

The Art of Evasion: Writing and the State in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*

Timothy Wright

Summary

This article focuses on J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) in light of current theoretical concerns with issues of sovereignty and the state (raised by, among others, Hardt and Negri and Agamben), issues which Coetzee explicitly addresses in his recent *Diary of a Bad Year*. I analyse the novel's engagement with several of the narrative formations of political modernity, both generally and in the South African context, and focus in particular on the following: the social contract, as formulated by Hobbes, and its rebuttal by Rousseau; as well as the historical events that came to underpin the modern South African state: the Great Trek and Van Riebeeck's garden. I argue that the novel attempts to counter these narrative underpinnings of state sovereignty, not so much with a literary sovereignty, but with its own strategies of rescripting, defamiliarisation, and evasion. I situate Coetzee very much within the context of not only South African, but also global modernity here: at a historical moment when the articulation between the state and its subjects is becoming increasingly problematic, I argue that Coetzee's novel is eminently worth revisiting.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel word J.M. Coetzee se roman *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) verken in die lig van die heersende teoretiese belangstelling (van onder andere Hardt en Negri en Agamben) in die staat en sy soewereiniteit. Coetzee ondersoek hierdie kwessie uitdruklik in *Diary of a Bad Year* wat onlangs verskyn het. Ek ontleed hoe die skrywer in die algemeen sowel as in die Suid-Afrikaanse verband omgaan met verskeie narratiewe formasies van politieke moderniteit. Die volgende aspekte geniet besondere aandag: die sosiale kontrak wat Hobbes geformuleer het en Rousseau se kritiek daarop, asook die historiese gebeure wat uitloop het op die totstandkoming van Suid-Afrika as 'n moderne staat, naamlik die Groot Trek en Van Riebeeck se tuin. Ek voer aan dat in die roman gepoog word om die narratiewe formasies van staatsoewereiniteit teen te werk. Dit word nie soseer deur 'n literêre soewereiniteit vermag nie, maar deur die skrywer se eie strategieë, soos herskrywing, vervreemding en ontwyking. Myns insiens verleen dit aan Coetzee ongetwyfeld sowel 'n Suid-Afrikaanse as 'n internasionale moderniteit. In 'n tydsgewrig waarin die verhouding tussen die staat en sy onderdane toenemend gespanne word, voer ek aan dat Coetzee se roman by uitstek herwaardering verdien.

Georg Lukács famously diagnosed the condition of the modern subject as “transcendental homelessness” – his term for the radical and irremediable fissure between human existence and meaning that suddenly renders the world an inadequate venue for the acting out of human desires. The emergence of the novel as a literary form that functions as a surrogate home for these rootless modern subjects is the prime expression of this condition ([1920]1971: 41). In his “Reflections on Exile”, Edward Said extends Lukács’s diagnosis to a consideration of the phenomenon of the modern state, which Said reads as an attempt to effectively annex a “national” home from the transcendental homelessness of modernity. Quoting Simone Weil, Said writes, “To be rooted ... is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul”, and goes on to suggest that of all the “remedies for uprootedness in the era of world wars, deportations, and mass exterminations”, it is “the state – or more accurately, statism – that is the most insidious, since worship of the state tends to supplant all other human bonds” (Weil quoted by Said 2000: 83). Said here outlines what we can call a psychopathology of the modern state, and helps give a peculiarly modern answer to the question posed so powerfully by Rousseau in the opening lines of his *On the Social Contract*, of why the home of a state turns so easily into a hell: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains” (Rousseau [1754]1987: 141).

Coetzee’s recent works, especially his *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), have explicitly articulated political critiques that his earlier works addressed only elliptically in the form of parable or allegory: specifically, the nature of the political and of the form in which the political finds its modern home, the state. *Diary of a Bad Year* opens with an essay on the origins of the state by a character none other than John Coetzee (“C”), or at least a semblance of him, six years older and less successful. It takes the form of an attack on the social contract:¹

Every account of the origins of the state starts from the premise that “we” – not we the readers but some generic we so wide as to exclude no one – participate in its coming into being. But the fact is that the only “we” we know – ourselves and the people close to us – are born into the state; and our

-
1. While the polyvocality of this work might lead the reader to give less than wholesale credence to these “opinions”, these diary entries by “C” nevertheless articulate in concentrated form several of the major problematics – clustered around the nature of political modernity – that recur throughout Coetzee’s fiction. The ironising of these opinions by way of the novel’s polyvocality should be understood not as a way of delegitimising them, but rather as a means of more fully realising their concerns at the level of form. I lack the space here for a larger elaboration of this issue, but see, for example, Jonathan Lear (2008), who has argued persuasively for the importance of the formal qualities of the novel to Coetzee’s political thinking.

forebears too were born into the state as far back as we can trace. The state is always there before we are.

(Coetzee 2007: 3)

As Rita Barnard points out, it is the narrative form taken by the state that is of interest to Coetzee as a writer: the state's narrative production of its own temporal anteriority not only renders its citizens subject, unable to dissolve or escape the state, but, as Barnard has suggestively argued, serves to render its own origins unimaginable (2008: 543). If these origins were only available in the mythic form provided by the state, she suggests, one could nevertheless "imagine the unimaginable ... by creating fables and stories about the origins of the state". That is to say, one way of challenging subjection is through the rewriting of it – the "it" here being, specifically, the contract.

The question of how to challenge this subjection is very much at play in Coetzee's powerful and enigmatic 1983 novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, the tale of a solitary gardener's thwarted attempts to live off the land in a war-torn South Africa. Much contested at the time of its publication for its alleged evasion of pressing political issues (it was written during the crisis years of the apartheid era), Coetzee's novel, I suggest here, can be read as a fable that is as much about *surviving* subjection as challenging it, its protagonist choosing, in more vehement form than Coetzee's other protagonists, the "third way" mentioned by C. in *Diary of a Bad Year*: "the way of quietism, of willed obscurity, of inner emigration" (Coetzee [1983]1984: 12).

