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‘The Labyrinth of the Memory’:
Spatial Form and Axes of Time and Place in the Work of J.M. Coetzee

by

Barbara Cecilia Janari

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

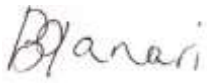
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SUPERVISOR: Professor Christopher Thurman

April 2021

DECLARATION

I declare that “The Labyrinth of the Memory: Spatial Form and Axes of Time and Place in the Work of J.M. Coetzee” is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.



30 April 2021

Signature Date

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I consider the ways in which spatial form influences the representation of time and place in J.M. Coetzee's works. Spatial form is the focus of a method developed by Joseph Frank to analyse the unusual time orientation of modernist novels (Foust, 1975: iv). Since then, a number of critics have broadened and expanded the scope substantially to include texts from other periods. The reference point for Frank's analysis of spatial form is Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoön*, in which the concept of space was associated with the visual arts, while time was associated with literature. Frank's conception of spatial form questions this distinction, arguing that in many modernist works the expectation of sequence is frequently disrupted, and that the works can be better understood as being "juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time" (1963: 10). My study focuses on Coetzee's first two novels, *Dusklands* and *In the Heart of the Country*; his trilogy of fictionalised memoirs, *Boyhood*, *Youth* and *Summertime*; and *Diary of a Bad Year*. In chapter one my central argument is that chronological sequence is frequently disrupted in *Dusklands*, producing a discursive shift in temporality that is underscored by the novel's non-linear narrative. In chapter two I analyse the ways in which Magda's narrative subverts historical time in *In the Heart of the Country* in order to disrupt and displace the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy that characterise the farm on which she lives. In chapter three I focus on the multiple ways in which time and place intersect in *Boyhood* and *Youth*, particularly in relation to Coetzee's representation of South Africa, his homeland. In chapter four I do a close reading of Coetzee's intricate textual strategies in *Summertime*, arguing that there is a parallel in the disjunctive narrative method and thematic concerns relating to time and place. Finally, in chapter five, my analysis centres on spatiality in *Diary of a Bad Year*'s form, focusing particularly on the technique of montage construction.

Keywords

spatial form; J.M. Coetzee; Joseph Frank; reflexive referencing; montage; juxtaposition; chronological sequence; linear; non-linear; temporal; image; time; place; *Dusklands*; *In the Heart of the Country*; *Boyhood*; *Youth*; *Summertime*; *Diary of a Bad Year*.

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In memory of David Hilario, who set me on this path.

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Introduction

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the arrow of time, which moves inexorably forward from an immutable past, is displaced by a kind of time that is both variable and shifting. As the narrator comments, it can falter and break:

> … and then they understood that José Arcadio Buendia was not as crazy as the family said, but that he was the only one who had enough lucidity to sense the truth of the fact that time also stumbled and had accidents and could therefore splinter and leave an eternalized fragment in a room. (1979: 355)

Chronological time is disrupted in the novel in other ways as well. Melquiades, a character who writes the history of the Buendia family, relates that "he has not put events in the order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant" (421).

The theme of time's mutability is also a recurrent one in J.M. Coetzee's work. In the essay 'Four Notes on Rugby,' Coetzee discusses the appeal of a game like rugby, and observes that, if we want to understand what makes the game so appealing to those who watch it, the most significant consideration is that of time (1997: 123). He argues that "The game promises to give meaning to a stretch of time," adding in parenthesis that in this respect "it is like narrative" (123). Coetzee likens the experience of watching a game to "a low-level experience of transcendence" in which "the spectator's time-sense is stretched and the second hand slows" (123). In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Magistrate, like the narrator in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, also refers to broken time to describe his sense of the catastrophic effect of the arrival of Colonel Joll and his men from the Third Bureau on the frontier, commenting that "I am the same man I always was, but time has broken, something has fallen in upon me from the sky, at random, from nowhere" (Coetzee, 1980: 43).

Time and place can be viewed as complementary aspects of experience, and in this thesis I will propose that time and place intersect in multiple ways in Coetzee's work. These intersections – indeed, an intertwining of the two concepts – are similar in principle to Mikhail Bakhtin's *chronotope* ("time space"), which denotes the "intrinsic connectedness

of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (1981: 250). Bakhtin defines the chronotope as follows:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history (1981: 84).

He argues that chronotopes are central aspects of narratives, clarifying the meaning that shapes a narrative: they are "the organising centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" and "the place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied" (85).

While my focus in this thesis is primarily on place, rather than space, the two concepts are closely related. Yi-Fu Tuan explains the relationship between them: "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value … if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (1977: 6). He adds that, while space is associated with action and movement, place is where you stop and rest and become involved –it can be "as small as the corner of a room or as large as the earth itself" (245). Tim Cresswell argues, in similar terms, that the conventional understanding of the relation of space to place is that space is distinct from place because the former is viewed as meaningless and empty. It is an abstract concept that becomes place "[w]hen humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way" (2004:10). Eric Prieto concurs, arguing that a site does not become a place until a person comes along and enters into a meaning-generating relationship with it (2012: 13). Space and place are not, however, distinct categories. For Cresswell, the relationship between space and place is one that can be viewed as a continuum that links experience to abstraction (2004: 21).

In this thesis I will argue that spatial form underpins the narrative organisation of a number of Coetzee's works, and that this narrative method reconceives the intersecting axes of time and place in ways that underscore the complex, fragmented nature of experience. This introductory chapter will situate the concepts of spatial form, time and place within a

theoretical framework, and will then discuss their relation to literary production and reception, with particular reference to Coetzee's oeuvre.

My discussion of spatial form is cued, in part, by Coetzee's own critical and theoretical work. Writing about the fourth volume of Joseph Frank's five-part biography of Dostoevsky, Coetzee refers to Frank's 'Spatial Form in the Modern Novel' (1945) as an "influential essay," and argues that "he [Frank] is, on the whole, singularly successful at working his … analyses of texts into the larger historical and cultural project" (2000: 146). Coetzee notes that Frank "applies the modernist theory of *montage* to the study of prose fiction, showing that many modern novels are better understood as juxtaposing their narrative elements in space than as unrolling them in time" (2002: 146, emphasis in original). In the light of his reading of Frank's essay on spatial form, he suggests that Dostoevsky's novels "are essentially scenic in construction" (2002: 147). The comment suggests that the structure of Dostoevsky's novels is not linear and sequential, but can be described as being composed of fragmented parts that are related to each other in various ways, and that have to be related to each other by reflexive referencing for their meaning to be apprehended. I will make a similar argument in this thesis about Coetzee's works.

Frank's essay, 'Spatial Form in the Modern Novel' (1945), was initially published in three parts in the *Sewanee Review*; it was later reworked, with a slight change in the title, to 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature,' and included in his book *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (1963). In subsequent years, a number of critics have elaborated on his thesis.

In Frank's analysis of spatial form, he uses Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoön*, published in 1766, as a reference point, because Lessing set up a distinction between literature and the 'plastic' (visual) arts that became deeply entrenched. His distinction was based on the concepts of time and space, which, he argued, "were the two extremes defining the limits of literature and the plastic arts in their relation to sensuous perception" (1963: 8). According to Lessing, painting uses "form and colour in space," while poetry consists of "articulated sounds in time" (Frank, 1945: 223). According to this theory, form in painting is spatial, because it consists of elements juxtaposed in an instant of time, while in literature it is temporal because it "makes use of language, composed of a succession of words proceeding through

time" (223). Frank's essay traces the evolution of form in modern poetry and the novel to argue, however, that methods in modern poetry and the novel contradicted this view, and that, rather, "the reader is intended to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (225).

As an example of how spatial form operates in novels, Frank refers to Marcel Proust as being a writer for whom spatial form is a characteristic trait. He argues that the "structural scaffolding of Proust's labyrinthine masterpiece" (25), *In Search of Lost Time*, is spatial form, even though he is invariably considered "the novelist of time par excellence" (20). Frank refers to the "quasi-mystical" experience Proust once had, at a time when he was "[o]ppressed and obsessed by a sense of the ineluctability of time and the evanescence of human life" (19). Through these experiences he was able to transcend time, and in this way "escape time's dominion" (19). According to Frank, "Proust believed that these transcendent, extratemporal moments contained a clue to the ultimate nature of reality" (19). Frank argues that Proust had learned that, "To experience the passage of time," he had to "rise above it" and "grasp both past and present simultaneously" (24). Ronald Foust, following Frank's lead, proposes that Proust's recapturing of his experiences amounts to "a Bergsonian act of memory … in which the past and present are apprehended simultaneously as a unity in a way that is similar to Pound's definition of the image" (1975: 7).

While Frank's theory of spatial form is specific to Modernist writers, in particular the poetry of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and the prose of Gustav Flaubert, James Joyce, Marcel Proust and Djuna Barnes (a large part of his essay focuses on Barnes's *Nightwood*), subsequent critics and theorists have broadened the scope substantially to include a wider range of works. W.J.T. Mitchell calls for a much broader, more radical, conception of spatial form. He argues that "spatial form is a crucial aspect of the experience and interpretation of literature in all ages and cultures" (1980: 541). Mitchell notes that, although the term "spatial form" is often used metaphorically, the physical text, as an "order of coexistent data," is literally a spatial form (550). Spatial form operates at other levels in the text as well. Mitchell refers to the mental constructs we make in apprehending a work (based on "the world which is represented, imitated, or signified in a work") and argues that this is a "spatial realm" (551). Another way in which we encounter spatiality in a text is when we discern the principle that governs the order in a text, when we "sense a 'map' or outline of

our temporal movement through the text" (552). While he cautions that we should not expect this map or outline to be consistently ordered and smooth, he insists that, even though only partial or temporary, these spatial patterns are an important aspect of reading (552). According to Mitchell, spatial form also manifests at a more subtle level, more difficult to explain, because it converges with how we interpret literature and how we experience it. It occurs when we are able to apprehend the meaning of a work, when we 'see' what it means – not necessarily the whole of the work, but "*a* whole *in* it" (553, emphasis in original).

Mitchell clarifies the relationship between spatial form and temporality by arguing that, contrary to the notion that spatial form is antithetical to temporality, it is in fact "the perceptual basis of our notion of time" (1980: 541). Brian Richardson expands on this argument by commenting that Frank's conception of spatial form is that it is a narrative method that "insistently slowed down, fragmented, or stopped altogether the chronological movement of the story" (2002: 10). Mitchell notes that we use spatial imagery to describe our experiences of time, and that "the experience of simultaneity or discontinuity is simply based in different kinds of spatial images from those involved in continuous, sequential experiences of time" (1980: 542). For example, when we read, we can consider the lines of words on a page to be a track, and this "track," Mitchell argues, is a spatial form. He suggests that:

> We cannot experience a spatial form except in time; we cannot talk about our temporal experience without invoking spatial measures. Instead of viewing space and time as antithetical modalities, we ought to treat their relationship as one of complex interaction, interdependence, and interpenetration […] Space is the body of time, the form or image that gives us an intuition of something that is not directly perceivable but which permeates all that we apprehend. Time is the soul of space, the invisible entity which animates the field of our experience. (544 – 545)

J. Hillis Miller also points out the associative relationship between spatiality and time. He argues that, as Heidegger noted in *Being and Time,* one of the problems with defining time is that "the words and figures for temporality in Western languages are primarily spatial," noting that an "everyday example of the spatialization of time is the movement of the clock's hand through space" (2003: 87). In terms that are similar to Mitchell's, he argues that "Any

literary narrative … is a spatially arrayed allegory of temporality"; that "the words in sequence, as you read them, follow one another across the page, one by one, from the beginning to the end, in a literally spatial display" (91).

With reference to Leibnitz's definition of physical space, Mitchell suggests that, when we open a book and the words are already there in a particular form on the page, the text is a spatial form. If we combine Leibnitz's definition with "Kant's idea of space as a mode of intuition, then we have … identified the philosophical tradition in which a poetics of space ought to be situated" (1980: 542). The reading experience may produce the illusion of temporal sequence, or it may produce the feeling that time is standing still, where "everything occurs simultaneously" (543). Whichever experience it produces, our experience arises because we are able to decode the text on the space of the page.

J. Heffernan notes that contemporary theorists have developed two ways in which the spatiality of literature can be defined (1987: 100). One way is to focus on how literary works describe physical spaces, or how they invoke them figuratively – in other words, how literature represents space itself. The other way is to show "how literature represents time or temporal experience in *spatial form*" – in other words, how time is spatialized in the act of representing it (100, emphasis in original). In this definition, spatial form can be described as a method of analysis that is "an attempt to explain the peculiar time-orientation" of (initially) modernist works (Foust, 1975: ix). My analysis will focus predominantly on the second definition of spatiality – time or temporal experience in literature – but I will also discuss spatiality in how physical spaces are imagined in chapters one and five.

Heffernan clarifies how spatial form operates in literature by exploring how the term developed. In an analysis of the distinction in representation between literature and the visual arts, Heffernan points to two underpinning assumptions:

> One is the assumption that words are conventional and pictures "natural," that words signify meanings by arbitrary convention while pictures represent objects by means of natural resemblance. The other is the time-honoured axiom that pictures and words are categorically divided by space and time, that painting is spatial and literature temporal (1987: 95).

Heffernan then cites a number of examples that question these long-held assumptions. For example, he points to the Sistine Chapel, where the spiritual history of mankind is represented in a series of pictures by Michelangelo, and argues that such a picture cannot be understood without reference to time (96). The notion that painting confines itself to a single moment of time takes it for granted that "our experience of painting is instantaneous," but Heffernan argues that, on the contrary, "looking at a picture can often take a good deal of time" (97). As another example that contradicts the assumption about painting being spatial and literature temporal, he refers to concrete poetry, in which "the visual pattern made by the words of a concrete poem is designed to represent iconically what the words signify linguistically" (97).

Questioning the assumption that literature is fundamentally underpinned by a succession of temporal moments, Heffernan suggests that we should consider the nature of time and how it relates to the nature of literature in a broad sense (97). He looks to Augustine, who argued that "the consciousness of time is a simultaneous awareness of past and future," and that to experience time is to transcend succession (98). Heffernan suggests that this notion of time "clearly implies that the experience or consciousness of time is fundamentally integrative," a view that is contrary to the conception of time in Lessing's *Laocoön*, "where the successiveness of temporal moments is treated as fundamentally antithetical to the juxtaposition of forms in space" (98). He notes that, for Husserl, "the temporal object must be processed by retention and protention in such a way as to be held in the mind, at its completion, as a simultaneous synthesis" (98). Heffernan contends that such a conception of time, which is fundamentally integrative, means that time and space can no longer be simply contrasted as that between succession and simultaneity, because they tend to merge (98). Heffernan invokes Kant, for whom time "has to do neither with shape nor position, but with the relation of representations to our inner state," meaning that time is interior and shapeless, and because of this, Kant argues that "we cannot represent it without spatial analogies" (99).

Augustine, writing in the fourth century CE, asked: "What then is time? If no one asks me I know; if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not" (quoted in Miller, 2003: 88). The concept of time is an elusive one – as Isham and Savvidou point out, "in one sense we

think we know exactly to what it refers, but when we try to pin it down it slips away" (2002: 7). Miller points out another problem with defining time, which is that, when it is detached from its context and seen in isolation, "The word then becomes an unfathomable enigma" (2003: 89). In the seventeenth century, Isaac Newton developed a theory of time that endured until the early twentieth century. In 1687, in his *Principia Mathematica*, Newton conceived of space and time as absolute and immutable entities, rigid and unchangeable: "[t]ime exists in and of itself and flows equably without reference to anything external" (quoted in Greene, 2004: 45). His conception of space was similar: "[a]bsolute space, in its own nature, without regard to anything external, remains always similar and immovable" (45). In other words, according to Newton, time is universal and absolute; it applies everywhere and is the same for everyone. Stephen Kern argues that the most influential argument about the atomistic nature of time was Newton's calculus, which conceived of time as a sum of discrete units: "Clocks produced audible reminders of the atomistic nature of time with each tick" (2003: 20). These conceptions of space and time endured for over two hundred years, until Albert Einstein published his theory of special relativity in 1905, in which he argued that Newton's ideas of absolute space and time were incorrect, that, instead, space and time were neither absolute, nor separate entities. According to Einstein, space and time are entwined in a four-dimensional continuum called spacetime, and are relative to moving bodies.

In the late nineteenth century, Emile Durkheim began investigating the social origins of time and suggested that "the foundation of the category of time is the rhythm of social life" because "the divisions into days, weeks, months and years, etc., correspond to the periodical recurrence of rites, feasts, and public ceremonies" (quoted in Kern 2003: 19). This conception of time as cyclical (rather than linear) is explored in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* when the Magistrate observes that Empire has created a time that is unnatural and warped, bitterly noting that "It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe" (133). The barbarians, on the other hand, as Debra Castillo notes, live outside history, and have adapted themselves to the cycle of the seasons (1986: 81).

A moment of time cannot be defined with certainty. The interval of time that can be experienced as a totality and that constitutes the present is hazy. William James argued in 1884 that it is impossible to perceive the present because it is past before we can comprehend it (in Kern, 2003: 82). Wilhelm Wundt, a German physician widely regarded as the "father of experimental psychology," conducted experiments in the 1880s to determine the duration of the present, and concluded that its limit was about five seconds (82). In terms of sensations that the eye and ear could perceive separately, one of his students found that the shortest interval that the ear could discern between separate sounds was 1/500th of a second, while the shortest interval that the eye could distinguish separate sparks was .044 seconds (82). Whether we apprehend the present as discrete units and then combine them, as in a melody, or whether we perceive an extended whole all at once is not clear. Kern suggests that the present has a nucleus of a "now-apprehension," and that this nucleus retains aspects of the immediate past and the imminent, or anticipated, future (82). The present, according to Kern, is "a continuous rolling field of consciousness, thickened with retentions and protentions" (84) – that is, with elements of both the past and the future. In Coetzee's works, as I will show in this thesis, the present can be thickened in other ways as well – it can be spliced open through various techniques to produce a temporally extended moment.

According to Kern, the introduction of standard time at the end of the nineteenth century was the most significant development in establishing uniform, public time since the invention of the mechanical clock in the fourteenth century (2003: 11). The growth of cities, the development of the wireless and telephone, and railroad timetables made it necessary to adopt a universal time system in the modern world. The wireless, in particular, provided the ability to experience many distant events simultaneously (67). Ursula Heise also notes that technological developments contributed to developing a standard system of time, but adds that these developments "led for the first time in history to the disjunction of spatial from temporal distance" (1997: 34). Related to these historical changes, David Dickens and Andrea Fontana argue that key to the new perception of time in postmodern works were new developments in transportation and communications technology, but add that the disorienting effects of spatial and temporal experience were the result of the "scientific-technological changes brought about by the pervasive influence of the money economy" (2002: 391). They note that economic crises and political conflicts in western Europe in the mid-nineteenth century produced a crisis in how time was experienced, arguing that "crises

and conflict radically disrupted the Enlightenment notion of objective time as uninterrupted progress" (2011: 390). According to Dickens and Fontana, the advent of Fordism also produced "new forms of organising and planning production" which "suggested that time too could be universally organised and controlled" (390). Heise also points out the efforts to mechanize and standardize time since the beginning of the industrial era, and argues that these were combined with "a sustained exploration of the workings of time in human consciousness and memory, which was often envisioned as antithetical to the rationality of machine and clock time" (1997: 35).

Public time was conceived as having two core aspects: it was made up of discrete parts, and it went only in one direction – irreversibly forward. But private time was seen as being much more fluid – its nature was heterogeneous and reversible (Kern, 1983: 34). Kern argues that, while the traditional view of public time as uniform and universal was generally accepted, there were many thinkers who argued for a plurality of private times (33). This is a theme that is echoed by other writers. An entry in Kafka's diary in 1922, in which he comments on the exasperating discordance between public and private time, reveals the disjunction between the two:

> It's impossible to sleep, impossible to wake, impossible to bear life or, more precisely, the successiveness of life. The clocks don't agree. The inner one rushes along in a devilish or demonic – in any case, inhuman – way while the outer one goes, falteringly, its accustomed place. (quoted in Kern: 17)

In *Orlando: A Biography*, Virginia Woolf also comments on the discrepancy between what she calls "time on the clock" and "time in the mind":

> But Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second (1992: 59).

Kern notes that James Joyce also found public time to be ill-suited to capturing the manifold temporal experiences of life. This is evident in *Ulysses*, in which Odysseus's twenty years of travel are compressed into sixteen hours in Leopold Bloom's life.

Heise points out an important distinction in how the representation of time differs in modernist and postmodernist works. She notes that, "although both modernism and postmodernism foreground breaks or schisms in time, high modernism questions mainly the relevance and accessibility of the past, whereas postmodernism challenges the notion of time as such" (1997: 37). As noted previously, while Frank's discussion of spatial form is limited to modernist works, other critics, such as Mitchell, have argued that spatial form is more widely applicable and is not restricted to works associated with modernism. While Coetzee's work is most often labelled postmodernist – Jane Poyner notes that the postmodernist label is often attributed to Coetzee's works because of its engagement with poststructuralist theory (2014: 9) – it can be argued that it also shares affinities with modernism, in which the development of spatial form is rooted. In fact, Neil Lazarus argues that, because Coetzee's work is "so *ethically* saturated, so *humanistic* in its critique of the established order … it would be quite inappropriate to describe it as postmodernist (1986-1987: 148, emphasis in original). Dominic Head, however, emphasizes the postmodern aspects of Coetzee's work, arguing, for example, that because *Dusklands* makes the question of discourse its focus, and because it interrogates particular narrative modes, it is widely seen as having introduced a new postmodernist strain in South African fiction (2009: 38). Derek Attridge concurs with this view, particularly because of what he calls its "use of nonrealist or antirealist devices, its allusiveness, and its metafictional proclivities"; however, he also suggests that it may be more accurate to characterise Coetzee's fiction as "late modernism" or perhaps "neomodernism," (2005: 2) arguing that post-structuralist theory "functioned as the preeminent exemplar" of postmodernism, and if modernism is viewed through this lens, "postmodernism is likely to appear less a break with than an intensification of modernism's own detotalizing pressures" (4).

Attridge suggests that the distinctions between modernism and postmodernism would be less important if there were less of a compulsion towards "totalising" definitions for diverse artistic practices. Nevertheless, he notes that the relationship between art produced during the period usually associated with Modernism, (roughly, the period from 1910 until the

1960s) and other influential and innovative art "remains an important and ill-understood one," particularly when one considers works, like J.M. Coetzee's, that are produced in such an intensely political environment (4). Attridge questions whether the techniques of modernism create art that is apolitical, and whether postmodernism follows this path; or whether it is possible that "modernist innovation" can be a source for an art that is political and that recognises the dangers of an artistic practice that eschews political responsibility; and if so, whether postmodernism is, in some ways at least, "the working out of such a practice" (4). This is a pertinent issue in Coetzee's fiction – as Head notes, a recurring criticism of Coetzee's work has been his perceived lack of direct engagement with politics in South Africa. This critique is especially sharp in Imraan Coovadia's analysis of Coetzee's engagement with South Africa, which I discuss in more detail in chapter four.

Attridge argues that the debate over whether Coetzee's work is "modernist" or "postmodernist" is significant "only insofar as it raises further questions about the practice of formal innovation and disruption that begins in the modernist period" (2005: 4). He argues that the tenets of modernism, such as its self-reflexiveness and foregrounding of its narrative techniques, provides a way in which the "demands of otherness" can be responded to in ways that are not available by other means. Attridge calls this mode of writing "modernism after modernism," and argues that it "necessarily involves a reworking of modernism's methods" (5). He argues that Coetzee "does not merely employ but extends and revitalises modernist practices" in a way that enables the development of a kind of writing that makes political engagement possible, and that modernist methods are used to enable a "new openness and alertness to such modalities of otherness" (6).

Ursula Heise also discusses the association between modernist and postmodernist works, particularly in relation to how temporality is conceptualised in these works. She argues that the ways in which time was "reinvented" in postmodernist novels was strongly influenced by modernism and followed from modernist experiments with temporality. She suggests that postmodernist texts "cannot be understood only within the cultural framework of the last four decades, but must also be viewed in the context of their engagement with their high-modernist predecessors" (1997: 3). Heise suggests that postmodernist novels' innovative narrative structures intersected with the "broader transformation in the Western culture of time that has taken place since the 1960s and involves changes in science,

technology and socio-economic structures as well as in aesthetic practices" (3). A key reason for this is that, especially from the 1960s, the 'grand' narratives of "progress, enlightenment, emancipation, liberation" were increasingly undermined (20).

A central aspect of Attridge's argument about the formal elements of Coetzee's fiction is his insistence that they are a significant part of what makes his work effective: they cannot be viewed in isolation from the importance of his work in the "ethico-political realm" because they "constitute … that importance" (2005: 6). Attridge argues that Coetzee represents the ways in which figures of alterity "convey their resistance … to the discourses of the ruling culture," and that his fiction is remarkably successful in this precisely because of its affiliation with modernism (13).

The development of literary modernism occurred within a much larger cultural matrix of modernism. Vargish and Mook argue that the nature of space and time, as manifested in art and literature during the modernist period (defined by them as falling between 1880 and the end of World War II), was altered by developments in the field of physics, particularly Relativity Theory (1999: 3). They define Modernism through a comparative analysis of physics, painting and fiction (what they refer to as three "cultural diagnostics") because "Relativity is a theory of space and time; Cubism revolutionized the treatment of space in visual representation; and modernist fiction explores with remarkable concentration the possibilities of a new temporality in narrative" (4-5). They define these cultural diagnostics as "advanced intellectual activities that serve to reveal the underlying *values* of the period" or, alternatively, as "any human activity or production that may be analysed in order to abstract the historically defining values" (4, emphasis in original). They stress, however, that their choice does not suggest causal linkages among the three fields, but that they are interested in "the common values that find contemporaneous expression in disparate fields" (5).

Katherine Hales expands on the idea of linkages between diverse academic fields. Her field model of cultural history also rejects notions of causality between fields in favour of a field notion of culture, "a societal matrix" which consists of a "climate of opinion" that, "rather than direct borrowing or transmission … is the underlying force guiding intellectual enquiry" (1984: 22). Hales notes that

> Such a history would insist that we not be misled by a causal perspective into thinking of correspondences between disciplines as one-way exchanges […] In a field model the interactions are always mutual: the cultural matrix guides individual enquiry at the same time that the inquiry helps to form, or transform, the matrix (22-23).

While the track of historical time is linear, in postmodern narratives it is "multivalent and nonlinear" (Ermath, 1992: 20). For Elizabeth Ermath, in postmodern time, "the controlling denominator that makes possible all other definitions relative to one another" is

> no longer the time of history, the time of project, the time of Newton and Kant, the time of clocks and capital … instead it concentrates phenomenologically on the reader-events that collapse the distances between object and subject, inside and outside (22).

Within the broader cultural milieu of modernism and postmodernism, Coetzee's interest in science, particularly its relationship to language, underlines Hale's argument about the interplay between disparate fields, and is particularly pertinent to my discussion in chapter five. Coetzee's writing about science and how it relates to the subject-verb-object order of English is especially relevant to the notion of time.

In 'Isaac Newton and the Ideal of a Transparent Scientific Language,' published in 1982 and reproduced in *Doubling the Point*, Coetzee explores the way in which science written in English may be influenced by the syntactic and semantic structures of the language. He refers to Wilhelm von Humboldt's linguistic relativity thesis that "one thinks in forms limited and determined by the forms of one's native language" (1997: 181) to discuss the ways in which Isaac Newton may have been constrained by the structures of Latin and English in explaining gravity as a force. (I will discuss this notion further in chapter 5, where J.C. in *Diary of a Bad Year* invokes the paradox of Zeno's arrow.) Von Humboldt's thesis, that thought is dependent on the language of the thinker, emerged as part of a growing body of knowledge about language, in contrast to the "classically inherited conception of language as a transparent medium for thought" (181). Similarly, Benjamin Lee Whorf

hypothesised that "we see nature along lines laid down by our native language" (182). As Coetzee explains, in his work on the Hopi language, Whorf attempted to uncover how thinking about the universe in English and other Indo-European languages led to certain assumptions about the world; he came to the conclusion that "Newtonian space, time and matter are no intuitions. They are recepts from culture and language. That is where Newton got them" (183-84).

Coetzee focuses his discussion on Newton's theory of universal gravitation, published in *Principia* in 1687, and suggests that it was Newton's inclusion of the word *attract* that courted the most controversy – he was criticised by other scientists for abandoning the materialist basis of science by using an explanation that seemed unscientific, based as it was on "a mysterious force exerted upon each other by two bodies separated by empty space" (185). Newton was accused by Huygens and Leibniz of "reinstituting a scholastic science of occult qualities" (187). Coetzee argues, however, that the challenge facing Newton in explaining gravitational force was that of "finding the right words, and specifically of finding matter-of-fact, nonmetaphoric words" (187). Coetzee suggests that the real problem facing Newton was getting beyond a mathematical explanation of gravity to "stating in 'real' terms relations between elements of the physical universe" (188). He suggests that the standard Subject-Verb-Object order in English "is iconic both of time order and of causal order," with the result that Newton's explanation of *force* "is understood as both object and agent, and the bogey of the occult raises its head again" (190).

In line with Heise, Ermath also sees qualitative differences in the construction of time in modernist and postmodernist works. She argues that the way in which postmodernism most radically transformed the historical construction of temporality that underpins the humanist tradition is through its undermining of realist traditions (1992: ix). She argues that history is "the most powerful construct of realistic conventions as we have known them since about 1400" (13). Ermath suggests that the postmodern transformation of the historical construction of reality was a result of the re-examination of Western discourse, with its "obsession with power and knowledge, its constraint of language to primarily symbolic function, its ethic of winning, its categorical and dualistic modes of definition … its linear time and individual subject" (6). She goes on to argue that, while the medium of narrative is temporal, "postmodern sequences make accessible new temporal capacities that subvert

the privilege of historical time" (11). While historical time privileges realist discourse, Ermath suggests that postmodern texts critique this language because it valorizes this discourse over others (11).

In Coetzee's works, the discourse of realism is frequently subverted. Coetzee has noted that, from his writing, it must be evident that he "[does not] have much respect for reality," and that he thinks of himself as "using rather than reflecting reality" in his fiction (2015: 69). In *Elizabeth Costello*, Lesson 1: 'Realism,' John (Elizabeth's son) comments that the description of his mother – "The blue costume, the greasy hair, are details, signs of a moderate realism" (2003: 4). He traces the genesis of this aspect of traditional novels to Daniel Defoe, particularly his most famous novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, in which details are foregrounded by being recorded precisely and meticulously, such as the description Crusoe gives when looking for his shipmates on the beach: he saw only "three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows." As John notes, "No large words, no despair, just hats and caps and shoes" (4). Later in the chapter John elaborates on the topic of realism, commenting that "Realism has never been comfortable with ideas. It could not be otherwise: realism is premised on the idea that ideas have no autonomous existence, can exist only in things" (2013: 9).

Costello expands on these ideas in her acceptance speech, entitled 'What is Realism?' for the Stowe Award in Pennsylvania. She refers to Kafka's story 'A Report to an Academy,' in which an ape makes a speech before an audience, but comments that "[w]e don't know and will never know, with certainty, what is really going on in the story: whether it is about a man speaking to men or an ape speaking to apes or an ape speaking to men or a man speaking to apes … or even just a parrot speaking to parrots" (19). Costello comments that:

> There used to be a time when we knew. We used to believe that when the text said, "On the table stood a glass of water," there was indeed a table, and a glass of water on it, and we had only to look in the word-mirror of the text to see them. But all that has ended. The word-mirror is broken, irreparably, it seems (19).

According to Ermath, the foundation of the convention of historical time is the "belief in a temporal medium that is neutral and homogenous and that, consequently, makes possible those mutually informative measurements between one historical moment and another that support most forms of knowledge current in the West and that we customarily call "science" (20). For Ermath, "History has become a commanding metanarrative, perhaps *the* metanarrative in Western discourse" (20, emphasis in original). Postmodern narrative, by contrast, "resolutely does not operate according to any form of historical time, that is, representational time, and in many cases directly parodies or disputes that time and the generalizations it allows to form" (43). Ermath notes that "The discourse of truth, history, and objectivity brings with it a whole set of conventions – clock time, for example, that fix in place one particular definition of consciousness" (84).

Tatyana Fedosova also focuses on the disruption of chronological sequence in postmodern literature, arguing that one of the features of time in postmodern literature is non-linear narrative. She suggests that temporal distortion in postmodern literature functions in a number of ways, and that rather than linear time, produces "cyclical, mythical or spiral time," which is used to create effects such as irony, parody or a cinematographic effect (2015: 77). I discuss the concept of 'mythical' time in detail in chapter two. According to Fedosova, some fundamental postmodern principles include an ironic attitude to reality, fragmentation in discourse, collage and montage, and that one of the most essential aspects of postmodernism is "the reflection on the following question: what is reality?" (78). These features of postmodernism are all relevant to Coetzee, and are discussed in detail in my study.

Given that this thesis analyses the multiple ways in which time and place intersect in Coetzee's work, it is necessary that I offer some final introductory remarks about the concept of place before providing an outline of the chapters that follow. The importance of place to human experience is foregrounded by Tim Cresswell, who argues that place is "a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world" (2004: 11). He adds that places contain worlds of meaning and experience, and that the notion of place represents "a rich and complicated interplay of people and the environment" (11). Eric Prieto links the study of place to changes in knowledge production after World War II, arguing that the positivistic trend after the war, with its focus on amassing and analysing objective data, came into

conflict with phenomenological questions, which focused on personal experiences (2013: 17). He suggests that the "quantitative revolution" of positivism marginalised humanistic methods, and that the concept of place "was considered to be too nebulous and subjective to merit serious consideration" (17). From the late 1970s, however, humanist geography reacted to this trend by "sending out a call for a 'return to place,' with particular emphasis on the individual experience of place" (17). The subjective experience of place became a topic of importance, with "The new generation of humanistic geographers ... exploring the subjective experience of place as an object of study in its own right" (17). According to Cresswell, the development of a theory of place was heavily influenced by the philosophy of phenomenology, which focused on the way in which relations between the self and the world are constructed (2004: 22).

For Coetzee, relations between himself and his homeland, South Africa, are complicated and fragmented. David Attwell argues for a reading of place that recognises the centrality of Coetzee's South African context, in which "South Africa … became the primary Situation with which Coetzee would find himself wrestling" (2008: 33). Coetzee's response to place and what constitutes home are coloured, to a large degree, by his understanding of himself as "a white South African [in] the latter half of the twentieth century, disabled, disqualified" (1992: 392). He traces his sense of alienness to his years in rural Worcester (1948-1951) when he, as a child from an Afrikaans background, attended English-medium classes (I discuss his years in Worcester further in chapter three). This period coincided with what Coetzee describes as "a time of raging Afrikaner nationalism," so that, by the age of twelve, he "has a well-developed sense of social marginality" (393). His sense of being an outsider was reinforced by his adolescence in Cape Town, where he was a Protestant enrolled in a Catholic high school with Jewish and Greek friends. As a student he moved "on the fringes of the left without being part of the left" (394). While he describes himself as being sympathetic to the concerns of the left, he is "alienated … by all political language," a recurring theme in Coetzee's works and one which I discuss further in chapters four and five (394). Attwell argues that the condition under which Coetzee lived and wrote in Cape Town could be described as one of "perpetual anxiety," in which Coetzee lived "without being comfortably settled" (2015: 26). This anxiety is a significant marker in Coetzee's representation of place, and one which I will discuss in detail in my thesis, particularly in chapters two and three.

The primary texts for this study are Coetzee's first two novels, *Dusklands* (1974) and *In the Heart of the Country* (1978); his trilogy of fictionalised memoirs, *Boyhood* (1998), *Youth* (2003), and *Summertime* (2010) (revised and republished in 2011 as *Scenes from Provincial Life*); and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007). I have chosen these texts because they exemplify the narrative organisation of spatial form and the ways in which time and place intersect; they also demonstrate the ways in which these concepts have evolved over the course of Coetzee's writing career.

In chapter one I argue that, in *Dusklands*, the reader's understanding of temporality undergoes a discursive shift, emphasizing the ways in which the past interpenetrates the present. I suggest that parody, the central method of critique in *Dusklands*, creates a palimpsest effect that evokes other, underlying texts. Photographs are a key element in Eugene Dawn's narrative in 'The Vietnam Project,' and I analyse the way in which the text contrasts the narrative power of photographs with that of texts. In 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,' I argue that the structure of the novella exemplifies the technique of montage, a key aspect of spatial form.

In chapter two I discuss Coetzee's second novel, *In the Heart of the Country*. I focus on the peculiar time-orientation of the novel, and argue that the narrative undermines and subverts historical time in order to disrupt and displace the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy that characterise the farm on which Magda lives (in a sense similar to Bakhtin's 'chronotope,' in which "space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history"). I discuss the concept of place as a central one in the novel, and argue that Coetzee's construction of temporality influences how place is represented and depicted. I link Coetzee's narrative method to an important concept in Frank's theory of spatial form – that of the image, and Frank's emphasis on the *spatial* nature of an image as one that unifies disparate ideas and emotions. I consider Coetzee's discussion of the ways in which the 'image' is manifested in prose, particularly in relation to the resources prose has to slow down the reading process, and explore how this is manifested in the novel. Ronald Foust refers to this characteristic of the image as "the essence of lyrical expression" (1975: 4), and I argue that this mode of expression is a distinctive characteristic of Magda's narrative. Another key characteristic of spatial form in the novel is reflexive referencing, which I argue

is a vital element of the structuring principle of *In the Heart of the Country*. I also focus on the ways in which the novel's narrative unreliability and inconsistencies reinforce the blurring of distinctions between past and present in the novel, creating a sense of the simultaneity of past and present.

In chapter three I frame my discussion of *Boyhood* and *Youth* in terms of a phrase taken from Wordsworth's *The Prelude* – "spots of time." I discuss Coetzee's links to Wordsworth, particularly in relation to autobiography (Coetzee once commented that his understanding of what it means to write autobiography was significantly influenced by teaching Wordsworth, and in particular, *The Prelude*). I show how, in these memoirs, place and time intersect in multiple ways, and I argue that the complexities of history have a significant impact on how place is imaginatively reconstructed. I discuss the memoirs' representation of Coetzee's homeland, South Africa, and suggest that Coetzee's representation of place is informed by key moments in his childhood and youth. I elaborate on these key moments and show how they contribute to shaping the adult psyche. I also argue that Coetzee's narrative method in the two memoirs parallels its thematic concerns, such as the contradictory and fragmented experience of place.

The discussion of *Boyhood* focuses on the contradictions of growing up in South Africa, as expressed in John's descriptions of Worcester (a place that he refers to as being "a purgatory that one must pass through"), and his idealised conception of the family farm, Voëlfontein. I argue that Coetzee's representation of the farm engages in a number of ways with the literature of the farm novel, or 'plaasroman,' in South Africa. I explore the tension between John's conception of Voëlfontein and the reality of its fragmented lived experience, and suggest that the novel's form echoes this tension between wholeness and fragmentation.

I argue that, in *Youth*, John's development as an artist is intimately bound up with his South African identity, despite his move to England to pursue his dream of becoming an artist. While art becomes a means for John to achieve distance from his homeland, the memoir ironically records John's first experiment with prose as one which is not only set in South Africa, but which is alien to the English sensibility. I suggest that there are a number of disparate strands in *Youth* which cohere around John finding his identity, both as individual

and as artist, and argue that these strands have to be connected to each other through reflexive referencing for their full meaning to be apprehended.

In chapter four I discuss *Summertime*, the third of Coetzee's fictionalised memoirs. I argue that Coetzee's representation of South Africa is filtered through intricate textual strategies that emphasize the ways in which time and place intersect. I propose that the memoir's thematic concerns – particularly its ambivalent, contradictory representation of place – are paralleled in its disjunctive narrative method. I focus again on the principle of reflexive reference, arguing that it is a key aspect of *Summertime*'s narrative strategies, and that the different parts of the memoir – the dated and undated Notebook entries, the short memos at the end of most of the Notebook entries, each of the interviews, as well as Vincent's rewriting of them – have to be connected and related to each other before meaning is apprehended. I also argue that the principle of reflexive reference in *Summertime* extends to other works by Coetzee: in addition to *Boyhood* and *Youth*, his 1999 Booker Prize-winning novel *Disgrace* is a good example.

In my final chapter I discuss *Diary of a Bad Year*, focusing on spatiality in the novel's form. I argue that the technique of montage construction is key to the novel's form, and that this technique is linked to the novel's thematic concerns. I argue that the novel's narrative organisation allows Coetzee to create the space for a type of discourse that blurs the distinction between fictional and non-fictional writing, and suggest that it is the juxtaposition of elements in space, rather than temporal progression, that generates meaning in the text.

There is a range of disparate thematic concerns that I discuss in this chapter – I argue that these disparate issues foreground spatial form in the novel. In particular, I discuss the ways in which the text interweaves form and theme in its exploration of the topic of space, which suggests the split, fragmented nature of experience. I also discuss the interplay between fiction and autobiography and public and private discourse, arguing that, even though South Africa is not a central theme or 'place' in *Diary*, its scattered presence in the novel is meaningful.

1. 'An invisible labyrinth of time': A discursive shift in temporality in *Dusklands*

Reflecting on what it was about Ezra Pound's Cantos that gripped him, J.M. Coetzee comments that it was "[s]omething to do with the way in which time slowed and stopped as one sense-datum after another was impeccably and unforgettably registered" (1993a: 6). Coetzee's comment offers an insight into his view of the relationship between time and narrative. In this chapter I will show how *Dusklands*, his first novel, employs a number of strategies to achieve a discursive shift in the reader's understanding of temporality. My discussion will focus specifically on how the novel's textual strategies undermine linear time in favour of narratives that are nonlinear and multivalent. I argue that it does so particularly through repetition, its critique of realism, parody, and the technique of montage, epitomised in juxtaposition.

Dominic Head argues that *Dusklands* manifests issues that have consistently underpinned Coetzee's subsequent fiction, such as questions of the colonizing psyche, master-slave relationships, and historical complicity (2009: 37). Head refers to a recurring criticism of Coetzee's work – his perceived failure to engage directly with South Africa's historical and political situation – and suggests that, contrary to this view, the concerns that underlie Coetzee's fiction have been profoundly determined by South Africa's history, but that these concerns have been expressed in his fiction in a more oblique manner, "through Coetzee's emphasis on textual structures, and his challenge to novelistic conventions" (37). In this chapter I will expand Head's argument by suggesting that there is significant interplay between Coetzee's textual strategies and thematic concerns in the novel.

In characterising the work of a narrative, the French historian Francois Hartog evokes the idea of a rhapsode, a term which, in its etymological sense, refers to a weaver, one who weaves disparate parts into a whole (Tally, 2013: 48). *Dusklands* epitomises this weaving – the novel consists of two novellas, both of which are comprised of distinct sections which have to be interwoven and related to each other in order to apprehend the work as a whole. Part 1, 'The Vietnam Project,' is set in America in the 1960s and consists of a narrative by Eugene Dawn, who is writing a report on propaganda in the war against the Vietnamese for the US Department of Defence. Part 2, 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,' is the story of Jacobus Coetzee's journey into the interior of the Western Cape in 1870. His journey is

ostensibly to hunt elephant, but is also one of exploration. This second novella is composed of various strands, constituted by a range of sources in colonial discourse, which are interwoven in the narrative to produce the parody that underlies the text. The technique of montage is central to the novella's structure. A key aspect of montage is the notion that reality is not independent but is experienced through connections and relationships with other elements. My central argument will be that temporal flow in *Dusklands* is disrupted in order to subvert the notion of historical progress, and to suggest instead the coextensive ways in which the past and present exist and interpenetrate one another. I will suggest that spatial form is manifested in the novel as a means to evoke the "presentness of the past," and that the juxtaposition of 'The Vietnam Project' and 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' constitutes an attempt to apprehend the unity of the past and the present in ways that eschew the linear progression of time in favour of a view that emphasises the spatial unity of past and present.

While I will focus in this chapter specifically on how *Dusklands* represents temporal experience in spatial form, the theme of time is woven throughout the novel. With the first part set centuries after the second part, the structure of *Dusklands* underscores its temporal discontinuity – as Teresa Dovey notes, as we move forward in the novel, "we go back in time" (1988: 71). The novel's title also explicitly references time – or, rather, a combination of time and place. The opening lines extend this reference to the passage of time: "My name is Eugene Dawn. I cannot help that. Here goes" ((1974: 1). David Attwell argues that these sentences suggest the inevitability of history and the historical process, and the subject's acknowledgement of this. I would like to add, however, that Eugene Dawn also alludes to time here; his name signifying, in opposition to the novel's title, both the first appearance of light in the sky before sunrise, as well as the beginning of something or a period of time, which he seems helpless to prevent. The subject of time is taken up again later in the narrative when Dawn refers to the project on which he is working as the "New Life Project" – another allusion to the start of something. Dawn again foregrounds the contrast between beginning and ending when he describes his Vietnam report as being something that "has been composed facing east into the rising sun and in a mood of poignant regret … that [he is] rooted in the eveninglands" (7). Dawn's comment emphasizes the temporal disjunction in his life – while the work he is doing on the New Life Project signifies the start of

something new, his comment suggests that he is out of sync with the time in which he lives, so that the ideas in his report are destined to be thwarted.

Dawn's report also references the cyclical, rather than sequential, nature of time – a theme that is also explored in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. In Dawn's description of his work, his body is in tune with cyclical, rather than chronological time: his creative work can only be done at a certain time of the day – in the mornings – when "the enemy in [his] body is too sleepy to throw up walls against the forays of [his] brain" (6-7). He refers to this time of the day as "those precious mornings when my body relaxes and my mind soars" (8). The afternoons, when he is unable to do creative work, he spends doing research in the library. Later, in section 1.6 of the Introduction to Coetzee's project 'New Life for Vietnam' (entitled *Victory*), Dawn contrasts the violence of war with the state of mind that is necessary to be victorious – which he describes as the "quiet garden into which we may escape from the cycles of time" (28). Dawn seems to suggest here that the mindset that is needed for victory is one in which the experience of time is transcended. As discussed in the introduction, in Frank's discussion of a "quasi-mystical" experience Proust once had, when he was "oppressed and obsessed by a sense of the ineluctability of time," he had an experience in which he was able to transcend time, so that he could "escape time's dominion" (1963: 19). Dawn links the state of mind necessary for victory (the 'quiet garden') to a state in which time is (momentarily) suspended.

