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## CONSTRUCTIONS OF APARTHEID

### The Novels of J. M. Coetzee in an International Frame

*I sometimes wonder if it isn't simply that vast and wholly ideological superstructure constituted by publishing, reviewing and criticism that is forcing on me the fate of being a 'South African novelist'.*

J. M. Coetzee<sup>1</sup>

#### Literature and the International Staging of Apartheid

South Africa has been made available as an object of knowledge in particular ways. The presentation of apartheid on an international stage was culturally mediated through various channels, discourses, and institutions.<sup>2</sup> These helped shape the international mobilisation of opposition to the policies of the ruling National Party regime. This process of mediation solicited specific forms of political commitment and moral approbation which were crucial to the maintenance of the anti-apartheid struggle at the international scale. Since the negotiated transition to democracy, established discourses for apprehending South African reality and positioning oneself with regard to that society have come under increasing critical scrutiny. In the light of current revisions of understandings of the relation between culture and politics during the period of apartheid, in this paper I want to explore the cultural mediation of apartheid in and through the discourses of metropolitan literary criticism.

From the late 1940s through to the 1990s, South Africa acquired "a notorious centrality in the contemporary political and ethical imagination which [gave] its writers a special claim on the world's attention".<sup>3</sup> The work of certain white writers in particular, such as Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J. M. Coetzee, came to hold a central place in defining an international canon of respectable, liberal oppositional literature. Given the stringent censorship regulations that operated under apartheid, the international arena became essential to the continued political significance of both black and white South African writers. However, dependence on this international context also reflected a deeper socio-economic reality which will not be immediately altered under the new political dispensation. Cultural production in post-apartheid South Africa will continue to be shaped by socio-economic disparities that sharply differentiate the cultural practices and interests of different communities: "To be still reliant upon the buying power and the sympathetic ear of liberal European metropolitan centres is to be involved in a form of neo-colonial dependency, one which marks the ongoing inability of the majority of South African (Black) people to constitute a collective or national readership through lack of the necessary access to funds and institutions."<sup>4</sup> With the demise of apartheid, it has been suggested in some quarters that such writers might now suffer the fate of other, earlier exemplars of dissident writing. Now that the stark moral certitudes which apartheid seemed to call forth have become complicated by the contingencies of the contemporary transitional period, one commentator has wondered whether fickle metropolitan audiences might now turn elsewhere for their literary heroes.<sup>5</sup> Another suggests that "South African writers, once comfortably ensconced in their certainties, are now facing the new order with increasing doubts."<sup>6</sup> In this paper, I want to suggest that any sense of certainty associated with representations of apartheid were less a feature of the work of writers like Gordimer or Coetzee, but rather a founding assumption of the "regimes of value" through which 'South African literature' has been produced as an identifiable genre over the past forty years.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis Nkosi has developed the notion of the ‘cross-border reader’ in order to understand the ways in which South African literary writing has been shaped by the necessity to address dispersed, divided, and fragmented audiences.<sup>8</sup> The cross-border reader needs to be understood theoretically as a factor constitutive of the very form of South African writing. Nkosi identifies the ways in which the cross-border reader is encoded into South African literary writing in its dominant realist aesthetic, containing a myriad of expository details characteristic of a genre of writing driven by the urge to inform and provide knowledge to a wider audience. The fractured and multiple audiences for South African writing imposes limitation as both the condition and subject of much of that literature, and produces writing characterised by an uncertain address to ‘virtual audiences’.<sup>9</sup> This is exemplified by the frequent recourse to epistolary forms such as letters, journals, or diaries, forms which make visible the act of writing for a fictionalised audience.<sup>10</sup> Fiction by white South African writers is, then, in no small part constituted from the outside in, shaped by the international audiences upon which it depended as the consequence of its own marginalisation from the everyday life and political and cultural struggles of the majority of South Africans. As a result of the need to negotiate multiple audiences and different political arenas, the meanings of South African literature were produced through a series of translations or transcodings, as the same texts moved from one context into others characterised by alternative ideological, political, and aesthetic imperatives. As a consequence, differences in geographical location become crucial in shaping the readings made of South African literary fiction.<sup>11</sup>

White South African writers were received into an international circuit of literary celebrity according to particular imperatives which determined the selection and evaluation of different texts and authors.<sup>12</sup> In his account of the successful internationalisation of political opposition to apartheid, Rob Nixon argues that the mobilisation of opposition to apartheid in the West had to negotiate fundamental incompatibilities between the political radicalism of organised opposition in South Africa, where liberalism was at best a beleaguered tradition, and the need to mobilise an essentially liberal constituency in the West.<sup>13</sup> Campaigns to mobilise international opposition to apartheid therefore necessarily required a certain degree of “cross-cultural flexibility” in terms of what was politically serviceable.<sup>14</sup> Writers from South Africa were often identified with those from Eastern Europe in Western shaping understandings of cultural repression and of ‘*écriture engage*’: “Despite their ideological antipathy, anti-apartheid and anti-communist writers became bracketed in the West as emissaries of extremity whose presence was at once disquieting and reassuring. This improbable coupling warned liberal Westerners of the fragility of their own freedoms while paradoxically often reaffirming such audiences’ cosy self-content”.<sup>15</sup> Writing by white South African authors was pulled into particular circuits of international literary evaluation shaped by liberal humanist values. In the early 1980s, one commentator suggested that apartheid had replaced the gulag as “the revealed outrage of the season”. A corollary of this was that the international reputations of white South African writers were based on the function they served in assuaging the guilt of their metropolitan audiences while also confirming their most cherished liberal presuppositions: “We love them for being South Africans *for us*”.<sup>16</sup> The conflation of apartheid with Eastern European communism was based upon the fact that the success of anti-apartheid movements in the West rested on the construction of a cause of apparently “epic moral clarity”.<sup>17</sup> The successful internationalisation of anti-apartheid movements was dependent on the discursive transformation of apartheid into an essentially moral issue: “The

successful conversion of the anti-apartheid cause into a world movement was in large part proportionate to the Manichean clarity of the issues at stake, as a showdown between good and evil, victims and villains, black and white, oppressed and oppressors, the masses and a racist minority”.<sup>18</sup> And this moralised staging of apartheid has continued into accounts of the transformation of post-apartheid South Africa that focus upon the activities of select individuals acting out an epic moral drama of reconciliation.

