South African Memoirs in a Decade of Transition: Athol Fugard's *Cousins* (1994), J.M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* (1997), and Breyten Breytenbach's *Dog Heart* (1999).

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This whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

Abstract

This thesis examines three South African memoirs using M. M. Bakhtin's theories of the dialogical relationship in language and literature. By offering an alternative to a postmodern or multicultural interpretation of autobiographies, Bakhtin's precepts, that define a dialogic, help to reframe a way of discussing memoirs and avoiding dead-ends previously arrived at by essayists in James Olney's 1980 collection. Bakhtin's ideas discussed here, which include the "once-occurrent moment", "architectonic contraposition", "emotional-volitional tone", "alibi", "non-alibi", and "centripetal" and "centrifugal" force, help to rebuild a discussion based on temporary and evolving self truth rather than fiction, the postmodern interpretation, or confession, the new-age secular spiritualism based on multicultural and politically correct standards. For this, each author's memoir had to be examined separately and a conclusion was arrived at through inductive analysis. Rather than try to find similar characteristics, I focused on what made each memoir different and unique.

Janet Varner Gunn's *Autobiography: Toward A Poetics of Experience* (1982) refocused the debate over autobiography on process. The question, what steps did each author take toward writing about himself, led the discussion to an examination of the priorities each author exemplified. Beginning with Fugard who emphasized spatial, concrete, and sensory detail to help him contain his emotional life, the thesis moves on to an examination of Coetzee's sense of justice. From the physical and intellectual world follows Breytenbach's spiritual space-making. In each memoir, control of space is evident on different levels of experience. Articulating space inevitably leads to a discussion of boundaries. Here, Charles Taylor's emphasis on the modern self's need to articulate a horizon or a framework is helpful in generalizing the effect of the autobiographical process.

The conclusion reached is that autobiography is inherently centrifugal: it moves away from the center of cultural thinking because its "truth" bolsters itself on dialogical process which does not depend on a fixed authority but rather on communicative exchange. As an example of exchange, autobiography's central truth is that it returns to a "unique point of origin", namely the self, only to reconnect to the *other* in a potentially eternal exchange of responsiveness moving away from the center.

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1. Introduction

1.1
Memoir as “Unique Point of Origin”

“My inclusion in a series of talks on autobiography and memoir is not entirely a misalliance”(Zinsser, 1998: 185), said Toni Morrison in 1986 when asked to speak on the art and craft of the memoir. “For one thing, I might throw into relief the differences between self-recollection (memoir) and fiction, and also some of the similarities — the places where those two crafts embrace and where that embrace is symbiotic” (185). For Morrison the symbiosis between fiction and autobiography was buried in memory, which she called an “archeological site ” (195). Images exhumed from that site pointed simultaneously toward “a reconstruction of a world” and “an exploration of an interior life”. This simultaneity revealed for Morrison and for many of her readers “a kind of truth” whose historical context in American slavery made her fiction “autobiographical” of the African American experience, an experience plagued with non-identity. By stretching the notion of autobiography to include Morrison’s fiction as well as her ethnocentrism and then declaring, “This is the age of the memoir”, William Zinsser initiated a new skepticism about just how far group identity can venture into the territory of the individual imagination and memory (3).

Memoir’s close positioning to the truth and its willingness to submit to imagination makes it a particularly attractive genre for authors and audiences whose awareness of predicaments of the modern self is keen. Postmodernism has left little for the individual to fix his identity upon: there are no definitive horizon, no universal truths with which to frame identity (Taylor, 1989: 14-19). This has made, according to Charles Taylor, one aspect of our moral sense particularly difficult to reckon with: “Moderns ... anxiously doubt whether life has meaning, or wonder what meaning is” (16). In his treatise *Sources of the Self* (1989), one of Taylor’s main objectives is to show that meaning is not necessarily connected to truth — the dilemma of postmodern philosophy — but that meaning is grounded by “the sense of dignity” of an individual (15). The role that articulation plays in ascertaining a sense of dignity, Taylor argues, is paramount to facilitating a process of finding a believable framework (a horizon), without which the self would be adrift in a sea of values, priorities, and contradictory identities. The role of the memoir when viewed as a process

of articulation instead of a product of truth will involve the retrieval of memory and the filter of imagination that, according to the author, best serve his sense of dignity.

Memoir as process of articulation is distinct from memoir as product of truth and self-discovery; yet both require the close involvement of the reader. The memoirist (or autobiographer), as any author of a work, is in dialogue with the reader. According to Bakhtin, the author, as a "unique point of origin" (in Burkitt:163) in a larger cultural dialogue, able to write what others cannot write, "is recast as a speaker within a context" (164). This role relies on "the individuality of the author [which] is, from a Bakhtinian perspective, of some importance, but only in that his or her utterances flow from the situation and not from some pregiven inner essence of individuality" (164). For Bakhtin, articulating the self has particular resonance at particular moments in time and space. The autobiographical impulse is part of a larger cultural dialogue marked by events outside of the individual. In South Africa, the shift from apartheid to democracy in 1994 has had enormous cultural consequences and requires a cacophony of dialogue, part of which comprises an attempt to articulate the self within time and space, and to utilize memory to construct a framework.

Two interesting autobiographical phenomena came out of the destruction of the World Trade Centers on September 11th, 2001. The first was that people who assumed authority to speak publicly on the topic (news anchors, congressmen, heads of state, etc.) as well as "ordinary"[1] people spoke about where they were at the time of destruction. The autobiographical response was reminiscent of the "where-were-you" at the time of John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas in 1963, and all people shared the same authority to tell where they were. Secondly, (and this came later), people began to interpret the changed New York skyline in terms of their own experiences. A friend remembers dancing on the plaza stage; an uncle remembers witnessing the 7-year-long construction of the towers from his office window; I remember catching the train to Jersey City seven stories below sea level. The question to ask is why these kinds of autobiographical responses to cataclysmic events are important for both the speaker and the listener? In these historical moments that produce "I" statements, why is what Paul de Man describes as "an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution" (921) so verifiably true? Transitions — willed or unwilled, a long time coming or sudden — require reassessment, a taking of

inventory, and a realignment. Since September 11th, the modern world is in the process of articulating all of these. In South Africa, where recently a major transition took place in terms of power and politics, a better understanding of articulations of the transition might hint at what challenges are in store for the period of transition across the modern world. What role does the autobiographical perspective play in filtering historical events? What relationship does memory have to the present in helping people stabilize in times of upheaval? What pitfalls of articulation exist for the individual as he speaks about himself? How does the individual survive as an individual, without complete alienation from the group?

In an autumn 2001 *New York Times* review about Athol Fugard's upcoming play *Sorrows & Rejoicings*, a play set in the Karoo about a poet's homecoming, the playwright expressed his frustration with political change in South Africa: "People are wanting to claim their own voices and the right to speak for themselves. So I think there's an impatience with me now. It would make, I think, a lot of people happy if, when '94 came along, my day was over, and my day was past" (Swarns: B1). The statement exposes ongoing and unsolvable problems in any dialogue: the issues of taking turns speaking, being heard, and dominance. The silencing that Fugard senses is not necessarily overtly shared by white male authors who wrote and published during apartheid, but the examples of three major South African authors, Athold Fugard, J. M. Coetzee, and Breyten Breytenbach, writing their memoirs at the time of transition, suggest that a similar experience occurred and that a period of reassessment, auditing, and realignment is shared. The question, "Where were you at the time of transition?" turns into a search to understand the place of origin of their childhoods, each one located in the Cape Province in the 1940s and '50s. To identify themselves as "a unique point of origin", the authors return to a time and place of origin, not unlike Morrison's return to African American roots. In a far more abstract way than the sudden void in the New York skyline, the authors' memoirs construct the horizon of self in light of the absence of their white privilege in order to reassess, audit, and realign themselves in the dialogue of a new South Africa.

1.2

History of the Memoir

"It is natural to retrace the course of our own lives... endeavoring not so much to enumerate the mere facts and events of life, as to discriminate the successive states of mind, and the progress of character" (Foster: 1). Written in 1805, John Foster's association to nature of man's will and interest to write himself grew out of the Enlightenment's refocusing on the individual and his quest for an identity of self that was uniquely his own. The two origins are not mutually exclusive. Nature and the self (formerly the "soul" and often today referred to as the "psyche") though continually at odds with each other — and no less so in the study of autobiography and particularly memoirs — mutually support each other in a dialogue about ethical, political, and social behaviors.

The origin of the theory of memoir can be traced back to John Foster, an American who lived in New York State as the United States was shaping and implementing its constitution on John Locke's argument for democracy. Foster is an apt starting point for a study of three South African memoirs written in and around the time of transition from apartheid to free elections. The still tenuous stages of democratic awareness, the uncertain transitions of elected officials, the unknown role of the South African economy challenge the individual. Great transitions are moments when the character is tested: "The moral constitution of your being composed of the contributions of many years and events" is revealed, and the past assumes "the dignity of a commencing eternity" (Foster: 7). To write a memoir in such a time is to take a picture of the self in a state of heightened exposure. The risk of an autobiographical statement — high at anytime in history — will usher forth a review akin to chaos, with the moral, psychological, and circumstantial memory confounded together. The individual will reflect till he "begin[s] almost to wonder how an individual retains even the same essence through all the diversities, vicissitudes, and counteractions of influence, that operate on it during its progress through confusion" (22). The reflection will inevitably lead to an understanding of self that is independent of all forces bearing down on it, and simultaneously dependent on the specifics of its own history, its location in time and place.

Since John Foster's definitions, written in letterform, the memoir has had little attention. Always considered in the background of the larger autobiographical picture, it has endured a reputation of irrel-

evance and inscrutability — like an estranged family member. Georg Misch thought the memoir to have a "connotation of informality, a casually constructed affair not a serious literary effort" (Bruss: 7). Indeed memoir was seen as a failed autobiography, one that succumbed to an apology that rebutted public character or one that attempted to sustain public character (Bruss: 12)[1]. Laura Marcus emphasizes Misch's assertion that memoir is passive and powerless in comparison to its more formal brethren. Posing as passive observers of the world, "The writers of memoirs ... efface themselves within the histories they observe and record" (Marcus: 151). Opting to write a memoir exposes a person who is less capable of self-reflection (21) and does not hope to secure an identity (7). Marcus — publishing in the late '90s — does not necessarily believe that the posturing of formal autobiography — its assertiveness, quest for identity and self-discovery, mode of action and power — is necessarily a stronger stance. What the memoir is lacking in boldness might be won back in its sincerity and authenticity, its ability to heal the self, and its answer to those who have called autobiographical writing a monstrosity. Marcus's references back to Foster's letters indicate a willingness to retrace origins of the memoir, particularly at this point in time during an unprecedented proliferation of memoirs in the literary market.

Even so Laura Marcus, a theorist of recent autobiography, gives only cursory attention to that category of autobiography entitled memoir, and leaves many questions still unanswered about the nature of memoir as it distinguishes itself from autobiography. Formal/informal, active/passive, powerful/powerless, self-discovery/self-effacement are broad differences that can be present at any one time in either an autobiography that covers the whole life of a person or a memoir that selects specific and enduring memories. She follows many in the attempt to first understand the genre *autobiography* — a pursuit that unfortunately has not led to any conclusive evidence as whether the genre even exists! — defining memoir as a member of an extensive family including confessions, testimonials, letters, diaries, prison writing, exile writing, and travelogues. While in most of these subcategories, some limitations and expectations are set, memoir continues to slip through the boundaries of even memory. Two of the memoirs here intended to be analyzed are written in the present tense. J.M. Coetzee even goes so far as to write his memoir in the third person, a farfetched but workable perspective given some support by the theories of internal dialectics. Unlike the tamer categories listed above, the memoir rivals autobiography in ways that a true confession in a collection of letters cannot.

William Zinsser defines the memoir as "personal narrative" and celebrates its proliferation with the hyperbole: "Everyone has a story to tell, and everyone is telling it" (3). His excitement is palpable as he lists the now famous writers who have written bestselling memoirs: Frank McCourt, Pete Hamill, Mary Karr, Tobias Wolff. His book *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (1998) is a series of transcriptions of writers talking about their memoirs or fiction-bordering-on-memoirs in a series of talks at the New York Public Library beginning in 1986. The publication reflects the growing fascination of both readers and writers with the memoir as well as the confusion surrounding what a memoir is. "A good memoir requires two elements — one of art, the other of craft. The first element is integrity of intention. Memoir is the best search mechanism that writers are given" (6). Of the art, Zinsser writes that "Memoir is how we try to make sense of who we are, who we once were, and what values and heritage once shaped us" (6). Of the craft, it is like all else in writing: "a careful act of construction" (6). Writing as *careful act* takes on new meaning when Zinsser says that the house he grew up in "survived only as an act of writing" (14). The house survived only as a careful act, in other words. As it is written, we begin to focus on the word *careful* and what exactly is meant by it when reunited with the first element, intention. Does intention deliberately assume a degree of careful consideration, seriousness, fine evaluation as to what exactly in the memory is the salient point, the essence of self? Can we — as Zinsser does — truly separate the art and the craft or can both of these be boiled down to one overarching idea when it comes to memoir: the truth?

Toni Morrison's twist on "the truth" concludes the discussion Zinsser hosts on the same concept with which eighteen years ago, James Olney's collection of essays on autobiography ended: autobiography and fiction are inseparable and self-truth is impossible. Morrison's inclusion in a series of essays on autobiography does raise questions about Zinsser's original point that intention is at the heart of the art of memoir. Can that which Morrison describes as "historical" and "persuasive" (186), forging a "route to a reconstruction of a world, to an exploration of an interior life that was not written and to the revelation of a kind of truth" (195), be enough to meet the expectations of Zinsser's autobiographical intention? Can expectations about intentions in the act of writing a memoir be defined more clearly?

Most of the memoirs featured in *Inventing the Truth* are what is called "family memoirs" (Eakin,1999: 85). Family members can be as important as the self, in which case memoirs often include a "proximate other" (86) and will seek to investigate the relationship between the self and the

"proximate other". This is certainly true of Russell Baker's relationship with his mother depicted in *Growing Up*, his second memoir, Jill Ker Conway and her relationship with her brother in *The Road from Coorain*, and Frank McCourt and his ties to his mother in *Angela's Ashes*. Some memoirs do not at all fit into the family memoir category as in the case of Eileen Simpson whose orphaned childhood along with her dyslexia stand at the center of *Poets in Their Youth*, but for Athol Fugard, J. M. Coetzee, and Breyten Breytenbach, it would be easy to define the memoirs they wrote as "family memoirs". Fugard's attachments to his mother and father and two cousins fuel the memoir; Coetzee's tense and painful relationship to his mother is the wedge driven between him and his father; Breytenbach's memoir reconstructs his great grandmother's life. The "proximate other" is perhaps much of what Zinsser's "careful construction" relies on. A relationship to another calls out the inner characteristics of a person, forces these characteristics to act, and helps to set boundaries around points of references representing original emotion and desire. Moral, ethical, and social responses are first formulated in the highly emotional and needs-driven environment of childhood and youth (Nussbaum, 2001). The "proximate other" marks an outside reference point for the individual and allows for the first experiences of self. Family memoir and its reliance on the "proximate other" provides a structure which can be copied, substituted, altered, or completely abandoned.

In contrast, memoirs that recall memory within a cultural environment reflect the tendencies of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Annie Dillard, for instance. Surrounded by a certain type of people that reflect a certain type of culture, the memoirist recreates an ethnocentric world in which s/he is located. Instead of the relationship of man to man as in the "family memoir", the individual experiences a relationship between man and culture. There is then always the further relationship between culture and the greater society where, say, Gates finds himself to be in a minority, and Dillard finds herself to be in the majority. These realities characterize the individual and complicate his quest for self truth. This kind of auto/ethnography is explored by Deborah Reed in *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (1997) where, like in Marcus and so many others, memoir has a shadowy presence next to autobiography. She does mention the term "French rural memoir" (125) to define the provincial memoir. Extending her term to other countries is not far fetched, and with reference to Fugard, Coetzee, and Breytenbach very appropriate. Montagu and Worcester in the Klein Karoo certainly classify as rural towns nestled in remote farming communities. Fugard's Port Elizabeth might have a harder time with the term "rural" but one certainly would not jump to

"urban" in describing the setting of *Cousins*. "South African rural memoir" matches up with Coetzee's original subtitle "Scenes from a Provincial Life", an allusion to first English then French rural life (Attwell: 1997). The idea, originating in Reed's study of memoirs being classified by culture, offers another resource for structure and could be useful to copy, substitute, alter or abandon.

European structuralist theorists of the mid-20th century postulated that language was a self-contained system of signs and that cultures, like language, could be analyzed in terms of structural relations among their elements. Literary structuralism in particular sought to recognize a system of interlocking signs that governs the form and content of all literature. Answering the movement, postmodernism emerged with values deeply rooted in deconstruction and poststructuralism. Focusing on reader-response and the multiplicity of interpretation, theorists began to see language, text, and author as unreliable sources of meaning. Meaning could only be networked through a thoroughly intertextual relationship, not from a single interpretation of a text or texts. Literary analysis of fiction flexed favorably toward the postmodern movement because here, nothing outside the text could interfere. Indeed, in many circles, the author once having completed his work was textually "dead", no longer necessary or desirable as a participant in the discussion of the text. Autobiography posed many more problems which challenged postmodern interpretation of text as text. According to the author, there was a correct interpretation, an essential "I" of the text, and an authority that he alone wielded. These very same attributes that empowered autobiographical writing, however, were used cleverly against it to discredit its access to truth and experience. Postmodernists dismantled the authority of the "I", claiming that the author had as much control over his autobiography as he does over his dreams (Sprinker: 342). Suddenly, autobiography was dead, beheaded by the postmodern guillotine that argued that even the "I" cannot know its life objectively; and since it cannot know its life objectively, it has no access to truth. Postmodernism seemingly had won against those who still scratched their heads (James Olney among them) and knew in their hearts that autobiography was not only possible (as there is abundant evidence), but also uniquely tied to truth, identity, and self-discovery.

Was postmodernism's original intent to discredit any proposition of truth? Conceived in the 1960s, the movement sought to challenge the accepted norm and status quo of philosophical thinking that had wound itself so tightly around unquestionable truths, that anyone who did not hold these truths as self-

evident could break into the conversation. Discussion, discourse, dialogue faltered. But twenty years later, as postmodernism was savagely becoming the modern ideology, the same thing was happening. There are no truths, so don't even bother trying to get to one, was the new thinking. As communism had taken the wind out of the sails of competition and social mobility, so too did postmodernism run a course into the doldrums of philosophical, political, and ethical thought. Whether or not this was the intention of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and others, the results were clear. As new technologies and globalism were progressing unregulated and at lightning speed, many ethicists, politicians, and academics did not risk framing progress anew lest the truth they proffered crumble under the pressures of political correctness, cultural tolerance, national autonomy. In such an unhampered environment, multiculturalism prospered, destabilizing thought processes, eroding belief systems, and retarding the growth of new moral paradigms.

What this meant for memoir is that it nestled more and more into the safe domain of literature and fiction, effacing itself once more as a genre in its own right. While fiction continues to protect the memoir from the postmodern inquisition, it fails miserably in helping readers come to terms with the nature of the memoir: why it is so potent, why so many read and write in the genre, why when public figures like President Clinton or Timothy McVeigh write memoirs, the earth nearly seems to shake, and why when prolific fiction writers like J. M. Coetzee turn to the memoir, readers feel there has been something uniquely said. And why is it that no piece of writing can be quite as disappointing as a poorly written memoir by a public figure? How are our expectations of a memoir different, and when — if ever — do we know that they have been met? If memoirs remain constructs of fiction, these questions cannot be answered.

Twenty years ago, critics still spoke about the difference between autobiography proper and memoir in terms of politics and public life.[2] Memoirs were regarded as invaluable yet "thin and unconvincing"(Pascal, 1960: 6) compared to "autobiography proper", whose contents are a confrontation with what is publicly known. "Proper autobiography" was and still is reserved for those whose lives have unfolded in a public arena, which is not the case with Coetzee, Fugard, and Breytenbach even though the atmosphere in South Africa through the '80s politicized almost all authors. The distinctions between public and private lives, public and private figures, and the configuration of the internal world as it relates to the outer world of a person led critics like Janet Varner Gunn to prove that autobiographical boundaries marked the obviously finite nature of external and internal worlds. Louis Renza also describes

memoirs and autobiographies in terms of restrictions and regulations, calling upon "margins" to distinguish temporality: "The margins of pastness that his autobiographical act intentionally sets in motion", according to Renza, can be better navigated by memoirs, whose margins are less linear (280). These definitions have in no way been shed; but as always they are tested by writers like J.M. Coetzee who retreats completely inward in his autobiography; or by Breyten Breytenbach whose memoir becomes an inner sanctuary, a visit inside a tomb; or by Athol Fugard who gives a tour of Port Elizabeth and seems never to retreat from the physical world on whose buildings he finds his memory and imagination posted like an event's announcement.

Answering many of the above critics, in the early 1980s, Janet Varner Gunn begins to move outside the text to argue that autobiography is more an experience involving author and reader (an uncertain, wary individual, plagued by his own struggle with identity), and movement toward and away from the text, instead of a complete outline of space/time. In her opinion, autobiography is not a static text, like a statue being viewed; it is a poetics, a dance, an exchange which Gunn calls a "sense-making activity" which is in keeping with the Bakhtinian paradigm. In the words of Voloshinov, "A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee" (quoted in Shotter and Billig: 15). But despite Gunn's remarkable conviction in describing the power of autobiography as "survival literature", her argument lacks a clear rebuttal of postmodernist beliefs that the author's inextricable enmeshment in autobiography fundamentally belies any textual authority. Autobiography is incurably subjective and therefore false. Interpreting Bakhtin, Burkitt addresses this shortcoming by claiming, "Language is not about individual expression but about communication" (166). Dialogue in a society is always in process and may at times like in the example of South Africa be particularly politically and historically acute. According to Burkitt, "[t]he author belongs to [the] dialogue and to various speech genres, but his or her own individuality marks the utterance. By individuality, Bakhtin is not referring to something internal and given to the self, but to the biography of an individual who has a social and historical location" (167). So by writing, the author takes on the responsibility for his own biography within a specific social and historical location with the purpose of assuming responsibility. Writing the memoir is his/her act of individuality. This is what is missing in Gunn: this sense of taking responsibility, which requires a philosophical underpinning because ultimately a sense of responsibility

leads to a sense of morality. The nature of the responsibility is determined by each individual author, and his success is determined by the extent of his ability to build an adequate and coherent framework (Taylor). In particular, success is determined by answering the questions consciousness poses, which are, according to Bakhtin, "What for?", "To what end?", "Is this right?", and not "Who am I?" or "What am I?" (quoted in Morson, 1990: 216).

1.3
Autobiography in South Africa

Autobiographical journals, letters, novels, and accounts are a South African tradition, yet despite this toiling at identity throughout its 300-year history, J.U. Jacobs attributes the proliferation in the 1980s of autobiographical works to "the autobiographical impulse of an entire nation *finally* bringing its past into proper perspective" (878, my emphasis). As the demise of apartheid was in the offing along with its backward looking autobiographical literature — limited after 1950 to the Great Trek and the rise of Afrikanerdom — writers began to catch up to the West, where autobiography challenged mainstream thought with such works as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) in the words of Alex Haley and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969) by Maya Angelou, and to the less open societies whence highly personalized fictional accounts such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1963) were being smuggled into Western Europe. Opportunity to join Western and Northern subversives lured South African writers whose own off-beat literary potential had poked its head out in such works as Herman Bosman's *Cold Stone Jug* (1949), an early depiction of prison life that broke the ice in modern South African autobiography. Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me on History* (1963) and Es'kia Mphalele's *Down Second Avenue* (1959) followed as examples of township testimonials whose autobiographical perspective awoke the world to the injustices of apartheid. By the mid 1960s, due to and in spite of the intensifying race problems in South Africa, a new generation of South African writers, willing to use their lives as proof of racial injustice, stepped up to the plate. Subsequently, in the 1980s, autobiography transformed into a literary venue for the political struggle of social activists, not just for descriptive realism. When Nelson Mandela, Frank Chikane, Ellen Kuzwayo, Oliver Tambo, Emma Mashinini, and

Helen Joseph combined activism and imprisonment in publications often edited and published abroad,[1] the extreme politicization of the craft had come full circle to what Pascal terms as "autobiography proper". In contrast, in this same decade, Athol Fugard published his *Notebooks 1960-77* (1983) and also wrote his famous award winning play *"Master Harold"... and the boys* (1983), a depiction of himself at seventeen in Port Elizabeth as he struggled with the generational and psychological consequences of racism. Breyten Breytenbach published *Judas Eye* (1988), which included his essay "Self-Portrait/Deathwatch *A Note on Autobiography"*; he also wrote and sent to press the now famous prison account *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1983), which represented a final disintegration of the Afrikaner psyche, and which ushered in the final decade of apartheid. In 1985, J.M. Coetzee wrote what he himself calls a pivotal essay entitled "Confessions and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky", and in separate essays critiqued both Fugard's *Notebooks* and Breytenbach's *Confessions*. All three essays are now collected in *Doubling the Point* (1992), a work considered by J. U. Jacobs an "intellectual autobiography" (880). The 1980s was a time of feverish catch up, leading to a crescendo in the early '90s. Ever more personal accounts ranged from historical documentation, as in Dr. Ysuf Mahomed Dadoo's *His Speeches, Articles and Correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi (1939-83)* (1991) to "so-called, non-standard, mediated, quasi-, or even hybrid autobiographies" (Jacobs: 881) like *The Calling of Katie Makanya: A Memoir of South Africa* (1995) by Margaret McCord. With this range of material, South Africa had expanded at breakneck pace its literary scope in the autobiographical genre. In order to manage its proliferation, critics such as Sheila Roberts, M. J. Daymond, and Susanna Egan divided the genre into subcategories: prison writing, confession, testimonials, protest poetry, and autobiographical novels. Reflected in the greater trend in the study of autobiography to classify and define, South African autobiographies fit into and became prime examples of the categories of autobiography popularized in the West. Prison accounts and writers in exile resonated particularly strongly in postmodern times because they exposed a political struggle and became quintessential examples of the individual against the state. The stories of Steve Biko, Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn gave meaning to Western culture to help in establishing other free and open societies; the seat of postmodern thought was enlisted in the attack on injustice. In South Africa, with few exceptions, the subcategories shared one distinct intent: to subvert Afrikaner thinking, values, power, and ultimately to provide leadership toward a democratic free society. Coming out of the '80s into

the ‘90s, the politicization of autobiographical literature seemed complete, even dangerously narrow, as in *My Traitor's Heart* (1990) by Rian Malan.

Free elections in 1994 and the subsequent establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a distinctly fertile environment for the subdivided South African autobiography to condense into a powerful new mode of expression that combined confession, testimony, and memory. Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* (1998) is just one account that combined the forces of guilt, anguish, empathy, and drama into a highly charged report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's proceedings. *Country of My Skull* is simultaneously a memoir of the privileged white Afrikaner, a confession of guilt, a testimony to the event of the Commission, and a journalistic account (Krog reported daily for the SABC on the TRC proceedings). Added to its autobiographical complexity is the book's inclusion of fictional interpretation, which accentuates the blurring of generic boundaries. There were others: Allister Sparks remembered transition in *Tomorrow is Another Country* (1995); André Brink wrote *Reinventing a Continent: Writing and Politics in South Africa* (1996); Rusty Bernstein contemplated his release in 1963 in *Memory Against Forgetting* (1999). In South Africa the force of social change was headed by Bishop Desmond Tutu and President Nelson Mandela both of whom often wrote introductions to autobiographical statements that participated in the political restructuring. In Piet Meiring's *Chronicle of the Truth Commission* (1999), Tutu wrote, “I hope, so fervently, that my Afrikaner fellow-South Africans will be moved by Piet Meiring to see the TRC as a remarkable tool to enable us South Africans to come to terms with our horrendous past as efficaciously as possible — *that we will be moved to confess*, to forgive and to be forgiven, responding to the extraordinary magnanimity of victims — black and white — and be reconciled *so that we can be healed*” (8, my italics). The statement revealed how politically urgent empirical values were and how urgency created an environment of intense pressure to concede to the social good.