Time and temporal experience are also significant at the level of form in *Dusklands*. The two parts of *Dusklands* are set in different centuries, in places thousands of kilometres apart. In order to apprehend the novel as a whole the reader has to engage in a number of linking processes. She has to understand the interrelationship between the two novellas and relate the distinct strands in each novella both to one another, and to the novel as a whole. Head points out that, while the novel is divided into two novellas, "the book is clearly a unified and single entity," because the whole is dependent on the interrelationships of the two narratives (2009: 38). This suggests that events in the two parts of *Dusklands* are coextensive and transcend their vastly different settings. Eugene Dawn explicitly links his work in Vietnam in 'The Vietnam Project' to the exploration and colonization that Jacobus Coetzee undertakes in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' when he comments that, had he lived two hundred years ago, he "would have had a continent to explore, to map, to open to

colonisation" (33). Attwell explains the links between the two novellas by noting that, in 'The Vietnam Project,' there is "a direct analogy between mythography and colonial exploration, with the implication that what Eugene Dawn undertakes … is a later and more abstract version of what Jacobus Coetzee undertakes in the interior of southern Africa" (40). He argues that the novel "juxtaposes subject-positions within twentieth-century American imperialism and eighteenth-century Dutch colonialism, finding them coextensive in their quest for self-realisation through dominance" (1993: 35). This "coextensive quest," in which Eugene Dawn's mythography is juxtaposed with Jacobus Coetzee's colonial exploration, undermines the chronological nature of time, in which past and present are distinct, suggesting instead a view of the past and present in which they are intertwined with each other.

The two novellas' juxtaposition manifests the way in which literature represents time or temporal experience in spatial form. Ronald Foust points to an aspect of spatial form that is relevant to *Dusklands* when he notes that spatial form is one of the ways in which the "presentness of the past" is recognised (1975: 3). The effect of the spatialization in the novel is to emphasise the underlying similarities in the brutality that marked these two distinct historical events. The juxtaposition of the two novellas suggests history's sometimes overlapping and lateral, rather than linear, movement. It also works to slow time down. Jan Wilm suggests that the novel's structure extends and slows time because reading the novel and developing one's understanding of the novel's two protagonists requires a continual back-and-forth movement between the two novellas. He argues that there is a "level of discursive 'familiarizing-defamiliarizing' … through the implicit comparison and contrast of Jacobus's narrative with the preceding novella, 'The Vietnam Project,' whose character Eugene Dawn … has already estranged us by the time we meet Jacobus Coetzee" (2016: 24). He notes that the implicit comparison and contrast between the two characters causes the reader to continually move back and forth in the text, that this continual comparison between the two novellas disrupts the novel's temporal flow, and that this process of going back and forth between the characters and texts "takes a certain amount of reflection and so a certain amount of time" (24). The novel's structure also compels the reader to find links between the two novellas. Wilm argues that "The gap between the two texts implicitly forces the readers to think the two characters together, to characterize the other through the one, and vice versa" (3). (I discuss the concept of 'gaps' in Coetzee's work in further detail in

chapter five.) Wilm adds that, in finding similarities between the two characters, readers are both brought closer to the text and characters *and* alienated from them by their violent actions and imperialist stances (3). The juxtaposition of the two novellas also undercuts the notion of historical progression by suggesting that the past and present can sometimes be conflated. Wilm notes that the "juxtaposition between Dawn and Jacobus generates … a feeling of atrocious historical self-repetition" (24). Rosemary Jolly similarly suggests the overlap between the two novellas when she argues that Dawn and Jacobus seem "reciprocally mimetic," that they are "colonizers in a history that repeats itself in the rise and fall of successive empires" (1996: 111).

Coetzee's juxtaposition is one way in which the events depicted in the novel capture moments that are both transcendent and extratemporal. Frank argues that these moments "contained a clue to the ultimate nature of reality" (1963: 20). The 'ultimate' reality that is suggested by the juxtaposition of the two novellas in *Dusklands* is the drive towards subjection and domination by the novel's two protagonists, Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee. Foust suggests that it is because of "the horror of an increasingly mechanical historical process" that the modern writer attempts to evoke a condition in which

> Time is no longer felt as an objective, causal progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods; now it has become a continuum in which distinctions between past and present are wiped out … Past and present are apprehended spatially, locked in a timeless unity that … eliminates any feeling of sequence by the very act of juxtaposition (59).

In addition to these continuities between the two parts, there are also links between the text and Coetzee's personal history that disrupt linear temporality. Attwell notes that in *Dusklands,* "Coetzee connects his ancestry and current experience" (1993: 37). This connection is reflected in the name of Dawn's supervisor – Coetzee – which, in addition to the link to Coetzee as author, also suggests Afrikaans ancestry, alluding to the ways in which American domination can be linked to the colonial quest from earlier times. Albeit obliquely, Coetzee is also linked to Vietnam through his involvement in a protest against the war in Vietnam at SUNY Buffalo University in the United States while he was a lecturer there. The consequence of his participation in the protest was severe – as a result of the

protest, his application for his visa to be renewed in the US was denied, and he was forced to return to South Africa in 1974. Aspects of Dawn's life are also connected to the author, J.M. Coetzee. When Dawn comments that his report is a reflection of his courage in not being afraid to expose himself, it is because of his poetry: "All my life, I have found, I have been prepared to expose myself where other people would not. As a younger man I exposed myself in poetry" (33). As Coetzee's second memoir, *Youth,* shows, writing poetry was a significant aspect of Coetzee's literary ambitions, and his first forays into literary life were in poetry. In the second novella, links between Coetzee's ancestry and the text (discussed later in the chapter) are also evoked. The links, moreover, are framed in complex ways that interweave fiction and biographical details, further slowing down the reading process.

Chronological development is also undermined in the novel's subversion and critique of realism. Ermath argues that, in the modern view of history, time was viewed as "a neutral, homogeneous medium" (1992: 27) and that "The tellable time of realism and its consensus becomes the untellable time of postmodern writing" (1992: 5). For Ermath, "the neutral, homogenized temporality of realism has largely disappeared in postmodern novels … which treat (historical) time as itself a phenomenon" (21). She credits the revised view of time to Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, where the notion of time as constant is changed to one that is a function of relative motion. She argues that this revised view of time "subvert[s] historical thinking and its supporting discourse of realism and empiricism," and that in postmodern narratives, temporality has little to do with historical conventions (8).

Realism is undercut in the narrative in a number of ways. The novel's form juxtaposes fictional writing with documentary-type sections which emphasize methods typically used in historical documents. Attridge argues that both parts of *Dusklands* appear to be types of documentaries: the first novella an account by Eugene Dawn of his work as an expert in psychological warfare for the American military; the second purporting to be a scholarly publication of Jacobus Coetzee's journey into the interior of the Cape (15). Likewise, the second novella includes documentary-type sections, but the documentary status of the parts is persistently subverted. For example, there are clear inconsistencies in the three accounts of Jacobus's expeditions, constituted by the main "Narrative," the "Afterword" and the "Deposition." Attridge points to the way in which documentary verisimilitude is undermined by the "unlikely philosophical speculation of the frontiersman, including … an

unacknowledged and anachronistic citation from William Blake" (2005: 16). He suggests that the first-person present-tense narrative "has become an impossibility, telling as it does of events that could not by any stretch of the imagination coincide with the recording of them"; and points out that the narrator's metafictional comment just before he stabs his son – that there is a convention that allows him to record the details – further underscores the implausibility of his narrative (15). The disjunction between the first-person, present tense narrative and the events narrated suggests a temporal disjunction between the events and the narrative that purports to record them. The time-flow of the narrative is disrupted and its temporal sequence broken up. Frank's analysis of Eliot's and Pound's poetry highlights this disjunction. He suggests that, what makes their poems particularly difficult is that there is "an internal conflict between the time-logic of language and the space-logic implicit in the modern conception of the nature of poetry" (12).

The critique of the discourse of realism is a distinct feature of Coetzee's works, and one which I explore in more detail in chapter two. Dawn's metafictional narration often draws attention to the constructedness of his narrative and its subsequent lack of plausibility, for example, when he satirically notes in parenthesis that he hopes he can "get this extravagance right" in describing the town he is in after abducting his son and going to stay in a motel. Dawn narrates that he writes "in an exuberant spirit and in the present definite," and that everything around him "has a bracing air of reality" (36). Later in the narrative he comments that he writes in the "present indefinite this time" (40). His subsequent description of the town is indeed embellished with detail, mimicking the realist tradition which is, however, undercut when he suggests uncertainty about which town it was. He describes the place he is in as "the town of Heston, pop. 10 000, or perhaps it is Dalton, on the foothill slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains" – as I discuss in the introduction, it is details such as these (population count, topography, etc) that embody the signs of the realist tradition (36). Dawn narrates his stay with Martin with descriptions that are highly detailed and specific – one of the main ways in which the discourse of realism is supported. The scenery around the motel room is described with precise detail: he notes that, if he turns his eyes upward and to the left, he sees "through the window, above doors 21 – 30 across the courtyard, the blue and white of the snowy mountains" (36-7). The supper that he and Martin eat is described in parenthesis with similar detail, as "flapjacks, ice cream orange juice, three items" (37). Dawn's metafictional comments – that "There is no doubt that contact with reality can be

invigorating" and that he hopes that "firm and prolonged intercourse with reality … will have a good effect on [his] character as well as [his] health" (38) – underscore the ways in which the discourse of realism is parodied in the novel. Later, when Dawn describes the police coming to his motel room where he is staying with Martin, he describes himself standing "in the middle of a dark room with police whispering outside," but then undermines this description when he asks "Out of what movie is it?" (43).

Dawn's metafictional commentary on his descriptions draws attention to their constructedness. He notes his attempts to describe the natural world around him, coming to the conclusion that his writing skills cannot do them justice. He says that he would like to be able to describe his surroundings (again in highly detailed descriptions) – the snowcapped mountains, the cicadas, the Dutch elm blight and orioles – and be able to "spin them into long, dense paragraphs" which would evoke their reality. He studies other books in an attempt to discern what he calls the tricks that writers use to make their work seem realistic, and concludes that what is necessary is simply a wide vocabulary – "A lexicon of common nouns" (28). The next paragraph, with its syntactical repetition of "long, dense paragraphs" parodies the realist tradition when he describes the motel in which he and his son are staying – commenting that "It is difficult to spin motels and roadhouses into long, dense paragraphs" (38). The repetition sets up an association between the two incidents and forces the reader to consider them in relation to each other, another way in which the narrative is slowed, as the reader has to go back to the first phrase and then relate the two to each other. The allusion to the constructedness of realism is repeated in his comment that "I could also try to weave in the room in which I am writing" (the reference to 'weave' is a recurring theme in the works in my study, and is elaborated particularly in chapter 2) (38 – 39). When he describes the way he is writing in his motel room, Dawn comments that he is doing it on the side of the bed because, although it is uncomfortable, he thinks it unlikely that a place such as the one he is in would have writing tables. Dawn's meticulous description of the motel room emphasizes the way in which details underpin realist discourse. Ermath suggests that, in postmodern novels, "the neutral, homogenized temporality of realism has largely disappeared," and that in postmodern narrative "we experience temporality as an imaginary ambience containing tensions, fields, tectonics, values" (21-22). She comments that "Novelists who simply abandon historical time as a convention, along with all its baggage including pre-eminently the stable individual subject, provide an alternative practice that

illuminates … the limitation of historical time," and that "Those conventions which presume that time is synonymous with historical time still have enormous scope and applicability, to the point that "history," as Claude Levi-Strauss has said, has replaced mythology and fulfils the same function" (25). Particularly in the first novella, Dawn demonstrates the significance of mythology in creating an environment in which the Vietnamese feel alienated and isolated from their community, a strategy that he identifies as key in defeating them. The novel suggests that the history of the American war in Vietnam is closely intertwined with that of mythology.

While the critique of the realist tradition disrupts the novel's chronological sequence, and slows the narrative, literary strategies in *Dusklands* also work to slow down time. Ermath suggests that movement in postmodern narratives is "paratactic rather than syntactic; it moves forward by moving sideways" and emphasises "what is parallel and synchronically patterned rather than what is linear and progressive [...] Paratactic narrative moves against the linearity of language and – this is its chief power – in several directions at once" (85).

Frank's discussion of spatial form demonstrates this paratactic movement of narrative by referring to the ways in which narratives subvert syntactical sequence. In a description of Pound's *Cantos,* he suggests that Pound's method is similar to that of Eliot's in *The Waste Land*, "where syntactical sequence is given up for a structure depending on the perception of relationships between disconnected word groups" (12). This method can be seen in *Dusklands* as well. Relations in *Dusklands* are suggested by the paratactic movement in the narrative in the novel's opening sequence, with Dawn describing a report that he has written for the 'New Life Project.' Chronological sequence in the report is frequently disrupted in a way that foregrounds the blurring of distinctions between documentary-type discourses, and private forms of narrative, such as the diary and journal. Dawn's report is interspersed with personal commentary: descriptions of himself, in particular, his 'resisting' body, and reflections of his relationship with his wife, Marilyn and, to a lesser extent, his son, Martin. These digressions are an important aspect of the narrative, alluding to the ways in which the work that Dawn does in Vietnam has contributed to what Marilyn calls the coarsening of his sensitivities. However, the effect of these digressions is to slow down the narrative of his work on the project, thereby heightening and intensifying the effect of its brutality on the reader.

The slowing down of the narrative correlates to an aspect of Ezra Pound's writing that Coetzee admired – the ability of the text to slow down time. A recurring theme in Dawn's digressions is his private discourses, particularly in relation to his body. He describes himself as being "hunched and shifty," commenting satirically that he "cannot help these eyes" (1974: 2). He notes that, since puberty, "all postures have sat uneasily on [him]," but that he nevertheless feels that he can unlearn these behaviours, and that he has "high hopes for an integrated future" (2). Dawn appears to suggest here that his body (unconsciously?) resists the work that he is doing. He describes his fingers as curling and clenching in the palms of his hands, and his conscious efforts to relax them, commenting that "While I am reading … I conscientiously flex and unflex them; and when I talk to people I keep my hands conspicuously relaxed, even to the point of letting them droop" (4). Despite these efforts, he notices that his "toes have taken to curling into the soles of [his] feet" (4-5), and he wonders "If I stamp out the gesture at the level of my feet, where will it migrate next?" (5). Another habit he has is stroking his face, commenting that he "keep[s] [his] fingers from [his] face by an effort of the will, on important occasions" (5). Dawn comments that he is often told that he is too intense, but counters that he is intense "only because [his] will is concentrated on subduing spasms in the various parts of [his] body" (5). Later in his narrative, when he recounts his research in the library, he comments again that "my body betrays me" – he says that his back "begins to petrify in the scholar's hook" and that his muscles clench throughout his body (7). He describes his face as being composed of two parts: an inner and an outer one, and comments of his face that, "If this inner face of mine, this vizor of muscle, had features, they would be the monstrous troglodyte features of a man who bunches his sleeping eyes and mouth as a totally unacceptable dream forces itself into him" (7). He concludes by saying that "From head to foot I am the subject of a revolting body" (7).

Later, when he comments in exasperation on the way in which his wife, Marilyn, berates their son, Martin, he describes the effect on him as one in which "the ropes begin to knot around my body, the primitive muscular face within my face begins to close off all avenues to the outside world" (9). These digressions work to decelerate time. Wilm argues that "the aesthetics of slowness, a complex oscillation between momentum and stasis, a system of deferring and tarrying" is one of the most notable features of Coetzee's writing (2016: 2).

He suggests that, for example, the novels of Henry James and Marcel Proust demonstrate how literary strategies slow down the reading process – "their slow, meandering, minutely detailed descriptions and mappings of inner landscapes" decelerate time "by the means of syntax, vocabulary and grammar" (9). In the example discussed above, Dawn's minutely detailed reflections on his body, which are woven into his work on the 'New Life Project,' embody what Wilm describes above as the mapping of his inner landscape, decelerating time. Wilm also argues that Coetzee's work "continually induces one to think intensely and deeply, slowly, about the matters dealt with in the works" (6):

> the reader is continually asked to weigh conflicting ideas, to qualify, to backtrack, and to reconsider formed opinions about the text once they have been made, since for each thought and each opinion there seems to be a counter-thought, another (an other) opinion, a different way of seeing a phenomenon, a statement, or even a word. (14)

Dawn's introductory narrative produces conflicting ideas between his supervisor's (Coetzee's) concerns about the report he has written and his own view of it. Much as he disparages Coetzee's views, the argument that Coetzee makes is reasonable, forcing the reader to rethink Dawn's report in the light of Coetzee's concerns about it. Coetzee points out, quite reasonably, that if he (Dawn) wants to convince the military of his views, he "will not succeed if [he] speak[s] over their heads" or if he approaches them "in the spirit of absoluteness" (3). From Coetzee's comments, it is clear that Dawn's report will alienate the people whom he hopes to persuade. Coetzee's comment to Dawn – "if you say that they don't know their jobs, that they don't understand what they are doing" (3) – suggests that both the tone and the content of Dawn's report are clearly disrespectful and likely to provoke resentment and anger. Dawn's narrative is thus countered by opposing views and opinions, compelling the reader to weigh his views against that of his supervisor, Coetzee.

In similar fashion, Dawn's description of his relationship with his wife, Marilyn, evokes a back-and-forth weighing of views and counter-views. Dawn comments that his life with Marilyn "has become a continual battle to keep [his] poise of mind against her hysterical assaults" (8). He carries all his papers around with him in a briefcase because he is

convinced that Marilyn would go through them to find out what he is doing. He feels that she does not understand the work that he does because she is "not equipped to understand correctly the insights into man's soul that [he has] evolved since [he] began to think about Vietnam" (9). According to Marilyn, his "human sympathies have been coarsened" and he has become "addicted to violent and perverse fantasies" (10). Dawn comments further that Marilyn "lives in the hope that what her friends call [his] psychic brutalization will end with the end of the war and the Vietnam Project, that reinsertion into civilization will humanize [him]" (10). Marilyn's views are countered by Dawn's dismissal of them – of her concerns he says that "This novelettish reading of my plight amuses me" (10). His admission, though, that a number of recent publications about Vietnam vets, referred to as "suburban sadists and cataleptic dropouts" (10) have emerged, evokes scepticism about his nonchalant attitudes towards the changes in him that the war in Vietnam has induced. The reader is thus constantly asked to reconsider opinions in the light of Dawn's unfolding narrative.

Under Section II, numbered 1.6 in the report, Dawn notes that he is "a hero of the resistance" and that he is "not alone," because "Behind their desks across the breadth of America wait an army of young men, out of fashion like [him]" (29). In what is meant to be an objective piece of writing, Dawn frequently inserts personal comments into the narrative, saying things in the report such as "I have to pull myself together" in the midst of a discussion on air attack and bombing the earth. Later in the report he comments that "I am in a bad way as I write this report. My health is poor. I have a treacherous wife, an unhappy home, unsympathetic superiors. I suffer from headaches. I sleep badly" (31). While these digressions seem to be unrelated to his report, it soon becomes clear that they are quite entangled and related.

Another strategy employed to slow the narrative is the use of questions. In his report, Dawn poses a number of questions. For example, when he describes the air attacks on the Vietnamese, he outlines the strategies that had been used, then questions aspects of them: "Why have we discontinued PROP-12? Why did we use it only on the lands of resettled communities?" (31). Wilm suggests that "The questions themselves constitute pauses in the text, since an answer is expected but withheld," and that "this meditative mode has the effect of giving the character and the text as a whole a reflexive quality" (2016: 70). Wilm argues that "This is achieved by keeping questions raised, leaving them generally unanswered and

at the same time conveying very distinctly that their asking is important to the narrative and to the characters or focalizers" (70). He argues that "Coetzee's work is unique for the sheer number of questions in the texts and for the fact that most of these questions are not rhetorical ones," suggesting that "The questions so frequent in Coetzee do not contain answers at all; they are literal questions that convey the focalizer's and narrator's uncertainty or reflexivity and repeat this reflexivity and uncertainty in the reader in a slowing way" (72). According to Wilm, "The question is arguably the most frequently and most subtly used device in Coetzee's works to slow the reading into a reflexive mode. Questions highlight the self-reflexivity and self-consciousness of all of Coetzee's characters and narrators in different ways" (73).

Another strategy which fragments the temporal movement of the novel is parody, which Attwell argues is the central method of critique in *Dusklands* (1993: 35). The parody in *Dusklands* creates a palimpsest effect that concentrates disparate sources into one narrative. In parody, the putative text is informed by other, underlying texts, and represents another way in which spatial form operates in the novel. The method enables the text to extend the temporal moment in its allusion to other texts. In 'The Vietnam Project,' it is the work of "the military bureaucrats and planners in corporations allied to the Department of Defense" that are parodied; and in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,' the parodied documents are from the archives of the Van Riebeeck Society of South Africa (35). Attwell notes that the original documents which are parodied in 'The Vietnam Project' are from studies on "national security and international order" compiled by the Hudson Institute, entitled *Can We Win in Vietnam? The American Dilemma*, published in 1968 (40). He cites the introduction of the book, by Herman Kahn, to argue that what Dawn was aiming for in his report was a "spirit of cool, technological equanimity" that is present in the introduction. This spirit is embodied in Dawn's reference to how success in war can be defined by using an equation, "where X measures release altitude, Y measures ground fire intensity, and a, b, c are constants" (1974: 30). While Dawn's account emphasizes objective, rational aspects of his report, it is undercut by his frequent subjective digressions.

A key aspect of Dawn's narrative is the photographs he carries with him in his briefcase (twenty-four in total), and which he plans to use in his final report. The photographs play a significant role in the narrative. They embody the way in which time or temporal experience

in narrative can be represented in spatial form. Foust suggests that a central feature of modern literature's attempt to spatialize time is the use of imagistic rather than narrative time – amounting to

> a systematic attempt to create a literature of epiphanic moments of timelessness which, freed of narrative sequence, allow the writer momentary respite from the ineluctable flow of temporality. The method employed is essentially imagistic; narrative time … is discarded in favour of a discontinuous "logic of the imagination" composed of seemingly random concrete images which, related by association in the poet's mind, must be woven together by the reader (1975: 8).

Frank points to the "*instantaneous* presentation" (10, emphasis in original) that images generate and "that sense of sudden liberation … of freedom from time limits and space limits" that they evoke. Images are a key aspect of Dawn's narrative – when he describes himself writing in his room, he comments that he sits in his room "secreting words as the spider secretes its webs" (38). When he describes the internal conflict that war can evoke, he employs two images – the "dark self" and the "bright self," commenting that "The dark self sickens the bright self with doubts and qualms. I know. It is his poison which is eating me" (29). The metaphor that Dawn uses to describe the essay he is writing in 'The Vietnam Project' – he refers to it as "a vast lumbering planet in [his] head" – (1974: 14) is one that suggests the subversion of narrative sequence in favour of a concept of the essay that views it as a totality, something which should be grasped instantaneously, rather than progressively. These types of images, in which temporal flow is undermined in favour of images that emphasize circularity rather than sequence, occur in numerous places in Dawn's narrative. For example, when he reflects on what he expected when he abducted his son and went to stay in a hotel, he evokes another image, commenting that he wanted to "sink through circle after circle of wordless being, under the influence of birdsong and paternal love and afternoon walks, until I attained the rapture of pure contemplation" (40). When he comments on the effect of the war on his psyche, he likens it to being like something growing inside him, "sucking my blood … a hideous boy who stretches his limbs inside my hollow bones … and will not go" (40). The metaphor suggests that the war's effect on his psyche has been one of displacement (rather than an incremental build-up that affects him over time). It is, however, Dawn's description of the twenty-four photographs that

epitomises imagistic time in the "discontinuous logic of the imagination" that embodies the "moments of timelessness" subverting the novel's temporal flow.

The significance of photographs in *Dusklands* is underscored by Dawn's comment in relation to the Vietnamese when he refers to the camera as "rulers of their destiny" (16). His comment suggests that the record of the Vietnamese – in the case of *Dusklands*, photographs – that remain will be more powerful and will play a more decisive role in determining their fate than physical engagement with them. Despite physically being in their country, Dawn makes a deliberate decision to not personally interact with the Vietnamese, even when he is given the opportunity to do so. He mentions that, when he first came to Vietnam, he was offered a chance to take a tour of the country but that he turned the offer down. Watching the film from which one of the photographs has been taken, he feels relief that he did not have any personal interaction with the Vietnamese, as he feels that he would have been repulsed by them – "the insolence of the people, the filth and flies and no doubt stench" (16). He describes the physical presence of the Vietnamese as one which "embarrasses and alienates" him, but notes that, when the camera moves beyond the prison courtyard and he sees the picture of the concrete pits and their mesh grates, "it bursts upon [him] anew that the world still takes the trouble to expose itself to [him] in images" (16).

Dawn's descriptions of the photographs demonstrate the ways in which the reader has to weave together their various meanings. Dawn says that he needs the photographs to stimulate his imagination when it is blocked: "I respond to pictures as I do not to print" (Coetzee, 1974: 14). His comment evokes Frank's conception of the image and its significance – that it unifies "disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time" (1963: 9). Frank argues that certain narratives have a distinctly poetic sensibility "to form new wholes, to fuse seemingly disparate experiences into an organic unity" (10). This can be seen as one of the characteristics of the photographs that Dawn responds to – they encapsulate myriad experiences that enable a more intense perception than an unfolding narrative would. Dawn's attachment to the photographs is obsessive; he carries them around with him wherever he goes, and every time he looks at them they make him "shake with fresh excitement" (Coetzee, 1974: 17).

In their depictions of violence and extreme trauma, the photographs are an especially disturbing aspect of the narrative in 'The Vietnam Project,' creating an indelible impression on the reader. Still images are especially significant for Coetzee – in commenting on films that use stills with voice-over narration, he says that they enable "a remarkable intensity of vision (because the eye *searches* the still image in a way it cannot search the moving image)" (1997: 60, emphasis in original). The photographs in 'The Vietnam Project' are a central aspect of Dawn's consciousness, his connection to the report he writes and the changes that he undergoes. According to Dawn, it is Marilyn's theory that involvement in the war has depraved him. Despite Dawn's disparaging of Marilyn's and her friends' ideas, he acknowledges that "During the past year relations between my own and other human beings have changed" (10). Marilyn connects these changes in him to the photographs. Dawn notes that Marilyn believes that the pictures contain a secret, his "shameful knowledge [that] hidden in the labyrinth of the memory lies an explanation for the haphazard present" (10).

Dawn dismisses Marilyn's speculations, arguing that "There are no secrets … everything is on the surface and visible in mere behaviour, to those who have eyes to see" (11). The photographs are what enable Dawn to continue his work even when he is feeling dispirited – he comments that "On mornings when my spirits have been low and nothing has come, I have always had the stabilizing knowledge that … these pictures could be relied on to give my imagination the slight electric impulse that is all it needs to set it free again" (13-14). When Dawn suggests that Marilyn is having an affair, it is a photograph of Marilyn that he points to as evidence for his suspicions, noting that she used to keep a picture of him on a shelf of her wardrobe, but that at some point ("late February"), his picture was replaced by a nude photograph of Marilyn in a sexually provocative pose. Dawn finds the picture of her embarrassing, commenting that it gave the impression of someone in distress rather than someone who was alluring, as had presumably been Marilyn's intention with the photograph. Instead, Dawn notes, he "squirms" for the "bad art of the photographer," who has captured "a frozen girl caught in a frozen moment by a freezing eye" (13).

The photographs are also connected to different times of the day. Dawn comments that it is in the evenings that he feels most disconnected from the world – "when [his] assembled props feel most like notions out of books ([his] home, for example, out of a La Jolla décor catalog, [his] wife out of a novel that waits fatefully for [him] in a library in provincial

America)" (15). At such times the photographs take on added significance for him, rooting him in reality; he finds himself reaching towards them "as toward the bed of [his] existence" (16).

One of the photographs that Dawn describes is of two smiling American soldiers who pose for the cameras while holding up the severed heads of Vietnamese corpses. The photographs emphasize American dominance and power. Dawn likens the heads to hunting trophies, commenting that "the Annamese tiger having been exterminated, there remain only men and certain hardy lesser mammals" (16). The soldiers are described as smiling "mostly out of the glowing wellbeing of their strong young bodies" (16). The horror of these images is amplified by Dawn's mockery of the image of severed heads. He comments that he finds something about the sight of a severed head "ridiculous" and questions whether, while there are many images that may evoke one's sympathy, can one "say the same of a mother with her son's head in a sack, carrying it off like a small purchase from the supermarket? I giggle" (16). Dawn's mockery emphasises Marilyn's conviction that the war has desensitized him to violence.

Another picture Dawn has is from a film made by the Ministry of National Information in 1965, described as a "still from a film of the tiger cages on Hon Tre Island" (16). The film shows the cages which are being used to house Vietnamese prisoners who have been tortured. An officer uses a cane to prod one of the prisoners. The photographs that Dawn has are of a 12" x 12" enlargement of the prisoner in the first cage, along with a second print of the prisoner, a greater magnification, of only the prisoner's face. The prisoner in the picture is one of those who had been tortured and drugged to the point of becoming completely compliable and cooperative with his interrogators. While the picture does not provide any insight into the prisoner's mind, Dawn hopes that his imagination may yet compel it to yield information – as he runs his hands over the picture, he finds it "bland and opaque … yielding no passage into the interior of this obscure but indubitable man" (17). Despite this, Dawn continues exploring the picture with his hands, hoping that "Under the persistent pressure of my imagination … it may yet yield" (17).

To evoke the cataclysmic effect of the torture on the prisoners, Dawn invokes a state of existence outside of time and space; in other words, a state so far removed from the

experience of humanity that he cannot describe it in any other way than one in which the very ground of existence is fractured. After the prisoners' torture, Dawn comments that it is easy to recognize them in the camps – they "hide in corners" and walk aimlessly around the camps all day, talking to themselves. They are, says Dawn:

> ghosts or absences of themselves: where they had once been is now only a black hole through which they have been sucked. They wash themselves and feel dirty. Something is floating up from their bowels and voiding itself endlessly in the gray space in their head. Their memory is numb. They know only that there was a rupture, in time, in space … that they are here, now, in the after, that from somewhere they are being waved to. (18)

In another photograph, Dawn provides a graphic description, which he refers to as being the only one of his pictures which is "openly sexual" (14), of an American soldier having sex with a Vietnamese woman. The soldier is very big: "6' 2", 220 lb.," while the woman is described as "tiny and slim, possibly even a child" (14). The description of the American in the photograph emphasises his strength and potency ("arching backwards with his hands on his buttocks he lifts the woman on his erect penis … He smiles broadly"). By contrast, the image of the woman in the photograph emphasises how passive and ridiculous she appears – "she turns a sleepy, foolish face on the unknown photographer" (14). The photograph's provisional title – "Father Makes Merry with Children" – and Dawn's casual reference to assigning it "a place in Section 7," emphasize his desensitization to violence. (The sexual subjugation of the Vietnamese woman is echoed in the treatment of the Khoisan women in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.') Dawn even dreams of the photographs, commenting that "in this dream it is never dawn. Out of their holy fire the images sing to me, drawing me on and on into their phantom world" (36).

There is a synergy between meaning and form in Dawn's discussion of one of the strategies used by the Americans to defeat the Vietnamese: a programme of random political assassination. Dawn's report reflects on the success of the programme by noting that it was effective largely because the random targeting of the Vietnamese was often based on information known to be untrustworthy: "we must regard the official count of 1250 as grossly inflated with non-significant dead" (24). The effect of this type of assassination was

that it produced in the targeted population a state that Dawn refers to as "High Threshold," a state in which the Vietnamese displayed the "affect traits of apathy, despondency and despair" (24). Dawn reflects on what was unique about this programme:

> it broke down the community not by attacking the whole but by facing each member with the prospect of an attack on him as an individual with a name and a history. To his question, Why me? there was no comforting answer. I am chosen because I am the object of an inscrutable choice. I am chosen because I am marked (24).

It was this isolating of the individual that broke their resistance. Dawn notes that the lesson of the programme of political assassination was that what mattered in defeating the group was to target them individually, not as a cohesive group; to "fragment, individualize" them (25). As Dawn comments, the Americans' mistake had been to allow the Vietnamese to conceive of themselves as part of a collective body, setting up for themselves the task of breaking this collective resistance, a task that Dawn referred to as "dangerous, expensive and unnecessary" (25). Dawn's perspective of the success of the Americans' strategy to defeat the Vietnamese – its fragmentation of the group – is echoed in the novel's fragmented form. He suggests that this strategy was particularly effective precisely because there was no pattern that could predict the assassinations, leaving the Vietnamese terrorised by its randomness. Of his report, Dawn acknowledges that "What I say is in pieces. I am sorry" (310). The novel uses a similarly fragmented form of various parts to undermine linear development and suggest that the narrative needs to be read less in sequential terms and more in terms of significant connections and interrelationships.

Another way in which the novel's form is linked to its thematic concerns is in its treatment of history, in which Dawn's narrative undermines the discourse of history as logical progression. After he stabs his son, Dawn is taken to a psychiatric institution where he describes his treatment and the doctors' hypotheses about what caused his breakdown and his catastrophic actions. When Dawn narrates his story in the hospital, he describes it in spatial imagery, as "the labyrinth of my history." He explains that the doctors feel that they need to start their treatment by going to his "beginnings far in the past and work up gradually toward the present" (45 – 46). He explains that the doctors' hypothesis is that his breakdown was connected to his work on the war in Vietnam, which made him callous to suffering and

created in him "a need for violent solutions to problems of living" (50). Although Dawn is open to their theory, "as [he is] open to all theorizing," he does not believe that it is the correct one (48) and questions whether the doctors' attempts to heal him will have a favourable result. He comments that, as the doctors "pick [their] slow way through the labyrinth of [his] history," he finds that he is seduced by their theory. As he and the doctors try to piece together the reasons for his breakdown, he mentions that he envisions "an alley with light and freedom at the end of it"; he has to "stifle [his] eager shouts and plod on after the good blind doctors" (49). Dawn's reference to the doctors as being "blind," however, reveals his underlying scepticism. It is clear from his narrative that he would like to believe their theory, but his rhetorical questions suggest the possibility that his history is not the smooth, linear progression the doctors imagine it to be; that instead, it may be a 'history' that does not follow the conventions of chronology at all. Instead of a logical cause and effect sequence, Dawn emphasizes paratactic movement, asking: "For who am I to say that my fortunate sunlit alley would not, following perhaps a curvature too slight for the human eye to perceive, lead us all in an enormous, wasteful circle? Or that their dogged crawl will not one day bring me to the garden gate?" (49). Dawn surmises that their analysis of him may simply be a performance in which he can be a case history to be filed away, so that "their own dream of death [can] be stilled" (49).

When Dawn alludes to what is actually the cause of his breakdown, he uses the image of a ball in a toilet cistern, "something closed and wet and black" that is sealed in his heart and which "tramps its blind round and will not die" (50). Despite the doctors' hypotheses about the cause of his breakdown, Dawn suggests that ultimately it was guilt, which he describes as a "black poison" (50) which corroded his life so severely that he was driven to attempt killing his own child. He locates this guilt in the images of the war, suggesting that it was this that warped his mind. As Dawn comments of the images that Americans saw on television of the war in Vietnam, "It was unnatural to bear such suffering" (50). Dawn suggests that ultimately the twenty-four photographs are to blame for his state. He refers to the photographs as "the worst of my tormentors" and asserts that, although they have all been taken from him, he "will not forget them"; he will "identify them before the judgement seat" and will "see them in hell" (50). Dawn suggests that his doctors' treatments will ultimately fail because they are mistaken in identifying the root cause of his breakdown, commenting that he is safe while he is at the hospital with his doctors around, where he is

"strong as a fortress," but that the photographs are "waiting till [he] leave[s] his home before they attack" (50).

One of the mysteries that Dawn imagines the doctors having to solve is how he has come to the point of such a cataclysmic event. He imagines that the question that must puzzle them is "How do such data come to coexist in a single biography?" (49), evoking Leibnitz's definition of space as "an order of coexistent data" (Mitchell, 1980: 543). Dawn's query suggests that he perceives his story as one consisting of various parts (the "coexistent data"), rather than a single, unified whole; and that key to unravelling his history is an understanding of the connections and interrelationships between them. In other words, Dawn suggests that his narrative cannot be understood as an unfolding chronological event. Rather, the temporal experiences that comprise his story are better understood by considering the connections between the various experiences that have resulted in him being institutionalized in a mental hospital.

As in 'The Vietnam Project,' the themes of juxtaposition, parody and the critique of realism are also integral aspects of the 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.' In this section, however, the technique of montage is a central aspect of the novella's structure.

In a discussion of the artistic equivalent to the nature of reality established by physics, Douglas Angus suggests that cubism can be considered analogous to relativity in that "Its basic principle, that there are as many versions of the object as there are points of view, is also one of the basic conclusions of the special theory of relativity" (1962: 105). In cubism, the relativistic device of montage emphasised the interplay between shapes, planes and colours (105). Angus argues that montage was used in the same way by Eliot and Pound. Ronald Foust argues a similar case, that the juxtapositional technique of montage, which is the essence of cubism, is very similar to Pound's definition of the image (1975: 31). According to Wylie Sypher, cubism is "a representation of modern time and space which can be treated only by means of the compound image with its simultaneous relationships" (1960: 277). For Irving L. Zupnick, cubism aims at "rearranging the spatial world to include multiple views in a compound image," and key to understanding this is "the theory of relativity … [which created] at the same time both a personal space, which was valid only

for the individual observer, and an 'impersonal space' which was constantly in flux" (1959: 220).

I would like to suggest that *Dusklands* shares affinities with cubism, and that the technique of montage is central to the structure of 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee.' This technique produces a narrative in which the linear development of the plot is abandoned in favour of a narrative whose concept of time is underpinned by relativity and simultaneity. Foust notes that, in spatial form, narration, "tied to 'classical' linear time perspectives (separate from and parallel to space), may be expected to undergo radical revaluation" (30); 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' epitomizes this.

Foust argues that spatial form is a way "to reimagine the structures of experience in a way more in keeping with the relativism of modern science: as relative rather than absolute, as discontinuous rather than continuous" (1975: 21). Reality is therefore depicted "as a continuum, a space-time whole, in which experience, while whole and individual, is not independent, but rather participates through association and interpenetration in an overall pattern of meaning" (24). Monroe Spears likewise proposes that discontinuity and the perception of randomness can be attributed to relativity/relativism:

> Einstein's special theory of relativity (1905), in which space and time were conceived of as a continuum … meant the abandonment of physical absolutes … [and] led to new concepts of the nature of reality: … space and time … were revealed as more complex and more curiously interrelated than had been thought (1971: 21-22).

Foust suggests that artists have had to develop a method that would encompass this complex "relative" reality "in the perpetual combination, dissolution and recombination of ever new patterns of relationships" (1975: 26). While the parts of the novel contain aspects of the whole within themselves, they are not complete until they "interpenetrate" other aspects and images of the novel by means of the constant reference and cross-reference of word-groups, so that "The whole consort of images and themes is then to be 'seen' simultaneously in the instant of space-time which is perception" (28). According to Foust, "the process of perception is a perceptual absorption of single images in juxtaposition, but so rapidly

formed, dissolved and repeated as to form in the perceiver a single flowing impression" (29). Foust refers to the three kinds of time identified by Nicholas Berdyaev and argues that the traditional conception of "objective" physical or clock time has been replaced by "the relative, existential, subjective or psychological time of the stream-of-consciousness" (29). In this technique, spatial entities, or images, are depicted, but because time is a stream that flows, it expresses them as a flowing "duration" (29). In his conception of film and its relation to time, Arnold Hauser argues in a similar vein. In his discussion, centred on Joyce's *Ulysses* and the Bergsonian concept of time, he argues that:

> The accent is now on the simultaneity of the contents of consciousness, the immanence of the past in the present, the constant flowing together of the different periods of time, the amorphous fluidity of inner experience, the boundlessness of the stream of time. […] in this new conception of time … the stuff of modern art converge[s]: the abandonment of plot … above all, the montage technique and the intermingling temporal and spatial forms of the film. The new concept of time, whose basic element is simultaneity … consists in the spatialization of the temporal element. (1963: 234)

Foust argues that both physics and the modern novel attempt to capture "this changed metaphysic of time, this vision of simultaneity which incorporates concord and discontinuity" (35). He suggests that Frank's key insight was to understand that space, and its relation with time, were of great importance to the modern writer (41). As discussed in the introduction, Coetzee was familiar with Frank's concept of spatial form, having referred to his essay 'Spatial Form in the Modern Novel' in his discussion of Frank's biography of Dostoevsky (2000: 146).

The concept of space is central in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee': it is evident in both the novella's form and its thematic concerns. Jacobus' description of the wilderness functions in an analogous way to the unconscious, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Among the characteristics of the wilderness is its lack of differentiation. It is distinguished by being uncountable; it is something that cannot be reduced by numbering. Jacobus comments that "Our commerce with the wild is an endless enterprise of turning it into orchard and farm," in which "The essence of orchard tree and farm sheep is number"

(85). Jacobus notes that being a hunter makes him "a hero of enumeration" and that this ability to number things is a cornerstone of the civilizing mission, so that "He who does not understand number does not understand death" (85). Jacobus notes that he loses his sense of boundaries in the wild because of the way in which space operates when one is in the wild. He contends that four of the body's five senses are muted in the wild, and that it is the eye, with its ability to "reach out to the horizon," that becomes all-powerful (84). He imagines the eye as constituting his being:

> I become a spherical reflecting eye moving through the wilderness and ingesting it. Destroyer of the wilderness, I move through the land cutting a devouring path from horizon to horizon … I am all that I see … I am a transparent sac with a black core full of images and a gun (84).

This image of the consuming and overpowering nature of the explorer's attitude to the wilderness suggests the intensity of the desire to tame and domesticate it. For Jacobus, the gun is closely related to space. The gun embodies a core difference between 'master' and 'savage' because it is tied to how one interacts with space. He suggests that 'savagery' can be defined as "enslavement to space," whereas the explorer has a "mastery of space" (86). Jacobus comments that, in its essence, "The relation of master and savage is a spatial relation" (86). He notes that the approach of the 'savage' across space is continuous until he reaches "that precarious zone," the point at which he (Jacobus) becomes the master, a point at which, he notes, "I command his life" (86). He achieves this power over the 'savage' because he, as explorer, has mastered the space, so that the 'savage' approaches as "representative of that out there which my eye once enfolded and ingested" (86). What follows the approach of the 'savage' is a foregone conclusion – as in his earlier meditations, his syntactical repetition of the phrase "demonstrations of firearms, murmurs of awe" (86) emphasises the inevitability of the power he commands. Jacobus frames the encounter as one that confirms the pattern of colonial mastery, with knowledge on his side and delusion on the side of the 'savages.' They engage in the usual exchange of gifts, words of peace and helpfulness, and the inevitable display of firearms, but it ends in the same way – subjugation of the 'savage'; as Jacobus sardonically comments, "eventually a lifetime of the pad-pad-pad of naked feet behind us" (86). Jacobus frames this transformation, from free to subjugated, as a journey across the wide, open expanse, one in which the 'savage'

approaches as an equal but, at a certain point, is subjected to the colonial's domination of space. The meeting between the two, with its pretensions of barter and exchange, ends in "the frank straight line, the transformation of 'savage' into enigmatic follower" and becomes "a fated pattern" (86-7).

The structure of 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' has close affinities to the technique of montage, and works to extend the temporal range of the novella. The novella's complex structure of various strands and levels of authorship slow down the narrative's temporal flow, requiring the reader to spend a fair amount of time unravelling the various parts of the narrative and relating them to each other. The structure epitomizes reflexive referencing, in which the reader can only make sense of the narrative by going back and forth and connecting various parts of it.

J.M. Coetzee is the putative translator of Jacobus Coetzee's Dutch narrative and the Afrikaans of S.J. Coetzee's Introduction. The "Translator's Preface" is a parody of academic discourse. It is presented as a scholarly work; a factual, historical text. It notes that the Introduction was written by the late Dr S.J. Coetzee, and was adapted from lectures presented at the University of Stellenbosch. Along with the narrative of Jacobus Coetzee, it was published for the Van Plettenberg Society. The personal relationship between the translator and his father, the late S.J. Coetzee, creates a connection between the current publication and the edition published in 1951 by S.J. Coetzee, that makes the two documents coextensive with each other. At the end of the Preface, various people and organisations are thanked: a fellow academic for assistance with the translation; the Van Plettenberg Society; someone who assisted with the typescript; and, finally, the staff of the South African National Archives. Both the thanks and the people and organisations that are mentioned mimic the realist tradition, adding weight to the narrative's putative historical veracity. But as it is entirely fictional, the novella parodies the way particular discourses create historical truths.

The unusual liberties that the translator takes with the text add a layer of irony that further undercuts the seemingly scholarly account. Arbitrarily, he reverses S.J. Coetzee's Introduction and places it after the main narrative, as an Afterword, disrupting the narrative's linear order. Jacobus Coetzee's official 1760 deposition, the subject of the

novella, is added as an Appendix – ironic as it is his narrative that is the foundation of the story. The putative author, J.M. Coetzee, adds passages that were omitted from his father's edition and "reduce[s] Nama words to the standard Kronlein orthography" (1974: 59). The changes that the translator makes to the text disrupt its linear flow and demonstrate how the text has been manipulated in order to produce a particular version of reality. This is one of the links between the two novellas, in that the historical truth of colonial discourse becomes as much a myth as Eugene Dawn's propaganda programme in Vietnam. Foust argues that this creation of mythic prototypes is a definable characteristic of modernist writers and is one of the methods used by them to 'redeem' time (1975: 19). He suggests that other features, such as discontinuity, simultaneity and reflexive reference, also serve to 'redeem' time (19). The 'redemption' of time that creates 'mythic prototypes' is one of the ways in which Coetzee undercuts temporal sequence, suggesting instead how moments in time can be rearranged in order to construct a particular reality.

Among the various parts of the novella, the narrative contains two documents describing the same event, one a translation of Jacobus Coetzee's official 1760 deposition (placed as an Appendix at the end of the novella), the other, constituting the main narrative, a retelling of it by the late Dr S.J Coetzee, and translated by J.M. Coetzee from the original Dutch of Jacobus Coetzee's narrative and Dr Coetzee's Afrikaans. The tale of Jacobus Coetzee's journey into the interior of the Western Cape is polyvocal and palimpsestic. Jacobus Coetzee's deposition is signed with an 'X,' suggesting that he was illiterate; his tale was written by someone else, the Political Secretariat, O.M. Bergh. The notation of L. Lund and P.L. Le Seuer as witnesses further testifies to the authenticity of the deposition. However, the fact that the official deposition was written by someone other than Jacobus Coetzee creates a distance between what was said and what is recorded, even though the official presentation of the deposition suggests authenticity and accuracy.

