he knows she will read it. Dostoevsky’s writing in Pavel’s diary thus betrays the dead Pavel and at the same time violates a child

Matryosha. However, Dostoevsky's writing in Pavel's diary can be associated in a paradoxical way with the work of mourning, through resurrection and betrayal of the dead.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine Coetzee's representation of Dostoevsky's mourning and its relation to memory in its personal, political and aesthetic domains. Firstly, Dostoevsky's (im)possible mourning will be explored by focusing on the relationship between the mourner and the dead. Secondly, in comparison with Dostoevsky's excessive mourning, the public or political mourning represented in the form of the policeman, Maximov and the revolutionary, Nechaev will be examined. It will be argued that such forms of mourning are not sufficient to mourn the dead ethically. This insufficient mourning and its political implication will be discussed as a disavowal of mourning in the name of sacrifice. Finally, I will examine how Dostoevsky's writing of the dead can be understood as a work of mourning, depending on the betrayal of the mourner. Thus, by exploring the work of mourning in its three dimensions, I will ultimately examine how the living Dostoevsky thinks of himself in terms of his relationship with the dead Pavel and how he can have an ethical relationship with the dead through memory. These explorations concerning mourning are inextricably related to Mrs. Curren's experiences of corporeal and incorporeal deaths that I have examined in *Age of Iron*, since Dostoevsky and Mrs. Curren are transformed into the living dead in order to keep the deaths within their memories. In this chapter, drawing on Derrida's theory of mourning, my analysis focuses on a new figuration of subjectivity as a mourner in diverse dimensions, which can illuminate affinities and differences between Deleuzian and Derridian theories of death in Coetzee's works.

II. An impossible mourning

Dostoevsky's mourning of Pavel is suspended by his desire to remember and resurrect his stepson. As I have discussed earlier, Derrida's impossible mourning confronts us with an aporia of memorization: "it has to fail in order to succeed because it succeeds only 'when it fails'". Drawing on Derrida's contradictory injunction of mourning, we can question whether Dostoevsky's mourning of his stepson can be seen as an ethical memorization. Yet, this ethical issue needs to be reflected upon alongside Dostoevsky's erotic impulses for Anna and Matryona which contaminate the authority of his mourning. In relation to this issue, Derek Attridge points out that Dostoevsky's mourning depends on his indirect memory of Pavel: "the absence of a blood relation between them in some ways makes the loss all the more difficult to cope with, reminded as he constantly is that his claim on Pavel's memory is an indirect one".²⁰ Attridge goes on to note that Dostoevsky "allows his actions to be determined by impulses, attractions, obscure desires, though without fully trusting in any of them".²¹ However, I will argue that Dostoevsky's mourning of his stepson is rather involved with the conditions of being human. His memory is contaminated by his desire, which concerns itself with the complicated relationship between the survivor and the dead. Thus, in this part, through the work of mourning and memory, I will explore a mode of subjectivity as a living dead.

It is necessary to examine the excessive or pathological aspects of Dostoevsky's mourning of Pavel's death. Dostoevsky's mourning seems to be pathological, since he can hardly affirm what Freud calls mourning and he is rather attached to his son's death. His pathological symptoms are shown in his diverse responses to the death of his stepson: lamentation, denial of the death, desire for Pavel's resuscitation, and a melancholic

²⁰ Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and The Ethics of Reading: Literature and Event* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 124-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

identification with the dead. Initially, in the cemetery, Dostoevsky is not capable of finding any remedy for mourning his stepson: “From the boy who still lives in his memory to the name on the death certificate to the number on the stake he is not yet prepared to accept the train of fatality” (8). Thinking of his stepson’s death as “*Provisional (8)*”, Dostoevsky feels driven to exceed the limitation of death, as if he is Orpheus descending towards Eurydice. Dostoevsky feels the urgent need to resurrect him:

He is trying to cast a spell. But over whom: over ghost or over himself? He thinks of Orpheus walking backwards step by step, whispering the dead woman’s name, coaxing her out of the entrails of hell; of the wife in graveclothes with the blind, dead eyes following him, holding out limp hands before her like a sleepwalker. (5)

In his mourning of Pavel, Dostoevsky’s identification with Orpheus descending to the dead Eurydice pushes him to reject his own status as a living being. As Maurice Blanchot asserts, only in his song to face Eurydice “does Orpheus have power over Eurydice, but in the song Eurydice is also already lost and Orpheus himself is the scattered Orpheus, the ‘infinitely dead’ Orpheus into which the power of the song transforms him from then on”.²² During his attempt to resurrect his dead son, Dostoevsky is stuck in an infinitive death, namely, in a suspension that he is neither living nor dying. This is demonstrated when he says: “I am the one who is dead, he thinks; or rather, I died but my death failed to arrive” (19). Compared to Blanchot’s ontology of infinitive death, Freud’s pathology of melancholy implies a mourner’s identification with death. In other words, Dostoevsky’s extreme form of mourning appears to be a pathological symptom of withdrawing his libido, followed by a melancholic identification with the dead. This is evidenced when Dostoevsky says,

²² Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and other literary essays*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill, 1981), 101.

“Because I am he. Because he is I” (53). However, as I have asserted earlier, instead of the pathological point of view, Dostoevsky’s mourning displays its impossibility through an interaction between the memory of the dead and the survivor.

In this light, Dostoevsky’s mourning is blocked, in such a way that the survivor incorporates the dead within himself in his memorization of the dead. Dostoevsky’s mourning is a sort of posthumous fidelity towards Pavel, which acts as a means of keeping him alive in his memory. Thus, Dostoevsky denies his mourning of Pavel: “He is not in mourning. He has not said farewell to his son, he has not given his son up. On the contrary, he wants his son returned to life” (52). Absorbed in his desire to resuscitate his dead stepson, Dostoevsky tries to incorporate the dead Pavel into himself in terms of sensation and memory. Concerned with sensation, Dostoevsky depends on corporality or materiality as a means of directly reaching the dead Pavel, believing that the corporeal traces of the dead are preserved in the things his stepson used. In this regard, Dostoevsky thinks that his stepson’s documents and other items enable him to merge with the dead Pavel. Dostoevsky thus occupies Pavel’s room, awaiting the return of Pavel’s documents taken by the policeman, Maximov. Whilst he is in Pavel’s room, Dostoevsky also smells the traces his stepson has left:

He lifts the suitcase on to the bed. Neatly folded on top is a white cotton suit. He presses his forehead to it. Faintly the smell of his son comes to him. He breathes in deeply, again and again, thinking: his ghost, entering me. (4)

For Dostoevsky, his sensation of Pavel’s white cotton suit is thereby available for him to

incorporate the dead son to himself and to keep him alive.²³ This incorporation generates a unity of the living and the ghost, since Dostoevsky's sensation of Pavel's suit signifies his stepson's absence. Similarly, he inhales the dead Pavel's smell and then wears the white suit. In the process, Dostoevsky thinks that Pavel is incorporated into himself:

At moments like this he cannot distinguish Pavel from himself. They are the same person; and that person is no more or less than a thought, Pavel thinking it in him, he thinking it in Pavel. The thought keeps Pavel alive, suspended in his fall. (21)

These corporeal traces of the dead Pavel are incorporated into the survivor Dostoevsky. In this regard, through sensing the material traces left by his dead son, Dostoevsky enters into a mode of the living dead, entailed in the suspension of Pavel's death.

However, as I have suggested earlier, Dostoevsky's desire to breathe life into Pavel seems incompatible with his erotic impulses for Anna and Matryona. Concerning this issue, I want to argue how Dostoevsky's work of mourning as a way of connecting with his memory of Pavel is inevitably intertwined with his experience of desire. In spite of his endless mourning, Dostoevsky's erotic desire can be seen as a form of infidelity, since he has a death drive generated by his strong wish to incorporate the dead to himself. In order to explore this contradiction between erotic and death desires, we need to begin with Dostoevsky's ideas about Anna and Matryona's memory of Pavel. It is noteworthy that, like Dostoevsky, they are the mourners who keep Pavel's memory alive. At the cemetery, Anna consoles Dostoevsky by saying: "No, of course he is not dead" (10). At that moment,

²³ In a similar way, Anna's hands convey a memory to Dostoevsky. When he sees her hands, he thinks: "The innocence of hands, ever-renewed. A memory comes back to him: the touch of a hand, intimate in the dark. But whose hand? Hands emerge like animals, without shame, without memory, into the light of day" (10).

he finds Anna “motherly, not only toward her daughter but toward Pavel too” (10). Suddenly, Dostoevsky feels a drive to touch her: “Absurdly, he would like to lay his head on her breast and feel those fingers stroke his hair” (10). After that, he feels a strong sexual impulse for Anna: “Where does his desire come from? It is acute, fiery: he wants to take this woman by the arm, drag her behind the gatekeeper’s hut, lift her dress, couple with her” (10-1). Dostoevsky’s desire for Anna develops into a sexual relationship. By having sex with Anna, Dostoevsky thinks that he can reach the dead Pavel: “Again, through her, he passes into darkness and into the waters where his son floats among the other drowned. ‘Do not be afraid,’ he wants to whisper, ‘I will be with you, I will divide the bitterness with you’,” (58). In order to make the dead alive, Dostoevsky, as a living dead or a being with a ghost, has an erotic experience with Anna, one that keeps his stepson’s memory alive. Nevertheless, Dostoevsky’s sexual desire, although it is a means of reaching the dead, definitely exists in tension with his excessive grief for the dead. Regarding this issue, Attridge asserts that Dostoevsky’s mourning is influenced and determined by his impulses and attractions because of his indirect memory of Pavel. Similarly, Attridge claims that Dostoevsky yields to a “force from outside”, which is related to his “epilepsy” that “manifests in stark terms his subjection to forces over which he has no control”.²⁴ However, Dostoevsky’s sexual desire for Anna is involved with his desire for recollecting and preserving the memory of Pavel. As for this issue, through Derrida’s insight into “friendship” and its relation to mourning, I further argue that Dostoevsky’s mourning of the dead Pavel is always preserved and betrayed by his memory. Thus, in a different vein to Attridge’s assertion of a “force from outside”, I will argue that Dostoevsky’s erotic desire for Anna is impelled by the impossibility of his mourning.

Similarly, perceiving a close relationship between Pavel and Matryona, Dostoevsky

²⁴ Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and The Ethics of Reading*, 125.

thinks: “To her Pavel is not yet dead. Somewhere in her he still lives, breathing the warm, sweet breath of youth” (14). In contrast with his strong sexual desire for Anna, Dostoevsky’s feelings for Matryona are ambivalent, comprising both desire and hatred, because she is alive while his child, Pavel is dead: “he is in a rage against everyone who is alive when his child is dead. In a rage most of all against this girl, whom for her very meekness he would like to tear limb from limb” (16). Yet, Dostoevsky’s rage against Matryona goes together with his desire to protect her: “There is a rush of feeling in him, contradictory, like two waves slapping against each other: an urge to protect her, an urge to lash out at her because she is alive” (23). On the one hand, as I have discussed, Dostoevsky’s desire for Matryona can be seen as dependent upon a corporeal memory that seeks to maintain the dead by virtue of sensation, since he thinks that Matryona like Anna maintains her memory of his stepson. On the other hand, Dostoevsky’s contradictory feeling for Matryona can be rethought as the work of mourning, or as an act of both preserving and betraying the dead Pavel. Whatever his desire for Matryona, Dostoevsky wishes to reach the dead Pavel through Anna’s and Matryona’s memories of Pavel. Dostoevsky says to Anna: “‘I have a hunger to talk about my son’, he says, ‘but even more of a hunger to hear others talk about him’” (25). In this context, the work of mourning the dead ironically proliferates connections and erotic desires amongst living beings.

It is here necessary to question what the living beings commemorate when they think of the dead Pavel. To engage with this, we need to consider an ethical memory between the survivor and the dead in terms of Derrida’s aporia of mourning. Since *Master of Petersburg* begins with Dostoevsky’s mourning of Pavel, the dead Pavel can no longer respond to or speak to Dostoevsky, although he is remembered by the survivors. The dead Pavel cannot exist without the memory of the mourner. As a consequence, Pavel is thereby preserved “in” Dostoevsky’s memory, but the dead Pavel in Dostoevsky can resist his

memory. In relation to this issue, Derrida explains mourning with reference to an “aporia”:

The aporia of mourning and of prosopopeia, where the possible remains impossible. Where *success fails*. And where faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead. It makes the other a part of us, between us—and then the other no longer quite seems to be the other, because we grieve for him and bear him in us, like an unborn child, like a future. And inversely, the failure succeeds: an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us.²⁵

Derrida’s aporia of mourning navigates the paradoxical structure of memory. On the one hand, if the dead Pavel is successfully incorporated into the mourner Dostoevsky’s memory, the Otherness of Pavel is repressed within Dostoevsky. In this way, Pavel can no longer be the other to Dostoevsky. Thus, Dostoevsky’s mourning succeeds only when it fails. If Dostoevsky’s mourning fails, he bears the dead Pavel in himself like “an unborn child, like a future”, which is “a respect for the other as other”.²⁶ Thus, as Ziarek suggests, Derrida provides an ethical injunction in relation to mourning as “the aporia to preserve both the memory and the alterity of the other”.²⁷ This marks the mourner, Dostoevsky, as an example of the living dead, where the memory of the dead unfolds the future.

Within the framework of Derrida’s theory, it could be argued that Dostoevsky experiences an impossible mourning for his own death as well as the dead Pavel, because his body always lives with a dead-alive other as a ghost. As Miller argues, Dostoevsky, in

²⁵ Derrida, *Memories*, 35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, “Encounters possible and impossible: Derrida and Butler on Mourning,” *Philosophy Today* (2006), 144.

mourning, is not a “self-enclosed unity”, but he is “always inhabited by death”.²⁸ In this way, Dostoevsky feels himself dead and also feels Pavel alive within himself: “I am the one who died and was buried, he thinks Pavel the one who lives and will always live” (124). Thus, in his recurring dreams of Pavel, Dostoevsky hears his stepson’s voice: “Father, why have you left me in the dark forest? Father, when will you come to save me?” (126). Moreover, as a dead-alive other, Pavel often transforms his images in Dostoevsky’s memory. The images of Pavel that Dostoevsky recalls always change. For example, when he tries to summon up Pavel’s face, the face overlaps with that of the other young man who “sat behind Bakunin on the stage at the Peace Congress two years ago. His skin is cratered with scars that stand out lived in the cold” (49). The dead Pavel in Dostoevsky’s memory is also reconstructed through an interaction with other people’s remembrance of him. Matryona, who had a close relationship with Pavel, is also in mourning. Dostoevsky is aware that she wants to find the traces of Pavel in his face, although he does not look like Pavel: “She is trying to see Pavel in me and she cannot” (14). At the same time, Dostoevsky thinks that “To her Pavel is not yet dead” (14). Thus, through the dead Pavel, Dostoevsky is able to open himself to an unfamiliar and unexpected relationship to others. As a result, the dead Pavel is constantly changing, as he interacts with the survivors’ memories.

The loss of the dead cannot be wholly regained in the survivors’ memories, because time is divided into the past and the future. In other words, the memory of the other in the past cannot be totally controlled and determined by the mourner in the present, which opens the future in the form of a promise. The temporal dimension of this mourning, as Jack Reynolds explains, displays Derrida’s theory of “*contretemps* that is associated with both the past and the future (*PF* 16)”.²⁹ Reynolds thus claims that this shows “Derrida’s ethics

²⁸ Miller, “Absolute Mourning”, 11.

²⁹ Jack Reynolds, *Chronopathologies: Time and Politics in Deleuze, Derrida, Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 156.

of nonpresentist time”.³⁰ It is noteworthy that there is an affinity between Derrida’s and Deleuze’s theory of time, via the concept of “nonpresentist time”. Deleuze in his work, *The Logic of Sense*, articulates “Aion” as the time of the wound that is constantly split into pasts and futures: “Always already passed and eternally yet to come”.³¹ In this way, both Derrida and Deleuze assert that within the time of mourning, the present is broken and decomposed by the past and the future. In this context, it seems that Dostoevsky’s painful grief is always already betrayed and his memory of the dead is also contaminated and distorted over time. At the grave of Pavel, Dostoevsky promises to come back, but he also knows he never keeps his promises: “*I will come back*: the same promise he made when he took the boy to school for his first term. *You will not be abandoned*. And abandoned him” (5). Dostoevsky’s broken promise reflects how the promise of the perpetual memory of the dead is always breakable. In mourning Paul de Man, Derrida articulates the problem of the promise:

“... yesterday, you may remember, we made each other a promise. I now recall it, but you already sense all the trouble we will have in ordering all these presents: these past presents which consist of the present of a promise, whose opening toward the present to come is not that of an expectation or an anticipation but that of commitment”.³²

As Martin Hägglund argues, Derrida’s definition of the promise highlights “the division between past and future that is the condition of temporal survival”.³³ Hägglund goes on to say:

³⁰ Ibid., 154.

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 165.

³² Derrida, *Memories*, 47.

³³ Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 137.

On the one hand, to promise is to commit oneself to the future, since one can only promise something that is to come. On the other hand, to promise is to commit oneself to the past, since it entails a promise to remember the promise. Whatever I promise, I necessarily promise to keep the memory of the promise.³⁴

Thus, Dostoevsky's promise in mourning is always haunted by the possibility of his memory and betrayal over time. Subsequently, Dostoevsky's work of mourning displays an ethical way of commemorating and betraying the dead Pavel, opening a connection between the past and the future for the dead. In this context, there is an affinity between Derrida's and Deleuze's theories of death and its relation to subjectivity. Specifically, in facing the deaths of the Other, both Mrs. Curren and Dostoevsky experience the dissolution of their subjectivity, which cause them to transform their subjectivity into an inter-being between the living and the dead. Additionally, because of their memories of the dead, both Mrs. Curren and Dostoevsky do not live in the present, but in the time of the wound that is split between the past and the future.

III. Insufficient mourning

As I have mentioned earlier, in spite of his absence, Pavel always haunts the people he has left behind, which produces his absent presence as ghost-like. Similarly, Dostoevsky becomes, as it were, one of the living-dead and then his act of mourning cannot be completed. Yet, intervening in the matters of Pavel's mysterious death, Dostoevsky's impossible mourning is changed into a political event. The truth of Pavel's death, whether

³⁴ Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 137.

he kills himself or is killed, is not revealed. Indeed, it is the mystery of Pavel's death that urges Dostoevsky to probe the circumstances of his death and to contact Maximov and Nechaev. Through his meeting with Maximov and Nechaev, Dostoevsky comes to feel that Pavel's death cannot be properly mourned and it is thus forced to be interpreted in terms of its different political directions: rebellion and revolution. On the one hand, from Maximov's position in the police, there are suspicions surrounding Pavel's involvement with Nechaev's rebellion against Tsarism. Pavel's documents, which are a mixture of private and political contents, contain a list of people who are to be assassinated, in the name of "the People's Vengeance" (36). Accordingly, Pavel's private letters and papers are classified as political documents and his death is unavoidably bound up with the rebellion against Tsarism. On the other hand, in order to politicize Pavel's death for the sake of the revolution, Nechaev urges Dostoevsky to write a political pamphlet saying that Pavel was killed by the police. In this way, Dostoevsky's (im)possible mourning of his stepson shifts to the politics of death signified and represses the ghost of Pavel as a dead-alive. In this context, I will examine how the politics of death in Coetzee's novel needs to be examined in terms of the ethical work involved in mourning the dead by considering an affinity between the oppressive circumstances of Russian Tsarism in the novel and apartheid South Africa in *Age of Iron*. This can also be related to an exploration of the political deaths of black people, approached through the prism of both the apartheid regime and the revolutionaries in *Age of Iron*.

