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Both Gordimer and Coetzee have been preoccupied, throughout their careers, with the responsibility of the novelist. From your reading of the novels, how would you say their ideas about responsibility differ?

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Considering the responsibility of the novelist in South Africa involves questions deeply embedded in the country's troubled history. The spectre of apartheid casts an unavoidable shadow over writers from white privileged society despite the breakdown of the political system of apartheid. With regard to the problem of the author's position Gallagher queries, 'how one can write for – in support of – the 'Other' without presuming to write for – assuming power over – the Other.'[1] The 'Other' is a term used to refer to the black majority, in that they had been so suppressed by apartheid, that their sudden integration into South African culture did not erase the ingrained difference projected during apartheid between the 'us' and 'them' of whites and blacks. There are two extremes in which the racist hierarchy can live on through art. In speaking for the 'Other' there is a risk of a continuing form of linguistic colonialism. At the other end of the scale is the counter-fear of an outright refusal to deal with the 'Other', accepting unbridgeable differences, straying toward recreating the rhetoric that formed apartheid. It is between these two fears that Coetzee and Gordimer carefully tread. Coetzee leans strongly towards the impossibility of representation, pushing language to its limit to expose the limitations of current literary conditions. Meanwhile Gordimer, more obviously politically active, chooses to speak for the 'Other' in order to coax the issues under public scrutiny, although her work is not lacking the inevitable presence of voids and silences of the oppressive culture of which it is born.

With *My Son's Story* Gordimer goes right to the heart of the issue in presenting a piece of meta-fiction, from the point of view of a 'coloured' boy who tracks his father's rise and fall in the domain of revolutionary politics. Her novel, ironically, speaks out of a void, as becomes clear in the final chapter, 'I am a writer and this is my first book – that I can never publish.'[2] It is a clear instance of speaking for the 'Other', however there is a crucial point that complicates the issue, that is, the specific avoidance of the term 'black' in relation to the family's race. In response to this evasion Head suggests a method of neutralisation, a meeting point in 'a family of immediate relevance to all South Africans... eschewing racial categorization.'[3] This I feel alleviates her problem of authority in speaking for the 'Other', in situating the family at the interim between black and white consciousnesses, aligning somewhat neatly with Gordimer's own position, allowing such a comprehensive analysis of the family of the 'Other' to appear less jarring. However the fact that the family are voiced only by bringing them *to* Gordimer is runs the risk of a simplification of the problem and

[1] Susan V. Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p.192
[2] Nadine Gordimer, *My Son's Story* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p.277
[3] Dominic Head, *Nadine Gordimer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.151

suggests a great degree of caution. An interesting parallel can be seen in *The Pickup*, a later novel, in which the protagonist Julie is assimilated into the culture of the family of her lover, in an unspecific (once again) Arab country. There is a degree of simplicity and idealism in this that is, I feel, misleading in its conflation of cultures, in the ease with which Julie is brought to the 'Other' culture to 'understand' it, that is the reverse of the issue in *My Son's Story* but suggests similar potential problems.

The race issue in *My Son's Story* is symbolised within the plot of the novel through the family's geographical relocation to the white suburb. Sonny brings his family out into the open, as a political gesture, he conflates private with public and thus endangers his family. At a meta-fictional level this involves Sonny using his family in his political narrative. This is a violation tackled head on in Coetzee's novel *Foe*, Jolly speaks of 'the inability of narrative... to deal with bodies as bodies and not figures of speech.'[4] Of primary concern is the reality behind the fiction, in South Africa in particular there are real bodies at stake.

It is this duty to the reality of South Africa to which Coetzee's supposed political evasion in *Life and Times of Michael K* has raised objections; it appears that Michael K does nothing, and he is politically inactive and innocent. There is a suggestion that this evasion of engaging with the culture constitutes an irresponsible promotion of innocence and helplessness in the face of momentous cultural problems. Gordimer, in making a similar accusation, directly draws upon the responsibility of the novelist as a duty, 'Coetzee must recognise what the victims, seeing themselves as victims no longer, have done, are doing, and believe they must do for themselves.'[5] However, the purpose of *My Son's Story* is to portray an active family caught up in political turmoil. The identified 'blacks' over the veld are still very much held under the mysterious cloak of the 'Other', even to Sonny's family caught in the racial interim. Just as Gordimer criticises Coetzee for bypassing the activism evident in the culture of the 'Other', so could Coetzee criticise Gordimer for ignoring (and furthering) the 'Other' that is not already engaged in conflict with white dominance. Will encounters a black woman selling mealies, 'her black face has no recognition for me, her half-blackness and this half-white man's street we live in...'[6]