More significantly, however, Jacobus Coetzee's deposition is a mere three pages long, while the narrative that was 'edited' by S.J. Coetzee is much longer, comprising fifty-three pages. This is a retelling and reinvention of the story, not an 'editing' of it. The retelling of Jacobus Coetzee's narrative extends the temporal flow of the novella considerably. The fact that S.J. Coetzee is an academic provides his account with credibility, but the difference in length between the two accounts subverts any notion of truth-telling; the juxtaposition of the two

narratives underscores the way in which seemingly official documents can be both distorted and manipulated. The placing of Jacobus Coetzee's deposition after his (S.J. Coetzee's) account and the Afterword further reinforces both the privileging of material deemed to be scholarly and the distance between the two accounts. The numerous strands that comprise the novella – as David Attwell puts it, "Strands are woven together here from a range of sources in colonial discourse, from chronicle and ethnography … to adventure fiction" (1993: 49) – are unified by the explicit parody that underlies the narrative.

Jacobus's quest – the journey to hunt elephant and explore the interior – epitomizes the ways in which montage is embodied in the narrative. The journey that he undertakes contains numerous intertextual references. Jacobus's narrative evokes colonial stereotypes of Africa as a land of opportunity and adventure for Europeans. While on the journey, Jacobus and his party, a group of six, encounter a group of twenty 'Hottentots[1]' – both sides approaching each other in a seemingly peaceful manner, although Jacobus arms himself and two of his party with muskets. As he watches their approach, he evokes numerous colonial stereotypes as he contemplates the differences between the two groups of 'Hottentots.' Sweeping generalizations are made about their nature. His party of 'tame' 'Hottentots' lacks what he calls "Hottentot integrity": they are short and their bellies are slack. When dressed in "Christian" clothes their shoulders are bent and their eyes are shifty; they "cannot keep still in your presence but must constantly twitch" (1973: 69). Their behaviour is deceitful because it is designed only to be pleasing, telling you only what he thinks you want to hear, so that "He becomes a false creature" (69). By contrast, Jacobus approves of the demeanour of the "wild" 'Hottentots' they encounter, "the one who has lived all his life in a state of nature" (69). According to Jacobus, this kind of 'Hottentot' "sits straight," "stands straight" and "looks you in the eye" (69-70). This description is another trope of colonial fiction – that of the 'noble savage.' As pleasing as this change is to Jacobus, he notes that their confidence is based on an illusion, "a delusion of strength, of equivalence" (70). As in many colonial fictions, Jacobus is confident of his European superiority, and knows that once they meet the feeling of equivalence will disintegrate.

[1] The KhoiKhoi are a group of Khoisan people native to southwestern Africa. The Dutch settlers labelled them 'Hottentots' when they colonised the area after 1652, but the term is today considered derogatory. It is, however, used in the text.

Jacobus's description of their meeting radically undercuts the novella's temporal flow when he presents a number of different scenarios in which the meeting could proceed. He notes that the contest between the groups is an unequal one. As he contemplates the meeting, he narrates various scenarios, each reminiscent of various colonial fictions, presented as "forking paths." Jacobus's reference to "forking paths" evokes Jorge Louis Borges's short story, *The Garden of Forking Paths,* in which time is split into different trajectories. As in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, Jacobus's narrative presents a number of alternative realities, suggesting a similar splitting of time. He comments that he "Tranquilly … traced in [his] heart the forking paths of the endless inner adventure" (70). His descriptions are filled with familiar tropes of colonial fiction. The entire sequence is informed by a pattern of repetition, each sequence being introduced by "the order to follow, the inner debate" (70). Each 'adventure' follows a particular trajectory and ending to the colonial quest. In the first sequence, they are ordered to go to the so-called Hottentots' camp, where demands are made for tobacco, their firearms are displayed to "murmurs of awe," gifts are exchanged, there is a feast, and the attempts to kill them are foiled (70). The next sequence is briefer: a shot is fired because of nerves, a battle ensues, and they are chased to the river. In the next sequence, the colonial fears of the barbarism of the natives is evoked. In Jacobus's narrative there is "ritual dismemberment in the savage encampment, limbs to the dogs, privates to the first wife" (70).

In the next sequence they are ambushed and captured, manage to escape but are captured again and in the morning brought before "the sacrificial gathering," where they display their knowledge of astronomy to dazzle the 'Hottentots,' so that they have "an amusing but tedious reign as tribal demi-god," and return "with numerous entourage of cattle" (70). This reference echoes other tropes of colonial fiction, such as the popular *King Solomon's Mines* by H. Rider Haggard, where Africans are represented as gullible and stupid – they mistake Captain Good for a supernatural being because of his eye-glass and false teeth – and the Europeans use their knowledge of astronomy to trick the Africans into believing that they are some kind of gods. Evoking Marlowe's comment in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* where Africa is characterized as a place where "there were no external checks" (1960: 24) and where "anything can be done in this country," (38) Jacobus comments that the wilderness, without law or government, was a place "where everything, I was to find, was possible" (1974: 70-71).

Temporality for Jacobus is experienced as a simultaneity of different possible events, similar to what J Hillis Miller describes in his analysis of time in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Miller argues that for Faulkner, time "exists not as a continuity between future, present and past, but as a simultaneity, an all-at-once viewed from multiple perspectives" (2003: 96). In addition to this representation of temporality, *Dusklands*' intertextual references also 'thicken' the temporal moment, creating a layered text, where the narrative's interior (somewhat like the TARDIS in the *Doctor Who* television series) is much larger than its exterior. This effect is extended in the narrative when Jacobus recounts his experience of being sick in the desert. His fevered meditations juxtapose two markedly different conceptions of the desert – an interior and an exterior one. His meditations on the landscape he is exploring – the interior of the desert – posit it as something mysterious, its latent form different to what is manifested by the exterior: "Behind this familiar red or grey exterior … this exterior jutting into every dimension inhabited by man, lies in ambush a black interior quite, quite strange to the world" (Coetzee, 1974: 83). However, as he notes, when the interior of the desert is exposed, it is transformed, and its enigmatic character is lost: "under the explorer's hammerblow this innocent interior transforms itself in a flash into a replete, confident, worldly image of that red and grey exterior" (83). His meditations suggest that the explorer's drive to penetrate the interior is a futile one. The stone in the desert questions whether the explorer is not perhaps deluded in his quest, asking "How … can the hammer-wielder who seeks to penetrate the heart of the universe be sure that there exist any interiors? Are they not perhaps fictions, these lures of interiors for rape which the universe uses to draw out its explorers?" (83).

Jacobus's meditations on the interior can be read in both a literal and figurative sense. On the one hand Jacobus compares the landscape's "red or grey" exterior to what lies beneath it. This interior is also a double one, as it also refers to the country's interior, which he explores on his elephant-hunting trip, and which he alludes to when he refers to "these lures of interiors for rape." There is, however, another sense in which Jacobus's meditations on the interior can be understood – as an attempt to understand the deeper, unconscious motives that drive one's actions and behaviour. This is what Jacobus alludes to when he comments that "Behind this familiar red or grey exterior […] lies in ambush a black interior quite, quite strange to the world" (83). Jacobus's meditations on the unconscious are linked to

dreams when he comments that he "perhaps even dreamed on the subject of dreams" (83). He questions whether what was happening to him was not perhaps simply a bad dream, one that could be nullified by articulating the fact that it was a dream. But he fears that he lacks the conviction to do so, because everything that has happened to him might in fact be a dream. In which case, he wonders whether the exit to the dream might not take him to a universe "of which I the Dreamer was sole inhabitant" (83). (There are echoes here of Borges again – in particular his short story *The Circular Ruins*, in which the protagonist is also a dreamer, one whose entire purpose is to "dream" a man "in minute entirety and impose him on reality.") Jacobus rejects this version of events as probably just a tale he tells himself to comfort him from the unpalatable truth of his existence, suggesting that it is, on the whole, the "effete topos of dreaming oneself and the world" (83-4). Yet his meditations on dreaming and its relation to unconscious desires are more significant than he would like to believe. His suggestion that the need to explore and colonise the land may a psychological one, driven by needs that are unconscious, and that have the capacity to "ambush" one because they are hidden and unknown, evokes Sigmund Freud's theory of how dreams operate.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud refers to dreams as "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind" (1991: 769). In speaking of the unconscious, Freud states that "in its innermost nature, it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world" (773). It is less dreaming itself than the interpretation of dreams that grants us a provisional access to the activities of the unconscious; Freud shows how the mind functions in ways that are unfamiliar to the waking, or conscious state. Uncovering the structures governing the production of dreams reveals that the psychical apparatus (the brain) is capable of the most complex mental activities that occur without our conscious awareness of them. Freud argues that our focus should not be on the dream as a whole, but on portions of the dream: dreams should be regarded as being of a composite character, conglomerates of psychical formation.

One of the psychological characteristics of dreaming is explained by Freud as a direction of thoughts that moves backward, in opposition to the conscious movement of thoughts. This *regression* of ideas, from thoughts to perceptions, explains how thoughts can be represented by sensory images. In dreaming, the mnemic systems, which contain memories, are thus

accessed in ways that would not be possible during waking life. This explains why in dreaming we are able to access infantile memories and experiences. Events in our conscious life which connect with repressed ideas in our unconscious become transformed by the dream-work into the manifest content of a dream. When Jacobus makes the distinction between the interior and exterior of the landscape, he emphasizes how different the exterior is to its interior (it is "quite quite strange to the world"). In Freud's terms, this represents the distinction between the *latent* and *manifest* contents of dreams, where the latent content of the dream can be extremely different to what is manifestly presented. Dreams are not merely representations of the unconscious. They manifest themselves in ways that are quite different to the dream-thoughts that underlie them. This distinction between the manifest and the latent content of a dream shows that "the most complicated and rational thought-processes … can occur without exciting the subject's consciousness" (772). Dreaming gives us glimpses of the workings of the unconscious structures of the mind, and when they are interpreted, they show motivations and desires of which we are not aware, but which underlie our conscious thoughts. Jacobus's meditations on dreaming evoke the unconscious when he reflects that his meditations were made possible "by the flexings of the soul's wings that came with fever" (82) – his reference to 'fever' suggesting that they were not rational or conscious. His meditations upon his past colonial conquests emphasise colonial violence, a subjection of the environment to his wishes: the land he traverses is described as having been "eaten up with [his] eyes"; the animals he encounters are subjected to violence and abuse – he reflects upon "the deaths I had presided over" and imagines inhabiting the horses who had carried him, wondering to himself: "what had they thought of it all?" (1974: 82). Jacobus's contemplations emphasize the violence inherent in the colonial enterprise, linking his narrative to 'The Vietnam Project,' which evinces a similar violence in the Americans' engagement with the Vietnamese.

Jacobus's journey back home exemplifies the way in which time or temporal experience is represented in spatial form. While the novella's structure is composed of fragments that do not follow a logical or coherent pattern, and that undermine the sequential nature of the narrative, the novella also disrupts temporal sequence and its supporting discourse of realism in its description of the journey that Jacobus undertakes. The repetition of Klawer's death is an example of this.

Elizabeth Ermath comments that, in postmodern narratives, "discontinuities function as *warps* in time", and that "These focal warps … between one short descriptive passage and another resemble the breaks between frames in cinema" (1992: 77-78, emphasis in original). She adds that "The *disjunctiveness* between the plot 'line' and what is really going on makes it hard to ignore one's own constructive imagination at work. Such sequences provide an opportunity to practice conspicuously what Nabokov calls *multilevel thinking:* a habitual reflex of thought" (78, emphasis in original). This 'warp' in time is embodied in the recording of Klawer's death. As Jacobus describes the crossing of the Great River, "Klawer, who was in front feeling out the bottom with a stick, unaccountably missed a hippopotamus hole and lost his footing" (1974: 99). The knots that had been holding them together snapped with the violence of the current which then swept Klawer to his death. While Jacobus is horrified at this tragic end, his ironic comment that Klawer had taken the blanket roll and all the food with him somewhat undercuts this conventional reaction to Klawer's death (100). In addition, the details that he mentions are signs of what John, Costello's son in *Elizabeth Costello* calls "a moderate realism" (2003: 4). However, confounding the discourse of realism, Jacobus describes the crossing again, noting, ironically, that it took longer than expected, because they had to "probe the bottom before each step for fear of slipping into a hippopotamus hole and being swept off [their] feet" (100). Unexpectedly, the narrative then describes the crossing as having occurred safely, with Klawer trying to warm himself in the fire after they have crossed the river. This "forking" of time into two equally plausible versions of the event undercuts the novella's temporal sequence, embodying the way in which temporal experience is extended, and undermining the sense of the journey as proceeding in linear time.

As in *In the Heart of the Country*, direct interior monologue is a significant feature of Jacobus's narrative, and through it the temporal range of the novel is widened. Kern argues that this type of narration "links the past and future in a temporally thickened one," in which "distant events are united to spatially expand the present" (2003: 86). In direct interior monologue, while the narrative time of a segment may last only a short while, the private time may extend over a much larger duration, "and may have unpredictable shifts in space and time" (28). Interior monologue narration is generally regarded as a form of the "stream of consciousness" technique. William James coined and defined the term in *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890: "Consciousness, then … is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a

'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life" (1950: 239).

Jacobus's journey is dominated by stream-of-consciousness narration. He compares his attitude to survival to that of a black beetle of which he is particularly fond, which he feels epitomises Zeno's infinite regression. Zeno of Elea, a 5th century B.C.E. philosopher, was known for suggesting a number of paradoxes. The one that Jacobus refers to is known as the 'dichotomy' paradox because it involves repeated division into two. The example is given of a runner – such as mythical Atlanta – who needs to run for the bus. If one supposes a constant motion, it will take her ½ the time to run halfway there, but to get halfway to the halfway point she would need to run ¼ of the way there, but to get to that point she would need to run ⅛th of the way there, and so on. If the halving is carried on an infinite number of times she would need to run an *infinite* number of *finite* distances. The paradox that follows is that all motion is impossible[2]. In Jacobus's narrative, the little black beetle evinces a particularly stoic approach to being attacked – if it cannot avoid you it will curl up and feign death, and nothing will deter it from this pretence. As Jacobus notes, "You may pull his legs off one by one and he will not wince" (102). This characteristic of the beetle, according to Jacobus, makes him "a true creature of Zeno" (102). He imagines the beetle's philosophy as one in which every attack is turned into a fraction of life over death: "Now I am only half-way dead. Now I am only three-fourths dead. Now I am only seven-eighths dead … You and I could spend eternity splitting fractions" (102). Jacobus feels that he evinced a similar attitude, being prepared to lose much, "abandoning mile after mile of defense" (103). As with Eugene Dawn, Jacobus uses the image of a labyrinth to explain himself; in the novella he refers to "the labyrinth of my self" (103) and "the infinite corridors of my self" (114). This image is an inherently spatial one, and foreshadows the ways in which temporality is experienced and constructed in the novel – not as a linear progression, in which time only ever moves forward as a straight arrow, but rather a kind of temporality in which time, like a labyrinth, moves in a maze-like way, with numerous twists and turns.

The forking of paths, in which time is split into different times, is again evoked in Jacobus's meditations on the ways in which he could respond when expelled by the 'Hottentots.' For him, the expulsion is a game or contest, one in which he makes the rules and which could

[2] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paradox-zeno/#Dic

play out in a number of different ways, with the path he takes dependent only on how he chooses to view the game. In one game, he could see his expulsion from the 'Hottentots' as a contest in which he is required to walk a distance of about 300 miles, with minimal provisions. Another version of the game is one in which he returns to take revenge: "The selfsame occasion might at another time initiate an entirely different contest between myself and the circumjacent universe in which I might be required to call up an expeditionary force and return in triumph to punish my depradators and recover my property" (104-5). This is an ironic reference, because he does in fact pursue this path in the last section of the narrative, entitled 'Second Journey to the land of the Great Namaqua,' which records the expedition of Captain Hendrik Hop, 16 August 1761 – 27 April 1762.

In a third possible game, he might "have to fall into the hands of strange Hottentots and survive abuse, degradation, betrayal, and expulsion," (105), which is indeed what has happened to him. A fourth game could be one in which he does not survive the harsh environment and perishes during the journey. For Jacobus, the challenge of the game "was to undergo the history" (105) – and victory would be his if he survived. He calls the fourth game, the one in which he dies, the most interesting, because it constituted "the Zenonian case in which only an infinitely diminishing fraction of my self survived" (105). He feels dismay at the prospect of his current enterprise – the 300-mile journey home – because the path offered nothing new in terms of storytelling, and he wonders if he would be able to narrate such a journey accurately, or if he would be tempted to embroider or alter the story to a more interesting one, one in which he would, "in a fit of boredom set out down a new path, implicate myself in a new life, perhaps the life of the white Bushman that had been hinting itself to me?" (105). To stick to the narrative of the journey home, he has to conceive of the journey as being of a composite nature. For example, he calculates the number of paces in three hundred miles. He also makes up hunting adventures as he goes along, but most importantly, he has to fill up time "with hunger and thirst, two more duties of the traveller in the desert," satirically again referring to the ways in which fiction uses detail to ground itself in realism (105).

Jacobus's narration of the journey home is an interplay of various tropes of colonial fiction, in which adventure and tales of suffering and overcoming hardships and obstacles are an essential part of the tale. In these tropes, exploration of the African landscape presents

opportunities for Europeans to demonstrate their manhood and superiority in a challenging environment. The juxtaposition of such tropes in Jacobus's narration underscores Coetzee's critique of these types of fiction. They also demonstrate Hauser's reference to a concept of time in which the "immanence of the past in the present" is evoked in the literary technique of montage.

2. 'Two Lengths has every Day': Speculative histories and mythic time in *In the Heart of the Country*

> Two Lengths has every Day –
> Its absolute extent
> And Area Superior
> By Hope or Horror lent –

These lines from Emily Dickinson suggest that the experience of time is relative, a notion that is pertinent to *In the Heart of the Country* (*HC*) as well. Magda's interior world is governed by its own time and is frequently privileged over the exterior, visible world of chronological time. In this chapter I will focus on the experience and construction of time and temporality in *HC*, and will argue that the narrative undermines and subverts historical time in order to disrupt and displace the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy that characterise the farm on which Magda lives – a place that she refers to as being "in the heart of nowhere" (1977: 4). As in *Dusklands*, montage is a central feature of the novel's structure.

The novel's temporal location is imprecise; Dominic Head points out that the types of transport used – horse, bicycle and train – suggest the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but that the aeroplanes at the end of the book suggest the later twentieth century (2009: 44). The uncertainty in the novel's temporal realm can be linked to a feature of what Ursula Heise refers to as the transformation in postmodernist texts away from high-modernist narrative techniques: the creation of a sense of time that is discontinuous and fragmented "into multiple temporal itineraries" (1997: 5). Magda's narrative epitomises this sense of time. Temporal sequence in the novel is frequently disrupted and fragmented by Magda's speculations and multiple temporal shifts in which alternative versions of events are recorded. The temporal shifts are related to place because Magda's speculative histories provide an alternative to her father's conventional (historical) time, and constitute an attempt to transform her present in a place where the legacy of colonialism is an entrenched feature of the landscape, and which the narrative identifies as the source of the warped relations between its inhabitants – something which Magda, who "occupies an ambivalent position, as both victim and perpetrator of colonialism" is unable to overcome (Head, 2009:

43). Heise suggests that this aspect of the treatment of time, in which there is a split between alternative temporalities, is central to the narrative organization of postmodern novels (1997: 29). This is embodied in the disruption of chronological sequence in *HC*, in which time is split and branches off into multiple 'realities.' As in *Dusklands*, chronological sequence is disrupted in *HC* through the technique of montage. Coetzee himself commented on the concentration of cutting, or montage, as a technical feature of the novel (1997: 142-43).

Montage is one way to "thicken" the present, or to extend its temporal range. Carol Shine argues that, in the twentieth century, authors, faced with a reality that proved to be "ambiguous, fragmented and illogical," sought to incorporate these new insights into their work (1978: 8). Sharon Spencer suggests that there were two developments in theories of the nature of reality that altered perceptions of space and time in the modern novel (both discussed in the previous chapter): firstly, Freud's study of the significance of dreams demonstrated a release from the constraints of time and space; secondly, the concepts of space and time evolved with the formulation in 1905 of Einstein's conception of relativity (1971: xvii). The structural technique of montage, which encompassed the juxtaposition of elements, became a central means of engaging with a reality that proved to be multifaceted and fragmented (12). Shine notes that Dickens, for example, used montage to demonstrate "the interrelatedness of the disparate aspects of English society," and that the dual narrators that he uses "foreshadow the montage of multiple perspectives typical of the twentieth-century novel" (30). An important effect of montage is that it reveals the "conflicting, subjective perceptions of reality" (30). Shine suggests that the effect of the method of juxtaposition is to break up the narrative's linear chronology, so that "time in the novel is freed from its supposedly irreversible flow: boundaries between past, present and future, or between reality and fantasy, dream and memory are dissolved allowing all phases of experience to impinge simultaneously" (1978: 12). As I discuss in this chapter, temporal boundaries are also dissolved in *HC*, with Magda at times uncertain whether her memories of events are accurate, because they may not correspond to the time period in which she narrates her story. Another important feature of montage that Shine notes is that it can be incorporated at multiple levels "not to provide answers or keys to puzzles but to create complexity, ambiguity and contrast" (1971: 183).

As in *Dusklands*, the novel's non-linear, fragmented narrative subverts historical time and the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy. Magda's resistance to these discourses is a thread that runs throughout the novel. Her resistance is reflected primarily in her construction of alternative histories, in which there is "a vision of a second existence passionate enough to carry me from the mundane of being into the doubleness of signification" (1977: 4). Early in the novel she wonders "whether a speculative history is possible … all sucked out of my thumb" (1977: 19). Much of what happens in the text is a result of Magda narrating precisely such histories – weaving stories about the farm on which she lives, from its colonial past to her relationship with her father and stepmother and the servants who work there.

HC is structurally unconventional. Instead of the usual chapter divisions it consists of 266 fairly brief numbered paragraphs. Coetzee has commented that the numbers are there "as a way of pointing to what is not there between them: the kind of scene-setting and connective tissue that the traditional novel used to find necessary" (1997: 59). This numbering is also one of the ways in which a different kind of time is created, one that is not subject to the dictates of historical time. Coetzee suggests, in other words, the novel's resistance to the tradition of realist fiction. His comment evokes something of Virginia Woolf's disposition towards that tradition: "This appalling business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner, it is false, unreal, merely conventional" (qtd in Stevenson, 1992: 87). Coetzee alluded to the connection between historical time and the discourse of realism in a 1987 talk, entitled "The Novel Today," in which he commented on the relation between novels and their historical context (1988b: 2). His argument hinges on a distinction between two types of novel: those which supplement history, and those that rival history. The novel that rivals history

> Operate[s] in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions, [and is] not one that operates in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history […] In particular I mean a novel that evolves its own paradigms and myths, in the process … perhaps going so far as to show up the mythic status of history. (3)

Coetzee suggests that novels that supplement history are closely aligned to the discourse of realism (those novels with 'conclusions that are checkable by history'), while those that rival history have the potential to subvert history. In its 'speculative histories,' *HC* epitomises the type of novel that rivals history.

In chapter one I discussed the role that photographs played in the first part of *Dusklands*. The still images associated with photography are also significant in *HC*, but in this novel the influence of film is especially notable. In an interview with Attwell, Coetzee points to the "quite swift *pacing* of the novel" and comments that the fundamental influence behind the novel is film and/or photography (1997: 59, emphasis in original). According to Kern, film contributed significantly to an expanded sense of the present, because it could show events from a variety of perspectives, or it could juxtapose events. In other words, film extended the temporal moment, enabling a moment to be spliced open in order to interweave varying strands (2003: 71).

In commenting on the kind of film whose style most influenced *HC*, Coetzee cites two examples. The first is a short French science fiction film (twenty-eight minutes long) from 1962 by Chris Marker called *La Jetée*. The film is about time travel and takes place in the aftermath of World War III, when radioactivity has nearly destroyed the world and the human race faces extinction. It is unusual in that it is almost entirely comprised of still photographs. The motif of the image is a central one, invoked in the opening line: "This is the story of a man marked by an image from his childhood." The image referred to is that of a pre-war childhood memory of a death that he had witnessed shortly after seeing a woman at the airport (Shefer, J-L, 1995). Later, when he is an adult, he is a prisoner who is chosen as a test subject in scientists' research into time travel. The scientists' aim is to send test subjects to different time periods, "to call past and future to the rescue of the present" (Shefer, 1995). The man is chosen because the scientists needed someone who had "very strong mental images," and this man had been obsessed with his childhood image for a long time. After several attempts at time travel, he reaches the pre-war period and meets the woman from his memory. The experimenters also send him to the far future, where he is given technology that enables his society to recover. Upon his return, however, he discovers that his jailers are about to execute him. The people of the future contact him and offer to help him escape permanently to their time, but he asks instead to be returned to the pre-war

time of his childhood, so that he can meet the woman again. He locates the woman but, as he's rushing towards her, he notices that an agent of his jailers has followed him and is about to kill him. In his final moments, he comes to understand that the incident he had witnessed as a child, which had haunted him ever since, was his own death.

The second film whose style Coetzee cites as an influence on *HC* is *The Passenger*, directed by Andrzej Munk and completed by his colleagues after his death. The film takes place on a ship and centres on Liza, a German woman who recognises one of the passengers, Marta, as a Polish former prisoner at Auschwitz concentration camp while she had been an SS officer there. The encounter forces her to confront memories she would rather not face and "cause[s] a series of desperate attempts at self-justification for working as a guard in such a place" (Balfour, 2006).

In a review of *The Passenger*, David Balfour describes the film as "a combination of the live action material shot on location in Auschwitz prison camp, still photography taken whilst location scouting with actors, and a voice-over that guides the audience through the film. These three elements combine and interact over the course of film" (2006). Balfour adds that there is a series of flashbacks, shot in Auschwitz, around which the story is structured, with "each one revealing a deeper and more complex view of the past" (2006). Material from the present is comprised of still photographs, while the past is composed of black and white sequences of the prison camp (2006). The result, according to Balfour, is:

> a film that investigates the way memory can act as protection against the past. It exists not only as whole, but also as a series of multi-layer speculations into filmic form, that sheds light on the very essence of memory. It is the interplay between the film's form and content which creates a unique viewing experience, one that calls on the viewer to re-evaluate not just the memory of the characters in the film but their own memory of the film. (2006)

While *La Jetée,* uses still photographs, *The Passenger* uses a combination of still photographs, live action scenes and voice-over narration. In his discussion with Attwell of the influence of film on *HC*, Coetzee notes that "There was a moment in the course of high

modernism when first poets, then novelists, realized how *rapidly* narration could be carried out: films that used montage effectively were connecting short narrative sequences into longer narratives much more swiftly and deftly than the nineteenth-century novelist had thought possible" (1997: 59, emphasis in original). What impressed him the most about films like those, Coetzee said, was what could be achieved through stills with voice-over narration: "a remarkable intensity of vision (because the eye *searches* the still image in a way it cannot search the moving image) together with great economy of narration" (1997: 60, emphasis in original). The influence of these two films is not meant to suggest that Coetzee intended his novel to be a film – as he commented to Attwell, *HC* "is not a novel on the model of a screenplay" (59). What I would suggest Coetzee has done in the novel instead is to approximate in narrative form the effect of still images. The novel's numbered passages can be likened to stills or photographs, forming a collection of images or a montage. The numbering makes each passage open to the kind of *searching* and intensity of vision to which Coetzee refers.

The novel's narrative structure, then, allows Coetzee to approximate in prose what the two films achieve using still images and a combination of still and moving sequences. This technique can be related to Frank's concept of the image, because it is one of the ways in which disparate elements can be linked in a moment of simultaneity. Coetzee recognised the significance of images in the act of reading. Referring to Pound's concept of an image, he notes that it is a singularly striking and vital one: Pound can teach, he argues – more than any other poet he knows – the process of slow reading essential for the mind to be prepared for the image (1993a: 6). In poetry, this slowing-down is easily achieved by metrical technique. Coetzee argues that what he has learnt about slow reading comes from following the principle, broadly rhythmical, advocated by Pound:

> By disposing the text in blocks or patches over the page, by interspersing the text with odd-looking orthography (Greek, Chinese), above all by getting the voice into the line, Pound makes possible the moment of the exact word, the word which the eye pauses over, takes in, absorbs, makes its own. (1993a: 6)

For Coetzee, the challenge is to enable the process of slow reading in prose, which does not possess the same range of resources as poetry. He argues that prose does, in fact, have

resources that enable it to achieve a similar effect to poetry: punctuation, the paragraph break and "all the resources of syntax to mime logic and to mime the movements of the mind in general, to indicate relations between elements, logical and rhetorical, in all their complexity" (1993a: 6). The numbering technique in *HC* can also be seen in this light. The novel's numbered passages each constitute a unit, similar to an image, over which the eye can linger. While some of the passages are linked by their content, others, even though sequential, are sufficiently unrelated to slow down the reading. An example of this is in the passages numbered 60 to 62. In passages 60 and 61, Magda narrates the day's events, emphasizing mundane, day-to-day activities: in passage 60 she comments: "Today I darned six pairs of socks for my father" and in passage 61 she relates: "Today's leg of mutton was excellent: tender, juicy, roasted to a turn" (1977: 31). In the next passage, however, she switches from recounting the day's events to a beautiful and lyrical description of the scenery: "Coming over the rise past the dam, my father gathers about his head and shoulders the streaks and whorls, orange, pink, lavender, mauve, crimson, of the haloed sunset display" (31).

It is notable that both films Coetzee cites as an influence on *HC* deal with the topic of time. In *La Jetée,* firstly, there is the image from his past which haunts the main character; secondly, there is the film's subject, which is time travel. In *The Passengers,* time is also a central concern, specifically as it relates to the past and the question of how reliable memories of the past are. In his discussion of spatial form, Frank also points to how other writers' works use methods derived from film in their narratives. To demonstrate aesthetic form in Flaubert, Frank refers to the county fair scene in *Madame Bovary* and suggests that the method Flaubert employs in the scene can be called cinematographic, in which action occurs simultaneously at three levels, with the physical position of each level being a guide to its spiritual significance (1963: 14). On one level, which Frank calls the lowest plane, is the crowd in the street, along with the livestock brought to the exhibition. Slightly above this, raised by a platform, are the officials making speeches, and above this, on the highest level, watching from a window overlooking the crowd, are Rodolphe and Emma (14). Commenting on the scene, Flaubert later wrote that "Everything should sound simultaneously … one should hear the bellowing of the cattle, the whisperings of the lovers and the rhetoric of the officials all at the same time" (15). The extent to which everything can be *perceived* simultaneously is, however, more difficult to determine. Frank suggests

that, in order to apprehend the simultaneity, it is necessary to break up temporal sequence, which Flaubert does by "cutting back and forth between different levels of action" so that, in a satirical climax of the scene, Rodolphe's speech coincides almost exactly with the naming of the prize winners for raising the best pig (15). Frank comments that the scene demonstrates what is meant by spatialization in the novel, where the narrative's time-flow is halted, and the focus is on "the interplay of relationships" (15). Because these "relationships are juxtaposed independently of the narrative," it is only when the "reflexive relations among the units of meaning" are apprehended that we are able to appreciate the full meaning of the scene, which Frank suggests is that of "devastating irony" (15).

HC's structure of numbered passages (1 – 266) creates an expectation of linear chronological progression, but this expectation is frequently frustrated. Instead of proceeding in the logical manner suggested by its sequentially numbered passages, the novel also moves backwards in time to rewrite the past, a feature that Suzanne Bennet describes as a characteristic of lyrical fiction: "Rather than moving forward in time, the story turns within, goes backward, and views the present in relationship to the past" (1981: 38). In addition, this technique, which fragments the whole into parts, emphasises disconnectedness, creating a parallel between the form of Coetzee's novel – its suggestion of fragmentation and disconnectedness – and the novel's central themes of distance, disconnectedness and lack of reciprocity. It is only by reflexively connecting the various strands of the fragments that the novel's meaning coheres.

Foust notes that spatial form attempts to explain "the peculiar time-orientation" of modernist novels (1975: ix), a feature that is manifested in *HC* as well. Magda distinguishes between chronological time and her own, or psychological, time. Time on the farm is "the time of the wide world, neither a jot nor a tittle more or less," but there is another kind of time that she calls "the blind subjective time of the heart" and which she has to "beat down" (3). According to Magda, in her childhood she experienced a different kind of time, a "mythical" time which was vastly different to her father's (historical) time. In this mythical time Magda experienced connectedness and kinship. It was a time when she shared her life with those of the servant's children, where she "spoke like one of them" and "played their stick and stone games" and roamed the veld with them and sat listening to the stories of their grandfather, stories of living in harmony with the world. Magda's references to herself are

often unfavourable – she refers to herself as a "miserable black virgin" and her story as "a dull black blind stupid miserable story, ignorant of its meaning" (5). However, when she describes the 'mythical' time she experienced, particularly her interactions with the workers on the farm, her references are considerably more positive. She enjoyed tending to the servants' children and the women when they were in labour, and when they called her "An angel from heaven!" it made "her heart sing" (5). Magda remembers a time when "At the feet of an old man I have drunk in a myth of a past when beast and man and master lived a common life as innocent as the stars in the sky, and I am far from laughing" (6-7). It is ostensibly her expulsion from this time that causes her frequent lapses into despair. Magda's 'mythical' past is recreated on numerous occasions in the novel, and serve as a counterpart to her father's historical, chronological time. It is the recreation of 'speculative' histories that sustain her life on the farm. She cannot overcome her yearning for the "lost world" of her past because of her notion that it is "a language I have not unlearned," a comment that gives Magda's speculative histories as much weight as her father's more conventional, chronological history (7).

Time and history in *HC* are fluid and changeable. Magda is endlessly creative in transforming historical time and events. Ermath argues that "the pleasure of the postmodern text is not in pinnacle or resolutions but in the process of exploration, in the improvising and inventing in the moment" (50). Furthermore, she points out that "the value of this kind of temporal experience differs considerably from the value of experience conceived in terms of historical time and its inexorable production of meaning" (50). Magda continually recreates her present by imagining and narrating various versions of the past she might have had. In one of the passages, she speculates on her past by imagining how it could unfold: "perhaps if I spend a day in the loft emptying old trunks I will find evidence of a credible past" (1977: 38). She observes that, among other items, she could perhaps find photographs. She identifies the imagined photographs as being "daguerrotypes perhaps," and then weaves a tale about them that includes a history of a conventional nuclear family: a mother and father, a baby and a brother "who must have died in one of the great epidemics, the influenza epidemic or the smallpox epidemic" (38). Despite the speculative nature of her narrative, it mimics the realist tradition in its detailed descriptions – her brother, for example, wears a suit "trimmed with lace," and the mother must have died "giving birth to a third child" (38). But she acknowledges that the history she has recorded is speculative, because her narrative

hinges on whether "there were photographs in those days" (38). Magda's versions of the past are often a counter to the alienated conditions under which she and her father live on the farm. Her inclusion of a mother and siblings in her alternative histories expresses her yearning for belonging and connectedness.

Despite her often satirical tone and black humour, Magda's anguish in the novel is a feature of the text that is at times palpable, and is rooted in her existence in a place tainted and corrupted by its colonial past, one characterised by disconnectedness and a lack of reciprocity among the people who inhabit it. This place is the semi-desert of the Karoo in the Western Cape. Throughout the text, Magda attempts to disrupt and, thereby, change relations between the people who inhabit the place, so that the farm on which she lives may be similarly transformed. She does this in various ways throughout the novel, most notably by disrupting the temporal progression of the narrative and providing varying versions of her past that undercut historical time. In Magda's history, the past is not immutable; she goes backwards in time to reorder and rewrite her past, sometimes presenting various versions of the same event, at other times narrating parodied histories of the farm and her childhood. A significant effect of this subversion of historical time is to reconfigure place by radically rewriting the discourses of patriarchy and colonialism that pervade the farm.

The novel further subverts historical time by privileging a narrative form that differs from that of traditional fiction. *HC* can be considered a type of lyrical fiction that interweaves spatial form in its narrative. These two characteristics of the novel's form are again encapsulated in Frank's discussion of the 'image', with reference to Ezra Pound in particular. "An 'Image,' Pound wrote, "is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (1963: 9). In this definition, Frank emphasises the *spatial* nature of an image and notes that it is not a pictorial reproduction; rather, it unifies disparate ideas and emotions instantaneously, rather than in succession (9). Sheila Roberts comments that one of the features of *HC* is "the startling originality of images" (1992: 21). Magda uses various images to describe herself, but the recurring image in the novel is a spatial one – that of a hole, signifying emptiness and suggesting her longing to be (ful)filled. Magda describes herself as "a being with a hole inside me," (9) commenting that "There is no act I know of that will liberate me into the world. There is no act I know of that will bring the world into me" (10). Later in the novel she again refers to herself as a hole: "I move through

the world … as a hole, a hole with a body draped around it […] I am a hole crying to be whole"; (41) at one point in the novel she comments that "perhaps what has been wrong with me all these years is simply that I have had no one to play with" (1997: 76).

Head also references the association of the novel's imagery with emptiness, suggesting that "the recurring image of the body inhabited by the body of another" is also a feature of *HC* (2009: 44). This is reflected in Magda's discussion of a "law" that governs what she is allowed to say, commenting that she is "exhausted by obedience to this law … whose mark lies on [her] in the spaces between the words, the spaces or the pauses" (1977: 84). Ellen Kriz notes the significance of spaces in her analysis of *HC*, arguing that the novel functions "through the 'gaps and absences' of language, apparent in the blank spaces between numbered sections of the text and semantically in the contradictory language of Magda's consciousness" (2020: 2-3). Of the law, Magda says that it has gripped her throat and invaded her larynx: "How can I say," she says, "that these are not the eyes of the law that stare from behind my eyes, or that the mind of the law does not occupy my skull […] How can I say that the law does not stand fullgrown inside my shell, its feet in my feet, its hands in my hands, its sex drooping through my hole" (84). The law that Magda invokes here is symbolic of the discourses of patriarchy and colonialism, in which she is both implicated and trapped, being both colonizer and victim. It is what creates seemingly unbridgeable chasms between her and the servants on the farm, Klein-Anna and Hendrik, as well as between her and her father. As much as she is trapped in these discourses, so too are Klein-Anna and Hendrik. In terms that are similar to the 'law' that displaces her own desires, after a section that describes Hendrik's rape of her, Magda wonders "What deeper invasion and possession does he plot in his sleep? That one day all his bony frame shall lie packed inside me, his skull inside my skull, his limbs along my limbs, the rest of him crammed into my belly?" (108). A short while later, in terms that echo this description, Magda imagines herself inhabiting the body of Klein-Anna, Hendrik's wife, saying:

> I would like to climb down her throat while she sleeps and spread myself gently inside her, my hands in her hands, my feet in her feet, my skull in the benign quiet of her skull where images of soap and flour and milk revolve, the holes of my body sliding into place over the holes in hers, there to wait mindlessly for whatever enters them, the song of birds, the smell of dung, the parts of a man, not angry now but

> gentle, rocking in my bloodwarmth, leaving me with soapy seed, sleeping in my cave. (Coetzee, 1977: 108-109)

Roberts points out, correctly, that Magda's assumption that Klein-Anna's inner life consists simply of domestic concerns, in which "images of soap and flour and milk" revolve, suggests that she is "locked into patriarchal/colonial preconceptions" (1992: 28). In a similar vein, and in words that echo Magda's description of Hendrik's possible "invasion and possession" of her, Head also points to the "motif of invasion and possession" that Magda's description implies; he argues, however, that there is also a positive connotation to her description in that "The desire to inhabit Anna's body enables her to imagine herself as Hendrik's sexual partner in other circumstances, thus confounding the psychological wrong of Hendrik's sexual violence" (2009: 44). While Magda's desire to inhabit Klein-Anna's body can be seen as coextensive with the colonial motifs of invasion and possession, it also reveals a radical desire to undercut the fractured relations between her and the servants on the farm, one that attempts to invoke a state of wholeness to counter her emptiness. The image of Magda inhabiting the body of Klein-Anna is an embodied one in which she and Klein-Anna are intertwined with each other, undoing the separation between them.

With reference to Pound's definition of an image, Foust calls its use in narrative "the valuing of verbal economy" and argues that it constitutes "the essence of lyrical expression" (1975: 4). In *HC,* Magda, indeed, notes: "Lyric is my medium, not chronicle" (71). Head argues that Magda's claim can be extended to Coetzee's writing more generally, that, "in a complex sense, lyric rather than chronicle is his medium" (2009: 45). In *HC*, Magda attempts to transform chronological time into what she calls "mythical time" partly through the lyrical mode of her narrative.

Suzanne Bennet argues that lyrical fiction must be viewed as distinct from more traditional fiction. She describes the lyrical novel as one which "fuses elements of the lyric with those of the narrative and requires a special analytical perspective" (1981: 36). A distinctive feature of lyrical fiction is that, using devices such as discontinuity and juxtaposition, it "dispenses with temporal sequence in favour of a more spatial, or locational, construct" – actions and events in the narrator's life proceed spatially rather than chronologically (37).

In this novel, Magda's narrative does not follow a linear track; instead, forward movement is often disrupted by repetition, digressions and reversals.

Bennet notes that traditional narrative fiction often fails to sufficiently account for meaning in a genre that combines the quality of poetry with prose: the lyrical novel appears to be a semantic contradiction, for while lyrical poetry suggests a personal expression of feelings and attitudes and is usually conveyed in a relatively brief style, novels are typically longer and entail a narrator and characters (36). Bennet suggests that the combination of these two terms "implies a way of looking at the world that differs from the traditional novelists' seemingly objective viewing," (36) and that there is a distinction between a poetic method of writing novels and a prose approach, in which the apprehension of reality is different:

> The poetic method sees the centre of the consciousness as the point where all that is significant in the surrounding world becomes aware and is transformed; the prose method requires a description of that world in order to explain the characteristics of the people in it (37).

Bennet argues that, in lyrical fiction, the hero or heroine "converts his or her world into self analogues and, through merging exterior milieu with interior vision, creates a lyrical perspective equivalent to a poet's persona" (36). As I demonstrate in this chapter, *HC* shares these affinities with lyrical fiction. In particular, Magda's vision of herself and the farm on which she lives entails a consciousness that subsumes and transforms her environment.

In *HC*, Coetzee relies on, among others, the resources of syntax to slow down the narrative in two ways: firstly, to undermine the discourse of realism and secondly, to link relations between different elements in the novel. In the first passage, Magda describes her father's arrival with his new bride: "They came clip-clop across the flats in a dog-cart drawn by a horse with an ostrich-plume waving on its forehead, dusty after the long haul … his bride [wore] a wide-brimmed sunhat" (1). The description is rich in detail, grounding the event in realism; this is almost immediately subverted, however, by Magda's satirical comment further in the passage that she cannot provide more detail without beginning to embroider, because she was not watching (1).

Temporal sequence is further destabilised by a recurring pattern of repetition. Ermath's analysis of Robbe-Grillet's novel, *Jealousy*, provides a useful analogy of how this functions in literature. She notes that "[d]etail in *Jealousy* functions paratactically and as a building block for reader construction, not syntactically as a carrier of meaning; it precisely lacks any connotative or signifying function" (75). According to Ermath, "This new kind of textual event involves new practices – especially holding simultaneously in awareness what is putatively "contradictory" but nevertheless *there* as an event of consciousness" (77, emphasis in original). She suggests that in *Jealousy,* "contradictions are irreducible and render completely inaccessible the time of historical mediation" (77):

> *Jealousy* itself consists of 'virtually identical' repetitions which, 'though barely perceptible,' nevertheless have enough variation to carry the reader 'quite far from the point of departure.' Important change, it appears, occurs minutely and repetitively, and has little to do with the classical idea of 'event' and 'cause.' This patterning … has little to do with 'meaning' in any conventional sense … It is above all the variation, often minute variation in those repetitions that gives excitement, definition, interest to the description and to the experience of reading" (69).

A number of the passages of *HC* display syntactical repetitions that are virtually identical, with minute variations. In passages 1 and 27, Magda describes her father bringing home his new wife, and in passage 38 Hendrik, their servant, bringing home his new wife. The two events are linked by their content – in both cases a man is bringing his new wife home. In passages 1 and 27, despite the gaps between them, the same event is described, using an almost exact syntactical sequence, but including other details and changing the sentence from a statement into a question. In passage 27, Magda contemplates her refusal to engage with her father's new wife by asking: "Why, since the moment she came clip-clop across the flats in the dog-cart drawn by a horse with ostrich plumes in its harness, dusty after the long haul, in her wide-brimmed hat, have I refused speech with her?" (12). This repetition subverts both the temporal flow of the story and the discourse of realism. The repetition also links the opening of the novel to later events, emphasising the significance of Magda's father's marriage. In passage 38, it is Hendrik and his new wife who arrive at the farm: "They came clip-cross across the flats in the donkey-cart, dusty after the long haul … Henrik wore … an old wide-brimmed felt hat" (17). The repetition here is slightly altered: the "dog-

cart" in the description of her father bringing home his new bride changes to a "donkey-cart"; in passage 1 it is her father's bride who wears "a wide-brimmed sunhat," while in passage 38 Hendrik is described as wearing "an old wide-brimmed felt hat." These changes undermine the realist tradition by emphasizing the way in which details can be changed in different scenarios simply by substituting and rearranging them. The transposition underscores the contrived nature of realist texts. Later, in passage 49, there is again repetition of part of this phrase, where Magda recalls Hendrik's arrival from Armoede, referring to the donkeys as being "weary after the long haul" (25). The repetition of the two events – Magda's father bringing home a new wife, and Hendrik bringing home a new wife – emphasises the intersection between patriarchy and colonialism, core preoccupations in the novel. Another example of repetition in the novel is Magda's description of the new bride, which entails only slight changes regarding her physical appearance. In passage 20, Magda describes her as having "full dark lips" and later, "full ironical lips," a phrase which she repeats further on in the same passage. The description of the new wife focuses on aspects of her physical appearance that are markedly different to Magda's, emphasising her (Magda's) fear of the new wife displacing her.

The pattern of repetition is a recurring feature of the novel. Magda describes the same act – killing her father – on two occasions in the novel: the first time when he brings home a new wife, the second time linked to Hendrik's bringing home a new wife (because he has seduced Hendrik's wife). The most subversive act in the novel – Magda's act of patricide – is linked by repetition on two levels: firstly, the syntactical repetition of the two men bringing home new wives and secondly, by the repetition of the killing of her father. The effect of the repetition is to undermine historical time – as Ermath comments, postmodern fictions disrupt the homogeneity of time. Neutral time and space are dissolved, and with them "the bracketing of empiricist and historical thinking as just one more construction" (66). Ermath argues, "Gone are the linear coordinates that make possible the description of a stable objective world; pattern is always emerging and dissolving without certain foundation or even intelligible residue" (54). According to Ermath, in postmodern narrative "invention is no longer the discredited cousin of 'reason' … but instead the main activity of conscious adult life," and that "Such experience can be shared but only *as* experience, not as knowledge or truth. There is no such thing as capturing in excellent summary the essential

'story.' The postmodern reading experience does not turn into knowledge or information or, in other words, into capital" (72, emphasis in original).