Let us begin with the division between personal and political deaths in the novel. Different approaches towards Pavel's death are evidenced, which leads Dostoevsky to classify Pavel's documents as personal and Maximov to classify them as political. Among Pavel's documents, there are Pavel's private documents, including Dostoevsky's letter, which chides his stepson for spending too much money. Yet, Pavel's fiction of revenge is

interpreted differently by Maximov and Dostoevsky. Maximov insists that the story of revenge is concerned with a rebellion against Tsarism. Specifically, Sergei as the hero in Pavel's fiction is described as "a young man convicted of treasonous conspiracy and sent to Siberia" (40). In the story, Sergei escapes from prison and hides with the help of a kitchen maid, Marfa, at the home of the landowner Karamzin. One evening Karamzin, as an old sensualist, tries to caress the girl, and Sergei then kills Karamzin with a hatchet.³⁵ Maximov goes on to assert that Sergei does not leave the murder weapon behind because "it is the weapon of the Russian people, our means of defence and our means of revenge" (41) against Tsarism. From this fiction, Maximov insists that the dead Pavel was associated with the Nechaevites by emphasizing words and their connection to acts. However, Dostoevsky rebuts Maximov's interpretation of Pavel's fiction as evidence of political rebellion against Tsarism. According to Dostoevsky, Pavel's fiction has to be understood as a private fantasy, written in his private space. In addition to this, Dostoevsky views Nechaevism as a universal "spirit" rather than as a particular act of the rebellion: "Nechaevism is not an idea. It despises ideas, it is outside ideas. It is a spirit, and Nechaev himself is not its embodiment but its host; or rather, he is under possession by it" (44). In short, rather than being seen as a particular ideology and its embodiment, Dostoevsky sees Nechaevism as a radical evil force of rebellion or betrayal within history, which anyone can be possessed and affected by. In this fashion, there are contrary positions for interpreting Nechaevism and the relation between Pavel's fiction and rebellion. Accordingly, Dostoevsky's suspension of mourning of his stepson shifts into a political debate surrounding his death.

However, it is necessary to further consider Nechaevism as a radical force that

³⁵ This is an intertextual reference to Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, in which Raskolnikov kills the money-lender with a hatchet.

Dostoevsky asserts. In the debate on Pavel's death and Nechaevism, Dostoevsky considers the dead Pavel's betrayal. Dostoevsky's assertion of Nechaevism also has implications for his relationship to his stepson Pavel, for Nechaevism as a radical force can be expanded into the relationship between fathers and sons. Through probing the mystery of his stepson's death, Dostoevsky recognizes the dead Pavel's infidelity. Dostoevsky encounters the unexpected fact that Pavel's rebellion is also motivated by his hatred of fathers: "Not the People's Vengeance but the Vengeance of the Sons: is that what underlies revolution—fathers envying their sons their women, sons scheming to rob their father's cashboxes?" (108). Sue Kossew points out that "the political revolution is envisaged in terms of a generation clash, with Nechaev, the young revolutionary leader, seen as giving 'a voice to something dumb and brutal that is sweeping through young Russia' (112)".³⁶ Pavel's participation in Nechaev's rebellion does seem to imply a resistance against or a betrayal of his stepfather Dostoevsky and the old Russia. In this fashion, it is significant that Sergei, the hero of Pavel's story, thinks of himself as an orphan. Specifically, through Sergei's mouth, Pavel denies the stepfather Dostoevsky, while calling his biological father Isaev his true one.

"I have no parents," says, Sergei to Marfa. "My father, my real father, was a nobleman exiled to Siberia for his revolutionary sympathies. He died when I was seven. My mother married a second time. Her new husband did not like me. As soon as I was old enough, he packed me off to cadet school. I was the smallest body in my class; that was where I learned to fight for my rights. Later they moved back to Petersburg, set up house, and sent for me. Then my mother died, and I was left alone with my stepfather, a gloomy man who addressed barely a word to me from one day to the next. I was lonely; my only friends were among the

³⁶ Kossew, *Pen and Power*, 215.

servants; it was from them that I got to know the sufferings of the people”.

(151)

After reading this part of the fiction, Dostoevsky thinks that the content is distorted: “Not untrue, not wholly untrue, yet how subtly twisted, all of it!” (151). Thinking of Pavel’s story as “the full truth dullest of all” (152), Dostoevsky remembers that Pavel’s real father was “a clerk, a pen-pusher” (152) rather than a “nobleman” with “revolutionary sympathies” (152). In Dostoevsky’s reading of and response to Pavel’s fiction, it is ironically shown that he also reads Pavel’s fictive story as a reality, like Maximov’s reading of the text and its relation to the political act. Thus, in contrast to his excessive grief surrounding the loss, Dostoevsky remembers an episode in Pavel’s lonely childhood, when his stepson was so “suspicious and unsmiling” and tried to “cling to his mother like a leech and grudged every minute she spent away from him” (151). Maximov, who has read all of Pavel’s documents, expresses a severe reservation about handing them over to Dostoevsky. Because “painful discoveries lie in store” for Dostoevsky—“painful and unnecessary discoveries” (147), Maximov warns against his reading of the papers. Clearly Maximov anticipates that Pavel’s writing of the story about Sergei could be read as expressing his wish to deny his stepfather, Dostoevsky. Thus, reminding himself of Maximov’s advice, Dostoevsky “would like to burn the letter, to erase it from history” (150). In this fashion, the survivor’s memory of the past cannot be determined, since it contains the betrayal of the dead in the form of Nechaevism. In this context, we can recall Derrida’s idea that the survivor’s mourning constitutes a betrayal of the dead. Dostoevsky’s mourning contains a betrayal of the dead Pavel, which is relative to Dostoevsky’s incomplete and impossible mourning.

Although Dostoevsky recognizes Pavel’s infidelity, he considers himself as Pavel’s real father. Dostoevsky thinks that Pavel’s story about Sergei was made available to him because writers “write out of anguish and, out of lack” (152). Dostoevsky goes on to think:

If Isaev had lived and Pavel had followed him, Pavel “too would have become nothing but a clerk”, and he “would not have left this story behind” (152). Moreover, for Dostoevsky, through his work of remembering, the dead constructs a real relationship between father and son. Thus, despite Pavel’s infidelity to him, Dostoevsky laments the dead Pavel:

Poor boy! On the streets of Petersburg, in the turn of a head here,
the gesture of a hand there, I see you, and each time my heart lifts as a
wave does. Nowhere and everywhere, torn and scattered like Orpheus.
Young in days, *chryseos*, golden, blessed. (152)

Pavel is thereby nowhere and everywhere, producing a space of the living-dead. Dostoevsky also thinks that only his remembering keeps Pavel alive:

I am here and father Isaev is not. If, drowning, you reach for Isaev,
you will grasp only a phantom hand. In the town hall of Semipalatinsk,
in dusty files in a box on the back stairs, his signature is still perhaps to
be read; otherwise no trace of him save in this remembering, in the
remembering of the man who embraced his widow and his child. (153)

In this space of mourning, as I have asserted earlier, Pavel also becomes an “unborn child”, through which the survivor Dostoevsky’s memory is broken open for the future.

However, Dostoevsky’s mourning is denied by Nechaev’s idea of the revolution. In order to persuade Dostoevsky to write a pamphlet for his revolution, Nechaev takes him to the cellar in which the cold and famished children and women are dying. Dostoevsky is sympathetic towards the miserable circumstances of the starving people. This scene overlaps with Mrs. Curren’s witnessing of the deaths of young black revolutionaries in the township of Guguletu in *Age of Iron*. Rather than Mrs. Curren’s change of her attitude towards the black revolutionaries, Dostoevsky finds more crucial flaws in Nechaev’s idea

of justice and revolution. Specifically, Dostoevsky recognizes that Nechaev uses the pathetic circumstances of the oppressed and even their death as a medium for the realization of his ideal society. As Nechaev asserts, “But hunger and sickness and poverty are not the enemy. They are only ways in which *real* forces manifest themselves in the world. Hunger is a medium, as water is a medium” (181). What Nechaev calls the “*real* forces” can be understood as anger, or the negative passion that activates or forces the oppressed to resist the oppressor. In this context, Nechaev accuses Dostoevsky of representing the suffering of people but of ignoring its causes: “You see children starving in a cellar; you refuse to see what determines the conditions of those children’s lives” (186). Thus, Nechaev claims: it is time that Dostoevsky tries “to *share* the existence of the oppressed” (186). By accusing the police of Pavel’s death, Nechaev also attempts to persuade Dostoevsky to use his anger about Pavel’s death: “We must use his death to light a flame. He would agree with me. He would urge you to put your anger to good use” (179). In his debate about revolution with Nechaev, Dostoevsky realizes that Pavel is sacrificed as a message to the students who “will be bound to come out in the streets in just outrage” (179). Moreover, Dostoevsky finds that the death of Pavel is Nechaev’s trap to lure Dostoevsky: “A trap, a devilish trap. ... Pavel’s death was merely the bait to lure him from Dresden to Petersburg (203).

Nechaev’s revolution seeks to exploit the deaths of the young generation. Thus, Nechaev’s view does not offer a possibility for the work of mourning, but rather promotes the sacrifice of young people. Nechaev’s thought of sacrifice is more shockingly manifested by Matryona, when she gives a poison to a Finnish girl, a comrade of Nechaev. Matryona gives her the purse of poison that Nechaev left, when the Finnish girl and the police come to Dostoevsky’s home. Matryona follows Nechaev’s orders and provides the Finnish girl with the means to commit suicide. Yet, Matryona does not show any guilt. Instead she is smiling slightly, in contrast with her mourning of Pavel’s death. From this, Nechaev’s

concept of revolution is problematic, when the deaths of the young generation are exploited to instigate people's anger. This negative passion of anger implies *resentment* in the Nietzschean and Deleuzian senses. In his reading of Nietzsche, Deleuze describes *resentment* as "spirit of revenge": "the man of *resentment* experiences every being and objects as an offence in exact proportion to its effect on him".³⁷ The spirit of revenge risks using revenge as a means for revolution, which can in turn bring about the sacrifice or death of young generations.

In order to examine a new vision for the future in oppressive regimes, we need to further examine the difference between revolution and resentment. For Dostoevsky, Nechaev's spirit of revenge is explicitly problematic, because Nechaev's revolution was motivated by his personal revenge. Nechaev wanted to become a schoolmaster, but he failed the qualifying examinations, and then turned to revolution in revenge against his examiners (182). Moreover, his revolution is also a reaction against his father's violence. Nechaev believes that the history of the world is constructed by "fathers and sons at war with each other" and the meaning of revolution implies "the end of everything old, including fathers and sons" (189). Accordingly, Nechaev's revolution denies the lineage of fathers in order to generate a new future. However, there are further questions that can be asked about Nechaev's principles of revolution. Firstly, Nechaev demands the sacrifice of the young generation (including Pavel and the Finnish girl) in the name of martyrdom. This politics of sacrifice relates strongly to the politics of Tsarism that sacrifices people's power for the tsar. In relation to the death of Pavel, Matryona poses a question to Dostoevsky: "Gave himself up for what?" (247). Dostoevsky answers: "For the future. So that he could be one of the martyrs" (247). Yet, a war, whether it is "the old against the young", or "the

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 116.

young against the old” (247), is effectively a method of exploiting death. Secondly, Nechaev’s spirit of revenge constructs an enemy which people project their resentment into. The principle of resentment thus says: “You are evil, therefore I am good”.³⁸ Although a real enemy exists, since tsarism oppresses people, Nechaev’s resentment is reactive towards the oppressor through his memory of his hatred of objects in the past. In his reading of Nietzsche, Deleuze describes the principle of resentment as the slave’s morality: “*resentment* is the triumph of the weak *as* weak, the revolt of the slaves and their victory *as* slaves. It is in their victory that the slaves form a type. The type of the master (the active type) is defined in terms of the faculty of forgetting and the power of acting reactions”.³⁹ In this sense, Nechaev’s revolution, as Dostoevsky reasons, relies on the father as an object of hatred: “Desperate. Desperate to be betrayed, desperate to find a father to betray him” (194). As a result, Nechaev’s thought of revolution is a reaction against his memory of the past, rather than an action for opening the future. In this context, it could be said that the work of mourning has to include both remembering and forgetting for the future. This is a Deleuzian concept of memory, which can provide more political approaches towards the revolution than a Derridean conception of mourning. Concerned with the revolution, we can consider what Dostoevsky calls “forgiveness” as a new vision for society. Dostoevsky tells Nechaev: “Forgiveness of all. He has only to think of it and his head spins. And they shall be united, father and son. Because it comes from the foul mouth of a blasphemer, shall it therefore not to be the truth?” (201). Yet, an ethics of forgiveness has to be haunted by its betrayal. I will now discuss this in relation to writing as a form of betrayal.

³⁸ Ibid., 119.

³⁹ Ibid., 117.

IV. Writing as a Posthumous infidelity

Dostoevsky's writing in the blank pages of Pavel's diary, after his death, is associated with the work of mourning. As I have asserted earlier, Dostoevsky's desire to resurrect Pavel is initially connected to Orpheus, who is "walking backwards step by step, whispering the dead woman's name, coaxing her out of the entrails of hell" (5). Because of the power of art, Orpheus is able to descend to death, or Eurydice. However, Dostoevsky does not see himself as a poet Orpheus, but rather as a dog: "Poetry might bring back his son. He has a sense of a poem that would be required, a sense of its music. But he is not a poet: more like a dog that has lost a bone, scratching here, scratching there" (17). The dog signifies Dostoevsky as a writer engaged with loss rather than Orpheus's attempted recovery of the dead. Because of his loss, Dostoevsky's attempt at writing after Pavel's death is concerned with a perversion. In the final chapter "Stavrogin", instead of writing his work, Dostoevsky begins to write Pavel's uncompleted fiction in the blank pages of the diary in order to resurrect him, but his writing is vile and pornographic. In this writing, the hero Stavrogin seduces and contaminates the innocent Matryona. His writing of Pavel's incomplete fiction is engaged in a means of betrayal: "Not a matter of fidelity at all. On the contrary, a matter of betrayal—betrayal of love first of all, and then of Pavel and the mother and child and everyone else. Perversion: everything and everyone to be turned to another use, to be gripped to him and fall with him" (235). Thus, a question may be asked in relation to the work of mourning in order to explore why Dostoevsky distorts Pavel's fiction in this way.

Dostoevsky's writing in Pavel's diary in Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* parallels an act of mourning in the real Dostoevsky's work. In essence, Coetzee's novel can be seen as a posthumous writing of the real Dostoevsky's works. "At Tihkon's" written by

the real Dostoevsky is the original version of the chapter called “Stavrogin”. “At Tikhon’s” was omitted from the original version of *Demons*, but it is added as an appendix in the modern version.⁴⁰ As Uhlmann recounts, the real Dostoevsky “caused offense, both in his life, and through his works, and unlike Nabokov, in his portrayal of pedophilia—‘At Tikhon’s’ or Starvrogin’s confession’ was censored or self-censored”.⁴¹ Coetzee redeems the suppressed “At Tikhon’s” in the last chapter of *The Master of Petersburg*. The fictional Dostoevsky writes an offensive posthumous fiction through the character of Pavel. Coetzee’s and the fictional Dostoevsky’s writings demonstrate a work of mourning to incorporate the works of the dead into their writings. In effect, in this posthumous writing, Coetzee and the fictional Dostoevsky resuscitate the dead Dostoevsky and Pavel, but in a manner in which it betrays them.

It is questionable, however, why the fictional Dostoevsky chooses a form of perverse posthumous writing as a way of keeping Pavel alive. In his mourning of Pavel, Dostoevsky has sex with Anna in Pavel’s room in order to seduce and corrupt Matryona. Perceiving this perversion, Anna says, “you use me as a route to my child” (231). As Anna points out, Dostoevsky’s writing in Pavel’s diary is also a perverse form of writing to seduce Matryona to read it. It is thus the reader who Dostoevsky tries to seduce and contaminate through a form of perversion. This precisely relies on his thought of his writing as a perversion of the truth: “I write perversions of the truth. I choose the crooked road and take children into dark places. I follow the dance of the pen” (236). This perversion of the truth is relative to a paradox exposed in Dostoevsky’s writing of Pavel’s diary, which embodies an encounter between the living and the dead. “Ultimately it will not be given him to bring

⁴⁰ See Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Yolkhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 681-714.

⁴¹ Anthony Uhlmann, “Excess as Ek-Stasis: Coetzee’s *The Master of Petersburg* and *Giving Offense*”, *The Comparatist*, 38 (October 2014), 64.

the dead boy back to life. Ultimately, if he wants to meet him, he will have to meet him in death” (237-8). This paradox demonstrates a dilemma in Dostoevsky’s posthumous writing, since his writing always represents the absence of the beloved after his death. Concerning this paradoxical situation, Dostoevsky draws on the Biblical parable of the thief in the night and the householder.

If he is to be saved, it will be by the thief in the night, for whom he must unwaveringly be on watch. Yet the thief will not come till the householder has forgotten him and fallen asleep. The householder may not watch and wake without cease, otherwise the parable will not be fulfilled. The householder must sleep; and if he must sleep, how can God condemn his sleeping? God must save him, God has no other way. Yet to trap God thus in a net of reason is a provocation and a blasphemy.

He is in the old labyrinth. It is the story of his gambling in another guise. He gambles because God does not speak. He gambles to make God speak. But to make God speak in the turn of a card is blasphemy. Only when God is silent does God speak. When God seems to speak God does not speak. (236-7)

In this vision, the householder must watch on in order to be saved by the thief. Yet, if the householder watches on, the thief will not come. This dilemma is then reworked, perhaps through a wager, as a parable of gambling: he claims he gambles in order to make God speak, but to attempt to make God speak through gambling is “blasphemy”. This leads to the paradox that God speaks only when he is silent.

The paradoxes of the householder and gambling designate Dostoevsky’s “choice that is no choice” (239), when he tries to write about Pavel in the work of mourning. Paralyzed, Dostoevsky has to bear Pavel within himself or to let him loose: “Either Pavel remains within him, a child walled up in the crypt of his grief, weeping without cease, or

he lets Pavel loose in all his rage against the rule of the fathers. Lets his own rage loose too, like a genie from a bottle, against the impiety and thanklessness of the sons” (239). This dilemma can also be understood as his choice between whether he writes (or mourns) Pavel for himself or for his stepson. Dostoevsky lets Pavel loose within his memory and lets Pavel grow and change beyond his memory: “from this vision of Pavel grown beyond childhood and beyond love—grown not in a human manner but in the manner of an insect that changes shape entirely at each stage of its evolution” (240). In this circumstance, Dostoevsky waits for Pavel’s voice beyond his memory, after his stepson has already died.

However, Dostoevsky still hesitates to write, as “he cannot mourn except to and for himself” (239). Thus, Dostoevsky incorporates himself into the dead Pavel like “the goddess-fiend drawing out the seed from the corpse, saving it” (241). Gazing upon “the body-parts without which there can be no fatherhood” (241), Dostoevsky begins to write at the moment when “Nothing is private any more” (241) between Dostoevsky and Pavel. Dostoevsky “takes Pavel’s diary and turns to the first empty page, the page that the child did not write on because by then he was dead. On this page he begins, a second time, to write” (242). In this way, when Dostoevsky starts his writing, his identity dissolves and disappears in the process of incorporating himself into a “version of Pavel” (242).

In his writing he is in the same room, sitting at the table much as he is sitting now. But the room is Pavel’s and Pavel’s alone. And he is not himself any longer, not a man in the forty-ninth year of his life. Instead he is young again, with all the arrogant strength of youth. He is wearing a white suit, perfectly tailored. He is, to a degree, Pavel Isaev, though Pavel Isaev is not the name his is going to give himself. (242)

By writing in Pavel’s diary, Dostoevsky becomes Pavel as a living-dead, producing the undetermined space between self and the other, the living and the dead. As a result, he

encounters a paradox of writing: “He is writing for himself. He is writing for eternity. He is writing for the dead” (245). The writer Dostoevsky thereby creates a paradoxical space where the self and the other can coexist, incorporating the dead into the living.

Nevertheless, what Dostoevsky writes in his stepson’s diary is not simply pornography, but also the corruption of innocent Matryona. Dostoevsky describes his writing as a trap to catch God:

It is an assault upon the innocence of a child. It is an act for which he can expect no forgiveness. With it he has crossed the threshold. Now God must speak, now God dare no longer remain silent. To corrupt a child is to force God. The device he has made arches and springs shut like a trap, a trap to catch God. (249)

However, it is noteworthy that Dostoevsky’s trap to catch God needs to be distinguished from Nechaev’s trap for Dostoevsky. As I have argued, Nechaev traps Dostoevsky to write a pamphlet for a revolution by sacrificing the death of Pavel. However, Dostoevsky becomes a betrayer of the dead Pavel, the innocent Matryona and God, which results in the production of a paradoxical space. In this context, it is important to rethink what Uhlmann describes in relation to the writer’s betrayal. Uhlmann says:

...a particular kind of sacrifice is required in order to be a writer: the sacrifice not of Christ, but of Judas, who betrays so that Christ (or the idea of the truth) might be revealed. The betrayal destroys the idea of the one who betrays because it gives offense and draws condemnation. Yet, paradoxically, in drawing offense down on his head the writer is able to bring ideas into focus that might lead us to truths.⁴²

⁴² Uhlmann, “Excess as Ek-Stasis”, 64.