Moving back to *Life and Times Of Michael K*, Michael is willingly pushed away from textual capture and identification, he is 'the obscurest of the obscure, so obscure as to be a prodigy.'[7] Coetzee writes the novel in order to dramatise 'the risks involved in finding a place from which to speak.'[8] Rather than speak from absence, write what can't in practice be written (Will's novel for example), Coetzee writes absence into every page, Michael is, like Sonny's family, described evasively as 'coloured'. Where Gordimer is concerned with a mid-way point, Coetzee uses the technique to further emphasise Michael's 'refusal to capitulate to labels.'[9] 'The too hasty filling of this silence, whether that of the Other or of the writer himself, while overtly political, can itself become a colonising activity.'[10] This fear of colonisation through language is a pertinent one throughout all the novels, the idea that language is damaged by its implication in the corruption of apartheid (a 'riot' for a police protest, humans are 'located').[11] In Coetzee's *In The Heart Of The Country*, Magda struggles

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[4] Rosemary Jane Jolly, *Colonization, violence, and narration in white South African writing : André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J.M. Coetzee*, (Johannesburg : Witwatersrand University Press, 1996), p.8
[5] Nadine Gordimer, 'The Idea of Gardening: Life and Times of Michael K by J. M. Coetzee', *New York Review of Books*, 2 February 1984, p.6
[6] *My Son's Story* p.145
[7] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K (*London: Vintage, 2004*),* p.142
[8] David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee : South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.101
[9] Gallagher, p.147
[10] Sue Kossew, *Pen and Power: a post-colonial reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink* (Amsterdam: Atlanta/Rodopi, 1996), p.146
[11] Gallagher, p.40

with this historical corruption of the past, 'The language that should pass between myself and these people was subverted by my father and cannot be recovered.'[12] There is an underlying concern that this suppressed culture should not, cannot even, be expressed in the language of the oppressor, pressuring literary technique towards the abstract, toward experimentation. Magda's self-conscious first person narrative is an example of this single-minded aspect of western discourse, 'a prisoner… of my stony monologue.'[13]

In *The Conservationist* two separate presentations of the 'Other' are evident. On the surface of the narrative are the 'Others' on the farm, in the Indian store and on the Location. Here the 'Other' is utilised primarily to portray Mehring, to reveal the laws of apartheid which are embedded in Mehring's discourse, in the gaps and allusions and become symbolically evident.[14] Jacobus is the only substantial character, and he is merely imitating the white Master's behaviour. This is also relevant in *July's People*, the replication of white behaviour on behalf of the 'Other', most strikingly in July's use of the pickup truck, is part of a wider strategy, to use the figure of the 'Other' to highlight the economic dependency of the White on apartheid, whatever the 'liberal' views of the family. Gordimer utilises the void of the 'Other' as a mirror, to project back the image of the white, just as the revolutionary setting is utilised to render, not a possible future, but a temporally removed assessment of the author's present.

A parallel presentation of the 'Other' runs through *The Conservationist*, the body of the stranger killed on Mehring's land. For the blacks it is a call from the ancestry of the land (which is figured in the subtext of Zulu mythology, backed up by multiple epigraphs throughout the book). For Mehring it is a reminder of the overbearing, inescapable shadow of the 'Other', 'Poor bastard, whoever those bastards were they didn't give him time to speak God knows what he hasn't said. What he could have told; might have said.'[15] The representation of the corpse and this mournful reference to his silencing is uncharacteristically similar to Coetzee's work, in particular the mute slave Friday in *Foe*. This duality in the presentation of the 'Other' marks *The Conservationist* out as a book that sees the two concepts of responsibility converge; of representation and of powerful silence.

In theory, could Mehring hear Michael K's narrative, this psychological 'gap' which the 'Other' haunts should be filled and resolved. However the complication of the issue is demonstrated in the figure of Michael K and his apparent refusal to account for himself. A distinction is made between the refusal to speak and the inability to speak, 'Always, when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding baulked, into which it was useless to pour words…'[16] While Friday in *Foe* literally lacks the means to speak through the loss of his tongue, Michael K has been comparably, psychologically, damaged. This confronts the assumption that Coetzee's use of the mute, apolitical 'Other' in Michael K and the colonial slave, Friday, is unconstructive and misrepresents the efforts of the victims of apartheid. Coetzee builds a powerful case for the psychological damage that stands between the 'Other' and utterance. They are ultimately allegorical figures, representative of a national problem, not evasive 'nobodies'. The response to the 'Other' cannot be equated, and reduced, to the offering of the opportunity to account for themselves. The closing of this gap is an ongoing battle for both sides.