A key aspect of spatial form is reflexive reference, an element central to reading *HC*. Reflexive reference occurs when a text is composed of "numerous references and cross references that relate to each other independently of the time sequence of the narrative" (Frank, 1963: 16). For example, with reference to Joyce's *Ulysses*, Frank suggests that the reader must connect these references and view them as a whole before a meaningful pattern can be established: Joyce "present[s] the elements of his novel … in fragments" (18). The reader is expected to reconstruct the novel from these fragments, scattered throughout the book and sometimes separated by hundreds of pages. Frank concludes that "Joyce cannot be read – he can only be reread" (19). Kern argues in a similar vein, suggesting that Joyce wanted his readers to go back to the book many times, "continually building up the network of cross-references scattered throughout until Dublin came to life" (2003: 77). Reflexive reference is also a key structural principle of *HC*, in which meaning depends on references and cross-references that have to be connected to each other, and that are independent of the time sequence of the narrative. This aspect operates in the novel through, for example, repetition of action, narration that starts over again and again, and replication of syntactical sequence, in which phrases and sentences are repeated in passages that are separated by numerous pages and events. Frank's description of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, as a "collection of striking passages, some of breath-taking poetic quality," whose structural principle is one of spatial form, "obtained by means of reflexive reference" (1963: 27), could apply equally to *HC*. Even in the midst of describing killing her father and his wife and wondering what to do with their bodies, Magda disrupts temporal sequence to describe a speculative suicide, in which she imagines various scenarios: "perhaps I strike out once or twice with wooden arms. Perhaps I sink a second time … Perhaps I come to the surface again … Perhaps I beat the water now in one spot only" (13). Even here her musings are quite lyrical – her skirt "billows and floats around [her] waist like a black flower" (13); in the next passage, she asks: "why these glorious sunsets … if nature does not speak to us with tongues of fire?" (14).

In *HC*, the narrative presents a "network of times" in which the same incident unfolds in different ways, such as the alternating versions of Magda's father's wooing of Anna

(Magda's alternative versions also evoke Borges's "Garden of Forking Paths" which, as noted in chapter one, also constructs similar alternative versions, implying a splitting of time). In passage 67, Magda's father visits Anna one afternoon while Hendrik is out working. He woos her with a brown paper packet of various types of candy. But passage 68 begins with an alternative version, in which her father comes upon Klein-Anna while she is making her way homeward one afternoon, again presenting her with a brown paper packet of candies. In the next passage, instead of the packet of candy, he gives her a silver coin. The three passages are linked by syntactical repetition of specific aspects of the seduction, focusing on the interaction between Magda's father and Klein-Anna. In passage 67: "He speaks to her. She is bashful. She hides her face. He tries to soothe her. Perhaps he even smiles …" In passage 68, the syntax changes slightly and there is additional detail which is not in passage 67 but which is repeated in passage 69. The basic repetition, however, remains: "bending over the horse's neck, he speaks to her. She is bashful and hides her face. He tries to soothe her, even smiling at her." In passage 69, "He bends over the horse's neck, talking to the girl, trying to soothe her. She hides her face."

Magda's father's seduction of Klein-Anna is a cataclysmic event in the novel, rupturing the master-servant relations upon which their life on the farm is founded and sustained. Magda alludes to the catastrophic nature of her father's actions, noting that "There are few enough words true, rock-hard enough to build a life on, and these he is destroying" (35). In the same way that her father has fractured the pattern of their lives on the farm, Magda's narrative ruptures the forward movement of narrative time, signalling the novel's core themes of fragmentation and dislocation.

The novel's peculiar time orientation is evident in Magda's narration of her father's murder. With reference to *Ulysses*, Kern suggests that Joyce uses different methods to recreate the city of Dublin as a whole – not a history of it, but "a slice of it out of time, spatially extended and embodying its entire past in a vast expanded present" (2003: 77). One of these techniques is repetition of action and a narration that begins over again and again. Kern notes that other authors used similar techniques, for example, Gertrude Stein, who used the continuous present tense and the strategy of beginning again to "flatten out temporal distinctions and create an impression that all action occurred in a continuous present" (85). The most significant interruption of the forward movement of narrative time is when Magda

narrates the same event – committing patricide – on two separate occasions. Both occasions involve lengthy descriptions of how she killed her father and disposed of his body. In the first, in passage 26, she narrates killing her father with a hatchet – "The axe sweeps up over my shoulder" (11). At this point, however, she digresses to comment on her action, noting that she is not alone in having committed such an act, that many other kinds of people have done the same thing before her: "wives, sons, lovers, heirs, rivals" (11). Through her interior monologue, Magda widens the temporal moment. She goes on to narrate how fortunate it is that, at such a dramatic moment, not very much is required of her other than presence of mind, because "the larger action flows of itself" (11). After having struck her father, she recalls how his wife "wriggles her nightdress decently over her hips" before she kills her as well – delivering "much the better chop" – by hitting her on the crown of her head with the axe (11). At this point, Magda again digresses to comment, in parenthesis, on her action: "Who would have thought I had such strokes in me?" After drawing a sheet over the bodies of her father and his wife, Magda continues beating their bodies "with a steady rhythm, but calming myself too in preparation for what must be a whole new phase of my life" (11). Passage 26 ends with Magda killing both her father and his new wife and contemplating the story she will have to invent to explain their absence. The next four passages, 27 to 30, are linked by repetition – each of them begins, "I ask myself: …" before Magda digresses from the murders to contemplate other ideas. In passage 27 she contemplates an alternative history between her and her father's new wife that would counter the conventional jealousy between daughter and stepmother that is an extension of patriarchal discourse, and that reimagines cooperation and partnership rather than competition. In this scenario, she and her father's new wife become friends, engaging in shared activities: "cutting out patterns with her, or strolling through the orchard hand in hand, giggling" (12). She even contemplates the friendship deepening into intimacy, wondering whether they might not have "lain in each other's arms all afternoon, whispering, two girls together?" (12). In the next passage, Magda ruminates on her life on the farm, wondering what it is about the landscape and the farm that has made normal relations with others virtually impossible, so that "the merest pedlar or visiting third cousin would find himself poisoned at his meat or hatcheted in bed" (12). It is only in the next passage (number 30) that Magda goes back to the murders and the question of what she is going to do with the bodies (13).

After a lengthy interval, the forward movement of narrative time is again dramatically disrupted by the repetition of Magda's killing of her father. This time her father's murder is stretched out – in passage 118 she shoots him with a shotgun while he is in his bedroom with Anna, but her shots only wound him. Magda's description of the event is quite farcical. When she fires the first shot into the bedroom, she notes that she had never heard a scream like that before – "I am amazed. I would not have believed one could scream so loudly […] The screams grow shorter, they are acquiring a rhythm. There are also numerous angry lower sounds without rhythm, which I shall separate later, when I have time, if I can recall them" (61). Even at this moment, Magda slyly alludes to the possible unreliability of her memory.

After an interval of several passages, in which Magda leaves the farm and embarks on a journey that is a chaotic mix of memories, reflections and action, the account of her father's murder recommences in passage 123. In the intervening passages, Magda's journey encompasses numerous reflections, and an ironic reference to her ability to contain multiple states which seem to dissolve into each other with ease. She asks: "is it not remarkable how at one moment I can be walking away from a scene of crisis, from gunfire and screaming and interrupted pleasures … and at the next moment I can be lost to things and back in the gabble of words?" (62). As she notes later in the passage, "I … hover ever between the exertions of drama and the languors of meditation" (63). After her 'adventure' on the road, Magda resumes her narrative of her father's murder in passage 123, which finds her back in the house tending to her wounded father.

As with *Dusklands*, the use of direct interior monologue extends the novel's temporal range. Kern notes that in *Ulysses* the metaphor of 'stream,' which suggests a steady flow, does not accurately describe Molly's mind, which "revolves about her universe in defiance of conventional calculations of its pace or directions" (2003: 28). Magda's narrative is similarly defiant of chronological time and the logic of cause-and-effect. In its contradictory elements, her narrative, moreover, undermines realist discourse. For example, the first time she kills her father, she describes him as lying "face down," but a few lines later she notes that "My father lies on his back" (11). Magda's claims about the farm and its history are also marked by ambiguity. She contemplates how possession of the land came about, starting with the erection of fences, but notes "I speculate of course" (18) and "one does not

know" (19). Hendrik's arrival at the farm is likewise open to speculation; when she offers an explanation, she also notes "I am guessing" (19). This ambiguity is reinforced when she tries to recall what her father said to Hendrik when he arrived at the farm. Her observation that "I cannot know whether Hendrik heard what I heard besides, what I perhaps did not hear that day but hear now in my inner ear," also underscores the inherent tendency to create fictions to facilitate story-telling (20). Magda creates her present through speculating about how events could have unfolded in the past – her memory is fluid and seems able to hold various versions of what the past may have been.

The descriptions of her first act of patricide are also palpably unreliable. When she kills her father and his new wife, Magda is alarmed that the servants will find out about the murders before she has had time to dispose of their bodies, and she imagines Anna at the door of the room and asking her to leave. She notes that she can hear Anna leave, can hear the back door close behind her and the sound of her feet on the gravel as she walks away, but then she notes how implausible it would be for her to be able to hear this: "I hear the back door close behind her, then, though she ought to be out of earshot, the trot of her feet on the gravel" (14).

The novel has numerous such instances of narration that are clearly unreliable. In the third and fourth passages, the veracity of Magda's description of her mother is undermined by her commentary on it – according to her, it is "one such as any girl in my position would be likely to make up for herself" (1977: 2). Scepticism about her description is reinforced by the repetition of the words she uses to describe her mother – gentle and loving –suggesting that she is merely reproducing platitudes usually associated with motherhood. In the fourth passage she narrates her mother's struggle to give birth to her and the subsequent calling for the doctor: a messenger uses a bicycle to get to the doctor, and the doctor arrives in a donkey-cart. In the next passage, however, in parenthesis, Magda questions why the messenger did not rather come on horse-back, and wonders whether there were in fact bicycles in those days (echoing her earlier comment about the photographs she finds, in which she wonders whether there were in fact photographs in those days). Magda's scepticism about her descriptions completely destabilises the novel's temporal dimension. Her commentary emphasizes her malleable memory and underscores the novel's peculiar time orientation. Her narrative is highly creative, demonstrating a present consciousness

that is constantly transformed by her rewriting of the past. In passage 15, when she offers a description of herself, the description is filled with adjectives – she wore a "frilled sunbonnet," she played with beetles, "the grey ones and the brown ones and the big black ones" and anteaters "who made those elegant little conical sandtraps," and the scorpion she encounters is a "pale dazed flaccid baby scorpion" (6). The detail again reinforces realist discourse, but the descriptions are interrupted by her satirical aside – in parenthesis she notes "weave, weave!" after the description of herself as a little girl (6). Interspersed with the description is her comment "so the story goes," suggestive of fabrication and evoking scepticism about her account (6).

Magda's narration of the murder of her father is in the first-person present tense ("I … recover … my axe, and hack with distaste at these hands") and present continuous tense ("Here I am beating with a steady rhythm"), stretching out the action. But despite the impression of much happening to her or being caused by her, in the novel's penultimate passage, the rhythm and pattern of Magda's life is unchanged and, contrary to the many instances of drama she has narrated, quite placid – she feeds her father and puts him to bed. The cumulative effect of Magda's narration is to suggest the simultaneous and sometimes contradictory nature of consciousness, that it can encompass states of being that are starkly different. Magda demonstrates that it is doubtful if the present can ever be fully understood in its entirety because the past is complex and imprints on the present in unpredictable ways.

Magda's introspection in passages 27 – 30 (linked, as noted above, by the repetition of the opening phrase: "I ask myself") includes attempts to explain her actions and behaviour; she wonders eventually if it is possible that she is a prisoner "not of the lonely farmhouse and the stone desert" but of her "stony dialogue" (12). She tries to discern why she is the way she is, wondering why she has committed such a transgressive act. Again she questions whether it is the place she lives in that causes her to act the way she does – whether it is "a lifetime in the desert" that predisposes her to such aberrant behaviour, asking "Does an elementary life burn people down to elementary states, to pure anger, pure gluttony, pure sloth? Am I unfitted by my upbringing for a life of more complex feelings?" (12) She wonders whether being "in limitless space, in endless time" is the cause of her calamitous state. In passage 29 she considers an alternative – that perhaps the city would be equally cataclysmic, that it too could be the setting of a "thousand pattering damned voices" (13).

But she dismisses this alternative, because "it is too painterly, and I am not a painter" (13) It is only in the next passage that Magda returns to the murder of her father and his wife, wondering what she is going to do with the bodies. In Magda's interior monologue, the present is spliced open to encompass the past – her attempts to understand her incapacity to engage with her father's new wife leads her to wonder if her life of relative isolation on the farm is to blame for her behaviour. The novel's structural technique thus reinforces the central themes of dislocation and fragmentation that Magda's narrative embodies.

When Magda leaves the farm after having killed her father, she sets out on the road away from the farmhouse. Her journey is a fragmented and seemingly disconnected intermingling of the past, the present and the anticipated future. Again, Frank's analysis of high modernism is apposite here, particularly of fragments and seemingly disconnected passages in T.S. Eliot's poetry that are eventually shown to cohere around a perceptible framework. He suggests that the method used in Pound's *Cantos* is similarly one of fragmentation and disconnectedness (1963: 228). In the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land,* Frank argues, there was "a radical transformation taking place in aesthetic structure" (229). In fact, this method is one of "deliberate disconnectedness" and is "the method by which the *Cantos* tie themselves together" (12). Magda's narrative also depends on a "space-logic" that does not follow the conventional flow of time. She meditates on the past and the impact it has had on her current state. Kern notes that for Freud, all our experiences leave traces that influence and shape our present behaviour (2003: 42). According to Husserl, there are two types of past experience: "retention," which is a recent one, and "recollection," a more distant one. When a perception fades away from the present it is first a retention, but as it goes further back into the past, it becomes a recollection. The order of a retention is always fixed in experience, but the order of the original event may change in a recollection, because a recollection can consist of past experiences that interact with each other and interpenetrate (44). On her journey, Magda's recollections seem to interact with both the present and the anticipated future. She analyses her father's murder and her reasons for it, wondering why she had not involved Hendrik, who would have had a motive for killing her father. She also anticipates her journey on the road, imagining the people she will meet, "the innkeepers and postillions and highwaymen," but again adds a twist to the temporal dimension, noting that she will only meet these people "if that is the century I am in" (63). She thinks of "the adventures, the rapes and robberies" she might experience, although also speculating that

there is an alternative future, one in which "the road is forever as it is now, dark, winding, stony," a road that "goes nowhere day after day, week after week, season after season" (63). Magda's comment about the road foregrounds her description of the type of journey she would not mind being on, where the syntax is repeated – a road that is also "dark, winding, stony," which also "goes nowhere day after day, week after week, season after season" (122). Magda's repetition reinforces the principle of reflexive reference in the novel, while also emphasising the contradictory image of the road as a journey of linear sequence – her road instead emphasizes a journey that is 'winding' and that does not lead anywhere.

Magda's yearning for reciprocity with others is a thread that runs throughout *HC*. The form of the novel is echoed in the distance between her and her father, and between her and the servants on the farm. In terms of her disconnectedness from the servants, Magda observes that "we might as well be on separate planets, we on ours, they on theirs" (28). There is a parallel between the discontinuity of Magda's narrative and her sense of her lack of community with her world. The rupture between her and the servants is, in the first place, political – in a country that was colonised first by the Dutch and then the British, and in which colonialism developed the particular form of apartheid, the gap between her, the farmer's daughter, and the servants is immense. Much as she would like to bridge this chasm, Magda finds that she is not able to. In addition to the highly stratified social relations engendered by colonialism and apartheid, Magda also suggests a more metaphysical issue that entrenches the gap between her and the servants. She suggests that one of the reasons for the rupture between them is language's inability to convey true meaning. She says that she is "not spoken to in words … but in signs … whose grammar has never been recorded" (7). Because of this there is an immense gap between them: "Across valleys of space and time we strain ourselves to catch the pale smoke of each other's signals" (8). When Magda questions why she has not left the isolated farm on which she lives, she wonders if it is not because the farm is "a landscape of symbol … in limitless space, in endless time" (12). In other words, time on the farm can be understood as mythical, rather than chronological, time. She wonders whether she, "the true deepdown I beyond words," has not simply participated in the drama of her life "by simply being present at a moment in time, a point in space, at which a block of violence, followed by a block of scrubbing, for the sake of the servants, rattled past on their way from nowhere to nowhere" (16). J Hillis Miller's analysis of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is pertinent to Coetzee's conception of temporality in this text.

Miller argues that Faulkner's mode of narration suggests that human temporality "consists of blocks of language that register what is 'out there' from different temporal and spatial points" (2003: 93). He suggests that "the events of the story … seem to hover somewhere in perpetual simultaneity, going on being repeated over and over, waiting to be partially recited in one or another of the blocks of narrative" (93). Magda's narration suggests a similar temporal movement. Her ruminations imply that her history can be viewed as events playing themselves out according to some predetermined pattern that repeats itself endlessly, reinforcing her notion of mythical time (even Hendrik's grave "is marked out for him in the graveyard", 24). When Magda contemplates her father's life, she does so in terms that reflect her notion of time as cyclical, made of up rituals: "Who would think that out of rituals like these he could string together day after day, week after week, month after month, and, it would seem, year after year?" (31) For her father, however, time is conventional and sequential – when she is restricted to her room with a migraine attack, she compares her life to that of her father's after he has begun an affair with Klein-Anna: "I lie here involved in cycles of time, outside the true time of the world, while my father and Hendrik's wife travel their arrow-straight paths" (36). Magda associates her father's time with the depredations of colonization and patriarchy; it is this that allows him to seduce their servant's wife with impunity. It is ironic that his time is also the 'true time of the world,' associating conventional time with the history of colonization and patriarchy, one that is countered by her 'mythical' time.

At the end of the novel, Magda contemplates the more conventional history she could have created for herself – "hymns I could have written but did not because (I thought) it was too easy" (139). She chooses, instead, a narrative that, rather than supplementing history, rivals it, in the processing creating "its own paradigms and myths" (Coetzee, 1988b: 2). In doing so, she creates a time of wholeness and fraternity, as opposed to her father's time, which is precisely the same as the time of Empire in *Waiting for the Barbarians* – a time that is warped and unnatural, and which locates its existence "not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe" (1980: 133). Magda's narrative demonstrates the consequences of such a time, one in which relations with others are invariably fractured and fragmented. Her 'speculative histories,' by contrast, create a time of connectedness and belonging; Kriz comments that Magda realises that "the unlimited imaginative power that attends the gap

between language and the world can create the potential for reciprocity" (2020: 3). Choosing a narrative that rivals history is what enables Magda to disrupt the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy that define her life on the farm.

3. 'Spots of Time': The interweaving of memories in *Boyhood* and *Youth*

In 'The Autobiographical Pact,' in his seminal work *On Autobiography*, Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography as "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (1989: 4). He argues that

> As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are referential texts [which] claim to provide information about a 'reality' exterior to the text, and so to submit to a test of verification. […] All referential texts thus entail what I would call a "referential pact" implicit or explicit, in which are included a definition of the field of the real that is invoked and a statement of the modes and the degrees of resemblance to which the text lays claim. (1989: 22)

Paulina Grzęda notes that Susan Friedman goes further in her definition in arguing that "what guarantees the fixity of boundaries of the autobiographical genre is the concept of individuality based on the assumption that the autobiographical self constitutes a distinct, fixed and stable entity" (2012: 85). In its interweaving of facts and fictional elements, and its elusive, unstable autobiographical subject, Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy of *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2003) and *Summertime* (2009) does not conform to these conventions. Instead, it reconceives the autobiographical discourse as one that foregrounds the inherent fictionality of *all* texts. I will argue that, in *Boyhood* and *Youth*, Coetzee's life is imaginatively reconstructed in a way that attempts to elucidate key moments of his childhood and youth. The memoirs suggest that his childhood and youth are shaped to a significant degree by the politics of growing up in South Africa at a particular time in its history. Coetzee's representation of place is inextricably entwined with the complexities of time and history. His textual strategies underscore these complexities. Grzęda argues that "It is through Coetzee's formal experimentation, through the author's radical disruption of the discourses of the autobiographical genre … rather than through his works' substance, that Coetzee manages to counteract established discourses" (77). Coetzee's narrative organisation, which underscores fragmentation and disconnectedness, is echoed in the texts' thematic concerns, and will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

In her wide-ranging discussion of autobiographies in South Africa over the past ten years, Anna Gagiano notes that most of the autobiographies that she mentions are socially and historically embedded in the fabric of South African life, and "Predictably, the historical-political frame most prominently featured in the texts is the apartheid system and resistance against it" (2009: 265). In a similar survey, Coullie and Meyer distinguish three major categories of auto/biographical writing in post-apartheid South Africa: "personal memoirs, accounts which reclaim portions of history or experience suppressed by the apartheid regime, and auto/biographies which focus on their subjects' attempts to adjust to a new political dispensation" (2012: 82). Like most autobiographical works by South Africans, South Africa's socio-historical context is a significant aspect of Coetzee's works.

The story in Coetzee's fictionalised memoirs is a spatial one, in which the intersecting axes of time and place weave together memories of alienation and belonging, connectedness and disconnectedness, fragmentation and wholeness. Despite Coetzee's frequent attempts to take a stance outside of politics, the question of place in South Africa during John's childhood and youth foregrounds its intensely political nature. Edward Said notes this in his characterisation of place: "Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography" (1993: 7).

Coetzee's three *autre*-biographical works, *Boyhood, Youth* and *Summertime,* were published in 2011 as one volume, entitled *Scenes from Provincial Life*. Angela Müller explains Coetzee's use of the term *autre*-biography as one which "expresses an estrangement of the speaking self toward the historical self. The comparison between *autre* (French for 'other') and *autos* (Greek for 'self') thus seems to distinguish two kinds of selves: one distanced from and one closer to the present self" (2016: 18). *Scenes from Provincial Life* describes the three works on the inside cover as being "a trilogy of fictionalised memoir." Coetzee has himself emphasized the fictional nature of his *autre*-biographical works – he described *Boyhood* and *Youth* as being "books of the memoir genre for which I claim no historical truthfulness and in which invention has been used freely" (cited in Kannemeyer 2012: 268).

My discussion of key moments in *Boyhood* and *Youth* will be framed with reference to a phrase from Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* "spots of time," in which I will argue that the

phrase is apposite in describing how Coetzee engages with and represents key moments in his life in *Boyhood* and *Youth*. In one of his earlier novels, *Foe*, Coetzee alludes to the importance of placing markers in the process of writing when the author Foe comments to Susan Barton that:

> In a life of writing books I have often, believe me, been lost in the maze of doubting. The trick I have learned is to plant a sign or marker in the ground where I stand, so that in my future wanderings I shall have something to return to, and not get worse lost than I am. (1992: 2)

In *Boyhood* and *Youth*, Coetzee plants a number of markers that indicate significant moments in his life. Nature and the link between nature and subjectivity are central themes, aspects which create affinities with Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Coetzee has commented that "I see no mark of Wordsworth's style of writing or style of thinking in my own work, yet Wordsworth is a constant presence when I write about human beings and their relations to the natural world" (cited in Smuts, 2015: 10). Teaching Wordsworth, and in particular *The Prelude*, "has had a significant impact on [Coetzee's] understanding of autobiography, on what it means to write autobiography" (10). Eckard Smuts argues that there is a facet of Coetzee's work – an extratextual, subjective reality that "has its roots in the Romantic heritage, and particularly in the Romantic belief that the reality of one's subjective experience forms the basis for what constitutes value in literary expression" (2015: 9). He argues that parts of Coetzee's work hinge on "a constant yearning for what has been left behind, namely a unified discoverable sense of self," and that this yearning is most keenly felt in John's descriptions in *Boyhood* of the family farm in the Karoo (9). The farm is a central theme in *Boyhood*; Coetzee emphasizes its significance in his critical writing as well. In *White Writing* he notes that "The farm … however regionally defined, is conceived as the sacral place where the soul can expand in freedom," and that it represents "the same intimation of a return to the true self and primitive moral sources that Wordsworth feels in returning to the dales and fells" (1988a: 180).

In Book XII of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth describes "spots of time" in his childhood, moments which he has imaginatively recreated from his past, and which sustain him through difficult or troubled times:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence – depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse – our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master – outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. **(**William Wordsworth *The Prelude* Book XXII (1805) [Lines 208-225]

I will argue that, while the intersections of place and time are often key indicators of alienation and dislocation for Coetzee in *Boyhood* and *Youth*, there are also moments – "spots of time" – where time and place intersect and create instances of belonging and connectedness that nourish and sustain his spirit.

The phrase "spots of time" can be understood in a number of ways. Michael Wiley argues that, "With rare exceptions, William Wordsworth uses the word "spot" to designate a geographical place," one that seems to emphasize a complex placedness (2015: 52). He notes that, when the word entered the language in 1200 CE, it meant "moral stain, blot … a stigma or disgrace," but that its semantic range expanded in time, so that, around 1400, it

included “A small space or extent of ground; a particular place or locality of limited extent” (52). While place is a key aspect of Wordsworth’s phrase, it is interwoven with the concept of time. Thomas Weiskel called Wordsworth’s “spots of time “the temporal, dynamic aspect of the “Wordsworthian moment” (1976: 175). Geoffrey Hartman expands on the temporal aspect of Wordsworth’s phrase, arguing that:

> If we derive the origin of the notion from Wordsworth’s attraction to specific place (the omphalos or spot syndrome), and notice that 'spot' is subtly used in two senses – as denoting particular *places* in nature, and fixed *points* in time (‘Islands in the unnavigable depth / Of our departed time) – the emphasis would fall on the initial word. But the natural pull of the phrase and the fact that these spots are not only *in* time, like islands, but also creative *of* time or of a vivifying temporal consciousness, throws the emphasis to the second noun and evokes a beaconing 'time-spot.' The concept is in any case very rich, fusing not only time and space but also stasis and continuity. (1971: 212, emphasis in original)

In a comparative analysis of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” and Emma Willard’s use of the phrase in her American school textbook, *Ancient Geography, as Connected with Chronology, and Preparatory to the Study of History* (1822) Jack Stillinger notes that Willard affirms the important role of maps in helping pupils learn and remember the events of history (1990: 70). In the textbook, Willard argues that some people find it very difficult to remember past events, while others are able to do so easily and with confidence that their recollections are accurate. The difference between the two, she suggests, is that the latter have acquired a habit “of associating with events the time and place in which they happened” (quoted in Stillinger, 70). Stillinger notes that, rather than confusing the pupils with too much information, Willard focuses on “eminences” – important events connected with each map:

> ... every person possessed of historical knowledge, must be sensible that there are in his mind certain points of time, from which, like eminences in a road, he can look abroad and discover the remarkable objects there existing together and that, were it otherwise, his knowledge would run into one confused mass. In this plan we erect these eminences for the pupil. […] We plant him as it were upon one of these spots

> of time; we detain him upon it till he has collected every important fact, and we oblige him to delineate it in a manner sensible to the eye, and giving him ever after a command of the whole at a single glance. (1824 ed., v – vii; quoted in Stillinger, 70)

Stillinger argues that, even though Willard could not have known about Wordsworth's use of the phrase "spots of time" in *The Prelude*, her use of the concept parallels the ways in which he used it. Stillinger also recalls Wordsworth's phrasing in Book III of *The Prelude*: "Points have we, all of us, within our Souls, / Where all stand single" (188 – 9). As in Wordsworth's earlier reference to "spots of time," the 'points' here suggest moments in our lives that are singularly significant in shaping our identity and subjectivity. Alan Richardson alludes to this when he comments on the ways in which the "spots of time" explain key moments in shaping the psyche. He argues that *The Prelude* "has its own tropes for explaining how early childhood experiences shape the psyche, and that one of Wordsworth's key tropes in this regard is embodied in the phrase 'spots of time'." According to Richardson, "spots of time" embodies experiences from early childhood that have a significant effect on the adult psyche, and the notion is central both to Wordsworth's autobiography and to how he represents the "growth of a poet's mind" (1988: 16).

Wiley elaborates on the ways in which place is complicated by time when the word "spot" is invoked. He argues that, "In Wordsworth's time, as now, the word often connotes spiritual, mental, bodily characteristics: a spot on one's face, on one's reputation, etc," but that Wordsworth "places these characteristics onto or into land" (2015: 52). Wiley proposes that Wordsworth's 'spots of time' implies "associative recursiveness and temporal complexity," and suggests Wordsworth's "interest in the interplay of the spatial and the temporal" (53). He argues that, in Wordsworth's 'spots of time,' "a single place, a single spot, has two (or more) appearances, depending on one's relation to it, one's distance from it in space and time" (53). He observes that the spots, which are "scattered everywhere" (1805 Prelude 11.275), "are as locatable in – and affected by … the 'distance of time' as 'distance in place'; and time, as Wordsworth represents it, is as much of the inward as the outward sense. The spots are explicitly more than places: they are time-places" (2015: 55). Wiley argues, however, that "If there were no more to the 'spots of time' than their physical

placedness … they would remain unremarkable. But in representing placedness as inseparable from the workings of time, Wordsworth shifts and shakes the ground" (55).

Place is a recurring theme in Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy, and is invariably interwoven with time. In an interview with Folke Rhedin, Coetzee commented on the profound significance of place: "I do believe that people can only be in love with one landscape in their lifetime. One can appreciate and enjoy many geographies, but there is only one that one feels in one's bones" ('J.M. Coetzee: Interview'; quoted in Attwell, 2015: 64). *Boyhood* suggests that the landscape that exerts the strongest pull on Coetzee is the dry, arid Karoo, home to the family farm, Voëlfontein; its representation in the text signifies his complex relation to South Africa. Coetzee's construction of place in *Boyhood* is a creative, performative act that brings particular places into being *as* places. Wordsworth's "spots of time" provides an apt analogy:

> Wordsworthian space is relational – figured by place-to-place relations – and … place (a spatial spot) also is relational, relating to itself over an extent of time. The places of [Wordsworth's] two "spots of time" occur in narrative time and, more to the point, in the shifting temporal perspectives of the narrator himself: that is, in his past childhood experience, in his past-to-present memory of that experience, and in his present consideration of the meaning of such experience. (Wiley, 2015: 57)

In a similar way, Coetzee's consideration of place in his childhood experiences reflects shifting temporal perspectives – as a combination of his representation of his past experiences with a present consideration of what those experiences meant.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Coetzee has commented that Dostoevsky's novels "are essentially scenic in construction" (2002: 147). *Boyhood, Youth* and *Summertime* are variously published with and without the sub-title "Scenes from Provincial Life," but in 2011, Harvill Secker republished a revised edition of the trilogy in one volume, entitled *J.M. Coetzee: Scenes from Provincial Life.* The reference to 'scenes' provides a verbal echo of Coetzee's comment about Dostoevsky's novels, and suggests that his (Coetzee's) books could be read in a comparable way.

Boyhood and *Youth* reflect feelings of both distance *and* intimacy in John's recollection of his past experiences, feelings that are echoed in John's evocation of place. The narrative method in *Boyhood* is unusual in an autobiography in that it is written in the third person and present tense. The third-person narration creates a *distancing* effect between the narrator and John, the protagonist of the story, but the use of the present tense creates a sense of immediacy and proximity, so that Coetzee's narrative style creates a contradictory simultaneity of both distance and proximity, intimacy and detachment (Kossew in Mehigan, 2011: 11). The narrative form also contributes to a sense of what Attwell refers to as Coetzee's "famed impersonality," which, he argues, is a deliberate effect whose purpose is to partially obscure the self (2015: 33). As Attwell notes, "The several 'Coetzees' of *Dusklands,* the 'JC' and 'Senor C' of *Diary,* 'John' of the autobiographies, 'John' in the stories in *Elizabeth Costello,* are all, in some measure, Coetzee himself" (32). These constructions hint at Coetzee's identity, but remain elusive. While there is a clear playfulness to Coetzee's identity games, the matter of his South African identity is also one that has entailed ambivalence and conflict; Coetzee's ongoing masking and unmasking of himself is related to a South African identity that is unsettled and troubled. Attwell contends that Coetzee's spoken English is neutral and "unlocatable," and that this feature is the result of Coetzee's preference for world culture over a local, provincial one (2015: 37). I would add that this feature accords with Coetzee's ambivalence over his South African identity – what Attwell calls "identity drift", neither one thing nor the other (2015: 41).

The third-person narration also displaces the usual subjective position associated with life-writing such as memoirs and autobiographies. The displacement distances the 'I' that writes from the subject being written about, allowing Coetzee to maintain a tone of both intimacy and ironic detachment, creating a shift into *autre*-biography rather than autobiography (Lenta in Mehigan, 2011: 6). Margaret Lenta argues that the effect of this shift is that the self is narrated as other (2011:10). Another important effect, however, is that it also enables the author to interrogate the authority of that 'I,' because, as Carrol Clarkson argues, "linguistic exigency dictates that writing cannot *but* imply an 'I' who writes" (2009: 21, emphasis in original). Clarkson argues that Coetzee's narrative method creates the sense of a dynamic interface between the writing and the written selves, while still "retain[ing] the suggestive hint that the character is not utterly distinct from the one who writes" (2009: 39).

In *Boyhood,* the narrative method undermines the usual authority associated with the subject position and underscores John's representation of himself as *constructed,* open to multiple readings. This complexity is emphasized in Coetzee's description of recalling the past and rewriting that past from a distance. His description of his 'first' memory is complicated by the different versions he gives, alluding to their possible fictiveness; yet they draw attention to instances that can be described as John's 'eminences' – moments from his childhood that have shaped the adult. The first two 'first' memories, in particular, foreground his empathy and sense of responsibility for those who are often marginalized and without a voice. This is evident in his representation of characters such as Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*, Michael K in *Life & Times of Michael K,* Vercueil in *Age of Iron* and the dead dogs in *Disgrace*.

In the first version of his earliest memory, John describes an incident where he is one day playing a game with two friends, Greenberg and Goldstein, in which he asks them to discuss their earliest memories. Greenberg refuses to play, but Goldstein relates a long story that John barely listens to, as the point of the game for him is to tell them about his own first memory. John relates a story about leaning out of the window from their flat in Johannesburg, and seeing a dog hit by a car. Immediately after telling the story, he begins to question its authenticity: "But is it true? Why was he leaning out of the window watching an empty street? Did he really see the car hit the dog? … Is it possible that he saw nothing but a dog dragging its hindquarters and made up the car and the driver and the rest of the story?" (2011: 26). He also has a memory that he does not share with his friends because it is a secret. He calls this "the other first memory": he is sitting in a bus with a sweet wrapper in his hand, and he throws it out the window and watches it fly up into the sky (27). He is concerned about what will happen to the wrapper, commenting that "He thinks all the time about the scrap of paper, alone in all that vastness, that he abandoned when he should not have abandoned it" (27). The memory is such a poignant one that he thinks that he must go back and find it, that it is his duty and that "he may not die until he has done it" (27). This memory is echoed later in *Boyhood*, when, at Aunt Annie's funeral, where there are only five mourners present, he feels the responsibility of remembering her, a woman who evokes feelings of repugnance in the young John – when she is taken to hospital, her toenails are described as being "as long and black as birdclaws" (1998: 115). He does not like being around her; in the hospital he wants "to be gone, to be out of this place and never to come

back" (116). However, at her funeral he feels the responsibility of giving her a voice weighing on him:

> … and now Aunt Annie is lying in the rain waiting for someone to find the time to bury her. He alone is left to do the thinking. How will he keep them all in his head, all the books, all the people, all the stories? And if he does not remember them, who will? (1998: 166)

Later, John recounts another 'first' memory, "His very first memory, earlier than the dog, earlier than the scrap of paper," of his mother's breasts, speculating that he must have hurt them when he was a baby, because she now pointedly denies them to him (31). John's discussion of different memories, each labelled his 'first' one, disrupts the memoir's temporal flow by forcing the reader to shift her apprehension of the memories.

Coetzee's narrative method, which creates a contradictory sense of distance and intimacy, is echoed in the representation of place in both *Boyhood* and *Youth*, entailing both deep-rooted belonging and acute alienation. While marginalisation and dislocation are key characteristics of his representation of South Africa, the Karoo landscape evokes an intense and deeply felt connection to the land. Attwell suggests that, for Coetzee, "*place* is experienced as both rooted and agonistic" (2008: 230, emphasis in original). This contradictory representation of place is explored in detail in *Boyhood*, but its genesis is also referenced in J.C. Kannemeyer's biography of Coetzee.

Kannemeyer cites a note that Coetzee made about all the places he had lived in during his early years, commenting that the list reveals "what an exceptionally nomadic existence" the young Coetzee led (2012: 34). Kannemeyer's chronicle of these places does indeed show a remarkable unsettledness. Coetzee was born in Mowbray, Cape Town, in 1940, but shortly thereafter the family moved to Victoria West in the Great Karoo for three months, then to a small town called Warrenton in the Northern Cape, then back to Mowbray for two months, then to Prince Albert for another two months. After this they moved to Johannesburg for a few years, then back to Prince Albert for a while, then to Voëlfontein to stay with his paternal grandparents, then they moved to a beach hut in Plettenberg Bay for ten months. It was while John, his younger brother David and their mother Vera were living there that

John's father Jack returned from the war in 1945. After this they went back to Voëlfontein for another two months, then moved to John's aunt and her husband's farm Skipperskloof near Williston (Kannemeyer, 2012: 35). The family then moved to a military camp in Pollsmoor, and in 1946 John attended his first school, Pollsmoor Primary School. Shortly thereafter the family moved into a house in Rosebank, Cape Town, where John attended Rosebank Junior School. However, by 1949, his father had lost his job and the family had to move to Worcester into a housing project called Reunion Park (2012: 44). By the end of 1951 the family was able to move back to Cape Town, first to Plumstead, then later to Rondebosch, where they settled down. (2012: 62).

Boyhood is set during the period in South Africa's history that coincides with the rise and entrenchment of apartheid. The family farm, Voëlfontein, epitomises the ways in which state-sanctioned divisions played out in ordinary life under apartheid and thus plays a key role in elucidating the ambiguities and contradictions of place for John. In *White Writing*, Coetzee suggests that there are two parts to the wilderness: firstly, it is "a world where the law of nature reigns," and secondly, it is "a place where the true ground of one's being could be rediscovered" (44). These conceptions of the wilderness both manifest in *Boyhood* through the centrality of Voëlfontein in John's life.

Tim Cresswell suggests the significant role that place plays in our lives when he argues that "Looking at the world as a set of places in some way separate from each other is both an act of defining what exists (ontology) and a particular way of seeing and knowing the world (epistemology and metaphysics)" (2004: 15). Tracing the genealogy of place, Cresswell shows how, from the 1970s, humanist geographers began to view place as a "universal and transhistorical part of the human condition"; what interested humanists was the idea of place as a "concept and way of being-in-the-world" (19). Yu Fu Tuan, for example, argued that we get to know the world through our experience of places (1974: 4). For Cresswell, "place as dwelling … is a spiritual and philosophical endeavour that unites the natural and human worlds" (2004: 22). He adds that "[h]ome is an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness. Home … is seen as a centre of meaning and a field of care" (24). Edward Relph refers to an aspect of place that resonates with *Boyhood* and *Youth.* He distinguishes between insideness and outsideness in the human experience of place: "To be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you

are the stronger is the identity with the place" (1976: 44). At the other extreme, "existential outsideness involves the alienation from place which is the antithesis of an unreflective sense of belonging that comes from being an existential insider" (44). Coetzee alludes to this sense of existential outsideness when he comments: "*how truly unfortunate that my life will not express a happier meaning – the unthinkable contentment, for example, of a settled people in love with the land"* (Coetzee Papers, *HC,* in Atwell, 2015: 64 emphasis in the original).

Like Cresswell and Tuan, Relph also emphasizes the significance of place to one's being when he argues that "we experience the world through and in place. And perhaps it is because place is so primal to human existence that it becomes such a powerful political force in its socially constructed forms" (50). The unsettledness of John's early years and his mother's experiences at a time in their lives when they were particularly vulnerable reinscribe the importance of place. It is particularly bitter for John's mother to visit Voëlfontein; during the war, "when they were living on a share of a lance corporal's pay, too poor to buy butter or tea," John's (paternal) grandmother denied them a home – a situation that shamed his father when he returned (2011: 32).

In its construction and representation of place, *Boyhood* embodies both the primal significance of place, as well as the existential alienation it evokes in him. Coetzee's representation of Worcester fuses time and place – his life in Worcester is characterized by torment, suffering and anguish, so that John's assessment of his childhood is that it is a time of his life "to somehow get beyond," because "Nothing he experiences in Worcester, at home or at school, leads him to think that childhood is anything but a time of gritting the teeth and enduring" (Coetzee, 2011: 12). He comments that "perhaps Worcester is a purgatory one must pass through. Perhaps Worcester is where people are sent to be tested" (29). Memories of Worcester are scattered throughout the text, and while they are almost overwhelmingly negative, the picture that emerges of John's time in Worcester is a complex one, because it is also a place from which he seems to draw inspiration in his writing. In Worcester, John experienced life in a more primal way, in which there were new revelations every day of the "cruelty and pain and hatred raging beneath the everyday surface of things" (117). He knew that he was too young to be exposed to such things, but "the passion and fury of those Worcester days gripped him; he was shocked but he was greedy to see more"

(118). While Cape Town is often represented in *Boyhood* as being the antithesis of Worcester – John refers to Rosebank, where they lived previously, as "the house with the great oak tree in the front garden where he was happy" (2011: 62) – his representation of it also demonstrates the contradictions of place. When they leave Worcester to go back to Cape Town, to live in the suburb of Plumstead, John feels that "he is wasting his time" because "[s]chool is no longer a place where great passions are aired. It is a shrunken little world, a more or less benign prison in which he might as well be weaving baskets" (18). The realization that "Cape Town is not making him cleverer, it is making him stupider" causes him to panic, because "whoever the true 'I' is that ought to be rising out of the ashes of his childhood, is not being allowed to be born, is being kept puny and stunted" (18). This feeling is felt most keenly in one of his teacher's – Mr Whelan's – class. Mr Whelan teaches English, but John's writing makes no impression on him, because it seems that boys with English names are favoured. For John, writing for Mr Whelan "is not like stretching your wings; on the contrary, it is like huddling in a ball, making oneself as small and inoffensive as one can" (118). He is bored and frustrated by having to write for Mr Whelan, and if it were not for him, he would write "something darker, something that, once it began to flow from his pen, would spread across the page out of control, like spilt ink" (118).

In *Boyhood,* John experiences a number of moments that are especially significant because of how alienated he often feels from his environment. The theme of being different and an outsider is a recurring one in the memoir. John's inclinations often seem contrary to others' – and set him apart from them. One example is his childhood preference for the Russians over the Americans. He refers to this as "a secret so dark that he can reveal it to no one" (23). The year, 1947, is significant because it was the start of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective allies, and also when John's passion for the Russians was at its height. John notes that "Liking the Russians is a serious matter. It can have you ostracized. It can have you sent to jail" (23). John refers to a box of drawings that he kept in his cupboard, in which he depicted Russian forces as superior to those of the Americans – shooting their planes out of the sky and sinking their ships. John is proud of himself for remaining loyal to the Russians during that year, "when a wave of enmity against the Russians suddenly burst out on the radio and everyone had to take sides" (23). In his later recollection of that moment, he is proud that he retained "loyalty to himself as he was when he did the drawings" (23). John's comment underscores the shifting temporal

perspectives of the narrator, and demonstrates how his reconstruction of his childhood memory impacts on his adult psyche.

At his new school in Worcester, John chooses Roman Catholic as his religion (he is given a choice of Christian, Roman Catholic or Jew); this is another example of how his instincts alienate him from the majority. The decision, he says, is made on the spur of the moment, as his family does not practice religion. So when he is asked, he chooses Roman Catholic because of Rome – "because of Horatius and his two comrades, swords in their hands, crested helmets on their heads, indomitable courage in their glance, defending the bridge over the Tiber against the Etruscan hordes" (18). This decision causes him numerous problems – the other Catholic boys harass him at school with questions about why he does not come to catechism classes, and the Afrikaner boys bully him as they do the boys who are Jewish. John regrets his decision, would like to say that he is Christian if he is given the chance to change his mind. Nevertheless, he does not regret it entirely, feeling that the two free periods a week when the Christian boys have gone to assembly make up for the problems his decision caused.

John's attitude towards being caned at school is another aspect of his life about which he is ashamed. While the other boys are regularly beaten, and even have stories about the teachers and their canes – John comments that "Every teacher at his school, man or woman, has a cane and is at liberty to use it. Each of these canes has a personality, a character, which is known to the boys and talked about endlessly" – John cannot take part in the conversations because he has no experience of being caned: "The very idea of being beaten makes him squirm with shame. There is nothing he will not do to save himself from it" (7). He feels that if he is ever called out to be caned he would create a scene that would be so humiliating that he would never be able to go back to school again, and that "in the end there will be no way out but to kill himself" (7).

He likes the things that set him apart – the fact that he wears shoes, takes books out from the public library and stays home from school when he has a cold. At the same time he is angry with his mother "for not having normal children and making them live a normal life ... for turning him into something unnatural, something that needs to be protected if it is to continue to live" (8). This sentiment resonates with Coetzee's comment in *Doubling the*

Point, that "He is trying to find a capsule in which he can live," alluding to his sense of estrangement from others and the need to find a space in which to live where he can feel at ease *(*1992:393). In a striking description of himself as a spider in a hole he comments:

> Always, it seems, there is something that is wrong. Whatever he wants, whatever he likes, has sooner or later to be turned into a secret. He begins to think of himself as one of those spiders that live in a hole in the ground sealed with a trapdoor. Always the spider has to be scuttling back into its hole, closing the trapdoor behind it, shutting out the world, hiding" (2011: 24).

In the light of this acute sense of alienation, moments in the memoir where he experiences feelings to the contrary are significant. An experience with two school friends demonstrates that, despite his overall bleak assessment of himself and his relationships with others, there are moments of connection and camaraderie in his childhood. One such moment is an event where he is playing cricket with Greenberg and Goldstein but, when it gets too dark to see the ball properly, they have wrestling fights. This memory is a joyful one, where John thinks that "I have never been happier in my life. I would like to be with Greenberg and Goldstein forever" (2011: 22). Another such moment occurs during the June holidays when John is ten and goes camping with a Scout troop to which he belongs. One day they go swimming in the Breede River and John, who comments that "he does not actually know how to swim," has to swim across the river and back. He manages to "somehow splash across" to the other side, but on the way back he is too tired and stops swimming (14). He cannot stand and does not have the strength to continue swimming, and sinks into the water. His next memory is of lying on the riverbank with his troop leader, Michael, having rescued him. John is filled with joy that Michael, older and far more accomplished than him (by comparison to Michael he says that he is "negligible"), noticed him and noticed that he was in difficulty in the water, and "risked his own life to plunge back into the river and rescue him" (14). John comments that "It would have been quite appropriate for Michael not to have seen him go under, even not to have missed him until they got back to camp" (15). For John, the incident is of enormous significance, and "From that day onward he knows there is something special about him. He should have died but he did not. Despite his unworthiness, he has been given a second life. He was dead but is alive" (15).