In imagining (or staging the difficulty of imagining) the unimaginable and unlawful time before the Hobbesian contract is signed, the novel has a lineage that goes back at least to Rousseau's "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality" and shares some of that text's yearning for the idyll of pre-social life. In this sense, at least, it engages with the tradition of the pastoral idyll. "Because this innocence and good fortune seem incompatible with the conventional relationships obtaining in society as a whole," wrote Schiller, "poets have ... assigned the idyll a place in humanity's infancy *prior to the beginning of culture*" ([1795]1985: 227). Yet the unmediated world of Rousseau's natural man is not available to us as moderns: the state will not be rolled back, and the genre finds itself in the awkward position of catering to an audience that is almost by definition excluded from the pastoral ways it celebrates – indeed, we might say, actively engaged in their destruction. The more self-conscious the genre is about its own foundations, therefore, the more it tends toward the elegiac. In the elegy, wrote Schiller, "nature and the ideal are presented as objects of mourning, where the former is presented as something lost, the latter as something unattained" (p. 227).

To invoke the pastoral here is not unwarranted, since Coetzee's novels so actively engage with that South African appropriation of the pastoral, the *plaasroman* (farm novel), and indeed work to complicate its inherent

tendency towards the simple, the pure, the idyllic. As in Schiller, the pastoral is for Coetzee a necessary genre in that it gives expression to the deep nostalgia of the modern subject for the plenitude of nature. Yet Coetzee writes with the historical knowledge of the pastoral's entanglement in the history of the South African state and its attempts to render the alien African land legible and productive for its white settlers, to make it a home: it institutes its own history, its own time, and banishes that which threatens its idyllic plenitude. This dual valence of the pastoral – where the head condemns while the heart cannot let go, as Coetzee writes of Breyten Breytenbach's attachment to an older, rural South Africa (2001: 257) – informs Coetzee's writing within the genre. "I would ask whether it is in the nature of the ghost of the pastoral ever to be finally laid," he writes ([1988] 2007: 83), alluding to the complex ways in which the genre continues to haunt the social imagination of political modernity.

Rita Barnard points to the deep sense in which the idea of the pastoral as a political genre informs Coetzee's fiction. *Life & Times* "allows Coetzee to reveal the dystopian dimensions of the Afrikaner's dream topography of beloved farms and fences," she argues, suggesting that the roots of Coetzee's own ambivalent pastoral impulses can be traced to his situation as a white South African under apartheid, in which, she says, "he felt he should restrain from pastoral indulgences" (2007: 30, 25). However, admirable as it is, Barnard does not push her analysis far enough: Coetzee's novel engages with and rewrites, through the lens of the pastoral, not just the South African farm novel and the rustic life it celebrates (that is, the Afrikaner nation and its political instantiation in the apartheid state), but the larger ideological underpinnings of the modern state as such, and, indeed, of some of the major strands of political modernity, stretching back to the origins of the modern nation state at Westphalia and its prime theorisation in the social contract of Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

The first part of my article aims to outline some of the ethical and epistemological dilemmas faced in the writing of a literary character as "other" as Michael K, and examines both the uncomfortable linkages and the critical differences between the discursive productions of the state and the possibilities offered by novelistic discourse. In the second part I suggest a number of "master narratives" of the state that are covertly embedded and rescripted in the text. Here I introduce Hobbes's theorisation of the social contract, its rebuttal in Rousseau's "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality", and two of the grand narratives of South African history – Jan van Riebeeck's garden and the Great Trek – as narrative forebears of *Life & Times of Michael K*. I argue that the novel attempts to counter these narrative underpinnings of state sovereignty, not so much with a rival literary sovereignty, but with its own strategies of rescripting, defamiliarisation, and evasion. I conclude with some speculations as to the kind of politics – or

anti-politics – articulated by the novel, and the place of literature and narrative within this politics.

Anti-Subject and State

As an attempt to imagine a radically other being as the full protagonist of a novel, *Life & Times of Michael K* seems anomalous in Coetzee's work, which for the most part is preoccupied with staging the failure of access to the other. Yet the drama of contact with the Other is not absent: it is merely re-encoded at a different level, for this is a work in which a self-conscious representative (Coetzee) of one highly developed strand of Western culture – the novel – turns his attention to a being that to some extent stands outside of and indifferent to the main currents of this culture.² In this sense, then, it is a literary reprise of a classic coloniser-colonised relation, and we would have to say that *Life & Times of Michael K*, for all its evasiveness, clearly lays itself in political territory, although the terrain on which it locates its politics is not the generally accepted one.

If the state, like the novel, has a vested interest in mapping and articulating the lives, thoughts, and desires of its inhabitants, then, at the very least, there is an uncanny morphological similarity between the two forms, and, at the most, the trajectories of state and novelist risk intersecting. Indeed, it has been argued that the literary valorisation of alterity merely rehearses the othering gestures of empire.³ One should distinguish then, right away, between the kind of othering conducted by the colonial state and the representation of alterity at issue here. While the modern European state is founded on a claim of sameness, that is, on the homogenisation of a disparate set of peoples into a unified nation, the colonial state operates through the management and production of *difference*. It is, in John Comaroff's analysis, a *state without a nation*, whose indigenous populations, while "said to be on the high road to civilization and citizenship" are "portrayed, to themselves and the world, as anonymous antimoderns, condemned to live for the foreseeable future in the primal mire of ancient custom" (1998: 13, 20). Cartography, government commissions, ethnological reports, all fixed and naturalised otherness, displaying it back to natives in museums and schools (p. 18). The *difference* produced by the

2. I draw this idea, and much of my following analysis of K's otherness, from Derek Attridge's reading of the novel. Attridge describes the novel as extending an "invitation to the reader to apprehend, and follow in its twists and turns, a consciousness unaffected by many of the main currents of modernity" (2004: 49).

3. For strong instances of this argument, see McClure (1994), Appiah (1992), Suleri (1992).

state (a difference that can be codified, ethnographised, etc.) should be differentiated from what I will here call, following Derek Attridge, *alterity*, whose distinctiveness is precisely its resistance to codification.⁴

How does Coetzee's novel encode alterity, rather than difference? The title, *Life & Times of Michael K*, simple and understated as it is, alludes to a vast repertoire of Western culture. "*Life & Times*", as others have noted, suggests a number of genres: the chronicle, the *Bildungsroman*, the diary (Head 1997: 5); the K immediately summons up Kafka's hapless protagonists. The title of the novel thus positions it both firmly within the tradition of the Western novel, as it invokes and suggests its indebtedness to the enormous cultural history of this tradition, and at the same time on its borders, in the way it presents its subject matter almost dismissively (the ampersand, the lack of an article). At one point, the novel explicitly undermines itself as a form of authority by having its protagonist call into question the value of storytelling itself:

If I had learned storytelling at Huis Norenius instead of potato peeling and sums, if they had made me practise the story of my life every day, standing over me with a cane till I could perform without stumbling, I might have known how to please them. I would have told the story of a life passed in prisons where I stood day after day, year after year with my forehead pressed to the wire, gazing into the distance, dreaming of experiences I would never have, and where the guards called me names and kicked my backside and sent me off to scrub the floor. When my story was finished, people would have shaken their heads and been sorry and angry and plied me with food and drink; women would have taken me into their beds and mothered me in the dark. Whereas the truth is that I have been a gardener, first for the Council, later for myself, and gardeners spend their time with their noses to the ground.