However, although Uhlmann describes the writer as an embodiment of Judas by betraying Christ, there is a risk that a writer inevitably condemns the position of sacrificing himself in order to access what is called the truth. This could also result in elevating the writer to the sacred one who sacrifices himself for the truth. Given Dostoevsky's desire to become a dog rather than a poet, it is necessary to consider the relationship between a writer and the truth through Deleuze's conception of betrayal. From Deleuze's perspective, rather than sacrificing himself, a writer traces a line of flight, which is always related to betrayal. According to Deleuze, firstly, betrayal has to be a "double turning away": "The movement of betrayal has been defined as a double turning-away: man turns his face from God, who also turns his face away from man".⁴³ For example, "It is a story of Jonah: the prophet is recognizable by the fact that he takes the opposite path to that which is ordered by God and thereby realizes God's commandment better than if he had obeyed". Thus, in his writing in Pavel's diary, Dostoevsky turns away from Pavel, who also betrays him. Secondly, betrayal is related to a traitor, who betrays "the world of dominant significations", and "the established order".⁴⁴ For example, Captain Ahab, in Herman Melville's novel, *Moby Dick*, chooses "Moby Dick, the white whale, instead of obeying the law of a group of fishermen, according to which all whales are fit to hunt".⁴⁵ This engages Ahab with a "whale-becoming-himself".⁴⁶ In this context, Dostoevsky's posthumous writing is a double turning away that he betrays Pavel who turns away from him. This is an act of betrayal of

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 40.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 41. Deleuze distinguishes a traitor from a trickster: "for the trickster claims to take possession of fixed properties, or to conquer a territory, or even to introduce a new order. The trickster has plenty of future, but no becoming whatsoever" (41). Unlike that of a trickster, Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand of Plateaus*, describe a traitor's betrayal as a "universal deception", which can invent a new relation between signs and signs, or an individual and a community. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand of Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 118.

⁴⁵ Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogue II*, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

a writer who resurrects the dead or the past. To put it another way, betraying the dead Pavel and the living Matryona in his posthumous writing, the writer Dostoevsky is forced to become a ghost, or one of the living-dead, through the paradox of incorporating death into his life.

Subsequently, a posthumous writing entails an infidelity to the dead in order to be faithful to him. This is associated with what Kossev describes in relation to Dostoevsky's betrayal: "Life becomes story, death becomes life. The writer himself takes on Pavel's youth, becoming a 'version of Pavel', who has 'passed through the gates of death and returned' (242)". Kossev goes on to assert that "Writing on a blank page in Pavel's diary (an act which represents the time he had ceased to write in it because he was dead), the writer takes on an ambiguous identity ('he is not a god but he is no longer human either') and, in some way, the writing process begins" (221). As a result, in writing the dead, Dostoevsky experiences himself as existing in a space of paradox: "time stands still and watches too. Time is suspended, everything is suspended before the fall" (249). In the suspension of time, Dostoevsky feels his own living dissolved: "I have lost my place in my soul, he thinks" (250). Dostoevsky eventually reaches the thought of his own death by betraying his own life: "He has betrayed everyone; nor does he see that his betrayal could go deeper." "Am I dead already?" (250). In this context, Dostoevsky's consciousness of himself as a ghost has an affinity with Mrs. Curren's recognition of herself as an ailing and dying woman, when they write the deaths of the young generation. Dostoevsky's posthumous writing therefore displays a fidelity to the dead and the living through an infidelity to both of them.

V. Conclusion

As I have argued, J.M. Coetzee's novel *The Master of Petersburg* is a work that concerns itself with the mourning of the dead. In the novel, the protagonist Dostoevsky returns to Petersburg to mourn his stepson Pavel's mysterious death. Yet, Dostoevsky's mourning is suspended, because he is attached to the dead Pavel, by virtue of keeping his stepson alive in memory. From this, I have discussed Dostoevsky's mourning in its three dimensions: the impossibility of mourning, the political denial of mourning and the mourning as posthumous writing. As I have noted, Derrida argues that an act of mourning is impossible, since the survivor's mourning implies the perpetual memory of the dead. Specifically, in mourning, the survivor incorporates the dead within his memory, but the alterity of the dead can be determined by the survivor's memory. Thus, Derrida offers an ethical aporia of mourning to preserve both the memory and the alterity of the other. Within the framework of Derrida's ethics of mourning, rather than engaging with the incorporation of the dead, the mourner is forced to recognize the dead as a dead-alive other, whilst thinking of himself as a living-dead. In other words, the mourner and the dead, in the work of mourning, both become living-ghosts, following the death of the other.

In relation to Derrida's writing on mourning, firstly, I have argued that Dostoevsky's mourning is impossible. Overwhelmed by his sorrow at the loss of Pavel, Dostoevsky becomes melancholic, forcing him to recall and resuscitate his stepson in his memory. In the process of the mourning, Dostoevsky, however, comes to recognize a paradox of mourning the dead from Derrida's perspective: Dostoevsky succeeds in mourning his stepson, only when he fails. The dead Pavel is not able to resist Dostoevsky's incorporation and memory. However, in mourning, Dostoevsky experiences himself as the dead, a position that dissolves his self. Instead of being a "self-enclosed unity," Dostoevsky becomes a living-dead, haunted and inhabited by the dead. As a result, Dostoevsky's

mourning is not completed, but is always suspended.

Secondly, although the dead Pavel cannot resist Dostoevsky's memory or incorporation of him, he, as a dead-alive other, is able to betray the survivor in the act of mourning. The betrayal of the dead can be juxtaposed with the risk that the mourning of the dead is used politically. Specifically, Dostoevsky's grief for the dead Pavel has to be suppressed because of the political implication that his stepson was involved with Sergei Nechaev's rebellion against the Tsarist regime. Firstly, the policeman Maximov interprets Pavel's fiction as evidence of his rebellious activities, whilst Dostoevsky thinks of the fiction as a form of private writing. Secondly, trapped by Nechaev, Dostoevsky is forced to write a pamphlet saying that Pavel was killed by the police. Nechaev wishes to use the death of Pavel for the purposes of political agitation. As I have argued, Nechaev's revolution relies on the politics of sacrifice, which prohibits Dostoevsky from experiencing an impossible mourning. In an interview with the policeman Maximov, Dostoevsky interprets Nevchaevism as a radical and evil force of rebellion, a betrayal of history rather than as a specific commitment to rebellion. This radical force can also be understood as an act of betrayal with reference to the relationships between sons and fathers. Thus, Dostoevsky recognizes that Pavel betrays his stepfather through his fiction in which his stepson denies him as a father. However, Dostoevsky comes to comprehend a work of mourning as "the inside-outside relation", one that bears a betrayal within any relations.

Finally, Dostoevsky's writing in Pavel's diary, is clearly associated with an act of mourning. However, this writing offers a paradox, since he presents the absence of the beloved by resuscitating the dead. This paradox is described as Dostoevsky's assertion of a "choice that is no choice". In addition, in order to mourn Pavel, Dostoevsky writes his stepson's uncompleted fiction in the empty pages of his diary, but his writing is a pornography that seeks to seduce and contaminate the innocent Matryona. As a result, his

perversion of writing enacts an infidelity towards his stepson. However, Dostoevsky's mourning is suspended rather than completed, through the paradox of incorporating the dead into the living. In this way, Dostoevsky offers fidelity towards the dead through infidelity. Accordingly, Dostoevsky's posthumous writing triggers his mourning for both the other and himself. *The Master of Petersburg* can be seen as a work of posthumous writing, which commemorates the dead, and constructs a betrayal within the relations between the survivor and the dead, between fathers and sons, and between the texts of the dead and the posthumous writings of the living.

Chapter 5

The discordant accord and the ridiculous effect of the sublime

in *Disgrace*

I. Introduction

During the post-apartheid period in South Africa, the sovereign power of the former regime was dismantled and the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized was challenged. As Paul Patton observes, “this painful transition to a new South Africa is directly implicated in many of the events that befall” the characters in J.M. Coetzee’s novel, *Disgrace* (1999).¹ The protagonist David Lurie, once a professor of Romantic literature, teaches communication skills at the Cape Technical University, as part of what he calls the “great rationalization”.² From Lurie’s perspective, the authority of traditional values and emotions in the university needs to be discarded, in order to develop practical and communicative skills.³ However, in contrast to this stream of “rationalization”

¹ Paul Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts: Philosophy, Colonization, Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 119.

² J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 3.

³ Coetzee, in “Critic and Citizen” comments on the changing model of the university: the “old model of the university finds itself under attack as an increasingly economic interrogation of social institutions is carried out”. J.M. Coetzee, “Critic and Citizen: A Response”, *Pretexes: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 9:1 (2000), 110. Quoting this part, Derek Attridge suggests a possible connection between the changes in Lurie’s and Coetzee’s own universities: “Coetzee’s resignation from the University of Cape Town in 2001 and his move to Australia may not be unconnected with the views implicit here”. Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 169.

in the altered world, Lurie thinks that “his temperament is not going to change, he is too old for that. His temperament is fixed, set” (2). This discord between his fixed personality and the spirit of rationalization within the university marks him as an anachronistic individual, and this anticipates his friction with the spirit of the new South Africa. In this chapter, however, I will consider how Lurie’s decline triggers an encounter with the sublime, which can be described as a sentiment that opens up a chasm in his imagination and reason. This chapter will investigate the effects of the sublime in relation to the subject’s decline in Coetzee’s novel, drawing on Gilles Deleuze’s and Slavoj Žižek’s theories of the sublime. I will examine how Lurie’s experience of the sublime is transformed into the two effects of the ridiculous as articulated in Žižek’s theory and of inhuman becoming, as outlined in Deleuze’s theory. Subsequently, through this focus on the two effects of the sublime, I will explore how Lurie’s disgrace can be seen to designate an ethical and political potentiality for a new South Africa rather than a repetition of the violent structure of its history.

Set in turbulent times following the end of apartheid, the novel depicts a bleak South Africa fraught with violence, rape and revenge, which predicts a pessimistic future. From the perspective of white people, the colonizer’s racial privilege over the colonized has been lost. Lurie, as a white intellectual, is not able to maintain his former privileged position, but rather he has to negotiate with black Africans on different terms in the altered political circumstances of the new South Africa. Dawn, a young white woman, who Lurie takes out for lunch, regards the political shift as “anarchy”, by complaining that “Now people just pick and choose which laws they want to obey” (9). This circumstance, according to Tom Herron, entails the “white dilemma” in “dark times” (216): “the breakdown of law and order there; the ethics of silence as response to black-on-white, male-on female rape; the notion of historical retribution; the mechanics of land redistribution; the impact of

economic rationalization; the status of truth and the possibilities for reconciliation”.⁴ The focus of the early part of the narrative is Lurie’s sexual relationship with his student Melanie Isaacs, and her charge that he has raped her. This affair and its aftermath force Lurie to take a track of chaotic descent. After his retirement from the university, Lurie moves to his daughter Lucy’s smallholding in the Eastern Cape Town of Salem. Here, Lurie is beaten by three black Africans while Lucy is raped by them. There is an obvious linkage between these two acts of sexual violations, and in both cases their actions relate to the reversal of the relationship between the oppressor and the victim in the past. In this respect, the political change in South Africa involves the failure of reconciliation between the oppressor and the victim. Given the oppressive history of the apartheid regime, it becomes necessary that white people understand the pain of the black victims. In this context, as Dereck Attridge notes, the novel contains not even a “tinge of celebration and optimism”.⁵

Lurie’s traumatic experience at the hands of his attackers compels him to experience a fundamental sense of frailty and formless horror. It is this sense of formless fear that I want to approach through the conception of the sublime. From this perspective, I want to examine how this experience of the sublime pushes him to the limit of his imagination and reason. My first consideration is how Lurie’s imagination plays a role in understanding a transformative reality that the white people have lost their former privilege over the black people and have to negotiate with them. As an expert in Romantic poetry, Lurie identifies himself with Lord Byron and his circle. His literary imagination appears in contrast with a rationalization of South Africa. There is a disparity between the political demand of “rationalization” and his literary imagination. The second consideration is for whom the sentiment of the sublime provides a potentiality, since it enables an experience of the

⁴ Tom Herron, “The Dog Man: Becoming Animal in Coetzee’s *Disgrace*”, *Twentieth-Century Literature* (51:4, Winter 2005), 473.

⁵ Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 150.

formless that he cannot perceive or imagine in the oppressive society of South Africa. I will explore Lurie's decline and his experience of the sublime in terms of Deleuze's notion of the double movements of discord and accord, and Žižek's assertion of the effect of ridicule.

In order to explore the effects of the sublime in terms of the subject's decline, it is necessary to begin with Deleuze's conception of the sublime. In his reading of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Deleuze defines the sublime as a sensation or feeling of experiencing the limit of our imagination and reason, when we face "the formless or the deformed (immensity or power)".⁶ Specifically, in Deleuze's conception, there are two forms of the sublime, the "mathematical" and the "dynamical", which both lead us to experience feelings of pain.⁷ As Deleuze points out, we experience the sublime in the form of a dissension or a "contradiction experienced between the demands of reason and the power of the imagination".⁸ This contradiction or disparity, as Deleuze stresses, is available for the subject to reach the limit of the imagination. This makes possible "a tempest in the depths of a chasm opened up in the subject".⁹ Deleuze goes on to assert that "This is why the imagination appears to lose its freedom and the feeling of the sublime seems to be pain rather than pleasure. But at the bottom of the dissension the accord emerges; the pain makes a pleasure possible".¹⁰ In other words, the discord between reason and the imagination can be resolved in an accord, since reason and imagination have a "suprasensible" destination which also makes us feel "the indeterminate suprasensible

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2008), 42.

⁷ In Kant's account, the mathematical sublime involves the relationship between the imagination and theoretical reason, while the dynamic sublime is associated with a relationship between the imagination and practical reason. In this chapter, I will focus on the dynamic sublime in order to discuss the process of the discordant accord between reason and the imagination, alongside the change from pain to pleasure.

⁸ Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 43.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

unity of all the faculties”.¹¹ In this way, Deleuze describes Kant’s notion of the sublime as a sensation of experiencing the discord between reason and the imagination, followed by the sensation of an accord in the form of sensation. Thus, Deleuze focuses on the potentiality of an accord between each faculty through an experience of the discordant in Kant’s work, saying that “a discordant accord is the great discovery of the *Critique of Judgement*, the final Kantian reversal”.¹²

In Žižek’s theory of the sublime, however, emphasis falls on the relationship between the sublime and the ridiculous. At first, it is useful to consider Žižek’s discussion of the sublime, drawing on the tragic figure of the ‘Elephant Man’ in the late Victorian age. As its subtitle, “A Study in Human Dignity” suggests, “it was the very monstrous and nauseating distortion of his body which revealed the simple dignity of his inner life”.¹³ Žižek explains that the sublime arises from the great gap between the nullity of man as natural being and the infinite power of his spiritual dimension”.¹⁴ It is here that the ridiculous effect of the sublime reveals a Victorian morality. Žižek’s discussion of the ridiculous sublime is applied to humour, drawing on the Freudian conception. Žižek argues that humour is “the contribution made to the comic through the agency of the superego”, or “severe master of the ego”.¹⁵ According to Žižek, “‘The malevolent neutrality’ of the superego consists in the impossible position of pure metalanguage, as if the subject can extract himself from his situation and observe himself from the outside”.¹⁶ For Žižek, this split happens between the superego and ego: “when the subject adopts this neutral position to his ego, with all its problems and emotions, it is suddenly perceived as something petty

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., xi.

¹³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 219.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 217.

¹⁶ Ibid.

and insignificant”.¹⁷ Drawing on the example of Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry*, Žižek draws attention to the moment when “the old gentleman drags Harry’s corpse along a forest path and encounters an elderly woman who kindly asks him ‘What seems to be the trouble?’ Over the corpse, they fix their first date”.¹⁸ In this way, the subject’s indifferent attitude towards his own predicament brings on the effect of humour. The point of humour is, according to Žižek, its distinction from jokes or what is simply funny. In humour, “a person maintains the distance where one would not expect it—he acts as if something which we know very well exists, does not exist”.¹⁹ In this vision, humour thus reveals how the subject both sustains and suspends the ruling ideology. In this way, humour can be applied to the ridiculous effect, when the sublime falls. I will argue, drawing on Žižek’s theory of the ridiculous sublime, that we can rethink Lurie’s fall and its relation to the ideology of South Africa in this way.

One of the questions the novel raises is whether Lurie’s humiliation can be compared to the suffering of the Other, which, in the novel, includes black Africans, women and animals. In particular, most of the animals in the novel are abandoned, slaughtered or incinerated by humans, but they are not able to escape from their suffering. In other words, compared to the human victims, the animals, in this novel, are incapable of avoiding their death, because “they exist to be used” (123) and to be sacrificed by and for humans. In fact, animals are presented as the wholly Other and incapable of resisting their suffering. Given, as Derek Attridge remarks, that “the most powerful writing in the novel involves the relation not to animal life but to animal death”,²⁰ animal suffering becomes strikingly suffused with their ruthless slaughter. As a result, we are invited to consider how Lurie’s

¹⁷ Ibid., 218.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 185.

disgraceful decline is connected to the suffering of animals. Based on Deleuze's theory of becoming-animal, Paul Patton describes Lurie's becoming-animal in terms of the proximity between humans and animals. However, my contention here is that Lurie transforms himself into a becoming-animal (or becoming inhuman) through an experience of the sublime, or, more specifically, through Deleuze's sublime with its double movements of discord and accord between the imagination and reason.

In this chapter, I will firstly examine how Lurie's literary imagination functions as a vehicle of self-deception that enables him to avoid a transformative reality, which I will explore by comparing the concepts of the literary imagination and the sympathetic imagination. Secondly, drawing on Deleuze's and Žižek's theoretical perspectives, I will examine how the assault he undergoes forces him to encounter the sentiment of the sublime, via the disparity between his imagination and reason, and how the ridiculous effects of the sublime produced by Lurie's decline ironically bring him to face his own crime against the black people in its ideological aspects. Finally, drawing on Deleuze's theory of a discordant accord, I will examine how Lurie's becoming-inhuman is processed by sacrificing the structure of revenge and sacrifice for the sake of a community to come.

II. The limit of the imagination

What role does the faculty of the imagination play in enabling Lurie to understand and recognize the Other in a new South Africa? This question will be central to the following section. In his reading of Kant, Deleuze explains that "the synthesis, as both apprehension and reproduction, is always defined by Kant as an act of the imagination", but the synthesis is insufficient to constitute understanding, or knowledge: "That which

constitutes knowledge is not simply the act by which the manifold is synthesized, but the act by which the represented manifold is related to an object”²¹. This is called the “recognition” of the object, or cognition and understanding of the Other. Yet, imagination and understanding become free and unregulated, when we face the immensity or power of the sensible object or world. Reason pushes the imagination to “unite the immensity of the sensible world as a whole”.²² Because the imagination grasps the object as its parts, there is a “*dissection*” or a “contradictory experience” between the imagination and reason.²³ At this moment, the imagination goes to its limit. As Deleuze observes, it is, yet, through its limit that imagination-reason accord is “*engendered*”, as a discord-accord, or a “suprasensible destination”.²⁴ In this context, I will consider here how Lurie as an expert on Romantic poetry is capable of recognizing the Other and the changed world through his imagination in the new South Africa.

Having already published three books on Romanticism, Lurie now has the idea of composing *Byron in Italy*, a reflection on the love between Byron and his lover Teresa Cuiccioli in the form of a chamber opera. Although the communications of “thought, feelings and intentions (4)” is required in the setting of a rationalized university, Lurie offers a course on Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Byron this year. In contrast with his aesthetic comprehension of the Romantic spirit of revolution, Lurie’s personality is determined and fixed by his old habits and attitudes. Lurie attests that “I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself” (77). For this reason, Paul Patton describes Lurie as an “allegorical figure” who restates “if not the habits and attitudes of the ruling class of the old colonial regime, then at least a certain kind of Eurocentric and cultured cast

²¹ Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, 13.

²² *Ibid.*, 43.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

of mind that sustained the possibility of colonial relations”.²⁵ Nevertheless, his privileged habits and attitudes can be viewed as problematic and unconventional in post-apartheid South Africa.

