CHAPTER IV
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES USED IN
J.M. COETZEE’S NOVELS

A novel conveys what the novelist perceives and comprehends of the world around. In other words, a novel presents the writer’s vision of life as it faces him. Through his works, he presents the truth of life as he sees it. In order to do so he has to choose a particular mode so that he can strike a chord of understanding with his readers and make the reading of his work a complete and satisfying experience for them. The method adopted by him to present life in the process of living may be described as the narrative technique. The novel’s success depends on how it is narrated and also what it conveys.¹

Mark Schorer in Technique and Discovery writes that,

Technique alone objectifies the materials of art, hence technique alone evaluates those materials …………….. under the “immense artistic preoccupations” of James and Conrad and Joyce, the form of the novel changed, and with the technical change analogous changes took place in substance, in point of view, in the whole conception of fiction. And the final lesson of the modern novel is, that technique is not the secondary but a deep and primary operation, not only that technique contains intellectual and moral implications, but that it discovers them.
The narrative technique in the new era is being driven more by human and individual experience than by ‘the situation’ which may also imply a move from the sociopolitical towards the ethical and subjective. This should not be constrained as a reject or a denial of politics, but much rather a process of remaining the political, the social and the public.

The analogies between the past and the actual happenings of the 1980s must be too demanding for the common reader, Vaughan implies. Both Rich and Smith recognize Coetzee’s postmodernist techniques and feel that they are probably illegitimate in the crisis situation of South Africa, where greater moral certainty by is required. The right of Coetzee to interest himself in post modernism and to use postmodern techniques in his novels was asserted, especially by David Attwell but later also by Head and other critics, who have at the same time recognized that he is a postcolonial writer. Part of Coetzee’s rewriting of myths involves what Watson calls the conflation of historical periods in his books, and he describes him as:

*Imposing, with a seeming disregard for all historical veracity, an eminently twentieth century voice and academic intelligence onto a historical period seemingly remote form it in both time and space (Magda speaks of “dancing slippers,” “daguerreotype,” and even a “Weekly Advertiser” and “Colonial Gazette”).[She nevertheless] betrays both an acquaintance with certain French surrealists and later commonplaces of structuralist linguistic theory. In the Heart of the Country is a tissue of borrowings.*

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Coetzee’s rejection of realist devices such as linear plot, well-rounded characters, clear settings and close endings, are all part of his postmodern approach to his narrative material, and identify him as part of that group of metafictionalists whose interest in language brings them to investigate the very act of story-telling, thus creating self reflexive narratives which question the nature of the text itself. Infact, Coetzee’s rejection of realism can be understood as an act of decolonization. Then, critics remain apprehensive about making a judgment as to Coetzee’s political intent largely due to his self referential writing technique, which constantly questions his own authority.

The novel Robinson Crusoe is characterized by its narrative techniques, which are the foundation of many of the codes of the realist novels, and by the allegorical and metaphorical significations that it gives to motifs of exploration.

**Present Tense Narration**

Coetzee has used present tense narration as a technique as it is a way of escaping the “Time of History”. Especially his novel Waiting for the Barbarians with its other world setting and its loquacious, elderly protagonist narrator, who prefers “fancy, questions speculations” to “facts” and “pragmatic dicta” is a present tense narration. In this novel every moment is present; past fades; future is hidden; cause and effect remain to be unraveled and pondered.
“I have never seen anything like it …………………
Is he blind?”(WFB, P.1)

asks the provincial magistrate, in the novel’s first sentences, of the interrogator in the dark glasses sent from the imperial capital to learn the truth about rumors of barbarian unrest on the frontier.

The narrator’s question hangs fire until the Magistrate solves the puzzle of Colonel Joll’s newly invented glasses. And the novel’s many other instances of blindness and of what is “never seen”\(^3\) reverberate similarly in the reader’s mind because the Magistrate’s present tense narration records present uncertainly without always drawing retrospective connections.

Coetzee, however, has the Magistrate tell the story not retrospectively but simultaneously. That is Magistrate tells the story in the present tense not the historical present after the fact, but the simultaneous present as events are happening. Indeed, Coetzee has written other allegorical novels in or partly in the present tense. And in all of them questions of how to make narratives out of lives are central and therefore possible fictional occasions of narration, whether specified or unspecified, are also central.

*Foe*, for example, Coetzee’s most recent work, is an epistolary novel, therefore often in the first-person present tense, consisting of letters from Susan Barton, Castaway, to Daniel Foe, or Defoe, well-known author, describing her experiences with Cruso and Friday on Cruso island and hoping the renowned Mr. Foe might make her reminiscences into a book. Clearly it remained for a later author Coetzee himself, who appears as the
narrator of a first person present tense epilogue. Even Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country*, for another example, is also the narrative of a “castaway,” “a spinster with a locked diary” who lives with her domineering father and two black servants on an isolated South African farmstead. The novel consists of numbered first person present tense entries, which because, for example, the events they describe are inconsistent cannot be an actual “locked diary.” Considering his novel *Life and Times of Michael K* it is found that the main protagonist “Michael K doesn’t play the role of a narrator nowhere in the novel. And hence not escaping the time of history, Coetzee has not used the technique of present tense narration in this novel.

**Fantasy and Reality Technique:**

The fantasy and reality technique is Coetzee’s appropriate vehicle to play bare the horrifying and frightening reality of the absurd event symbolic of human condition. Coetzee’s novels distinguishes from the traditional English novel. The central core is still realism but around it gather layers of fantasy, symbolism and stylistic innovations. The result is a new kind of realism, which may be called African realism, bringing into existence the novels of Coetzee as distinguished from the novel proper.

