

## Contesting Discourses and Transmodalization in J.M.Coetzee's Fiction

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### Abstract

South African metafictional literature by white writers, specifically J. M. Coetzee (Nobel laureate, 2003), is essentially pivoted on the black-white dialectics of discourse. The narrative is informed with a variety of sociopolitical inflections that pronounce in various ways the contemporary ideology in South African literature. Critics have greatly delineated the racio-political quagmire of the colonial subject in metafictional literature appearing in the last few decades of twentieth century. However, a deeper analysis of the representation of the colonial subject that interrogates the discourses in narrative is still untapped. J.M.Coetzee's South African-based novels, mainly *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Age of Iron* (1990), manifest a metafictional consciousness that investigates the constructs of reality of the colonial subject. It is significant to explore the logocentric premise in the representation of colonial subject and how this contributes to the meaning of the fictional word. This study is a narratological research of Coetzee's technique of transmodalization (narrative mode shifts) between two types of discourses, the pedagogical and performative, and employs Homi K Bhabha's (1994) theoretical framework of representative discourse. In examining the narrative mode shifts between frame breaks, metanarrative, narrative of words, narrative of dreams, and narrative of topography, this research argues that a non-position is generated between the contesting discourses. This research becomes a model for the study of colonial dynamics in metafictional white writing. It aims to unravel the elements integral in voicing the conditionality of the colonized subject and the contention of representation. This study also explores the metonymical relationships in narrative that reflect intrinsic aspects of the signification of representation.

**Keywords:** *Transmodalization, discourse, metanarrative, frame-break, metafiction, metonymy*

### Metafictional White Writing and Transmodalization

Metafictional white writing in the late twentieth-century South Africa attempts the sounding, interpreting and retelling of the black in a narrative of holistic vision. Through the white man's words, a representation of the colonial subject and land sees the invasiveness of self-referentiality in narrative language, and internalizes the marginal integration of people with their emergent meanings and practices. The representation of the colonial subject is implicit in the

works of white South-African writers such as Nadine Gordimer (1988), Andre' Brink (1980), Alan Paton (1998), Athol Fugard and Breyten Breytenbach (1996). In their writings, largely the dogmas of representation defining the elocutionary basis of the white writer writing the black man's condition remain in an uncharted historical perspective. The prolificacy of J.M. Coetzee as a novelist, linguist, and computer analyst has lent his writing a vintage metafictional allusiveness. His major South African-based novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), and *Age of Iron* (1990) highlight the 1980 to 2000 period in South African literary history. The past criticism of white writing, and Coetzee's fiction specifically, has expounded the 'ethico-political' substance in the narrative that performs the 'acts of genre', as in Jane Poyner (2009), and most others such as Derek Attridge (2004), David Atwell (1993), and Laura Wright (2006) that focus on the contextual displacement of narrative but remain sceptically dismissive of the representational discourse in language.

Recently, there has been more emphasis on Coetzee's language, as in Jarad Zimble's (2014) stylistics recount of Coetzee's fiction that examines the elements of prosody and rhetoric "contributing to (his) spare, stark and taut style." Zimble views a 'theological lexicon' in the middle fictions that pronounces a 'sense of a lack' in our world. Carrol Clarkson (2009) analyses the linguistico-philosophical structure in Coetzee's fiction and non-fiction to present the 'ethical ramifications' of the authority of the writer. Gillian Dooley's (2010) deep exploration of Coetzee's oeuvre takes several approaches: she examines the types of resistance in the narrative, the effect of point of view and the 'identifications between Coetzee and his alter egos'—the elements that create the intensity of Coetzee's narrative. But a deeper analysis of Coetzee's discourse in narrative mode shifts and metanarrative transgressions in white writing (representing the colonial subject during apartheid) remains largely unattempted.

Narrative is a complex system of meaning, signifiers and signifieds. It is, as Butor holds, "a phenomenon that extends considerably beyond the scope of literature; it is one of the essential constituents of our understanding of reality." (Butor, 1977, p. 48) Kara Lee Donnelly proposes that now world literature is essentially a redefinition of developing 'strategies of representation' (Donnelly, 2014, p. 63). Narrative language in white writing inevitably entails the mechanics of representation that inform the connection with reality; it becomes the means by which life and mediation of human experience architect the boundaries in society and in the text, manifesting the potential of discourse and interstitial space in emergent discursive practices.

