

Maria Mouton in the Heart of the Country?¹

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Summary

This article notes and substantiates the intertextual link between an eighteenth-century case of adultery and murder involving Maria Mouton in the Tulbagh area of the Cape of Good Hope and the narrative in J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). The details of the crime and subsequent execution of Maria Mouton and her accomplices, which are recorded in the Cape Archives, provide the historical facts that are absorbed into Magda's fictional experiences on a remote Cape farm and inform the intellectual reflections on history that are evident in her discourse. In Coetzee's novel, details such as the porcupine hole in which Magda buries her father are spatial signs which simultaneously reflect repetitions of events from the past, the apparent circularity of rural life, the vacuity of Magda's existence, and her sense of a stifling psychological and sexual incarceration. The porcupine hole is both grave and archaeological site and as such it recalls the digging site in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1981) and the use of archival material in *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* (1998). The use of historical texts in these works acknowledges an indebtedness to the historical discourses which informs the written experience of fictional characters in these works and the act of writing itself. The centrality of the porcupine hole in *In the Heart of the Country* also reflects the Lacanian and Freudian elements of Magda's relationship with her father, which become the more apparent when viewed against the background of her historical predecessor, Maria Mouton.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel neem kennis van en bevestig die intertekstuele skakel tussen 'n agtiende-eeuse geval van owerspel en moord, wat op Maria Mouton in die Tulbaghgebied van die Kaap die Goeie Hoop en die narratief in J.M. Coetzee se *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) betrekking het. Die besonderhede van die misdaad en daaropvolgende teregstelling van Maria Mouton en haar medepligtiges, wat in die Kaapse Argief opgeteken is, voorsien die historiese feite wat vervat is in Magda se fiktiewe ervarings op 'n afgeleë Kaapse plaas, en verskaf die intellektuele besinning oor geskiedenis wat ooglopend in haar diskoers is. In Coetzee se verhaal is besonderhede, soos die ystervarkgat waarin Magda haar pa begrawe, ruimtelike tekens wat gelyktydig herhalings van gebeure uit die verlede, die oënskynlike sirkel-

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1. This article was first presented in a shorter version as a paper at the Worlds in Dialogue Conference of AUETSA/SAVAL, 2009, North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.

vormigheid van landelike lewe, die saaiheid van Magda se bestaan, en haar bewustheid van 'n versmorende sielkundige en seksuele gevangenskap weerspieël. Die ystervarkgat is tegelyk graf en argeologiese terrein en as sodanig herroep dit die opgrawingsplek in Coetzee se *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1981) en die gebruik van argiefmateriaal in *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* (1998). Die gebruik van historiese tekste in hierdie werke erken 'n verpligting jeens die historiese diskoerse wat aan die geskrewe ervaring van fiktiewe karakters in hierdie werke en die skryfhandeling self ten grondslag lê. Die sentraliteit van die ystervarkgat in *In the Heart of the Country* weerspieël ook die Lacaanse en Freudiaanse elemente van Magda se verhouding met haar vader, wat al hoe sigbaarder word wanneer dit teen die agtergrond van haar historiese voorganger, Maria Mouton, beskou word.

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The history of Maria Mouton and the slave Titus of Bengal has been recorded in the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope/Cape Archives, and brought to public attention by various publications in non-literary fields of study, amongst which are Heese (1994) and Penn (2002) to whom John Hilton refers in a paper in which he proposes that this incident from the history of the Cape of 1714 has, very likely, been co-textualised in *In the Heart of the Country*.² We quote from his relay of the Maria Mouton incident which is based on the Archives and on the versions provided by Penn and Heese respectively:

The council recorded the facts in its sentence (*sententie*) as follows: Maria Mouton, who was born in the Netherlands at Middelburgh in the province of Zeeland, had evidently emigrated with her Huguenot parents while she was a young girl to the Cape, where the family obtained land in the remote region known as the "Land van Waveren": (the Tulbagh area). She later married the Cape burgher, an ex-soldier Frans Jooste of "Lubstat" (which Penn identifies with Lippstadt in Germany). She was twenty-four years old. The age of the husband is not given but the relationship was clearly not a happy one She later claimed that Frans had not bought her clothes for nine years and she clearly had a hard life with him. She entered into an adulterous relationship, described in the archives as concubinage (*concubinatie*) with the slave Titus of Bengal, who was thirty years old, and plotted with him to bring about the death of Jooste At four o'clock one afternoon in August 1714, Maria and Frans had an argument and he threatened to hit her. She fled out of the door of the house to Titus who was standing outside. Titus went into the house, took his master's musket (*snaphaan*) and shot with it but missed. Titus then

2. John Hilton, "Maria Mouton and the Roman Law in the Heart of the Country", unpublished paper read at the Classics Colloquium of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, 24 August 2006. For the legal aspects of the case, see Hilton 2009.

got his master by the hair and called on Fortuin³ to help him. Fortuin struck the farmer in the neck with the heavy handle of a plough-share (*ystere houte ploeg stoker*). After he had fallen to the ground, Fortuin gave him two more blows in the loins (*lendenen*) and Titus joined in hitting Frans three times with a stick. Maria then saw the farmer Isaacq Visagie riding towards the farm in the distance and ordered her slaves to bury the body. They dragged it behind the kraal and in the evening, while Isaacq sat in the house with the prisoner, tied a rope under the dead man's arms and attached it to the collar of a horse and dragged the body to a porcupine hole (*ystervarken's gat*) where later the bones and head were discovered.

(Hilton 2006: 2)

To our knowledge this historical incident and archival text have not before been connected with *In the Heart of the Country*. Hilton motivates the possibility that Maria Mouton is “in the heart of the country” as follows:

Coetzee's novel contains a number of hints of definite historical context. There are references to a smallpox epidemic (Coetzee 1977, p. 38), a farm school-house (ibid., p. 46), an itinerant teacher of Latin (ibid., p. 22), repeated mention of slavery (pp. 118, 129, 130), concubinage (ibid., p. 52), bailiffs and court procedure (ibid., p. 122), a rifle (ibid., p. 58), and so on.

(Hilton 2006: 2)⁴

The term “slave” appears to be out of context or used anachronistically in *In the Heart of the Country*.⁵ Where it is used, it could simply refer to a servant who acts or is treated *like* a slave. Should we accept that a text from the Dutch Cape plays a role in this use, then the intertext emerges in the ambiguous way typical of those novels by Coetzee where time and place remain purposefully unspecific, such as, for example, also *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

The use of “intertexts”⁶ in Coetzee's work is well known and has been extensively researched. The purpose of this article is to establish whether a Maria Mouton “intertext” is indeed co-textualised in *Heart* and, if so, what the nature and function of the intertext is.