In Coetzee’s novel a heighted and mysteriously portentous representation of abstract symbols and ideas on the one hand and, on the other, of the involutions of the private psyche, he shows how this technique could be applied to native conditions and put to the best literary use. He explores its possibilities and
potentialities so thoroughly that novelists of later generations are to find in it an effective instrument to throw light on the dark recesses of consciousness and help evoke complex mental states. Coetzee’s use of fantasy and Reality technique is to make man aware of his predicament of what is and what it may well become. He infact uses them to unravel and explore the timeless question of man’s relation with his universe and to his own inner being. His choice of alien creatures and planet is profoundly meaningful whether or not it is satirical in intent with reference to human life. The alien creatures in his novels are always constructed on the same principles of analogy or contrast with the human world. His transportation of his protagonists to alien planets only intensifies their perception of what life and human nature is.

The powerful mixture of fantasy and reality, is described as so far the greatest expression of the African imagination. There is a hard headed realism in Coetzee’s novel which also makes him major influence on the modern world. He exercises great control in his descriptions and knows when to suppress detail and when to report in detail in order to make the description effective. Fantasy and Reality technique in the presentation of everyday reality and concern for the consciousness of its characters have been the distinguishing mark of modern fiction. For Coetzee, the act of writing is a modes of self preservation in a highly politicized society like South Africa. In order to foreground a certain truth in writing. Coetzee distinguishes between two forms, one that he calls as truth or Reality to fact and the other that reaches beyond the factual or fantasy.
In the discussion of narrative technique in *In the Heart of the Country*, with the critic David Atwell, Coetzee volunteered the information that his novel

\[\ldots\ldots\text{ is constructed out of quite brief sequences which are numbered as of pointing out what is not between them: the kind of scene setting and connective tissue that the traditional novel used to find necessary.}\]

What Coetzee does in the novel is to flout convention of mimetic fiction, by presenting a narrator who, far from striving to convince the reader of the authenticity of the experiences she describes, contrives instead to cast doubt on the veracity of her narrative through her uncertainties and hypothesizing about what happens. In the novel, the pattern of Magda proposing one account of events and then instantly calling into question its validity by offering an equally plausible alternative is repeated again and again throughout the novel, making it impossible for us to ignore the truth to which such narratorial behaviour emphatically points: namely that the narrator is incapable of making the distinction between fact and fantasy, chronicle and fabulation. There are instances when Magda’s fantasies about what might happen are shown to be so powerful that the temporal barrier that her use of the future tense initially interposes between the reality of now and the events she foresees, is suddenly ruptured by the sheer force of her imagination. If Coetzee seems to be saying, nothing in this story we are reading can be assumed to be true, then we are forced to recognize the story for what it is – a construct of the author’s creating imagination. Magda’s own
attempts to prove that she is a real, live human being only serve to illustrate the paradox that it is when fictional characters are most adamant in their insistence on their flesh and blood reality, that they are at their least credible. Unless they are mad, real people do not insist that they are real.

Through the technique of fantasy and reality used in *In the Heart of The Country* Coetzee tries to parallel Magda’s demented fantasizing with the prodigious myth-making of white South Africa that picturizes his major preoccupation.

Throughout the novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, the protagonist is plagued by doubts about himself. He turns all the social conditions into without having a story and fantasizing of searching for a moral. But in reality it is Coetzee’s interpretation of apartheid South Africa, Michael K’s utopian South Africa is a place where one can only dream of forgotten corners and angles and corridors. But what really experiences is proliferation, of camps. Coetzee’s blending of Fantasy and Reality helps to delineate themes that are quite serious. This technique in this novel serves as a spring board from where to plunge into certain very important issues in contemporary life. In efforts to combat reality the ideals of all the characters of Coetzee’s novels are shattered. The consequences of this is that while some characters submit to reality others escape from it by fantasizing new situations. In the same way Michael is an escape artist who escapes from war, from camps, from hospital, and also from the society living in isolation. He chooses the life of animals. Thus, Michael k is an allegorical figure presented by Coetzee.
The inclination for Fantasy in the novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, is the socio-political conditions in South Africa that brought Africans much nearer to Fantasy and have lessened the gap between fantasy and reality. Racial issue, colonialism and apartheid made life bizarre and hallucinatory. So Fantasy becomes a realistic mode of presentation of life.

South Africa is a divided and dangerous country and the injustice and its repressive impact on human personality is the obsessive theme. This theme and his great longing for history are best depicted through Michael, a victim of apartheid.

It was as part of a growing international debate on torture that during a brief stay in the United Stated in 1979, Coetzee wrote this novel which as was mentioned in the general introduction, focuses, if allegorically, on the South African situation. Through the figures of Colonel Joll, The Magistrate and the Barbarian girl of *Waiting For the Barbarians* the author therefore presents torture and question of power through the technique of Fantasy and Reality. The realm of the novel is both familiar and unfamiliar; it is both South Africa and every where else; it is the present trying to redeem the past in anticipation of the future. Coetzee depicts the barbarian girl’s body as a medium of excavating the realities of torture through the Magistrate’s sexual fantasies. But, the Magistrate atlast fails in his sexual and linguistic assaults which demonstrate his lack of authority. Charles Bressler gives a better term to the novel connecting it to logo centrism. Bressler defines logo centrism as there is an ultimate reality or center of truth that can serve as the basis for all
All of Coetzee’s novels deal with one central truth that of issue of Apartheid and its effects. Even in this novel Magistrate also tries to escape from history and from reality. He fails to excavate the wooden slips and torture of barbarian girl. Also the Magistrate’s efforts to visualize the girl before she was tortured. Takes the form of a recurrent dream about snow castle and children in the snow. Here fantasy takes the form of excavation of reality.

Coetzee’s next novel *Foe* is intricately involved with the construction of ‘Utopia’ The novel is an imaginative rendering of the of the very condition of the colonial personality and of colonialism. Jameson claims, infact, that

> narrative is the form in which we receive reality. It is not just that stories help us understand the world, stories are how the world is presented to us. In other words, reality comes to us in the shape of stories.