Literary writing by white South Africans was inserted into this moralised frame through which apartheid was constructed as an international issue. However, from the late 1970s onwards in particular, the cultural work that such fiction is made to do on this international stage is increasingly at odds with the domestic concerns which shape that fiction. The emergence of black consciousness movements and the upsurge of all forms of resistance from black communities after 1976, precipitated a terminal crisis of liberalism as both political ideology and literary aesthetic. This accounts for the characteristic introspection of white South African writing in the 1980s: “It is an obsessional literature, haunted and introspective, urgent and compulsive. It tracks relentlessly and more or less pitilessly over the ever more restricted terrain to which, by virtue of its situation, it is condemned. It is a literature of parsimony and narrow depiction, in which the motions of generosity and expansiveness have had to be stilled, as unaffordable luxuries.”<sup>19</sup> Forced to concede the limits which bound their writing and its relevance, white South African writers took on the task of imagining the contours of post-apartheid identities. The resulting deconstruction of white subjectivity in the novels of Gordimer and Coetzee has been hailed as a ‘post-liberal’ project which parallels the ‘post-nationalist’ writings of Njabulo Ndebele.<sup>20</sup>

As white South African writing becomes increasingly self-reflexive about its own marginalisation and the problematisation of its authority in the 1980s, one might expect that it becomes increasingly difficult to contain within the frame of reference through which it was mediated for mainstream international literary publics. This is likely to be particularly the case with Coetzee’s texts, in which this interrogation of white authority is articulated through a rigorous textual experimentation with generic and narrative forms, a formal radicalism that, as we shall subsequently see, is met with increasing impatience in certain reading-formations.

### **The Fiction of Postcolonial Theory**

Coetzee’s fiction has been produced and received within multiple and overlapping regimes of cultural value.<sup>21</sup> Interviewed in 1982, Coetzee noted that the favourable reception of his first three novels came largely from two quarters: “It has come first of all from people whose thinking is politically and historically fairly radical and, secondly, it has come from a fairly middle-of-the-road literary establishment”.<sup>22</sup> Coetzee regretted that neither of these two groups had shown very much interest in issues of formal radicalism. From the late 1980s, however, a new audience for his fiction has emerged, one which does show considerable interest in its formal characteristics. We can, then, identify three broad audiences through which Coetzee’s writing has been subjected to critical scrutiny and put into wider circulation. Firstly, his novels are internationally acclaimed within the mainstream English-speaking literary world, having won major literary awards in his native South Africa, in Britain and Europe, and beyond. Amongst this audience his fiction has been received as embodying a “powerful moral critique of apartheid”.<sup>23</sup> This

particular reading-formation will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. Here, I want to briefly consider the second and third audiences for Coetzee's writing. Within the dominant frameworks for assessing the political credentials of South African fiction during the 1970s and much of the 1980s, radical critics found it difficult to ascribe an unambiguously positive political evaluation to Coetzee's work.<sup>24</sup> Coetzee's de-familiarising reinscription of South African reality into diffuse networks of overlapping geographical linkages and historical layers does not easily fit into the dominant realist aesthetic characterise of much post-war South Africa literature. In interviews Coetzee has cultivated a careful resistance to the standard gestures of the writer's political responsibility, and in his critical essays he has explicitly marked his distance from both instrumentalist conceptions of writing and from understandings of the subordinate relation of fiction to history which have shaped the realist aesthetics of mainstream oppositional South African literature.<sup>25</sup>

If Coetzee's novels have been the subject of charges that they do not deal adequately with the urgent demands of the representing reality of life under apartheid and articulating political response to it, then more recently they have been re-evaluated by academic critics precisely because of their interrogation of the previously dominant realist aesthetic characteristic of so much South African literature. Novels previously found to be lacking in an appropriate political agenda are now found to have political significance. So, for example, Wohlpert observes that *In the Heart of the Country* has been subject to divergent readings on two levels: "the first demonstrates a lack of a radical political agenda in the novel whereas the second presents a true political thrust".<sup>26</sup> The positive re-evaluation of Coetzee's novels coincides with the ascendancy of post-structuralist theories of interpretation, both in Europe and North America and in South Africa.<sup>27</sup> This re-evaluation of the 'political' significance of Coetzee's novels rests on a recognition of their formal radicalism that had previously been overlooked by critics of his early work.

The increasingly contested evaluations of the 'political' significance of Coetzee's fiction are wrapped up in a more widespread transformation which has destabilised anti-apartheid discourses which were hegemonic during the 1970s and 1980s. In the field of cultural politics, a thoroughgoing revision of previous rhetorics of transformation in the 1990s was first triggered by the controversial intervention of ANC activist Albie Sachs.<sup>28</sup> As Atwell has argues, these debates about the relation between culture and politics must be considered as one of the main 'contexts' from which Coetzee's fiction departs.<sup>29</sup> South African cultural debates in the 1990s are characterised by an attempt to find a new 'settlement' between domestic and international discourses.<sup>30</sup> There is now an increasing acknowledgement of the value of formal pluralism in cultural forms.<sup>31</sup> In particular, the question of the degree of relevance of debates concerning postcolonialism to the South African society and culture has been widely considered.<sup>32</sup> These discussions are of interest here not least because of the place that Coetzee's fiction has come to hold in the working up of an international canon of postcolonial literary writing.<sup>33</sup> Coetzee's writing exemplifies the increasing convergence between post-structuralist theories of language and post-colonial literary genres,<sup>34</sup> and his fiction has been easily fitted into academic discussions of post-colonialism, not least because of his position as both a novelist as well as a professional theorist and critic. Coetzee's novels are frequently approached as if they were essentially allegories of certain theoretical principles drawn from post-structuralism or deconstruction.<sup>35</sup> Like all literary theory, postcolonial theory is characterised by a tendency to select certain texts, genres, authors, and formalistic or stylistic features and elevate these to the status of defining features of a singular