Perhaps the clearest indication of purposeful intertextualisation is the old grave which is to serve as the grave of Magda's father after she shoots him. We read in *Heart*:

3. See Hilton 2006: “a twenty-year-old slave from Angola”, p. 1.

4. Hilton refers to the Secker and Warburg edition of *In the Heart of the Country*, 1977.

5. From here onwards abbreviated as *Heart*.

6. When Lotman's terms are applied strictly these are “extratexts” which surface on the level of the apparently closed narration and stratify it.

By the weathered granite slab is the mouth of a tunnel, going at an angle into the earth. In this dead man's bed a porcupine, perhaps itself by now generations gone, hollowed out a home for itself and slept and raised its young.

(Coetzee 1999: 96)⁷

Hendrik, the servant on the farm in *Heart*, has to lift the gravestone and clean out the hole. He protests: "Miss, this is porcupine hole, there's nothing in it" (p. 99). The text continues: "... it is not hard to dig, that is why the porcupine chose to live here, close to the lucerne fields" (p. 99). The hole appears to be big enough and the coffin of the previously buried will not be touched. Hendrik: "Miss, it's big but it doesn't [sic] go deep, porcupines don't burrow deep, they make a big chamber like this, just the one." Magda crawls into the opening of the hole and curls up in it for a few moments, establishing that it is indeed large enough for the corpse of her father. Hendrik refuses to participate in the burial and Magda finds that the stiffened body will not go through the opening of the hole and fit into the chamber. The burial will only succeed if she enters the hole herself and pulls the corpse into it, towards her (pp. 91-93). The effort to fit the body into the grave is described in minute and bizarre detail over the next 5 pages. Eventually the father finds a resting place in this "ystervarken's gat".

The following remark by Magda, reflecting on guilt and the law after the burial of the father, might also be linked to the Maria Mouton intertext: "There is no one to see us. There has never been anyone to see what goes on here. We are outside the law ..." (p. 90). Maria Mouton was put on trial and punished, as were the slaves. The brutal punishments of the day were applied in full force: Mouton was sentenced to be "bound to a pole, and half strangled ... her face ... blackened with flaming straw" after which she would be garrotted to death. Her body was to remain tied to the pole. The slaves Titus and Fortuin were to have their right hands cut off and to be impaled alive until death set in.⁸

If the Maria Mouton intertext is connoted, it is by way of a difference between the main text and the connoted text. In the Mouton murder Isaacq Visagie rides towards the farm of Jooste just after the latter has been killed by the slaves. Maria sees him approaching in the distance and instructs the slaves to hide Jooste's body. The farmer Visagie spends part of the evening talking to Maria as they wait for Jooste's return after Maria has explained away his absence, and during this time Titus and Fortuin hide Jooste's body in the porcupine hole.

7. Our own references are to the Vintage edition of *In the Heart of the Country*, 1999 edition – an imprint of the Secker & Warburg edition of 1977. Subsequent references will be indicated by page number(s) only.

8. For the details of these executions, see Hilton 2009: 135.

Notwithstanding the ambiguity concerning the presence of “Maria Mouton” in Coetzee’s novel, once one is aware of the possibility of the presence of Maria Mouton in this text, the reader readily links remarks like the following, made after the second murder of the father, to the archival report:

We have had visitors ... all at once there is a tumult in the empty doorway ... and Hendrik has come and gone ... and Anna at once behind him running too, bent, urgent Before I can stand up they are gone With the tablecloth over my shoulders and my halfcut hair in my fist I emerge from the house to face two strangers, two horsemen.

(p. 125)

The two horsemen ask after the owner of the farm, her father, and Magda lies about this. When considering whether the visiting men came to look for her father or for criminals, she refers to Hendrik and Klein-Anna as “the truant slave and his mate”, a remark which might as well refer to Maria Mouton’s two helpers Titus and Fortuin, a slave from Angola (p. 122). Sections such as the following with Magda wondering what might have happened to Hendrik and Klein-Anna after apparently fleeing the farm, echo the Dutch court reports in the Cape Archives:

But, perhaps they did not shoot them out of hand. Perhaps, having tracked them down, they took them in, tied like beasts, to some far-off place of justice and condemned them to break stone for the rest of their lives to pay for their crimes and the crazed vindictive stories they told Perhaps they marched Hendrik and Anna out of the courtroom, tempering justice with mercy, and sent the bailiff with a role of wire to wire the gates of this. The farm shut, and cast me out of their minds Perhaps, therefore, my story has already had its end, the documents tied up with a ribbon and stored away, and only I do not know, for my own good.

(p. 122)

Magda’s story might have “had its end” in at least two different senses: Hendrik and Klein-Anna have been caught, tried for the murder of Magda’s father and punished, and the case has been closed, and – the intertextually concomitant meaning – her story has already been enacted in the form of a previous murder, the one committed by the slaves in the service of Maria Mouton and at the latter’s behest.⁹

It is Magda’s father who has an affair with a slave, Klein-Anna. Magda does not kill her husband but her father. After her father’s death Magda concedes to a sexual relationship with Hendrik, but this is told by way of variations. She might also have been raped. These relays might all have

9. A third possible meaning could be that Magda is thinking of the typical outcome of stories such as the one she is now considering, presuming that the outcome is predictable as if predetermined.

been mental fictions on Magda's side. Hendrik and Klein-Anna do not help her to kill her father, but are commanded to help her bury him against their will, so that Hendrik leaves her to perform this labour herself. In *Heart* Magda herself is the murderer. Her father is murdered twice. The first murder (performed with an axe) is partly cast in a literary and romantic mode: "I bring not the meat-cleaver as I thought it would be but the hatchet, weapon of the Valkyries. I deepen myself in the stillness like a true lover of poetry, breathing with their breath" (p. 11). This is preceded by a self-contemplation:

I am a being with a hole inside me, I signify something, I do not know what I stare out through a sheet of glass into darkness that is complete, that lives in itself, bats, bushes, predators and all ... that does not signify but merely is 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. I am a torrent of sound streaming into the universe.

(p. 10)

Magda axes the father and his bride in their marital bed and afterwards ruminates about various ways of getting rid of the corpses. The porcupine hole connoting the Maria Mouton events only plays a part in the second narrated parricide. In the second scenario the bride has disappeared. The father enters into an unbecoming sexual affair with a servant girl, provoking his spinster daughter. Magda kills him accidentally, seeking a gesture of acknowledgement from him.