Postmodern practices varyingly expose the constitution of metanarrative in fiction and how it investigates the interrelatedness of reality and fiction. Metanarrative is that intrinsic facet within the narrative that throws light on the construction of the narrative itself, by laying bear the construction and plurality of discourse in it. Hence, it gives insight into the way meaning is generated in a system of signs. Self-reflexivity and self-

consciousness in writing are functions that take effect due to the way metanarrative enacts human interaction and means of mediating experience.

The term transmodalization was defined by Gerard Genette in his book *Palimpsest* (1997) as the “transformations or shifts in the narrative mode” (p. 277). The nature of such shifts is quite variable; according to Genette, these variations are witnessed in narrative features such as frame-breaks, temporal order, perspective and narrative voice. These features may manifest narrative shifts in a variegated manner: the narrative shifts between frame-breaks, metanarrative, narrative of words, narrative of dreams and thoughts, and narrative of topography.

This research examines Coetzee’s technique of transmodalization (narrative mode shifts) between the pedagogical and performative discourses in narrative by employing Homi K Bhabha’s theory of representative discourse. Bhabha presents his theory in his essay “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation” published in his book *The Location of Culture*. According to Bhabha’s framework, “the split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical discourse and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative discourse” generates an interstitial space in narrative (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145). This research argues that the interstitial space between the pedagogical and the performative discourses becomes the potential site for representing the colonized subject, and this interstitial space re-orders the signifiers and signifieds, thus re-organizing language ‘to write a nation.’

The change in the narrative mode is essentially the split between the pedagogical and the performative discourse that creates the interstitial space defining the representation-signification. The pedagogical discourse involves a ‘continuist’ language structure founded in an imperialist mode of representation, while the performative discourse involves representation of the colonial subject in ‘recursive’ language that presents the latter in a process of signification. The term ‘performative’ in linguistics was first employed by John Langshaw Austin in his Speech Act Theory in 1962 in order to define utterances that perform an action rather than simply describing it. The performative discourse, hence, competes with the pedagogical discourse. The “continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical” imparts an authority based on a constituted historical past and portrays the colonized as the *object* of the discourse. The “repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative” (Bhabha, p. 145) attempts to show the colonized in the process of action, imparting new signifieds to the colonized and employs the latter as the *subject* of the discourse. It is in the split between these discourses that the “conceptual ambivalence becomes the site of writing the nation” (Bhabha, p. 146) that offers a possibility for the representation of the colonized. The shifts in the narrative mode expose the split or the space between the pedagogical and the performative discourses at the change of mode, and also the interaction of metaphor and metonymy that probes the process of representation in Coetzee’s narrative.

This study attempts to analyse J.M.Coetzee's technique of transmodalization (narrative mode transformation) through the functioning of the discourses in his narrative. Drawing mainly on three prominent novels of Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Age of Iron*, it examines the following research questions about the representation of the colonized subject in Coetzee's narrative: What is the representation-signification of the colonized subject in the narrative word in the selected texts? What integral symbolic elements in discourse do shape the colonized subject in the selected novels? And finally, in this contention of representation, what is the transposition that the narrative achieves through the flux of narrative modes in all three texts?

### **Narrative Frames**

Narrative frames constitute the organization of action; they are akin to structural boundaries in the narrative that distinguish happenings. According to Erving Goffman (1974), a frame "defines a situation built up in accordance with the principles that govern events and our subjective involvement in them." (p. 67) An analysis of frames in the narrative is hence an analysis of the organization of experience. According to Katherine Young (1982), frames in narrative can also be "considered as edges where psychological characteristics are externalized." (p. 278). Frames therefore not only reflect the ontology of events but also represent the mediatory achievement at the point of frame-break when one frame ends and another begins. Narrative mode shifts occur at the point of frame-break. In the beginning of part one of Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, the narrative describes Michael K's childhood years:

Because their smiles and whispers hurt her, she kept him away from other children....