**Intertextuality:**

As Intertextuality is a capacious term, some working definitions seem to be in order. Most readers will be familiar with the term, as coined by Julia Kristeva, as founded upon the propositions that “every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text.” At its narrowest this has been taken to limit the applicability of the term to parody, mere allusion, source criticism or casual generic resemblances. More commonly, however, the intertext of a given story may be defined as the set of plots,
characters, images and conventions which it brings to mind for a given reader. One can of course, go one step further to define a ‘text’ as a system of signs, whether in literary works, spoken language or symbolic systems, so that intertextuality is defined as the transposition of one or several systems of signs into another. One may wish to consider that paradigmatic plots abound, not just in literary culture, but in general culture.

The term ‘Intertextuality’ can describe this sense of life as repeating a previously heard story, of life predestined by the notions that shape our consciousness. In this way real life may be structured according to patterns, familiar from literary culture – just as literary culture may be structured according to patterns familiar from real life.

More recently, however, specific attention has been paid to the various forms that intertextuality can take. Michael Bakhtin in his essay ‘From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse’ insists upon the DIALOGIC element in all UTTERANCES and the range of different dialogues to be traced in literary works focusing the ‘problem of quotation’. According to Roland Barthes, all texts are intertexts:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located,
John, Frow says that intertextuality has to be seen in association with the whole complex issue of the reader’s varied expectation formed by IDEOLOGICAL, generic and other factors.

Dealing with the Intertextuality technique in the novel ‘In the heart of the Country’, the character of Magda appears to be a continuation of the character of Eugene Dawn, the protagonist of Coetzee’s earlier novel, Dusklands. This is an instance of intertextuality since an older text is being repeated in a new text. The latter text is therefore an inter-text. If Dawn is attempting to strike a balance between the various forces that control his life and define himself then Magda is struggling against her powerful father who is symbolic of conventional modes of thinking and behaviour. Magda also describes in the novel herself as spending evenings “humped over the dictionary”, and the quotations from European literature within the novel suggest that she has a large library of other works. As an antipastoral, that is to say, a work that asserts that life in the country is far from idyllic, the novel is a descendant of the first great South African novel, The Story of an African Farm,\(^9\) which also depicts life on a farm in the karoo as troubled.

When Magda’s father gives some sweets to Anna, he assumes an attitude similar to Jacobus’s in ‘the Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’, when he offered some tobacco to the Hottentots he met during his journey. On that occasion, Jacobus narrates that he ordered his men to distribute a bit of tobacco to
each Hottentot, in order to ingratiate himself with the natives and obtain their permission to cross their territory without trouble. As a consequence, the meaning the tobacco assumes is similar to that of the presents Magda’s father gives klein-Anna, as both ultimately stand for the coloniser’s power. These presents offered to the natives, then, become some of the means the ‘master’s use to have their mastery recognized.¹⁰

Magda’s father can thus be identified as the colonizer of the situation and as the one who plays the same role as Defoe’s robinson Crusoe. Paradoxically, though, Magda’s father assumes this role also in relation to the protagonist herself who inspite of belonging to the Afrikaner class and being therefore destined to assume the role of mistress could be seen as the first ‘Friday’ of their microcosm. Unlike the protagonists of Dusklands, Magda appears as an ‘Anti-Robinson’, a reversed reflection of Defoe’s protagonist and, as a character, she resembles more Coetzee’s Cruso. Defoe’s novel Robinson Crusoe and Coetzee’s In The Heart of The Country obviously share the discussion of colonisalism and white man’s power, but whereas Magda’s father, just like Robinson, does his duty, her attempt to colonise the natives and the surrounding reality only leads to the servant’s definite flight and the ruin of the farm.

The texts that are most often compared are Gordimer’s the Conservationist and Coetzee’s In the Heart of the Country. The Conservationist, which appeared in 1974, has like In the Heart of the Country, one of its main themes the debate about the ownership of land. Coetzee has commented that it is in every way
a worthy follower of the **Story of an African Farm** in the antipastoral tradition.\(^{11}\) Gordimer, in *The Conservationist*, looks at what constitutes ownership of a farm for a white businessman whose actual income comes from the modern sector, from which blacks are excluded except as miserably paid laborers. She analyzes, as does Coetzee, the relationship between the black farm workers and the white owner, as well as the white owner’s relationship with his son and his mistress.

Attwell argues that Coetzee, opposes to any historical narrative various intertextual configurations, which participate explicitly, in the international affiliations of intellectual, literary critical or, at best, literary-historical’ culture.\(^ {12}\) *Waiting for the Barbarians* is richly intertextual with echoes of Kafka, Hawthorne and Beckett. The novel in fact directly thematises intertextuality in a careful strategy of barbarism. The novel primarily owes its general situation to Dino Buzzatis *II Deserts Dei Tartari* translated into English in 1952 as The Tartar Steppe Giovanni Drogo, a young officer in an unnamed country, is posted to Fort bastiani, located in a dead stretch of frontier, beyond which lies a great desert, the Tartar Steppe. Long ago there may have been Tartars but, as in Waiting for the barbarians, none have appeared in living memory. In remodeling the Tartar Steppe, therefore, Coetzee turns to an African intertext – Constantin Cavafy’s ‘Waiting for the Barbarians.’\(^ {13}\)

Both Cavafy’s poem and Coetzee’s novel have received a great deal of critical attention. Many interpretations have viewed either the poem or the novel in a historical light as allegories of
the human condition, and the barbarians as abstract symbols with universal value and dimensions. These latter approaches situate the work in the specific place and time of its creation and view it as a sign of its time or a reflection on the historical situation at the time it was written, namely the ‘Fin de Siecle’ climate in the case of Cavafy and the apartheid in South Africa in the case of Coetzee.\textsuperscript{14}

But some critics claim that Cavafy’s poem is staged in a decadent city not historically defined, but with a resemblance to Rome. It is structured as a dialogue – a person poses a series of questions and another one answers them, I will henceforth refer to the person that asks the questions as “the first speaker” and to the one that answer as “second speaker”. Just like the poem, Coetzee’s \textit{Waiting for the Barbarians} is situated in an undefined town and period. The Magistrate, who narrates the story, is peacefully doing his job in a small town at the edge of the “Empire”. The iteration of the title indicates the kinship between the two texts. The progressive form of the verb in the title of the poem points to the lack of closure in the process of waiting.