Lurie’s refusal to change his old habits and attitudes appears to be particularly risky in his private and intimate life. The novel starts by describing Lurie’s old habits relating to his sexual life through his regular meetings with a prostitute: “For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well” (1). Yet, his thoughts concerning his sexual life are soon shown to be delusionary, and entail his misunderstanding of the Other. Specifically, in order to solve “the problem of sex”, he makes a weekly arrangement with Soraya, a Muslim woman. From the start, it is clear that Soraya herself embodies contradictions. Thus, although she works as a part-time prostitute, she is, he thinks, “surprisingly moralistic”, as suggested in her opinion of tourists: “She is offended by tourists who bare their breasts on public beaches” (1). More importantly, because of his “unfailing” pleasure with her, Lurie thinks they have a “reciprocated affection” (2), whereas Soraya actually does this simply for a job. After he accidentally meets Soraya with her two sons in an open space, his opinion that a mutual affection exists is revealed as illusionary. After this encounter, Soraya cuts off their arrangement. Although he senses Soraya’s shame with regards to her “precarious double life” (6), Lurie pursues his own desire by hiring a detective to track down her real name and address. Shocked by his unexpected phone call, Soraya adamantly says: “You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me here again, never” (9-10). Thus, Lurie’s desire is exposed as “the predator’s intrusion” “into the vixen’s nest, into the home of her cubs” (10). Clearly, a gap exists between Lurie’s comprehension of and the reality of his relationships with the Other. This gap is exposed, in his relationship with Soraya, when his delusion is

²⁵ Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts*, 121.

blocked.

Lurie's delusion surrounding the relationship between himself and the Other is instigated by his literary imagination. Specifically, what is noticeable in Lurie's use of the literary imagination is his twisting of Kant's concept of beauty. From a Kantian perspective, judgement of beauty is entirely "subjective" and is thus located in the dimension of the personal. As Steven Shaviro articulates, a Kantian notion of beauty is neither cognitive, nor reasonable: "A judgement of taste is not based on determinate concepts": that is to say, the concept behind such a judgement "does not allow us to cognize and prove anything concerning the object because it is intrinsically indeterminable and inadequate for cognition".²⁶ In this respect, Shaviro describes a Kantian conception of beauty as "an *event*, rather than a condition or a state".²⁷ For example, "The flower is not beautiful in itself; rather, beauty *happens* when I *encounter* the flower".²⁸

Just as in Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement, Lurie regards Melanie as the beautiful object that lures and affects him. Shaviro, in his reading of Kant, expounds a similar perspective: "the object lures the subject while remaining indifferent to it; and the subject feels the object, without knowing it or possessing it or even caring about it".²⁹ In this way, when Lurie encounters Melanie on campus, he subjectively interprets her indifference to him as a luring gesture. Thus, he thinks of her smile as "sly rather than shy" (11). Through his judgement of her smile, Lurie calls her a "beauty" (16) and he goes on to treat her as an object: "She does not own herself. Beauty does not own itself" (16). On the basis of this aesthetic claim, Lurie treats Melanie like a beautiful object to be desired, since he thinks that Melanie's beauty itself draws him regardless of her response and interest.

²⁶ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009), 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

Accordingly, Lurie comes to imagine his relationship with Melanie as an irresistible “love”, justifying it by saying that “Eros entered” (52). In short, Lurie imagines that Melanie arouses his sense of beauty without engaging understanding.

However, as I have suggested, Lurie’s conceptualization of Melanie as the beautiful object only arises through his twisting of the Kantian concept. From a Kantian perspective, his experience of the beautiful is not an actualization of his feeling and desire for the object, but rather it is an aesthetic judgement that involves recognizing the object through the faculty of the imagination. Shaviro asserts that “Aesthetic judgement is a kind of *recognition*: its’s an appreciation of how the object ‘adapts itself to the way we apprehend it’, even though, at the same time, it remains indifferent to us”.³⁰ Thus, the subject’s aesthetic experience is also his engagement with the object’s indifference towards him. However, Lurie is not interested in recognizing Melanie’s existence, but he rather determines and fetishizes her within his imagination for his own pleasure.

The novel emphasizes Melanie’s passive attitude, but we can question why she does not resist his sexual advances. In fact, there is no direct reference to Melanie’s thoughts and feelings towards Lurie’s pursuit and abuse of her. Attending his lecture on Wordsworth’s poem, Melanie is seemingly confused about the sexual violation she experienced at the hands of Lurie: “For the first time she looks up; her eyes meet his and in a flash see all. Confused, she drops her glance” (23). However, Melanie is not always passive. Later, when she comes to stay over at his house and excuses her absences from his classes, he reflects: “she is learning to exploit him and will probably exploit him further. But if she has got away with much, he has got away with more. ... he is the one who leads, she the one who follows” (28). Nevertheless, Lurie elevates his affair as a flash of love inspired by Eros.

However, despite Lurie’s exaltation of his affair, its exposure results in the ridicule

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

he already half anticipates. This half-anticipation itself reflects the disjunction between his imagination and his understanding. Thus, there is a distinctive discord between his and other people's perception of his affair. His ex-wife Rosaline says that his affair is regarded as "stupid, and ugly too" (44). She goes on to say: "Don't expect sympathy from anyone else either. No sympathy, no mercy, not in this day and age. Everyone's hand will be against you, and why not? Really, how could you?" (44). In this account, Rosaline observes that Lurie's affair can be understood as anachronistic. However, by ignoring the transformative reality that his former privilege can no longer be accepted, Lurie still elevates his affair with Melanie, since he is absorbed in his illusive imagination. Accordingly, Rosaline calls him "a great self-deceiver" (188).

Lurie's literary imagination is problematic in his recognition of the Other, as he deliberately refuses a reality. In order to engage with this, it is necessary to examine the aesthetic experience of the subject's perception of the object through the imagination. In his lecture on Wordsworth's Book 6 of *The Prelude*, Lurie quotes part of the poet's description of the summit of Mon Blanc unveiled.

"From a bare ridge", he reads aloud,
we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. (21)

As "the clouds cleared", "the peak was unveiled (21)". At that moment, Wordsworth perceives the image of the summit and experiences a feeling of disappointment. This disappointment arises, as Lurie explains to the students, because the soulless image of the summit usurps the poet's living thought. Yet, Lurie suggests: "The question is not, How

can we keep the imagination pure, protected from the onslaughts of reality? The question has to be, Can we find a way for the two to coexist? (22)". Specifically, this coexistence presents what Žižek describes as "a harmony in the conflict itself" instead of "the harmony of an imposed uniform order".³¹ In Lurie's words,

"Wordsworth seems to be feeling his way toward a balance: not the pure idea, wreathed in clouds, nor the visual image burned on the retina, overwhelming and disappointing us with its matter-of-fact clarity, but the sense image, kept as fleeting as possible, as a means toward stirring or activating the idea that lies buried more deeply in the soil of memory". (22)

Thus, what Lurie tries to assert in his lecture on Wordsworth's poem is the aesthetic experience of a spontaneous harmony between the imagination and reality, the image and the pure idea through the unregulated imagination.

However, a discord exists between the imagination and reality in Lurie's experience, since Lurie connects a sense of the poetic moment to his sexual relationship with Melanie: "What did he say to Melanie that first evening? That without a flash of revelation there is nothing" (21). However, far from being a mutual encounter, Lurie's sexual encounter with Melanie presents a mixture of his illusion and perverse pleasure, which involves his domination and exploitation of Melanie's body. While he fulfills his desire during sex, Melanie is like a corpse: "her limbs crumple like a marionette's" (24). Their intercourse is thus more like a predator preying on a victim: "As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were far away" (25). Lurie's desire is only

³¹ Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 245.

achieved by failing to comprehend and recognize her subjectivity. In this way, there is a great gap between Lurie's imagination and a Kantian concept of "recognition". Accordingly, through his illusive imagination, Lurie avoids and denies his responsibility for Melanie. In the hearing, Farodia Rassool, as one of the committee members, criticizes Lurie's avoidance of confession and of apology:

"Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specifically, all of a sudden it is not abuse of a young woman he is confessing to just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part" (53).

Thus, the gap between the imagination and reality turns Lurie into a self-deceptive and self-enclosed figure, pursuing his desire in a conflict with the faculty of understanding.

Nevertheless, there is a further question that needs to be asked in relation to Lurie's imagination, arising from the great gap between the power of the imagination and the demand of reason. Choosing to identify himself with Byron and his literary figures, Lurie refuses to renounce his lifestyle and pursues his perverse desire. In this context, through Lurie's analysis of Byron's poem "Cain", we are prompted to think of a demonic figure and its relation to Lurie. As Lurie says, Lucifer, "the angel hurled out of heaven" (32), acts by impulse. Let us look at the part of "Cain" that Lurie discusses in his class:

He could
At times resign his own for others' good,
But not in pity, not because he ought,
But in some strange perversity of thought,
That swayed him onward with a secret pride
To do what few or none would do besides;
And this same impulse would in tempting time

Mislead his spirit equally to crime. (33)

Before explaining this poem, Lurie asks who Lucifer is. In answer to his question, Melanie's boyfriend says that Lucifer "does what he feels like. He does not care if it's good or bad. He just does it" (33). In this deliberately provocative answer, an implicit connection is made between Lucifer's conduct and Lurie's sexual conduct. Specifically, as Lurie asserts, Lucifer is a figure who "does not act on principle but on impulse, and the source of his impulses is dark to him" (33). The darkness, as Lurie restates, implies madness: "His madness was not of the head, but heart'. A mad heart" (33). In this formulation, Lurie claims that desire is not in accord with reason and understanding. As a result of taking his impulse to its limit, Lurie asserts that Lucifer is reduced to an inhuman monster. "For though he lives among us, he is not one of us. He is exactly what he calls himself: *a thing*, that is a monster. Finally, Byron will suggest, it will not be possible to love him, not in the deeper, more human sense of the world. He will be condemned to solitude" (33-4). Lucifer's becoming a monster predicts Lurie's own fate. Lurie's Romantic imagination is not able to function as a vehicle of understanding and reconciliation with the Other in a new South Africa, but it rather determines and fetishizes the Other, and, as a result, will condemn him to solitude.

III. The Sublime and the Ridiculous

As I have demonstrated so far, the accord between the imagination and reason that Lurie advocates through his reading of Wordsworth's poem breaks down, when, as in "Cain", the imagination is allowed to be free. The unlimited imagination then pushes a Byronic figure such as Lucifer to act by impulse, becoming a "thing", a "monster", in the

process. However, a further question can be asked: What is the relation between the discord of the imagination and reason in Romantic poetry and Lurie's disgrace in the dimensions of the individual and the political? In this section, drawing on Žižek's theory of the sublime and the ridiculous, I will here examine how Lurie's decline is processed beyond his imagination and reason and how Lurie's experience of the sublime through his decline ridiculously reveals the deadlock in which he maintains his political ideology.

In order to engage with this, it is firstly necessary to examine how the sublime is enacted through Lurie's decline. From Žižek's perspective, the sentiment of the sublime relates to Lurie's experience of the attack he undergoes on Lucy's farm. According to Žižek, the Kantian concept of the sublime can be found in a great gap, for example, between the diminished ego and the infinite power of the object. This is evoked in an example that Žižek draws upon from an episode of the Marx Brothers' film, *Meaning of Life*, which demonstrates the sentiment of the sublime in the form of humour. Two men from the 'live organ transplants' business visit a couple's apartment and demand the husband's liver. Although the poor husband resists, the two men drag his liver out of his viscera with cold indifference and then demand the wife's liver too. With her refusal, one of them brings her on a journey across the universe, "singing about the billions of stars and planets, and their intelligent dispositions with the universe".³² Žižek goes on to explain that "after she realizes how small and insignificant her problem is compared to the universe, she gladly agrees to donate her liver".³³ In this example, drawing on the Kantian concept of the sublime, Žižek focuses on the subject's sensation of the diminished self through the ridiculous effect of the sublime, as manifested in humour.

Drawing on Žižek's theory, we can reflect on ways that the sentiment of the sublime

³² Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 219.

³³ Ibid.

constitutes the dissolution of the self in Lurie's experience. Before the attack, Lurie still elevates his sexual desire for Melanie, justifying his impulsive sex as an irresistible love: "It was a god who acted through me" (89). However, he is rendered powerless with the arrival of the black African assailants.³⁴ Reality all of a sudden dawns on him:

So it comes, the day of testing. Without warning, without fanfare, it is here, and he is in the middle of it. In his chest his heart hammers so hard that it too, in its dumb way, must know. How will they stand up to the testing, he and his heart? (94).

In this account, Lurie's reason and imagination do not have any part to play. Only his body responds to the attack, and that response occurs in a "dumb way". Thus, for Lurie, the act of the rape is neither apprehensible nor capable of representation. It is only catastrophic.

Lurie's experience of the attack arises as a feeling of formless horror. When the gang set Lurie's body on fire in the bathroom, he feels "only fear", whilst his words and voices are shattered. "He strikes at his face like a madman; his hair crackles as it catches alight; he throws himself about, hurling out shapeless bellows that have no words behind them, only fear" (96). The "shapeless bellow" marks the formless sensation that Lurie is incapable of articulating. This event thus forces him to experience something that he previously failed to understand. The sublime arises from the gap between the powerlessness

³⁴ Andrew Van Der Vlies articulates that the assailants can be marked as black Africans by examining the characters' language in many ways, although there are not overtly expressions concerning their race. For example, Vlies asserts: "But the reader should notice that there are few overt indications of race in the narration of the attack. The attackers, 'two men and a boy', walk (in David's opinion) 'with countrymen's long strides' (91); the majority of rural South Africans are black" (46). Also, he provides another example: "When Lucy shouts at the men taunting the dogs, she does so in Xhosa ('*Hamba!*'), the first language of the majority black population of the Eastern Cape (about which more later), and the syntax of the assailant who explains why they want to use the telephone—'His sister . . . is having an accident'—also suggests a second-language English (and specifically a first-language black Xhosa-language) speaker (92)". Andrew Van Der Vlies, *J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 46.

of man and the tremendous power of violence. After the attack, Lurie feels shocked and weakened:

The events of yesterday have shocked him to the depths. The trembling, the weakness are only the first and most superficial signs of that shock. He has a sense that, inside him, a vital organ has been bruised, abused—perhaps even his heart. For the first time he has a taste of what it will be like to be an old man, tired to the bone, without hopes, without desires, indifferent to the future. Slumped on a plastic chair amid the stench of chicken feathers and rotting apples, he feels his interest in the world draining from him drop by drop. It may take weeks, it may take months before he is bled dry, but he is bleeding. When that is finished, he will be like a fly-casing in a spiderweb, brittle to the touch, lighter than rice-chaff, ready to fly away”. (107)

In contrast to his sublimation of self in his poetic imagination before the traumatic attack, the passage offers a vivid description of Lurie’s inertia. Lurie’s body and spirit have been wounded, which results in his diminished self, evoked through a shapeless horror. This demonstrates how an experience of the sublime breaks and overturns the imagination and knowledge that Lurie depends upon.

However, from the vantage point of Žižek, it is important to reflect on the ridiculous effects of the sublime rather than Lurie’s sensation of the sublime itself. Concerning the ridiculous effects of the sublime, we must re-evaluate Lurie’s overly privileged position, and its relationship with his subsequent humiliation. At first, the issue of Lucy’s rape and sexual violation at the hands of the assailants raises questions in relation to Lurie’s sexual harassment of Soraya and Melanie. For example, the telephone call, the uninvited intrusion, the unwanted sexual encounter, and the refusal to apologize. Yet, it is important to look at the processes behind these actions, when Lurie calls Soraya and

Melanie. With his telephone call to Soraya, Lurie “intrudes into the vixen’s nest, into the home of her cubs” (10). Similarly, giving no warning, Lurie calls Melanie and invades her flat. This incident most clearly anticipates the rape of Lucy; “she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her” (24). These telephone calls, the invasion and the rape are brought together in the scene where the gang unexpectedly intrudes on Lucy’s smallholding on the pretext of using a telephone. However, Lurie distinguishes between his affairs and his daughter’s rape at the hands of these men. This raises the question of how he is not able to notice an affinity between the sexual violations, since the two violations are clearly related. As we have seen, Lurie fundamentally lends his sexual violation a romantic pathos through associations with poetry and music, but he recognizes a realistic and political matter in the attackers’ rape. In this way, he maintains a distance from the crimes of the assailants as a way of de-realizing his own crime. Yet, there is also humour evident in this formulation, in the way that Lurie rages against the attackers and their attitude towards the violation, whilst remaining oblivious to his own acts.

In this context, it is worth examining Lurie’s rage against Petrus’s silence. During the black men’s attack, Petrus was absent, but Lurie suspects his involvement with the gang’s rape. However, Petrus maintains silence surrounding the attack. This parallels Lurie’s refusal to confess his sexual violation of Melanie. Frustrated by Petrus’s silence related to the assailants, Lurie recalls the past: “In the old days one could have had it out with Petrus. In the old days one could have had it out to the extent of losing one’s temper and sending him packing and hiring someone in his place” (117). However, Petrus is now a “*neighbour*” (117) rather than “the black man for hire”³⁵ as in the past. In this new context,

³⁵ Vlies examines how Petrus’s race can be considered as black based on Lurie’s words. For example, Lurie thinks that “Petrus is an old-style kaffir”. Vlies points out that Lurie’s use of the word “kaffir” is “inflammatory and highly offensive” because it is “a racist epithet for a black South African”. Moreover, as I have quoted, Lurie thinks that “In the old days one could have had it out with Petrus”. From this, Vlies describes Petrus’s race as black by stating “Petrus is no longer the black man for hire”. *Ibid.*, 47.

Lurie thinks that Petrus is now “entitled to his silence” (116). “It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus, Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it” (117). Because of Petrus’s changed position, Lurie is not able to express his outrage against Petrus’s silence, as he might have done in the past, but he rather blames Petrus mutely:

Yet at this moment he would like to take Petrus by the throat. *If it had been your wife instead of my daughter*, he would like to say to Petrus, *you would not be tapping your pipe and weighing your words so judiciously. Violation: that is the world he would like to force out of Petrus. Yes, it was a violation*, he would like to hear Petrus say; *yes, it was an outrage* (119).

White people’s silence and indifference towards black victims in the past now echo in an uncanny way. Nevertheless, ridiculously, Lurie blames Petrus and the black men, as if no link exists between his and their crimes. This is one of the comical effects of Lurie’s decline.

However, in reality, Lurie’s decline is made more obvious through an examination of his relationship with his daughter. The relationship between Lurie and Lucy reveals a discord, through its contrast with that of Mr. Isaacs and Melanie. Lurie fails to protect Lucy from the attack of the invaders and fails to sympathize with Lucy’s wound. In contrast with Lurie, Mr. Isaacs, after hearing that his daughter has been victimized, denounces Lurie and reports his crime to the university. As a result of Mr. Isaacs’s actions, Melanie is protected from further harassment at the hands of Lurie. Moreover, in contrast to Lurie’s powerlessness, Petrus gets to exert his domination over Lucy and also to occupy her land. After the rape, Lucy is forced to be more dependent on Petrus. In fact, after the rape, Lurie has little to do with Lucy, but Petrus efficiently trades her flowers in the market, laying out the wares and selling them. As a peasant, Petrus is able to technically help Lucy who wants

to become a farmer. It is a significant marker of the changed political context when Petrus tells Lurie that “I will protect her” (139). In a further indication of the shift in power between whites and blacks, after the attack, Lucy, a lesbian, feels obliged to become Petrus’s third wife and a tenant of his land. Petrus allows her “to creep under his wing” (203). Both Lurie and Petrus are part of the old generation of apartheid, but a clear contrast exists between Petrus’s and Lurie’s recognition of reality in post-apartheid South Africa. In this respect, Lurie’s failure to understand this reality is relevant to his tragic decline.

Further questions can be asked concerning why Lurie fails to recognize the affinity between his and the black men’s crimes, and why it is important for Lurie to recognize this affinity. It is necessary to examine the parts of the novel where Lurie has sex with Melanie, as the sex is not overtly described as a rape, but it is at least considered as an act of exploitation. Let us look at the scene where Lurie first has sex with Melanie in her flat:

“But nothing will stop him. He carries her to the bedroom, brushes off the absurd slippers, kisses her feet, astonished by the feeling she evokes. Something to do with the apparition on the stage: the wig, the wiggling bottom, the crude talk. Strange love! Yet from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves, no doubt about that.

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him” (25).