Because of his disfigurement and because his mind was not quick, Michael was taken out of school . . . [for] learning the elements of reading, writing, counting, sweeping, scrubbing, bed making, dishwashing, basket weaving, woodwork and digging. (p. 4)

This passage exhibits a sudden transmodalization as the first 'because', indicating Anna K's action and view, moves to the second 'because' indicating Michael K's activities, a shift within the realistic mode, marked by the change of paragraph. The first 'because' sentence describes Michael K as an historical object of a pre-constituted ideological pedagogy set in the dynamics of colonization. It deems the basis of the causal relationship between the 'smiles and whispers' of the other and the handicapped condition of Michael K as an "accumulative, temporality of the pedagogical." (Bhabha, p. 145) In the next paragraph, the second 'because' sentence is a long chain of clauses indicating a recursive formation. This presents Michael K as a subject of a process of signification that attempts to describe his reality through a repetitious strategy of creating signifieds, demonstrating the performative. It is in this split between the pedagogical and the performative representations that the contested conceptual territory becomes the "site of writing the nation." (Bhabha, p. 146)

Another significant moment in the narrative where a frame-break marks the transmodalization is described in the following extract from *Life and Times of Michael K*:

He climbed a hill and lay on his back listening to the silence....Perhaps if one flew high enough, he thought, one would be able to see.  
Two aircrafts streaked across the sky from south to north leaving vapour trails that slowly faded, and a noise like waves. (pp. 46 - 47)

In this silent scene, while Michael K lies serenely, contemplating the environment, a shattering frame-break is created by the two aircrafts that streak across the sky, hammering their aerial noise into the silence of the land. The image of tranquility is shattered by the noise. This gap between Michael K's thought process and the aircraft streaking across the sky marks the split between the performative and the pedagogical that indicates the transmodalization. In the protagonist's thought process, the long cluster of clauses indicative of the recursive strategy of performative discourse takes Michael K as the subject of a process of signification, attempting to passively describe its reality, the clause in parenthesis marks the authorial intrusion that comments on the performative discourse. The aircrafts' trail marks the sudden shift in the narrative mode, wherein the discourse is authoritative, pedagogical presentation of the realist ideology. This transmodalization also explores the connection of causality and irony. After the sentence 'Perhaps if one flew high enough,' the sudden and actual appearance of the aircrafts shows how the latter mode exhibits an intrinsic mockery of the causal relation of events in the former realist mode; and in the split between these two modes lies the representative space of the colonized.

Frame-breaks reveal instances when the metanarrative creates interstitial space in the text. According to Gerard Prince, metanarrative can essentially be defined as the "passage in a narrative that refers explicitly to the codes or subcodes in terms of which the narrative signifies." (2003, p. 1948) The metanarrative comments on the premises of construction of the narrative. In the first part of the novel, when Michael K discovers a band of men from the mountains feeding on his pumpkin garden, he muses to himself about what chores those men would give him to do, like carrying, chopping, building, listening, and ultimately, telling stories. This narrative is suddenly intercepted by a frame break:

Yet in the same instant that he reached down to check that his shoelaces were tied, K knew that he would not crawl out and stand up and cross from darkness into firelight to announce himself. (p.109)

As Michael K thinks to himself in a first-person soliloquy, the subject of discourse becomes the telling of stories. But as it comments about the stories of rebellion, stories about the voice of the colonized, there is a strategic frame-break in the narrative, as the narrative mode transforms to the third-person, when Michael K is shown bending down to check his shoelaces. In the first part of the passage, the contemplation of the protagonist is in the future tense; here he is the subject of a process of signification that attempts to redeem

ideological principles governing identity, through the iterative strategy of the performative utterances—the recursive clauses that explicate reality. In the latter half of the passage, beginning with '[y]et in the same instant', the protagonist is represented as the object of a nationalist pedagogy that gives discourse an authority based on historically constituted ideology. This dictates the representation of the colonized other through its historically determined patterns of hierarchy. This is what the last part of passage quoted above implies: 'K knew that he would not crawl out and stand up and cross from darkness into firelight to announce himself.' The discourse here prescribes upon Michael K the resilience to voice—to stand up, move across from darkness to firelight—that inherently avows to a warning of atrocity. Hence, between this pedagogical and the performative, lies the gap through which Coetzee's splitting of the discourse becomes the "site of writing the nation." Proceeding from the above passage is the following metanarrative that creates a gap in essence as it displays a shift from the narrative:

Between this reason and the truth that he would never announce himself, however, lay a gap wider than the distance separating him from the firelight. Always, when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding balked, into which it was useless to pour words. (p. 110)

On a similar note is Magda's discourse in Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*: "I am incomplete, I am a being with a hole inside me, I signify something, I do not know what, I am dumb, I stare out through a sheet of glass into a darkness that is complete. . . ." (p. 9) And, in line with the same thought, Susan Barton comments regarding Friday's character in Coetzee's *Foe*: "...what it is to speak into a void, day after day, without answer." (p. 80). The change of narrative mode in the interstitial space reveals the pause in the representation of the colonized. It reflects the pause on part of the writing agency, the inscribing system, the imperialist logocentric assumptions that shape the individuation of the colonized.