Caution in declaring progress towards voicing of the 'Other', based on political deconstruction, is crucial. On the Island in *Foe* Susan Barton says, 'What are these blinks of

[12] J. M Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (London: Vintage, 2004), p.106
[13] Ibid., p.13
[14] Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Clingman, 'The Future is Another Country', *Transition*, 56 (1992), p.145
[15] Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p.302
[16] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* , p.110

an eyelid, against which the only defence is an eternal and inhuman wakefulness. Might they not be the cracks and chinks through which another voice, other voices, speak in our lives? By what right do we close our ears to them.'[17] By drawing a comparison with the series of broken images viewed in the metaphor of sight (a pertinent one in respect of our reading of a novel, in which we 'see' the gaps, and read the voices), the idea of an interrupted, selective hearing of voices works in revealing the 'Other' through such gaps. The point is to drive home the existence of other modes of expression that the closed-mindedness of Western tradition has consistently ignored. This idea is tackled in *Foe,* not only with respect to colonialism and Friday, but to introduce perspective that we understand, the suppression of Susan Barton, who represents the female voice, a voice that has since been released from oppression. Here there is not just 'another voice', feminism, which was so persistently fought for in the 20th century but 'other voices.'

The novelist has a responsibility, in a fractured culture, to pay attention to these voices through an expression of truth in the gaps in discourse, something I feel is evident in all of the books. The damaged language, its complicity with apartheid, renders the conventional realist narrative a characteristic of ownership. It is only through the gaps that these other voices can reform the text.

In *My Son's Story* the gaps in dialogue betray such truths,

> ...it was clear, later, that the boy never said anything – to his mother, to anyone.
> -He didn't mention it to you?-
> -No. It's as if it never happened.-
> -All Hannah said was: - That can't be -[18]

Here the void lies in the unsaid, what passes between Sonny and Will, the revelation of the affair is held in the air throughout the novel, a truth but a void in the dialogue of the text and the private world of the family. Gordimer gives voice to this truth through Will's monologues, so she speaks for the 'Other', but this is ironic. She dramatises the keeping of this silence, the inexpressibility of this truth, meta-fictionally, in the fact that Will cannot publish. The void of the affair hangs over every sentence, with the unspecific referents, 'Its as if *it* never happened.', 'He didn't mention *it* to you' and of course the ironic 'the boy never said *anything*,' an assertion that has more significance than Sonny believes. The location of this oppression is within the private world, but it draws an uncomfortable analogy with the public world in the shadow of apartheid.

Gordimer says of Mehring, 'it was absolutely necessary to let him reveal himself, through the gaps, through the slight allusions...'[19] The gaps are numerous: in his fantasies through which he tries to establish a connection, 'to create meaning out of his farm without immersing himself in the community which constitutes his farm.'[20] In the 'nowhere' of the aeroplane, an 'exploiters paradise' in which his true nature as an insidious sexual exploiter is revealed, 'an intensification of his usual behaviour'[21]; and in the body buried in the third pasture that haunts him throughout. Importantly these instances emancipate these alternative voices, which fight against and break down the oppressive monologue, a persistent protest.

These self-conscious considerations of language also extend to the overall structure of *The Conservationist* in its presentation of a subtext of Zulu mythology, which eventually

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[17] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin, 1987), p.30
[18] Gordimer, *My Son's Story*, p.73
[19] Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Gray, 'Interview with Nadine Gordimer', *Contemporary Literature*, 22.3 (1981), p.266
[20] Lars Engle, 'The Conservationist and the Political Uncanny', in *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*, ed. by Bruce King (Basingstoke:Macmillan, 1993), p.105
[21] Dominic Head, p.103-4

supplants Mehring's text, in an assertion of authentic possession of the land. Clingman states, 'if the novel expresses historical certainty, that black history is once more to resume, then the manner in which it is produced in the work – formalistic, symbolic and transcendental – can, in light of the novel's realism, signify only the radical uncertainty as to the actual process where by it may be achieved.'[22] He implies that while stylistic innovation does present a stepping-stone in encouraging the emancipation of the history of the 'Other', in looking into the gaps behind the language, we can be in no way certain as to the practicalities of such a solution: where next? The form of expression needs to transcend these first steps of progress, towards a pointing from within the fiction to outside of fiction, something demonstrative.