Although it is written very concisely, this sexual scene is depicted in some detail. The scene is initially described from Lurie’s perspective, invoking the idea of ‘love’ and decorated with the classical allusion to Aphrodite. This perspective ignores what the second paragraph reveals: the fact that Melanie averts her lips and eyes—and turns her back on

him when he is finished. As Lurie thinks, the sex is at least exploitative: “Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” (25). Lurie goes on to reflect that the sex is an act of exploitation and it may also be considered as rape: “As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck” (25). In contrast to the details of Lurie’s sexual violence against Melanie, the black men’s rape of Lucy is a central absence in the novel. This absence marks the limitations of Lurie’s understanding. In relation to Lucy’s subsequent response to the incident, Lurie says, “I failed to understand why you did not lay *real* charges against them, and now I fail to understand why you are protecting Petrus?” (133). Lucy points out Lurie’s inability to comprehend the event, saying, “*You weren’t there. You don’t know what happened*” (140). Lurie’s incomprehensibility is not just caused by his absence in temporal and spatial dimensions, but also by his ideological perspective. Lurie’s incomprehensibility of the event in relation to Lucy is inextricably linked to his ignorance of Melanie’s pain. In the hearing, Lurie refuses to read Melanie’s statement: “I do not wish to read Ms Isaacs’s statement. I accept it. I know of no reason why Ms Isaacs should lie” (49). In this respect, despite the details of Lurie’s sexual harassment provided to the reader, the impossibility of his comprehension of Melanie’s situation lies at the heart of his decline. In the same way, a gap exists between Lurie’s and Lucy’s understanding of the event. Nevertheless, responding to Lucy’s remark about his lack of comprehension, Lurie insists that “On the contrary, I understand all too well” (157). He goes on to assert that “I will pronounce the word we have avoided hitherto. You were raped. Multiply. By three men” (157). The reader is not provided with a representation of this event, but Lurie understands the basic facts. In contrast, where the reader is provided with details of his exploitation of Melanie, Lurie seems oblivious to that basic fact. The ridiculous point of Lurie’s response lies in the fact that he pronounces the word “rape” and insists on using “the words we have avoided”. It is

ironic that he thus insists on appropriate, legal, realistic language in trying to understand Lucy's traumatic experience, whereas his own exploitation of Melanie was filtered through his literary imagination. This is the ridiculous effect arising from the discord between Lurie's understanding and his imagination of reality.

Lurie's ridiculous disclosure also has a relation to the political circumstances of South Africa. Instead of charging the black men, Lucy insists that the rape is a personal matter. However, a vital question remains as to whether the event could be seen as a private matter in South Africa. In her reference to her traumatic experience, Lucy remarks on the element of hatred on the part of her attackers: "It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was . . . expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them" (156). Lurie responds that "It was history speaking through them". He restates: "A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestor" (156). Responding to Lurie, Lucy observes: "That doesn't make it easier. The shock simply doesn't go away. The shock of being hated, I mean. In the act" (156). In this dialogue, both of them unexpectedly expose the fact that they cannot live a personal life in South Africa. Regardless of Lucy's and Lurie's different positions on the issue, they reveal that their personal lives are inextricably tied up with political life. Even the black men's and Lurie's perverse impulses have political overtones. In this context, it is ironic that both Lucy and Lurie treat their rapes discursively as personal matters separated from political ones. As I have discussed earlier, Lurie elevates his exploitation of Melanie, seeing it as an act of personal love, but he ridiculously exposes his lack of awareness that this was an act of violation when he attempts to empathize with Lucy's pain.

Lucy's disavowal of the public and political implications of her rape, however, poses a political and ethical question. Lucy says, "What happened to me is a purely private

matter. But in another time, in another place, it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, it is not. It is my business, mine alone” (112). This is clearly Lucy’s chosen survival strategy, but it is clear from the previous discussion that this ‘private matter’ is permeated by the public and the political. Furthermore, concerning Lurie’s connection between her rape and the idea of black African “vengeance”, Lucy goes on to challenge him: “Is it some form of private salvation you are trying to work out? Do you hope you can expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present? No. You keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. I don’t act in terms of abstractions” (112). From this, it can be seen that Lucy’s remarks on her private matters deny the crucial link with white people’s crimes in the past. In relation to this issue, I will now examine why Lucy’s refusal to treat her rape as a political issue is relevant to an escape from the structure of revenge and sacrifice in South Africa.

IV. Becoming-Inhuman

As I have discussed, drawing on Žižek’s theory, the ridiculous effects of the sublime are evidenced, when Lurie’s and Lucy’s catastrophic circumstances push them to experience something incomprehensible and unimaginable, which they would not have expected in their previous lives. As I have suggested, Deleuze’s notion of the sublime provides Lurie and Lucy with an experience of unformed or deformed power, via the discord between the imagination and reason. Deleuze asserts that the discord also produces an accord between the imagination and reason, which resonates with Kant’s concept of the

sublime. Deleuze's vantage point concerning the sublime offers the "suprasensible"³⁶ of a discordant accord between the imagination and reason, which "reveals the forces or intensities that lie behind sensations, and which draw us into nonhuman or inhuman *becomings*".³⁷ Thus, from Deleuze's perspective, the forces or intensities emerging from this chaotic sensation push humans into a becoming-something else beyond the human. According to Daniel W. Smith, "this is where Deleuze breaks with Kant and inverts the critical philosophy".³⁸ In this final section, drawing on Deleuze's theory of becoming-inhuman, I will explore how Lurie and Lucy become inhuman beings, entering into the zone of proximity between human and animal. Moreover, I will explore how their transformations provide a potentiality, which is capable of generating a radical change in a new South Africa by escaping from the structure of revenge and sacrifice.

As noted earlier, humans subject animals to violence in the novel. The animals die disgracefully in ways that involve abandonment, slaughter and incineration. Animals are much more vulnerable than women and black people. Animals are not regarded as members of the human community, but rather as objects to be used and sacrificed by humans. Alongside his decline, Lurie is compelled to observe animals' suffering in the country. In Lucy's smallholding, Lurie sees the watchdogs, and an abandoned dog, Katy. The dogs, which Lucy calls "working dogs" (61), are used to deter thieves in the case of a break-in. Thus, the watchdogs threaten and growl at the black strangers in Lucy's smallholding, but they are shot by one of the invaders. The brutal scene of the slaughter is meticulously described:

³⁶ Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 49.

³⁷ Daniel W. Smith, "Translator's Introduction", Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxii.

³⁸ Smith, "Translator's Introduction", xxii. Smith explains: "For Deleuze, the faculty of Idea is no longer identified with Reason; rather, Deleuze posits Ideas within sensibility itself and defines them not by their transcendence to Nature but rather in terms of their immanence to experience itself (the noumenal as immanent)".

With practiced ease he brings a cartridge up into the breech, thrusts the muzzle into the dogs' cage. The biggest of the German Shepherds, slavering with rage, snaps at it. There is a heavy report: blood and the brains splatter the cage. For a moment the barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog, shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears, following with its gaze the movements of this being who does not even bother to administer a coup de grâce. (95)

The striking scene of the slaughter of the watch-dogs provides us with the sensation of violence generating intensities. Nevertheless, Lurie does not express any compassion for the slaughtered animals. When he buries the corpses in the grave, Lurie rather remains indifferent to them, thinking of the death of the dogs as the revenge of the black people, and seeing their deaths from that perspective: "Contemptible, yet exhilarating, probably, in a country where dogs are bred to snarl at the mere smell of a black man. A satisfying afternoon's work, heady, like all revenge" (110). In this context, the death of the watch dogs represents a sacrifice on the part of white people, which is related to the revenge of the black people.

Nevertheless, Lurie's apathetic gaze also enables him to deal with dying animals and their corpses in Bev's clinic. Lurie seems to operate here on the grounds that he considers animals as a different species destined to die for humans. Observing Bev euthanizing a goat, Lurie says, "They know how death comes to a goat. They are born prepared" (84). Bev, on the other hand, does not think that there should be any difference between the deaths of humans and animals. She responds to his observation: "I am not sure. I don't think we are ready to die, any of us, not without being escorted" (84). Lurie's thoughts concerning animals are also different from Lucy's attitudes towards them. Lucy

believes in an equality of lives among humans and animals, saying that “there is no higher life”, but “only the life”, one that “we share with animals” (74). By contrast, Lurie stresses the difference between humans and animals: “We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different” (74). In this context, Lurie cannot imagine and comprehend Bev’s evocation of the interactions between humans and animals through sensation. When in the animal clinic, Lurie assists Bev to operate on the dog, which is full of pain and fear. Bev tells him: “Think comforting thoughts, think strong thoughts. They can smell what you are thinking” (81). She goes on to say, “I sense that you like animals” (81). However, Lurie denies her suggestion: “Do I like animals? I eat them, so I suppose I must like them, some parts of them” (81). Despite Bev’s insistence on shared intensities of feelings between humans and other animals, Lurie maintains his indifferent attitude towards animals’ suffering.

However, Lurie’s experience of the death of animals dismantles his abstractive distinction between human and animal. Instead of using his imagination and understanding, Lurie now starts to sense animals’ suffering. Thus, annoyed by the bleating of the two young sheep to be killed for Petrus’s party, Lurie thinks about their sacrificial destination for humans: “Sheep do not own themselves, do not own their lives. They exist to be used” (123). This reflects his earlier thoughts on Melanie, when he lures her by insisting that her beauty should be shared: “She does not own herself. Beauty does not own itself” (16). Yet, unexpectedly, Lurie feels compassion for the lot of the two sheep: “A bond seems to have come into existence between himself and the two Persians, he does not know how. The bond is not one of affection. It is not even a bond with these two in particular, whom he could not pick out from a mob in a field. Nevertheless, suddenly and without reason, their lot has become important to him” (126). Lurie’s sensitivity to the sheep may have arisen from the feeling of his own frailty in his circumstances of disgrace. On a deeper level,

Lurie's compassion may be accompanied by his identification with the sheep's vulnerability.

We certainly see radical change in Lurie's dealing with dying animals in Bev's clinic.

He had thought he would get used to it. But that is not what happens. The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets. One Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's kombi, he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. (142-3).

Although "he does not understand what is happening to him" (143), Lurie is clearly affected by the death of animals, which dismantles his indifference to the suffering of animals beyond his imagination and reason.

Deleuze, in his analysis of Francis Bacon's paintings shows how a possibility exists in a "zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between man and animal" through the deformation of their bodies or the disorganization of their faces. As a result, the great gap between human and animal is dissolved. For example, in Bacon's painting, *Three Figures and a Portrait* (1975[78]), there is, according to Deleuze, the pictorial tension that achieves "meat" "through the splendor of its colors".³⁹ Deleuze restates: "Meat is the state of the body in which flesh and bone confront each other locally rather than being composed structurally".⁴⁰ This "meat" is a common connection between the flesh of the human and the animal. Bacon establishes it by merging the faces or frames that represent their identity. As a result of this deformation and merging, Deleuze finds a sharability between humans and animals in the "meat" of Bacon's paintings through their suffering. The sensation of meat arises in its manifestation of violence rather than its representation, which brings

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. and intro. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 20.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 20-1.

about a “violence of reaction and expression”.⁴¹ This violence of sensation triggers us to embody within ourselves invisible forces, which push us to interact with the object in a material way. In this way, according to Deleuze, Bacon paints “the scream rather than the horror”.⁴² Drawing on Kant’s conception of the sublime, we can further consider how the violence of sensation can bring about transformative forces. Danial W. Smith describes the experience of the sublime: “Kant presents a disconcerting scenario: I look at something, but my imagination wavers, I become dizzy, vertiginous”.⁴³ Smith goes on to explain that the experience of catastrophe, or the sublime takes place when the edifice of synthesis collapses: I no longer apprehend parts, I no longer reproduce parts, I no longer recognize anything. Instead of rhythm, I find myself drowned in a *chaos*”.⁴⁴ Yet, in the moment the imagination is unregulated and free, chaos becomes a rhythm or a wave between bodies.

Drawing on Deleuze’s assertions related to Bacon’s paintings, we can further examine Lurie’s transformation through the assistance he gives to Bev, as he incinerates the corpses of animals. For Lurie, it is beyond his imagination and comprehension that Bev euthanizes abandoned animals. In response to Bev’s statement of “Someone has to do it”, Lurie even thinks that Bev “may be not a liberating angel but a devil, that beneath her show of compassion may hide a heart as leathery as a butcher’s” (144). Nevertheless, similar to Bev’s euthanization of abandoned animals, Lurie takes the bags of corpses to the hospital grounds and also incinerates them in the furnace. By asserting that he is “offering himself to the service of dead dogs” (146), Lurie is transformed into an inhuman beyond the morality of humanism: “He saves the honour of corpses because there is no one else stupid enough to do it. That is what he is becoming: stupid, daft, wrongheaded” (146).

⁴¹ Deleuze, “Author’s Introduction to the English Edition”, *Francis Bacon*, xxix.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Smith, “Introduction”, xix.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Accordingly, rather than offering pity to the dead dogs, Lurie “becomes a dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp; a *harijan*” (146). In this context, an affinity exists between Lurie’s becoming-inhuman and Bacon’s becoming-meat on the grounds that they are both affected by the corporeality of animals’ suffering rather than by the abstractive idea of them. It is in this way that we should understand what Lurie means, when he says that he becomes stupid by incinerating the corpses of animals

In this context, it also becomes possible to understand how Lucy’s becoming-inhuman is different from the politics of revenge and sacrifice. This distinction is inextricably connected to Lurie’s giving up of a mode of human life. In order to continue living on the farm, Lucy decides to become Petrus’s third wife. Additionally, Lucy gives up her land and becomes a tenant of Petrus. In her dialogue with Lurie, Lucy says:

‘Yes, I agree, 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. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity’.

‘Like a dog’.

‘Yes, like a dog’. (205)

In this passage, Lucy decides to live like a dog in the country. As I have mentioned earlier, Lucy’s refusal to treat her rape as a public matter is deeply related to her becoming-dog. The structure of revenge and sacrifice are merely repeated in the relationship between black Africans and white people, men and women, humans and animals in South Africa. In order to escape from this vicious cycle of revenge and sacrifice, an ethics of becoming-inhuman is required.

In the context of Lucy’s becoming-dog, we can also further rethink Lurie’s becoming-inhuman in a situation in which animals and women are forced to be sacrificial

offerings for the reconciliation between the oppressor and the victim. The moment when Lurie is about to kill the dog is revealing in this regard:

The dog wags its crippled rear, sniffs his face, licks his cheeks, his lips, his ears. He does nothing to stop it. 'Come'.

Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. 'I thought you would save him for another week', says Bev Shaw.

'Are you giving him up?'

'Yes, I am giving him up'. (220).

Lurie's giving up of the dog can be misread as a sacrifice of the dog, who is treated like a scapegoat for the crimes of human beings. Yet, it is important to note that Lurie's giving up of the dog is neither an act of compassion towards the dying animal, nor a sacrifice of the dog for the purgation of South Africa. The sacrifice must be sacrificed in order not to repeat the history of revenge for a new community. Lurie's giving up of the dog is thus closer to his becoming-meat rather than the sacrifice of the victim. In this context, Lurie eventually learns how to love the Other by assisting in Bev's euthanization of animals: "He and Bev do not speak. He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love" (219). In this way, Lurie becomes a monster beyond the understanding and imagination of human beings. This is also the ethical aspect of Lurie's becoming-inhuman, as he seeks to generate a new community on this basis.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored how the protagonist David Lurie's decline

encounters the effect of the sublime in a new South Africa by drawing on Deleuze's and Žižek's theories of the sublime. During the transition of the post-apartheid period, bleakness fraught with violence such as rape and revenge, is rife in South Africa, and is also evident in the novel. The characters are required to change their previous modes of life, but Lurie as a white professor in Cape Town originally maintains his fixed personality. However, Lurie's sexual violence against his student Melanie Isaacs brings him into a state of disgrace. By drawing on Deleuze's and Žižek's theories, I have investigated that Lurie's decline takes him to the limit of his imagination and reason, generating his transformation in three dimensions: the limit of the imagination, the sublime and its ridiculous effect, and the becoming-inhuman.

Firstly, I have examined how Lurie's literary imagination hardens his narcissistic personality. Drawing on Immanuel Kant's conception of the imagination, Lurie's imagination can be seen to function as a synthetic faculty that enables him to recognize and understand the Other. However, by identifying himself with Byron and his literary figures, Lurie twists the Kantian concept of the beautiful in order to achieve his sexual desire for Melanie. However, Lurie's imagination is not in accord with his understanding of the Other and the altered world. Accordingly, by relying on his imagination, Lurie ignores the suffering of the Other in his sexual obsession with Melanie. Thus, by following his imagination to its limit, Lurie becomes a monster like a Byronic figure that nobody can comprehend. That is why Lurie's imagination can be seen as dangerous in relation to the Other in a new South Africa.

Secondly, I have discussed Lurie's decline in relation to the ridiculous effect of the sublime. Lurie's experience as the victim of violence brings him to a sensation of formless fear. From Žižek's perspective, Lurie's traumatic experience however produces its ridiculous effect. Specifically, Lurie does not recognize the affinities between his own

sexual exploitation of Melanie and the black men's rape of Lucy. Rather, he regards his exploitation of Melanie as a private and irresistible love while thinking of the black men's violence as the political revenge of the black people. However, through his experience of the ridiculous sublime, Lurie ironically is compelled to face and name his crimes. His encounter with his own crimes offers the potentiality of dismantling white people's privileged attitudes and habits, as the ridiculous effect of the sublime. Nevertheless, Lurie's recognition of his crimes is not sufficient to bring a radical change to the ethical and political implications of a new South Africa, since the ridiculous effect of the sublime does not offer an ethical and political solution to the question of how not to repeat the structure of sacrifice and revenge between the oppressor and the victim.

In this chapter, I engaged with this issue by drawing on Deleuze's sensation of the sublime. I further examined how to escape from the structure of revenge and sacrifice in a new community, drawing on Deleuze's analysis of Francis Bacon's works, which conveys the becoming-inhuman evident in Bacon's paintings of the body as meat. Bacon paints a violence of sensation by embodying invisible forces in his painting of meat. This affords us with the possibility of entering a zone of indiscernibility between human and animal. Animals in the novel initially exist to be used and sacrificed by and for humans. At first, Lurie is indifferent towards the suffering of animals. Yet, after his decline, Lurie assists Bev's euthanization of abandoned and dying animals, and the incineration of their corpses. The violence of the sensation in coming into contact with the suffering of animals forces him to become inhuman in an ethical sense, through interactions between himself and animals rather than through his compassion for the victimized animals. Lurie's becoming-inhuman therefore provides an ethics that enables us to escape the politics of revenge and sacrifice in South Africa.

Chapter 6

Sympathetic imagination and Becoming-Animal:

Elizabeth Costello

I. Introduction

This chapter will investigate the ethical ways that humans can think of and sympathize with animals, as presented in J.M. Coetzee's novel, *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). Framed as eight lessons and a Postscript on diverse issues, the novel comprises fragmentary chapters, taken from the continuous point of view of the eponymous protagonist. Among the fragmentary lessons, the two on "The lives of Animals" are connected through different subtitles: "The Philosophers and the Animals" and "The Poets and Animals". In these two lessons, Elizabeth Costello, an elderly, successful, vegetarian writer, gives lectures on animals and their vulnerability by drawing on striking analogies between humans and animals. Most strikingly and controversially, for instance, she makes a comparison between the extermination of the Jews of Europe and the treatment of animals. Less controversially, drawing on Thomas Nagel's question, "what is it like to be a bat?", Costello considers the limit of our sympathetic imagination to think the being of another.¹ The limit of sympathy is, according to Costello, "tragically restrictive, restrictive and restricted" (76). However,

¹ J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Vintage Books, 2003), 75.

Costello claims that “There is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination” (80). Nevertheless, Costello’s remarks do not convince her audience, and rather cause anger and indifference. In this context, it is questionable as to whether Costello’s use of analogy and the sympathetic imagination can function as potential ways to affect us to empathize with the other by dismantling the representation of difference between humans and animals. My contention will be here that Costello’s use of analogy and the sympathetic imagination has the potential to generate a new configuration of self-differentiating difference, which I will explore by drawing on Gilles Deleuze’s theory of sympathy, imagination and becoming. Moreover, I will show that Costello’s sympathy with the being of another makes possible her own becoming-animal in terms of Deleuze’s theory.