‘tradition’ of ‘postcolonial writing’.<sup>36</sup> The construction of literary ‘postcoloniality’ easily repeats the tendency of western metropolitan avant-garde theory to read its own concerns into its objects of analysis, which are then in turn presented as embodiments and confirmations of the theory’s own premises.<sup>37</sup> This structure of specular projection characteristics a reading-formation in which those texts which are selected and canonised are those which “can give back what the theory is looking for”.<sup>38</sup> For example, Slemon’s discussion of the inscription of resistance in postcolonial literature explicitly privileges writings from what he calls the ‘second world’ - by predominantly white writers from former settler colonies like Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.<sup>39</sup> In turn, the textual inscription of ambivalence and ambiguity is identified as the exemplary feature of postcolonial literature. It is this sort of construction of literary ‘postcoloniality’ which elevates the writing of Coetzee, characterised as it is by its overt inter-textual references to canonical novels, by tropes of allegory and mimicry, and by a studied ambivalence of narration, into the canon of postcolonial literature. But any attempt to elevate a single literary form or genre as the single model of post-colonialism is bound to marginalise other forms, not least because of the tendency towards universality which is inscribed within the category ‘postcolonialism’ itself.<sup>40</sup>

In the postcolonial reading of Coetzee’s novels, a distinctive understanding of colonialism is privileged as the framework for understanding contemporary South African society.<sup>41</sup> Atwell suggests that Coetzee’s concentration on issues of race and colonialism to the exclusion of other themes is the mark of his being “a regional writer within South Africa.”<sup>42</sup> Coetzee’s novels are therefore particularly accommodating to incorporation by contemporary theories of colonial discourse, in so far as his novels address the colonial traces not so much of South Africa as a whole, but of the Cape in particular. In readings of Coetzee’s work framed by contemporary theories of colonial discourse and postcolonialism, South Africa is not only constructed as a particular variant of colonialism, but of colonialism theorised as a set of discursive practices for the construction of colonial subjectivities. South Africa thus becomes just one example of a generic colonialism, one which “cannot be historicized modally, and that ends up tilted towards a description of all kinds of social oppression and discursive control.”<sup>43</sup> The historical specificity of apartheid as a regime of governance and accumulation is thus elided, as apartheid is assimilated to an essentially de-historicized model of oppression.<sup>44</sup>

The canonisation and circulation of a selected tradition of postcolonial writing within an academic reading-formation depends upon the prior working-up of certain texts and authors in another separate, but related arena of cultural judgement, that of the non-academic literary review. This arena of criticism has considerable cultural authority in determining the selection and transmission of particular texts and authors.<sup>45</sup> In the next section, I want to examine the specific terms of reference which shaped the reception of Coetzee’s fiction in this sphere in Britain and North America, and how in turn certain understandings of South African society and of apartheid were put into circulation through this process of ‘translation’. Given the dominant notion of literature as a repository of universal humanistic moral values that underwrites this genre of criticism, literature can be expected to have been understood as a privileged medium for the articulation of critiques of apartheid in a moral register.

### **Making Coetzee Available**

Nkosi has suggested that the metropolitan journalistic review has been constitutive of a particular notion of 'South African literature' as the product of white writers working in the English language.<sup>46</sup> Taking the leading literary reviews from New York and London as my 'sample', in what follows I shall try to trace the discursive dimensions of this non-academic reading-formation, into which Coetzee's novels have been inscribed and through which they have been made available for consumption by a more general international literary public in the 1980s and 1990s. Coetzee is of interest not least because his fiction is marked by a highly developed reflexivity regarding practices of canonisation.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, we might suppose that the reception of Coetzee's fiction would tend to make visible the norms of reception and canonisation through which his work has been constructed as exemplary of a certain form of 'South African literature'.

A recurring theme in reviews of literary writing by white South African authors during the years of apartheid is that of South African writers being 'trapped' by their location into dealing repeatedly with the same themes of living in an oppressive society. This theme frames the commentary on the first of Coetzee's novels to receive widespread attention in metropolitan literary circles, *In the Heart of the Country*,<sup>48</sup> published in Britain and USA in 1977: "One of the tragedies facing all serious South African authors still living in that country is that they are trapped into dealing with human beings who are almost exclusively afflicted by racialism."<sup>49</sup> South African society is presented here as synonymous with apartheid, as a singularly and uniquely racist society, such that race is identified as the only axis of power of significance. In turn, racism is routinely understood as an historical anachronism, the result of irrational belief systems. The figure of Magda in this novel is understood as "a powerful image of outdated conventions and the struggle to erode them."<sup>50</sup> This same theme of writers being constrained to write about the politics of apartheid, and of this being an intrusion upon the proper tasks of the novelists vocation, reappear in commentaries of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. One review describes South Africa as a culturally isolated society, and concludes that writers therefore find it difficult to "address themselves to themes of any wider significance than those represented by the tragic dilemma of their country."<sup>51</sup>

According to this perspective, then, South African writing suffers from being forced into being overtly political. The space for the proper subject-matter of the novel, for private inter-personal relationships, is squeezed in a society understood to be uniquely saturated with public, political significance.<sup>52</sup> The political nature of South African fiction is at one and the same time the source of its attraction for international audiences, yet also the source of disappointment amongst reader-reviewers who prefer individual characterisations rather than typological characterisations. Coetzee's novels are often valued to the extent that they escape the received conventions of politically committed literature. This judgement is in turn often made through comparison with other white South African writers, and most often with Nadine Gordimer.<sup>53</sup> The sense that the politics of South African society is too imposing a subject to make for truly great literature is found, for example, in one review of Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and Gordimer's *My Son's Story*. The allusive qualities of Coetzee's allegory of illness, death, and decay considered to be the qualities that "raises it above the level of a political novel or a *roman à thèse*".<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Gordimer's novel is judged to be too weighed down by its authors urge to write explicitly about politics in South Africa: "it's a good read and good journalism. It informs and explains. But it's too banal and too explicit to be good art." Gordimer's political urges are seen to impinge upon the quality of the novel's

writing. A dualism is set up in this sort of evaluation, between the novels which escape the murky traps of a society saturated with political significance, and novels which apparently succeed in rendering political reality but are, by this very token, condemned to a lesser aesthetic judgement. This same economy of judgement is used to compare Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* with André Brink's *A Chain of Voices*. Coetzee's work, it is argued, is infused with "artistic purpose", Brink's merely with "moral purpose", a distinction which, it is argued, is reflected in the relative qualities of their respective writing styles. Coetzee's writing is judged to be the product of slow, skilled, meticulous deliberation, whereas Brink is condemned by the judgement that he "writes fast".<sup>55</sup> In reviews, Coetzee is positioned both as part of a tradition of committed anti-apartheid writing, but also as a writer whose work succeeds in escaping the conventions of politically committed fiction and thus elevating itself to the status of 'art'.