(Coetzee [1983]1984: 181)

Storytelling – as the practice of creating and performing an identity – appears as one more technology of subjugation from which K spends his life trying to escape. It is as if the entire tradition called up is at the same time dismissed as meaningless pomp when brought up against the experience of Michael K. The novel thus conjures up and embeds within itself its own antithesis; it is a work in which all the resources of high literary writing are brought to bear on a character who desires to exist almost completely outside of culture. Aristotle calls the artist one who lavishes care on those unable to return it: nowhere is this truer than in this novel.

4. In his own critical work, Coetzee has traced the presence of this form of alterity back to the early colonial Cape. Here, he argues, the figure of the Hottentot presented a scandal to European settlers precisely in that Hottentot idleness presented no grounds for an anthropological discourse of difference: the Hottentots were, in effect, not different enough ([1988]2007: 23).

Life & Times of Michael K comprises three sections. The outer sections are narrations of K's wanderings through a war-torn South Africa (set in a projected future in which the state of emergency of the 1980s has given way to a full-out war), his attempts to make a home for himself on the land, and his various captures by and escapes from army camps; the middle section is the diary of a well-intentioned physician – the “Medical Officer” – who becomes fascinated with K during the latter's stay in a makeshift prison hospital. We thus have a symmetrical structure: two framing sections, in which Coetzee seems to bypass the explicit problematisation of the other (so much a part of his other novels) and moves directly to the narration of his story “as it is”; and an embedded inner section, in which we are presented with more standard Coetzeean fare: the contortions and agonies of the liberal conscience in its attempt to understand its relation to the other (the hallmark of the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*).

The Medical Officer functions partly as a foil for Coetzee himself, and the sudden interpolation of his voice in the midst of the narrative foregrounds an authorial desire that is unacknowledged elsewhere: the desire to assimilate subject matter by rendering it transparent and legible. He thus occupies a far more ambivalent position than does the state, whose interest, as we see it here, extends solely to the disciplining and management of its subjects. Yet the Medical Officer's position as unwilling functionary of an oppressive state, a palliative, humanistic figure fascinated by subjectivities on the margins of the state yet unable or unwilling to enter into a position of outright defiance, suggests dark analogues with the Magistrate of *Barbarians* – in particular his final insight, “I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he [the torturer Joll] the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow” (Coetzee [1980]1999: 133) – and with Coetzee himself.

The Medical Officer's narrative thus functions as the novel's most thorough critique of the writing enterprise, and serves to foreground those qualities of the outer sections – ambivalence, desire, evasiveness – that are not overtly thematised. If we examine Section One we notice that it is far from being a straightforward narration from within a strange consciousness. We start off estranged from K (“The first thing the midwife noticed about Michael K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had a hare lip” (Coetzee [1983]1984 : 1)) and never, at least not until the enigmatic final scene of the novel, can claim to know him completely. When we do begin to enter into K's consciousness much later in the narrative, it is not in K's voice but, as Derek Attridge has observed, in the voice of Coetzee, ventriloquising thoughts that K would be unable to express himself (Attridge 2004: 50). Furthermore, key portions of his narrative are left out: between Sections Two and Three, he mysteriously escapes from a prison camp: we never find out how. At this nuts-and-bolts level of narrative – the lack of an internal monologue holding together the temporal succession of his thoughts and actions – he is not completely

present in the novel. Aside from a few brief rejoinders here and there, he is not allowed – and has no desire – to present his case, make his report, narrate his world.

The complex set of manoeuvrings by which the novel keeps K distant implicitly stages the novel itself as a disciplinary technology that, in dark and unexpected ways, mirrors the state. It is not enough to say that Coetzee is resisting speaking for the other, resisting doing violence to the other by articulating him in terms that are not his own. This only tells half the story: it seems that the more we know of K, the more clearly we see the radical nature of the challenge he poses to some of the axiomatic notions of political modernity underpinning the state. The novel carries out – through the figure of K – an interrogation into the foundations and origins of the state and its subjects.

According to official records, Michael K is a Cape Coloured – “CM” or Coloured Male (Coetzee [1983]1984: 70) – that is, in apartheid terminology, mixed race, and hence politically marginal, neither completely of the coloniser or colonised caste. (The reader’s conception of K as Coloured might be said to allow Coetzee to claim for him a lineage extending back to the nomadic Khoi who originally inhabited the Cape.)⁵ He is called a gardener, earthworm, or mole (by himself), an *opgaarder* [hoarder] (by official records); the Medical Officer, who wrestles most strenuously with the meaning of K, resorts in the end to calling him an escape artist (p. 166). But before all this, from the first sentence of the book, he is marked, physically by a harelip, and textually, by the letter K. Nadine Gordimer’s early review dismissed the Kafka reference, saying that it most likely stands for a commonplace Afrikaans name like Koekemoer or Kotze – the latter, intriguingly, a variation on Coetzee (Gordimer 1998: 139). One aspect of this name has been hitherto uncommented upon. I would like to speculate that this is partly a textual game; that we might read the “K” as an orthographic sleight of hand, as “I<,” the conjoining of an “I” and the “<” sign. That is, K is “less-than-I”, a continually receding subject. This understanding of K is in fact bolstered by reading him as a version of Kafka’s K, consigned to a kind of liminal, incomplete subjecthood, while he tries in vain to gain access to the Castle, where his indeterminate identity – interloper or guest? – will finally be validated. If K is a character who slips away

5. The Cape Coloured community resulted from the intermixture of Malay, native African, and Afrikaner stock. More pertinently, they represent for many South Africans, including it seems Coetzee, the only people who can convincingly claim descent from the Khoikhoi who originally inhabited the Cape. They are thus in some deep historical sense heirs to the land (at least in the Cape) in a way that Afrikaners and black Africans of Bantu descent are not (again, *pace* Coetzee, or at least “Coetzee” – see Coetzee 2009: 232). Of course, as nomadic people, the Khoi did not “own” land in any sense in which we now think of ownership.

from the forms in which he is represented, his very representation slyly encodes this slippage, indicating at the very least that the novel is partly about the problematics of representation and the production of the social being.