First of all, however, the ethical rethinking of other lives in *Elizabeth Costello* needs to be explored in relation to the novel’s complex composition in various contents and forms. The novel is a generic hybrid of fiction and argument, an assemblage of diverse forms of lecture, discussion and letter. These multiple forms deal with multiple contents such as language, African literature, animals, the Humanities, Evil, Eros, and belief. In this context, it is useful to note the start of the first lesson on “Realism”: “There is first of all the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank. It is a simple bridging problem, a problem of knocking together a bridge” (1). The novel itself is an assemblage that bridges multiple connections, whilst looking to a realm that is yet to come. However, the bridge metaphor can also be misleading, since these diverse elements are arranged in a disjointed way. For example, the relation between language and the world in the first lesson on “Realism”, is presented as cracked. Costello says that a “word-mirror” of language in realism is broken (19), thereby making possible the ironical circumstance of Kafka’s ape, Red Peter, who makes a speech to scholars in a human language. In the second

lesson, “The Novel in Africa”, as Costello claims, language is again split from the body. Emmanuel Egudu, a writer from Nigeria, insists on “an [African] oral novel that has kept in touch with the human voice and hence with the human body, a novel that is not disembodied like the Western novel” (53). However, Costello contests this and challenges Egudu’s assertion of an essentialized African identity, saying that “A novel about people who live in an oral culture, she would like to say, is not an oral novel. Just as a novel about woman isn’t a women’s novel” (53). By contrast, in the sixth lesson, “The Problem of Evil”, Costello describes the danger of a writer representing an evil deed such as the execution scenes of the Holocaust, ironically emphasizing the power of the realistic novel. As this suggests, the fragmentary elements of the lessons and Postscript are interwoven, yet generate crevices between their connections. Thus, the complex composition of the novel implicitly poses the questions of how to connect its disjunctive elements.

The novel’s assemblage poses three basic questions related to analogy, the sympathetic imagination and becoming. Firstly, there is the consideration of how to connect the philosophical arguments and the fictive aspects in the novel. Costello’s thinking about the being of another, as I have mentioned earlier, is suggested as a form of analogical thinking and the sympathetic imagination. However, the novel’s exploration of ethical ways of sympathizing with animals is presented alongside philosophical arguments in the forms of lectures and discussions. Not only Costello’s lectures, but also her audiences’ responses are argumentatively presented. In addition, the two lessons titled “The Philosophy and the Animals” and “The Poets and the Animals” were originally delivered by Coetzee himself as his Princeton Tanner lectures in 1997-8, and were later reprinted in *The Lives of Animals* (1999) with the addition of the “reflections” of four scholars: Marjorie Garber, Peter Singer, Wendy Doniger and Barbara Smuts. Following this, the two chapters of *The Lives of Animals* were included in *Elizabeth Costello* in 2003. Moreover, given their earlier

appearance as Coetzee's own words, it is questionable how a reader may respond to them being presented as the words of a character Costello. In this context, they pose a question of how philosophical arguments relying on reason enable us to develop our extensive engagement with others and their lives.

Secondly, the novel allows us to reflect on the difficulty of connecting distinct lessons. Because of an assemblage of dissimilar issues, there are inconsistencies or holes in the presentation of Costello's and other characters' thoughts. Dereck Attridge points out various "inconsistencies" in the characterization. For example, according to Attridge, Costello's son, John lives in Australia in the part of "What is Realism" and "teaches in the department of astronomy at the Australian National University". Yet, in the U.S. in *Lives of Animals*, he is "assistant professor of physics and astronomy" at Appleton College. Attridge goes on to assert that "When Coetzee brought the pieces together in *Elizabeth Costello* he had to make some slightly awkward adjustments to achieve consistency": "John is said to be on leave in Australia for a year from his college in Massachusetts" in order to accompany his mother.² More noticeable inconsistencies are shown in the arguments. For example, Costello, in the fifth lecture, "The Humanities in Africa", writes a letter to her sister Blanche, who is called "Sister Bridget" in Africa. In the letter, Costello refers to human performances, of dressing and undressing, which distinguish us from animals. Costello says:

"Acts like that are not available to animals, who cannot uncover themselves because they do not cover themselves. Nothing compels us to do it, Mary or me. But out of the overflow, the outflow of our human hearts we do it nevertheless: drop our robes, reveal ourselves, reveal the life and beauty we are blessed with". (150)

² Dereck Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 194.

However, Costello's assertions surrounding clothing seems to repeat what scholars talk about in relation to "shame" (85), as a marker of differentiating humans from animals. Nevertheless, in her lectures on animals, Costello criticizes Western philosophers' distinction between human and non-human by saying that they are "more alike than they are unlike" on the grounds that "a philosopher who says that the distinction between human and non-human depends on whether you have a white or a black skin" (111). In this context, the novel poses the question of how to synthesize the inconsistencies of Costello's thoughts in relation to dissimilar elements, for example, species of human and animal, racial difference, religious and secular love, passion and belief.

Thirdly, there is the final consideration of the writer's voice and its relation to a fictive figure. Costello's philosophical voice throughout the lectures triggers the question of whether it is merely a reflection of the author. Costello is described as a successful writer, the author of *The House on Eccles Street* (1969), which rewrites James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). There is an obvious echo here of Coetzee's *Foe*, as if Costello is an avatar of Coetzee. Like the character of Friday in Coetzee's *Foe*, which rewrites *Robinson Crusoe*, Costello can be read as a fictive figure, delivering Coetzee's own ideas. However, Sam Durrant raises an important question regarding the relationship between Coetzee and Costello by considering the inconsistency of their positions in relation to the sympathetic imagination. Specifically, by claiming that "Coetzee's position is ultimately irreducible to Costello's", Durrant points out that "Costello's assertion that 'there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination' is turned upon itself in Coetzee's fiction, which one might describe as acts of sympathetic imagination that continuously encounter their own

bounds”.³ Durrant goes on to say: “While Costello has apparently rewritten *Ulysses* from the perspective of Molly Bloom, Coetzee has written a book about the impossibility of recovering the point of view of Friday from *Robinson Crusoe*”.⁴ In this way, there is a lack of integration between Coetzee and Costello, between writer and character, and this is emphasized by their difference in gender. However, at the same time, comparisons can be made between Coetzee and Costello. This can be found in Costello’s comparison between herself and Franz Kafka’s educated ape, or Red Peter in her lecture, in which she also draws on Kafka’s comparison between Red Peter who “performs before human beings” and the Jew, Kafka who “performs for Gentiles” (62). Costello goes on to say that the comparison between Kafka and the ape is conceived of “ironically” in relation to a reader and an audience (62). In their speeches, Costello’s feelings towards the ape and Kafka’s creation of the ape allow for differentiations between Costello and audiences and between Kafka and readers. Thus, Coetzee’s creation of his character makes possible his own transformation, which can be seen as relative to Costello’s and Kafka’s becoming-animal.

Through the consideration of these three questions, it becomes clearer in what ways the novel is an assemblage of heterogeneous elements: a mixture of argument and fiction, the coexistence of dissimilar issues, and an ironic integration between writer and character. This complex structure, I will argue, is closely related to the question of thinking and sympathizing with others. In this context, my argument focuses on how the use of analogy and sympathetic imagination in the disjunctive composition of the novel lead us to a way of thinking the being of another. Thus, this chapter will firstly examine the virtue and risk of analogy through Costello’s comparison between the extermination of the Jews and the

³ Sam Durrant, “J.M. Coetzee: Elizabeth Costello, and the Limits of the Sympathetic Imagination”, *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, ed. Jane Poyner (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 119.

⁴ Ibid.

slaughter of animals. Rather than being seen as a metaphor based on the similarities and differences between compared objects, I will show that Costello's analogy generates interactions between them. Secondly, Costello's sympathetic imagination will be examined as a method of corporeal association through Deleuze's reading of David Hume. Thirdly, I will examine how Costello as a writer creates self-differentiating difference, by discussing her comparison with Kafka's ape, or Red Peter in "Report to an Academy". Subsequently, this chapter will show that Coetzee, through the figurative character Costello, minoritizes the major configurations of literature, transforming it into a minority literature like Kafka's.

II. Analogy

Costello's analogies between humans and animals indicate a metaphorical extension of humans and animals. However, Costello's comparison between the human suffering of the European Holocaust and that of slaughtered animals brings about an angry reaction in her audience. In relation to this analogy, her son John Bernard, an assistant professor of physics and astronomy, thinks: "She should have thought twice before bringing up the Holocaust. I could feel hackles rising all around me in the audience" (93). The Jewish poet, Abraham Stern directly expresses his anger against her analogy through a letter, which states that Costello misunderstands "the nature of likeness" (94). By means of these fictional audience responses, a question is thus brought up about Costello's analogy and its relation to metaphor. In this context, I will examine that Costello's analogy is neither a metaphor that transforms one literal designation to another, nor a metaphor that asserts a resemblance between the two, but it rather attempts to trigger a new configuration of inhuman becoming.

Analogy can be defined as the core of cognition. It is created by drawing on similarities between designated objects, which otherwise may seem disconnected. The lives of animals have been unquestionably exploited for the benefits of humans, but this fact has rarely been explored by humans. To prompt this exploration, Costello attempts to evoke the Holocaust and its affinity with the food industry:

“They went like sheep to the slaughter.” “They died like animals”.
“The Nazi butchers killed them”. Denunciation of the camps reverberates so fully with the language of the stockyard and slaughterhouse that it is barely necessary for me to prepare the ground for the comparison I am about to make. The crime of the Third Reich, says the voice of accusation, was to treat people like animals”. (64-5)

In this passage, Costello cites various similes used to describe the Holocaust. She implicitly notes the under-examined comparator in these similes: the slaughter of animals. Far from accepting this normalization, Costello presents the “meat industry” as worse than the Nazis: “once its victims are dead, after all, it does not burn them to ash or bury them but on the contrary cuts them up and refrigerates and packs them so that they can be consumed in the comfort of our homes” (66). In this way, by creating the resemblance between the Nazis’ treatment of the dead bodies of people and the butcher’s treatment of the dead bodies of animals, Costello vividly presents the meat industry’s horrendous crime against animals. .

However, because of this comparison between the corpses of humans and animals, the audience resents Costello’s analogy. Attending Costello’s lecture, her son John thinks: “His mother does not have a good delivery. Even as a reader of her own stories she lacks animation” (63). In addition, John is concerned about Costello’s inappropriate comparison and the audience’s reaction. Stern directly reveals his resentment of Costello’s analogy by absenting himself from the dinner held in her honor. Stern notes the reason for his absence

in his letter:

You took over for your own purposes the familiar comparison between the murdered Jews of Europe and the slaughtered cattle. The Jews died like cattle, therefore cattle die like Jews, you say. That is a trick with words which I will not accept. You misunderstand the nature of likenesses; I would even say you misunderstand willfully, to the point of blasphemy. Man is made in the likeness of God but God does not have the likeness of man. If Jews were treated like cattle, it does not follow that cattle are treated like Jews. The inversion insults the memory of the dead. It also trades on the horrors of the camps in a cheap way. (94)

In this passage, Stern senses in Costello's analogy an insult against the dead Jews as well as a blasphemy against God. As this suggests, he refuses this analogy primarily due to the belief in the hierarchal relations between God, humans and animals in Western thought. Costello's analogy is precisely designed to contest this.

Stern's criticism of Costello's analogy can be viewed as reasonable and ethical, given Marjorie Garber's remark concerning the risk of analogy in *The Lives of Animals*. In relation to Costello's analogy, Garber asks: "Is the comparison of human beings to animals venal? Patronizing? A mode of false consciousness? A blasphemy? A necessary mediation? Viewed in literary terms, this is the challenge to humanism".⁵ An analogy of human and animal could devalue humanism or human culture. Garber cites various examples of the abuse of analogy. Regarding an analogy against the Jews, for example, Garber mentions the children's film *Bebe*, which draws on images of German expressionist film and the specter of the Nazi death camps. From this, Garber claims that "The Holocaust is one

⁵ Marjorie Garber, "Reflections", *The Lives of Animals*, ed. and intro. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 81.

profound challenge to the use of analogy”.⁶ Garber’s remark is associated with the suffering of the victims, so that the analogy of the Holocaust can be morally understood and criticized. Analogy is more often used as a form of metaphor in literary and cultural texts. Yet, the metaphor can be problematic, when the difference between the compared objects is naturalized and forgotten. For instance, in quoting a remark from Richard Lewontin’s, Steven Rose’s, and Leon J. Kamin’s work, *Not in Our Genes*, Garber asserts that “one of the errors of sociobiology is to take metaphors for real identities, and to forget (we might say ‘naturalize’) the source of the metaphors”.⁷ Garber goes on to refer to the application of human culture to non-human animals as “false metaphor”.⁸ Given that human culture typically rests on the opposition between human and animal, the analogy between human and animal can be abused.

However, Garber’s emphasis on the abuse of analogy is based on reinforcing the unequal relationship between human and animal. The same criticism applies to the Jewish poet, Stern’s criticism of Costello’s analogy. From Stern’s perspective, Costello’s analogy can be understood as an insult against the memory of the slaughtered Jews, since she reduces their plight to the death of animals. From Stern’s perspective, the suffering of the Jews cannot be compared to that of animals, as “man is made in the likeness of God but God does not have the likeness of man”. However, this hierarchical relationship between God, humans and animals is problematic, and it is precisely the effects of this hierarchy that Costello exposes. In fact, as Jacques Derrida remarks, the suffering of animals is perhaps even more serious than the suffering of humans, but it has been forgotten:

No one can deny seriously any more, or for very long, that men

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 83.

do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide (there are also animal genocides; the number of species endangered because of man takes one's breath away).⁹

Because of this hierarchical divide, the fact that animals have been massively exploited and slaughtered in farming, industry and experiments for human' benefit has been ignored. Stern's attack on Costello's analogy is thus based on the assumption that the suffering of animals is lesser than that of humans.

In Western culture, various characteristics of humanity such as reason, language and consciousness have been putatively considered as markers that differentiate humans from animals. According to Costello, Western thought from St. Thomas to Immanuel Kant has regarded reason and language as distinctive traits in humans, and these are considered to be divergent from animals. Humans think of themselves as reflecting the likeness of God on the grounds that God is an embodiment of reason. However, from Costello's perspective, the decisive elements involved in dividing humans and animals seem to be anthropocentric. Thus, when questioned about the "stupidity" of animals, Costello says that the thought that "animals are imbeciles is profoundly anthropocentric" (108). This can be rethought by reflecting on Deleuze's discussion of "stupidity" and its relation to animals. By investigating the diverse concepts of "stupidity" in Western philosophy, Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, asserts:

Stupidity [*bêtise*] is not animality. The animal is protected by specific forms which prevent it from being 'stupid' [*bête*]. Formal

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 26.

correspondences between the human face and the heads of animals have often been composed; in other words, correspondences between individual differences peculiar to humans and the specific differences of animals. Such correspondences, however, take no account of stupidity as a specifically human form of bestiality.¹⁰

Deleuze problematizes the way that the concept of stupidity is reduced to “error”, thus engaging in a reversal of thinking or reason in Western philosophy.¹¹ Deleuze thus questions: “how is stupidity (not error) possible?”¹² Deleuze connects the concept of stupidity to the “indetermination” in relation to determination: “It is the indeterminate, but indeterminate in so far as it continues to embrace determination”.¹³ Similarly, Deleuze explains that “Stupidity is neither the ground nor the individual, but rather this relation in which individuation brings the ground to the surface without being able to give it form”.¹⁴ In this context, Deleuze’s conception of stupidity can provide us with a question concerning the reason for dividing humans and animals.¹⁵ Along the same lines, Costello claims that

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 150. Deleuze describes changing views of the concepts of “stupidity” in Western Philosophy. For example, “The stoic notion of *stultitia* involves at once both madness and stupidity. The Kantian idea of inner illusion, internal to reason, is radically different from the extrinsic mechanism of error. The Hegelian idea of alienation supposes a profound restructuring of the true-false relation” (150).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹² *Ibid.*, 151.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, in his essay, “Man and the Becoming-Animal”, criticizes Deleuze’s discussion of stupidity on the basis that it still relies on humanism. Specifically, Derrida says that the two French words, “bête” and “bêtise”, are untranslatable and imply “not ‘stupid’ or ‘stupidity’ and not even ‘dumb’ or ‘dumbness’” (35). Using the French word “bêtise” rather than stupidity, Derrida insists that Deleuze “excludes the question of error from the question bêtise” in his question of “how is stupidity (not error) possible?” (45). The exclusion means that “la bêtise is not the relation of a judgement to what is” (45). From Derrida’s perspective, “‘bêtise’ implies not an error, nor a bad judgement, but rather an inability to judge, a flaw in judgement, a defect in judgement” (46). From this, drawing on Deleuze’s division between error and stupidity (bêtise), Derrida comes to assert that Deleuze’s discussion of “stupidity (bêtise) is not animality”, which implies that “only man is exposed to stupidity” (57). Jacques Derrida, “Man and The Becoming-Animal”, *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). However, despite the fact that Derrida describes Deleuze’s discussion of stupidity as evidence of the division

“For, seen from the outside, from a being who is alien to it, reason is simply a vast tautology” (69-70). This issue is seen as Costello’s criticism of language and reason grounded in humanism, as an exponent of the divide between humans and animals.

In this context, Peter Singer in “Reflections” attests that “There’s a more radical egalitarianism about humans and animals running through her lecture than I would be prepared to defend”.¹⁶ Based on the utilitarianism of the equal consideration of creatures’ interests, Singer comes to distinguish humans and animals in terms of their interests. From Singer’s perspective, it could be concluded that all animals are available to be killed, depending on their capability to feel pain. Yet, in her dialogue with Singer, his daughter Naomi points out a potential induction of Singer’s logic: the painless killing of animals could be justified. This could be an abuse of rationalism exercised by applying the calculability of pain to humans and animals, despite the fact that Singer emphasizes animals’ capability of experiencing pain. Thus, from Naomi’s perspective, Singer’s approach towards animals is limited by its rationality as judged from the perspective of feeling: “Too much reasoning, not enough feeling. That’s a horrible thought”.¹⁷ Accordingly, Naomi’s argument designates the limit of thinking animals in terms of the anthropological grounds of reason. Thus, Costello says, “The question to ask should not be: Do we have something in common—reason, self-consciousness, a soul—with other animals?” (79). In this context, Costello’s comparison between the extermination of the European Jews and the slaughter of animals does not appeal to common reason, but rather to the indiscernibility between humans and animals through the effect of its analogy.

However, if we consider the analogy of humans and animals presented in paintings,

between humans and animals, Deleuze attempts to demonstrate the groundlessness of knowledge that links animals to stupidity.

¹⁶ Peter Singer, “Reflections”, *The Lives of Animals*, 86.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

we can begin to rethink a process of dismantling their representations through the conjunction of animal and human. Deleuze, in his work, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, finds a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between human and animal in a composition of representative images of a face and an animal. According to Deleuze, Bacon “pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: *to dismantle the face*, to rediscover the head or make it emerge from beneath the face” (the original emphasis).¹⁸ In other words, by deforming or dismantling the face, as a site of identity, Bacon paints an animal trait, such as meat, which is neither human nor animal, but rather represents a “zone of indiscernibility or undecidability”:

Meat is not dead flesh; it retains all the suffering and assumes all the colors of living flesh. It manifests such convulsive pain and vulnerability, but also such delightful invention, color, and acrobatics. Bacon does not say, “Pity the beasts”, but rather that every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility; it is a “fact”, a state where the painter identifies with the objects of his horror and his compassion. The painter is certainly a butcher, but he goes to the butcher shop as if it were a church, with the meat as the crucified victim (the *Painting* of 1946 [3]).¹⁹

In this passage, Bacon’s painting of meat does not merely imply the representation or the metaphor of the dead body, but rather it is associated with the sensation of containing all suffering and vulnerability. Accordingly, in Bacon’s paintings, meat looks “like” neither the dead flesh of humans nor of animals, but rather dissolves their representative images.

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, translated and with an introduction by Danial W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-2.

It is also noteworthy that sensation arising from meat passes between the dead body and the painter Bacon, which generates the becoming-meat. In other words, sensation does not arise from the object and the subject but instead passes through them. Indeed, Bacon thinks of himself as meat in a butcher shop:

I've always been very moved by pictures about slaughterhouses and meat, and to me they belong very much to the whole thing of the Crucifixion.... Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal.²⁰

This is the becoming-meat of human that could be achieved by analogy.