Early in *My Son's Story*, as Sonny, locating himself in the political maelstrom of the country, he concludes 'Equality was not freedom, it has been only the mistaken yearning to become like the people from the town. And who wanted to become like the very ones feared and hated? Envy was not freedom.'[23] It marks out a distinction between freedom and equality, pointing to the responsibility that the novelist has, not to reduce their novels to simply equalising the 'Other' with the white ruling class. Dimitriu writes, 'Sonny's book learning is a symbol of his ambition to go beyond his social status and to find new concepts and words through which to express his ambition and dreams.'[24] Sonny's ambition is in contradiction to his earlier distinction, the learning is occurring using the tools and terms of the White. Will becomes an author as 'a compromise, as a necessary act of complicity in finding a voice that will challenge the hegemonic system in a language it can recognise.'[25] Politically this is sound and so, Will succeeds in Sonny's dream. But on the terms of Sonny's original distinction between equality and freedom, Will's novel falls short, in being primarily realist and explaining his situation on white terms.

Returning to outside the meta-fiction once more Gordimer's responsibility is apparently violated in that she is writing on her own, white terms, 'speaking for' the 'Other' where Will is silenced and cannot, thereby continuing linguistic colonialism. What saves us from this quandary is Gordimer's use of irony, what Uledi Kamanga considers to be her primary technique, 'The ironical technique enables the writer to stand apart from the lives of others with whom he is at the same time imaginatively involved.'[26] Her irony comes in salient attention to social realism, including the sympathetic dramatisation of the author Will, while simultaneously standing apart from her fiction in a self-conscious critique of writing itself.

Though the book appears realist, the self-conscious meta-fictional aspect is working in 'muted' ways. As Dimitriu states, '*My Son's Story* came from the exhaustion of the interregnum... textual strategies are muted: Aila's silence may, by desperate inversion, emphasise the superficiality of Sonny and Hannah.' I would argue that, as well as representing this exhausted, more pessimistic post-apartheid political period, it also offers an alternative to the seemingly endless battle for novel stylistic form to represent the 'Other', by ironically drawing attention to the superficiality of Will's main focus in the text.

Language is shown to be tired in the novel, 'His 'needing Hannah' becomes a leitmotif almost as limiting to thought as the clichés 'happy for battle' and 'sermons in stones'.'[27] These literary allusions are forced and represent only Sonny's false sense of self-improvement, on Western validation, a quest for 'equality' not 'freedom'. The re-use of 'Sermons in stones...'

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[22] Stephen Clingman, *The novels of Nadine Gordimer : History from the Inside* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p.160
[23] Gordimer, *My Son's Story,* p. 24
[24] Ileana Şora Dimitriu,*Art of conscience : re-reading Nadine Gordimer* (Timisoara : Hestia, 2000), p. 48
[25] Dominic Head, p. 158
[26] Brighton J. Uledi Kamanga, *Nadine Gordimer's Fiction and the Irony of Apartheid* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2002), p. xiv
[27] Ileana Şora Dimitriu, p. 77

by Hannah with the political exile outside of her own and Sonny's private language emphasises this. Sonny grasps at the unwanted truth, 'that was not to be used as a password, in the mouth of a third person.'[28] The language is part of the system, of politics and as such becomes wearing and oppressive; ultimately Sonny surrenders and resorts to the rhetoric he so despises, as Head phrases it, a 'stubborn outburst... automatic, gestural.'[29]

Aila comes out of the void of her silence quite unexpectedly, indeed 'Aila has tended to be regarded somewhat dismissively as an incomplete character creation.'[30] In it we find the presentation of the novel to be ironic in a deep sense. Gordimer writes, through Will, of the author's unawareness of the way in which the 'Other' can express themselves and yet in doing so dramatises this absence through meta-fiction. Thus Gordimer offers a way through, alternative to stylistic, language innovation and yet this is, in its own 'muted', ironic way a stylistic innovation in itself. In *Foe* Susan and Foe's self-conscious assessment of their argument over words becomes relevant here, 'May it not be a slaver's stratagem to hold him [Friday] in subjection while we cavil over words in a dispute we know to be endless.'[31] Aila is not held in subjection by the 'cavil over words'. She breaks through the language as it fails. She becomes an idea, ignored by Western discourse (as represented in Will's compromise, his assimilation with it). Comparisons can also be drawn with the Medical Officer's assessment of Michael K, 'how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without becoming a term in it.'[32] The gap in the narrative here, draws in critics, to pounce on the 'plot hole', but I would argue this hole is a self-conscious one, drawing a traceable connection between the damaged private world in the interim of black/white relations and the overarching problem of bridging the gap between white and 'Other' in the public world of fiction.