Another moment of connection with others occurs on the two family farms, one at Voëlfontein, during September – spring, "the best time to visit the Karoo" (1998: 92) – and the other at Skipperskloof. September at Voëlfontein is when the sheep are sheared, a special ritual on the farm. For John it is a time of great excitement, and he too is given tasks to assist with the shearing. The shearers are considered special people, and it is good luck when they come to the farm. With his younger brother and cousin, Agnes, a few months older than him, and her sister, who are visiting from the Skipperskloof farm, John experiences much happiness – the four of them jump up and down on the bales of hay, "giggling and cavorting as if in a huge featherbed" (93). John recounts an experience with Agnes when he was seven and they had been invited to the Skipperskloof farm. It was a place "not at all like Voëlfontein; he did not want to be there" (94). Nevertheless, when Agnes shows him around the farm and they go for a walk in the veld, "in the middle of nowhere," John has a rare and profound moment of kinship and ease with someone else – when he and Agnes "began to talk […] He lost his reserve. As he spoke he forgot what language he was speaking: thoughts simply turned to words within him, transparent words" (1998: 94). John comments that he could not remember what he said to Agnes that day, but that he "told her everything, everything he did, everything he knew, everything he hoped for" (94). The experience is significant for John because it is very different from his relationship with everyone else, that in her company he experiences "easy generosity, [a] sense of being understood at last, of not having to pretend" (95).

The unsettled nature of John's early years may account for the centrality of the farm in his life, but the farm also represents something more complex than simply a sense of belonging. It also represents a way of being in the world that privileges nature and the natural world, and that offers a deeply personal perspective of man's place in it. In Coetzee's works there is a strong ethos of caring for the earth and a joyous sense of gratitude for its bounty. This is particularly evident in his 1983 Booker Prize-winning novel, *Life & Times of Michael K*. In a review, Nadine Gordimer critiques the novel for its lack of engagement with South Africa's struggle against apartheid, noting that the victims of apartheid are depicted as passive and that the novel seems to espouse "A revulsion against all political and revolutionary solutions" (1984: 3). However, she notes that, for Coetzee, a more compelling consideration seems to be a position outside of political doctrine, and that for him, this is rooted in a connection to the land, in "the idea of gardening." She argues that "Coetzee has

been drawing upon the strength of the earth to keep his deceptively passive protagonist … alive" (4). In *Michael K*, attending to and caring for the earth are ends in themselves. Coetzee clarifies his position, which Attwell cites from his notebooks: "I wanted there to be at least one gardener throughout. Who did not hoe and plant in order that a war should be won and he should be free to garden but because the earth called to be hoed and planted" (2015: 144). This ethic is expressed in *Boyhood* in John's love of the farm, exemplified in the reverence with which he describes the land and its produce.

In Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy, John's comments about South Africa are often disparaging and critical, such as his comment in *Youth* that he wants to leave South Africa "so that he can breathe." At the same time, however, his representation of the Karoo landscape seems to manifest the sentiments expressed in the interview quoted earlier, that "people can only be in love with one landscape in their lifetime." John's feelings about Voëlfontein stress his attachment and connection to the land – he comments in *Boyhood* that "The secret and sacred word that binds him to the farm is *belong"* (1998: 95, emphasis in original) and "Belonging to the farm is his secret fate, a fate he was born into but embraces gladly" (1998: 96). Coetzee's evocation of the farm in *Boyhood* creates a sense of place that suggests a profound and deep-rooted attachment to the South African landscape. Some of the most memorable and striking prose in *Boyhood* concerns his relation to Voëlfontein. As John notes, "Through the farms he is rooted in the past; through the farms he has substance" (22).

This comment resonates with Jeff Malpas's contention that the relation between humans and place is primary, and that it constitutes our way of being-in-the-world (1999:35). John's description of himself as having two mothers and being twice-born – "born from woman and born from the farm" (1998: 96) – suggests a profound bond. His feelings for the farm are in stark contrast to his experience of other places while growing up. Much of *Boyhood* is a bleak account of Coetzee's childhood years. Part of this bleakness is related to its setting; the housing estate outside Worcester is described as barren and as a place where the wind always blows, where there are ants, flies and plagues of fleas (1998: 34). Even getting a haircut in Worcester is unpleasant – as John comments, "There are proper haircuts and then there are haircuts one suffers in Worcester" (38). Worcester is also particularly loathsome for what John calls the rage and resentment of the Afrikaans boys. Characterising his

childhood in his notebook, Coetzee drew upon an equally dismissive image of Cape Town: "Deformation. My life as deformed, year after year, by South Africa. Emblem: the deformed trees on the golf links in Simonstown" (Coetzee Papers, *Boyhood,* 11 May 1993, in Attwell, 2015: 28). Nevertheless, despite this bleak assessment of his childhood, Attwell argues that it is also the very distinctiveness of the emblem that gave Coetzee a basis for affirmation in the writing of his memoirs (2015: 28).

By contrast to the miseries of Worcester, the young John in *Boyhood* narrates that he is never happier than when he is listening to the stories of his mother and his uncles about their childhood on the farm (1998: 22). It is on the farm that he experiences deep exuberance and joy. For him, "farms are places of freedom, of life" and "there is no place on earth he loves more or can imagine loving more" (79). He says that "he loves every stone of it, every bush, every blade of grass" and that "it is not conceivable that another person could love the farm as he does" (80). The produce is spoken of in a tone of reverence, as "blessed," and the landscape is likewise described in terms of deep affection: "the beloved landscape of ochre and grey and fawn and olive-green" (90). Attwell comments that the Karoo inspires strong feelings "because the life it sustains is so elemental, because of its exquisite sunsets and, above all, because it is so silent" (2015: 65). Smuts links John's feelings for the farm to the Romantic sense of kinship with nature, commenting that "The affinity that Coetzee's autobiographical protagonist feels for the environment of the Karoo farm, and the spectre of a more fully realized subjective identity that it evokes, draws quite strongly on the English Romantic literary ideal of achieving a unified sense of self through creative acts of identification with the natural environment" (2015: 9). He suggests that Coetzee's affiliation with the Romantics can be seen in his evocation of the farm, when "the younger self experiences those moments of cosmic affiliation that are so suggestive of Romantic rapport with the natural environment" (13).

Coetzee's affection for the South African landscape is evident elsewhere. In "Remembering Texas," Coetzee recalls a conversation with an Indian friend from his days in England, in which they discussed the Surrey countryside: they agreed that it meant nothing to either of them (1992: 51). From his friend's descriptions of America, he had expected to find the American landscape more congenial, but on arriving there he found no difference: he was as alienated from the landscape as he had been in Surrey (1992: 52). What he missed, he

says, “seemed to be a certain emptiness, empty earth and empty sky, to which South Africa had accustomed [him]” (1992: 52).

Despite John’s deep affection for the farm, it is, however, also inextricably tied to its setting – apartheid South Africa – and John’s feelings for the farm are complicated by the history of land ownership in South Africa. In the same way that, in its earliest usage, a ‘spot’ can be a moral stain or blot, in Coetzee’s representation of land in *Boyhood*, these characteristics are also projected onto the land. Apartheid’s race-based inequalities recur throughout *Boyhood*. One day on a walk with his mother, John sees a coloured boy approaching. He marvels at the boy, whose body is “perfect and unspoiled,” and who is “light as a deer and innocent,” but he knows that, despite the boy’s natural beauty and physical superiority to him, the boy “is a living reproof to him” as the boy “is nevertheless subjected to him in ways that embarrass him so much that he squirms and wriggles his shoulders and does not want to look at him any longer, despite his beauty” (1998: 51-52). He knows that if his mother wanted to, she could at any time call out to him and order him to do whatever she wanted. The injustice is troubling to John, as he notes that, among the people called coloured are those who are and have always been rooted in the land, for “Not only do they come with the land, the land comes with them, is theirs, has always been” (52). For his birthday he takes three friends out for dessert as a treat, commenting that “the occasion would be a marvellous success, were it not spoiled by the ragged Coloured children standing at the window looking at them” (61). He knows that it would be easy to get them to leave – all he would have to do would be to ask the café’s owner to chase them away, but he cannot bring himself to explain that the reason he wants them gone is that they are spoiling his birthday, that “it hurts [his] heart to see them” (61-2). Another incident that John records is when they were living in Rosebank, and a seven-year old boy named Eddie (just a few months older than him) came to work for them. After two months he ran away, but was caught and later beaten by one of their lodgers. He remembers owing a debt to Eddie, as it was he who had taught him to ride a bicycle. After Eddie’s punishment, he is sent back home to Ida Valley. When he asks his mother what will happen to Eddie, her reply is that “People like that always end up in a reformatory, and then in jail” (64). He understands that the cruelty and injustice of Eddie’s life are related to his race, and wonders, if he and Eddie passed each other in the street one day, if Eddie would, “despite all his drinking and dagga-smoking, despite all the jail and all the hardening, recognize him and stop and shout “*Jou moer!”* (65,

emphasis in original). John evokes here the future reckoning for the historical legacy of apartheid (a theme he returns to in *Summertime*), commenting later that "he knows that Eddie is thinking of him. In the dark Eddie's eyes are two narrow slits. One thing he knows for sure: Eddie will have no pity on him" (65).

The history of land ownership in South Africa is pertinent in *Boyhood*. With the promulgation of the 1913 Natives' Land Act, thousands of black families were dispossessed of their land by the government: Coetzee notes that, because of this history of land dispossession, in the early phase of Afrikaans poetry, the task of the writer was to "find evidences of a 'natural' bond between *volk* and *land*, that is to say, to naturalise the *volk's* possession of the land" (1988a: 61, emphasis in original). The South African landscape in *Boyhood*, and the Karoo in particular, can be compared to what Coetzee describes in *White Writing* as dream topographies. In the South African pastoral, or *plaasroman*, there are two dream topographies: a conception of the land as "a network of boundaries criss-crossing the surface of the land, marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom"; and a "rival dream topography," which conceives of South Africa as vast, empty and ancient, a place which will remain unchanged "long after man has passed from its face" (1988a: 6 – 7). The conception of South Africa as marked by vast emptiness is a widespread trope in writing about the topic, but Coetzee's representation of the landscape in *Boyhood* consistently challenges and undermines pastoral discourse. Coetzee argues that, under a conception of Africa in terms of the "rival dream topography," the challenge is not to domesticate the landscape, but rather to find a way in which consciousness can relate to it (7). He notes that South African conditions, which are generally dry, are completely different to the moistness of English conditions, and that these differences are echoed in material culture and outlook (43). The differences between landscapes raise problems of representation for European writers. Coetzee refers particularly to places like the Karoo, which is flat and arid, and says that the problem of representation is one of "finding enough in the landscape to fill the painting or the poem; or … of finding an art form responsive to 'empty' country" (49). Linked to these differences, Coetzee points out that, in pastoral writing, the landscape also plays a role in how people are represented and imagined, so that "people who grow up in hilly, rugged surroundings are independent, strong and high-minded," but people who grow up in places where the land is flat – "monotonous plains" – are associated with squalidness and brutality, because "mere space … prostrates, rather than sustains, the mind" (60).

Boyhood eloquently challenges these pastoral stereotypes with its lyrical descriptions of the landscape. John's intense love for the farm parallels that of Michael K in *Life & Times of Michael K*, whose experience of the farm is one of profound joy: "His deepest pleasure came at sunset when he turned open the cock at the damn wall and watched the stream of water run […] There were times… when a fit of exultation would pass through him at the thought that he, alone and unknown, was making this deserted farm bloom" (1983: 59). When Michael K brings water up from the well, "it seemed to him a miracle" (60), and he "breathed into his lungs the clear sweet smell of water brought up from inside the earth. It intoxicated him, he could not have enough of it" (115).

The question, for Coetzee, is whether the South African landscape can be articulated in a European language, or whether it remains unresponsive to it (1988a: 167). Coetzee suggests that the pattern about writing about the South African landscape that emerges is that it is resistant to European language, that there is "the burden of finding a home in Africa for a consciousness formed in and by a language whose history lies on another continent" (173). Traditionally, in the pastoral novel, labour humanises the landscape, but the African landscape "remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it" (7). Whether this is possible by people of European descent is not clear. Coetzee suggests that the inability of pastoral writing in South Africa to speak about Africa in an authentic way – "the true language of Africa" – is "a failure to imagine a peopled landscape, an inability to conceive a society in South Africa in which there is a place for the self. The literature of empty landscape … is thus a literature of failure, of the failure of the historical imagination" (9). He goes on to argue that "The literature of white pastoral marks off for itself, and defends, a territory 'outside' of history where the disturbing realities of land and labour can be bracketed off " (9). Historically, pastoral art in the West exemplified the opposition between virtues and vice – virtues associated with the garden, such as simplicity and peace, against the vices of the city, such as competitiveness and luxury (3). It also depicts the opposition between the garden that blooms and the one that decays (3). Coetzee argues that, in South Africa, pastoral art fulfils both these functions, but South Africa's colonial history complicates the ways in which the pastoral is portrayed, particularly in relation to the question of labour. To claim the primacy of rural life, the pastoral has to portray labour, but because of its colonial history, it has to portray white labour to justify white settlers' claim to the land (5). Black labour becomes occluded – "the

black man becomes a shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then" (Coetzee, 1988a: 5). Indeed, an inherent feature of the South African pastoral is that it is blind to the colour black (5). The issue of labour is one way in which *Boyhood* undercuts the traditional South African pastoral novel. Black labour is foregrounded in numerous instances, particularly in the embarrassment and angst that it causes John.

In *White Writing* Coetzee argues that, in the first dream topography, the family farm is ruled by a benevolent patriarch whose right to the land is unquestioned, and whose legacy will live on in his sons in perpetuity. Smit-Marais and Wentzel argue that in *Disgrace*, Coetzee challenges this 'dream topography' and exposes it "as a cultural construct associated with a history of patriarchal and colonial domination" (2006: 26); *Boyhood* similarly challenges the 'dream topography' of the Afrikaner's unquestioned claim to the land in John's implicit feeling that the farm labourers, Ros and Freek, belong to the farm in ways that are more authentic than the Coetzees. Despite their subordinate positions, he feels that Ros and Freek belong more securely to the farm than he does, that for them, the Karoo is their home, while the Coetzees are "like swallows, seasonal, here today, gone tomorrow … short-lived" (1998: 87).

Attwell argues that Coetzee's work implies that the divisions engendered by colonial relations are "both fixed and disabling" (2015: 219), regardless of how much one may want it to be otherwise. This is evident in *Boyhood*, where the farm is represented as a space inscribed by fixed colonial relations of deference and submissiveness between the farm labourers and the owners. Coetzee argues in *White Writing* that the labour of the black man is often an embarrassing silence in the Afrikaner 'dream topography.' In an observation on South Africa's apartheid political geography, the poet Jeremy Cronin noted that: "It is no easy feat to maintain the indigenous and overwhelming majority as excluded 'foreigners,' while simultaneously including them for their much-needed labour" (1987: 9). In *Boyhood*, the workers' labour is foregrounded in detailed descriptions that disturb the young John's farm idyll, and that question the family's claim to land. John is frequently mortified by relationships with the coloured farm workers that are marked by the disconcerting deference of adults towards him. He finds it "deeply embarrassing" being called "*die kleinbaas*" and having to watch one of the workers, Tryn, on her knees washing his clothes. He tries to avoid replicating the master-servant relationship with the workers, but even the language he

speaks seems complicit in maintaining these relationships of deference, so that, with Ros and Freek, he "has to speak tortuously constructed sentences to avoid calling them *jy* when they call him *kleinbaas*" (86). The Afrikaans term '*jy*' would usually be used in conversation with someone on the same social level as you, and would not be conventionally appropriate for a child to use towards an adult, hence John's discomfort with using it. The alternative would be to refer to someone as *u,* but this would not be appropriate either as it would sound overly formal in the context, so John attempts to avoid its usage altogether, ironically making the exchanges between him and the farm workers even more strained. Much as John loves being on the farm, it is also a place of conflict because of South Africa's history.

Places of conflict, and the conflict of place, are also significant in *Youth,* the second instalment of the trilogy. I will focus on four narrative strands in *Youth,* and will argue that place and time are foregrounded in all of them. Firstly, I will consider how John's development as an artist is represented, arguing that his development as an artist is intimately connected with place. Secondly, I will discuss John's contradictory and ambivalent relationship to South Africa. I will focus here on his deliberate estrangement from his family, particularly his mother, and the politics of growing up in apartheid South Africa. Then I will discuss his negotiation of the intricacies of language and his relationship to Afrikaans. Finally, I will discuss his experiences in London, the place he has chosen to enact his transformation into an artist.

The workings of art, and becoming an artist, are central themes in *Youth*; the novel-memoir can be described as a künstlerroman. Rita Barnard argues that, for Coetzee, the artist's subjectivity is a matter of performance, and involves making choices about which positions to occupy and which memories to invoke. She refers to an essay from *Giving Offense* in which Coetzee depicts the self as a zoo "in which multiple beasts have residence, and over which the anxious overworked zookeeper of rationality exercises a rather limited control" (2009:88). In this analogy, Coetzee argues that the beasts have different roles: "some of the beasts have names … others are memories or fragments of memories in transmuted form, with strong elements of feeling attached to them; a whole subcolony are semitaimed but still treacherous earlier versions of the self, each with an inner zoo of its own over which it has less than complete control" (Coetzee 1996: 37). The creative process, Coetzee argues, entails "managing these inner selves, making them work for one" (38). The identity that

Coetzee claims in *Youth* is that of an artist, and the sufferings he experiences are necessitated by his chosen vocation. He feels that it is through "the light of art" that the "fire that burns within him" (2002: 3) will be revealed and that he will be liberated from his suffering.

In a discussion of Coetzee's representation of art, Derek Attridge argues that his exploration of art carries with it the implicit understanding that artists cannot be expected to explain or rationalise what they do (2010: 33). He refers to *Elizabeth Costello* and suggests that in the last chapter, entitled 'At the Gate,' Coetzee comes closest to an account of the workings of art. Elizabeth is forced to give an account of what she believes in to a panel of judges. Her attempts to answer are met unsympathetically. She is forced to repeatedly question her own assumptions, which leads her to a tentative formulation – she decides to try a test that she does when she is writing, which is "to send out a word into darkness and listen for what kind of sound comes back" (2003: 219). The sound that comes back will be either "healthy" or "cracked" (2003:219), and in this way she will know whether what she has written is true. Attridge refers to another instance in which Coetzee alludes to the sources of art in his Nobel Prize Lecture, *He and His Man* (2010: 34), in which he (Coetzee) writes: "those are words he would not think of. Only when he yields himself up to this man of his do such words come" (2003). Coetzee here intimates that one of the ways in which art works is by giving oneself up to the subjectivity of another and relinquishing control over one's own desire to control and shape a narrative. In the final section of the lecture, Coetzee writes that "If he must settle on a likeness for the pair of them, his man and he, he would write that they are like two ships sailing in contrary directions, one west, the other east" (PMLA, 2003: 552). According to Attridge, this final image suggests "the writer's necessary ignorance of the sources of his/her inspiration" (2010: 34).

In his essay 'What is a Classic,' Coetzee describes the first time he became aware of the power and force of art. He relates an incident when he was fifteen years old: one day, in the back garden of his home, he heard music from the neighbour's house. He describes the experience thus: "As long as the music lasted, I was frozen, I dared not breathe. I was being spoken to by the music as music had never spoken to me before" (1993b: 8). In trying to articulate the effect of the music on him (he had been listening to Bach), Coetzee says that

> … when the chain of sounds is realized in time, the building process ceases at a certain moment to be the mere linking of units; the units cohere as a higher-order object in a way that I can only describe by analogy as the incarnation of ideas of exposition, complication, and resolution that are more general than music. (9)

Coetzee's description of the music suggests the way in which chronological movement seems to be suspended in favour of a temporal mode that emphasizes simultaneous perception of the music – what Coetzee describes as "the incarnation of ideas" – rather than sounds unfolding in sequence. This echoes Frank's conception of spatial form in the novel, where "the reader is intended to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence" (1945: 223). Smitten, who locates the basis of spatial form in language, structure and reader perception (1981: 15) argues that for Frank, modern poetry "undermines the inherent consecutiveness of language," and this is done primarily through suppressing causal/temporal connectives" (17). The effect of this suppression is that "The reader must work out a syntax for the text," and in order to make sense of the text, "must discover for himself what connections are to be made among seemingly disconnected words" (17). Coetzee's description of the music suggests that at some point, the music becomes embodied as a whole, and that causal/temporal connectives become superfluous.

John's goal in art is to write poetry, but this ambition changes gradually to writing prose instead. He frames this change with reference to Henry James. What draws him to James's writing is its ability to dispense with the details that other writers use to ground their work in realism – as he notes, "People in James do not have to pay the rent; they certainly do not have to hold down jobs" (2002: 64); neither do they have to focus on the intricacies and subtleties of "conversations" and "exchanges of words" (65). It is this example that he tries to follow, but he finds that he cannot do it, that it is "like trying to make mammals fly" (64). John's inability to use James's work as a literary example is further stymied by his experience of London. He notes that, while James's sensibilities are certainly finer than his, he cannot disregard the exigencies of living in London, the place for which he left his homeland, a place that becomes "the city on whose grim cogs he is being broken" (65).

Youth at times portrays a comic struggle on John's part to make his daily life and experiences fit with his conception of an artist. He recounts an incident that took place when he was

asked to stay in the house of one of his professors who was going overseas for six months. For the first month, he has to share the house with a woman and her three-year-old daughter from New Zealand. One night she comes into his room; it is plain that she is sexually interested in him. She embraces and kisses him, but he is revolted by her (she appears to be drunk) and forcefully rejects her advances. His panicked response to the woman's sexual overtures perturbs him because he wonders if his rejection indicates a flaw in him as an artist, who, he thinks, ought to be willing to undergo various experiences. He is convinced that great artists, such as Henry Miller, would not have turned down such opportunities: "If a drunken woman had slipped into bed with Henry Miller, the fucking and no doubt the drinking as well would have gone on all night" (2002: 29). His further reflections also touch on the immature, sexist views he had as a young man, wondering if the woman had been drawn to him because she had heard that he was a poet, and commenting that "Women love artists because they burn with an inner flame, a flame that consumes yet paradoxically renews all that it touches" (30).

It is the struggle to find his identity, as both individual and artist, around which many of the strands in *Youth* cohere; this is what Eliot, in relation to *Nightwood*, refers to as "the whole pattern." Coetzee's comment about the scenic nature of Dostoevsky's novels resonates with the experience of reading *Youth*, which can be read as a montage of episodes or moments in John's youth, rather than a chronological narrative. The effect of this structure is that the work comprises a number of strands, scattered across the novel, that have to be linked to each other before they can be properly understood. Wordsworth's "spots of time" is also relevant in understanding significant moments in John's life, as they elucidate key aspects of his development as an artist, while framing that development within a particular time and place.

An incident that John recounts in *Youth* exemplifies this. One Sunday afternoon on Hampstead Heath, he experiences what he calls "a signal event" (2011: 242). Hampstead Heath is a grassy public space in London, covering 320 hectares. It is a place that John retreats to when he is tired from walking the city streets. John's description of the place emphasizes why he considers it a retreat from the city – it is a place of "[s]uch peace and contentment!" (242). One Sunday afternoon he lies down on the heath and falls into what he calls "a sleep or half-sleep in which consciousness does not vanish but continues to

hover" (242). John describes the experience as being unlike any other he's ever had, an experience in which everything around him ("The faraway cries of children, the birdsong, the whirr of insects") all "come together in a paean of joy" (242). He comments that "His heart swells" and he thinks to himself that "[a]t last! […] At last it has come, the moment of ecstatic unity with the All!" (242). John notes that the experience "lasts no more than seconds in clock time. But when he gets up and dusts off his jacket, he is refreshed, renewed" (242). This "signal" event about how the objective time of the clock can differ significantly from one's subjective experience of time exemplifies the relative nature of time. The event also evokes Wordsworth's sentiments in *The Prelude,* where he writes that the "spots of time" that we experience in our lives can nourish and repair our minds from experiences that are hurtful or harmful and that depress or damage us. (This 'signal event' that John describes constitutes what David Lurie, in *Disgrace,* describes when he discusses the concept of one of those "revelatory, Wordsworthian moments" to a class that he teaches on the Romantic poets. He argues that the concept describes the key role the imagination plays in experiencing such a moment, but stresses that it has to be combined with reality. The challenge in writing, he suggests, is not in "keep[ing] the imagination pure, protected from the onslaughts of reality"; rather, that "the question has to be, Can we find a way for the two to coexist?" (1999: 22).)

John's desire to become an artist is an important factor in his decision to move to England, as he feels that his literary and artistic ambitions are unlikely to be fulfilled in a place like South Africa, and that becoming the artist he wants to be necessitates a change in location. This is necessary for him because, as Donald Powers argues, he "experiences life [in South Africa] as excessively provincial" and the relation of South Africa to London as one of "province to metropolis" (2011:27). In a similar vein, Lars Engle argues that "much of [John's] life in England is part of a project to de-South Africanize himself" (2009: 36). In addition, as a colonial citizen of a country on the English-speaking periphery, it is not unusual to aspire to be at the centre – as Engle comments, "Ambition, among other things, impels one to the centre" (42). Coetzee suggests that Eliot himself experienced the effects of being on the periphery, and that this feeling is evident in his poetry, with "particularly young colonials struggling to match their inherited culture to their daily experience" (2001: 6). Coetzee goes on to explain the effect of this fate:

> To such young people, the high culture of the metropolis may arrive in the form of powerful experiences which cannot, however, be embedded in their lives in any obvious way, and which seem therefore to have their existence in some transcendent realm. In extreme cases they are led to blame their environment for not living up to art […] This is a provincial fate … but particularly a colonial fate, for those colonials brought up in the culture of what is usually called the mother country but in this context deserves to be called the father country. (2001: 7)

John's vocation as artist is putatively at odds with, but also emanates from, his identity as a South African: art is a means of achieving distance from his country of origin. On his decision to leave South Africa to move to England, John would like it to be one that is not loaded with significance, so that he will one day be able to say, with equanimity, that: "Once upon a time I used to live in South Africa but now I live in England" (2002:116). Yet there are significant attractions in England, and in particular the city of London, related to John's goal of becoming an artist. It was the home of two poets whom he admired immensely – Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Henry James is another artist whom John uses as an example to emulate in learning how to shake off one's nationality: "James shows one how to rise above mere nationality" (2002: 64). These writers' shared connection to London underscores the significance of place because they are among John's favourite artists, and it is their example that guides John's quest to remake himself as a particular kind of artist. In "What is a Classic?" Eliot is invoked as a model – he will be "using Eliot the provincial as a pattern and figure of [him]self" (2010: 10). In the same essay, he comments that

> The process I have been describing, extrapolating from Eliot's 1944 1ecture, is one of the most spectacular I can think of of a writer attempting to *make* a new identity, claiming that identity not on the basis of immigration, settlement, residence, domestication, acculturation, as other people do, or not only by such means – since Eliot with characteristic tenacity did all of the above – but by defining nationality to suit himself and then using all of his accumulated cultural power to impose that definition on educated opinion. (1993b: 11, emphasis in original)

South Africa features prominently but paradoxically in John's journey to becoming an artist because for him, becoming an artist is bound up with leaving "benighted South Africa"

(2002: 5). The epigraph to *Youth*, however, is an ironic counter to his insistent longing to blot out the country from his memory. The epigraph, *"Wer den Dichter will verstehen / muß in Dichters Lande gehen,"* is a line taken from a poem by Goethe, and can be loosely translated as: *Who wants to understand the poet / must go to the poet's land.* The epigraph can be read in a number of ways. It is possible that the "Dichter" (poet) could refer to Coetzee himself, in which case one could understand the epigraph to suggest that an understanding of Coetzee's native country, South Africa, is central in understanding the author himself or the author's works (Dooley 2010: 20); or, as Rita Barnard puts it, we can read it as Coetzee's "oblique confession" that "his fiction has to be understood in some sort of relation to his native country" (2002: 15). It could also refer to England, the country of two of Coetzee's favourite poets, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, and would therefore refer to Coetzee's move to England in *Youth* as a way of better understanding these poets (2010: 20). While open to different readings, the epigraph, importantly, underscores the primacy of place in understanding the subject.

The sentiments that inform the opening of *Youth* are those that stress the young Coetzee's self-sufficiency and self-reliance, proving "that each man is an island" (2002: 3). The description of his living quarters emphasizes its starkness – it is simply "a one-room flat near Mowbray railway station" (1). John's approach to sustaining himself as a student at the University of Cape Town is informed by pragmatism and practicality: he has a number of part-time jobs to pay for his rent; food is a matter of what is basic and nutritional (soup made with beans and vegetables, with fruit that is seasonal); and clothes, likewise, that are based on what is suitable and on what he has available. Despite being only nineteen, he is, he says, "on his own feet, dependent on no one" (2). He is aware that he looks "odd," and views his current situation as being "part of a purgatory he must pass through" in his journey to becoming an artist (3). John's insistence on minimalism and independence can also be read as indicative, however, of his determination to cut ties in South Africa.

When John decides to leave South Africa, it is plain that he intends leaving for good, that he has no intention of returning. When he is in England, he is exasperated by his mother's letters, because she keeps him up-to-date with news of the family, reminding him of the place he has left behind. He asks: "How can he make her accept that the process of turning himself into a different person that began when he was fifteen will be carried through

remorselessly until all memory of the family and the country he left behind is extinguished?" (98). For him, South Africa is "a bad start, a handicap" (2002: 62) from which he is grateful to have escaped. In fact, he considers that, if the country were to be washed away by a tidal wave, he "[would] not shed a tear" and would simply be grateful to be "among the saved" (62). South Africa is represented as a site of derision, with scathing comments about the country scattered throughout the text. But it is also a site of heartache, "a wound within him" that won't stop bleeding (116). Ironically, it is through his art, a key factor motivating him to leave the country, that South Africa is most poignantly evoked. On one of John's walks through the streets of London, he visits the British Museum and discovers the writings of early travellers to southern Africa. He comments that he feels a "tug at the heartstrings" of their descriptions, at the "reconnaissances by ox-wagon into the desert of the Great Karoo, where a traveller could trek for days on end without clapping eyes on a living soul" (137).

When John embarks on the change from writing poetry to writing prose, he discovers, to his dismay, that his first experiment with prose is a story set in South Africa, a story he feels it would be pointless trying to publish in England because his descriptions are quite specific to a South African sensibility, and would be lost on the English. As he comments: "For the beach in the story they will summon up an English idea of a beach, a few pebbles lapped by wavelets. They will not see a dazzling space of sand at the foot of rocky cliffs pounded by breakers, with gulls and cormorants screaming overhead as they battle the wind" (62). Coetzee's description of the beach in South Africa is rich and detailed; by comparison, the beach in England comes across as meagre and tame. Coetzee's description evokes Magda's feelings about the land in *In the Heart of the Country* when she says that she has been "corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world" (1999: 266). It is the South African landscape that evokes the more memorable and favourable description, suggesting the power it exercises over John's imagination.

John's depiction of the landscape is a marked departure from Coetzee's analysis, in *White Writing,* of the landscape poetry of other South African artists, such as Guy Butler. Coetzee comments that a recurring theme in Butler's poems is his alienation from Africa, both in terms of his distance from the landscape and his difficulty in finding a language for Africa (1988a: 169). He suggests that this alienation is two-fold: firstly, it is because the African landscape lacks the "depth" of "the historical resonances of voices from the past" that is

usually acquired when there is a long association with the landscape and a particular language (170); and, secondly, there is a tradition in South African poetry, from Pringle onwards, that describes Africa as the antithesis of Europe, that "makes Africa into a mere negative reflection or shadow of Europe, insubstantial" (1980: 170). Given John's own negative feelings about the country and his determination to leave it behind, it is notable that his first attempt at prose evokes such a favourable impression of the landscape.

A recurrent strand in John's narrative is his desire to rid himself of his South African identity. An important part of this mission entails effacing the Afrikaans language from his identity. John is scathing of Afrikaans syntax – "the circumlocutions of Afrikaans" – as it relates to using the second-person pronoun "you" for people who are older than the speaker (1998: 49). The result of avoiding the use of "you" is that it not only makes one's speech cumbersome and clumsy (such as when he mocks his father's speech: "*Mammie moet 'n kombers oor mammie se knieë trek anders word mammie koud* – Mommy must put a blanket over Mommy's knees, otherwise Mommy will get cold" (42)), but also makes one sound excessively submissive. For the young John of *Boyhood,* it makes one sound like a "whipped slave" (1998: 49). He is terrified of rumours at school that the government plans to transfer all schoolchildren with Afrikaans surnames to Afrikaans classes, noting that if that happened that he would quietly slip away from the school, go home, "close and lock the front door and tell his mother that he is not going back to school, that if she betrays him he will kill himself" (2011: 58). He also hates the Afrikaans songs that they are made to sing at school, commenting that when they have to sing them, "he wants to scream and shout and make farting noises during the singing" (59).

When he is working at IBM in England, there are many women there, and even though he aspires to having an English girlfriend, they are not particularly forthcoming with him. However, he notes that his highest aspiration in this regard would be to have a French girlfriend. He holds the French in extremely high regard because of their language, their culture, and the beauty of their country; for him, "The French are the most civilized people in the world," (2003: 75) and the writers whom he admires the most all seem to have some kind of roots in France. Because of his veneration for the French, he tries to learn the language, but discovers that "He has no feel for French … The language resists him, excludes him" (75). By contrast, the language for which he feels an inherent connection and

which comes easily to him is German. He notes that in German, there are times "when he forgets he is in a foreign language" (76). John knows Latin, so he feels that he ought not to find French that difficult, yet the language does not resonate with him and he cannot develop a feel for it. The difference with German, though, is its relation to Afrikaans – as John comments, "With the ghost of Afrikaans still in his ears, he is at home in the syntax" (76). In one of his mother's letters, she mentions to him that his cousin Ilse and a friend would be coming to England and she asks him to show them around London. He is quite astounded at his mother's request as he has made his dislike of any reference to South Africa clear to her. However, he relents and goes to visit his cousin. Although they all speak English for a while, he capitulates and switches to Afrikaans. Despite not having spoken Afrikaans in years, the switch in language has a marked effect on him – he immediately unwinds and feels at ease, and can "feel himself relax at once as though sliding into a warm bath" (127).

It is likely that being in England makes it easier for John to speak Afrikaans again – Rita Barnard suggests that the weight of the linguistic choice the young John makes is underscored by his joy when he feels himself outside of the restrictions of language (2009: 96). Barnard argues that Coetzee consciously refused the subject position of an Afrikaans identity so that he could pursue a more worldly identity as a writer and intellectual (87), but the choice is also more complex than this – it is a linguistic choice but also both an ideological one for John and one determined by the group's willingness to accept him as one of their own, a willingness of which John is uncertain. Then there is John's contempt for the formal Afrikaans that they learn at school, with its "lumpish, nonsensical idioms" that he assumes are inherited from the Great Trek (1998: 81). But elsewhere, Afrikaans is invoked in an entirely different vein, when it is referred to as "a language of nuances, of supple word-order and delicate participles, opaque to the outsider, dense to its children with moments of solidarity, moments of distance" (Coetzee, 1982: 30). This recollection of Afrikaans is evoked by his memory of listening to conversations at Voëlfontein. In contrast to the heaviness that he associates with formal Afrikaans is the much happier memory of conversations on the farm, in which the language is a "slapdash" mixture of English and Afrikaans, which he likes, and which creates an atmosphere of joviality. John is also intrigued by the Afrikaans he hears from the shearers who come once a year to Voëlfontein – as he listens to his uncle Son speak to their leader, he notes that it is "so thick, so full of strange idioms, that he can barely understand it," making him wonder whether there is "a

country deeper even than the country of Voëlfontein, a heartland even more secluded from the world" (93).

John's childhood coincided with the legalisation and enforcement of racial segregation and the policies of apartheid, when the National Party gained power in 1948. His references to the political turmoil in the country and the effect it has on him are encapsulated in a striking image of a workers' march when John is at university. For John, studying English and Mathematics, the country's politics are of no interest. One day at a mathematics tutorial, the lesson is interrupted by a workers' march along De Waal Drive, a road close to the university. Along with the other students, he goes outside to see what is happening. The sight that greets him is ominous – thousands of men marching, grim and determined. As John concedes, "It does not look like an army, but that is what it is" (2002: 38). More ominously still, it appears that the march had been organised by the PAC, a more left-wing, radical organisation than the ANC, whose message and ethos – *"Africa for the Africans!* [...] *Drive the whites into the sea!"* (2002: 38, emphasis in original) – reverberates in John's mind. The incident is frightening and chilling, for him and the other students, who had imagined that what they were going to see would be a spectacle. Prior to the disruption, they had all been concentrating on maths problems, secure in their protected bubble, but the column of grim, marching men brings home to them the fragility of their place in South Africa. The effect is to make them long to go back to the comfort of their protected spaces, so that "all they want now is to go home, have a Coke and a sandwich, forget what has passed" (39).

This incident is juxtaposed against another, different representation of the country, but one which nonetheless also exposes the relentless presence of history and politics. The incident uses the motif of a journey to suggest John's feelings of angst about living in the country. One evening, after having missed the last train, he and his friend, Paul, decide to walk to Paul's mother's place in St James for the weekend, although it is twelve miles away. As they are walking, he and Paul are passed by a milkman in a horse-drawn cart. John watches him with fascination as he replaces the empty milk bottles with full bottles, marvelling at the innocence with which the milk is left, without the fear that it will be stolen. The explanation that John would like to believe, he says (although he refutes the likelihood of it a few lines later), is that "thieves take pity on milkmen, who are for the most part young and

black and powerless" (2002: 17). John reflects on the gentleness with which the young milkman watches them drink a pint of milk they have bought from him and muses that:

> … from Africans in general, even from Coloured people, he feels a curious, amused tenderness emanating: a sense that he must be a simpleton, in need of protection, if he imagines he can get by on the basis of straight looks and honourable dealings when the ground beneath his feet is soaked with blood and the vast backward depth of history rings with shouts of anger. (17)

Youth demonstrates John's acute awareness of the embattled position he occupies in the country of his birth. Yet he eschews politics. For him, "Justice must be done, that is all that matters; the rest is politics, and he is not interested in politics" (2002: 100). Ironically, he one day attends a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament rally in London, only to find himself repelled by the actions of the protesters – the fury and fist-shaking and slogan-chanting, so that he is left to ponder: "From the frying-pan into the fire! What an irony!"

Youth is John's journey towards becoming an artist, but as a white South African growing up during apartheid South Africa, with aspirations towards becoming a writer of international stature, the journey is an unusually complex one. The narrative method that underscores both intimacy and detachment, belonging and attachment, is echoed in the book's themes, which manifest the fragmented, dislocated nature of John's experience and his decision to leave the country. Nevertheless, despite the pessimism associated with growing up in South Africa, there are sufficient "spots of time" that sustain John in his quest to become an artist.

4. 'A place worth marking': Place and disjunctive temporal modes in *Summertime*

At the ceremony for Coetzee's Nobel Prize for Literature award on 7 December 2003, Horace Engdahl, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, introducing Coetzee, commented that: "To direct the attention away from oneself on this stage may seem a hopeless undertaking. And yet there are perhaps ways, literature being, after all, the third alternative to speaking and remaining silent" (2003). Given Coetzee's reticence in speaking about himself, Engdahl's suggestion that literature straddles the line between speaking about oneself and being silent is especially apposite. Arguably it is epitomised in *Summertime*, Coetzee's third fictionalised memoir. *Summertime* also straddles the line between autobiography and fiction – his memoir interweaves facts from his life with fictional elements. Coetzee alludes to his reimagining of the autobiographical genre when he comments in a letter to Paul Aster that "I get impatient with fiction that doesn't try something that hasn't been tried before, preferably with the medium itself" (2014: 165). His interweaving of facts with fictional elements in a memoir suggests that it is not just the medium of fiction's boundaries he is willing to challenge. As I discuss below, in *Summertime* the character Sophie also notes John's belief that "our life-stories are ours to construct as we wish" – a notion which underpins all three memoirs, and which suggests Coetzee's scepticism and caution about writing and reading autobiographical works (2011: 455).

The title, *Summertime*, foregrounds time, and in this chapter, I will argue that the text's disjunctive chronological movement underscores Coetzee's representation of South Africa, which is filtered through intricate textual strategies that emphasize the intersecting axes of time and place. I will propose that the memoir's disjunctive chronology parallels its ambivalent, contradictory representation of place, suggesting the nuances and complexities of Coetzee's response to South Africa. I will also argue that the image of the fictional John that emerges from the text is a composite of this John and the author, J.M. Coetzee, and is one which embodies Coetzee's often fraught relationship with South Africa. I will suggest that the principle of reflexive reference is a key aspect of *Summertime*'s narrative strategies, and that Coetzee's representation of place depends on an apprehension of the relationships between the different parts of the memoir – the dated and undated Notebook entries, the short memos at the end of most of the Notebook entries, each of the interviews, as well as

Vincent's rewriting of them. I will argue further that this principle of reflexive reference in the memoir applies not only to his previous two memoirs, *Boyhood* and *Youth*, but also to his 1999 Booker Prize-winning novel, *Disgrace*.

The multiple textual elements in *Summertime* complicate the reader's experience. Coetzee's narrative organization can be elucidated by Frank's discussion of R.P. Blackmur's description of the form of the *Cantos*. Blackmur explains that the central problem of the *Cantos* "is that of the anecdote begun in one place, taken up in one or more other places, and finished, if at all, in still another. This deliberate disconnectedness, this art of a thing continually alluding to itself … is the method by which the *Cantos* tie themselves together" (1963: 12). *Summertime*'s narrative organisation is similar in its deliberate disconnectedness, particularly in terms of its chronological sequencing. It is framed by entries from Coetzee's Notebooks: it opens with entries that cover the years 1972–1975, and ends with a number of undated fragments from his Notebooks. Most of the entries include a short 'memo' at the end, added between 1999 and 2000. While the memos follow the Notebook entries in the text, they are separated by decades. Between the Notebook entries is a series of interviews conducted between 2007 and 2008, based on recollections from five people who had known Coetzee in the 1970s – a key period in John's life as it marks both his return to South Africa after a failed emigration attempt to America, and the beginning of his writing career, with the publication of *Dusklands* in 1974. Again, there is a notable gap between when the interviews took place and the time period to which they refer. In the case of the *Cantos,* Frank argues that this method privileges relationships between disconnected word groups over syntactical sequencing, and that for their meaning to be adequately grasped, they must be juxtaposed with one another (12). In *Summertime*, it is also necessary to juxtapose the various parts of the narrative to adequately grasp their meaning. Frank also discusses Joyce's *Ulysses* in terms that resonate with *Summertime*, arguing that reading the novel entails reconstructing the fragments, "sometimes hundreds of pages apart, scattered throughout the book. As a result, the reader is forced to read *Ulysses* … by continually fitting fragments together and keeping allusions in mind until, by reflexive reference, he can link them to their complements" (1963: 18).

Andrew Uhlmann also points to the importance of the relationship between the different parts of the memoir. In a discussion of anachronism in *Summertime*, he refers to Coetzee's

article on Isaac Newton (which I discuss in my introduction) to argue that, in Coetzee's work, the metaphor he uses to discuss Newton's explanation of gravity – the force of attraction – can "be understood to be *the* metaphor of relation, with the relation of parts within a work understood to structure all potential meaning […] it involves a force between related terms that generate meaning and in turn powers the work" (2012: 754, emphasis in original). The relationship between parts is a key feature of Coetzee's representation of place in *Summertime*, which is constructed as a composite one in which the principle of reflexive reference has to be adopted. In other words, readers have to suspend individual references temporarily "until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity" (Frank, 1963: 12). Smitten and Daghistany elaborate on reflexive reference by arguing that "the reader must map out in his mind the system of internal references and relationships to understand the meaning of any single event, because that event is no longer part of a conventional causal/temporal sequence" (1981: 20). They argue that, "In the case of the reader, his alertness to reflexive reference, his ability to construct a syntax for the work, creates a whole out of the discrete parts of the narrative" (21).

A defining feature of *Summertime* is its fragmented narrative, which destabilises any notion of a conventional correspondence between the author and the subject of the text. While conventional autobiographies privilege a single authorial perspective, the narrative in *Summertime* juxtaposes different voices and competing interpretations. If the first two fictionalised memoirs were characterised by the distancing technique of third-person narration, then here Coetzee both increases and complicates the distancing. The text is marked by the physical absence of the subject, the acclaimed author John Coetzee, who is now dead. John's voice frames the narrative, but is also modified and countered by those of others. In this text, we experience both the absence and presence of the book's subject, one in which Vincent, the putative English biographer of the author, J.M. Coetzee, attempts to construct a narrative about a period in John's life that is informed by the voices of people who were part of his life. Uhlmann again evokes Frank's central argument when he suggests that one of the reasons for Coetzee's complex narrative method is that "The subject being sought cannot be approached directly; it is only through the relation of elements adjacent to the absent object that that absent object might be sufficiently evoked" (2012: 755). He emphasizes this point by comparing *Summertime's* textual strategies to Orson Welles' film, *Citizen Kane*, observing that there are a number of similarities: "As is well known, the thesis

of *Citizen Kane* is that, while taken alone, none of the relations or stories offered by those who knew Kane will offer the truth about him, the relations they bear to one another may allow us to somehow glimpse this truth" (755).

Angela Müller argues that the author J.M. Coetzee and the character John are "complementary parts of a composite selfhood and authorship that is based on a complex interplay between selfhood and alterity" (2014: 15). Coetzee offers his readers a number of 'stories' about himself, articulated through Vincent's interlocutors. Despite the fragmented nature of the narrative, there are numerous threads and overlapping themes, with the interviews reflecting recurring themes about John and his relationship to the world that, once linked, create a composite figure that enables a fuller understanding of the fictional John and of the author Coetzee.