Deleuze's and Bacon's notions of meat are explicitly associated with Costello's idea of the corpse. Similar to Bacon's sensation of meat, Costello tells the audience how to recognize what a corpse is. For Costello, ageing enables us to embody the death that an abstractive knowledge cannot, since ageing signifies a sort of dying. As Costello observes:

'When I know, with this knowledge, that I am going to die, what is it, in Nagel's terms, that I know? Do I know what it is like for me to be a corpse or do I know what it is like for a corpse to be a corpse? The distinction seems to me trivial. What I know is what a corpse cannot know: that it is extinct, that it knows nothing and will never know anything anymore. For an instant, before my whole structure of knowledge collapses in panic, I am alive inside that contradiction, dead and alive at the same time.' (77)

Costello says that she knows what it is like to be a corpse, since she lives dead and at the

²⁰ Ibid., 22. See David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon, 1962-1979*, the third edition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 23, 46.

same time dies alive. In this way, Costello's rethinking of the corpse is produced through a compositional process of life and death. Consequently, Costello's analogy between humans and animals is neither an identification nor a resemblance between humans and animals, but rather a compositional process of dismantling their representations as different species. From this, it can also be concluded that philosophical arguments concerning animals offer limited scope for thinking the being of another, since the arguments depend on reason and language. In order to draw on our sympathy with the being of another, philosophical arguments need to be processed in a way that dismantles the difference between humans and animals, as Costello seeks to achieve.

III. The Sympathetic Imagination

Alongside analogy as the dissolution of representative objects, Costello proposes the sympathetic imagination as an extensive capacity to feel and think the being of another. However, Costello does not further articulate how the sympathetic imagination can go beyond the limitations of anthropocentric ideas of thinking other lives. Nevertheless, she poses the question of how the sympathetic imagination can lead us to a cognitive engagement with—rather than an intellectual recognition of—the other. In this context, I will examine firstly the concept of the sympathetic imagination that Costello mentions in her lectures and secondly the problems of the sympathetic imagination, with specific regards to partiality, drawing on Deleuze's reading of David Hume. Finally, I will explore how the sympathetic imagination entails a corporeal association and interaction in both Costello's and Deleuze's conceptions of sympathy and the imagination.

In order to engage with this, it is necessary to examine Costello's concept of the sympathetic imagination in her lecture on the lives of animals. After ending her lecture, Costello is asked by a man on the floor about her theories. He asks whether Costello's argument is concerned with practical issues related to "factory farms, eating meat, treating and killing animals more humanly, stopping experiments with animals" (81). However, Costello responds: "If principles are what you want to take away from this talk, I would have to respond, open your heart and listen to what your heart says" (82). In Costello's account, the openness to other lives is emotional and affective, and thus explicitly divergent from reason and language. Costello's conception of openness is associated with the sympathetic imagination as a way for empathizing with another, which is the opposite to people's apathy towards the Nazis' annihilation of the Jews and to the Nazis' readiness to kill other humans. Specifically, Costello claims:

"The horror is that the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims, as did everyone else. They said, 'It is they in those cattle cars rattling past'. They did not say, 'How would it be if it were I in that cattle car?' ... They didn't say, 'How would it be if I were burning?' They did not say, 'I am burning, I am falling in ash'" (70).

In this way, Costello draws attention to the practical limits of thinking other lives and their suffering. She also draws attention to another limit while she explains the hearts as the seat of sympathy:

"The hearts is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy* that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the "another", as we see at once when we think of the object not as a bat ("Can I share the being of a bat?") but as another human being" (79).

Sympathy, she claims, is based on the subject rather than the object. In this context, it is worth remarking that Costello's account of the sympathetic imagination is not limited to humans, but is extended to animals.

The extensiveness of the sympathetic imagination can be further examined through Costello's theorization surrounding the bat. As I discussed earlier, drawing on Thomas Nagel's question of "what is it like to be a bat? (75)", Costello addresses the limitation of our sympathy with the being of another. According to Costello, Nagel proposes the impossibility of humans' becoming-bat on the grounds that the minds of humans and bats are different: "Whereas what we really aspire to know is what it is like to be a bat, as a bat is a bat; and that we can never accomplish because our minds are inadequate to the task—our minds are not bats' minds" (76). In Nagel's remark, the mind is identified with the concept of subjectivity, which constitutes a profound divide between humans and animals. However, instead of the decisive difference between human and animal minds, Costello finds in both a commonality based around their status as living beings: "To be a living bat is to be full of being; being fully a bat is like being fully human, which is also to be full of being" (77). This fullness of being is, according to Costello, "a state hard to sustain in confinement" (77). Costello thereby asserts a necessary sharability between humans and animals, which leads us to the experience of "joy" in its fullness (77). From Costello's perspective, the fullness of a life based on sharability works in opposition to the mind and subjectivity as markers of identity.

However, in order to examine how Costello's assertion of the sympathetic imagination enables us to share with other lives in a community, we need to further examine the limitations of the sympathetic imagination through Deleuze's and Hume's theories. In his reading of Hume's *Treatise*, Deleuze proposes that "Hume's project entails the

substitution of a psychology of the mind by a psychology of the mind's affections".²¹ In other words, for Deleuze, the sympathetic imagination is here a question of how the mind, as a site of subjectivity can be constituted as an extensive and associative relation to the being of another. Drawing on Hume's theory, Deleuze explains sympathy as a faculty of extension, whilst describing the imagination as a corrective and reflective rule. Thus, in Deleuze's account, sympathy, on the one hand, constitutes a faculty of extension within the subject. On the other hand, sympathy needs to be corrected and reflected through the process of the imagination, because it can generate an expansion of the same, in the forms of identification or integration. In this regard, sympathy needs to be corrigible through the function of the imagination. This point is important in relation to Costello's assertion of the limit of the sympathetic imagination, as it enables us to consider how humans may think of the being of another beyond the limits of anthropological thought.

In his reading of Hume, Deleuze notes that sympathy can function as partiality and egoism. In fact, sympathy makes us give up our own point of view and thereby merge with the Other. Yet, sympathy can also function as partiality in a community. This point is associated with the paradox of sympathy. Sympathy, on the one hand, allows us to reach agreement with the Other, which embodies an openness to the future: "In fact in order to be moral, sympathy must extend into the future and must not be limited to the present moment".²² On the other hand, Deleuze's account of sympathy has a tendency toward partiality, as an "inequality of affection" that "sympathy bestows upon us as a characteristic of our nature, 'so as to make us regard any remarkable transgression of such a degree of partiality, either by too great an enlargement, or contraction of the affections, as vicious

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's theory of human nature*, translation and introduction by Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 37.

and immoral”²³ Through this paradox, the partiality of sympathy belongs to the nature of humans, since it is incorrigible. Thus, it seems natural that “We condemn the parents who prefer strangers to their own children”.²⁴ From this, we cannot criticize Nagel’s denial of thinking a bat, as argued by Costello, who says that “To Nagel a bat is a fundamentally alien creature, not perhaps as alien as a Martian but certainly more alien than any fellow human being” (76). Thus, because of this partiality, we can hardly have sympathy with animals, or different species.

The partiality of sympathy is, according to Deleuze, opposed to the social. Deleuze thus proclaims that sympathy is “no less opposed to society than egoism is. ‘... [S]o noble an affection, instead of fitting men for large societies, is almost as contrary to them, as the most narrow selfishness’. No one has the same sympathies as another; given the plurality of partialities, we are confronted with contradiction and violence”.²⁵ In Hume’s and Deleuze’s accounts, sympathy can merely function as the most narrow selfishness, which implies an extension of the self towards one’s own groups: families, relatives and even species. Also, the extension of sympathy to individuals’ groups ironically results in contradictions and violence, since individuals have their own partialities. Accordingly, drawing on Hume’s perspective, Deleuze poses a question regarding the ways humans extend sympathy beyond the limits of partiality. Deleuze goes on to say:

Consequently, a contradiction explodes inside nature. The problem of society, in this sense, is not a problem of limitation, but rather a problem of integration. To integrate sympathies is to make sympathy transcend its contradiction and natural partiality. Such an integration implies a positive moral world, and is brought about by the positive

²³ Ibid., 38.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

invention of such a world.²⁶

Thus, Deleuze's question regarding sympathy is precisely linked to the association between mutual exclusions: "Partialities or particular interests cannot be naturally totalized, because they are mutually exclusive. One can only invent a whole, since the only invention possible is that of the whole".²⁷ For this reason, Deleuze claims that we need to artificially create what Hume refers to as a "general rule". Drawing on Hume's account, Deleuze suggests a common point of this general rule: "The function of the rule is to determine a stable and common point of view, firm and calm, and independent of our present situation" (*ES* 41). General rules thereby enable us to reach a convergence of divergent perspectives.

Nevertheless, this general rule makes possible the lack of vividness in thinking the being of another. Moreover, the being of another cannot be included in the common points of the general rules. How then can we grasp the object vividly? In answer to this, it is important to consider the relationship between the imagination and sympathy. Firstly, from Deleuze's perspective, Hume describes the function of the imagination in thinking the general rule. Hume's notion of the imagination is, as Deleuze articulates, considered as an assemblage of ideas:

The collection of ideas is called "imagination", insofar as the collection designates not a faculty but rather an assemblage of things, in the most vague sense of the term: things are as they appear—a collection without an album, a play without a stage, a flux of perceptions. (*ES* 22)

From this, it seems that the imagination comprises a flux of perceptions without a specific location or order. Moreover, Hume's notion of the imagination is identified with the mind

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

and ideas (*ES* 22). It is important to note that the imagination has, for Hume and Deleuze, an equal function to ideas, but ideas are only *in* the imagination (*ES* 23). Deleuze says, “Nothing is done *by* the imagination; everything is done *in* the imagination” (*ES* 23). Yet, there is no constancy or uniformity in the way in which ideas are connected through the imagination. For Hume, ideas are linked by the principle of association, and “association with three principles (contiguity, resemblance, and causality) transcends the imagination, and also differs from it” (*ES* 23). From the principle of association, Deleuze puts forward important questions: “how to go beyond partialities, how to pass from a ‘limited sympathy’ to an ‘extended generosity’, how to stretch passions and given them an extension they don’t have on their own”.²⁸ Association affects the imagination, which also inspires sympathy to be corrigible. In this way, through the processes of associations, Deleuze’s notion of the imagination can make sympathy reflective beyond the limits of partiality and the present.

The vividness of thinking and imagining the being of another is suggested in Deleuze’s own concept of sympathy. Compared to Deleuze’s early work on Hume, Deleuze, in his dialogue with Claire Parnet, explains sympathy as an assemblage. Furthermore, this assemblage is co-functioning: “The assemblage is co-functioning, it is ‘sympathy’, symbiosis”.²⁹ Thus, Deleuze goes on to express sympathy as interactions between corporeal sensations of bodies:

Sympathy is not a vague feeling of respect or of spiritual participation: on the contrary, it is the exertion or the penetration of bodies, hatred or love, for hatred is also a compound, it is a body, it is no good except when it is compounded with what it hates. Sympathy is bodies who love or hate each other, each time with populations in play,

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, intro. John Rajchman and trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 46.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogue II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 52.

in these bodies or on these bodies. Bodies may be physical, biological, psychic, social, verbal: they are always bodies or corpora. (52)

In this way, Deleuze says, “There is no judgement in sympathy, but agreements of convenience between bodies of all kinds” (52). In this sense, Deleuze explains the notion of sympathy as the continuous interaction between things and bodies: “This is assembling, being in the middle, on the line of encounter between an internal world and the external world” (52). In this context, Costello’s assertion of becoming a bat is made possible through sympathy: a corporal assemblage and interaction between a human and a bat, which is neither a human’s identification with a bat, nor a human’s instinctive partiality to exclude another life.

An affinity between Deleuze’s and Costello’s sympathetic imagination can also be examined through Costello’s mentioning of Ted Hughes’s poem “Jaguar”. Costello articulates how we can imagine and sympathize with an animal in the poem. According to Costello, the poem makes us imagine and perceive the movement of the jaguar’s body as a manifestation of its vital life, prior to its internment in the zoo:

In the poem we know the jaguar not from the way he seems but from the way he moves. The body is the body moves, or as the currents of life move within it. The poems ask us to imagine our way into that way of moving, to inhabit that body. (96)

Thus, in reading the poem, we do not think of the idea of the jaguar’s movement but rather imagine our way into its way of moving. Costello goes on to say:

“With Hughes it is a matter—I emphasize—not of inhabiting another mind but of inhabiting another body. That is the kind of poetry I bring to your

attention today: poetry that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him”.

(96)

The poem of the jaguar, as Costello articulates, brings us not into the abstractive idea of the living animal, but into the embodiment of the jaguar within ourselves. Thus, Costello claims: “When we read the jaguar poem, when we recollect after in tranquility, we are for a brief while the jaguar. He ripples within us, he takes over our body, he is us” (98). As a result, reading the poem is “about the jaguar, about jaguariness embodied in this jaguar” (98). This poem triggers corporeal interactions between humans and animals via the sympathetic imagination. Subsequently, from Costello’s notion of the sympathetic imagination, we are able to expand our sympathy to the being of another beyond the limit of anthropological thought.

IV. Becoming-animal

Despite Costello’s assertion of the connection between the sympathetic imagination and the being of another, there is no sense of agreement between Costello and her audiences. This failure to reach an agreement is found in John’s response to her lecture: “A strange ending to a strange talk, he thinks, ill gauged, ill argued” (80). No one appears to be affected by Costello’s lectures on animals. In this respect, Michael Funk Deckard and Ralph Palm point out an ironical effect produced by the opposing viewpoints of Costello and the other characters:

Through the portrayal of her contradictory manner of expression and the

responses of other characters (e.g. pity, doubt, indifference), through the description of her desire to have an effect and the repeated frustrations of that desire. *Elizabeth Costello* the novel says something that Elizabeth Costello the character cannot.³⁰

In this way, Costello's lecture on animals does not merely aim (and fail) to impress upon audiences an ethos for both human and non-human beings, but also places its own usage of language in an ironic situation. However, my contention here is that this tension between Costello's intention and the audience's reaction exposes her to an experience of becoming-animal instead of the irony that produces what Costello cannot say. I will later explore this becoming-animal through Costello's idea of "belief" in the final lesson "At the Gate". This exploration will be connected to the questions of literature and the writer that Coetzee offers in this novel.

In order to examine Costello's transformation, it is necessary to look more closely at Costello's comparison of herself with Red Peter in Franz Kafka's short story, "Report to an Academy", which I have previously mentioned. The issue of Costello's transformation has a close relation to the question of the relationship between the writer, character and audience. Costello's analogy between herself and Red Peter serves to alienate her from her audiences, which results in her inability to convey any meanings or significations to them. Costello's differentiation of herself from her audience drives her to experience a process of becoming-animal. It is necessary to note Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming-animal in order to examine Costello's becoming-animal. Firstly, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal implies a process by which the body enters into continuous relations of affects, which also leads to an interrelational and intersubjective

³⁰ Michael Funk Deckard and Ralph Palm, "Irony and Belief in *Elizabeth Costello*", *J.M. Coetzee and Ethics*, eds. Anton Leist and Peter Singer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). 343.

interplay between bodies based on the milieu of affective relations. Because of the characteristic of affects, Deleuze and Guattari highlight a sense of contagion between human and animal: the “pact” is “animal reality and the reality of the becoming-animal of the human being; contagion is an animal peopling, and the propagation of the animal peopling of the human being”.³¹ Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari assert, “Man does not become wolf, or vampire, as if he changed molar species; the vampire and werewolf are becomings of man, in other words, proximities between molecules in composition, relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between emitted particles”.³² Secondly, Deleuze and Guattari propose a process of becoming-animal in Kafka and his works by focusing his literature on deterritorialization and thus aiming to produce a becoming-minority in social and political contexts. It is here that I will examine Costello’s becoming-animal by drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of Kafka’s works. Concerned with Kafka’s works, Deleuze and Guattari describe becoming-animal as the deterritorialization of language in order to create a flux of non-signifying signs.

To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.³³

Deleuze and Guattari draw on the example of Gregor Samsa, the central character in

³¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 242.

³² *Ibid.*, 275.

³³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan and forward. Reda Bénsmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13.

Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and the sounds he makes in the process of becoming-cockroach to illustrate their point:

In the becoming-insect, it is a mournful whining that carries along the voice and blurs the resonance of words. However, Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn't know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but him: 'Did you hear him? It was an animal voice', said the chief clerk.³⁴

In this way, Gregor becomes an insect, entering the zone in which his sound does not have any significations produced by the world of paternal and bureaucratic procedures, since his sound is "generally monotone and always nonsignifying", drawing on "an unformed material expressions".³⁵ Thus, the sound of non-signification forces him to escape from the human voice and humanity. In this sense, the notion of becoming-animal implies neither humans' imitation of animal sounds nor humans' search for the resemblance between humans and nonhuman animals. Gregor's becoming-animal rather engages with his entering a proximity between human and animal.

Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Kafka's works provides us with a perspective for approaching Costello's transformation into an inhuman being. Thus, it is important to look at Red Peter's performance in Kafka's "Report to an Academy" before examining Costello's comparison between herself and the ape, in the lecture. Trained to be a human, Red Peter recounts his story to the members of the academy. With a human language, he is able to tell them about "his life—of his ascent from beast to something approaching man"

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

(62). In relation to this, Deleuze and Guattari describe the becoming-human of an ape in Red Peter's performance as follows:

It is no longer a question of a becoming-animal of man, but a becoming-man of the ape; this becoming is presented as a simple imitation and if it is a question of finding an escape (an escape, and not "liberty"), this escape doesn't consist in fleeing—quite the contrary. Flight is challenged when it is useless movement in space, a movement of false liberty; but in contrast, flight is affirmed when it is a stationary flight, a flight of intensity ("No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right, or left, or in any direction; I made no other demand").³⁶

In the above passage, in order to find an escape from the cage on the ship, Red Peter imitates a human being. Yet, Red Peter's imitation of human behaviours leads him to find a way out: "[T]here was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I was imitating them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason". According to Deleuze and Guattari, Red Peter "captured by the man finds itself deterritorialized by human force".³⁷ In this context, Red Peter's way out implies neither a search for freedom from his capture, nor a search for any direction for his escape. As Red Peter asserts, "Only a way out; right, or left, or in any direction". As a result, as Deleuze and Guattari observe, Red Peter's escape demonstrates that "the deterritorialized animal force precipitates and intensifies the deterritorialization of the deterritorializing human force".³⁸ In this way, becoming-animal is a metamorphosis, which embodies "a sort of conjunction of two deterritorializations".³⁹

Given Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Red Peter's deterritorialization of

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 35.

detritorialization, Costello's creation of a comparison between herself and Kafka's ape can be considered as her becoming-animal, which I will now explore in terms of two aspects: sound and the search for a way out. Firstly, both Red Peter and Costello make sounds rather than vocalizations that hold any meaning. Red Peter, although speaking before the scholars, does not present his story like a human being, because his language just imitates that of a human. For this reason, Red Peter's story, according to Costello, is about what education costs, "through the ironies and silence of the story" (72). In other words, Red Peter's story serves to express an unformed material that he cannot signify in a human language. Thus, a gap exists between content and expression in Red Peter's speech. Subsequently, when he stays with his ape mate as a half-animal, Red Peter can see "the insane look of the bewildered half-broken animal" in his mate's eyes. Red Peter is neither a human, nor an animal, but a being between a human and an animal.

Similarly, in front of scholars in Appleton College, Costello says, "On that occasion I felt a little like Red Peter myself and said so. Today that feeling is even stronger, for reasons that I hope will become clearer to you" (62). Speaking of Red Peter, Costello says:

"If Red Peter had any sense, he would not have any children. For upon the desperate, half-mad female ape with whom his captors, in Kafka's story, try to mate him, he would father only a monster. It is as hard to imagine the child of Red Peter as to imagine the child of Franz Kafka himself. Hybrids are, or ought to be, sterile; and Kafka saw both himself and Red Peter as hybrids, as monstrous thinking devices mounted inexplicably on suffering animal bodies. The stare that we meet in all the surviving photographs of Kafka is a stare of pure surprise: surprise, astonishment, alarm. Of all men Kafka is the most insecure in his humanity". (75)

In this passage, Red Peter's becoming-human amounts to his becoming a monster. This is

why Red Peter cannot imagine being a father. Also, Costello observes that Red Peter's sterility is comparable to Kafka's becoming an inhuman being. From Costello's perspective, this demonstrates the affinity between the writer Kafka and his characters. Costello refers to Kafka's "stare of pure surprise: surprise, astonishment, alarm", which we can read as indicating Kafka's becoming inhuman: "the most insecure in his humanity". From Costello's assertion that a strong connection exists between Red Peter and Kafka, it is suggested that Costello herself becomes an inhuman, monstrous being. Therefore, the question of the relationship between the writer Coetzee and the character Costello can be applied to the connection between Kafka and his ape. In fact, as James Meffan asserts, "Elizabeth Costello's surname is graphically similar to Coetzee's; less superficially, she shares his *métier*, and some of his principles (his ethical vegetarianism, for instance)".⁴⁰ However, rather than the resemblance between the writer and the character, an interaction between them needs to be more importantly considered on the grounds that both Coetzee and Costello draw on this in the two lectures on animals, to differentiate themselves from their audiences and to invent a "minorization, or a kind of foreign language within language".⁴¹

From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, we can further consider Costello's becoming an inhuman being in relation to the minority literature of Kafka. As I have mentioned earlier, Kafka's becoming-animal creates a conjunction between the movements of two deterritorializations that Kafka imposes on the animal, but also that the animal imposes on the human. Similarly, Costello thinks of Kafka and his ape as hybrids of human and animal, created through their forced transformations. In fact, Red Peter was wounded,

⁴⁰ James Meffan, "Elizabeth Costello (2003)", *A Companion to the Works of J.M. Coetzee* (New York: Camden House, 2011), 180.