The mode of confession was especially revered by those who saw the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as being one of a purging, a sort of secular public confession. In her 1995 essay, “‘Through Other People’: Confession in South African Literature”, Susan Gallagher pointed out how similar “religious strategies of confession” and “judicial manipulation of confession” (99) were. Gallagher was well aware of the arguments in Olney's collection of essays and pointed toward the final essay by Sprinker that alleged the impossibility of autobiography. She wrote, “The impasse created by the possibility

of deception may be true to the self in isolation, but in community, which religious confession insists on, confession provides a valuable opportunity to speak *a* truth, if not *the* truth" (106). What was about to be discarded as illegitimate or defective was retrieved by an argument that objectified the individual with accusations of guilt, inferiority vis à vis the community, and feelings of shame. From a religious point of view — which Gallagher represents — reentering a community is a high priority and if autobiographical writing can assist in the effort, let it. From a secular perspective, however, autobiography was being usurped by ulterior motives, albeit spiritual ones. Despite Gallagher's implied recognition of the plurality of truth, the emphasis on truth finding seemed to be yet another manipulative gimmick to in fact establish ultimately a single truth toward an ideological monopoly. Dangerously, autobiography was seen to be deteriorating into modes of confession because of a failure of literary analysis to understand its unique distinctions from fiction.

Such a strong pressure for group participation might alienate many who do not define themselves within a political context or who refuse to submit to the power of forgiveness which, Gallagher suggests, has moved into a "spiritual secularism" as in the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. John Shotter and Michael Billig's analysis of Bakhtin's work helps to contextualize how other writers, less overtly political but finding themselves in an intense political environment, respond to the pressure to confess. Writing — a "once-occurrent event of Being" — is not only a way, in Bakhtin's words, to "express ourselves and show each other the nature of our own unique 'inner' lives, but also [to] shape our living relations both to each other and to our surroundings" (quoted in Shotter/Billig:14). Because virtually all writing in South Africa in the 1990s was being viewed through a political lens, what one wrote molded or remolded "the already existing historical and ideological influences at work in spontaneously and routinely shaping our ways of relating to each other and our surroundings" (14). Even those works that were not political were deliberately answering the political demands by changing the subject, ignoring transition, or refusing to talk about race. While Breytenbach, Coetzee, and Fugard do not meet the challenge Bishop Tutu sets — to confess, forgive, and be forgiven — they, nevertheless, engage in the dialogue, and contribute to the shaping of their surroundings. "'Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (Bakhtin, 1981: 293).

Bakhtin's dialogics present an alternative to the increasingly narrowing and rigid political path, and includes recognizing multi-culturalism -- a social outcome of postmodern thinking -- and living with its

hegemonic context. Racial labels, cultural and gender boundaries, sexual orientations, all these and more are compounded with walls thrown up by categories in autobiography. Understanding the relationship between these groups is imperative if postmodern ideals (not ideologies) of tolerance and equality are to prevail over the fundamentalist hegemony on the religious right. Secular fundamentalism around the issue of race could be equally destabilizing, and in South Africa, the fight against racial labels in the autobiographical genre dates back to the early nineties. Writers recognized "a danger in dissolving everything into the single essential issue of 'race' because that is the prevailing paradigm at the moment" (F. Nussbaum: 29). In order to reestablish a relational and unique position of "self" and the *other* which is inherent in autobiography, writers had to eventually reject race as "the primary point of reference" in South African autobiography and find a way for "individuals to define themselves otherwise" (29). The cry against race classification had different effects in the South African literary community. Because inevitably some autobiographies were distinctly racially motivated, these needed to be separated from autobiographies that attempted to repeal race orientation. On the one hand, there was a outcry from writers such as M. J. Daymond who argued that there is a demand for "an even more precise making of distinctions within the kinds of writing and reading which are grouped under 'autobiography'" (32) and that these distinctions could reflect the multifarious subjectivity present in speech.and missing in print. Daymond believed that by grouping types of autobiography at least in terms of South African autobiographies or black women's autobiographies, the "ontological impossibility of unified, autonomous subjectivity in autobiography" (38) of a recent study by Judith Lutge Coullie would be overcome. The danger -- which , alas, this thesis exemplifies -- eventually would be to further classify autobiographies in terms of race or nationality on top of the type categories such as confession, testimonials, prison writing, etc. The origin of classification springs from the overall discussion about autobiography as it distinguishes (or fails to distinguish) itself from fiction, as well as from an ongoing attempt to define the genre.

Judith Lutge Coullie in *'Not Quite Fiction': The challenges of Poststructuralism to the Reading of Contemporary South African Autobiography* argues for the impossibility of a universal definition. She believes, "Rather than read autobiographies so that we may classify them … we might more fruitfully examine the political implications of autobiographies as particular kinds of knowledge-making" (19). Classifications might more easily dismiss autobiography into certain modes of expression of anger, guilt, fear,

sadness rather than allow it to be part of a dialogue, a necessary effect on South African society in order to continue to oppose a system that thrived on stereotype, groupings, census readings, and other methods of classification and organization. In 1991, as the apartheid state was entering its twilight, Coullie wrote, "[An] imperative to write one's life in forms that are taken to be quite distinct from fictional forms is accompanied by the broader imperative to read others' lives, to understand what apartheid's obsession with the group has meant to individuals" (20). The implication was that by officiating over autobiography through definitions and categories, one was taking away autobiography's power as the voice of the individual and statement of the minority.

1.4
Autobiography as Fiction: A Postmodern Interpretation

"How the act of autobiography is at once a discovery, a creation, and an imitation of the self... [is] one of the most important explanations for the critical turn toward autobiography as literature"(19), wrote James Olney in 1980, pinpointing autobiography's main purpose. The problems autobiography faced as its *autos* was prioritized over its *bios* constituted the bulk of the essays in Olney's publication *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. These essays have consequently helped to transform autobiographical discourse into a philosophical, psychological, and literary example of postmodernism, a movement based partly on the deconstruction of authority. Postmodernism aims to eliminate the participation of the author and treats text as distinct and separate from the author. Because in autobiography author and text are inseparable, postmodernism does not recognize autobiography, a point made quite clearly in Michael Sprinker's essay "Fictions of the Self: The end of Autobiography".

A problem with a postmodernist approach to autobiography is its tendency to limit itself to the text. The author's absence in relationship to his work raises questions as to whether such a disconnection (no different from fiction) between text and author could possibly sustain an audience that has turned increasingly toward autobiography and particularly memoirs. Some other force must be at work. James Olney became aware of the symbiotic relationship between autobiography and fiction, and in

his essay, "The Ontology of Autobiography", studied Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (autobiography) and *Native Son* side by side. Several of the essays collected by Olney also examine autobiography and fiction by the same author side by side. Roger Rosenblatt likens imagery in *Go Tell it on the Mountain* by James Baldwin to that in its source, the author's autobiography *Notes of a Native Son*. James Cox considers *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson* alongside other collected works in *Inventing America*, demonstrating that Jefferson's political writings have a discernible foundational relationship to his autobiography. The same pattern applies to Ben Franklin. In another essay, William Howarth compares Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography to the Florentine's biography, also suggesting a relationship between the two works that elucidates meaning in the process of correcting or adjusting autobiography's subjectivity. Finally, Germaine Bree includes fiction and autobiography (and indeed anything an author has written) in a single discourse, hypothesizing that all writing is autobiographical. While none of the above studies sets out to study the relationship between fiction (or other writing) and autobiography, each uses the relationship in its struggle to understand more about autobiography. Olney's collection hints at a new way of engaging in discourse on autobiography: to bring it out of its isolation and allow the text (or texts) to interact more freely with other work by the same author.

Janet Varner Gunn has defined a theory of autobiography that situates the genre within the lived experience of historicity and temporality where "selving" is made possible by the limits of finitude and the *other*. "To exceed those limits," she repeats in her prologue to her own memoir, "was to drown in depth, the fate of Narcissus" (1995: xxiv). In *Second Life: A West Bank Memoir* she challenges standard thinking on a number of works in the autobiographical canon, a challenge that she first takes on in her theoretical study of autobiography *Autobiography: Toward a Poetics of Experience* (1982), in which her selection of works ranges across the novel, spiritual writing (Augustine's *Confessions*), confessions, memoir, and even poetry. Gunn knows her choice of poetry "might seem anomalous", but wants to examine Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" for its "sense of *thereness*" (1982, 62). She makes another unusual decision in her study: the use of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" to "[set] the stage... for a fuller understanding of ['Tintern Abbey']" (63). Unlike Susanna Egan, who, in "Breytenbach's *Mouroir*: The Novel as Autobiography", uses autobiography to inform an understanding of fiction, Gunn uses the more metaphorical/allegorical "Resolution and Independence" to develop fully the autobiographical perspective in

"Tintern Abbey". A heightened understanding thus flows both ways, to and from autobiographical work, a sign that fiction and non-fiction in part can be exchanged but also a sign that heightened understanding can be achieved through the dialogue between autobiography and fiction. Distinct yet mutually supportive, the relationship between fiction and autobiography begins to simulate a dialogic balance.

The lively discussion that primarily searched for definitions and patterns failed to consider that a "detailed analyses of modern autobiographical writings may cumulatively shed light on the general cultural conditions responsible for the emergence of individuality and self-conscious concern" (Weintraub, 1978: xv). Consequently, studies have been pursued by critics like Judith Lutge Coullie as further proof that modern autobiography was as inscrutable as past examples even if narrowed to a specific country or culture. Weintraub was more interested in the phenomenon of individualism in modern culture and the need to express the "I" than whether such expression is true or accurate, a focus that is rooted more in philosophical studies rather than literary analysis. Gunn supports Weintraub and dares to challenge traditional theories about Augustine's *Confessions*. She writes, "It is the *success* of autobiography, not its failure, that becomes the problem — one of over-orientation rather than alienation, of completing not losing the self, of regressing to what Frank Kermode has called 'paradigmatic rigidity'"(119). Augustine's *Confessions* is for her an example of successful autobiography, and Gunn struggles to find a way to "defamiliarize the text" and to "[look] at the questions of the text as if they were yet unsolved" (121). To do so, she looks to Augustine's *credo ut intelligam* to frame his autobiographical statement and to "[ground] its perspective and [secure] its standpoint in the reality of Augustine's life as lived" (125). In this example, it is the relationship between texts that Gunn identifies that can model paratextual stability. Together, texts can stabilize meaning, and together with autobiography, texts can outline identity. Groundedness is defined as an identification of finite boundaries of time and place represented and marked out by text(s).

Gunn attempts to balance public truth with private truth: "[Autobiography] represents an act both of discovery and creation that involves, at the same time, the movement of the self *in* the world, recognizing that 'the land makes the man,' and the movement of the self *into* the world, recognizing as well that 'man elects his land'" (59). Her thesis is successful in so far as it creates an alternative to the autobiographical expectation of truth and self-discovery, but fails to define the alternative in philosophical terms. The risk factor of autobiographical writing requires that the alternative to the

postmodern paradigm be defined so that even when, as Gunn explains, "The dialectic between participation and distantiation, or discovery and creation, [faces the] danger of being collapsed toward one side or another" (59), the failure of autobiography has not been in vain. "To the extent that one sees the finding of a believable framework as the object of a quest, to that extent it becomes intelligible that the search might fail" (17), writes Taylor in order to encourage a consciousness of the purpose of the quest of "selving". Without such a consciousness, success and failure are meaningless. With such a consciousness, success and failure both represent action and progress.

1.5
Memoir as Dialogic Exchange: an Alternative Interpretation

The postmodern proclamation that an objective assessment of self is impossible — that all autobiographies are inventions of the self — has up till now not been refuted or challenged. In fact, scholars like Paul Eakin and William Zinsser have not disagreed with postmodernism's evaluation. Inventing a truth or writing the self's fiction is just as interesting a phenomenon as a more empirical presentation of truth and identity. While Zinsser and Eakin allow us to continue to be fascinated with life-writing, they do not set us at ease as to why autobiography is so affective in engaging the reader, maintaining his interest and ultimately telling him something about himself. The modern reader's interest in this type of writing is the mystery that awaits resolution. One answer is that autobiography is also a sociopolitical perspective that magnifies the individual's relationship to society. In a country like South Africa in the latter part the 20th century, the relationship has particular resonance for the struggle against injustice. Justice having been served by the abolition of apartheid, however, some ethical questions remain about whether the residual power of the moral authority (embodied in Bishop Tutu) has a right to continue making demands on individuals. David Lurie's refusal to confess and his subsequent dismissal from his post in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* exemplify what happens to a wayward self in modern times. The problems for the self and its independence come into question: how does the individual overcome his disassociation from society and its demands? Both points of view — the postmodern literary perspective and the sociopolitical/historical approach — fail to answer

that question and are both likely to accept Lurie's alienation as odd, self-imposed, and sadly undignified.

As an alternative, Bakhtin's dialogical approach positions the author in relative relationship to the *other*. The non-identity of the isolated self and of the isolated world "is the conceptual rock on which dialogism is founded", writes Michael Holquist in *Dialogism* (1990: 17). Added to this assumption of non-identity without the *other*, two Bakhtinian a prioris are as follows: "Nothing is anything in itself" (38), and "There is no word directed at no one" (27). The postmodernist concern to dismiss the author, his power, and his authority, vanishes in the Bakhtinian approach, where the focus is *mostly* on the relationship between the self and the *other*, a relationship that in principle is dialogic. For autobiography what is tremendously liberating is identity's reach outside the confines of a text (which can be viewed as a prison) toward an *other* — the reader — whose answering act identity seeks even as it expresses itself. Poststructuralism, which focuses on the idea that language is inherently unreliable, promoted analysis based on intertextuality, a form of dialogue between texts. It did not in and of itself suggest that a dialogue took place between author and reader — self and *other* — so only once the practitioners of reader-response criticism embraced poststructuralism as a credo allowing for multiple valid interpretations of the same text, did the the author-reader dialogue move to the forefront of discussion. In autobiography, as Gunn points out, reader-response is the necessary step that answers the act of setting down identity. She calls it a poetics; Bakhtin sees it as a dialogue; some may romantically interpret it as a dance.

Important aspects govern the poetics/dialogue/dance. First, as said before, the concept of *otherness* must be considered in the utterance of speech. Another person must receive, now, tomorrow, in a hundred years, the words that are put down to represent identity. The second aspect is that there is no permanent center between self and the other: the center is always shifting because the dialogue is always shifting, like dancers on a dance floor. Third, simultaneity, multiplicity, and separateness dominate the dialogue: there is never one certain thing said which bars other things from consideration or power-sharing. There are, for instance, other dancers always on the floor and at any one time, partners may regroup, new dialogues may emerge. Interaction is molten. Finally, every dialogue takes place in a space/time specificity;[1] therefore, every dialogue is unique. In this way, "Dialogism is a version of relativity" (Holquist: 20). Because all meaning is relative, dialogism satisfies postmodern sensibilities without denying some sort of meaningful outcome to action. Permanent meaning is denied a dialogical relationship, but not temporary

meaning. While meaning that is fleeting might not have much of a role to play in fiction or even in historical writing, temporary meaning in autobiography might not only be relevant and valuable, fleeting insight might also provide dialogic momentum.

So what is this momentum composed of? The key, perhaps, is emotion. We know that a current runs between "I" and the *other*, between here and there (space), between now and then (time), but all these are simply points of departure and arrival in different directions making up the network Holquist calls dialogism. The current, like electricity, light, laser, must be made up of certain particles or elements that carry the knowledge from one point to another. Why else would one be interested in receiving the knowledge? Martha Nussbaum believes, as she states in her most recent book *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), that knowledge cannot be transmitted from one person to another without emotions informing the logical and ethical structure of knowledge: "Emotions are not just the tools that fuel the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself" (3). Emotions, therefore, are part of the autobiographical delivery and are a vital element in the current of dialogic exchange. The attempt to tame the current, to subdue it, is most visible in the choices J. M. Coetzee makes in talking about himself as a boy. Accused of fictionalizing the self, Coetzee recognizes the difference between authoring fiction and authoring the self in the chances of emotions overtaking the other as equally important elements in the dialogic relationship.

A second quality in the current between "I" and other is inherent in the shifting nature of exchange within space/time. Seen from the outside (the same as our looking at a solar system in space) the exchange exists only as long as it does because as soon as it is objectified, the exchange becomes the "I", and the *other* is he who interacts with the objectified relationship. This for instance happened with J. M. Coetzee's interviews with David Attwell collected in *Doubling the Point*. Dialogic exchange occurs between the reader and the text even if an interview is text. The molten, shifting, tectonic energy is in the current between reader and text which, seen from a sociological standpoint, creates ineffable culture, for as soon as it is spoken, another layer of listening reshapes the architectonic whole. Karl Mannheim believes this perpetual becoming of culture has "conjunctive validity only, not objective validity" (193). As soon as culture is objective, it is no longer sociological but rather anthropological, i.e. a fixed, unchanging culture. Among people, current culture is transformative: "It is a dynamic nexus connecting us" (194). Living culture can

only be lived in the here and now and creates an existential relationship: "We remain in continuity with ourselves, with the Other, and with our mutual relationship" (194). A dialogic relationship, seen as representing a culture of exchange, is existential and can have no other ulterior motive but the motive of exchange. Sharing the self as a process of communion is most clearly demonstrated in Athol Fugard's *Cousins* which itself has incorporated the memoir of his cousin Garth. The dialogic relationship feeds on itself. It is governed by hunger and greed: the more you speak, the more you hear and want to speak. Writing, exchange, sharing is endlessly building community and culture. On a global scale, this very process can be incredibly frightening as molten culture tends to impose upon past cultures. Dialogism is inherently liberal and liberating; conservatism and status quo will not endure a dialogic relationship.

Adding to the elements of emotion and existential exchange, a third quality in the dialogic current is apparent. (This is not to say that there are not many more elements that make up the exchange. For all I know there could be hundreds and certainly there are likely more elements than less because this is inherently dialogic, that more and more get put into the mix.) But in the memoir, the truth or meaning of its utterances must lie in the dialogue it engenders. There is finally a morality in the act of articulation that must be considered in analyzing what drives the dialogic momentum of autobiography. First and foremost, Charles Taylor sees modern man as unable to find an equilibrium for himself without establishing the perimeters of his life. He must look out of himself and see a horizon and it "*must* include strong qualitative discrimination" (32, Taylor's emphasis). In absolute terms, the process of setting out to lay out the self's horizon seems possible; after all, formal autobiography attempts to do just that. The dialogic relationship, however, demands that not only must the "I" articulate, the articulation must be received by the *other*, and if truths do not exist beyond the truth of dialogue, then the speaker and the spoken to risk a complete disconnection. Recognizing the risk of laying out the horizon too rigidly as in formal autobiography, Taylor presents articulation in and of itself as a sort of horizon knowing that "Full articulation is an impossibility... articulation can by its very nature never be completed" (34). So articulation needs to happen within a context and this he calls "a language community" in which one's position is defined as "a self only among other selves" (35). The stability of the horizon of articulation is therefore referenced to the *other* who is also in the process of establishing a horizon. The shared activity of selving is part of the current between "I" and the *other*.

Breyten Breytenbach has written five blatant autobiographical pieces, but no doubt his poetry as well as his novels are saturated in autobiographical detail. Breytenbach is an individual engaged thoroughly in the process of articulating a horizon. But like all his previous autobiographical statements, *Dog Heart* cannot and will not be his final assessment of himself. Its importance, however, as temporary statement is demonstrated in one of the very few critical essays of the memoir written by J. M. Coetzee, "Against the South African Grain" (1999).[2] In this answering essay published first on the internet and later in *Stranger Shores* (2001), Coetzee acts out the dialogic relationship. The discussion that takes place between the work *Dog Heart* and Coetzee's interpretation and judgment is surely what Taylor had in mind when he wrote, "A self exists only within what I call 'webs of interlocution'" (36). Coetzee's long interest in Breytenbach's writing is particularly intriguing now that Coetzee too has written a memoir set in Worcester, an hour's drive southwest of Bonnievale, where Breytenbach's memoir begins and where he was born, a year apart from Coetzee. Their memoirs *Boyhood* and *Dog Heart* have an uncanny relationship reflected in time and place, yet they are as different as night and day. Breytenbach, who plunges forth emotionally, draws in the regulated Coetzee in unmitigated response. The current between these two writers of shared time and space stimulates enormous curiosity about what that current is made up of. If Breytenbach could be likened to a Hawaiian volcano, whose words seep forth in continuous horizon making, then Coetzee is the Mount Vesuvius, aware of the cataclysmic effect of unbridled emotion. So different in temperament, the authors still find a common ground of communication. Why? The answer might be simply because they want to share of themselves in this once-occurrent moment of South African transition.

What has often been the fear in sitting down to write one's memoir is the certainty that one will not get it right. One will always have more to say; one will have to go back over the same ground and say it better, more exactly. Certainly in Breytenbach's case, there is evidence that the process of defining the self is all consuming and almost addictive, and there is something pathetic about a person having to explain himself all the time. But one must remember that modern man is only at the beginning of his relationship with articulating himself in the direct light of autobiographical writing. Up until recently, he has always deferred to the metaphor, the allegory, the metonymy of himself in literature, fine arts, performance, music, etc. The process of autobiographical writing can potentially provide the self with new modes of self-realization as long as the genre can pull itself out of the fictional

construct. Focusing on the dialogic relationship between autobiographer and reader provides an alternative perspective to fictions and inventions of self.

1.6
The Memoirs of Athol Fugard, J.M. Coetzee, and Breyten Breytenbach

Olney concludes, "We have a sufficient demonstration of the rich variousness of autobiography and clear evidence of the *stubborn reluctance* of autobiography to submit to prescriptive definitions or restrictive generic bounds" (1980: 267, my italics). His frustration is the result of years of struggle to come to terms with a genre through a structural, essentialist approach. This study intends to add to his list in "The Ontology of Autobiography" that suggests "the impossibility of making any prescriptive definition for autobiography or placing any generic limitations on it at all" (237). I argue, however, that patterns do emerge, not so much in the content of obviously similar authors but rather in the dialogic current that runs between author and reader:

> 1. First, the author begins with the knowledge of himself as "a unique point of origin".
>
> 2. From there, s/he looks out from himself asking the question what for, to what end, and is this right.
>
> 3. The questions induce a conception of a horizon or a framework.
>
> 4. Perceiving it, s/he is compelled to articulate the horizon — the autobiographical imperative.
>
> 5. The articulation is a current driven by emotion, existential self-actualization, and temporary exchange between self and *other*.
>
> 5. A sense of failure germinates in the realization that articulation is an infinite process because the author's "I" is bound to the *other*.

According to Bakhtin, a mutual process of communication is the atmosphere/energy/sustenance of our "I": "The highest architectonic principle of the actual world of the performed act or deed is the concrete

and architectonically valid operative contraposition of *I* and the *other*" (1993:74). For the three authors presented below, despite their undeniable similarity in the moment of writing a memoir, in the memoirs' historical context, in their shared race, age, gender, and profession, and despite their obvious similarities in writing a memoir about their childhoods, which include memories of mother, father, hometown, school, interests, and hidden lives, they cannot be categorized. The "once-occurrent event" of autobiography and reader response sparks a dialogic exchange between the "I" and the *other* that is both exclusive and eternal. This exchange, unique in autobiography and accentuated in memoir, is its distinguishing enterprise.

Likewise, recognizing differences in the memoirs of South Africa's Transition Period suggests that autobiography can play a role of self-assertiveness, resistance, opposition, and difference within the existential non-repeatability of lived time. Internally, *Cousins*, *Boyhood*, and *Dog Heart* have wholly different anatomies; but as each memoir answers the demands of the historical moment and draws on the authors' accustomed literary expression as a source of stability, similarities in the form of responsibilities as the act of remembering, imagining, emoting, and articulating in the "once-occurrent moment" come, if only temporarily, to the fore. That each memoir in its own way claims the stories previously and subsequently written by the author is only an example of shared responsibility. Fugard does so overtly in statements like "I was also living out the story of my relationship to Sam and Willie, which I tried to tell in fictional terms in *"Master Harold"... and the boys*"(3). Breytenbach condenses all the stories of the past into "to make a long story short" (1) and uses the memoir as a condensation as well as an extension of the "long story". Coetzee, who writes in the third person, says, "He alone is left to do the thinking" (166), identifying a wellspring of his drive to write fiction. Not surprisingly but most importantly, there are no disclaimers of what was written in the past or even what will be written in the future. For the writer, identity is tied to text and texts are tied to one another. The role memoir plays is one that reconnects an explicitly articulated notion of the author as an individual, a unique "self", publicly to what he has written, making his autobiography a unique and distinct work.

The linking mechanism is different in all three memoirs. In *Cousins*, what becomes most apparent is Fugard's physical mapping of Port Elizabeth. Campaigning for his position as one, if not *the* Eastern Cape writer, Fugard recreates the city as he tells the stories that define himself in relationship to his two cousins. With the use of photographs and dialogue, he punctuates the memoir with dramatic mo-

ments and constantly mixes the stories he has written with the stories that still need to be written.

In *Boyhood*, a blueprint of Coetzee's conceptual world becomes apparent in his choice of using the third person, present tense narration. Even though Coetzee's own criticism of literature and particularly autobiography tends to weld the authors to their historical context (see *Stranger Shores*), Coetzee's conceptual blueprint in *Boyhood* clarifies his fiction and transcends historical context through the use of third person narration in the present tense. *Boyhood* reveals the fundamentally autobiographical ontology of Coetzee's writing process as it works to generate identity in present time, a mode of self-definition strongly reminiscent of Bakhtin. This might account for Coetzee's temporary slippage into the notion that all his writing is autobiographical, a precept he challenges by the end of *Doubling the Point*.

Finally, the repetition of autobiographical statements in Breytenbach's case complicates the network between autobiographical text and other writing, but contributes further to a universal selving consciousness. *Dog Heart* is a beacon, Breytenbach says, although there is every indication that it is a tomb, an image inherited from the highly politicized *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1983), whose temporal and ideological aspects risk being superseded by progress in South Africa. *Confessions* preempts the spiritual space-making in *Dog Heart,* which, instead of functioning as information about or toward his other writing, is rather a new and improved version of his previous autobiographical writing. The memoir is grounded by previous works and simultaneously takes responsibility for all his work.

The end result of these men asserting themselves autobiographically at this critical juncture in South African history is in itself an acknowledgement of incompleteness. Gunn's point about the very success of autobiography being a failure, and its very failure being a success, together with Taylor's emphasis on the never ending process of articulation of modern man as he struggles to have a moral sense indicate that the act of writing a memoir is the author's most dramatic and overt gesture of respect for the reader, of acknowledgement of his dependence on the reader, and of recognition of his own mortality. The contribution that Fugard, Coetzee, and Breytenbach make in writing their memoirs is in the control they exert over language toward this end, control that for the reader becomes a model of control, self-control, self-determination, and ultimately, selfhood.

