BECOMING TRAITOR AT THE MARGINS OF "EMPIRE": RADICAL AGENCY AND THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY IN J.M. COETZEE'S "WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS"

Rogers Asempasah
College of Humanities and Legal Studies
University of Cape Coast, Ghana
rasempasah@ucc.edu.gh

Abstract. This paper advocates for a nuanced understanding of treason and encounter in Coetzee's "Waiting for the Barbarians" (1980) (hereafter WB). Although treason and encounter constitute critical sites for Coetzee's interrogation of imperial or dogmatic thought and emphasis on the epistemic and agential value of becoming, their interpretive utility to the desire for community has remained largely underexplored. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Walter Benjamin, this paper contends that encounter and becoming-traitor function as sites of critique and the genesis of a new thought on the alternative community. The paper shows that beneath the dystopian atmosphere that pervades WB, Coetzee is a thinker of new thought as the precondition for the emergence of a new community. By focusing on encounter and becoming-traitor, it draws attention to Coetzee's ethic of what the body can do and interrogates Colonel Joll's narrow understanding of treason. The analysis focuses specifically on Magistrate's encounter with Joll of the Third Bureau and the barbarian girl - as central to Magistrate's becoming-traitor or betrayal of the dehumanising apparatus and temporality of "Empire".

Keywords: J.M Coetzee, Gilles Deleuze, encounter, treason, community, Walter Benjamin, futurity, thought

> What has made it impossible to for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in the air, like children? … Is there any better way to pass these last days than in *dreaming of a saviour* with a sword who will scatter the enemy hosts and forgive us the errors that have been committed by others in our name and grant us a second chance to build our earthly paradise?
>
> Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) remains one of Coetzee's most critically acclaimed and explored works of fiction. Its exploration of the shame of being human, the degradation of the body, the crisis of liberal ideology, the fragility of moral universals or Manichaean thought, and the philosophical and ethical problematics of war on terror defines its untimeliness. Which is why in reading WB one is confronted with the question of how it thinks redemption and community. This is especially important in light of Coetzee's assertion, in an interview with David Attwell, that:

> I am not a herald of community or anything else … I am someone who has intimations of freedom (as every chained prisoner has) and constructs representations — which are shadows themselves — of people slipping their chains and turning their faces to the light. I do not imagine freedom…I do not represent it. Freedom is another name for the unimaginable (Attwell 2003, 6).

Rather than characterise this as a disavowal of community, I will argue that it is a call for criticality thinking towards the aura of certainty or faith that usually animates discussions on community. As Coetzee goes on to point out, "Community has its basis in an awareness and an acceptance of a common justice. You [Attwell] use the word faith. Let me be more cautious and stay with the word awareness: awareness of an idea of justice, somewhere, that transcends laws and law-making. Such an awareness is not absent from our lives" (*bid.* 6). Put differently, redemption and community are impossible without a consciousness and recognition of a common justice. This search for a *common justice* constitutes the ethical-political axis and epiphany in Coetzee's fiction. For Coetzee's fictional protagonists, the awareness and acceptance of a common justice is the outcome of a radical encounter that calls into question habitual thoughts and practices.

Written during the period when the Apartheid regime in South Africa had intensified its terroristic campaign of incarceration and torture of critics, WB is first and foremost about torture and the crisis of colonial ideology. Coetzee himself has argued that the novel

is "about the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience" (72). The novel is set in an unnamed colonial time-space and traces the ethical-political awakening of Magistrate, the colonial administrator and narrator, at the margins of Empire, as a consequence of his encounter with bodies that challenge his most cherished convictions. More broadly, WB attacks not only the ideology and practices of colonialism/imperialism but all forms of coercive socio-political organisation.

The novel has generated a rich corpus of critical literature on issues as diverse as history, torture, barbarism, otherness, the crisis of liberal notions of freedom and justice, war on terror, human rights, agency and responsibility, disability, and time (Gallagher 1988; Moses 1993; Detels 2004; Spencer 2008; Hall 2012; Asempasah 2013; Winter 2014; Kelly 2015; Lochner 2016). Other scholars have focused on the type of future WB summons. Opinions are, however, divided on this. On the one hand, some critics argue that WB presents us with the possibility of a new world or community (Crary 2017, 131; Jolly 1989, 78; Durrant 2004, 1). On the other hand, drawing on the "apocalyptic figure of the marked or mutilated body", Russell Samolsky contends that WB should be read "as proleptic of future catastrophe" (Samolsky 2011, 31). For Samolsky, the "apocalyptic legibility" undercuts any weak messianic or redemptive vision in WB (Samolsky 2011, 177). Furthermore, encounter and its destabilizing power in WB have also been examined by a number of scholars. Kamel Abdaoui asserts that in Coetzee's fiction "encountering the Other (…) is a convulsive and dislocating event that forces the Self to undertake a decisive and critical journey across identities" (Abdaoui 2018, 7-8). While Abdaoui is broadly right, his claim that hybridization is the end result of the Self/Other encounter in Coetzee's fiction is problematic. As Coetzee's idea of common justice suggests, far from a quest for hybridization Coetzee is interested in a shared ethical-political ethos that permits the coexistence of different identities.

