GEOGRAPHY OF LONELINESS: THE POLITICS OF DETERRITORIALISATION IN THE APARTHEID WRITINGS OF NADINE GORDIMER AND J. M. COETZEE

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Abstract

This thesis explores Nadine Gordimer's and J. M. Coetzee's political consciousness as it is represented in the narrative embodiment of the separation-based condition of politicised loneliness, and as it is recognised and established in the representation of and investment in the counter politics of deterritorialisation. My research looks to the theoretical frameworks of Hannah Arendt's understanding of loneliness to devise an alternative way of thinking about and looking at the problems of apartheid in terms of political spatiality, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of deterritorialisation to construct new approaches to the political and spatial impasse set up by the apartheid regime. Interchangeably, these two theoretical frameworks allow for wider possibilities of understanding about the spatiality of politics in apartheid South Africa.

A selection of apartheid writings by Gordimer and Coetzee will be studied, including Gordimer's *A World of Strangers*, *The Conservationist*, *July's People*, and *A Sport of Nature*, and Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life & Times of Michael K*, and *Age of Iron*. These two writers are linked through their particular investment on the questions of political responsibility and spatiality. Under three intersecting social relations, from which the two novelists' ideas of political spatiality emerge, the chapters are organised: the first two chapters are dedicated to the discussion of the spatial relation between the personal and the political, the next two chapters address the central question of spatiality as it is understood in the relation between the personal and the spatial, and the last chapter deals specifically with the interpersonalised realm of desire.

The key findings of this thesis are that the condition of political limitedness under the apartheid regime can be understood in the context of politicised loneliness through three main intersecting social relations, that negates the possibility of establishing a viable connection between the personal and the political, the spatial and the apartheid-induced racial Other. As a counter politics, deterritorialisation opens up social forms of spatial interaction and involvement that are grounded in the language of political variability, spatial mobility, and interpersonal connectedness.

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Introduction

'Men are not born brothers; they have to discover each other, and it is this discovery that apartheid seeks to prevent,' thus Gordimer begins 'Apartheid,' a short, non-fiction piece on the condition of life under the apartheid regime, and possibilities as well as risks of interracial friendship and relationship in South Africa.[1] 'To discover each other', as Gordimer puts it, is intrinsic in all human beings in a given social environment. The urge to connect, and the longing for contact form that basic spatial interaction between individual subjects. However, as it is apparent here in the quoted lines and the history of apartheid South Africa, free interactions and connections were prevented by the country's geopolitics of segregation. In this respect, my thesis is a study of the social construct of that geopolitical disconnection and racial segregation. This social construct, which the following discussion will unpack, is called politicised loneliness. This is a site-specific condition that is brought about by apartheid's prevention of the 'discovery'. Together with the study of politicised loneliness, the thesis examines the counter politics of deterritorialisation, and the accompanying, spatial forms of contacts and interactions. Discussion will be drawn from two of South Africa's most internationally recognised writers, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee. The central focus will be placed on these two authors' apartheid fictions, which were written from the period of the 1950s to the 1990s.

A Brief History of Apartheid

To begin the discussion of apartheid in South Africa, it is critical that I look into the history of racial segregation in the country. Following the rise to power of the National Party in 1948, apartheid as an institutionalised policy was embraced and enforced in South

[1] Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: Writing and Living, 1954-2008* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 62-70.

Africa.[2] As institutionalised policy, apartheid demarcated, categorised, and separated the social body. Most notable were the Population Registration Act of 1950 which categorised the South African subjects into four distinct groups on the model of races (White, Black, Indian, and Coloured), The Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 which rendered any interracial marriage or relationship a punishable crime, and The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 that legalised the separation through a systematic segregation of public premises, vehicles and services.[3] In addition, to enforce social distancing between races, the apartheid government enacted several apartheid laws which were specifically meant to punctuate the spatial limits of races in South Africa.[4] Considered as an extended version of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act, 1946, the Group Areas Act, 1950, for instance, sought to legally designate certain urban areas to be for the exclusive occupation and ownership by specific racial groups.

The 1950 Act was several years later repealed and re-enacted twice in 1957 and 1966, before it was indelibly rescinded in 1991 by the Abolition Racially Based Land Measures Act. The purpose of the Group Areas Act, according to Dr T. E Donges, the National Party's Minister of the Interior, cited by Uma Mesthrie, would be 'the preservation of any particular area from further penetration by one group or another.'[5] He further justified the rules of the Act in June 1950, stating that

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[2] The rhetoric of apartheid was present even before the 1948 general election of the National Party. Certain causes that provided contexts for the development of apartheid and its subsequent institutionalised policy include the internal political conflicts within the country between the white ruling party and the black dissidents, the massive population migrations beginning from the 1930s to the 1940s, and the economic and social expansion in the 1940s. For more detailed discussion, see: Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel, eds, *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1993); Howard Brotz, *The Politics of South Africa: Democracy and Racial Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); and Bill Freund, 'South Africa: The Union Years, 1910-1948 – Political and Economic Foundations', in *The Cambridge History of South Africa 1985-1994*, vol. 2, ed. by Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 211-53.

[3] Thompson, pp. 190-200.

[4] Phillip Bonner studies the territorial segregation and its effect on the South African society and the black populations in 'South African Society and Culture, 1910-1948', in *The Cambridge History of South Africa 1985-1994*, vol. 2, ed. by Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 254-318. See in particular pp. 254-263. Bonner traces the territorial segregation from the introduction of the Natives' Land Act of 1913, and describes how the subsequent land management of the apartheid government evolved, p. 256.

[5] Uma Mesthrie, 'Tinkering and Tampering: A Decade of the Group Areas Act (1950-1960', *South African Historical Journal* 28:1 (1993), pp. 177-202 (pp. 179-80).

> And the first problem we had to face here was to prevent any further deterioration in the existing position. We had to see to it that the mixed areas which have grown, which have continued in the past years, will not be allowed to continue further; that there shall not be any deterioration as far as that aspect of the question is concerned and, therefore, the Bill provides for the idea of a controlled area which comes into operation as soon as the Bill is applied to any particular part of South Africa.[6]

According to Donges, the spatial and social separations enforced by these laws were essential in an effort to 'prevent any further deterioration' of the white social body. Deborah Posel similarly notes that 'Apartheid, therefore, was never an exterminationist project […] On the contrary, one of the abiding imperatives of apartheid was to keep (most) black people alive, albeit under the conditions of perpetual servitude and submission, so as to keep the structures of white supremacy intact'.[7] The introduction of 'a controlled area' thus marked the quintessential spatial as well as interracial limitations that embodied the apartheid ideological imperatives.

According to Timothy Francis Strode, apartheid is 'an ethos of propriety, one whose "'texture" and force derive from a particularly virulent form of bounded dwelling.'[8] Central in the characteristics of apartheid propriety is, as Strode further elaborates, the power and centrality of whites to control the physical landscape as well as social forms of contact and involvement between groups of different races, institutionally classified in the Population Registration Act of 1950. The very idea of 'a controlled area' resonates well with Strode's understanding of South Africa under the apartheid regime as 'bounded dwelling'. The idea is predicated too heavily on the notion of separation and rigid mobility in terms of social, political and interracial interactions.

The implementation of Donges's idea of 'a controlled area' is most evident according to John Western in the spatial arrangement of two segregated cities: Cape Town

[6] Edgar H. Brookes, *Apartheid: A Documentary Study of Modern South Africa (*London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 138.
[7] Deborah Posel, 'The Apartheid Project, 1948-1970' in *The Cambridge History of South Africa 1985-1994*, vol. 2, ed. by Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 319-68 (p. 322).
[8] Timothy Francis Strode, *The Ethics of Exile: Colonialism in the Fictions of Charles Brockden Brown and J. M. Coetzee* (New York, Routledge, 2005), p. 135.

and Durban. The following passage gives a specific example of South Africa's spatial planning:

> A residential zone should: (a) have boundaries which should as far as possible constitute barriers of a kind preventing or discouraging contact between races in neighboring residential zones; (b) have direct access to working areas and to such amenities as are used by all races, so that its residents do not have to traverse the residential areas of another race, or do so only by rail or by way of a common highway segregated from the residential areas abutting it...[9]

Together with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, 1949, The Immorality Amendment Act, 1950, the Population Registration Act, 1950, The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, 1953, and the Group Areas Acts 1950, the idea and implementation of 'a controlled area' constitute, in Michel Foucault's words, 'a compact model of disciplinary mechanism' of a panoptic society.[10] To view South Africa under the apartheid regime as a country in panopticism, I shall argue that under the apartheid registrations concerning both the political and social limits of races in South Africa, whose geographic and social topographies come close to resemble a bounded, segmented, and enclosed space, the country is a state-wide prison. Its populace, whether that be black, coloured, Indian, or, in some situations, white when they are deemed a threat to the state, becomes inmates, to be 'inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised and policed, in which all events are recorded...'[11]

However, it is never just a question of land control, of how land is distributed to each race, or how a certain race is kept in certain allotted areas under strictly repressive laws and geopolitical discourse. It is essentially the question of spatiality, of not being able to reach forwards and to cross over, to create changes, whether that be political, interpersonal or spatial. The term 'spatiality', used here, is borrowed from Doreen B. Massey's works. It encapsulates the kind of spatial perception and embodiment of

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[9] John Western, *Outcaste Cape Town (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p 88.

[10] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison),* trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 197. For a detailed discussion on the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950), see William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1994), particularly chapter 6. These two legislations 'prohibited marriage and extramarital sex across racial boundaries […]', p. 141. Beinart also notes that 'Legal controls in this sphere partly reflected a desire for social discipline of whites who strayed from the fold', p. 141.

[11] Ibid, p. 197.

intersecting social relations.[12] That is, the term provides a conceptual framework to understand the question of space the thesis aims to examine as a vast 'product of interrelations' between different realms and areas of life under a given social environment.[13] In the context of apartheid, the question of spatiality that is deeply rooted in relationships between races, between the human and the land people seek to manage, and, above all, between individual subjects and the political world.

Politicised Loneliness

The form of separation and social distancing enacted through spatial rearrangement and social control of face-to-face involvement and interpersonal relationship between groups of different racial classifications is instrumental in shaping and perpetuating the apartheid government to move forward. Yet, instead of preventing the erosion of white structures and ownership of the country's landscape, it produces a quasi-solipsistic prison of frightening loneliness that forces the self to exist in virtual isolation from the others, regardless of races. To understand what loneliness under discussion in the thesis is, it is important to discern loneliness as, first and foremost, an affective condition. That is, loneliness is an affective condition of relations; it arises out of the needs to be recognised and be part of something or someone. That condition is predicated on relations between two or more than two subject entities. Lars Svendsen writes that 'lonely people fear a lack of connection to others, and therefore look for signs of failure in their relationships, which in turn undermines their connections to others, additionally reinforcing loneliness'.[14] What Svendsen means by this is that loneliness individualises a human subject, and, thus, draws a self back into one's self, rendering all ties to others or things that surround them, at worst, cut, or, at best, made insignificant and superficial.

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[12] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994). See also Massey's other works, 'Politics and Space-Time', in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London: Routledge, 1993) pp. 139-59; 'Spaces of Politics', in *Human Geography Today*, ed. by Doreen B. Massey, John Allen, and Phillip Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999) pp. 279-94.
[13] Massey, 'Space of Politics', (p. 279).
[14] Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness* (London: Reaktion, 2017), p. 23. See also, Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2012).

From an affective condition, loneliness has been contextualised in a political discourse of totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (first published in 1951), Arendt states that loneliness is 'the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man'.[15] Drawing on Arendt's definition of loneliness, Thomas Dumm aptly agrees that loneliness is 'the experience of the pathos of disappearance.'[16] By the term 'disappearance,' Dumm includes the disappearance or loss 'of self, world, experience, and thought.'[17] While Dumm does not fail to acknowledge the positive sides of loneliness in his linking the experience of loneliness to the experience of skepticism, he states that 'At its worst, loneliness is a denial of the possibility of a politics of becoming.'[18] From these two similarly positioned perspectives on loneliness, the experience in question can be seen to be operating from a much larger than interpersonal and affective context of relations. To Arendt, it is the experience of 'not belonging to the world at all'. Dumm himself elaborates the specific condition of loneliness, writing that loneliness is an experience of total abandonment. That experience includes the loss of 'self, world, experience, and thought'. Studying apartheid's prevention of 'discovery' through the regime's institutionalised policy of segregation on various terms of life, the thesis, therefore, treats loneliness similarly to Arendt and Dumm, as an experience of total abandonment, which is delineated by the absence of meaningful interpersonal relationship and connection, as well as the loss of spatial and political rootedness.

As pointed out earlier, the experience of loneliness is an experience of loss in a context larger than the interpersonal realm of life, where loneliness becomes a social construct that is utilised for a political purpose. As Arendt claims, the 'organised loneliness' is truly 'the essence of totalitarian government.'[19] A state under such a limited political possibility cultivates, so to speak, loneliness among its citizens in order to perpetuate its governance. The question then arises: how does the experience of loneliness become a recognised condition that resonates deeply within the political realm of action?

[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 624.
[16] Thomas Dumm, *Loneliness as a Way of Living* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 34.
[17] Ibid, p. 45.
[18] Ibid, p. 38.
[19] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 628, 612.

Interestingly, the construction of 'organised loneliness' is, following Arendt's claim, a result of rigid, spatial management. The following quotation describes the nature of spatial management that engenders the experience of loneliness under a totalitarian regime:

> While isolation concerns only the political realm of life, loneliness concerns human life as a whole. Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capabilities. But totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys the private life as well.[20]

There are two key points of interest to unpack from this quotation. Firstly, Arendt connects the experience of loneliness to the governmental management and control of space. From this quotation, it is possible to discern the graphic depiction of space control under a totalitarian regime. There are public and private spaces present under Arendt's assessment. These two spaces are destroyed by a totalitarian government. It is then worth noting that by destroying the public as well as the private spaces, a totalitarian government destroys the distinction of spatial formation in a given social environment, resulting in the emergence of one whole space of control. As any socially visible distinction between the two realms is destroyed, the individual's spatial relations to the social and the public life, and to the personal and private realm are also destroyed.

Secondly, the control of space is related to the notion of political capabilities of social subjects in a given society. In this respect, through the destruction of the distinction between the private and the public realms of life, a totalitarian government isolates individual subjects both from their own interpersonalised privacy of life and, above all, their political capabilities since there is no private and public spaces present under a totalitarian regime. The disappearance of both spaces marks Arendt's notion of organised loneliness and the terror of the ideological and social practices of totalitarianism. Loneliness thus becomes that encompassing experience of loss that 'concerns human life as a whole'. It is an experience not limited itself to the personal and the private. It is an experience not regulated purely on the political ground of individual, political capabilities. It is an experience of loss, of total abandonment, in which individual subjects are

[20] Ibid., p. 624.

disconnected from all their personal, interpersonal and political capabilities. When such spatial contact to the private and public spaces is not a possibility under a totalitarian regime, loneliness as a form of politicised as well as affective experience articulates the sense of isolation and the disappearance of self in relations to *the other*.

According to Arendt, for a totalitarian regime to make progress, citizens of such a society must be held in check and rendered docile. The destruction of the public and private space serves that purpose. Such society will at once become 'the protected place of disciplinary monotony'.[21] As a result of spatial management and the control of the social body, loneliness becomes the experience of total abandonment wherein individual inhabitants in a totalitarian state are caught in the uniquely prison-like condition of stillness. Under such a condition, loneliness can be described as an experience of being abandoned by everything and everybody. It is a negation of life or, to put it differently, a state of being in its extreme condition of existential solipsism.

Yet, while Arendt sees loneliness as a result of a breakdown of the distinctions between the public and the private realms, my analysis of Coetzee's and Gordimer's selected apartheid fictions will suggest a more nuanced reading of how the apartheid regime in South Africa produces and cultivates the experience of loneliness among its populace. And, this is perhaps what sets the operation of space in South Africa under the apartheid regime apart from Arendt’s case study of a totalitarian state. Broadly speaking, both the erasure of the public/private distinction, and the widening gap and distinction between races evident in spatial rearrangement and land allocation are two distinct phenomena in South Africa under the operation of the apartheid system. Each phenomenon operates in two separate but, sometimes, overlapping spheres. Like the operation of a state prison, the former is implemented to ensure free spatial mobility for state officials to inspect and control its citizens, while the latter is required to enforce the limits of spatial movement on individual subjects. The administration of body and place as disciplinary mechanism become an essential violent means of control under the governance of the apartheid regime on all races in South Africa.

[21] Foucault, p. 141.

In his study of what a short story is and is not, Frank O'Connor relates the voice of loneliness to the 'submerged population groups'.[22] By the term 'submerged population groups', O'Connor refers to both the creators of short stories as well as the characters living in those short narrative forms. They are 'whatever these may be at any given time – tramps, artists, lonely idealist, dreamers, and spoiled priest'.[23] What is noteworthy from O'Connor's influential work on the short story as an art form is how O'Connor frames the experience and agony of loneliness as a short story particularity that is 'attracted by submerged population groups', in the way that they articulate an ideological difference.[24] O'Connor further elaborates what he means by ideological difference in the novel and the short story: 'The novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilised society, of man as an animal who lives in a community [...] but the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community – romantic, individualistic, and intransigent'.[25] To build upon O'Connor's critical perspective on the ideological difference between short story and novel, the thesis posits that both Gordimer's and Coetzee's literary works, despite being primarily written in the form of a novel, embody the voice of the lonely in an ideological position that is remote from the civilised community. That is, as the two authors' works depict the separation-based spatiality of apartheid, loneliness rendered in those texts, regardless of forms, is a prominent experience that is cultivated as an experience of loss, and disappearance of *contacts*. In this sense, all of their fictions cultivate some of the effects that O'Connor attributes specifically to the short story.[26]

Whereas O'Connor describes the experience of the submerged population groups to be ideologically different as a consequence of their remote position from the civilised world, the thesis takes into consideration three key aspects of apartheid laws in order to understand the nature of politicised loneliness under the South African context. While the economic can be seen as one of the primary grounds on which apartheid as an

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[22] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of Short Story* (London: Macmillian, 1963), p. 20.
[23] Ibid., pp. 20-1
[24] Ibid., p. 20.
[25] Ibid., pp. 20-1.
[26] It should also be noted short stories as a narrative form has provided the creative space for many Black and 'Coloured' writers during the apartheid era. The thesis shall present, alongside an in-depth reading of novels, an analysis of Gordimer's short stories to attest to how the writer carves a space of cultural resistance in the narrative space of the short story. See Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), in which he discusses the short story form in the long history of cultural resistance to apartheid.

institutionalised policy was molded and reinforced, there are three essential aspects of interactions that apartheid laws seek to control to strengthen and perpetuate its governance: the interaction among different groups of races, the actual management of physical landscape, and the control of political space.[27] Among several that have been seen as essential to an understanding of apartheid, the political, the spatial, and the interracial/sensual are chosen as the focus of the thesis in order to unpack the distinct characteristics and operations of politicised loneliness as a site-specific condition as opposed to the concept of loneliness set up by O'Connor. Dealing specifically with the contexts of the political, the spatial, and the interracial, the thesis contextualises loneliness as a condition that concerns human life as whole. In chapters that follow, these three contexts of social interactions also provide important grounds for a further investigation and analysis of Gordimer's and Coetzee's counter politics to racial segregation.

Politicised loneliness and the loss of contacts can thus be understood in these three contexts of spatiality: the political, the spatial, and the interracial/sensual. Within these specific contextualisations, politicised loneliness comes to be an articulation of an individualised inability to engage with not only the political world by establishing relationship with the public space, but an inability also to fully engage with the land they live in, and with the racial Other, whether this is on a strictly interpersonalised context or in a specifically sexualised manner.

Deleuzoguattarian Concept of Deterritorialisation

Using the political understanding of loneliness put forward by Arendt and Dumm as the experience of total abandonment, this thesis charts a new way of reading Gordimer's and Coetzee's representation of apartheid experience and its geopolitical codes of

[27] As a virulent form of racial ideology and practice, apartheid was molded as a result of processes of the economic and capitalism. Processes of migrancy and urbansisation, in particular, are the key historical events that engendered a myriad of public and private struggles between different groups of races in South Africa. Many of apartheid's policies and laws, including those that are grouped under the contexts of the political, the spatial, and the interracial, grew out of the state's responses to the concurrent history of industrialisation and urbanisation. For more detailed discussion on the ideologies of racial segregation and the shift in racial domination in South Africa, see the work of Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, and Deborah Posel, eds, *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*.

separation. Under these terms of understanding, both as politicised and affective conditions, the thesis presents not only how the conditions of apartheid can be understood in the language of loneliness, but also how the question of political consciousness in Gordimer's and Coetzee's apartheid writings can be recognised as primarily invested in the ideas of loneliness and the *deterritorialisation* of loneliness. This is where the concept of deterritorialisation comes into play. As Gordimer and Coetzee recreate, so to speak, the consciousness of apartheid by emphasising the sense of politicised loneliness in the separation between the self and three different areas of spatiality as earlier stated, those conditions of loneliness are undermined by the two authors' geopolitical approaches of deterritorialisation, that offer, roughly speaking, a geopolitical effort to remap, or even to erode, the apartheid regime's rigid construction and mediation of politicised loneliness and its separation-based spatial relations.

In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's collaborative works, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, territorialisation and deterritorialisation form a key conceptual framework that plays through their thoughts in a wide range of fields. As a conceptual framework which draws on the metaphor of territory, the terms territorialisation and deterritorialisation emphasise, respectively, processes that organise and systematise social space, and processes that disrupt sets of social codes, divorcing the sign from its previous signification, and reorienting established social codes toward a new domain of signification.[28] The concepts of territorialisation (norming/making) and deterritorialisation (unmaking/decoding) form two important axes in a given social order. These two axes, understood in a social environment, create an extraordinary social complexity. Under these two axes, 'social space', in Christa Albrecht-Crane's words, 'is suffused by two different kinds of forces: forces that order social space, and forces that escape that ordering'.[29]

The usage of the terms, territorialisation' and deterritorialisation, presents a potential problem that arises out of the encounter between the post-structuralist thinking of Deleuze and Guattari and the South African context. While the terms are critical materialist

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[28] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983); and *A Thousand Plateau: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[29] Christa Albrecht-Crane, 'Style, stutter', *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. by Charles J. Stivale (Chesham: Acumen, 2005), p. 122.

analysis of the social relations outside of South Africa, they present themselves as equally critical to the understanding of South Africa's spatial management and social relations between groups of different racial communities in the country. While in certain contexts of discussion the term racial segregation will be used in order to underscore the general depiction and understanding of racial struggle and division in South Africa, the term 'territorialisation', in particular, is used to emphasise Deleuze and Guattari's concept of systemisation and organisation that expresses an appropriated claim, and, thus, has a distinct territorial function in a similar way Ronald Bogue argues in his discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of birdsong.[30] According to Bogue, territorailsation as a term emphasises a state of orderly organisation that speaks of a given territory. It is a term that creates an array of spatial significations under certain social and territorial codes. What is territorial and becomes territorialised under the South African context of apartheid is, therefore, a particular construction of spatial and territorial power and engagement that is not only expressive of social and spatial relations of South Africa under the repressive regime of apartheid, but is also representative of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the interactive complexity of territorial forces – territorialisation and deterritorialisation that are inherent in a given social environment.

According to Mark Bonta and John Protevi, deterritorialisation, on the other hand, refers to: 'the always complex process by which bodies leave a territorial assemblage following lines of flight that are constitutive of that assemblage and 'reterritorialise', that is, form new assemblages'.[31] Jan Aart Scholte particularly understands deterritorialisation as a process of respatialisation, a process which he further claims to be in opposition to the concepts of territorialism and nationalism.[32] This notion of deterritorialisation additionally constitutes the Deleuzoguattarian dialectics that includes the forces of territorialisation, deterritorialisation, and reterritorialisation. To elaborate, in this dialectical relation, territorialisation is presented as thesis/norming, deterritorialisation is the antithesis/unmaking, and reterritorialisation is the synthesis/becoming. Within a given

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[30] Ronald Bogue, 'Minority, Territory, Music', *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, ed. by Jean Khalfa (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 114-32.
[31] Mark Bonta, and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophiosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 78. See also, John Tomlinson, *Globalisation and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), particularly chapter 4.
[32] Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

social environment, these three processes form the relationality that disrupts and transforms the space in question. The relationality, contradiction, and confrontation between the three forces are, hence, critical in spatial and social transformation, which will result in the production of a different spatial unit/order.

Putting the concept of territorial dialectic to the history of apartheid, it is possible to discern how the dialectical force fails to materialise due to the apartheid government's rigid control of its space and populace. To sanction its territorialising codes of social and racial segregation, the apartheid regime territorialised South Africa. Through the act of territorialisation, the apartheid government did not simply occupy space or the physical geography of South Africa; it instead created a particular type of territory or territorial assemblage that had a specific claim and was expressive of the power relations and relations of political forces immanent in South Africa. Through the three contexts of apartheid legislations on land, race, and politics, apartheid government created territorial South Africa, a territorial space of political comfort for whites. This image of territorial South Africa, achieved through the arrangement of lands and South African subjects, is not a pre-existing space; it is however a forced condition of racial segregation enacted to ensure the apartheid government's sustained continuity.

While the term is often employed, outside of Deleuze and Guattari's seminal works, to denote a transnational politics, cultural hybridisation, and supraterritorial connectivity in the international context of globalisation, the thesis applies the appropriated concept of deterritorialisation to its study of Coetzee's and Gordimer's space of loneliness in the context of South African geopolitics of segregation. As a counter geopolitics, deterritorialisation renegotiates, attacks, and decodes the apartheid regime's control over space and the population situated in that space by means of remapping, rewriting, and penetrating established geopolitical codes of power. Through such means, deterritorialisation removes obstructions to spatial mobility and creates conditions in which connections and relationships beyond racial and political boundaries in South Africa become possible. In Gil-Manuel Hernàndez i Martí's words, deterritorialisation entails that 'social forms of contact and involvement which go beyond the limits of a specific territory', and thus transforming how space is experienced, affecting how perceptions of closeness

and distance, inside and outside, private and public, black and white, are perceived and experienced in apartheid South Africa.[33]

By focusing on the explorations of loneliness as a site-specific condition of political limitedness, and deterritorialisaiton as a counter geopolitics, in spatial terms of relations, my thesis differs from previous research that has read Gordimer and Coetzee on the question of political responsibility. The critical premise of political consciousness embedded in the scholarship of both Gordimer and Coetzee is a much-debated ground. One central question that has governed this scholarship is: Are these two writers politically conscious writers? – how are their political consciousness in relation to the historical and political demands of apartheid South Africa understood in their literary works? Quite clear, the question is a straightforward one when applied to Gordimer's body of literary works. Due to Gordimer's representations of historically and politically situated events in South Africa, most scholars see Gordimer as a politically and historically committed writer. Despite the fact that Gordimer's early criticism has suggested a line of separation between the public and the private, her political consciousness is never questioned by her critics. On the subject of tensions between the private and the public, Robert F Haugh, for instance, states that Gordimer's short stories are more heavily about private relationship, whereas her novels show the author's increased attention to the political world.[34] From this critical assessment of seemingly separated realms between the private and the public, John Cooke notes that the private space is often presented as an enabling space of action that produces the state of personalised progress and intervention to the public sphere, where a much more detached, objective vision of the political reality is consolidated.[35] On the general question of Gordimer's political responsibility, Michael Wade's work validates Gordimer's political commitment by offering a survey of the writer's political ideas across her novels.[36] Similarly, Stephen Clingman's seminal work presents a historically-based discussion of

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[33] Gil-Manuel Hernandez i Marti, 'The Deterritorialization of Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Modernity', *Journal of Contemporary Culture*, 1 (2006), 92-3.
[34] Robert F. Haugh, *Nadine Gordimer* (New York: Twayne, 1974).
[35] John Cooke, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: Private Lives/Public Landscapes* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985)
[36] Michael Wade, *Nadine Gordimer* (London: Evans Brothers, 1978).

the development of Gordimer's political thought.[37] Noting the difficulty of integrating the two seemingly separated realms in his critical focus of the personal and the physical as the primary realm of expression, Andrew Vogel Ettin sees Gordimer's political consciousness as inseparably related to the personal.[38] Studying intertextuality in Gordimer's fiction, Dominic Head argues that 'the development of Gordimer's work is characterised by an increasing literariness and stress on textuality'.[39] The claim emphasises the fusion of European literary tradition and African culture as 'a working out of the politics of textuality and, consequently as an appropriate way for Gordimer to define how her fictions offer their intervention'.[40] Similarly, Louise Yelin contends that Gordimer's works are 'narratives of nationality' in the way that they emphasise the strategic movements between the 'colonial and formerly colonial "margins" and metropolitan "centre", and between national and transnational affiliations'.[41]

In contrast to Gordimer's explicit and immediate expression of and approach to political responsibility in her fiction, Coetzee has been generally viewed as not as politically committed as Gordimer. Clingman states in his discussion of Gordimer's historicism that 'Gordimer's work has always been tied much more urgently than Coetzee's to the idea of political obligation and responsibility'.[42] However, there are some scholarly attempts to position the writings and reading of Coetzee in the political consciousness of South Africa under the apartheid regime. One of Coetzee's early critics, David Attwell helps to establish Coetzee's political seriousness by revealing the extent of his engagement with the specificities of South African political culture, claiming that Coetzee's novels are 'situational metafiction'.[43] On that note, Laura Wright states that 'Coetzee's novels never exclude this historical reality from which they are drawn; instead, Coetzee's rhetorical choices simply deny that there is merely one way to tell any story, including the stories of

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[37] Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993).
[38] Andrew Vogel Ettin, *Betrayals of the Body Politics: The Literary Commitments of Nadine Gordimer* (Charlotteville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).
[39] Dominic Head, *Nadine Gordimer* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), p. xii.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Louise Yelin, *From the Margins of Empire: Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 12.
[42] Ibid., p. xiii.
[43] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 17.

colonisation, apartheid, and democracy in South Africa'.[44] Similarly noting Coetzee's textual elusiveness, Hania Nashef contends that Coetzee's writings are 'autonomous' texts that '[open] the possibility of inexhaustible deductions rather than being merely didactic'.[45] There are some readings of Coetzee's works that resist the critical temptation to directly engage Coetzee's literariness in the political immediacy of South Africa, but which do not explicitly abandon any political tie Coetzee's works may have established in their discursive practices. Discussing the literary reception of Coetzee's works in terms of their historical and political engagement, Head, for instance, writes: 'Coetzee works on the principle that the novel should not supplement history, but establish a position of rivalry with it'.[46] Exploring the complex relationship between politics and the ethics of reading, Derek Attridge also argues that 'The importance of Coetzee's books […] lies not only in their extraordinary ability to […] move intensely with their depictions of cruelty, suffering, longing, and love, to give pleasure even when they dispirit and disturb, but also in the way they raise and illuminate questions of immense practical importance to all of us. These include the relation between ethical demands and political decisions, the human cost of artistic creation, […] and the difficulty of doing justice to others in a violent society'.[47] Looking at the formal experimentation of Coetzee's texts, Patrick Hayes notes that 'there is nothing regressive or depoliticsing about Coetzee's abiding concern with genre or prose style, nor with the concept of literariness […] my central argument is that Coetzee's writing should be understood in the broadest terms as an attempt to move beyond a long discursive tradition, […] which attempts to position literary value, or literary truth, or most generally "culture", as superior to, or even transcendent of politics'.[48]

My work is not to justify the political consciousness of both writers, however. The thesis aims to understand the positions of Gordimer and Coetzee on the subject of political commitment in the language of spatiality. My thesis simply asks this question: how can Gordimer's and Coetzee's political consciousness be understood in spatial terms of

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[44] Laura Wright, *Writing 'Out of All the Camps': J. M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement*, ed. by William E. Cain (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.
[45] Hania A. M. Nashef, *The Politics of Humiliation in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.
[46] Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), p. x.
[47] Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee & The Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. x.
[48] Patrick Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2010), p. 3.

intersecting social relations? There are some scholarly works that addresses the question of space and landscape in both Gordimer's and Coetzee's apartheid writings; however, the discussion on that subject is not contextualised in terms of political spatiality or spatial relations to the politics.[49] My thesis, therefore, seeks to explore and understand Gordimer's and Coetzee's political consciousness as it is represented in the narrative embodiment of separation-based condition of politicised loneliness, and as it is recognised and established in their fictions' representation of and investment in the counter politics of deterritorialisation. As political consciousness is understood in the explicit and immediate approach of Gordimer, and in the implicit and distant approach of Coetzee, the thesis tackles these two distinct approaches and examines the intricate nature of how Gordimer and Coetzee spatially establish their political voices and consciousness. That is, when stating that Gordimer's political responsibility is depicted in the language of historical and political immediacy, the questions arise: in which relational contexts does that political responsibility transpire? What are the two poles of intersecting relations in which such an immediate connection comes to be? Is it merely the novels and the political reality that form such a connection? Or is it specifically how the area of the personal is immersed into the language of politics? These questions can also be asked in relation to Coetzee's writings. And, the answer to these questions would be 'no'. There are more than just one or two contexts of spatiality that are at play in both Gordimer's and Coetzee's works, contexts that establish their respective, firmly-grounded approaches to politics.

To explore the question of political responsibility of Gordimer and Coetzee in the spatialised language of loneliness and deterritorialisation, I focus my discussion on the following pieces of literary works. In Gordimer's case, the novels that will be the primary focus in chapter 1 are *A World of Strangers* (1958), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), and two of her short stories, 'Some Monday for Sure' and 'A Chip of Grass Ruby' from the

[49] For some note-worthy discussion of place and land-based questions on Gordimer's works, see Kathrin Wagner, *Rereading Nadine Gordimer* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1994); on Coetzee's fiction, see Timothy Francis Strode, *The Ethics of Exile: Colonialism in the Fictions of Charles Brockden Brown and J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by William E. Cain (New York: Routledge, 2005), and Rita Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

collection, *Not for Publication* (1965). These works are selected because they are best representatives of how Gordimer establishes her early political thinking in the relational context of space, that is, strictly speaking, regulated on the relationship between the personal and the political. They show early signs of how loneliness is understood in spatial terms as well as how the idea of deterritorialisation materialises and evolves in the process of creating the deterritorialised space of connection and spatial engagement. Two novels and two short stories are chosen to discuss Gordimer's political consciousness as it is contextualised in the relations between the personal and the landscape in chapter 4: *The Conservationist* (1974) and *July's People* (1981), and 'The Termitary' and 'The Life of the Imagination' from *A Soldier Embrace* (1980). These works are chosen to depict Gordimer's preoccupations with both the constructed imagery of space and the actual physicality of landscape in South Africa. Chapter 5 uses *A Sport of Nature* (1987), and the stories like 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' and 'Teraloyna' from *Jump and Other Stories* (1991) as a case study. Both *A Sport of Nature* and *My Son's Story* (1990) depict similar themes of interracial sexuality that is of particular interest in the chapter's discussion. However, *A Sport of Nature* stretches the narrative boundary of political thinking as understood in the context of interracial relationship, and shows how Gordimer's political thought not only revolves around the notion of interracial relationship, but also how the notion is deterritorialised and reterritorialised to the point of delivering the encompassing boundary/space of life as a whole. The two short stories are chosen to complement the discussion of those constituencies by South African designation termed 'coloured' and the idea of political engagement at the time.

In the discussion of Coetzee's works, chapter 2 focuses its critical claim on the reading of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). Out of all three early novels by Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* can be said to be the most accomplished in terms of its delivery at the level of discursivity. And, for that reason, the novel is chosen as the primary text of discussion, in which the space of the text itself becomes that emerging body that characterises Coetzee's distant approach to politics in his very unique – spatial and discursive – production of political relations. Chapter 3 uses Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) as a case study in a comparative chapter whose major concern is the relationship between the personal and the spatial. *Life & Times of Michael K* is a fitting

choice for this purpose as this novel depicts a complex interaction between human and land in the way that a novel from the same period like *Foe* (1986) does not. For chapter 5, which, as previously mentioned, investigates Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* in the spatial contexts of relations between races, Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990) is also considered to provide a relevant depiction of the sensual as well as the deviant representation of sexual encounters that embody the political discourse of the late 1980s and the early 1990s in South Africa.

The remainder of this introduction outlines specific arguments that are central in each chapter's discussion of the question of political consciousness understood in the three different areas of spatial relations – the political, the spatial, the interracial. In chapter 1, 'Deterritorialising Politics: Rhizomatic Resistance in Gordimer's Fiction of the 1950s – the 1960s', I discuss the experience of politicised loneliness as understood in the relational context of the personal and the political. Politicised loneliness is established in Gordimer's writings of the period as that individualised experience of inability to engage with the political world. I subsequently provide a reading of Gordimer's novels to emphasise the ideas of 'interbeing' and rhizomatic resistance – an interconnected web of political possibility and engagement.[50] Such proximate interaction with politics becomes a dominant feature that defines Gordimer's spatial consciousness during the early phase of her writing career. This absolute level of immediacy and proximity, as a result, establishes a new spatial boundary of the social body and the political realm, which in turn undermines apartheid's problematic politics of racial segregation, as well as engenders a myriad of fluid and flexible, spatial movements: one that is defined by the state of emergence 'above' the subject at the level of the social and the political; and another that is characterised by the movement 'below' the social, in a multiplicity of subjects/agents whose individualised capacities and properties to engage/disrupt varied social systems are highlighted.

In Chapter 2, 'Deterritorialising Language: Discursive Anarchism in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*', I discuss the similar condition of loneliness to that examined in chapter 1. However, by focusing on the discussion on Coetzee's discursive practice, the idea and mediation of politicised loneliness in *Waiting for the Barbarians* can be seen to

[50] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 26. Deleuze and Gauttari utilise the term interbeing to underscore the ideological position of middleness as they address the complex understanding of the rhizome. In this regard, the term interbeing is employed in this thesis as a particular subject position that connects with and responds to the myriad possibilities and capabilities of life.

stem from the repressive language of reduction. The chapter then discusses Coetzee's distant position in his approach to the political world. The relationship between the personal and the political, in contrast to that shown in chapter 1, is embedded in the distant deterritorialisation of the language of reduction through Coetzee's narrative display of discursive anarchism. The notion of anarchism identifies a dispersing, and disordering of language, resulting in an endless proliferation and multiplicity of historical/political *meaninglessness*. Through discursive anarchism, the individual subject's political capability can be achieved without coming into close contact with the political world.

Chapter 3, 'Deterritorialising the Landscape of Power: Nomadism in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*', discusses the experience of politicised loneliness as it is understood in the relational context between the personal and the landscape. Textual evidence will be drawn mainly from *Life & Times of Michael K* to substantiate a moment of politicised loneliness as that condition of political impasse, resulting from a character's limited relations to the land he or she occupies. I then read the novel with a particular interest in the protagonist's nomadic movement. Looking at how deterritorialisation operates from the context of nomadism, I see nomadic movement, an intervention in Coetzee's distant disruption of apartheid's geopolitics of segregation, as a precondition of Coetzee's spatial consciousness in the 1970s. This movement involves a consciousness that is not experienced as rooted and fixed, but rather in a constant state of awayness, of subversive and transgressive mobility, of nomadism, defined in basic terms by its distance and exclusion from the dominant realms of the politics.

In Chapter 4, 'Deterritorialising Referentiality: Nonhumanism in Gordimer's *The Conservationist* and *July's People*', I explore the condition of loneliness from a similar context to that set out in chapter 3. Here, however, the experience of loneliness in Gordimer's works is depicted to be heavily dependent on the idea of spatial control and land management from a white perspective, highlighting, in the process, the illusion of spatial nearness. The chapter subsequently examines the politics of deterritorialisation as Gordimer's novels reposition the referential system, whereby the nonhuman is at the centre of geopolitical power. The term nonhuman refers to what is essentially, culturally, and politically *outside* and *beyond* the privileged realm and status of the autonomous white subject and subjectivity constituted under the apartheid regime's geopolitics of

segregation. The term 'nonhumanism' is additionally used to connote an ideological opposition to the notion of landed humanism, whereby the idea of human beings as the source of referential order is undermined. As a result, Gordimer's texts demonstrate a spatial consciousness that is defined by its proximate interaction between the human and the nonhuman worlds, emphasising the singularity of landscape, human experiences of emplacement, the relation of people to places, and the ethics of human enmeshment within an agentic material world. The spatial interaction that is expressed from this nonhumanist position of referentiality is not just a position of close contact, but that of an overlapping territory wherein both the human and the landscape are a mutual composition, forming a deeper state of spatial existence.

Chapter 5, 'Deterritorialising Desire: Rainbowism in Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* and Coetzee's *Age of Iron*', examines the two novels and a short story collection, *Jump and Other Stories* (1991), in relation to the subject of territorial desire. Consequently, the experience of loneliness explored in this chapter is one that is mediated within the interpersonal context of black and white relationships. Politicised loneliness comes to embody here that politicised inability to reach beyond the racial line for a deeper and racially inclusive connection. The chapter thus treats deterritorialisation operating on the interpersonal level as a response to the problem of racial segregation affected on the social body. The chapter looks at an alternative form of social contact and involvement between individual subjects, which goes beyond the limits of a specific territory and the apartheid politics of interracial relationship. The idea of rainbowism therefore is used to connote the antiracial inclusivism. It is upon this new vision of interracial communion that a new political order should be established.

Addressing antiracial inclusivism as a politically emancipatory argument prevalent at the time of writing in her representation of deterritorialised desire and sexual interactions between black and white, Gordimer's spatial consciousness is significantly marked by an explicit and proximate interaction between black and white, both in the personal and political realms of life. In Coetzee's texts, a more complex, spatial interaction is discerned. That is, desire in *Age of Iron* emerges from an interpersonalised context, which does not resolutely lead to sexual intimacy. The novel's deep reflection on sexual intimacy, as well as its generalisation of desire, ultimately forms a narrative pull between two conflicting

forces that moves in opposite directions. In Deleuzoguattarian terms, Gordimer's projection of desire is *productive*, while Coetzee's rendering of it is *disjunctive*. Both perceptions of desire constitute the overall artistic perspectives on the notion of rainbowism as a politically emancipatory ideology at the turn of the decade. Comparatively speaking, productive desire sheds light on Gordimer's firm belief in proximate and close contact as a gesture towards her attitude to the spatial formation of South African politics after the end of apartheid. Disjunctive desire, on the other hand, embodies Coetzee's elusiveness, in terms of his vision of the future of South Africa. In other words, disjunctive desire articulates the conflicting pull between the urge to embrace the new spatial interaction between races, as well as the persistent effort to remain distant and noncommittal in establishing the new racial order as the foundation of the future of South Africa.

Chapter 1

Deterritorialising Politics: Rhizomatic Resistance in Gordimer's Fiction of the 1950s – the 1960s

As the introduction demonstrates, politicised loneliness is a condition in which the political capability of individual subjects is nullified due to a severe separation between the political and the personal realms of life under the apartheid regime's geopolitical code of racial segregation. In Nadine Gordimer's short fiction of the 1950s and the 1960s, narratives of politicised loneliness are shown to have, broadly speaking, two representational layers. Firstly, there are narratives which deal specifically with politicised loneliness with pointed emphasis on the notion of space and how space is managed and controlled, metaphorically as well as literally, as an important element which reinforces the idea of politicised loneliness itself. In these narratives, portrayals of interpersonal loneliness and the illusion of 'nearness' are overlaid by the larger question of political capability. Secondly, there are narratives which takes on the question of politicised loneliness as it is understood as a restrictively, mono-spatially centred condition that prevents a meaningful relation and connection between the self and the public world. This second set of narratives is of particular interest in the present discussion of the chapter. The inquiry that follows will therefore explore how the two realms of the personal/private and the public/political interact within specific literary texts – Gordimer's short fiction, *Not for Publication* (1965), and her longer works, particularly, *A World of Strangers* (1958), and *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966). Reading the representations of as well as the interplay between the political and the personal, this chapter claims that Gordimer's spatial consciousness, established early on in the fiction of the 1950s – the 1960s as a counter consciousness to the apartheid consciousness of geopolitical segregation and politicised

loneliness, is characterised by a rhizomatic resistance, with a pointed emphasis on the proximate as well as acentred relations between the political and the personal.

The key concept which helps to facilitate a reading of such a political position of rhizomatic resistance in Gordimer's fiction is Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome. The two philosophers write:

> Let us summarise the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states … It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overspills.'[1]

To explain the picture of the social and modern politics, Deleuze and Guattari invoke that image of the rhizome, which branches out sideways and connects with any other point, without a recognisable source or centre. The image of the rhizome mentioned above matches well with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of supple segmentarity which highlights the degree, flow, and flexibility of movements and social entities. They further assert that the rhizome 'has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*'.[2] Applying the idea of the rhizome to the study of Gordimer's investment on the divide between the political and the personal, I contend that as the rhizome is conceptualised as a critical position in which there is no visible end or beginning and as something which 'is always in the middle', Gordimer's invested idea of political responsibility is characterised by that rhizomatic resistance of middleness/interbeing. This notion helps to situate individual subjects and their political capability in their very 'middle' position between the end points of the political and the personal realms of life. This 'middle' or rhizomatic position creates a way of thinking and rendering the subject, who, under the apartheid construction of politicised loneliness, would have remained mono-spatially centred, as the 'interbeing', in a 'supple', acentred relation between the private/personal and the political/public spheres.

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[1] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 21.
[2] Ibid., p. 26

The problem of politicised loneliness as a condition predominantly resulting from apartheid's mono-spatially centred relations between the personal and the political is one of the major preoccupations of Gordimer's works in the early period. It is the primary problem which has been set up to be solved by Gordimer's second novel, *A World of Strangers*. The following discussion begins with the rendering of such a mono-spatially centred relation between the personal and the political in her second novel, to be supported and extended by an analysis of the said condition elsewhere in Gordimer's shorter works of the period. After the discussion of Gordimer's portrayal of politicised loneliness, the chapter will present a reading of how that condition of political limitedness is shown to be resolved by discussing Gordimer's deterritorialised condition of political consciousness which is grounded in the ideas of the rhizome and acentred interbeing.

As a prime example of Gordimer's novels which explores the question of politicised loneliness, *A World of Strangers* tells the story of Toby Hood, who comes to work in Johannesburg as a representative of his family's publishing company, and his friendship with a young African named Steven Sithole. The novel is told from the first-person perspective of Toby, who, despite his friendships with other South Africans, regards himself as 'a stranger among people who were strangers to each other'.[3] The textual perception of the 'world of strangers' as Toby understands South Africa to be is a foregrounding element which is set up at the outset of the novel and which the novel itself seeks to dissolve. The key context in which such an understanding of himself as a stranger among strangers is a result of how Toby sees and positions himself in relation to others in Johannesburg. And it is this self-positioning of Toby that *A World of Strangers* comes to approach the divide between the personal and the political in South Africa. First and foremost, the 'world of strangers' as Toby understands it is a world inhabited by 'two kinds of people':

> [...] I've always thought that there are two kinds of people, people with public lives, and people with private lives. The people with public lives are concerned with a collective fate, the private livers with an individual one. But – roughly, since the Kaiser's war, I suppose – the private livers have become hunted people. Hunted and defamed. You must join. You must be Communist or Anti-Communist,

[3] Gordimer, *A World of Strangers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p. 168.

> Nationalist or Kaffirboetie' – she [Anna] smiled at my pronunciation – you must protest, defy, non-cooperate. And all these things you *must* do; you can't leave it all in the infinitely more capable hands of the public livers.[4]

The above quotation is taken from a dialogue between Toby and Anna Louw, a socialist who provides legal support for black South Africans. In this interchange, the two parties discuss the idea of political responsibility. As recounted in the quotation above, there are two kinds of people: the public and private livers. These two groups of people who function in life differently; the worlds of those are thus considered two separated worlds. Toby sees himself as the private liver who shuns the politics. He repeatedly voices his indifference to the politics by expressing his distaste at the thought of how the private livers like himself are being 'hunted and defamed' just because they want to live outside the political realm of life. From this perspective, *A World of Strangers* portrays Toby as an individual subject who lives and navigates his own life as well as his relations to others in, strictly speaking, a mono-spatially centred context of the personal: 'I [Toby] want to live! I want to see people who interest me and amuse me, black, white, or any colour. I want to take care of my own relationships with men and women who come into my life, and let the abstractions of race and politics go hang. I want to live! And to hell with you all!'[5]

The convoluted intensity of this assessment of the world Toby lives in suggests something of a strongly marked inscription of apartheid's fundamental divide between the personal and the political, in its effort to maintain power and make progress, as rightly noted by Andrew Vogel Ettin, 'Apartheid codifies out oppressive tendencies to separate to segregate, contain, and dominate'.[6] If we follow Toby's humanist and liberal position as he attempts to articulate it to Anna, it can be discerned that the lives of the private livers are in fact the lives of the humanist liberals. To Toby, such a humanist and liberal position is in and of itself an indirect rebellion against 'the old white civilisation at its own games':

> 'My dear Anna, you're so wrong, too. The private liver, the selfish man, the shirker, as you think him – he's a rebel. He's a rebel against rebellion. One the side, he's got a private revolution of his own; it's waged for himself, but quite a lot of other

[4] Ibid., p.122.
[5] Ibid., p. 36.
[6] Ettin, p. 7.

> people may benefit. I think that about Steven. He won't troop along with your Congress, or get himself arrested in the public library, but, in spite of everything the white man does to knock the spirit out of him, he remains very much alive – getting drunk, getting in debt, running his insurance racket. Learning all the shady tricks, so that, in the end, he can beat dear old white civilisation at its own games […]'.[7]

The passage is an ironic restatement of humanist liberalism, an ideology which champions the particular intervention in the name of safeguarding the moral and humanist welfare of the individual. Although Toby perceives that such a humanist and individualist intervention may be thought as being 'waged for' 'quite a lot of other people' too, the very notion of liberal humanism that he articulates at this very moment does reinforce the politically restricted capability of such an individual to generate any meaningful or real political action. That is, the political agency of a liberal humanist cannot be fully justified when the ideological basis of such a subject position still bases itself on the problematic, apartheid-induced divide between the personal and the political.