Given that the purpose of a literary biography can be described as one in which the biographer shares information about the subject and her/his works, and provides insight into them, Vincent's methods, sharply critiqued by the interviewees, are contentious, and highlight important caveats about the nature of such texts. When Martin presses him to explain his choice of five people, he says that he was following up on clues that John had left in his Notebooks about who was important to him during the 1970s. Martin finds his explanation unconvincing, arguing that it seemed a strange way to select biographical sources, and that with such a narrow selection it could end up privileging a narrative that favoured personal opinions at the expense of John's literary achievements (2011: 448-49). He cautions Vincent about relying too heavily on his opinion, noting that, while he and John were friends, he could not say that he knew him intimately (447). He also suggests that interviewing women who had been emotionally involved with John might provoke "a settling of scores, personal scores" (447). Adriana also questions her role in John's life. When Vincent contends that she was important to him, she is sceptical, replying "That is what you say" (417). She insists that to her he was "nothing … an irritation, an embarrassment" (432). And yet, *Summertime* suggests that, despite the lack of reciprocity in the relationship between Adriana and John, she seems to have been a sufficiently significant figure for John to use her as an important character (Susan Barton) in *Foe*. Vincent comments that even though Susan in the novel is an Englishwoman, in the first draft she was Brazilian, and one of her defining features – her overriding concern to protect

her daughter – is echoed in Adriana's narrative, in that her biggest objection to John was her concern that he might seduce her daughter. These cautions in the memoir underscore the elusive nature of Coetzee's character, despite the wealth of information that is revealed about him.

The memoir's internal relationships – the perspectives that each of Vincent's interviewees give of John – need to be related to each other by juxtaposition rather than temporal progression. Smitten and Daghistany suggest how spatial form explicates this procedure. They argue that, in the absence of "conventional connectives," the reader must discover the work's internal relationships (1981: 17). It is only by seeing the seemingly disconnected parts of the work cohere into a whole that the reader is able to understand the text. They suggest that "Any time the novelist suppresses causal/temporal connectives or makes his work self-referential, he forces the reader to discover the syntax of the work by paying extraordinary attention to the synchronic relationships among the seemingly disconnected word groups" (19). The narrative method in *Summertime* eschews linear temporality in favour of juxtaposition. For example, the first interview in the book is conducted with Julia (with whom John had an affair while living with his father in Tokai, a suburb of Cape Town, during the time he had written the Notebooks) in May 2008, but the third one, with Adriana, is conducted in December 2007. The interview with Margot was conducted in December 2007 and June 2008, but given that Vincent had to travel to numerous countries to conduct the interviews, it seems questionable whether he would have the means to travel to South Africa in December 2007, then go to Brazil in December of the same year, then come back to South Africa in June 2008 for a second interview with Margot. The memoir's temporal disjunction emphasizes the synchronic relationships among the interviewees and John, in the process emphasizing the fictitious elements of the memoir. This is stressed when Margot questions something Vincent had written from their interview, asking him "*Did I say all that*?" and Vincent answers: "I may have added a detail or two to bring the scene to life" (2011: 365, emphasis in original). In addition, Vincent changes the narrative in numerous other ways, telling her "I cut my own interjections, my prompts and questions, and fixed up the prose to read as if it were an uninterrupted narrative spoken in your voice." He also "decided to dramatize it here and there, for the sake of variety" (350). Margot is quite taken aback by these changes, arguing that she was under the impression that he was simply going to transcribe the interview, not rewrite it, but he counters by saying, somewhat

disingenuously, that he has "merely recast it as a narrative" and that "Giving it new form has no effect on the content" (353). She is not convinced and feels disquieted by the change, telling him: "your version doesn't sound like what I said to you" (353). At another point, she tells him *"I said nothing remotely like that. You are putting words of your own in my mouth"* (375, emphasis in original). Later, when she reads what Vincent has written about her and Lukas, her husband, she tells him *"You can't write that. You can't. You are just making things up"* (389, emphasis in original). Margot's vehement protests foreground the text's scepticism towards a genre that purports to be a historical account, underlining the constructedness of all such texts.

As noted previously, Coetzee's essay on Dostoevsky argues that one of the challenges of prose is to enable the process of slow reading, using "all the resources of syntax to mime logic and to mime the movements of the mind in general, to indicate relations between elements, logical and rhetorical, in all their complexity" (1993a: 6). *Summertime's* organisation of ideas around John's character depends on being able to apprehend the synchronic relationships among the fragments. Roland Barthes also emphasizes the significance of linking disparate parts of a work and tying them together in his analysis of Michel Butor's novel *Mobile*; Barthes argues that the work "reproduces an interior model assembled by the meticulous arrangement of parts," and that the interior model, which he refers to as a maquette, is not a ready-made structure which the work then transforms into a work of literature, but rather "a structure to be realized starting from pieces of events, pieces which the author tries to bring together, to separate, to arrange, without altering their material figuration" (1972: 182). Thus, in *Mobile*,

> Michel Butor has conceived his novel as a single structural investigation whose principle might be this: it is by trying fragments of events together that meaning is generated, it is by tirelessly transforming these events into functions that the structure is erected: the writer … sees the meaning of the inert units in front of him only by relating them. (182-83)

Barthes' argument suggests that meaning in the work is generated not by temporal succession, but by a linking of its parts. In *Summertime,* Vincent argues a similar case for his biography. When Sophie challenges him about his reliance on interviews even though

John Coetzee left a wealth of material behind in the form of diaries, letters and notebooks, Vincent argues that, with a range of perspectives it is possible to "synthesize a whole" in a way that would be less reliable than if it came from a single source (2011: 454). The 'synthesizing' implies a method which ties together the fragments of events and perspectives. But it is not just the work's internal elements that need to be tied together. *Summertime* also engages in ongoing dialogues with the previous two memoirs, *Boyhood* and *Youth*, and with *Disgrace*.

According to Mitchell, one of the ways in which spatial form is manifested is in overlapping or intersecting patterns, some of which could refer to "principles of movement through the text," others "governed by patterns of imagery or ideas" in the text (1980: 556). One of the dominant overlapping patterns in Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy, constituting what Mitchell refers to as a "principle of movement through the text," is the narrative method of third-person present-tense narration. As discussed in chapter 3, this narrative method entails a contradictory simultaneity of both distance and proximity, intimacy and detachment (Kossew in Mehigan, 2011: 11). The sense of distance, however, is markedly increased in *Summertime*, which Kannemeyer characterised as being "[t]he most elusive of the autobiographies," where the historical record is rearranged "with a view to arriving at a deeper account of the truth" (2012: 9-10). I would argue that this "deeper account of the truth" can be found in the overlapping themes and "patterns of imagery or ideas" across the three memoirs. These themes and patterns become apparent most clearly through reflexive referencing, by which relationships between disparate sections of the text and across the texts are linked.

It is ironic that the overwhelming majority of the interviewees in *Summertime* (four of the five) are women, because their impressions of John are mostly unfavourable. Their views of him are often scathing and mocking, and in Adriana's case, his dogged pursuit of her borders on harassment. One of the more surprising threads that emerges is that of comedy: John is characterised as a figure of comedy, especially regarding his relationships with women. John's sexual and emotional dysfunction are recurring and primary themes in both *Summertime* and *Youth*. One of the ways in which he is cast as a figure of comedy, exacerbating the sense of alienation, is in an emphasis on the "principles" that he was not willing to forgo. As Julia observes, "principles are the stuff of comedy" (332). Margot also

points to how ridiculous John's principles made him – when they were stuck on the road home from Merweville because he insisted on trying to fix the car himself, she mocked him by imagining him with a wife who would indulge his principles but who would later be forced to fix the mess he had made, scornfully describing how the wife would revere him, perhaps thinking to herself *"What a man is my mate … What a developed conscience he has!"* (372, emphasis in original).

Julia describes him as looking "out of place," with "an air of failure" about him (300), someone who "had no sexual presence whatsoever" (302) and who "was not built for love" (321). Margot echoes these sentiments, wondering: "Why is there no male aura about him?" and thinking that he is perhaps a eunuch (371). Julia also describes him as being somewhat abstract when having sex: "it was as if he was engaged with some erotic image of me inside his head; perhaps even with some image of Woman with a capital W" (324). He seemed so removed from her that she describes his lovemaking as having "an autistic quality" (324). Julia observes that this inability to connect meaningfully with women is also a feature of Coetzee's novels: "What is the one theme that keeps recurring from book to book? It is that the woman doesn't fall in love with the man" (347). The conclusion that she comes to about John, what she calls her "mature conclusion," is that he "wasn't made for love, wasn't constructed that way … Like a sphere. Like a glass ball. There was no way to connect with him" (347). She points to the irony of John's vocation: he is a novelist who writes about human experience, but who is unable to connect with others. As she tells Vincent: "Here we have a man who, in the most intimate of human relations, cannot connect, or who can connect only briefly, intermittently" (349). This theme of disconnectedness is echoed in *Summertime*'s form, which consists of disparate, fragmented elements. Julia emphasizes John's disconnectedness by relating an incident to Vincent about John once wanting to make love to her to the music of Schubert. She feels that the incident reflects John's inability to act instinctively when it comes to love, asking how he could be "so dumb, so cut off from reality, that he could not distinguish between playing on a woman and loving a woman" (348). Her judgement is that he was "A man who loved by numbers … not human, not in the fullest sense" (348). However, she also relates an occasion when the lovemaking between her and John was what she called "something truly to write home about" (342). Her consideration of this occasion is that it occurred because it happened at a time when she was hurt and vulnerable, and because of this, John "for once opened his heart, the heart he

normally kept wrapped in armour" (349). She notes that this could have been a turning point for her and John to develop a more intimate relationship, but that, instead, he ultimately lacked the courage to do so; he "took fright, hurriedly strapped the armour back over his heart, with chains and a double padlock" (349). Paradoxically, despite this inclination to keep others at arm's length, he is not unresponsive to others' openness. Their inherent reserve is one of the reasons she suggests that John didn't get along with the English: "He preferred people who were ready to give more of themselves; then sometimes he would pluck up the courage to give a little of himself in return" (326).

Adriana's characterisation of John is harsh and unsparing. He became involved in her life as a tutor to her younger daughter, Maria Regina. From the outset, her impression of him was unfavourable because his name sounded Afrikaans and he was tutoring her daughter in English. She dislikes the Afrikaners from her experience of them in Angola, because they "Treated the blacks like dirt" (404). Even when she got to know him better, her impression of him did not improve. One day, when she invited him over to tea to meet him because she was concerned that her daughter might be infatuated with him, she describes him as being "badly dressed" with "badly cut hair" (406). She echoes previous sentiments regarding his lack of sexual presence by noting that he struck her as being "*célibataire,*" someone "not suited to marriage, like a man who has spent his life in the priesthood and lost his manhood and become incompetent with women" (406). She tells Vincent that, despite his dogged pursuit of her, she was entirely uninterested in him: "to me he is nothing" (432). She thought he was "soft" and that "there was a quality he lacked … a quality of strength, of manliness" (414). She comments that Coetzee's ideas about himself were delusional: he wanted to be "an existentialist and a romantic and a libertine" but "Freedom, sensuality, erotic love – it was all just an idea in his head, not an urge rooted in his body" (431). She suggests that he "was disembodied … To him, the body was like one of those wooden puppets that you move with strings" (438). This characterisation echoes the one J.C. discusses in one of the opinion pieces, 'On the body,' in *Diary of a Bad Year,* in which he argues that, while human beings compartmentalize the body into parts, animals appear to experience the body more holistically. J.C. suggests that the difference perhaps comes down to language, which "splits up the unity of experience" (2007: 59). Adriana jokes to Vincent that perhaps he should call his book "*The Wooden Man,*" adding that that was why he was so out of place in the dance

studio, because in dance "it is the body itself that leads, the body with its soul, its body-soul. Because the body knows! It knows!" (436-37, emphasis in original).

Sophie also characterises her relationship with John as being "comical in its essence" (467). Like Adriana, she feels that, in all the time she knew him, she "never had the feeling [she] was with an exceptional person" and that he "had no special sensitivity … no original insight into the human condition" (467). As a writer she felt that his work was too controlled, that he lacked ambition: "You do not sense you are in the presence of a writer who is deforming his medium in order to say what has never been said before, which is to me the mark of great writing" (468).

Martin's perspective about John's vocation – teaching – suggests the ways in which John's particular temperament affected his role as a teacher. Of John's abilities as a teacher, Martin feels that, while he was "a perfectly adequate academic," he was "not a notable teacher" (444). Part of the reason for this is that he feels that John did not involve himself deeply in teaching, even though literature mattered deeply to him. He says that "Something was always being held back" and suggests that it was perhaps because of something intrinsic to John's character, "a strain of secretiveness that seemed to be engrained in him, part of his character" (444). According to Martin, John treated his "connection with the poet as a personal secret to be closely guarded" (445). He suggests that John's style – "a little dry and reserved" (444) – and his manner – "somewhat stiff and informal" (446) – may also have been unsuited to teaching English literature, and that John had once told him that "he had missed his calling, that he should have been a librarian" (444).

Adriana finds it difficult to reconcile her image of John with that of an internationally renowned writer. She questions how he could be considered to be a great writer when, in her opinion, he was "a little man, an unimportant little man," arguing that talent alone is surely insufficient to be considered a great writer; that one would also need to be "a great man" (433). Vincent provides another perspective to John's behaviour towards Adriana. He suggests that the period during which Adriana knew him was a particularly difficult time for him, a time when he was "*a little lonely and a little desperate*" (434, emphasis in original). She considered him to be a solitary person, "Not made for conjugal life" (415). In another echo of Julia's experience with John, Adriana tells Vincent that John had once

written a letter to her about how the musician Franz Schubert had taught him about a great secret of love, "how we can sublime love as chemists in the old days sublimed base substances" (418). Again, her judgement of his ideas is mocking and derisive. She says that "It was nonsense, worse than nonsense" (418). Instead of provoking her interest, it made her "recoil" (418).

Adriana also finds his way of speaking very odd – when asked about his qualifications to tutor her daughter, he replies that his role is more that of an examination coach, but comments that "It is not what I was called into the world to do," words and sentiments that strike her as being very strange. When he talks about his teaching philosophy, he invokes Plato and gives her a highly theoretical, abstract explanation: "Before true learning can occur," he says "there must be in the student's heart a certain yearning for the truth, a certain fire. The true student burns to know" (408). She is immediately antagonised, thinking to herself: "*What nonsense he talks! Dangerous nonsense too!*" (408, emphasis in original). Adriana is a foreigner in the country and her English is poor. Her husband is in hospital in a coma and she has two daughters to take care of. She worries that John might be interested in her daughter, who is very beautiful and who is clearly taken with him. After his visit she is sufficiently concerned to write him a very straightforward letter, in which she tells him to ensure that he behaves appropriately towards her daughter. Instead, John pursues her with persistence and tenacity, despite the fact that she ignores all his overtures. Adriana suggests to Vincent that John simply lacked insight into her, and that if he had not been so determined to pursue a romantic interest in her, he could have been very helpful to her in her circumstances, because one of the biggest frustrations in her life was dealing with the bureaucracy while her husband was in a coma.

In the interviewees' accounts of John there are a number of overlapping themes. The different strands are interwoven throughout the text and Francois Hartog's concept of the rhapsode, discussed in chapter one, is also pertinent to understanding Coetzee's textual strategies in *Summertime*, as it accounts for the way in which the various strands that make up Coetzee's memoir can be linked together. Hartog notes that "The space of the narrative purports to be a representation of the world and he, the rhapsode, is the one who … indicates the forms, who makes things seen, who reveals; he is the one who knows" (1988: 354-55). In this conception of a rhapsode, Robert Tally suggests that narrative becomes "the result

of both the geographical project of the *surveyor* and the work of a rhapsode" (2013: 48, emphasis in original). The narrator becomes "a surveyor of spaces, a rhapsode who sews these spaces into a new unity, and a bard who ultimately "invents" the world so surveyed and stitched together" (48). In clarifying the role of the rhapsode, Tally argues:

> As narrators or writers survey the territory they wish to describe, they weave together disparate elements in order to produce the narrative, and these elements may include scraps of other narratives, descriptions of people or places, images derived from first-hand observation as well as from secondary reports, legends, myths and inventions of the imagination. In producing this patchwork representation of a world … the narrator also invents or discovers the world presented in the narrative. For readers, this narrative makes possible an image of the world, much like that of a map, and the literary cartography present in one narrative can become a part of future surveys, rhapsodies, and narratives, or of future narrative maps. (2013: 49)

Hartog's rhapsode is both extended and elaborated by *Summertime's* textual strategies. The author, J.M. Coetzee, is the rhapsode who weaves a narrative from disparate sources and episodes from his life. In this narrative, fiction and fact are woven together seamlessly. In addition, the presence of Vincent creates an additional layer of complexity in the text. Vincent shapes the narrative in ways that are often disingenuous and duplicitous – at times rewriting his interviewees' stories so that they conform to his own notions of what constitutes a good narrative. He alters Margot's narrative in radical ways, and presents the reworked narrative as though representing Margot's consciousness, as free indirect discourse (Attwell, 2012: 291). When she queries what seems a strange decision – to refer to her as "she" rather than "me" – Vincent replies that "The *she* I have introduced is like I but is not I" (351, emphasis in original). He claims that his adaptation and rewriting of the interviews presents a more seamless, coherent narrative, but this view is frequently contested by the interviewees. Vincent's transcription of the interviewees' stories is not straightforward, and his narrative becomes another thread contributing to shaping Coetzee's representation of John. Vincent's frequent distortions emphasise the ways in which biographies are shaped by both subjective perspective and the influence of story-telling on all narratives. As Justin Neuman notes, "Vincent emerges as an untrustworthy custodian at

best of stories about Coetzee" (2011: 131). Coetzee epitomizes Tally's argument that the author makes choices about not only which elements to include and which to exclude, but also about how to organise those elements – as Tally notes, not unlike a cartographer, the author determines "what *kind* of narrative or map" it will be (2013: 54, emphasis in original). The writer must determine the function of the story, and this question entails deciding which details of the story can be left out, and "What counts as a place worth marking" (50).

The memoir's lack of temporal continuity, its disjointed temporal order, thus alludes to its ambivalent representation of place. Time is notable in the text not only with reference to a particular historical period in John's life; it is also structurally significant and is an important aspect of spatial form. One of the ways in which spatial form is manifested in *Summertime* is the way in which it slows down and fragments the narrative. Differences between the fictional John and the author J.M. Coetzee entail a continual process of finding links and discrepancies between the two, which slows down the reading. For example, as noted in Kannemeyer's biography of Coetzee, during the period which the book covers, 1972-77, J.M. Coetzee was living with his wife, Phillipa, and their two children, Nicolas and Gisela. In *Summertime,* however, his wife and children are entirely absent from the text, and he is living with his father. Attwell argues that the reason for this manipulation of the author's life is that Coetzee, the mature author, has chosen events that fit in with the interpretation of the narrative that he wants to construct: "they represent fictionalizations of the literary alter ego, an imaginary persona retrospectively constructed as a way of exploring the kind of subject who has written himself into being in the oeuvre" (2012: 288).

A further complication that contributes to slowing the narrative is the role of Vincent in the memoir. Attwell argues that there are three Coetzees in the text: "(i) the fictional John, (ii) the historical author, and (iii) someone in-between, a narrator standing behind the character of Vincent and his interlocutors, ventriloquizing the counter-voices through which the composite image of the character, John, is created" (2012: 289). These different iterations of Coetzee require the reader to continually move back and forth between the 'three Coetzees,' a process which contributes to further slowing the reading; in addition, the "someone-in-between" entails an even more intricate process of understanding and deconstructing the "composite" representation of John in the text. The reader is given snapshots of John from various perspectives and has to juxtapose the images with each

other, and with what Attwell refers to as the historical author, to approach a fuller apprehension of him. What Coetzee's method does is to create an image in a way that is similar to Frank's conception: "[A]n image is defined not as a pictorial reproduction but as a unification of disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time" (1963: 9).

The mutability of time is evoked in *Summertime* in other ways as well. Uhlmann points to how the text suggests instabilities in the perception of time. Julia describes to Vincent a conversation with John about her husband, Mark. Her discussion alludes to the ways in which chronological time can be distorted. She notes that, "chronologically speaking, Mark was older than me, but that was not how I saw it. The way I saw it, I was the oldest in our family, followed by Mark, who was about thirteen, followed by our daughter, Christina, who would be two at her next birthday. In respect of maturity my husband was therefore closer to the child than he was to me" (Coetzee, 2012: 306).

Time is again invoked in the text when Julia recounts a conversation about a mistake John had made in measuring concrete. John told Julia: "'I was out by a factor of six' … (or maybe it was sixteen, I was only half listening). Instead of one and a half tons of gravel, ten tons of gravel" (307). Julia tells him that she also makes mistakes with numbers all the time, that she gets the decimal in the wrong place, to which John replies: "Yes, but a factor of six isn't like misplacing the decimal point. Not unless you are a Sumerian" (307). Uhlmann argues that the odd reference to Sumeria "offers a key to the structure of the novel as a whole" (2012: 757). His argument is premised on the fact that the Sumerians were the first to develop a sexagesimal, rather than a decimal, system of counting. It was the Sumerians who developed the system in which there were 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour (357). What was notable about the Sumerian system, though, is that, while in a 24-hour day there were 12 hours in a day and 12 at night, the length of the hours of light and the hours of darkness varied throughout the year (357). This leads Uhlmann to arguing that the reference to Sumerian mathematics emphasizes the temporal disjunction (the subjective relativity of time) in the memoir: "Sumertime [sic] … involves a mind-warping understanding of the relativity of time with regard to our immediate perceptions" (757). The text's fragmented chronology emphasizes this point, with the undated fragments at the end of the memoir adding to the sense of temporal disjunction.

The genre of autobiographical writing is sharply critiqued in *Summertime* by the memoir's textual strategies. The book opens with entries from Coetzee's diary, written in the third person and present tense, entitled 'Notebooks 1972 – 1975.' This section of the novel is fairly brief, and comprises in total only eight entries. The entries are modified somewhat by the author's comments more than two decades later: there is a short 'memo' at the end of nearly each entry, passages added in 1999-2000 when, according to Vincent, Coetzee was thinking of reworking the diaries as a book. The additional comments add more complexity to the memoir's chronology, underscoring the text's temporal disjunction. Vincent's idea that the diary entries and undated fragments from John's Notebooks were intended to be part of a larger book project emphasizes the provisional nature of autobiographical writing. It also ties in with Tally's concept of literary cartography: "The mapping project of narrative is necessarily incomplete, provisional and tentative" (2013: 53).

In parallel with the diary entries that were meant to be part of a larger book project, Vincent cites an excerpt from John's notebooks in which he refers to "the third memoir, the one that never saw the light of day" (Coetzee, 2011: 439). The comment is, of course, ironic, as *Summertime* is in fact Coetzee's third memoir. But Vincent's reference to the third memoir not having been published reminds us that the John in the text is fictional, despite the numerous links between him and the author, J.M. Coetzee. This strategy on Coetzee's part makes his character even more opaque to the reader and parallels his characterisation of himself when he says that "All of his intercourse with the world seems to take place through a membrane," and that because of this, "fertilisation (of himself by the world) will not take place" (481). Jonathan Crewe recalls a poem about Coetzee by Anne Carson that reflects what he calls Coetzee's "pained self-consciousness and lifelong experience of being uncomfortably situated in the world" (2016: 49):

> … Coetzee basking
> Icily across from you at the faculty table is all at once
> there like a fox in a glare, asking
> And what are your interests?
> his face a glass that has shattered but not yet fallen. (2016: 49)

The final line quoted above echoes Coetzee's fragmented representation of himself in his three memoirs, alluding to the difficulties in piecing together a coherent picture of the subject. While Crewe notes that his demeanour is related to his relation to the world in general, I would argue that it suggests more specifically Coetzee's relation to South Africa – cracked and frozen. As I discuss in the next chapter in more detail, Dorothy Driver, Coetzee's partner, describes him as "a far more relaxed person" after settling in Adelaide, one who "joked and jested" and "was a happy man, visibly so to all who came into contact with him" (Kannemeyer, 2012: 599).

In addition to Vincent's rewriting of the interviews, Adriana also refers to a Senhora Gross who will "*transcribe our conversation and tidy up the translation*" (437, emphasis in original), suggesting that we are reading a version of the interview as it took place. This construction of the text again focuses attention on the work's temporal aspect. Joseph Kestner notes that "an event and its utterance, expressed by *is*, could mean only that the event was simultaneous with its utterance; the copula *is* immediately becomes non-temporal" (1978: 17, emphasis in original). Adriana's reference to Senhora Gross is another reminder of the work's non-linear temporality. The memoir's disjunctive temporal order is foregrounded in the interviews as well. The order of interviews in the book differs from the order in which they were conducted. The first interview in the book is with Julia, in Canada, but, according to Vincent, the first interview he conducted was with Martin, in England. In the book the interview with Julia is followed by interviews with Margot (South Africa), Adriana (Brazil), Julia (Canada) and Sophie (France). However, according to Vincent, after Martin the order of interviews he follows is Julia, Margo, Adriana, Martin and Sophie.

The narrative of *Summertime* suggests that biography is invariably shaped by choices the author makes in deciding what to include and what gets excluded. This propensity may obscure the truth, because the image of John that is created in *Summertime* is heavily influenced by others' stories about him. Coetzee's strategies in the text focus attention on the ways in which biography can distort, rather than enhance, understanding of the subject. Even though Vincent's interest in Julia is solely because of her link to John Coetzee, Julia stresses throughout her narrative that whatever story she tells will in fact be centred on her, not John. In her story, John is not the central figure by any means. She tells Vincent that "the only story involving John that I can tell, or the only one I am prepared to tell, is this

one, namely the story of my life and his part in it … My story, the story of me" (309). She tells Vincent that he must be very careful to take this difference into account when writing his biography, because it is an important distinction, telling him that to do otherwise would be to "commit a grave error" (317). She insists that the difference cannot be ironed out by his rewriting the perspective and "some clever editing", and cautions him: "I warn you most earnestly: if you start playing around with your text, cutting out words here and adding in words there, the whole thing will turn to ash in your hands" (318). Ironically, this is precisely what Vincent does, undermining the entire (supposed) biography he is writing.

Coetzee underscores this caution about trying to get to the truth of one's subject in his essay "Confession and Double Thoughts" in *Doubling the Point*. He discusses the problem in autobiographical writing of "how to know the truth about the self without being self-deceived" (1992: 252). One of his aims, he says, in his readings of Rousseau's and Tolstoy's autobiographies, is to bring into question the notion of *the* truth (272, emphasis in original). His analysis emphasises the difficulty in autobiographical writing of knowing when one has uncovered or revealed the truth about oneself, because every truth that is revealed can lead to a questioning of the motive behind the revelation, leading to "a regression to infinity of self-awareness and self-doubt" (274). The quest for an ultimate truth is, by its nature, an infinite one, because each layer of truth can be interrogated and shown to reveal gaps where there is a measure of self-interest and, hence, self-deception. The self, Coetzee argues, cannot protect itself from its desire to construct its own truth (279). The workings of self-consciousness, however, perpetually undermine this truth by self-reflexive questioning, to which there can theoretically be no end, because "behind each true, final position lurks another position truer and more final" (292). The problem, then, is how to end this infinite regression. Coetzee's response in *Summertime* underscores the difficulty in finding the 'truth' of the subject, suggesting that the 'truth' is relative, and that the best one can hope for is an approximation of the truth (linking to Alan's comment in *Diary of a Bad Year* that "we live in a probabilistic universe") (2007: 107). Julia's narrative highlights the inadequate nature of autobiographical writing in providing a full and complete picture of its subject. She is not willing to tell Vincent everything – at one point, as she is relating an incident between herself and her husband to Vincent, she tells him: "I am sorry, I am going to draw a veil over what happened next" (340). At another point, she recounts an incident when she

had briefly left her husband and John came to visit her at the hotel at which she was staying, and she says to Vincent: "Words between us, which I won't repeat" (345).

Julia's interview also reinforces the tendency to create fictions in telling the story of oneself (a recurring theme in Coetzee's works), and suggests that this is perhaps an inescapable part of the nature of autobiography. Despite the wealth of material that Coetzee left, Vincent argues that

> *What Coetzee writes there cannot be trusted, not as a factual record – not because he was a liar but because he was a fictioneer. In his letters he is making up a fiction of himself for his correspondents; in his diaries he is doing much the same for his own eyes, or perhaps for posterity*. (453-54, emphasis in original)

He argues that "if you want the truth" then you would have to look to "the testimony of people who knew him in the flesh" (454). His argument, however, is undercut by Sophie's observation that that may be what we all do: "but what if we are all fictioneers?" she asks. "What if we are all continually making up the stories of our lives?" (454). Julia also undercuts her narrative by emphasising the constructedness of her story; as she comments to Vincent at one point, "You must be getting worried, Mr Vincent … you must be asking yourself. *How can this woman pretend to have total recall of mundane conversations dating back three or four decades?* … I am making up the words, the dialogue, as I go along" (308, emphasis in original). She also engages in meta-commentary about her construction of herself, noting that "I am perfectly aware how much I was behaving like a character in a book" (309). This point is emphasized later in the text; when John gives her a copy of *Dusklands,* she asks him if the book is fiction, and he says "Sort of" (326). When she comments on the book's preface, in which his father is ostensibly an historian, John casually dismisses the comment, saying "Oh that's all made up" (327). From his very first novel, Coetzee interweaves facts about his life with fiction. Adriana and Martin both draw attention to the ways in which narratives are shaped and the possible distortions these may have when writing a biography. Adriana senses that Vincent is disappointed with her narrative about John and comments to him: "This is not the story you wanted to hear, is it? You wanted to hear of the romance between your hero and the beautiful foreign ballerina. Well, I am giving you the truth, not romance. Maybe too much truth" (425). Martin also cautions about reading

too much into John's fiction, commenting that "It would be very, very naïve to conclude that because the theme was present in his writing it had to be present in his life" (447).

As with John, the picture of South Africa that emerges in *Summertime* is also a fractured one, in which the past and the present are interwoven. This temporal interweaving intersects with the question of the 'spatial' in South Africa's fragmented geography. Apartheid spatial planning along race lines is still reflected in many parts of the country. While the lingering effects of the migrant labour system and the1950 Group Areas Act may predominantly account for this segregation, Paul Maylam questions whether the roots go even further back, asking: "Does one trace the modern configuration of segregated townships to the group areas policy of the apartheid era or to the preceding era of segregation? Or does it have more distant colonial origins? In other words, has it been a product of South Africa's own peculiar, bizarre brand of racism or a typical feature of colonialism?" (1995: 22). Rita Barnard suggests that the apartheid state was "fundamentally space-dependent" in that it "[relied] on the power of space to separate individuals from each other, to direct and control their movements, and to reinforce social distinctions" (2007: 6). The geographical location of the five people whom Vincent interviews for his biography reflects a similarly fragmented picture, even though they had all known John while he lived in South Africa.

Of the five interviews, only one is set in South Africa (in Somerset West) and takes place during December 2007 and June 2008; the other interviews range across countries (and continents) during the years 2007-2008: Canada, Brazil, England and France. The setting is thus remarkably widespread and suggests the cosmopolitan nature of Coetzee and his writing – Neuman comments that "The book's insistent geographic mobility reminds us of the myriad routes and modes of interconnection and displacement that constitute Coetzee's global world" (2011: 132). The comment underscores Coetzee's intellectual affiliations as ranging far beyond South Africa's shores. In 'Homage,' Coetzee discusses his main literary influences and comments "in 1960 there was no South African writer, novelist or poet, to whom I as a young man could turn for a significant and vital lead in how to respond to, how to feel about, and therefore how to write about, my homeland," hence his turn towards other, non-South African, literary influences. (1993a: 7). This in part accounts for Coetzee's sometimes ambivalent, critical reception in South Africa, particularly in relation to what South Africans had come to expect as appropriate literary responses to colonialism and

apartheid. Despite this, South Africa is a constant presence in many of Coetzee's works, both fictional and non-fictional. One of the comments, though, that Sophie makes about her experience of South Africa is that it was "insular," and engaged very little with the countries to its north – other African countries. This is a telling comment about Coetzee's three *autre*-biographical texts as well. Sophie's comment could indicate self-critique on Coetzee's part, acknowledging the parochial nature of the South African experience. Sophie also stresses his rather abstract ideas about Africa – she notes that he "saw Africa through a romantic haze" because he thought of Africans as occupying the role of "guardians of the truer, deeper, more primitive being of humankind" (458). She says that they used to argue strenuously about this conception of Africans, which she felt to be "old-fashioned romantic primitivism" and particularly unacceptable in the context of the 1970s and the liberation struggle. Sophie suggests that John was culturally conservative in that "he was deeply attached to the South Africa of his youth," and that *Boyhood* demonstrates "a palpable nostalgia for the old feudal relations between white and Coloured" (465-66).

In *Summertime*, a dominant thread in the narrative is John's relationship with his homeland. Each of the interviewees' perspectives is coloured by place to a significant degree. The view of South Africa that emerges from Coetzee's memoir is a complex one: harsh and embittered in places, but also very moving and tender in others. Tim Mehigan points to the repeated criticisms about Coetzee's fiction that centre on the fact that his apartheid-era fiction never engaged directly with apartheid or indicted the Nationalist government for its policies (2014: 2). As Coetzee was aware, he faced demands and expectations from the reading public about how they wanted to see South Africa represented. Attwell cites a comment from an entry on *Foe* in Coetzee's Papers:

> They ('they') want me to be a realist. They want my books to be about, specifically, to be about South Africa, about social relations in that country. They check my text against what they have picked up in the popular media about South Africa, and where there is correspondence they say it is 'true.' The rest they cannot, will not read. (2015: 158)

Imraan Coovadia notes with scepticism Coetzee's depiction of South Africa as containing futures that "never come to pass" (2012: 106). In *Disgrace*, Coovadia notes, despite its

partial setting in Cape Town, there is "Almost nothing of the city, its life, its beauty, its specificity, and its traditions" (106). Similarly, in *Life and Times of Michael K,* Sea Point is depicted as a "burned out and post-apocalyptic cityscape," whereas, Coovadia contends, in reality, a stroll down the Sea Point Promenade will show "million dollar apartments, and roller skaters, and afternoon cricket games" (106). Coovadia links Coetzee's attitude towards South Africa to an ideological stance in which Coetzee "turned his radicalism against the doctrines of the political Left" (109). In support of this argument, he points to Coetzee's association with the University of Chicago, in which he served on The Committee on Social Thought as Distinguished Service Professor for many years. Coetzee publicly called the University of Chicago "his intellectual home" when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003, commenting further that he was particularly happy that the award had been announced during his stay there. Coovadia argues that it is highly unlikely that other prominent South African writers, such as Nadine Gordimer and Athol Fugard, would ever have been co-opted onto a committee such as the Committee on Social Thought, as their work was socially and politically engaged – they "built their work out of what used to be called life, vivid feelings, characters in unexpected situations, and sharp conflicts" – unlike Coetzee's, whose work, Coovadia suggests, is assembled "from sections of theoretical discourse. He borrows the themes of his narratives from questions raised in contemporary theory about such matters as signification, subjectivity, and colonial subordination" (109). Coovadia's disparaging tone ties in with one of the critiques of modernism – that it creates art that is apolitical. Coovadia argues that modernist narratives have privileged theory over political context, and that Coetzee's fiction is a particularly good example of this. According to him, Coetzee's fiction estranges itself from the realities of life in South Africa, an example of which is the complete absence in his fiction of the HIV/Aids epidemic (111). He is sceptical of the claim that one of the reasons for Coetzee leaving South Africa was the government's criticism of his novel, *Disgrace,* wondering how he (Coetzee) could "survive racial tyranny, censorship, and near civil war, only to succumb to Thabo Mkeki's literary criticism" (113).

As I've discussed previously in this thesis, Coetzee is resistant to works of fiction that "supplement history" (as Coovadia appears to suggest literary works should do), arguing that there was:

> a powerful tendency ... to subsume the novel under history, to read novels as what I will loosely call imaginative investigations of real historical forces and real historical circumstances; and conversely, to treat novels that do not perform this investigation of what are deemed to be real historical forces and circumstances as lacking in seriousness. (1988b: 2)

Nevertheless, in *Summertime*, Coetzee arguably moves closer to realist discourse on South Africa than in any of his other texts. His various depictions of South Africa provide some context for his decision to leave the country permanently. While his views may be controversial, his depiction of South Africa across all three memoirs suggests an experience of place in which he was inherently uneasy and unsettled. Edward Relph emphasizes the central role of the experience of place to human existence in his argument that "the essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence" (1976: 43). Heidegger also notes the significance of place; for him, 'rootedness' is essential for an authentic existence: "we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*" (1975: 35, emphasis in original). Coetzee's self-depiction in *Summertime* suggests a particularly troubling kind of existence in which 'dwelling' and 'place' are ever-present sources of anxiety. Tally invokes Lukács's conception of the novel form as one of "transcendental homelessness" (1971: 41), proposing that it is directly relevant to spatial discourse because this sense of "homelessness" creates a need for a kind of mapping (2013: 63). He argues that the notion of existential *angst* is a precursor to Lukács's conception of "transcendental homelessness" and is similar to the feeling of anxiety analysed by Heidegger and Sartre (64). For Sartre, "the inescapable characteristic of being-in-the-world is simply that it exists. In existence one is situated in the world and cannot otherwise be." (65). According to Tally, this means that, in order to create your own meaningful existence, you have to have the freedom to "establish a sense of place and purpose in the world, via a project in which the individual subject orchestrates the elements or aspects of life in some meaningful way" (2013: 65). Coetzee's memoirs suggest that creating 'a meaningful existence' in South Africa was not possible for him.

In *Summertime*, different interviewees emphasise different aspects of the country and John's relationship to it, but there are a number of overlapping ideas. A key image is the idea of South Africa as a place marked by violence. John explores the violence of the apartheid

machinery in his Notebooks, while the interviewees explore violence in South Africa from other perspectives, particularly that of crime. Apartheid and the violence it engenders create other linking strands in the text, one of which is John's sense of helplessness and guilt. Attwell notes that the phrase John recalls in *Summertime*, "agenbite of inwit," comes from Joyce's *Ulysses* and is an allusion to a thirteenth-century Middle-English text that can be loosely translated as "remorse of conscience" (285). While Neuman suggests that Coetzee's reference to Joyce underscores the "complex global entanglements at work on the periphery of empire" (2011: 130), Attwell links Coetzee's reference more specifically to South Africa, noting that the phrase "signals for Joyce a burden of guilty interiority fuelled by the claims of the motherland" and that, while for Joyce the phrase related to Catholic Ireland, in John's case, one can substitute South Africa – and in particular, Afrikanerdom – for Ireland (2012: 285).

John's diary entries reflect his revulsion at the workings of the South African government to maintain the system of racial segregation in the country. South Africa emerges as a place of wretchedness, and one way in which the wretchedness is expressed is in the violence committed by the state's security forces. In the first entry, dated 22 August 1972, John reads an article about what appears to be a politically motivated attack on a black South African family, refugees in Botswana. Despite denials from the South African government and military, there is evidence that the killers were South African. Similar incidents are reported with regularity. The incidents, and their regularity, leave John with both regret at having to come back to such a country, and anguish at the horrors being perpetuated. His question, "where in the world can one hide where one will not feel soiled?" (2011: 287) and comment: "How to escape the filth" (288) reflect his despair at the violence and its effects on him. It is not simply the fact that he is in South Africa, because he recognises that it wouldn't matter where he was; it is what is being done in his homeland, by "his people," (287) that evokes such despair. John's own feeble response to the atrocities committed by the security forces – "fits of rage and despair" (288) – is also galling to him, and suggests his helplessness in the face of the government's actions. The country's politics has personal ramifications for John – of his decision to become vegetarian, Julia suggests that it was "part of a larger project of self-reformation," that "he had decided he was going to block cruel and violent impulses in every arena of his life … and channel them into his writing" (329). Of

Dusklands, Julia comments that for John, "writing it was a project in self-administered therapy" (329).

The related question of manual labour is raised in all three memoirs. In *Summertime*, John is committed to doing his own manual labour. When the house that he lives in with his father needs to be repaired because of the damp, John decides to do so himself. Despite his lack of knowledge and skill (which results in massively erroneous calculations of how much material he needs), and the physical strain of such unaccustomed work, John finds that "he is not unhappy. What he finds himself doing is what people like him should have been doing ever since 1652" (2011: 290). The labour that John does is motivated by the desire to break the seeming taboo on labour by whites in South Africa. As Julia comments, "it was not usual in those days for a white man to do manual labour, unskilled labour" (301). Margot also emphasizes manual labour and John's response to it when she relates an incident in which the car she and John were travelling in got stuck, and they had to spend the night on the road. The car got stuck because John had tried to fix it himself. His reason for doing so was that "It's because of the country we live in … Because of our long history of making other people do our work for us while we sit in the shade and watch" (369). He tells her that he also does the work in the garden by himself, and all the repairs around the house, and that, despite how ludicrous it appears, "I am making a gesture. I am trying to break the taboo on manual labour" (370).

Summertime also debunks and exposes to derision a number of ideas that white South Africans supposedly fostered about themselves. In Julia's narrative she relates how they imagined themselves to be "the Jews of Africa … cunning, unscrupulous, resilient, running close to the ground, hated and envied by the tribes they lorded it over" (325). But she argues that this idea was "All false. All nonsense" (325). In fact, she says that they were simply "a great big family of babies looked after by slaves" (325). The essentially mercenary nature of the apartheid enterprise is a key theme in *Summertime*. John is convinced that, contrary to what the architects of apartheid purport is the reason for their behaviour – that they are fighting to keep Western Christian civilization alive on the continent (a well-known sentiment fostered by colonialism and imperialism) – the actual reason for apartheid and its elaborations is mercenary. He suggests that their patriotism is a lie, that, instead, exploitation and material benefit are what drives them. Moreover, he argues that they have no intention

of rooting themselves in the country; on the contrary, they have sufficient plans in place in other countries for when they leave, as "insurance against the day of reckoning" (289). The view of South Africa as a temporary place of residence is echoed in the second interview by Margot's brother-in-law, a German engineer "who has for years been trying to get them out of South Africa" (352). Her brother-in-law was one of a number of German and Swiss expatriates who came to South Africa in the 1960s "to make quick money and are preparing to abandon ship now that the country is going through stormy times" (353). This transient way of living suggests a deep-rooted alienation from the country.

The notion that apartheid ideology was a sham to mask white greed is borne out by Julia's reference to her husband, Mark, who works for an investment company whose clients were "for the most part wealthy South Africans trying to get their money out of the country before the country imploded" (305). Julia describes her relationships with white South African men as having a certain quality in common, a quality of evasiveness that she links with their relationship to the future of South Africa, "as if there were some conspiracy they all belonged to that was going to create a fake, trompe-l'oeil future where no future had seemed possible before. Like a camera shutter flicking open for an instant to reveal the falseness at their core" (325). Margot notes, however, that if she had had children, she would also seriously consider leaving the country and going to countries like America, Australia or New Zealand, "places where they can look forward to a decent future" (374). Her comment invokes Coetzee's own emigration to Australia in 2002. Jonathan Crewe refers to an email, dated 4/15/2003, in which Coetzee comments on his emigration, where he says that "Australia itself is wonderful. It's possible I am badly mistaken, but until I am persuaded so I will continue to believe this is the best move I have ever made" (2016: 67). In another email, four years later (8/5/2007), Coetzee writes to him that:

> I am trying to make a go of it in Australia, though I know I will never feel other than an outsider here. Dorothy is finding the move harder than I am – she misses her friends in Cape Town … but agrees that growing old in SA is not a fate to be looked forward to. (2016: 67)

John intones *dies irae, dies illa* in *Summertime* (289) to emphasise what he calls the "day of reckoning" for South Africa's apartheid past. He comments that he used to think that the

people who orchestrated apartheid had merely had a "tragic misreading of history" because they had not appreciated how the colonial world was being dismantled after 1945, so that they had "erected their fortress state and retreated behind its walls: where they would keep the flame of civilization burning until finally the world came to its senses" (289). Later, however, he had come to realise that their patriotism and "talk of saving civilization" had been false, that in fact, material interests had always been their primary motivation – they were always "calculating how they [could] keep the show running (the mines, the factories) before they [would] need to pack their bags, shred any incriminating documents and fly off to Zurich or Monaco or San Diego" where they could access the "villas and apartments" that they had bought years previously (289).

The phrase that John uses – *dies irae, dies illa* – are the opening words of a Latin hymn from the thirteenth century, known particularly for its use in the Catholic Church during the Mass of All Souls' Day and in funeral Masses. The words are also used in Mozart's Requiem and can be translated as "day of wrath, day of anger[3]". This doomsday paradigm for understanding South Africa's past and future echoes the biblical allusions found in *Disgrace*. The ecclesiastical resonance of Coetzee's phrase in *Summertime* suggests a reading of apartheid as a sin of biblical proportions, and provides another reflexive link to *Disgrace,* which also has biblical echoes. South Africa is represented in *Disgrace* as a place characterised by "the absence of grace" (Graham, 2002: 4); Derek Attridge, similarly, argues that "Lurie's phrase 'state of disgrace' clearly evokes the theological notion of a 'state of grace,' the name for a condition of receptiveness to the divine" (2005: 182).

Neuman argues that Coetzee's approach to politics in *Summertime* is informed by "a theological reading of politics," which epitomizes his interest in religion (135). A notable aspect of Coetzee's writing is his lack of interest in politics, evidenced most clearly in *Youth*, as discussed in the previous chapter. In *Summertime,* John longs to learn "How to live one's life outside politics"; what interests him about Jesus is that Jesus was killed because he refused to "play politics"(2011: 294). Coetzee's approach to politics is more often discursive and oblique – while his oppositional approach to apartheid is clear from the text, as Neuman notes, "his aesthetic response tends toward abstraction" (2011: 135). This abstraction often takes a theological turn. Coetzee's memo at the end of the entry is a caution to himself to

[3] http://www.stmatthews.com/choir/mozartsrequiem.htm

not pursue his interest in Jesus too much, but his journal entry of 31 May 1975 suggests his intense admiration for him: "Odd to find himself contemplating Jesus as a guide. But where should he search for a better one?" (12–13). Commenting on the formative effect of "the Jewish element in Western culture" in a letter to Paul Aster, he notes that "I would not be who I am without Freud or Kafka, to say nothing of that aberrant Jewish prophet Jesus of Nazareth" (2014: 146). Neuman suggests that "*Summertime* vividly depicts the way homelessness and apartness are conditions Coetzee sees as his fate and birthright as a white South African of a certain generation, tainted by a complicit relationship to apartheid that fosters a guilt his fiction and prose consistently describe in religious terms" (134).