Both women react passionately to their problem situation. Both feel disappointed, maltreated or frustrated. This emerges as a link across the differences. There are further links. Jooste did not buy his wife Maria new clothes. Magda's father bestows gifts on Klein-Anna, reminding Magda of his negligence of and indifference towards her. Again, Maria and Magda could be linked by virtue of their status as victims of men who are the products of patriarchal and chauvinist cultures, leading to the women's desire for acknowledgment, sexual liberation or revenge. Due to their status as servants Hendrik and Klein-Anna flee because they fear (apparently rightfully) to be seen as the main culprits in spite of the facts. Titus and Fortuin in a similar fashion do not act entirely on their own when they kill Jooste but are nevertheless meted the strongest punishment because of their status as slaves. We do not know whether Hendrik and Klein-Anna are ever caught and punished.

The porcupine hole appears to "index"¹⁰ the Maria Mouton story as intertext, but the intertext is traced through Magda's story by way of the difference between an archival text documenting reality and the fiction.

10. For the purposes of this article I borrow this term in a slightly adapted meaning from Anne Haeming 2009.

The rest of this article will presume that the Maria Mouton saga is indeed incorporated in *Heart*, in other words that the points mentioned above sufficiently prove this.

From the second part of *Dusklands – The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* – and from other sources we know that Coetzee has read the archives. The second part of *Dusklands*, as well as parts of *White Writing* – the chapter on “Idleness in South Africa”, to mention but one (Coetzee 2007: 13-37) – demonstrate that Coetzee has researched the history of the early Cape Colony through its documentations and other written sources (travelogues, etc.). In the essay “Remembering Texas”, Coetzee speaks of his reading of records compiled by travellers “including his remote ancestor Jacobus Coetzee” in a library in Austin (Coetzee 1992: 52). Hilton concludes that Coetzee must have read the archives himself and that the Cape Archives should be seen as the source of the Maria Mouton intertext in *Heart*:

Coetzee’s novel was written in 1977, whereas the historical accounts of Penn and Heese appeared only in 2002 and 1994 respectively. It would seem, therefore, that the fictional account is based either on an oral account or directly on the records of the case in the Cape Archives.

(Hilton 2006: 3)

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The nature of Maria Mouton’s emergence in *Heart* and the function of the intertext, as well as implications its presence may have for the interpretation of *Heart*, will be investigated in this section.

Coetzee’s novel does not seem to need the Maria Mouton reference. Readers have dealt with *Heart* without having to look for such a “hidden” intertext. This by itself testifies to a textual feature, namely that the intertext is woven into the textual surface. Critical commentary has aligned *Heart* with a variety of intertexts, notably *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner (see for example Dovey (1988), Barnard (1994), Atwell (1993)). However, when compared to later novels which take overt intertextuality to innovative levels of complexity such as *Foe* or *The Master of Petersburg*, the Mouton intertext is unobtrusively present. I would propose that this unobtrusive presence of Maria Mouton is a feature which requires to be accounted for.

Once Maria and Magda are co-read, the reader might well wonder to what extent the history of Maria Mouton served as instigation of the story of and by Magda. A first feature of the manner in which Maria Mouton is present in *Heart* is that it does not emerge as a source text. The links between Magda’s discourse and a possible historical forerunner of the events befalling her remain indeterminate. Magda’s discourse contains many intellectual reflections on history but these do not mention a Maria Mouton

event and appear to be referentially nonspecific on purpose. Her story has “already been told”, Magda remarks. In inscription 10 she describes herself as “one of the forgotten ones of history” (p. 4). “My story is my story,” she professes as she appears to indulge in the futility of her own writing of it, since her story is “ignorant of its meaning and all its many possible untapped happy variants” – “variants” which may include the Maria Moutons of the colony. Magda herself refers to other possible “authors” of her story – history, fate, God – and concludes “I am I. History is fate” (pp. 4-5). The way of writing, moreover, forces the reader to constitute a narrative voice not restricted by a realistic verisimilitude of time and place. In one of many moments of ironic self-abasement she refers to herself as “a mind mad enough for parricide and pseudo-matricide and who knows what other atrocities can surely encompass an epileptic Führer” (p. 11) imagining herself looking for “evidence of a credible past”, Magda enumerates: “ornamental fans, lockets and cameos, dancing slippers, favours and souvenirs ...” – a list at once apparently culturally specific yet disallowing a reading in terms of a specific time and place (p. 41). It could connote Maria Mouton’s European mother,¹¹ but such connoted referential meanings cannot be verified. It might as well also be Magda’s mother and a more jovial and culturally sophisticated past which is remembered – a past calling forth previous lifestyles at the Cape, especially those which were closer to the European centre from which the early settlers at the Cape came, a past and a lifestyle lost in the rough and forlorn “country”.

Heart, one may infer, does not obscure the presence of a Maria Mouton, but, to the contrary, displays how factualities such as this incident are absorbed into Magda’s experience of history as an indifferent force. The sexual repression and patriarchally organised culture of which Magda’s story speaks can be interconnected across an intertextual spectrum chronologically starting with Mouton but including the figures of Schreiner’s *The Story of an African farm*, the Victorian novel, and the South African literary pastoral and more. It is an intertextual spectrum linked also by the very fact of their textual, that is, their written or literary aspect. After all, Mouton’s story is also a written one. It exists, and has probably been accessed in the form of archival text. This intertextual spectrum interlinks written histories and stories of or by women which form part of a South African literary history which, by means of Maria Mouton, includes the history of writing in South Africa from the early Cape Dutch official documents to novelistic writing of the late 19th and early 20th century.

A further viable conclusion is that the Mouton “intertext” has a status similar to that of other intertexts operative in *Heart*. The plan of this article is, however, not to discuss intertextuality and its versions or renewals in Coetzee’s work in general nor even specifically in *Heart*, but rather to relate

11. See Cape Archives CJ 318 (1714).

it to the technique which appears to carry the thrust of the writing of *Heart*, namely the use of voice. Arguably, in *Heart* the narratological category of voice seems to subsume time, place and narrated events to its own dynamics.¹² Critics such as Ian Glenn (1996: 120-137) have argued that Magda's voice does not coincide with the kind of single consciousness in terms of which readers of conventionally written novels would naturalise it. To a question on this, Coetzee answered that "(a) Jacobus Coetzee is not an 18th century frontiersman and (b) Magda is not a colonial spinster".¹³ Magda is knowledgeable, she pores over dictionaries and can relate theories of evolution and speculative history. She is informed about the many ways in which women have been narrated in fairy tales, pastoral scenarios and idylls, and even in what today would be called popular culture, since her repetitive self-description of spinsterhood is loaded with the irony and self-loathing that attaches to the popular stereotype, especially in cultures where marriage and child-bearing as well as servitude to the men of the house were, for women, a prerequisite to acknowledgement. The effect of this stereotype has been felt over quite a few centuries, and hence its mention adds to the arealistic temporality produced by Magda's diary inscriptions. Magda hints at events from a past which she believes she is bound to repeat ("Character is fate. History is God.") (Coetzee 1999: 5). The conclusion that Magda's voice stretches the conventional verisimilitude of fictional characterisation is partly based on the non-linear use of time which the fictional topography helps constitute. Different eras or time notches appear to overlap at one single space, namely the space or place from where Magda speaks.