To counteract and juxtapose such a position of Toby's ideological stance, *A World of Strangers* offers Anna who represents the ideological opposite of the public livers. The opposition of the private and the public worlds are thus rendered in the languages of liberalism as represented in this novel in the character of Toby, and the political activism as represented in the character of Anna. This conflicting confrontation and opposition between the two ideological forces are crucial to the thematic development of the novel. While the humanist position of Toby privileges the individual and personal consciousness and autonomy of the self as the *political* means of action, Anna presents the other emphasis on the collective and public consciousness as the origin of material and social forces. Such a confrontation between the two positions charts the intellectual and historical scene in South Africa at the time, in which the discourse of liberalism resurfaces in the public consciousness.

Reading *A World of Strangers* within the pertinent discourse of humanist liberalism in the 1950s and the early 1960s, Stephen Clingman contends that the novel's depiction of interpersonal commitment evident in Toby's friendship with Steven and other black

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[7] Ibid., p. 123.

Africans in the townships is Gordimer's counter politics which is designed to undermine 'the extraordinary division of South African society' or to 'bridge the gap' between the black and white worlds.[8] Despite situating the novel in the political ideology of humanist commitment and inter-racial transcendence, Clingman argues that Gordimer charts 'a wider historical contradiction within South African liberalism itself' in the way that *A World of Strangers* presents a particular trace of ideological skepticism deep within the novel's exploration of liberalism, most evident in how the depth of Toby's humanist conviction is questioned.[9] Building on Clingman's historical reading of Toby's friendship with Steven including Toby's spatial movement in and out of the townships, the chapter contends that *A World of Strangers* presents a particular claim of politicised loneliness in its very textual depiction of humanist commitment and interracial relationship. Within such a presentation of interracial and humanistic context, Toby's friendship with Steven is and remains, until the very end of the novel, within an intensely interpersonalised level. Despite the fact that his friendship with Steven slowly introduces him into a recognition of the meaning of 'apartheid' and South Africa as the 'world of strangers', Toby's friendship with the young African, to put it differently, is Gordimer's attempt to depict the mono-spatially centred subjectivity of Toby's. That is to say, his friendship with Steven does not go beyond the limits of the personal realm of life, preventing Toby from being fully immersed in the context in which Steven's life has been constantly limited and subjugated under the apartheid regime. As such, *A World of Strangers* does not, as it seems, bridge the gap between the private and public realms of life, but articulates the impossibility of reaching any political action as the self remains buried deep within the border of its own personal space.

The character of Anna and how she views Toby's humanist stance as being 'romantic' is *A World of Strangers*' attempt to gesture towards the existing divide between the political and the personal humanist liberalism creates, in a similar manner to the way in which the apartheid government promotes a territorialising geopolitics to prevent any political form of agency from its populace. Thus, the mono-spatially centred subjectivity of Toby is called in to question in its very own insistence on distancing itself from politics,

[8] Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, p. 57.
[9] Ibid., p. 58.

as well in its so-called political agency, limited to a strictly experiential and interpersonalised context. This mono-spatially centred subjectivity of Toby results in the acute sense of politicised loneliness often experienced by Toby in his paradoxically proximate encounters with various groups of characters in the text. In considering the humanistic and interracial commitment of Toby in his friendship with Steven as primarily Gordimer's exploration of the idea of politicised loneliness as a condition in which an individual subject is kept grounded and apart from his potential, political capability, the personal realm of life takes on the meaning of the politically non-subversive in opposition to the public realm which is taken to be the site of politically subversive. No matter how politically subversive or nonsubversive the two worlds are represented, the divide between them persists.

In Gordimer's *Not for Publication*, the idea of the personal as the site of the politically non-subversive is tackled to reveal how such a mono-spatially centred being and subjectivity of an individual subject could prevent one's self from being able to venture into the political world. In 'Some Monday for Sure', for instance, Gordimer presents the confrontation and opposition of voices and forces, one being politically committed and the other being politically apathetic. This characteristic duality is a noted technique in the short story, which here orders the text's representation of Emma as being a subject residing in the site of the domestic, the politically non-subversive, and Willie (Emma's brother and the narrator of the story) and Josias (Emma's husband) as subjects residing in the realm of the public, the politically subversive. The following interchange is taken from the end of their early conversation of the political sabotage plot in which the men intend to blow up a train:

> 'What must you say? Why? They can get my statement from me when they find us [Josias and his team] tied up. In the night I'll be back here myself'.
>
> 'Oh yes', she [Emma] said, scraping the mealie meal he [Josias] hadn't eaten back into the pot. She did everything as usual; she wanted to show us nothing was going to wait because of this big thing, she must wash the dishes and put ash on the fire. 'You'll be back, oh yes. – Are you going to sit here all night, Willie? – Oh yes, you'll be back'.

> And then, I think, for a moment Josias saw himself dead, too; he didn't answer when I took my cap and said, so long, from the door.[10]

The above conversation takes place while they are having dinner. The scene presents the tension emerging from the confrontation between the two forces. Against the pull of the individual over the political imperatives represented in this scene in her husband Josias, and Willie, Emma remains in the politically non-subversive realm of the personal/the domestic, in her insistence upon tending to her domestic duties in order to show the men that 'nothing was going to wait because of this big thing'.

A similar depiction of such mono-spatially bounded subjectivity can also be found in Gordimer's depiction of Mr Bamjee in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' from the same short story collection. Looking specifically at the opening scene of 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', we can discern the narrator of the story as a character whose being is bounded by the domestic space of the home:

> When the duplicating machine was brought into the house, Bamjee said, 'Isn't it enough that you've got the Indians' troubles on your back?' Mrs Bamjee said, with a smile that showed the gap of a missing tooth but was confident all the same, 'What's the difference, Yusuf? We've all got the same troubles'.[11]

The story opens with the image of the duplicating machine that Mrs Bamjee has 'bought into the house' in order for her to produce copies of political pamphlets and leaflets. At one level, Mr Bamjee is displeased with Mrs Bamjee's involvement with the anti-apartheid cause. The presence of the duplicating machine in his own house is both an actual reminder of his wife's political commitment as well as a reinforcement of how the domestic and personal life of his family has been intruded upon by the political action of the outside world. Gordimer's representation of Mr Bamjee presents a similar portrayal to those of Emma in 'Some Monday for Sure' and Toby in *A World of Strangers*, who insist on seeing two groups of people performing and functioning differently and, thus, having the two, private and public worlds separated. As a domestically centred subject, Mr Bamjee is represented as grounded and bounded, metaphorically speaking, in his own house. The domestic setting of the story where all the action takes place illustrates that limiting

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[10] Gordimer, *Not for Publication* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), p. 197.
[11] Ibid., p. 104.

condition of space in which Mr Bamjee is confined, and in which his political aspiration and concern do not materialise. The story's insistence not to move its setting outside of Mr Bamjee's most personal space directly reinforces that notion of a spatially centred subjectivity and Mr Bamjee's inability to understand his wife's political commitment.

'A Chip of Glass Ruby' adds another layer of textual complication to Gordimer's critique of the spatially bounded subjectivity. Looking back at the quotation in the previous paragraph, it is noted that what Mr Bamjee could be considering as rightfully belonging to his domestic realm is one which is racially dependent. That is to say, Mr Bamjee's rejection of Mrs Bamjee's political involvement may have nothing to do with her political engagement per se. Rather, it is Mrs Bamjee's political involvement in an anti-apartheid movement that seeks to help black Africans fight against the apartheid regime that upsets Mr Bamjee: 'When the duplicating machine was brought into the house, Bamjee said, "Isn't it enough that you've got the Indians' troubles on your back?"'. The implication is that Mr Bamjee does not acknowledge the troubles black Africans are facing as his own, and, therefore, resents the intrusion of this political fight into the personal space of his house. If we strictly follow Mr Bamjee's speech here, he is intimating that his personal and domestic space is a site that should be kept for the troubles of his own race: Indian. This is slightly different from what we see in Gordimer's critiques in *A World of Strangers* and 'Some Monday for Sure'. However, by seeing himself as ethnically and racially different from the black Africans and not regarding the troubles black Africans have as his own, Mr Bamjee in his racially and spatially bounded self can be said to be an extension of what South Africa is conceived to be under the apartheid regime of segregation. Therefore, in this racially centred and spatially bounded depiction of Mr Bamjee, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' constructs a particular perception of the domestic and the personal as essentially politically non-subversive as it seeks to be politically active for one particular race and not the other.

From the ideological divide between the personal and the public realms of life raised in *A World of Strangers* and 'Some Monday for Sure' to the spatially and racially centred subjectivity of Mr Bamjee in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', Gordimer reinforces the notion of loneliness which is predominantly registered in the spatially centred subjects' inability to imagine a life outside their own, personal space, and, hence fail to engage in any meaningful political action. Politicised loneliness is then conceived as a condition

emerging from that domestically bounded space and, later, developing into an impersonal condition of political incapability. In 'Some Monday for Sure', such a projection of spatially bounded subjectivity is evident in the story's representation of Emma's final, mental breakdown. At this final moment in the narrative, Emma and her brother, Willie, have relocated to a foreign town as a result of Josias's political involvement. Being displaced from her own home, and the domestic security of having all members of her family present with her, Emma is put into a context of loneliness, which is first and foremost understood in relations to her complete rejection of life around her. The following quotation describes the moment in which Emma is mentally shattered:

> She [Emma] shakes her head slowly, over and over, and I know she's going to cry again. 'A place where there's no one. I get up and look out the window and it's just like I'm not awake. And every day, every day. I can't ever wake up and be out of it. I always see this town'.[12]

Being torn between the longing for domestic peace, and the political tie that she inadvertently establishes through her relationship with her husband and her younger brother, Emma is seen in the scene quoted above as being confined within her personal longing to the point that she is unable to establish any meaningful relationship with anyone around her, and to the extent that she regards the town as completely empty of human beings. The scene above shows that sense of loss and loneliness, understood in the contexts between Emma and the new town, and between Emma and Willie, respectively.

From such an interpersonalised context of relations, 'Some Monday for Sure' quickly develops its narrative dramatisation of loneliness into a subtle interrogation of political responsibility. First, loneliness is represented as being a condition strictly tied to the idea of mono-spatially centred subjectivity, in which the disconnection and distance between characters, and between characters and the town they live in are highlighted. Implicit in the scene quoted above as well as what comes after that, the question of loneliness becomes immersed in the context of the political. The story achieves this by drawing attention to Emma's inability to engage even with Willie who is physically *near* her. As 'Some Monday for Sure' juxtaposes two separated subjectivities of Emma and Willie, the story connects Emma's loneliness to the context of her political indifference.

[12] Ibid., p. 207.

That is, because of her inability to engage actively with the political realm of life, a realm in which her husband and her brother are committed, she is found to be unable to envision a world outside of the town she perceives to be 'empty'. Within that moment of mental breakdown, Emma is locked up in the impasse of politicised loneliness that separates her, not only from her brother who is spatially and physically near her, but also from her chance for political liberation and to be 'out of [town]'.

From the presentation of the domestically/privately centred subjectivity of Toby, Emma, and Mr Bamjee, we see politicised loneliness as the condition of how one individual is confined within the restrictively personalised perception of life and relation to others. The usual attempt to resolve such a condition of politicised loneliness is therefore to move such domestically/privately centred subjects from the realm they formerly reside in to the realm of the collective good, into the public space of political capability. However, such movement from the personal to the public realms of life presents itself as counter-productive in the way that it also gestures towards the very division and separation between the public and personal realms endorsed by the apartheid regime. Evidence of this can be found in 'Some Monday for Sure'. In this short story, the characters of Josias and Willie are depicted as being ideologically antithetical to Emma. By the virtue of their political enthusiasm and commitment, both male characters are representations of the politically centred subject, who remains throughout the course of the story outside and excluded from the realm in which Emma situates herself. In an attempt to critique the political consciousness which is foregrounded primarily in political capability and ambition, Gordimer draws the reader's attention to the palpable distance between Emma, and Josias and Willie. This distance is reflected and repeatedly reinforced through the story's use of first-person narration.[13] To illustrate, the story is told from Willie's first-person narration. In this form of narrative focalisation, Willie is spatially limited to observations of proximal

[13] The concept of focalisation is defined by Gérard Genette in 1972 as a restriction imposed on the information provided by a narrator about his observations and characters. There are three types of focalisation according to Genette: zero, internal, and external. These forms of focalisation is based on a degree of access to the psychology of the characters in a story. A non-focalisation or zero focalisation means that a narrator is unrestricted psychologically and spatially in his or her access to the characters. Internal focalisation gives a narrator full access to the psychology of the focal character and he or she is spatially limited. External focalisation involves a spatial limitation but a narrator in this form of focalisation is temporally unrestricted. See Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

objects and encounters that surrounds him. While such a narrative technique may seemingly suggest Willie's close connection and relationship to the characters like his sister Emma, 'Some Monday for Sure' alternates its story line between what is spatially near Willie, and what is temporally distant from him. This particular technique of external focalisation, which focuses on the temporal freedom and the spatial limitedness of the narrator, is deployed in 'Some Monday for Sure' to the extent that it creates a bewildering condition of illusion in which Willie and the political world he comes to represent is projected to be physically near Emma, and yet, temporally not within her reach. The following quotation gives an account of one of Willie's political dreams which, in essence, interrupts the actual observation and narration of his proximal experience with his family members:

> One day I [Willie] suppose I'll remember it and tell my wife I stayed three years there once. I walk and walk, along the bay, past the shops and hotels and the German church and the big bank, and through the mud streets between old shacks and stalls. It's dark there and full of other walking shapes as I wander past light coming from the cracks in the walls, where the people are in their homes.[14]

The scene quoted above describes Willie's political enthusiasm which at this particular moment in the story enables him to envision himself in an exilic future as a political activist in Dar es Salaam. In a sense, his political aspiration can be seen as having an enabling force which helps him to envision and live a life outside of the shanty town he now lives in with his sister Emma. His physical movement through Dar es Salaam, 'along the bay, past the shops and hotels and the German church and the big bank, and through the mud streets between old shacks and stalls', heightens that spatial capability which is restricted under the apartheid regime. However, while such notion of temporal and spatial liberation is reinforced by that particular interruption of Willie's political fantasy, that narrative intervention signals a departure from Willie's immediate experience and relationship with Emma. By venturing into and ending with Willie's political fantasy, 'Some Monday for Sure' leaves the troubled and distraught Emma behind, physically and ideologically alone, in the town she wishes to break free from. It is at this very moment of 'Some Monday for Sure' that the notion of separation, of problematically centred subjectivities of both Willie

[14] Gordimer, *Not for Publication*, p. 208.

and Emma is reinforced to suggest that it is not just Emma, but Willie, as well, who experiences the condition of politicised loneliness evident in how his political enthusiasm presents itself to be a complete isolation from his immediate contact with his sister and the world she comes to represent.

It is in this portrayal of Willie, a man who is politically eager, that Gordimer's assessment of politicised loneliness can be fully appreciated. To regard a total preoccupation with public life as the criterion of political consciousness is to ignore the most critical and elemental distance between the private and public realms of life. Instead of countering the condition of politicised loneliness, a total preoccupation with public life reinforces the apartheid regime's restrictive control of the space and its populace, which is first and foremost grounded in the language of separation. Looking at the very last lines of the story again, where Willie's focalised narration leaves the troubled Emma behind and embarks on an imaginary journey to his future in exile, that apartheid-induced condition of separation and distance between the political and the personal is reinforced and shows itself to be unresolved.[15] That is, as his political vision is temporally distant, and spatially situated in the public sphere, the distance between the political and the personal worlds is subtly noted in this very graphic depiction of Willie's fantasy to undermine his temporal and spatial liberation. For example, the lines quoted in the previous paragraph give two contrasting and disconnected images of public and private spheres, where the images of the bay, the shops, the German church, the big bank, and the muddy streets invoke notions related to the public, the external, the collective as well as the political, the notions of the internal, the domestic, and the personal simultaneously are invoked in the image of 'light coming from the cracks in the walls, where the people are in their homes'. In these two separated spheres, Willie remains with the outside, dark world of his political conviction. As he catches a glimpse of '*other* walking shapes' in the muddy streets of Dar es Salaam, he is at once implied by the very language he uses to be one of those 'walking shapes'. It

[15] In addition to the representation of Willie as a politically centred subject, there are other Gordimer's characters that enjoin such a mono-spatial subject position. One notable example is Elizabeth van de Sandt's husband Max from *The Late Bourgeois World*. In his critical assessment of Gordimer's political attitude, Peter F. Alexander notes that 'Max's political motivations, in sum, are deeply undermined by Gordimer; he is revealed as too immature to be capable of lasting human relationships, whether with the blacks whom he professes to care deeply about, or with Elizabeth and their son, Bobo', in 'Political Attitudes in Nadine Gardiner's Fiction', *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 70 (1988), pp. 220-38 (p. 225).

is then worth noting that while the individuals behind the walls, in their homes are descriptively regarded as 'people', the individuals like Willie who are outside in the dark street of the public world are portrayed as 'walking shapes'. This descriptive juxtaposition of images in Willie's political fantasy undercuts his relation to and inclusion in the domestic comfort and the private realm of life. At the moment as he is taken away from Emma in his narrative intervention of political fantasy, he resolutely becomes a walking shape in the public space, and a mere observer, external to the private and domestic realm. In rendering Willie's disconnection from the domestic space, 'Some Monday for Sure' calls his politically centred life in question in a similar manner that it raises an inquiry into the temporally and spatially limitedness of Emma's subjectivity.

Representations of Toby in *A World of Strangers*, Emma and Willie in 'Some Monday for Sure' and Mr Bamjee in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' are Gordimer's textual investment on a problematically centred subjectivity in which an imbalanced relation between the political and the personal portrays a varying degree of politicised loneliness. Each character listed above is exposed to the condition of politicised loneliness in such a way that even when they are politically active they still cannot overcome that quintessential distance set up by the apartheid laws designed to create a gap between the people and the politics. Understanding Gordimer's representations of problematically centred/segmented characters such as those discussed above in light of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialised politics and segmentarity, I see these representations as textual examples of rigid or molar segment, whose movement and directional relation between spaces are limited if not impossible. Deleuze and Guattari write, 'The human being is a segmentary animal. Segmentarity is inherent to all the strata composing us. Dwelling, getting around, working, playing: life is spatially and socially segmented'.[16] However, as they go on, there are two distinct types of segmentarities at work: one being rigid or molar segmentarity and the other is supple or molecular segmentarity.[17] Caught up in their own separated worlds, whether it be personal or political, without an imbalanced relation and movement between the realms which constitute life as a whole, characters like Toby, Emma, Willie, and Mr Bamjee are representative of those segmentary animals in a limited and rigid segmentarity.

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[16] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 244.
[17] Ibid., p. 248.

As their inability to cross or bridge the distance set up by the apartheid laws show, characters like Toby, Emma, Willie and Mr Bamjee can be seen as Gordimer's critique of apartheid in her depiction of a closed, static, mono-spatially centred subjectivity. This closed subjectivity is limiting in its failure to move between and reconcile the two realms.

The tensions between the conflicting claims of the private and the public worlds, explored and set up in Gordimer's *A World of Stranger* and her short fiction in the notion of closed and centred subjectivities as discussed above, can then be translated into the ideological contradictions and oppositions between liberalism and political activism in South Africa of the 1950s to the early 1960s. In contrast to how Clingman sees *A World of Strangers* as a work that charts the historical mapping of humanist liberalism in the novel's representation of Toby's interracial encounter with Steven and its skepticism of the depth of Toby's humanist commitment, *A World of Strangers*, I contend, offers an audacious critique of South Africa's liberalism in its equating Toby's humanist, interracial relationship with the notion of political passivity and mono-spatially centred subjectivity.

Concerning this particular notion of liberalism in South Africa, Kathrin Wagner lists three distinct groups of liberals in South Africa at the time: the first group is 'made up of those who do little more than embrace alternative attitudes and lifestyles' but their 'progressive and even radical opinions fail to impel such individuals to meaningful action'; the second group is 'made up of those who attempt to involve themselves directly in some sort of anti-apartheid activism'; and the third group refers to armed struggle, or those 'who eventually clumsily risk life itself for their belief, […] for their willingness to further change through violent action'.[18] Concerning the notion of passivity and activism evident in how the forces of the private and the public worlds in *A World of Strangers*, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', and 'Some Monday for Sure' are represented, it is possible to build from Wagner's historical observations and see evidence of them in Toby's language, and in the way he understands how the world is made up by different groups of people. That is, Wagner's first group of liberals can be understood, in Toby's words, as the private livers who, because of their apolitical and humanist attitudes towards the notions of race and race relations in South Africa, represent a privately-centred passivist view. Gordimer's depictions of Toby, Mr Bamjee, and Emma fall into this critical assessment of private

[18] Wagner, *Rereading Nadine Gordimer*, p. 14, 16, 18.

livers, who are politically non-subversive. Toby's understanding of the public livers seems to fall uneasily into Wagner's second and third group of liberals, depending on how violent their political actions are. However, if we are to follow my discussion of politically-centred subjectivities of Josias and Willie in 'Some Monday for Sure', it is possible to see that these characters may fit more into Wagner's third group of liberals, who, despite the fact that their political radicalism renders them politically active, they are too radical in their political action, and, thus, too distant from their private life that they fail to perform adequately in both realms.

From Toby's perspective, there is no 'third' group per se. There are only private and public livers. Concerning the question of worlds with *A World of Strangers*, Robert Green notes that there are actually 'three worlds' represented in the novel: '[Toby] enjoys the parties of the rich Whites; the company of Anna Louw in no man's land; and the exuberance of his black friends in the shebeens'.[19] From Green's assessment, these three worlds may not be strictly differentiated on the basis of political consciousness in the same way Wagner and Toby propose. Yet, what we can discern from Green's notion of the third world as 'no man's land' is that this world is populated by Anna; and it may be situated on the border between the white and black worlds. What Green may be proposing as being the major characteristic of this world is the fact that Anna, being a white socialist, works for black Africans in South Africa. The world she lives in bridges the front lines between two opposing and separated worlds of black and white. Later on in the novel, it becomes clear what constitutes the world of Anna, and it is not merely a world of political activism as may have been the case from Green's critical analysis.

The following part of the chapter discusses in more details the presence of the third *world*, and the existence of a third group of *livers*. Although Wagner states clearly that 'Gordimer's protagonists typically attempt to maintain an independent stance outside the three groups of liberals', I argue that from the way Gordimer's fiction problematises the conflicting forces of the personal and the public worlds that there is a committed attempt to find a middle ground, to reposition the self as the *middle* livers.[20] With reference to the

[19] Robert Green, 'Nadine Gordimer's *A World of Strangers*: Strains in South African Liberalism', in *Critical Essays on Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Rowland Smith (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990), pp. 74-86 (p. 79).
[20] Wagner, p. 17.

opposition between the public and private worlds, Wagner admits the difficulty of integrating the two worlds in Gordimer's fiction. With that critical impossibility of integrating the public and private worlds in mind, Wagner states that 'Despite her commitment to the idea of public responsibility and to the need for radical resolutions […], Gordimer's protagonists remain reluctant revolutionaries throughout'.[21] The critic further notes that Gordimer's novels often 'chart the various ways in which the individual is persuaded to move from the relative safety of the one to a reluctant embracing of the imperatives of the other: that is, from the marginalities of private life to the mainstream of public political commitment'.[22] To Wagner, the critical relation between the public and the private has always been one sided, in the sense that the personal is often seen as being invaded by the political force, and the idea of political commitment is one which is often conceived as being the end point of movement. Concerning the subject of private and public movement, Wagner succinctly states that 'the only route to a public and political commitment is via the intensity of a private epiphany'.[23]

While this critical assessment of Gordimer's work may be justified at one level, Gordimer's potential, narrative attempt, I contend, is not to 'move' characters from their respective domestic, and personal realm of life and deposit them into the political world. To do so, the idea of public responsibility is, therefore, understood to be that which is dependent on the drastic divorce between the public and the private realms of life. What Gordimer's narratives attempt to achieve is, however, to reposition the characters and find a middle, rhizomatic ground in which characters may have full access both to their political and personal aspects of life, a condition which is fundamentally antithetical to the apartheid construction of politicised loneliness. Using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, the following section illustrates a reading of a more balanced vision of what political engagement is made to be in the writings of Gordimer. As the above discussion of *A World of Strangers*, 'Some Monday for Sure' and 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' shows, the question of political engagement should not be a complete intervention in the political world as we see in my analysis of Willie's naïve, political enthusiasm. Rather, political

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[21] Ibid., p. 27.
[22] Ibid., p. 35.
[23] Ibid., p. 36. Similarly, critics like Haugh and Cooke see a relatively distinct practice in Gordimer's fiction, a practice which departs from the personal and arrives at the political, and vice versa.

capability should be seen as a state in which a particular subject can transverse easily in and out of both the political and the domestic realms. That 'supple' and flexible movement between the two realms should, in other words, be conceived as the most critical characteristic of what constitutes political capability against the apartheid backdrop of geopolitical segregation.

Early evidence of Gordimer's attempt at the rhizomatic/middle positioning of the self in between the borders of the public and private realms of life can be found towards the end of *A World of Strangers*. As earlier discussed, the opposition between the public and the personal worlds has been established in the novel as one of the massive social problems in Johannesburg. Within this opposition, there is Toby, the narrator of the novel who resists, throughout the major part of the novel, to maintain within the personal and private realm of life, even in his relationship with Anna or Steven. Critics have remarked on the heavy focus placed on the question of personal development in the novel. Together with Clingman and Ettin, Head notes the concerning aspect from the novel, in which the idea of political advancement is eclipsed by the representation of Toby's personal growth and awakening, to the point of displacing its political consciousness.[24] I agree that the depth of Toby's liberal humanism may be questionable, and that the novel places emphasis on personal awakening as a prerequisite to the question of political responsibility. Yet, the novel also offers us a moment of narrative insight into Toby's relatively transformed subject position and identification with regards to the political world. That position which is briefly and implicitly depicted at the novel's conclusion presents a state of balance, that neither prioritises the personal over the political, or vice versa.

Thus, the novel does not aim to remove Toby from his personal grounding and resolutely deposit him into the political world, to which his liberal parents belong. Instead of doing that, *A World of Strangers* presents an articulation, not an actualisation, of a *frontier* position, a rhizomatic repositioning of Toby, in which he finds himself in the middle space bordering on both the political and the personal worlds. The notion of the 'frontier' is evoked at the beginning of chapter 13, shortly before Toby goes on a hunting trip in the countryside:

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[24] Head, *Nadine Gordimer*, pp. 47-62.

> You couldn't really reconcile one with the other, the way people were, the way the laws were, and make a whole. The only way to do that was to do what Anna Louw had done – make for the frontier between the two, that hard and lonely place as yet sparsely populated.[25]

At this moment, Toby is forced to reflect on his life in Johannesburg, how he moves in and out of the two worlds, the black and white, so easily and carelessly. In this context, the frontier is a place that connects both the white and the black worlds. Clingman himself argues that what *A World of Strangers* is doing here is attempting to imitate Anna Louw's position as a 'frontier' character, stating that the novel's 'most significance area of activity lies in the in-between zone of black-and-white counter'. However, as shown in my previous discussion, the novel's most significant area of activity does not lie in 'the in-between zone of [interpersonalised] black-and-white-encounter', but more in the centrally perceived space of Toby's individual understanding and perception of political responsibility in South Africa. Therefore, Gordimer's text can be re-appropriated to function as a frontier text that connects, not just the worlds of black and white, but also the worlds of the private and public livers. And in that connection, the text creates a frontier or rhizomatic space in which the *middle* livers can situate themselves.

It is then worth noting that although the novel sets up a propositional contradiction between private and public livers in its exploration of Toby's friendship with the white and black worlds, and proposes a resolution in which a frontier should be made, it is clear that such a resolution is not actualised within the course of the novel. Considering how the novel ends abruptly with Toby's departure from South Africa and how the depth of his emerging, political sensibility, rooted in the process of personal growth, is questioned by Sam at the end of the novel, that particular in-between space is never realised. Yet, there are subtle indications of the rhizomatic subjectivity which is rested on a balanced, frontier space between private and public realms of life. The following lines are taken from the last scene of the novel in which Sam comes to see Toby off at the station as he is about to leave the country:

> When I read the list on that morning I felt myself suddenly within the world of dispossession, where the prison record is a mark of honour, exile is home, and

[25] Gordimer, *A World of Strangers*, p. 203.

> family a committee of protest – that world I had watched, from afar, a foreign country, since childhood.[26]

What Toby is reading at this moment are two newspaper cuttings. In them there is a list of 'black and white people arrested on a treason charge'. Anna's name is one of the names listed. As recounted, Toby now regards himself 'suddenly within the world of dispossession'. The implication of such a world is drastically and ideologically oppositional to the 'world of strangers' which South Africa is rhetorically perceived to be. That is to say, in the 'world of strangers', Toby, in his personalised vision of and relation with the outside world, does not see himself as being affected and troubled by the political demand of life in South Africa. He insists on maintaining his friendship with black Africans as well as with Anna outside of the political context. That results in a restrictive sense of loneliness, a sense of separation, against Toby's unfailing attempt to forge interpersonal relationships. In that world, his private life is kept in perpetual separation from the public and political realm. However, at this moment in the narrative Toby finds himself 'suddenly within the world of dispossession'. In this 'world of dispossession', Toby's long-withheld space of private life becomes socialised and politicised. The two worlds, which are formerly kept apart, are bridged, with Toby as that provisional, frontier character. In this 'world of dispossession', an immediate contact and connection between the worlds of public and private realms of life, respectively represented in how 'the prison record' and 'a mark of honour', 'exile' and 'home', and 'a committee of protest' and 'family', are all connected.

As the term 'dispossession' denotes the actual absence or loss of personal property and private life, the term in this context connotes a subtle process of deterritorialisation in which the linkage of political and private realms of life can be made in one's pursuit of a political cause. The perception of life as wholly constituted on the basis of such acentred relation between private and public realms of life is *A World of Strangers*' proposed resolution to the problem of politicised loneliness experienced by Toby in his so-called friendship with Steven. According to Wagner, Toby's political awareness at this point in the narrative 'emerges only when he experiences injustice as a personal violation of his

[26] Ibid., p. 265.

own emotional connections and moral integrity'.[27] In that reading, 'the world of dispossession' could then be understood as that world of loss and deprivation, in which Toby's personal connection to Steven is violated, and of which Steven is a victim. However, the idea of 'dispossession' reproduced in the quotation above can be one that intricately links the sites of the political and the personal. This linkage does not simply articulate how Toby's interpersonal relationship with Steven is devastated by the political limitedness at the time and how his political awareness emerges as a result of that personal devastation. Rather, it involves a situation in which Toby's life is extended to part take in both the forces of the personal, the private, and the public, the political as Toby notes that the political life, evoked by the images of 'the prison record', 'a committee of protest', and 'exile', can now be considered his 'mark of honour', his 'family', and his 'home', respectively.

Although *A World of Strangers* presents that potentially, rhizomatic repositioning of Toby at the loss of Toby's personal relationship with Steven, the novel does not venture far enough to allow for possible, further exploration. However, in Gordimer's later work of the period, we see how such a rhizomatic position of the self in an acentred relation between the public and the personal worlds is further elaborated and explicated. 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' from *Not for Publication* provides a good example of Gordimer's extended exploration of rhizomatic resistance of the middle/frontier livers. In this particular story, the idea of rhizomatic resistance is invested in Gordimer's portrayal of the political capability of Mrs Bamjee. She is an Indian housewife whose physical appearance over the course of the story is confined to the beginning of the story when the duplicating machine makes an intrusion into the household of Mr Bamjee as earlier discussed. Despite her limited physical presence in the story, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' demonstrates how the character positions herself in the frontier space between the borders of the public and private realms of life. Despite having extensively laid out Gordimer's 'fatally flawed liberal or radical characters/protagonists' in Gordimer's novels from *A World of Strangers* to *Burger's Daughter*, Alexander argues that 'it would, however, be an overstatement of the case to suggest that there are no examples of entirely admirable liberal characters. There

[27] Wagner, p. 20.

are a few, the protagonist in the story "A Chip of Glass Ruby" amongst them'.[28] In his short assertion, Alexander does not elaborate how the character is distinct in her liberal subject position, but, as the following discussion will show, Mrs Bamjee, unlike Emma and Willie in 'Some Monday for Sure', stands out as Gordimer's character that is able to maintain the balance between the domestic and the public demands, and that her acentred subject position defines the critically spatial imagery of a political consciousness.

In the final scene in which Mrs Bamjee's eldest daughter joins her stepfather in the morning of his birthday, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' consolidates Mrs Bamjee's acentred, political position. The following quotation is taken from the last paragraph of the short story. In this particular moment, Girlie, Mrs Bamjee's daughter, reminds her stepfather that today is in fact his birthday. The lines below follow Girlie's birthday reminder:

> '[…] What importance is my birthday, while she's sitting there in a prison? I don't understand how she can do the things she does when her mind is always full of woman's nonsense at the same time – that's what I don't understand with her'.
>
> "Oh, but don't you see?' the girl said. 'It's because she doesn't want anybody to be left out. It's because she always remembers; remembers everything – people without somewhere to live, hungry kids, boys who can't get educated – remembers all the time. That's how Ma is'.
>
> […] he was overcome by something much more curious, by an answer. He knew why he had desired her, the ugly widow with five children; he knew what way it was in which she was not like the others; it was there, like the fact of the belly that lay between him and her daughter.[29]

Told from the point of the view of Mr Bamjee, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' slowly undermines Mr Bamjee's limited, self-centred vision of his wife. And, the final scene here provides evidence of his limited vision. Because Mr Bamjee is shown to be self-concerned, the narration of the short story is permeated with his dissatisfaction with his wife, and disapproval of her involvement in anti-apartheid activities. This narrative focalisation shows, at one level, how mistakenly Mr Bamjee has understood his wife's political action. Judging from his incessant complaints, Mr Bamjee's dismissal of his wife's role in the

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[28] Alexander, p. 235.
[29] Gordimer, *Not for Publication*, p. 113.

political activist cause may have its roots in his thinking that Mrs Bamjee has neglected her role as a wife, implying that her life should be centred on her personalised relationship with Mr Bamjee and the family. However, as the above scene unfolds, Mr Bamjee becomes disabused of his mistaken perception of his wife. As it appears to Mr Bamjee at the moment his stepdaughter tells him that it is her own mother, Mrs Bamjee, who reminds her of Mr Bamjee's birthday during her earlier visit to see her mother in the prison: '"That's the first thing she told me when I saw her yesterday – don't forget its Bajie's birthday tomorrow"'.[30] This critical moment of revelation not only breaks Mr Bamjee's self-centred production and understanding of the political life of his wife, but also offers an insight into Mrs Bamjee's acentred subjectivity.

That is to say, Mrs Bamjee's acentred subjectivity is one which is situated between borders where the political and the personal realms of life meet. She is in that critical position in which she could transverse in and out of the two realms. In this frontier space, Mrs Bamjee responds to the political demands that have been pressed upon her from the outside world. She actively engages in political resistance, while also fulfilling her private and domestic duties to her family. Within that middle/frontier position, Mrs Bamjee accomplishes to retain both her political and personal obligations, not '[wanting] anybody to be left out', as Girlie puts it. The scene above helps the reader to discern how Gordimer's work constructs a perception of political capability which is not either heavily and completely rooted in the realm of the political, or centred in the realm of domesticity. As Girlie reminds her stepfather of his birthday, Mrs Bamjee's ability to 'remember everything' foregrounds both the character's unwavering dedication and commitment to the anti-apartheid movement and her personalised attachment and connection to her family. This story culminates at this moment of revelation in which Mr Bamjee is awaken to the reality or 'an answer' concerning his wife's political commitment, which has previously been something he could not comprehend and tolerate. The short story ends with a sense that, although Mr Bamjee does not contribute to the cause of the anti-apartheid movement, he now understands Mrs Bamjee's commitment to the political demands of life under apartheid South Africa as well as her personal commitment to her own family.

[30] Ibid., p. 112.

Looking at the notion of political capability exemplified in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', the chapter additionally discerns a domestic characteristic in Mrs Bamjee's political agency. First and foremost, the fact that the duplicating machine is brought into the space of the home is one clear example of Mrs Bamjee's attempt to bridge the political and the private realms of life. Second, there are scenes in which, during the day, Mrs Bamjee would receive prominent Indian and African activists in her house, and, at night, she would be found by Mr Bamjee sitting up 'making a new dress for her daughter'.[31] These two instances shed light into Mrs Bamjee's political agency and her acentred subjectivity. To illustrate, these two instances from 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' work against that commonly perceived route to the public and political commitment which emphasises the compete departure from the domestic to the public realms of life. In addition, in depicting how Mrs Bamjee brings the duplicating machine as well as receives political activists at her own domestic space, Gordimer does not aim to show Mrs Bamjee's attempt to politicise her domestic domain, thus, erasing or abandoning it altogether. However, the two textual examples show how the character of Mrs Bamjee herself has become that frontier space which, in essence, connects and brings into contact the political and the domestic.

Reading the short story in the light of feminist criticism, Karen Lazar argues that 'the main character, Mrs Bamjee, enacts a curious mixture of backward-looking and forward-looking practices'.[32] From this critical position, Lazar contends that Mrs Bamjee 'adapts with a degree of genius to what she sees as her two roles, accepting as natural the well-entrenched ideological separation between 'public' and 'private'.[33] However, as Lazar builds her argument concerning the ambiguity of Mrs Bamjee's political and personal consciousness, the critic comes to assert that, through examination of Mrs Bamjee's supposedly domestic life, 'Mrs Bamjee's political behavior lies on the same continuum of female subject-construction as her caring for her spouse and children. In this, Gordimer suggests that supposedly domestic qualities can, and should, be transported into the (traditionally defined and sterile) realms of politics'.[34] Martin Trump similarly notes

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[31] Ibid., p. 107.
[32] Karen Lazar, 'Feminism as "piffling"? Ambiguities in Some of Nadine Gordimer's Short Stories', in *Current Writing*, 2.1 (1990), pp. 101-116 (p. 110).
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

that while Gordimer's representations of marriage in stories like 'Six Feet of the Country' and 'Something for the Time Being' emphasise 'the divisions between husbands and wives and explore the reasons behind these raptures. In the story "A Chip of Glass Ruby", Gordimer describes the reapproachment achieved by a husband and wife'.[35] In line with these readings, this chapter contends that Mrs Bamjee as a frontier space, so to speak, is composed of the immediate contacts between her political responsibility and her personal relationship with her family. In this spatial and ideological connection, Mrs Bamjee renders the spatial boundaries of both the political/public and the personal/domestic worlds endless and boundless, instead of keeping the two realms perpetually separated.

Another example of Mrs Bamjee's interbeing can be discerned from the very act of hunger strike in prison. Halfway through, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' makes a direct reference to Mrs Bamjee's absence from the house and her hunger strike while being held in detention among other political prisoners. This very act of a hunger strike revolves around the domestic act of eating. Through this domestic reference in Mrs Bamjee's political, resistance act, Gordimer additionally foregrounds Mrs Bamjee's political agency in her acentred/middle positioning in her relation to the domestic and political worlds. Taken into consideration in relation to the dining scene in 'Some Monday for Sure', Mrs Bamjee's hunger strike represents a particular terrain of the frontier space in which 'different regimes of signs' and contradictions of forces are brought into play in defining her subject position as acentred 'interbeing'. First, if we look back at the dining scene in 'Some Monday for Sure', the characteristics of the domestic are clearly invested in the story's portrayal of Emma who is seen in that particular moment as 'collecting the dishes', '[dragging] the tin bath of the hot water from the stove', or 'scraping the mealie […] back into the pot'.[36] While that domestic realm is projected on the character of Emma, the political realm of the collective good is dramatised in the prolonged conversation between Josias and Willie, and occasionally joined by Emma in her questioning and disapproving voice. In contrast to that dramatised opposition and separation, 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' constructs a textual rendering of political and domestic 'interbeing' through Mrs Bamjee. In her hunger strike,

[35] Martin Trump, 'The Short Fiction of Nadine Gordimer', *Research in African Literatures* 17.3 (1986), pp. 341-69 (p. 358). See also Barbara Eckstein, 'Pleasure and Joy: Political Activism in Nadine Gordimer's Short Stories', *World Literature Today* 59.3 (1985), pp. 343-46.
[36] Gordimer, *Not for Publication*, p. 196, 197.

not only does Mrs Bamjee actively engage in the political world, but she also does so in an act which is most characteristic of the personal, the individual, the domestic. While the act of eating/not eating is repeatedly shown in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', whether it be in the scene after the family learns of Mrs Bamjee's hunger strike, or the final scene of Mr Bamjee's birthday breakfast, as an essentially domestic act and, therefore, politically non-subversive, this very same act exercised by Mrs Bamjee during detention is impregnated with a strong, politically-subversive message.[37] The way that the domestic characteristic of eating/not eating is channelled into Mrs Bamjee's political agency while it is being represented elsewhere in the story as politically non-subversive, describes how the middle/frontier space of Mrs Bamjee's 'interbeing' operates. In a sense, the operation of her acentred 'interbeing' deterritorialises by means of extension and variation any finalised perception of life as limited and centred in one realm or another. Her acentred interbeing, to put in shortly, is a frontier space of intensities and variations, in which the notion of political responsibility is no longer attached to the isolated world of the outside; neither is the notion of domestic commitment attached and permanently fixed in the separated world of the inside.

Understanding the acentred 'interbeing' of Mrs Bamjee in the wider context of social relation, Mrs Bamjee can be conceived in her political commitment as one *segment* in an interconnected web of the social order in the Deleuzoguattarian sense of the word. As a segment in the social order, the character is recognised in her own right as well as in relations to the public/political whole in the more heterogeneous space of politics. In this sense, Mrs Bamjee's existence is one which is larger than her personal, domestic life since it is also characterised by her relation to the political world. Despite the fact that the short story does not show how freely Mrs Bamjee can move in and out of this relational network invested in her political commitment, it is quite possible to presume that such a flexible and 'supple' movement is possible. This does not mean that the political responsibility that Mrs Bamjee is charged with is one that renders such a possibility of movement, but, instead, it is the fact that Mrs Bamjee herself has more than one relational network, which in this case includes her personal commitment to her family and her political commitment as an anti-apartheid activist, to which she has attached herself. Unlike Mrs Bamjee, characters

[37] Ibid., pp. 111, 112-3.

like Willie or Emma in 'Some Monday for Sure' are limited in their possibilities of relational capabilities. For example, Emma, who cannot fully establish any possible connection with the political ideology and, therefore, fails to envision a life outside her own world, will be dependent on her only viable thread of personal connection. But as the short story reveals, her connection to her family, made manifest more clearly towards the end of the story, is possible only when Willie gives and shows his sister little of his attention. She is often seen to be left stranded in her anxiety, or buried beneath Willie's naïve retelling of his political dream and aspiration. Similarly, Willie's existential relation is predetermined and fixed by his political enthusiasm; the fact results in his inability to fully identify with his own sister's discomfort and sense of loss. He is often seen as being drifted in his dreams, being completely divorced from the personal connection that he may have had with his sister, and is *alive* only in his political fantasy.

In Gordimer's later work, that ideological repositioning of the self into the frontier/rhizomatic space is challenged. *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), regarded in this chapter as the last text of the early period in Gordimer's writing career, charts a problem of resettling and repositioning in the political position of middleness as it attempts to build that subject position which interlinks the political and the personal realms of life. The following part of the chapter looks at the novel in these two regards. Similar to 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', *The Late Bourgeois World* builds a subject position of an interbeing in its portrayal of the narrating character, Elizabeth van den Sandt. The text provides a good example of that subject position in the scene of encounter between the narrator and Luke, the African activist. The lines quoted below illustrate a moment of encounter with a highly sexual undertone:

> He [Luke] put his arms around me and mine went round his warm, solid waist. We rocked gently. I [Elizabeth] teased him: 'I suppose you're supported by the Communist Party' – like all PAC people, he accuses the ANC of being led by the nose, first by Moscow and then by Peking.[38]

The entire episode, which involves all domestic as well as private acts of eating, talking, grinning, holding, teasing, and flirting between Luke and Elizabeth, foregrounds the sense of the political in the domestic. The specific moment, reproduced above, shows this very

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[38] Gordimer, *The Late Bourgeois World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 123.

notion of how the encounter is both sexually and politically charged in the touching and talking between the two characters. Elizabeth herself regards the confrontation as coming close in its implication as a scene of sexual seduction in a way she is drawn into the political service requested by Luke from Elizabeth.

> So that was it. I was caught out; like that game we used to play as children, when the one who was 'he' would drop a handkerchief behind your back and you would suddenly find yourself 'on'; it doesn't matter how alert you think you're being, you still get the handkerchief served on you.[39]

To present a scene in such a way that the notion of the political is permeated with the sense of the private and the personal, *The Late Bourgeois World* dramatises its crucial attempt to construct a rhizomatic position out of that encounter between Elizabeth and Luke.

Unlike 'A Chip of Glass Ruby', *The Late Bourgeois World*'s dramatisation of the sense of the political in the domestic is not invested in an encounter between two, socially disadvantaged characters, but in a specific encounter between a socially privileged character, Elizabeth, and the socially disadvantaged character, Luke, in the domestic sphere. This particular representation sets *The Late Bourgeois World* as doing something more than 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' does. That is, not only does the novel itself project a sense of the political in the domestic in its portrayal of the sexually charged encounter between Elizabeth and Luke, the text also undermines what would otherwise be a common scene of encounter in the narrative's domestic sphere between black and white characters. It is, in other words, the very visit and presence of Luke himself in the domestic sphere of Elizabeth that adds an element of the political to the domestic space of the home. Within a typical narrative space of the home, the encounter between black and white characters is often that between a master and a servant. With the presence of Luke in Elizabeth's house as a guest who 'doesn't worry about being seen', the space of the home and the personal is deterritorialised to part take that of the outside world personified in the figure of Luke.[40] Coupled with Luke's reason for the visit and his sexually charged way of conducting himself before Elizabeth, the whole domestic sphere is infused with a particular intermingling of the sensual and the political, that transcends not only the space they are

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[39] Ibid., p. 128.
[40] Ibid. p. 111.

situated in but also the very socially and racially prescribed roles and limitations designated to their respective skin colours by the apartheid regime.

Taking a closer look at the novel's portrayal of the sensual and the political in this scene, Ettin writes that the novel's dramatisation of the encounter is a critical exploration of how sex can be desensualised and translated into a means or 'an alliance for power or sympathy, an element of barter'.[41] Following Ettin's logic, the sensual or the sexual elements in the scene under discussion here come to serve both Elizabeth's and Luke's respective approaches to one another. In Luke's case, his flirting and sexual seduction of Elizabeth can be discerned as the character's way of political negotiation. They are the particular ways by which Luke negotiates his relations with Elizabeth, and fathoms her political eagerness in order to seduce her into his anti-apartheid cause. To Luke, the sensual is, all in all, deployed as a path that leads straight into the realm of the political. From Ettin's reading of the sensual and the political, the novel is accordingly made to emphasise this particular transition: how the sensual and the physical gives particular energy to the political world, and vice versa, in its attempt to draw 'a connection between physical awareness ('knowing through the body') and political awareness'.[42]

However, the idea of the rhizomatic is not invested in that transition from the private, the domestic to the public and the political, or the other way round. It is, strictly speaking, an ideological position which connects and interlinks the two spheres, without resolutely moving into a definite end of relations. The fundamental idea of the rhizomatic resistance is therefore the positioning of the self in the middle ground, the condition which will open more possibilities of movement and encounters for the self to be made. Looking specifically at Elizabeth's perspective, it is unclear whether the sensual can be viewed as the departure point of movement. She is conscious of Luke's ulterior motive under his sexualised persona. She knows that their encounter is greatly affected by the political cause, and that is what solely sustains their interpersonal relationship. However, to her the sexual and the sensual is 'part of the bargain'.[43] The loans Luke is expecting to get from Elizabeth in order to fund the anti-apartheid cause are what she can offer him. But, as Elizabeth

[41] Ettin, p. 68.
[42] Ettin, p. 8.
[43] Gordimer, *The Late Bourgeois World*, p. 142.

herself notes, Luke will not be able to pay her back in real money. What she therefore allows herself to entertain at this point is that he will eventually have to pay her back in sexual terms of understanding: 'Oh yes, and it's quite possible he'll make love to me, next time or some time. That's part of the bargain. It's honest, too, like his vanity, his lies, the loans he doesn't pay back: it's all he's got to offer me'.[44] What can be concluded here is that the physical and the sensual is seen and utilised by Elizabeth as both a means of negotiating her relations with Luke as well as an end point, that is projected to establish her political coyness and sensibility, on the one hand, and to deposit her back into the realm of the sensual. Regardless of how serious that thought is, Elizabeth's conjoining of the sexual and the political subverts the divide between the political and the sensual. To her, the domestic and the private are not perceived as two separated realms, whereby the domestic and the sensual are seen as the point from which one departs, and the political and the public as the point one arrives at. The scene, in short, blurs the boundaries between the two worlds to the point of them being indivisible.

With the deterritorialised, rhizomatic subject position of political consciousness, Gordimer's work presents a unique exploration and possibility of movement in the very interaction of 'character and situation in private and personal lives'. In a talk given at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1968, Gordimer states that:

> *The Late Bourgeois World* was an attempt to look into the specific character of the social climate that produced the wave of young white saboteurs in 1963-64 […] As an artist, I am not concerned with propaganda and my characters were shown in all their human weaknesses. What interested me was not to 'prove' anything, but to explore the interaction of character and situation in private and personal lives […] This book was banned. It moved in the area of doubt about the traditional way of life and thought in South Africa, it moved into the most heavily mined area of censorship […].[45]

While 'the area of doubt' is first and foremost an experience of uncertainty about and questioning of 'the traditional way of life and thought in South Africa', it may as well serve as a bigger image of how *The Late Bourgeois World*'s ending can thus be discerned as a

[44] Ibid.
[45] Gordimer, 'South Africa: Towards a Desk-Drawer Literature', *The Classic* 2:4 (1968), pp. 66-74 (p. 71).

textual construction which brings within the novel's final scene, where Elizabeth lies awake at an unknown moment of the night, the sense of political movement/consciousness and the personal sense of doubt and uncertainty. In this 'area of doubt' and uncertainty, the text invites a reading of the mind of Elizabeth who is wrestling with the thought of offering Luke the financial favour he has earlier requested: 'I've been lying awake a long time, now […] the slow, even beats of my heart repeat to me, like a clock; afraid, alive, afraid, alive, afraid, alive ....[46] This contemplation does not come to a resolute moment of decision-making. This account is then crucial to how the text's implication of the rhizome is established. At one level, the scene can be understood to highlight the dynamic and variable state of the rhizome, which refuses to move into a fixed position. Instead of having the character make her final decision, the text dwells on that frontier space where Elizabeth's political consciousness and her moment of doubt and uncertainty meet.