Disgrace is also linked to *Summertime* in its association of South Africa with violence and crime. The novel was heavily criticised for its representation of post-apartheid South Africa, with one of the dominant critiques being that it perpetuated racist ideas. As Jane Poyner puts it, "[t]he controversy the novel sparked stems from the portrayal, at a time when the nation was preoccupied with discourses of reconciliation and forgiveness, of the gang rape of David Lurie's daughter, Lucy, by three intruders to her homestead on the Eastern Cape, who, we are led to believe, are black" (2014: 4). This depiction provoked multiple criticisms, specifically that the rape appeared to endorse racist stereotypes, on the one hand, and retaliation for apartheid, on the other. The novel faced such condemnation that, in 2000, it was submitted to the Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Racism in the Media. The then Minister of Public Enterprises, Jeff Radebe, identified an ironic authorial distance between Coetzee and such stereotyping:

> J.M. Coetzee makes the point that five years after liberation white South African society continues to believe in a particular stereotype of the African which defines the latter as immoral and amoral, a savage, violent, disrespectful of private property, incapable of refinement through education and driven by … dark satanic impulses. (quoted in Attwell, 2002: 334)

Coovadia's assessment of Coetzee's representation of South Africa in *Disgrace* is echoed by other critics: it is "a world dying without hope" (Kochin, 2004: 4) and a place that is "extraordinarily despairing" (Cowley, 1999:19). Of the novel's reception, Attridge commented that:

> Coetzee is either praised (implicitly or explicitly) for unblinkingly depicting the lack of progress South Africa has made towards its declared goal of a non-racial, non-sexist democracy … or condemned for painting a one-sidedly negative picture of post-apartheid South Africa, representing blacks as rapists and thieves, and implying that whites have no option but to submit to their assaults. (2002: 317)

Coetzee's critical writing on the subject, however, suggests that he does not endorse these views – in his essay on Breytenbach's *Dog Heart,* he is critical of Breytenbach's depictions of whites as the victims of attacks in the so-called new South Africa, arguing that:

> These stories make disturbing reading not only because of the psychopathic violence of the attacks themselves, but because they are being repeated at all. For the circulation of horror stories is the very mechanism that drives white paranoia about being chased off the land and ultimately into the sea. Why does Breytenbach lend himself to the process? (2001:312)

These comments suggest that Coetzee does not support stories that participate in discourses that promote fear and paranoia among white South Africans; it would seem unlikely that his own fiction would engage in a similar discourse. I would argue that *Disgrace*'s depiction of violence is linked to South Africa's legacy of land dispossession, something which is alluded to in *Summertime* as well – as Poyner argues, Coetzee's works have "provided one of the most sustained critiques of the land question in South African literature" (2014: 5). In both texts, this issue coheres around the Eastern Cape. In the post-apartheid setting of *Disgrace,* the attack on Lucy takes place in a town in the Eastern Cape. In *Summertime,* the Eastern Cape is also associated with violence and crime – Julia suggests that the reason her in-laws never visited was that they were afraid of leaving their farm in the rural Eastern Cape because they feared that the farm would be attacked and robbed, so that "they might as well have been in jail" (336). In his review of Noel Mostert's *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa* people (1992), Coetzee argues that there is an association between the Eastern Cape and racial conflict in South Africa because Grahamstown came to represent British culture in South Africa after 4000 British volunteers

were offered free land there. With reference to the conflict between the Xhosa and British settlers, Mostert argues that "[t]here was a quality of racial hatred in [Grahamstown] of a virulence that equalled, and probably surpassed, anything previously experienced in South Africa" (quoted in Coetzee, 2002:337). When the homes of the British settlers were attacked and their possessions stolen, it "was felt as a crippling assault upon their social identity, as it was not by the Boers. Hence their rage; hence, ultimately, the hostility between white and black that characterises the Eastern Cape down to the present day" (quoted in Coetzee, 2002:337).

A recurring critique of Coetzee's writing is that it did not engage explicitly with apartheid, particularly in relation to the increasing resistance to apartheid during the 1970s – the time that he started publishing fiction. As discussed in the previous chapter, Nadine Gordimer's review of *Life and Times of Michael K* was highly critical of the novel's passive approach to politics and the victims of apartheid. But, as Sophie notes, "[John's] politics were too idealistic, too Utopian" for him to become actively involved in it. Of his response to issues of race, she says that he "longed for the day when everyone in South Africa would call themselves nothing"; when they would be "ethnically indistinguishable," what he referred to as "the Brazilian future" (459). It is one of the most notable (and remarkable) features of Coetzee's work that in a country in which race continues to be the dominant characteristic that identifies people, Coetzee resists the usual racial categories used during apartheid, and which continue to be used currently. As Sophie wryly notes, however, while he "approved of Brazil and the Brazilians" he "had of course never been to Brazil" (458), underscoring his idealistic (and perhaps naïve) approach to race. In an oblique response to criticism against his perceived eschewing of overtly political work, Sophie comments that John "looked down on politics. He didn't like political writers, writers who espoused a political programme" (455). She characterises him as being "anti-political"; he thought that "politics brought out the worst in people," and that it "also brought to the surface the worst types in society" (456). Her view of why Coetzee was so strongly against politics is that it was because he thought that it allowed people to "give rein to [their] baser emotions" and that meant "hatred and rancour and spite and jealousy and bloodlust and so forth" (456), and that "fighting only prolongs the cycle of aggression and retaliation" (458). Of his views on the liberation struggle, she felt that, for John, while the struggle was just, "the new South Africa towards which it strove was not Utopian enough for him" (457).

While crime is foregrounded in *Disgrace*, it is also a significant aspect of Coetzee's representation of South Africa in *Summertime*, particularly in Adriana's narrative, which is a bitter one in relation to place. Her memories and view of the country are bleak and grim. She and her family came to South Africa from Angola, where they had been working – her husband for the newspaper, she for the National Ballet. However, because of political events in the country, they moved to South Africa. Adriana characterises her life in South Africa as a "living death," commenting that it was "a fatal mistake when we took the ship to South Africa" (422). One night while guarding a warehouse her husband was brutally attacked with an axe. This callous attack becomes the focal point of her feelings about the country. She calls South Africa "this strange country where they were not at home, on a continent where they should never have come" (405). She says of the country that "all I desired was to escape from it" (428). Of the flat in Wynberg where they lived, she says that she "hated" it (418). When her husband was taken to Stikland hospital in a coma, she reflects on how "stranded and helpless" they were "in this cruel land" (420). She was not allowed to take him home to look after him because the doctors wanted to treat him with electric currents in the hope that it could bring him out of his coma. She was angered at what she considered to be humiliating treatment, and that he was not allowed to "die properly, in peace" (421). She longed to be released from the country so that she and her daughters could return to their home, Brazil. Her harrowing experiences provoke intense bitterness about South Africa, making her long for the day that they could leave: "Then we could spit on this atrocious earth of South Africa and be gone" (421). When John enrols at the dance studio she teaches at, she notes how ill at ease he looks, and comments that "Only in South Africa did I meet men like that, stiff, intractable, unteachable. Why did they ever come to Africa, I wondered" (424). Adriana notes that being from Brazil made the situation worse for her, because in South Africa "there were no regulations for Brazilians, no precedents" and that "to the bureaucrats it was as if we arrived in their country from Mars" (419). In addition, with her poor English and her husband unable to sign for anything, dealing with the bureaucracy proved a nightmare. Her description of the effect of living in South Africa is especially poignant: "Sometimes … I would be trudging the streets of that ugly, windy city from one government office to another and I would hear this little cry come from my throat, *yi-yi-yi*, so soft that no one around me could hear. I was in distress" (420).

Against this harsh view of the country as a pitiless place marked by violence is John's fierce love for the Karoo landscape, just as in *Boyhood* and *Summertime.* This love for the Karoo, and the family farm, Voëlfontein, in particular, can be read against Coetzee's critique of white South Africans and their relation to the South African landscape. In his Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech (1987), Coetzee commented that:

> At the heart of the unfreedom of the hereditary masters of South Africa is a failure of love. To be blunt: their love is not enough today and has not been enough since they arrived on the continent; furthermore, their talk, their excessive talk, about how they love South Africa has consistently been directed toward *the land,* that is, toward what is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers. (1992: 97, emphasis in original)

While the most poignant and moving feelings John has about South Africa, explored particularly in *Boyhood* and *Summertime,* are invariably directed towards the land, which might make his critique a questionable one, Coetzee's fictions, particularly *In the Heart of the Country*, demonstrate a yearning for love and connection between people. Coetzee comments of Magda that

> … her passion is … the love for South Africa (not just South Africa the rocks and bushes and mountains and plains but the country and its people), of which there has not been enough on the part of the European colonists and their descendants – not enough in intensity, not enough in all-embracingness. (1992:61)

What *Boyhood* and *Summertime* make clear is that John's love for the land is enormously complicated by his feelings of historical guilt over it. While his love for the Karoo is a recurring thread and an indelible part of his memoirs, it is also a site of conflict. Justin Neuman notes that "Coetzee juxtaposes attachments fostered by geographic mobility and unexpected cosmopolitan networks with … a Homeric longing for *nostos,* here identified with Coetzee's regional affinities to the Karoo and Western Cape regions of South Africa" (2011: 134).

There is a tension in Coetzee's depiction of the Karoo as idealised – 'whole' and 'coherent' – and as experienced – 'fragmented' – that is echoed in the memoir's form. Coetzee represents the family farm as an idyllic space, but this conception of the farm is tainted by John's feelings of guilt over land dispossession in the country's history.

The interview with John's cousin, Margot, relates particularly to the Karoo landscape and family gatherings at Voëlfontein. As in *Boyhood,* John's relationship to the family farm and the Karoo landscape is a central theme in this section of the memoir. John's relationship with Margot is the closest he has with anyone in his family. They share a special bond: "To him and to her it was granted to spend their childhood summers in a sacred place" (Coetzee, 2011: 387). Their connection is rooted in the land, in their intense love for the dry Karoo landscape, with John noting that: "They are in a minority, a tiny minority, the two of them, of souls that are stirred by these great, desolate expanses. If anything has held them together over the years, it is that" (383). However, there is also a certain understanding they have about the landscape, "an understanding that love can be too much" (387). When she asks him whether he is glad to be back in the Karoo after having been in America, he is disconcerted and uncertain. He has to weigh up his love for the land over his feelings of alienation about the country. The Karoo is defined as being "this sky, this place, the vast silence enclosing them," and John remarks that it makes him feel "blessed, one of a lucky few," but he questions what kind of future he could have in a country where, he says, "I have never fitted in" (385). His answer is that perhaps it would be better to just make a clean break with the country – "Cut yourself free of what you love and hope that the wound heals" (385). The memoir suggests that this is in fact what John does, and Attwell argues that his return to South Africa after his failed emigration to the USA was a morally and psychically traumatic event (2012: 287). Jonathan Crewe adds that "this sense of not being at home in SA was clearly heightened by the uprooting from the US," particularly also because life in America "offered a singularly rich and varied cultural milieu" (2016:51).

For John, the Karoo landscape "spoils me for life," adding that it "wrenches my heart … It wrenched my heart when I was a child, and I have never been right since" (358). When John tells Margot that he is considering buying a house in Merweville, a town a short distance from Voëlfontein, as a sort of holiday house for him and a place for his father to live, Margot is completely taken aback, given that the town is in complete decline. John's response to

her astonishment is simply that "It's in the Karoo" (367). Margot marvels at his naïveté, thinking, *"He speaks of the Karoo as if it were paradise!"* (366 emphasis in the original). John's profound love for the farm is again evoked when Margot is reminded of the time when there would be huge family gatherings at the farm over the Christmas season, and recalls John asking her one day where she wanted to be buried, and, without waiting for her reply, whispered that "I want to be buried here" (367).

John's wish to buy a house in Merweville, close to the farm, foregrounds the intersecting axes of time and place, as the passage of time has altered the environment considerably. Margot observes that "Even Voëlfontein and the Karoo are no longer Voëlfontein and the Karoo as they used to be" (373). Her comment suggests the effect of political developments in the country during the mid-1960s and 1970s, particularly massive resistance to the apartheid regime, such as Soweto 1976 and the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement, most famously associated with Steve Biko. Margot notes that the children they encountered at the café in Merweville approached them quite brazenly, and "In the attitude of Coloured people in general towards whites there is a new and unsettling hardness" (373-74). The younger people no longer use the terms of subservience, such as *"Baas"* and *"Miesies"* (374), and people are reluctant to report men who break the pass laws, as they used to do.

Despite loving the farm where she and her husband live, Margot fears the future direction of the country and also feels bitter about their prospects, as the farming is very difficult, and she wonders whether there is any point to the effort they put in trying to keep the farm viable, when their future in the country is so uncertain and the prospect is that she and her husband are quite likely to "expire in some forgotten corner, disinherited" (376). After she writes a letter to John trying to dissuade him from buying property in Merweville, she thinks about the unspoken question in the letter, which is *"What are we doing here? … What are we doing in this barren part of the world?"* (392, emphasis in original). In this text there is a thread of anxiety about the future of white people in South Africa that also links it to *Disgrace*. Race relations are again a key thread in the last of Coetzee's memoirs, emphasizing the way in which spatial form informs Coetzee's narrative method – as Mitchell argues, one of the ways in which spatial form may be designated is how distinct parts of a narrative may be connected, "without regard to chronology, through such devices as image patterns, leitmotifs, analogy, and contrast" (13).

Margot and Lukas face enormous difficulties in keeping their farm going, and she bitterly asks herself: "Whose idea was it to lay down roads and railway lines, build towns, bring in people and then bind them to this place, bind them with rivets through the heart, so that they cannot get away?" (392). Margot's sentiments are contrasted to those of Adriana, who bitterly regrets her and her husband's decision to come to South Africa in the first place. Margot's anger has its genesis in the colonial enterprise (people like Jacobus Coetzee), whose colonial exploits laid the foundation for the subsequent colonisation and exploitation of the land and its people, resulting in inevitably deformed relationships between people. These warped relationships are emphasized by Margot's experiences. When her mother has to be taken by ambulance to Groote Schuur hospital, they are accompanied by a coloured nurse, Aletta, and Margot is overcome with gratitude at the nurse's friendliness and helpfulness. She feels the wretchedness of the situation, hoping that her smile of gratitude will convey what she is too ashamed to say, which is that *"I want to tell you how grateful I am for what you and your colleague are doing for an old white woman and her daughter, two strangers who have never done anything for you but on the contrary have participated in your humiliation in the land of your birth, day after day after day"* (396, emphasis in original).

Another thread explored in the memoir in relation to South Africa is that of language and its relationship to identity; these threads overlap and intersect with similar themes in *Youth.* When John refers to himself and his father as two Afrikaners, Margot wonders if he really considers himself to be an Afrikaner, commenting that "She doesn't know many real *[egte]* Afrikaners who would accept him as one of the tribe" (356-57). When they are rescued from being stranded on the road by Hendrik, one of the farm workers, it is clear that one of the reasons Hendrik prefers talking to her is that they "share a language, whereas the Afrikaans John speaks is stiff and bookish" (379). Sophie tells Vincent about an incident in which John was interviewed by a French journalist, who, it turned out, was mainly interested in John's opinion of Breyten Breytenbach. John felt that it would not be possible to explain the significance of Breytenbach's poetry to a foreigner, as it was "so deeply rooted in the *volksmond*, the language of the people" (463). The journalist was very disparaging of what he considered to be Breytenbach's "dialect poems" and commented that it was surely not possible to write great poetry in dialect, a remark which "really infuriated John" (463). After

attempting to placate the journalist, Sophie realised that the journalist "was putting Breytenbach and John in the same category, as vernacular or dialect writers," and that John's angry response was his objection to what he considered "an insult to the dignity of Afrikaans" (463). Vincent suggests to Sophie that John's position was quite contradictory, given that his outlook was cosmopolitan and that he showed little interest in being an Afrikaner, but was prepared to claim an Afrikaner identity. Sophie's opinion is that John, because of his Afrikaner family connections, would have considered it ethically dubious to "separate himself off from the Afrikaners while retaining his self-respect" (464). According to Sophie, what distinguished John's family is that they were "cultural Afrikaners but not political Afrikaners" (465) in the sense that they were uninterested in nationalism, as many Afrikaners became.

The interview with Martin offers perspectives about South Africa in more overt political terms, about which the author Coetzee has generally been reticent to speak. In his Notebooks, John refers to the British influence in the Cape, and comments that, without that influence, the Cape would be merely "A minor landing on the way to nowhere; a place of savage idleness," and the University of Cape Town, where he goes for a lectureship interview, as a "provincial university that is doing its best to maintain standards in difficult times, to keep the flame of civilization burning" (440). Martin speculates that a possible reason that John makes a reference to white South African identity in his Notebooks, but then drops the topic, is that he felt the topic to be "too complex and too close to the bone" (442). According to Martin, he and John shared similar ideological views about South Africa, that "our presence there was illegitimate" and that while it was their birthright to be there, "the basis of that right was fraudulent. Our existence was grounded in a crime, specifically colonial conquest, perpetuated by apartheid" (442). He goes on to say that "Whatever the opposite is of *native* or *rooted*, that was what we felt ourselves to be. We thought of ourselves as … without a home, without a homeland" (442, emphasis in original).

Martin calls his fate in South Africa not tragic but, rather, comic. He suggests that it was deeply ironic that all the effort that had gone into colonising the country should result in descendants who felt their presence to be both tenuous and provisional: "Doubt in the hearts of those descendants about title to the land; an uneasy sense that it belonged not to them" (433). Martin says that both he and John "cultivated a certain provisionality in our feelings

towards the country," that they were "reluctant to invest too deeply in the country, since sooner or later our ties to it would have to be cut" (443). Vincent wonders whether there is a parallel between John's inability to commit himself emotionally in personal relations and his feelings of provisionality towards the country, alluding to the deep-rooted ways in which the experience of place may affect a person.

Summertime's narrative organisation, underpinned by spatial form, foregrounds the text's themes of fragmentation and disconnectedness. Foust suggests that the fulcrum of Frank's theory of spatial form is that it is "composed of the ideas of simultaneity, juxtaposition, and the reflexive reference of word-groups" (1975: 5). The textual strategies employed in *Summertime* privilege these techniques over chronological progression. Coetzee's use of reflexive reference in *Summertime* operates internally in the memoir but also extends to his other works, particularly his previous two memoirs and *Disgrace*. The composite images of John and Coetzee's homeland, South Africa, that emerge from these strategies embody spatial form in Coetzee's work, in which "two or more superimposed moments are fused within a moment of concrete sensuous apprehension (the image) which for the moment releases one from the desperate sway of Time" (Foust, 1975: 7).

Chapter 5: 'An order of coexistent data': Spatiality and montage construction in *Diary of a Bad Year*

My focus in this chapter will be on spatiality in *Diary of a Bad Year*, epitomised by its technique of montage construction, and on the interplay between the novel's form and its thematic concerns. I will argue that, as in 'The narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' in *Dusklands* and *In the Heart of the Country*, montage is a key technique in *Diary of a Bad Year*. One of the effects of the technique is that experience in *Diary* is represented as a spatial construct, highlighting connections between sometimes disparate elements, and emphasizing a view of reality as being complex, ambiguous and fragmented. At a structural level, the layout of each page juxtaposes the text's fictional narratives and a miscellany of opinions which, although part of the text's fictional framework, form part of a different type of discourse. I will argue that the novel's montage construction allows Coetzee to create the space for a different type of discourse, one that blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. I will focus my discussion of montage on the technique of juxtaposition. In montage, it is the juxtaposition of elements in space, rather than temporal progression, that generates meaning in the text. Within this framework, *Diary* juxtaposes a range of thematic concerns which I will discuss in this chapter: space, the split, fragmented nature of experience, the interplay between fiction and autobiography and public and private discourse, and the complex, multi-layered nature of place.

The technique of montage is a key aspect of Coetzee's *Diary*. The most striking feature of the novel is its visual aspect: the organisation of space on the page. In my introduction, I discussed Leibnitz's definition of space – "*spatium est ordo coexistendi*" (space is an order of coexistent data) (1980: 543) in which he argued that, because the physical text comprises "characters, objects, images, sensations or emotions," it is an entity that renders an "order of coexistent data" (quoted in Mitchell, 1980: 551). In *Diary*, multiple fictional narratives and non-fiction passages (which juxtapose what J.C. calls 'Strong Opinions,' and "a second, gentler set of opinions … on birds, for example," referred to as 'Second Diary'), are represented as coexistent, rather than separate, discourses. Sharon Spencer uses the term "architectonic" to describe novels whose structure creates the "illusion of a spatial entity," in which "prose fragments of diverse types and lengths" are arranged "by means of the principle of juxtaposition" (1971: xx – xxi). This is epitomised in the stylistic variations and

multiple narrative perspectives in *Diary*. In such novels, meaning depends on the reader's apprehension of the relationships between the fragments. Spencer defines the mode of construction by means of juxtaposition as "the setting beside one another without connectives of types of prose" in which "the whole idea of beginning and ending is annihilated," and overt transitions, as well as suggestions of causality, are abandoned (xxi).

Shine argues that, while writers such as Dickens in the nineteenth century used montage constructions in order to create plot excitement and tension through parallel action, this usage expanded in the twentieth century in order to elucidate a view of reality that is more complicated. Montage is now used "to provide juxtaposed multiple perspectives, disparities, ambiguities and uncertainties which the modern consciousness perceives is the only accurate way to view reality" (50). Shine uses the example of William Faulkner as exemplifying this aspect of the novel. She argues that, in his works, there is "a combination of multiple narrative points of view," thus emphasizing the technique of montage construction in his texts (ix). She proposes that Faulkner creates a world "where dream, memory and reality are inextricably mixed" (91) and that he uses contrasts to suggest "the multiple possibilities open to human nature and … the wealth of different responses to life and death that individuals are capable of expressing" (102). She argues that in Faulkner "we are not dealing with an artist who is trying to communicate a rational, ordered whole but with an extremely subjective vision which may have no basis in or relevance to any attempt at approximating objective reality" (115).

Space is used in a text – the physical book – to organise 'data,' and in *Diary*, the way in which the novel's 'data' is organised on the page is meaningful. Joseph Kestner discusses this organisation of space in a book in his reference to Michel Butor's "The Book as Object," in which he notes that it is an example of a work that also uses the page's space meaningfully, arguing that "the book, itself a diptych, exploits its typographical and spatial layout for part of its existence," and that "framing and perspective occupy the novelist as much as the painter" (1978: 30). As Gerard Genette notes, the novel has devices, such as discontinuity and atemporality, that undercut linear discourse, and that these aspects of the novel reveal that "language *spaces itself* … so that space, in itself, becomes language, speaks it and writes it" (in Kestner, 1978: 30, emphasis in original).

One of the consequences of the novel's layout is that it emphasizes discontinuity and atemporality in the text, aspects of the text which undercut linear discourse – as Rita Barnard points out, the separate narratives make it impossible to read the text either chronologically or from the top to the bottom of the page (2013: 452). The effect of this method is that each narrative combines to make a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Bergson's conception of time, designated *duree*, or duration, provides a good illustration of this. He argues for a view of time as being not linear but flowing, a continuum in which past, present and future melt together: "As in a piece of music, each note becomes part of and changes the entire composition, so each moment of time changes the whole" (in Shine: 119). These comments resonate with Coetzee's description of listening to Bach one afternoon where, as discussed in chapter three, he tried to articulate the effect of the music on him, noting that at some point, the chronological movement of time ceased and the different elements of the music "cohere[d] as a higher-order object" (1998: 9). Attwell also emphasizes the centrality of the text's structure and layout: "The richness of the text lies wholly in the experience of *reading*, as one follows the opinions and the narrative sequences printed below them, wondering (often inconclusively) about the connections between them" (2010: 218, emphasis in original).

Diary is premised on an invitation from a German publisher to contribute to a series of essays, entitled *Strong Opinions*, written by six distinguished authors, in which they comment on contemporary issues in the world. The narrative organisation incorporates both a fictional narrative and political and philosophical reflections by the protagonist (referred to only by his initials J.C.; as Señor C by Anya, and as Juan by Anya's partner, Alan). The top track consists of a series of opinion pieces by J.C. The middle and bottom tracks consist of narratives by J.C. and Anya, the young woman whom he hires to do his typing, and later her partner, Alan. Within this framework, there is a clear distinction between the top narrative, comprised of J.C.'s essays, and the bottom two fictional narratives. In addition, the essays in the top band are further divided into two types: Part One: a series of essays entitled 'Strong Opinions,' dated 12 September 2005 – 21 May 2006, and an undated Part Two, entitled 'Second Dairy,' a series of reflections that are more personal, what J.C. calls 'gentler opinions.' Albeit within a fictional framework, the top track, J.C.'s opinion pieces, does not constitute fiction per se; it comprises a miscellany of reflections about the world. While the three separate tracks on each page make the reading experience a fragmented one,

combining as they do both essay-type reflections and fictional narratives that are seemingly independent of each other, there are two factors that mitigate the fragmentary reading experience. Firstly, there is significant interplay between the three tracks and, secondly, for the most part, the sentences in each narrative track do not run on to the next page but end on the same page – there are only a few instances where the sentences in the different strands run on to the next page.

Its typographical layout and structure make *Diary* an unusual novel. In addition, as Kannemeyer notes, the novel "has nothing in common with an ordinary diary, or even with literary diaries like Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* or Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*" (2012: 594). Each page is divided into first two, then three, separate, parallel narrative strands, each strand separated by blank space and a line. All these elements focus attention on the space of the page.

In delineating spatial form in the novel, Kestner refers to Lessing's distinction between the two categories of art – "those based on coexistence in space, and those based on consecutiveness in time" – to argue that space functions in the novel as the "secondary aesthetic illusion" (1978: 19). This is a term first used by Susan Langer in discussing the concepts of primary and secondary illusions in art. Mary Reichling explicates Langer's conception of secondary illusion. For Langer, an illusion is not "a dreamlike state, a delusion, or something hallucinatory"; it can be characterized, rather, as "apparitions or appearances of something" (1995: 39). Reichling traces the distinction to Kant, for whom "illusions are acknowledged by the understanding as a play of the mind with perceptual appearance"; they are "voluntarily or consciously entered into and sustained" (39). For Reichling, illusions can be described as being:

> … akin to the philosopher's concept of aspect perception, Wittgenstein's notion of ambiguity in multiple reference as demonstrated by the "duck or rabbit" phenomenon, and Gombrich's idea of multi-stable images where a viewer may continually shift between duck and rabbit. The illusion is a moment of magical or imaginative seeing that is personal, associative, logical, and often fleeting. (40)

Primary illusions are those that are essential to a work, while secondary illusions are more transient aspects of the work: "They may be fickle, ephemeral, variable, complementary, sometimes slightly articulated and other times forceful" (41). A work may have a number of secondary illusions, but what is important about it is that it is "the realm of the imagination, and … are grasped imaginatively" (41). Reichling notes that what Langer tries to describe in her explanation of secondary illusions can be difficult to grasp, because she seems to be attempting to describe "the magical and sorcerer-like qualities and abilities art and the artist can have – where things can become so mysteriously much more than at first they seemed to be" (42). She suggests that "images" is a preferred designation, because "the notion of images seems to tie more closely to imagination, which Langer holds as central in grasping illusions and understanding the import of the artwork" (43). In the secondary illusion, spatial elements in a text include aspects such as point of view, line, plane, scene, characterisation and functional form, which derive its properties from the "pictorial, sculptural and architectural spatial arts" (20). *Diary*'s typographical layout functions in an analogous way to Langer's conception of secondary illusion, in which the novel's space produces a meaning in the work that complements its thematic concerns. The novel's technique of montage is essential in generating this meaning.

In *Diary*, the juxtaposition of J.C.'s opinion pieces and the fictional narratives blurs boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, both in its stylistic variations and in its thematic contents. Elizabeth Ermath calls this 'paratactical' movement in a novel, arguing that "Paratactical postmodern sequences … direct attention simultaneously in several different, perhaps even contradictory directions" (1992: 85). An example of how this operates in the text is the juxtaposition of one of J.C.'s opinion pieces with narratives relating to Anya. In the top track of the first section, 'Strong Opinions,' number 17, entitled 'On Intelligent Design,' J.C. engages in an academic discussion of the Intelligent Design movement as an alternative to Darwinism, noting that a US court had recently ruled that public schools in Pennsylvania were not allowed to teach Intelligent Design as an account of the universe, especially not as an alternative to Darwinism (Coetzee, 2007: 83). Below his opinion piece are two narratives, one by J.C. and one by Anya. J.C.'s narrative is focused on Anya and is an account of his personal relationship with her, one in which he has a conversation with her about her boyfriend, Alan, while having romantic thoughts about her. At one point in the conversation he thinks "*Dump Alan, be mine!*" (83, emphasis in original); later, as she

continues talking about Alan, he thinks: "*Rule Two: Never have anything to do with the husband"* (85, emphasis in original), all the while continuing his conversation with her without a hint of what he is actually thinking. J.C.'s narrative, in which he engages in a rather bland conversation with Anya while having erotic thoughts about her, demonstrates this paratactical movement. Arnold Hauser traces such 'simultaneity' in literature to the influence of film, noting that the notion of 'simultaneity' that the experience of film produced ushered in a new conception of time in that it demonstrated that the same person could experience "many different, unconnected and irreconcilable things in one and the same moment," in which "past and present, dreams and speculation join hands across the intervals of space and time, the sensibility, always on the scent of new tracks, roams about in space and time, and the boundaries of space and time vanish in this endless and boundless stream of interrelations" (2015: 231). While Hauser refers, in particular, to modernist writers such as Proust, Coetzee can be seen as a postmodernist whose work shares a number of affinities with modernist works. Also, as discussed in chapter two, Coetzee was interested in film and how its techniques could be adapted in writing.

Shine also references modernist writers by arguing that novelists turned to the technique of montage in the twentieth century to

> provide a new definition of reality; not to label, pigeon-hole, or assess, but to present a kaleidoscopic impression of a world without absolutes; to convince us that time and existence are not objective and linear, but instead prismatic, complex, dynamic webs of expanding, resonating planes of reality forever held in a suspension of simultaneous interaction (1978: 186).

The structure and layout of *Diary*, with its juxtaposition of separate fictional narratives and opinion pieces, creates both complexity and ambiguity. At a basic level, this can be seen in the lack of clarity about the work's genre. Peter McDonald notes the differences in the way the work is labelled in different editions. For example, the first U.S. and U.K. editions call *Diary* a "work of fiction," while the Australian edition refers to it as "not like any other novel by J.M. Coetzee" (2010: 485). Paul Patton also points to the difficulty in defining the book's genre – whether it is a novel or a book of opinions – concluding that it has to be considered as being both at once (2011: 54-5). Given that J.C. confesses that he has no

mother tongue, and that the novel was first published in Dutch and then later in other languages, such as Spanish, German, Japanese and French, Rebecca Walkowitz suggests that novels such as *Diary* ask us "to imagine new geographies of literary production" and require "methodologies that understand the history of a book to include its many editions and translations" (2009: 568). Attwell suggests that *Diary* falls into the same category of "semi-detached autobiography" as *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002) and *Summertime* (2009), while including "explicitly fictional elements" (2010: 214). Kannemeyer concurs, saying that the novel "seems intended to be read autobiographically" (2012: 593). There are a number of details in the narrative about J.C.'s life that could be read as autobiographical, but these details interweave seamlessly with others that are fictional, blurring the distinction between the two genres.

Attwell suggests that the fictional narratives are quite thin, that "there is something slightly perfunctory" about them (2010: 218). He points out a contradiction between the three tracks: while the top track comprises essay-type pieces, in contrast to the middle and bottom tracks, which are fictional, the part of the narrative in which fiction seems to work best is in fact in one of J.C.'s non-fictional reflections – number 18 of the Second Diary, entitled 'On the birds of the air,' which he refers to as "a brilliant rendering of the interior life of a magpie that makes itself known to J.C" (218). In the piece, J.C. describes his encounter with a magpie, which he calls "the magpie-in-chief," in a park across from his apartment block, on a strip of land that used to be where the birds came to hunt and nest, but that had been converted into a public park. Because of the magpie's boldness and pride, J.C. comments that "I never waver from according him the full respect, the full attention he deserves" (209). J.C.'s description of the cockatoo in this piece is equally lyrical – he comments that:

> There are visits from the cockatoos as well. One sits peaceably in a wild plum tree. He regards me, holds out a plum kernel in his claw as if to say, "Would you like a bite?" I want to say, "This is a public garden. You are as much a visitor as I, it is not up to you to offer me food." But public, private, it is no more than a puff of air to him. "It's a free world," he says. (2007: 209)

While Attwell proposes that the novel's thinness "is counterbalanced by a certain metafictional thickness," (118) I would add that the effect of the montage principle at play

here is to undercut the boundary between fiction and other types of discourse – that is to say, fictionalisation is present in all types of discourse.

Kannemeyer defines *Diary* as "a hybrid of essay and fiction. Elements of the traditional novel, such as character, background and plot, are subordinated to a metafictional approach" (2012: 595). According to Patton, the book's structure creates many uncertainties, one of which is defining the type of book it is and what the relationship is between the opinions and the parallel narratives below them (2011: 54). These uncertainties create what he calls the first aporia at the heart of the book (54). The second aporia that Patton identifies in the novel is the question of whether the opinions can be attributed to J.M. Coetzee, or whether they are simply those of the main protagonist, J.C. He points to the similarities in biography between the two and argues that the coincidences between them suggest that "these are indeed all opinions of John Coetzee" (54). There are, however, a number of differences between them; among others, they were born in different years and live in different cities in Australia, and J.C. comments that he hasn't written a novel in years, whereas J.M. Coetzee had published *Slow Man* just two years previously. Patton concludes that whether or not the opinions in the book can be attributed to J.M. Coetzee is "an irresolvable puzzle" (54). I am, however, more inclined to agree with Attwell, who argues that, despite their fictional framing within J.C.'s narrative, "they are unreservedly autobiographical on Coetzee's part" (215). On the question of whether and to what extent J.C.'s views are related to J.M. Coetzee's, Attwell is clear: "anyone who knows anything about Coetzee's work and reputation will know that J.C.'s views are recognisably Coetzee's" (216). For Attwell, "Fiction shades into autobiography here, because the text anticipates that the reader *will* gauge J.C.'s views alongside what we know of the author's" (216, emphasis in original), a claim with which Julian Murphet concurs (2011: 74). Coetzee's narrative method deliberately blurs the boundaries between the two genres in favour of a hybrid genre that encompasses both (a trend that seems to have gained traction in recent years – in selecting the final six novels for the International Booker Prize shortlist for 2021, "the judges found they were swayed towards works that blurred the lines between fiction and nonfiction," Flood, 2021).

The narrative method of *Diary,* with its parallel tracks, multiple narrative perspectives and stylistic variations, undermines Gotthold Lessing's conception of the distinction between

literature and the visual arts (discussed in the introduction to this thesis), according to which painting uses "form and colour in space," while poetry consists of "articulated sounds in time" (in Frank, 1945: 223). Lessing's distinction between the two art forms – the notion that form in painting is spatial, because it consists of elements juxtaposed in an instant of time, while in literature it is temporal because it "makes use of language, composed of a succession of words proceeding through time" (223) – has become standard. Yet in its juxtaposition of different narrative perspectives, *Diary* epitomizes how temporal sequence in literature can be undermined in favour of spatiality. Significant parallels between the novel's form and thematic concerns are epitomised in its exploration of spatiality.

The literal gaps on the page in *Diary* between the different narrative strands are echoed in the text's thematic concerns. For example, in a philosophical passage that explores the nature of rational discourse, J.C. considers the notion of spaces unimagined, and the implication this has for how we see and understand the world. J.C.'s essay 'On Zeno' echoes 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' in *Dusklands*, where Jacobus contemplates the Zeno philosophy of infinite regression in relation to his capture by the 'Hottentots.' In his narrative, he compares himself to the black beetle, which he feels epitomises Zeno's paradox, because when it is attacked, it will feign death, and, as Jacobus notes, "You may pull his legs off one by one and he will not wince" (Coetzee, 1974: 102). In the essay 'On Zeno' in *Diary*, J.C. contemplates the paradox of Zeno – that before an arrow can reach its target, it has to first get half-way there, but before it can get half-way there it must first get a quarter of the way, and so forth, to infinity. The arrow has to pass an infinitely long series of markers before it can reach its destination, making its destination seemingly impossible to reach. As J.C. notes, Isaac Newton overcame Zeno's paradox by finding a way to add the infinite number of steps and getting to a finite total, but J.C. is not convinced. He feels that the paradox has depths that are not explained by Newton's solution: "What if," he says, "in the interval … the arrow were to lose its way, fall into a hole, vanish?" (94). This topic is one that recurs in Coetzee's works, particularly *The Childhood of Jesus*, where, as Urmila Seshagiri suggests, Coetzee "turns gaps themselves into the novel's prevailing tropes" (2013: 650). She argues that:

> David's childish fear of falling into sidewalk cracks gathers mysterious resonance as he expresses an obsession with other gaps: distances between stars, imaginary

> spaces between numbers, invisible holes between book chapters, graves for corpses, hollows in the body. All of these gaps – metaphysical, cosmological, physical – acquire their greatest intensity in the linguistic gaps that accompany the act of translation. (650)

David, in *The Childhood of Jesus,* worries about holes that may exist between the cracks in the sidewalk. One day, when he and his father are walking back to the Centre, David's father irritably tells him to hurry up, pointing out that the cracks in the sidewalk are much too small for him to fall through (his progress is slow because he tries to avoid the cracks in the sidewalk). David replies, however, that it is other cracks that concern him, the ones which nobody knows about and through which anyone can fall (Coetzee, 2013: 35). Later in the novel, when Simón is attempting to teach David to read a book, he notices that David is "whipping furiously through the pages," and asks him why he is handling the book so roughly, to which David replies that if he doesn't hurry, "a hole will open … Between the pages" (166).

David's worry about holes which no one can see might be considered irrational, contrary to how the physical laws of the world work. Yet both J.C.'s and David's concerns about spaces that may exist but that we cannot see or do not experience in everyday life suggest that the discourse of rationality is not a particularly strong imperative here. There may also be a playful allusion to the notion that rationality is not necessarily congruent with reality at its most fundamental level, particularly the kind of rationality that is based on our everyday experiences of the world. In fact, the past century of scientific discovery has shown that our everyday experiences are not necessarily an accurate guide to the nature of reality. Two fundamental principles in physics highlight this: the uncertainty principle and special relativity. The uncertainty principle was developed by Werner Heisenberg in 1927. It is a fundamental property of the universe, and operates at the sub-atomic realm. It posits that, at its most fundamental level, reality cannot be completely known. Heisenberg formulated the principle in relation to the development of quantum physics, in which knowledge about sub-atomic particles, such as an electron, can never be complete, unlike in the deterministic world of 'classical' physics. Kenneth Ford points out that "The principle applies not only to position and momentum but to other pairs of quantities as well, such as time and energy"; in essence, it means that "the more accurately you know one thing the less accurately you

can know another thing" (2011: 197). Alan refers to this principle when he and J.C. argue about intelligent design – J.C. is in favour of it, but Alan disparages him, pointing out that Schrödinger and Heisenberg proved that "we live in a probabilistic universe, a quantum universe" and that Einstein was wrong (107). In 'classical' physics (which describes the universe at large scales – the world of Isaac Newton; in other words, the 'macro' world in which we live), this notion is nonsensical, as it does not describe the laws of the world as we experience it. However, as J.C. notes in *Diary*, there is a different way of thinking about the arrow in Zeno's Paradox, one which suggests that reality may be quite different to what it appears, but that we are conditioned to think in patterned ways that inhibit our ability to consider alternatives.

In the same opinion piece, J.C. refers to a philosophical fable written by Jorge Louis Borges, about a man who develops a way of counting that is not systematic, that "makes no assumptions about what comes next after N," so he makes up arbitrary names for numbers (2007: 95). For J.C., the point of the fable is that it emphasises that "the order we see in the universe may not reside in the universe at all, but in the paradigms of thought we bring to it" (96). This theme is taken up in *The Childhood of Jesus* as well. Simón becomes very annoyed with David when he insists that he knows about numbers, but his 'knowledge' does not follow any logical or systematic method – when he asks David the next number after 888, David replies that it is 92; and when he asks David which number is greater, 888 or 889, David answers that it is 888. When Simón corrects him, David challenges him by asking him how he knows if he has "never *been* there" (2013: 150, emphasis in original). When Simón attempts to explain the logical and systematic method of counting numbers, he notes that his words "are being absorbed, all of them, absorbed and rejected" (150).

The 'paradigms of thought' that J.C. refers to may be understood here as the systems of logic and rationality that govern how we think about the world. Again, science has demonstrated that logic and rationality do not always reflect the way in which the world works. Commenting on Einstein's special theory of relativity, and the idea that the passage of time depends upon our state of motion, Brian Greene notes that we are not able to observe this fundamental relationship between time and motion because our everyday experiences

do not reveal the link to us[4] (1999: 26). Another aspect of reality revealed in special relativity that is completely non-intuitive, and that underscores J.C.'s comment about our view of reality as being influenced by the patterned ways in we perceive reality, is the notion that the speed of light in the universe is constant. Greene describes this notion as follows: "almost a century of effort by a series of dedicated experimental physicists has shown that any and all observers will agree that light travels at 670 million miles per hour *regardless of benchmarks for comparison*," a fact that Greene described as requiring "a revolution in our view of the universe" (33, emphasis in original). Essentially, this means that, if one were somehow, miraculously, able to travel at a speed close to the speed of light, for example, 570 million miles per hour, and set off at the same time as a beam of light, one would expect the light to travel at 100 million miles per hour faster than us, as that would be the light's speed relative to ours. But this is not what actually happens. What actually happens is that, regardless of one's speed, light will always travel at 670 million miles per hour faster than one. Greene notes that this is something that at first seems "completely ridiculous," but that, "Regardless of relative motion between the source of photons and the observer, the speed of light is always the same" (32). The uncertainty principle, likewise, is not at all evident in the everyday world around us, but it is accepted as reflecting a fundamental property of the universe. These aspects of science demonstrate that our perception of reality, based on our experiences, is not necessarily an accurate guide to the properties that govern how the universe works, and demonstrates J.C.'s point that we structure reality according to ways of thinking that are generally informed by logic and reason, but that these ways of thinking are not always correct.

The split narratives also parallel the novel's thematic content in J.C.'s discussion of the nature of experience. In his piece 'On the body,' J.C. contemplates the differences between how human beings and animals approach the body, and comments that we tend to compartmentalise ourselves in terms of the body's "parts," unlike animals, who seem to experience the body in a more holistic way. He wonders if this compartmentalisation suggests that "language cannot get purchase, cannot get going, until it has split up the unity of experience" (2007: 59). This split is echoed in the contrast between Anya's narrative and J.C.'s opinions. Anya's narrative, with its erotic undertones and stress on the body, contrasts

[4] The relationship between time and motion only becomes apparent at speeds close to the speed of light, speeds that we do not generally experience.

sharply with J.C.'s intellectual discourse. She frequently references her body: "when I make my silky moves I can feel his eyes lock onto me. That is the game between him and me. I don't mind. What else is your bottom for?" (28). She engages in flirtatious dialogue with him, telling him "You shouldn't say things like that to a nice girl, Señor" when he tells her that he prefers writing to typing. She then says "I turn my back and off I go with a waggle of the bum, his eyes avid upon me" (30). When she reads J.C.'s piece about the movie *The Seven Samurai*, she remembers having watched the movie before, and not knowing what was going on, remembering only one image from the movie, that of "the long naked thighs of the crazy man with the topknot … naked thighs, bare bottom … Enough to drive a girl wild" (33). While he talks about shame and dishonour in the top track, she imagines him stealing her panties at the laundry and conjuring up visions of her "divine behind" in the bottom track (40). Coetzee's comment that language "split[s] up the unity of experience" alludes to Descartes's mind/body dualism, and is echoed in the split between Anya's and J.C.'s narratives. I would argue that, while temporal sequence reinforces the splitting up of experience, the montage technique on the page attempts to obviate it by juxtaposing the experiences of J.C. and Anya. The interplay between the fictional narratives below and the opinion pieces on top suggests an attempt to overcome or at least undercut the splitting of experience.

There is constant interplay between the opinions on top and the fictional narratives below. As we read J.C.'s reflections at the top, the narratives that unfold at the bottom of the page engage with it in a number of ways. While J.C. reflects on war and politics, comparing the Cold War to the war on terror, Anya, in her narrative, undercuts his intellectual discourse by commenting on how boring his writing on politics is, telling him "The kind of writing you do doesn't work with politics" (35). She criticises him for a "know-it-all tone" that suggests that his opinions are superior: "*I am the one with the answers, here is how it is, don't argue, it won't get you anywhere*" and tells him that she wishes he would find a better way to address the topics (70, emphasis in original). When he writes that "These are dark times," she counters with "I think they are pretty good times" (73). In contrast to his engagement with politics in his opinion pieces, her view is that it is pointless talking about it: "Best to ignore it, or just get used to it, adapt" (35). In addition, she also adapts his writing when she thinks it necessary: "Fix them up too here and there where I can, where they lack a certain something, a certain oomph" (29). While Anya's narrative engages with the

opinions in various ways, J.C. insists that she does not influence them: "there was no chance that refraction through her gaze could alter their angle" (125). This insistence is later undercut, however, when J.C. tries to persuade Anya to come back to working for him. He comments that "I should thoroughly revise my opinions, that is what I should do. I should cull the older, more decrepit ones, find newer, up-to-date ones to replace them" (2007: 143). Later he tells Anya that he is putting together a second set of "gentler" opinions which "*take up suggestions that you let drop*" (145, emphasis in original).

Montage operates at multiple levels in J.C.'s opinions; firstly, in the contrast between the 'Strong Opinions' and the 'Second Diary,' and, secondly, in the way the opinions evoke other texts, inviting us to read the opinions as engaging with a network of ideas across time and space. The juxtaposition of 'Strong Opinions' and the 'Second Diary' is framed by Attwell as a parallel between public and private discourse, in which the distinction between fiction and autobiography is continually blurred. Attwell suggests that the form of the 'Strong Opinions' "mimics what Immanuel Kant (1784) famously called the public performance of reason: a tradition … [which] has since the eighteenth century come to be associated quintessentially with an Enlightenment concept of the public sphere" (2010: 214). The reflections of Part Two, the 'Second Diary,' are more personal, and offer a contrast to the public reflections of Part One. Coetzee is "playing with the relationship between public discourse and fictional writing" (Attwell, 215). He also argues that J.C.'s engagement with this relationship is a struggle with public discourse. The last sentence in the text is spoken by Anya. She imagines herself attending to J.C. at his death, promising to "whisper in his ear: sweet dreams, and flights of angels, and all the rest" (Coetzee, 2007: 227). Attwell points out the allusion to Horatio's lines in *Hamlet*, arguing that Hamlet's problem was similar to J.C.'s because "Claudius, the usurping monarch, exercise[d] so much power over the court that public discourse [was] corrupted, so Hamlet [had] to feign madness for the truth to be revealed" (215).