The notion of South Africa as an enclosed, isolated society underwrites a very particular understanding of the allegorical qualities of Coetzee's fiction. For Bernard Levin, *Waiting for the Barbarians* Coetzee escapes the 'trap' imposed upon South African literary writing of having to deal with immediate political realities by dis-locating his narrative. The novel contains no specific reference to South Africa as such, and so Levin takes the narrative to be "timeless, spaceless, nameless and universal".<sup>56</sup> Allegory is understood here in conventional terms as a trope which turns on a relation between the particular as a way of rendering general or universal themes. This understanding of allegory often allows writers like Coetzee or Gordimer to be salvaged for the humanist literary tradition, by arguing that they do not write exclusively about a South African situation but rather about the general human condition: "Mr. Coetzee sees the heart of darkness in all societies, and gradually it becomes clear that he is not dealing in politics at all, but inquiring into the nature of the beast that lurks within each of us, and needs no collective stimulus to turn and rend us."<sup>57</sup> Any significance beyond South Africa is ascribed not to the realm of politics but to the realm of morality. For Levin, the universal qualities of this novel lie in this move beyond politics, a move that is taken to be the proper task of literature. The same sort of judgement is routinely made in those commentaries on Coetzee's fictions which alight upon their qualities as 'allegories' or 'parables' of essentially moral principles. Coetzee's novels "have a suggestion of parable about them. Sometimes they imagine further forms of man's inhumanity to man [...] and sometimes we are allowed to interpret them more specifically, their moral brought nearer to home."<sup>58</sup> This interpretation of the allegorical qualities of Coetzee's novels allows any particular reference that they may contain about culture or politics in South Africa to be re-written as simply another lesson of general moral significance. If universal moral significance is registered in and through a reading of 'South African literature' in this way, then in turn 'South Africa' is discursively transformed into just a particular example of a more general, universal moralised theme of tyranny, suffering, and individual artistic conscience.

Irving Howe's review of *Life and Times of Michael K* reiterates the theme of the dilemma facing South African writers trapped by their location: "A great commanding subject haunts the South African imagination, yet this subject can also turn into a kind of tyranny, close, oppressive, even destructive. Imagine what it must be like to live as a serious writer in South Africa: an endless clamor of news about racial injustice, the feeling that one's life is mortgaged to a society gone rotten with hatred, an indignation that exhausts itself into depression, the fear that one's anger may overwhelm and destroy one's fiction. And except for silence or



emigration, there can be no relief.”<sup>59</sup> Howe goes on to question whether the real significance of Coetzee’s writing lies in an apparent move beyond politics to universal themes. As he observes, one of the effects of this sort of understanding is the suggestion the particular realities of apartheid society lay beyond a political solution. But, as in other reviews, the implicit assumption of Howe’s commentary is that the ‘serious writer’ from South Africa is a white South African. In this reading-formation, ‘South African literature’ is understood as an exclusively white tradition.

Conceptions of ‘allegory’ are central to the readings undertaken of Coetzee’s writing. Coetzee has observed that there is a persistent tendency to approach literature produced under conditions of state censorship as if it were necessarily allegorical. Although his reference here is to post-war Poland, the observation holds as true to the reading of South Africa under apartheid. And as Parry argues, the self-reflexive theoretical sophistication of Coetzee’s fiction suggests that readings of his novels as simple political allegories are probably wide of the mark, and might be better read as commentaries on the impossibility of this form.<sup>60</sup> The genre of non-academic literary review shares an essentially mimetic conception of the functioning of allegory with much of the left-leaning academic criticism of Coetzee’s novels. According to this conception, texts are approached in order to measure their distance from a pre-existing conception of the dimensions of an essentially extra-textual reality. In non-academic reviews, Coetzee’s allegorising is understood as a politically duplicitous escape from historical reality, as in the case of Gordimer’s discussion of Coetzee’s early novels,<sup>61</sup> or alternatively, as with Levin, as a successful elevation of the narrative to a universal, moral level. In both cases, allegory is understood in terms of the relation of the text to a historical reality that is already intelligible. Amongst academic critics, Coetzee’s writing becomes the ground for competing conceptions of allegory, different conceptions which sustain different political evaluations of that writing. For Abdul JanMohammed, for whom allegory is understood mimetically in terms of the relation between text and reality, Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* repeats the defining allegorical manoeuvres of classical colonial discourse.<sup>62</sup> The re-evaluation of the political significance of Coetzee’s fiction in no small part revolves around an alternative conceptualisation of allegory, one which follows the re-evaluation of allegory in postmodern and post-structuralist literary theory. Accordingly, Slemon reads *Waiting for the Barbarians* as a post-colonial recuperation of allegory, understood as a relation between texts, thematising the inextricable entwinement of history and fiction.<sup>63</sup> On this post-structuralist reading, allegory is not a means of escaping history, but rather the trope where the place of language in history becomes the subject of narration itself. This alternative conception of allegory does not enter into considerations in the genre of the literary review, in which Coetzee’s inter-textual inscriptions of other canonical works is met with suspicion. Each of Coetzee’s novels can be read as a meta-fictional commentary on particular sub-genres of ‘white writing’, whether fiction or non-fiction - the pastoral novel, colonial travel writing, historiography, or various canonical novels. This inter-textuality is recognised by reviewers, who locate Coetzee on the margins of a tradition of European and North American avant-garde modernism through frequent references to the similarities of his work and that of writers such as Kafka, Conrad, or Nabokov. And yet the challenge that his fiction presents to this tradition is barely registered in this genre of reviewing. Rather, when his fiction presents the conventions of the Western novel with its formal, ethical or political limits, one sees the emergence of an impatience with formalistic licence. In particular, Coetzee’s re-writing of classic, canonical works (of Defoe in *Foe*, and

Dostoevsky in *The Master of Petersburg*) is met with certain degree of unease. One reviewer regrets that Coetzee chooses to sexualise the Robinson Crusoe story in *Foe*<sup>64</sup>, another considered his revision “a static and anaemic affair, despite the elegance of the writing”<sup>65</sup> Likewise, *The Master of Petersburg* is considered a mere “literary pastiche” of Dostoevsky’s novel, is called to task for juggling with the known historical facts, and is finally dismissed as “act of literary terrorism.”<sup>66</sup>