This portrayal of the rhizomatic subject position allows possibilities of more than one, if not multiple, interactions between characters and the outside world. Looking back at how Elizabeth sees her encounter with Luke as a personalised version of the ancient legend of Orpheus and Eurydice, and how the character sexualises the political in her approach to Luke as well as desexualises sex in her allowing herself to be entertained by the thought of receiving sex in exchange of her favour, there are two possibilities of spatial emergence to be accounted for.[47] One is the state of emergence 'above' the subject to the level of the public, the social sphere; the other is the emergence that is characterised by the movement 'below' the social and public. To elaborate, the first state of emergence, which is defined by the rise above the personal and the domestic to the level of the public and the political, is noted as a possibility in Elizabeth's ability to establish her connection with the outside/public force, which comes in the personified form of Luke. In this scenario of sexually coded interaction, Elizabeth is likely, as often agreed by a number of critics, to accept Luke's request for her financial favour. Therefore, her sexualised encounter with Luke can be seen as an enabling point in which Elizabeth is able to move beyond or above the sexual, the personal, to assist Luke in his political activism. However, instead of offering a conclusive ending to that account, the novel moves on to present another case of

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[46] Gordimer, *The Late Bourgeois World*, p. 142.
[47] Ibid., p. 133.

emergence which is characterised by that particular movement 'below' the public and the political. With regard to this emergence, Elizabeth acknowledges the possibility of herself being conducted into the realm of politics. However, as the character herself visualises sex as a compensation for the risk she is taking in helping Luke, that movement into the political world is not considered a complete departure from the domestic and the private. Instead, by viewing sex as 'part of the bargain', Elizabeth's rhizomatic position highlights an act of emergence which returns the self to the domestic and the private realm of life.

In both potential states of emergence, Elizabeth as a character succeeds in maintaining her political capability as well as her private life. While the first act of emergence emphasises Elizabeth's political capability, the second act of emergence foregrounds the subject's individualised capabilities and desire while it also regards a strong linkage between the subject, the domestic and the private, and the public, the collective and the political. Within that second account of emergence in particular, Elizabeth's relations to Luke remain on two parallel lines of political as well as personal connections, without one taking priority over the other. With such an open-ended closing scene, *The Late Bourgeois World* constructs as well as complicates the notion of rhizomatic relations that might have remained as a convenient choice as in Gordimer's earlier fiction. Judging from this presentation of the rhizomatic subjectivity, the kind of political consciousness at this stage in Gordimer's writing career may not be an easy assessment as commonly regarded in the earlier years where the political responsibility is vested so heavily on a complete divorce between the personal and the political.

Gordimer's treatment of Elizabeth's political consciousness may make it appear, as suggested by many critics including Wagner, as the consciousness of a reluctant revolutionary. However, as the above discussion shows, the novel constructs a different understanding of the political consciousness, one that even Elizabeth herself cannot properly name:

> I can't explain; but there is the bank account. That's good enough; as when Bobo used to answer a question about his behaviour with the single word: 'Because'. Am I going into politics again, then? And if so, what kind? But I can't be bothered with this sort of thing, it's irrelevant.[48]

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[48] Ibid., p. 141.

This new, yet to be fully perceived, understanding of political consciousness is Gordimer's direct response to the immediate demand of South Africa in the 1960s. As is noted by Clingman, the 1960s witnessed a rapid change in the political and social scenes. He writes that while peaceful methods of resistance and demonstration had been 'the orthodoxy of the 1950s', 'violence resistance' and the 'unexpected brutality and expedition by the power of the South African state' were considered the 'double movement of the 1960s'.[49] As the critic notes that Gordimer's novels such as *A World of Strangers* and *Occasion for Loving* chart that pre-revolutionary period of South Africa in its situating Gordimer's texts in the ideology of humanist liberalism, *The Late Bourgeois World* presents what Clingman considers to be 'a moment of ironic post-revolutionary aftermath'.[50] The question of Elizabeth's political agency, whether or not she will channel her grandmother's money to help the PAC, thus becomes irrelevant for Clingman contends that 'For or against, […] *The Late Bourgeois World* returns to the moment from which it has emerged, as the frenzy of its methods only heightens a sense of the silence from which it was generated'.[51]

To encapsulate the moment of doubt in political progress and social decay of the 1960s, *The Late Bourgeois World*, Head argues, is Gordimer's experimentation in form and genre.[52] Head writes '*The Late Bourgeois World* registers the fragmentation of the liberal ideology, and does so through a skillful disruption of form which is more overt than in her previous work'.[53] The narrative form in question is a particular feature of shorter narrative forms such as the novella and the short story. In these narrative formal styles, 'ideas are expressed obliquely' due 'the technical limitations of point of view', resulting in a narrative ambiguity in various levels.[54] One key expression of ambiguity derives from Elizabeth's uncertain and fragmented subjectivity as she 'is at an interim stage, coming to terms with the apocalyptic vision, while trying to formulate a way beyond it'.[55] Drawing upon Head's reading of the novel's formal experimentation, I see the rhizomatic subject position of Elizabeth as, at one level, signalling towards a kind of waiting for movement to

[49] Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, p. 92, 93.
[50] Ibid., p. 110.
[51] Ibid., p. 110.
[52] Head, *Nadine Gordimer*, p. 77-86.
[53] Ibid., p. 78.
[54] Ibid., p. 82.
[55] Ibid., p. 85.

be made. At another level, her position can be considered as demonstrative of the novel's place in the frontier/rhizomatic position, considering how the peaceful/humanist ideology fails in the earlier period of the 1950s and how the violent acts of resistance and repression are the orthodoxy of the 1960s. In this regard, at the frontier/rhizomatic space, the novel refuses either to retrace the ideological footsteps of the 1950s, or to fully embrace the violent atmosphere of the political world of the 1960s. That moment where Elizabeth lies awake at night at the very end of the novel is the novel's attempt to heighten the character's political consciousness which is deeply formed in the ideological implication of the rhizome in relation to the divide between the personal and the political, as well as against the ideology of radicalism of the time. It is therefore possible to say that Elizabeth's political agency has no centrally/spatially fixed position; it is 'always in the middle', an interbeing which operates in relationship with both her humanist/personal grounding and her public/political capabilities.

The ambiguity and uncertainty that may have overridden Elizabeth's political agency can thus be discerned, more suitably, as the narrative moment in which the novel as a whole attempts to go beyond the political limitation of the public responsibility of the time, which is previously punctuated in the ideologies of liberalism in the 1950s and the politically violent activism of the 1960s. The formal experimentation marks that moment of a fragmented consciousness at an interim state, as Head argues. While the frontier consciousness is presented earlier in the chapter as the political subject position that Gordimer's works of the period seems to be taking, *The Late Bourgeois World* pauses to ask: 'Am I going into politics again, then? And if so, what kind?' Written almost 10 years after *A World of Strangers*, *The Late Bourgeois World* complicates Gordimer's rhizomatic resistance. With the emphasis on the subjective uncertainty and political agency of Elizabeth, *The Late Bourgeois World*'s articulation of the frontier/interbeing subject position becomes a consciousness, truly 'of dimensions, or rather directions in motion', waiting to intervene in causes yet to be defined. It is, in other words, an articulation of both politically manifold possibilities and an agentic moment of self-preservation.

As Gordimer fashions a critically nuanced position of the frontier and interbeing which underlines the flexible and supple movement in the her works like *A World of Strangers* and *Not for Publication*, the author, having been presented with new political

demands, presents a reevaluation of that subject position as the appropriate approach to politics. In her politics of deterritorialisation Gordimer's approach is well grounded in the explicit and proximate encounter between the personal and the political. Her texts demand that immediate contact. In sum, *A World of Strangers*, together with her short fiction, demonstrates a critique of humanist liberalism as a counterproductive cause that prolongs the condition of politicised loneliness. The idea of the frontier subject position raised towards the end of the novel as well as implicitly depicted in 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' is an answer to the damaging result of liberalism since it does not reproduce the geopolitical discourse of separation, which preserves the divorce between the self and the political capability of an individual in perpetual distance. *The Late Bourgeois World* is the last novel of the period, exploring the position of interbeing; however, without falling into an easily conceived idea of the frontier ideology, the novel suspends the moment of mobility. Having dissolved the distinction between the domestic and the political, the novel succeeds in projecting the possibility of such directions in motion, in which characters like Elizabeth are seen as capable of retaining their subjective individualism as well as attaining to the political call of their time.

In chapter two, the discussion will depart from Gordimer's political approach of proximity and immediacy to Coetzee's politics of distant deterritorialisation. The chapter will present a point of departure in which Coetzee, whose writing career being almost two decades after Gordimer, sees politics and the approach to it from a different perspective. While chapter two also deals with the condition of loneliness on the basis of the relational interplay between the personal and the political, the approach to undermine such a condition in Coetzee's fiction is rested upon an entirely new cause of movement and law of interaction.

Chapter 2

Deterritorialising Language: Discursive Anarchism in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*

In 1987, Coetzee addressed the problem of history: 'In South Africa the colonisation of the novel by the discourse of history is proceeding with alarming rapidity'.[1] He further states that:

> … history is not reality; […] history is a kind of discourse; that inevitably, in our culture, history will, with varying degrees of forcefulness, try to claim primacy, claim to be a master-form of discourse, just as, inevitably, people like myself will defend themselves by saying that a history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other.

In this talk, Coetzee uses an analogy which equals the problem of history to the problem of colonisation and apartheid. While he justifies his discursive practice against the charges that his writing irresponsibly ignores the historical reality of apartheid in South Africa, Coetzee may indirectly have suggested that the course of liberation for both literature and colonisation could be achieved through language. In a similar manner of freeing literature from the clutches of history through discursivity, the language of apartheid or the 'master-form of discourse' must be deterritorialised for a state of political immediacy to be achieved.

To write in the language of apartheid, which in this case can be taken to mean writing under the historical/political preconditions set up by the state, a writer allows himself, Coetzee states in an essay entitled 'Into the Dark Chamber', 'to be impaled on the

[1] Coetzee, 'The Novel Today', *Upstream* 6.1 (1988), pp. 2-5 (p. 2).

dilemma proposed by the state, namely, either to ignore its obscenities or else to produce representations of them'.[2] Rather than *following* the state, Coetzee remarks that 'The true challenge is: how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority, how to imagine torture and death on one's own terms'.[3] If we consider Coetzee's discursivity in the context of South African geopolitics as well as in relation to the writerly dilemmas listed in 'Into the Dark Chamber', it is possible to argue that the need for such a concentrated degree of discursive techniques is related to Coetzee's idea that language, especially one that is constructed and fabricated under the regime of apartheid, is territorial and limiting. In the same manner that history is viewed by Coetzee as 'claim[ing] primacy' over literature as 'a master-form of discourse', the language of apartheid expresses a claim, a colonial, territorial claim of representation, exploitation, and hierarchisation.

Understanding Coetzee's discursivity in line with the problem of territorial language proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, I examine, in this chapter, the condition of language and discursivity in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. However, this chapter does not aim to read *Waiting for the Barbarians* allegorically in a way that links 'Empire' in the novel to the apartheid regime.[4] As Attridge puts in, 'But we are dealing here with novels which, to a greater degree than most, concern themselves with the acts of writing and reading, including allegorical writing and reading […] how allegory is thematised in the

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[2] Coetzee, 'Into the Dark Chamber: The Writer and the South African State (1986)', *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David Attwell (MA, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 361-68 (p. 364).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Critics and scholars of Coetzee have long debated the question of reading *Waiting for the Barbarians* allegorically. Notable examples include Attwell (1993). Studying the historical and political responsibility of Coetzee, Attwell draws a deep and sustained discussion of *Waiting for the Barbarians* in its direct reference to contemporary South Africa during and after the Soweto Uprising, entitling his chapter on the text as 'Reading the Signs of History'. Although the work does not offer, strictly speaking, an allegorical reading, it draws on 'signs of history' which constitutes the text's historical consciousness. In a different perspective, Head produces an allegorical reading of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which starts with the claim that 'At one level, this is an allegory of imperialism […]', and develops into 'a deep understanding of the nature of Empire's imperialism, and to a burgeoning ethical stance', in *J. M. Coetzee* (1997). Rebecca Saunders reads the novel in light of the literary concept of the foreign, arguing that *Waiting for the Barbarians* is 'an allegorical text that is […] both thematically and structurally about foreignness and, hence, an exploration into the relationships between "literal" and literary foreignness' (223), 'The Agony and the Allegory: The Concept of the Foreign, the Language of Apartheid, and the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee', *Cultural Critique* 47 (2001), pp. 215-264. Shadi Neimneh offers a postmodern re-reading of the novel, claiming that Coetzee's writing is a visceral allegory 'intertwined with allegorical viscerality' in the way that 'the materiality of the suffering body becomes a new order for the allegorical' (694), 'The Visceral Allegory of *Waiting for the Barbarians*: A Postmodern Re-Reading of J. M. Coetzee's Apartheid Novels, *Callaloo* 37:3 (2014), pp. 692-709.

fiction […]'.[5] While he does not completely ignore the significance of allegorical interpretation, Attridge draws attentions to Coetzee's writing to foreground 'its own linguistic, figurative, and generic operations'.[6] Expanding on Attridge's claim, which presents Coetzee's writing as reworking allegory through his critical attention on what the work does, rather than what it means, this chapter presents an analysis of language and allegorical discursivity in order to understand the elements of the political distance and engagement, respectively set up and performed by Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Drawing on Deleuze and Gauttari's deterritorialisation, one that is deeply related to language and discourse, my argumentative focus here is that Coetzee's deterritorialised form of language and representation is represented as a counter language to the language of apartheid-induced discourse of racial segregation. This presented form of discourse and representation, I argue, envisions an aesthetic articulation of discursive anarchism, a term which is taken to describe a kind of wild dispersing or disordering of order/language, or a discursive practice of disruption and insurgency – the very opposite of apartheid's *orderly* construction and representation of racialised geopolitics. From this critical position of discursive anarchism, Coetzee's spatial consciousness of the 1970s departs from Gordimer's language of historical/political immediacy and urgency that I discussed in chapter one. As the following discussion will show, discursive anarchism articulates the kind of spatial consciousness that depends so much upon the idea of distant and implicit engagement, and simultaneously demands a political interaction that is based on a renewal of discursive practice in the question of political responsibility.

Reading *Waiting for the Barbarians* as an exemplary work which explores Coetzee's discursivity, it is probably helpful to begin with one of the most often quoted passages of the novel, in which the idea of allegory is articulated and contested. The following passage is taken from a scene in chapter four, in which Colonel Joll demands that the poplar slips he found in the Magistrate's apartment to be translated. The quotation below offers a reading of the said poplar slips:

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[5] Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee & The Ethics of Reading*, pp. 33-4.
[6] Ibid., p. 4. See also Susan VanZanten Gallagher's assessment of the novel, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

> They form an allegory. They can be read in many ways. Together they can be read as a domestic journal, or they can be read as a plan of war, or they can be turned on their sides and read as a history of the last years of the Empire – the old Empire, I mean. There is no agreement among scholars about how to interpret these relics of the ancient barbarians […] I found [this set of wooden slips] not three miles from here in the ruins of a public building. Graveyards are another good place to look in, though it is not always easy to tell 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 upon scraps, shards, reminders of the dead […].[7]

Often taken to be indicating how the novel as a whole should be read, the passage outlines the appropriated form of allegory rendered in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Critics like Attridge view an allegorical reading of Coetzee as having the effect of diminishing the 'event' of reading the text, in the way that it universalises the text and disregards the reader's immediate response to the text each time the text is read.[8] In response to Attridge's claim, Jan Wilm argues that Coetzee's works present 'a complex balance' between the literal and the allegorical modes of reading, stating that 'it is more productive, more ethically responsive to the text, to see allegorical as first […] a first and heuristically valid reaction'.[9] While both claims present valid points of argumentation, the reading in this chapter will attest that *Waiting for the Barbarians* does court but resolutely resists allegorical reading. In other words, *Waiting for the Barbarians* offers a deterritorialised perception of allegory in its complete rejection of literal and reductive modes of reading and understanding. Accordingly, I read the above passage's reference to allegory as a form of language and a mode of reading does not '[deal] with the already known'.[10] Specifically, allegory as outlined by the Magistrate deals with that which is impossible to be definitely known. It does not, one could say, have a single, determinate, universalised reading to be underpinned and understood. To the Magistrate, 'an allegory' offers indefinite reading and is, therefore, subject to interpretation.

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[7] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 112.
[8] Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee & The Ethics of Reading*, p. xii.
[9] Jan Wilm, *The Slow Philosophy of J. M. Coetzee* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 130.
[10] Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee & The Ethics of Reading*, p. 64.

With the inclusion of the term 'allegory' in a passage spoken by the Magistrate to Colonel Joll, *Waiting for the Barbarians* draws the reader's attention to two forms of language, one being the language of reduction, and the other, the language of singularity. The language of singularity (or allegory as the Magistrate calls it) performs similarly to what Attridge, in his observation of a literary work, understands to be the subversive quality of literature in the 'testing and unsettling of deeply held assumptions of transparency, instrumentality, and direct referentiality'.[11] In broadest terms, the language of singularity identifies the special nature of literary language in its resistance to critical appropriation. This kind of language is the exact opposite to the language of reduction, which inevitably forces a reading of a certain text into an allegorical reading of a referential kind. *Waiting for the Barbarians* appears to be engaging in this specific employment of language and what that literary language entails, to disrupt and disperse the question of political responsibility that demands an immediate and urgent consciousness of commitment.

In general, these two presented discourses of reduction and singularity are evident in the textual representations of the two characters present at this scene in the novel. In what follows, I begin with a reading of Colonel Joll's language of reduction, which shall be followed and expanded by my discussion of the Magistrate's language of singularity. The implication of these two forms of language presented and contested in the novel shall be the primary subject of discussion, through my analysis of dream sequences, allegorical reference, and the textual mediation on discursive anarchism.

Over the course of the novel, the reader sees different aspects of language portrayed and interrogated in different layers of the narrative. Looking at the scene concerning the wooden slips as a whole, the language of 'the three hundred slips of white poplar wood' is represented first and foremost as 'an unfamiliar script'.[12] The term 'unfamiliar script' has different connotations. It could refer a kind of foreign language whose literal meaning is well beyond the linguistic knowledge of the speaker (who in this scene is Colonel Joll). Or, it could refer to the quality of literary foreignness whose literal meaning is well concealed in the decorated language of literariness. As the scene of the wooden slips unfolds, it is

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[11] Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 30.
[12] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 110.

evident that the first meaning of the 'unfamiliar script' is emphasised both by Colonel Joll and the Magistrate:

> I [The Magistrate] do not know whether to read from right to left or from left to right. In the long evenings I spent poring over my collection I isolated over four hundred and fifty. I have no idea what they stand for.[13]

From this literal or linguistic foreignness, the novel progresses to another realm of discursive incomprehensibility which is vocalised in the aforementioned, long block quotation. In that passage, *Waiting for the Barbarians* shifts its critical focus to the literary or allegorical quality of language whose meaning is disrupted and fragmented by the very nature of language itself.

This fundamental demarcation between literal and figurative foreignness is displayed and juxtaposed in the novel's portrayals of Colonel Joll and the Magistrate. I will first look at the representation of Colonel Joll and the kind of language which is representative of his discursive practice. Over the course of the novel, Colonel Joll consistently speaks the language of literalness and reduction. It is a language with a grave emphasis on literal and proper meaning. The following statement gives an example of Colonel Joll's language of literalness. It is spoken after the Magistrate has finished his long translation of the wooden slips, part of which is given in the block quotation previously discussed:

> 'When I arrived back a few days ago, I had decided that all I wanted from you was a clear answer to a simple question, after which you could have returned to your concubines a free man'.[14]

Unable to accept the Magistrate's ambivalent translation of the wooden slips, Colonel Joll expresses his feeling of exasperation. To Colonel Joll, the Magistrate's reading of the 'unfamiliar script' is not 'a clear answer' to his 'simple question'.

Looking elsewhere in the narrative, we see a more nuanced portrayal of Colonel Joll's discursive practice. His understanding of language, as the following analysis will show, does not merely reside in the realm of literalness and proper meaning. Instead, the language of Colonel Joll is a specific language of suppression and reduction. To illustrate

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 113.

this, I will look at another well-known passage from *Waiting for the Barbarians* which describes Colonel Joll's discursive practice as well as his interrogative nature. The following quotation is drawn from one of the earliest scenes of confrontation between the Magistrate and Colonel Joll, in which the latter explains to the former his method of interrogation:

> 'No, you misunderstand me. I am speaking only of a special situation now, I am speaking of a situation in which I am probing for *the truth*, in which I have to exert pressure to find it. First I get lies, you see – this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth' (emphasis added).[15]

In this speech, Colonel Joll refers to his general practice of interrogation. In order to find truth, one must assert 'pressure' or torture. Additionally, there can only be one truth, 'the truth'; everything else is regarded by the speaker as 'lies'. This leads the Magistrate to articulate the following conclusion to Colonel Joll 'Pain is truth; all else is subject to doubt'.[16] This kind of language is not simply a language of literalness. It is accurate to say that Colonel Joll does not speak or, shall I say, resist a language of literariness. Rather, what Colonel Joll speaks is in fact a language of discursive reduction, in which a rigid belief in single meaning represses and, even in this case, reduces the myriad ways language actually performs when written or spoken. This kind of language is, in short, reductive as displayed in Colonel Joll's understanding of truth: 'Pain is truth; all else is subject to doubt'. Revisiting the wooden slips scene, the reading can then be developed:

> 'A reasonable inference is that the wooden slips contain messages passed between yourself and other parties, we do not know when. It remains for you to explain what the messages say and who the other parties were'.[17]

When what the Magistrate translates does not match Colonel Joll's centralised and reductive notion of how the wooden slips should be read, he proclaims it to be unreasonable and furiously dismisses it. For Colonel Joll, the messages should not only be definite, but they have to have the kind of meaning that will justify and maintain his political foothold.

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[15] Ibid., p. 5.
[16] Ibid.
[17]Ibid., p. 110.

Interrogating the linkage between linguistic practice and thinking elsewhere, Coetzee notes a particular situation in which 'the concept of force', proposed in 'Isaac Newton and the Ideal of a Transparent Scientific Language', is essential in tracing the structure of one's language.[18] In the essay, Coetzee produces a reading of Newton's language prevalent in his work of cosmology following the Whorf hypothesis by asking the question: 'Do we find in Newton's English and Latin the seamless continuity that Whorf predicts between syntax and logic and world view, or on the contrary, are there signs of a wrestling to make the thought fit into language, to make the language express the thought, signs perhaps even of an incapacity of language to express certain thoughts, or of thought unable to think itself out because of the limitations of its medium?'.[19] Against the claim which is often directed toward the Whorf hypothesis as being circular and experimentally unverifiable, Coetzee contends that there is 'a dense complicity between thought and language', pointing to the limitations of the linguistic medium which Newton worked in. Placing Colonel Joll's language under Coetzee's concept of force, I see Colonel Joll's words as an example of how the character projects the structure of his own language out onto the wooden slips and wrestles to produce a reductive meaning from it. That is, Colonel Joll takes his own 'inference' as an accurate, and, apparently, 'reasonable' reading of the wooden slips, rather than a reading which is determined by his own particular linguistic practice. It is a scene, in other words, of Colonel Joll unable to think himself 'out because of the limitations of [his own linguistic] medium'. As it appears, his political power and his ability to exercise that power are dependent on the kind of perception he verbalises, resulting in the negation and rejection of any other readings that the wooden slips may yield.

This is a critical moment in the narrative in which Colonel Joll's discursive as well as material practices operate in concert. In the criticism commonly directed at Coetzee's emphasis on discursivity, the subjects of material and discursive practices often remain in two separate realms. From the portrayal of Colonel Joll in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, it is possible that the intention in combining the discursive belief and the material practice of

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[18] Coetzee, 'Isaac Newton and the Ideal of a Transparent Scientific Language (1982)', *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 181-194 (p. 184).
[19] Ibid., p. 184.

Colonel Joll as a figure of colonisation is critical in ways that suggest there is no material or historical circumstance that operates independently of discursive practices.

In addition to the portrayal of Colonel Joll, the reader can find other examples of how Coetzee implicitly interrogates the material conditions of colonisation through his critique of the discursive practices of reduction, centralisation, and hierarchisation. One prime evidence is the novel which precedes *Waiting for the Barbarians*. *In the Heart of the Country* provides one good example of this type of language which is employed by the central character, Magda: 'I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective'.[20] Despite the complicated situation where gender plays a role in placing her in a distinct position as a half-colonised character, Magda's discursive practice is similar to that of Colonel Joll. While it is not clear what Magda means by this 'language of hierarchy', it could possibly refer to the language of patriarchy which she constantly tries to subvert from the outset of the novel. However, in a context more immediate to this chapter's discussion, the 'language of hierarchy' can also refer to a kind of territorialised language which creates a political climate in which the logic of hegemony and hierarchy contains and suppresses a given group within the confines of its territorial and discursive power.

Within the context of apartheid, the true binding which confines Magda is more than just the masculine imaginary of the farmhouse novel, but, in fact, the apartheid imaginary of racial geopolitics and hierarchy. Within this context, the kind of language Magda was then born into can then be reinterpreted as the Afrikaans language, which she uses to speak to her servants. That very language represents and reinforces the idea of suppression, exploitation, and segregation. The following passage is drawn from a scene in which Magda admits to herself how the language of her ancestors has exhausted and imprisoned her:

> The lips are tired, I explain to him, they want to rest, they are tired of all the articulating they have had to do since they were babies, since it was revealed to them that there was a law [...] I am exhausted by obedience to this law, I try to say, whose mark lines on me in the spaces between the words, the spaces or the pauses, and in the articulations that set up the war of sounds, the b against the d, the m

[20] Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 91.

> against the n, and so forth, as well as in other places which I would be too weary to set out for you even if I felt you understood, which I doubt, since you do not so much as know the alphabet.[21]

The language of hierarchy, or of apartheid, hinges upon the polarisation of sounds which Magda understands to be 'the war of sounds'. Although she feels exhausted and imprisoned by the sounds she makes, the language provides her a certain level of power over her subordinates who 'do not so much as know the alphabet'. As a narrator as well as the mistress of the farmhouse, Magda consciously deploys the language of hierarchy to secure her agency and display power regulated under racial and social classifications.

In terms of language and their portrayals of Magda and Colonel Joll, *In the Heart of the Country* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* explore the reductiveness and centralisation of discourse which result and are imbricated in certain material conditions of control and exploitation. This critical viewpoint, of how language and material conditions interlink, sets out, I contend, the kind of consciousness that insists upon the idea of politicised loneliness, in which the dominant materiality of historical and political truth in and outside the apartheid context creates a limiting condition of discursive reduction. The idea of loneliness that is implicit in how the language of reduction operates demands a closer look into the historical deployment of discursive practices in South Africa. In the broadest terms, the condition of politicised loneliness as discussed in chapter one is a condition that is deeply intertwined with the notion of political incapability due to the severe separation between the human and the political realms. As my reading of Gordimer attests, the condition of politicised loneliness in the 1960s is a condition that is a direct result of the apartheid government's geopolitics of segregation. Such segregation aims, first and

[21] Ibid., p. 84. In Coetzee's later work, *Foe*, the phrase 'I try to say' is reused at the very end of the novel: 'I try to say […] But this is not a place of words. Each syllable, as it comes out, is caught and filled with water and diffused. This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday', *Foe* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 157. While the reuse of the phrase shows Coetzee's engaged meditation on language and how language performs in connection with individual subjects, the use of the phrase functions differently in both novels. While language is perceived to be inconsequential, in a way that the material condition of Friday is more favoured as a form of non-verbal sign of language, existing in a different realm than the language of the narrator, or that of Susan Barton, language in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is considered to be repressive and more binding, in the way that the material presence and freedom of Magda is limited by the very language she speaks. The attempt to voice/articulate, present in both novels, is then called into question, signifying in *In the Heart of the Country*, the inability of Magda to break free from such repressive mode of Afrikaner and patriarchal discourse, and, in *Foe*, a moment of realisation/actualisation of the narrator to arrive at 'the home of Friday' in which language is graphically submerged in the material signs of Friday's discursive *body*.

foremost, to limit an individual subject to engage with the political world. Her narrative solution as I have discussed is to bridge the two separated worlds, and to make the condition of movement flexible and feasible. It is a direct and immediate counter practice to the condition of loneliness in question. However, as Coetzee understands it, the condition of politicised loneliness derives from and can only be countered by destabilising the discursive practice of reduction. That language of reduction which is represented as the truth produces the real geopolitical discourse of separation.

Certain historical examples from South Africa provide good insights into how Coetzee understands the language of reduction in its operation and production of politicised loneliness. To illustrate, discourse is the critical mechanisms through which material conditions of colonisation and loneliness transpire. From a historical perspective, the exploitative mechanism of apartheid operated more forcefully through its discursive practices throughout the period of the 1970s. In 1974, the South African Minister of Bantu Education and Development, Martinus C. Bortha, issued the Afrikaans Medium Decree which forced the use of Afrikaans as a mandatory medium of instruction in black schools. With the intention to reverse the decline of Afrikaans among black Africans, the decree was implemented despite the fact that it was met with several resistance campaigns and peaceful demonstrations. The event culminated in the police opening fire on a peaceful protest in 1976 known as the Soweto Uprising. This form of enforcement of the use of Afrikaans signifies a process which seek to stratify and normalise subjects under a national discourse of hierarchy, by forcing non-white subjects to speak in the language of the oppressor.

To better understand apartheid discourse and how it affects the writing of Coetzee especially in the 1970s to the early 1980s, we must next consider the writing of Geoffrey Cronjé. In a chapter entitled 'Apartheid Thinking', Coetzee raises concern over the question of 'ignorance and madness' found to be abundant in the passages of, as the author names it, apartheid 'testament' written in 'the heart-speech of autobiography and confession' by Cronjé.[22] In persuading the reader to enter the language of Cronjé, Coetzee brings to light how Cronjé's madness is reinserted into the history, into the discourse of

[22] Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 164.

apartheid South Africa. Among many of Coetzee's textual examples from the 1945 writing of Cronjé are his rigid and problematic, fivefold typology, which include 'natives', 'Coloured', 'Asians', 'Jews' and 'whites'. From the normalised and stratified language of Cronjé, Coetzee moves to the more concrete subject of mixed marriage that has been put forward by Cronjé:

> There are whites, born in this country, who have degenerated to such an extent in respect of morality, self-respect and racial pride that they feel no objection against blood-mixing […] Whites must protect themselves against these conscienceless and criminal blood-mixers by […] making all blood-mixing (illegal intercourse) punishable.[23]

With that comment, Coetzee points out how Cronjé indirectly approaches the question of a mixed marriage, a subject which predates the writing of Cronjé, and pits it against the question of desire, implying that the ban on mixed marriage is an issue that criminalises not only actual cases of a mixed marriage, but also any interracial relations, or, even, sexual desire.

As is noted by Coetzee later on, Cronjé's writing was welcomed as 'a serious account of reality' both in the period of its writing in the 1940s as well as in two decades later, when his writing became the defining factor which enshrined the laws and regulations of limitations and divisions on individual subjects in South Africa. The Publication Act, 1963 is one of the primary examples of how Cronjé's language of 'madness' entered the history of South Africa. According to Peter D. McDonald, the newly elected government of H. F. Verwoerd responded to Cronjé's writing and passed the law whose mandate was to investigate and censor publications in South Africa. Deemed as being 'less repressive', the Publication Act of 1963 was later amended to be more repressive as equally envisaged in the Cronjé's original proposals.[24] The new Act comprised five main clauses, 'covering what could be deemed morally repugnant, blasphemous, socially subversive, or politically seditious':

> 5 (2) A publication or object shall be deemed to be undesirable if it or any part of

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[23] Ibid., p. 172.

[24] Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 33.

it –

(a) is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to the public morals;
(b) is blasphemous or is offensive to the religious convictions or feelings of any section of the inhabitants of the Republic;
(c) brings any section of the inhabitants of the Republic into ridicule or contempt;
(d) is harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic;
(e) is prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare or the peace and good order.[25]

As the words of the Cronjé became realised in the laws of South Africa, as seen in the above quotation, the question of reading under the gaze of the censoring apartheid government became an ever more, pressing matter. Placing this contextual situation of the Publication Act in close proximity with Coetzee's writing, it is safe to say that *Waiting for the Barbarians* is Coetzee's direct response to such repressive history/discourse of South Africa, which, in a greater degree, aims to police and attack the public's exposure to reading and the capability to *read and think otherwise* (to what is stated and totalised).[26]

This language of 'madness' and of reduction is in line with the kind of language Deleuze and Guattari discuss in their works. To the two philosophers, this type of language is called overcoding. Deleuze and Guattari define overcoding as a series of 'phenomena of centering, unification, totalisation, integration, hierarchisation, and finalisation'.[27] Following their definition, overcoding is a form of practice that presupposes the perceptions of homogeneity and finality. Furthermore, if we look at overcoding as particularly a form of language, this language privileges the condition which seeks to normalise, totalise and finalise meaning and knowledge. Applying that concept to the context of South Africa, it is possible to see apartheid discourse of race and geopolitics as definitive and reductive in the ways that they seek to normalise and stratify South African

[25] Ibid., p. 34.
[26] According to Attwell, at the time of redrafting *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee's previous novel *In the Heart of the Country* was in the process of being investigated by the censorship board (83-4), J. *M. Coetzee and The Life of Writing: Face-to-Face with Time* (New York: Viking, 2015).
[27] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateau*, p. 105.

subjects under the regime's geopolitical codes of racial segregation. The aim is to manage and control the whole body of the population without regard to their myriad subjectivities and their subject positions in the state. Such is how the condition of loneliness is produced. It is produced and sustained by language of 'madness' and of historically, racially reductive truth.

As amply exemplified in Coetzee's reading of Cronjé, language is the primary discursive means through which the apartheid government manages its populations. We see certain literary representations of how language overcodes and punishes subjects in Coetzee's novel. In order to stratify and discipline the social body, language becomes a means which sanctions the atrocity and brutality of torture in an episode of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The passage reproduced below depicts a scene of punishment in which prisoners are brought into 'an arena clear for the exemplary spectacle'.[28]

> The Colonel steps forward. Stopping over each prisoner in turn he rubs a handful of dust into his naked back and write a word with a stick of charcoal. I [The Magistrate] read the words upside down: ENEMY … ENEMY … ENEMY … ENEMY. He steps back and folds his hands […] Then the beating begins. The soldiers use the stout green cane staves, bringing them down with the heavy slapping sounds of washing-paddles, raising red welts on the prisoners' back and buttocks […] The game, I see, is to beat them till their backs are washed clean.[29]

To Nashef, *Waiting for the Barbarians* tells a story about how language oppresses and is forced and 'thrown at a silent non-responsive other'.[30] And the perception of language, of how language, in Nashef's words, 'can be molded into a viable instrument for inflicting pain by oppressive regimes', is best illustrated in the above passage.[31] Tellingly, the scene depicts four prisoners kneeling on the ground with a cord running through their mouths. Not only are they identified here as 'prisoners' but they are also literally written over to be designated as 'ENEMY'. In graphic details, the scene moves from how the Colonel paints their 'naked [backs of the prisoners]' with dust and writes the word 'ENEMY' 'with a stick of charcoal', to the actual act of beating, intended for the purpose of cleaning the soiled

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[28] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 104.
[29] Ibid., p.105.
[30] Nashef, *The Politics of Humiliation in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee*, p. 9.
[31] Ibid.

bodies of the prisoner's branded back. The act of writing is the very act of discursive overcoding which stratifies the four individual subjects under the category of 'ENEMY', and, thus, justifies Colonel Joll's intention to purge/punish the soiled bodies. This practice of overcoding, of writing the word 'ENEMY' on the bodies of the prisoners, proves to be consequential, for, without it, the subsequent scene of beating cannot be justified. Thus, the writing or overcoding itself provides a necessary ground for Colonel Joll to exercise his political power. It is a condition deemed critical to his existence and position in the frontier outpost.

Under the condition of politicised loneliness, delivered as well as deeply lodged within the language of reduction and madness itself, *Waiting for the Barbarians* critiques the question of political responsibility. In contrast to how Gordimer approaches the political realms through representing a historically and politically charged consciousness and representation, Coetzee navigates the question of political responsibility through the medium of literary language and the language of singularity. One question remains: if the singularity of literary language emphasises the elusiveness of meaning, is a political reading of a text actually possible? To put this into perspective, does not a reading of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, in the political context of apartheid's discursive practice of reductive truth disregard the novel's supposedly prepositioned singularity? To answer this question, I examine, in the following section, the counter language of singularity evident in the character of the Magistrate and the novel's overall language of literariness.

Looking at Coetzee's discursive practice, Judie Newman, for instance, resolves the tension between the novel's lack of political situatedness and its elusive political consciousness by studying the language of intertextuality. She argues that '*Waiting for the Barbarians* is in fact a novel which directly thematises intertextuality in a careful strategy of repoliticisation. Key intertexts are rewritten and deployed in order to underline specific political points, within an overall framework which reconstrues the literary technique itself to subversive ends […]'.[32] While Newman finds direct correlations between text and intertext to justify the re-conception of political commitment, my examination of Coetzee's

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[32] Judie Newman, 'Intertextuality, Power and Danger: *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a Dirty Story', in *Critical Essays on J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by Sue Kossew (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), pp. 126-38 (p.127).

discursivity, primarily on the subject of allegory as language does not present an easily-mapped language of political consciousness. As the discussion that follows will attest, the mediation of discursive singularity in *Waiting for the Barbarians* depicts an artistic articulation of a hesitant/distant consciousness of spatial involvement, unique to Coetzee's writing. The hesitant/distant consciousness of spatial involvement is characterised by the novel's hesitant/distant identification of and interaction with a historical interpretation, whereby the idea of discursive anarchism becomes a deterritorialisation of the language of reductive truth.

To deterritorialise or put this discursive process of overcoding/reductive truth in flux, Coetzee juxtaposes the representation of Colonel Joll with that of the Magistrate. In contrast to Joll whose mission is always to seek *the* truth and who is often seen as being blind to the singularity and complexity of reality/history, the Magistrate speaks in figurative language, the language of allegorisation. To illustrate this, I will look at various scenes in which the Magistrate employs a literary language in ways that depict, to a certain degree, a belief in the plurality/fluidity of reality/truth. For instance, in one of his recollections after he meets the barbarian girl, the Magistrate describes the girl as 'an urn or a ball, something which is all surface'.[33] Or, in another instance, in which the Magistrate learns that the barracks will be expanded and 'proper cells' will be built, he sarcastically recalls himself speaking symbolically, 'time for the black flower of civilisation to bloom'.[34] Through this figurative language, Coetzee constructs the Magistrate as a character who is essentially opposite to the kind of man Colonel Joll is. In other words, the Magistrate's language of literary singularity emphasises the degree of discursive ambiguity and doubleness, in ways that suggest the variability of meaning and a complete rejection of Colonel Joll's belief in the totality and reduction of knowledge. Recalling the passage about the wooden slips in which the Magistrate emphasises the many, contradictory ways in which each slip should be read whether when placed together or read separately, I contend that through this depiction of language called allegory, *Waiting for the Barbarians* capitalises on the ideas of openness, ambiguity, and plurality, ideas that are often policed and prevented in Coetzee's contemporary South Africa.

[33]Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 49.
[34] Ibid., p. 79.

If we follow the quoted scene of punishment discussed earlier, we will have a clearer perception of how the Magistrate's use of language directly takes aim at Colonel Joll:

> 'I [The Magistrate] point to the four prisoners who lie docilely on the earth, their lips to the pole, their hands clasped to their faces like monkey's paws, oblivious of the hammer, ignorant of what is going on behind them, relieved that the offending mark has been beaten from their backs, hoping that the punishment is at an end. I raise my broken hand to the sky. "Look!" I shout. We are the great miracle of creation!" Words fail me. "Look at these men!" I recommence. "*Men!*"'.[35]

As the scene unfolds, the reader is now at the point in which Colonel Joll is holding 'a hammer, an ordinary four-pound hammer used for knocking in tent-pegs', ready to strike the four prisoners with it.[36] Before any action is made, the Magistrate steps in and stops Colonel Joll. He insists that these four prisoners are 'the great miracle of creation'. Pointing to the sky above, the Magistrate verbally attacks Joll's inhuman punishment, demanding that he sees them as '*Men*'. The vocalised demand of the Magistrate emphasises the notion of humanity and subjectivity which is not registered in Colonel Joll's discursive practice of overcoding. Although the Magistrate's acknowledgement of the four prisoners as 'the great miracle of creation' does not resolve the tension in this situation, but with this narrative investment the novel presents a stark contrast between perceptions and discourses, respectively invested in two different characters.

In a more extended discussion of the Magistrate's discursive practice, it is best to look at how the character understands and employs the term 'allegory', a term which in the context of *Waiting for the Barbarians* becomes unsettled and deterritorialised. Broadly speaking, allegory is 'to say one thing and mean another'.[37] It is often a mode of writing and reading which demands that we think otherwise. However, *Waiting for the Barbarians* problematises that understanding of allegory (the interpretative and writing act). Some critics have noted Coetzee's intervention on this matter. Shadi Neimneh, for instance, argues that Coetzee's revision of the received notions of allegory is significantly grounded

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[35] Ibid., p. 107.
[36] Ibid., p. 106.
[37] Brenda Machosky, *Thinking Allegory Otherwise*, ed. by Brenda Machosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 7.

in his strongly pronounced emphasis on the surface and material condition of the novel, rather than its abstract meanings.[38] While I agree with Neimneh's claim, I contend that Coetzee's revision of allegory in equally grounded in its material representations as well as its particular investment on how language itself functions to produce and fragment meaning. That is, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, allegory leaves its traditional understanding and practice, and is understood through the context of the novel at a highly conceptual level of language. When the Magistrate says that the wooden slips 'form an allegory', the novel itself does not merely invite the reader to understand the text as a whole as a work of allegory, which in turn requires an interpretative mode of allegorical reading. Instead, it alerts the readers to consider the wooden slips, which are regarded in the novel as forming an unfamiliar script, as a kind of language which is understood by the Magistrate as 'allegory'. The Magistrate's understanding of the wooden slips as forming 'an allegory' demonstrates his attempt to subvert Colonel Joll's blind insistence and desire to reach a definite reading/truth concerning the slips. If we follow the Magistrate's wording when he points out the myriad possibilities of reading that the wooden slips contain, it is evident that the idea behind his usage of the term 'allegory' has nothing to do with the traditional practice of allegory and allegorisation as a mode of writing and reading. In fact, it reinforces the conceptual understanding of language which is interpretative and irreducibly arbitrary. The term 'allegory' is therefore employed to underline such a nature of language which always rhetorically speaks and invites reading/meaning of more than one kind. This form of language is inherently opposed to the language Colonel Joll practises.

Looking more closely at the allegory passage, we see specific evidence of how language about allegorical perception performs. The Magistrate says, if all the slips are read together, 'they can be read as a domestic journal, or they can be read as a plan of war […]'. However, if they are read separately, each slip presents 'a single character'. Of one slip, he says:

> a single character. It is a barbarian character war, but it has other senses too. It can stand for vengeance, and, if you turn it upside down like this, it can be made to read justice. There is no knowing which sense is intended […].[39]

[38] Neimneh, p. 693.
[39] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 112.

Here, the Magistrate highlights the diverse and seemingly contradictory readings of wooden slips in ways a single wooden slip can be read as 'war', 'vengeance,' or 'justice'. Now while listing all the translation he may have made on reading the wooden slips, the Magistrate may be ridiculing Colonel Joll by emphasising all the translation he may or may not have accurately acquired through his reading of the wooden slips. Yet, as he speaks of those interpretative possibilities, it is evident that the idea that the Magistrate is trying to impart to Colonel Joll is the impossibility of knowing the definite meaning. This case of impossibility of knowing the definite translation may be twofold as it could possibly refer to the Magistrate's own limited understanding of the wooden slips or to Colonel Joll's inability of getting 'a clear answer', simply because the wooden slips do not contain a single, coherent message.

Set in direct opposition to Colonel Joll's language of reduction, the novel's language of allegory is established as the art of fragmentation. That is to say, allegory as proposed in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is not merely a form of reading or writing which does not build up a single meaning since it will not offer a whole, coherent reading. Instead, allegory as seen by the Magistrate through his reading of the set of 'slips of white poplar wood', fragments and ruins meaning, and thus presents a case of breakdown in meaning.[40] Noting the inadequacy that an allegorical reading of Coetzee's novel would present, Attridge draws attention to the elusiveness and subversiveness of the text. To expand on Attridge's idea of elusiveness and open-endedness, I turn to Walter Benjamin and his acclaimed theory of allegory in the modern age. Particularly, Benjamin understands allegory as a form of art which deals with the perception of death and a world in ruins, which results in his claim that allegory destabilises what is established and whole. Discussing allegory in his critique of the Romantic valuation and vision of nature, Benjamin states that

> […] death digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance. But if nature has always been subject to the power of death, it is also true that it has always been allegorical.[41]

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[40] Ibid., p. 110.

[41] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by J. Osborne (London: Verso, 1977), p. 166

In this passage, as Benjamin rejects the organic power of nature, he relates the idea of death to allegory. This leads him to propose the idea that 'the false appearance of totality is extinguished'.[42] Taken from George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the term 'totality' implies the notion of knowledge as a whole. However, what Benjamin discusses here is the disappearance of that totality in allegory.[43] According to the critic, allegory as a form of art refuses to see meaning or knowledge as a whole or as a single, coherent entity. The *death* or the disappearance of 'totality' or body of knowledge thus suggests that allegory both derives from and produces fragments or ruins of meaning. Commenting on this train of thought, Howard Caygill states that 'The first movement of the allegorical is that of fragmentation – the destruction and ruination of contexts of meaning – with the ruin as an emblem of the destructive character of allegory'.[44]

The Magistrate's reading of the wooden slips illustrates a particular form of language called allegory similar to how Benjamin understands it. The textual representation of wooden slips is one which is grounded in the image of death and ruins: '[The Magistrate] found this one not three miles from here in the ruins of a public building. Graveyards are another good place to look in, though it is not always easy to tell where barbarian burial sites lie […]'.[45] In a similar way that 'the three hundred slips of white poplar wood' correspond to the perception and invocation of a world in ruins in its formation of an allegory, *Waiting for the Barbarians* could be understood as a narrative representation of, and, a meditation on, language which presupposes the impossibility and *death* of meaning/knowledge in its narrative premise dated back to an unknown period of a lost Empire. From that perception of death and ruins related to the wooden slips, the novel, in the allegory passage, directs our attention to how many individual slips there are to be read. Judging from the Magistrate's attempt to ridicule Colonel Joll's reductive vision of truth, it is best illustrated in the speech that each individual slip invites a particular understanding of language, that each slip stands for fragments of history. Regardless of

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[42] Ibid., p. 176

[43] Bainard Cowan writes: 'Allegory could not exist if truth were accessible: as a mode of expression it arises in perpetual response to the human condition of being exiled from the truth that it would embrace', in 'Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory', *New German Critique* 22 (1981), pp. 109-22 (p. 114).

[44] Howard Caygill, 'Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory', *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2011), pp. 241-53 (p. 248).

[45] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 112.

how one should read them separately, together, or in what order, they come to underline truth/history in its fragmented/broken forms.

Represented as fragments, the wooden slips and, by extension, the overall language of the novel, do not in any way lack in meaning. The problem that Benjamin implies to be at issue in the case of breakdown in meaning is, in fact, the problem of transmitting any valuable, coherent reading. Like the wooden slips discussed above: they do have *meaning*, but because they are in a fragmentary state and situated in the discursive realm where their immediate meaning is not readily available to both the Magistrate or Colonel Joll. Looking at this very same motif, Carrol Clarkson notes that 'throughout Coetzee's writing […] there is an appreciation of language as material substance – an appreciation that it is something that is seen and heard, as much as it is understood'.[46] Later on Clarkson asserts that this 'something' can be 'recognised *as signifying, as wanting-to-say* […] even in the absence of the reader's or the listener's comprehending it'.[47] In a similar vein to Clarkson's assessment of language in general, and of the wooden slips in particular, language as exemplified in the novel's representation of the wooden slips can be seen as 'signifying' and 'wanting-to-say'. Yet, the very message or meaning is broken down by the nature of its form. The possibility of knowing the precise translation is thus made irrelevant. From the passage on the wooden slips, the reader is introduced to a kind of language which is incoherent, fragmented, indeterminate, and impossible to be completely understood. Intended to destabilise Colonel Joll's belief in the literal, definitive, and reductive production of knowledge, this kind of language is intricately linked to the novel's portrayals of the Magistrate and the barbarian girl. The tensions which unfold between the two characters as well as those raised in dream sequences highlight the textual ambiguity, and, above all, substantiate and deepen the reader's understanding of language as it is broken down into pieces and segments.

How *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a mediation of language destabilises and deterritorialises the totality and reduction of meanings, and with what effects, will further be shown through close readings of the textual construction and reproduction of allegorical ambiguity. The quality of language called allegory is manifest in different narrative levels.