2. Athol Fugard,
Cousins: A Memoir

2.1
A Regional Writer

Athol Fugard has long struggled with the label "political playwright", which he describes in *Cousins: A Memoir* (1994) as a "pigeonhole" label (81). Misunderstood internationally as a "South African" writer and feeling now rejected for having "presumed to write and give voice to the black reality" in that country (Swarns: B1), Fugard in his memoir presents the case that his talent as a writer is his mastery of one place at one time in history (82), namely Port Elizabeth and the Eastern Cape region from 1932 to the present. The distinction permits him to retreat from the historical abyss of the struggle against apartheid and to revisit all four addresses of his youth — the house on Clevedon Road, the Jubilee Hotel, a farm north on the Old Cape Road, and Newton Park — that shape a framework of the imagination through which he has understood his own emotions. The framework is not new but up until now has been fragmented into separate plays. *"Master Harold" ...and the boys* is probably the best example of a play closely based on the life of the young Fugard. It is set in the St. Georges Park Tearoom which his mother ran for a quarter century. Its main character, Sam, is based on someone Fugard came to know in the Jubilee Hotel, also part of the map of his imagination. Even before writing *Cousins*, Fugard highlighted his dedication to portraying the "humble specifics of an Eastern [Cape] Province world" (Vandenbrouke: 197). Yet, given the historical context of his work, both in terms of when the stories take place as well as of when they are written, it seemed inevitable that these humble specifics would be transformed into examples of "universal plight" (194). As a white playwright giving voice to the marginalized people of South Africa, Fugard got caught up in the moral shaping of a new South Africa. Critics called his work existential, thinking that the desperate characters such as Boesman in *Boesman and Lena* (1970) were quintessential examples of the marginalized classes and races whose existence could be nothing other than a moment by moment experience. Lena's final contentedness at the end of the play, that today someone has heard her story,

captures the smallest of happiness in just being alive in South Africa in the period of apartheid. These poignant lives give way to larger ambition in works such as *My Children! My Africa!* (1990), that tend to be didactic and only temporarily successful. Stories about remote characters remain today the more memorable and enduring impressions. Because his plays depict the many facets of Port Elizabeth life, Fugard's argument against a political label is in his strong attachment to places that he knows intimately through childhood experiences. That the plays produce a socio-political tableau is beyond his control, he claims.

In *Cousins*, he argues that he is first and foremost a "regional writer"(81), choosing Port Elizabeth as his private address. Using specific time and place references, photographs, snippets of dialogue, and even a lengthy text written by Garth Fugard, Fugard presents himself in the moment of transition from old to new South Africa as a humble sage telling a private story spanning the era of his and his two cousins' youth from 1932 to just after World War Two. "It is time now to share" (2) a story from his youth, a youth that coincided with the beginning of apartheid. The mental, emotional, and physical homecoming that *Cousins* signifies is such a grandiose mark of humility in the time of cataclysmic change that I (and I suspect many readers) wonder at the contrast Fugard sets up between the political moment and his claim to be a humble Port Elizabethan. His avowed detachment from politics coupled with a distinct exploitation of the moment in history, evident in the time the "I" writes, 1994, raises questions about what double-sided tableau Fugard means to erect as the backdrop for the "multiplicity of stories"(3) he tells us he has access to. Having always used such detailed specifics — a mudflat, the front room of an apartment, the interior of a cafe — to penetrate the heart of political issues — poverty, alienation, racism — one wonders if he is not once again creating a duality whose subliminal theme is a question of survival, namely, his own. Autobiography as space in which emotions are managed may offer a particularly charged venue for Fugard's development. Putting his integrity on trial — particularly his tendency to exploit the moment as well as his inexorable development toward confession — *Cousins* sets the scene for the playwright's own survival as South African spokesperson.

Fugard's turning away from politics is ironically what makes him a political writer. Vandenbroucke's emphasis on Fugard's universality and politics rooted in existentialism is seconded by Dennis Walder's interpretation of Fugard's collaboration with the New Brighton Players[1] as inherently socialist, maybe even

communist, in the way collaboration tries to undo the hegemony of authorship: "Fugard was concerned to acknowledge the lives, indeed the very existence, of those of his compatriots excluded in one way or another from the centers of privilege and power in his society" (1993: 409-10). Turning toward the individual and witnessing his story has always been Fugard's strategy, one which not only had ethical implications — of giving voice to the voiceless — but also displayed an expertise in the orchestration of emotion, his own and his audience's. The moment of revelation in his plays almost always includes a divulging of secrets: in *"Master Harold"*, Sam reveals the truth about Hally's father's drunkenness; in *The Road To Mecca*, Marius admits his love for Helen; in *My Children! My Africa!*, Thami, speaking with the "full authority of the anger inside him"(79), explains to Isabel the dilemma his people are faced with. "Try to understand, Isabel," Thami says; it is Fugard's own emotions mirrored in Thami and projected onto the audience. In *Cousins,* situating himself apart from the political transition, he transforms the nature of change into a personal confrontation with a secret he is compelled to reveal, but which raises a crucial question about his orientation: whether he is indeed being honest about where he says he stands. The details of the secret, having nothing to do with the concerns of a new, free South Africa, distance him further. The aloof nature of personal memory, which for most of us is only revealed in private, intimate settings, makes an important point about all personal memories being remote in nature from public, political life. At the same time, being far away, they are useful mirrors that reveal the finer, homespun details of the larger society. Fugard's *Notebooks: 1960-1977* exposed the same distanced relationship to events in South Africa during that time; mentioning political events but once or twice, the notebooks were nevertheless a reflection of wider South African struggles. These dichotomies about Fugard's intent, fused in relationship by his imagination and emotions, exhibit the long but thin connection between the center of society (politics/public) and its margins (alienated/private).

2.2

Fueling Memoir with Confession

In his memoir, Fugard retrieves memory of his hometown to prove he is a regional writer like William Faulkner, and he also exposes how, in using his imagination to control his emotions through identification and narrative definition, he is led to understand his actions and to confess them. The same pattern is evident in many of his plays. In *"Master Harold"*, Sam finally explains to Hally why he spent time flying kites with him, because he felt sorry for the boy with the crippled father. Using his imagination to recreate the scene in the St. Georges Park Tearoom, Fugard controls the emotion from childhood. Contained, the emotions can roil in location, spinning ever more quickly and dangerously unless escape through a final confession diffuses the intensity. Confession acts like a release valve on a pressure cooker in Fugard's plays. The alternative is the process toward a total shutdown on emotion, a response Martha Nussbaum calls "lack of responsiveness" (178). Rooted in emotion whose climactic expression is persistently confessional, Fugard's memoir, like so many of his plays, makes good Bakhtin's view "that the words themselves contain no emotion, for it is the way in which they are spoken, the way they are acted out, that gives the utterance its emotional context" (Burkitt: 169). With Fugard's plays, we are privy to the detailed specifics of his imagination, its domination over emotion, and finally the emotional escape through confession; but only in the memoir does the whole system of survival embrace the life of the author. Reading his whole life as a play in which he struggles to choose a world and to be chosen by a world, Fugard writes a memoir as a climactic moment of openness in which the world is asked to acknowledge the individual, Fugard. The memoir is building a drama as well as a long confession. It builds toward a revelation of "secrets" about his cousin Garth, who becomes the central figure in *Cousins*. In the end, Garth joins Fugard in his role as "author [who] in the proper sense of the word is someone who makes public things which everyone felt in a confused sort of way", as argued by Pierre Bourdieu (Burkitt: 174). The memoir also reveals the pressure cooker of his imagination and functions as a release valve through which the emotions can now escape from the public/political Fugard of plays like *My Children! My Africa!* and return to a private story.

Not "the sole originator of an utterance" (Burkitt: 174) but simply a member of a dialogue with his cousins and himself that has been taking place since his youth, Fugard writes *Cousins* to read like a play

within the form of a prose autobiography. This is evident in the way he interacts with Garth's memoir as well as in his life-long commitment to drama. Since writing the memoir, Fugard has further experimented with internal dialogue in *Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Play* (1999). His most recent play *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002) also has autobiographical value in that it is set in New Bethesda — Fugard's second home since the early 1980s — and is about coming home after twenty years. The story of his cousins, one light-hearted, the other dark, his alienation from Garth after Garth's confession, his subsequent reunion, confession, and compassion make up a tale structured like Fugard's *Boesman and Lena*, *"Master Harold" ...and the boys*, or *The Road to Mecca*, where the climax is the raw character whom the audience is asked to judge. The memoir's overall dramatic effect results in Fugard presenting himself as an ordinary and desperate person from Port Elizabeth whose debt to his cousins mirrors his debt to the township actors and actresses with whom he began his career. At a subtextual level, Fugard asks his characters, who are all buried in fictional constructs, to join him in his "I" which is after all only a world — a Fugardian world — of intense emotion regulated by imagination. The memoir may reward Fugard with renewal because it requires a coming home of all his characters and a recognition that all the characters of his plays make up the identity of Fugard, an identity so complex that it cannot be told in one story, in one place. The accumulation of stories, just like the accumulation of dialogue in a play, however, needs a final revelation, a release valve; and this comes in the form of a lengthy monologue of the writer himself.

Stephen Spender writes: "A human instrument is most exact about objective things when it is most detached from them" (118), implying that the autobiographer cannot detach himself enough to get at the truth of himself. The statement makes sense if indeed objectivity is what the author is seeking, a goal that would lead to self-discovery and truth, *requiring* little to no compassion from the one who reads, but winning it in the end anyway. About Fugard, a case can be made that objectivity is the furthest thing from his mind when writing *Cousins*, because he is intuitively seeking to humiliate himself for having exploited and transformed himself into a political instrument, a predicament that few late 20th century South African authors escaped. Exploitation of time and place is the inevitable outcome of using the imagination, and a crucial component of identity. The individual says, "This world is given to me, from my unique place in Being, as a world that is concrete and unique. For my participative, act-performing consciousness, this world, as an architectonic whole, is arranged around me as around the sole center from which my deed

issues or comes forth: I *come upon* this world, inasmuch as I *come forth* or issue from within myself in my performed act or deed of seeing, of thinking, of practical doing" (Bakhtin, 1993:57). Fugard's retreat to a world of "humble specifics" seeks to prove that *he is more because he is less* than a tool of objectivity serving empirical truth — truth that necessarily drives political struggle but has been buried by postmodern ideology, whose insidious effect has been to kill the author. Turning his back on the universal but insisting on participating in a dialogue toward specifics, Fugard's enduring power lies in the hand that writes, not because it is objective, but because *it writes*, nothing else. In this "right" and "responsibility" to be oneself, which Bakhtin describes, nestles a fundamental morality which Fugard performs by writing his memoir: a search for the meaning of our life is attached to our sense of dignity, our demand for respect, and our progress toward respecting others. "We find the sense of life through articulating it", writes Charles Taylor (18). As one of the infinite examples of the quest of the individual, Fugard stands out as a model example of the ends justifying the means: exploitation of the public arena is justified by private humiliation.

Shame dogs Fugard and he has been clever to make good use out of it. Having left Port Elizabeth as a young man bound for the University of Cape Town, then later abandoning his studies to explore Africa, Fugard spent time living abroad and in other South African cities before he returned to Port Elizabeth and began to write the first play *The Blood Knot* (1963) set in that city. Henceforth, his exploitation of his hometown, its ordinary people, and his childhood memories, propelled his plays and transported Fugard to the heights of the literary universality Russell Vandenbrouke celebrates. At the same time he never abandoned his first lessons of writing in Johannesburg with black casts in Sophiatown, which Dennis Walder identifies as a gifted grassroots sensibility. Able to use Port Elizabeth imagery to serve his ambitions to say something important about South African lives, Fugard again and again tapped into the city he once yearned to forget but realized, "It is always this city that you will reach" (Cavafy quoted by Fugard: 83). His shame at having come from such a remote city in the Eastern Cape began to emerge as the emotional fuel he needed to expose South African injustice. To write about the city now — the wellspring of humility — is to peel away the mask of authenticity his plays live by. To a large extent because Fugard barely mentions the dramatic events taking place in South Africa, his memoir states that, No it was not race issues that really bothered me so much, although these too were important. Is this his final confession? Perhaps he is saying: The truth is much simpler, much more specific to my life, having to do with a couple of cousins whose

influence upon my craft, upon my sexuality, upon my personhood far outweighed what I hitherto have written about. As a way of admitting his own shortcomings politically, the memoir appeals to the reader for respect for the "true" Athol Fugard, even if that "truth" turns out to be temporary. His plea for deference, coupled with the reader's natural resistance to believe one who in the past represented himself otherwise, sets up a dilemma that in and of itself is emotional. While in the past the audience sat to the side "bearing witness" to moral dilemma as Sam asked Hally to reconsider their friendship, and Boesman solicited Lena for forgiveness, now, in *Cousins*, the reader is part of the drama, the one being asked to acknowledge, to respect, to show leniency. Like Lena who forgives or Hally who fails to understand Sam, the reader of Fugard's autobiography must decide how to respond. To help the reader, Fugard's strong and persistent argument that he is a regional writer and not a political writer carves out the space of interchange.

2.3
Port Elizabeth

Port Elizabeth *is* for Fugard an autobiography, available as much in his imagination as in the physical city marked out by streets, corners, buildings, and parks. He need only visit Jetty Street, Main Street, Donkin Reserve, Happy Valley, the Strand, Newton Park, the old Devon Road, Salisbury Park to recreate the autobiographical context in which his imagination takes flight. The "multiplicity of stories"(3) unfolds in myriad directions within this regional context. Jetty Street is a name that "still resonates for me with rich undertones of violence and sin" (66), writes Fugard as he admits to "[hanging] around in the shadows of Jetty Street spying on the rough and raw life coursing along its pavements" (66). "The ordinary men, women, and children on the pavements of Main Street"(71) peopled all his plays. Main Street drew in individuals from all over the city, a crossroad where people of all colors met temporarily, retiring to their homes far and wide in the evenings, leading very different lives that seemed hidden away but were hinted at by the "faces — young and old, male and female, black and white, colored and Indian"(82) that fed Fugard's cannibalistic imagination (60). Calling his imagination "cannibalistic" is an act of self-criticism and describes his shame at having taken advantage of his childhood environment that appears now in his thoughts and memories to be pristine and innocent.

Martha Nussbaum describes two developmental directions in which emotions evolve in a child: responsiveness, and lack of responsiveness. Fugard falls into the former. He exemplifies a sense-making responsiveness that shapes emotional "appropriateness to the life of an incomplete creature in a world of significant accidents, their connections to the development of practical reason and sense of self" (178). Fugard's "cannibalism" can be interpreted as a controlling response that orders random realities to make sense of himself. At home in the Jubilee Hotel, ordinary strangers furnished "archetypal transit spaces " (62) because that is what Fugard's imagination and responsiveness did: he created spaces around himself and around others. Fugard's mother, who was the central authority of the family, worked hard, particularly in the Jubilee and then later in the St. Georges Park Tearoom. She scraped together a living that never seemed to match her ambitions. Fugard's father, in contrast, benefited enormously from his marriage to a hardworking Afrikaner. He settled easily into all the households run for him, engendering a family of two sons and a daughter, and adapting to a routine that demanded little of him and allowed him the freedom to drink (except when he was stuck on the farm on the Devon Road), nurse his gammy leg, play the piano on occasion, and tell stories to a wide-eyed, precocious "Hally". The secrets about these two essential individuals, Fugard says quite clearly, "I am not yet up to telling" (3). Whetting our appetite for these by saying in the "Foreword" in *Cousins,* "There is only a hint of unquestionably the biggest and best of the stories of my childhood: those about my mother and father" (3), Fugard forestalls any discussion of these two key influences. This tactic — *The best is yet to come!* — has a way of undermining the self-effacement Fugard is striving for and encourages, for the time being, an avoidance of a discussion about the mother and father. Rather than focus on the polar workaholic/alcoholic parents and how that tension drew out the stark contrasting of good and bad cousin, Afrikaans versus English, detachment versus enmeshment, and then later the stark contrasts in his plays between light and dark (*The Road to Mecca*, *The Blood Knot*, "*Master Harold"*) Fugard wants us to follow the trail of the facilities in P.E. that nurtured his imagination as a mechanism that would help him control his emotions. So, down the hill, the library stretched his imagination to the American West and South and introduced him to the introspective Russian psyche, for instance. Two blocks from the Jubilee, Donkin Reserve was his personal playground. "It was where I came to hide away from my mom whenever I had done something really wicked"(65). It is where he flew his kites with Sam, later referenced in a seminal scene in *"Master Harold"... and the boys*. It is also "where with my cousin

Garth I had one of the most decisive experiences in my childhood" (65), one that gives him the crucial formula of confession, bearing witness, and indeed, lying, and one that makes complete detachment, as in the case of J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* , impossible for Fugard.

One of Fugard's several addresses in P.E. was on the old Devon Road, a farm meant to fulfill the "deep instinct in the Afrikaner to root himself in a piece of land that is his own and which can feed him and his family" (32). An utter failure, the farm nevertheless etched into Fugard's memory the way his "little Afrikaner soul smelt the potential of those fallow acres behind the house" (30). The fallow acres, on which his parents, and he in particular, failed would later reap the rich harvest of regional stories, transforming Fugard into a metaphoric farmer of a land at the edge of the civilized world. From the micro-experience of "feeling my way for the first time into that very specific world of the alienated working-class Afrikaner"(30), a macro-opportunity of representing forgotten voices in a marginal region emerged, much in the same way as the anguish of a vanquished South lent itself to Faulkner. Faulkner, whom Fugard credits for showing him how to master a code of a specific time and place (70), also exploits the specifics of local people and land to serve a universal vision of human endurance. Fugard assumes the role as scribe for the inarticulate people who boarded the bus for menial jobs in P.E., acknowledging them as the seed of his utterances and the rightful owners of who he has become.

From a weak-hearted attempt at farming on the Devon Road, to a "luxurious piece of suburbia on the corner of Hudson Street and Third Avenue in Newton Park" (43), to visiting his cousin Johnnie in Salisbury Park where his aunt and uncle ran a grocery store "with bad grace" and where he was first exposed to the "candle and lamp-lit periphery of Port Elizabeth" and the names that "litter my plays: Veeplaas, Kleinskool, Kortsen, Missionvale, Fairview, Swartkops" (44) — the specifics of P.E. and Fugard's world were complex and mapped out the young man's departure from mainstream Afrikanerdom as he tried to make sense of these different locations. Attempting first to make sense of them through music, Fugard was forced to acknowledge, "All I had then with which to respond is all I have ever had, and out of which I have fashioned all of my responses to life ... words" (48). His cousin Johnnie, a master at the piano, is the man to whom Fugard most owes a debt for making him realize that stories, not melodies, were where his talent lay. "The emotional event underneath that surface of words" (52) in even the simplest of confessions — that he would rather have been a musician than a writer — is the physical as well as the emotional

basis of Fugard's memoir and of his plays.

The combination of physical environment and of emotion is the origin of theater. Classical Greek thespian tradition purposefully appealed to the emotions. Theater was a place to cleanse the psyche of the physicality of emotions by elevating their content into linguistic and rational constructs. Not surprisingly, Fugard serves the lasting appeal of live theater and is credited with a mastery of constructing spaces in which emotions bask. By nurturing emotional spaces, Fugard gets at a larger context than what appears on stage physically. "This is the incredible power of Athol's plays: the emotional content of what he is exploring is bigger than what is physically happening", writes Susan Hilferty (480), who has worked with Fugard on set design. The same can be said for his memoir: the emotional content of what he is saying is far greater than the words of the memoir that at times come across as prosaic. Because the emotional response is larger than mere environment, larger than P.E. — in the same way that returning home after many years is really a much larger emotional experience for most people than it is a physical experience — Fugard has once again exploited the autobiographical specifics in P.E. — his stage — to exorcise emotional content out of himself, onto the setting. The emotions are then no longer physical, but mental, rational, malleable, exploitable. What are the linguistic specifics of the emotion? His failure at the piano and on the farm, his enslaving indebtedness to his mother (see *Captain's Tiger: A Memoir for the Stage* [1999] for the real agony of his enslavement), the anger and shame in his relationship with his father. It is tragic on one hand, comic on the other, that a man at 61, a veritable modern Shakespeare, is still grappling with childhood pain.

Yet grappling with and exposing oneself in the process are the enduring attraction of autobiographical writing. Whether public/political figures like Fugard succeed or fail at sincerity and authenticity is for the reader to decide, a power that is unlike any other in literature. What the reader taps into in his decision-making is the same as what the writer taps into when writing: a morality made up of respect moving between reader and writer. The current of respect enlightens both reader and writer about his own own dignity, a framework of identity each one is working on. The current of dialogue is making it possible for each member to articulate himself further in a "world that is experienced concretely... a world seen, heard, touched, and thought, a world permeated in its entirely with the emotional-volitional tones of the affirmed validity of values" (Bakhtin, 1993: 56).

2.4
Johnnie and Garth

The role articulation plays in describing the self in dialogue is similar to the role of the memoir. Many of us have sat at a dinner table with a tacit guest (perhaps even some of us have been that speechless personage) and been frustrated. It is impossible to have a dialogue with a person who refuses to speak or even a person who cannot speak, in the case of babies, senility, or people like Friday in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). By articulating, the individual constructs a framework of his identity, "a horizon within which [the "I"] is capable of taking a stand" (Taylor: 27), and provides a framework as a reference to others who strive to articulate themselves. "A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it", argues Taylor (35), whose intent is to get at the very foundation of why the self is compelled to explain itself. The dual responsibility of articulation describes the current of dialogue: responsibility toward self (respect input), and responsibility toward the *other* (respect output). Fugard's intuitive understanding of, first, creating a framework, and second, positioning the framework in relationship to others is best handled in his discussion of his two cousins, the use of photographs, and the memory of dialogue. Including each of these in his overall memoir, the framework of others within a framework of self, makes use of the *other* more explicitly than implicitly, raising questions in the reader about Fugard's autonomy. This autonomy is an essential characteristic of morality in terms of the concept of "dignity" (Taylor: 12). A person lacking autonomy risks shiftiness unless somehow the lack of autonomy is symptomatic of the dialogic relationship between self and *other*.

A younger Fugard experiences what so many children feel toward older siblings and cousins: a sense of awe. According to Fugard, this sense is best captured in the photograph of him and his cousin Johnnie (37), which exemplifies the mini-drama that played out on the streets of Port Elizabeth. Fugard assigns a front-row seat to the reader, who may now discern for himself the emotion on the faces of Athol and his cousin Johnnie as together they walk down Main Street in 1947. The photograph depicts a 15-year-old Fugard striding beside his taller, stealthier cousin who is reading as he keeps step. The photo is dark and has glaring contrasts of washed out bright spots and black shadows on their youthful faces. Fugard sums up the complex memory of the photo, fumbling with various interpreta-

tions, none of which ring true, especially in light of the fact that the same photo — the cousin now excluded — was once used as an advertisement for *"Master Harold"... and the boys* (38). The struggle to interpret what he also offers the reader to interpret introduces the interplay of audience response that Fugard thrives on and which he manipulates with his depiction of character.

While this photograph and others supply a memory surface through which Fugard's imagination plunges, what the reader cannot see is the depth of the reservoir of memory under the surface. Johnnie represents the image, which is mostly physical and sensuous (Johnnie looks good, he smells good, he plays the piano beautifully, he feels relaxed), but the depth of memory requires a more complex relationship, which is represented by Garth. This complexity can only be an approximate articulation, which for Fugard is linguistic as well as emotional: "What I am really talking about now is the emotional event underneath the surface of words, and I am saying that I try to organize, control and direct that event" (52), a skill he is first exposed to by his cousin Garth. Garth is a compulsive talker and the young Fugard absorbs his storytelling as a model of what he would later replicate on stage. The visual representation of Fugard's sets and the complex emotional and psychological reality combine the same surface/depth interaction intrinsic to conversations. This is particularly well done in *The Road to Mecca* when Helen lights all the candles on the stage and nurtures the brilliant surface of what we see with mirrors and glass. Until then Helen's dependence is reflected in the rather mundane dialogue the two women are having about the future of Helen's life, which is growing increasingly precarious; but when all the candles are finally lit, Helen plunges into a last monologue that reveals her complete independence. The fire, which at first represents the concern for the reason Helen can no longer live alone, becomes the metaphor of the reason she is free: "There is more light in you than in all your candles put together" (70), Marius is forced to admit. The same relationship between surface and depth informs the use of photographs in *Cousins*. By including the one of himself and Johnnie and then writing about it, Fugard accesses the emotional history of the space of the picture. This *includes* at one point cutting Johnnie completely out of the picture for the poster for "Master Harold". To go back to the same picture and betray the earlier use of the picture by emphasizing Johnnie's good looks, his smooth, rich hair, his confident stride makes the picture a metaphor for the still ambivalent emotions Fugard harbors toward his cousin, a sign that his imagination is still at work harnessing the emotions. The interplay between surface and depth is another way Fugard has

managed his emotions. Imagination, therefore, risks becoming “the second sense” of sense-making (Taylor: 18), a sense-making akin to lying.

As a self-confessed liar (66), Fugard is drawn to the way Garth lied and covered up the truth with excessive talk. Garth is Fugard’s “first encounter with that complicated and torturous pattern in human behavior, when men and women will act out a denial of themselves and their true natures because of inner pain and confusion” (98). Before long and through careful listening, Fugard discovers what Garth is hiding. The two are depicted sitting up on Donkin Hill on a bench overlooking Algoa Bay. Fugard is a youngster at the threshold of puberty. Garth has come back to P.E. once again to try to pull himself together and as always he is talking. In this scene, three aspects become apparent. The first is the amount of time Fugard spends developing the scenery, which is the specificity of Garth’s autobiographical occasion. From the sounds rising from Main Street below to the sun setting over Algoa Bay to Fugard remembering his own hands tucked in underneath his thighs, the details of the moment are as vivid as the photograph of himself and Johnnie. The second aspect is the exactness of Garth’s spoken confession. Like the photographs, the words stand separate from the memoir:

> “I’m not like other men ... I’m not interested in girls ... I’m different ... I like to be with men and boys ... Some people are born that way ... I am one of them” (101).

The confession itself is bland. The words are simple, foolish, and limited. But in the silence between confession and Hally’s response, the emotion is riveting:

> “You understand, don’t you, Hally” (101)?

Fugard nods, whispering,

> “Yes” (101).

Darkening his own innocence in a lie he will later pay for with years of alienation is the third aspect, the hidden secret that nestles in dialogue. The scene on Donkin Hill describes the private source of the emerging fiction and makes a case for Fugard’s final compulsion to bring the dramas he has written back home. His autobiographical statement demands that he look at the lies he has told over the years. Satisfying the compulsion, of course, risks further untruths.

What we are privy to in his memoir is not what he said and felt as a child but how he interacts with what he said and felt in childhood, a time, Nussbaum argues, replete with continual grieving. The lie on

Donkin Hill and its consequences is an example of Fugard's present grief. When the young Hally whispers, yes, he is in fact lying. Bakhtin warns of becoming passive in self-reflection. He stresses, "I can try to prove my alibi in Being, I can pretend to be someone I am not" (1993: 42). By exposing the lie and connecting it to consequences, Fugard once again makes use of himself, feeds on his wrongs; and though he suffers in the process, he also succeeds. Success is problematic in this sense in the way Gunn has pointed out. Success risks rigidifying identity. But the lie also permeates the photograph because we know the photograph was used other than to show the older Fugard's admiration for his cousin Johnnie. Fugard's lack of awareness of his own contradiction in including the photograph, raving about his cousin, and having at one time cut him out of the picture and advertised himself as a seventeen-year-old shows failure that is useful in persuading identity to perform as a non-alibi. "It is only my non-alibi in Being that transforms an empty possibility into an actual answerable act or deed", explains Bakhtin (1993:42), explaining the difference between the word and the act. Mixing alibi and non-alibi creates enormous ambiguity in the memoir.