The mimetic conception of allegory at work in the non-academic review allows Coetzee’s novels to be located as ‘South African’ in relation to a stable, extra-textual referent synonymous with racism. ‘Allegorical’ readings, in this reading-formation, re-anchor the novels to a familiar model of South Africa as an enclosed terrain, but at the same time, and conversely, once so located they can be read as having a universal moral significance, rather than a specific political one either with reference to alternative understandings of South Africa or to the politics of writing. This double movement is recognisable in commentaries on those novels in which South Africa is an indirect referent, such as *Life and Times of Michael K*, where “there is a certain fictional haze between the events and their local reference”<sup>67</sup>, but also of those novels in which the narrative is not located in any specific time or place, or in a non-South African location, such as *Foe*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and most recently *The Master of Petersburg*. In reviews of his latest novel, Coetzee’s re-writing of Dostoevsky’s *The Devils* is routinely re-attached to ‘South Africa’, a re-attachment that allows the incorporation of apartheid into a general paradigm of tyrannical regimes in decline: “The relevance of this political allegory to apartheid-era South Africa, and the increasingly vicious response of a doomed regime to what it perceives as the enemy at its gates, is clear at once.”<sup>68</sup> Here, South Africa under apartheid and nineteenth-century Russia are both taken to be emblematic of a general form of “historical tyranny”<sup>69</sup>. Apartheid is constructed as simply a variant of an a-historical form of totalitarianism. *Waiting for the Barbarians*, for example, is inserted into a sub-genre of “the political allegory or fable dealing with modern totalitarianism”<sup>70</sup>. An ‘allegorical’ reading enables South Africa to be understood as the referent of the novel, but a South Africa which is already constructed in terms of tyranny and totalitarianism, allowing a more general and de-politicised significance to be drawn from the novel. In the discourse of general literary review, South Africa is concretised and named as the context and referent of Coetzee’s novels, but at the same time and in the same move, it is idealised as a stage for more general moral dramas of human suffering and violence.

The ‘allegorical’ re-anchoring of Coetzee’s novels enables them to be assimilated to familiar paradigms for understanding apartheid. One of the features of readings of South African fiction amongst metropolitan reading publics was the routine treatment of literature as a source of knowledge about South African reality. South African writers were expected and in turn were read to provide information about a particular reality at specific conjunctures. In particular, South African literature was read in terms of a pre-existing set of understandings of a society polarised along stark lines of racialised division. Being able to place characters in fictional narratives into a racialised drama is essential to the reading of South African fiction in this genre of criticism. Reviews of *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Age of Iron* are characterised by a desire to be able to place both Michael K and Vercueil into a manageable frame of radicalised reference. Thus, Vercueil is reported to be a “white down-and-out”<sup>71</sup> or “a white vagrant”<sup>72</sup>. Alternatively, another reviewer admits that “I thought he was meant to be a Coloured”<sup>73</sup>, admitting that Coetzee might be engaging in an intentional ruse in this respect. If characters are expected to

accord to a certain racialised understanding of South African society, then in turn this racialised lens is understood in strictly polarised, binary terms. Accordingly, *Age of Iron* is understood to be a novel treating “the effects of apartheid on the psyches of both the oppressor and the oppressed”<sup>74</sup>. Such an understanding fails to register the ways in which the protagonists of Coetzee’s novels rarely belong to this sort of easy binary division. Rather, they tend to be figures on the margin of the defining axis of racialised conflict which defined apartheid in the western imagination. This exploration of the multiplicity of positions and identities in South Africa is one of the features that recommends Coetzee’s novels as distinctively ‘post-apartheid’ narratives.<sup>75</sup>

The re-inscription of literary writing by white South Africans into an international frameworks involved the imposition of a peculiar ‘burden of representation’ upon those writers. These writers are positioned on the margins of Western literary canons as representatives who can speak of and against a racist system, in the name of universal values of justice and equality. They are asked to represent live under apartheid, and present a principled resistance or refusal to it, yet they do not and cannot represent its principle targets and victims, the majority of black South Africans. Black South African writers were much more effectively silenced or severed from their main audience, and have never been accorded the same degree of critical acclaim amongst the mainstream literary establishment in North America or Europe. On an international stage, white South African writers were invited to serve as proxies for the black South African majority. Yet, at the same time as this frame of reference underwrites the regime of value into which white South African literary writing was inserted, white novelists increasingly come to focus upon, in the content and form of their writing, their own marginalisation from the main sites of conflict and struggle in South African society.

We can see the increasingly strain resulting from this tension in the response to *Life and Times of Michael K*. This is a novel which makes visible the specific horizon of meaning through which South African writing is made intelligible. Michael K’s social position is carefully delineated in the course of the narrative, but without recourse to the signifiers of race that are a standard feature of most South African society. Michael K remains unclassified by racialised signifiers throughout the novel. The only occasions when the routine vocabulary of racial classification appears is when Michael K is addressed by figures of authority. Racialisation is presented in the novel as a process of interpellation into institutionally supported discourses of hierarchical differentiation. Furthermore, not only is race the absent signifier in the novel, but the eponymous ‘hero’ of this novel is a singularly passive figure. One commentator suggested that, if the theme of Coetzee’s novel was passive suffering, then this was an inadequate theme for a novel.<sup>76</sup> Compared both to standard figures of black resistance in South African literature, and to the heroes in the work of Kafka, with whom Coetzee is routinely related in literary reviews, Michael K is thought to be simply not heroic enough. The charge that Coetzee fails to adequately represent black South African political struggle is most forcibly articulated in Gordimer’s review of the novel. For her, Coetzee’s novel represents a retreat from a commitment to political solutions and is marked by a refusal to see an active black presence in South African society. The oppositional thrust of the novel is diluted by fashioning an account around such an ambivalent central character, and Gordimer concludes that Coetzee fails to acknowledge the agency of black South Africans in resisting apartheid, the novel being marked by a “revulsion against all political and revolutionary solutions”.<sup>77</sup>

This same charge is echoed in other reviews of the novel. As soon as Michael K is read as a figure for black South Africa, a reading that effaces the ambiguous non-inscription of race in the narrative, then he appears as a model of passive suffering rather than active struggle and resistance, a representation that causes a certain degree of bewilderment: “Surely he does not represent the spirit of Africa? I see no point in this prolonged tale of woe.”<sup>78</sup> In failing to accord to the ‘burden of representation’ imposed upon South African literary writing, the novel brings in to the open the conventions which framed the reading of such writing around an expectation of clear, binary protagonists who fell into simple categories of good and evil.