Social Contract and State Narrative

One way of understanding the split significance of K (as sign and referent, as an explicitly “literary” character who actively seeks to inhabit an anti-literary world) is as a dramatisation of the central conflict at the heart of the social contract – namely, that between the pre-social self and the socialised subject. In other words, the problem of literary representation comes to stand, in Coetzee’s text, for the problem of political representation.

Social contract theory is more properly described as a narrative, a story that retrospectively posits a pre-social human being and charts his course into society. The individual exchanges one series of benefits (e.g. physical freedom) for another (e.g. physical protection). Among other things, the social contract charts the making legible of the human individual. In Hobbes’s account, the most famous and influential, the compact, turns all men into subjects of a sovereign; using the language of theatre, Hobbes tells us these men now become “actors” on the public stage and “represent” themselves through “personae”. The private feelings and motives of the actor do not interest Hobbes, insofar as they have no immediate relation to what occurs on the public stage (presumably private experience can still be mediated and reach the public sphere in some reduced or disfigured form). Even those men “whose words and actions are their own” (i.e. who represent themselves in their own body and are not represented by another) still have to become a “person” – don a public mask – in order for those words and actions to be legible and socially meaningful.

The culmination of the “person” in Hobbes is the state itself: the multitude of the citizenry is unified in one immense virtual body, the state. This virtual person is held together with chains (civil laws) that are “fastened at one end to the lips of that man or assembly to whom they have given the sovereign power, and at the other to their [the subjects’] own ears” (Hobbes [1651]1994: 138). Where does the freedom of the subject lie for Hobbes? Only in those spaces between laws, those things the sovereign has omitted to legislate. Individual liberty (or individual constraint) falls outside the public sphere and is of no interest or inherent meaningfulness. In this regime of contractual representation, bodies are distinct from their signs (their personae), which attain value only within the community legitimated by the sovereign.

Thus at the very heart of the discourse on the state we find a notion of politics as an exclusionary mechanism, embodied in the notion of the person

as *persona*: a form of representation which in the very act of making the self legible as a political subject places this self within a set of contractual obligations, disciplinary behaviours, and structures of power. Foucault has described the particular technology of the contract as a method of turning an unwanted conquest (particularly apposite to the South African state) into a willing contract. “Hobbes turns war, the fact of war and the relationship of force that is actually manifested in the battle, into something that has nothing to do with war,” writes Foucault (2003: 97). The state’s painful and violent disciplining of the subject into particular forms of social behaviour is transformed by Hobbes into the drama of representation, in which the fundamental structures of the contract are taken for granted and “war” is transformed into “politics”.

While Hobbes’s model of the state still to a large extent underpins the modern understanding of the state, it has not been without critique. We could cite, first and foremost, Rousseau’s, in the *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men*. The social contract, for Rousseau, is not the *originator* and *guarantor* of society, as for Hobbes, but the *culmination* of society in its most degraded form, where a succession of progressive dependencies and inequalities have created a society so unstable as to require the powerful to placate a restive underclass by means of a wholly ideological construct, called “the social contract”. Rousseau’s project then becomes to sketch out this alternate myth of the origins of the state. Partly a reply to and rebuke of Hobbes, Rousseau’s fundamental intervention in the discourse on the state of nature is not so much that he sees man as “naturally good” but rather that he sees human nature as inherently blank, moulded by the conditions in which it exists.

Rousseau’s primary critique of Hobbes is that he applies to his analysis of man in the state of nature the features of the men he sees around him in society, rather than admitting that the passage into society has changed human beings in ways they are not aware of. To sketch his own view of the state of nature, Rousseau then posits a “natural” man: a man utterly uncorrupted by society. Rousseau’s Second Discourse is then troubled by the question of how one can imagine a being outside of culture and language from a position within culture and language.⁶ The “natural” savage is

6. Derrida is particularly attuned to this problem in Rousseau’s thought (see *Of Grammatology*, especially the section “... That Dangerous Supplement ...” (1976: 141-164)). Fredric Jameson usefully glosses the problem as follows:

To work our way back mentally to a situation that must have once existed ... requires us to postulate, either in language or in writing, a condition from which both of those “properties” are absent, something whose many incoherences and contradictions can at least be dramatized by this one: namely, the difficulty for a being who “possesses” speech/writing to imagine what their absence could possibly entail.

(Jameson 1991: 226)

solitary, temporarily bonding with others only in order to mate, neither good nor evil but endowed with a natural pity for the suffering of others. His long fall from his natural state turns on the key moment in which he begins to value the opinions of others over his own. The implications are existential: “the savage lives in himself; the man accustomed to the ways of society is always outside himself and knows how to live only in the opinion of others” (Rousseau [1754]1987: 81). The savage, motivated by *amour de soi* (love of self), pursues that which is necessary for his survival: food, shelter. The civil man, motivated by *amour propre* (self-regard), pursues that which aggrandises him, which improves his standing in relation to others: status, power, beauty. This does not necessarily mean that natural man is fully present or psychically unified (although he is certainly autonomous); rather, the need for presence and unity only becomes a problem in civil man, who, living in the gaze of others, forgets who he is, no longer understands the nature of his desires.

Natural man, according to Rousseau, is inherently satisfied (he has few passions and is self-sufficient); for this reason he does not progress through generations but remains a child (p. 51). In the civilising process, man unwittingly undergoes a series of alienations: most significantly a temporal one (devotion to the future rather than the present) and an existential one (his needs can no longer be satisfied by himself). Man’s primordial freedom has given way to his enslavement to unquenchable desires. Once man has become aware of his own alienation, it is already too late: having once bitten the hook, he is snared. Civil man has been tainted by his socialisation, and all yearning for natural states is essentially sentimental.

The Second Discourse is a narrative of a fall, in the mode of Genesis, juxtaposing the iniquities of the present with an ideal and inaccessible past. How does Rousseau imagine this natural man, who exists nowhere? Natural man is in the literal sense an ideal creation, drawn not from history but rather from speculation as to what must have been.⁷ He is in this sense a fiction, an ideal fiction held up against reality so as to highlight the shortcomings of man as he is. Rousseau reaches his natural savage by a process of projecting backwards, stripping away the accretions of society. If Hobbes’s world is a world of masks, Rousseau preaches an ethic (and aesthetic) of authenticity: the unveiling and revealing of the true self. Whether there might not be any such thing as a true self behind the mask is not a possibility Rousseau appears to entertain.