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[46] Carrol Clarkson, *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), p. 67.
[47] Ibid., p. 67.

First, I will look in more details at the Magistrate's language of allegory and the representation of the barbarian girl. The following paragraphs will show a reading of the Magistrate's dreamscape pertaining to the subject of allegory as language and what it entails. The passage below gives a description of the Magistrate's first narrated dream:

> As I glide across the square, dark figures separate out from the whiteness, children at play building a snowcastle on top of which they have planted a little flag […] I am aware of my bulk, my shadowiness, therefore I am not surprised that the children melt away on either side as I approach. All but one. Older than the others, perhaps not even a child, she sits in the snow with her hooded back to me working at the door of the castle, her legs splayed, burrowing, patting, moulding. I stand behind her and watch. She does not turn. I try to imagine the face between the petals of her peaked hood but cannot.[48]

There are five dream sequences in the novel. All of the Magistrate's dreams centre on the figure of a hooded girl at play in a snowy town. The above passage describes the Magistrate's first encounter with the hooded figure. The Magistrate's perception of the girl is not clear: 'Older than the others, perhaps not even a child, she sits in the snow […]. The girl appears to be 'hooded', concealed under a 'peaked hood'. In this dream as well as other dreams, the Magistrate is seen trying to 'peer under the hood' to see what is beneath it.[49] At the advent of the first dream, the figure of the hooded girl immediately becomes a narrative mystery.

Although the link between the hooded figure and the barbarian is not immediate to the reader, the novel nonetheless presents both figures in such a similar way that seems to reinforce or, at least, court a reading above or beyond literal understanding. As the girl in the Magistrate's dream appears to be hooded and with her back facing him, the barbarian girl is described by the Magistrate to be 'an urn or a ball, something which is all surface'. Barnard, among other critics, connect Coetzee's representation of the hooded girl with the image of the barbarian girl, commenting how the Magistrate 'in a dream urges the barbarian girl to put people in the empty city she builds out of snow'.[50] Rather than seeing the hooded

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[48] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 9-10.
[49] Ibid., p. 37.
[50] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, p. 33.

girl as a recreation of the barbarian girl in a dream, I see both narrative figures as emphasising the subversive quality of language in which the idea of totality and finality is dismantled. Looking at the correlation between what it is and what it represents in the Magistrate's dream sequences, while the figure of the hooded girl may symbolise a secret significance, in that it may lead the reader to probe for another meaning, it purposely obstructs the possibility of transmitting meaning by creating a significant split between surface meaning and what is underneath it. Here the connection between the surface meaning and what it represents is drastically increased since the analogy itself is wrested out of the Magistrate's consciousness and buried into his unconscious. Narrative attention is then drawn to the split, rather than the connection, between what or who the hooded girl is and what she represents. The hooded girl may be the barbarian girl as imagined and dreamed by the Magistrate, but it is not certain for the context in which the analogy appears is twice removed from waking reality and, thus, is too open-ended for definition.

As the Magistrate's choice of analogy which compares the barbarian girl to an urn or ball indicates, there is a certain depth, an unknown area which lies beneath or inside, beyond the Magistrate's eyes. In pointing towards a certain depth of comprehension which is beyond his knowledge, the analogy reinforces the Magistrate's failure to read the barbarian girl's subjectivity. He later admits to himself, shortly after his first encounter with the barbarian girl, that 'It has been growing more and more clear to me that until the marks on this girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her'.[51] The term 'deciphered' that the Magistrate uses at this point tellingly suggests that the meaning of the barbarian girl as a person does exceeds the literal or factual meaning or understanding. That is, as the need to decipher and understand 'the marks on [the] girl's body' arises, the literal meaning of the barbarian girl is infused, if not replaced, with an allegorical reading. That reading renders the barbarian girl as language to be read and deciphered by the Magistrate. The representation of the hooded girl in the Magistrate's dreams, on the other hand, emphasises the act of gazing, on the part of the Magistrate, and the act of building a snow town with the girl's face hiding under the hood. Her presence and particularity are not immediately known to the Magistrate. Together, I see these two figures as representing language in the Magistrate's desperate attempt to understand it.

[51] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 31.

These two separate depictions of the barbarian girl in waking reality and the hooded figure in dream sequences, at once, add layers of textual and allegorical ambiguity to the novel as a whole. To elaborate, *Waiting for the Barbarians* first invokes the image of a hooded girl at play in the Magistrate's dream. Later, the novel introduces another figure of the barbarian girl whose undecipherable nature has captivated the narrator in waking reality. Seemingly speaking, as the term 'deciphered' suggests, the barbarian girl, and, by extension, the hooded figure in the Magistrate's dreams, could then be read allegorically as a textual personification of language. However, the textual ambiguity in these two invocations relies not only on the actual representations of these two figures themselves, but also on the narrative shift between waking reality and dreams. The shift between dream and waking reality produces, on the one hand, a textual movement which transforms the unconscious perception of language into a person. On the other hand, despite his attempt to *decipher* her allegorically, the Magistrate's encounter with the barbarian girl in his waking hours insists that the barbarian should be taken literally, first and foremost, as a person or agency. In addition, his subsequent, dream episodes, which offer another allegorical reading of language in another form of the hooded girl, confuses the issue of language as real, as being personified. The confusion is partly due to both the shift from the barbarian girl in waking reality to the hooded girl in dream sequences and the fact that in the Magistrate's dream, language is reimagined as a person, but the personified presence only resides in a moment of the unconscious.

The representations of the two figures, therefore, show the inconsistence and arbitrariness of linguistic representation which relies upon the correlation between the signified and the signifier, the literal and the literary, which is, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, represented through the projections of two different girls who reside in two separate realms. As language as an abstract quality is invoked in the form of the poplar slips; its meaning is well beyond the linguistic knowledge of Colonel Joll as well as the Magistrate. Yet, when the novel itself presents language in the figures of a barbarian girl and the hooded figure in the Magistrate's dream, not only do their undecipherable figures remain unclear and closed, the personification of language arbitrarily slips in and out of consciousness and refuses to be underpinned as a person, making it a crucial way to see language as an active system which escapes definition and fixity.

The shifting representation of language in *Waiting for the Barbarians* portrays language as allegory, unsettling Colonel Joll's language of totalising and reductive truth. As discussed in the paragraphs concerning the wooden slips, this term 'allegory' connotes a kind of language which is incoherent, fragmented, and impossible to be completely understood. This appropriated concept of allegory produces fragments of meaning, with no assumption can be made of an underlying coherent meaning. This form of language is proposed to be a complete opposite to the language of metaphor (and overcoding) according to Deleuze and Guattari. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, the two philosophers argue against the language of metaphor: 'Metaphors are one of the things that make me despair of literature'.[52] They claim that in a language of metaphor knowledge is finalised, totalised, and homogenised. In order for a language to be truly deterritorialised, language must be able to perform the opposite of what metaphor generally does. That is to say, language must be heterogenous and transgressive in ways that will not bring things back to a familiar ideological perspective, to what is already known. This is precisely what language as allegory does in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

In a language of personification, *Waiting for the Barbarians* may invoke the indeterminate and undecipherable nature of language in the personified forms of the hooded girl and the barbarian girl. Besides showing the shift in consciousness and textual movement which fluctuates between waking reality and dream, the novel delves deeper into the realm of language in order to produce a language of allegory whose meaning is confused by means of transformative and transgressive capability or which Deleuze and Guattari call the process of 'metamorphosis'. This process is reinforced in the Magistrate's dreams in which the figure of the hooded girl persists, or, rather, transforms throughout the extended series of the novel's dreamscape. For example, in the Magistrate's second dream sequence, he manages to see the face under the hood. However, what appears to be under the hood is a blank and featureless face. The Magistrate himself notes that 'it is the face of an embryo or a tiny whale; it is not a face at all but another part of the human body that bulges under the skin; it is white; it is the snow itself'.[53] In this very dream sequence, the

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[52] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, tans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 22.
[53] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 37.

face of the hooded girl transforms or metamorphoses into many different forms. The careful choice of the word 'embryo' itself connotes that this vision of the hooded girl or her very face is subject to transformation, changes, and growth. Looking specifically at these transfigurations from 'an embryo or a tiny whale' into 'another part of the human body that bulges under the skin', and into 'the snow itself', I see *Waiting for the Barbarians* as introducing a form of allegorical language which makes the text vibrate with a new intensity, in ways that it does not homogenise things or finalise meaning. In this regard, the textual representations of the Magistrate's dreams with pointed emphasis on various images of the hooded girl throughout its extended series of dreams underline a Deleuzoguattarian concept of discursive 'metamorphosis', an idea which puts an emphasis on the deterritorialised transformation and fluidity of language.

Studying the language of unspecificity in terms of time and place in Coetzee's fiction, Barnard notes that Coetzee's writing produces an intense mediation on the question of place and space.[54] A sense of place, Barnard argues, is traditionally related to one's perception of its locality and its historical situatedness. However, 'At stake in [Coetzee's] work', in Barnard's words, 'is not place as an empirical and inert object of mimesis, but rather the discursive, generic, and ultimately political codes that inform our understanding, knowledge, and representations of place'.[55] In his attempt to unsettle and defamiliarises the chronotopic dimension of fiction, Coetzee gives what Barnard terms 'dream topographies'.[56] Pertinent to the present discussion is the critic's assessment of the Magistrate's dream episodes, which Barnard argue 'demand, in their very silences, a landscape replete with the sounds of humanity and a society based on reciprocity and fraternity'.[57] In such a time(lessness) and place(lessness), Coetzee's novel envisions 'the country ways of the [postapartheid] pastoral', which is, according to Barnard's further reading of *Disgrace*, impossible to be actualised.

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[54] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, pp. 19-21.
[55] Ibid., p. 21.
[56] See Clarkson, 'Responses to Space and Spaces of Response in J. M. Coetzee', published in *J. M. Coetzee's Austerities*, ed. by Graham Bradshaw and Michael Neill (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 43-55. In this piece, Clarkson also looks at the strangeness of place(lessness) in Coetzee's work. With direct reference to a question of language and its limitation, Clarkson claims that the absence of temporal and spatial specificity is crucial in Coetzee's fiction, in way that it 'reiterates the value of creating a space for voices to be heard', in way that it draws and problematises the limit between notions of 'native' and 'foreign' space of response to Africa (44).
[57] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, p. 33.

Building on Barnard's reading of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, I see Coetzee's representations of dreams, including its accompanying presence and transfiguration of the hooded girl, as a deliberate unsettling of reductive truth/history exemplified in the representation of Colonel Joll. The language of allegory, which fluctuates between dream and reality, and consistently rolls in and out of the Magistrate's attempt to read and personify it, is a language of literary singularity. And, it is in the dream sequences, as that Barnard observes, that Coetzee's envisioned postapartheid pastoral language reveals itself as ever more incomprehensibly shifting and inconsistent. First, language manifests itself in the personified form of the hooded girl, concealing parts of her face and figure in the snow. Later, the figure transfigures beyond recognition before it lastly evaporates into the air. To further illustrate this point, I look into the subsequent dream episodes where the Magistrate revisits the snowy town square. There, he appears to have never witnessed the face of the hooded girl before. The passage below describes his third encounter:

> I fear, at this last instant, that she will be a disappointment, that the face she will present to me will be obtuse, slick, like an internal organ not meant to live in the light. But no, she is herself, herself as I have never seen her, a smiling child, the light sparkling on her teeth and glancing from her jet-black eyes.[58]

And his fifth and final encounter with the hooded girl is as follows:

> I am almost upon her […] I have a vision of her face, the face of a child, glowing, healthy, smiling on me without alarm, before we collide. Her head strikes me in the belly, then I am gone, carried by the wind. The bump is as faint as the stroke of a moth […] I try to look back, but all is lost from sight in the whiteness of the snow.[59]

These two episodes describes a refusal to underpin the image of the hooded girl into what is already shown in the previous sequences. Instead of showing a 'blank, featureless' face or 'an embryo or a tiny whale', the third encounter depicts the girl as 'herself, herself […] a smiling child' before that vision is cancelled in the final dream by having the Magistrate and the hooded girl collide with one another. Before the Magistrate could have a last glimpse of the girl, 'all is lost from sight in the whiteness of the snow'.

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[58] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 53.
[59] Ibid., p. 136.

As it appears, there is, in addition to the constant transfigurations of the hooded girl, also a change in perception related to the Magistrate's vision of the snow castle. During their fourth encounter, the Magistrate finds the girl as she is kneeling before what the Magistrate previously thinks is a castle: 'I am mistaken, it is not a castle she has built but a clay oven […] Also now I can see that what she is holding out to me is a loaf of bread'.[60] In projecting the said transfigurations of both figures and the disappearance of the hooded girl in 'the whiteness of the snow', the novel completely divorces the connection between what the story tells us and our perception of what it means, as well as reinforces the impossibility of reading/understanding the allegorical figure for its referential value. If we follow Barnard's attempt to read the unspecified time and place of Coetzee's fiction as South Africa after the apartheid regime, a situatedness that regrettably never fully emerges in this novel, we then can see *Waiting for the Barbarians*' investment in allegorical language including its allegorical ambiguity of reading and referentiality as a discursive foundation on which such a postapartheid society of timelessness and placelessness could be articulated and established.

In addition to the idea of literary singularity, the allegorical ambiguity of referentiality evident in the metamorphosis of the hooded figure can also be discerned as being characteristic of what Wilm understands to be Coetzee's 'slow philosophy'. In his examination of Coetzee's aesthetics, Wilm states that 'When reading Coetzee's works the reader is continually asked to weigh conflicting ideas, to qualify, to backtrack, and to reconsider formed opinions […], since for each thought and each opinion there seems to be a counter-thought […] a different way of seeing a phenomenon'.[61] This slow philosophy is meant to, according to Wilm, 'obstruct a quick or superficial reading that ends in an unequivocal interpretation'.[62] To build on Wilm's critical perspective, I contend that as the novel slows down its pace in its textual ambiguity of allegorical referentiality, it raises a question of the relations between meanings of the allegorical figures in *Waiting for the Barbarians*. That is, the allegorical ambiguity allows us to slowly see the discrepancy of, and the distance between, textual representations and its formerly established meanings.

[60] Ibid., p. 109.
[61] Wilm, p. 14.
[62] Ibid.

While allegory is often a narrative mode of 'speaking other' – saying that A means B, and that the connection between A and B is rigidly coded through various applications of literary language, Coetzee's re-appropriation of allegory slackens, if not breaks, such rigidly coded connection.

Putting the re-appropriated language of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, whose connection between and meaning of A and B are problematised, into Coetzee's discussion of writing proposed primarily in 'A Note on Writing', I understand *Waiting for the Barbarians* with its pointed investment in allegorical ambiguity, suspension, and fragmentation of meaning/relation as a text that emblematises Coetzee's middle-voice utterance.[63] In the most popularised understanding of the term, Coetzee's 'middle voice' shows the author's fascination with the determinism of linguistic structure, which, according to the essay, is limited to the active-passive opposition. Then, Coetzee goes on to address 'the possibility of threefold opposition active-middle-passive'.[64] This has been taken by scholars as Coetzee's projected attempt to escape such determinism of linguistic structure (of agency and structure), which is translated into his fiction in the form of insufficient claim and representation to any direct historical and political event.[65] In line with such a reading of Coetzee's middle voice, I see the absence of direct interplay between meaning and representation, between historical agency and textual (allegorical) evidence. That connection is disrupted if not completely deterritorialised. The constant transformations of the hooded figure in the dream sequences is the prime example of such state of disruption, dissolution and breakdown of meaning. As the figure of the hooded girl transforms and, eventually, disappears over the course of the novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* develops and defends a particular understanding and representation of language which is insufficiently *transitive*. That is, the need for transitive correlation between A and B, or what the text says and what it means is entirely irrelevant. On a

[63] Coetzee, 'A Note on Writing (1984)', *Doubling the Point*, pp. 94-95. See also Coetzee, 'The Rhetoric of the Passive in English (1980)' pp. 147-169, and 'The Agentless Sentence as Rhetorical Device (1980)' pp. 170-180, reprinted in the aforementioned essay collection. Together these three essays discuss the rhetorical absence and interplay between agency and structure in writing. Particularly, the latter two pieces outline the linguistic construction of agentless sentences, which can broadly be understood as a means of linguistic evasion and ironic inversion.
[64] Ibid., p. 94.
[65] Brian Macaskill, 'Charting J. M. Coetzee's Middle Voice', *Contemporary Literature* 35.3 (1994), p. 441-75.

different note, a fully mapped-out allegory in which the correlation between A and B is distinct and finite is nothing less than the kind of reductive language Colonel Joll employs, in that it reduces the possibility of meaning into a definitive, determinate, and finalised understanding.[66]

The allegorical correlation between A and B in which A means B is drastically destabilised not only on the level of relations between allegorical figures and meaning, but also on the level of writing the novel itself. While some critics understand the refusal of historical specificity as Coetzee's attempt to offer a universal ethical message, displacing the material reality of colonial history in favour of colonial discourse in general, I see the disruption in terms of place and time, and representation and meaning, in which the represented A does not simply mean and easily lead to the intended meaning of B, as the novel's attempt to foreground the figurative distancing and linguistic disruption of political involvement. Considering the year of the novel's publication, critics see various events in *Waiting for the Barbarians* as Coetzee's direct critique of the contemporary South Africa. Events such as the graphic representation of the torture chamber and the death of the old fisherman are often linked to police brutality and torture and the death of Steve Biko in detention. Despite alerting the reader to 'the dangers allegory engenders', Jane Poyner, for instance, states that 'The novel self-consciously invites allegorical readings, not only [in the scene of poplar slips] but in the representations of Empire and torture, in the girl and Joll as blank texts, in the Magistrate's attempt to write a history of the settlement, in the dream sequences'.[67] However, such allegorical association between representations of events and the events in contemporary South Africa insists on a neatly-mapped perception of allegory which *Waiting for the Barbarians* seems to caution against through its deliberate attempt to situate itself in an unspecified time and place. Through the

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[66] The tension that may be inevitable here in my reading of Coetzee's deterritorialised language of allegory is one between an essentially allegorical mode of interpretation and the idea of unsettling the simple idea of allegory, and its colonial connotations. Attridge solves the problem through his idea of 'responsible instrumentality', highlighting 'a preparedness to be challenged by the work, an alertness to its singular otherness, an attentiveness to the way it operates through mobile and meaningful forms as well as by thematic representation and conceptual argument' (*Singularity*, p. 130).

[67] Jane Poyner, *J. M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p.57. Like Poyner, Head suggests that 'There are, in any case, some uncomfortable contemporary association, despite the vagueness of the setting', additionally referring to the final scene of 'the inhabitants' abandoning of the settlement in the face of fears of barbarian attack' (76). See also Susan Gallagher's notes on torture, chapter 5 of *A Story of South Africa.*

placelessness and timelessness of *Waiting for the Barbarians* exemplified in the novel's foregrounding disruption of allegorical associations and interpretation, Coetzee's writing highlights, first and foremost, the inconsistencies of representations and interpretations. These qualities draw the reader's attention to the kind of language which is unsettling, fragmentary, incoherent, and subversive in nature, producing, as a result, the literary singularity of truth and perception.

During composition, *Waiting for the Barbarians* went through a major, imaginative leap in which the setting of the novel, including any direct reference to South Africa, is all the more divorced, with each written draft, from the town in which it was written and meant to critique. Looking at various versions of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Attwell contends that 'The novel's emergence took the form of a simultaneous, seemingly contradictory, two-way process: both a distancing – into an unspecified empire at an unspecified moment in history – and a homecoming into the violence of apartheid in the period of its climatic self-destruction'.[68] Understanding the historical implications that South African censorship in the 1970s might have on the writing of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Attwell argues that while the Karoo does 'remain a point of reference' for the novel, it is essential for Coetzee to envision and construct the remote setting and placelessness of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, not so much to evade censorship as to create a future of placelessness (after apartheid).[69] That moment in the history of South Africa is a moment of transition. Coetzee himself, as Attwell quotes in his work, realised after a year into writing the novel that '[*Waiting for the Barbarians*] was about "waiting for a desire which does not come because one is waiting for it"'.[70] Following from Attwell's reading of Coetzee's manuscripts, I suggest that the endlessness of waiting for a future where South Africa will be deposited, politically speaking, is dramatised in the novel's linguistic ability to withhold meaning, and to constantly break the textual correlations between South Africa and the placelessness

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[68] Attwell, *The Life of Writing*, pp. 89-90. The manuscripts of Coetzee that Attwell uses are publicly accessible in the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas at Austin.

[69] McDonald notes that with its apparently universal representations *Waiting for the Barbarians* was passed by the censorship board. See McDonald, 'Not Undersirable': How J. M. Coetzee Escaped the Censor', *TLS* 19 May 2000, pp. 14-15; 'The Writer, the Critic, and the Censor' in *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, ed. by Jane Poyner (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 42-62. In his later work of *The Literature Police*, McDonald specifically shows that Coetzee's 'temporal and spatial displacement' is 'an integral part' of the writer's 'anti-realism' as well as his 'sustained and always evolving anti-aestheticist commitment to storytelling, which Coetzee regards as quintessentially thinking/telling otherwise (313).

[70] Attwell, *The Life of Writing*, p. 103.

of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. With such suspension of a definite end, of finite knowledge, the waiting for such a place of future South Africa is continuously suspended and prolonged.[71]

Through Coetzee's introduction of a rather vaguely and transgressively coded language, in which A may or may not mean B, the textual space of allegorical ambiguity in *Waiting of the Barbarians* reaches its highest level. Appropriated use of allegory in the novel then becomes a textual embodiment of discursive anarchism, which distinctly manifests itself towards the end of the novel in which an episode of actual anarchism takes place. The event of anarchism, which is to be studied from the perspective of Coetzee's discursivity, is not however a reference to a political resistance of leaders/hierarchies, but a reference to the more popular conception of anarchy as social/political breakdown and disorder. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term anarchy highlights the state of lawlessness 'due to the absence or inefficiency of the supreme power: a political disorder'.[72] It also implies in the last entry as the state of 'unsettledness or conflict of opinion'.[73] This sums up the state of anarchism that is dramatised at the end of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, at which point the narrator arrives at a scene and time of social and political breakdown, bringing the unsettledness of history and truth into the actual *disorder* of the outpost town.

The following passage is taken from the beginning of chapter five. It gives a specific outline of an outpost town on the verge of collapsing:

> The barbarians come out at night. Before darkness fall the last goat must be brought in, the gates barred, a watch set in every lookout to call the hours. All night, *it is said*, the barbarians prowl about bent on murder and rapine […] The barbarians have dug a tunnel under the walls, *people say*; they come and go as they please, take what they like; no one is safe any longer […] the barbarians are only waiting for the crops to be established, *they say*, before they flood the fields again (emphasis added).[74]

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[71] Ibid., p. 83.
[72] 'Anarchy', in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], < https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/view/Entry/7118?redirectedFrom=anarchy#eid> [accessed 23 June 2020].
[73] Ibid.
[74] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 122.

Descriptively speaking, the entire chapter describes the rapid decline and social and political breakdown of the Magistrate's town, characterised primarily by mass migration, anxiety, murder, rapine, desolation, and military withdrawal from the walled town. The whole town, as the Magistrate himself sees it, is overtaken by panic, hysteria and fear of the barbarian invasion. Looking at the passage quoted above, I see anarchism displayed in two different but interconnected levels. Firstly, anarchism is subtly projected here as resulting from 'anxious rumours' of the barbarians' imminent attack.[75] As seen in the above quotation, Coetzee uses phrases such as 'it is said', 'people say', 'they say', or, elsewhere in the chapter, 'Others say' and 'Some say' to deliberately suggest that the present state of disruption and disordering in the town is most likely grounded in 'anxious rumours' rather than the actual invasion of the barbarians. Those phrases, which are placed in between clauses, at the start of sentences, or in the middle of sentences, constantly negate the public's assumption concerning the barbarians, which would otherwise be realised as actual and definite. With this careful placement of those phrases, Coetzee reinforces the notion that discourses are the true regulatory mechanism through which anarchism as a material condition can come to be.

Secondly, anarchism is imagined in the above quoted scene not merely as an actual, material condition. Rather, anarchism depicted here is an imaginary of wild dispersing and disordering of language, through which a space of disruptive and deterritorialised politics is reconstructed. Studying the works of Deleuze, Nathan J. Jun claims that Deleuzean philosophy, akin to Deconstructive philosophy, 'seeks to avoid closure, entrapment, and structure; it seeks to opens up rather than foreclose possibilities, to liberate rather than interrupt the flows and movements which produce life'.[76] Similar to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome, anarchism is a philosophical stance that acknowledges that 'power emerges from multiple sources', rejecting in that regard the idea of normativity and finality.[77] This lead us to a more complex understanding of anarchism. When referring to anarchism as a state of lawlessness or political breakdown, one often assumes that it means

[75] Ibid., p. 123.
[76] Nathan J. Jun, 'Deleuze, Derrida, and Anarchism', *Anarchist Studies* 15.2 (2007), pp. 132-56 (p. 132). For more detailed discussion on the anarchist tradition in Deleuze and Guattari's works, see also, Chantelle Gray van Heerden and Aragorn Eloff, eds, *Deleuze and Anarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), particularly chapters 3 and 5 by Andrew Stones and Jun, respectively.
[77] Ibid., p. 137.

without a government or a state. In fact, Deleuzoguattarian anarchism principally means the state of no 'coercive authority', implying the lack of closed and normative power and domination.[78] Following this notion of anarchism, what the previous quotation implies is not merely the state of chaos and rulelessness. Rather, it depicts, in its very form of discursive deterritorialisation, the disappearance of authoritative truth and the knowability of meaning. As *Waiting for the Barbarians* inhabits that shifting and arbitrary space between what it says and what it means, the tension between these two realms of meaning reaches its height in this scene in which the notion of knowledge or, as the Magistrate has it, 'tranquil certainties' is constantly disrupted by destabilising language of 'they say', 'people say' and 'it is said'.[79] These phrases, so to speak, interrupt and break the general public's perception of the barbarians by putting the reductive and normalised truth or knowledge in those sentences in flux. This leads to a textual and discursive breakdown in knowledge and authority, in which the destabilising elements of Coetzee's language discursively deterritorialises the *orderly*, established construction of the Empire's discourse. Therefore, what the passage discursively draws above is not merely an actual condition of an outpost town on the verge of collapse as a result of their own discourse of fear and anxiety, but also a textual portrayal of discursive anarchism, in which the language of allegory, of destabilising and deterritorialising effects, disperses and fragments the ordering and establishment of the master discourse of truth and history.

Coetzee's articulation of discursive anarchism enables us to see language (called allegory) as an essentially heterogenous system. In contrast to the language of Colonel Joll which is marked by a single and reductive meaning and simple communication, the allegorical language of *Waiting for the Barbarians* is reinforced through the representations of and the tensions between the Magistrate and the barbarian girl, in ways that it communicates not the homogeneous, but the dispersing and the heterogeneous. While the idea of homogeneity is conspicuously linked to the novel's attempted establishment of a referential connection between the signifier and the signified, the notion of the heterogenous is reinforced at the very end of the novel in the final transformation of that allegorical figure of the snowman:

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[78] Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 2012), p. 115.
[79] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 143.

> In the middle of the square there are children at play building a snowman. Anxious not to alarm them, but inexplicably joyful, I approach them across the snow.
>
> They are not alarmed, they are too busy to cast me a glance. They have completed the great round body, now they are rolling a ball for the head.
>
> 'Someone fetch things for the mouth and nose and eyes,' says the child who is their leader.
>
> It strikes me that the snowman will need arms too, but I do not want to interfere.
>
> They settle the head on the shoulders and fill it out with pebbles for eyes, ears, nose and mouth. One of them crowns it with his cap.
>
> It is not a bad snowman.
>
> This is not the scene I dreamed of […].[80]

The scene can be discerned as something very similar to the dreamscape of the Magistrate to point that it is possible to say that the dreams are jolted out of the Magistrate's unconscious and, having been placed in the waking hours of his life, and materialises. That connection between this scene and the dreamscape is, however, discouraged by the Magistrate himself, saying 'This is not the scene I dreamed of'. Head reads this particular scene, in connection with the dream sequences, as mirroring the Magistrate's advancement on the road to ethical awakening, claiming that 'the dream sequence amounts to an accreted narrative of sublimation and human advancement […]'.[81] Hayes, on the contrary, suggests a reading of 'questionable desires' embedded in the characterisation of the Magistrate. Looking at the contradictory prose style, Hayes argues that 'It is possible to regard the Magistrate's desire to open up a channel of sympathy with the girl […] But this interpretative framework never takes hold of the text: the prose is too slippery, too akin to the infuriatingly unreadable body of Beckett's Worm for that to happen'.[82] Instead of assigning an definite interpretation of sympathy to the reading of this scene, I take note of the novel's reinforcement of that idea of textual ambiguity and elusiveness in which certain

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[80] Ibid., pp. 155-56.
[81] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, p. 92.
[82] Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel*, p.70.

images and figures in the novel are constantly metamorphosing, shifting into different forms and appearances, without the control of locality, space, and time specified. That moment of textual and representational cancelation and dissolution insists that we see the novel as the whole as a text which will not and cannot amount to anything conclusive and coherent, to anything more than fragments of meaning.

Towards his final assessment of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Attridge states that despite the connection between the dreamscape and the barbarian girl that can be viably made, a traditional, allegorical reading will not do full justice to 'the uncertainty and open-endedness of the novel.[83] As he notes that a sense of 'normality' in the final scene, Attridge maintains that 'that hoped-for state' is too fragile considering the novel's very nature of textual elusiveness.[84] In similar train of logic proposed in Attridge's idea of open-endedness and elusiveness, the novel, through the last piece of narrative fragment at the very end of the narrative, presents a culminated imaginary of a discursive system which deals specifically with the notion of heterogeneity. This system, which is represented here through the actualised image of the snowman, is 'made of assemblages of heterogeneous orders of signs that cannot be reduced to a binary structure' of truth and lies.[85] As the passage of children at play in the town square reproduced above shows, the image of the snowman takes centre stage and becomes the last image of interpretation. However, the novel does not directly invite any reading of any kind in the way that all the Magistrate's dream sequences do. Instead, the passage presents an allegorical figure of the snowman which is constructed from heterogeneity or 'assemblages' of '*things*'. Each *thing* serves for each part of the snowman whether it be 'the great round body', 'the mouth and nose and eyes' or the head and arms. Among other items are a cap and pebbles, not the mention the snow itself, a natural element which can dissolve, or can be shifted into forms. Hence, the snowman is a construction which takes the form of a human figure but is nonetheless not a human figure. The snowman appears to be the final transfiguration of *Waiting for the Barbarians*'s central allegorical figure which is not either a definite personification of language, or language completely reproduced in its abstract quality. It is, in fact, a

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[83] Atrridge, *J. M. Coetzee & the Ethics of Reading*, p. 48.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p. xi.

combination of both abstract and concrete perception of language, a linguistic space that is radically heterogenous and arbitrary, completely deterritorialised in ways that it represents a meeting of signs, things, and fragments, contesting the established, dominant discourse of the Empire.

Affected by a high coefficient of deterritorialisation, this vision of language is pushed through allegorical distancing, reversals, and dispersing fragmentation. This is a vision of language called allegory which destablises and deterritorialises the whole symbolic and linguistic structure of the Empire's totality of history/truth. It is also a language which is constructed within and in juxtaposition with the dominant language of overcoding and normalisation. It marks the impasse of reading and transmitting meaning, which resolutely 'turns language into something impossible'.[86] Through his vaguely, intransitively, and, rather, heterogeneously coded language of allegory, Coetzee expresses his unique understanding of political responsibility. Whereas his literary writing as seen in the discussion of *Waiting for the Barbarians* does not appear to acknowledge and respond to the historical situatedness of apartheid, its very appropriation of allegory, including its criticism of definitive truth, transcends the distance, whether it be political or historical, that a text such a one as *Waiting for the Barbarians* produces. The figurative distancing and linguistic disruption of political involvement deliver, I argue, the very essence of political involvement by not producing a linear and clear correlation between the representation and what it represents. The effort is to achieve a kind of language that is drastically the opposite of the apartheid language of truth and the geopolitics of segregation. The novel underscores such a spatial consciousness that emphasises distant interaction but does not, resolutely, limit its narrative realm to the condition of referential finality and totality. The language of apartheid overcoding as 'phenomena of centering, unification, totalisation, integration, hierarchisation, and finalisation' is here called into question, and broken down in the allegorical language of *Waiting for the Barbarians*. By introducing elements of destabilising effects *Waiting for the Barbarians* conceives of a deterritorialised imaginary which is indeterminate, contingent and heterogenous. In contrast to the spatial production of apartheid which is rigidly constructed on the basis of the spurious categorisation and segregation of racial groups, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

[86] Ibid.

returns us through a process of discursive deterritorialisation to a space of singularity and anarchism, a deterritorialised space whose contours are undecidable and contestable, making it a crucial way of contesting and fragmenting the apartheid government's established discourse of racialised segregation, and, in doing so, turning and reducing the master-discourse of apartheid into 'nothing but a certain kind of story'.

Chapter 3

Deterritorialising the Landscape of Power: Nomadism in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*

Drawing upon Coetzee's manuscripts and notes, Attwell traces the origins and the making of what would become the final version of *Life & Times of Michael K*, published in 1983, beginning with Heinrich von Kleist's German Romantic novel of 1810, *Michael Kohlhaas* to Franz Kafka and to Alan Paton's famous novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and ending with some historical and political contexts of 'the forced "ontruiming" (removal) of Africans from the Western Cape' in which the novel would subsequently emerge.[1] The final product, as Attwell has it, is 'the story of an outlaw who is so far beyond the reach of the law that even the very idea of the law, its conceptions of the citizen and civic responsibilities, are unable to contain him'.[2] To Attwell, K is an outlaw whose only vocation is to be a gardener. Over the course of the novel, it is possible to see that the drama of the story lies in K's act of walking, running away from the social and political milieu. His escape, his ducking through or clambering over the fences, becomes his signature move. One could very well say he lives the life on the road, the life of a nomad, moving from place to place with no definite endpoint.

But just how is K, as a trespasser and a runaway, an answer to the demands of his time? Is K merely evading the political/social scenes when he is on the road? How does the problem of political responsibility come to be embodied in the figure of a nomadic wanderer for Coetzee? And, how does nomadism or a figure of nomadism fit in the ongoing debates of political engagement in South Africa fiction? This chapter considers these

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[1] Attwell, J. *M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, p. 109.
[2] Ibid., p. 111.

questions as it examines the discourse of nomadism that develops around two essential areas: the perception of an uncertain, or unfixed identity as well as the transgressive/nomadic movement of deterritorialisation.

My critical analysis treats Coetzee's representation of K as a nomad and his nomadic movement as that which enables an articulation of a nomadic relation/interaction through which the idea of political responsibility is established and politicised loneliness is destabilised. As one of the two most historically situated of Coetzee's apartheid novels, *Life & Times of Michael K* presents a new intervention in Coetzee's spatial consciousness. Drawing upon nomadism and deterritorialisation, my claim will be that nomadic interaction is a precondition of Coetzee's spatial consciousness of the early 1980s South Africa. It is a consciousness that is not experienced as rooted and fixed, but rather in a constant state of *awayness*, of subversive mobility, of nomadism, defined in basic terms by its distance and exclusion from the dominant realms of politics.

Before the chapter presents a reading of nomadic deterritorialisation and what it entails, it is best to consider, first and foremost, the politically unique condition of apartheid loneliness. Expanding on the idea of politicised loneliness understood in the relational context of the personal and the political explored in chapter one and two, the writing of Coetzee after *Waiting for the Barbarians* moves forward to address the condition of loneliness as contextualised in the relationship between man and place, tackling another judicial context in apartheid history. Set during an unspecified period of war and revolution, *Life & Times of Michael K* charts the protagonist's unflagging search for a space *outside* the landscape of power and incarceration. The search for the socially and politically 'outside' space is evident in K's countless attempts to avoid any direct contact with the political and social realms, and to clamber over barbed-wire fences and enter into the veld.[3] Although Coetzee often depicts the veld and fenced orchards as a space of neglect, of weakened colonial rules, and a space that is devoid of human presence, these places are not, strictly speaking, historically or politically 'outside' the apartheid operations. That is to say, whatever life K means to build and lead in that perceived 'outside' territory is still framed and policed by the apartheid system. The following passage describes K's first crossing into the veld:

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[3] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 44.

> I could live here forever, he thought, or till I die. Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before, there would be nothing to say. The anxiety that belonged to the time on the road began to leave him [sic]. Sometimes, as he walked he did not know whether he was awake or asleep. He could understand that people should have retreated here and fenced themselves in with miles and miles of silence […].[4]

The passage, taken from one of the early moments in the narrative, describes K's internal struggle after a period of restless movement on the road. At this point, the novel presents a case of spatialised loneliness, a condition which the novel as a whole will seek to depart from in its emphasis on nomadic deterritorialisation. What is implicit in this dramatisation of K's thought is the idea of loneliness, one that deals specifically with the relationship between man and the landscape. To illustrate, K finds himself at this particular moment caught up within the desire to live outside the political realm. He wishes to remain within this *outside* space 'with miles and miles of silence'.

However, this life of political retreat 'with miles and miles of silence' is the life of politicised loneliness that is similar in nature to the kind of life apartheid government constitutes. How does this life of politicised loneliness present a problem of man and landscape as a unique condition of apartheid geopolitics? Comparatively speaking, the problem of politicised loneliness examined by the novel is not the one that is related the condition I explore in chapter one and two, in which the separation between the personal and the political creates a condition of political incarceration. Here, the condition of loneliness is deeply rooted in the relationship between human beings and the territory. Under the apartheid regime, broadly speaking, the only condition that any individual subject has with the land is through their physical labour in the case of K, and through their control of a closed space in the case of whites (this idea is especially germane to chapter four). Regardless of their conditioned relations to the land, apartheid creates a false sense of emplacement in which the fallacy of spatial nearness is introduced. This flawed condition of spatial nearness creates the resulting effect of spatial loneliness, in which a given individual subject experiences a severe sense of displacement and a damaging sense of separation between one's self and the place they live in, thus reducing their political

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[4] Ibid., p. 46-47.

capability in the very process of their inability to interact freely with place and landscape. That is, one cannot fully engage and interact with the land/place outside of the regulated conditions set up by the apartheid regime.

Concerning the historical backdrop in *Life & Times of Michael K*, contract and manual labour is the primary condition of man-land/man-place relationship that the novel examines. 'By the early 1980s,' Leonard Thompson writes, 'it [the government] recognised that some Africans, referred to as "urban insiders", were legally entitled to live permanently in the metropolitan areas, but it was still trying to apply the pass laws to prevent Africans domiciled in the Homelands from coming to the cities except as migrant workers on temporary contacts.'[5] Several replacements of legislative laws were enacted to restore what the apartheid government understood to be 'orderly urbanisation'.[6] According to Michael Savage, as those pass and influx control laws were enacted and enforced, African labour was channelled in and out of the white urban areas: 'the pass laws have [thus] occupied the central position in the process of policing the African population and directing them into places dictated by whites.'[7] Concerning the problem of influx control, there were countless arrests and convictions of Africans for pass law and influx control offences.[8] While the number of people being convicted was not known, there were 158,335, 162,024, 206,022, and 262,904 cases of arrests in, respectively, 1980, 1981, 1982, and 1983.[9] Some cases of these arrests in offence of the pass laws indicate that a number of Africans were prevented from entering, or being allowed out of, urban areas because they are declared to be 'idle and undesirable' under Section 2(a) of the Black Urban Areas Act.[10] Some Africans, however, were driven to risk prosecution for their own survival by leaving poverty and unemployment in the countryside and entering illegally into town areas. One black worker said: 'If they send you back home (back home now there's a drought) and you realise you

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[5] Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 226. See also, Roger Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook* (London: Penguin, 1985).
[6] Cited in Thompson, p. 226.
[7] Michael Savage, 'The Imposition of Pass Laws on the African Population in South Africa, 1916-1984', *African Affairs* 85 (1986), pp. 181-205 (p. 181).
[8] Thompson, p. 226.
[9] Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook*, p. 109.
[10] Cited in Savage, p. 187. See also Hermann Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, ed., *Up against the Fences: Poverty, Passes and Privilege in South Africa* (Claremont: S.A., 1985); David M. Smith, ed., *Living Under Apartheid: Aspects of Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986); and Pual Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 179-204.

can't get any new job, it's a death sentence. The countryside is pushing you into the cities to survive; the cities are pushing you into the countryside to die'.[11]

If the condition of spatial loneliness describes the individual incapability to engage and interact with the land/place outside of the regulated conditions set up by the apartheid regime, how is K's desire to live 'with miles and miles of silence', depicted in the first quotation from the novel, emblematic of such a condition? Descriptively speaking, K at that moment is alone in an isolated landscape of the veld, in a place 'with miles and miles of silence'. His political retreat in that space encapsulates the very idea of political passiveness. This aspect is explored on two levels. First, it is a condition of political passivity due heavily to the fact that the location he now occupies is a place of isolation. His first thought is: 'I could live here forever […] or till I die. Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before, there would be nothing to say'. What is emphasised here is the act of apolitical passivity. One could very well argue that the idea of political evasion (the desire to do nothing, and that 'every day would be the same as the day before') is a deliberate act that defies the apartheid code of conducts prescribed to non-white subjects. Consequently, this very idea of apolitical passivity does not present a new emergence of life that is different than that of K's life under contract labour and the pass laws, conditions that prevents both a viable sense of emplacement and political engagement. It is still, to put it straightforwardly, a life that is in a state of a severe separation from the political realm.

Coupled with this explicit depiction of apolitical life on the veld is the implicit dramatisation of K's passive interaction with the veld. This second point brings the idea of spatial loneliness to the forefront. Inherent in the quotation, life on the veld is characterised and can only be made possible by a complete absence of human communication and interaction. The life K entertains to lead, here, is one that is situated in the so-called 'outside' space. However, is the veld or the place in question really outside the political power of the apartheid regime? Is it really politically outside? Will the life K imagines to have not be conditioned and restricted by the apartheid regime? The entertained desire to escape stems, one could say, from K's short-sighted perception that the veld is an 'outside space'. That perceived vision implicitly reveals K's interaction with the space in question,

[11] Ibid., p. 205.

if he were to lead that life. That is, since the veld is thought to be politically 'outside', K would not be subject to interact with the land as dictated by apartheid laws. However, the quotation above does not specify an active interaction K would wish to undertake if ever such a desire was actualised. Instead, the idea of 'Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before, there would be nothing to say' is explicitly articulated. With that articulation of stillness and nothingness, what is apparent in the quotation is that moments of silence and stillness seem to be the kind of moments that constitute and facilitate K's life and meaning. In other words, the only life on the veld that is possible for K is life in politicised loneliness and isolation, which is ironically the essence of the apartheid regime. What he could do with that life is *nothing*. His relationship to the land may have changed, but the degree to which such a change would construe a new understanding of engagement between K and the land is still questionable.

Since the life he wishes to lead at this particular moment in the novel is a life of political isolation as well as spatial loneliness, K's apparent agency is carefully and subtly structured by the force of apartheid. That is, his apparent contentment with and desire for this life is a result of how the operations of apartheid silently manipulate K into thinking that such a minimal existence of political isolation and incapability is enough, that it is enough to be 'out of the camps, out of all the camps' while in fact he is still *inside* at the very heart of apartheid.[12]

Projected as a runaway and a trespasser, K's movement including its perpetual mobility and transgressivity is dictated by a will to survive under the cruel conditions non-white South African labourers had to face. However, the character does not succumb to the limited dilemma of countryside/urban areas, in which they are forced to navigate their lives under the dictations of pass laws and contract labour system. Having violated the pass laws earlier in the narrative, K chooses to leave Cape Town, but he is not to be pushed into 'the countryside to die'. The thought of apolitical life he earlier entertains is swiftly erased by the novel's subsequently projection of K's endless nomadic movement. Over the course of the novel, K transgresses the striated space of both urban and countryside areas, and consequently remains on the road. This particular movement, defined by its perpetual mobility as well as its spatial transgressivity, is, in and of itself, a frontal contravention

[12] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 182.

against the apartheid regime, a regime that restricts mobility and discourages spatial transformation.

To fully discern how K's nomadic deterritorialisation operates as an act of transgressivity and how the discourse of nomadism is linked to transgression, the terms 'nomadism' needs to be clarified. The concept of nomadism, developed here, derives from the concepts of nomadism and nomadology expounded by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. As Deleuze and Guattari understand it, nomadism is a form of cultural resistance to the late capitalist power structures. Concerning the subject of nomadism, Deleuze and Guattari discusses the actual experience of peoples or cultures that are literally nomadic:

> … even though the nomadic trajectory may follow trails or customary routes, it does not fulfill the function of the sedentary road, which is to *parcel out a closed space to people*, assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares. The nomadic trajectory does the opposite: it *distributes people (or animals) in an open space*, one that is indefinite and noncommunicating … It is a very special kind of distribution, a mode of distribution, in space without borders or enclosure … It is in this sense that it stands in opposition to the law or the polis […].[13]

The lines above suggest a strong link between nomadism and deterritorialisation in the way nomads work, through their movement and trajectory, on a gated territory. Drawing upon their reading of nomads, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the work of nomadism is in essence enacted against the working of the state apparatus. The nomadic deterritorilisation in question would work in levelling a given territory, allowing nomads to rest or pass through: 'The nomads are there, on the land, wherever there forms a smooth space that gnaws, and tends to grow, in all directions'.[14] This levelled space is an open, smooth space, a space without enclosure or borders. Hence, the nomad's constant transition from place to place becomes the key factor that proposes a new consciousness of resistance that not only interrogates or resists the state apparatus's striated space of power, but also redefines,

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[13] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 443.

[14] Ibid., p. 445

cancels, and reshapes it. It is in this way that the nomads are recognised by Deleuze and Guattari as the 'vectors of deterritorialisation'.[15]

Recent usage of the term reflects an emphasis on the contemporary experience of a denationalised, decentralised, and globalised world. Looking at how Deleuze and Guattari discuss nomadism in a wide range of activities such as religion, music, and science, Eugene W. Holland states that nomadism 'offers a critical alternative', on various social and cultural experiences, in the way that it redefines and deterritorialises any form of social restrictions. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti sees nomadism as referring to 'the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior'.[16] It is, in other words, 'a form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity.'[17] Discussing the term 'nomad' in connection with the terms, 'migrant' and 'exile', Braidotti writes:

> As opposed to the images of the migrant and the exile, I want to emphasise that of the nomad. The nomad does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. This figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity.[18]

The lines above encapsulate the two interrelated principles that govern the theoretical concept of nomadism. The first principle is the principle of non-fixity and the other is that of perpetual variability. Concerning the first principle of non-fixity, in contrast to the images of the migrant and the exile, the nomad does not geographically change his dwelling or move with a teleological purpose. Therefore, the nomadic movement is one that is perpetual, with no visible end point. This principle of perpetual mobility is often translated into the nomad's ability to endlessly move beyond the confines of the social and political milieu. Implicitly related to the principle of non-fixity is the idea of continuous change and perpetual variability (of *the open the space*): when the nomad enacts transition and

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[15] Ibid., p. 445.
[16] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 5.
[17] Ibid., p. 23.
[18] Ibid., p. 22.

successive shifts in their movement, they not only escape social and political coherence, but also ratify a complex interaction of differences in places and time in the constitution of its own subjectivity as well as the very physical formation of a given territory.

Understanding nomadism as a form of political resistance that emphasises the principles of perpetual mobility and continuous variability, this chapter reads Michael K as a nomadic vector of deteritorialisation. The charge of nomadism in *Life & Times of Michael K* is therefore twofold: one deals specifically with how nomadism is understood with reference to the actual landscape and movement of nomadism, while the other tends specifically with 'the nomadic state' in which a discussion of nomadic subjectivity and nomadic deterritorialisation are the primary points of focus. The following part of the chapter is devoted to the discussion of these two aspects of nomadism. The discussion will begin with a consideration of K's literal, nomadic movement, and proceed to the analysis of the nomadic state represented in K's rootless, mobile subjectivity and process of distant and mobile deterritorialisation.

Historically situated in the political crisis of the late 1970s to the early 1980s, *Life & Times of Michael K* presents Michael K as a runaway, a trespasser, and a nomad, who moves in and out of town areas, crosses over fences and boundaries. On this literal level of the term, nomadism reveals itself in the actual movement of K, including his ability for continuous transition from place to place (from Cape Town to a labour camp, from the relocation camp to the Visagie farm, and from an infirmary back to Sea Point in Cape Town). It is here in K's unique ability for continuous mobility and subversive movement within the racially restricted, striated boundary of apartheid South Africa that K as a character emerges as Coetzee's embodiment of subversive nomadism and political transgressivity. The following passage gives an instance of the moment K escapes from the labour camp:

> He walked all night, feeling no fatigue, trembling sometimes with the thrill of being free. When it began to grow light he left the road and moved across open country. He saw no human being though more than once he was startled by a buck leaping from cover and racing away into the hills. The dry white grass waved in the wind; the sky was blue; his body was overflowing with vigour. Walking in great loops, he skirted first one farmhouse, then another. The landscape was so empty that it

> was not hard to believe at times that his was the first foot ever to tread a particular inch of earth or disturb a particular pebble. But every mile or two there was a fence to remind him that he was a trespasser as well as a runaway.[19]

This very passage is characteristic of K's sustained, nomadic transgressivity, describing the moment in which K is running away from the Jakkalsdrif rehabilitation camp, a designated place for African labourers. What is quite telling from the quotation is how K navigates his movement through the landscape of South Africa. He travels by foot on the road at night, and leaves it when the day breaks. He is conscious of the kind of situation he is in: as a runaway, and a non-white South African he does not have the privilege of movement without governmental permission.