In the novel, as in Cavafy, no barbarians ever appear, only fisher people and nomads, and the latter only briefly. To the barbarous proponents of Empire, however, they are very necessary, regularly invoked in scare stories, in a procedure reminiscent of the well known South African tactic of ‘Swartgevaar’ (Black danger).

On the one hand, we have the denunciation of the way in which language, by obscuring the horrors perpetrated, becomes a
further accomplice of the system. In this respect the text can be seen as echoing recent events in South Africa. As Gallagher points out, for example, the syntax adopted by the author is similar to that used in official police reports, where the passive sentence, analysed by Coetzee himself in *Doubling the Point*, is exploited to obscure the actions of the security police.

Furthermore, the jargoon used by Coetzee’s police in the report of the first prisoner’s death (WFB, P.6) has the same euphemistic tone used by the South African police, and sharply brings to mind Biko’s coroner’s report. The fact that in Coetzee’s novel there is no record of the magistrate’s imprisonment (WFB, P.125) recalls the experience of many South African detainees whose existence was never officially recorded and, even more sinisterly, the denial of the Holocaust by certain Nazis and revisionists.

Initially, the Magistrate shares the belief that what distinguishes ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarity’ is the ability to write, and he tries to maintain the distinction between his ‘lettered civilisation’ and the ‘unlettered primitivism’ of the Barbarians. But this distinction, and the ‘civilised’ ability to write which is equally exploited by the white man to inscribe the otherness on the black man’s body, finally turns out to be yet another weapon the Empire can exploit in its perpetration of blind power. Like the Empire in kafka’s ‘In the panal Colony’ (1919), which imposes its writing on the prisoners’ bodies through an infernal apparatus that literally inscribes their sentences onto their flesh, so the tortures impose a cruel writing on the girl’s body. Her scars, her broken
feet, her blinded eyes, thus become the ‘signs’ that Coetzee’s Empire imposes on her.

Through torture the Empire writes and creates the Barbarians, and through the physical pain and the mental distress it inflicts on its prisoners it creates its own version of the truth: the Colonel’s job, as the Magistrate tells us, is precisely ‘to find out the truth’ (WFB, P.5). Exactly like many ‘real situations in which interrogation and torture are used to elicit the ‘truth’ and ‘protect’ the Empire, ‘this is what happens – first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth’ (WFB, P.5) Sharing kafka’s officer’s conviction that ‘guilt is never to be doubted’ (1961), Joll forces his first prisoner to confess, just as many incriminating declarations are obtained from prisoners in countries where torture is practiced.

To underscore the books universality, Coetzee deliberately invites comparison with one of the greatest of modern novelists, the German-Jewish, author Franz Kafka. Michael’s name points to Kafka’s The Trial and The Castle, in which the hero is called ‘K’; but unlike Kafka, Coetzee infuses a surprising amount of optimism into his fiction. The Trial ends bleakly: “It was as if he meant the shame of it to outlive him. Life and Times of Michael K finishes with the hopeful words. “One can live”. Critics have cited similarities between Michael K and the character K in Franz Kafka’s novel The Trial. Like kafka’s K, Michael K is victimized by social forces he can neither control nor understand. Although some critics objected to Coetzee’s use of Kafkaesque elements, most applauded the novel’s powerful social and political
implications. As Cynthia Ozick stated, “Mr. Coetzee subdued yet urgent lament is for the sadness of a South Africa that has made dependents and parasites and prisoners of its own children, black and white.”

Michael K succeeds as a work of the imagination to the degree that Coetzee’s allegorical and modernist intentions are foiled rather than sustained. The use of K is mannered K belongs to kafka for the millennium, and to the over formed world of the modern West, where the crime is anonymity In Life and Times of Michael, the long episode in the burrow irresistibly evokes kafka’s short story “The Burrow”, a long meditation on within and without. We may also trace South African references. There is a strange affinity between Life and Times of Michael K and The Expedition to the Baobab Tree by Wilma Stokenstrom\(^{17}\) (12), also a story of retreat, not within a care, but within the trunk of a tree. Coetzee himself translated this marvelous tale from the Afriakans in 1983 i.e.; at the time when he was publishing Life and Times of Michael K.

The novel appears to be a twentieth century version of Robinson Crusoe. Infact the title echoes Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe; The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York Mariner. The character Michael K in Coetzee’s novel bears similarity with Crusoe and Friday; and it can be said that Michael K is a precursor to the Friday of J.M. Coetzee’s next novel Foe. Michael K is a third person narrative and describes the life of Michael against the backdrop of his contemporary socio-political situation. As against this, Robinson Crusoe, describes the
sea adventures of Robinson, the individual who is alienated from his contemporary social and historical situation.

For Critic Merivale the novel “deploys the more ‘post modern’ intertextual strategies of ‘palimpsest’ and ‘bricolage’, so that we may read the tectonic plates of kafkan episodes as they slide across each other submerged yet legible under Coetzee’s text (159). Merivale claims that Coetzee “constructs entire episodes” in the novel based on “the major kafkan motifs of the ‘hunger artist’ and the ‘burrow’, nothing ‘the two burrow’ settings of the cave and the farm, which segue into the two ‘hunger artist’ camp scenes” (160). This observation leads merivale to conclude that “for Coetzee, the fable form has been filtered through kafka’s remarkable development of it in his own parables.” Merivale thus successfully undermines reading a specific moral significance from Coetzee’s references to kafka.