7. Note that in this respect natural man is different from *tribal* man, about whom ample anthropological evidence was available to Rousseau. On *natural* man, before the formation of society, Rousseau says: “I will suppose him to have been formed from all time as I see him today ... when I strip that being ... of all the artificial faculties he would have acquired only through long progress; when I consider him, in a word, as he must have left the hands of nature ...” ([1754]1987: 40).

One immediately notices the similarities with Coetzee's project, which I will not belabour unnecessarily. The most obvious thing we can say about the Rousseauian strain in *Life & Times* is that Michael K shares much with Rousseau's savage. K is in fact Rousseau's ideal savage – free of the desire for recognition or for foundation⁸ – living in a fallen civil world. This world, in which an oppressive government regime has declared a state of emergency in its efforts to contain an insurgency, and wide tracts of the country are essentially a lawless no-man's-land, approximates not the Rousseauian state of nature but the Hobbesian one, i.e., a state of war (which is where, for Rousseau, the unchecked development of civilisation ultimately leads). The state of emergency through which K travels should therefore not be read as the dissolution of the state, but as its apotheosis. Thus, unlike Rousseau's natural man, K is pulled by various social forces (including the interpretive desire of the reader)⁹ that effectively press him into making a representation: it is in the pull of these forces that he experiences a need to legitimate himself, to present a truth, a story. He is haunted by an insubstantiality, a "gap", that renders him untranslatable into the representational languages of society, of politics, of war. The extreme measures to which K goes to avoid inscription in any form of social order (refusing food while he lies emaciated in a hospital bed, for example) are not ultimately political reactions, or even mystical-religious abstinences, but instead, as Michael Moses has suggested, attempts to attain a state of reverie available only within the radical freedom of Rousseau's natural man (Moses 1994: 140).

But it is crucial to realise that Coetzee's text does more than present us with "natural man" trying to survive in a collapsed social world: it also covertly re-enacts the passage into society, in particular re-enacts the foundation of the modern state. It is in his moments of seemingly complete freedom from the social order that the demands of the social begin to make claims on him, and that K is paradoxically privy to the repressed and hidden existential terrain that underpins and precedes the creation of the state and its forms – the lack, the doubt, the absence, upon which are inaugurated the major projects of political modernity: the state and the modern subject. Indeed, one of the recurrent obsessions in this text is the act of foundation.

Because at first glance the narrative seems to have so little to do with the

8. Like natural man, he "peacefully awaits the stimulus of nature"; once his need is satisfied, the desire dies. It is his ignorance of vice that prevents him from doing evil, rather than a specific knowledge of and desire for the good. For a fuller reading of the Rousseauian elements in the novel, particularly in relation to Rousseau's own later writings, see Moses (1994) – a reading of the novel to which my own is deeply indebted.

9. Part of Coetzee's ploy is to conflate the state's gaze with the reader's. See Marais (1996) for a full reading of this aspect of the novel.

founding of nations and the creation of the state, one could say that it *defamiliarises* these things: the state appears as something strange and uncanny. K's narrative as a whole follows the archetype of what we could term the "narrative of foundation", in which the hero leaves a moribund or decaying society and sets off into uncharted territory to start a new line. The classic literary archetypes here are the *Aeniad* (Rita Barnard notes that K carrying his mother in a wheelbarrow echoes Aeneas carrying his father on his shoulders) and Exodus (since the narrative is also about trying to return to some primordial "home"). *Robinson Crusoe* is a variation on these elements (Crusoe reinstates the forms and rhythms of English life on the formless wilderness of his island), and it appears as a subtle shadow in *Life & Times*: K's building of his shack from the odds and ends of an abandoned farmhouse, the cultivation of his crops.¹⁰ K's narrative, while following the first movement of the narrative of foundation (escape, abandonment, shipwreck – the "epic" elements), does not allow itself to conclude the second part (foundation, establishment – the "pastoral" elements):

There was much else he could have taken to make life easier for himself: a grid, a cooking-pot, a folding chair, slabs of foam rubber, more of the feed-sacks. He scratched among the odds and ends in the shed and there was nothing for which he could not imagine a use. But he was wary of conveying the Visagies' rubbish to his home in the earth and setting himself on a trail that might lead to their misfortunes. The worst mistake, he told himself, would be to try to found a new house, a rival line, on his small beginnings out at the dam. Even his tools should be of wood and leather and gut, materials the insects would eat one day when he no longer needed them.

(Coetzee [1983]1984: 104)

The other narrative of foundation echoed here is more localised. The text traces in ghostly form the foundation of the modern South African state, or at least its historical mythologisation. K's journey to the interior via a wagon cobbled together from a wheelbarrow and a bicycle that carries his ailing mother is a stripped-down (and faintly parodic) echo of the *Voor-trekkers'* journey by ox-wagon through hostile country to stake out their own territory, their "promised land" free of British control in the heart of southern Africa. The heroic magnitude of this event as the pivotal and foundational moment within Afrikaner history cannot be overstated.¹¹

10. For more on the *Robinson Crusoe* analogies in the text, see Marais (2009: 38-42), Kossew (1996: 143-144), and Kaplan (2011: 154-155). Marais (2009) argues that Michael K moves from a possessive and instrumental relationship to the world, embodied by Crusoe, to a mimetic one.

11. The Great Trek, a migration of around 12 000 Afrikaners from the British-ruled Cape Colony into the interior to found what became the regions of The Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Natal, took place in the 1830s and '40s,

Furthermore, K's creation of a garden outside the abandoned farmhouse and his beginning of life as a "cultivator" links directly back to the garden laid out at the Cape of Good Hope by Jan van Riebeeck in 1652.¹² Van Riebeeck's garden, beginning as a refuelling station where sailors rounding the Cape could stock up on fresh produce, soon outgrew its bounds: inhabitants grew restless, freeburghers staked out claims on land outside the station, bit by bit a permanent colony formed. The garden, of course, has its most resonant echo in the biblical Garden of Eden. These two precursors of K's garden, one a prelapsarian state of nature in which a social contract is unnecessary and unthought of, and the other a founding element of what would become the modern state of South Africa, are both at play and in tension in K's garden (and gardening). (The term used by K, "cultivator", seems to contain both possibilities). This also turns on the distinction between garden and farm, the latter clearly legible as having social utility, the former more ambivalently valued as at best having the non-essential value of "cultural" space. (It is said that North America was thought to be empty space because the European colonisers thought the Native Americans did not farm – since it was the women who laboured, "farming" was assumed to be merely gardening.) Both of these significations are at play: the farm as a state form that is fully legible as a social tool; the Garden of Eden as a lost space of full presence (i.e. absence of desire, absence of politics) from which man has been banished. The world K inhabits is fallen, both in the biblical sense (man has to farm the land to make it flourish) and in the political sense (warfare). (Notably, in its suspension between utility and gratuitous indulgence, the garden also seems to be a symbol for writing itself).