Non-chronological leaps in time or repetitions of events apparently already belonging to a past are facilitated by details related to space, as examples in the first section of this article will already have demonstrated. Bicycles and bailiffs are spatial signs which, in this novel, indicate shifts in time. The "ystervarken's gat" is a typical feature of the countryside which constitutes Magda's physical world. It also signifies time – porcupines dig it (close to lucerne fields) and then leave it again. Since it was a grave before, it connotes both the time of nature and human time, absorbed by the former. Drawing on the Mouton text, the porcupine hole's potential to co-textualise time and space becomes more pronounced. From a chronological perspective it refers to an event predating Magda (it is a grave and contains old human bones and graveclothes). In her essay on Kafka as an intertext of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Merivale notes that the intertextualisation of

12. In his interviews with Attwell, Coetzee states that film and/or photography and in particular the technique of montage as a connecting manoeuvre between "short narrative sequences" and "longer narratives" was influential in the writing of *Heart* (see Coetzee 1992: 59-60).

13. As recorded by Glenn 1996: 122. Other Coetzee commentaries also refer to this explication, for example Attwell (1993).

Kafka's parables and novels helps Coetzee "to abstract history by spatialising it" (Merivale 1996: 156). Old graves still containing, perhaps, a few bones, gesture towards previous settlement, and, given Magda's space and world, to farmer settlement, frontiersmen, moving inward. From the "Land van Waveren" the scenario shifts to what could be the lesser or greater Karoo, the deep inland of what once was only a settlement with a few towns and "vryburghers". The separation of lodgings on the farm where Magda lives is the same as the one implied, in passing, by the record of the Mouton case, although slaves are now servants.¹⁴ History, a record of events which marks the movement of time, is consolidated around certain details such as old graves, burghers murdered by slaves or farmer overlords murdered and then buried with the help of their own co-opted servants, sexuality across ethnic and class boundaries and sheep farming. The consolidation of history around social, economic, class and sexual/gender relations is an important effect of the intertext, and it is noteworthy that the intertext is recalled (to the extent that it is) by the "ystervarken's gat", a spatial sign. This colonial history is, however, absorbed by a greater space and time to which Magda refers, in a way of writing which reminds of *The Story of an African Farm*, as a kind of prehistory:

No one is ancestral to the stone desert, no one but the insects, among whom myself, a thin black beetle. Hendrik's forebears in the olden days criss-crossed the desert with their flocks and their chattels Then one day fences began to go up ... men on horseback rode up and from shadowed faces issued invitations to stop and settle that might also have been orders and might have been threats.

(p. 20)

The porcupine hole, found in an old graveyard, links past and fictional present by means of spatial detail. The reader could naturalise it conventionally as a sign of the cycles of life and death since it was and is about to be, once more, a place of interment, leaving only bones as the remains of human life. In the context of Magda's speaking-writing, it also is a sign of the unity of human body and nature, a unity to which Magda refers with a measure of disgust, even as she engages with it full of determination. If a cycle of life and death can be constituted here, and if this connotes a philosophy of nature which a novel such as *African Farm* still investigates for its redeeming features, then this philosophy of nature loses its transcending value in Magda's experience. The porcupine hole signifies something which

14. Seen in terms of the Hegelian master-slave paradigm which, according to Attwell and other critics, is active in *Heart*, the difference between slaves and servants becomes negligible since the relation between Magda's father and his workers resembles the master-slave model, and it is this stultified communication which Magda in the second half of the novel tries to transform, without success (see Attwell 1993: 62-63).

defies redeeming myths about human life-and-death. The porcupine hole comes to signify for the reader aware of the Mouton story the movement, or lack of it, of time in a space which does not change, namely the "country". As Coetzee observes in *White Writing*, the lifeless or "empty" landscape is a characteristic colonialist optic (see Coetzee 1988: 9-10). Space in *Heart* is also colonial space. The stony landscape with porcupine holes which could be hiding burial places, can also be read in terms of Briganti's remark about the stones Magda uses to write her messages to the "sky gods" as "the tombstones of a world that has turned itself into a graveyard".¹⁵ They expose the impulse behind colonisation, which makes "the land a page on which the generations write their history" (Coetzee 1988: 66). This meaning is obviously underscored by the Mouton intertext.

In so far as the porcupine hole signifies a past and its repetition in a present, it seems to signify repetition as such, as if it were *the* figure for the manner in which Magda's parricide and relationship with Hendrik repeats Maria Mouton's story. Within the context of Magda's responses and thoughts, it also signifies repetition as dullness, as that which holds down, or from which there appears to be no relief, so that Magda in her bid to escape her oppressed situation, or at least give vent to her real feelings, axes and/or shoots the father who embodies the repressive patriarchal principle and the culture of the "law" it has produced (Coetzee 1999: 98). Magda's self-disparaging comments about her own spinsterhood recode the porcupine hole as the hole or "lack" of Magda the spinster, who sees herself as a mere repetition of the many spinsters and "dull dutiful daughter(s)" of a stagnated culture (p. 111). The porcupine hole is part of a semiotics of the hole which develops throughout the narrative in repetitive loops. It foretells the Kafkaesque "burrow", central to *Life & Times of Michael K*. "Porcupines don't burrow deep", Hendrik remarks (p. 97). Observing the "nakedness" of the landscape as she wonders what has happened to Hendrik and Klein-Anna after the neighbour's visit, Magda remarks, "He who cannot burrow is lost" (p. 133), perhaps ironically referring to the burrowing which allowed her to hide her father's corpse.