The gap between reason and truth showcased by Coetzee's protagonists, Michael K, Magda and Susan Barton, identify the empirical effects of the contesting pedagogical and performative discourses of representation. The metanarrative comments on the textuality of narrative and reveals the structuring of sentences and words. By detailing how Michael K's story is "always a story with a hole", Coetzee explicitly pronounces the gap and also the subject's self-awareness of it; this act of displaying the gap in the text of words is an occasion offering itself to the hermeneutics of articulation. The gap expressed in words of the narrative signifies the dilemma of assigning the elements by which to measure the relation between reality and its representation, between language and its meaning. The "...gap, a hole, a darkness...into which it was useless to pour words" in effect is reflective of the difficulty to name objects, a kind of aphasia which exhibits an incapacity to use language through the activity of substitution based on similarity, and "a tendency to rely on metonymy." (Jakobson, 1956, p. 56). According to Roman

Jakobson, this is called the similarity disorder and he describes it as “a deterioration of metalinguistic operations” (p. 56). Simultaneously, Coetzee also implies that realistic prose “which is predominantly metonymical” (Jakobson, p. 57) is inadequate to represent the reality of the colonized, hence the narrative undermines the linguistic construction of realistic mode as “always a story with a hole in it. . . .”

The variety of asides and thoughts in the novels constituting the metanarrative reflect the canonization of literary narrative in its contravention of power and representation. At one point in *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee describes the stillness of the days in which there was no sound to be heard except the ‘scurrying of insects’ (p.67). Then the narrative suddenly shifts to an insight about the protagonist’s life as a constituent of a system that is ordered and designed by an outside authority. “The story of his life had never been an interesting one; there had usually been someone to tell him what to do next; now there was no one....’ (p. 67) This change from narrative to metanarrative is a transformation that discusses not only the binary opposition between the element of choice and predestination but also shows the power of ideologically constituted, predetermined terms of the imperialist discourse, and of the author of the narrative. Hence in this shaping of metanarrative, discourse disrupts the stability of the realist convention. What is interrogated is the discursive and disciplinary position of authority from which questions of teleological relationships are institutionally posed.

There are variegated implications of the system of signs in the metanarrative that is in turn metonymically related to the narrative's realist conventions of representation. For instance, in *Life and Times of Michael K*, “[t]his was evidently a code for something, he did not know what” and, as Coetzee writes elsewhere, “[the man] bent down and opened the cock. Water gushed out along the old furrows K had dug during his first stay, flowing into the field. That is a mistake, thought K, that is a sign.” (pp. 31, 111) And, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*: “...opening my sense to the night, waiting for a sign that what lay around me, what lay beneath my feet, was not only sand, the dust of bones, flakes of rust, shards, ash. The sign did not come.” (p. 17) The semantics of the words ‘code’ and ‘sign’ are referents of the discursive ambiguity in the realist structure of narrative - the ordering of events that narrative ordains in the story and the relation of their meaning in real life. According to its definition, the hermeneutic code is a code that can be explicated as a voice according to which a narrative or a part of it can be “structured as a path leading from a question to its possible answer. “A passage can signify in terms of the hermeneutic code if it suggests or asserts that there is a question to be asked or an enigma to be solved; if it formulates that question or enigma; if it alludes a possible answer to that question or acts as an obstacle to it.” (Prince, 1982, p. 40) Hence ‘code’ and ‘sign’ proclaim the metonymic axis and, based on contiguity of relation, they employ the metaleptic signification of semantic system onto epiphany. So it is through this transmodalization, the shift from narrative to metanarrative, that Coetzee

interrogates the paradigms of the processes of signification affecting the relation of signifier and signified.