Here, of course, the narrative of foundation intersects with the pastoral, a genre with which Coetzee has had a long engagement (his novel *In the Heart of the Country* is among other things a rewriting of the South African *plaasroman* (farm novel)). "At the centre of the mode," Coetzee has said,

and was motivated by discontent over British rule. Its role as the historical myth undergirding Afrikaner national identity is immense; it occupies a space not dissimilar to the exodus in Jewish history. Most historians agree that the major factors leading to this migration were the introduction, via the British, of capitalism, which threatened to destroy the traditional feudal structure of Afrikaner life, and the shortage of open land available to Boer settlement. (I have drawn my historical information from two general histories of South Africa, one by Thompson (2001), the other by Bundy and Saunders (1994)).

12. Van Riebeeck was not the first European at the Cape (he was preceded by the Portuguese), but under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company he was the first to found a permanent fortified settlement, including a garden whose aim was to provide fresh produce for vessels rounding the Cape. He governed the settlement from 1652 until 1662.

“lies the idea of the local solution. The pastoral isolates and defines a space in which whatever cannot be achieved in the wider world (particularly the city) can be achieved” (1992: 61). The pastoral as local solution finds its undoing in this novel in the unavoidable fact that there is no virgin, unclaimed land. The land K claims as his, it turns out, belongs to a family, the Visagies, whose grandson turns up and attempts to commandeer K as a manservant. Before it belonged to the Visagies, one can assume it had belonged to someone else (a black someone) who had been driven from the land to make way for the agrarian dream of the Afrikaner people to be given birth. This, indeed, is the story of the Great Trek, which, with its ambitions of founding an Afrikaner nation living in unity under God in an idyllic promised land, also runs aground when this land turns out not to be an empty Edenic expanse but populated by the Bantu tribes of the interior, who had to be bloodily subjugated before they found new roles as menservants working the Afrikaner fields.¹³ (If I seem to be eliding the role of the British in the founding of modern South Africa, it is only because the liberal mythology they created had little purchase on the national imagination during the apartheid era. While the actual formation of the state, and the violence demanded for this formation, were to a far greater extent the product of British imperial ambitions, the ideology and mythography of the late-20th-century nationalist republic stemmed very much from the Afrikaner tradition).

The garden then alludes to several foundational stories: of the South African colony, of the social contract, and of Judeo-Christian history (among others). It is also bound up with another overdetermined symbol, the earth: one thinks of “mother earth” and all its connotations, and especially of Heidegger’s strife between world and earth. This mythic strife imagines the creation of the human world through work, study, and use, as it continually emerges out of and is pulled back into that mysterious, unmasterable quantity that always exists outside of human history and human decision and that Heidegger names earth ([1971]2001: esp. 38-76). Heidegger’s grand opposition is apropos here, for K’s existence – apolitical, asocial, ahistorical – is placed in the midst of the terrain of society, the polis, and history. Again, one becomes aware of the distance between the particularity of K’s (meagre) garden and the expanse of the symbolism to which it alludes. For K, the garden is not an echo of Rousseau, of Eden, or of the Cape: it is just a space of land to grow food. Indeed, his presence to

13. The Voortrekkers created a myth that the highveld into which they trekked was empty, depopulated as a result of the *Mfecane* (the diaspora of Bantu people resulting from Shaka’s expansion of the Zulu kingdom). Historians have shown that the reconnaissance reports to this effect were quite unreliable, exaggerating the effects of the *Mfecane* and taking liberties with the sizes and locations of the unpopulated areas. Bantu tribes had occupied the interior of South Africa for at least 200 years before the arrival of the Boers.

some extent subverts and undoes the interpretive frameworks applied to him. If the garden and the Trek constituted the foundations of the *passage* to the modern South African state, K's tracings of them constitute instead a non-passage, or a stalled passage. K's garden is not – like Van Riebeeck's – used to feed people (it barely serves to nourish K). His dwelling (his "kennel") is deliberately built not to withstand time, to leave no trace.

K's thought and subjectivity follow a similar anti-foundational logic. Hence the trope of an abstract masculine, paternal line which runs through the text: authority, the law, which reproduces sameness and acts as the binding fabric of the state. Alongside it, in its shadow, runs the feminine, maternal line, which behind its seeming presence is always absent. "My father was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory," K thinks, "and my mother is buried and not yet risen" (Coetzee [1983]1984: 105):

He thought of his mother. She had asked him to bring her back to her birthplace and he had done so, though perhaps only by a trick of words. But what if this farm was not her true birthplace? Where were the stone walls of the wagonhouse she had spoken of? He made himself pay a daylight visit to the farmyard and to the cottages on the hillside and the rectangle of bare earth beside them. If my mother ever lived here I will surely know, he told himself. He closed his eyes and tried to recover in his imagination the mudbrick walls and reed roof of her stories, the garden of prickly pear, the chickens scampering for the feed scattered by the little barefoot girl. And behind that child, in the doorway, her face obscured by shadow, he searched for a second woman, the woman from whom his mother had come into the world. When my mother was dying in hospital, he thought, when she knew her end was coming, it was not me she looked to but someone who stood behind me: her mother or the ghost of her mother. To me she was a woman but to herself she was still a child calling to her mother to hold her hand and help her. And her own mother, in the secret life we do not see, was a child too. I come from a line of children without end.

He tried to imagine a figure standing alone at the head of the line, a woman in a shapeless grey dress who came from no mother; but when he had to think of the silence in which she lived, the absence of time before the beginning, his mind balked.