As an index of a historical event which Magda might have in mind, the hole encodes the repetition of murder, sexual frustration, family violence and the intimacy with "slaves" who "liberated" the Marias and the Magdas from this psychological and sexual incarceration. It clearly contradicts the family romance as representation of life on the farm, popular in some versions of the South African farm novel tradition after Schreiner. One might be tempted to read the "ystervarken's gat" as a metaphor of history buried or ignored, that is of events belonging to a past not accounted for properly, not included and reflected in the official discourses of history and the ways society and culture appropriate their own histories. Was it buried

15. Briganti 1994 quotes this remark by Coetzee in *White Writing*, 1988: 66.

because Maria's passion was uncivilised and therefore challenged the verification myths of colonial settlement, or was it buried because the passion is a woman's, bearing in mind that men freely made use of the services of slave prostitutes kept for that purpose in brothels at the Dutch Cape? Did sheer sexual passion in a woman threaten the patriarchal social and cultural order, and its control of colonial paradigms of self-justification?¹⁶

When Magda remarks that nothing will liberate her, a reader aware of the Mouton events might want to compare it to Maria's sexual and perhaps also emotional liberation by the slave Titus. Magda's voice could be read as a comment on and, in this sense, as a unilateral dialogue with the voiceless (except in the court reports) Marias of early Cape colonial history. From a past, about which Magda speaks in generalising terms, to a present which is purportedly Magda's, nothing has changed, and the element of repetition-with-variation in spatial and temporal indices as well as in Magda's experiences as reported, tend to accentuate this. The "country" remains a constant given of sameness, irrespective of "history" and the changes it supposedly brings. Textualised by means of Magda's voice, the country, the earth, the landscape, the farm and spatial details retain a certain suffocating immanence.

Admittedly, Maria Mouton is not needed to read the hole as a site of burial, of the human dead and the human past and, in this sense, of history. Magda's digging into it adds a tempting connotation to the porcupine hole. She finds that she has to widen the hole to make her father's corpse fit in, starts to chop at it with a stone but finally resigns to using a spade not fit for the intended labour (Coetzee 1999: 99). The "ystervarken's gat" now reminds one of the archeological finds of the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Coetzee 1981) and his contemplation of them.¹⁷ On how to find the supposedly Barbarian slips of paper the magistrate explains:

16. In his article on the application of Roman-Dutch law in the early Cape as exemplified in the Maria Mouton case, Hilton concludes that "it is clear that the sentence of the Council considered the murder to have been particularly serious because Magda should have treasured her husband but instead committed a monstrous and barbaric crime against him – a crime that could not be tolerated in a self-governed land" (Hilton 2006: 12). From the legal documents Hilton concludes that Maria's was a crime of passion. The blackening of Maria's face was a symbolic warning to other women not to become involved with blacks, Hilton mentions with reference to Penn, and the impalement of the two slaves "constituted a particularly graphic illustration of the power of the authorities over slaves and an emphatic reassertion of the status quo. Events on the remote Cape farm on that fateful day could have been construed very differently as a passionate act of resistance against brutality that was carried too far" (p. 13). For the legal context, see Hilton (2009).

17. Subsequently abbreviated as *Barbarians*.

Graveyards are another good place to look in, though it is not always easy to know where barbarian burial sites lie. It is recommended that you simply dig at random: perhaps at the very spot where you stand you will come across scraps, shards, reminders of the dead.

(p. 112)

The hole is a grave and the grave can be an archeological site, a burial site of history containing only remnants, pieces for which a context has to be reconstructed, but which defy such reconstructions. The traces left in graves and the inscribed poplar-wood sticks resist interpretation. The magistrate suspects that his archeological diggings and finds speak of previous settlement and culture, but to decipher them would be guesswork. Magda digs open a grave already dug in some past, and tries to perform another burial, as if actualising the historical process the magistrate's diggings display – the building of one empire, culture or settlement on a previous one, erasing the past in the process but itself prone to the same fate in future (pp. 15-16). Like the archeological sites in *Barbarians* the porcupine hole articulates time as space and links space to history by means of an archeological sign. It could be said to pre-empt the magistrate's thoughts about the time of the seasons and the time of history. The time of empire is "the jagged time of rise and fall, beginning and end, of catastrophe" which is contrasted with the "smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons" (p. 133). In *Heart* the site of digging resembles a site of violence when the porcupine hole will not accept the corpse, the rotting body of the dead father. To return the father and his human settler life to the soil will require acts which only the subject-in-abjection can perform.

The porcupine hole and its use as a grave and a site of digging after it has been used as a burrow by porcupines also is a figuration of history as repetition. In this sense the textual indices of Maria Mouton are "archaeological sites" on the very surface of the text. This might explain why the Mouton intertext remains unobtrusive. The intertextual writing procedure displayed in *Heart* can be defined as repetition-as-rewriting. It follows the procedure of the palimpsest – overwriting, writing again on an older, other page and in the process erasing the older text. This figure would also account for the use of archival text in *Heart*. The voice of Maria Mouton is accessible through archives, and notably the Cape Dutch archives. (The same would of course be true of *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee*.) The documents or historical data on which the writing may draw are apparently effaced by the literary writing process as the unobtrusive presence of Maria Mouton in the "heart of the country" might suggest.

Such a description of Coetzee's intertextual act of writing which returns in novel after novel can account for a certain ethics of representation as far as history and the relation between history and the novel are concerned. Literary writing neither "digs up" forgotten or "lost" finds or leftovers, nor does it provide, imaginatively, missing "facts" in the manner of conven-

tional literary realism, thus using literature to supplement history. The point, it seems, is not to remain “true to the facts” (as an archival report, for example, could provide them), or “give voice to” that which discourses of history might have omitted. Intertextualisation signifies the acknowledgement of a certain indebtedness to a history of discourse aligned to the place and time of one’s own writing. Magda experiences this historicity as a burden to be escaped from but also as given, from which she is alienated. It spurs on her venture to write her own “history”, albeit with an ironical awareness of discursive and historical placement. Maria Mouton is both historical fact and discursive (archival, documented) given, and as such her “story” signifies, in *Heart*, repetition, the return of the same even as Magda positions herself against pre-emptive explanations. As intertext which tempts us to think of it as a source text, Maria Mouton contributes to the novel’s self-defictionalisation, eroding it from within by opening it up to a non-fictional historically real place outside itself. This can of course be said of the other “intertexts” operative in the novel. Magda is keenly aware of the fact that she is writing – she writes about herself writing, as many commentaries have pointed out.¹⁸ She also refers to herself as being written as she writes. At first glance this might appear to refer to the many discourses which position her attempt at her own discourse – historical, literary, social and Freudian, to name some. Her own writing is an effort to create a self which will not be the object of the discourses of others. If intertextuality can be described as rewriting, then rewriting acquires a double meaning since it describes the intertextual encoding of writing by others, but also the effort to overwrite these, in other words to write something new to replace the former. The narratological experimentalism of the writing apparent in the conflicting renditions of supposedly real events and the resulting delegitimation of conventional narrative verisimilitude is one indication amongst several of these.