As he walks endlessly by day and night, his nomadic movement on the road and across the open country constitute his new existence as a 'trespasser as well as a runaway'. As K has noted, the vast area of the veld before looks 'so empty that it was not hard to believe at times that his was the first foot ever tread a particular inch of earth'. In opposition to the notion of an empty, deserted area with 'miles and miles of silence' earlier sighted in the narrative, the veld now is accurately assessed and navigated by K as an area that is heavily still within the apartheid geopolitics of racial segregation. In this aspect, despite the fact of spatial emptiness, K realises that the landscape is not truly an *open* space. He still needs to 'skirt farmhouses'; areas that are fenced are a reminder of his illegal movement. Despite all that, K's determination to move with great effort sustains his existence. The fact that he trespasses on someone else's property and territory does not stop him. It is, to the contrary, fueling his body 'with vigour', 'with the thrill of being free'.

Concerning the subject of nomadic transgressivity, Westphal writes, 'transgression is not just crossing porous boundary lines. It assumes a closed and striated space and a will to penetrate, which the state apparatus (following Deleuze and Guattari) establishes as a form of burglary'. Projected as a runaway and a trespasser, K's continuous movement penetrates the closed and striated space of labour camps, farmhouses, and fenced territories. Considering his supposedly outlawed movement across the veld, K's movement can additionally be seen as 'a form of burglary', and the transgression made is an act directed to the ideological household of the apartheid regime. This perspective of K's nomadic

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[19] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 97.

trajectory offers a literary reflection on another historical backdrop of South Africa after the period of political unrest after the 1970s. That is, not only is K represented as an outlaw and a nomad who has violated pass laws through his spatial mobility across the country, he is also a representation of 'a persistent problem of life in suburban Cape Town', as Attwell has noted in his work.[20] This persistent problem is that of household burglary. In this historically and critically situated reading of K, his nomadic movement presents the particular consciousness of political engagement in its deliberate and prolonged transgression that is acted upon the physical landscape of apartheid South Africa.

Unlike his early days on the run, here K does not entertain the wish to 'parcel out' or fence himself in with a given piece of land. Instead, his nomadic movement renders what is supposedly closed and fenced space *open*. The veld, to a certain extent, is made 'open' and free for him to pass. His nomadic trajectory is politically anti-apartheid in the sense that it both creates a smooth space out of a striated territory, and does not produce a case of fixity to any given land and place. As K geographically moves from one location to another, the place he is passing is deterritorialised, in a way that is not resolutely rendered entitled and owned by K. It is also worth noting that it is the idea of attachment to a particular place as well as the associated ideological baggage of entitlement that is here deterritorialised.

The main criticism directed towards *Life & Times of Michael K* is Coetzee's rejection of political and revolutionary identity. Gordimer in her review of the novel attacks Coetzee on the basis of his championing the heroes 'who ignore history, not make it'.[21] Reevaluating Coetzee's depiction of heroism critics like Laura Wright and Barnard claim Michael K as a genuine hero. In her study of the pastoral sensibility in Coetzee's works, Barnard contends that *Life & Times of Michael K* presents 'a utopian vision: a dream of rural life without patriarchal or colonial domination'.[22] The terms Barnard uses to describe K's new relationship with the landscape is 'maternal' and 'antifoundational'.[23] In line with Barnard's interpretation, I claim that K's nomadic trajectory is a means of deterritorialisation. This means of deterritorialisation presents a new understanding of land

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[20] Attwell, J. *M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, p. 105.
[21] Gordimer, 'The Idea of Gardening', *New York Review of Books* (2 Feb. 1984), p. 3.
[22] Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond*, p. 34.
[23] Ibid.

and place as well as a new style of relationship one could establish between the land and the human subjects. Under the apartheid influence, an individual non-white subject like K is objectified in his existence and his relationship to the land and place, which is limited to his contract labour. By means of delivering a representation of K as a trespasser and a runaway, the novel offers a new dynamic relationship between place and human beings. The new emerging relationship which emphasises an immediate contact between land and human subjects is presented through K's active process of deterritorialisation that not only depends upon his transgressive movement from one location to the next, but also centres, predominantly, on his vigorous act of asserting a new claim of a referential relationship between himself and the land, as well as his insistent commitment to connect each isolated, parcelled, pieces of territory.

I now return to what actually constitutes K's act of nomadic deterritorialisation. Looking back at Westphal's assertion on the term transgressivity, K's act of clambering over fences and entering into the veld is, therefore, not enough to allow K to transgress and penetrate the bounded landscape of power *and* to destabilise the state of politicised loneliness. To transgress, K needs to deterritorialise an apartheid territory. It shall become evident that later through his nomadic movement, K not only deterritorialises the apartheid's fixed and segregated construction of compartmentalised South Africa, but also reterritorialises, as he physically changes his dwelling, a counter/outside space of the unknowable and uncontrollable. This counter space is paradoxically situated 'inside' South Africa, but is neither fixed nor static, and, above all, not presupposed by the domineering hands of the apartheid government. It is a space which is unknowable and uncontrollable by the apartheid regime.

One early example of K's nomadic deterritorialisation is evident at a scene in which K clambers over a barbed-wire fence and enters what appears to be a neglected apple orchard:

> In the cleared ground were neatly tended patches of vegetables: cauliflower, carrots, potatoes. He [K] emerged from the shelter of the trees into the downpour and on hands and knees began to pull yellow half-grown carrots out of the soft earth. It is God's earth, he thought, I am not a thief.[24]

[24] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 39.

After entertaining a thought of having a minimal existence in complete isolation 'with miles and miles of silence', K, in the passage reproduced here, enters into an orchard and, consciously deterritorialises it. Now under K's deterritorialising hand that landscape is characterised by a principle of nonexclusion that is, in this case, regulated within a religious context. Implying that all things are created by God, K removes the apartheid control of the racially restricted doctrine, which normally bestows the right to own and cultivate a territory to whites, and reorients it towards a new signification. In this religious context of reference, K is no longer confined to a set of prescribed limitations and can, upon his wish, cultivate and make changes to the landscape. Through deliberate deterritorialisation and nomadic transgression, a bounded, striated space of politicised loneliness becomes unbounded. This unbounded space offers K a genuine possibility to live 'outside' the closed landscape of loneliness.

His nomadic movement and the territory that is moved (deterritorialised) form Coetzee's pointed strategy of resistance. Another good example of K's nomadic deterritorialisation of a referential relationship between himself and the veld is inherent in the gardening motif. What does, then, the gardening motif signify? It should not be considered as a resistance force merely because it is the ideological opposite of the camp and incarceration times of K's life.[25] Nevertheless, gardening in *Life & Times of Michael K* is the quintessential moment of deterritorialisation. The process of deterritorialisation including its accompanying process of reterritorialisation is, at this point in the narrative, purely regulated within the personalised context of K's own desire. While he previously returns to a religious context of nonexclusion as the main, referential source, K now utilises his own being and desire as a system of reference. In this way, the gardening scene is imbued with deterritorialising and reterritorialising forces. The following passage, taken from a scene in which K first arrives at the Visagie farm in Prince Albert, provides ample evidence:

> His deepest pleasure came at sunset when he turned open the cock at the dam wall and watched the stream of water run down its channels to soak the earth, turning it

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[25] See Poyner, *J. M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship*, p. 69-90. In Poyner's reading, K is 'the epitome of alienation and cultivates his isolation as a means of resisting the tumult of the "now", an imagined future South Africa in which the iron-hard rule of apartheid persists', p. 69-70; and Nashef, *The Politics of Humiliation*, p. 26-36.

> from fawn to deep brown. It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature … The impulse to plant had reawaken in him; now, in a matter of weeks, he found his waking life bound tightly to the patch of earth he had begun to cultivate and the seeds he had planted there.[26]

Here, the process of gardening is described in a highly personalised language of gratification as it is being regulated within K's 'deepest pleasure', 'impulse' as well as 'his nature'. From someone who has to carry a pass in order to travel from place to place, a peripheral K becomes a referential determinant, to which the deterritorialised space is now attached. By projecting his own desire as a point of reference, K undermines the notion that only the power-centre can be the referential determinant of cultural experiences under the apartheid regime. Such a process of deterritorialisation sets a ground of relationship K can establish with the land.

In a similar way, Barnard notes that 'the brilliance of the survival strategy Michael K devises is that he finds a way to reclaim displacement and tracklessness as a form of freedom. He turns the social condition prescribed for him – that of having to work the land without owning or inscribing it – into something else, something to be desired'.[27] Building upon Barnard's reading, I contend that K's pastoral appreciation and attachment, how his life engages and interacts with the veld on the basis of his own desire, articulates, above all, the interrupted sense of discursive ownership and land cultivation. What K does, on the subject of gardening, is not manual, contracted work. He cultivates the land, and is pleased by that act. What my discussion earlier has shown also is the emphasis on how K's nomadic trajectory produces a new discourse of referential order, in which the peripheral figure of K has turned into the focus of the culturally referential order. Therefore, the idea of gardening is not merely an ideological antithesis of apartheid's closed and dehumanising aspect of land-man relationship. It is a practical process of political emergence, wherein a subject position under apartheid rises to the centre of a referential order, with the renewed relationship between man and landscape.[28]

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[26] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 59.
[27] Barnard, p. 31.
[28] See also Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*; and Head, *J. M. Coetzee*. Working on the subject of South African myths and the tradition of *plaasroman*, Gallagher argues that the novel 'does not affirm the conservative ideology of the Afrikaner myth nor does it resort to an idyllic retreat from social and political responsibility', instead, 'Michael's return to the land offers a strategy for the future rather than a mystification

With the introduction of two referential sources within the religious and personalised contexts, the language of multiplicity and variability consequently enters into the spatial discourse of the novel's counter geopolitics of deterritorialisation. These narrative representations of two referential sources produce and emphasise two significant movements. First, there is the movement that is defined by a dramatic reversal in the relation between the oppressor and the oppressed, the centre and the periphery. K who is a marginalised figure is now a key referential centre, replacing and cancelling the apartheid government's power to map and cultivate the landscape. Second, there is the movement away from the fixed, monologic narrative of apartheid, and towards a state of continuous variability and contextual mobility. As the apartheid discourse of land ownership and entitlement is now disrupted by K's personalised and religious contexts of referential orders, the narrative of land-man relationship becomes variable and mobile. These two movements are central in the working of nomadic deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in *Life & Times of Michael K*. In contrast to a bounded space of Jakkalsdrif relocation camp, which anchors apartheid's geopolitics of racial segregation, the gardening motif here presents a case where such established anchoring is penetrated and replaced by new systems of referentiality.

These two, particular movements thus offer a new vision of place and space in South Africa; places are no longer fixed, bounded/gated, or dead. However, they are in constant motion, waiting to be shifted and recoded by a multiplicity of significations and references through a constantly active dialectic of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The production of space and spatial interaction under the apartheid regime may be singular since it does not offer an alternative view of spatiality; however, this state of continuous variability, driven by the complex interaction between axes of differentiation, between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, contests that singular, rigid vision. No longer attached to any definite referential roots, a deterritorialised space is then left open to a myriad of referential possibilities. The space in question is thus, in Westphal's words, 'unpredictable in its appearance and its manifestations'.[29]

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of the past', p. 156. In a similar vein, Head contends that the novel is 'a highly politicised novel, at once an account of – and a parable about – the control of social space' in its representation of the gardening motif, p. 103.

[29] Westphal, *Geocriticism*, p. 51.

A question, then, follows: how does K's nomadic movement including the gardening motif succeed in undermining the apartheid centre of political gravity as well as its spatial production of politicised loneliness, and, above all, establish a sense of nearness to the political realm while it persistently assumes a historically and politically 'outside' space of unboundedness? One may argue that neither K's gardening nor the novel as a whole is political, and that instead of being political or having a political edge, the novel, in particular, evades the question of political responsibility, in a similar way K often escapes the ordering of apartheid in the forms of policemen, soldiers, and convoys, and recedes into his own complacency. One may as well ask: how does the work of deterritorialisation enacted in so remote a location (as represented in the gardening motif) from the hub of all apartheid power produce an impact that would help to change the course of South African politics? Attwell, for instance, resists any symbolic reading of the gardening motif. He sees the ethical significance of gardening as it is represented as cultivation. He does not, however, think that the gardening motif is represented 'as merely the convenient, structural opposite of power'.[30] Derek Wright acknowledges an ecological/mythological meaning in Coetzee's treatment of gardening.[31] He writes that 'Michael K is a creature not of human history but of earth [...]'.[32] The gardening thus presents an alternative history to which K returns after being 'disenfranchized from a human existence on the earth's surface'. Poyner also suggests that 'the garden is antidote to the prescriptive requirement of culture during the apartheid era', in which K must remain in order to cultivate the state of exteriority that the garden offers in his resistance against apartheid.[33]

Considering K's movement from Cape Town to the Visagie farm and then back to Cape Town at the end of the novel, nomadism in *Life & Times of Michael K* is not a complete departure from the political and social milieu. Neither is it an articulation of embedded and prolonged exteriority and displacement as suggested by some of the critics above. However, the process of K's nomadism, with respect to Deleuzoguattarian

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[30] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, p. 96.
[31] Derek Wright, 'Fiction as Foe: The Novels of J. M. Coetzee', *International Fiction Review* 16.2 (1989), pp. 112-18 (p. 116).
[32] Ibid.
[33] Poyner, p. 85.

territorial dialectic, presents a question of political responsibility in a new light, in a way that it transforms how we can engage with the political world. To be specific, political responsibility is no longer a question of proximity. Rather it is a question of how political involvement can be achieved in distance. Nomadic movement defined in basic terms by its constant state of subversive awayness in *Life & Times of Michael K* is the prime evidence that shows how we can experience closeness to historical and political events in distance. Therefore, the effect of K's nomadic deterritorialisation should not only be understood as it is felt within particular localities but also as it is felt in a wider context of referential relations.

One of the referential relations that informs Deleuzoguattarian territorial dialectic is Hegel's dialectical method. To illustrate this, the deliberate act of avoidance and evasion inherent in K's nomadic movement underscores the lack of confrontation and struggle between thesis and antithesis. If we follow the trajectory of Hegelian dialectic, the struggle for relational recognition and the confrontation between thesis and antithesis play an important role in establishing the existence of both entities. If the presence and existence of apartheid require the antithetical existence and presence of K, with K's nomadic, evading movement, there is no active antithesis existing, to which the apartheid government's consciousness is ontologically related. In other words, the act of nomadism of K, beside its active and actual spatial movement and endless mobility, results in the disappearance of the key dialectic that constitutes the apartheid government's existence. Consequently, apartheid's consciousness, which is left without the relational struggle for recognition or interaction, is one that is not dynamic but rather static and isolated.

On a different note, scenes of confrontation between territorialisation (thesis) and deterritorialisation (antithesis) may prove to be indispensable as the confrontation of two forces would result in triggering spatial transformations according to the Deleuzoguattarian territorial dialectic. However, when the antithetical vector of deterritorialisation evades any obvious contact with the social and political realms through his nomadic movement, K does not simply recede into the ecological and mythological complacency and stillness of the pastoral and gardening. That is to say, while being geographically far from the political and social scenes, the process of deterritorialisation is already taking place, working its way on various places through K's nomadic mobility. Following the Deleuzoguattarian

dialectic, once the process of deterritorialisation is acted upon a territory, its neighboring territory is bound to be deterritorialised and reterritorialised as a result, sending waves of continuous change from one territory to the next. Therefore, if we consider K's gardening as deterritorialisation together with his characteristic ability for the spatial movement of nomadism, it is possible to discern K as a figure of becoming not as a figure of being in a way most critics of *Life & Times of Michael K* has previously suggested. That is, although K may not appear to be verbally and directly antithetical in his relation to the apartheid government, K is indeed a figure of continuous changes with direct regard to his mobile and distant interaction with apartheid. In a significant way, K's nomadic movement reveals Coetzee's subtle play between active, disruptive resistance force and a seemingly docile and static one. On this account, without relational recognition and through K's distant/mobile works of deterritorialisation, apartheid as an institution is destabilised at its core.

Considering the metaphorics and instances of personification in *Life & Times of Michael K*, Jarad Zimbler sees another web of relational interconnectedness between, for instance, scenes featuring a gardening motif and a camp motif. He writes that '[…] the metaphorics of *Life & Times of Michael K*, and indeed, all Coetzee's early novels, both relies on and reconfigures the model of Great Chain of Being, and does so in a way that allows us to characterise it, finally, as a metaphorics of diminution, of existential reduction'.[34] Some ample evidence of Coetzee's concretisation metaphor are, according to Zimbler, a) EARTH IS MOTHER, b) THINGS OF THE EARTH ARE FAMILY, c) PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, d) PEOPLE ARE THINGS.[35] To elaborate on Zimbler's observation of metaphorical language in the novel, the first two instances are often found, particularly, in scenes such as the Visagie farm or the mountains in which K is, strictly speaking, alone. The other two instances are, by contrast, can be located in scenes of detention and the labour camps, in which the interactions between the police or institutional authorities and the inmates are present. Drawing upon his own instances of personification, Zimbler particularly states that 'the description of non-human entities in human terms

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[34] Jarad Zimbler, *J. M. Coetzee and the Politics of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 149

[35] Ibid., p. 124-31.

imbues with familiarity the relatively alien natural and animal worlds' as depicted in the gardening scenes.[36] Consequently, the said relational context between the animal/natural and human worlds bridges the political gap that the gardening motif may seemingly incur. In this metaphoric respect, the gardening scenes imbued with instances of personification can then be discerned as moments where the political emerges: '[…] there must be men to stay behind and keep the gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children. That was why'.[37] Referring to the earth in the language of personification, K justifies his staying at the farm and not joining the guerrilla revolutionary group by equating his gardening to the act of revolutionary groups, both of which, according to K, have to be executed simultaneously, not one before or after the other. His decision, in this metaphoric context, is therefore considered a political one, and, thus, produces an equally significant impact to the politics at the turn of the decade.

Through these three relational contexts, deterritorialisation of the power-centre is, therefore, no longer tied to a question of proximity or how close we are to the political and historical scenes. Rather, they can be penetrated and deterritorialised by distant forces. These distant forces, with K as the nomadic vector of deterritorialisation and his deterritorialising gardening, present an overarching critique as well as a reconstruction of apartheid space by drawing a sharp, pointed line connecting two or more, seemingly, geographically separated worlds as represented in the camp motif and the gardening motif for instance. As the gardening world, which is in and of itself a product of deterritorialisation of the old, farming world, emerges, it presents a case of ontological threat to the apartheid regime which restricts the autonomy of certain races, and prohibits any deterritorialising acts that may become detrimental to its geopolitics of segregation. Through this process of distant/nomadic deterritorialisation, the peripheral figure takes aim at the centre, reducing the distance from the power centre, and cancelling it through the particularities of nomadic transgression and deterritorialisation.

It is also worth noting that K's political emergence is not shown in the novel to be within the consciousness of the protagonist K. It is rather within the authorial/narrator's

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[36] Ibid., p. 124.
[37] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 109.

consciousness that any political message and action could be read and understood. In other words, it is the language in which the novel of *Life & Times of Michael K* is written that Coetzee reveals any political engagement K might have had with the repressive regime of apartheid while the protagonist himself remains geographically distant. In 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech', Coetzee says:

> So as a student he moves on the fringes of the left without being part of the left. Sympathetic to the human concerns of the left, he is alienated, when the crunch comes, by its language – by all political language, in fact. As far back as he can see he has been ill at ease with language that lays down the law, that is not provisional, that does not as one of its habitual motions glace back skeptically at its premises. Masses of people wake in him something close to panic. He cannot or will not, cannot and will not, join, shout, sing: his throat tenses up, he revolts.[38]

This is how Coetzee sees himself. As a writer, Coetzee is known for being a private man. As elusive as he is, Coetzee wants to discursively create a space of language 'that lays down the law'. This language will create, as Coetzee understands it, the kind of engagement that is similar to living 'on the fringes of the left without being part of the left'. In *Life & Times of Michael K*, K is allowed to exist and find the authenticity of being without being overtly political. However, the language by which his story and life are created does not truly speak without a message of political engagement. It can then be summed that even though K does not consciously appear to be politically active, his actions, especially his relationship with the veld and the act of gardening, carry a political message. This is the particular extent of K's political emergence as an elusive self within the apartheid regime.

From the discussion of K's actual nomadic trajectory, this chapter examines K's nomadic subjectivity, the discussion of which shall bring my examination of nomadic deterritorialisation full circle. Following the nonunitary principle of nomadism, nomadic subjectivity can then be conceptualised to move beyond the confines of coherence. How this is imagined in the context of the novel is through the interplay between speech and silence in Coetzee's representation of K. In the original version of the text, K is described as 'a silent partner' (and his mother is still his wife).[39] Although the relationship between

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[38] Coetzee, 'Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech', *Doubling the Points*, p. 394.
[39] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and The Life of Writing*, p. 109.

K and his mother has gone through several revisions, K's characteristically pointed silence and slipperiness persist. Speaking of the figuration of portentous silence in Coetzee's oeuvre in general, Benita Parry sees speechlessness and silence as Coetzee's 'conjuring and valorising of a non-verbal signifying system'.[40] Understanding silence and speechlessness in the structural relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, critics like Gayatri Spivak and Graham Huggan perceive Coetzee's representation of silence as a form of self-preservation and resistance.[41] Reading K's silence in particular, Attwell similarly states that 'K's apparent lack of meaning (or his absenting himself from meaning) is his very strength'.[42]

In the similar way K's nomadic movement is a direct articulation of political transgression and deterritorialisation, his consciousness and subjectivity also remain in the state of awayness. Analyzing various moments of K's deliberate silence and verbal slipperiness in the context of nomadism, I contend that K is emblematic of a nomadic identity of movement, of rootlessness that refuses to be pinned down into an apartheid discourse of racialised subjectivity. K is, in other words, a force that escapes the territorialising ordering of the apartheid government, or, in Attridge's words, 'the signifier that escapes systematization, the force of *différence* [...]'.[43] The second section of the novel gives ample evidence of how the figuration of silence and verbal slipperiness is enacted as a key characteristic that defines K's nomadic identity. With regard to this particular section of the novel, Gallagher notes that 'the interpolation of the medical officer's narrative, with its pat formulae and insistent message, warns us of the dangers of assigning meaning to and of composing stories for the Other' and of 'the inadequacy of turning human flesh and blood into abstract intellectual meaning'.[44] Building on this perspective, I also see a series of textual ambiguities being enacted through silence and verbal slipperiness of K. This results in the situation in which the absolute authority of the fully constructed narrator of the section is undermined, and from which K emerges as possessing authority embedded

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[40] Benita Parry, 'Speech and Silence in J. M. Coetzee', *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), pp. 37-65.
[41] Gayatri Spivak, 'Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's Foe Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*', Englishpost in Africa 17.2 (1990), pp. 1-23 (p. 172); Graham Huggan, 'Philomela's Retold Story: Silence, Music and the Postcolonial Text', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 25.1 (1990), pp. 12-23.
[42] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and The Life of Writing*, p. 122.
[43] Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, p. 49.
[44] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, pp. 164-65.

in his storytelling. The lines below describe one of the first instances in which K is interrogated by the medical officer who is also the narrator of the section:

> '"Where is your mother now?" I asked. "She makes the plants grow,' he replied, evading my eyes. "You mean she has passed away?" I said (pushing up the daisies?). He shook his head. "They burned her," he said. "Her hair was burning around her head like a halo"'.[45]

Trying to understand K's story, the narrator admits that they are 'not sure [K] is wholly of [their] world'.[46] The ambiguity embedded in K's unique way of understanding the world, in general, and of telling the story of his mother's death, in particular, protects K from being completely understood, and, thus, fixed in one kind of prescribed identity. Drifting along a series of prescribed identities of 'a vagrant', 'an insurgent', 'an escapee', or 'arsonist' bestowed on him by the soldiers and the medical officers, K exposes the unstable relation/correlation between language and interpretation, between the act of voicing and reading.[47]

And, it is in this unstable relation that K comes to be acknowledged by the narrator as 'a stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand […].[48] The imagery of stone here reminds the reader of *Waiting for the Barbarians* in which the Magistrate refers to the barbarian girl as 'an urn or a ball, something which is all surface'.[49] Like a stone (or an urn or a ball), K refuses to easily appear *phenomenally* to those who try to elicit meaning out of his being. His language, particularly at the end of section one and throughout section two, places him in a continuous transition from one meaning or point of interpretative reference to the next. This perpetual movement and the rootlessness of his identity, therefore, render K as *the unknowable and uncontrollable self*, that which is placed beyond the limit of apartheid's knowledge and management of the world, that which

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[45] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 130.
[46] Ibid., p. 130.
[47] Ibid., p. 120, 130, and 131. Nashef presents a similar reading, stating that 'Michael can never be grasped, as his whole existence has been literally one deferral after another […] The inability to pin down Michael adds a haunting quality to his very existence', p. 36. Although Nashef is referring to K's evasive identity, primarily, due to his silence as a method of defiance, it is possible to add that K is a deferral of fixity, which remains constantly out of reach, both in his physical presence as well as his state of mind.
[48] Ibid, p. 135.
[49] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 49.

resists and escapes, though its nomadic movement, the hegemonic homologation of the apartheid-managed and -closed space of power.

More than a form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity dictated by the apartheid regime, K's silence and verbal slipperiness pose an ontological threat to the constitution of apartheid existence. Since the access to K's mind is blocked, the ontological entity of K's "I" is not relatively presupposed and governed by the exterior world he lives in. Some may argue that the apartheid government's means of controlling its social body and the world are not based on a deep knowledge of the things they wish to manage, and, so that getting into the ontological core of K in order to subject him under its rules becomes irrelevant. However, K's silence reverses the geopolitical practices of apartheid, whose knowledge of the world is often acquired through its solipsistic engagement with the world, and whose main mechanism is heavily dependent on its ability to transfix a subject by imposing a narrative of some sort onto the subject. That is to say, K's occasional silence and verbal slipperiness over the course of the novel become not only a means of preventing himself from being read, mapped and completely subsumed within the dialectical relation to the apartheid government, but also the means that enables him to travel endlessly, evading various discourses of fixity imposed by the apartheid regime.

In addition to K's silence and slipperiness, the style of narration of the novel also has direct bearing on the question of nomadic subjectivity. Broadly speaking, the first and the third sections of the novel are told in a limited third-person narration while the second section of the novel is narrated from a first-person perspective. However, as has been suggested by a number of critics, *Life & Times of Michael K* contains, especially in the opening and ending sections, the use of multiple voices. Looking at the style of narration, Attridge discerns a tension between narrated and narrating voices. He argues that the repetition of phrases such as 'he thought' is a stylistic device that always positions the reader outside the consciousness of K.[50] In a similar vein, Clarkson discusses the use of a version of *style indirect libre*: 'the style of narration *in Life & Times of Michael K* is not straightforward first-person interior monologue, nor is it an external third-person perspective, nor is it a dominating authorial voice speaking on behalf of the characters.

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[50] Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, p. 50.

Instead, we have a voice that seems to vibrate between a narrating and narrated consciousness'.[51] This 'perpetual shuttle from the third to the first person and back again' draws attention to 'the precariously balanced tension between the literary consciousnesses [of the narrator's and the protagonist's] at work in the novel, where each seems to place the other on hold, in the instant that its own existence is supervenient upon the other'.[52] Building on Clarkson's discussion of *style indirect libre*, I would say that the narrative shift between the first and third persons draw attention to the tension between narrated and narrating consciousness in *Life & Times of Michael K* in a way that it mirrors how K, the narrated protagonist, is struggling for an escape from being narrated, from the force that seeks to territorialise him.

Evidence of this can be found toward the end of Section Two. At the moment, K has already left the infirmary, while the narrator seems to be deeply obsessed with K, trying to comprehend and project their thoughts onto him. The following passage is taken from the very last paragraph of the section:

> Would I be imagining it, or would it be true that at this point you would begin to throw your most urgent energies into running, so that it would be clear to the meanest observer that you were running to escape the man shouting at your back, the man in blue who must seem to be persecutor, madman, bloodhound, policeman? … 'Am I right' I would shout. 'Have I understood you? If I am right, hold up your right hand; if I am wrong, hold up your left!'[53]

K's presence lingers in the medical officer's mind even though he has physically left the infirmary. For almost fourteen pages, the narrator insists on retaining K, or at least the thought of him, within the confines of their narrative voice. This very moment at the end of the section reproduced above depicts an abrupt end of their narrative perspective, before the text will depart from it and resume with the third-person narration of Section Three. Against the narrative force to incarcerate K within the narration, K emerges at the opening of Section Three, in a narration mainly focalised from his perspective.

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[51] Clarkson, *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices*, p. 30.

[52] Ibid., p. 31.

[53] Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K*, p. 167.

From the perspective of territorial dialectic, K as a nomadic vector of deterritorialisation escapes the ordering and territorialising force which is represented through the shift and instability of narrative voices over the course of the novel. When that force becomes immanent, the narrative voice shifts drastically from a third-person narration to a first-person interior monologue evident in Section One and Section Three, and from a first-person narration of Section Two to a narration focalised on K's point of view in Section Three. These various shifts scattered over the pages of the novel emphasise K's nomadic identity of movement as well as his transgressive subjectivity which refuses to be fully subsumed in a narration of any kind. In sum, K's nomadic subjectivity fractures dominant and coherent categories of narrative subjectivities. Choosing to live on the farm and to 'stay behind and keep gardening alive', K delegitimates the state, which incarcerates him through the means of detention and labour camps and apartheid laws of influx control, and medical officers or those guerilla soldiers, the encounter with which may lead to K being involuntarily conscripted, as arbiters of fixed identity.

The final pages of the novel bring my analysis of how K's nomadic subjectivity and his transgressive movement produce a complex interaction of place and subjectivity in the constitution of K's nomadism to its critical accumulation:

> He thought of the farm, the grey thornbushes, the rocky soil, the ring of hills, the mountains purple and pink in the distance, the great still blue empty sky, the earth grey and brown beneath the sun save here and there, where if you looked carefully you suddenly saw a tip of vivid green, pumpkin leaf or carrot-brush.
>
> It did not seem impossible what whoever it was who disregarded the curfew and came when it suited him to sleep in this smelly corner […] might be tired of life at the seaside and want to take a holiday in the country […].
>
> And if the old man climbed out of the cart and stretched himself […] and looked at where the pump had been that the soldiers had blown up so that nothing should be left standing, and complained, saying 'what are we going to do about water?,' he would produce a teaspoon from his pocket, a teaspoon and a long roll of string. He would clear the rubble from the mouth of the shaft, he would bend the handle of the teaspoon in a loop and tie the string to it, he would lower it down the shaft deep into the earth, and when he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon;

and in that way he would say, one can live.[54]

The last journey that is reproduced in length here is one that occurs inside K's mind. It moves from 'stories of how they beat [K] in the camps' to his life at Sea Point at 'this smelly corner'.[55] Bringing together all places he has been to, the novel enables an articulation of life that can go beyond the spatial limits of the apartheid-controlled territory. Whereas the dominant interest of apartheid lies in the process of compartmentalisation of landscape and the critical distance set up between black and white worlds, K's nomadic deterritorialisation presents a case of possibility of life that is neither rooted in nor bounded by a fixed, fenced space. Life, at the novel's closure, is explicitly expressed as being a possibility without regard to the spatial limitation, when the metaphor of the teaspoon tied to the string is lowered 'down the shaft deep of the earth'.

In this vivid retelling of K's *life and times*, the nomadic movement proposes the fleeting co-presence, interconnection, as well as interaction of multiple spaces/places, that would otherwise remain locked or gated, separated or segregated under the apartheid geopolitics of division, in a space/time continuum that deterritorialises a stable, exclusionary management of spatiality. According to Hayes, the novel at this point presents 'a contradictory movement', whereby 'there is a tendency, in tone and register of the text, to elevate Michael's aspirations into a seriousness and dignity and meaningfulness worthy of a hero (of a certain kind); there is also an observable, and frequently observed, reality that pulls him back down with a thud'.[56] Without confining his reading to any critical camps related to how scholars view K on the basis of his political responsibility, Hayes contends that the novel's interplay with the question of truth and truth-telling marks its narrative uniqueness in rendering K as a subject position that is cast into the middle ground, not only on the question of political heroism but also on the question of truth and lies. From Hayes's claim, it is possible to state that K's nomadic life is also a moment of contradiction. His *life and times* present a contradiction in which his seemingly distant and elusive movement may suggest the state of apolitical consciousness; however, it is within this elusiveness and distant approach that K brings a forceful production of a world, unknowable and

[54] Ibid., pp. 183-84.
[55] Ibid., p. 183.
[56] Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel*, pp. 88, 89-90.

uncontrollable, into existence. The quoted passage above depicts this very idea of the unknowable and uncontrollable world, which is exemplified not only in how the nomadic trajectory is deliberately taken in the mind of K himself, but how the trajectory itself constructs a nomadically induced space/time continuum of spatial interconnectedness that lies forever out of apartheid's grasp.

Through the nomadic movement of K that highlights the essence of non-fixity and variability, *Life & Times of Michael K* presents a critical statement that directly takes aims at the question of political responsibility in South Africa. Should the explicit approach to politics be the only narrative South Africa deserves? In a similar vein, is the idea of political responsibility only possible when one commits one's self to the generally upheld movement of political urgency and immediacy? The answer that a novel like *Life & Times of Michael K* seems to be offering is 'no'. Especially under the apartheid rule where the idea of movement, whether it be physical, political, or interpersonal, is limited by a monologic discourse of segregation, the novel as a whole offers an alternative, a variation on the question of political responsibility, that when coupled with the approach of immediacy and explicitness championed by authors like Gordimer, will form and open up the multiplicity and possibility of political movements in South Africa. Characters like K, as Kelly Hewson rightly notes, are 'not going to be Everyman. Instead, the impression created is, simply, that Michael K is going to be a particular figure'.[57] As a particular figure, K's life and times under the apartheid regime add another layer of political consciousness, that should not be limited to a single course of political action or ideological commitment.

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[57] Kelly Hewson, 'Making the "Revolutionary Gesture": Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee and Some Variations on the Writer's Responsibility', in *Critical Essays on J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by Sue Kossew (New York: G. K Hall & Co., 1998), pp. 145-56 (p. 149).

Chapter 4

Deterritorialising Referentiality: Nonhumanism in Gordimer's *The Conservationist* and *July's People*

The approach of Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* to politics is primarily marked by its nomadic teleology and progression as a means of transgressive deterritorialisation. The novel's engagement and interaction with the material landscape of South Africa are measured out in the way that the peripheral figure moves and deterritorialises each territory, thus, sending stratigraphic transformations from one territorial point to another, without directly coming into close contact with the apartheid hub of political power-centres. In Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* and *July's People*, the subject-oriented, implicit approach to politics as well as the anthropocentric engagement and interaction with the nonhuman world of Coetzee's geopolitics of deterritorialisation in *Life & Times of Michael K* are fully nonhumanised. To specify, not only is the approach of Gordimer's fiction to politics in the 1970s charged with an explicit level of political nearness, it is also defined by its proximate contact between the human and the nonhuman, as well as its critical turn towards nonhumanism as its point of referentiality, responding to the new spatial terrain of politics concurrent in South Africa at a point of historical and political crisis of the 1970s.

I use the term 'nonhuman' to describe, strictly speaking, animals, plants, climatic systems, and ecosystems, as well as, broadly speaking, what is essentially, culturally, and politically *outside* and *beyond* the privileged realm and status of the autonomous white subject and subjectivity constituted under the apartheid regime's geopolitics of racial segregation. The term 'nonhumanism', therefore, connotes a critical engagement with matter, objects, or, in general terms, the natural world as a necessary turn in order to question the stability of, and to reposition, the individuated, white subject whose existence

and political engagement has been dependent on the oppressive and manipulative management and control of social as well as spatial bodies.

Speaking of the nonhuman turn, Richard Grusin writes: ‘the nonhuman turn […] is engaged in decentering the human in favour of a turn toward and concern for the nonhuman, understood variously in terms of animals, affectivity, bodies, organic and geophysical systems, materiality, or technologies’.[1] Unlike the posthuman turn, the nonhuman turn, Grusin further states, does not entail ‘a historical development from human to something after the human’; rather the nonhuman turn insists on the ideological and critical premises that ‘the human has always coevolved, coexisted, or collaborated with the nonhuman – and that the human is characterised precisely by this indistinction from the nonhuman’.[2] Key in this critical proposition is Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the ‘plane of consistency’. According to Gregg Lambert, the Earth is understood by the two philosophers as ‘a more compact plane of consistency that lies between layers or strata’.[3] From this critical assessment, the nonhuman turn does not underpin a return to nature, that may or may not imply a complete departure from the social and political realms. Rather, nonhumanism as a critical proposition necessitates the ‘question of *consistency*: the ‘holding together’ of heterogeneous elements’ (original emphasis).[4] It is ‘a “natural state” that exists prior to the moment of stratification which causes it to deviate from its true unitary compositions or to become “outside itself within itself”’.[5] Situating within the critical perspective of the plane of consistency, nonhumanism speaks of the critical turn in which any object, whether that be the human or the nonhuman, exists and functions in consistency with one another. This forms a particular perspective in which the human is no longer at the centre of referential order; neither is the turn to the nonhuman is the *return* to nature, in a way that signifies a divorce between the ontological units of the nonhuman and the human worlds.

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[1] Richard Grusin, ‘Introduction’, in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. by Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), pp. vii-xxix (p. vii).

[2] Ibid., p. ix-x.

[3] Gregg Lambert, ‘What the Earth Thinks’, in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 220-239 (p. 234).

[4] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 376-77.

[5] Lambert, p. 234.

There are some potential problems when applying the post-structuralist term 'nonhuman' to the South African context. As has been stated, the term 'nonhuman' is broadly used to connote what is essentially, culturally, and politically *outside* and *beyond* the privileged realm and status of the autonomous white subject and subjectivity. As this definition stands, the term 'nonhuman' encompasses all communities that are not white. Under the apartheid regime, non-white communities are subject to an inhumane, if not dehumanised, state of being. The usage of the term 'nonhuman' in this chapter takes into consideration such a problematic context. However, what is understood and highlighted under the definition of the term 'nonhuman' is not the inclusion of non-white communities in South Africa as being 'nonhuman'. On the contrary, it is the deprived and forced state of being of the non-white communities (which comes close to be nonhumanised under the repressive regime of apartheid) that is emphasised here. In what follows, the chapter discusses the state of white humanism and how that is presented as an essentially, culturally, and politically privileged state of being under apartheid as opposed to that of black humanism.

To discuss the emancipatory message of nonhumanism in Gordimer's fiction, it is best to begin by looking at her short fiction produced in the same period, where the issues of land control, spatial emplacement, and the fallacy of spatial nearness are primary cases of investigation. The questions of spatial emplacement and land control, which underscore the systematic fallacy of spatial nearness in the apartheid society are raised in Gordimer's short fiction published in the 1970s to the early 1980s. One ample example can be drawn from 'The Termitary' from the collection, *A Soldier's Embrace* (1980). 'The Termitary' provides an allegorical account of land management and control including its resulting effect of spatial loneliness. Told from the first-person perspective of a young woman, the story 'Termitary' is an account of a mother who tries to get rid of the termitary in her house. After several failed attempts, the mother hires a group of men to do the job for her. According to three exterminators, the queen termite needs to be located and destroyed for the termitary to be deserted, and not repopulated. Reading the story allegorically, the act of depopulating the termitary by locating the queen termite becomes symbolic of how the apartheid government works to create a 'new' geopolitical order, in which former occupiers and owners of the land are to be removed and rezoned.

Through the depopulation and removal of the termitary, the short story delves into another allegorical exploration of an imposed condition of spatial 'nearness'. Instead of becoming the solid foundation where life flourishes, this condition of 'nearness', as the narrator later at the end notes, confines her mother: 'Now she [the mother] is dead and although I suppose someone else lives in her house, the secret passages, the inner chamber in which she was our queen and our prisoner are sealed up, empty'.[6] Figuratively speaking, the mother, in this retrospective reconsideration of the past, is not only the queen of that apartheid control over landscape, but also a prisoner who is incarcerated by her own act of land management. As the narrator notes in the final paragraph of the story: 'We lived on, above the ruin', the removal of the termitary is projected as 'the ruin'.[7] The house itself, 'above the ruin', is 'a burden' to 'the mother'.[8] Looking at the story as an allegory, the act of land management symbolised in the removal of the termitary constitutes the condition of spatial incarceration and spatial loneliness, that leaves the mother the 'queen' and paradoxically 'prisoner' of her own home.

The sense of loneliness that is acute in how the mother herself is represented as such can also be discerned in the sense of disintegration the story conveys. The degree of disintegration and of loneliness is portrayed in the last paragraph of the story, in which the conditions of spatial loneliness and interpersonal relationship intertwine:

> The children grew up and left the town; coming back from the war after 1946 […] it bored them to hear same old stories […] 'D'you remember the time the white ant men were in, and you nearly broke your leg?' Where these events the sum of my mother's life? Why should I remember? I, who – shuddering to look back at those five rooms […]. My father grew senile and she [the mother] put him in a home for his last years. She stayed on, although she said she didn't want to […].[9]

The removal of the termitary leaves the land ruined; the house itself becomes a burden, a prison to the mother. As the act of land control and management is critiqued in this light, the interpersonal connection between the members of the family disintegrates.

[6] Gordimer, *A Soldier's Embrace* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p. 120.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

As the story of the 'The Termitary' reveals, the question of white control of and entitlement to land does not produce a true sense of emplacement. Instead, it is represented as doing the contrary, resulting in a lasting period of incarceration and loneliness, in which the ideas of interpersonal as well as spatial connection cannot be fully achieved. The condition of spatial loneliness, in which the relationship between the human and the land they occupy is one of Gordimer's key concerns in her earlier works of the period. Without focusing on the question of land control and management, stories like 'An Intruder' and 'The Life of the Imagination' from the short story collection, *Livingstone's Companions*, examine how a sense of spatial loneliness is a direct result of the apartheid government's flawed geopolitics of emplacement in the racialised model of segregation.

'The Life of the Imagination', for instance, presents a seemingly private exploration of life and personal struggle. The story gives an account of Barbara, a married woman with children, who has an affair with the family doctor, Asher. The story follows her life in a suburban neighbourhood, where she is often visited by her lover. It is not until the final scene of the story that the illusion of emplacement and the idea of spatial loneliness are evoked. The following quotation describes the final moment of contemplation, fear, and a hidden but critical 'imagination' of life threats:

> This was one of the few houses without an alarm system – she and Arthur had refused to imprison themselves in the white man's fear of attack on himself and his possessions. Yet now the door was open like the door of a deserted house and she found herself believing, like any other suburban matron, that someone must enter. They would come in unheard, with that wind, and approach through the house, black men with their knives in their hands. She, who had never submitted to this sort of fear ever in her life, could hear them coming, hear them breathe under their dirty rag masks and their tsotsi caps.[10]

The paragraph describes Barbara lying in bed at night as she is 'possessed' by 'the white man's fear of attack'. As the story reveals, the side door is probably left open by Asher, who comes for a night visit while Barbara's husband is out of town. However, Barbara's mind is quick to travel 'through the house' following the echoing of the banging, terrace

[10] Gordimer, *Livingstone's Companions* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 121.

door.[11] As she 'lay there possessed by it [the fear of an attack]', she is described on the page as 'She saw it; saw the gaping door, the wind bellying the long curtains and sending papers skimming about the room […]'.[12] The quotation describes the essence of Barbara's life when she is possessed and gripped by racialised fear. The story does not stop at such projection of Barbara's realistically rendered imagination. She goes on to imagine, starting with 'They would come in unheard, with that wind, and approach through the house, black men with their knives in their hands', and ending with 'they will come straight into the room and stick a knife in me. No time to cry out'.[13] What is at first represented as an actual imagination, a mediated hypothesis, that is in itself an accurate projection of Barbara's state of mind, turns into an actualised mediation of false belief and thought. The story shifts between grammatical structures as it describes how Barbara's state of mind reveals that she is not only gripped by fear and anxiety, but also how her life is taken in and overcome as her imagination is actualised despite the fact that she herself anticipates the possibility, if not the happening, of Asher leaving the terrace door open.

With this narrative revelation of internalised fear and anxiety at the end of the story, Gordimer brings the question of spatial 'nearness' to the forefront. Under the apartheid regime, the racialised discourse of power and geopolitics of racial segregation are the prominent narratives, through which individual subjects in South Africa establish a connection and spatial involvement with others as well as places. Through land control and appropriation, the narratives of land entitlement and privilege are meant to construe that sense of spatial nearness in which white individuals establish their sense of self and power in their firm and racialised control of land. However, apartheid's racialised control of land does not promote a deep, healthy condition of 'nearness', in which white individuals find themselves emplaced and 'near' the land they live in. What it does, on the contrary, is prevent the condition of actual 'nearness' or relationship to the physical, material landscape as well as to other South Africans. And, it is this prevention that constitutes the severe separation between one's sense of self and the land they occupy.

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., p. 122.

The condition of loneliness that can be discerned from an investigation of questions of land control and the illusion of spatial emplacement from 'The Termitary' and 'The Life of the Imagination' during this phase is then one that originates from such a geopolitically problematic condition of spatial 'nearness'. To an extent, at the very end of the story 'The Life of Imagination' Barbara is rendered 'empty' as she is possessed by the 'stale fantasy, shared with the whole town, the whole white population'.[14] Her mind is deeply preoccupied with that account of fantasy to the point of being spatially displaced and abandoned. To put it differently, she no longer occupies the domestic space of her house. Neither is she situated in her secure white space, protected by apartheid ideology. On the contrary, she is locked up in her internalised fear, becoming a prisoner of her own thought. Once the terrace door is left open, her sense of spatial emplacement is destabilised and the apartheid-induced state of spatial 'nearness' disrupted. Together with 'The Termitary', 'The Life of the Imagination' examines an illusion of spatial emplacement and the resulting effect of loneliness.

Given that such engagement with the material landscape endorsed by a series of apartheid laws and policies presents a flawed case of spatial nearness and rootedness, as previously shown in my discussion of Gordimer's 'The Life of Imagination' and 'The Termitary', the politics of deterritorialisation, understood here in the geopolitical relation between the apartheid processes and the land, can be complete only if the land problem and its accompanying condition of problematic emplacement and human-nonhuman relation are resolved. With the critical turn towards nonhumanism in the process of deterritorialisation, *The Conservationist* and *July's People*, thus, decentre the apartheid government including its legislations related to land apportionment, ownership, and resettlement as the prominent narratives of spatial referentiality, and, thus, reorients itself toward a new referential system of the nonhuman.

Published respectively in 1974 and 1981, *The Conservationist* and *July's People* were written in response to the political demands of the time.[15] Retrospectively, the 1970s

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[14] Ibid.

[15] While Gordimer's previous novels, written in the early phase of her fiction writing career, deal specifically with the urban landscape of South African cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town, her works in the 1970s emphasise a critical turn toward the rural and remote landscape of South Africa, with the exception of *A Guest of Honour* (1970) whose narrative emerges out of an unidentified, Central African state, and *Burger's*

South Africa was confronted with two possibilities of political humanism: white and black humanism. The first was heralded by the apartheid government since the 1940s while the latter was championed by anti-apartheid activist movement like the Black Consciousness Movement (B.C.M.), an ideology of political order that emerged in the mid 1960s but became influential in the 1970s. The concept of white humanism was largely related to the preservation of white subjectivity through the management of the social and spatial spaces, a process that consequently resulted in the exclusion and dehumanisation of non-white people as discussed in the previous chapters. 'The Termitary' and 'The Life of Imagination' are ample representations of such ideological conception of white humanism, that emphasises the preservation of white subjectivity through the control of the geographical body, including its inherent flawed perception of spatial nearness.

The limiting concept and practices of white humanism were challenged with the emergence of the B.C.M. and the introduction of black consciousness ideology. The following quotation describes what the movement is in the words of Steve Biko, one of the B.C. leaders, who was later detained and murdered while in detention:

> Black consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin - and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude …. Black Consciousness therefore takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life.[16]

Generally speaking, two of the key concepts that defines the B.C.M. are re-groupment and conscientisation. Studying the impact of the B.C.M. on South African politics, David Hirschman states that 're-groupment in a world where political power derived from groups was an essential step towards emancipation'.[17] The need to regroup on the basis of race and political grounds became an essential aspect of the movement. However, the need to

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Daughter (1979), a novel which engages explicitly with political cosmopolitanism and development revolving around the central character, Rosa Burger.

[16] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like. A Selection of his Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 49.

[17] David Hirschman, 'The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa', *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies* 28.1(1990), pp. 1-22 (pp. 4-5).

'infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, value systems, their culture, their religion, and their outlook to life' was also central to the ideology of the B.C.M. Part of its political aims was, therefore, to reclaim what was lost in and subsumed under the apartheid geopolitical code of racial segregation.

Acknowledging how black African labourers were reduced to live the life of the nonhuman, Biko realised that:

> The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump black life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of 'Black Consciousness'.[18]

As Gordimer's writing in the previous phase sought to establish a sense of political belonging and responsibility in a drastically divided landscape of South Africa, her work in the 1970s seems to be written in the spirit of the B.C.M., highlighting, in short stories, a sense of loneliness and disconnection between human and land as a result of the discursive practice of racial segregation. To counter such the problem of white humanism we see in 'The Termitary' and the 'The Life of Imagination', the aim of Gordimer's fiction might then be to repopulate the land with the queen termite that is previously removed from the land. From allegories of 'rezoning' to the fallacy of spatial nearness as a result of such land management, 'The Termitary' can be read with regard to its representation of the queen termite as emblematising the ideological spirit of the B.C.M., the 'black life' 'with pride and dignity'.

Contextualising 'The Termitary' within the political influence of the B.C.M., the queen termite comes to represent the black consciousness which is removed from the land in order for whites to control the land and claim entitlement. It symbolises, in other words, the black humanism. Looking at Biko's quest for liberation and black humanism, we see a major influence from Frantz Fanon's emancipatory methodology. In *Black Skin*, Fanon also asks: What does the Black want? Since colonialism is a system of dehumanisation, black humanism or the humanity of blacks is something that is merely impossible. For Fanon as well as Biko, black humanism or, even humanism in general, is significantly

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[18] Biko, p. 29.

rooted in the land question. The ability to control and appropriate the land becomes the defining power of humanism and human dignity as Fanon himself states that 'the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land; the land which will bring bread, and above all, dignity.'[19] In the similar way that white humanism is characterised by the need to control and manage the physical body of South African landscape, black humanism as an ideological conception implies the reclaimed ability to control and appropriate the land as its passage to restore its 'pride and dignity'.