On another level, looking back on the scene in Donkin Park, Fugard recognizes himself as a writer, not just a boy absorbing confession:

> From almost the first few words of his confession, something in me had jumped ahead and had known what was coming: somehow I tapped into a fund of secret knowledge inside myself that I never knew I had. It was my first experience of that most essential of all the writer's faculties — intuition. But as surprising as was its discovery, even more so were the emotions it provoked: a surge of dark elation, a thrilling sense of power (102).

Confession, a verbal posture, seems to be defined as the revelation of a lie, and Fugard pays tribute to Garth who had the courage to strike the verbal pose and entrust himself to words: to both the boundaries of his own spoken word (the alibi) and to the ensuing "absent presence" (124) of response (the non-alibi). The latter shapes itself into secrets and resides in the unconscious. On another even deeper level, Fugard is preparing us for a confession he himself must make by bringing in the memory of the dialogue. Like the photographs, the dialogue stands separate from the text (the point size is smaller; the text is indented). The eventual flatness of the confession Fugard foreshadows is disappointing, but also has a role to play. Again, Fugard assumes the role of alibi as he admits to homosexual experience. But the false

ending is shored up by a final interaction between Garth's memoir and Fugard's memoir, reopening also Fugard's relationship with Johnnie who is pictured again in the end, his hair now virtually gone. The connections between the description of Johnnie — good looking, sensuous, musical — and Garth's sexuality combine to say something more about Fugard, something that is perhaps not at all intended by the alibi but hoped for by the non-alibi: that the wrong cousin may have made advances. Fugard opens himself up to the reader's interpretation as Garth opened himself up to the young Hally's secret thinking and judgement.

The relationship between what is said and what is not said is another way reality remains lucid, flexible, evolving infinitely even within the finite moments of the past. The word — its utterance or silence — becomes the play or the exchange whose "central question ... is between a liberal framework [liberal in the sense of liberating the word] and the extent to which [the exchanges] challenge [liberation]" (Green, 51). The framework Fugard succeeds in articulating, without overstating connections, is the space that manages the still shifting emotions Fugard wants to round up without destroying them entirely. A confession that would appear at the end of the text stating his own tendency toward homosexuality would end his story, just as confession in his most famous plays brought conclusion. Conclusion in a political context is exactly what Fugard and his contemporaries are trying to avoid, for it would be easy to put the pen down in so many instances in South Africa. It might even be argued that putting the pen down is a moral imperative for some in South Africa. Avoiding that rigidity which Nussbaum describes in childhood as "lack of responsiveness" (174) is an essential goal in bridging transition, and by entering upon the scenes of grief — the first being the photograph, the second Garth's confession — Fugard avoids the problems that might arise were he to comment on anything other than what lies beneath the surface of grief, a domain that is far from being resolved. Charles Taylor reminds us that "The self's interpretations can never be fully explicit. Full articulacy is an impossibility" (34), a reminder that it is necessary to go easy on Fugard's still evolving sense of self. He is, of course, counting on that leniency, and risks at times a certain over-confidence that we will pardon him.

2.5
Garth's Memoir

After Garth's confession, the cousin turns up one day on the family's doorstep hoping to start anew in a land where his sexual alienation is more a secret than alienation by race. Garth beds down in Athol's room and one night attempts to sexually engage the young adult. Athol repels the attempt and henceforth loses contact with his cousin. It is a normal response, but the ensuing disconnection leaves Fugard at odds with his emotions. While up on Donkin Reserve, he understood Garth's autobiographical statement, "I like boys"; but when confronted with Garth's act in the bedroom (also a normal act even between cousins) Fugard's compassion falls apart. The difference in acceptance between articulation and action is the same dilemma that causes Bakhtin to investigate the act and to understand the act as something other than simply speech. The "division of the world into *I* and those who are all *others* for me is not passive and fortuitous, but is an active and ought-to-be division" (1993: 75). Garth, as a member of the *others*, elicits response, which in this case is emotional and long-lasting. That is not to say, however, that the response is complete, or that it withers into non-existence. It is always "yet-to-be-realized", is "incessantly and actively realized through my answerable deed" (75). Fugard's intensifying responsiveness to his cousin Garth is ultimately what the memoir is about and nowhere is this aspect more apparent than in the lengthy "Epilogue" he writes. As an afterthought Fugard adds a most critical scene and then follows up on that with an acknowledgement of Garth's grief.

Fugard's return to Garth as his play *A Place with the Pigs* is on stage in Cape Town is a gesture of responsibility on a very deep level toward his relationship with Garth, an essential "architectonic contraposition" of Fugard's life. The interplay between these two characters, Fugard and Garth, is now offered by the artist, Fugard, who always uses his imagination as a means of control, as a model of compassion, which he hopes the audience will absorb as an ideal of mutual respect. Fugard reminds us that despite the memoir's extensive celebration of Port Elizabeth, the city also embodies his unsettled nature. "I was again floundering helplessly in a quagmire of self-doubt and panic" (128), he writes about writing in the mid-eighties, and "During the writing of *Pigs* at the Ashram, my home on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth, these fears and doubts made me physically ill at my desk" (128). Fugard's close encounter with the deepest

sense of self-deprecation is expressed in his strange and still largely unexplored play *A Place with the Pigs*. In this play, Pavel, a deserter from the army, punishes himself by living with pigs. His self-loathing is so deep that at one point he removes his clothing and begins standing with the pigs, snorting, feeding at the trough, wallowing in shit until his wife, Praskovya, literally beats sense into him. This allegory of human psychology exposes self-loathing to such a degree that it pains one to witness Pavel. But the play must have been doubly difficult to act in, night after night, in Cape Town under the glare of poor reviews. It is in this state, a contextual, existential pigsty, that Fugard reencounters his cousin Garth. He invites Garth to come see the play in the half empty Baxter Theater after the cousin sends a note of recognition. Garth has sent letters in the past but Fugard was not ready to receive the gesture. Now, in his beaten down state, Fugard responds. Garth is glad to attend the play, and, loyal to the end, praises it over a cup of tea afterwards. The dialogue, set apart from the text, exploits the moment when Fugard is saved by his understanding cousin:

> "That scene where you wore the dress!"
>
> "You liked it?"
>
> "You bet! Bloody good laugh it was. But I have never wanted to try that one myself you know."
>
> "Never?"
>
> "No. Not my style."
>
> "What have you tried?"
>
> "Everything else" (137)!

In this moment both cousins see each other completely. The dialogue is charged with emotion that is both profoundly sympathetic as well as deftly humorous. It stands out as a model of empathy, of a moment where identities are fully acknowledged. Meaning is exchanged and both men walk away from this encounter able to face themselves or at least attempt to face themselves. Self-respect is restored by mutual respect, an exchange that had been lost by the young Athol's false articulation and the cousin Garth's attempt to involve the young Fugard. For a brief moment, anyway, the two cousins see eye to eye which describes a full autobiographical experience, where the "I" has been fully recognized by the *other*. The moment is fleeting, a truth evinced only temporarily. After that, Garth writes

his memoir which sits in a box unread for a long period of time until it is finally acknowledged and indeed celebrated in Fugard's own memoir.

In the "Epilogue", Fugard claims the seed of his own memoir was sown in a conversation with Garth where Fugard had encouraged Garth to write his memoir. Narrating in the memoir his own deterioration after the death of a man he loved, Garth allows Fugard finally to come to terms with his own lie and subsequent behavior toward Garth: "When I reached the end of Garth's memoir, turned the last of those one hundred-twenty six handwritten pages in the old-fashioned office-file, I discovered that my feelings had changed" (151). Garth's memoir is the climactic moment in Fugard's memoir that releases Fugard from one more mental state of bondage responsible for his childhood oppression. While before he was sorry, now he is a changed man, a state shared by Sam and other characters in the plays, who bear witness.

Part of Fugard's "architectonic contraposition" is also his relationship with his audience, from whom he is hoping to elicit a note of compassion, similar to what he has modeled in his response to Garth's memoir. He puts the reader's response up to a test by bringing in Garth's memoir and by modeling compassion, respect, indebtedness to his long-lost cousin. In hoping that his own memoir reads like a revelation of secrets and in placing himself as a parallel personage to his cousin Garth, who throughout the chapter "Garth" is dark and devious, Fugard comes across as lacking autonomy and is susceptible to the problem Taylor identifies as "orientation"(41).

> Orientation has two aspects; there are two ways we can fail to have it. I can be ignorant of the lie of the land around me — not know the important locations which make it up or how they relate to each other. This ignorance can be cured by a good map. But then I can be lost in another way if I don't know how to place myself on this map (41).

Fugard's thorough and lifelong commitment to describing the lie of the land, his mapping out of Port Elizabeth, and his attempt to recognize the private address of his emotional response, fail in getting him situated on the map. While humility and self-accusations of cannibalism, and the modeling of adoration of his cousin might be moments of accuracy, he avoids placing and situating himself "in relation to the good, or ... in contact with it" (42). The "good", which Taylor defines as worthiness and meaningfulness, elucidates "dignity", the meeting point between the input and the output of respect, and a

concept trying to solve the unsolvable contraposition between "I" and the *other* described by Bakhtin (1993: 75). The act of writing a memoir, of attempting to tell the truth, as if in a courtroom, might resonate with a shared dignity that Fugard and his cousin Garth model; but there is no evidence that either cousin has revealed the whole truth about their characters. In Fugard, an unconsciousness of having failed might be once again orchestrated. His exploitation of his own failure may be the final twist in his autobiography.

2.6
Facing the Firing Squad

"The existential predicament in which one fears condemnation is quite different from the one where one fears, above all, meaninglessness" (Taylor: 18). Yet condemnation and meaninglessness in a country in transition like South Africa may be closely linked because the condemnation of a person for wrong association or subconscious exploitation, or even simply obsolescence, can erode meaning if meaning was built originally on shifting ground. Bakhtin says ground is always shifting: it is architectonic. The moment is always once-occurrent, unique; dialogue is in a state of constant realignment. Fugard's final stretch — to reorder his imagination so that his emotions remain in a controlled state — depends on the authority of the autobiographical statement to realign identity so that the writer may believe himself. Remaking the horizon largely depends on the amount of respect he generates, which he does toward Port Elizabeth, toward his cousins, and toward Garth's memoir; but construction also pivots on the amount of respect returned to him, and especially how much he returns to himself.

By the end of the period of time covered in *Cousins*, Fugard has moved to New Bethesda in the Karoo, "an austere world that withers human vanities and conceits" (14), and Garth has passed away. The change of location is significant because place as well as death reframes identity. From his fresh vantage point in New Bethesda in 1993, Fugard writes about seeing himself trapped in a family portrait which has been hanging on his wall for all the time between "me", the 61-year-old writing, and the

"little boy squatting on the bottom step on the extreme left" (5). The boy — whose name is mostly "Hally", also Athol, and sometimes "the author as a young man", but never Harold as that was his father's name, and always the friendly "chum" in conversation with his father — scowls at the older Fugard who has to admit, "I feel no connection with that little boy" (12). The boy whom Fugard remembers torn between loving and resenting his crippled father, between idolizing and pitying his mother for working so hard, between wanting to be a piano player like his cousin Johnnie yet finding his talent in storytelling, between his English tongue and Afrikaner heart, is still on occasion a stranger staring back at him in the bathroom mirror. It is a postmodern goal for Fugard to resist wanting to take charge of the youth's face inside the frame, to refrain from stepping back from the family scene and looking at it "objectively" and with assumed authority. He knows the space or frame of the identity looks back at the space and frame of the authority. The boy controls him as much as he controls the boy. Rather than talk directly about the boy and risk falsifying the disconnection, Fugard focuses on what frames the boy, and in particular in the photograph, on who stands around him. In the photograph, "The image it presents of the gentle, silver-haired English presence of my paternal grandmother and my father — the only two adult Fugards in it — swamped by the four Afrikaner Potgieter sisters, their husbands and children, is a perfect expression of my cultural reality" (12). The photograph is a space in which the boy must function. In it he must give out or withhold respect; in it he is given or denied respect. Not being able ever to leave Port Elizabeth really means not being ever able to leave these people.

At the end of *A Place with the Pigs*, Pavel decides to give himself up to the authorities and to tell the truth about his desertion. Hiding from others in a pigsty turns out to have been the wrong choice. "It's a crooked fate that ties up a man's freedom and his surrender in the same bundle" (98) is Pavel's realization that he cannot escape connection to other men. Although he is scared, his only choice as a human being is to face their judgment, which he does, putting on his best suit — his wedding suit — and insisting that they go to the highest order (not to the street corner as his wife suggests) to announce his presence. Aware that his seriousness in deciding to go public will be met with as serious a punishment, namely the firing squad, he says, "Even if my punishment turns out to be a firing squad ... those men, looking at me down the barrel of their guns, will be 'home' in a way this sty could never be" (99).

"The author is one who speaks and therefore makes objective the behavioral ideologies that had previously been only implicitly known" writes Ian Burkitt (175), cultivating a belief that the writer is explicitly objective as he enacts that which is not said, which is always subjective. Fugard's memoir makes an artifact of social behavior out of the autobiographical experience and its attendant confessional fuel, aiming to be subjective, to submit to the boundaries of self, to succumb to the shame of humble specifics. This is where we are in a post postmodern/multi-cultural world whose attempts to silence the individual as author has only resulted in an ever more articulated individualism. Unlike Spender, who believes that the statement *I am I* is a "measuring [of] the capacity of human beings to tell the *truth* about themselves" (122, my italics), Fugard demonstrates that the autobiographical statement measures the *will* of the individual to speak for himself even when previously others have spoken for him and even when perhaps his voice is no longer respected. "Again and again Fugard's characters are in themselves evidence of their oppressed state," observed Michael Green in 1984 (51). The insight continues to apply to the eternal lack of recognition an individual suffers from and must learn to solve through self-respect. Hally, Sam, Boesman, Lena, Helen, Elsa, Pavel and many others — these voices all get sucked up into Fugard's courage, that is finally on display in *Cousins*, and that rises as something greater than itself because the tradition of courage is to counter self-deprecation. Speaking up — once described as a code made up of the "desperate need to talk, to tell, and to ask forgiveness" (quoted in Weales: 507) — evolves into a path to righteousness for the new South Africa. Whether this path is exactly what Bishop Tutu had in mind when he expressed hope that Afrikaners confess collusion with privilege and oppression is unlikely; Fugard's politically potent apolitical address pays homage to process more than content.

3. Port Elizabeth Photo Album

The places and period Athol Fugard describes in *Cousins* mirror his plays and their origin as well as a specific region whose locations one can go and visit, photograph, and inherit as one's own experience. In a series of ten photographs of Port Elizabeth I took while researching at Rhodes University, the reader can now follow the trail of addresses and public spaces Fugard marks out in *Cousins.*

In Fugard and in his memoir, there is evidence that indeed everything begins with an autobiographical origin, a Bakhtinian "unique point of origin". Origin, however, is a space/time construct and can in this sense never be reproduced. Time is irretrievable. But according to Taylor, who believes that a sense of self depends on the retrieval of memory to help construct a horizon, what is lost in "time" in Bakhtin's philosophy can be recreated by Taylor's emphasis on the use of memory to frame one's horizon. In this sense, Fugard's tour of P.E. embodies the craft of memoir, the shaping of space, and the art, which is represented by the retrieval of memory. Fugard returns to the address in his writing and thereby develops a metaphoric homecoming. The homecoming is a final repository of memory, a fleeting and in the end unsatisfying document of his return, but one that proves to himself and to others his will and courage to locate himself in a specific time and place.

I also wanted to include these photographs as another example of the interplay between surface and depth. Each photograph is a surface catalyst: an infinite wellspring of the memory of my visit to Port Elizabeth to visit the very places mentioned in the memoirs. The relationship between Fugard's memoir and my travels to the locations is an example of reader response and its dialogic nature. The same relationship did not exist with Breytenbach's or Coetzee's memoirs, both of whose locations I also visited and photographed. The triumph – in my opinion – of the photographs in connecting memoir to specific location in Port Elizabeth is a sign that Fugard has succeeded in his claim as regional writer. The success immediately raises questions about Fugard's authenticity, a concern he himself incorporates by moving to New Bethesda in the end.

Port Elizabeth

The photograph of Port Elizabeth taken in 2000 of an old and undated photograph in the Port Elizabeth Library predates the restructuring of the downtown infrastructure and is most likely the Port Elizabeth downtown in which Fugard thrived. Like in *Cousins*, Jetty Street juts out into Algoa Bay from the square. The library is directly in front of the head of Jetty as well as at the end of Main

Street, which runs east from the square: "At one end was the city hall: white, square and as solid as the wedding cakes my mother baked and decorated as a sideline; and at the other end, beckoning me through all my childhood and youth, was Africa" (65). The photograph captures the heart of Fugard's dramatic imagination: Main Street provides the incessant flow of humanity between the South African government and the rest of Africa and which Fugard says he has mastered; Jetty street is the dark secretive energy of sin; Donkin Reserve — the gassy knoll overlooking the lower downtown — is the mountain of confession, of play, of transcendence that brings the dramas to climax.

Port Elizabeth Public Library

The Port Elizabeth Public Library is the single most important public building outside of Fugard's home that influenced his life. "Among the major [formative experiences of my childhood] was unquestionably my discovery of the beautiful Port Elizabeth Public Library, situated (with an appropriate symbolism in terms of the choices to be made in my life) opposite the entrance of Jetty

Street" (67). Fugard faults his father for coaxing him into the world of reading and books. Soon he was to meet up with the great William Faulkner whose own regional loyalty Fugard tries to emulate. The location of the library at the nexus of Jetty Street, Main Street, and Donkin Hill further stretches the symbolic value of hometown. The layout of the city mirrors Fugard's inner awareness — or so at least he wants it to be. The stalwart self-determination further represented by Queen Victoria's statue exudes a self-confidence that seems out of place if not downright bold in the moment of South African transition. Will the statue come down? Not if it has a say so.

Donkin Reserve

"A large, open public space with a lighthouse in the middle, and a few strands of scraggly, gnarled pines. This was my personal playground; it was here that I came to hide away from my mom whenever I had done anything really wicked, and it was here that I flew kites with Sam, and where with my cousin Garth I had one of the most decisive experiences of my childhood" (65). The bench,

exemplified in the photograph, features in the moment of Garth's confession as well as in Sam's instructive reminder to Hally in *"Master Harold"... and the boys* that the boy need not be naïve on the whites-only bench. The bench in Donkin Reserve is a symbol of confession and the loss of innocence initiated by the telling of secrets. When Fugard says, "Writing… is… essentially a trade in secrets" (1), he imagines a trade borne on the winds and tides visible from a bench up on a hill. He says, "It is time now to share this one" (1) as though the winds have suddenly changed, and the tide is in his favor.

36 Clevedon Road

The photo introducing the section Family Photo is taken in front of 36 Clevedon Road in a house belonging to Fugard's grandmother. The house is pictured in the memoir (14) but does not resemble the photo below of a house preserved and protected under historic status in the upscale eastside neighborhood. While living at 36 Clevedon Road, "All decisions, all control of family eco-

nomics were [grandmother's], and after her death my mother took over and then her world became law" (14). From this house, the move to the Jubilee Hotel where Fugard slept sometimes in one room with his family signals a financial change for the worse. Fugard's insistence that "To this day I still bridle at any suggestion of class distinction and privilege" (18) is in defense of the family's movement in and out of affluence represented by the Clevedon neighborhood and later by the Newton Park address. His defensiveness could well be the seed response that leads Fugard to embrace the ideals of a classless philosophy but that also begins the cycle of secrecy and confession associated with idealism.

Devon Road

After years living and working in the Jubilee Hotel, the Fugard family moved out to the world of "smallholdings and scabby little farms"(27) sixteen miles out of center city. The farm pictured in this photo could not be much different from Fugard's twenty morgen plot although the house he describes was a far cry from the Cape Dutch thatched roof farmhouse below. The move was impor-

tant to Fugard for it was here that he learned that "The deep instinct in the Afrikaner to root himself in a piece of land that is his own and which can feed him and his family is a powerful element in my own psychology" (32). That he claims to have more respect for the harvest of a bag of walnuts (32) and "the magnificent pines, and cypresses, poplars and bluegums, acacias and wild pear that line the dusty roads of [New Bethesda]" (36) than any theater award he received is hard to believe, but the statement is meant to ask his mother for forgiveness for chopping down a row of bluegums on the Devon farm and for failing so utterly at farming the land. The Afrikaner soul that smells the potential of fallow acres (32) is the same Afrikaner psyche writing in English (13) and making a claim on Port Elizabeth. Has Fugard succeeded in harvesting an immortal Port Elizabethan? Himself? The characters in his plays? Or has he again failed? Perhaps this was his intent in the end.

St George's Park Tea Room

The St. George's Park Tea Room became famous in 1980 when it metamorphosed into a stage set in London and later on Broadway. Fugard's mother proudly ran the Tearoom for thirty years and although the architecture of the building has not been altered, the inside today is far less than what is described in Fugard's play *"Master Harold"... and the boys* and pictured in the photograph of the

interior (46). The tearoom was "a place where we all came together to tie and untie that rosary of knots that is every family's unique story" (115). The description of what lay at the heart of the 1980 autobiographical play is a far cry from the hardened overt interpretation that *"Master Harold"* illustrates the waxing postcolonial alienation in South Africa beginning in the 1950s. In the memoir, the tearoom is one stop among many the mother's "rubbish" makes before being boxed up for good and stacked in closets and under beds (117). The image recalls the mess of a boxed up and throw away life of the lifeless parent in *Hello and Goodbye*. In the play, while the father is lying in bed dead in the adjoining room, the children rummage through the cardboard boxes looking for something of value. The tearoom is now an empty shell, rented for R500 per month by an Indian man who is trying to make a living off pop and candy in a struggling post 1994 economy.

73 Third Avenue, Newton Park

After failing out on the 20 morgen plot, the Fugards move to Newton Park which was "a substantial and, by comparison with Devon's primitive facilities, luxurious piece of suburbia on the corner of Hudson Street and Third Avenue" (43). More than any other address, Newton Park is a house of walls: "High walls, low walls, ornamental walls, wire-mesh and split-pole fencing" (106).

The walls are "the appropriate metaphor for the wary and guarded adolescent I carried into the house… I was fifteen years old" (106). "Very little family life was lived out in 73 Third Avenue, Newton Park" (115), but "it was in [the four bedrooms] that you found signs of life" (116). From this house, Fugard eventually leaves the family, ushering in his father's final years of loneliness and his own savage guilt (118), but not before the final scene of Garth's advances. Of it, Fugard says: "There was nothing left finally but to use the darkness to bring down the curtain on this crazy little scene we were acting out" (123). The morning after Garth's misstep, he leaves a note on the kitchen table saying goodbye and beginning the thirty-five year silence between the two cousins. Home of *"Hello and Goodbye"* as well as the opening scene of *"Blood Knot",* the front room and the bedroom at Newton Park further the "archetypal transit spaces" (62) first experienced at the Jubilee Hotel.

Salisbury Park

Fugard still goes to visit the Asian owner of the general store pictured below. His Aunt Ann and Uncle Lou owned the store, and it was here that Fugard spoke/acted out his very first dramas. Accompanied by his cousin Johnnie on the piano and performed in front of his aunt and mother on Sunday evenings, the plays forced Fugard to accept his inferiority at the piano and to turn to words as

a response to life (48). "I write, read or even just think the names 'Buffelsfontein Road' or 'Salisbury Park' and I smell a heavy fragrance compounded of paraffin and chew-tobacco, ground coffee and blue soap, all stirred into the clammy sweetness from sacks of moist brown sugar; I close my eyes and I see again a dimly lit world of shadows and muted, deferential voices as soft as the moths fluttering around an old Coleman lamp that is hissing away on a wooden counter" (43). In contrast to the dead isolation and insulation of Newton Park, the worlds of the candle and lamp-lit periphery of Port Elizabeth fired Fugard's imagination (44). "It was in that little lounge in Salisbury Park that I developed and shaped a dramatic imagination" (52). Competing with his cousin, Fugard "[tried] to write plays with the same emotional dynamic, the same organization of energy as there is in music… [one that would lead to] the emotional event underneath the surface of words" (52). The emotional event we know is the moment of confession, of bearing witness, of telling secrets. Fueled by competition, the Fugardian confession takes on new meaning.

New Bethesda

Fugard wrote *Cousins* in Sneeuberg Lodge, fifty miles as the crow flies from where he was born. “I have… now returned — emotionally and physically – to the Karoo” (13), he writes even though the entire memoir is a return to Port Elizabeth and to those places that most shaped him. “My sense of belonging there, of ‘belonging to’ it, is of an order I have never experienced anywhere else in my life” (13), he says yet goes on for the next hundred and forty pages describing who he was as a boy, a young man, and a playwright, and the way he is rooted in houses, parks, on street corners and public buildings. “Our attempt to defeat the high imprisoning walls of our mortality” (152) is no less evident in Fugard’s claim on the addresses in Port Elizabeth than in his claim on this modest castle in New Bethesda.

4. J. M. Coetzee,
Boyhood: a Memoir

4.1
The Dialogical Novel

In 1995, Coetzee (2001: 114-126) wrote and presented a paper on Joseph Frank's five-volume biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Written two years before the publication of *Boyhood*, the essay's section IV blames Frank for not supplying what is missing in Bakhtin (who is at the center of discourse on Dostoevsky), "namely, a clear statement that dialogism as exemplified in the novels of Dostoevsky is a matter not of ideological position, still less of novelistic technique, but of the most radical intellectual and even spiritual courage" (123). According to Coetzee, "A fully dialogical novel is one in which there is no dominating, central authorial consciousness, and therefore no claim to truth or authority, only competing voices and discourses" (123).

Can there be such a novel? Taking *Boyhood* as an example of dialogical fiction or autobiography, we see a contest taking place in which each voice (both silenced voices) has its own truth. In light of Coetzee's own identification of a debate within him over whether identity is shifting or absolute, the memoir reenacts the discourse. But is there truly no "dominating, central authorial consciousness"? Who makes the decision that a memoir gets written? Who decides what time and place the memoir will cover? Who declares the rules and restrictions that will govern the time and place? Who, if not the author?

Going back to a Bakhtinian psychology, not only do language and written language enact dialogue, "human thinking is also predominantly dialogical and, therefore, also marked by an internally complex two-sidedness" (Shotter: 14). In *Boyhood*, Coetzee comes closer to dissecting the two-sidedness he embodies, but it is doubtful whether he has reached the bottom of it, or whether he ever will. For the student of Coetzee, it is vital to acknowledge the doublespeak in *Boyhood* because it reformulates the autobiographical/fiction debate over his work and possibly the work of others.

First and foremost, it moves the debate entirely away from realism that its proponents have continuously criticised Coetzee for evading. The outer world and its limitations is not a place where Coetzee has

ever intended to toil. "He lives wherever he finds himself, turned inward"(Attwell, 1992: 393), he says about himself in "Retrospect", his final interview with Attwell in *Doubling The Point*. It is a statement we must know a little more about. Janet Varner Gunn points out that autobiography marks out the finite boundaries and limits of the inner *and* outer world. Coetzee writes an inner world that also, if it is to be fertile and productive, must be marked out, flattened, and regulated for fair play by some dominant authority. And if he seems to want to argue that no central authority determines the field of debate, then he must concede that the contest is being decided upon by *someone* or *something*. Tolstoy ends up answering the same question in a much more primitive form with the Christian Truth, concludes Coetzee in *Doubling the Point* (293). Can he possibly be heading there as well?