Contesting discourses evince the power dynamics eclipsing the moment of writing and focalization. Intramodal transmodalization implores the syntactical relationships within the text. In *Age of Iron*, Coetzee implicates the act of writing: “Because he is and is not I. Because in the look he gives me I see myself in a way that can be written... no matter what the word, through it I stretch out a hand...” (p. 9). Here, Coetzee not only exposes the relationship of the object and subject of discourse in the enactment of the postcolonial dialectics of authorization but also the signifier and signified of the sign system of the written word. As the narrative progresses to this metanarrative, the change in mode constitutes the self-reflexive nature of writing. The gaze of the colonial subject, Vercueil, upon the white woman, Mrs Curren, is employed to subvert the convention of focalization in postcolonial writing, referring to the vision of the colonial subject through which the elements of a story are presented rather than the voice of the white woman that is verbalizing the vision. The signifieds of the words ‘man’, ‘dog’, and ‘house’ are not substitutions of the authority of ‘I’; it is rather a deeper, metaleptic constitution, wherein the signifiers of the self and the other do not coalesce but substitute positions to formulate in the act of writing a soul-searching that becomes a means of ethical self-introspection, and an epistemological basis for values. Thus, the shift from narrative to metanarrative highlights the split between the pedagogical and the performative discourse which, through its series of repetitive clauses, reiterates the subject in the process of signification.

The shift from the narrative to the metanarrative expressing the relationship of the object and subject of discourse may be seen in Coetzee’s 1999 novel *Disgrace*. He writes, “A distasteful word, it seems, double-edged, souring the moment. . . .The language he draws on with such aplomb is, if he only knew it, tired, friable, eaten from the inside as if by termites. Only the monosyllables can still be relied on... (p. 129) Here, David Lurie’s confrontation with Petrus reaches a standpoint wherein language becomes ineffective in conveying the perceptibility of each mindset which, in turn, arises from the binary division of discourse into the pedagogical and performative. The recursive, repetitive adjectival structure of metanarrative shift conveys this formulation of the intrinsic ‘double-edged’ aspect of narration, and the ‘friability’ of language in its realist claims becomes the crumbling paradigm of modernist theory. This hollowness, “eaten from inside”, in the language hinted at in the metanarrative, also effaces the conception of perspective and position from within and without the flux of sociological factors affecting the station of a character.

The shift between the narrative of words and the narrative of thoughts model an integral characteristic of the temporal order in the metafictional novels of Coetzee. There are numerous instances when the narrative of thought intervenes with the narrative of words, generating an interstitial space that

becomes the “site of writing the nation” (Bhabha, p. 145). For example, Coetzee writes in *Michael K*:

But for the rest he was living beyond the reach of calendar... half awake, half asleep. Like a parasite dozing in the gut, he thought; like a lizard under a stone. Parasite was the word the police captain had used.... (p. 116)

In this excerpt, the initial narrative of words expresses the idleness of Michael K in his hideout; the “half asleep, half awake” is the continuist, accumulative characteristic of the pedagogical discourse wherein the protagonist is the object of a historical, imperial ideology proclaiming the intrinsic idleness in South African life. The subsequent part is the narrative of thought; it shows the idea of parasite in Michael K's musing which forms a contestation in the semiotics of this word. He questions the basis of parasitism, its symbiotic relationship to other parameter functions. In presenting a debate between two definitions of 'parasite', the protagonist becomes the subject of a process of signification that attempts to erase past ideologies and replace them with the contemporaneity of living values, hence representing the performative discourse in the narrative.

The recursive structure of interrogation in the narrative of thought reflects a presentiment of the certainty of his uncertainty. The phase upon phase of progress traced by 'scene after scene of life' comments upon the frames and chronology of the realist tradition of representation that signifies the performative that relays passively the reality of Michael K as the subject. As the narrative of words, presenting Michael K as the object of a pre-determined, pedagogical discourse constituted in the past, changes to the narrative of thought, it represents the protagonist as the subject of a process of signification. The series of clauses here pronounce the repetitious, 'recursive' manner of the performative discourse that endeavours to passively describe the subject's reality while demonstrating the prodigious living principle of its 'contemporaneity' (Bhabha, p. 145). It is this gap created by this narrative mode transformation wherein lies the enunciative moment and the enunciation of the colonized subject.