Through intertextual reference to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Virgil’s *Aeneid* especially the narrative develops k as anti-Crusoe and anti-Aeneas, devoid of single minded focus, the acquisitive and dominating impulses of the original figures. K’s narrative highlights especially the masculism shaping the past. In Aenaes’s story a patriarchal order threatened after long struggle is restored and emerges in the process stronger than before, like Michael emerges from a colonized order.

In the critical commentary passed, some assert, deny or qualify the ‘kafka connection’ to which Coetzee himself states
'I don’t believe that kafka has an exclusive right to the letter K. Nor is Prague the centre of the universe; I have been reading kafka since I was adolescent in German; so it would be even more foolish for me to deny that kafka has left his traces on me.'

Further, Coetzee constitutes entire episodes of *Life and Times of Michael K* by deploying the major kafkan motifs of the ‘hunger artist’ and the ‘burrow’, rare, though not unknown in the novel. The motif although interwoven and overlapping are roughly separable into the two ‘burrow’ settings of the cave and the farm, which segue into the two ‘hunger artist’ camp scenes, the first of which is told in third person from Michael’s point of view, while the second is narrated in the first person by the Medical Officer.

As a ‘Hunger Artist’, Michael *k shapes his being by negating it, by living minimally, by accepting no food. Like kafka’s Hunger Artist, he does so not out of a commitment to hunger but because, as the Medical Officer eventually figures out, he could not, in the camp, eat the food that he liked. In contrast to kafka’s existential implication, that it is impossible in this world to find ‘the food that ‘Hunger Artist’ liked.

The principal ‘burrow’ episode begins with the business of making a dwelling’, and supplies almost as many concrete details of this process as kafka does. Anxious, Michael learns, like the Burrower, to ‘rest by day and stay up at night to protect his land’ (103). His sense of sight diminishes, but his senses of touch and hearing become sharper and, like a blind man, he strains his ears for the noises that would herald his discovery’. He becomes like a
mouse. Michael needs a fence to stop the burrowers, and suffers, like his kafkan predecessor. Coetzee’s title seems to parody the ‘Life and times’ of a famous person ‘Daniel Lindley 1801-80.\textsuperscript{21} The extended sequence of animal similes for Michael K himself – he is for instance like ‘a mole …. that does not tell stories because it lives in silence’ that suggests the ancient strategy of an animal fable. For Coetzee the fable form has been filtered through kafka’s remarkable development of it in his own animal-centred parables.

It can be said that Coetzee’s battle against Daniel Defoe reaches its culminating point in Foe where there is a one-to-one encounter between the female castaway Susan Barton posited by Coetzee and Crusoe, Friday and Mr. Foe. As Coetzee’s novels are said to be working against the text of Robinson Crusoe, they are not isolated text but function as inter-texts. Infact the novel \textit{Foe} is a radical rethinking of Daniel Defoe’s desert island myth, a postmodern revision of Defoe’s sexual dynamics. As Gallagher observes in her \textit{A Story of South Africa}, during the 1980’s the country experienced a real crisis of censorship, as the government of president P.W. Botha declared once again a state of emergency which lasted from 1985 to 1990. During this period, major black political and literary figures were silenced.\textsuperscript{22} Friday’s muteness represents the muteness of the entire black South African population, which during the years when Coetzee was writing, was dramatically reduced to silence and deprived of any control over their lives. Friday’s muteness could simultaneously be read as a strategy of opposition against the coloniser’s language of
authority. In particular, because Coetzee’s text is a rewriting of Robinson Crusoe, Friday could be interpreted as representing Coetzee’s rejection of Defoe’s ‘noble savage’. In Defoe’s text, it is Robinson who tells us about Friday and emphasizes the way in which the native submits to the white master straight away, immediately showing his superiority.

Far from being a ‘simple’ post-modernist speculation on issues of intertextuality and self-reflexivity, then, *Foe* deals with the issue of power on various levels. Obviously by virtue of its intertextuality Coetzee’s novel denounces the colonialist attitudes and implicit oppression inherent in Defoe’s text. The character Susan Barton, who is at once as resilient and opportunistic as Moll Flanders, and as sensual and creatively observant as Joyce Cary’s Sara Monday. The novel is taken over by an absurdist lost daughter subplot, apparently stage-managed by Foe, but which springs from ‘Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author.

Coetzee’s borrowings in *Foe* include not only those from Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe but also those, some quite explicit, from other Defoe writings, including Moll Flanders, Roxana or the Fortunate Mistress and The Apparition of Mrs. Veal. Although a major theme of survival against great odds is common to both Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe and Coetzee’s *Foe*, there are striking differences between the two novels in the specific details used to paint life on their respective islands. The presence of the woman on Coetzee’s island is a major variation, as is the character of Friday. Defoe’s Friday is not black “His hair was long and black, not curled like wool …. The color of his skin was
not quite black, but very tawny…. His nose was small, not flat like the negroes.”

Coetzee’s Friday is black: “He was black a Negro with a head of fuzzy wool.” The fact that the latter Friday is a black man helps us see Foe, set primarily on the island and in England in 18th century, as an allegory of contemporary South Africa.

The intertextuality of Foe works to unsettle any simple relation between historical report and fictional invention. The Cruso we encounter in this novel appears as the historical original of the fictional Crusoe.

**Time and Space:**

The most obvious way in which story and plot relate is in terms of time. If a story is a sequence of events then its temporal aspect must be presented in the narrative. What might be termed ‘text-time’ is a spatial pseudo time that is limited by both reading and writing practices. Narrative techniques include analepsis in which time-line of the main narrative is interrupted by an earlier scene and prolepsis is a technique by which a narrative interrupts the main story-time with an event, or events, that properly belongs to its future.

According to Eric Voegelin, -

‘time and then heaven came into being at the same instant in order that, having been created together, if ever there was to be a dissolve of them, they might be dissolved together. It was framed after the pattern of the eternal nature that it might resemble this as far as was possible, for the pattern exists
from eternity, and the created heaven has been and is and will be in all time.’