No, for Coetzee functions within a secular society, and, seen from a certain angle — the angle that is governed by social laws — *Boyhood* proves it. In the following sections, discussion over the rules of discourse between two contestants will be laid out. Unlike Fugard's spatial imagination, which he learned to master in order to control his emotions and then consequently diffuse with confession, upon demand, Coetzee has set up a contest between characters, a contest from which, once started, there is no escape. A certain game is played — a game of truth; there are rules, boundaries, score keeping, a beginning, and an end. So to get back to the question, who decides that a memoir should be written? The answer is the same as in any secular culture: the audience decides. While there might be an argument that Coetzee wrote *Boyhood* as a bridge from the old to the new South Africa, more likely Coetzee writes his memoir because he wants to compete and to prove that he has the courage to do so in every literary contest. The audience demands memoirs. Coetzee is game.

What must ultimately be decided about *Boyhood* is whether its quest for justice is a choice Coetzee bases on a freedom of expression Bakhtin calls "free volition"[1] , or whether his toiling for justice comes to him in the Kantian sense, as an imperative he cannot escape. The struggle to create norms for discussion about a boy's life whose normalcy was in question from every angle may not be simply a matter of free expression or an unknown imperative. It might, as Bakhtin argues, be an "emotional-volitional"[2] act of identity whose essential dignity resides in a sense of justice, fair play, a level playing field.

4.2
Introducing the Boy in *Boyhood*

Boyhood begins with the mother and a portrait of her strange ways as the family moves to Worcester, a small Karoo town 120 kilometers from Cape Town. The mother acquires a bike and defiantly resists being confined to the house on Poplar Avenue, "I will not be a prisoner in this house, she says. I will be free"(3). She tries to learn how to balance but eventually has to give up. Both her will to separate from the family and her inability to ride a bike portray her as a frustrated individual: inconsistent, impulsive, and ineffective, but nevertheless determined to try. For an impressionable, sensitive boy, who "can always pick his mother out from the group: the one in whose shy, defensive look he recognizes a feminine version of his own" (39), the memory stays with him as he tries to find the equilibrium that will endow him with the wherewithal to escape as well.

The boy and his mother are hopelessly entangled. "He is too close to his mother, his mother is too close to him" (37). She is important but weak because she is so unpredictable. She judges others harshly, suddenly. "Above all [the boy] fears the moment, a moment that has not yet arrived, when she will utter her judgment" (162) at him. If she judges him,

> It will be like a stroke of lightning; he will not be able to withstand it. He does not want to know. So much does he not want to know that he can feel a hand go up inside his own head to block his ears, block his sight. He would rather be blind and deaf than know what she thinks of him. He would rather be like a tortoise inside its shell (162).

A way of living with her would be to stand in opposition to her impulsive, drifting, shifting opinions which would require a stable, committed, disciplined, even rigid position.

The boy "is a liar and he is cold-hearted too: a liar to the world in general, cold-hearted toward his mother" (35). The boy begins to lie because he cannot separate himself from the mother's love, a love that expresses itself in the infinite sacrifices she makes as a mother.

> Feeling her hurt [of separation], feeling it as intimately as if he were part of her, she part of him, [the boy] knows he is in a trap and cannot get out. Whose fault is it? He blames her,

> but he is ashamed of his ingratitude too. Love: this is what love really is, this cage in which he rushes back and forth, back and forth, like a poor bewildered baboon (122).

Recalling his closeness to his mother and his character's resemblance to hers, the boy feels trapped within the confines of his mother's love. The sense of no escape mirrors the imprisonment he feels trapped inside himself, inside the memory of her, inside the boy. The boy can lie to her, keep secrets from her, refuse to kiss her. Through her he experiences his first autobiographical frustration: namely, how does one cut oneself off from oneself. Being oneself and being normal cannot be had at the same time: "If he stopped lying he would have to polish his shoes and talk politely and do everything that normal boys do. In that case he would no longer be himself. If he were no longer himself, what point would there be in living?" (35). The boy solves this problem by pretending, lying, fantasizing, in other words, by deliberately not being himself.

The boy "wants everything to be as it was in the past" (82). The past is a time of chivalry and harmony — at least, this is the boy's fantasy. The boy's desire is also crude and filled with conflict: "He wants his father to beat him and turn him into a normal boy. At the same time he knows that if his father dared to strike him, he would not rest until he had his revenge"(13). The boy whose passions roil with contradiction cannot make sense of himself, yet his desire to make sense of himself is acute. He wants to know what being himself will cost, what sacrifice will be exacted. He sees that the sheep on the family farm "have calculated the price and are prepared to pay it — the price of being on earth, the price of being alive" (102).

The boy often stays home from school, which the mother somehow excuses and which the father disdains but cannot fight. The young John pretends he is sick and believes it himself until after midmorning when he is feeling better and dares to wander about the empty house. On his days at home, he reads voraciously. Reading, going to the bioscope, listening to stories on the radio stimulate his imagination, and from there the boy imagines that "He wants, one day to be faithful as the snow-goose is faithful"(45). It is a momentary respite from the gloom of that everyday life which is filled with going to school, witnessing beatings of boys who are tougher than himself, experiencing the shame of his cowardice. For a moment, in the boy's imagination, he wants to be faithful, not a liar. It is a glimmer of hope for the boy, one that gets re-ignited when the boy encounters the dusty volumes of his great grandfather's autobiography *Ewige Genesing,* a thoroughly boring account of spiritual awakening.

The above summary, not so different in tone from the actual text, demonstrates the neutralized "I". The "lie" such neutrality vis à vis the self constructs undermines the attempt at autobiography while at the same time it makes the autobiographical attempt an exchange on level ground. Neutrality handicaps the "I", but it enables the boy's authenticity.

4.3
Introducing the Man in *Boyhood*

Coetzee, who speaks with a biased "I" in *Doubling the Point*, does not fault his father. In "Retrospect", he gives both his parents "eternal credit" (393) for remaining aloof from the nationalistic Afrikanerdom instituted the year the family moved to Worcester and the boy was eight. The interview contradicts *Boyhood* on this issue: nowhere in the memoir is the boy forgiving of his father; and nowhere does he give him credit. It is a key difference between the man Coetzee speaking to editor David Attwell and the boy who is emotionally present in the man, and is evidence that the boy is at the center of a fiction regulated by some autobiographical restrictions.[1]

A summary of the memoir's limited time and place is as follows: The Coetzees moved to Worcester due to the boy's father losing his job in Cape Town after a bureaucratic shake up when Malan took over power in 1948. The father had left the family farm to study law and later joined the allied forces in World War II. Years later, with a wife and two sons in tow, he was dismissed in Cape Town and took the first available job as bookkeeper in a cannery in Worcester. Vastly overqualified for the position, the father submitted to his new life, and the family was asked to swallow a downsized home and lifestyle in one of the new and still treeless neighbourhoods on Worcester's outskirts. The boy attended the local schools where most of the children came barefoot. There he had to choose a religion, and because on the day he was asked to choose he had been reading and studying Rome and the Romans, he opted for Roman Catholic. The family visited the Coetzee farm during the holidays. Run by Son, the oldest of the six brothers, the farm was a traditional Klein Karoo merino operation managed by trusty Khoi. The house was large enough to sleep three generations of Coetzees, whose cleaning, laundry, and cooking were performed by the wives and daughters of the Khoi males who managed the farm.

The Coetzees' life in Worcester lasted four years until the family returned to Cape Town to Reunion Park. There, the father tried and failed to support the family by representing members of the underclass in court. Soon, he fell into bad company and was drinking heavily and plunged into debt irreparably. At the same time, the boy had been wait-listed at a number of the more elite Cape Town boys' schools and had to content himself with enrollment in the local Jesuit high school. The mother began to work first to pay off the debt her husband had incurred and then to support the family on her own. Meanwhile, a relative, Aunt Annie, fell ill and died. In the weeks and months of deterioration, the mother took the boy to Aunt Annie's old apartment where he discovered a number of books written by an Uncle Albert: *Ewige Genesing*, *Kain*, and *Die Sondes van die Vaders*. A boy, who up until then had shown little interest beyond reading, playing cricket, and getting the highest marks in class, attended Aunt Annie's funeral, at which the coffin was left unburied, standing in the rain.

The autobiographical boundaries laid out in "Retrospect" covering the same periods from 1948 to 1951 in Worcester, and then from 1952 to 1958 in Reunion Park read as follows:

> A sense of being alien goes far back in his memories. But to certain intensifications of that sense I, writing in 1991, can put a date. His years in rural Worcester (1948-1951) as a child from an Afrikaans background attending English-medium classes, at a time of raging Afrikaner nationalism, a time when laws were being concocted to prevent people of Afrikaans descent from bringing up their children to speak English, provoke in him uneasy dreams of being hunted down and accused; by the age of twelve he has a well-developed sense of social marginality. (People of his parents' kind are thundered at from the pulpit as *volksverraaiers*, traitors to the people. The truth is, his parents aren't traitors, they aren't even particularly deracinated; they are merely, to their eternal credit, indifferent to the *volk* and its fate.) His years in Worcester are followed by adolescence in Cape Town, as a Protestant enrolled in a Catholic high school, with Jewish and Greek friends. For a variety of reasons he ceases visiting the family farm, the place on earth he has defined, imagined, constructed, as his place of origin. All of this confirms his (quite accurate) sense of being outside a culture that at this moment in history is confidently setting about enforcing itself as the core culture of the land.

> Sociologically, it helps, perhaps, to think of him in his late teens as a *raznochinets*, in the line of Turgenev's Bazarov and those hordes of young men in Dostoevsky's novels with their pallid faces and burning eyes and schemes to change the world — as a socially disadvantaged, socially marginal young intellectual of the late British empire. Disadvantaged? Well, perhaps not disadvantaged. But by the standards of the white middle class, unadvantaged. His parents have no foothold in either Afrikaans or English social circles. They have unending financial troubles. He pays his own way through university doing odd jobs, if only because he is too squeamish to witness his mother's sacrifices. (393-394)

In comparison, the second marking out of boundaries is more fleshed out, more subjective, a concern that seems to plague Coetzee and that must be held hostage by a greater drive for the truth. But the two paragraphs are useful because not only do they mark out beginning and end of the period of time revisited in *Boyhood*, they highlight certain ideas: alienation, disadvantage, marginality. If the first summary reveals the field of experience where autobiography will take place, then the second summary tells why the rules have been put into place. Limited in its scope and conduct, it is questionable whether Coetzee has succeeded in what he calls "the ultimate goal of the autobiographical enterprise itself, namely, to get to the truth of oneself by going back over the ground of the past" (2001: 246), because there are so many restrictions in time, place, and content. It is also somewhat dubious to conclude that he has made any confession at all, even though David Attwell says that the seeds of the memoir are in the confessional mode of his fiction (1997: 23). The strict limitation on time and content removes the boy from the politics that color subjectivity. Coetzee shapes the terms of inquiry by limiting the time period to remove any gesture of remorse or resentment, both present in the description in "Retrospect". For some readers, *Boyhood* feels once again like the muddy surface of escapism, i.e. fiction; from the Bakhtinian dialogic point of view, Coetzee is merely trying to discipline himself to focus on the boy, with whom a silent "I" intends to dialogue. It is evidently harder than one thinks, to connect self to an *other*-self in time. It requires a shutting out of distraction.

4.4
The Field of Debate: Autobiography

Critics and critical essayists (Walsh,Viola,van Onselen, Shafto, Kakutani, Driver, Ackermann) have succeeded in circumventing the discussion of *Boyhood* as autobiography in favor of pointing at its fictive constructs. It is easier talking about fiction than it is about autobiography: fiction eliminates problems of the double referent "I"; it inoculates against postmodern arguments that accuse the essential "I" of non-existence; and it satisfies both of two opposing theses: that all writing is autobiographical, and that all autobiography is fiction. But one cannot ignore fairly that *Boyhood: Scenes from a Provincial Life* was, within two years of its first publication, changed to *Boyhood: A Memoir*. If the arguments against autobiography are correct, then such a small change in title should make no difference. Yet, the title makes all the difference.

Is there any way of knowing for sure that the boy described in *Boyhood* is in actual fact J.M. Coetzee? In favor of answering yes, the reader can point out that J.M. Coetzee in fact lived and went to school in Worcester between the said dates and that he had the experiences marked out above. But then what about *Disgrace*? J.M. Coetzee has been a professor at the University of Cape Town for thirty years. Tweak the details of the facts just slightly and how do we know that he is not David Lurie, student of Wordsworth, peddler of the Romantics, who like the boy is also spoken of in the third person present tense? In the difference between these two are we once again up against some boundaries, some limitations, some restrictions which, like rules in a classroom, can help us feel certain and safe against insidious doubt that a work is autobiographical? I answer the question with a qualified, Yes, but not on the basis of evidence within the text.

To recall: Janet Varner Gunn presented a thesis in 1982 in answer to James Olney's 1980 dilemma that "Everyone knows what autobiography is, but no two observers, no matter how assured they may be, are in agreement"(7). The problem of disagreement leads to a lack of conclusion that Gunn tries to address by proposing that autobiography is a poetics of experience. In Gunn's argument it is a progression that has dance-like characteristics with steps belonging first to the writer, then to the reader. The writer must first have the *impulse* and then the *perspective* to write autobiography;

then the autobiographical experience progresses through reader *response*. Through this exchange, which echoes a Bakhtinian ethos within the framework of autobiography, the author moves forward toward *worldliness*, a condition best described as an awareness of the limitations of the outer and inner world. Autobiography, therefore, unlike fiction, requires as part of its script not only *a* reader, an *other*, but a certain type of reader who assumes "transcendental authority that allows him to pass judgement" (de Man, 923). Judgment must be administered in a courtroom: such is the environment that Coetzee tries to set up in *Boyhood*.

But there is another aspect outside the text of *Boyhood* that tells the informed reader that he is dealing with autobiographical material, not fiction. *Boyhood* is already the second version of Coetzee's self-reflection if one considers (and there is no reason not to) the description of himself in "Retrospect" to be the first published autobiographical statement he has made about his boyhood in Worcester. It is not surprising that Coetzee, who faults other writers (Breyten Breytenbach in particular) for indulging in narcissism, has shown great restraint in talking about himself. For an individual who has always striven to be the best, the top, the first even when it could possibly mean the death of a challenger (*Boyhood*: 143), living up to an idea of himself that is self-effacing and wholly disciplined is another way in which Coetzee meets his own high standards (see *What is a Classic?*, 2001). "Our historical being is part of our present," he says (13). Proceed with caution and prudence and you shall succeed where others have failed.

Finally, the switch from *Scenes of a Provincial Life* to *A Memoir* is the guarantee the reader needs that, according to Coetzee himself, he has written a memoir. Barring the pundits, the relationship between writer and reader is all that counts because, according to Gunn, the case of autobiography is an issue of justice, fairness, toward a balanced order: it is a mode of partnership between the writer, who argues both for and against himself, and the reader, who decides whether he is right. If Coetzee calls *Boyhood* "a memoir", which is to say if he is up to the task of being both prosecution and defense, then that is all that is needed to proceed in realistically evaluating both the man writing and the boy who is written.

4.5

Rules of Debate: Silenced "he" and "I"; Leveling History with the Present Tense

What is this strange habit of talking about oneself in the third person, present tense? Coetzee explains, "I see ... a submerged dialogue between two persons" (1992: 392):

> One is a person I desired to be and was feeling my way towards. The other is more shadowy: let us call him the person I then was, though he may be the person I still am. The field of their debate is truth in autobiography. The second person takes the position I have sketched above [that all autobiography is storytelling, all writing is autobiography (391)], but in a more extreme version: there is no ultimate truth about oneself, there is no point in trying to reach it, what we call the truth is only a shifting self-reappraisal whose function it is to make one feel good, or as good as possible under the circumstances, given that the genre doesn't allow one to create freefloating fictions. Autobiography is dominated by self-interest (continues this second person); in an abstract way one may be aware of that self interest, but ultimately one cannot bring it into full focus. The only sure truth in autobiography is that one's self-interest will be located in one's blind spot. (392)

Coetzee says less about the "first" character except that he is one who wants to believe that "We are born with the idea of the truth" (395), in which case the man or boy who was born to indifferent parents in South Africa in 1940 was himself from the beginning. The two characters continue the debate in *Boyhood*. The dark shadowy figure from the past makes his case in the third person pronoun while the first figure, the emergent "I", presents himself as the narrator of experiences belonging to the "I", experiences that are always in the process of becoming the condition of the "he" of the past. As in all debates, one must function under some set of rules, some guidelines that will help determine fairness and progress.

From the outset, the terms are unfair and must be adjusted. When Coetzee describes to Attwell, "Standing on the hillock or island created by our present dialogue, let me tell you, in the retrospect it provides, what the story of the past twenty years looks like when I make the story pivot on the

essay on confession, written in 1982-83" ("Retrospect": 392), Coetzee is fully aware of the high ground he is privileged to stand on as he looks backward in time. The "I" in this sentence must be disempowered if, in the debate between the child and man in *Boyhood*, the boy is to stand up equally to the man. Over the next couple of sentences in "Retrospect", the "I" is disciplined into silence, allowing the "he" to emerge, who is also as silent but at least an empowered silent voice. So the first term of debate is a silencing of the ego, the "I" that speaks about itself on either side of the debate.

The second major problem in the debate is the retrospect, the hindsight, the Monday night football playing so easily indulged in by the "I" that writes. The power of reviewing and remembering must be downsized but not eliminated if the boy and the man are to have a fair debate. Writing the boy's life in the present tense (with very few exceptions) forces the silenced, narratorial "I" to play fair.

Is the use of the third person and present tense sufficient to put the debate on equal footing? No, not if either the "he" or the "I" feels censored, translated, or operating under a fear of being punished for performing its role. If the terms of autobiographical debate are to be fair, the boy must be entirely free to say what he wants to say without being penalized. On the other hand, the silent "I" who chooses not to indulge in the same freedom must be allowed to limit himself to his duty of narration, starkly honest as that might be at times. The narrator must also be allowed to serve his side of the argument: a larger, wiser belief in "the idea of truth", and "the idea of justice" (395). The boy, on the other hand, can serve his own idea of self, that "Truth is only a shifting self-reappraisal" (392).
It is up to the narrator to allow the boy his freedom. But who "allows" the narrator to play the role he sets out for himself? Why, in fact, the reader.

4.6
No Escape

Well-schooled as a critic in the art and folly of autobiography and particularly of confession, Coetzee raises the question: is it necessary to have two assurances of truth, the present tense and the "I"? Or can one abandon one of these confessional modalities? Writing in the first person singular past tense had been done before, but unsuccessfully because the past is "a language that dominates its subject as the

language of the historian does" (1992: 268). Let us move to the option of writing in the first person present tense. Quoting Starobinski, Coetzee also writes in 1985, the present tense is "so pure that the past itself is relived as present feeling" (268). At the same time, in the present tense, the "I" works steadily against truthfulness because problems arise "whose common factor seems to be a regression to infinity of self-awareness and self-doubt" (274). Yet opting for the third person narration opens up the writer to accusations of dominance as well. But what if one took that risk and weighed it against the opportunities of the present tense, a mode in which "Everything takes place" (268)? The trade-off seemed worth a shot at an autobiographical piece that, if successful, could result in a fair debate. Failure would only lead to the autobiography being mistaken for fiction.

Anne Waldron Neumann's case for a way of documenting history without imposing it argues that, in *Waiting for the Barbarians* — Coetzee's novel using the same technique— "Every moment is present; past fades; future is hidden, cause and effect remain to be unraveled and pondered" (67). Escaping from time is a "childlike confusion", one that is used as an avoidance mechanism, a pretense of a lack of understanding, and an excuse to remain innocent. All three goals are evident in *Boyhood*. The boy's confusion results in his avoiding school, in his cruelty toward his parents and brother, and his pitiable cry of innocence. And while escape may be the boy's and the Magistrate's desire, the opposite is true for the narrator who has carefully constructed a debate between two silenced egos.

The first challenge to the boy's ability to be authentic and sincere is when the narrator exposes his emotional response to corporal punishment. As the boy sits at his desk, he thinks of what he will do when his turn comes to be beaten:

> What he will not be able to endure will be the shame. So bad will be the shame, he fears, so daunting, that he will hold tight to his desk and refuse to come when he is called out. And that will be a greater shame: it will set him apart, and set the other boys against him too. If it ever happens that he is called out to be beaten, there will be so humiliating a scene that he will never again be able to go back to school; in the end there will be no way out but to kill himself (7).

On this first and important item the boy scores significantly. His shame is exposed entirely without showing remorse, without showing that he would rather not be the way he is; he simply is this way, filled

with shame. The narrator makes progress as well because he has succeeded in exposing the boy.

Had his father prepared him properly for the beatings he would be normal, and being normal would save him from thoughts of violence against himself. Instead of giving his father credit, the boy blames him. The accusation leads logically to thoughts of alternatives: "If [the boy] had a choice between Son and his own father as a father, he would choose Son, even though that would mean he would be irrevocably Afrikaans and would have to spend years in the purgatory of an Afrikaans boarding-school, as all farm children do, before he would be allowed to come back to the farm" (100). The dark confession of wishing to be Son's child rather than his father's reveals the extent to which the boy is confused about who he is. He is in a state of desired escape, or like Neumann argues, a "childlike confusion". The fantasy about being Son's offspring is relentlessly darkened when the narrator reveals what Son thinks of the boy, that he is "not straight, honest, truthful" (100). The narrator's grievously hard blow to the boy's attempt to escape goes unanswered. The boy's silence accuses him in the same way as in the scene where he and his mother are crossing a square and the boy says nothing against the injustice of the dark child who is not required to go to school and is left "free to roam far from the watching eyes of parents" (60). The narrator steps in provokingly, declaring: "He, ruled by his dark desires, is guilty" (60). Again, the boy responds in tacit agreement. The silence the boy chooses is what makes him guilty as a child first and then as an adult. The failure of denial does not bring on a sentence; it simply stops up a loophole through which both the narrator and the boy have escaped knowledge of themselves before. To be guilty is not the worst thing; to not accept your guilt is.

Self-imposed captivity in the form of a still slippery self-knowledge brings equilibrium, and nowhere is the equilibrium more evident than in the experience with Eddie, a dark child in training to become a gardener. After a short tenure in the Coetzee household in which the young John befriends him, wrestles with him, lets him ride his bike, Eddie runs away. The attempted escape is thwarted and quickly punished. Eddie is whipped and then sent home. The boy, missing his friend, wonders if he will ever stop thinking of him: "Will he ever escape Eddie?" (77). The question echoes in meaning as it was really Eddie who tried to escape from the Coetzee household, succeeded, and now traps the boy in a memory of Eddie. The problem with the memory is the responsibility the boy must assume for the acts of his elders as well as his own for having spied on Eddie as he was beaten. The narrator

accepts the confinement of the boy in the memory stating, "At this moment, in the leaky house in Ida's Valley, curled under a smelly blanket, still wearing his blazer, he knows that Eddie is thinking of him. In the dark Eddie's eyes are two yellow slits. One thing he knows for sure: Eddie will have no pity on him" (77). Here, the boy is not feeling, not denying, not imagining, not pretending, not fantasizing about Eddie. It is the one thing he knows; in which case, it is the one thought that is true, his one true thought. Eddie is thinking about him and Eddie will have no pity on him when they meet again in some distant future. In this experience is an example of the boy's first stirring of an idea of the truth which is mirrored in the thinking that is going on in Eddie's head.

What must he do when he faces Eddie in the future? The memoir answers this question: he must be fair. He must, above all, hold justice, fair play, a leveled playing field, with the highest of regard. Nothing short of a total commitment to justice will allow him to convene with Eddie in the future. The boy's struggle to value justice is captured best in the example of cricket which is "The only passion that has not abated" (144) by the time he is in high school. As for so many young people, his mastering this game means mastering the rules, the various shots, the footwork, the strategy, the postures, and ultimately the courage that it takes to win and to lose. "The truth is, he prefers his solitary game on the stoep to real cricket" (145), but that does not deter the boy from facing the fast bowlers, getting struck, and enduring pain (145). He knows he must join the contest if he is to prove he is fair-minded, able to compete, willing to accept defeat. Of course, he fails, but "looking back on these failures, he consoles himself with stories of test matches played on sticky wickets during which a solitary figure, usually a Yorkshireman, dogged, stoic, tight-lipped bats through the innings, keeping his end up while all around him wickets are tumbling" (175). The image of this man captures an idea of himself that cannot be described any other way but through the boy's imagination of himself. Coetzee has, after all, been criticized for being dogged, stoic, and tight-lipped, and certainly his memoir depicts the same character both in the silent "he" and in the silent "I". There is no escape from this character, but there is one consolation: it preaches to no one, assumes no authority except over himself, and it continues to act as proof that "one isn't a coward" (146) when playing a game governed by a fair set of rules that everyone must follow.

4.7
"I" utterances in *Boyhood*

The restrictive conditions imposed by narrative choice in *Boyhood* magnify and manipulate the boy's shifting identity. He is very much the captive in what he describes as "this cage in which he rushes back and forth, back and forth, like a poor bewildered baboon" (122). In response, the boy imagines himself as any number of crustaceous creatures, walling himself off, turning inward. The self-imposed shell is once again evident in the sparse instances of fleshy identity in *Boyhood*. Like an otherworldliness protecting the boy, the silent "I" walls around the child's identity, which pokes its head out fleetingly in dialogue.

The boy speaking completely unmediated — meaning there is no transition in the sentence to the "he" by the author — occurs only twice: "'I want to'" (100), and "'I don't want her to live with us'" (115, 117). Contrast these statements of desire with the handful of statements made by the boy about his limitations — "I couldn't walk, I had blisters on my feet from the tennis," he whispers back" (10); "'I can't come to catechism, I have to do errands for my mother on Friday afternoons,' he had lied" (111) — and his abnormalities — "'Thinking,' he had replied unthinkingly: 'I like thinking'"(29); "'I hate normal people,' he replies hotly" (78); "'I'm sick,' he croaks to his mother" (103); "'I am a Catholic,' he had insisted, lying again"(111). Desire cannot be transformed; it is the flesh of identity; it completely belongs to the "I" and should not be intruded upon by the narrator.

Inadequacy, inability, shortcomings, on the other hand, these readily transform into the "he" because the narrator can accuse them, evaluate them, argue against them. "'I want to bat,' he mumbles, and sits up" (146) is already different because an action is at stake and the action can be judged fairly. Note, for instance, the contrast between standing up to bat and mumbling. Clearly, in Coetzee's sentence, getting up to bat is more virtuous. The desire to act transforms into action, and action can be known objectively to the *other*. The relationship between narrator and subject are carefully developed as philosophical engagements or points of dispute. The difference between, "'I want to bat,' he mumbles, and sits up"(146) with its merit of the narrator's support, and "'I want to'"(100) and its unnarrated state requires more consideration.[1]

A second general category of "I" utterances is apparent in what the boy doesn't say aloud to others but thinks, considers and says to himself when no one is listening. "If he says, 'I made a mistake, I am actually a Christian,' he will be disgraced" (21), follows an assertion at school that he is a Roman Catholic. Admitting that he lied or made an error gets weighed up against consequences which the narrator recognizes are too damaging for the boy. The lack of justice surrounding the boy is again recognized by the narrator when he is faced with an Afrikaner clerk selling him cigarettes for his father. A fly flies into his mouth and he is reprimanded after he spits it out. "He wants to protest: 'What must I do? Must I not spit? Must I swallow the fly? I am just a child!'"(127) writes the narrator affirming the boy's sense of violation. In a third cry against injustice, "Unfair! he wants to cry: I am just a child!" (160), the narrator allows the boy and himself to emote in partnership as a response to the vision of his dead father. It turns out that the father is not dead and the protest is over-dramatic, but because the narrator joins in with the boy, the vision of death is transformed into an exposure of the father's sloth. The father should not be lying around in the middle of the day looking as if he has died. It is unfair. Turning inward is not only a matter of justice. Inner thoughts also bring an awareness of happiness, precarious though it may seem: "He thinks, 'I have never been happier in my life. I would like to be with Greenberg and Goldstein forever" (25).