Heart can also be read as a novel about the act of writing as such. As act of writing it experiments with the formalities of narrative tradition and its established relations with historical and social realities. It also experiments with the potential of language. Such a reading could not regard the act of writing in any foundational manner, since the novel responds more meaningfully to a reading which treats the act of writing as an ongoing performance by and by means of Magda, as we will try to argue further in the sections below. This has consequences which are played out, firstly, on Magda’s sense of her own existence. After all, she exists by virtue of her own act of writing, as she tends to think even as she becomes aware of simultaneously being written.

18. Magda is writing a diary, but she is also writing about herself writing and, in a further twist, about herself being written, that is, about herself as the object of other writing. This view of Magda has been presented by, amongst others, Glenn (1996) and Macaskill (1994).

3

In the semiotics of the hole as it unfolds in the novel, “holes” signify the loss of self caught up in the desire for the other which it needs to become a self, to loosely follow Dovey, who has teased out Lacanian allegories from the textualisations in Coetzee’s earlier novels (Dovey 1988). This desire reaches out to the father and to the servants who could help her constitute a social or communal life-world which might emulate the lost “pastoral” and “family romances” which the law of the Father has made impossible. The desire produces a “lack” – a “hole” – which turns to the landscape or nature, to the physical aspect of the “country” which is her habitat to become “whole”. Whatever she reaches out to and the reciprocities she hopes to find there, are in advance confounded by the way in which father, servant, community and even nature is always already fraught with social and cultural history. History will only offer continuity and integration at the price of accepting a placement which Magda experiences as an interment of the self. Is Maria Mouton the hole of the unconscious which “knows” of the extent to which South African settler culture was based on fragile and enforced social and cultural discourses? ¹⁹

The Maria-Magda relation appears to have been cast in terms of a Freudian “return of the repressed”, and this impression is strengthened by the apparent Oedipal nature of Magda’s relationship with her father. When the father is removed, the sexual desire which is obviously dormant and plays its part in the convoluted dynamics of Magda’s need for and outreach to the father, appears to find its outlet in sexual intercourse with Hendrik. The Father and his “No!” is removed and appears to be replaced by a sexual object proper. However, Freud’s Oedipus is the son who wishes to rival the father (and kills him), not the daughter. Magda moreover does not remove the father so as to have a relationship with Hendrik. In a close Freudian and feministic analysis of *Heart*, Briganti concludes that Magda is in the ambiguous position of the daughter who seduces and/or is being seduced by the father (Briganti 1994: 41-43). Briganti concludes that Magda’s psychological state and the voice emanating from it should be described in terms of Freud’s work on hysteria (Briganti 1994: 41-43). One could take this argument further and propose that Magda’s parricide(s) are parodies of the Freudian thesis, as if Magda played out possibilities of self-liberation by means of parricide. Such an interpretation of the parricides would make sense of the presence of the Mouton intertext since Maria is not liberated by the death of Jooste and has to face the full force of the dominant legal and moral order. Magda tries out murdering the object of her repression, as she

19. The best-known psychoanalytical interpretation of Coetzee’s work was Dovey’s Lacanian reading of Coetzee’s earlier novels (Dovey 1988). For a detailed Freudian analysis of Magda and *Heart*, see Briganti (1994).

perceives it, in a moment of jealousy, but on the second occasion only shoots to give vent to her loneliness and frustration. In line with the possible status of these attacks as products of writing and possibly as penned-down fantasies, one could read Magda as experimenting with or as enacting the actions and histories (hysterias?) of others. Her indifference to the emotional and moral aspect of her “deeds” could confirm such a reading. Briganti’s conclusion is that Magda exposes the unconscious of psychoanalysis by inhabiting this ambiguous space of psychoanalysis as the discourse another father (Freud) produced (Briganti 1994: 39-41). *Heart* exposes the manner in which psychoanalysis as well as a variety of other discourses, notably literary ones, casts Magda so that her “writing” or voice-as-writing becomes a productive space where she fights to find the “voice” which she is being denied. Although Briganti herself errs in the direction of a psychoanalytic reduction of textual complicity, this conclusion is crucial. The tradition of the pastoral in South African English writing, including the anti-pastoral *African Farm* by Schreiner, but also the Victorian novel, as Briganti points out, threaten Magda’s voice, and, paradoxically, spur it into existence as speech in the form of writing:

She can’t stop, because it is through her narrative impulse that she comes into existence [S]he must continue to create herself in words, beginning each new story with “if”. Like Dora, who “refused to be a character in the story that Freud was composing for her and wanted to finish it herself” ... she must discard the stories she inhabits like the shells of a dead creature, migrating from one empty shell to another like the hermit crab to which she compares herself.

(Briganti 1994: 39)

From this perspective the unobtrusiveness of the Mouton intertext actually strengthens psychoanalytical interpretations of the intertextual Magda-Maria link, as if the events captured in the Mouton saga constitute an unconscious and repressed knowledge that own writing is bound to end up in more re-writing and will fail the sought-after “self” and its truth. On the other hand, the process of writing as such produces new, albeit fleeting, modes of existence for Magda. When Magda imagines herself in other-worldly forms of existence (part of the earth, in water, etc.), she might describe states of the imagination which are facilitated by the very fact of her writing. Because she can write them, they have a certain “reality effect” (Barthes 1986: 141-148), and they might very well also arise in her imagination because she is writing. This is akin to the way in which Magda imagines or constructs various arrivals of the father with his bride, as she produces various versions of the first sexual encounter with Hendrik. Attridge argues against the interpretation of the rape of Magda as different rapes or different versions of the same rape, and suggests that the rape is written repeatedly because writing fails to name it, thus demonstrating that it cannot say what it intends to say.

According to Attridge this repeated effort at writing something – which I would also see as a form of rewriting – opens up the space where the wholly Other as “Alterity” becomes apparent or arrives in the Derridean sense of the word (Attridge 2004: 25-29).

Here, too, a link with the Freudian repetition compulsion and its definition as the return of the repressed cannot be ignored. If in this case “Alterity” is the unsayable, is it connected to the taboo surrounding sexual pleasure with a servant who is also of another race, who is attached to another woman and who has been co-opted to remove the “Law of the Father”, to speak with Lacan? The repressed “returns” in the form of repeated displacements, so that its content is endlessly deferred. Magda’s parricides are fantasies, and each one could be read as a further displacement of a desire to kill the parent, on which a taboo is placed, and to possess a forbidden phallus. Every fantasised killing of the father, just like fantasised sexual encounters with Hendrik, reinvigorates the process of repetition-displacement. Hence, absurdly, the father has to die twice, after which he still lives, and her sexual relation with Hendrik is a rather popularised Freudian rape fantasy. In such a reading Maria Mouton’s sexual transgression would acquire the meaning of an unthinkable, repressed content repeating itself in the history of colonial daughters, their belated hysterias and their lost desires. We would propose that the Freudian effects in *Heart* could also be read as a writing technique, and as a display of the paradox of Magda writing and Magda writing about herself being written.