If the peculiar burden of representation imposed upon white South African writers by international audiences is increasingly at odds with their own self-conscious reflection on questions of marginality and authority, then this accounts for the frustration and impatience felt towards the formal experiments undertaken in Coetzee’s novels. While the reading of Coetzee’s novels as allegories and parables allows a particular moral universalisation of South Africa to be undertaken, it is also the case that for many reviewers the allegorical qualities of Coetzee’s writing do not accord with notions of what good literary writing should be and of what South African writing in particular should deliver. The notion that Coetzee’s persistent allegorising gets in the way of what should be clearly identifiable realities is a recurring theme: “Coetzee’s urge to allegorise intrudes upon his narrative gifts”<sup>79</sup>. This genre of criticism is somewhat intolerant of Coetzee’s stylistic and narrative experimentation, ascribing these to a certain ‘academicism’ that intrudes into his writing. *Age of Iron*, with “its didactic urges everywhere apparent”, is found to be ‘formulaic’ and ‘obvious’ in its allegorising about death and illness.<sup>80</sup> What is most important in this arena of judgement is, above all, the quality of the narrative, and Coetzee’s fiction is often found to be too ‘contrived’ to support what are often considered to be thin stories. The aversion to Coetzee’s formal radicalism is a recurrent theme, one reviewer invoking the same remark in two separate reviews to express is discomfort: “We are repelled by any sort of writing that, in Keats’ phrase, ‘has a palpable design on us’.”<sup>81</sup> The same discomfort and impatience with the formal features of Coetzee’s novels is evident in Cynthia Ozick’s commentary on *Life and Times of Michael K*. Hers is just one review which is unhappy with the intrusion into the narrative of Michael K’s adventures of the reflections of the Doctor, who provides a second-order commentary on the difficulty of placing Michael K in any system of meaning. This section of the novel serves as the point at which the novel stages the necessity of its own (mis)reading. The temptation to make Michael K speak, to read him as symbolic of something, even as a figure of non-meaning, is made explicit within the narrative through the Doctor’s account. This section of the novel is regarded by Ozick as an unnecessary and “self-indulgent” intrusion into Michael K’s the “authentic” inner dialogue: “the doctor’s commentary is superfluous; he thickens the clear tongue of the novel by naming its ‘message’ and thumping out ironies.”<sup>82</sup> This intolerance of a stylistic “flaw” succeeds in neutralising that part of the novel in which the question of interpretative authority is explicitly. For Ozick, this self-reflexivity is judged “redundant”, a judgement which neatly enables her to place the rest of the novel, understood simply as the rendition of Michael K’s story, within an established system of moral interpretations of apartheid.

## Conclusion

The novels of J. M. Coetzee have been constructed in different ways by different audiences, and have thus been subjected to alternative and shifting aesthetic and political evaluations. These different audiences alight upon different features of Coetzee's texts, and in turn they construct the 'context' of Coetzee's writing in different ways. In the genre of the journalistic literary review, the context of the novels is understood according to a particular, stabilised model of South African reality under apartheid. Within the emergent postcolonial paradigm of academic literary criticism and theory, the contexts of the novels is understood to be an array of other texts and discourses. What I have tried to suggest in the preceding discussion is some sense of the ways in which the meaning and referent of 'South African literature' is dependent upon the cultural mediation of texts through particular institutionalised discourses of criticism and theory. I have argued that Coetzee's fiction has been inserted into dominant moral representations of apartheid, but also that the reception of such a rigorously self-reflexive body of fiction makes visible the norms of these mediating discourses.

Focusing upon the mediating channels of discourse through which 'South African literature' has been worked up on an international stage enables the reformation of the problem of the politics of representation. Rather than asking questions as to the 'authenticity' of acts of representation, understood either mimetically or as the act of speaking on behalf of others, and rather than dissolving questions of political judgement into an indeterminate mass of individual acts of endlessly creative or subversive acts of cultural reception, attention can be directed towards evaluating the relative influence and force of different groups and institutions in shaping the discourses of mediation through which cultural products are produced, circulated, and made available for consumption. In this respect, the discourse of metropolitan literary journalism has been highly influential, not only in pre-selecting authors and texts who are subsequently made the subject of academic canonisation, but also as part of an array of discourses where the persistent representation of South African society as a racial allegory is worked up and maintained.

Laura Chrisman has recently argued that the sense that South Africa is an immediately and transparently knowable society supports a particular relation of 'sanctioned ignorance' amongst commentators in the West.<sup>83</sup> Remedying this situation requires that attention be paid to rendering visible the frames by which South Africa is 'worlded', critically questioning the discourses which secure the representativeness of particular accounts of South African culture and politics. South African culture has and will continue to circulate globally, marked but not bound by its contexts of origin. This requires that binary models of interpretation which unproblematically posit an interpretative hierarchy between inside and outside, the West versus the Rest,<sup>84</sup> need to be replaced by a focus upon the complex processes of circulation, mediation, and movement.

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<sup>1</sup> T Morphet (1988) "Two Interviews with J. M. Coetzee, 1983 and 1987" in D Bunn and J Taylor (eds.) *From South Africa: Writing, Photography, and Art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 460.

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<sup>2</sup> R Nixon (1994) *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond*, Routledge, London.

<sup>3</sup> D Attridge (1992) "Oppressive Silence: J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon" in K R Lawrence (ed.) *Decolonising Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> E Boehmer, L Chrisman, K Parker (eds.) (1994) *Altered State? Writing and South Africa*, Dangaroo Press, Sydney, p. xii.

<sup>5</sup> M Bunting "Don't cry for the beloved writer" *The Guardian*, October 5 1994.

<sup>6</sup> J Cartwright "Dusting off Dostoevsky" *Sunday Times*, 27 February 1994, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> A 'regime of value' is understood here as "a semiotic institution generating evaluative generalities under certain conditions of use, and in which particular empirical audiences or communities may be more or less imbricated" (J Frow (1995) *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 144). This concept is closely related to that of 'reading-formation', which will also be used in this paper, and is understood as a set of determinative practices which "connect texts and readers in specific relations to one another in constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects as objects-to-be-read in particular ways." (T Bennett (1987) "Texts in history: the determinations of readings and their texts" in D Attridge, G Bennington, and R Young (eds.) *Post-structuralism and the question of history*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.70.)