In the transmodalization from the narrative of words to the narrative of dreams, there forms a gap between contesting discourses that becomes the foundation of not only the spatialization of time, but also the representation of the colonial subject. As Coetzee writes in *Life and Times of Michael K*:

He held his hand in the flow...drinking and being bathed, he could not get enough of the water. He ... awoke from a dream in which the Visagie boy, crouched in a ball in the dark beneath the floorboards, with spiders walking over him and the great weight of the wardrobe pressing down above his head, mouthed words, pleas or cries or orders, he did not know.... (p. 99)

In this excerpt, the narrative of words spells the 'continuist pedagogical' discourse in which Michael K is represented as the 'object', acted upon and

determined by the constituted ideological precepts of the imperialist. In the narrative of the dream, the chain of clauses displays the recursive structure of the performative discourse, wherein Michael K is the subject of a process of signification that continually attempts to erase the past originary presence of an ideological discourse dictating the signified of the colonized subject's semantic domain. The series of "words, pleas or cries or orders" that the Visagie boy mouthed, present in the narrative of dream, shows the functioning of metonymy. Through the contiguity of these words, the trope of metonymy illustrates the unconscious of the human mind that, structured like the system of language, functions to 'displace' the existing signifier with the subjectivity of experiential performative. The Visagie boy in the dream narrative is depicted as crouched in the dark beneath the floorboards. This is not an analogical substitution, but rather a contiguous one—Michael K sleeping out in the open is associated with the Visagie boy who was hiding inside the main house. Hence it is a metonymical functioning of language here that has operated by displacing the protagonist's claustrophobic, colonized existence by that of the colonizer boy in the dream. The gap signified by the pause between the comma and the conjunction 'and' reflects that of the narrative of words and the narrative of dream, the interstitial space between the pedagogical and the performative that formulates the 'site of writing the nation.'

The continuous interpolation of discourse into semantic domain of the colonized semantic domain is similarly prevalent in other Coetzee novels. In *Age of Iron*, where narrative contains quite a few number of dreams, one such instance is when Mrs. Curren expresses her dream to Vercueil in which she describes his hair as 'long and oily; dirty too, hanging down at the back in ugly rats' tails...fixing me with his eyes.' She expresses her fears of how the water all around her was oily too and that she felt like 'drowning in oil: I had not the courage for that' (p. 168). In this particular dream, Mrs. Curren is being guided or being beguiled by Vercueil in the dream into a sea of oil. The profuse colon marks punctuate the elaborations in a single sentence and are revelatory of the lack of word which is displaced by the colon; like Mrs. Curren as the little sardine is being drawn back into the sea of sardine oil in which Vercueil is submerged, sardine oil becomes the context in which the distinct meaning units of the white woman and the colonized black are combined, it is based on the syntactic and physical contiguity of the 'oily hair' of Vercueil and the 'oily sheen of the sea' that ultimately becomes the 'metonymic ruin of the object' in the narrative of dream. (Lacan, 1988, p. 34) Similarly, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, there is a physical space in the text as the narrative of words shifts to the narrative of dream with the subsequent movement from the pedagogical discourse to the performative:

From horizon to horizon, the earth is white with snow.... As I glide across the square, dark figures separate out from the whiteness, children at play building a snow castle on top of which they have planted a red flag. They are mittened, booted, muffled.... (p. 10)

As the narrative moves from the mechanical actions of the magistrate in the pedagogical to his subconscious actions in the performative discourse of the narrative of dream, there is a marked gap at this point that creates a physical distancing between the two. In the dream narrative, the series of clauses create the recursive strategy of the performative: the walls and houses dwindle and lose their solidity, the dark figures of the children separate out from the whiteness predominant on the land. The 'mittened, booted, muffled...' figures of the children and the 'queer floating gabble of their voices' indicate how they are the subjects of a process of signification that attempts to demonstrate the living contemporaneity of these people. The dream narrative mode compounds the effect of the metonymic trope in the symbolic transformation of the hot desert sun into white mist, and the 'white puffs' effusing from the breaths of the children. Here the notion of metonymy functions through combination of these distinct meaning units, the aura of light and the puffs of breath, by locating them within the same context of the white snow; the two signifiers of the aura and the children's breath are associated not through similarity but rather through their contiguity - the textuality of the white colour.