Other effects of specific ways of using language also indicate that the act of writing is co-textualised in *Heart*. The writing itself trespasses the boundaries between conscious and unconscious, rational and libidinal. As in *Dusklands*, it plays with a naturalistic, even graphic form of writing. Contemplating the dismembering of the father’s body in order to force it into the porcupine hole, Magda says:

I cannot find it in me to open the graveclothes and confront again the darkening cheesy flesh that sired me. But if I do not bury it now will I ever bury it? Perhaps I should simply go to bed and wait there, ... while the bag lies in the sun, the flies buzzing around it and the ants crawling in and out, until it bloats and bursts and runs in black fluids ... until it is simply bones and hair ... and then get out of bed at last ... and simply pick it up and sling it into the porcupine hole and be free of it.

(p. 100)

Magda’s language displays the failure of the means to signify in terms of family- or father-daughter affinities and revels in grotesque detail. Writing seems to exploit the possibilities the abject holds.²⁰ In the introductory essay to *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva describes the abject as “the jettisoned

20. We here rely on Kristeva’s work on the abject (Kristeva 1982).

object” which “is radically excluded and draws me to the place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva 1982: 2). She continues:

It is not the white expanse or slack boredom of repression, not the translations and transformations of desire that wrench bodies, nights, and discourse; rather it is a brutish suffering that “I” puts up with, sublime and devastated for “I” deposits it to the father’s account.

(Kristeva 1982: 2)

In this example writing the abject does not mean that symptoms of an experience of the abject are paraded for the reader to conclude on certain psychological states of the fictional figures. It rather serves as a way of writing; a technique, by means of which the body as body can be introduced into the exercise of language. At a safe distance, the abject helps to define the subject, but when the border is crossed the world of the “I” breaks down since “I” is in the presence of a “thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything” (Kristeva 1982: 40). The writing of the abject would be a writing which cancels out meaning-producing systems. By writing the abject, writing confronts itself with its own limits and the abject scenarios in *Heart* (there are quite a few) could also be read as deliberate experiments testing the boundary between language and the body – hence the graphic detail and the use of the sensory (smell, the visual, touch).

Writing facilitates the transgression that this imagination of the abject implies. Furthermore, the history intertextually embedded in *Heart* is one of transgression. Following Attwell’s analysis of *Dusklands*’s history and “politics” (Attwell 1993), the killing of farmer Jooste by his slaves, influenced by Jooste’s wife Maria, could also be said to mirror the attack of the “primal horde” on the totemic father of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (Attwell 1993: 43 ff.; Freud 1919). However, the revolt of the servants against their masters – a regular occurrence at the Cape of Dutch colonial times – is cruelly punished, both by Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusklands*, and by the Dutch administration of 1714 when they bring Titus and Fortuin to trial. The ancient myth in its Freudian explanation appears to be repeated in Magda’s sacrilegious killing of her father, constituting the breaking of a taboo. However, Magda’s transgression is of a broader social, historical, psychological and sexual nature, especially in the case of her “concubinage” with Hendrik. Hendrik’s coarsely seductive and taunting innuendos to Magda contain some of the most realistically written parts of *Heart*. Neither respect and obedience nor passion and desire are salvaged, and Magda’s effort to establish a new society (or to re-establish a vaguely remembered, imagined one) fails.²¹ The meaning of the rebellion of the “primal horde” is overturned, as if writing incorporated the myth to demythologise itself.

21. We are obviously indebted to Attwell (1993: 58-69) for quite a few of the points made here.

There is no renewal of society, but when *Heart* is read together with Maria Mouton, there is a recurrence of vengeance, spite, and frustrated desire displaced in experiences of the abject. These are emotions repressed in a fully normalised and apparently normal society. In Kristeva's account death and crime are "abject". The Mouton saga contains both elements, and these are the elements which are intertextually restored in Magda's narrative. If one placed the Mouton intertext into its historical and social context, Maria Mouton would personify or embody the abject as such in the eyes of the law and the legal system at the Cape, which was trying to establish and protect order and civilisation. Maria's punishment marks her physically and socially, and symbolically affirms that she has been expunged from society.

If we play the Maria-Magda reading game, Maria Mouton emerges as the counterpoint of Magda's stories, as if to parody the latter. Magda's is only a written self and her experiences are facilitated by language and acts of writing, which are guaranteed to be "free" since they are diary inscriptions. The Beckettian impulses in the writing of *Heart* underscore this debunking effect. The "literary" discourse which is *Heart* is a celebration of language, a *jouissance* in Barthes and Kristeva's sense of the word (Barthes 1975). This is also evident when one reads Magda's voice through the framework of existentialist alienation or when the possible influence of Samuel Beckett's writing is brought to bear on *Heart*. Magda's laments in places take up the appearance of existentialist self-encounter and its typical experience of alienation and loneliness. Standing at the window looking out into the evening and the farmyard, she presses her hands against the glass separating her from the outside world and registers how she will bleed should the glass break – as if the bleeding would prove to her that she is alive, too (p. 10). Her life on the farm is "gaping with boredom because nothing ever happens" (p. 8). Spatial signs and details of nature often serve to signify feelings of separation and disembodiment, even when Magda writes them as if they provided truths and opportunities of identification. In his comparison of some novels by Beckett and *Heart*, Cantor demonstrates how Beckett's figures tend to demystify their own fictional status (Cantor 1994: 89-90). In *Heart*, being written would mean to be fictional, to lack concrete existence. Magda is strongly aware of her paper being, of her status as fictional construct so that her "ontological status" becomes unclear to herself:

Like Beckett, Coetzee asks us to imagine what the convention of ellipsis "feels" like to a character in a novel, how jolting it must be to be whisked from a Monday to a Thursday with no glimpse of the intermediate days.

(Cantor 1994: 90)²²

22. Attridge remarks that of all Coetzee's novels *Heart* is "the most Beckettian, both in the broader scheme of an introspective and wordy monologue whose

The reader is not only reminded of the writtenness of Magda's "voice" and accord of her life, but also of the absent agent of the writing of Magda writing, the one who fictionalises Magda but then defictionalises this in the same move. However, in this case the agential place is given to Magda, so that a comparison with Beckett's figurations of fictional characters enacting and discussing their own fictional status is called for. Beckett constitutes an archive of writing which Coetzee draws upon without, it appears, hiding this. It is an archive of ways of writing or of "style" as both Cantor and Attridge call it. The "overthrow of all conventions, romance, erotic and pornographic" in Beckett's writing is also in evidence in descriptions in *Heart* (Attridge 2009: 80). When Coetzee remarks on the influence of Beckett on his own prose to the effect that it teaches a lesson "about finding a form for the movement of the mind [i]t comes down to a certain dancing of the intellect that is full of energy yet remains confined, a dancing on the spot" (Coetzee (1992: 6) quoted by Attridge 2009: 75).