<sup>8</sup> L Nkosi (1990) "A Country of Borders" *Southern African Review of Books*, June/July, pp. 19-20; and Nkosi (1994) "Constructing the 'Cross-Border' Reader" in E Boehmer, L Chrisman, K Parker (eds.) *Altered State? Writing and South Africa*, Dangaroo Press, Sydney, pp. 37-50. For further considerations of the centrality of borders and boundaries as emblems of social differentiation in South African culture

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and politics, see J A Stotesbury (1990) "The Function of Borders in the Popular Novel in South Africa" *English In Africa* 17:2, pp. 71-89, and R Thornton (1996) "The potentials of boundaries in South Africa: steps towards a theory of the social edge" in R Werbner and T Ranger (eds.) *Postcolonial Encounters in Africa*, Zed Press, London, pp. 136-161.

<sup>9</sup> S Clingman (1986) *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*.

<sup>10</sup> W Ong (1975) "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" *Publications of the Modern Languages Association* 90-1, pp. 9-21. .

<sup>11</sup> L Engle (1995) "Differences of location" *Southern African Review of Books* July/August 1995.

<sup>12</sup> On the canonisation of 'third world' literary celebrities, see T Brennan (1989) "Cosmopolitans and celebrities" *Race and Class* 31:1, pp. 1-19.

<sup>13</sup> Nixon , p.78.

<sup>14</sup> Nixon, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> J Kramer "In the Garrison" *The New York Review of Books*, 2 December 1982, pp. 8-12.

<sup>17</sup> Nixon, p. 205.

<sup>18</sup> Nixon, p. 204.

<sup>19</sup> N Lazarus (1987) "Modernism and Modernity: T. W. Adorno and Contemporary White South African Literature" *Cultural Critique* 5, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> G Pechey (1994) "Introduction" in N Ndbele *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp.????; and Pechey (1994) "Post-Apartheid Narratives" in F Barker, P Hulme, and M Iverson

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(eds.) *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 151-171.

<sup>21</sup> Coetzee has written seven novels: *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994). His academic writings range widely across contemporary theories of language and writing, analyses of colonial discourses, literary criticism, and philosophical commentary. See J M Coetzee (1988) *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven; (1992) *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge; (1996) *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

<sup>22</sup> J M Coetzee (1984) "Interview" *Kunapipi* 6:1, p.9.

<sup>23</sup> B Parry (1993) "Speech and Silence in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee" *New Formations* 21, p. 19. For a discussion of Coetzee's fiction with respect to British literary awards, see R Todd 199? Consuming Fictions .....

<sup>24</sup> For example, M Vaughan (1982) "Literature and Politics: Currents in South African Writing in the Seventies" *Journal of South African Studies* 9, pp. 118-138.

<sup>25</sup> J M Coetzee (1992) "A Note on Writing" in *Doubling the Point*, pp. 94-95; and 1988 "The Novel Today" *Upstream* 6, pp. 2-5.

<sup>26</sup> J Wohlpart (1994) "A (Sub)Version of the Language of Power: Narrative and Narrative Technique in J. M Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*" *Critique* 35:4, pp. ??.

<sup>27</sup> David Atwell identifies Teresa Dovey's Lacanian reading of Coetzee's fiction as marking a break with previous readings, which explicitly addresses previous critical accounts (Atwell (1993) *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*,



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University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 2). See T Dovey (1987) "Coetzee and his critics: the case of Dusklans" *English in Africa* 14:2, pp. 15-30; and Dovey (1988) *The Novels of J. M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories*, Ad Donker, Johannesburg. For responses to Dovey's reading of Coetzee, see B Parry (1989) "The Hole in the Narrative: Coetzee's Fiction" *Southern African Review of Books* April/May, pp. 18-20; M Chapman (1988) "The writing of politics and the politics of writing: On reading Dovey on reading Lacan on reading Coetzee on reading ...(?)" *Journal of Literary Studies* 4:3, pp. 327-341.

<sup>28</sup> See I de Kok and K Press (eds.) (1990) *Spring is Rebellious: Arguments about cultural freedom*, Buchu Books, Cape Town;

<sup>29</sup> Atwell (1993); and Atwell (1990) "The Problem of History in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee" in M Trump (ed.) *Rendering Things Visible: Essays on South African Literary Culture*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, pp. 94-132.

<sup>30</sup> T Morphet (1990) "Cultural imagination and cultural settlement: Albie Sachs and Njabulo Ndebele" in I de Kok and K Press (eds.) *Spring is Rebellious: Arguments about cultural freedom*, Buchu Books, Cape Town, pp. 131-144.

<sup>31</sup> B Parry (1994) "Some Provisional Speculations on the Critique of 'Resistance' Literature" in E Boehmer, L Chrisman, K Parker (eds.) *Altered State? Writing and South Africa*, Dangaroo Press, Sydney, pp. 11-24.

<sup>32</sup> A Carusi (1989) "Post, Post and Post: Or, Where is South African Literature in All This?" *Ariel* 20:4, pp. 79-95; K Parker (1993) "J. M. Coetzee: 'White Writing'" *New Formations* 21, pp. 21-34; C Clayton (1994) "White Writing and Postcolonial Politics" *Ariel* 25:4, pp. 153-167; R Jolly (1995) "Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa" *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 110:1, pp. 17-29.

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<sup>33</sup> For example, see J Thieme (ed.) (1996) *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, Arnold, London; and E Benson and L W Connolly (eds.) (1994) *The Encyclopaedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, Routledge, London. For the use of Coetzee's work in theorising post-colonial literature, see H Tiffin (1987) "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse" *Kunapipi* 9:3, pp. 17-33; and B Ashcroft, G Griffiths, and H Tiffin (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: theory and practice in post-colonial literature*, Routledge, London.

<sup>34</sup> E Boehmer (1995) *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 223.

<sup>35</sup> See Atwell's comments in *Doubling the Point*, p. 245. Perhaps the best example of reading Coetzee's fiction as an allegory of theory is G C Spivak (1991) "Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*" in J Arac and B Johnson (eds.) *Consequences of Theory*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 154-180.

<sup>36</sup> For further discussion of the constitutive structure of exemplarity characteristic of all literary theory, see J H Miller (1995) *Topographies*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, pp. 316-337.

<sup>37</sup> V Dhareshwar (1990) "The Predicament of Theory" in M Kreiswirth and M A Cheetham (eds.) *Theory Between the Disciplines: Authority/Vision/Politics*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, p. 231-250; and A Ahmad (1995) "The politics of literary postcoloniality" *Race and Class* 36:3, pp. 1-20.