In ‘The Time Machine’, H.G. Wells wrote:

“Any real body must have extension in four directions: it must have length, Breadth, Thickness and Duration... There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of space, and a fourth, Time.”

The literary possibilities of a critical geography are suggested in an intriguing passage by John Berger:

“Prophecy now involves a geographical rather than historical projection; it is space and not time that hides consequences from us. To prophesy today it is only necessary to know men as they are throughout the whole world in all their inequality. Any contemporary narrative which ignores the urgency of this dimension is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a table.”

The notion that it is space that hides inequalities from us, in particular, calls to mid Coetzee’s comments on the political geography of South Africa:

If people are starving let them starve far away in the bush, where their thin bodes will not be a reproach. If they have no work, if they migrate to the cities, let there be roadblocks, let there be curfews..... If the black town ships are in flames, let cameras be banned from them. ...... Certainly there are many lands where prisoners are used as dumping places for people who smell wrong and look unsightly and do not have the decency to hide themselves away. In South Africa the law sees to it as far as it can that not only such people but also the prisons in which they are held become invisible.”
These ideas have significant implications for those who strive to understand the inequality of South African men and women. Apartheid, as Coetzee so clearly understands, operates from day to day as a means of distributing people in space and in the process, of controlling the way they see the world.

In the novel *In the Heart of the Country* Magda in the end turns almost to an animal state and wicked old fairy tales. This repression influences her perception of time. While Robinson notes down very accurately every day he spends on the Island, Magda completely loses the notion of time. The past and the present are confounded in the mind of the protagonist, who seems to live in an eternal present non-present, in a motionless and static world: ‘I lie here involved in cycles of time, outside the true time of the world’ (36). Magda is never able to state anything for certain, doubting even the century she lies. In the novel *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee denounces the way in which power is obtained and maintained in oppressive regimes, emphasizing that in order to survive the system must create an other. This is the reason why the various representatives of the system like Medical officer, use every means to stop Michael from living out of time and space, in an attempt to integrate him.

Also in the end of the novel the Cape gardener notices that as long as there is earth and water, life can go on. Therefore the earth is also the place where time can be stopped or altered. It is often said of Michael K that he has interrupted time, that “he is not of this world”. Magda winds up the clock and thus pretends to
remain in touch with the time of the outer world. But with a sort of perversity, she mixes colours, light and darkness, by dressing in white at night and in black in full daylight. Michael K also practises this perversion of time by sleeping during the day whereas the starts being busy at night: the order of time is set topsy-turvy. He eventually loses track of time: this is quite normal since this very fusion with the earth kill it. This protection of the earth is synonymous with Death: in Death time stops. The novel is set in a future period – future, that is, in the period 1980-1983, when it was being written in which revolution and civil war will have engulfed South Africa. It belongs to the special category of ‘future history’ which became popular in South Africa in the 1980’s and which attempted from the tendencies of the present to construct a future.

One way, paradoxically, “to live in history and to plot against history” is “to sublimate the contingency of imperial order in time to the timeless serenity of the cosmic order itself. That is the Magistrate’s wish, a feature of the featureless old story. Even imperial time is to a degree aligned with seasonal rhythms: For the duration of the winter the Empire is safe: beyond the eye’s reach, the barbarians too, huddled about their stoves, are gritting their teeth against the cold. But the Third Bureau’s Colonel Joll is more a manipulator of time. Having virtually invented the limitless catastrophe posed by the barbarian threat, he also abolishes the time of the seasons, replacing the town with a prison.
*Foe* is the novel which is most remote in time from the writer’s present: all but the last section deals with the early seventeenth century, before 1719, and it is set on an unknown tropical island. *Waiting for the Barbarians* is set outside of historical time, on the borders of an unnamed empire, towards the end of its period of dominance over surrounding, territories.

In an interview with Jean Sevry, Coetzee says the treatment of space, in the works of J.M. Coetzee, presents us with a ceaseless variation, a constant shifting from vast and empty spaces to narrow and restricted books. As Magda puts it in the novel, “I can expand to infinity just as I can shrivel to the size of an ant.” (IHC, P.50). This instills narration with an inner pulsation, a kind of biological rhythm oscillating. Space, here, is treated as isolation, where a young woman finds herself marooned.”

Coetzee’s work, as Stephen Watson has observed, seems to float free of time and place, even in the act of alluding to a time and place which is specifically South African.

**Flash Back Technique:**

Flash-back is one convention of fictional methods which twists time. The flash back method can also be described as the instrument of interpreting and also probing the past in terms of the present. It is actually a technique organic to the novelist’s vision of reality. Through flash backs, we are given an insight into the repressive social scene outside the cells. One is struck by the distressing reality of the perpetual exposure of the South African
life. The confrontative nature of the black experience in South
Africa is brought out vividly through the pass law.  

Whatever we get to know about Coetzee’s primary political
characters as human beings, such as Michael K, Magistrate, by
way of flashbacks, shows us how they came to be involved in
politics. For example, in *In the Heart of the Country* in the lines:

> from one of the farthest outlets of memory I extract a faint grey image, the image of a faint grey frail gentle, loving mother, huddled on the floor. *(IHC, P.2)*

here the presence of new wife in the house makes Magda reflect
on her dead mother, who apparently dies when Magda was an
infant. She constructs memories of her mother as frail and gentle,
dying a child birth. In the same way she also has memories of her
school days where her father and herself were the children of the
same school and the farm workers had also been from the same
school.

> The school is empty ........ Jakob and Anna ........ school house, once upon a time this was a real school..... *(IHC, P.45)*

Through this flash back technique, Coetzee effaces any clear and
absolute distinction between the real and fiction. Further, she also
hates his father, in an instance because it is her assumption for her
father is liable for mother’s death. But there is an intimate relation
of Magda with her mother discussed throughout the novel and for the reason, she hates father.