We are reminded of Magda describing "the words that create me" as a "spinning out of sentences ... that belong to the dead of night when the censor snores, to the crazy hornpipe I dance with myself" (p. 8). Beckett's characters defictionalise themselves and, like other stylistic techniques used by Beckett as analysed by Coetzee, allow Beckett to achieve "the art of zero" (Coetzee 1992: 43).

The zeros or self-defictionalisations in *Heart* constitute voice, or, rather, a "more of voice", an excess or *jouissance* of voice which *is* the act of writing and which marks it as performance. Intertextuality is, again following Barthes and Kristeva, part and parcel of literature's ability to produce this excess, just like the writing of the abject is symptomatic of it. Coetzee commentary has provided strong answers to the reasons and effects of the defictionalising aspects of Coetzee's writing to which one might add that it lends to Magda's writing the ironic sense that a voice is lost in spite of all its linguistic and formal transgressive activity. The writing returns to the literary habitat of dutiful daughter taking care of the father who is more dead than alive, on the stoep, as if nothing has happened.

"As if nothing has happened" describes the fate of Maria Mouton's historical representation and acknowledgement, reduced as it is to archival documents, to paper remnants stacked away on forgotten shelves. The rediscovery of these reports is not unlike archaeological finds "discovered" by those who happen to dig for them. Documentary reports moreover impose a silence on the desires and subjectivities of their referred objects, here Maria Mouton. This desire rightly belongs to the domain not only of the unsaid or repressed, but also, perhaps, of the unsayable.

relation to reality is not always easy to fathom and in the small details of style" (Attridge 2009: 83).

Maria Mouton's unobtrusive or hidden presence in *Heart* could itself be captured by the term "hole". It acquires the significance of a figuration of the hole in Magda's discourse, produced by various techniques of defictionalisation. This is clearer when we understand the defictionalising effects as part of a high modernist self-referential way of writing which takes its own conditions of possibility as the stuff or structure to be worked with – language, narratological conventions, fictionality (as for example explored by Beckett) but also the very act of writing. Defictionalisation is then not merely a technical ploy but a way of writing that seeks to disclose that which escapes it, and which makes it "fail" in terms of ideals of closed narrative, achieved insight and the truth of the self.

I have preferred the term "rewriting" as a description of the blending of text and "intertext" in *Heart*. According to the textualist Barthes of *S/Z* all (literary) writing is rewriting, but of course not in the sense of repetition or copying (Barthes 1974). Meanings contain within themselves their histories of use, their previous and possible further encodings, the contexts which they were part of, and the nuances they may have gained or lost. In Barthes's terms linguistic meaning as code denotes the already-written. In this sense all literary writing is rewriting and the marked difference that the writing of certain modernist and postmodernist authors render is that the notion of the already-written is deployed in the writing itself. In Coetzee's novels this mode of intertextuality is further marked by a rewriting in the literal sense of engaging with the literary ways of writing of other authors, for example Kafka. What is "rewritten" is a use of already produced meaning by another writer in the context of her or his own writing.²³ This meaning can be injected into new settings, contexts or processes of literary writing, into new writing, so that the underlying point of such "rewriting" is that the writing agent is looking for ways in which things can be made writable. If the act of writing aims at making writable, then ongoing rewriting of the writing of others and of itself should not surprise us.

It is tempting to interpret the absent Maria Mouton as a "sign" of the already-written of South African anti-pastoral novelistic writing, of discourses of knowledge from colonial history to Freudian psychoanalysis, of not only the writing but also the life or biography of Olive Schreiner, of the stylistic techniques and their meaning effects in the work of Samuel Beckett and so forth; in short, as a sign of an archive in a Foucauldian sense. The porcupine hole reminds us, however, that the archive of writing, documents and letters cannot be separated from a more ancient and more concrete archaeology which combines time and place.

23. It is well known that Coetzee does this in his own writing, for example by reusing terms from a previous novel or novels. Apart from this specific technique it is interesting to note the role of perished books in the last section of *Foe*.

Speaking about the Kafka texts linked to *Barbarians*, Merivale notes that “the intertextual always possesses political application” but as an oblique and undirected strategy “of naming the political” (Merivale 1996: 164-165). Maria Mouton’s story is a factual event which was sensational in its time.²⁴ It contains, tellingly, the story of that passion and sexuality which the “Immorality Act” of apartheid culture and domination tried to curtail. Wittenberg notes that Coetzee was strongly aware of the possible public and official reaction his scenarios of interracial sexuality might elicit (Wittenberg 2008: 135-136). *Heart* contains a story of transgression which the apartheid powers of the day by their policies and laws, and the rationalisations of these, had symbolically, if not literally, erased from the archive of history. Maria Mouton’s transgressions obviously contradicted the founding myth of white settlement for the political and cultural order of the day at the time of *Heart*’s publication. Following Merivale, the Mouton intertext could be said to condense in itself the political of *Heart*’s writing. What Coetzee does not do, as Merivale hints at in the section quoted above, is to retell this “as it was”, to make conventional realism out of it, and to thus purport to save it from history. We seem to deal with a clear example of the writer Coetzee not setting up a rival discourse to “history”. This is a further explanation of the curious presence by way of the apparent absence of Maria Mouton in *In the Heart of the Country*.²⁵

24. Penn writes:

As the only white woman to be executed at the Cape during the eighteenth century Maria Mouton has long enjoyed a unique notoriety. Her crime “inciting her slave lover to the murder of her husband” has been noted by historians and preserved in the folk memory of a district; relished, almost, for the enormity of its multiple transgressions. What made “and makes” Maria’s actions so deliciously shocking to both her contemporaries and to recent commentators is not so much that she committed murder and adultery (common enough crimes in any age) but that she was a young white woman and that her partner, or partners, in crime were slaves. Her lustful and murderous conduct, her intercourse with dark-skinned bondsmen, betrayed both her gender and her social group. Colonial society as a whole was threatened by her actions. It was necessary that she be eliminated, and she was.

(Penn 2002: 1)

25. The fact that Coetzee’s first two novels both make use of the Cape Archives, that they connect themselves with the early Dutch history of the Cape by means of real existing texts – that is, documents which report or narrate and make compelling truth claims – raises a few new questions about Coetzee’s view of his own discursive status as a writer and of the historicity of writing in general. This is discussed in more detail in “Cape Dutch in the early

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