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, trans. Danial W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 5.

when human beings captured him. Thus, physically, he becomes a wounded ape, with a large red scar on his cheek, from which his name is derived. Also he has a serious wound in his hip, which causes him to limp a little. In this way, Costello says,

“Red Peter was not an investigator of primate behavior but a branded, marked, wounded animal presenting himself as speaking testimony to a gathering of scholars. I am not a philosopher of mind but an animal exhibiting, yet not exhibiting, to a gathering of scholars, a wound, which I cover up under my clothes but touch on in every world I speak”. (70-1)

Like Red Peter, Costello finds herself wounded, because her sympathetic imagination with Red Peter causes her to be affected by Red Peter and his wound. She says: “Yes, I’m not dreaming. I look into your eyes, into Norma’s, into the children’s, and I see only kindness, human kindness. Calm down, I tell myself, you are making a mountain out of a molehill. Everyone else comes to terms with it, why can’t you? *Why can’t you?* (115).” Costello’s sympathetic imagination enables her to differentiate herself from other human beings, which forces her to transform into an inhuman being.

Costello’s metamorphosis can also be examined through her concept of “belief”, which will be rethought of in relation to the questions of the writer and literature. Costello, in the final lesson, “At the Gate”, is forced to confront the question of her belief. As if she is at the boundary between life and death, Costello tries to pass the gate. The title of the lesson apparently alludes to Kafka’s allegory of the same title. Similar to K in Kafka’s allegory, Costello becomes a petitioner before the gate. Yet, she must write a statement of her belief, as the man at the gate says, “For each of us there is something we believe. Write it down, what you believe. Put it in the statement” (194). However, Costello rejects his assertion that she must write a statement of her belief, claiming the rights of her position

as a writer: “It is not my profession to believe, just to write. Not my business. I do imitations, as Aristotle would have said” (194). Costello adds, “In my work a belief is a resistance, an obstacle. I try to empty myself of resistances” (200). It is here that we need to think the contrary concepts of belief, drawing on Deckard and Palm’s account of the two concepts of belief: “knowledge” and “probability”. According to Deckard and Palm, on the one hand, “belief has been “closely tied with knowledge, where ‘belief’ is the same thing as ‘judgement’. According to this view, if a belief is justified by reason, then it becomes knowledge”.⁴² On the other hand, drawing on Hume’s conception of belief, Deckard and Palm assert that belief is connected to probability, which “requires nothing other than a firm or steady feeling, and this steadiness ‘gives them [belief] a superior influence on the passions and imagination’”.⁴³ From Deckard and Palm’s perspective, Costello’s thoughts concerning belief are closer to the latter, since they assert a steady feeling rather than a sense of knowledge and judgement. Nevertheless, the judges require her to write a statement of belief based on knowledge.

Deckard and Palm’s perspective of “belief” can be rethought through Deleuze’s concept of “disjunctive synthesis”. Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sense*, describes the disjunctive synthesis in a way that the sense contains two disparities or two reducible sides of reality. Yet, the sense is “not reducible to a conjunction”, but rather “it is left as a disjunction”.⁴⁴ The notion of disjunctive synthesis allows us to affirm the paradoxical logic of containing both and neither, which creates a continuous divergence of the world. In the novel, Costello is required to prove her belief in front of the judges and eventually states her belief in little frogs, as she remembers their joyous sounds from her childhood. As she

⁴² Deckard and Palm, “Irony and Belief in *Elizabeth Costello*”, 344.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 174.

mentions, “In my account, for whose many failings I beg your pardon, the life cycle of the frog may sound allegorical, but to the frogs themselves it is no allegory, it is the thing itself, the only thing. What do I believe? I believe in those little frogs” (217). Costello thus believes that the little frogs exist regardless of her belief: “They exist whether or not I tell you about them, whether or not I believe in them” (217). In this context, it seems that Costello believes in the existence of living beings. However, it is not sufficient to merely understand Costello’s singular belief in frogs. Costello’s further explanation of why she believes in the frogs highlights this: “It is because of the indifference of those little frogs to my belief” and “it is because of their indifference to me that I believe in them” (217). Costello’s belief in the frogs indicates a belief in an object beyond her knowledge. This is relative to what Costello says: “I have beliefs but I do not believe in them” (200). Moreover, when she explains her belief in the existence of living beings, Costello realizes that she has a supporter in the courtroom, a cleaning woman. After finishing her statement, the cleaning woman responds to her by clapping her hands:

From behind her, the sound of gentle handclapping, from a single pair of hands, the cleaning woman’s. The clapping dwindles, ceases. It was she, the cleaning woman, who put her up to it—this flood of words, this gabble, this confusion, this *passion*. Well, let us see what kind of response *passion* gets. (The original emphasis, 218)

In fact, in the eight lessons and the Postscript, nobody, except the cleaning woman, appears to be moved by Costello’s statements. Yet, the cleaning woman’s interest leads Costello to change her view in relation to the connection between belief and her position as a writer. She changes from being an imitator to a sympathizer with living beings and the Other. Yet, it is crucial to conceive Costello’s belief in the “becoming” of all living beings as well as her becoming as a writer. The judge further asks Costello about her belief as a storyteller:

“These Australian frogs of yours embody the spirit of life, which is what you as a storyteller believe in” (218-9). Costello ultimately comes to assert her belief in “becoming”:

““You ask if I have changed my plea. But who am I, who is this I, this *you*? We change from day to day, and we also stay the same. No, I, no *you* is more fundamental than any other. You might as well ask which is the true Elizabeth Costello: the one who made the first statement or the one who made the second. My answer is, both are true. Both. And neither. I am an other””. (221)

As a result, we can find an affinity between Costello’s belief in the little frogs and her position as a writer in affirming the two reducible sides of reality, or “both and neither” through Deleuze’s concept of “disjunctive synthesis”. Costello’s assertion that “Both. And Neither.” thus does not merely imply an aporia as an emptiness of signification, but rather as an affirmation of the logic of disjunctive synthesis. Her affirmation of both and neither creates her becoming-other in a way of “I am an other”.

Subsequently, we need to reflect on what Coetzee and Costello mean by a writer in the novel. As I have mentioned earlier, alluding to Kafka’s fable, “Before the Law”,⁴⁵ Coetzee describes Costello at the gate petitioning for the judge to let her pass through. The setting “at the gate”, is an allegorical mix of reality and fantasy, compared to the former seven lessons. Like the man praying for admittance to the Law in Kafka’s fable, Costello’s petition for her passing through the gate is denied, but then suspended. In this context, Costello, as a writer, is considered as a petitioner who is never allowed to pass through the gate, since the world in which she lives is “a court out of Kafka or *Alice in Wonderland*, a court of paradox” (223). The writer Costello is situated at a threshold between life and

⁴⁵ Franz Kafka, “Before the Law”, *Frantz Kafka: The Complete Short Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (London: Vintage Books, 1999), 3-4.

death, or reality and fantasy.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined ways of thinking animals through the eponymous protagonist's notions of analogy, the sympathetic imagination and becoming, in Coetzee's novel *Elizabeth Costello*, drawing on Deleuze's theories. Framed as eight lessons and a Postscript, the novel discusses discontinuous issues, as Costello gives lectures in diverse spatio-temporal circumstances. Amongst these, I have focused on the two lectures on animals, discussing both the importance and limitations of our sympathetic imagination to think about animals. Firstly, I have examined Costello's analogy between humans and animals. Costello's analogy between the suffering of victims of the European Holocaust and slaughtered animals provokes Abraham Stern's criticism that the conventional comparison's inversion is an insult to the death of the Jews. Marjorie Garber in *The Lives of Animals* similarly alludes to the risks embodied in Costello's comparison, through its use of a false metaphor that, from her perspective, naturalizes and defaces the differences between the compared objects. However, I have argued that Stern's and Garber's insistence on the abuse of analogy problematically reinforces unequal and hierarchical differences between humans and animals, which results in diminishing the massive victimization of non-human animals. In contrast to Stern's and Garber's criticisms of analogy, Deleuze's analysis of Francis Bacon's paintings of "Meat" provides us with a dismantling of the identities of humans and animals in terms of analogy. The meat in the painting represents neither the dead flesh of humans, nor that of animals, but rather highlights their proximity. Subsequently, I argue that Costello's analogy neither seeks to highlight an identification

nor a resemblance between humans and animals, but rather offers a conjunction and interaction between them by dismantling the representation of their differences.

Secondly, I have examined another way of thinking about animals by drawing on Costello's notion of the sympathetic imagination as an extensive capacity to feel and think the being of another. Quoting Thomas Nagel's question of "what is it like to be a bat?", Costello exposes the limitations of our sympathetic imagination. This is approached through the Nazis' annihilation of the Jews, since they could not sympathize with the position of the victims. In the novel, this is reflected in Costello's thought of sympathy as a "seat of faculty that allows us to share at times the being of another". Nevertheless, given Deleuze's reading of David Hume's sympathy and imagination, sympathy is not sufficient to bring an interaction between humans and the other, because sympathy can function socially as partiality and acts in opposition to the social. As Deleuze emphasizes, sympathy thus needs to be accompanied with imagination, since it is through the imagination that sympathy can be corrigible. A conjunction between sympathy and the imagination proliferates continuous interactions between humans and animals, rather than expanding sympathy within the homogeneous groups.

Finally, I have discussed a writer's becoming-inhuman. Costello's comparison between herself and Franz Kafka's ape, Red Peter generates a becoming-inhuman by differentiating herself from human audiences. Costello's becoming-inhuman is closely related to her thought of herself as a writer. In the last lesson, "At the Gate", Costello is forced to confront the question of her "belief" at the gate, as if she is at the boundary between life and death. As a writer, Costello believes and affirms the two reducible sides of reality, or the paradoxical logic of being both and neither, which generates a space of literature. Subsequently, analogy and the sympathetic imagination, as methodologies of thinking animals that Costello provides in her two lectures, offer new formulations that

allow us to sympathize with others' lives instead of bringing about an identification or resemblance between humans and animals. This way of thinking animals, thereby, leads to a becoming-inhuman. The literature that Costello shows at the gate, thus demonstrates a becoming between humans and animals, life and death, writer and reader. This can be viewed as a minority literature created through Coetzee's and Deleuze's encounter.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to present the affective and impersonal power of corporeal frailty in the selected novels of J. M. Coetzee through an approach based on Gilles Deleuze's theory of corporeality. The South African writer, Coetzee, whose oeuvre was the subject of this thesis, attempts to articulate the suffering of bodies produced by the biopolitics of (post)colonial circumstances. Despite the fact that Coetzee stresses the undeniable authority of suffering bodies, their suffering is denied and rendered invisible through the diverse mechanisms of biopolitical regimes. Because these mechanisms construct the impossibility of interactions of pain between the subject and the Other, or the colonizer and the colonized, an ethical and political question is raised in relation to the subject's capability of empathizing with the suffering bodies of the Other. This question is crucial in Coetzee's six novels, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Time of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, *The Master of Petersburg*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*, which has been discussed in this thesis. I have argued these novels convey an encounter and affectedness between the bodies of the subject and the Other. Through attention to these six novels, I have analyzed how this affectedness, driven by corporeal weakness thereby entails a dynamic of self-differentiating difference, opening up the process of the subject's becoming-impersonal. In particular, I have focused on how the subject is touched and affected by the corporeal frailty of the racial, economic and sexual Other and by non-human animals, while examining ways in which the corporeal frailty of the subject can have ethical, political, and ontological implications in (post)colonial contexts. Rather than adopting a psychoanalytic view of corporeal pain, with its focus on repression and trauma, a Deleuzian

approach proposes inorganic and collective forces of corporeal frailty, as the basis for affective relations with other bodies. Thus, drawing on these Deleuze's theories of corporeality, this thesis has articulated a new configuration of corporeal frailty as represented in a selection of Coetzee's novels and a new vision for a community to come in its political, ethical and ontological dimensions.

Drawing on Deleuze's view of corporeal weakness and illness, this thesis has investigated how corporeal frailty functions as a blockage of habitual life and a crack in the self. Deleuze's vantage point on corporeal weakness and illness does not involve their negative connotations but rather provides the subject with the possibility of "health" beyond his or her self and of transformation into the dimension of the impersonal. In Deleuze's thought, the body foregrounds corporeal frailty in order to create its auto-affectation and modification, on the grounds that the body is a mode of inorganic and affective relations, which promotes the subject's interaction with the bodies of the Other. This is why Deleuze's conception of the body can also be understood in terms of its capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies. Specifically, based on Deleuze's theories of "masochism", "exhaustion", "corporeal and incorporeal deaths", "the ridiculous sublime", "meat", "the sympathetic imagination" and "becoming", this thesis has investigated how Deleuze's theories highlight the body's dynamic of the self-differentiation of difference and its ability to become impersonal. More specifically, the suffering of bodies, as a kind of limit, yet enables the subject to experience him/herself as disjunctive from his/her self, which also leads to a collective and synthetic process of becoming with other bodies. It is notable that this affective and collective process of corporeal frailty is neither a dialectic synthesis of the subject and the Other, nor a resemblance or identification between them, but rather embodies their becomings, or the movements between them, entailing a movement towards the impersonal dimension.

Within the framework of Deleuze's thoughts on corporeal frailty, I discussed the protagonists' suffering and their metamorphoses in (post)colonial contexts in Coetzee's novels. In the first chapter on *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Magistrate as the colonizer becomes a masochist by dismantling his likeness to the Empire. In the second chapter, the eponymous protagonist of *Life & Times of Michael K*, exhausts a marker of the racial and economic Other and becomes imperceptible in apartheid South Africa. In the third chapter on *Age of Iron*, Mrs. Curren dissolves her position as a white liberal humanitarian in apartheid South Africa and enables herself to develop an inter-subjective relation with black people in the dimension of impersonal death. In the fourth chapter on *The Master of Petersburg*, Dostoevsky becomes the mourner as a living-dead by interacting with the memory of the dead. In the fifth chapter on *Disgrace*, David Lurie experiences the ridiculous effect of the sublime and thereby transforms into an inhuman being through his sensation of animal suffering. In the sixth chapter, the eponymous protagonist of *Elizabeth Costello* differentiates herself from humans and becomes animal by using analogy and sympathetic imagination. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that, among the transformations of the protagonists in these six novels, Michel K alone, as the colonized, is not affected by the other characters but rather continues to escape from the discourse and practice of biopolitics. The other protagonists, as the colonizers, experience the processual waves and intersections between the subject and the Other due to their sensation of the suffering of the Other. Because of their memory of suffering bodies and the dead in the colonial history of exploitation and humiliation, they become the living-dead as a way of dissolving their subjectivities and of interacting with the dead in the corporeal and incorporeal dimensions.

However, the protagonists' transformations into inhuman beings could also be seen to embody their political and practical limitations. Firstly, Coetzee does not foreground the ways in which the colonized are affected by or interact with the colonizer, but only focuses

on the colonizer's transformations into the becoming-other. In this sense, the possibility of building a new community is limited, in the absence of the affective and transformative power of the colonized. Rather, the potential for violence and conflicts remains. Secondly, because of this limitation, the protagonists' becoming-inhuman can be seen as seeking a utopia in the non-present tense of the ontological dimension rather than providing reconciliation between black people and white people in an alternative mode of community. Nevertheless, the becoming-inhuman of the characters can be seen as containing the potential for political and ethical transformations, since they engage with the process of becoming-democracy, escaping the given discourse and practice, in particular, the frames of sacrifice and revenge in (post)colonial contexts. According to Paul Patton, utopianism can be considered as "becoming-democracy" in the Deleuzian sense, so far as it "serves the utopian task of political philosophy by probing the limits of democratic processes in contemporary society".¹ An encounter between Coetzee's and Deleuze's corporeal frailty thus generates new ethical, political and ontological figurations of becoming-impersonal, where one can become a masochist, an exhauster, an impersonal crack, a living-dead, meat and an animal. As a result, Coetzee's figuration of corporeal frailty provides us with an affirmation of the affective relations between the subject and the Other in its impersonal dimensions, while opening the potential for the radical shift in (post)colonial situations by suggesting the "not yet" of affect as its promise for the community to come.

My thesis of corporeal frailty is also connected to Coetzee's conception of "autobiography", as exemplified in his autobiographical trilogy, *Boyhood*(1997), *Youth*(2002) and *Summertime*(2009), which I will explore in my future research. "Autobiography" refers to the writing of memories in the third person present tense. The

¹ Paul Patton, "Deleuze's political philosophy", *The Cambridge Companion to Gilles Deleuze*, eds. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Sommers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 214.

term has its genesis in an interview with David Attwell, where Coetzee claims that “all writing is storytelling, all writing is autobiography”² in that a writer’s life interacts with and is permeated by his/her fictions. Specifically, with regards to Coetzee’s trilogy, Andrew Van der Vlies points out that we can “recognize the first two sets of initials as belonging to Coetzee’s mother and father” in the term “autrebiography”.³ Additionally, Vlies asserts that Coetzee’s dedications of his fictions to his dead family members, for examples, *Age of Iron* to his dead son, Nicholas and *Scenes from Provincial Life* (2011) to his late brother David Keith Coetzee, are a way of memorializing the dead.⁴

With regards to the issue of autrebiography in Coetzee’s trilogy, Laura Wright also points out its different manifestations: “While the first two volumes [*Boyhood* and *Youth*] corresponds to factual elements of Coetzee’s life as a child in South Africa and later as a computer programmer in England, the events described in *Summertime* are clearly contrafactual: Coetzee is neither dead nor did he live with his father in South Africa during the period of 1972”.⁵ Wright further attests that “*Summertime*’s engagement with a posthumous biography of John Coetzee forces us to consider the nature of ‘truth’ in the previous two volumes of the series”.⁶ However, rather than examining autrebiography and its connection to “Roland Barthes’s death of the author” in that “the work[*Summertime*] fully embraces the fictive nature of autobiography and biography”,⁷ I plan to research how the author’s affective life and death could interact with the memories of others in the dimension of the impersonal by drawing on Deleuze’s theories of affect, autopoiesis,

² J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 391.

³ Anderw Van der Vlies, “[From] Whom This Writing Then?': Politics, Aesthetics, and the Personal in Coetzee’s *Age of Iron*”, *Approaches to Teaching: Coetzee’s Disgrace and Other Works*, eds. Laura Wright, Jane Poyner and Elleke Boehmer (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2014), 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 101-4.

⁵ Laura Wright, “Introduction”, *Approaches to Teaching*, 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷ *Ibid.*

writing, personal and impersonal death. According to Deleuze, “Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived”.⁸ From Deleuze’s perspective on writing as becoming, Coetzee’s autobiography is also connected to the notion of the impersonal that I have discussed in my thesis. Specifically, given Coetzee’s describing on his life in the University of Texas, the concept of autobiography has relevance to Deleuze’s concept of the impersonal, which refers to neither the subject nor the Other: “The discipline within which he (and *he* now begins to feel closer to *I*: autobiography shades back into autobiography) had trained himself/myself to think brought illuminations that I can’t imagine him or me reaching by any other route”.⁹ In this context, my future research will be concerned with Coetzee’s writings as “autobiography” in *Boyhood*(1997), *Youth*(2002), and *Summertime*(2009), which I will relate to the processes of the writer’s differentiation of self and becoming impersonal.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997), 1.

⁹ Coetzee, *Doubling the Point.*, 394.

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