However, Gordimer does not stop at a return to the spirit of black consciousness in her counter politics of deterritorialisation. Her political approach to the question of land and spatial loneliness is deeply a question of how a new referential system of the nonhuman should stem from the actual nonhuman sphere in extension to the black consciousness movement. As a response to the emergence of the B.C.M. and the geopolitics of racial segregation in South Africa, Gordimer's fiction can be seen as a textual rejection of *landed humanism*. Both *The Conservationist* and *July's People*, above all, embrace a construction of a deterritorialised *humanism* or a claim that mixes the human and the nonhuman, in which humanism is redefined, not merely, by its ability to control the land but also the ability to live and to be enmeshed within an equally agentic material world. The nonhuman turn, hence, entails a particular development or progress in which we begin with the abrupt confrontation between apartheid and black consciousness/humanism, and see a transformation from that point of collision to something beyond *landed humanism*. To go beyond the anthropocentric vision of Biko and Fanon, Gordimer's fiction reimagines the law of referentiality. Thus, her novels deliver a deterritorialised progression beyond that anthropocentric vision to a complete terrain of referentiality. Therefore, the discourse of nonhumanism explored in Gordimer's texts of the period is a bigger concept that acknowledges not only the resurfacing or recovery of the B.C.M.'s black humanism, but also the indistinction and imbrication of human and nonhuman on a larger terrain of spatial and referential relations. In other words, nonhumanism as a point of referentiality blurs the boundaries set up by apartheid between white humanism and black humanism, and between human and nonhuman by replacing the flawed binary oppositions with a broader, more inclusive sense of possibility and consistency. Therefore, to return the queen termite to the

[19] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 1968), p. 44.

South African landscape, Gordimer emphasises a form of spatial involvement and nearness that demands a contact between the people and the land, so close and so intimate that there is no place left for an apartheid narrative of any kind to intervene.

The fall of apartheid consciousness including the subsequent rise of its black counterpart with a particular investment in the materiality of rural and nonhuman landscape are emphasised early on in the opening scenes of *The Conservationist* and *July's People*.[20] To illustrate this, both novels present white, human characters being confronted with a world of the nonhuman, a world to which, as the narratives progress, they fail to accommodate. Studying both *The Conservationist* and *July's People* in connection with *A Guest of Honor*, Cooke argues that the materiality presence of place and landscape in these novels is not merely a narrative embodiment of 'an African history'.[21] He states that 'the increased role of place in [Gordimer's] later novels was likely prompted as well by her increased interest in the literary-cultural views of Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, who emphasise the role of broad cultural trends in shaping identity'.[22] In *The Conservationist* and *July's People*, in particular, the personal definition of self is intertwined with the physical world which is 'a repository of cultural history'.[23] From this reading, the narrative confrontation between apartheid and the black consciousness at the beginning of both novels come to be symbolic of how South Africa during the period of the 1970s to the early 1980s enters into a period of political transformation, in which its very cultural definition undergoes a critical turnaround. In this political as well as cultural change, the increased preoccupation with landscape and African history, predominantly articulated in these two novels, becomes an expression of a renewed, recovered cultural history of the country.

However, if we are to take the material landscape as not just 'a repository of cultural history' but as an entity of the physical and nonhuman realm in and of itself, the materiality of landscape in both *The Conservationist* and *July's People* will deliver a new depth of

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[20] Both *The Conservationist* and *July's People* give direct references to actual historical moments. The textual reference to violent strikes, riots, walkouts, and marches are indications of everyday existence prevalent not only in the 1980s but as early as 1971 predating the publication of *The Conservationist*. Examples of references to historical moments in *July's People* include the Soweto Riots in 1976 and a series of political strikes, which leads to an actualised narrative of apartheid fall, see Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 6-7. See also for historical reference to labour strikes in *The Conservationist* in Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, p. 139.

[21] Cooke, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, p. 132.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 133.

understanding on how Gordimer approaches the political world through a reorientation of a referential order. To illustrate, I will discuss *The Conservationist*, and then *July's People* to substantiate a claim that a new referential order is instantiated, whereby the referential point of power is no longer the human, specifically the apartheid subject position, but rather the nonhuman, embodied in the material presence of the land and African landscape.

Central to my exploration of nonhumanism as an ideological construction that demands an equally agentic position from both the human subject as well as the nonhuman counterpart is Deleuzoguattarian geophilosophy. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a territory or landscape is anything but passive. That is, a territory is not an entity merely to be acted upon, waiting for the subject-oriented force of deterritorialisation to enter. On the contrary, it is an entity that actively performs self-organising processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation itself. On their analysis of the interaction between the nomad and a territory, Deleuze and Guattari note:

> It is the earth that deterritorialises itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (sol) or support. The earth does not become deterritorialised in its global and relative movement, but at specific locations, at the spot where the forest recedes, or where the steppe and the desert advance … The nomads inhabit these places; they remain in them, and they themselves make them grow, for it has been established that the nomads make the desert no less than they are made by it. [24]

As the passage above suggests, a process of deterritorialisation is a product of a combined force between the human and the earth. In addition, for a vector of deterritorialisation, evident from the passage above in the figure of the nomad, to enter any given territory, the territory itself has to create a condition necessary for such a process of deterritorialisation to occur/enter. This complex interaction between the human and the nonhuman forms one of the key points in Deleuzoguattarian geophilosophy, which, instead of giving priority to the human or foregrounding the human experience, acknowledges the role and the presence of the nonhuman in the process of deterritorialisation.

The centralised role of the nonhuman presence in the process of deterritorialisation finds its manifestation in Gordimer's investment in the presence and the *presencing* of the

[24] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 445.

nonhuman world in its proximate confrontation with the white, human world. Landscape in Gordimer's novels is not a mere background to be observed and appreciated; rather it is a force to be reckoned with. The notion of material presence and presencing of Gordimer's landscape demands that we approach language not as a medium of representation but of rendering and mimicking the singularity of the nonhuman world. Therefore, language as inherent in the passage below is not a mere container of the signified which seeks to represent the South African landscape or cultural history. The following passage is drawn from *The Conservationist*:

> Look at the willows. The height of the grass. Look at the reeds. Everything bends, blends, folds. Everything is continually swaying, flowing rippling waving surging streaming fingering. He is standing there with his damn shoes all wet with the dew and he feels himself swaying. The pulsation of his blood is moving him on his own axis (that's the sensation) as it seems to do to accommodate the human body to the movement of a ship. A high earth running beneath his feet. All this softness of grasses is the susurration of a slight dizziness, hissing in the head.
>
> Fair and lovely place. From where does the phrase come to him? It comes back, tum-te-tum-te-tum, as only something learned by rote survives. It's not his vocabulary. Fair and lovely. A place in a child's primer where nothing ugly could possibly be imagined to happen: as if such places exist […].[25]

Here as elsewhere in the novel, Gordimer employs the present tense in her narrative description of the land in order to, partly, capture the immediate presencing of the nonhuman beauty which reveals itself before the eyes of the novel's protagonist. Moreover, although the above passage itself follows Mehring's perception of the landscape, instead of having a definite subjective form the first and the third sentences are written in the imperative mood as though Mehring is being commanded, by the veld itself, to 'look' and observe the vast scene of his farm. The flow and movement of the grass and reeds are discursively emplaced in the language of verbal and present-participle repetitions, which runs from 'bends' to 'folds', from 'swaying' to 'flowing' with a comma, and from 'rippling' to 'fingering' without a comma, signifying the increased preoccupation of Mehring in his proximate encounter with the agentic farm. What it does, in short, is make

[25] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, pp. 183-84.

present the materiality and presencing of the nonhuman world in a way that it brings out the embedded signified of the signifier in order to highlight the active and dynamic presence of the veld.[26] Therefore, the discursive practice here gestures toward a movement away from the mere representation of place or place as *represented* to a direct, proximate presencing or place as *present* within, or made *present* by, language.

In exploring a direct presencing or sensation of the veld, *The Conservationist* utilises two types of languages in order to highlight the phenomenal presence of the nonhuman world: one is the language of metaphorics and the other is the language of specificity. More often than not, the presence of the veld is conveyed in a metaphorical language in ways that the activity of the nonhuman world is described or perceived in language drawn from human actions. These movements as discernible in Gordimer's deployment of dynamic verbs include 'reaped', 'skirted', 'gutted', 'devouring', and 'leaked' from the fire episode.[27] Coupled with Gordimer's language of metaphorics is her usage of language of specificity. In an opening passage of the section before last (quoted in length below), Gordimer carefully details the turbulent weather, that which is about to bring storm and flood to the Southern African region:

> The weather came from the Moçambique Channel.
>
> Space is conceived as trackless but there are beats about the world frequented by cyclones given female names. One of these beats crosses the Indian Ocean by way of the islands of the Seychelles, Madagascar, and the Mascarenes. The great island of Madagascar forms one side of the Channel and shields a long stretch of the east coast of Africa, which forms the other, from the open Indian Ocean. A cyclone paused somewhere miles out to sea, miles up in the atmosphere, its vast hesitation raising a draught of tidal waves, wavering first towards one side of the island then over the mountains to the other, darkening the thousand up-turned mirrors of the rice paddies and finally taking off again with a sweep that shed, monstrous cosmic peacock, gross paillettes of hail, a dross of battering rain, and all

[26] In line with a number of critics, Wagner notes that 'landscape has the force of a vast presence, penetrating, diverting and redirecting consciousness', *Rereading Nadine Gordimer*, p. 189.
[27] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, p. 95.

> the smashed flying detritus of uprooted trees, tin roofs and dead beasts caught up in it.
>
> From the Moçambique Channel a mass of damp air was pushed out over Southern Africa, and the other factors – atmospheric pressure, prevailing wind – did not head it off, turned to rain […] A dark rain, a tropical rain, not the summer storms of a high altitude often lit by the sun still shining in another part of the vast sky.[28]

Critics like Cooke contend that landscape in *The Conservationist* is often depicted as a cultural transformation of South African history, hence, the language of the veld is often 'given more metaphorical treatment'.[29] The quoted passage above is the prime example of how Gordimer's use of language to describe the natural world with flood and storm carries allusions to the South African political situation. It is accurate that language used to describe the natural world in this novel is often laden with metaphorical messages. What I would like to build upon this metaphorically-focused reading is that there are two kinds of languages used in this novel: the language of locative specificities, predominantly used here, and the language of metaphorics, predominantly used in the fire episode but sparsely used in this quotation.

These two forms of discursive focus reinforce the complexity and agency of the nonhuman world, presenting in juxtaposition with Mehring's manner of speech the dynamic interplay of agency and presencing of the natural world. While earlier in the novel Mehring often labels the veld he has accumulated as possession by using his white, humanist language as '[f]air and lovely', or 'safety, solid ground', the materiality of the veld embedded in the language of metaphorics and specificity challenges such normative understanding and perception of landscape deeply rooted in the formation of white South African subjectivity.[30] That is, Gordimer's language of specificities demands that language of place and the nonhuman world needs to be locative and localised rather than generalised, dealing specifically with a particular understanding of certain places or locations without using the generalised 'vocabulary' of certain areas to label or limit the understanding of

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[28] Ibid., p. 232.
[29] Cooke, p. 149.
[30] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, p. 235.

landscape in another area. On the other hand, language needs to be flexible and object-oriented enough to underpin the unpredictability and uncertainty of the nonhuman world implied in the employed language of metaphorics. Both types of language usage in *The Conservationist* tellingly disrupt Mehring's normative and generalised perception of the nonhuman world, which seeks to strip the nonhuman world of its inherent agency and reduce it into a narrative of familiarity, easily to be contested and accumulated as possession.

Written in the language of spatial specificity, the Moçambique storm can be re-read as representative of political reality in South Africa in two different levels: one is that which is remapped onto Mehring's subjectivity and cultural history of the country, and the other is that is acted on the actual landscape of South Africa itself. Firstly, the Moçambique Channel passage refers to paranoia amongst white South Africans in the 1970s about the fate of Western culture, following the ongoing so-called Portuguese Colonial War which began in 1961 and ended in 1974, predating the publication of *The Conservationist*. After the collapse of Portuguese colonial rule, Moçambique became independent in June 1975. With this specific political reference to revolution in Moçambique, *The Conservationist* recounts the metaphorical 'cyclone' of political unrest and independence onto the actual landscape of Mehring's veld. As Wagner notes, the suggestion is that political activities 'in Mozambique would fan revolutionary fervor in South Africa'.[31]

Secondly, the 'weather' can also be read as simply a natural force that is looming to deterritorialise the actual landscape of South Africa. Through the particular usage of localised language, *The Conservationist* presents a critical perception of how the deterritorialising force of ecology should be recognised as it describes the climatic turbulence which is about to bring torrential storm and flood to South Africa in the succeeding pages. This reinforces both the presenscing of the nonhuman world as well as the specific dramatisation of eco-agency as a deterritorialising vector. Similar to the Moçambique revolution cyclone is the fire episode, another elemental force of deterritorialisation which remaps the actual landscape of Mehring's farm. Below is the excerpt from the episode, which foreshadows the revolutionary recolouring of South Africa by the B.C.M. as the fire roams and torches the terrain:

[31] Wagner, p. 51.

> He [Mehring] walks along the new boundaries of black and finds at close quarters how inexplicably the fire has reaped a patch of tall grasses here, skirted one there, gutted itself greedily in a ditch, fanned a shrivelling heat over a clump of some tough marsh-plant without devouring it, leaked a trickle of black towards the fence. The picnic bank is in black territory; it's littered with twisted filaments of burned leaves and shapes of willow twigs that appear to have grown furry grey mould and fall to ashes at the touch of his boot. The stones of the pit, there, bear fire-marks like crude pottery […] They are black as everything except the glancing river, but alive, like it, where everything is dead. The river is extraordinarily strong, slithering and shining, already it seems to be making the new paths possible for it through the weakened foothold of destroyed reeds; it swells against its surface sheath and it is impossible to look at it in one place: he feels his eyes carried along.[32]

Leaving the metaphorical allusion behind, the elemental forces of fire here and flood in the Moçambique passage are precisely an example of nonhuman deterritorialisation. The lines above show how the nonhuman world itself performs a self-organising process of deterritorialisation on its own territory. Particularly, the veld, in the fire episode, is graphically rendered in a way to depict an image of vast landscape being invaded and taken by *a reconnoitering figure*.[33] The recurrent use of the word 'black' here overtly suggests a spatial transformation of the farm, reinforcing the fact that the veld is now recoloured. In addition, the recoloring of the landscape presents another implication in the way that the veld is, by the force of the fire, acknowledged, first and foremost, as 'the fire's territory'.[34] In other words, the symbolic implication of the fire-induced blackened territory does not merely foreshadow a South African territory under the black African consciousness, to be emerging after the fall of white rule, but entails a spatial leveling and rebirth of the landscape that is enacted by and for the landscape itself.

On another level, *The Conservationist* provides an examination of how the nonhuman deterritorialisation affects the physical, white body of Mehring himself. As depicted at the end of the passages 'Look at the willows' and the fire episode, Mehring is

[32] Ibid., p. 95.
[33] Ibid., p. 94.
[34] Ibid.

affected by his proximate encounter with the animated presence of the farm. For instance, he is described, in the passage 'Look at the willows', as being made dizzy by susurration and by 'all this softness of grasses', which results in 'a slight dizziness, hissing in [his] head'. Such an encounter produces dizziness which can be read as the early sign of the unmaking process enacted on Mehring by the landscape itself. Furthermore, what complicates such scenes of human enmeshment within a material world is how such descriptions of the nonhuman landscape are told from the perspective of a character it seeks to decentre. That complex interaction between Mehring and the land he possesses, one could say, marks one of the central thematic premises of *The Conservationist*. That is to say, while the prescencing of place and landscape is discursively acknowledged on the page of the novel, and reported to the reader from the point of view of the protagonist, it appears to be unregistered or not actively realised, and, repeatedly, resisted by none other than Mehring himself. On the one hand, we could say that this nonhuman presence is presented in such proximate manner in relation to Mehring's consciousness in order to compel Mehring, the perceiver, to reimagine his role within the material world. The effect on Mehring, when we follow this hypothesis, is detachment and denial. Wagner contends that Gordimer's writings like *The Conservationist* invest in what she terms 'the ironic detachment of the narrative voice'.[35] According to Wagner, this narrative technique 'serves to mark the narrator's distance' as well as 'protects both author and reader from the challenge of direct action'.[36] Drawing on this reading of Mehring's experience in the veld, such an act of reimagination of his role in the farm may not happen.

On the other hand, the emerging consciousness represented in the presencing of the veld may not be there just to be acknowledged, but to resolutely displace and replace the detached and isolated human presence of Mehring. The actual displacement of Mehring's consciousness comes, then, at the very end of the novel, when the narrative moves from Mehring's consciousness, evident in the scene in which Mehring picks up a young woman on the way to work, to the nonhuman counterpart of the final alternate chapter. The transition between these two alternate chapters at the very end of the narrative marks the eventual fall of Mehring. His perception and privileged consciousness are displaced and

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[35] Wagner, pp. 141-42.
[36] Ibid.

removed from the centre of narrative attention. With the disappearance of Mehring, the titular conservationist, from the narrative that constitutes his life, the textual landscape of the novel itself is at once free to be reclaimed and repopulated by black Africans.

What is also worth noting with the displacement of Mehring's consciousness is how the novel develops at this final stage from limiting itself to a third-person perspective focalised through Mehring's to a point of view that is not simply limited by the perspective of a single character. With that open possibility of land ownership and claim to the textual as well as physical landscapes, a sense of community is evoked:

> The one whom the farm received has no name. He had no family but their women wept a little for him. There was no child of his present but their children were there to live after him. They had put him away to rest, at last; he had come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them.[37]

The resurfacing of the dead black man is often taken to represent the recovery of the formerly *buried* African beliefs and customs under colonial and apartheid systems. Direct references to those traditional Zulu beliefs are contained in the prose quotations from the Reverend Henry Callaway's *The Religious Systems of the Amazulu*, the ten excerpts scattered throughout *The Conservationist*.[38] One particular quotation concerning the ancestral heritage, worship, and culture is from the tenth excerpt which precedes the final two alternate chapters of the novel.[39] The quotation, which recounts the tradition of creation and ancestor beliefs, presents a notion of community and historical continuity of black African culture reinforced here in the final pages of the novel. In Wagner's terms, the quotations from Callaway's work 'resonantly contextualise Gordimer's conviction offered here that: black connections with the land are so deeply rooted in an intuitive identification with a mythical ancestral past that they must finally triumph over the white man's temporary tenancy'.[40] Thus, once the novel shifts its narrative attention from Mehring's focalisation to the black African community on the farm, *The Conservationist* makes a claim about a socio-political development from one system which is founded on the white

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[37] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, p. 267.

[38] For more detailed discussion on Zulu beliefs and traditions in *The Conservationist*, see Newman, *Nadine Gordimer* (London: Routledge, 1988), chapter 3.

[39] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, p. 247.

[40] Wagner, pp. 155-56.

presence and the apartheid consciousness to its black African counterpart. Historical and cultural history which is formerly dependent on Mehring's viewpoint and subjectification is now rendered invalid, as what is previously presented as epigraphic has now become a chapter on its own account.

However, as much as the scene above, including the shift in narrative focalisation, projects a reclaiming and recovery of black African beliefs, the return of the black body here also underlines and encapsulates the nonhumanist construction of dependency and balanced agency between black Africans and the landscape they now occupy. That is, if the resurfacing of the black body signifies the recovery and reclaiming of Zulu culture and traditions, it is made possible only after the torrential storm and flood have swept and deterritorialised Mehring's farm. It is accurate that at this stage in the novel the black Africans have a certain claim and control over the land; however, the veld itself retains its own power as well. To Wagner, for instance, the water/flooding imagery here is not only represented as 'destructive' but it 'becomes a force of redemption for the oppressed, death for the oppressor'.[41] Understanding the storm and water as 'a purifying natural element' as proposed by Wagner, the nonhuman world is now depicted as being the deterritorialising force as well as the deterritorialised space, that no longer accommodates Mehring's humanist and capitalist subject position.[42] While earlier the dead man is acknowledged as a complete stranger by everyone on the farm including Mehring, now the dead man is depicted as finally returning to his *home*, being 'received' by the farm, where the farm 'women wept a little for him' and farm 'children were there to live after him'.

Looking at the relationship between the dead body and the farm workers on Mehring's land, Head suggests that *The Conservationist* 'embodies a clash rather than a fusion' of cultural sources', that may be representative of 'a necessary preliminary to the cultural hybridization Gordimer has called for'.[43] He claims that by allowing Jacobus and his African community to bury the unknown dead man Gordimer 'moves beyond a strict application of Amazulu ancestral rites'.[44] In doing so, Gordimer appropriates the mystified African cultural heritage for the new social/cultural models to be born after the fall of

[41] Ibid., p. 201.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Head, *Nadine Gordimer*, pp. 108-9.
[44] Ibid., p. 108.

Mehring. Similar to this reading, as well as those that understand *The Conservationist* to be a tale of clash between Mehring and the Black farm workers, I see the novel itself as a narrative embodiment of this clash. However, this narrative of clash can be extended to include the collision between the human and the nonhuman worlds, whereby the natural world receives the dead body and expels Mehring from its realm. The black African community, as shown in the final pages of the novel, are inclusive of that natural world, but they do not control it. The language of communal relationship and ownership is distinctive in the burial of the dead man, signifying the ethics of human enmeshment within an agentic material world.

By emphasising the presencing of the nonhuman landscape of South Africa as well as the non-privileged presence of Black Africans, nonhumanism invested in *The Conservationist* makes a claim about progress in which we begin with the white human character and see a movement away from that privileged position to the nonhuman body who is previously stripped of agency or inherent meaning under the previous political order. However, nonhumanism as a critical turn in *July's People*, published almost seven years afterwards, is presented with a twist, gesturing toward the gradual decline of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1980s. In particular, nonhumanism as explored in *July's People* does not make a complete turn from the narrative realm of the white. What nonhumanism in this novel entails, instead, is the 'holding-together' (plane of consistency) of the white human and the nonhuman, black Africans as well as the ecology, by not completely moving away from the white human but repositioning and reappropriating the previously insistent privileging of the white human within the agentic material world of the nonhuman.

Written almost six years after the Soweto Uprising, *July's People* opens its narrative in the landscape of a not-too-distant post-apartheid era. The physical landscape of *July's People* is not, strictly speaking, post-apartheid since it is still plagued with political conflict and violence. But like that final alternative chapter of *The Conservationist*, the novel anticipates a prophetically post-apartheid landscape that is altered under a new geopolitical order. However, while *The Conservationist* does not accommodate white presence and consciousness in its final pages, *July's People* presents an attempt to hold both white and black South Africans in its rural setting of July's village.

By transporting both blacks and whites into a territory that is no longer dependent on the apartheid geopolitics of racial segregation, *July's People* graphically depicts how the material world of the nonhuman intervenes and shapes the human presence. The following passage, drawn from the water-tank scene, gives an evidence of how the human subjects are dictated by the land that they now occupy:

> He [Bam] arranged the stones brought from some other attempt to build something that had fallen into ruin. That was how people lived, here, rearranging their meagre resources around the bases of nature, letting the walls of mud sink back to mud and then using that mud for new walls, in another clearing, among other convenient rocks.[45]

The passage points up the limitations of Bam's observation on black Africans' life on the veld. At one level, Bam's encounter with July's village has reassured him that black Africans living on the land can only subsist on the meagre bases of nature. However, the image of the mud hut (or that of stone ruins) conjured here, as well as elsewhere in the narrative, gives an insight into the non-apartheid spatial relations manifested most explicitly in black Africans' idea of land ownership. That is, there is no fixed claim on a certain piece of land and that land ownership is negotiated not by the human subject but by the landscape itself. As indicated in the passage above, the wall of the hut is made of mud, that which is always vulnerable to rain and other atmospheric conditions. If it rains, for instance, the thick clay walls will be 'washed down and rejoin the earth here and there', which then shall be reused for new walls of a new mud hut.[46]

In contrast to textual references of Johannesburg's gated community, a black African mud hut is not a rigid, physical embodiment of land power and private ownership, since once the old mud walls are washed down by rain, a new mud hut will be built 'in another clearing, among other *convenient* rocks'. In short, there is no such thing as individual land ownership. This does not mean that the land does not belong to the people or the owner of the hut; instead it means that ownership of a certain piece of land is always subject to change, dependent on how the elements of the nonhuman at large affect and dictate it. On the subject of ownership, Rosemarie Bodenheimer writes: 'political

[45] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 26.
[46] Ibid., p. 12.

consciousness and identity [in *July's People*] are predicated less on race and power than on the fundamental economic facts of ownership and dispossession'.[47] She claims that objects and 'the concreteness of possession' are the definitive realm, by which both the Smales family and July understand as well as reconstruct the meaning of dependency.[48] The critic also notes that the novel as a whole presents 'an indication of the divided identity structure created by the homelands policy'.[49] While Bodenheimer's discussion of divided identity does not explicitly refer to the divided laws of ownership and possession, it is possible to see that as July negotiates and reconstructs the meaning of dependency based on the strict and concrete principle of ownership, he also introduces another set of flexible and shifting practices of ownership, whereby the supple and communal movement of objects and possession is a fundamental outlook.

Drawing on this example, the process of deterritorialisation invoked in *July's People* relies not on a simple opposition between European and African management of landscape and possession but on the reversal of man-land relations. That reversal becomes explicit in the proximate encounters between the Smaleses and the land itself. Under the apartheid regime, the question of land has been used centrally in the management and manipulation of the social body. That is, landscape is inscribed and marked with the apartheid discourse of power and control. However, in this novel, such discursive management is overridden. In its place, *July's People* introduces the sense that the land, through its self-organising process of deterritorialisation, informs and, even, reappropriates the white human subject position.

The novel presents different examples of the reversal of man-land relationship over the course of the novel. The character who is most affected by this, and is at the centre of narrative attention is Maureen. On numerous occasions, Maureen, who is still much defined and confined by her past, admits to herself that she has been not only transported geographically from 'that master bedroom ensuite' but also 'jolted out of chronology' from the time of the past to the day when the new millennium has finally arrived: 'She was in another time, place, consciousness; it pressed in upon her and filled her as someone's

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[47] Rosemarie Bodenheimer, 'The Interregnum of Ownership in *July's People*', in *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Bruce King (London: Palgrave, 1993), pp. 108-20 (p. 108).
[48] Ibid., pp. 115-16.
[49] Ibid., p. 118.

breath fills a balloon's shape. She was already not what she was […]'.[50] To Maureen, this severe sense of disorientation is heavily due to her spatial as well as temporal displacement. The charge of the present is so forcefully realised in this scene in which Maureen feels herself being 'jolted out of chronology' and displaced into a consciousness entirely strange and uncontainable. The quotation, reproduced above, gives an account of how Maureen sits on the lame stool reading *The Betrothed* with a view of the bush before her. Juxtaposing the 'transport of a novel' to her real-life displacement, Maureen, as disoriented as she is, imagines herself as a nonhuman object, a balloon, being filled and pressed upon by the humanised figure of the nonhuman world. Although it is not clear what 'it' refers to, the unspecific pronoun reinforces that unknown presence and strangeness of 'another time, place, [and] consciousness'.

The quotation is immediately followed by a revealing movement in which Maureen verbalises her emptiness, her inability to be, to have, and to see:

> They [The Smaleses] had nothing.
>
> In their house, there was nothing. At first. You had to stay in the dark of the hut a long while to make out what was on the walls. In the wife's hut a wavy pattern of broad white and ochre bands. In others […] she caught a glimpse of a single painted circle, an eye or target, as she saw it […] They reflected nothing […].[51]

The notion of nothingness noted in the passage above speaks of Maureen's dissolved subject position as she is now being 'filled' and 'pressed upon' by the darkness of landscape she inhabits and not the other way around. The only way Maureen could actually see anything in the dark is to 'stay in the dark of the hut a long while to make out what was on the walls'. Yet, no matter how long she stays, or how much she manages to see, the objects as well as her surroundings reflect 'nothing'. That nothingness that shapes her world can then be read as a textual indication of Gordimer's critique of Maureen's consciousness in the way that without Maureen's own ability to mark and control the mud hut and, by extension, the land outside, everything in that overflowing of African indigenous reality ceases to yield meaning. The scene can also comment on the white

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[50] Gordimer, *July's People*, p. 4, 29.
[51] Ibid., p. 29.

definition of spatial power. That is, since the objects and the surrounding area do not reflect their power and control, they reflect 'nothing'.

Quoting a different example from the novel, Cooke discusses the idea of the nothingness and shapelessness of July's village.[52] According to Cooke, the shapelessness of landscape in *July's People* is 'conveyed not only by Gordimer's comparisons […] – but by deliberate obfuscation'.[53] Although Cooke's discussion does not include the reversal of the man-land relationship, the critic presents some interesting insights into how the shapelessness of an uncontrollable landscape impacts on Maureen. It is clear that Maureen cannot adjust and fit into the village world. Cooke draws attention to, firstly, Maureen's quixotic reading of the landscape, and, subsequently, her detached perception.[54] Cooke's reading emphasises the resistance to engage with the new world Maureen is now living in. He further states that '[Maureen] conceives of [the landscape] not as an identification but a complete effacement of self, which leaves her "not there"'. From Cooke's reading of Maureen's detached and self-protective perception of the landscape and its surrounding objects, it is possible to see that Maureen's insistence to produce a detached and quixotic understanding of the landscape is indicative of how the landscape ceases to be an entity to be acted upon. Its formlessness and nothingness are attributes of that representation of the nonhuman world that seeks to destabilise Maureen's existence. What she resists, in other words, is the palpable sense of immanent threats coming from the landscape that will reverse the relational course between the man and the natural world.

In another textual moment, *July's People* emphasises the man-land reversal with a particular interest in the imbrication of the white subject and what is essentially outside that subject position. The force of the landscape and the veld is then not only to inform or to deterritorialise the human self but to situate itself so close and so intimately to the human spectator to the point where the two landscapes, the land and the topography of the human body, become one overlapping territory. An important scene, in which Gordimer carefully

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[52] In Wagner's study of Gordimer's representation of landscape, the critic presents a different reading of landscape iconography. Wagner contends that 'landscape [in *The Lying Days*, *Occasion for Loving*, *A Guest of Honour*, and *The Conservationist*] has the force of a vast presence, penetrating, diverting and redirecting consciousness. In *July's People*, however, it has come to be reduced to mere scaffolding, simply sketched in as a symbolically laden backdrop to a narrative which the political theme shapes and direct every detail', Wagner, pp. 189-90.
[53] Cooke, p. 169.
[54] Ibid., pp. 168-171.

dramatises the image of such an overlapping territory is the scene in which Maureen walks naked into the rainstorm:

> Heat and dark began to dissolve and she [Maureen] had to go in […] It was the first time there had been rain since they came; the worn thatch darkened and began helplessly to conduct water down its smooth stalks; it dripped and dribbled. Insects crawled and flew in […] She went out. Night was close to her face. Rain sifted from the dark. She knew only where the doorway was, to get back. She took off her shirt and got out of pantites and jeans in one go, supporting herself against the streaming mud wall. Holding her clothing out of the mud, she let the rain pit her lightly, face, breasts, and back, then stream over her. She turned as if she were under a shower faucet. Soon her body was the same temperature as the water.[55]

This passage assumes a symbolic significance in its literal depiction of how the physical geography of the landscape encroaches on and affects the life of the human. Literally speaking, the scene portrays how all human activities within its enveloping darkness of the night are affected by elemental forces: the rain permeates the very thatched roof of the hut, insects crawl and fly in, and the floor of the hut becomes wet. The effect of this scene reaches its symbolic pinnacle when Maureen steps outside into the rainstorm naked, becoming engulfed by the very landscape she is now living in. As it appears, the human and the nonhuman, the self and other, become one overlapping territory, signifying, one level, the gradual dissolution of a displaced and dispossessed white bourgeois family as result of their encounter with South Africa's wilderness.

On another level, the scene does not simply display the dissolution or deterritorialisation of white subjectivity; it emphasises, through its symbolic gesture, a spatial consciousness that depends upon a close interaction and engagement with landscape, an interaction that is prevented from occurring by the apartheid regime’s constructed illusion of spatial rootedness. Under this condition of spatial closeness, everything, whether it be the human or the nonhuman, enters into correspondence with everything else. Therefore, the human character ceases to remain a subject outside and away from the nonhuman realm. Maureen is no longer the mere observer; neither is the physical world the unreceptive element that lies forever at the state of exteriority. Rather,

[55] Gordimer, *July’s People*, pp. 47-48.

the human characters, in this case Maureen, are subject to it and are, above all, transported into the perceived, separate being of the nonhuman world. In other words, the physicality of the characters is no longer external or remains divorced from the nonhuman body, but is subsumed, in its proximate contact between the two realms, into the physicality and materiality of the landscape itself.

July's People represents such a composition wherein the body of the human enters into proximate and intimate connection with the natural world. From this vivid representation, the novel moves from a simple case of man-land reversal based on power relations. Gordimer's writing, at this point, presents a critical moment in which the idea of *a more powerful body* is introduced. To unpack the phrase, I draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming-animal*, a political as well as existential stance in which a body, of any given entity, becomes not what is itself:

> We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.[56]

To become 'a more powerful body', the 'affects' of another body are required, with that being the ability to destroy or be destroyed. What is emphasised is the basis of connection, of close engagement between two entities. With the fundamental basis of connection and engagement, the real power of a body – 'what the body can do, what its affects are', as implied in the quotation from Deleuze and Guattari, will be known. This notion of 'a more powerful body' is thus the result of the said composition and contact between two separate bodies. Although it is yet to be realised and dramatised in the scene quoted above, Maureen's physical body, once joined and shaped by the rainstorm, is metaphorically entering into a new sense of perception and existence. Her subjectivity, as will be shown later in the discussion below, will no longer remain closed and detached from the nonhuman world.

In contrast to the apartheid construction of subjectivity which is grounded on rigid compartmentalisation of space evident in the permanent precariousness of the hard edges

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[56] Guattari and Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 300.

of the gated community, the spatial consciousness of *July's People* is one which is grounded on the notion of boundlessness and immensity. The lack of a door in the Smaleses' hut, for instance, is a metaphor for the removal of strictly limited living space under apartheid. The discussed examples of the mobile community of impermanent dwellings as well as the imbrication of whiteness and the nonhuman body also reinforce the notion of largeness and formlessness. Such then is the logic of *July's People*'s spatial consciousness: its boundlessness and its immensity that problematises the clear distinctions between the human and the nonhuman, the observer and the observed, the living and the public spaces. Without completely subscribing to the Black Consciousness Movement as a result of the movement's inter-racial comradeship that existed in the fight against apartheid, *July's People*'s spatial consciousness does, nevertheless, refers back to the words of Biko in its representation and construction of space. In one of Biko's papers, entitled 'Some African Cultural Concepts', the activist names several fundamental aspects that constitute African culture as a whole.[57] The last aspect which Biko mentions and uses as a concluding point of all other aspects is closeness to nature:

> Thus in its entirety the African Culture spells us out as people particularly close to nature. As Kaunda puts it, our people may be unlettered and their physical horizons may be limited yet 'they inhabit a larger world than the sophisticated Westerner who has magnified his physical senses through inverted gadgets at the price all too often of cutting out the dimension of the spiritual'. This close proximity to Nature enables the emotional component in us to be so much richer in that it makes it possible for us, without any apparent difficulty to feel for people and to easily identify with them in any emotional situation arising out of suffering.[58]

On one level Biko seems to be voicing that idea which is similar to the notion of spatial nearness under discussion in this chapter since it seeks to reposition African closeness to nature in opposition to apartheid's problematic construction of spatial nearness, and renders it as a possible answer to the essence of loneliness under the apartheid regime. Yet,

[57] Oliphant, p. 217.

[58] Biko, p. 46. The passage is taken from a paper given at a conference called by IDAMASA (Interdenominational Association of African Ministers of Religion) and ASSECA (Association for the Educational and Cultural Development of the African people) at the Ecumenical Lay Train Centre, Edendale, Natal in 1971.

Biko's notion of largeness and richness in all physical and spiritual dimensions is still very much grounded in the Black Consciousness's centralised emphasis on race and black solidarity. *July's People*, however, appropriates such an understanding of spatial boundlessness, of how one is *close to nature*, and how one is enlarged and enriched as a consequence. That is, *July's People* extends the boundary and limitation set up by the doctrines of the B.C.M. so as to include not only the proximate engagement and interaction between Africans and the material world but also that between the white human and the nonhuman world which, in this case, include both the Africans and the land as well. In this respect, a sense of loneliness, whether that is understood in an interpersonal context or a context defined by the relations between the land and the people living in it, is at once challenged and replaced, by a richer and larger existence or sense of being that is characterised by the close proximity with the nonhuman.

The notion of spatial boundlessness discussed above does not present the complete picture of how *July's People* charts the dynamic confrontation of the white family and black villagers. Parallel to and almost against the novel's presentation of the overlapping of edges is the textual emphasis of white resistance. This notion is most prevalent in Maureen's strong and durable impulse to return to her past. In contrast to the image of the mud hut which embodies a proximate engagement between the human and the nonhuman worlds, the recurring image of Bam's bakkie presents an opposite movement which privileges the distinction between the human and the nonhuman. As several critics have remarked, the presence of the bakkie is central to conveying the Smales family's privilege of movement. Head, for example, states that the bakkie 'emphasises the importance of the control of space'.[59] He further elaborates that *July's People* does not explore the issue of the control of space, inherent in the representation of the bakkie, 'simply as a matter of loss'.[60] In various accounts, Maureen recalls how the bakkie is used for a recreational purpose like hunting or for family camping trips in Kruger Park, Botswana, or Moçambique.[61] On one particular occasion, Maureen visualises how she and her family are going on a family trip to drive July back to his village during one of his leave periods.[62]

[59] Head, p. 133.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Gordimer, *July's People*, pp. 5-6.
[62] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

These white privileges which are intricately tied up with the image of the yellow bakkie, give Maureen, once she has been displaced, a reassuring sense of the Smaleses' past, without which she cannot fully feel contained and at ease with herself.

Yet, it becomes clear over the course of the novel that the bakkie is more than just a referential source of the Smaleses', especially Maureen's, existence. Apart from its symbolic tie with the Smaleses' past, the vehicle also holds Maureen's desire and desperation to be transported back to her past life. Together with other direct references to governmental airlift, U.S aircraft rescue, or even the figure of the helicopter at the end of the novel, the bakkie has a significant meaning in the way that it offers a substantial and concrete means and possibility of being relocated back to a space or a territory that Maureen can domesticate. Flight rescue, for instance, gives a privilege of spatial movement and a chance for survival to whites in places of political chaos, regardless of nationalities, an idea that is entertained by both Bam and Maureen toward the end of the novel.[63] Therefore, when the vehicle's key is taken away from Bam and, later, when July finally learns to drive, Maureen faces a terrible predicament whereby not only does the possibility of escaping back to her desired past become obsolete due to the fear of being found by revolutionaries, but also that real power of movement now rests on July whom she comes to mock, at this particular moment in the narrative, as having grown into '*a big man*':

> —You'll profit by the others' fighting. Steal a bakkie. You want that, now. You don't know what might have happened to Ellen. She washed your clothes and slept with you. You want the bakkie, to drive around in like a gangster, imagining yourself a big man, important […].[64]

This final scene of confrontation between Maureen and July starts with Maureen accusing July of stealing her family's gun; however, the gun as the subject of this violent exchange disappears and the bakkie takes centre stage as the cause of Maureen's suppressed discontentment and exasperation. As partially evident in the lines above, this moment exemplifies Maureen's honest rejection of the state in which she as well as July have become embroiled. At this point, as Maurren's subject position becomes unstable as a result of her dispossession of a gun and a vehicle, July has gained considerable control over his

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[63] Ibid, pp. 125-26.
[64] Ibid., p. 153.

former white employers. While earlier in the narrative, there may have been moments in which Maureen could find solace and comfort from the bakkie as well as the gun her family is in possession of, now that last thread of hope for life away from 'this place of ruin that was the habitation of no living being' is irrevocably broken.[65]

This discussion of white resistance reveals, first and foremost, Maureen's articulated anger and inner turmoil. Her interpersonal confrontation with July is mediated as one of the first few steps of the character unknowingly coming to a new sense of acceptance and existence. The last two chapters, whose narration is punctuated by a change in narrating voice of past and present tense, indicates, quite clearly, Maureen's shifted focalisation on the temporal and spatial context of the past to the present. However, such a shift in narration does not suggest Maureen's complete submission to the elements of the nonhuman. Maureen's shifted focalisation on the temporal and spatial landscape of the present exemplified in the present-tense narration of the last chapter indicates the textual establishment of that unbearable present landscape of July's village as a point of departure, from which Maureen herself will leave and fully enter into a world in which she is fully nonhumanised. The final scene at the very end of the novel provides ample evidence:

> She walks out of the hut. The pace quickens, stalks past the stack of thatch and the wattle fowl-cage, jolts down the incline, leaps stones, break into another rhythm. She is running through the elephant grass […] She can hear the laboured muttering putter very clearly in the attentive silence of the bush around and ahead: the engine not switched off but idling, there. The real fantasies of the bush delude more inventively than the romantic forests of Grimm and Disney […] She runs: trusting herself with all the suppressed trust of a lifetime, alert, like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival, the enemy of all that would make claims of responsibility. She can still hear the beat, beyond those trees and those, and she runs towards it. She runs.[66]

Literally, it is the sound of the helicopter that prompts Maureen into the act described in the passage above. As has been established earlier, the helicopter, to Maureen, is a

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., pp. 159-60.

privileged and racialised means of rescue. It is also a branded image of hope and fantasy. On one level, Maureen seems to be running away from July's village, quickening her passage through what can be generally defined as a landscape containing black South African characteristics of living: 'the stack of thatch,' 'wattle fowl-cage,' 'the elephant grass,' 'the slaps of branches,' 'thickets of thorn,' 'the ford,' etc. The end of her last journey taken on foot here seems quite obvious. Since the helicopter itself will presumably take her back to the kind of life Maureen has longed for since her displaced days at July's village, what she is then after here is her past, back to her days and homeliness of Johannesburg. In this regard, the repetition of the phrase 'she runs' and 'she is running' then reinforces Maureen's ongoing, endless pursuit over the kind of life she is more familiar with and, above all, over a domesticated space that she can truly claim as home.

However, such reading depends on how one interprets the identity of the helicopter. As suggested by a number of scholars, the ambiguity of the ending scene rests on how the novel conceals the true identity of the helicopter. For instance, Clingman, Nicholas Visser, and Ali Erritouni contend that the ending scene gesture towards a possibility of utopic change/future that the helicopter comes to symbolise.[67] This utopic vision, according to Erritouni, implies an emerging political space that 'anticipate[s] an egalitarian post-apartheid South Africa'.[68] On the other hand, others have suggested that the helicopter likely belongs to the African revolutionary army, and that Maureen, by running towards it, may end up being raped, tortured, and killed by those who exit from the helicopter. Nancy Topping Bazin, for example, contends that 'Maureen's impulsive attempt to escape is more likely to be self-destructive than liberating'.[69] Like Bazin, Nancy Bailey holds that the helicopter is 'a symbol of death rather than life […] since it is more probable that the

[67] Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*; Nicholas Visser, 'Beyond the Interregnum: A Note on the Ending of *July's People*', *Rendering Things Visible: Essays on South African Literary Culture*, ed. by Martin Trump (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), pp. 61-67; and Ali Erritouni, 'Apartheid Inequality and Postapartheid Utopia in Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*,' *Research in African Literatures* 37.4 (2006), pp. 68-84.

[68] Erritouni, p. 69.

[69] Nancy Topping Bazin, 'Women and Revolution in Dystopian Fiction: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*', *Selected Essays: International Conference on Representing Revolution*, ed by John Michael Crafton (Carrolton: West Georgia UP, 1989), pp. 115-27 (p. 124).

helicopter is manned by black revolutionaries alerted to the existence of the white family by Daniel than that it represents an American *deus ex machina*'.[70]

My reading of the helicopter incorporates these two oppositional polarities into the identity of the helicopter. The significance of helicopter is, therefore, its apparent obscurity. It is not decisive whether the course of Maureen's action as reproduced above will ensure her survival. Neither does it suggest her tragic end. From the cryptic representation of the helicopter, the image in question becomes a floating signifier with no ultimate meaning. From that image of a helicopter as a floating signifier with no definitive and ultimate meaning, the ambiguity of the scene reaches the point of critical accumulation when narrative attention is drawn to Maureen's interaction with the nonhuman world. As the helicopter remains hidden behind the bush of July's land, the bush is perceived by Maureen to have that alluring, inventive power of delusion, in the way that the bush is capable of keeping the true identity of the helicopter at bay. Coupled with the bush, the helicopter is thus represented as a signifier or an image that lies forever out of Maureen's reach. And it is through this suspended delusion that Maureen comes to be seen as welcoming and living with the nonhuman world.

Without directly articulating the transformation of Maureen's perceived sense of self, *July's People* delves into a particular production of being that breaks and deterritorialises the severe separation between human subjectivity and the nonhuman world. It is clear that Maureen at this moment is now running away from all that is characteristically related to the indigenous reality of African culture and place; yet her manner comes close to showcasing a textual instance of 'becoming-animal'. Maureen's becoming-nonhuman in this scene is carefully noted on two levels. First, she is described as being prompted to the act of running with 'all the suppressed trust of a lifetime, alert, like a solitary animal at the season when animals neither seek a mate nor take care of young, existing only for their lone survival'. If we follow the analogy, Maureen is at this point acknowledged as 'a solitary animal' who has abandoned her husband and her children. Second, her moment of 'becoming-animal' is well established in how Maureen herself interacts with the land and the bush. Despite being not certain about the identity of the

[70] Nancy Bailey, 'Living without the Future: Nadine Gordimer's *July's People*', *World Literature in English* 24.2 (1984), pp. 215-24 (p. 221).

helicopter, Maureen is alive or, rather, suspended in the blissful ambiguity and vagueness of July's material landscape. The nonhuman world is here perceived and received by Maureen herself as the key point of reference for her 'lone survival'. The present narration then indicates a suspended moment of arrival in which Maureen's subject position of white humanism is destabilised as well as reconstructed by the ecology she now lives in.

Becoming-animal is a key term in Deleuze and Guattari's works from *Kafka* and *A Thousand Planteaus*. In broadest terms, becoming-animal is a deterritorialisation in which a subject is detached from a realm of stability and organised sense of subjectivity. It is, in a way, a movement from the stable/constant to the variable and indefinite. They write:

> To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are valuable only in themselves, to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialised flux, of nonsignifying signs.[71]

To become animal is thus to become what is not limited to and by one's self. As Maureen enters into the world of 'deterritorialised flux', 'of nonsignifying signs' of the bush and the helicopter hidden behind the bush, she is entering into a world where all her senses and perceptions are freed from the mooring of the apartheid geopolitics of spatial limitation. And, as she enters into a new world, she exists in a suspended continuum of 'pure intensities where all forms come undone'. This final scene of *July's People* can thus be read as a scene of flight, in which the deterritorialised subjectivity of Maureen rushes towards a 'becoming-animal' moment. The line of flight delineates a critical production of self as being open and variable to what constitutes the agentic, material world of the nonhuman.

The novel can be said to explore this particular condition of *a more powerfully engaged being*, in which an individual subject, regardless of race, engages in an intimate, actualised contact with one another as well as with the nonhuman world. That critical engagement, which is apparent here in the final page of *July's People*, detaches one's self from the organised, centralised perception of one's self and subjectification, a condition which produces a sense of isolation and spatial loneliness. As the ambiguity of the identity

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[71] Deleuze and Gauttari, *Kafka*, p. 13.

of the helicopter is heightened, and the subjectivity of Maureen is shaped and sustained by 'The real fantasies of the bush', she is entering, fully, into a mode of nonhumanised existence in which her white humanist subjectivity is deterritorialised. The moment of 'becoming-animal' is thus a moment that opens up Maureen's closed and isolated being into proximate and uniform contact with the nonhuman world. From the representation of landscape as formless and nothing, to the naked shower in the rainstorm, to the outburst of emotional pain and dissolved identity, what has earlier been represented as a gradual process of deterritorialisation has now become distinctively a moment of animal-becoming. This flight of becoming-animal indicates, in Holland's words, 'all the virtual potential, all the potential becomings' […] that could ever enable'.[72] That is, Maureen's subjectivity is nonhumanised to point of it being imperceptible as she, at this point in the narrative, is capable of *becoming-everything*.

As this chapter shows, both *The Conservationist* and *July's People* present a critical turn towards the nonhuman world in which the representation of the agentic, material realm of the nonhuman creates an intimate, spatial involvement and nearness between the people and land, that resolutely decentralises the human subjectivity. However, upon close examination, *The Conservationist*, which was written during the first half of the 1970s is much more B.C.M.-oriented in which the force of nature takes complete controls over the material landscape of the white protagonist's farmland, championing the spirit of black humanism, in its repopulating the landscape with black Africans and human dignity. In this instance, the material world of the nonhuman acknowledges *only* the inclusion of black Africans within their material realm of being. In *July's People*, the nonhuman world departs from the anthropocentric vision, regardless of race, to a new referential order. Human individuals, both black and white, are seen as being taken and nonhumanised by the force of nature. The process of nonhumanisation, vividly seen in the last scene of *July's People*, does not erase, as it seems, the subjectivity of the human, however. It is a subtle reimagination of life that is characteristically defined by its proximate interaction between the human and the nonhuman worlds. The moment of becoming-animal in *July's People* is thus a focal moment that symbolises the decentralisation of the human subject, of how their lives are now affected and shaped by the land, and how their subjectivity and agency

[72] Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 111.

depend on the singularity of the nonhuman world. That is to say, *The Conservationist* demonstrates an absolute level of deterritorialised humanism, and, *July's People* presents a relative level of deterritorialisation. Through an absolute degree of deterritorialisation evident in the presencing and singularity of landscape, *The Conservationist* rediscovers the buried, nonhumanised body of African life and culture, without leaving any possibility for the presence of whiteness to resurface after the territory has been deterritorialised through the forces of the natural world, and black Africans return to repopulate the landscape. *July's People*, written towards the end of the B.C.M.'s political influence, extends that nonhumanist progression, by appropriating the rigid principles of the B.C.M. While the ending of the novel itself projects Maureen as 'a solitary animal' running away from July's village, it does nonetheless preserve her presence, and retain her subjectivity as it is now fueled and supported by the force of the world she is trying to escape.