The public discourse that comprises the narrative in the top track elucidates a reality that is both multifaceted and fragmented. Attwell argues that "Coetzee has kept up what Hamlet called an antic disposition in a long struggle with public discourse, with modern rationality, with language that pretends to know itself, with political discourse that assumes the right to determine who speaks what to whom" (215). He suggests that Coetzee's characters have

often adopted a sceptical attitude towards such language, and that Coetzee has "sought to elaborate the traditions and generic possibilities of fiction, giving reign to what he calls countervoices, drawing attention to the positionality of his narrators, enabling the revelation of self-interest, the unconscious and desire as they position themselves in history" (215). For example, Alan's is a significant countervoice to J.C.'s opinions. He disparages J.C.'s notions of the state – that it is systematic banditry – suggesting that J.C. fundamentally misunderstands how the state functions because he sees things too simplistically, that "it is all a morality play to him, good versus evil" (Coetzee, 2007: 97). He derides J.C.'s understanding of Australia, suggesting that, because Australia is a modern state, "there are no big issues […] Politics is a sideshow" (99). This, he argues, is what defines modernity – "The big issues, the issues that count, have been settled" (99). He argues that J.C. sees big issues because he comes from Africa where "there is no security and everyone keeps their money under their pillow" (99). Anya also counters J.C.'s idealism, his talk of shame and dishonour, with pragmatism: "When you tell me you walk around bent under your load of dishonour, I think of those girls from the old days who had the bad luck to get raped and then had to wear black for the rest of their lives" (103).

The montage principle explicates a core theme in the novel: the tension between speaking in one's own voice and speaking through one's art. We may ask what compels Coetzee to embark on a path that could be called didacticism. I would suggest that the answer can be found in J.C.'s response to a question Anya asks, about what he thought the issues in the book would be about. In reply, J.C. speculates that the six writers would probably conclude that "the world is unfair. An unfair dispensation, an unfair state of affairs" (22). His own reasoning, which he does not share with Anya, is that the book is "an opportunity to take magic revenge on the world for declining to conform to [his] fantasies" (23). This verdict about the state of the world seems to be what drives Coetzee's opinion pieces. That they are couched within such a thin fictional framework suggests an inclination on Coetzee's part to privilege authorial authority over art in this novel.

Julian Murphet discusses the tension between speaking in one's voice and/or through one's art. He anchors his reading of the novel in the concept of *parrhesia* – a figure of speech described as "to speak candidly or to ask forgiveness for so speaking." Murphet analyses the interaction between J.C.'s opinions and the fictional narratives by situating Coetzee's

use of montage in the opposition between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. He suggests that the novel's structure and typographical layout – the spatial distribution of the different bands of narrative and the parallel tracking of the narratives – embody a key concern: the tension between literary art and the author's desire to make public his own beliefs about the world. Murphet's judgement of the novel is harsh: "What is lacking in *Diary*, for all its superficial deformation of the novelistic page, is a truly dialogical deformation of the discourses of which it is constituted" (2011: 78). He argues that there is a formal tension in the novel between its status as a work of literary art and the author's desire to publish his own opinions (64). Like Attwell, Murphet notes that the fictional element of the work is thin. In order to be more than just a set of opinions about the state of the contemporary world *and* to lighten the opinions with what Murphet calls "the spirit of fiction," *Diary* engages in a dualism between fictional narratives and J.C.'s opinions. Murphet argues that the fictional narratives are deliberately constructed in order both to provide a countervoice to the opinions and to modify them (64). He suggests that there are two ways for a novelist to embrace *parrhesia*: "Either she speaks outside her art, in the public square" – as J.C. and Elizabeth Costello do – or "she puts what she has to say into her art" (68). The first strategy is a risky one because, as J.C. notes in *Diary* in his reference to Harold Pinter's 2005 Nobel Lecture acceptance speech, "one embarks on a contest which one is likely to lose because it takes place on ground where one's opponent is far more practised and adept" (Coetzee, 2007: 107). Murphet argues that this kind of strategy is less risky than the alternative, which is to modify and adapt one's opinions into one's fiction, as Tolstoy did (68-9). He notes that, given J.C.'s caution about writing his opinions for a non-fiction publication, it would seem unlikely that he would endorse Tolstoy's position – "to counsel against the unchecked didactic impulse in a work of art" – but instead he does seem to endorse it (69). Murphet argues that this position has both a historical dimension and a contextual function. He refers to Coetzee's 1985 reading of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, in which Coetzee is critical of the intrusion of Tolstoy's own ideology into the novel. According to Murphet, the position Coetzee adopts is that it is simultaneously "an inadmissible aesthetic lapse" and "a perfectly defensible gesture" (2011: 70). He suggests that this apparent contradiction

> has in fact driven the later fictions of Coetzee himself … whose increasingly strange formal devices strive to accommodate this very impatience with the usual mechanics of fictional 'truth-telling' and accept a certain Tolstoyan *diktat* about revealed truth

> itself: that it is better, more urgent than artistic truth, and can and must be forced into the aesthetic domain … immediately and without ambivalence (70).

For Murphet, it is "the highest irony of all" that *Diary* adopts this same practice – the use of a "mouthpiece" character, such as the kind that Coetzee had severely criticised Tolstoy for in his 1985 essay (72), to express the "ordinary, fallible opinions" of the author (Coetzee, 2007: 122). However, he also discerns a pull in another direction, from "the master Tolstoy" to the other "master Dostoevsky" (73). Bakhtin's influential study, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, argues that "Tolstoy's world is monolithically monologic […] Tolstoy's discourse and his monologically naïve point of view permeate everywhere, into all corners of the world and the soul, subjugating everything to its unity" (1984: 56). Tolstoy, then, stands as the literary artist who exemplifies the integration of personal beliefs into his art. Murphet notes that, in Bakhtin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are opposing poles: "As distinct from the extraordinary richness and polyphony of Dostoevsky's dialogical art form, Tolstoy's stands high and aloof" (73). He argues that J.C.'s "strong opinions" and Elizabeth Costello's lectures and lessons "are the closest Coetzee has yet come to the importance of what Bakhtin calls 'direct authorial discourse' … single-voiced discourse of the monologic type into his novels" (73). He points out, however, that they are *objectified* by being placed in the hands of characters and narrators who are objectionable in a number of ways. He also notes that J.C.'s strong opinions are excessively "literary" by comparison to Coetzee's own typical style – "degree-zero severe minimalism" along with his "utter distaste for flourish and colour" (73-4). The fictional framing and difference to Coetzee's characteristic style serve to dilute the charge of "direct authorial discourse," so that, Murphet suggests, Coetzee gets to "have his cake and eat it": he wants to "enact his Tolstoyan will to *parrhesia,* and yet, paradoxically retract it via the Dostoevskian compositional devices available to his elected form: dialogical decentrement and ironization" (74).

Attwell's view on this issue is more accommodating. Given the public nature of the Opinions, he asks whether Coetzee has "succumbed to the temptation to have his say after all"; his answer is both yes and no (215). Unlike Harold Pinter, whom Coetzee notes in *Diary* used his Nobel Lecture acceptance speech of 2005 to denounce Tony Blair, Coetzee frames his Opinions within a fictional narrative that includes countervoices to his opinions. Both Coetzee's Nobel Lecture (2003) and the Costello stories draw public discourse into

fiction, reflecting on "the spaces of intimacy and distance between the self-of-writing and the writer's historical-biographical being" (Atwell 218). I would argue that, in *Diary*, Coetzee attempts to create precisely such a space – one which integrates different aspects of the writer's self, aspects that are both private and public, and that blur the boundaries between speaking in one's own voice and speaking through one's art. While I think that Murphet's analysis is accurate, I would argue that Coetzee is simply not particularly concerned by the contradiction of the "Tolstoyan will to *parrhesia*," and the dialogical discourses of Dostoevsky. In *Diary* there is an ironic self-awareness of the interfolding of contradictory elements. This can be seen in Alan's comment that J.C.'s contributions to the book are "ingenious … a way of operating in both dimensions at the same time" (79). Coetzee's attitude may perhaps be encapsulated by Walt Whitman's question and answer: "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes)."

I would also argue that Coetzee's fusing of elements of both Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's work foregrounds his intense admiration for the two writers. Towards the end of *Diary*, J.C. comments:

> And one is thankful to Russia too, Mother Russia, for setting before us with such indisputable certainty the standards toward which any serious novelist must toil, even if without the faintest chance of getting there: the standard of the master Tolstoy on the one hand and of the master Dostoevsky on the other. By their example one becomes a better artist; and by better I do not mean more skilful but ethically better. (2007: 227)

Murphet is correct to identify Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as Coetzee's twin points of reference. Yet, given that J.C.'s opinions are constantly challenged and undermined by Anya and Alan, this passage should not necessarily be taken at face value. Murphet concedes that, ultimately, it is not stylistic nuances that counter J.C.'s opinions, but the parallel tracks of his opinions and Anya's comments: "It is thanks to the often quite elaborate, but always unsubtle, relationships between these three tracks of textual material … that no single opinion of the Coetzee mouthpiece character is allowed to congeal into Tolstoyan monologism" (75). Nonetheless, the fact that J.C.'s opinions occupy the top track suggests

that they are privileged over the fictional narratives below. This prioritising is acknowledged in *Diary* when J.C. comments that Tolstoy's later fiction is often critiqued for becoming arid because of a tendency to use his art to further his own ideology; that his art, in effect, became didactic. J.C.'s response to this charge suggests that he does not disapprove of this turn in Tolstoy: "Yet to the older Tolstoy the evolution must have seemed quite different. Far from declining, he must have felt, he was ridding himself of the shackles that had enslaved him to appearances, enabling him to face directly the one question that truly engaged his soul: how to live" (155). Murphet contends that the opinions are "eloquent and persuasive ... viable and often valid" – but, "for all that, flat and uninspired and non-artistic – *untrue*" (74, emphasis in original). I would contend, however, that for Coetzee, in this novel, the ethical is a stronger imperative than the artistic. (As the quote above by Coetzee shows, he equates becoming a better artist with becoming ethically better.)

Rita Barnard also identifies the novel's form – its juxtaposition of fictional narratives and opinions – as complementing its concern with the relationship between public and private. She suggests that, in *Diary*, Coetzee scripts a role for his character J.C. in which he adopts the role of public intellectual, a role Coetzee has, based on previous interviews, generally resisted. In *Doubling the Point* Coetzee comments that he has difficulty "precisely with the project of stating positions, taking positions" (Coetzee 1992: 205). In *Diary,* J.C. takes on this role with relish, holding forth on numerous topical issues in world affairs. Barnard comments that "Those who want their novelists to speak truth to power could not wish for anything more impassioned than, say, J.C.'s denunciation of George W. Bush" (2013: 445) in which J.C. comments that Bush is so arrogant that he "asserts that he cannot commit a crime, since he is the one who makes the laws defining crimes" (Coetzee, 2007: 49). Barnard notes, however, that despite these stirring opinions (which she feels Coetzee has already ventured with his "infinitely tedious Elizabeth Costello"), *Diary* offers something more: Coetzee has "always been drawn to forms that exploit the tension between public and private," and the "complicated contrapuntal form and contents" of *Diary* are no different (446). For example, she points to his use of private, solitary forms such as "the confession, the letter, the diary and stream-of-consciousness narration" but notes that he "has often set them in juxtaposition to public forms like the lecture, the speech and the deposition" (446). In a consideration of the novel's *mise en scène,* Barnard argues that the novel takes place in a setting that foregrounds the relationship between public and private space (450). J.C. lives

in a place that seems designed to ensure privacy – an upmarket apartment complex in Sydney. Yet, within this space, "a place designed to ensure that one does not see much of one's neighbours," (450) there are spaces where neighbours do in fact see each other, such as the laundry, where J.C. first sees Anya, and J.C.'s ground floor apartment, where neighbours can see him watching television when he forgets to draw the curtains. This blurring of the public and private is noted in J.C.'s remark that, in the contemporary world, "private life is, to all intents and purposes, a thing of the past" (22).

Barnard contends that the plot of *Diary* is "centrally concerned with an invasion of privacy," citing Alan's installation of spyware on J.C.'s computer (450). This gives Alan access to not only the book J.C. is working on, but also a wealth of personal information, particularly information about J.C.'s finances. Alan thus has the opportunity to devise a scheme to enrich himself, and even though the scheme is blocked by Anya's opposition, "it nevertheless emphasises the precariousness of privacy in the contemporary world" (451). For Barnard, then, "The novel's formal and generic dimensions both amplify and complicate the way in which the public-private divide is explicitly thematised" (451). She argues, however, that the separation between public and private begins to disintegrate: firstly, as mentioned earlier, the separate narratives make it impossible to read the text 'chronologically,' or from top to bottom on each page; secondly, we become aware as we read of the ways in which the public opinions are influenced by the more private fictional narrative; and, thirdly, the opinions in the first part of the book become, in the 'Second Diary,' more personal reflections. Like Murphet, Barnard suggests that *Diary* follows Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, and argues that "The various strands of this work do not resolve into any kind of fictional or representational unity … The form, in other words, is anti- or, more accurately, post-novelistic" (453).

The montage principle operates at the level of content as well, where the issue of place and how to live is a primary concern. J.C.'s opening piece, 'On the origins of the state,' presents a dualism in how one is able to live vis-á-vis the state. J.C. juxtaposes two ways of living in the world: outside the state, and within the state. Ironically, the person who lives outside the state may feel that she is free, but that is an illusion, because to live outside of the state means to live in a world in which one is at the mercy of whatever prevails: "war, fear, poverty, nastiness, solitude, barbarity, ignorance, savagery," while the person who lives

within the state, though born subject, lives with "reason, peace, security, wealth, splendour, society, good taste, the sciences and good-will" (Coetzee, 2007: 4). In a second piece, entitled, 'On anarchism,' J.C. quotes from Etienne de La Boétie, a friend of Michel de Montaigne, who suggests that people become so accustomed to being ruled that at some point even the notion of liberty comes to seem peculiar: they are so passive that one could say of them that "they have not lost their liberty but won their servitude" (12). J.C. counters this view by arguing that the opposition is not an entirely fair one, because there is an alternative, a third way of living, a way "chosen by thousands and millions of people every day … the way of quietism, of willed obscurity, of inner emigration" (12) – a comment that evokes Horace Engdahl's reference to literature "being, after all, the third alternative to speaking and remaining silent" (2003). Attwell also comments on the significance of J.C.'s description of an alternative, third way of living. With reference to one of the opinions in *Diary,* 'On Raiding,' in which J.C. holds the view that colonial conditions encouraged the practice of pillaging goods from one's neighbour, Attwell suggests that J.C.'s views are consistent with the ones he expresses on the origin of the State, and that when Alan states to Anya that J.C. does not understand contemporary politics and should go back to Africa, he (Alan) does not understand how much "the African model has emerged as the template of the State globally"(2010: 217). He notes that J.C. finds himself watching "apartheid-era practices becoming the global norm," and that since one cannot live outside of the State,

> the solution that proposes itself is the same as the one developed in the bad old days by marginalised intellectuals in South Africa: quietist anarchism, or 'inner emigration.' Universally, more than ever, the novel seems to suggest, Enlightenment principles about publics, the right to speak and the rule of reason are collapsing under the weight of their contradictions (217).

J.C. identifies a similar dualism in the ways in which governments operate. In the piece entitled 'On Machiavelli,' he comments on "the dualism of modern political culture, which simultaneously upholds absolute and relative standards of value" (17). In terms of morality, Machiavelli seems to offer a contradictory stance. He argues that "the claims morality makes on us are absolute. *At the same time* he asserts that in the interest of the state the ruler 'is often obliged … to act without loyalty, without mercy, without humanity, and without religion'" (18, emphasis in original). J.C., equating the Machiavellian with the modern,

suggests that this seeming contradiction (which liberal intellectuals are quick to spot) actually expresses the quintessence of the modern, which is that "The world is ruled by necessity … not by some abstract code. We have to do what we have to do" (18).

Diary's complexity in form is echoed in its representation of place, which juxtaposes reflections of affluent, developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia, with South Africa. Despite Coetzee's often negative portrayal of South Africa, there are moments in *Diary* where the country is presented in a sympathetic light, emphasizing the nuanced and complex representation of place. The juxtaposition of South Africa and Australia is a notable feature of *Diary*. As I discussed in my introduction, Imraan Coovadia's scathing article about Coetzee's emigration to Australia questions Coetzee's choice of destination – Adelaide – dismissively referring to it as "an undistinguished provincial capital in southern Australia" (2012: 103). In terms of Coetzee's choice to settle in Adelaide, however, Kannemeyer notes that it reflected "his preference for rural areas and small cities" and describes Adelaide as being "the only city in the world separated from its suburbs and living areas by a belt of parks and gardens" (2012: 543). In addition, the climate suited him and he found the inhabitants very hospitable (544). Kannemeyer quotes a tribute to the city of Adelaide that Coetzee read from an unpublished text at the 2004 Adelaide Writers' Week, in which he expresses his intense admiration for the city:

> It was March, it was hot, but there were shaded walks to be had along the Torrens River, where black swans glided serenely.
> What kind of place is this, I asked myself – is this paradise on earth?
> What does one have to do to live here?
> Does one have to die first? (545).

While Coetzee's description of Adelaide as 'paradise' cues the question, "Does one have to die first?" the question also implies that perhaps to "die" in this context means to disavow his South African identity and affiliation. The reception of *Diary* in South Africa is also telling of how Coetzee's emigration to Australia is viewed by his former compatriots. The novel was the winner of the MNET Award for South Africa's best novel in English in 2008. Michael Titlestad describes his experience being a judge for the award in "Capital Games:

On Judging a South African Literary Award." He discusses the reservations the panel had about the novel, noting that there were three issues that created concerns: firstly, there was concern that the novel was being judged based on Coetzee's formidable literary reputation rather than the book itself; secondly, there were questions about whether the novel was in fact about South Africa at all, even though it was eligible for the prize (despite taking Australian citizenship, Coetzee had opted to retain his South African passport); and finally, there was the concern that, according to Titlestad, "South Africans don't like J.M. Coetzee anymore … Coetzee has fallen from grace" (2009: 467). Titlestad notes that it was difficult to fathom the reasons for the dislike, but that "His emigration is probably the dominant cause of the hostility" (467). In fact, Titlestad says, "I have heard the opinion expressed often enough that one who has capitalized (symbolically, economically, and politically) on the wretchedness of South African history should at least stay the course" (467).

Coetzee's notebooks demonstrate his disaffection with South Africa's moral climate of the 1990s, which he felt to be "anti-intellectual and potentially tyrannous," as explored particularly in the novel *Disgrace* (Attwell 2015: 221). Attwell notes that Coetzee's feelings about the political climate in the 'new' South Africa reflected, in particular, personal anxieties about the future, particularly related to his role as a parent (2015: 224). According to Attwell, the condition under which Coetzee lived and wrote in Cape Town could be described as one of "perpetual anxiety," in which Coetzee lived "without being comfortably settled" (2015: 26). An effect of this 'anxiety' is that his representation of home is informed by ambivalence: a desire, on the one hand, to distance himself as much as possible from the country of his birth, and a paradoxical inclination, on the other hand, to root himself in the land. Attwell suggests that Coetzee's reading of Dostoevsky's characterisation of Stavrogin in *The Possessed* suggests similar concerns that he (Coetzee) held about South Africa in the early 1990s: a political climate of nihilism characterised by unprincipled recklessness and the singular impulse towards chaos and confusion (2015:207).

Coetzee worried about the direction South Africa was taking, writing that: "I have been left behind by South Africa as it enters Africa. Horror of irrational violence, of a vision I can all too easily believe in but can't afford to believe in because my self-culture rests on a denial" (Coetzee Papers, *The Master of Petersburg,* 19 November 1991 in Attwell, 2015: 207). Coetzee's dilemma is that the characterization conforms to stereotypes of Africa as

inherently violent, and suggests that South Africa too is becoming ever more like this. As he notes, it is a vision "he can't afford to believe in" because of his liberal views, and, as Attwell cautions, "The note is a tinderbox that needs delicate handling" (2015: 207). Attwell's caution emphasizes the volatile nature of discussions about race, in which the kind of comment that Coetzee made may be open to criticisms of racism and stereotyping, despite an oeuvre that suggests otherwise. That Coetzee associates "irrational violence" with Africa is deeply problematic, as he acknowledges, but it does underscore the attraction for him of a country like Australia, known for its adherence to law and order. Coetzee's comments on the topic of violence emphasize his strong feelings about it:

> Violence, as soon as I sense its presence within me, becomes introverted as violence against myself … Or, to explain myself in another way: I understand the Crucifixion as a refusal and an introversion of retributive violence, a refusal so deliberate, so conscious, and so powerful that it overwhelms any reinterpretation, Freudian, Marxian, or whatever, that we can give to it. (Coetzee, 1992: 337)

Lucy in *Disgrace* embodies this choice – a refusal of retributive violence. Coetzee's views about violence and its influence in shaping his move should also be seen in the light of his feelings of historical guilt over colonisation and imperialism. In *Diary*, J.C. compares American and Australian actions with the actions of the South African government during apartheid. He argues that generations of white South Africans will have to bear the burden of "the shame of the crimes that were committed in their name" (44). He quotes from Jean Pierre Vernant, who writes that "Tragic guilt" develops in the clash between personal and collective responsibility. This is an apt description of John's feelings about living in South Africa, as explored in Coetzee's autobiographical trilogy. Vernant notes that the ancient conception of guilt was based on the notion that misdeeds attached to an entire race and were passed on down the generations, but that this notion has been supplanted by the modern conception in law of guilt attaching on an individual basis, to the person who committed the crime. In this context, J.C.'s feelings about historical guilt seem outmoded – Alan highlights this when he comments that J.C.'s problem is that he doesn't understand the modern state, that Africa is the root of his problem because "he can't get away from Africa … Everywhere he looks he sees Africa" (95).

Coetzee's connection to Australia appears to have a long history. According to Kannemeyer, Coetzee had been invited to the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, as long ago as 1989 and took up the offer in 1990, when he and his partner, Dorothy Driver, used the opportunity to explore the country (2012: 535). A year later, Dorothy went on an academic visit to Adelaide, where she was "impressed with the city and the warmth with which she was received" (535). The next year they were in Australia again, this time as guests of the Department of English at the University of Melbourne. Between other travels they visited Adelaide, "whose setting and layout made a strong impression on Coetzee" (535). Kannemeyer suggests that, from his very first visit, Coetzee was attracted to Australia. He cites an interview in 2001 with Anne Susskind, a South-African born Sydney literary critic, in which Coetzee comments that "I have felt a strong pull towards the land and the landscape. I come from Africa where the land seems to have a similarly mysterious, dwarfing power over people" (535-36). Despite Coetzee having lived in both the United States and England, the landscapes there did not appeal to him at all (Kannemeyer 536). The landscape of Australia, by comparison, reminded him of his beloved Karoo, but with "almost none of the crime of South Africa" (536). Kannemeyer refers to an email that Coetzee wrote to a friend in which he commented on an idyllic scene ("families with picnic baskets, the green bay with its orange sands") he had come across while sitting on a bench at a beach in Sydney. What he particularly noted about the scene was "the absence of danger" (536). In broader terms, he was impressed with the egalitarianism of Australian society, with the way in which he perceived Australians as relating to each other, "spontaneously … as equals" (536). In 1999 he started the process of relocating to Australia, asking various prominent people to support his application. In one of the letters, he wrote to David Malouf, an Australian author, that South Africa "is not a good place to grow old in" and that, from his first visit to Australia, he had "felt a tug toward the country and its landscape" (536).

While there has been public criticism of Coetzee's emigration to Australia, the release from anxieties over personal safety that living in South Africa entailed seems to have had a markedly positive effect on him. From a personal interview with Dorothy Driver in 2009, Kannemeyer reports that Coetzee became "a far more relaxed person" after settling in Adelaide (2012: 599). While he had disliked gardening when he lived in Cape Town, at his home in Adelaide he "developed into a dedicated and obsessive gardener" (599). In contrast

to his reputation in South Africa as cold and unsociable, in Australia "At dinners and parties he joked and jested. He was a happy man, visibly so to all who came into contact with him" (599). For Coetzee, the similarities between South Africa and Australia in terms of its landscape, combined with stark differences in crime in the two countries, were overwhelming attractions. The issue of crime in South Africa is, however, a complex one. In *Diary*, J.C. outlines a theory about the historical roots of crime, tracing it to South Africa's colonial past. He sees the migration of Africans from the country to the city as an epochal moment, one that the white generation of South Africans before his own misread catastrophically, assuming that the African children born in the cities would carry the memory of their migrations and view their urban environment as "Europe's great gift to Africa" (103). J.C. notes that, when he lived in Cape Town, he considered the city to be his, not just because he had been born there, but because he "knew the history of the place deeply enough to see its past in palimpsest beneath its present" (104). But, he notes, "History has no life unless you give it a home in your consciousness; it is a load no free person can be forced to take on" (104). J.C. contextualises what he says people call "a crime wave sweeping the new South Africa," suggesting that this is simply a continuation of the practice of raiding that started when European settlers came to the country. He says that there are "thousands of people from the black areas of South Africa, particularly young men, who get up each morning and, either individually or in bands, set off on raids into the white areas. To them, raiding is their business, their occupation, their recreation, their sport" (105). On the question of land taken by settlers, J.C. notes the similarities between South Africa and Australia, but comments that the situation is less practical in Australia, because Aboriginal Australians are few in number by comparison to South Africa, where the settlers were far outnumbered by the native inhabitants. J.C.'s observations about crime provide interesting insights into Coetzee's perception of the link between history and contemporary issues.

J.C. also talks with admiration about the people of Australia, commenting that what he liked best about Australia when he first visited in the 1990s was "the way in which people conducted themselves in their everyday dealings: frankly, fairly, with an elusive personal pride and an equally elusive ironic reserve" (122). Now, however, he feels that those characteristics have become outdated, that such conduct is now "disparaged … as belonging to an Australia of a past now outmoded" (Coetzee, 2007: 122). *Diary* also emphasizes the negative aspects of Australian society and other affluent, developed nations. His piece 'On

national shame' explores the paradox of the US administration in the light of its sanctioning of the torture of prisoners and the active measures it took to subvert laws that prohibit torture. The paradox of its behaviour is that, being legally elected, it is a legal administration, but it acts in ways that are illegal, that both evade and resist the law. For the ordinary American citizen, the dilemma this presents is a moral one: how to behave in the face of behaviour by the state that evokes shame. In terms that echo David Lurie in *Disgrace*, J.C. notes that the question becomes: "How do I save my honour?" (39). In J.C.'s terms, living with such moral ambivalence brings about a state of being characterised by dishonour, which "descends upon one's shoulders" (40). He notes that, in such matters, the government can act with virtual impunity – even history will not judge accurately, because the government has "unparalleled control" over the records (41). J.C.'s opinion is that we must accept that we will never know the truth of the government's actions. While Australia has been complicit in America's crimes, it hasn't yet acted in ways that circumvent the law. J.C. notes, however, that in terms of new policing powers, the Australian government has shown a "comparable contempt for the rule of law" (43). He comments that he is "flummoxed by the drift to the Right in the countries of the West" (121); South Africa, he notes "begins to look like a sensible older brother. What an irony!" (122).

In the opinion piece entitled 'On asylum in Australia,' J.C. confesses to being utterly baffled by the Australian government's handling of refugees. He asks: "How can a decent, generous, easygoing people close their eyes while strangers who arrive on their shores pretty much helpless and penniless are treated with such heartlessness, such grim callousness?" (Coetzee, 2007: 111). He supposes that they do in fact feel disturbed by it, but choose to close their eyes and ears in order to maintain their sense of themselves as decent, generous people. He argues that the point of the refugee system seems to be the creation of a system of deterrences, whose message is "*This is the purgatory to which you will be subjected if you arrive in Australia without papers. Think again*" (112, emphasis in original). He compares the Baxter Detention Centre in the south Australian desert to Guantanamo Bay: they both target "masculine honour, masculine dignity" (113). In the case of Guantanamo Bay, he comments that when the prisoners are released they are "mere shells of men, psychically wrecked"; in the worst cases "Baxter is achieving the same effect" (113).

In 2019, in *The New York Review*, Coetzee published a lengthy review of *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* by Behrouz Boochani, which complements J.C.'s opinion piece in *Diary* in a number of respects. In the review, Coetzee outlines the history of Australia's controversial practice of offshore processing for refugees arriving by boat in Australia: arrangements were made with Papua New Guinea and Nauru to either resettle them in their own countries or in another country. Like other commentators, Coetzee notes that the camps operated "under a blanket of secrecy," that "Inmates were to be known not by name but by number" and that "circulating photographs of them was forbidden." Coetzee argues that, based on accounts such as those of Boochani and medical staff who spoke out against the treatment of the refuges (despite threats of imprisonment), "it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Manus and Nauru are not just processing centers but punishment camps where detainees—"clients" in the jargon of the bureaucracy—serve indeterminate or even indefinite sentences for the offense of trying to enter Australia without papers." Coetzee argues that, given Australia's settlement history, it is "hard to comprehend the dogged hostility of the Australian public to the latest wave of refugees fleeing strife in the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Indian subcontinent, and northeast Africa," and notes that "Poll after poll attests that a majority of Australians back stringent border controls."

In *Diary,* J.C.'s response to the attitude of ordinary Australians towards refugees and the government's inhumane treatment of them is one of anguished bafflement. His analysis, however, does not take adequate account of the role of race and racism in Australia, a country in which discrimination against Aboriginal Australians is commonplace. In 'Australia's Shame,' Coetzee also notes that "Refugee policy was not an issue in the recent elections for the Australian federal parliament … News that Australian voters had returned to power the same set of jailers responsible for their misery provoked a spate of self-harm and suicide attempts among the remaining detainees." Of the prisoners who died on the island, Coetzee notes that "They died because the camps were unhealthy, dangerous, and destructive not only of their psychic stability but of their very humanity."

Coetzee's view of Australia's stance on refugees seeking asylum is paralleled by reports from other organisations. Amnesty International issued a scathing report[5] in August 2016 condemning Australia's asylum policy for those arriving in Australia by boat. The report

[5] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/08/australia-abuse-neglect-of-refugees-on-nauru/

addresses the plight of the men, women and children who sought refuge in Australia and were transferred to the remote Pacific Island nation of Nauru where, Amnesty argued, they suffered "severe abuse, inhumane treatment, and neglect." The organisation accuses the government of precisely the same thing that J.C. does, namely, of deliberately creating conditions of severe suffering in order to deter further asylum seekers. According to Anna Neistat, a Senior Director for Research at Amnesty International, who conducted the investigation on the island, "Australia's policy of exiling asylum seekers who arrive by boat is cruel in the extreme […] Few other countries go to such lengths to deliberately inflict suffering on people seeking safety and freedom." Amnesty argues that a number of reports have highlighted the abuses suffered in Nauru; the Australian government was well aware of the abuses, and its "persistent failure to address abuses committed under its authority on Nauru strongly suggests that they are adopted or condoned as a matter of policy." Michael Bochenek, Senior Counsel on Children's Rights at Human Rights Watch, emphasised the cruelty of Australia's treatment of the refugees, noting that "Driving adult and even child refugees to the breaking point with sustained abuse appears to be one of Australia's aims on Nauru."

Coetzee suggests that the roots of this hostility towards refugees lie further back in Australia's history; as noted by the historian Jane Haggis, "The sense of exile, of expulsion from Europe to the bottom of the world, of being victims rather than members of God's elect, [shapes] Australia and Australians' historic sense of themselves as a national community [and] feeds a hyper-vigilance to maintain … First World privilege." Racism evidently also feeds into the government's determination to restrict refugee numbers. Coetzee's review of Boochani's book complicates the sense of Australia as a "paradise", suggesting instead that, as in his depiction of South Africa, the lived reality of a place is complex and fragmented. This is evoked in J.C.'s contrast of the shame and dishonour of national politics to the pride that can be invoked in citizens when one of their own acts to create something beautiful. In one of his opinion pieces, 'On National Shame' (a verbal echo to Coetzee's review of Boochani's book under the title 'Australia's Shame'), J.C. refers to a performance he had recently heard of Sibelius' fifth symphony. He comments that he experienced "the large, swelling emotion that the music was written to elicit" (2007: 45). He links the experience to the pride that must have been felt by a Finn in the audience, that "*one of us* could put together such sounds, proud that out of nothing we human beings

can make such stuff" (45, emphasis in original). By contrast, J.C. contemplates the feeling of shame "that *we, our people,* have made Guantanamo. Musical creation on the one hand, a machine for inflicting pain and humiliation on the other: the best and the worst that human beings are capable of" (45, emphasis in original). In *Diary*, the opinion piece, 'On Competition,' complements this discussion. J.C. comments on the commonplace notion that "each person on earth must belong to one nation or another and operate within one or other national economy; that these national economies are in competition with each other" (78). That this is so is a result of choice – J.C. notes that we can equally well choose "comradely collaboration" over competition, but that we choose to compete because of human nature, which is "fallen, vicious, predatory" (81). J.C.'s opposition between 'the best' and 'the worst' of human beings is echoed in the opposition between 'comradely collaboration' and 'competition,' and epitomizes Coetzee's often conflicting representations of place.

Conclusion

My central argument in this thesis is that Coetzee's narrative method is underpinned by spatial form (originally theorised by Joseph Frank) and that this narrative organisation influences how time and place are conceptualised in Coetzee's works. Coetzee has often been criticised for his perceived lack of engagement with South Africa's history and politics, but Dominic Head argues that his engagement has been more oblique, and is demonstrated particularly through his textual strategies and challenges to the conventions of the novel. Following Head's argument, my aim in this thesis has been to demonstrate how these features of Coetzee's works underpin his engagement with South Africa, particularly during the years of apartheid.

In my analysis of spatial form in Coetzee's novels, the most significant characteristics that I have focused on are related to the unconventional time-orientation of his works, in which chronological sequence is frequently disrupted through simultaneity, juxtaposition and reflexive reference. Michael Spencer identifies similar features; according to him "the discussion of techniques of juxtaposition and the consequent disruption of linear sequence" are the most important aspects of Frank's conception of spatial form (he adds that "to have recognised this as one of the key features of modernism and developed it into a coherent theory is a feat of intellectual recognition and extrapolation of the highest order") (1984: 194). A large part of Frank's essay on spatial form is an analysis of the novel *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, to which he also attributes the main motivation for the essay. He says that, in reading *Nightwood*, he was "haunted" by it and was initially at a loss to account for the book's effect on him. The essay on spatial form had its origin in Frank's attempt to define for himself what made the book so different from other novels (Daghistany and Smitten, 1981:7). My interest in spatial form is underpinned by Coetzee's favourable reference to Frank's essay (discussed in the introduction to this thesis), as well Frank's essay itself, which resonates with my reading of Coetzee's works.

Because a central feature of spatial form is its peculiar time-orientation, time and temporality are key structuring *and* thematic concerns in Coetzee's works. While his works are most often associated with postmodernism, they also share a number of affinities with modernist works (I discuss this in more detail in the introduction). I demonstrate in this

thesis that Coetzee's works construct a reality that is underpinned by modernist and postmodernist reconceptions of time and temporality. Heise suggests that postmodernist novels' innovative narrative structures intersected with the "broader transformation in the Western culture of time that has taken place since the 1960s and involves changes in science, technology and socio-economic structures as well as in aesthetic practices" (3). A key reason for this, Heise suggests, is that, especially from the 1960s, the 'grand' narratives of "progress, enlightenment, emancipation [and] liberation" were increasingly undermined (20). Coetzee's engagement with South Africa's history and politics reflects these changes, eschewing 'grand' narratives in favour of narratives that, instead, often critique their foundations.

Temporality is reconceived in the narrative organisation of Coetzee's works through techniques such as montage construction (in which events are juxtaposed rather than proceeding chronologically), discontinuity and fragmentation. Elizabeth Ermath links the changes in the conception of time in postmodern narratives to its move away from historical time, which is linear, to one that is "multivalent and nonlinear" (20). Sharon Spencer suggests that "discontinuity and juxtaposition constitute the novelist's most effective approach to the destruction of linear chronology and to the reconstruction of events into spatial constructs" (1971: 156), noting that an important effect of juxtaposition is that elements that are juxtaposed do not become simply the sum of their parts, but represent an entirely new concept of reality (15). Coetzee's temporal constructs frequently subvert historical time, producing works that 'rival,' rather than 'supplement,' history. His textual strategies are key to this endeavour. But time is also a central *theme* in Coetzee's works, and in this study I explore the multiple ways in which it intersects with place because, as I argue in this thesis, time and place can be seen as complementary aspects of experience. Mikhail Bakhtin uses the concept of the 'chronotope,' meaning 'time space,' to denote the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (1981: 250). This is demonstrated in the ways in which time and place are interwoven in Coetzee's works.

In my discussion of *Dusklands* in chapter one, I show that the representation of time in the novel is both an important thematic concern *and* an integral aspect of the novel's textual strategies. The cyclical nature of time is a recurring theme in Coetzee's works, and I discuss how it is manifested in *Dusklands,* with a particular focus on how it impacts on Eugene

Dawn's work on the Vietnam report. Teresa Dovey also discusses this notion in the novel, arguing that *Dusklands*' title suggests that "it is a history founded in the notion of cyclicality, or repetition," and that it is a concept that functions "both thematically and structurally to problematize the concept of history itself" (1988: 67).

In terms of the novel's textual strategies, I suggest that the novel's narrative organisation subverts linear time in its use of the technique of montage, and argue that the juxtaposition of the war in Vietnam and colonial exploration in South Africa suggests the coextensive ways in which the past and present interpenetrate each other. The juxtaposition also highlights continuities between the two parts, undermining the chronological nature of time and distinctions between past and present. The technique of montage is again evident in the novel's juxtaposition of fictional writing with documentary-type sections in both parts of *Dusklands*. There are numerous other textual strategies that work to slow down time, such as: the comparison and contrast between the two novellas and their protagonists, which require a continual back-and-forth movement that disrupts the novel's temporal flow; the use of questions, which Jan Wilm identifies as the device most frequently employed to slow down the narrative; the parody of historical documents, which extends the temporal moment in its allusion to other texts; and the disruption of linear temporality by the novel's connections with Coetzee's ancestry, which are evoked in both novellas. The perception of simultaneity rather than sequence is demonstrated by the key role of the twenty-four photographs that Dawn carries around with him. The photographs embody moments of temporal suspension, and are similar to Pound's concept of the 'image,' which unifies "disparate ideas and emotions into a complex presented spatially in an instant of time" (Frank, 1963: 9).

Because historical time is underpinned by realist discourse, the subversion of realist discourse in *Dusklands* also undermines historical time. This is manifested in numerous ways in the novel. Dawn's unreliable narration and metafictional comments emphasize the constructedness of his narrative. The repetition of Klawer's death in 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee' adds to the novella's disrupted temporal movement. Temporal flow is also slowed down by the paratactic, rather than chronological, movement in the report that Dawn writes for the 'New Life Project,' in which the documentary-type discourse is frequently interrupted by personal and private digressions. In 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,'

juxtaposition is again evident in the numerous versions of events that are contemplated and recorded – for Jacobus, temporality often comprises a simultaneity of different possible events. The principle of reflexive referencing, in which different fragments of the narrative have to be connected to each other, is also integral to unravelling the narrative's multiple parts and different putative authors.

In the Heart of the Country can be characterised as a novel that 'rivals' history. While novels that 'supplement' history are, according to Coetzee, associated with realist discourse, in this novel realist discourse is subverted in the novel's speculations, unreliable narration and multiple versions of events. The novel's temporal flow is also disrupted and fragmented by its textual strategies, which include multiple temporal shifts, alternative histories and the technique of montage, in which the novel's numbered sequences suppress causal and logical connectives, allowing the passages to be juxtaposed with each other. The use of montage in *HC* was influenced by film: Coetzee commented that, during the period of high modernism, novelists realized how *rapidly* narration could be carried out by films that used montage effectively. He was particularly interested in the intensity of vision that still images enable, and I argue in chapter two that the numbered passages produce a similar effect to that of still images.

Magda subverts historical time in favour of speculative histories and mythical time, in the process displacing the colonial and patriarchal discourses associated with the farm on which she lives. A key aspect of her construction of time is the distinction between the chronological time of her father, which travels along "arrow-straight paths," and her own time, which she refers to as 'mythic' time. I show how Magda's 'speculative histories' counter her father's conventional historical time, enabling her to experience a time characterised by an idealised conception of family and relationships of reciprocity and equality with others. Her 'speculative' histories reject linear, chronological time in favour of a kind of time that envisions cycles and wholeness, suggesting that the differences in how they experience time constitute a key reason for the chasm between her and her father.

In his fictionalised autobiographical trilogy, from *Boyhood* through to *Summertime,* John's approach to living in South Africa can be characterised as "unsettled." As demonstrated in *Boyhood,* from a young age John shows an awareness of the embattled position he occupies

in the country of his birth. In *Youth* he makes his first break with South Africa, leaving for England: exchanging the colony for the metropolis. In *Summertime,* the English biographer, Vincent, frames his narration through friends of Coetzee who had all, at one time or another, known him in South Africa. While *Diary of a Bad Year* is not part of his autobiographical works, as I show in this thesis, a number of critics have argued that aspects of the novel are autobiographical. *Diary* shifts the setting to Australia, Coetzee's adopted country, where issues of identity and belonging are intertwined with those of emigration, citizenship, refugees and the role of the state.

The intersecting axes of time and place are central concerns in *Boyhood* and *Youth,* and in chapter three I argue that the two memoirs elucidate key moments in Coetzee's childhood and youth that have particularly shaped his adult life. In terms of *Boyhood,* I discuss the contradictions of growing up in South Africa through John's descriptions of Worcester, a place that he refers to as being "a purgatory that one must pass through," as well as through the idealised conception of the family farm, Voëlfontein. In exploring the tension between John's conception of Voëlfontein and the reality of its fragmented lived experience, I show that the novel's form echoes this tension between wholeness and fragmentation.

In my discussion of *Youth* I focus on the ways in which time and place intersect in John's development as an artist. Despite his move to England and persistent attempts to rid himself of his South African identity and ties to the country, South Africa remains a significant presence in John's life, and plays an integral role in his journey towards becoming an artist. Montage and the principle of reflexive referencing are notable aspects of the novel's structural organisation. I argue that there are recurring patterns in John's description of significant moments in his life – they are scattered across the novel and constitute the disparate strands that cohere around his identity as both individual and artist, with particular relevance to his relationship with South Africa. With reference to the 'spots of time' that frame this chapter, I also show that there are 'signal' events in the text that exemplify experiences that are significant to John, and that play an important role in his life.

In chapter four, I show how Coetzee's intricate textual strategies in *Summertime* influence his representation of South Africa, and I argue that the memoir's form is intimately related to its thematic concerns. My central argument is that, in its disjunctive chronology, the form

parallels the themes of ambivalence and fragmentation, and emphasizes Coetzee's complex approach to place. The significance of relationships between parts is foregrounded in Coetzee's narrative method, in which the principle of reflexive reference is a crucial element in the reading process. I demonstrate that the memoir's disparate elements are intimately connected with, and cohere around, Coetzee's representation of South Africa. These effects extend beyond the memoir itself – I show that *Summertime* recasts and elaborates on themes related to place in his other works, especially his two previous memoirs and his 1999 novel, *Disgrace*.

In chapter four I also analyse John's representation of himself in *Summertime* and suggest that the picture that emerges of John is a postmodernist one: it is a composite representation that is informed by numerous, sometimes contradictory, perspectives. It provides hints and clues to John's character and identity without fixing him in an essentialist way. Coetzee's representations throughout his three fictionalised memoirs do not provide a stable, coherent identity. On the contrary, John's identity remains an elusive, fragmented one. The memoirs do, however, provide significant insights into what matters to him, and the forces that have shaped his creative works.

Finally, in chapter five, I argue that, in *Diary of a Bad Year*, spatiality and the technique of montage are key themes, and are interwoven in the novel's form and thematic concerns. I focus, in particular, on the ways in which a range of disparate thematic concerns are juxtaposed, particularly those related to the interplay between fiction and autobiography; public and private discourse; and South Africa and other, more developed nations, particularly Australia. My key argument is that *Diary* represents experience spatially rather than chronologically. This is evident in the novel's typographical layout, in which the multiple narratives are arranged on separate tracks. In addition, the organisation of the page's space overlaps with the concept of space itself, which is also a thematic concern in the novel. As in Coetzee's other works, the concept of place is a complex, nuanced one.

Diary encompasses an important theme that is alluded to in Coetzee's other works, particularly his memoirs: the interweaving of fictional and non-fictional narratives. Coetzee challenges the boundaries between these types of narratives in *Diary*, representing reality as "kaleidoscopic", a world "without absolutes," where reality is not objective and coherent

but instead participates in the "complex, dynamic webs of expanding, resonating planes of reality forever held in a suspension of simultaneous interaction" (Shine, 1978: 186).

The vexed reaction in South Africa to Coetzee's emigration to Adelaide, Australia, in 2002 underscores the significance of place. Coetzee's response to the move has been to emphasise the private nature of such a decision: "leaving a country is, in some respects, like the break-up of a marriage. It is an intimate matter" (Kannemeyer, 2012:13). Public responses, however, countered this desire for privacy with an expectation of accountability and explanation. Coovadia argues that Coetzee's decision to leave South Africa for Adelaide had a decidedly negative impact on the morale of white South Africans post-apartheid. This theme of responsibility for damaging the morale of white South Africans is taken up elsewhere. In an email that contains an implicit accusation of desertion, Mariana Swart[6] wrote to J.M. Coetzee: "I am furious that you have left South Africa – yes, rage is in my heart [...] I ask myself: What are you doing in Adelaide, Australia? [...] How can we ... make a go of it when people leave out of fear and disillusionment?" (quoted in Kannemeyer, 2012: 542). The desire on Coetzee's part to leave South Africa, however, goes back a long way, to 1962, as noted in *Youth,* when Coetzee left South Africa for England as soon as he had graduated. He first moved to England, then to the United States of America, where he lectured at SUNY Buffalo University. He tried to emigrate to the United States, but involvement in a protest campaign on university grounds led to his application for a visa renewal being denied, and Coetzee was forced to return to South Africa in 1974, where he then spent most of his professional career as an academic (Professor of General Literature) in the English Department at the University of Cape Town.

Despite a concerted effort to remain in the USA, it was while living in South Africa that he produced literature that established him as an internationally acclaimed writer. Jonathan Crewe comments that "this return to South Africa proved so enormously enabling for Coetzee as a writer that one had to wonder about the "accident" that brought him back to Cape Town" (2013: 18). By the time he emigrated to Australia, in 2002, he had become the first person to win the Man Booker Prize twice, and a year after emigrating he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. While South Africa is not always the explicit setting for

[6] It is not clear from Kannemeyer's text who exactly Mariana Swart is, whether a personal acquaintance or an unknown fan of Coetzee's work.

Coetzee's novels, it can be argued that it is this place and its attendant tensions and dynamics that haunt his earlier fiction.

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