Landscape descriptions in narrative hold significance due to their manner of digression from the plot of action, thus creating a modal shift, from the narrative of action to the topography. Analysing landscape aestheticization reveals the semantics of realist representation and denotes the trope of metonymy. A stark feature in his landscape descriptions is the predominance of metonymy over metaphor that ruptures the narrative into a split; the split between the pedagogical and the performative, at the moment of which is the interstitial space that becomes the site of expressing the South African landscape in its indigenous reality. In the following instance, the narrative of words shifts to the landscape description in *Life and Times of Michael K* when the protagonist is shown aching for the pleasures of 'digging' and 'planting' in the earth:

All morning he tramped the veld....Three hundred yards from the dam two low hills, like plump breasts, curved towards each other. Where they met, their sides formed a sloping crevice as deep as a man's waist, three or four yards long. The bed of the crevice was of a fine dark blue gravel.... (p. 100)

Here, the pedagogical describes the protagonist as eager to penetrate and dig into the earth, explicating the historical ideology of the imperialist. In the performative discourse, details of the curvature of the hills feminises them as the bosom of the female body, juxtaposed with the waist of the male body. It conjures up the potential of reproduction, in the moment of confluence of binary opposites, the confrontation of the signifier and signified, a search for the mediatory, interstitial space between opposites in which Michael K digs his burrow. The dark blue of the gravel into which he penetrates recalls the shade of the British navy, an insignia flagging the imperialist. The 'bed of fine dark blue' becomes a metonym for the British naval imperialism to form colonies. As Michael K digs into the gravel bed to form his burrow, it enacts a

process of decolonization wherein he becomes the subject of the performative discourse endeavouring to represent the land and the protagonist in a process of signification which erases past origins to create new signs of the present, to redeem and iterate national life as a reproductive process. It is therefore, the gap in-between these pedagogical and performative discourses that becomes the site of writing the nation.

The landscape description also portrays the two hills before the protagonist as the home and grave of men. This constitutes the essential binary opposition between the conception of living and the conception of dead and, in search for a mediation between these binaries, the author (through) Michael K ultimately journeys into the crater, into the earth. The burrow in the earth between the hills is the reversed image of a hill, atop the earth. The burrow, hence, is the true vantage point, the space of mediation between the binary opposites, the interstitial gap between the contesting discourses. Also, this pronounces the significant movement inwards, to the primordial centre of being to seek refuge and knowledge.

Transmodalization and contesting discourses also interrogate the historicization of landscape within narrative by deconstructing its semantic effect. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, there is an interesting depiction of the lake and river as the far 'green smudge' in the midst of the desert and the bronze sun in the South African terrain. The sand dunes have been described as immortal as they stand as steadfast monuments: "For the dunes cover the ruins of houses that date back to times long before the western provinces were annexed and the fort was built" (p. 15). As the river traces its path into the lake, the scanty greenery vanishes into the haze of the desert. It is in the omnipresence not of the desert but rather the empty vastness of it that predominates the landscape as the veld descriptions in *Disgrace*, *Life and Times of Michael K*, and *In the Heart of the Country*. In "the sun still hangs bronze and heavy", the bronzeness of the sun and its iterative present become the performative discourse which attempt to present an indigenous association of the sun with the land. The sand dunes in their stability and perseverance are monuments representing historicity of time; the dunes cover the ruins of a past civilization, preserving in the heart of the desert the memory of human life, human instinct, and become, therefore, witnesses of the crime of colonial conquest and usurpation. The 'timber skeletons' on which the sand dunes stand recall the skeleton remains of the tortures of the Empire's soldiers inflicted upon the native folk that the magistrate ultimately discovers in various regions. The sand dunes, like the hills, are harbingers of the myth of historicizing, constantly impinging upon the present consciousness, along with the fact that historicizing itself forms a ploy of imperial ideology, "the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects." (p. 169) The landscape represents nature's endless preserve of the insignia of human life.