Chapter 5

Deterritorialising Desire: Rainbowism in Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* and Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

In a short essay on South African fiction in the 1980s, Clingman writes that 'the future is *the* presiding question of the 1980s'.[1] Briefly outlining the historical forces in South Africa in the previous decades, Clingman notes that such a contemplation of the future is required after South Africa, in the previous era, had witnessed a series of failed opposition movements which focused on the 'extension' of the existing South African politics and reality to 'include blacks and everyone else within it' in the political spirit and ideology of multiracialism.[2] Thus, Clingman's term, 'future', connotes a prolonged determination for 'revolution', and signifies the 'wholesale replacement' of the silenced, invalid ideology of the past, if not the past as the whole.[3] The 'future' is therefore evoked as an aspect, a framework, of reality to replace and revolutionise the continued, persisting past carried over to the present. Building from this critical reading of Clingman, I see the works of Gordimer and Coetzee written during this period as doing something similar: anticipating, contemplating, and envisioning the future. While Clingman offers some differentiation concerning how both Gordimer and Coetzee approach the future, noting 'the guarded welcome of Gordimer' and 'the political refusals of Coetzee', the idea of the future is understood most predominantly in the general, political reality of South Africa.[4] In this

[1] Clingman, 'Revolution and Reality: South African Fiction in the 1980s', *Rendering Things Visible*, ed. by Martin Trump (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), pp. 41-60 (p. 43).
[2] Ibid., p. 44.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 52. In this essay, Clingman discusses three related texts of the 1980s by Gordimer, Coetzee, and Mongane Serote. In relations to what Clingman claims about Gordimer's and Coetzee's approaches to the

chapter, I see the kind of future that both Gordimer and Coetzee investigate in their works of this period as one which is entwined with the question of desire, particularly sexual desire in relation to racial and sexual relationships across the colour line. This kind of future, which is invested in the question of interracial desire, speaks, in turn, to the particular racial tension in the political scene in the late 1980s to the early 1990s, at the time when a new political order is emerging, to replace the older, persisting order of the past.

To investigate the issue of interracial desire in relation to the political consciousness of the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the central focus of the chapter will be on Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* (1987) and Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990). Discussion will centre on how these texts, in their acute representations and interrogations of sexual desire and interracial relationships, address the question of political discourse of the late 1980s in their respective embodiment of desire. Two other presiding, related questions are: how do the Gordimer's and Coetzee's texts under discussion in the chapter present and deterritorialise the problem of loneliness originating from this interpersonalised realm of relations between races, and what spatial movement/interaction ensues when such a process of deterritorialisation occurs? The following part of the chapter will be divided in three sections. The first section is devoted to the discussion of loneliness, here understood in the context of political relations and sexual relationships across the colour line. Discussion in this section will be based on my reading of Gordimer's short fiction. The second section focuses on the consideration and analysis of Gordimer's novel, *A Sport of Nature*, particularly on the novel's central character's cross-racial relationships. The last section will bring the discussion of the chapter to a close in its interrogation of Coetzee's novels, *Age of Iron*. In this section, Coetzee's text will be set in comparison to Gordimer's novel in relation to how the two authors present the issue of interracial desire and how their respective representations of the issue result in their characteristically, unique and opposing approaches to the political demands of the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

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future, he notes 'the whole-hearted embrace and affirmations of Serote' in his study of Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* (52).

Related to my discussion of interracial desire is the term 'rainbowism'. The term 'rainbowism' refers back to the well-known discourse of the 'rainbow nation', popularised by Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech as president in 1994:

> We enter into a convenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.[5]

In this speech, the term 'rainbow nation' signifies the trope of political as well as racial unity under the larger vision of nation-building in the wake of the first democratic elections of 1994.[6] However, the term was coined by the chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The term 'rainbow nation', or, rather, the metaphor itself was first used in 1989 when the Archbishop described people partaking in political demonstrations as the 'rainbow people of God'.[7] He later published a collection of writings under the title of *The Rainbow People of God* in 1994. Drawing on the Archbishop's religious background, the rainbow rhetoric, Fileve T. Palmer suggests, foregrounds the Archbishop's belief 'in the ability of all South Africans (Black, White, Coloured, and Asian) to co-exist in spite of and because of difference'. Palmer also notes that the rainbow comes to symbolise cross-racial 'reconciliation', invoking 'a period of safety such as that which occurred after the great flood'.[8] Although the coinage and the use of the rainbow metaphor postdated the texts under discussion in this chapter, the idea was already present in Gordimer's fiction, and in cultural debate more generally. The term is, thus, used here to suggest as the idea of interracial communion and inclusivism to highlight the political as well as racial integration and coalition between non-whites and whites in relation to how the idea is fostered and foregrounded in Gordimer's and Coetzee's exploration and investment of interracial desire. Broadly speaking, the notion of desire,

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[5] Nelson Mandela, Statement of the President of the African National Congress Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela at His Inauguration as President of the Democratic Republic of South Africa, Union Buildings, Pretoria, May 10, 1994.
[6] Martha Evans, 'Mandela and the Televised Birth of The Rainbow Nation', *National Identities* 12:3 (2010), pp. 309-29 (p. 317).
[7] Desmond Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God: South Africa's Victory over Apartheid* (London: Doubleday, 1994).
[8] Felieve T. Palmer, 'Racialism and Representation in the Rainbow Nation', *SAGE Open*, October-December (2016), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).

explored in *A Sport of Nature* and *Age of Iron*, is the central area in which both Gordimer and Coetzee develop and deterritorialise the aforementioned notion of rainbowism. Rainbowism, therefore, presents a critical reflection on Gordimer's and Coetzee's spatial as well as racial consciousness of the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Situating my discussion of desire with reference to the discourse of rainbowism, the chapter contends that rainbowism marks a unique understanding of how the two authors approach the question of race, desire and politics at the turn of the decade. It characterises a consciousness that emphasises, in Gordimer's case, the proximate encounter between the two races on the questions of desire and politics, and, in Coetzee's case, the elusive, contradictory pull between connection and resistance, with reference to both the author's political as well as cross-racial consciousness of the late 1980s South Africa.

Gordimer's fiction of the late 1980s prominently features myriad representations and explorations of interracial relationships and desire, including the product of that desire: the coloured subject. *Jump and Other Stories* (1991) is the sole collection of short stories which came out during this period. The questions of interracial relationship and coloured identity, which are, I argue, emblematic of Gordimer's vision of antiracial inclusivism, form a thematic focus of the collection. One example from the collection which explores the condition of interracial relationship and the coloured is 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', which tells the story of an Afrikaner farmer named Marais Van der Vyer who accidentally shoots one of his farm boys while they are out working on the farm. Only at the end of the story is it revealed that the farm boy is in fact Marais' son, who was born from his cross-racial affair with one of his African farm labourers. Studying the idea of shame surrounding the discourse of the coloured in South Africa, Zoë Wicomb notes that 'miscegenation, the origins of which lie within a discourse of "race", concupiscence, and degeneracy, continues to be bound up with shame, a pervasive shame exploited in apartheid's strategy of the naming of a Coloured race […]'.[9] According to Wicomb's argument, while the bodies of the coloured in South Africa appear as sites of shame, 'the actual materiality of black bodies that bear the marked pigmentation of miscegenation'

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[9] Zoë Wicomb, 'Shame and identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa', *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. by Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 91-107 (p. 92).

present the possibility of textual reading, and how, in its very 'ethnographic self-fashioning', the bodies relate to political culture and consciousness of interracial unity.[10] 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' can then be read as Gordimer's textual construction of colouredness in this manner, in which the idea of the coloured is closely related to the political reality of inclusivism in the late 1980s. Although in this text, the ideas of sexual desire and interracial relationship are not the central preoccupation, the short story can be discerned as signposting and commenting on the issue of nation-building in the late 1980s in its very subtle investment and representation of the coloured. Considering the question of colouredness in this aspect, the chapter contends that Gordimer, during this writing period, attempts to chart a metaphorical representation of colouredness to reflect the political movement of inclusivism and rainbowism prevalent in the politics at the time.

Key in this historical period of the late 1980s and the early 1990s was the drafting of the interim constitution, one that would ensure the peaceful creation of a unitary state for the black as well as the white populations. As a result of numerous negotiations and debates, leaders of the white establishment and the black resistance force came to an agreement that the new constitution should contain 'sunset clauses'. The clauses suggested that in order for an ANC-dominated regime to govern effectively, 'a period of compulsory power-sharing in the cabinet' was required.[11] The figure of the coloured farm boy comes to represent such a political engendering of the new, antiracialised movement. The materiality of his coloured body can be seen as a direct, textual reference to that idea of political inclusivism, which is emblematic of the white and black consciousnesses in the political vision of nation-building at the time apartheid was about to be abolished. The death of the farm boy in 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' can then offer a symbolic interpretation as Gordimer contemplates the future of the kind of political ideology her character comes to represent. His death, despite being an accident, can be discerned as a textual gesture towards a hidden, violent result of political opposition and the tragic ending

[10] Ibid., p. 93, 92.
[11] The 'sunset clauses' was introduced, with a mutual agreement and understanding of both leading parties, The National Party and the ANC, as 'solution of the problem of satisfying the National party without sacrificing the long-term interests of the ANC'. See Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, p. 255.

of antiracial inclusivism that the text itself anticipates. The following passage demonstrates such a political future in the text's representation of the funeral of the farm boy:

> But she [The dead man's mother] says nothing, does nothing. She does not look up; she does not look at Van der Vyer, whose gun went off in the truck, she stares at the grave. Nothing will make her look up; there need be no fear that she will look up; at him [Marais] […] He, too, stares at the grave. The dead man's mother and he stare at the grave in communication like that between the black man outside and the white man inside the cab the moment the gun went off.[12]

In this particular moment, the repressed, interracial relationship between Marais and the mother of the dead farm boy encourages the imposition of silence. At a first glance, the lack of verbalised communication and voice here may be born of out sorrow and loss. Given the portrayal of the voiceless communication, the scene, however, suggests a suppressed understanding and relationship between the two, and the necessity that such an understanding and relationship be kept silent.

What is worth noting from this scene is how the scene, or the story as a whole, is ostentatiously marked with words that involve a grappling with silence. The silence comes from both the mother of the dead man as well as from the white farmer. At an interpersonal, interracial level, the silence reveals the mutual 'fear' of both Marais and the dead man's mother that their past illicit, criminalised cross-racial affair is to be exposed. The silence is therefore considered a necessity in the way that it conceals the truth about their relationship. Although the word 'and' conjoins the two parties and indicates a connection, that connection is paradoxically marked by a sense of separation, which renders, for instance, the critical positions of 'the black man outside and the white man inside'.

Through silenced suppression of the interracial relationship and the death of the coloured boy, politicised loneliness of the late 1980s is depicted as a condition that demands an understanding of racial relations in South Africa in order to fully appreciate the concept of loneliness in a split consciousness responsive to the political ideals of the age. In other words, 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' can be read not only as a just depiction of interracial conditions in a strictly interpersonalised context, but also as a reflection on the very specific ways in which this interracial relation and, above all, the

[12] Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 116.

product of such a relation, regulate and embody the political consciousness of national unity between blacks and whites when South Africa as a country is poised on the verge of a transition to democracy. As a symbolic mark of interracial unity and hybridity in the political reality of the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the death of the coloured boy reflects the split consciousness of the late 1980s concerning the discourse of nation building. From a historical perspective, the years of the late 1980s witnessed a growing presence of white and black collaboration in political movement. The new political order of antiracial/nonracial inclusivism saw its first emergence at the founding of a leading anti-apartheid organisation called The United Democratic Front (UDF), a black-led, nonracial coalition of various social groups and bodies. With the gradual decline of the B.M.C. a decade after 1976, the emergence of the UDF marked an increased participation by whites and non-whites in anti-apartheid activities.[13] Another key political activity that occurred in 1983 that helped shape a de-compartmentalised South Africa was the National Forum. The Forum, participated in by almost two hundred organisations, 'embodied a diverse range of political views, ranging from "nonracial" socialist to a gamut of black consciousness and Africanist philosophies'.[14] That sense of antiracial movement of inclusivism gives rise to a growing support of a black-run nation to be rebuilt from political ideology of inclusivism. According to Thompson, this is the era of political transition, in which 'ineluctable processes were undermining the regime's long-term prospects'.[15] In his study, Thompson lists four aspects in which such 'ineluctable processes' can be discerned to mark the destabilisation of the government's segregation dogma. Among his four examples, there are two notable aspects which signpost the political and historical shift in South Africa. The first aspect is the gradual decrease in numbers of the white population and the simultaneous, rapid increase in numbers of the non-white population. Thompson writes: 'the white population of South Africa (including the Homelands) dropped from its peak of 21 percent of the total in 1936 to 15 percent in 1985 […] the African population of the townships doubled from 5.2 million to 10.6 million between 1951 and 1980'.[16] The second

[13] Tom Lodge and others, *All, Here, And Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (London: Hurst and Company, 1992), p. 143.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Thompson, p. 242.
[16] Ibid.

aspect is the fact, as Thompson notes, that 'white and black South Africans were inextricably interdependent' resulting from 'the cumulative economic power of black people as consumers, workers, and entrepreneurs'.[17] As a consequence of these demographic and economic aspects of social changes, the idea of political inclusivism was already implicit in the very changing nature of South Africa itself. Parallel to that political conviction, there was, however, a series of violent, physical struggles for power that originated from those who disapproved of the ideology of 'national unity' through peaceful, political negotiation, and sought to 'overthrow the state by force'.[18] Monica Popescu lists four specific groups who attacked the optimistic outlook of political inclusivism. She writes: 'there are black South Africans dissatisfied with the rhythm and extent of reform, Afrikaner extremists who paint themselves as the victims of reverse discrimination, and coloured people and Indians who feel marginalised in the new narrative of national unity'.[19] Broadly speaking, the split consciousness of the era is marked by two forces between those who approve and support the discourse of rainbow nationalism and inclusivism, and those who vent disagreement, distrust, and frustration at the thought of peaceful coalition between blacks and whites in the post-apartheid formation of South African politics.

'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' comes to embody such a political split consciousness, whereby the idea of political inclusivism is articulated in silenced suppression in the relationship of Marais and the farm woman, whereas the mounting disagreement and distrust of the so-called inclusive, unitary ideology of rainbowism is reflected in the accidental death of the coloured boy. Another example to demonstrate that condition of politicised loneliness where the political split between the two races prevents an engaging political order of inclusivism can be discerned from 'Teraloyna'.

'Teraloyna' is another story that presents itself as the truth about apartheid in its direct and immediate representations of colouredness. According to Jeanne Colleran, 'Teraloyna', despite being written in the narrative tradition of a fable and not in historical

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[17] Ibid., p. 243.
[18] Ibid., p. 248.
[19] Monica Popescu, 'War Room Stories and the Rainbow Nation: Competing Narratives in Contemporary South African Literature', *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, ed. by Gerard Bouchard (Routledge: London, 2013), pp. 191-205 (p. 199).

realism, 'tells the truth about apartheid'.[20] In comparison with 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', the representation of the issue of colouredness in this short story is more straightforward. It tells the story of an island which was inhabited by people 'coloured neither very dark nor very light'.[21] In terms of its political reference implicit in the representation of interracial relationships, 'Teraloyna' offers an explicit narration of the coloured: 'Exogamous marriage made their descendants' hair frizzier or straighter, their skin darker or lighter, depending on whether they attached themselves in this way to black people, white people, or those already singled out and named as partly both'.[22] From this explicit retelling of the interracial history of the island, 'Teraloyna' moves on to demonstrate a direct attack on the island's strict and restrictive laws which categorise its population, by emphasising the fact that colouredness is characteristically pronounced as the presiding colour in all races in the island, regardless of their skin colours:

> When a certain black carpenter draws a splinter from under his nail, the bubble of blood that comes after it is Teraloyna. And when a certain young white man, drafted into military service straight from school, throws a canister of tear-gas into a schoolyard full of black children and is hit on the cheek by a cast stone, the broken capillaries ooze Teraloyna lifeblood.[23]

Written in the tradition of folklore and fable, 'Teraloyna' champions the idea of colouredness implicit in all races against 'categories, laws that decreed what colour and degree of colour could live where'. It is possible to see the concept of ontological sameness, which is the underpinning concept of political inclusivism in the short story's portrayal of Teraloyna as the 'lifeblood' of all races.

Like 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', 'Teraloyna' prophetically charts the demise of political inclusivism. However, the story does not specifically contextualise the act of killing within a political context of power struggle. The cause which brings about the massacre of the island people is, in Colleran's words, the white's 'blocked desire – the desire for blood'.[24] This idea of 'blocked desire' offers a critical position from which we

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[20] Jeanne Colleran, 'Archive of Apartheid: Nadine Gordimer's Short Fiction at the End of the Interregnum', *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Bruce King (New York: Palgrave, 1993), pp. 237-45 (p. 238).
[21] Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories*, p. 99.
[22] Ibid., p. 102.
[23] Ibid., p. 104.
[24] Colleran, p. 239.

could understand the period's production of loneliness when placed in relation to the question of deterritorialised desire, which is examined in the following part of the chapter. Under the present discussion, this concept of 'blocked desire' is a causal factor of the condition of loneliness, which is, in essence, the inability to form a unitary consciousness between black and white due to that separation between two split political ideologies. This form of desire results in the political position of stillness and deadly silence, in which the idea of colouredness is silenced or slaughtered: 'all colours, abundant targets, doesn't matter which, kill, kill them all'.[25] It is, in other words, a desire that does not produce but hinders and sterilises the reproduction of political inclusivism. 'Teraloyna' portrays the scene of mass killing in the following lines:

> 'Under command, and sometimes out of panic, they have shot chanting black schoolchildren, black mourners dispersing from those children's funerals, black rioters fleeing, black men and women who happened to go out for a pint of milk or a packet of cigarettes and crossed the path of an army patrol in the streets. Pick them off. They're all black. There is no time – it is no time – to distinguish the bystanders from the revolutionaries.[26]

In light of the portrayal of death revolving around the issue of the coloured in 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' and 'Teraloyna', we can see that the question of loneliness, as examined in these two short stories, is not merely a condition understood in the context of political deviance. It is also a condition and a political position in which a much-awaited future of political inclusivism falls dead and that the future of South African politics is now wrapped in a politicised state of death-like stillness. Loneliness is therefore a condition whereby a political aspiration for a unitary consciousness is expressed, but suppressed in deadly fashion.

To utilise the concept of 'blocked desire' in the chapter's discussion of Gordimer's and Coetzee's texts, I draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of life and desire. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari explore the condition of desire in their critique of the Freudian notion of the Oedipus complex. In this work, they argue that desire should not be perceived under the Freudian assumption that desire comes from lack: that is, what we

[25] Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories*, p. 107.
[26] Ibid., p. 106.

desire is what we lack. The act of desire is the wish for completion, which not only limits desire to a particular idealised and romanticised object, but also to a particular relational fulfilment of completion. Such a definition of desire, as they contend, introduces the condition of desire under a fantasised object of desire, and frames it under a fixed, presupposed relation. In contrast to Freudian concept of desire, Deleuze and Guattari propose the idea of desire as production. They write:

> Desire is the set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production […] Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed object; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine.[27]

What is central here in their concept of desire is, as Claire Colebrook puts it, that '[desire] is the production, from flows or connections, of bodies as relatively stable points'.[28] This argument negates the existence of an idealised object as well as a fixed relation of completion concerning the condition of desire. Under this Deleuzoguattarian conception of desire, a subject is stabilised since it does not predicate its relation toward its lack.

Another key notion related to the concept of desire, which is central to my discussion of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*, is the notion of life under such a desiring condition as production. Freeing the discussion of desire from the imprisoned realm of sexuality, Deleuze and Guattari look at desire in a wider context of existence. Thus, their concept of desire is linked to the concept of life as a whole. On that theoretical premise, the two philosophers raise two related notions: 'the body without organs' and the closed organism. Deleuze and Guattari state that:

> The body without organs is the model of death […] the death model appears when the body without organs repels the organs and lays them aside: no mouth, no tongue, no teeth – to the point of self-mutilation, to the point of suicide. Yet there is no real opposition between the body without organs and the organs as partial

[27] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 39.
[28] Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 129.

> objects […] It is a question of different parts of the machine, different and coexisting, different in their very coexistence.[29]

First and foremost, there are two implications of life from this quotation: the articulated 'body without organs' and a closed, bounded organism. According to Colebrook, 'the body without organs' is that form of 'radical sense of life' – the life which operates beyond its own, physical boundary.[30] Opposite to the notion of the closed organism, the concept of 'the body without organs' undercuts the general perception which dictates a fixed role of a given body's organs. Rather than seeing a body with different parts, and different organs, with their assigned, specific production duties, the concept of 'the body without organs' negates the existence of organs, or, particularly, the specific roles of production each organ and part are perceived to have. Instead, the production as a whole of a given body is generated through the complex process by the whole body itself.[31] This idea of 'the body without organs', thus, allows us to reimagine the production of a given body, and its relation to a life or a body outside its own physical boundary. While the closed organism exists in its own bounded space of limitations and fixed production, the relation between 'the body without organs' and that which exists beyond or outside its own physical boundary is dependent on that vital force, flow, and production of desire, a production of desire that is not predicated on lack and is not in any way limited to one fixed role of production.

Drawing on these two key concepts of life and desire, the chapter presents an analysis of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* in the following section. The novel centres on the life and political development of its central character, Hillela, through a series of love affairs and political movements. In using Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of desire and 'the body without organs', the following discussion of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* shows how the novel turns Hillela's sexual desire into an affirmative vital force, wherein the notion of life and subjectivity is not determined by lack but emerges in relation to alterity. To understand how sexual desire operates in *A Sport of Nature*, it is best to return to the

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[29] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 375.

[30] Colebrook, *Deleuze*, p. 2.

[31] It is worth noting that Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, state that 'In effect, the body without organs is itself the plane of consistency, which becomes compact or thickens at the level of the strata', p. 46. Both ideas present a critical perspective that necessitates a structure or 'a body' without imposed limitation and organisation.

idea of 'blocked desire'. As the idea of desire, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is a vital means of affirmation and production, the notion of 'blocked desire' is that desire that suppresses and blocks the process of connections and productions. Over the course of the novel, Hillela encounters two distinct forms of suppression. These two forms of suppression are regulated within the character's mode of sexual desire. First, there is her experience with the coloured boy during her teenage years with one of her aunts, Olga. The second time is when Hillela enters into an incestuous relationship with her cousin Sasha, while she lives with her other aunt, Pauline. Both incidents reinforce the idea of suppression and prohibition: The first incident highlights the common taboo under the apartheid regime, which marks the body of the other – non-whites – as tabooed. The second incident, on the other hand, is considered in a much wider context of cultural intolerance, in which any given culture introduces the idea that we must repress desire for our relatives whether they be our father, mother, siblings, cousins, and such. From these two incidents, the novel presents two major narrative representations concerning the subject of desire: the first being the idea of prohibition, and the other being the idea of repressed subjectivity. These two focuses, I argue, form the narrative production of 'blocked desire'. The first incident in particular gives a good example of how such 'blocked desire' operates in relation to Hillela's subjectivity as a sexual as well as social being. The following passage describes Hillela as she is confronted by the headmistress as well as her father after she is seen with a coloured boy:

> She did not know whether her father knew she had been to the boy's home. She didn't know whether to explain about the banana loaf, a little sister who stared, the mother who called her 'miss'. An opposing feeling was distilled from her indecision. She resented the advances of that boy, that face, those unnatural eyes that shouldn't have belonged to one of his kind at all, like that hair, the almost real blond hair. The thought of him was repugnant to her.[32]

This particular passage gives a first glimpse into Hillela's subjectivity in relation to her sexual desire and its consequence after it has been revealed to her that the boy she goes out with is a coloured boy. At this particular moment, desire is projected as being repressed and marked as taboo when it is associated with a coloured subject. Hillela's subjectivity,

[32] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 14.

despite being shown in an earlier scene as desiring and opening, is now closed and forced to retreat into her own bounded, white body. In this way, *A Sport of Nature* projects the cause and movement of desire as well as immediately prohibits and represses that desire. Without the flows and connections of desiring bodies, Hillela is shown, through her expression of resentment and indecision, to become that figure of a closed, bounded organism.

Under the apartheid regime, as we have seen from Gordimer's depiction of interracial relationships in stories like 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off' or in a small episode in *A Sport of Nature*, desire which emerges between the white self and the other cannot be entirely repressed. Yet it can be reprimanded and made illegal. What we see from Gordimer's novel is that Hillela, upon being informed of the identity of the boy as well as after she expresses a sense of indignation and revulsion, is, nonetheless, a desiring but repressed subject. Critics have generally agreed when it comes to the subject of Hillela's sexuality that it is because of Hillela's sexual desire that the character manages to free 'herself from the limits and restrictions of her class and race'.[33] Although Hillela is punished as a result of her interracial misconduct with the coloured boy as well as her sexual experience with Sasha, it is because of that prohibition and taboo on sexuality that she experiences during her early years that makes it possible for the character to emerge as a freed, sexual being. How does this question of Hillela's sexual desire become a cause for the character to emerge as a political and sexual being? That question depends upon the novel's strategic development of the process of deterritorialisation, in which the degree of deterritorialisation on the subject of sexual desire opens up possibilities for Hillela to emerge and connect with not only her own sexual potential but also her political aspiration in the most tangible and pragmatic sense of being. The process can be traced and divided into two major phases. The first stage involves Hillela's interracial relationship with her first husband, Whaila, and the second and last stage deals with her life as the wife of the imagined post-apartheid South Africa's President, Reuel.

From these two stages of development, the idea which is central to Hillela's sexual desire as well as her subjectivity is the idea of rainbowism. From my analysis of 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', the term rainbowism is, broadly speaking, used to

[33] Ettin, p. 22.

define an ideology of political inclusivism. That idea of political inclusivism inherent in the concept of rainbowism signifies an interracial communion in which whites and blacks come together in an effort of forming a new nation after apartheid is abolished. *A Sport of Nature* draws on the same premise of political inclusivism in its application of the term 'rainbow'. However, it recontextualises the concept deeply within Hillela's sexual subjectivity. That concept of political inclusivism, having been reoriented to be situated within the boundary of an interpersonal condition, will then be deterritorialised and reterritorialised as Hillela herself develops a new sexual and political consciousness over the course of the novel. To discuss the idea of rainbowism in relation to Hillela's sexual desire, it is best to begin with Hillela's first interracial marriage and see how such an interracial marriage characterises Hillela's sexuality as well as what the term 'rainbowism' comes to mean under such a condition.

Concerning the subject of Hillela's sexuality, I will begin by looking at one of the most quoted passages from the novel, at which moment Hillela's sense of life and sexuality reveals in full force.

> *Lying beside him* [Whaila]*, looking at pale hands, thighs, belly: seeing herself as unfinished, left off, somewhere. She* [Hillela] *examined his body minutely and without shame, and he wakes to see her at it, and smiles without telling her why: she is the first not to pretend the different colours and textures of their being is not an awesome fascination.*[34]

Critics have read this passage as a celebration of racial distinction and differences of skin colours. Ettin writes that 'In *A Sport of Nature*, it is Hillela's physical sense of life that allows her to understand and transcend the historical importance of "skin and hair", to feel that the body's responses are the surest truths'.[35] In relation to Hillela's interracial marriages as well as her sexual encounter in the scene quoted above, Head writes that the scene represents a kind of unification, a celebration made possible by 'a pure sensuality which depends upon the preservation of difference rather than its effacement'.[36] Building on these arguments developed by Ettin and Head, I see the kind of sexual desire which is

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[34] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 225.
[35] Ettin, p. 94.
[36] Head, *Nadine Gordimer*, p. 142.

explored and represented in this scene as showing conflicting forces. It is true that the scene itself is a celebration of racial differences, and that is made possible purely through Hillela's sexual desire which operates here as a vital force of connection. This force helps to free the character from that experience of 'blocked desire', and an overlay of apartheid laws on sexual repression and constrictions of racial separatedness. However, the kind of desire which Hillela expresses here is not one which is characterised by that sense of subjective stability. On the contrary, her desire demonstrates a relative sense of lacking. By '*seeing herself as unfinished, left off, somewhere*', Hillela not only destabilises her sense of being, but also confines the subjectivity and body of Whaila as that fixed, idolised object of her own desire. His body, despite being praised, fascinated, and celebrated, becomes imprisoned as an idealised object required by Hillela's desire to complete and stabilise her sense of self.

Through these conflicting operations of desire, which is here both a force of production as well as hindrance to the growth of Hillela's and Whaila's emerging selves, *A Sport of Nature* begins to build its investigation of the idea of rainbowism. As the desire explored in this scene, as well as elsewhere during their entire marriage, necessitates the existence of lack and is only expressed in sexual terms, rainbowism as a concept of interracial communion is buried deep within the realm of repressive sexuality. That is, the notion of rainbowism is grounded in that projected realm of Hillela's sexual desire, which both produces a flow of connections and imprisons the body of the other as object of desire within its reach. In this marriage, sexual desire seems to be the defining means through which the character establishes her connection to Whaila, as well as the means of maintaining her sense of power, as it is expressed, for example, in the scene in which she describes herself as a woman waiting for a general to come 'to her on the nights before a great offensive begins'.[37] The novel then reinforces that idea of imprisonment and desire not entirely as production but as suppression of subjectivity in the following passage:

> 'Really. The black was a cover. Something God gave you to wear. Underneath, you must be white like me […] White like me; because that's what I was told, when I

[37] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 254.

> was being taught not to be prejudiced: underneath, they are all just like us. Nobody said we are just like *you*.'[38]

The scene above reveals that Hillela is not entirely freed from the apartheid constrictions of racial ideology. Despite the fact that the scene itself illustrates the overt, political awareness of Hillela's racial thinking, the scene undermines the sense of inclusivism and interracial communion through sexual desire by explicitly negating the skin differences and turn the reader's attention to what is underneath. In other words, the central idea of this scene does not reside in the question of who is like whom underneath, but the fact that racial difference in skin colour and hair, which seem to be the source of Hillela's admiration earlier, are dismissed at this very moment. The celebration of self in terms of difference becomes here a suppression and imprisonment of subjectivity, in which the self is turned against its own condition of desire. Here, rainbowism does not connote a sense of connection, deeper and wider than the realm of desire as suppression.

Inherent in the novel's representation of Hillela's sexual desire, and her subsequent, interracial marriage to Whaila is the subject of the coloured. In their marriage, Hilliela and Whaila have one child, Nomzamo. The coloured child, whose role is not textually critical to the narrative as a whole, represents, as Hillela so desires, the very idea of rainbowism. At this stage of Hillela's first pregnancy, the idea of rainbowism is perceived to be an aspect of a revolutionary, emancipatory perspective. Ettin, for instance, praises *A Sport of Nature* in regard to its ability to desensualise sexual desire. He contends that 'By means of the character of Hillela, Gordimer seems to haul up the mythic taboos of race and colour into clear view to shove them over. Hillela reveals to us […] the woman of their fantasies'.[39] However, looking at how her sexual desire is expressed earlier, this political aspect of Hillela's sexuality demands a further investigation of how Hillela, her sexual power, and the conception of her child, form a political perspective of inclusivism and rainbowism. The following passage gives an insight into Hillela's developing political consciousness in the way that it reveals how she perceives her sexuality and the product of her sexual relationship with Whaila as a political movement:

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[38] Ibid., p. 226.
[39] Ettin, p. 72.

> – I told you, I love your hair. I wonder what colour the baby will come out, Whaila? –
>
> – What colour do you want? – […]
>
> – I love not knowing what it will be. What colour it is, already, here inside me. Our colour. – She buries her head on his belly. Our colour. She cannot see the dolour that relaxes his face, closes his eyes and leaves only his mouth drawn tight by lines on either side. Our colour. A category that doesn't exist: she would invent it. There are Hotnots and half-castes, two-coffee-one-milk, touch-of-the-tar-brush, pure white, black is beautiful – but a creature made of love, without a label; that's a freak.[40]

The lines above depict one of the first moments in the novel, in which the skin colour of Hillela's child is raised. According to Head, the scene indicates Hillela's 'clear political orientation: Hillela sees her conception of a black child as a gesture of her solidarity with Whaila's cause'.[41] It is this very idea of how the conception of the first child is linked to the political movement of her husband that the idea of rainbowism is turned, more forcefully, towards the realm of politics in *A Sport of Nature*. Rainbowism, or, in Whaila's words, Hillela's 'big ideas of an African family' reveals a political ideology of idealism, deeply entrenched in the mind of Hillela.[42] To Hillela, her sexuality is viewed as a positive link between the private desire and the political realm. It is a personal force that can be channelled into a political action, and her offspring as the product of that sexual desire is the revolutionary subversion of the racist geopolitics of the apartheid regime in racial and sexual terms. Her child, as it is revealed in the dialogue above, is 'a category that doesn't exist […] a creature made of love, without a label'. To Hillela, her child cannot be categorised. Despite the fact that under apartheid law her child would be categorised as a coloured subject, Hillela insists on not prescribing any colour category to the child. Its coloured identity is only referred to as 'Our colour'.

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[40] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 227.
[41] Head, *Nadine Gordimer*, p. 148.
[42] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 253.

Hillela's further reflection on the issue of rainbowism becomes more definitive and vocalised when she finally utilises the term 'rainbow' to describe the skin colour of her children:

> Her belly was coming up; the creature in there was beginning to show its presence. She did not ask him this time, what colour he thought it would be: they would be a rainbow, their children, their many children.[43]

The term 'rainbow' here implies a literal manifestation as well as a metaphorical declaration of, respectively, a spectrum of skin shades and interracial harmony. In Hillela's political utopian perspective, with the conception of the rainbow children, she and Whaila together form 'the rainbow family'. Metaphorically, the terms 'rainbow family' refers to how people of different skin colours come together, against the apartheid regime's effort to criminalise them, in a mutual agreement of marriage. The conception of Hillela's children, Nomzamo, and her second pregnancy which is later tragically lost in the horrid incident of Whaila's assassination, provides further completion of that image of 'the rainbow family'. They are both additions to the spectrum of skin shades as well as the living, human definition of interracial communion.

Before moving on to provide further evidence of how the novel deterritorialises the concept of rainbowism, I would like to draw attention to how the term rainbowism is fabricated as a political ideology of sexual idealism. As critics like Head and Ettin suggest, *A Sport of Nature* succeeds to a certain degree in connecting the private desire to the political realm. Both Ettin and Head agree that such a perception of Hillela's sexuality is idealistic and utopian in nature. With that critical assessment in mind, the idea of rainbowism at this particular moment in the narrative is inexplicably tied to the idea of Hillela's private desire. That is, any political aspect that may have been generated within Hillela's idea of 'the rainbow family' is a result of how the character produces a limited vision of desire not as production but as limitation and suppression. Her desire, in other words, limits the possibility of her subjectivity to grow beyond the sexual line into the actual, political world where practical action can and should be made in order to build that sense of solidarity with her husband, Whaila. In addition, her desire limits the possibility of Whaila and Hillela to come and connect in a meaningful, larger-than-sex sort of

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[43] Ibid., p. 262.

existence. Desire as represented at this stage in Hillela's life does not produce the multi-dimensional flows of connections. Any forms of contacts and communion between Whaila and Hillela are restricted within sexual and personal realms. Therefore, her sense of political power in an effort to build an 'African family' or 'the rainbow family' is both idealistic and naïve, in the sense that it does not produce any real tangible outcome outside their interpersonal connection. It may be said, however, that their interracial marriage is a first, early step in Hillela's journey towards a true, liberated sense of self and life that is no longer closed or bounded by her own lack and skin.

On the subject of children from mixed marriages, Wagner writes: 'Only in such utopian projections can Gordimer suggest a resolution to the intractable problem of race in her society, and the tentative nature of such a hope is perhaps reflected in the fact that she allows Hillela only one child of the 'rainbow family she so desires in *A Sport of Nature*'.[44] While the underlying premise, revolving around the image of children from a mixed marriage is an idealistic view entertained by Hillela, *A Sport of Nature* does not stop at that projection but moves on to contextualise and criticise Hillela's idealistic and romanticised accounts of life and relationships between races. While *A Sport of Nature* reflects upon the idea of rainbowism inherent in the primacy of Hillela's sexual desire as an emancipatory perspective, it nonetheless goes on to rework the idea as Hillela herself progresses through a series of events over the course of the novel. First and foremost, the idealistic notion of 'the rainbow family' is revoked at the end of the chapter entitled 'Special Interests'. In this chapter, Whaila is assassinated and Hillela loses her unborn, second child in the incident. At the end of the chapter, the idea of 'the rainbow family' is recontextualised and criticised in the context of the crude reality of African life:

> The real family, how they smell. The real rainbow family. The real rainbow family stinks. The dried liquid of dysentery streaks the legs of the babies and old men and the women smell of their monthly blood. They smell of lack of water. They smell of lack of food. They smell of bodies blown up by the expanding gases of their corpses' innards, lying in the bush in the sun. Find the acronym for her real family.[45]

[44] Wagner, p. 51.
[45] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 317.

The passage quoted above can be said to signal towards a deeper political awakening of Hillela. At this point in the narrative when the ideal picture of the 'African family' is torn apart by the force of political struggle, Hillela awakes to the realisation that her sexualised and romanticised understanding of life and politics will not suffice. The idea that underlies the concept of 'the rainbow family', which is quintessentially related to the notion of a family of mixed race, is not the proper method of how one should approach and resolve the political tensions surrounding her family and the country at large.

In addition, the notion of 'the rainbow family' is called into question once again when Hillela herself enters into a new relationship with the nation's anti-apartheid leader, General Reuel. Throughout her relationship and marriage to the General, Hillela adopts a more practical and realistic approach to politics. However, it is the interpersonal relationship with the General and her actual presence in his family that reinforces another reconsideration and deterritorialisation of how 'the rainbow family' should be perceived. It is in this manner that 'the acronym for her real family' is found. The following passage is taken from the chapter entitled 'State Houses'. It describes a moment in the narrative in which Hillela's political subjectivity as well as her private life is brought in harmony under a new, deterritorialised understanding of 'the rainbow family':

> But Hillela has not been taken in by this African family; she has disposed it around her. Hers is the non-matrilineal centre that no-one resents because no-one has known it could exist. She invented it. This is not the rainbow family.[46]

According to Alice Knox, although the lines above offer an insight into Hillela's political awakening as she 'moves beyond the romantic idea of racial communion through a sexual relationship' earlier discussed in her relationship with Whaila and her idea of 'the rainbow family', the novel fails to define and elaborate on Hillela's invention of this new complex idea.[47] Instead, the lines present a 'vague, journalistic […] descriptions of Hillela's life in the fictional Africa republic'.[48] I agree with Knox that the quoted lines portray a shift in Hillela's political vision in the way that her political idealism of 'the rainbow family' is abandoned in her present relationship with Reuel. However, the lines quoted above

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[46] Ibid., p. 393.

[47] Alice Knox, 'No Place Like Utopia: Cross-Racial Couples in Nadine Gordimer's Later Novels', *ARIEL* 27.1 (1996), pp. 63-87 (p. 72).

[48] Ibid.

highlight a complex, political vision that is heavily invested in Hillela's interracial relationships with both Whaila and Reuel. That is, what Knox regards as vague can be discerned as the novel's most explicit passage that articulates Hillela's sexual and political trajectories. To elaborate, her former relationship with Whaila shows a relatively idealistic and politically naïve understanding and approach to politics, in the way that her only means of envisioning and engendering freedom is through her sexual contact with Whaila. Her part, if any at all, explored and projected in the novel during her relationship with Whaila, is her sexual relationship with the activist. Her role, as Hillela sees it, is to reproduce 'the first generation that would go home in freedom'.[49] However, at this very moment in the novel, it becomes clear that Hillela's life and political role has changed its focus from political idealism to pragmatism. She actively engages in her partner's political campaigns, accompanying him to various political meetings, and giving lectures and talks at universities outside of South Africa.

In contrast to the idea of 'the rainbow family', Hillela's invention speaks of a kind of a relationship or 'family' that has its roots in both political and sexual practice. Instead of being a complete opposite of two political ideals in the way that idealism is compared to pragmatism, Hillela's invention can be discerned not as an opposite to the idea earlier related to 'the rainbow family'. Rather, it is a re-appropriation of that idea. In other words, the novel does not completely overturn its earlier advocacy of sexualised rainbowism. It does, however, expand its meaning, deterritorialising its somewhat limited terms. While formerly the idea is utilised in matters related to Hillela's sexual relationship with Whaila, the idea is now rendered differently to embody the character's unique role in and outside of Reuel's 'African family'.

By looking at the novel's representation of Hillela as 'the non-matrilineal centre' of Ruel's family, the novel allows us to envision a new understanding of rainbowism. Despite the fact that the novel itself denounces this invention as being 'not the rainbow family', the paragraph that precedes it describes a new understanding of family or communion that is neither glaringly sexual nor markedly political.

> It was his first woman he was burying, the mother of his daughter; the young man who had been her husband was going down into the grave, too. Yet he had no tears.

[49] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 264.

> Hillela lay in bed and patted the place beside her. He padded over the cool marble floor of what had been the governor's bedroom, reluctantly; but took her nightgown off over her head and gazed at what he had revealed to himself. He moved in beside her; moved on.
>
> The mother of the Colonel, the second wife, has treated Hillela with respect that Hillela has sometimes been able to cajole into some kind of affection – but the second wife cannot make a sister out of a white woman.[50]

The passage provides a sweeping account of Hillela's life and her relationship with Reuel right before the revolution is won. As described in the passage above, the novel moves swiftly from the funeral of Reuel's first wife to Hillela, lying in bed before being joined later by Reuel, and lastly to Reuel's second wife and her attitude towards Hillela. This last quoted paragraph adds another textual layer to the kind of complex intervention the novel is making at the end of the section. Taking that into account, the kind of racial communion explored here is no longer one which is, strictly speaking, 'rainbow family'. Reuel's family and Hillela's place in it define what sort of racial communion *A Sport of Nature* is envisioning at this very moment. That is, a racial communion, or what I would call a deterritorialised concept of rainbowism, is now characterised by both Hillela's sexual and asexual relationship in the family. First, her sexual relationship with Reuel does reinforce the necessity and significance of cross-racial communion in fostering the new, post-apartheid nation, gesturing towards, I may add, the kind of social and sexual practice across the colour line, understood and practised in an interpersonal context. That idea is deeply and distinctly invested in the former introduction of rainbowism in Hillela's relationship with Whaila. That notion is still present at this moment in the narrative. However, as we see from Hillela's role and relationship to other members of Reuel's family, sexual and matrilineal relationship is not a central concept that foregrounds her presence and the kind of family she is connected to. All Reuel's children are not biologically related to Hillela. Reuel's second wife does not even want to 'make a sister out of a white woman'. Yet, Hillela is part of the family. This new family portrays the kind of racial communion, a post-apartheid one, which does not heavily paint the idealistic cross-racial relationship between the two races as the only political, emancipatory message. It speaks of the kind of racial

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[50] Ibid., pp. 391-92.

communion which extends beyond the sexual line. It is, in other words, the non-matrilineal concept of interracial communion, which champions a connection between blacks and whites, in both idealistic/sexualised and pragmatic/politicised senses. The novel can thus be said to present that kind of communion and rainbowism that deterritorialises and appropriates its own understanding of cross-racial communion and political discourse in interpersonal as well as political contexts. Hillela's sexuality is the culminating point as well as the point which generates and *reproduces* political discourse that underscores such a cross-racial communion, one that is liberated, and not necessarily restricted and limited to the sexual realm.

By expanding the idea of rainbowism in this way, *A Sport of Nature* shows Gordimer's effort to navigate the narrative focus away that which is often related to stereotypical representations of love affairs and relationships across the colour line. While the novel itself centres on the various, actual love affairs of Hillela, and resolutely progresses to her political awakening as a result of such relationships, the novel does not completely abandon the idea of sexuality related to the concept of rainbowism. On the contrary, that idea of sexuality is deterritorialised and reterritorialised to encompass the political world while maintaining its sexual undertone. Hillela's desire is now presented to be that which works towards the multi-dimensional proliferations of relations. It draws, through flows and connections of bodies in and outside the sexual realm, the possibility of a self to emerge in relation to alterity. In this mode of productive desire, Hillela's self is that stable point, which is not predicated on the absence of a desired object, but works towards the presence of another desiring subject, to, in Brent Adkins' terms, 'affect and be affected'.[51]

The fact that the novel presents Hillela as 'the non-matrilineal centre' renders Hillela as a critical reflection of Deleuze and Guattari's 'the body without organs'. Similar to the concept of the 'body without organs', Hillela can be seen at this point in the novel as showing the kind of subjectivity that 'repels the organs and lays them aside'. Within this interracial family, Hillela is at the centre. Yet, she is not biologically related to anyone. Her connection to and relationship with each member of the family goes much larger than that

[51] Brent Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 96.

sexual line we see in Hillela's relationship with Whaila. And it is in this much larger than sexual relation that Hillela's body is fully liberated. Her body is liberated to freely experience its sexual, interpersonal, and political potentials. Her 'body without organs', in other words, is a liberated construction of desiring production which engenders a new form of subjectivity that breaks free from the constrictions normally associated with the apartheid regime's geopolitics of racial separatedness. Her liberated subjectivity is seen at this point in the narrative as emerging in relations to others around her, in the realms of both sexual and political potentials.

It is also worth looking at the nature of Hillela's relationship to Reuel. As is evident in the previous quotation, Reuel has had three wives over the course of the novel. Hillela is his third wife who is often regarded as the 'mistress of adaptation'. Wagner contends that the novel presents 'the intricacies of what [Gordimer] perceives to be an African world of polygamous relationships in her representation of Hillela's marriage to the General, Reuel'; but the kind of polygamous relationship explored in this novel is not simply, as Wagner suggests, 'conventional under the veneer of Africanisation'.[52] It does not merely reflect how Hillela would position herself as '*the white outsider in black Africa*', being Africanised and re-appropriated under the new, political order.[53] At one level, the novel's investment in and representation of such an interracial relationship, as discussed in the paragraphs earlier, demonstrates the kind of mixed-race communion, which is not simply idealistic/sexualised or pragmatic/politicised. Therefore, if I were to agree with Wagner and call Hillela as 'the revolutionary heroine and symbolic mother of the new Africa', it is simply because of her intervention in what 'the rainbow family' should be and look like, in ways that would attest to the political ideologies of political idealism and pragmaticism, as well as the fundamental social limitations of apartheid in racial and sexual terms.[54]

At another level, by adopting the image of the polygamous relationship in the novel's final representation of Hillela's mixed-race marriage, *A Sport of Nature* allows its textual representation of that communion to reflect upon the political tension of the late 1980s, in which the idea of split consciousness between white and black forces of political

[52] Wagner, p. 92.
[53] Ibid., p. 148.
[54] Ibid., p. 88.

activism is an existing condition. If the novel's representation of a polygamous relationship is read in relation to the split consciousness of the late 1980s, it is possible to see Hillela as a figure of white presence in the black, anti-apartheid force. Her presence is represented in the novel as the mistress of General Reuel. Her extramarital affair, and the subsequent polygamous relationship, signify the kind of antagonism expressed and directed against the presence of whites in the black, anti-apartheid political movement. Looking elsewhere in Gordimer's oeuvre, there is also a similar depiction of an extramarital affair between the narrator's father and Hannah Plowman in *My Son's Story* (1990). This form of extramarital affair and infidelity is not simply Gordimer's effort to portray the conventional depiction of an African tradition of polygamy. It can also be discerned as the novel's attempt to incorporate the political consciousness of the time in its narrative. As is discussed earlier in my analysis of 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', the tension surrounding the sunset clause was built up long before the actual clause was written. *A Sport of Nature*, with its narrative focus on the life and interracial relationship of Hillela, projects such a political tension in its very own depiction of a polygamous relationship. In contrast to the sense of politicised loneliness rendered in the narrative of 'The Moment Before the Gun Went Off', *A Sport of Nature* presents a relative understanding and acceptance of the white presence in the black anti-apartheid campaign against the regime. This sentiment is suggested at the moment in which despite her inability to regard Hillela as her 'sister', Reuel's second wife shows respect for Hillela because she 'knows Hillela went to protect the eldest son in some far country, after he had done a wicked thing and joined the people who wanted to kill his father'.[55]

As the novel charts the sense of political conflict and hostility in the late 1980s in its very representation of the polygamous relationship, it resolves such political conflict in having the second wife demonstrating due respect for Hillela's political conviction in her fight against the apartheid regime alongside the black community. Taken into account both accounts of how Hillela's entering into an interracial, polygamous relationship, and the representation of her multi-dimensional production of desire is represented, it can be concluded that this is in fact the kind of racial communion the novel intends to offer, as both a nod to its own historical and political atmosphere as well as a prophetic embodiment

[55] Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature*, p. 392.

and embracement of rainbowism, as the post-apartheid, utopian future of South Africa in which the races conjoin politically as well as sexually.