(Coetzee [1983]1984: 117)

What is not immediately apparent in this remarkable passage (which seems almost to arrest the temporal flow of the narrative and tear itself free from the rest of the text) is the extent to which it draws on and rewrites classic pieces of Western foundational thought. At one level it reproduces the first moment of the Kantian sublime – the collapse of the imagination as it contemplates something beyond its limits – while failing to enter into its second moment, or completion, in which the rational intellect compensates for this imaginative failure and consolidates the subject as an autonomous self (Kant [1790]2001: 128-150). At another level, it reproduces a classic

Rousseauian progression: it begins with the experience of lack/absence (the loss of the mother), and then by a series of substitutions/supplements (thought, imagination) it attempts to recover this absence – to bring about, as Derrida has it, the “reappropriation of presence” (1976: 144). For Rousseau, the loss of the mother is the primordial loss (the story of his *Confessions* is, among other things, the story of his attempt to replace the mother he lost at birth, to restore the “natural” mother-child relationship; in *Emile*, the child must leave the mother in order to begin his education by the state). It is this loss which education (*e-ducare*, not just to “lead out”, but to lead away from, to wean) both engenders and functions to substitute. The maternal becomes a figure for a lost original plenitude, a transcendental home. We could say that the compensation for this loss is what we call civil society: the systems of law, education, language, in which we find an alternate home. This is the realm of the father, who, as Derrida puts it in his commentary on Rousseau, becomes the institutionalised supplement within society that “forget[s] the vicariousness of its function and make[s] itself pass for plenitude” (Derrida 1976: 144). This logic, the substitution of the father for the lost mother, becomes the logic of the state.

K’s attempt to reappropriate the mother as presence ends by foundering on the fact that this presence did not exist to begin with: “To me she was a woman but to herself she was still a child calling to her mother to hold her hand and help her”. We know that from the start K’s primordial separation from the mother (his birth) is compounded by his cleft lip: “Anna K did not like the mouth that would not close” and, furthermore, K is separated from the maternal teet by his disfigurement: “The child could not suck from the breast and cried with hunger. She tried a bottle; when it could not suck from the bottle she fed it with a teaspoon” (Coetzee [1983]1984: 3). (K is also alienated from the supplemental father of the school, from which he is removed due to his slow mind – he is placed instead in a home where he is forced to perform rote tasks).

K’s radical separation becomes a space of freedom, but not a space of presence. The freedom revealed is one of doubt and loss, hovering between absence and presence, between the lost mother and the supplement of the father. This non-passage constitutes a kind of exposé of those narratives that structure themselves around passage: of state sovereignty, in its exposure of the absent void which the supplementary state form fills up (the passage from a natural state to a civil state); of the sovereignty of the autonomous subject, in its failure to complete the Kantian sublime (the passage from submission to intellectual self-mastery). Thus a critique of sovereignty is articulated here, both at the level of the state and of the individual, as a narrative based upon a repressing or a concealment of absence: to repeat Derrida, of the supplement which forgets the vicariousness of its function and makes itself pass for plenitude. If the mythic birth of the South African state is traced in ghostly form through K’s trek inland and his gardening,

then the birth of the modern subject is traced, and evaded, through K's negotiation of the absence of the mother.

The Politics of Evasion

The generalised loss of sovereignty found in the novel – of the state over its subjects, of the subjects over their bodies – is mirrored finally in the text's loss of sovereignty over K. K is first of all enigmatic, even to himself. We do not know, and it seems he does not know either, why he does certain things. He is troubled by what he perceives as a gap in himself: a gap in his story, a gap in his truth. Because he cannot reliably "read" himself, he seems to solicit readings from others. K's lack of legibility teases the reader: we expect to find the truth of K, as he does himself. Part of the condition of being present (metaphysically) and being represented (politically) is that one possesses (or performs) a coherent identity. In all theories of the state, one gives up a portion of one's self into the public domain. The individual is split between a public persona, which represents, and a private self. Not to represent, or to represent deviantly, is to fall outside the public realm of the state, or to be perceived as inimical to the state, or not to be perceived at all. What does Coetzee's refusal to grant K either an ontological or a textual plenitude signify? Why does he leave gaps in the text, motivations unexplained? One reading is that K's textual incompleteness is an indictment of a political regime that deprives its subjects of full political status. However, K, in a crucial scene, passes up the opportunity to join the insurgency, to take up arms against the oppressive regime and thus provide a model for political action. (It should be noted that in interviews Coetzee is careful not to endorse K's refusal.) The text overtly resists an explanation for this refusal: K dismisses the reason he first proffers (a perfectly good reason, in my view: that he must keep the idea of gardening alive) but cannot articulate the "real" one: "Always, when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding balked, into which it was useless to pour words" (p. 110).

Michael Marais (1996) argues that the gaps in Coetzee's texts are really enactments of resistance to the colonising gaze of the reader. I want to expand here on the political implications of Marais's highly suggestive observation, for K is doubly elusive in this sense: he is not only resistant to the reader's powers of knowing, but of his own. His inability to interpretively colonise himself makes him a problematic subject not only within the context of the South African state, but, potentially, for any future state. Through K's demurral to participate in the battle over sovereignty, Coetzee suggests a perspective from which the modern political order as such – with its struggles over who has power, who is included and who excluded, who is

represented and who not – is defamiliarised. It is not so much an unjust regime that is the problem here, but the very existence of a regime per se.

In an essay on *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Michael Valdez Moses draws a similar conclusion, arguing that the Magistrate's "repudiation of Empire implicitly rejects all political regimes, none of which may lay claim to a philosophically defensible conception of right", since the state can only "establish its claim to justice by discriminating itself, its form, from the Other which lies outside it" (Moses 1993: 123). *Life & Times of Michael K* takes the precarious utopian step of narrating from the perspective of an Other who is persistently able to elude or undermine those definitions placed upon him from within the state. The novel thus pits two utopias against one another: the concrete political project of the South African state with its pastoral-utopian ideological underpinnings, and the perpetually shifting and elusive utopia sought by Michael K. The novel's critique of state utopianism thus also becomes a form of self-denial, for it means that the novel cannot bring itself to fully realise its own utopian pastoral yearnings. The elusiveness of K's utopia thus seems aimed at protecting, for some as yet unimagined future, the utopian impulse harboured by the narrative from the kind of appropriation that has been diagnosed as lying behind the state, whose pastoral dream of plenitude is always-already slipping over into its hidden obverse, the Hobbesian logic of the contract.¹⁴