Towards the end of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the magistrate describes the landscape just before the final storm takes over the land after the soldiers of the Empire have left: "[T]he air grows luminous, the sun turns coppery. The boats have all left the lake, the birds have stopped singing. There

is an interval of utter silence. Then the wind strikes.” (p. 168). In this final culmination, the change of the sun's hue from bronzeness to coppery represents the performative, indicating it as a subject of a process of signification, attempting to show the progressive era of human existence and strife, which advances to iron in Coetzee's later novel *Age of Iron*. The utter silence, like the metanarrative space, becomes the poignancy of the moment of realization and enunciation as the magistrate ultimately begins “to write such a history” of the desert:

We lived in the time of the seasons, of the harvests, of the migrations of the waterbirds. We lived with nothing between us and the stars. We would have made any concession, had we only known what, to go on living here.... (p. 169)

The desert, therefore, represents a repertoire of the colonized subject's consciousness that in this performative discourse becomes a continuous process of living principles through which national life is redeemed.

Similarly, *In the Heart of the Country*, Coetzee presents Magda's view of the farmland around her: “The farm, the desert, the whole world as far as the horizon is in an ecstasy of communion with itself...” (p. 49). This description of the landscape reflects how the veld and farm in essence draw the energy of life from Magda's existence. Her perception of the outside world is basically an extension of her inner being. This conception of exteriorizing the interior involves the blurring of the boundaries between the inner and outer self, between reality and fiction itself. Hence, through this repetitive, recursive, performative discourse, Coetzee represents how the relationship of man and nature revels in the core which emanates from man, that in this relation man seeks refuge within the primordial self.

In the narrative of landscape, as Coetzee describes South Africa, the pedagogical discourse resorts to metaphors of western imperialism, especially of European root and impose them on African land. The landscape narrative in feminising the land, embarks on its exotic appeal for the colonizer solely due to its characteristic of impenetrability - the voluptuous vastness and the hardness of its earth, which is its mystifying enigma. The pedagogical prescribes to the South African land an innateness of the vast, empty veld and dessert.

## Conclusion

From Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* to *Life and Times of Michael K* and, ultimately, *Disgrace*, there is evidence of the varying discourses of representation of the colonized. The pedagogical discourse represents the colonized as an object of imperial ideology of the colonizer constituted from the early days of white's colonial settlement in South Africa. The pedagogical discourse is anchored in a demand of 'the story' from the colonized: “Tell us your story” reiterates the imperialist command throughout the pedagogical in all of Coetzee's narratives by imploring the dynamics of 'the truth' that it poses to interrogate, and procreating the reality of the colonized object. The

performative discourse simultaneously contests the pedagogical and represents the colonized as a subject of living sign of the present that reconstitutes the skepticism of 'the truth', 'the story' constituted in the pedagogical.

J. M. Coetzee portrays a demystification of the myth of 'the story' - the story of the colonial subject. As the pedagogical discourse prescribes, the performative re-inscribes in its endeavour to create a new voice and vision of the colonial subject. The myth of 'story-telling' in itself upholds the seductive imperial appropriation of the land and people and resorts to the ideological and linguistic value system in colonizing practices. In renouncing the latter through the performative discourse, prevalent in Coetzee's South African novels, the literary work resists the archetypal force of the imperial, pedagogical representation.

The metanarrative space created between the contesting discourses becomes a momentary lapse that distances the author from the text. There is a subtle, momentary time break that occurs at the point of the transformation of the narrative mode - this temporal break generates the ironic distancing between the discourses. This intermediate gap disrupts the semantic disciplinary paradigms between theory and practice. Outside the sentence then occurs the pedagogy's introspection of its limits and the performative's exploration of its strategy. The gap becomes the moment wherein the ideological determinism of the pedagogical discourse is explored as well as the concurrent and recursive endeavours of the performative discourse to ascribe the signified.

The metanarrative space thus evinced through transmodalization at the change of mode becomes a non-position. This space becomes the time-lag, the temporal break in the discourse of representation. Here only, in-between the ideological, constituted past, and the contemporaneity of the present, is the possibility of a re-articulation of the sign. This interstitial space may represent the potential silence or the non-expression of the condition of the colonial subject. This may tend towards a re-ordering of symbols that generate in the inter-subjective moment of re-vision. As the metanarrative space becomes emblematic of historical development as well as narrative agency, it symbolizes the inherent politics of representation that surfaces ultimately in time to re-inscribe human existence. Coetzee's narrative offers a re-vision of language because his transmodalization creates metanarrative space as a moment of cultural signification that actualises the representation of the colonial subject in metafictional white writing in South-Africa. This exposes the transformative power of representative discourse that can defy ideological codes while seeing through its principles of constructs.

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