As the discussion of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* shows, the author approaches politics in the most explicit manner in the ways that the character of Hillela develops her political consciousness through a series of connective and productive episodes of desire. That desire, which starts at the most private level of the sensual, emerges as a productive, vital force that connects Hillela to other desiring subjects as well as giving birth to Hillela's mature political thinking. The sense of interracial connection as well as political proximity are notably displayed in the novel's nuanced depiction of the interracial communion of rainbowism beyond the sexual and interpersonal realm. But this is not the case for Coetzee's *Age of Iron*. From Gordimer's depiction of Hillela's subjectivity, through the process of desiring production, entering into connections with and in relations to other bodies and potentials, I shall move on to discuss desire from the elusive, distant position of Coetzee's *Age of Iron*. The following section provides an analysis of Coetzee's *Age of Iron* with particular reference to the novel's depiction of desire. The question of desire, which is, under the present discussion, emblematic of Coetzee's political consciousness, is not treated explicitly in the way that it is in Gordimer's text. Published in 1990, *Age of Iron* presents, I contend, the kind of desire that oscillates between connection and disjunction. With its implicit, elusive depiction of desire at an interpersonal level, *Age of Iron* posits desire in the productive and disjunctive realms in which a longing for political inclusivism or rainbowism is articulated with a relative resistance to commit itself to that discourse of national unity as the projected future of post-apartheid South Africa. In what follows, I begin with a brief look at Coetzee's oeuvre in relations to how the author depicts cross-racial encounters and sexual desire. Then I will situate *Age of Iron* in relation to Coetzee's earlier texts in terms of its elusive and distant investment on the questions of cross-racial encounter and sexual desire.

From *Dusklands* (1974) to *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Coetzee utilises images and representations related to the discourse of the erotic Other to allegorise and reflect upon the violence of colonialism. Encounters between blacks and whites are often depicted in the most forceful, crude and violent manner, emblematising the ravaged body of the symbolic Other at the hand of the oppressor. In *Dusklands*, for instance, a rape scene

of the Hottentot girls is a crucial moment where the novel explores the violence and atrocity of colonialism. As elaborated later in the novel as well as in Coetzee's third novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, penetrating the female other offers a symbolic reflection of how the materiality of the native land is forcefully reconnoitred, mapped and exploited. The following lines are taken from the very end of the novel, under the section of 'Second journey to the land of the Great Namaqua [*Expedition of Captain Hendrik Hop, 16 August 1761 – 27 April 1762*]':

> I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way.[56]

A similar scene of colonial 'expedition' and penetration is depicted in *Waiting for the Barbarians* in the sexual counter between the barbarian girl and the Magistrate. The scene quoted below shows the Magistrate, awakened in the middle of night after his first sexual experience with the barbarian girl during his quest to return the girl to her people:

> Is it then the case that it is the whole woman I want, that my pleasure in her is spoiled until these marks on her are erased and she is restored to herself; or is it the case (I am not stupid, let me say these things) that it is the marks on her which drew me to her but which, to my disappointment, I find, do not go deep enough? Too much or too little: is it she I want or the traces of a history her body bears? For a long time I lie staring into what seems pitch darkness, though I know the roof of the tent is only an arm's length away.[57]

In this scene, the Magistrate is reflecting on the cause and reason behind his obsession with the barbarian girl. It is explicit in the quotation that the girl holds various symbolic meanings, especially from the perspective of the Magistrate. At one level, she is the Other, whose body has been physically and brutally marked by the force of the Empire. As obsessed as he is with the torture chamber, the Magistrate takes the marked body as a dark, disfigured passage that will lead him to a comprehension of the horror of the torture chamber. She is that piece of 'a history' that he seeks to unpack. But, at another related

[56] Coetzee, *Dusklands* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 106.
[57] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, p. 64.

level, the barbarian girl's body presents the possibility of an unknown territory: a history of her own, material, barbarian self. These two images of the girl become an indistinguishable perception of the Magistrate's obsession. Coetzee explores the discourse of the erotic Other at the most critical moment as the Magistrate himself explores the physical, barbarian terrain of the unknown landscape.

These two examples explore desire and cross-racial encounter as a critique of the imperialist and colonialist psyche. A similar exploration is found in *In the Heart of the Country* where racial power is reversed in the rape scene where Magda is depicted as being raped by her Black African servant, Hendrik. In these three texts, desire, in a more generalised sense of the word understood not necessarily at the level of the sensual but the interpersonal, is power. And, *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) displays such power with reference to the question of power relations between races:

> What does one do with desire? My eye falls idly on objects, odd stones, pretty flowers, strange insects: I pick them up, bear them home, store the away. A man comes to Anna and comes to me: we embrace him, we hold him inside us, we are his, he is ours. I am heir to a space of natal earth which my ancestors found good and fenced about.[58]

In this scene, sexual desire and desire for power and to control are intermingled. Magda starts with pondering about desire as the need to possess, to lay claim to objects around her. Then, her thinking shifts to desire that is explicitly sexual in her relationship with Hendrik. It is the final sentence in the quotation above that Coetzee links the idea of sexual desire to a colonialist mentality of power and entitlement. The reference to Magda as 'heir to a space of natal earth […]' could be read as a narrative reflection on *Dusklands*' representation of the horrid event of the past similar to the one portrayed in the expedition of Captain Hendrik Hop in the earlier quotation. With that ancestral history, Magda is no different to Captain Hendrik and Jacobus Coetzee. Her desire, whether it be possessive or sexual, is to claim and own. It is to control and exploit. From these three examples of desire, Coetzee explores the condition that paves the way for the construction of politicised loneliness, which *is disabling* in its demarcation and categorisation. That history of politicised loneliness results, under the apartheid regime, in the condition that renders

[58] Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*, p. 114.

individual subjects to a prison-like state of stillness, with a sense of political as well as interpersonal limitation. And, cross-racial desire and encounters are the key moments in which that condition of limitation is explored.

We do not see much of cross-racial desire in *Life & Times of Michael K*, *Foe* and *Age of Iron*. However, in both *Foe* and *Age of Iron*, there are scenes in which Coetzee allows a glimpse of a cross-racial relationship to be explored, with a limited, sexual undertone. In *Age of Iron*, for instance, the notion of desire in cross-racial relationships, at both generalised, interpersonal as well as sexual contexts shows Coetzee attempting to explore the political limitedness of politicised loneliness in a more contemporary history of apartheid. However, as the following pages will attest, *Age of Iron* is not just about politicised loneliness in its exploration of desire and cross-racial encounters. Unlike *Dusklands*, *In the Heart of the Country*, and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, desire and interracial relationships become the realm in which, much in the spirit of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*, a counter politics of rainbowism is shown. The novel contains key narrative movements where, in other words, Coetzee's political consciousness is characterised by a deep exploration of interracial desire. The following part of the chapter analyses *Age of Iron* in details related to cross-racial encounters and desire. First, I will draw attention to the character of Elizabeth Curren, who is wrestling both with her terminal illness as well as the condition of politicised loneliness. Then, I move on to discuss desire as a more positive aspect in which it displays a counter politics of political inclusivism, that is unique to Coetzee in its stark contrast to Gordimer's perspective.

In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee provides a critique of the apartheid-generated condition of politicised loneliness, understood in the present chapter as a condition of separation in interpersonal as well as interracial contexts – a critical inability to establish connections with the other. Coetzee achieves this through his depiction of Elizabeth Curren, the narrator of the novel, as a desiring subject. One major aspect of Elizabeth's life that has been put forward by a number of critics including Poyner is her desire 'for truths, both private and political ones'.[59] One other aspect of equal importance in the novel's representation of the character of Elizabeth is her physical desire – the desire for physical as well as spiritual connection with other human beings. This form of desire is markedly expressed in

[59] Poyner, *J. M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship*, p. 111.

Elizabeth's life as the character is approaching the end of her life. Much like Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*, desire in Coetzee's *Age of Iron* is productive as well as connective. However, *Age of Iron* completely deterritorialises the concept of desire and repositions the productive force of desire in terms of relations and connection in a more generalised and desensualised context. To illustrate, the idea of desire is first and foremost contextualised in Elizabeth's longing for her daughter:

> 'How I longed for you to be here, to hold me, comfort me! I begin to understand the true meaning of the embrace. We embrace to be embraced. We embrace our children to be folded in the arms of the future, to pass ourselves on beyond death, to be transported'. [60]

This passage gives a succinct rendering of desire in *Age of Iron*. In the context of mother-and-daughter relationship, desire is well expressed as a mother's perpetual, unfulfilled longing for a daughter's presence. It is known in the narrative that Elizabeth's daughter is now living in America because she has had enough of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Elizabeth at the outset of the novel is the lonely figure who is dying of cancer. In her letters to her daughter, which form the novel itself, the character is seen trying to reach out to her daughter in words:

> Man, house, dog: no matter what the word, through it I stretch out a hand to you. In another world I would not need words […] But in this world, in this time, I must reach out to you in words. So day by day I render myself into words and pack the words into the page like sweets: like sweets for my daughter.[61]

These two passages form a passage of desire at an interpersonal level. Similar to *A Sport of Nature*, this passage of desire is unique in this mediation and operation. That is, it is a desire of reciprocity. It is, in other words, a desire that produces and returns forms of connection – 'to embrace to be embraced'. It is worth noting that while such a rendering of desire is one of reciprocity, it also articulates a sense of loneliness whereby the return of physical connection is not yet present.

Nonetheless, Elizabeth deploys figurative language to display her longing for her daughter in both passages. In the first passage, the image of 'children' symbolises the

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[60] Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 5.
[61] Ibid., p. 9.

'future', to which she wishes 'to be transported'. That symbolic contextualisation of desire puts Elizabeth's rendering of interpersonal desire in a much larger context, that speaks of both her physical pain and suffering due to her illness as well as her spiritual struggle at the time and place where apartheid is still a living condition. Therefore, the 'future' here is not merely a temporal condition of an afterlife or 'beyond death', but the temporal and spatial specificity that is post-apartheid. In the second passage quoted above, there are many layers of symbolic language at play. To elaborate, the character of Elizabeth shifts from symbol to simile. Firstly, she reimagines herself, in writing letters to her daughters, as 'words' which are packed into the page of the letters. By means of sending those letters to her daughter, Elizabeth, rendered into words, will be transported to be physically close to her daughter. Then, that symbolic rendering of herself as 'words' is changed into the simile of 'sweets', signifying the productive desire in which Elizabeth is attempting to mediate, a desire that profits not only the desiring subject but also the other person that her desire is directed towards. As the novel shifts the representation of Elizabeth from the physical human being to 'words' and then to 'sweets', *Age of Iron* introduces a narrative of productive desire from a perspective of the character whose life has been kept in politicised loneliness.

Freed from the realm of sexuality, the deterritorialisation of desire is shown to be discernible in other areas. In addition to the context of the mother-daughter relationship I have earlier discussed, *Age of Iron* situates productive desire in the most generalised fashion as possible. That is, not only is desire as production presented in the mother-daughter connection, but it is also expressed in relationship between Elizabeth and her domestic servant, Florence. This representation of desire extends to Elizabeth's care and love for Florence's son, Bheki: 'I want to be held to someone's bosom, to Florence's, to yours, to anyone's, and told that it will be all right'.[62] The generalisation of desire, which does not limit itself to one kind of relationship, presents, at one level, that multi-dimensional operation of productive desire: how the body itself produces connections, through flows of desire, and emerges in relations to the other.

In contrast to *A Sport of Nature*, desire here emerges from an interpersonalised context, which does not resolutely lead to sexual intimacy. When Elizabeth is visited by

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[62] Ibid., p. 40.

Vercueil and his dog, the character starts to show that care and longing for his company. Even though Vercueil at first is not invited to come into the house, or even live in Elizabeth's property, it becomes much clearer over the course of the novel, especially after the episode of apartheid brutality in black township that results in the death of Bheki, that his company is much needed and desired by Elizabeth. From such an connection, *Age of Iron* adds yet another layer of desiring connection between human and animal in the form of Elizabeth's relation to Vercueil's pet dog: 'I let it [the dog] lick my face, lick my lips, lick up the salt of my tears. Kisses, if one wanted to look at them that way'.[63] She even asks if the dog could sleep with her in her bed 'for the warmth' at a scene near the end of the novel.[64] The generalisation of desire at an absolute level of deterritorialisation allows *Age of Iron* to explore and depict, through its representation of the desire 'to be held to someone's bosom, […] to anyone's', that sense of desperation within the character of Elizabeth and the degree to which her life has been alienated and separated from any meaningful relationship with anyone around her.

It can be said that *Age of Iron* is a novel full of desire. And that desire, more often than not, comes from Elizabeth. It belongs to her, generated and displayed in the letters to be delivered to her daughter. However, part of the novel's critical exploration of the topic of desire is not just the question of what kind of desire and how it is mediated. It is also a question of fulfilment. When that question of fulfilment comes in place, Elizabeth's relationship to Vercueil takes a central focus. It seems, as I have discussed earlier, that despite desire being shown to be generated and mediated in various contexts, the only real, tangible connection that Elizabeth manages to establish and maintain is her connection to Vercueil. Her connection to the vagabond Vercueil is one of the critical domains of discussion among Coetzee's critics. Drawing upon the connections between Vercueil and the dog he cares for, Wright reads Vercueil as Elizabeth's 'silent pet', and her relationship to Vercueil as 'a symbolic need to care for […] her absent and silent daughter'.[65] In this reading, Vercueil substitutes for the absent and silent daughter. Elizabeth's desire for his company is not, relatively speaking, a real, tangible desire for his actual presence but for

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[63] Ibid., p. 160.
[64] Ibid., p. 185.
[65] Wright, *Writing 'Out of All the Camps'*, p. 43.

what he comes to stand for. On the other hand, in his reading of *Age of Iron* as part of the larger discussion on Coetzee's 'bare style' of writing, Zimbler emphasises the use of 'a language of the soul' as a critical focus to unpack the relationship between Elizabeth and Vercueil.[66] According to Zimbler, 'the soul' functions 'as seat of emotions and means of intense connection'.[67] Describing the connection between the two characters, Zimbler quotes the following lines from the novel to highlight the two characters' 'capability for pleasure of an intense, spiritual kind'.[68]

> Two souls, his and mine, twined together, ravished. Like insects mating tail to tail, face away from each other, still except for a pulsing of the thorax that might be mistaken for mere breathing. Stillness and ecstasy.[69]

According to Zimbler's reading, the connection between Elizabeth and Vercueil is real, and it is mainly achieved through their 'capability for pleasure of an intense, spiritual kind'. While the critic does not mention any aspect of physicality in this relationship, I would like to draw attention to Elizabeth's desire towards Vercueil that, in the following discussion, is revealed to be transcribed in both physical as well as spiritual kinds. It is accurate, following the two critics, that Vercueil is the only real source of fulfilment, at which the mediated desire is reached and deposited. Without Vercueil, *Age of Iron* would be a simpler narrative of desire without commitment and fulfilment.

Returning to the quotation raised as an example of spiritual connection between Elizabeth and Vercueil used by Zimbler above, it is possible to see, in the same way Elizabeth's productive desire is recorded in the symbolic language discussed earlier, that the connection from flows of desire between the two characters are quite a different kind to those explored in Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*. Despite the fact that I have said earlier that desire as deterritorialised as it is here does not resolutely lead to sexual intimacy, *Age of Iron* compares Elizabeth's relationship to Vercueil in sexual imagery: 'Like insects mating tail to tail, face away from each other […].' Over the course of the novel, such sexual imagery is abundant. Another example can be found in a scene where Elizabeth and Vercueil go for a drive around the coast. At one point, Elizabeth ponders:

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[66] Zimbler, p. 153.
[67] Ibid., p. 175.
[68] Ibid., p. 174.
[69] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 30.

> 'Why did I give in? Perhaps what won me in the end was the new attention he was paying me. He was like a boy in a state of excitement, sexual excitement, and I was his object. I was flattered; in a distant way, despite all, I was even amused.[70]

Elizabeth describes herself and Vercueil later on in that scene as 'lovers revisiting the scenes of their first declarations'.[71] These images may reflect on Elizabeth's own sexual desire; however, the novel itself does not give anything more tangible and material in terms of how that desire manifests itself in physical action. In Hayes' reading of the novel's representation of sexual desire, he argues that while sexual desire is mostly mediated from Elizabeth's fantasies, and that her 'words carry no weight, her consciousness is irrelevant', 'Elizabeth's story does seem to have a chance at fulfilment […] a chance of being desired'.[72] In this 'jocoserious' manner, *Age of Iron* mediates and navigates the conflict and politics of difference. In his reading, Hayes contextualises Elizabeth's desire in the stylistic tradition of the epistolary novel and the novel of sensibility pioneered by Samuel Richardson. According to Hayes, Coetzee's representation of sexual desire in this way allows the author to provide 'a creatively "jocoserious" play with the rules and boundaries' of the politics of difference.[73] Situating the novel's representation of sexual desire in that half-serious, half-comic fashion, *Age of Iron* manages, Hayes argues, to situate itself within that in-between space, resolutely not letting itself be contained within a particular category that would limit its openness and fluidity.

In line with Hayes's argument, I see the sexual imagery as a deep reflection on Elizabeth's most interpersonalised desire for Vercueil. However, that desire does not have to materialise in sexual terms. That is, I contend that sexual imageries offer a way in which *Age of Iron* explores Elizabeth's relationship to Vercueil, and to articulate the deep, desperate desire for physical connection. However, since it is presented in a figure of speech, resulting in a desire twice removed from action, and never actually materialises beyond that realm of figurative comparison, that aesthetic rendering of desire does not necessarily speak of Elizabeth's actual desire for sexual connection. That being said, the

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[70] Ibid., p. 117.
[71] Ibid., p. 118.
[72] Hayes, p. 162.
[73] Ibid.

closest account we get of their physical connection is towards the end of the novel, in which the two characters share a bed together at night: 'We share a bed, folded one upon the other like a page folded in two, like two wings folded: old mates, bunkmates, conjoined, conjugal'.[74] This might be Coetzee's closet reflection on the cross-racial communion of rainbowism.

Following Elizabeth's calling Vercueil 'her shadow husband' and herself as 'Mrs. V.' at the end of that scene, the idea and nature of desire between the two characters become a complex construction.[75] That desire is voiced in figurative language and fantasised in Elizabeth's letters only produces a narrative of contradiction into which the idea of desire is raised but never actually materialises. *Age of Iron*, when it comes to desire, is a narrative of contradiction in the ways that the novel positions desire in the realm where real actions do not take place. In a sense, it is also worth noting that contradictory representation of desire as Coetzee's unique way of exploring the condition of Elizabeth's desire for Vercueil, as well as for other characters of the novel. In other words, moments of narrative contradiction such as those that place desire in mere moments of fantasy and never allow it to take shape in reality other than a simple, interpersonal contact between the two characters, reveals a critical contradiction, or, in Deleuze and Guattari's term, 'disjunction' deeply entrenched in the affective formation of Elizabeth's production of desire.

There are passages in *Age of Iron* which contains pointed portrayals of affective contradiction in terms of how desire is generated. The following two passages give ample instances of contradiction on the basis of desire. The first one is taken from the scene in which Elizabeth revisits her attempt to get Vercueil to delivery her letters to her daughter in America. The second quotation is taken from the scene in which Elizabeth finds John, a friend of Bheki, in her house after he has run away from a hospital:

> 'I give my life to Vercueil to carry over. I trust Vercueil because I do not trust Vercueil. I love him because I do not love him. Because he is the weak reed I lean upon him'.[76]

and

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[74] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 189.
[75] Ibid., pp. 189-90.
[76] Ibid., p. 131.

> 'I must love, first of all, the unlovable. I must love, for instance, this child [John]. Not bright little Bheki, but this one. He is here for a reason. He is part of my salvation. I must love him. But I do not love him. Nor do I want to love him enough to love him despite myself'.[77]

These two passages portray Elizabeth's mediation of trust and love, seemingly at the surface level, in a contradictory, and confusing manner. Clarkson reads passages of contradiction in *Age of Iron*, particularly the ones with reference to love and trust such as those two quoted above, as examples of how the novel responds 'to a personal transcendent imperative'.[78] She contends that passages of 'a personal transcendent imperative' is 'a written statement to an idea of a better world'.[79] That vision of 'a better world' is pitted against the world Elizabeth is living in, whose time and place are 'not hospitable to the soul'.[80] In this reading the notions of 'I trust' and 'I must love' are 'a series of countervoices', that could, according to Clarkson, 'possibly form the basis of a lasting community'.[81] In addition to Clarkson's reading which underscores 'a personal transcendent imperative', *Age of Iron*, I contend, presents desire, particularly love and trust, as a connective, vital force that is operating from the Deleuzoguattarian law of 'inclusive disjunction' through these representations of contradictory statements.[82]

In addition to the kind of connective and productive desire which enables Hillela to form relations with the bodies of other desiring subjects in both sexual and political realms, *Age of Iron* provides an investigation in what further connection can be made possible, or even impossible by the existing set of connections. This perspective is achieved in the way the novel projects desire in its disjunctive form. While the idea of productive desire explored in my discussion of Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* is a general understanding of desire and how it operates in its productive and connective synthesis, the idea of desire represented here is one which is dependent on the notion of disjunction. Pertinent to the present discussion is the Deleuzoguattarian concept of 'inclusive disjunction' proposed in *Anti-Oedipus*. In broadest terms, desire under the synthesis of 'inclusive disjunction' is

[77] Ibid., p. 136.
[78] Clarkson, *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices*, p. 192.
[79] Ibid., p. 192.
[80] Coetzee, *Age of Iron*, p. 130.
[81] Clarkson, *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices*, p. 193.
[82] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 77.

'one that maintains the possibility of affirming two opposite poles at the same time', oscillating between points of connection.[83] Therefore, the term of inclusive disjunction is not negative, according to Deleuze and Guattari. The two philosophers write:

> He [The schizophrenic] does not substitute syntheses of contradictory elements for disjunctive syntheses; rather, for the exclusive and restrictive use of the disjunctive synthesis, he substitutes an affirmative use. He is and remains in disjunction: he does not abolish disjunction by identifying the contradictory elements by means of elaboration; instead, he affirms it through a continuous overflight spanning an indivisible distance. He is not simply bisexual, or between the two, or intersexual. He is transsexual. He is trans-alivedead, trans-parentchild. He does not reduce to contraries to an identity of the same; he affirms their distance as that which relates the two as different.[84]

Under the synthesis of inclusive disjunction, desire carries out the connection 'in drifting from one term to another and following the distance between terms'.[85] The contradictory messages, quoted earlier from *Age of Iron*, presents a condition in which Elizabeth's desire for connection emerges as well as how that desire transverses back and forth between her two seemingly opposing feelings: 'I love him because I do not love him'. Desire for connection, explored in this case in the affective forms of trust and love, is mediated by juxtaposing the two seemingly contradictory feelings in close proximity. However, *Age of Iron* does not abolish disjunction and the contradiction embedded in those messages and leave the two notions of 'I do not trust' and 'I do not love' behind, before embarking on the transcendent message of 'I must love' and 'I trust'. The novel highlights or, in Deleuze and Guattari's word, 'affirms', points of connection by maintaining the existence of disjunction, and making a pointed series of 'continuous overflight' spanning a distance between the two contradictory notions, rendering, as a result, the distance in question 'nondecomposable' as well as 'indivisible'.[86]

By looking at desire in its most generalised, desensualised terms in *Age of Iron*, I see Coetzee attempting to reimagine his political consciousness in the late 1980s to the

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[83] Adkins, p. 138.
[84] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 76-77.
[85] Ibid., p. 77.
[86] Ibid., p. 76.

early years of the 1990s. While the political world calls for an ideology of cross-racial inclusivism and rainbowism in the most explicit dictum of Archbishop Tutu and the national discourse of political unity, *Age of Iron* can be read through its representation of desire as Coetzee's text that shows a desire to commit to that ideology of national unity in its articulation of deterritorialised desire. However, that desire, as I have discussed, is positioned within that contradictory cause of disjunctive synthesis. Productive desire is one which establishes connections between the bodies of desiring subjects and also opens up the possibilities for potential larger than the self. Disjunctive desire in *Age of Iron* creates that 'indivisible' and 'nondecomposable' space of distance in which the desire transverses from one point of relative stability to another. While the distance is rendered 'indivisible' and 'nondecomposable', such an existence of distance (and disjunction) is needed for the kind of desire explored in this novel to emerge and function. Emblematising Coetzee's political consciousness, disjunctive desire in *Age of Iron* emphasises, in short, both the notion of connection and resistance. Hence, desire in *Age of Iron* exemplifies a gesture towards that quintessential oscillation between the connective and disjunctive, political discourses of rainbowism. In other words, *Age of Iron* is a text that presents a narrative pull between two conflicting forces: one that tends towards the spirit of cross-racial inclusivism/rainbowism, and the other that refuses to commit to it, as the definite future of postapartheid South Africa.

In contrast to how Gordimer undermines the condition of the late 1980s' politicised loneliness by establishing a cross-racial communion of rainbowism, which extends beyond the sexual and interpersonal realms, Coetzee, as we see in *Age of Iron*, undercuts the condition of politicised loneliness of the late 1980s to the early 1990s by presenting a disruptive condition of disjunctive desire that emphasises, simultaneously, a desire for connection and national unity, and a sense of political distance in which such a disjunctive desire needs to emerge. As a result, the sense of politicised loneliness in *Age of Iron* does not merely refer to the kind of separation between the two races in both their relations to one another and their own relations to the political world at large. It can also be perceived as a sense of political elusiveness, in which the idea of political engagement/inclusivism can be found in the novel's very own representation of the 'indivisible' and 'decomposable' but perpetual distance between the self and the site it seeks to engage and disrupt.

Loneliness, in the light of Coetzee's works, is therefore not only a condition to be subverted and abolished, but is also characteristic of how Coetzee's aesthetic vision interacts with the political world from a distance.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have considered the question of political responsibility treated in the discourse of space and loneliness, and in the specific context of apartheid South Africa. I have shown how this site-specific condition of politicised loneliness is mediated and experienced, and how it is deterritorialised in Gordimer's and Coetzee's unique and divergent approaches to space and politics. Apartheid regulates and controls its populace under the rigid and limited management of space: division and separation become the key definitions of how individual subjects perform and interact. The thesis looks at that particular ground of limited interaction conditioned by apartheid geopolitics of racial segregation. It examines the idea and condition of politicised loneliness as the quintessential experience of political, geopolitical, interracial, and interpersonal aspects of life under apartheid. The writings of Gordimer and Coetzee offer critical insights, not only into the experiences of disruption and rapture caused by politicised loneliness in various realms of life, but also the geopolitical discourse of deterritorialisation as a counter politics that negates the apartheid regime's politicised loneliness as well as constructs forms of spatial interactions that are grounded in the language of political variability, spatial mobility, and interpersonal connectedness.

As a theoretical framework in Deleuze and Guattari's works, deterritorialisation is a key concept that is utilised most explicitly to identify the consequences of the flows of capital, or a similar process of rewriting customs and habits. From my research on the usage of the term by readers and critics of Deleuze and Guattari, the term has been used in different contexts through each critic's own application and appropriation. As my research investigates the three areas of social interactions under apartheid, particularly the political, the spatial, and the sensual, I look at critical works in these three different fields of politics, geography, and desire, and identify how the term deterritorialisation is employed. What led me to construct a theoretical framework of deterritorialsation that is suitable for my purpose

is Bogue's unpacking of the concept of 'territorial'.[1] Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of birdsong and other animal ethology, Bogue writes: 'To learn a language is to learn a host of categories, classifications, binary oppositions, associations, codes, concepts, logical relations, etc. whereby the world is given a certain coherence and organisation'.[2] Language, or songs for that matter, is, therefore, territorial. Birdsongs are, for instance, speak of a given territory, but they also express a claim and, thus, having a territorial function. From this critical premise, the term deterritorialisation enters into an appropriated, generally conceived, understanding of what is de-territorialised. That is, it becomes a concept that desystemises and disrupts sets of social and territorial codes, divorcing the sign from its previous signification, and reorients them towards a new domain of signification. While the terms 'territorial' and 'territorialisation' do not, strictly speaking, have negative connotations, when placed under the cultural landscape of apartheid, which prevents the process of deterritorialisation, what is territorial and becomes territorialised appears to be problematic in the way that there is no possible interaction or causes of changes present in such a given social environment under the apartheid regime.

From the perspective of a language as a territorial product, I see the three areas as discussed in this thesis as having this problematic, territorial claim: politics, geography, and desire. Politics, first and foremost, is the realm that I begin my investigation, and it is rightly so because it is the location where the rest of my arguments depends upon. Political discourse of separation is territorial in the way that it speaks of a territorial claim that dehumanises certain groups of people based on the model of racial categorisations. Its territorial function is to spatially delimit the role of individuals who do not belong to the socially privileged class. My application of the term deterritorialisation thus allows me to locate Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the rhizome, which is the critical focus of chapter one. The conceptual framework behind my application of the rhizome is how the idea emphasises an ideological perspective that is drastically different from that of apartheid's geopolitics of segregation. I draw upon a number of critical reading of Deleuze and Guattari in order to encapsulate the idea of the rhizome as a critical stance that champions the state

[1] Ronald Bogue, 'Minority, Territory, Music', *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, ed. by Jean Khalfa (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 114-32.
[2] Ibid., p. 171. For a detailed discussion of Deleuzian theory of language and territory, see Bogue's 'The Minor', *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. by Charles J. Stivale (Chesham: Acumen, 2005), pp. 110-120.

of spatial mobility and complexity in my understanding of political power relations between social units. This very concept of mobility and complexity of power relations links my theoretical framework of chapter one with that of chapter two. In broadest terms, the rhizome and the anarchist tradition underpin the critical perspective that sees power and political relations as being deterritorialised from a mono-logic code of separation-based spatiality. The notion of anarchism found in works of Jun, for instance, emphasises the state of freedom, whereby authority is dismantled, and power is redistributed. Power, or truth for that matter, comes from multiple sources and directions, as a result.

That apparent directionless and dispersing quality of anarchism enables a look into Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadism. As a conceptual framework of deterritorialisation, nomadism is utilised in this thesis to underpin two main areas of investigations: the distant consciousness of deterritorialisation and the reorientation of referential centre from apartheid to a marginalised figure. Works of Bonta and Protevi, DeLanda, and Braidotti are notable sources that help to shape up a critical perspective of deterritorialisation that is suitable for the study of the spatial consciousness emerging from the relational context between the personal and the spatial. However, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadism does not only suggest the subject-oriented perspective of deterritorialisation we see in chapter three, but also imply the object-oriented process of deterritorialisation. This object-oriented implication of deterritorialisation thus becomes a critical outlook of chapter four. As chapter three has left us with the question of referentiality as being reoriented towards a new referential source of a marginalised figure of K, chapter four expands on that critical proposition, and moves resolutely into the realm of the nonhuman as the referential basis of object-oriented deterritorialisation.

Desire as the final area of investigation expresses a certain territorial claim of the land it emerges from. Territorial desire is a desire that systematises certain groups of people as the *undesirable*, and, subsequently, makes an interpersonal attachment between whites and those groups a punishable crime. Works of Adkins and Colebrook help to bridge my understanding of deterritorialisation to the idea of desire in Deleuze and Guattari's works. In Colebrook's appropriation, the term deterritorialisation implies a transformation or a becoming 'other than itself'.[3] She writes: 'But alongside every territorialisation there is

[3] Colebrook, p. xxii.

also the power of *de*territorialisation. The light that connects with the plant to allow it to grow also allows for the plant to become other than itself […]'.[4] The interaction between territorialisation and deterritorialisation is crucial in forming life. Desire is perceived under this perspective as a generative and productive force that furthers as well as transforms life. Under the apartheid regime, there is no 'power of *det*erritorialisation' alongside its limited geopolitics of territorialisation. This brings my discussion of the thesis as a whole to encapsulate a particular condition of a social order that negates life including its other forms of connection between territorialisation and deterritorialisation. Rainbowism as an aspect of deterritorialisation is thus a concept that empahsises the notion of desire in its most interpersonalised context of connection. It underpins, in short, the flows of movement and interactions between bodies of desiring subjects.

Alongside my applications of deterritorialisation is Arendt's notion of loneliness. Loneliness is a condition that defines political incapability that is revealed and mediated into three different realms of life in South Africa. Gordimer and Coetzee investigate the conceptual and experiential productions of such a condition. In Gordimer's works, politicised loneliness is predicated on the predominant discourse of separation, in which two entities are kept perpetually apart, and the only possibility of contact between the two does not yield a sense of connectedness and deep engagement. Interestingly, contacts between two entities are made and represented to paradoxically highlight the irony and illusion of engagement, and the predominance of loneliness, whether it be on the grounds of the political, the interpersonal, or the spatial. The short story of Gordimer embodies in a great detail such experience of loneliness. Stories that have not been discussed in previous chapters such as 'Ah, Woe Is Me', 'Which New Era Would That Be?', and 'Enemies' are focused on such moments of loneliness. In these writings – like those included in the thesis – loneliness as understood in the interpersonal context is empahsised just as much as loneliness as a strictly politicised condition. It can then be said that interpersonalised and politicised conceptions of loneliness are represented inextricably linked aspects of the fabricated human experience of loss and abandonment under the apartheid regime.

As an author who is generally regarded by critics as not as politically committed as Gordimer, Coetzee presents a contrasting perspective on the question of politicised

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[4] Ibid.

loneliness. In Coetzee's writings, politicised loneliness is a condition that is uprooted from its interpersonal realm. His characters are represented as lonely human subjects; however, the personalised conception and production of loneliness are always immediately transported into a different realm of symbolic reflection to embody the characters' deeply-seated sense of political incapability. Characters like Magda and the Magistrate, for instance, embody such a state of politicised loneliness. They are represented as lonely human beings, in the ways their voices are repeatedly articulated but never heard, and they are always in search of interpersonalised contact and redemption. However, such a personalised expression of loneliness is quickly transformed to mirror the characters' political inability to arrive at their own respective, political catharsis. Such a political reflection is revealed to be the primary route through which critical expression of loss and suffering is articulated in Coetzee's works.

What is noteworthy in this critical framework of politicised loneliness is the acknowledgement that not only are the marginalised figures exposed to the experience of loss and abandonment, so too are the white characters who are subject under such a political limitation: Gordimer's Toby and Elizabeth from chapter one, Mehring and Maureen from chapter four, and Hillela from chapter five, Coetzee's Magda and the Magistrate from chapter two, and Elizabeth from chapter five. They all are exposed to live under the condition of politicised loneliness even though apartheid's geopolitical management and control of space is meant to protect them. Reading apartheid fiction in the critical perception of politicised spatiality, this thesis expands the commonly regarded positions of whites in apartheid South Africa. Their positions, as the thesis attests, are not truly of the privileged class per se. While they do, relatively speaking, have certain freedom of mobility and political connection, such projections of social and spatial interaction display the illusion of political nearness and fallacy of spatial emplacement.

Accordingly, the investigation of politicised loneliness offers an insight in the cultural production of loss and disconnection under apartheid. Taken from Arendt's strict usage in the political discourse of totalitarianism, loneliness is a multifaceted term that discusses the experience of total abandonment in terms of spatiality. With regard to the treatment of marginalised figures and whites in fiction, loneliness opens up new grounds of investigation that allow us to see representations of those characters within and without

the locale of the home and its spatial consciousness. The investigation thus allows us to look at twentieth-century fiction as a form of art that liberates the discourse of marginalised figures, both in terms of their political and racial disadvantages, from the characteristically introverted realm of the home. Therefore, as politicised loneliness is characterised by an acute sense of separation between two entities, the sense of separation – that experience of inability to reach and move forward from one point of relational context to the other – is not merely limited in the narrative of interpersonalised relations between races.

Under apartheid, politicised loneliness as a conceptual framework defines three key contexts in which the experience of loss and abandonment is displayed. The first context of spatiality is that between the personal and the political. As we have seen from my discussion in chapters one and two, Gordimer's and Coetzee's writings present narratives of the interpersonal as the crucial domain where the idea of politicised loneliness transpires. However, their writings also, slowly but firmly, establish the ground on which the true cause of their characters' loss of connection is based: their inability to engage successfully and deeply with the political world. The political context of spatiality becomes that overarching realm where the characters' political and personal interests must be met.

In chapters three and four, the investigation of politicised loneliness allows us to see another tension that results in the perpetually dehumanised condition of marginalised figures and the limited position of whites under apartheid in Coetzee's and Gordimer's fiction, respectively. There, the idea of political immediacy is no longer bounded by the straightforward connection between the political and the personal as we have seen in chapters one and two. Instead, we see politicised loneliness as a condition that is manifest from the relational context between the personal and the spatial. Under the apartheid regime, such a context of spatiality is a profound area of loss and abandonment. Gordimer and Coetzee portray the sense of loss and disconnection in their characters' inability to freely interact with the land. The treatment of loss is all the more detached from the narrative of the home. The special attention is now given to how one can form a viable connection with a given territory outside of apartheid's established geopolitical codes of segregation. Looking at the novels of these two writers from the conceptual framework of politicised loneliness gives a particular possibility of how the discourse of political responsibility can alternatively be completed. This adds a complex sense of loss that is not

commonly acknowledged among marginalised figures as well as whites in fiction as, in Gordimer's as well as Coetzee's literary works, that sense of loss is now situated in the spatiality of human figures and landscape.

Chapter five seemingly revisits one of the common tropes in the cultural production of relationships between two different groups of racial identities. Yet, what is noteworthy of Gordimer's and Coetzee's fiction is how the two authors produce narratives of politicised loneliness deeply within the language of the sexual and the home without calling it *home*. Desire may seem to be an unavoidable subject that novelists writing of the political impasse of apartheid must come to terms with. Gordimer's fiction is reputable for their overt portrayals of sexual relationships between non-white and white characters from novels such as *Occasion for Loving* (1963), *A Sport of Nature* (1987), and *My Son's Story* (1990). Coetzee's works, on the contrary, avoid to directly capture those moments. They are, as briefly discussed in the final chapter, mainly represented as a secondary plotline or, more or less, convoluted moments in the larger narrative that add a sense of complexity to the thematic discussion of marginalised figures. As I look at these two authors' representations of interracial desire from the framework of politicised loneliness, the emphasis is not given to how the encounters between marginalised figures and white characters are entirely bounded within the realms of the home and the sensual. In Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*, for instance, each interracial and sexual encounter between the protagonist and her lovers are represented as something that Hillela must overcome in order for her to arrive at the point of a deterritorialised conception of rainbowism. In Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, not only does sexual encounter appear to be unobtrusively represented, but it is also reflective of a broader understanding of apartheid's political limitations, put in place to criminalise sexual acts as well as desire between groups of people from different racial classes. That is, politicised loneliness in the novel is shown to be that particular condition whereby sexual desire cannot be overtly mediated and must, accordingly, be suppressed by the novel as well as the characters themselves. Interestingly, in order to deterritorialise such politicised loneliness, Coetzee, as shown in the chapter, does not allow sexual desire to materialise in his fiction. To avoid the universalised urge to return his fiction to the realm of the sensual and the home when it comes to the treatment of desire between white and non-white characters, politicised loneliness is undermined by

the novel's repositioning of desire in the relational flight between commitment and resistance.

As deterritorialisation and politicised loneliness collide in my discussion of Gordimer's and Coetzee's apartheid works, the thesis presents two main patterns of spatially deterritorialised consciousness that is recognisable across the two authors' writings. That is, the spatial consciousness represented in Coetzee's works is defined by the constant state of mobility, even at the cost of its own political awayness, whereas the space of Gordimer's fiction functions most effectively under the geopolitical laws of spatial proximity and immediacy. The space discussed in each chapter of the thesis can be seen 'an orchestration of crashing bricks extracted from a variety of disciplinary edifices'.[5] The space produced, including its subsequent forms of contact and movement, constitutes, so to speak, an open, multi-dimensional system of geopolitical intensity and variability. As divergent and incongruous as they may seem, the constructions and representations of space and spatial movement in both authors' writings not only deteritorialise the apartheid regime's rigid perception and production of space and social interactions, but they also come 'crashing' into one another in this thesis's discussion of spatial deterritorialisation, resulting in a spatial representation of movements that reinforces the Deleuzoguattarian connection and interplay between territorialisation, deterritorialisation, and reterritorialisation.

Concerning the spatial consciousness of proximity and immediacy found in Gordimer's works of fiction, the ideas represented do not merely place an emphasis on close contact between two people from different racial groups. Instead, Gordimer's spatial consciousness recognises the importance of geopolitical interconnectedness, wherein one entity is brought into close contact with the other, and such a proximate engagement entails the subsequent, fluid and flexible mobility on the supple line of spatial flight from one end/place to another. As seen in chapter one, the idea of acentred subject position is introduced to emphasise not only the immediate contact between the personal and the political, but also the free and fluid movement between the two poles of spatiality. Characters like Mrs Bamjee from 'A Chip of Glass Ruby' and Elizabeth from *The Late*

[5] The quotation is taken from Brian Massumi's 'Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy', in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. xii.

Bourgeois World are not resolutely moved from their respective domestic realm of life and deposited into the political world. They are represented as being positioned in that in-between space of the political and the domestic. That middle ground is key in Gordimer's texts to establish a unique rhizomatic resistance in which characters have full access to their political and personal aspects of life. What that middle position of *interbeing* allows us to discern is, therefore, the flexibility of individual movement that is not possible under the apartheid regime. Above all, it does not cancel out the importance and presence of the domestic life as being irrelevant to the political sphere. What this implies is that the characters' individuality as well as their political capability are recognised as the source of rhizomatic power to emerge below or above their prescribed subject position in a given society.

In the case of interaction between the landscape and the human subject, the real contact and interchangeability between the land and the characters become manifest in the power relations to emerge from such a contact. These power relations speak of a unique and agentic subject position of both the land and the human characters. Examples from *The Conservationist* and *July's People* attest to that perception of the interchangeability of power. With varying degrees, both texts comment on the powerful presence and presencing of the natural world upon the human subjects. By empahsising the singularity of the nonhuman world, both novels decentre the white subject position as the point of referential order, and reposition the nonhuman at the centre of the new referentiality. Slowly progressing from Mehring's consciousness to the embracement of black humanism in *The Conservationist*, and to the man-land reversal of power relations in *July's People*, the discussion of the deterritorialised constitution of spatial consciousness in chapter four comes in full force in *July's People*'s later representation of how both the human and the nonhuman entities perform and interact with one another, resulting into the renewed composition of 'a powerful body'. Such a composition regards, in sum, both the overlapping physicality of the human and the physical space as one, whole body of greater possibility and variability. What is worth noting in this representation of *July's People*, which sets it apart from *The Conservationist*, is how the character of Maureen is not erased or subsumed within the space of the nonhuman. However, her physicality is

deterritorialised in its contact with the nonhuman world, signifying a self that is open and variable to what constitutes the agentic world of the nonhuman materiality.

Coetzee's approach to politics, on the other hand, highlights the politics of distant and implicit deterritorialisation. His representations reveal that the process of deterritorialisation is predicated on the need to remain distant in order to elicit political change and transformation. *Waiting for the Barbarians* allows us to discern Coetzee's implicit deterritorialisation as it is manifest in the novel's discursive practice. In chapter two, language is viewed as the medium through which a means of political responsibility can be established. As shown in my discussion of the novel, deterritorialised language of literary singularity is a discursive practice that fragments meaning, and thereby rendering the impossibility of reaching for the definite and the known. From the art of fragmentation, *Waiting for the Barbarians* further empahsises the dynamic process of deterritorialised language that can transform and become undecipherable due to the distance, set up by the novel, between allegorical figures and meanings. This representation of language as discursive anarchism principally deterritorialises the language of reductive truth and coercive authority of the apartheid regime.

In this distant approach, politicised loneliness, which is first and foremost a condition within the regulated discourse of segregation, is not exacerbated. Instead, distant deterritorialisation articulates a unique process of political engagement in which the very presence of distance between two entities can and may stay so long as that critical distance is easily navigable. In other words, the separations set up between the characters and the political/the spatial/the human other is only problematic, Coetzee seems to be saying, when they present themselves as a hindrance to any logical and deep interaction intrinsic to human individuals. From this ideological position and operation of distant deterritorialisation, Coetzee's works empahsise the presence and importance of distance in the political engagement present in the interaction between his characters and the three primary contexts of apartheid life. In his writings such as *Life & Times of Michael K*, distance is crossable, negotiable, and rewritable through the novel's representation of K that comes close to be a nomad traveling endlessly from place to place. As K travels, his relationship with the veld changes. With each subject-oriented interaction with the veld, K

enacts temporary changes not only onto the landscape, but also his presence and subject position as the new referential source of geopolitical order.

As a productive and affirmative force, desire is the final area of investigation where Coetzee's distant and Gordimer's proximate approaches to politics are manifest. In this analysis of desire, Coetzee's distant deterritorialisation presents a new layer of his particularly elusive engagement with the political world. His spatial consciousness is relatively based on a more distinct area of spatial flights between connection and disjunction in the similar manner the notion of disjunctive desire is represented in *Age of Iron*. In comparison to Coetzee's perspective on deterritorailised desire that moves between two poles of oppositional forces of affective engagement, Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature* reinforces the novelist's unwavering, political engagement of close contact. In this novel, desire as a production is represented to develop from a purely sexualised realm to a concept of a more balanced plane of connection and consistency between the sensual and the political. In Coetzee's account of deterritorialised desire, distance is preserved, rather than being erased; in Gordimer's novel, distance does not exist due to the dominant presence of connective and productive flight of desire that renders a self to exist and emerge in proximate relations to alterity.

What needs to be emphasised next is that the effect of deterritorialisation under discussion does not change space per se as so much as it does the degree of mobility and variability. In his reading of Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy of deterritorialisation, Ian Buchanan writes: 'Obviously, it would be inaccurate to say that space hasn't changed at all, but the focus on the mobility of the subject is […] the necessary key to understanding the ways in which it has changed'.[6] When the process of deterritorialisation is introduced, characters are moved into a space that is not rigidly coded and cannot be navigated under the old forms of spatial interaction. We have discussed the transformed perceptions of landscape, of political consciousness, and of interracial engagement brought about by such deterritorialised forms of contacts and interactions. We have also seen, particularly at the closure of Gordimer's and Coetzee's novels, deterritorialised forms of contacts and connectedness between two entities as narrative resolutions. This bring us to the final

[6] Ian Buchanan, 'Space in the Age of Non-Place', *Deleuze and Space*, ed. by Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p. 19.

premise of this thesis that simply asks: what is the future of the deterritorialised, when the deterritorialised refers to all entities which have become eroded and transformed: politics, the landscape, and the people.

Considering how both Gordimer's and Coetzee's writing careers span the decades beyond the years of apartheid, it seems fitting to ask that final question as a way to sum up my discussion of deterritorialisation and loneliness in both authors' works. To arrive at an answer to the question, I need to draw attention to some of Gordimer's and Coetzee's narrative closures in extension to what have already been discussed. Previously, I have established the forces of loneliness and deterritorialisation as being conflicting and contradictory in my discussion of both authors' perspectives on space and loneliness. In Gordimer's as well as Coetzee's works of fiction, we see deterritorialised forms of engagement and contact as the narrative resolution, whereby the forms of contact and commitment rest, predominantly, on the ground of proximity and immediacy, in the case of Gordimer, and of distance and awayness, in the case of Coetzee. Yet, Gordimer and Coetzee seem to be offering another level of reflection on deterritorialisation and loneliness when we consider the notion and representation of personalised anxiety and disorientation in most, if not all, Gordimer's and Coetzee's narrative endings.

The scenes of anxiety and disorientation, when strategically placed at the novels' closure, cannot be easily dismissed. They provide key evidence that complicates the ideological concepts of loneliness and deterritorialisation that the thesis builds upon. The scenes in question are, among other, the endings of such novels as *The Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Age of Iron*, *The Late Bourgeois World*, and *July's People*. These novels contain endings that dictate the poetic vision of the deteritorialised: that foreboding sense at the end of *The Late Bourgeois World*, the desperate anxiety that concludes *July's People* or even a note of skepticism at the close of *A World of Strangers*; Coetzee's closing scene of dream-like emptiness in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the ending of *Age of Iron* where the dying narrator recedes into death-like slumber, or that suffocating immersion of voicelessness in *Foe*.

As narrative closures, these endings present a deterritorialised transformation of both human subjectivity as well as the *other* entities characters come into contact with. However, these endings do not suggest an absolute sense of closure as they embody the

notions of skepticism, desperation, fear, and suffocation. Concerning the critical premises of politicised loneliness and deterritorialisation, these closing scenes portray that foreboding, suffocating, and disorienting sense one has when narratives finally arrive at the deterritorialisation of the formerly established geopolitical codes. It is that reflection and expression of not knowing *the future*, of being uncertain of what is to come. Through these scenes, these novels reorient the notion of politicised loneliness into a new boundary of perception and relation, upon which the fate of the deterritorialised subject is now dependent. Interestingly, these scenes depict the loneliness of the deterritorialised subject, whereby the idea of loneliness embodies that foreboding impossibility of establishing a resolute contact with the unknown and uncertain future. Now, that the idea of deterritorialisation is established, what the future after apartheid will be built upon is yet to be constituted although the ground of deterritorialisation has been readily formed.

To return to Deleuze and Guattari in closing, the predominant argument of deterritorialisation across their works rests upon the notion of perpetuality. Speaking of the rhizome, they write: 'It is a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again'.[7] Deterritorialisation as understood by both Deleuze and Guattari is a perpetual, unending process, which, in essence, is the nature of this very process that I have demonstrated, in opposition to the apartheid, fixed and striated geopolitics of racial segregation. As Gordimer and Coetzee reimagine and deterritorialise the spatial contours in various relational contexts, whether it be that between the human and politics in general, between the characters and the landscape in a land/man-based perspective of enquiry, or between the two 'races' in their deeply political reflection, that process of deterritorialisation is never presumed to be a complete one even at the time the apartheid regime was about to be abolished. Although it is uncertain as to what would be the fate/future of the deterritorialised subject under the new condition of geopolitical South Africa after 1994, one aspect remains to be assured in my present discussion: deterritorialisation and what follows depend on the model of perpetual mobility. When approaching the nature of deterritorialisation as a counter politics to politicised loneliness, ultimately we are not asking about what would be the end process/state of such a model of disruption and erosion.

[7] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 21.

Essentially, the question is how we contest and recontest established or institutionalised states, in forever reaching for that perpetual flight of greater possibilities, variabilities, and relationalities in space and time.

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