Clearly, the absence of a political regime does not solve all political problems: the arrival of the Visagie grandson – also on the run from the state – at the farmhouse does not result in the formation of a new utopian stateless community but instead in the reinstantiation of hierarchy and domination. At the end of the novel, one doesn't have higher hopes for the community K imagines he will form with the old man he imagines is living in his room, a non-reproductive community of the destitute on the now landmined farmland. Even this exists more as a utopian dream than a practical hope, and the novel gives no inkling that it might actually come to pass anywhere outside of K's imagination. In this case, we should understand the logic of the state, or at least the political relations it authorises, as having permeated the very fabric of society, including the literary text (the apparatus of the novel, the archetypal narrative desires for foundation that the novel reproduces and from which it tries to escape). This can be seen in the novel's final insistence on an inviolable element within the individual imagination, made with the desperate but imperious force of a condemned man who must flee or face the gun. We can then understand the text's

14. Theodor Adorno's discussion of utopian aesthetics also articulates this tension: "At the center of contemporary antinomies is that art must be and wants to be utopia, and the more utopia is blocked by the real functional order, the more this is true; yet at the same time art may not be utopia in order not to betray it by providing semblance and consolation" ([1970]1997: 32).

deliberate withholding of meaning as gesturing towards a place outside of itself – that is, the imagination, the interpretive acts, of its readers. With its gaps, mysteries, withholdings, Coetzee's text lays itself out before the reader, inviting consummation and the granting of meaning. Yet the consummation is always frustrated; like Friday in *Foe*, K conscripts his readers into spinning out endless webs of interpretation. The Coetzeean text refuses the possibility of its own utopian plenitude, insisting on remaining fundamentally unfillable.

Thus the perhaps surprising phenomenon of a text that seems to refuse to overtly set up its own literary sovereignty in rivalry with the state – the well-known rivalry proclaimed by Shelley, that the poets are the true legislators of the world – leads to a different payoff, a mechanics of contestation in which the text accrues power precisely by its evasion of rivalry. Why should Coetzee be so insistent, not only that his characters should fail to interpret, but that his work itself should evade definitive interpretation (or, what amounts to the same thing, provoke endless interpretation)? Here Coetzee seems to be raising a question about the status of the literary itself within the realm of the state, whose logic is that of definitive answers, transparent representations. One is reminded of C's investment in the resistant powers of language itself, in *Diary of A Bad Year*: "The masters of information have forgotten about poetry, where words may have a meaning quite different from what the lexicon says, where the metaphoric spark is always one leap ahead of the decoding function, where another, unforeseen reading is always possible" (Coetzee 2007: 23). It is not too much of a stretch to say that K, in his extreme *allusiveness*, as well as his elusiveness, in many ways comes to represent the contested fate of the literary itself in a political culture hostile to the hermetic, the ambiguous, the unclassifiable. "To strive for a systematic, supra-political discourse about politics is futile," writes C in *Diary of a Bad Year* (p. 9). Nothing in Coetzee's oeuvre seems to contradict this, yet, in its attempt to find a space from which to speak of the political stand outside of politics, *Life & Times of Michael K* can be read as a response, *avant la lettre*, to this lament.

References

- Adorno, Theodor
[1970]1997 *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio
1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony
1992 Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial? *Critical Enquiry* 17(2): 336-357.

- Attridge, Derek
 2004 *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- Barnard, Rita
 2007 *Apartheid and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 2008 "Tsotsis": On Law, the Outlaw, and the Postcolonial State. *Contemporary Literature* XLIX(4): 541-572.
- Bundy, Colin & Saunders, Christopher (eds)
 1994 *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa*. New York: Reader's Digest Association.
- Coetzee, J.M.
 [1980]1999 *Waiting for the Barbarians*. New York: Penguin.
 [1983]1984 *Life & Times of Michael K*. New York: Viking.
 [1988]2007 *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Pentz.
 1992 *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, edited by David Attwell. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
 2001 *Stranger Shores*. New York: Viking.
 2007 *Diary of a Bad Year*. London: Harvill Secker.
 2009 *Summertime*. London: Harvill Secker.
- Comaroff, John
 1998 *Reflections on the Colonial State, in South Africa and Elsewhere: Factions, Fragments, Facts, and Fictions*. Chicago, Illinois: American Bar Foundation.
- Comaroff, John & Comaroff, Jean
 2001 *Criminal Justice, Cultural Justice: The Limits of Liberalism and the Pragmatics of Difference in the New South Africa*. Chicago, Illinois: American Bar Foundation.
- Derrida, Jacques
 1976 *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Foucault, Michel
 2003 *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, translated by David Macey. New York: Picador.
- Gordimer, Nadine
 1998 The Idea of Gardening: *Life & Times of Michael K* by J.M. Coetzee. In: Kossew, Sue (ed.) *Critical Essays on J.M. Coetzee*. New York: Prentice Hall, pp. 139-144.
- Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio
 2000 *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Head, Dominic
 1997 *J.M. Coetzee*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin
 [1971]2001 The Origin of the Work of Art. In: *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper Perennial Classics.
- Hobbes, Thomas
 [1651]1994 *Leviathan*, edited by Edwin Cruley. Indianapolis: Hackett.

- Jameson, Fredric
1991 *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel
[1790]2001 *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, Brett Ashley
2011 *Landscapes of Holocaust Postmemory*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Kossew, Sue
1996 *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink*. Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi.
- Lear, Jonathan
2008 The Ethical Thought of J.M. Coetzee. *Raritan* 28(1): 68-97.
- Lukács, Georg
[1920]1971 *Theory of the Novel*, translated by Anna Bostock. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- McClure, John
1994 *Late Imperial Romance*. London: Verso.
- Marais, Michael
1996 The Hermeneutics of Empire. In: *Critical Perspectives on J.M. Coetzee*, edited by Graham Huggan & Stephen Watson. New York: St. Martin's, pp. 66-81.
2009 *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi.
- Moses, Michael Valdez
1993 The Mark of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. *The Kenyon Review* 15(1): 115-127.
1994 Solitary Walkers: Rousseau and Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93(1): 131-156.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
[1754]1987 *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, translated by Donald Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Said, Edward
2000 Reflections on Exile. In: *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Schiller, Friedrich
[1795]1985 On Naive and Sentimental Poetry. In Nesbit, H.B. (ed.) *German Aesthetics and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Suleri, Sara
1992 *The Rhetoric of English India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thompson, Leonard
2001 *A History of South Africa*. 3rd edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Timothy Wright
timothy.sean.wright@gmail.com
Duke University, Durham, US