This critical attention to the 'plot hole' is in conflict with my assessment that the key to the novelist's responsibility in presenting the 'Other' is in paying attention to such gaps. Consideration needs to be given as to the extent to which these gaps can be dealt with as functional, contrary to Western tradition. Gordimer highlights the idea of non-representation (in meta-fictional ignorance), but in doing so tackles the issue, avoiding accusations of doing nothing constructive to bridge the void. It is in this example of critical pressure, however, that we see the psychological tendency in the Western world to complete, an impulse to contain: eradicate speculation, myths and uncertainties. In *Foe*, Foe himself states, 'It is thus that we make up a book... beginning, then middle, then end.'[33] The novelist feels it is his/her responsibility to complete the narrative. In *Foe*, 'Friday possesses the key to the closure of the narrative.'[34], this lack of an ending, this hole, is cause for authorial discontent. So for Susan it is about 'seeking the means to use Friday as an informant in order to fill the hole in her narrative.'[35] This phrasing is morally dubious and leads to a consideration of this conflict between completing narrative and healing society.

The problem is evident in *The Conservationist* in Mehring's relationship with the blacks on his farm. Engle states, 'He does not cast his relations to them in the mode of dominance and submission: rather he meditates on the limits of his communication with them and fantasises about having more communication than he has.'[36] But beyond this, Mehring's meditation is a means to an end, the hobby farm is his narrative and his removal from the

[28] Gordimer, *My Son's Story*, p.164
[29] Head, p.159
[30] Ileana Şora Dimitriu, p.80
[31] Coetzee, *Foe*, p.150
[32] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p.166
[33] Coetzee, *Foe*, p.117
[34] David Attwell, p.112
[35] Benita Parry, 'Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee', in *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996), p.50
[36] Engle, p.105

community is the hole. The spectre of the 'Other' has yet more meaning in that it represents the boundary between him and the farm, the root cause of the failure of his 'authenticity project'. In order to do this Mehring fantasises, nowhere more prominently than in the scene in which he spends the night 'drinking with Jacobus'. The fantasy is confirmed when he wakes up with the assertion 'Jacobus has not come… If he did come it was to the *house*.'[37] His disorientation, a gap in his controlled narrative, exposes the falsity of his story, Jacobus was supposedly already with him. His satisfaction in this suggests a false equilibrium in narrative can be achieved, 'a self-deceptive dream, a myth of belonging without substance.'[38] It is a state of mind predicted in the voice of his liberal mistress earlier in the novel, 'You'll even in time think there's something between you and the blacks...'[39] It is the responsibility of the author to avoid this false bridging, to evade committing the 'Other' to fiction incorrectly. Forging false camaraderie may close up the hole in the *narrative* for a while, but the body of the 'Other' in reality will not disappear.

This physical representation behind the spectral 'Other' is, I feel, a crucial one, in that it displaces both Mehring and his narrative style in the novel. In Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the 'Other' that haunts the Magistrate is also manifested physically. While Mehring tries to evade the issue of the corpse, to his doom, the Magistrate confronts the consequences of his Empire directly by summoning the tortured body of the Barbarian girl to his quarters, he deals with the 'Other' as a body, not an idea and ultimately returns her to the Barbarians. This is to the cost of his relationship with the Empire, he gains understanding through the physical, ravaged, tortured. Understanding comes in the imposition of each others bodies, in each others lives. I posit that it is in the body that the novelists find common ground in expressing the potential of future progress, a move towards evading the guilty, controlling language of the ruling classes that cannot shake free the associations with apartheid.