It is better to say out loud what one thinks to make sure one has thought it. The narrator makes the boy do this three times about the land: "Out in the veld by himself he can breathe the word aloud: *I belong on the farm*" (95); "What he really believes but does not utter, what he keeps to himself for fear that the spell will end, is a different form of the word: *I belong to the farm*" (96); "*I belong to the farm*: that is the furthest he is prepared to go, even in his most recent heart" (96). The importance of the land and how it manifests itself on the fault line between the "he" and the "I" is of course to be noted in the threefold repetition of the italicized statement.

Despite the fact that the mother begins the story with a pathetic cry to not be a prisoner in her home and to be free, she ends on a very different note, a note of resolve to act: "I will pay all his debts,' she says. 'I will pay in installments. I will work.' (158)" The difference between being and acting is magnified in her; it is the same nuance of characterization that differentiates "'I want to bat,' (146)" from "'I want to'"(100). "Emotions are closely connected with action; few facts about them are more obvious. And yet it would be a mistake to identify them with desires for particular types of action"

(M. Nussbaum: 135). The triangle of desire, action, and emotion helps to clarify the disconnection in the Coetzee household between desire (to be free) and action (to be committed). The boy's undefined desire, which permeates the memoir in mediated or unmediated form, is harnessed by the man writing and directing it into an action that materializes in a secondary portrayal of the man writing. Recognizing that unfettered desire leads to the highly emotional life of the mother, the boy through the man describing him, moves from desire unregulated by emotion to desire regulated by action. With great skill, however, Coetzee never loses the history of his emotions (Nussbaum: 175) in the process of regulating desire with action. Why not?

4.8
The Internal Dialogic

A dialogical relationship resides within the individual. It is represented by the internal interaction among desire, emotion, and action and is that which shapes the self's history. Regarding emotion, Nussbaum cautions that a lack of responsiveness may result in an overemphasis on desire for certain types of action: a desire to make a lot of money, to win every game, to control the emotions. Without emotions man is adrift in a sea of meaningless acts. "Emotional health requires the belief that one's own voluntary actions will make a significant difference to one's most important goals and projects" (5), Nussbaum writes, emphasizing the value of a responsiveness to emotion rather than a suppression, especially a suppression in early childhood. Bakhtin regards emotion slightly differently: he sees that emotion subsists in the current between the "I" and the *other* and is made up of a sense of uniqueness in time and place. To be devoid of emotions is to be a "disembodied spirit" (1993:47). The result is: "I lose my compellent, ought-to-be relationship to the world, I lose the actuality of the world" (47). To lose "touch" is to be "a finished and rigidified architectonic" as opposed to "an architectonic that is incessantly and actively realized through my answerable deed" (47). Hard as it is, writing his memoir places Coetzee in the latter category, a category he does not necessarily enter willingly (just as he did not necessarily want to play cricket), but one that he enters (and has always entered) with great preparation and training.

In *Cousins,* Fugard asks for compassion, understanding, a commitment to bearing witness, and he uses familiar imaginative strategies to capture emotions. His approach asks for the reader's respect and

also nurtures his own self-respect, something he displays himself as having lost. Fugard's memoir represents the input/output current of respect between the reader, on whose imagined identity his conceptualized dignity ultimately depends, and the writer whose own refashioned identity is also his conceptualized dignity. This same interchange takes place in *Boyhood*, but instead of being driven by managed emotions that finally escape through confession, it is driven by a sense of fair play. The contest Coetzee sets up between the boy and the silent first-person narrator has a deeply emotional foundation, a "history" of reverence for justice, fairness, regulated contest. Secularism — if it can be imagined into a spiritual context — is driven by the authority of law and justice.

Speaking about ethics, Bakhtin says, "What is needed in addition to [a norm] is something issuing from within myself, namely, the morally ought-to-be attitude of my consciousness toward the theoretically valid-in-itself proposition" (1993: 24). While cricket or any such game or contest or competition entails a set of rules that acts in place of the abstraction "justice" or "fairness", the games do not come from within the individual and do not test his true commitment to his own values. To test one's own commitment to justice and to see whether the norm it represents for the self comes from within, one must create a contest that is completely of one's own making. *Boyhood* is such an example of an internal debate in which the players, the boy and the man, are each treated equally by the terms of discourse. The preparation and forethought of establishing one's own set of rules that will govern a sense of self is of great value in understanding one aspect of the nature of selving. In defining what makes up the framework of identity that we in the modern age are now responsible for, Taylor stresses that our self-evaluation must be based on values that are "incomparable" (19-24), a concept that naturally issues forth confusion and conflict over what it means to affirm the self. The thought, "If I can measure myself up to so and so, I will more clearly understand who I am," is one that drives so many of our decisions about what to buy, do, challenge ourselves with, believe in. Coetzee's attempt to move away from values that measure up to and derive from rules of discourse about the self that others accept (most notably a first person narration), prioritizes for Coetzee the importance of restrictiveness, self-discipline, self-monitoring. Alongside Fugard's modeling of respect and self-respect as a fundamental dialogic current, Coetzee's sense for setting up a just interchange helps to shape an idea of what it takes to know the self without the self (the narrator) imposing himself on the self (the subject of discussion). Fair interchange is an act of respect.

5. J.M. Coetzee,
Disgrace

Ignited by the recent novel *Disgrace*, debate about J. M. Coetzee's work has reached another level of intensity over his role in contemporary literature. Set a decade after free elections, the novel is about a South African professor who falls from public grace and must then face an uninspired identity. In the half-defense of J.M. Coetzee's reputation, still official according to Booker Prize judges, the dogged criticism of the novel is beginning to sound wan and disillusioned. The most predictable argues once again:

> Coetzee aims to question the status and structures of colonial and post-colonial power from as many vantage points as possible. (Lowry, 1999: 2)

Yawn. The second aging voice says:

> There is here what seems to be a note of authorial irritation, not only, as might be expected, with the perennial intractability of language and the constraints of the novel form, but with the social changes that are occurring in his country, and in the world at large. (Banville, 2000: 2)

Not quite so large a yawn, but if one is hoping for Coetzee to finally de-ice and tell everyone what he really thinks, one might fall asleep waiting.

Both points of view, though noble, academic, and well intended, are unfortunately not bringing anyone closer to understanding Coetzee's place in literature, and both perspectives seem to be like tired warriors fighting for their cause. Coetzee will never be a Gordimer or a Brink, whose realist prose blended into the build-up to 1994 and the end of apartheid, and might more readily fade in and out with the climactic idealism of the times. Nor will he ever find the solution to power -- colonial, post-colonial, post post-colonial, you name it. Of course, this is why Lowry lamentingly concludes, "*Disgrace* is a deeply pessimistic book"(11), even though she believes that "*Disgrace* is the best novel Coetzee has written" (3).

Disgrace, like every other novel Coetzee has written, is about him. Not about South Africa, not about colonialism, not about women, although all of these furnish his imagination. His novels are battlefields upon which Coetzee's own ideas about himself wage campaigns against one another. While the smoke of such a conflict has permeated his novels, it is most distinctly evident in *Boyhood*. The leaders of the two

armies are in his head: one of them believes that "truth is only a shifting self-appraisal" (1992: 392), and the other leader fights for a Platonic truth, which is really an idea of justice and an idea of the truth (395). Coetzee, the writer/artist striving toward "a single authentic note"(214), is himself the field of debate, the battlefield. Like *Disgrace*'s David Lurie, who in his music is in "the voice that strains to soar", Coetzee in his writing is in the voice that strains to speak. *Boyhood*, given its two restricted voices, presents the strain of expression, while *Disgrace* actually measures its progress and consequences, from conception, to labor, to inevitable abandonment.

As we have seen, the debate inherent in autobiography is not only J.M. Coetzee's debate. I have mentioned James Olney's enduring set of essays on autobiography that laid out in great detail the problem with the genre. In 1985, Coetzee followed up on the collection with his own version of the autobiographical dilemma. In this essay, at one point writing about Rousseau's *Confessions*, he concludes, "All we can say at this stage is that the problems are not articulated... [There is] no recourse but to break off the discussion for lack of common ground" (274). About Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*, he writes, "His confession reveals nothing so much as the helplessness of confession" (279). Confession is only thinly relevant, he intimates in his conclusion, pondering Tolstoy's attempt at the end of his life to set down the truth. Like Olney's essayists, Coetzee reached his own verdict that autobiography was impossible even as he began work on his highly acclaimed confessional novel *Age of Iron*.

The issue of truth continued to haunt him. In 1989, he thought he could tackle the truth in dialogues with David Attwell, who himself, as well as others like Teresa Dovey and Susan Gallagher had written that all of Coetzee's novels were in some way autobiographical. A series of interviews were conducted over the next two years. In the first interview, Coetzee said, "I have turned to the mode of dialogue [...] as a way of getting around the impasse of my own monologue" (19). By the last interview, Coetzee — either because he felt comfortable enough talking to Attwell or through his
experiences with dialogue — came to realize that within him a debate was taking place. By splitting his allegiances and seeing himself double, he incorporated a dialogue system. It was a refinement of the same system that had permeated his writing. The silent "I" was the narrator he abandoned after publishing *Age of Iron* whilst still engaged in the dialogues with Attwell. He seems to have permanently replaced the "I" with the "he" which was first conceived in *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983). The ensuing *The Master of*

Petersburg (1994), *Boyhood* (1997), *The Lives of Animals* (1999), and *Disgrace* (1999) are all written in the third person, an indication that in combination with the autobiographical mode, a silencing is taking place. In addition to the silent "I" and "he" axis, the present tense also emerged as the operating mode of autobiography. Because "Everything takes place, in effect, in a present so pure that the past itself is relived as a present feeling" (1992: 268), the dialogue first between Coetzee and Attwell, then later between the silent "I" and "he", allowed for autobiography to metamorphose into something closer to biography as it made its way into the present tense. The shared time of the experience allowed for multiple perspectives.

"He lives wherever he finds himself, turned inward" (DTP: 393). This statement made to Attwell describes an internal world where imagination and memory can easily generate not only the "he" of the world but also the "I". The "I" speaks to itself as if it speaks to another, and therefore, in this process, transforms from the "I" of the writer into the "he" (or "she") as well. As in any relationship, there is a sharing, an exchange, and a manipulation of power. Autobiography and biography are constantly shifting in a field of articulation that the writer presents. In *Boyhood*, the exchange predicates itself on the expectation of the reader, and Coetzee's main objective seems to be an illustration of the process of leveling the field of debate between the "he" and the "I"; *Disgrace* takes the debate further into an interaction between Lurie's "I" and his expression and understanding of himself through the life of Teresa. Lurie survives himself through creating Teresa and recreating her longing for Byron. His uninspired identity competes with hers in the novel, which creates a mutual understanding between the two abandoned, forgotten lovers. The intent of art and of the imagination as it interacts with memory, specifically memory of self, is what Coetzee labels in *Disgrace* authenticity — "one authentic note" (214) — which is articulated by neither the "he" nor the "I", but finds itself in the exchange (dance, dialogue) between the two.

Lurie's fall from grace is hard; but amazingly he lands on his feet and assures his daughter Lucy, whom he goes to visit in the Eastern Cape, that he is busy writing an opera. By the time he is on the farm, like everything else, his relationship to the opera has significantly changed. Although a necessity to keep busy and focused seems to motivate him to get serious about his opera, the writing of the opera begins to shed more and more light on who Lurie really is under the now fading professorial persona. This veneer is exposed

early on by Lurie's regular visits to a call girl and by a slippery self-awareness of his position vis à vis his students, especially Melanie Isaacs. Self-knowledge is slippery only in terms of what is seemingly his own inescapable perspective on himself. After refusing to play the game of confession his colleagues demand of him, he is dismissed from his post. The dismissal simultaneously strips him of authority and disgraces what he stands for, namely a mastery of romantic impulses: nature, passion, and intuition.

Lucy, surprised at her father's creative ambitions, inquires into the operatic project with questions Lurie finds awkward to answer. Finally he admits that progress on the piece has been nil: "I haven't written a note"(63), because, he says, he has been "distracted". Why would the man who sees himself as "the servant of Eros" sum up his scandalous experience as a distraction? Thus has his whole career been reduced and devalued. His own authority has been a distraction, and by the time he gets to the farm in Salem, he is glad to have shed his authority and to start anew to serve himself. But this is trickier than it appears. Throughout the ordeal in which Lucy is raped, he himself burned, and both robbed by three local men, Lurie tries to regain his authority simultaneously as victim, as accuser, and as agent of justice. Lucy, who is wiser than her father and more in touch with her own nature, not some ideal handed down from Wordsworth, rejects his attempts to take control over her life. From her he learns to listen to himself (though ironically one ear is mangled by the assailants) and to see his own life (though his eyes have been burned).

At night he continues to read Byron's letters of 1820. In the letters, he learns more about Teresa Guiccioli, wife of a jealous husband and Byron's lover for a brief time. Byron's inevitable boredom with Teresa sows the seeds of Lurie's empathy for this "short-legged mistress". Through the night, he reads the letters that are all that is left after the theft. Heavier volumes were at one time necessary for research into a "true" Byron, but Lurie's reeducation is going well. He asks himself, "Can he not, by now, invent a Byron... and a Teresa too?"(121). The stop in George where Lurie visits with Melanie's family brings him to a decisive understanding of himself. About his relationship with Melanie, he tells Mr. Isaacs, "There was something I failed to supply, something...lyrical. I manage love too well. Even when I burn I don't sing, if you understand me"(171). Mr. Isaacs understands nothing of what Lurie says, but wants the matter to end and misreads Lurie's gesture as an apology. On the other hand, Lurie has finally learned enough about himself to begin to create. By recognizing that he is not lyrical, he crawls out from underneath the hold Wordsworth and Byron have on him. His self-awareness frees him from the strangling authority he has

spent his life trying to master. When he gets home to Cape Town and sits amidst the chaos of a ransacked home, he is finally able to write.

The autobiographical/biographical interface is revealed in the first days of Lurie's creating the world of Byron and Teresa. "[Lurie] is in the opera neither as Teresa nor as Byron nor even as some blending of the two: he is held in the music itself, in the flat tinny slap of the banjo strings, the voice that strains to soar away from the ludicrous instrument but is continually reined back, like a fish on a line"(185). Lurie prefers to call this experience art: "So this is art, he thinks, and this is how it does its work! How strange! How fascinating!" (185). The reader who is privy to the autobiographical drive of Lurie's "art", knows that the world that Lurie creates is a simulation of the events that have come to pass in the course of the novel. Byron abandoned Teresa as Melanie forsook Lurie; Teresa was shamed by the public gossip about her relationship just as Lurie was shamed by the press; despite their both having grown old, neither has forgotten the love they shared with a creature their lyric impulse considered worthy. Creating Teresa and Byron's world enables the progress Lurie must make in his own self-understanding because he can measure out his mistakes, reenact them through another, and finally overtake them, pass them, transcend the errors he has made on his own terms. Writing moves him on in his life: moves him on from perceiving himself as a lyricist, from having the authority of a teacher, from his role as father.

The opera now consumes Lurie. Teresa is standing exhausted, in a white nightgown — she has been calling to Byron night and day. Lurie is obsessed; Teresa is obsessed. Coetzee, who has also been struggling for "a single authentic note of immortal longing" (214), also seems exhausted. His cynicism about writing is overwhelming when he writes, "As for *recognizing* [the note] he will leave that to the scholars of the future, if there are still scholars by then"(214, my italics). Reader response, if it chooses to be, must include a recognition of authenticity. In *Disgrace*, reader response is most evident in Lurie who composes. His response to himself and consequent expression in music is autobiographical. Unfortunately for him, Lurie doesn't even match up to the hope Coetzee has for him. When pushed by Lucy — also a silent "she" manifestation of the silent "I" — to find a way to be a good person, Lurie responds, "I suspect it is too late for me. I am just an old lag serving out my sentence. But you go ahead. You are well on your way" (216). Lurie is a disappointment but not without a consciousness of hope. From this point on the opera is gone from the story. Abandonment infuses the end of *Disgrace*: the opera, Lurie, the dogs, all are laid to rest.

So the problem of Coetzee's internal battle between the existence of truth and the shifting nature of all identity is abandoned for the time being. It is unresolved. This is best illustrated by the ending of *Disgrace*: here is an old man ushering the unwanted mongrels of a new and distracted South Africa to their quiet death. In particular, there is one dog, "a young male with a withered left hindquarter", that Lurie is fond of and who "is fascinated by the sound of the banjo" (215) Lurie plays to accompany the Teresa of his imagination. A kindred spirit again, the dog's malfunctions recall the old goat with the inflamed, rotting testicles Lurie first encounters in Bev's operating room. Bev is a homely woman whom Lurie comforts and loves over time and who runs an animal welfare service. The combination of love, sexuality, and un-beauty that rummages around this setting is the reason the novel offers no solutions. Nothing of beauty, nothing of truth exists in the mournfully brightened chamber of death. Here the dogs sense that "the soul is yanked out of the body" (219). It "is not a room but a hole where one leaks out of existence" (219). For the dogs, one hopes that there is something more to being dissolved, but it is unsure. The soul competes with its unknown identity: the two cannot be separated.

To understand why the debate Coetzee plays out is still unresolved, one must turn back to the issue of fairness and justice. Seeking to write a dialogical novel, one that according to him has no "dominating, central authorial consciousness" (2001: 123), Coetzee cannot resolve the contest on his own. He is after all the field upon which the debate takes place. His own opinion must remain completely neutral, favoring neither one side nor the other. While he may not succeed at convincing the reader of his neutrality in *Boyhood*, his attempt to silence the voices that speak through him, his will to achieve such a goal, is itself autobiographical evidence, and as I have argued in the previous chapter, the autobiographical evidence of his memoir as well as his talks with David Attwell redirect those opposing theses — all writing is autobiographical, all autobiography is fiction — away from whether one is correct and toward the rules of discourse between the I and the *other*. The scene he sets up in *Disgrace* includes the reader in a must-act imperative. The reader cannot walk away from the novel unengaged on some level, for he must supply the scores himself as to whether this or that view or belief triumphs. The reader, being ultimately subject to his own debate about truth, may read the novel *Disgrace* in favor of Lurie's seeming transition to grace as he escorts the mongrels to their maker; or in favor of an opinion like Elizabeth Lowry's that ultimately recoils from the un-beauty of an overweight pseudo-veterinarian, a disgraced child molestor, and mangy, mangled outcasts.

Coetzee thins (strains) his voice as much as possible to allow these other voices a dialogic participation in a debate about David Lurie, an effort he believes is an authentic act. Without Teresa, whose role is to give Lurie some relief from himself, favoring Lurie is virtually impossible. With Teresa (as well as with his near flawless daughter Lucy) Lurie as creator chances an escape from the confines of the political moment (which admonishes an old man's adoration of young beauty as well as his failure to change) and gives Lurie, the creator, a just trial, a fair contest, or a level playing field on which he may or may not according to the jurist (the reader) be the innocent one, the victor.

"We must deal with the life and behavior of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world," explains Bakhtin (1981: 275), in order to overcome a complete disintegration of meaning. The "orientation toward unity" (274), Bakhtin argues, has only led us to exclude voices, dialogues, accents, and judgments associated with the "word" (276), and has led us further away from the truth. David Lurie, Romantic Literature expert, is guilty in the end of having narrowed his world toward an idea — one might even argue an ideology — of truth. His guilt is evident in his eventual demise and could ironically be argued to be his saving grace. Bakhtin's antidote to ideology is an embrace of the word's interrelationships, its intersections, its merging meanings (276). Guilt is grace; disgrace is escape; murdering (as in the case of Bev) is saving; fiction is autobiography; and so forth. This conclusion, however, risks contradicting the very idea it seeks to prove; it risks becoming, as Coetzee accuses, "vulgarizations of [Bakhtin's] thoughts" (2001: 123). The monologue is not inferior to the dialogue. Unity is not replaced by diaspora — indeed the former might be strengthened by the latter. In *The Lives of Animals* (1999), there are large tracts of text solely devoted to monologue; yet the lecturer-character Elizabeth Costello must eventually be questioned by those she addresses; she must engage in dialogue she cannot dominate; she must suffer in silence, be narrated by the *other*. Unity interacts with dispersion.

Disappointing to his critics who may still hope for some conclusion that will direct us out of the wrongs of the 19th and 20th centuries (racism, sexism, colonialism, fascism, to name a few), *Disgrace* is a dialogical novel on the topic of identity. Its optimism (if one can call it that; try also "momentum into the future", "transcendent nature", "escape") is situated in its inconclusivity, its silence on the topic of right and

wrong, the nearly invisible discursive plain upon which it takes place. “Every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates” (1981: 280), writes Bakhtin about that which gives language momentum indefinitely. The anticipatory nature of the word, however, does not only move outward; it is also a momentum inside the mind: “The phenomenon of internal dialogization ... is present to a greater or lesser extent in all realms of the life of the word” (284). Coetzee’s life lived inward as well as Lurie’s autobiographical expression through Teresa are not static realms where all ideas form ideologies. The inner realm is an active, shifting, tectonic realm where people like Lurie — who tend historically to have benefited from the rigidification of truth — find their thoughts about themselves and their actions filled with “emotional-volitional tone” (Bakhtin, 1993: 33). What is so stimulating in Coetzee’s novel is the tone that describes the “inalienable moment of the performed act, even the most abstract thought [such as lyricism, in Lurie’s case], in so far as [the] I [is] actually thinking it, i.e., insofar as it is really actualized in Being, becomes a participant in the ongoing event” (33). The reader’s participation in that complexity propels an infinite momentum, an always-future of the “once-occurrent event” (1993: 1). I find this idea most comforting.

6. Breyten Breytenbach, *Dog Heart*

6.1 Death Motif in Breytenbach's Oeuvre

"Writing is an after-death experience" (1), writes Breyten Breytenbach in *Dog Heart*, his 1999 memoir. Breytenbach's death motif has escorted him through his early poetry, through his exile and prison term, and now continues to be a central motif in work written after political change in South Africa. About his poetry, J. C. Kannemeyer writes, "[Breytenbach] hopes to overcome death by immortalizing it in art. Often the fear of death, the motif of transience and the idea of decay dominate" (140). Breytenbach's exile in the 1970s ushered in a series of autobiographical works, which allude to South Africa as a paradise from which he has fallen. It is unclear whether paradise is used ironically, cynically, paradoxically, or mournfully; the reference to Biblical paradise, however, strongly impacts the meaning of the text. Breytenbach's apparently complete disintegration (the deconstructed "I") in his most famous autobiography *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1983) further stretches his expression of the earlier themes and is a pivotal creative work for him because of his embrace of death as a state of being. Insisting that he is dead, that he did not emerge from prison alive, the work ushers in a new interpretation of death and challenges the reader at a new level. His latest work, starting out with a pronouncement of death, undeniably places the question of mortality and immortality at the center of Breytenbach's work and forces the reader to face his own acceptance or non-acceptance as a prerequisite to understanding the memoir and indeed all Breytenbach's work. Because of Breytenbach's choice to write largely in the mode of autobiography, his work tends to collapse into a continuous present, which, like a painting, is evident in the surface of the new mark he has made, namely, in 1999, *Dog Heart*.

Breytenbach's habit of challenging the reader by asking him or her to accept his death state is at the heart of his credibility. Kannemeyer and others interpret his work as steeped in fantasy, symbolism, and the grotesque. *Dog Heart* is no different and must on one level be interpreted symboli-

cally. Following Breytenbach's lead, that he is dead, advances the notion that the text is a tomb he has hollowed out, furnished, and decorated: "I have hollowed out this land with writing" (53). His assertion that "Deconstruction is an act of creation when everything is dragged back into the earth" (140) is an indication that the realm of the memoir is underground, carved out, and vaulted. The interpretation of the image of text upon the page as layers of earth furthers the notion of being buried, inundated, static in a death state.

Where Fugard is the master of emotional response and Coetzee is a master of regulation toward the purpose of fairness, Breytenbach embraces a vision of his mortality as the central control panel of his existence. In his memoir he reasserts his governance over his own death by naming it, defining it, and applying its meaning within the context of lived time. This is a strong indication that his understanding of his own death is at the center of his moral sense. Embracing the theme of death and taking responsibility for an understanding of meaning, Breytenbach acts against the confusion Charles Taylor describes as following the loss of spiritual identity (19-24). According to Taylor, the questioning of spiritual truths has led modern man to seek an affirmation of ordinary life, yet he cannot affirm ordinary life without the moral distinctions he once found in the certainty of God. Without moral distinctions, modern man cannot evaluate his everyday life, which includes a sense of whether he has acted rightly or wrongly, whether his sacrifice means something, whether his goals are worthy of effort. Taking control of mortality and immortality and having a vision of death become an essential need; without a firm idea of one's own death, one cannot control one's life.

The role of writing in expressing Breytenbach's vision is to repeat an awareness of death consistently enough to surmount "the pernicious non-fusion and non-interpretation of culture and life"(Bakhtin, 1993: 3) that is permeated by a lack of responsibility and that dislocates "moral answer-ability". Individuals who are fully responsible for themselves must acquire "a single unitary plane" or a "unitary and unique moral answerability", says Bakhtin (2-3). Writing as "an individual-historical moment" (3) enables Breytenbach to manage meaning, and autobiography theoretically is best suited to shed meaning as it is written. The moment of writing is the singular moment when he is fully responsible for meaning insofar as he acts out "being-true [as] the ought of thinking" (4). Michael Holquist believes that "In order to invest ... forms [of being-there] with life and meaning, so that we may be understood and so

that the work of the social world may continue, *we must all perforce become authors*" (66, original italics). Authoring is a way of managing, ordering, regulating, controlling not only the world around us but mostly the world as we see it. The meaning of the world depends upon our willingness to harness it in words that, as soon as they are written, fall from truth like dirt from a spade. The use of words as a way of shifting truth is most evident in Breytenbach's endless and engaging autobiographical work. By repeating the autobiographical moment, he seems to admit and accept, "There is no aesthetic ought, scientific ought, and — beside them — an ethical ought; there is only that which is aesthetically, theoretically, and socially valid, and these validities may be joined by the ought, for which all of them are instrumental" (Bakhtin, 1993: 5). We do not *know* who we are, but that we *ought to know* philosophically precedes the cycle of autobiography that Breytenbach himself admits is a process of "caressing the unknowable I" (1988: 123).

Breytenbach openly bases his meditation on Eastern thought and beliefs; his writing (and painting) push toward a spirituality that is both a cause and an effect of his singularity of identity. If articulation depends on the infinite attempt as well as an infinite failure, autobiography is the medium of meditation that can continuously shed the dead weight of the past. Words fall off Breytenbach in a process of constant renewal: his writing "is now already a past, an unreadable archeological site of words, an absence, part of the big void. But language continues to sing, it rustles through the reeds which in earlier times were used to make flutes" (1999: 53-54).[1] Words are dead but the melody of language is alive. The consciousness of the failure of words is his immortality; as a reporter (a writer), he realizes he is "the agent of transformation, the bearer of tidings that there will always be life, from one digestion to the next, and thus immortality" (1988: 131). Because autobiography fails so miserably at securing a truth about the self, it becomes the ultimate tool that enables control of immortality in the way Breytenbach — an example of Taylor's modern man — uses and reuses it. "The right to the fuckup as creative process" (131) sums up all three elements of Breytenbach's memoir: text as tomb, as lifeless meaning; the death of Afrikaans, words modernity sheds but whose melodic traces linger in modern languages; and the layering of marks or signs, that in and of themselves form a horizon, a landscape, a framework. Without a consciousness of eternal failure and the failing "I", these aspects of the memoir get lost in the attempt at interpretation, an act that is exemplified by Coetzee's interpretation of *Dog Heart* as revisionist history.