<sup>38</sup> A Mukherjee (1990) "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Postmodernism?" *World Literature Written in English* 30:2, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> S Slemon (1990) "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" *World Literature Written in English* 30:2, pp. 30-41.

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<sup>40</sup> On the problematic nature of ‘postcolonialism’, see R Frankenburg and L Mani (1993) “Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, ‘Postcoloniality’ and the Politics of Location” *Cultural Studies* 7:2, pp. 292-310; and A McClintock (1992) “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term “Post-Colonialism”” *Social Text* 31/32, pp. 84-98.

<sup>41</sup> For examples, see S Watson (1986) “Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee” *Research in African Literatures* 17, pp. 370-392; and S Roberts (1991) “Post-colonialism, or the House of Friday” *World Literature Written in English* 31:1, pp. 87-92.

<sup>42</sup> Atwell (1993), p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> S Slemon (1994) “The Scramble for Post-Colonialism” in C Tiffin and A Lawson (eds.) *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and textuality*, Routledge, London, pp. 15-32.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of the limits of analysing South Africa from this postcolonial perspective, see N Visser (1997) “Postcoloniality of a Special Type: Theory and its Appropriation in South Africa” in *The Yearbook of English Studies* Vol. 27, pp. 79-94. For a critique of the ‘colonialist paradigm’ of oppression, see H L Gates, Jr. (1992) “Trading on the Margin: Notes on the Culture of Criticism” in *Loose Canons*, Oxford University press, pp. 173-194.

<sup>45</sup> M Berubé (1992) *Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon, and the Politics of the Canon*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

<sup>46</sup> Nkosi (1990), p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Attridge (1992).

<sup>48</sup> Coetzee’s first novel, *Dusklands*, was published in South Africa in 1974, but only published in Britain in 1982, and in the USA in 1985.

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- <sup>49</sup> R. Harwood "An Astonishing First Novel" *Sunday Times*, June 12 1977, p.41.
- <sup>50</sup> B Morrison "Veldschmerz" *Times Literary Supplement*, July 22 1977, p. 900.
- <sup>51</sup> B Levin "On the Edge of the Empire" *Sunday Times*, 23 November 1980, p. 44.
- <sup>52</sup> P J Parrinder "What his father got up to" *London Review of Books*, 13 September 1990, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>53</sup> Gordimer and Coetzee are routinely coupled in both academic and non-academic criticism, often being taken as exemplars for different models of principled literary opposition to apartheid. On this pattern of interpretation, see K Hewson (1988) 'Making the "Revolutionary Gesture": Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee and some variations on the writer's responsibility' *Ariel* 19:4, pp. 55-72; and I Glenn (1994) "Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, and the Politics of Interpretation" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93:1, pp. 11-32.
- <sup>54</sup> G Annan "Love and Death in South Africa" *The New York Review of Books*, 8 November 1990, pp. 8-10.
- <sup>55</sup> J Kramer (1982).
- <sup>56</sup> Levin (1980).
- <sup>57</sup> Levin (1980).
- <sup>58</sup> D Donoghue "Her Man Friday" *The New York Times Book Review*, 22 February 1987, pp 1, 26-27.
- <sup>59</sup> I Howe "A Stark Political Fable of South Africa" *The New York Times Book Review*, April 18 1982, pp. 35-36.
- <sup>60</sup> See Coetzee (1996) *Giving Offense*, p. 151; and B Parry (1991) "Thanatophany for South Africa: Death With/out Transfiguration" *Southern African Review of Books*, January/February, pp. 10-11.

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<sup>61</sup> N Gordimer “The Idea of Gardening” *The New York Review of Books*, 2 February 1984, pp. 3-6.

<sup>62</sup> A R JanMohamed (1985) “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature” *Critical Inquiry* 12, pp. 59-87.

<sup>63</sup> S Slemon (1988) “Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 22:1, pp. 157-168; see also T Dovey (1988) “Allegory vs Allegory: The divorce of different modes of allegorical perception in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*” *Journal of Literary Studies* 4:2, pp. 133-143.

<sup>64</sup> P N Furbank “Mistress, muse and begetter” *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 September 1986, p. 995.

<sup>65</sup> D J Enright ‘Visions and Revisions’ *The New York Review of Books*, 28 May 1987, pp. 18-20.

<sup>66</sup> Z Zinik, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 March 1994, p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> Donoghue (1987).

<sup>68</sup> P McGrath “To be Conscious Is to Suffer” *The New York Times Book Review*.

<sup>69</sup> J Bayley “Doubles” *The New York Review of Books*, 17 November 1994, pp. 35-36.

<sup>70</sup> P Lewis “Types of Tyranny” *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 November 1980, p. 1270.

<sup>71</sup> P Parrinder “What his father gets up to” *London Review of Books*, 13 September 1990, pp. 17-18.

<sup>72</sup> S French “Writing and Action” *New Statesman*, 21 September 1990, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> Annan (1990).

<sup>74</sup> L Thornton “Apartheid’s Last Vicious Gasps” *The New York Review of Books*, ??? September 1990, p. 7.

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<sup>75</sup> See T Kai Norris Easton (1995) "Text and Hinterland: J. M. Coetzee and the South African Novel" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21:4, pp. 585-599.

<sup>76</sup> D J Enright "The thing itself" *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 September 1983, p. 1037.

<sup>77</sup> Gordimer (1984).

<sup>78</sup> D A N Jones "Saint Jane" *London Review of Books*, 20 October 1983, pp. 17-18.

<sup>79</sup> N Shrimpton, *Sunday Times*, 25 September 1983, p. 43.

<sup>80</sup> D J Taylor "Death of a Nation" *Sunday Times*, 16 September 1990.

<sup>81</sup> Enright (1983) and (1987).

<sup>82</sup> C Ozick "A Tale of Heroic Anonymity" *The New York Times Book Review*, 11 December 1983, pp. 1, 26, 28.

<sup>83</sup> L Chrisman (1997) "Questioning Robert Young's post-colonial criticism" *Textual Practice* 11:1, pp. 39-45.

<sup>84</sup> See K A Appiah (1988) "Out of Africa: Topologies of Nativism" *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2:1, pp. 153-178; and K Parker (1995) "Very Like a Whale: Post-Colonialism Between Canonicities and Ethnicities" *Social Identities* 1:1, pp. 155-174.