In *Foe* a key image is presented in Susan's realisation, towards the end of the novel, that 'the man seated at the table was not Foe. It was Friday, with Foe's robes on his back and Foe's wig, filthy as a bird's nest, on his head. In his hand, poised over Foe's papers, he held a quill...'[40] This presents the reader with a somewhat farcical figure but also an uncomfortable one. This forced situation goes beyond a deep seated racial divide, beyond the surprising figure of the 'slave' as writer. I would argue it mocks the author more than it mocks Friday; it represents the falsity of the author 'speaking for' Friday. For Foe himself, in the novel, it is a first step, 'it is part of learning to write.'[41] However the result is questionable, 'he is writing the letter *o*...' Once again the author is mocked, Friday presents only an 'o', the hole into which the author pours words in an attempt to speak for Friday.

In concurrence with the ending of *Foe* it is through the body that Friday speaks, not through the pen, 'This is a place where bodies are their own sign, it is the home of Friday.'[42] Consider Friday's first encounter with Foe's robes, in his mansion where, crucially, Foe was absent, 'the robes have set him dancing, which I have never seen him do before.'[43] This is one of the few moments of expression for Friday. Attwell asserts, 'What discourse could adequately represent Friday? The answer Susan and Foe give, of course, is *Friday's own discourse'* [44]But Foe is persistent in getting Friday to express his own discourse on White terms, with the quill, at the desk. Throughout the novels the body is a sign of expression, no

[37] Gordimer, *The Conservationist*, p.252
[38] Stephen Clingman, p.149
[39] Gordimer,*The Conservationist*, p. 211
[40] Coetzee. *Foe,* p.151
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p.157
[43] Ibid., p.92
[44] David Attwell, pp.113-4

matter what the reference, a sign unto itself; it is from the body that the answer must finally come. The novelist's responsibility is to provide the body with the aid to expression, the authorial robes perhaps, but not the writing desk or the pen.

How is this idea of the body asserting itself expressed in these fictions? In *The Conservationist,* the body of the dead man rises out of the gaps in language itself. It is something substantial that is pointed to, asserting itself behind language. In *My Son's Story* language in general is degraded, Aila asserts herself, missed by Will's Western discourse. Expression in general is emphasised in Sonny's final stand, in the ruins of the family house. His 'old rhetoric' is contrasted devastatingly with his expression, 'He grinned and his whole face drew together an agonised grimace of pain and reassurance, threat and resistance drawn in every fold of the skin....'[45]

Compare the Medical Officer's early outburst in *Life and Times of Michael K*, 'listen how easily I fill this room with words. I know people... who can fill up whole worlds talking... give yourself some substance man...'[46] with the later assertion, 'here I beheld a body that was going to die rather than change its nature.'[47] It is a victory for the body, even though Michael's mind 'tried sincerely'[48] to comply. His failure to eat does not at all, as Gallagher states, embody 'his social powerlessness... his inability to attain spiritual and personal freedom.'[49] Rather Michael's body makes a very bold assertion, that substance must not be achieved on the white man's terms 'as a cipher in someone else's system'[50], there are other ways than words.

Finally, Friday's body speaks on its own terms, 'a slow stream, without breath, without interruption... it runs northward and southward to the ends of the earth.' This is not a symbol for the freedom afforded to Friday by 'twentieth century experimental writing'[51], as Kossew posits, I argue that it points to the body of the 'Other' itself, free from the semiotic. Friday's language is emancipated from the 'interruption' that plagues the novelist's discourse, the haunting gaps are filled in this final symbol of expression via the body.

However the responsibility of the novelist does not end with this, the forwarding of the body is merely a dramatic gesture as to how the problem of the 'Other' can be resolved in the future. The novelist is bound to the culture of South Africa which continues to suffer the disjointed, destructive effects of the shadow of apartheid. The novelist cannot resolve the issue alone. The resolution can only come as part of a dialectic process between white writer and 'Other', between art and society.

I have merged these two authors into a singular conclusion, suggesting a resolution of responsibility through specific points of overlap, but of course their differences stand. Gordimer retains her practical, political commitment as a focus, where Coetzee chases the psychological gulf directly. Gordimer ensures she does not stray from constructive observation of the political present, in order to preserve a direct link with, and aid in, the progress of her country. I have however argued, that her textual experimentation concurs with Coetzee's meta-fictional focus, in working with a literary form by which the novelist can contribute to the rehabilitation of the country's deeply divided state.

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45 Gordimer, *My Son's Story*, p.274
46 Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, p.140
47 Ibid., p.164
48 Ibid., p.163
49 Gallagher, p.151
50 Kossew, p.151
51 Ibid., p.176

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