6.2

Footnoting *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*

The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, which for a long time was part of the sociopolitical and historical discussion in South Africa as framed by postmodern and postcolonial philosophical terms of inquiry, offers some references for his recent memoir. In 1996, Erhard Reckwitz reiterates that Breytenbach has survived prison remarkably intact: "He did not leave prison a mumbling idiot or a suicidal case, and, after all, he had his wits about him sufficiently in order to be able to write a very complex account of his ordeal" (206). From the first comments written about the prison account, a sense that Breytenbach was "expanded by it artistically" (Roberts: 70) prevailed. Critics believed that death was only a temporary metaphor to elucidate a prison existence — one that hearkened back to Herman Charles Bosman's *Cold Stone Jug*. Reckwitz attributes the death state to the physical environment of prison, using the example that "Throughout the text prison is referred to as 'a place of death'" (206). After Breytenbach served his time in prison, critics could speculate on his survival even though "[Breytenbach] insists... that he did not 'survive,' that some essential part of him was destroyed during his term" (Roberts: 70). In an "Insert", Breytenbach tries to draw attention to the state of non-survival as a non-physical state related to the "I":

> It is important that you consciously (I'd be apt to say 'personally') assist at the putting down of the I. That is if you wish to parry destruction, to unsurvive. (As if 'survival' were going to inquire after your wishes!) The I not only as a concept of (para)physicality, as a screen of illusions, as a hole-ness — but in its most mundane manifestations (308).

Herein lies Breytenbach's identification of what he failed to do: to go beyond the "I" in *Confessions*, for he falls short of putting down his "I". In fact, he multiplies the "I" in his memoir, a result of deconstructing identity (Reckwitz: 209), the very aspect of the text that enables an attack on the Afrikaner perpetrator and victim, implicating everyone in the master-slave environment (Schalkwyk, 1994: 26). The text is a postmodern, deconstructionist victory, and for this very reason, he survived or seems to have survived. His "I" became for him a physical state of confinement, which he could manipulate and play

with, defying the effort of authority to destroy him. His defiance is a victory for the anti-apartheid movement, but a failure on his part to transcend the physical environment of prison.

Confessions foreshadows the allegorical transcendentalism in *Dog Heart* by exploiting three key images of death: the grave, decay, and resurrection. In prison, these images are physical realities. The prison cell is a measured space, which he calls a "grave" in a letter to his wife Yolande: "I was in my grave and you wrote to me"(321). In this letter written from prison in December 1982, he also states, "You gave me your strength and I survived" (321), which directly contradicts his after prison writing claim that he did not survive. Yolande's love kept him physically alive, evidence that his "I" in prison was singular and was withering, but his non-survival claim is based on the following: upon release and reflection, Breytenbach's identity disintegrates into the multiplicity necessary to expose apartheid from the myriad angles it used to enforce control. Breytenbach insists that "There is no composition like decomposition" (151), a reference to both forgetfulness and memory. Forgetfulness is the decaying experience he had in prison, and his writing after incarceration is an attempt to compose out of the decay. The genius of the statement is its reference to *Mouroir,* which he composes daily in prison. Each new section is removed from him, a shrinkage that characterizes decay. From the leftover of his decomposed memory after seven years emerges the frightening monster with multiple identities in *Confessions*. His "I"(singularized here for the sake of clarity) is Lazarus, a figure of immense persuasive power yet decayed and shrunken from leprosy, raised from the dead by Jesus, or in more modern terms, by a moral sense that can only be captured in writing. Breytenbach wants to convince us that he walks away from this resurrection: "[I] have no life left. I have lived it. What remains is gratuitous, free, no attachments, no importance. I have no affairs. I have no interests" (27), yet the fact that he has written down the words (in vertical column, page after page), transforms the column of thought into discernible value and attaches to the column a sense of responsibility that cannot be shed. Though the words disintegrate over time in meaning, the attempt at them evinces a sense of accountability toward what has been said.

The permanence of the confessional text itself threatens the very process of deconstruction Breytenbach toils for and is commended for. The actual physicality of the text belies Breytenbach's insistence that he is destroyed. He describes himself in the third person, "He has the smell of writing on him; he

is utterly deconstructed to stuttering utterances" (308); this is a realization that he can go only so far within the realm of the physical. There will always remain evidence of him if only in the image of utterances or the sound of uttering. In his effort to deconstruct in the physical realm, he has achieved the ultimate secular eternal life: a memoir that joins the final attack on the Afrikaner State, an attack through the heart where multiple "I"'s really represent self-doubt, uncertainty, and shifting values: "If there is one thing that has become amply clear to me over the years, it is exactly that there is no one person that can be named and in the process of naming be fixed for all eternity" (13). An earlier reading of *Confessions* seemed to support this: "There can be no fixities, no static structures or meanings" (Reckwitz: 208). Yet it is a fixity of text and its problematic hypocrisy that Breytenbach must now deconstruct by virtue of a fixed notion or metaphor, namely, death, one that he must continuously answer to and reaffirm.

6.3
Managing Mortality

When Breyten Breytenbach states at the beginning of his most recent memoir that he is dead (*Dog Heart*, 1999: 1), the reader faces similar issues to those described by Erhard Reckwitz in his discourse on *Confessions*. What does Breytenbach mean by "dead"? How can he be dead if he is writing the words for us to read? Does he mean dead in some paradoxical way? Should we believe him? And, finally, how essential it is to ask whether his self pronounced death is connected to what he said fifteen years earlier: that he did not "survive" prison? At the center of any analysis of *Dog Heart*, which is otherwise a delightfully mournful, dense journey through the Boland that ends with the naming of a grave in honor of his great grandmother, one must come to terms with what Breytenbach means when he says, "To cut a long story short: I am dead" (1).

According to Reckwitz, the de-centered "I" presented in *Confessions* was a way of deconstructing the linguistic code and enabling an act of violence against the apartheid system that could shatter its structure (211). In retrospect, it seems this method was effective. This is the long story Breytenbach does not want to retell in *Dog Heart*. But he does want to make clear that he still believes that he did not survive. This connection to a past autobiographical statement is a variation of what Janet Varner

Gunn calls autobiographical response. Gunn contends that the unsettled nature of meaning in any text demands a continuous response from the author as well as the reader. Response to one's own autobiographical texts is "a question of validity" that leads to "a question of truth" (1982: 91), both of which have strong application to Breytenbach's claim that he is dead. Reader interpretation must start with an acknowledgement of the statement which will "make accessible the value and meaning of certain experiences" (91). Since the physical experience of death is not accessible to the reader, s/he is forced to *imagine* a death for himself and for the author. If unwilling to tap the potential of this introductory image, the reader fails to receive the full effect of *Dog Heart*, whose total meaning may "remain hidden forever" (Gunn: 91), a result some close to South Africa might find very convenient, as in the case of J.M. Coetzee's analysis in *Stranger Shores* (2001: 249-260). Breytenbach tests us from the very first line, demanding that our perception be open to being directed by and selective of the requirements of the immediate occasion. Resisting a full acknowledgement and willingness to be escorted through his memoir by a metaphysical host is to close the door on the memoir's truth and value.

Only one out of the five reviews I read dealt directly with the statement, "I am dead". J. M. Coetzee does call the memoir "in part a book of the dead" (10), but he never delves into how it represents the dead. Mark James quotes the opening line and uses it to support part of his thesis that "Memory is intimately entangled with the dead." But he never shows (most likely due to a lack of time and space) how memory is recalled in the statement "to make a long story short" and how that atomization of Breytenbach's experience relates directly to what he wants from the reader. It is easy for Andries Oliphant to dismiss the memoir as "flights of fantasy" because, unless one takes seriously the opening note to the reader, *Dog Heart* becomes too porous to make any lasting impression. Another review describes the overall truthfulness of *Dog Heart* as Chagall's floating shtetl figures (Toerin, 1999) — in other words, shifting, ungrounded, unreliable. Striving to visualize *Dog Heart*, Ariel Dorfman describes the memoir as a "dog who has survived an earthquake and sniffs for bones in the rubble, ready to chew up anything that can keep him going"(14). Like Coetzee, who also understands *Dog Heart* to be revisionist history making a case for survival, Dorfman's historical interpretation serves his needs to understand South Africa, not Breyten Breytenbach. Reading autobiography as statements about public life tempts both Coetzee and Dorfman in a way that Breytenbach seems to have anticipated. That is

why he writes the short note to the reader and cautions that the ways of the mirror are dark to the eye. Interpreting his memoir as a treatise on a new South Africa will let the more challenging aspect of the memoir slip away unknown and unacknowledged.

Autobiographical response is not limited to reader response; it also includes and demands a reading by the author of himself. This is very important in light of Breytenbach's previous autobiographical works because writing himself one more time requires that he acknowledge what he has written in the past. "[The] past becomes an 'optical instrument' for reading 'his own self' when he is finally able to locate himself in front of his life" (93), writes Gunn about the autobiographer's vision. Part of Breytenbach's unique past is that he has written several autobiographies and each one provides a slightly different optical instrument. Because much of the debate about the value and truth of *True Confessions* focused on the decentered "I" and how it provided evidence that the centered "I" did not survive prison, and was in fact deconstructed by the experience, Breytenbach connects the conclusion of that story to the beginning of the next story, something he does not do in the two previous autobiographical works; *Return to Paradise* (1993) and *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution* (1996) do not as clearly follow Gunn's theory of autobiographical perspective. For Breytenbach, the end of *Confessions* and the beginning of *Dog Heart* fit together seamlessly because of his own autobiographical response. In this new memoir the concern is not how or why he died but rather what happens now.

Through the first sentence, the reader steps out of an objective relationship in which an understanding of death is controlled by empirical thought and into a relationship directed and managed by Breytenbach's imagination and memory. "Death is the birth of imagination" (11), Breytenbach writes, and ensures that he himself and his reader accept imagination as a way of "[discovering] new possibilities to dress up memory" (11). The process of imagination empowering memory to remake itself he calls "resituating myself before *that which happened in the meantime* screwed up my choices"(11, my italics). The italicized subject phrase refers to prison and as part of the overall statement suggests that Breytenbach is looking to "undead" himself in terms of *Confessions* and revise his vision of death in the present time. He is looking for a resurrection and is hoping by virtue of the power of his imagination and his memory to remake the story (that is so long and dull to retell now that its main characters and the apartheid

environment have been extinguished). Only by remaking the story can a resurrection seemingly be possible. Resurrection depends on the power of memory and imagination, forces that are metaphysical as well as linguistic. The former pair is rooted in imagery; the latter are forces Breytenbach has mastered and now employs to manage his death and resurrection.

6.4
Symbolism in the Tomb

Dog Heart is "in part a book of the dead" (Coetzee, 1999: 10) because of the innumerable listings of things associated with the dead. Aside from the statement, "I am dead", which will eventually lead this discussion of the text as metaphysical tomb rich with symbolism, relatives who are either dead or dying, visits to graves, deaths by disease, old age, violence, or Nature, children's graves, myth-making, and the past in general as a dead realm, contribute to an impression that the memoir is not forward looking. It reads at times like an inventory of the dead. In the process of taking this inventory, Breytenbach stumbles across a photograph of his great-grandmother Rachel Susanna Keet and finds he cannot locate her grave. The memoir begins to focus on her life — she was a rather eccentric midwife who delivered virtually all the children in Montagu between around 1870 and 1915 when she died — as evidence of another time before apartheid when white and brown people lived together more harmoniously in a process of "glorious bastardisation" (35). It ends with a sad acceptance that Keet's memory has physically vanished. Only a metaphysical memory can be restored by adopting an unmarked grave and renaming it in her honor. His memory is not his own but inherited from writings about his great-grandmother recorded by Babsie van Zyl. "Reading about my great-grandmother is like listening to someone else describing the dusty light coming through the windows of a room where dead memories are kept" (86), Breytenbach laments. So from nothing but vague memories he plants a beacon in the form of the naming of a grave (196), doubtful that his marking out his history is either legitimate or harmless.

Rachel Susanna Keet comes to embody all the other examples of the dead and dying. For one, her unmarked grave is the shared experience of so many marginalized people who found themselves completely

outside of the history propagated by the Afrikaner elite since 1948. In contrast to written history and all its attendant authority and power, Keet represents the way memory quickly turns into myth, the oral history passed down from generation to generation, which inherently is flexible, mutable, and adaptable. Other examples are the stories of Gert April, Koos Sas and Dirk Ligter, all folk heroes, that get told over and over again in various degrees of drunkenness (136). Inevitably, the stories mutate but the message remains the same: the men were the first of the resistance fighters (136), who challenged the white settlers and pitted their nomad ways against the rigidity of a land-hungry newcomer. Keet is also a revolutionary because she did not make distinctions between kinds and cultures of people as she went about her midwifery work. The memory of her also carries with it the proof that life was always violent in this country. In her medicine bag preserved in the Missionary Church, Breytenbach finds two crocheted baby bonnets, one white and one black, for the baby born either alive or dead. First violence, then death, then myth-making marks the natural path out of the past. It is a sequence of events not lost on Breytenbach who wonders where he is in this process if indeed he did not survive prison. In planting a beacon in Africa and naming it for his great grandmother he is no doubt in another step of myth-making.

How and where does Breytenbach get the notion that he will get away with myth-making? In all of the reviews, ranging from those which label *Dog Heart* as "flights of fantasy" to those which portray him as revisionist historian or reconstructionist, none try to disqualify him as a voice in South Africa at a time of transition. He merits discussion — by virtue of his ascendance as a premier poet and his agonizing fall into prison as recounted in *Confessions* — even if no one seems to really understand what he is talking about. The elusive meaning of what Breytenbach is getting at makes most sense if he is regarded as a myth-maker, as one who harnesses imagination beyond the natural realm. Because he requires from the reader an acceptance of his death, he gains a kind of immortal authority, like the stories of Gert April or Koos Sas. Viewed as a myth-making instead of as a sense-making narrative, the treasury of symbolism and meaning available in the "text as tomb" mirrors the defamiliarization that occurs when an autobiography evolves into allegory by virtue of the autobiographical perspective, a key aspect of Gunn's *Poetics of Experience*. The reader begins to respond to Breytenbach's autobiography by rising to the "interpretive occasion it requires"(117). Taking the imaginary hand of the reader, standing close to the reader as if in a dance, whispering in his or her ear — "Reader, I'm

leaning forward to whisper to you" (166) — he assumes the role of escort through a tomb, namely, his own.

In the tomb are innumerable and fascinating hieroglyphics, trinkets and treasures of which I will here give a quick sampling.

First, there is violence. In the first chapter "Beginning, For the Reader", Breytenbach writes, "This has always been a violent country" (1). The same words or a mutation thereof echo, sometimes sorrowfully, sometimes caustically, sometimes even blandly throughout the text (54, 95), and belong to a set of repeated symbols: the injunction, "Look high, look low!" (2, 64, 95) is part of the set as well as the snake (2, 25, 51, 64, 122, 139, 184)) and the flood (2, 12, 25, 27, 54, 98, 106, 172-174)). What do these mean? They are open to interpretation. The snake and the flood are Biblical references but mostly they symbolize a very real South African fear. Flash floods in the Klein Karoo can devastate the region, killing livestock, crops, and villages. There are numerous poisonous snakes that lie in the grass, on the ground, in trees. Look high, look low for snakes specifically, but also for greed, for revenge, for attack. To say this is a violent country acts in the mind and memory as a reminder against complacency or any sense of security (178). The repetition of these expressions and images give their meaning symbolic value. Memory is figurative; it creates a set of symbols it understands.

Breytenbach recounts a dream in which he and his friend "Adam" (beware, none of the names in *Dog Heart* are real) are mauled by a boerboel in a dusty town in the Klein Karoo (52). The dream animates the dog symbol of the memoir —"I have written a monstrous attacker which refuses to lie down on the page" (52). In another part of the text, Breytenbach tells an odd story of Adam's dog devouring his manuscript (59). The dog is a symbol of doubt? Hubris? Greed? It can devour manuscripts and attack the author. It can be utterly unreliable for a creature so domesticated and human bound. A tribunal of dogs, namely the Truth and Reconciliation Commission whose Commissioners are "the chief dogs of God"(21, 64), further characterizes the species as unpredictable, which is why the dog symbolizes the unpredictability in society. Like humans, these symbolic dogs hold counsel, decide right from wrong, and have the power to judge others; indeed the dog is deified as an arbiter of morality. Immediately following this description, violence echoes, "Look high, look low! Watch out for the snake in the tree" (64). Towards the end of the text under the title "Breyten Dog", Adam's girl friend Mercy has told the

author that her activist father bought a puppy the day Breytenbach was sentenced and named him Breyten, "'So that somebody by that name can run around free outside'" (171). The story is further developed in meaning by the fact that the girl would run around and call the puppy *Bedelaar* (Beggar) instead of Breyten. Which dog is the true dog? Perhaps just as in people, the truth resides in both the good and the bad, in both the noble and the savage; perhaps characteristics are only a matter of perspective.

None of the characters — not even Breytenbach's daughter Gogga or his good friend Adam — undergo development. These figures and the narrator's interaction with them tell us more only about the narrator who is dead, resident of a memory tomb he invites us into. The name he gives to his wife, "Lotus", tells us something of what she means to him: she is a source of peace, meditation, knowledge, one with nature — "Lotus is shaping the grounds of Paradys plant by plant"(172). Kwaaiman is the name he assigns his brother. It means 'angry man' and stands in opposition to Nature — "Kwaaiman fights the baboons, the geckos, the starlings, the snakes, the crickets, the plant lice and the neighborhood's mongrels that come before daybreak to rip open the black plastic refuse bags. He will go down fighting" (29). There are many people in *Dog Heart* who are icons: Mercy, Oom Tao, Adam, Bruinman, and more. Each signals a meaning that belongs more to Breytenbach than to the individuals.

Like figurines of gods and goddesses, the filial archetypes carry as much but again a different type of meaning. Father, mother, grandfather are meaningful to the child, but both the child (1, 8, 35, 37, 78, 93, 99, 168, 193) and the archetypal figures are dead — "There's a photo of me and my grandfather, I'm about seven years old, soon I'll be dead..." (99) — and inaccessible to confirm the questions of lineage. The narrator must piece these together himself by visiting graves and researching in archives. Though inaccessible, the figures haunt him. He dreams about them. In one chapter, the father tries to smooth out his facial wrinkles with an iron; in another chapter, the father runs from a fire and is bleeding but the narrator cannot help him. The narrator daydreams about the archetypes, too. In a cemetery he sees a woman with a young boy at hand. He imagines he is the boy and the woman his mother (55). Later he reprimands himself, "You should know more about our mother"(169). The memory of her is too empty. There is nothing solid about her. She is a dream: "This could be a dream, but it is the image that lingers. My mother is dead. She is already lying in the coffin, dressed for eternity. She's talking, talking. (She was always full of words, our mother.) ... There's a secret she wants to share with me"(169). Breytenbach never gets to hear the secret

which could point toward the meaning of these archetypal figures. "I remain behind" (169); he stays frustrated with his own static death state, which he'd like more than anything to hurry along: "Just as you cannot survive without dreams, you cannot move on without the memory of where you come from, even if that journey is fictitious" (10). So the parents, the grandparents become symbolic imagery, of fiction, and of dreams, contributing to the mystery inherent in the past.

When including François Krige, who is dying in the text, Breytenbach seems to contradict himself claiming that "Painting (and writing) ... is movement... François moves our eyes and our memories." A painting or a text, therefore, is not a tomb. But *is movement* must be read empirically: painting and writing cause movement to happen. Death causes others to respond; a tomb is cause for excavation; the earth encourages us to dig into it. While a text or a painting is a place of memory, it also stirs memory in others. The documents on Rachel Susanna Keet initiate Breytenbach's memory, which gets documented in a text called *Dog Heart*. Text begets text as violence begets violence. Keet and Krige are mirror- symbols inspiring the text.

Nelson Mandela, Bishop Tutu, Alex Boraine and still others make cameo appearances in *Dog Heart*. They symbolize historical context and are strewn about the tomb like semi-precious stones. They can be a distraction from meaning, or a sort of anti-meaning. The one statement repeated in reviews and on the dust cover is when Mandela says to Breytenbach, "Gee Whizz, what are *you* doing here?" (163). The statement represents the antithesis to meaning, an indication that there is no reason to be in South Africa for *this* ex-con. Mandela thinks Breytenbach's absence — his exile — is more likely than his presence. It is more logical that he be buried under the strain of apartheid and transition in a nameless grave than to hollow out a tomb of his own where memory and meaning can rest for eternity. Breytenbach resists the anti-meaning that Mandela labels him with, a label resulting from the deconstructed, de-centered self of *Confessions*, a work Mandela has surely read. The comment has an important role to play in the text: it is a reminder that he has been misunderstood, misinterpreted.

Breytenbach never states we are in a tomb, but he gives us ample hints. He escorts us to so many graves, develops the story of his great-grandmother, leads us to the Missionary Church, drives us through Bonnievale where he was born to rather poor parents, to Wellington where he was schooled, and finally to Montagu where he carves out a home for himself if only for a short period. Because Breytenbach claims he

is dead, the reader can make of these memories a meaning, which I have done in the assertion of text as tomb. Breytenbach claims he wants nothing from the reader except to enter the text and have a look around — "There's nothing I want" (first page, last page). The tomb, decorated with symbols, furnished with figurines, adorned with sparkling moments of historicity, manifests itself in language: "Language as vector of imagination (180)," enables the space-making we encounter as text.

Space-making is synonymous with controlling space. The importance of spatial control is evident in Taylor's arguments for constructing a horizon or a framework of identity. It also represents one of the main axes of Bakhtin's space/time relationship: here/there. Constructing a tomb, therefore, is one way of marking out a here/there relationship (similar to a map of addresses as in Fugard, or to a playing field in Coetzee). The death state that keeps repeating itself in Breytenbach's work reaches a heightened articulation of distinctive imagery in *Dog Heart* because of the introduction he writes, because of his focus on the dying and the dead, and because of his scattered imagination. Within the text as tomb, detail is laid out and each piece is symbolic, a piece of the here/there (or the where). Characters, landscape, hieroglyphics are not part of the now/then, as in a narrative, but help to construct the here/there, as in a space. The now/then axis is represented by the story, which, according to Holquist's interpretation of Bakhtin's dialogic, represents the "specific contours" of self (1990: 37). While Breytenbach fills space with his imagination and memory (of landscape, people, things people said, sayings, myths particular to the area of Montagu), the boundary of space is time. The role of the reader in recognizing the contour of time is essential: "This narrativity, this possibility of conceiving my beginning and end as a whole life, is always enacted in the time/space of the other" (37). Through the *other*, Breytenbach can conceive of his own death, an aspect of his life he must control in order to be his own master. His way to mastering his own death is by writing his way through the eye and perspective of the *other*. Without writing (or any means of self expression, i.e. art) he cannot shape a finite horizon beyond which he wants to travel.

6.5
J.M. Coetzee Responds to *Dog Heart*

J. M. Coetzee's response to Breytenbach's memoir comments on the strange linguistic effect *Dog*

Heart produces: "It is odd to be faced with a book in English that is so much a celebration of the folksy earthiness of Afrikaans nomenclature; that follows with such attention the nuances of Afrikaans social dialect; and that entertains without reserve the notion that there is a sensibility attuned to the South African natural world which is uniquely fostered by the Afrikaans language" (1999: 8).[1] With measured practicality, Coetzee ascribes the English text to marketability. It is no doubt more favorable in modern times to write in English than in Afrikaans (or perhaps any other language for that matter); but there is also something to the role English plays in being a language of exile that makes Breytenbach's return to the Boland linguistically dramatic. "Breytenbach has published his account of his reexploration of his African roots in English, a language of which his mastery is by now almost complete," writes Coetzee patronizingly (8). The reference here to mastery and the assumption that Breytenbach is looking to master English merits exploration.

Dog Heart is an integrated text on more than a language level. As Coetzee points out, Breytenbach makes a great deal out of the mixed population in the Boland and especially in his new town of residence, Montagu. The combination of new-comers like himself, of the old people, of the first people, of the mixing of the Khoi and the European descendant, and of the nomadic tribes that permeated all of southern Africa long before the 19th century found expression in the modern population struggling to voice itself in the New South Africa. For this, Coetzee says, Breytenbach joins the revisionist historians who work to disprove the theory that the Afrikaner was the first rightful owner of the land. Breytenbach admits, "I want to write the penetration, expansion, skirmishing, coupling, mixing, separation, regrouping of peoples and cultures" (35). "The glorious bastardization" of the history of people who speak Afrikaans — "a vigorous bastard tongue" (96) — is his topic as historian. By representing them he hopes to make a case for the mutability of the culture and the language, and thus his own transformative identity.

Dog Heart as an archeological site (a tomb) provides enormous opportunity for the linguist to see how Afrikaans culture preserves itself. Coetzee points toward Breytenbach's tracing of Afrikaner roots to the Khoi, noting that the word "Hottentot" is no longer acceptable. He refers back to Breytenbach's earlier use of the word "bastard" in association with the Afrikaner in 1973, how the term was rejected even by Breytenbach sympaticos, and how now the term "bastard" is a source of pride for the liberal Afrikaner who is looking into his past for a dark brother or sister. The word reference "paradise" has metamorphosed from his earlier works — *Season in Paradise (*1980), and *Return to Paradise* (1993) — to what he calls

his home "Paradys" in *Dog Heart*. Breytenbach revises previous usages — "I have written often of this land as paradise, including in an ironical way, but this could be the first time that I truly return 'home'" (53) — and in so doing transforms his former identity. Tracing the history of the use of the signs and their evolving meaning in the finite text is a role the writer and reader share as they author and reauthorize the text in an eternal exchange of autobiographical responses.

Coetzee's comment on the marketability of a text written in English rather than in Afrikaans goes back to the earliest function of signing: a keeping track of the goods exchanged. Autobiography also depends on a certain exchange to occur between reader and writer. Buying or borrowing the book is not the least important; one could say it is the most fundamental exchange. Breytenbach wants to attract a wider audience not only because it will make him wealthier but also because he wants the autobiographical response to come from a wider audience. If there were no market for books written about the Afrikaner experience, certainly no publisher would commission it. But there is interest (always smaller than what one would like), and so the relationship between the Afrikaner and the English reading public becomes a factor in how members of a culture express themselves. Being a maverick, Breytenbach exaggerates the change Afrikaans will undergo by incorporating the whole English language as a vector of his Afrikaans imagination, self-invention, and transformation, "as thread through the maze, as memory of change, as vector of imagination and intervention and invention" (180). Language as a function of wealth is no doubt one of the most powerful forces on language as culture, causing huge leaps in its evolutionary process.

If he can prove that Afrikaans can mutate as it has done throughout history up till the rigid reforms of apartheid, then the idea of Afrikaans mutating into some form of English will explain Breytenbach's use of Afrikaner dialect, syntax, word play, and social nuances within the deployment of English linguistic signs. For a poet who is known "to break with conventional narrative patterns and present an image of the catastrophes which threaten man or the fears which dominate his life" (Kannemeyer: 140), such a risky act to preserve Afrikaans is possible. This notion is also in keeping with what Coetzee thinks Breytenbach argues for: "The sooner the modern Afrikaner discards the illusion of himself as the bearer of light into the African darkness, and accepts himself as merely one of Africa's nomads — that is to say, as rootless and unsettled being, with no claim of proprietorship over the earth — the better his chance of survival" (1999: 5). Adopting English but saturating it with Afrikaans habits is not so far fetched. Through *Dog Heart*, Breytenbach

proffers himself as an example of an Afrikaans version of English showing no intentions of forsaking its mutated form and content for what Coetzee or anyone else considers "mastery".