*The past. I grope around inside my head for the mouth of the tunnel that will lead me back in time and memory past images of myself younger and younger, fresher and fresher, through youth and childhood back to my mother’s knee ….. but the tunnel is not there.* (IHC, P.37)

There are many more memories of Magda’s relationship with her mother.

In the someway Michael K in the next novel expresses his memories throughout the novel. But here Michael’s political scene is different. He, alienated by race and class, never experiences the possibility of joining the society’s discourse and so begins to wean himself far from civilization, however he still vaguely senses the separation and alienation:

*His memories all seemed to be parts not wholes.*  
(MK, P.49)

Michael’s past thoughts are all scattered and fragmented. Throughout the novel the theme of Oedipus Complex seems to haunt Michael. He remembered his mother’s visits to Huis Norenius.

“Sometimes she had brought marshmallows, sometimes chocolate biscuits….” (MK, P.10)

Huis Norenius is a place like camp where all the afflicted children were put together and so was Michael. Through the flash
back technique, Coetzee tries to depict the inner desires that can never happen in real and so the characters satisfy themselves through experiencing it in imagination and memories. In all of Coetzee’s novels we find memories of the protagonists, not once but many times because they depict their real problems only through memories. Coetzee denotes many of the protagonist’s memories (Magda and Michael) in his earlier two novels.

Post Modern Techniques:

Here are some of the post-modern techniques introduced by Coetzee as instruments to depict South African apartheid.

In the novel In the Heart of the Country, the story is told from Magda’s point of view, but it frequently invites us to ask what her father or Hendrik or Klein Anna thinks of these events. Thus even if we are primarily interested in issues of race, class, and gender in Coetzee’s novel, we must also analyze its technical aspects. We cannot simply look at the story that seems to be told, one has to look at how it is told. That is one of the ways in which the novel is postmodern – it tells a story, but at the same time it raises fundamental doubts about what really happens. The opening paragraph of the novel is typical of what happens throughout the novel. Coetzee knows how to tell a gripping story, but at the same time he works to undermine its reality. Anyone familiar with Beckett will recognize that Coetzee derives these narrative techniques and strategies from him. Coetzee offers no way to decide which account of Magda’s murder of her father is true. Indeed Coetzee has his narrator oscillate between certifying
and decertifying her own narrative. The post modern effect in this novel goes at a little level. One comes to know about Magda not only as creating fictions but the narrator Magda, herself is finally revealed to be a fiction.

Coetzee’s fascination with blank spaces reflects his post modern sense that presence always points to absence. He focuses on these gaps as moments of silence, which he regards as the key to contemporary art. Here the postmodern technique of silence modulates into the post colonial concept of silencing. When we detect a silence in a work, we must trace it to the fact that a particular voice has been silenced, the voice of a threatening other, perhaps a feminine voice in a masculine literature or a black voice in a white literature. For example the novel Foe, though it deals with the process of colonial settlement, is deeply preoccupied with the recovery of the voice of the silenced indigene. This is post modern enterprises of exploring the absences, omissions, the blank spaces.

Coetzee uses techniques of post-modernist theory to convey the images of the narrator in The Life and Times of Michael K. The elements of deconstruction of society, participation, silence, anarchy and a plot with no clear purpose are the post modernist perspectives of self versus society. Michael K just wants to escape, to be content with the simple things in life and he chooses silence as a mode of resistance. Even Friday in Foe escapes from revealing anything to the colonizers by using this weapon of silence. In Waiting for the Barbarians the
barbarian girl is silenced by Coetzee thus ending in any particular interpretation and opinion.

Torture technique is the most functioning one in *Waiting for the barbarians*. The Magistrate, who does not penetrate the barbarian girl sexually until she invites intercourse during the return to her people, slowly learns to value a non–linear, non-oppressive language, unlike Colonel Joll who believes that you must probe and exert pressure to get the truth (5), that bodies can be penetrated and made to reveal their secrets with instruments of torture that pierce and turn “like a key”. Joll’s description of his torture techniques, undertaken in order to compel captured “barbarians” to admit to and reveal their devious plans reveals the circular reasoning of the Bureau’s interrogation procedures.

Narrative is a feature of a whole range of different genres with very different uses in and across cultures. These include reports, like the scientific one above giving an account of something done in the past, and procedures for how to go about doing something in the future. Regarding fiction and reality, some fictional narratives can be seen as imaginary resolutions of real contradictions. The relation between fiction and reality is not a straightforward one. The two have a peculiar way of getting mixed up together distinguishing the two is not quite as easy as one might think.

We can examine a text’s unconscious, so to speak, like psychoanalysts. Cranny-Francis’s remarks on the degree to which narrative sequencing is naturalized:
If narrative represents events in temporal sequence as a casual process, then it follows that we will read that casual process, as we read that casual process, as we read temporal sequences, as ‘natural’. That casual process, in turn, inevitably encodes ideological discourses and these discourses too are read as natural.\(^{32}\)

**Technique of Diaries, Letters and Records:**

Coetzee’s fictional use of verifiable references that asks questions about the reliability of the ‘facts’. Coetzee’s merging of fact and fiction reflects his depiction of history. He uses the text form of journal entries, diaries, letters, travel writing etc. This technique of using various forms of text writing acts as a simulation of collecting historical data, reflecting the objectives of TRC.\(^{33}\)

Coetzee employs the diary style of writing perhaps most prominently in *In the Heart of the Country* where Magda tells her story, again written as a first-person account. Her entries are short paragraphs that are chronologically enumerated, which serves to remind the reader of the chronological dates that normally introduce each journal entry.\(^{34}\) Letters also feature throughout Coetzee’s writing, including one in *Life and Times of Michael K* which is addressed to Michael from his doctor to express his inability to understand the inner drive of his former patient. Since the preceding and bigger part of the novel stays with k, this letter offers the reader another perspective on the same situation and as such unveils the ultimate base of historical data.
Historical facts, one could say, are like manufactured wooden slips engraved with indecipherable signs. Indeed, these slips appear in *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the Magistrate understands them to be historical data from a lost society. The obscure pieces of wood were found on one of several excavations that the Magistrate had supervised in the previous year. The digging produced traces of a lost civilization with faded carvings of dolphins and waves. Dramatically, these slips must be seen in relation to the Magistrate’s desire to write his autobiography. When Magistrate is forced to unveil their meaning by colonel Joll then he says:

*Together they can be read as a domestic journal, or they can be read as a plan of war, or they can be turned on their sides and read as a history of the last years of the Empire – the old Empire, I mean (WFB, P.112)*

In his next novel *Foe* Coetzee illustrates how the presence of an eye witness alone is not sufficient to convey an impression of authenticity. After returning from the island, Susan Barton sets out to have an account written about her time. She ventures into the genre of travel writing that appears as retrospective journal entries which combine descriptions of her present situation with island memories. However this diary entries are actually letters to Mr. Foe, thereby employed to translate this information.

*Stream of Consciousness / Interior Monologue*:
The technique of stream of consciousness and interior monologue would typically report a single moment of thought in a single moment of narrative. Coetzee has used this technique in most of his novels. In this kind a single voice tells the speakers own story and differs from a first person narrative in that voice is uninterrupted, where dialogue occurs it is understood as part of the speaker’s preoccupations, rather than a supplement to or contradiction of them. The speaker of monologue is generally preoccupied with him or herself, as opposed to a first person narrator, who is preoccupied with his or her story.

Stream of consciousness is a technique which seeks to record the random and apparently illogical flow of impressions passing through a character’s mind. The best meaning is, “it is a fresh weapon in the struggle against intrusive narration. By recording the actual flow of thought with its paradoxes and irrelevencies they sought to avoid the over insistent authorial rhetoric of Edwardian novels.” Now the inner thoughts and feelings have occupied the foreground of attention.

The narrative mode that Coetzee has used most in his novels is monologue, that is to say, a single voice that tells the speaker’s own story. This form differs from a first person narrative in that the voice is uninterrupted. In In the Heart of the Country the dialogue occurs as part of speaker’s is unable to distinguish between real life and fantasy. It is predominated by stream of consciousness, in which we follow the unchronological, first person narrative of a prematurely aging Afrikaner farm
woman who is troubled and murders her father. Magda is said to represent the stagnant policies of apartheid.

Magda’s thoughts often spiral into nearly mad interior dialogues. She speaks as though desperately pleading to be heard, yet at the same time knowing that her cries will go unanswered. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the meditative sections of the Magistrate’s narrative often seem not to be stream of consciousness or interior monologue. Stream of consciousness and interior monologue would typically report a single moment of thought in a single moment of narrative. For example, the Magistrate admits that he would prefer not to dwell on the possibility that the captured barbarian girl he has taken into his bed but not sexually penetrated may see in him evidences of impotence, indecisiveness, and alienation from his own desires rather than a man in the grip of a passion, however obscure and perverted.

The novel *Foe* consists entirely of Susan Barton’s monologues until the last section. She has been a castaway on the island where Cruso was shipwrecked and who gives an account of him and Friday to Foe in the form of letters and actually those letters depict the interior monologue.

Here are some of the post-modern techniques introduced by Coetzee used as instruments to depict the South African apartheid.
Psychoanalytic Technique:

The connection between literature and psychology is an ancient one. All of it was largely overtaken by the work of Freud, whose evolution of psychoanalysis is a technique which eventually generated a metapsychology fundamentally altered from speculation. Freud contends in three ways:

a. through dream.

b. through parapraxes, principally slips of the tongue.

c. through the technique of analysis and its main tool, free association.\textsuperscript{36}

These phenomena demonstrate that memory is merely a filtering mechanism and large part of what we forget is in fact stored.

If the desire of literary criticism is to tell every truth, to unveil whatever is veiled, to expose every secret to sight, why does it not tell its own secrets? Or does it claim to have none? These are the words by Coetzee in his Truth in Autobiography.\textsuperscript{37}

Regarding Coetzee’s \textit{In the Heart of the Country} there are many debates where Josephine Dodd has paid attention to this novel, has persuasively argued that the reviews of \textit{In the Heart of the Country} are informed by a set of ideological and textual assumptions that have led to a total re-interpretation of ‘Magda’s story, Magda’s life, Magda’s psychology, Magda’s text…. for the sake of consumption.”(4)

For most critics, Magda is simply mad, and she is mad because she is a spinster. The discontinuities in the narrative and
the blurring between the factual and imaginary reality have often been regarded as an irritating sign of Magda’s insanity. Since this novel is explicitly engaged in a dialogue with psychoanalytic discourse— an important subtext of Magda’s narrative is Freud’s studies on Hysteria— it is somehow surprising that one of the major tenets of psychoanalysis, the inextricability of fantasy and reality, should have been completely overlooked by critics who in other respects is how that they have learnt the lesson of psychoanalysis. For indeed, the psychoanalytic lesson is evident in their approach, which brings these critics to dismiss this novel as the muddled ravings of a hysterical spinster. Magda makes her reader her listener and turns him/her into an object of verbal seduction. By having her reader listen to her repressed speech, she exposes the vulnerable status of the father and taps the unconscious of psychoanalysis.

Each novels of Coetzee’s contains several voices, layers that work to convey multiple meanings; rather than struggling toward a singular reason or truth, his novels open up spaces for exploration in its own ways, helps us to rethink more familiar construction of the novel.
References:
10. Canepari Michela- Labib, ‘Old Myth-Modern Empires,’ “Representation of the natives- role reversal in In the Heart of the Country” Ch. 1, Bern 2005, Pg.81
28. Ibid.
31. Penner Workshop in 1984, Coetzee says “realism is being subverted by an anti-realistic Kind of game,” Countries of the Mind, P. 57.
36. Ibid. P 195

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