The dialogue regarding the mastery of language and the reconstruction of history that is evidently taking place between Coetzee and Breytenbach exemplifies what Bakhtin describes in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays* (Trans. by McGee, ed. Holquist: 1986):

> The transcription of thinking in the human sciences is always the transcription of a special kind of dialogue: the complex interrelations between *text* (the object of study and reflection) and the created, framing *context* (questioning, refuting, and so forth) in which the scholar's cognizing and evaluating thought takes place. This is the meeting of the two texts — of the ready-made and the reactive text being created — and, consequently, the meeting of two subjects and two authors (106-07).

The convergence of dialogue through text gains further momentum through additional response from any other source looking in at the dialogue between Breytenbach and Coetzee: "Each dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisible present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue" (126). Adding continuous layers of dialogue furthers space and horizon. The layering begins to act like a wave that gains momentum and proportion — a process congruent with Holquist's description of dialogism as molten and Bakhtin's description of "the layering of meaning upon meaning, voice upon voice, strengthening through merging" (121). Creativity results in space-making and is dependent on sense-making. Evidence of sense-making is in the response language elicits: "The word moves ever forward in search of responsive understanding" (127).

I think Coetzee is wrong in reducing Breytenbach's memoir to a revisionist history and his use of English to a simple greed even though on every count noted above the authors seem to be in sync. But Coetzee, whom we have seen determined to respect the rules of conduct toward the best assurance of fair play, is predictably unengaged in Breytenbach's more daring vision of his own death. Coetzee has after all not sat in prison for seven years, has spared himself from any such consequence. Breytenbach makes use of his prison term as memory feeding an imagination that ultimately can control his afterlife. An example of this is in *Dog Heart*, when he records for radio that the way to escape prison is to report to the main gate where one will be taken into custody to speak to the superintendent. One will decide on the means of

execution and agree that the way to cover up one's escape is by an official claim of attempted escape, written by officials. The deal is negotiated: an execution is staged in exchange for an official document stating the inmate attempted escape. The inmate is thus in control of his will, his death, and his immortality. Breytenbach states, the process is a matter of self-determination through language: "You must master [the language]" (175). Coetzee, who reveres the mastery of language in a different sense, attempts to ensure his immortality otherwise and in a way not so easily discussed here in terms of "selving" and self-determination. Language appears on the "mirror/page" and must be controlled; dialogue must be "trusted to proceed peaceably" (Coetzee, 1996: 229): this is the Coetzee model. Breytenbach, imagining memory to be "Kaggen, the trickster god" (182) who says, "There is *one* certainty: nothing is what it seems" (182), begins by knowing that whatever he says, he is wrong. In the example above, whatever final proclamation was officially made in the end about his death, he would still be dead. Mastering the language means having consciousness of failure, which can only be described through the use of language. As Coetzee interprets Breytenbach, it almost seems as though Breytenbach is sitting back and laughing at Coetzee's attempt — heartfelt, serious, fair — at interpretation, and particularly at his notion of "mastery".

6.6
Dignity: The Mark on The Landscape

The dialogue taking place between Coetzee and Breytenbach is cold and exact, desired more by Coetzee who has responded to Breytenbach's work countless times than by Breytenbach who himself admits to preferring Afrikaans-speaking individuals over the English-speaking in South Africa. The exchange, while satisfying Gunn's notion of reader-response, falls short of what Charles Taylor calls "*webs* of interlocution" (36, my emphasis). "I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors," writes Taylor, who suggests that without the myriad responses (which is a social condition), the self can cease to be. In prison where Breytenbach was cut off from all interaction with chosen peers, his need for a web of perspectives — a social network — was so strong that in order to survive he had to destroy his singular identity and resurrect it into multiple "I"s. In isolation, where he spent several years, he became his own society of selves, a

condition that he argues is still part of him as evidence that he, as a singularity, no longer exists. *Dog Heart*, a tomb, a book of the dead, creates a peer group of the dead and the dying. In this peer group, a common orientation is shared. Taylor explains that the common orientation must be, first, a common understanding of the lie of the land, and second, a knowledge of how to place oneself in it (41).

In a last visit with Francois Krige, as related in *Dog Heart*, Breytenbach sees, "It is evident that [Krige's] work grew from an intimate interaction with his environment" (112), and although he was a painter, "[He] worked in Afrikaans, in terms of both subject matter and technique... as Afrikaans as only that mixture of Boer and Khoi and Oriental can be" (112). Landscape is "the vector of non-intellectual consciousness" (113). Like dogs, humans mark the landscape. They use language, which is only a system of signs (lines). Painting and writing are examples of the same process. Visiting the dying Krige results in an epiphany: "Is it not ultimately about the dignity of leaving a few marks?" (110). Marking, signing, writing, painting layer the landscape with proof of the past.

The chapter "Travel Memoir" comes toward the end of the work and represents the original assignment given to Breytenbach by the publisher: to write about a favorite region. The system of signs Breytenbach uses as he returns to his "Heartland" is a collection of marks he gathers from the region that in various ways represent the layers of man's experience in the landscape. The abundance of marks and each one's inevitable eclipse suggests a consciousness that the present signs (Boland, Afrikaner, brown, Khoi, etc.) will also be covered in time. In the poem and chapter heading, "Boland, A Travel Memoir", Breytenbach writes, "look, thought is only an eclipse of passing/ ... / ... over more ancient landscape (50-51)" Signs whose role is to represent thoughts remain as testament to the ritual of being. For example, paying a visit to the dying, conversing over tea and home-baked rusks, and remembering the past, are also rituals acted out in a visit to the old woman Jeanne Retief, who is unfortunately confined to her bed. In the room, on the wallpaper are marks left behind by the Great Flood. Jeanne sits in her bed no longer afraid of the floodwaters that rose to one hundred and fifty centimeters years ago; she has other concerns. The previous night an old woman living alone on a neighboring farm was murdered. Nothing was stolen and it is speculated the deed was done for the thrill of dislocating a life. The violent act is the same as the mark left behind by another violent act. The ritual of being and the ritual of leaving evidence of being are closely linked.

From the visit, Breytenbach and company move on to Swellendam and walk through a Drostdy, along whose walls maps are exhibited. The French and Portuguese maps mark up the southern tip of Africa in various ways moving coyly one map at a time up the eastern seaboard, into the interior. The connection between the watermarks on the wallpaper and the maps of seafaring intruders on the wall are not lost. History makes its mark in different ways; the slow colonial flood of humanity into Africa retreated but now other sources of fear replace them. For Breytenbach, for one who writes (signs, marks) it is important to remember, "The maps of knowledge are partly the residue of observation, partly the wide arc of their imagination groping towards where experience and desire abut on the borders of the unknown, which will be sensed as 'darkness'" (185). All the marks, even nature's marks, are manifestations of imagination in response to the truth.

The interplay between landscape and language involves an act of perception and responsive marking. Impressing the self upon one's environment is the only evidence that the self has existed within the environment. Breytenbach is compelled to make his impression and hopes that his impression has a rippling effect. Being compelled to mark the landscape indicates that there is an autobiographical imperative at work in the relationship between the individual and the world. Breytenbach sees that he shares this imperative with the people of the past. But what he does not understand he discusses in the chapter "Stone", a chapter near the end of his memoir. "Earlier people didn't seem to have any curiosity about 'the deep past', they didn't go around exploring ruins... Why have we become so obsessed with origins and beginnings"(165)? While in the past, people were content to simply throw the stone into the water, knowing that the ripple effect would continue infinitely, today people are no longer simply satisfied with knowing how they were affected. They want to know, "Who threw the stone"(166)?

It must be the first question the reader poses of autobiography: Who wrote this? Who did this? Once identity is ascertained as a name or a role or an authority, the response can proceed. As the receivers or readers of the myriad autobiographical marks that surround us on nearly every inch of the globe, our obsession with connecting to those who have left the marks intensifies because our own autobiographical imperative depends on our ability to perform what Gunn terms the "answering look", the response to which autobiography is in part fundamentally linked (113). The landscape around us is increasingly becoming layered with marks (like the graffiti- encrusted cave above the Montagu Hot Springs), and unless we can

identify the different autobiographers, our own marking will become alienated beyond even self-recognition. Breytenbach is angry at this dialectical system because clearly some people and cultures will be left out. To these people he says: "Just as you cannot survive without dreams, you cannot move on without the memory of where you come from" (10). So make it up! he implores. "Memory is imagination" (10). "Go through the sunken 'homelands' of imagination and memory where the rain bull dwells" (180). Fertilize history with a bit of your own imagination. This mark was made by Kaggen; in that cave is where Gert April slept; here is Koos Sas's skull. Myth-making is a process of identifying the stone-thrower. Here, look, even I can make up a story or two. "Writing is ... a stone" (167). In this way, Breytenbach connects his own imperative to write himself, to mark the landscape, with those of others. A self only among other selves, Breytenbach implores others to be brave so that he himself can also continue to orient himself to and in the landscape.

The naming of Rachel Susanna Keet's grave is of course the quintessential metonymy of *Dog Heart*. Here the grave is not really hers; it is only imagined to be. Her name as sign is the beginning of the autobiographical process, the impulse that is the "I". But no matter, Breytenbach can start with his response, his acknowledgement of her identity. His looking at his great-grandmother gives him a sense that she "sees herself being seen" (Gunn: 113). Even the imagined sensation of reader response to her autobiographical sign is enough for Breytenbach to stir the roots of his own identity enough to answer her autobiography with his own.

6.7
Orientation through Autobiography

Gunn uses Marcel Proust's attendance at a party to bring out the aging writer's sense of himself as a young man through the eyes of others, and of how their *autobiographical response* in the form of "answering looks" shapes Marcel's *autobiographical perspective* and gives impetus to his *autobiographical impulse* — impulse, perspective, and response being the essential poetics of experience. By the end of the novel *In Remembrance of Things Past*, Proust is only beginning to write his autobiography.

There is in Breytenbach always a sense that he is just beginning. He embodies the act of crumpling

up a piece of paper and throwing it over his shoulder only to start again with a fresh piece under his fleshy palms. He incorporates the right he describes in *Judas Eye*, the right to "the freedom to be a failure" (131). Autobiography, more than any other genre, enables the right to fail in the same way that mistakes enable opportunities for our greatest progress, our deepest learning. Genre of failure, autobiography humbles, reminds us that we are not yet ourselves, sends us back to the drawing board; it refuses us and makes us want to be ourselves even more. Breytenbach's return to the Boland is similar in orientation to Adam and Eve's orientation to paradise. Their mistakes and failure define them. Placing himself inside a tomb, among the dead, in a dying culture, which Coetzee relegates to "history", is an act of revisiting both paradise and prison, both places he has been before, but now in the new memoir he merges as one. He is most himself in these places, orienting himself to his own finitude, while in contrast, compelled to "grasp [his life] in a narrative" (Taylor: 47), doomed to fail because the narrated life has no end. The finite "I" merges with its perpetual incompleteness: content is brought into communion with moral responsibility by virtue of failure and incompleteness.

Perceiving the horizon of our identity or acknowledging the framework of our "I" determines for us, Taylor argues, an "orientation to the good" (47). Unable to escape the questions that demand orientation, modern man sees that his spatial and moral orientation are synonymous. Because space/time continually shifts, so must our moral orientation. The writer will always have to return to write himself once more because he is committed to "making the best sense" of his life (Taylor: 57). "'Making the best sense' here includes not only offering the best, most realistic orientation about the good but also allowing us best to understand and make sense of the actions and feelings of ourselves and others. For our language of deliberation is continuous with our language of assessment" (57). "I am dead" (1) is ultimately an orientation that allows Breytenbach to write himself into immortality, making a myth of his life, imagining himself for all time. Threatening to be the finale of his life, *Dog Heart* will no doubt move aside for another autobiographical piece. In that case, nothing will be lost and so much gained in the assurance that failure drives the "I" statement in perpetual motion, until death immortalizes its final draft.

7. Conclusion

Bakhtin is considered by many as the Einstein of literary criticism for coming up with a theory of relativity that goes like this: "One's body motion has meaning only in relation to another body; or — since it is a relation that is mutual — has meaning only in dialogue with another body" (Holquist, 1990: 20). But unlike Einstein who takes many years to embrace an ever expanding universe, Bakhtin acknowledges forces that move toward and away from culture. Morson writes: "The cultural world, Bakhtin argued, consists of both 'centripetal' (or 'official') and 'centrifugal' (or 'unofficial') forces. The former seek to impose order on an essentially heterogeneous and messy world; the latter either purposefully or *for no particular reason* continually disrupt that order" (30, Morson's emphasis). In applying space/time imagery to culture Bakhtin suggests there is one force holding the entire universe together, giving it order; there is another force in rebellion against the order, moving away from it, gaining speed as it moves ever further from the center. The two forces in science and in culture are mutually dependent and, seen from the human eye as it strains to look outward, appear to be in perfect (static) equilibrium.

"Centripetal forces push toward unity, agreement and monologue, while the centrifugal forces seek multiplicity, disagreement and heteroglossia" (16), write Shotter and Billig to describe the Bakhtinian dialogic universe. Although in times of great intensity, autobiography is asked to take part in the unifying cultural force, the memoirs here studied remind us that autobiography is part of the centrifugal force. In part by the author's design, but largely due to the role of reader response to autobiographical statements, autobiography will inevitably move away from the center of culture and thinking. This is its enduring attraction for both reader and writer.

But why is this more evident in times of great change? Why does the decade of transition usher in the distinct examples of *Cousins*, *Boyhood*, and *Dog Heart*? (Risking a final analogy)... A parent says to her four-year-old, "I want you to eat your food." So often, the child will take this specially granted opportunity to assert his individuality "purposefully or *for no particular reason*" to say (quite maddeningly), "No." It could be argued, it is a good time to assert the self because the child best asserts itself when it articulates itself in opposition. Whom else shall he say "No" to? How

else will “No” be understood? “No” of course gets increasingly more complicated as one gets older. Each individual puts his or her special tone onto the words that describe “No”; they are uttered in a unique style and voice; they form groups called genres (official), or to Bakhtin, chronotopes (unofficial). Psychologists say the “No” should be celebrated early on, not necessarily because it is beautiful, but rather because it is inevitable. Rebellion, opposition, indifference to the “official” line or order will eventually assert itself. Rather sooner than later. One could say the same thing about the new order in South Africa. Rather sooner than later oppose the centripetal forces at work in shaping a new South Africa.

Athol Fugard’s celebration of the specifics of his world, his upbringing, his stash of personal, private secrets, is a movement away from the official line of business in South Africa in 1994. “Centrifugal forces register and respond to the most diverse events of daily life, to the prosaic facts that never quite fit any official or unofficial definition” (Morson: 30). Telling the story of his homosexual cousin and a story about his own uncertain sexuality cannot be further from the official concerns, and is almost interpreted by some as being an irritating distraction from the important business at hand. Like an old man fumbling and needling to remove a splinter from under his nail while the rest of his family is trying to discuss his imminent funeral and his will, Fugard’s limitation of focus is found annoying. But for him, finding and exercising self-respect far exceeded the larger political concerns of the day. Indeed the larger concerns benefited from his protecting himself with the humble specifics of his own past. Were he to focus too strongly on the larger political problems, the discussion would lead to his exclusion. Fugard is very attuned to the process of exclusion, especially if presuming membership in the centripetal forces, for this is what he has been writing about all his life: the poignant exclusion of those wishing to take part in discourse and being cruelly ignored. Fugard’s expertise is recognizing the voiceless. He says in reference to his new play,

> That is the challenge in the play. That is the question. Is there anything in the past that’s worth keeping? And you know, speaking as a white man, I would like to say, “Yes, there is.” But I think if we were to go and talk to the people in the Khayelitsha shacks and ask them, they’d say, “To hell with it,” There’s definitely a tendency, an attempt to ignore the contribution that other racial groups made to the struggle (Swarns: B1).

Wisely, out of self-respect as well as respect for the moment, Fugard has gone off on his own, written a quirky memoir as an antidote against exclusion. As South Africa heads off into the future, so does Fugard’s

work as literary artist, although only time will tell whether his new plays will capture center stage in quite the same way his previous writing did.

Instead of representing opposition as it acts directly in the opposite direction, Coetzee turns inward to explore opposition in the self. "Bakhtin relocates the central opposition in language as it shapes the self in inner speech", writes Morson (217). Accentuating the importance of autobiography is to incorporate the *other* as it speaks about the "I". Centrifugal/centripetal forces are at work internally, not only externally, although these need to be articulated precisely. "Because of mental habits, intellectual traditions, and centripetal cultural forces, we often lose a sense of the dialogic quality of an event" (Morson: 56); in which case we fail to assert opposition. Recognizing the tendency to reduce the autobiographical "I" to one unit, the author can make a fatal step into total "monologization" (57), a misstep Coetzee's *Boyhood* establishes as an internal pluralism by writing himself in the third person. He has engaged in internal dialogue before in *Doubling the Point*, where he covered similar content, time, and place. Exposing internal dialogue is not earthshaking. Some may say that Beckett's plays first exposed internal dialogue; today even respected philosophers use the internal dialogue in their academic presentations.[1] What is unusual about Coetzee's memoir is how doggedly it seeks to create a field of debate that places both the adult writer and the boy on equal footing. The debate must be governed by rules, a habit Bakhtin associates with centripetal forces: "The centripetal forces of culture ... codify ... habits by turning them into a fixed set of rules" (Morson: 58). Coetzee's will to govern debate is his most substantial autobiographical statement and leads discussion back to the issue of dignity that Fugard heads toward as he illustrates the many threats to respect and self-respect modern man endures.

Bakhtin states, "A life lived on the tacit basis of my alibi in Being falls away into indifferent Being that is not rooted in anything" (1993:43), as an argument for answerability, response, and opposition. The control over the contest between truth and transformation, which Coetzee exerts by silencing his "I" and transforming himself into "he", is a response he articulates in answering and taking responsibility for the messiness (emotion as well as revolution) in his internal dialogue. Silencing the voices allows him to speak authentically. This integrity of authenticity is Bakhtin's most fervent message: "Only through the answerable participation effected by a unique act or deed can one get out of the realm of

endless draft versions and rewrite one's life once and for all in the form of a fair copy" (44). "Shut up!" silently screams Coetzee at himself in *Boyhood*, where we are privy to the noise in his head. The gesture is a "single authentic note" lasting a couple of hundred pages.

So while Fugard says "no", and Coetzee says "silence", Breytenbach is the babbler on the *stoep* talking to himself for everyone to hear. To Nelson Mandela, he writes in *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution* (1996):

> Henceforth my contribution (and that of others of my ilk) will be: that our loyalty is a vigilant opposition; that any collaboration in the big project of constructing a South Africa in worthy accordance with the new realities born of dreams and of struggle will be predicated on principled criticism (86).

Strange, for someone from whom one expects revolution, to be so ardently explicit in defining his role as opposition. Saying it so bluntly in 1994 makes welcome the subtler approach of autobiography where the "I" confines itself to itself and does not get sucked in by the centripetal forces of "we".

Breytenbach's mantra of opposition is documented in all his work, and his questing from an intuitive recognition of the dying and death of his surroundings, through a so-called "bottoming out" in prison, to the profound perspective he has on self in South Africa today, has lasted all his life. Two things have escorted him throughout his development: images of death and the autobiographical impulse. How does his role as rebel (now rightly more gentlemanly, as noted in the above letter to Mandela) fit into his autobiographical imagination, driven as it is by the specificity of death and by his memory, which is in constant upheaval? Is there a connection between the impulsive response of self and the job of official critic that he self-assigns? According to Nussbaum, "Emotions ... have a history... The grief itself bears the traces of that entire history" (175). Grief is a process that acknowledges loss; it permeates the autobiographical statement in a process called "remembering". Memory, the product, is a product of grief with "specific content and cognitive specificity" (175). Coetzee's judgement at the end of his review describes *Dog Heart* as a "speculative history" (2001: 260), suggesting that Breytenbach is a historian of sorts. Coetzee, whose roots are in the Boland and Klein Karoo just as Breytenbach's are, reads Breytenbach as one who has dedicated himself to telling the history of a grief whose specifics — love of the anthropological/geological South Africa (in poetry); victim of politics in prison and exile (in autobiographies) — reverberate with the

emotion Coetzee is so disciplined in controlling and subduing.

The statement to Mandela is, therefore, only one advance in the history of grief. In 1994, as Mandela was released, Breytenbach must have felt the enormous pull toward the centre that any man of his commitment and experience would have felt. How quickly he escapes it! By 1999, he is again in the outer reaches of "South Africa", even suspected of being absent by the man he promised to oppose. For Coetzee this *hin und her* is evidence that he himself must maintain control, follow the rules, master the game. Yet he is likewise fascinated by the strange Afrikaner who is like the boys in his schooldays, who supplied "new revelations of the cruelty and pain and hatred raging beneath the everyday surface of things... the passion and fury of those days gripped him; he was shocked but he was greedy to see more, to see all there was to see" (*Boyhood*: 139).

The autobiography is an example of centrifugal force — a moving away from the center — and it can move at great speed. In that moving away, change can bring enormous upheaval, like major turbulence in a flight path. In that circumstance, the individual can lose orientation in two ways: first, he does not know whether he is looking in the same direction as he was before the change occurred; second, he makes the mistake of looking outside of his space for markers on the horizon that are not stable. In order to orient himself — an act of utmost importance for modern man as he seeks to position himself toward the good (Taylor: 28) — he must think in terms of spatial location in physical space. Where there is no fixed horizon, he must make one, either from memory or out of his imagination of what was. Looking out at his horizon, he might see a level playing field where he can join in a game governed by rules, he might see a city map where different locations conjure deep, intuitive emotion, or he might, as in the case of Breytenbach, look out on a mountainous horizon whose size and drama mirror the layered signs of the past. Metaphor upon metaphor, mark upon mark give the mountains their rise. He imagines himself into them, into his own horizon to make sure he is not left behind. These are, for the three authors here studied, the "strong qualitative discriminations" of their memoirs and what makes them unique; yet the example they offer is not an example of particulars, for these belong only to them. Their example is their responsiveness to the world around them, being on the one hand universal — the autobiographical response — and simultaneously specific — also the autobiographical response — as a way of reorienting themselves toward the good. For South African authors of all races, creeds, and genders, the horizon of their lives has changed

since the collapse of one of the great pillars of culture, namely the system of separation that affected their lives. Now that it is gone, the empty space it leaves alters the horizon in relation to which they had come to orient themselves; and in order to relocate themselves in space, the authors must reconfigure the way the horizon appears to them, from the position where they stand, where each can only stand alone.

In his essay, “The Problems with Speech Genre”, Bakhtin identifies the disconcerting certainty that any text relies heavily on listener response. “The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it” (1986: 68). I have argued intermittently in this thesis, that reader response, in the sense that Gunn has defined it, is a crucial factor in the autobiographer’s ability to move toward a better understanding of himself. Bakhtin further explains that the speaker knows and counts on listener responsiveness: “The speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else’s mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth” (69). In autobiography, in particular, a genre Bakhtin lightly discusses in *The Dialogic Imagination* in terms of classical autobiography, a most public display of the private life thrives on response. Without the *other*, the “I” of autobiography — silent or verbose — “self-consciousness” cannot develop (1981: 131). Reader, as explicit *other*, offers the “I” equilibrium as it seeks to make and restructure itself. Not only self-consciousness, but also *other*-consciousness drives the autobiographical impulse, on the one hand, to completion and, on the other hand, to eventual, inevitable revision. The reader fuels the autobiographical drive and is the eternal material of the “I”’s perpetual momentum.

Endnotes

1.1

[1] "Ordinary" in the sense depicted in Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* (1989) refers to man's ordinary life: "We are in conflict, even confusion, about what it means to affirm ordinary life" (24).

1.2

[1] The exact quotation in Bruss is as follows: "An autobiographer may act to rebut his public character in the form of an apology or to sustain it in the form of (what is now called) a memoir" (12). The ambiguities in the statement are complicated and reflect a general lack of attention focused on memoirs at the time. What is meant by "public character" and is the definition I will be working from throughout my thesis concerns known identities as in the example of published authors. This subtle use of "public" is important because it is what the authors, firstly, challenge in their memoirs; secondly, it is what they respond to; and thirdly, it is what they claim as an integral part of a broader identity.

[2] Roy Pascal's use of the word "public" is in conjunction with the word "political" (6). These two stand starkly apart from "personal" and "private" and to a great extent contradict the memoir's purpose which is to put more emphasis on the latter. To some extent, Pascal implies that the two perspectives are irreconcilable.

1.3

[1] Reference to political autobiography published in 1980s: Z. K. Matthews' *Freedom For My People* (1981); Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography, *Call Me Woman* (1985); Frank Chikane's autobiography, *No Life of My Own: An Autobiography* (1987); Oliver Tambo's speeches, *Preparing For Power: Oliver Tambo Speaks* (1987); Emma Mashinini's autobiography, *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life: A South African Autobiography* (1989).

1.5

[1] Dialogic (I will use both "dialogic" and "dialogical" interchangeably, following the model of M.M. Bakhtin and J.M. Coetzee) space/time marks the point between "now" and "then" and between "here" and "there". Like coordinates, both of these continuums have formerly confused the autobiographical perspective on time and place: time being a double referent, and space also often being dual. "When a particular person utters [the] word ["I"], he or she fills "I" with meaning by providing the central point needed to calibrate all further time and space discriminations: "I" is the invisible ground of all other indices in language, the benchmark to which all its spatial operations are referred, and the Greenwich mean by which all its time distinctions are calibrated" (Holquist, 1990: 23).

2 I will primarily be quoting from and referring to the 1999 article written as a first reaction to *Dog Heart*. The 2001 version found in *Stranger Shores* has already evolved from 1999. The 1999 title, for instance, changes to "The Memoirs of Breyten Breytenbach".

2.1

[1] The New Brighton Players are synonymous with the Serpent Players with whom Fugard worked between 1967 and 1973. In 2.2, I refer to the township actors and actresses, who include black players from Sophiatown and Port Elizabeth. The Sophiatown phase lasted two years from 1957 to 1959. All these examples of collaboration marked Fugard as one who worked with the marginalized population in South Africa.

4.1

[1] Free volition vs. the Kantian imperative are discussed in Bakhtin's *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993) on pages 24 and 25 and are meant here to capture the autobiographical tension between the two voices in Coetzee's mind.

[2] The emotional-volitional is "an inalienable moment of the actual performed act, [in this case the writing of an autobiography or of an opera that is 'autobiographical'] even of the most abstract thought, insofar as I am actually thinking it, i.e., insofar as it is really actualized in Being, becomes a participant in the ongoing event" (33). Much of this is quoted at the end of section 5, but might be necessary here for definition before going on.

4.3

[1] In “J.M. Coetzee’s unlikely autobiography gives a human face to a writer often perceived as cold”, David Attwell defines *Boyhood* as a “restricted autobiography”(1997: 24).

4.7

[1] More consideration of the transition from “I” to “he” can only be examined with linguistical tools, which I do not have at my disposal. I do think the limited examples in *Boyhood* and Coetzee’s expertise in control proffer a useful sampling of identity’s transition from “I” to “he”.

6.1

[1] Presumably, the reference is an echo of Roland Barthes’ *The Rustle of Language* (1984), an eclectic collection of essays on language and literature.

6.5

[1] I continue to quote the 1999 text because its revised state in *Stranger Shores* (2001) is already different. For example this quotation reads word for word the same; yet punctuation in the newer version replaces the semi-colons with commas. Because the development of the theme of reader-response relies heavily on Coetzee’s unique response, I felt it was necessary to stay consistent with one text and I preferred the 1999 text because of its strong title as well as other detailed differences.

7.

[1] This reference is to Martha Nussbaum’s presentation (1998), which includes dialogues between her deceased mother and father, and which she presented publicly in academic circles as examples of grief, emotion, and thought processes.

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