Drawing on Deleuze's notion of encounter and Benjamin's idea of becoming-traitor, this paper argues for a nuanced reading of

encounter and treason in WB as modalities for the genesis of thought on redemption and community. Contrary to Abdaoui, I will argue that in WB, in particular, encounter unleashes treason, betrayal or becoming-traitor as preconditions for a future community. Encounter has become, in the last few years, a topical idea in discussions across many disciplines (See Helen F. Wilson's "On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders and difference" (2014) for detailed discussion on the cross-disciplinary deployment of the notion of *Encounter*). One of the most influential has been Pratt's notion of "contact zones" (1991; 1992). For Pratt, the "contact zone" is the space of colonial encounter where "cultures met, clashed and grappled with each other" in highly asymmetrical relations of power. According to Pratt, "the contact zone" was marked by two broad forms of affects: "rage, incomprehension, and pain" and "exhilarating moments of wonder and revelation, mutual understanding, and new wisdom" (Pratt 1991, 39). However, it is to Deleuze rather than Pratt that we turn. This may appear surprising considering that Deleuze develops his idea of encounter in relation to his critique of representation "as the constitutive mode of knowledge-formation" (Hamilton 2011, xi). Nonetheless, the Deleuzian encounter has implications for reading WB, especially when placed within the context of Deleuze-Spinoza ethological ethics on "the materiality of existence or physics of the body" (Gatens 2002, 100). Deleuze's articulates his conception of the productive role of encounter in the following words:

> The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought, which presupposes itself, and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter (Deleuze 1994, 139).

It is important to note that there is precedent for the application of Deleuzian concepts and ideas to read WB. Hamilton (2010; 2011; 2018) and Nashef (2010) have discussed Magistrate's transformation in terms of becoming-nomad, becoming-woman, and becoming-

animal. However, by drawing mainly on Deleuzian becoming, these scholars have missed Magistrate's becoming-traitor, which Coetzee foregrounds as a radical agency and critique of Doxa. It is here that Benjamin becomes pertinent.

In "The Author as Producer" Benjamin proposed becoming-traitor as a radical strategy of ideological and ethical repositioning that dismantles dominant power structures and summons a people to come. Writing at the time of controversy over the role of the intellectual/writer in the proletarian revolution, Benjamin argued that the role of the intellectual was to transform the existing structure. Consequently, mere ideological solidarity with the proletariat was undesirable since it left the oppressive ideological structure intact. Framing the issue at stake in terms of the opposition between transmission and transformation, Benjamin argued that the intellectual's role was to transform the capitalist apparatus of production and not to transmit it. But how does the intellectual become the transmitter of new realities when he owns his means of production to the bourgeois class and, therefore, is "on the basis of the privilege of culture solidary with it, even more so it with him" (Benjamin 1970: 228). Benjamin's solution was that "the revolutionary intellectual" must become "a traitor to his class of origin" (1970: 237). To become a traitor meant "betrayal [that] consists, in the case of the writer, in behaviour which changes him from a reproducer of the apparatus of production into an engineer who sees his task as the effort of adapting that apparatus to the aims of the proletarian revolution" (237-238).

It is clear that Benjamin's viewed becoming-traitor as a key tactic in the realisation of a communist community. In this paper, we abandon Benjamin's Marxist idioms of "class" and "bourgeois" and redefine becoming-traitor not just as ideological repositioning but also as an ethic of leaping out of apparatus of capture. Leaping out should be understood within the specific context of exile as *ex salire.* Contrary to the dominant understanding of exile as *exsul* (banished, living abroad, homeless), Nico Israel argues that exile has another etymology, *ex salire,* which "expresses a sense of 'leaping out' toward

something or somewhere, implying a matter of will' (Israel 2000: 1). Embedded in *ex salire* as leaping out is the notion of agency and the production of the new. To become a traitor, as we use in connection with Magistrate, is to become an exile. As will become clear, by becoming-traitor to Empire Magistrate positions himself as a traitor and an exilic figure. This sheds new light on Magistrate's interpretation of the barbarian slips. Although critics have dwelt on Colonel Joll's accusation of Magistrate of treason, they have rarely paid attention to the subtle differentiated ways treason operates in WB as becoming-traitor or leaping out and to the desire for people to come.

Having clarified the conceptual framework for our analysis, the rest of the paper examines becoming-traitor in *WB* from the following perspectives: encounter as the genesis of thought and a break with Empire or the State thought, and what the body can do. Together, these constitute true betrayal that summons the people to come since they function as ethical responses to the shame of being human. The critical turning point in *WB* is Magistrate's betrayal or repudiation of Empire. By that act, Coetzee suggests that the quest for an awareness and acceptance of a common justice is contingent on a treasonable act or betrayal of that which imprisons the individual and prevents the emergence of alternative ways of being. Hence Joll's accusation of Magistrate for "treasonously consorting with the enemy" (Coetzee 1980, 85) represents a fragment of a more profound meaning of treason or betrayal in *WB*. The challenge for the reader then is to understand how "treason" functions as an apparatus of capture by the State and, at a deeper level, as the precondition for a genuine community.

We can now examine how *WB* instantiates Empire's dogmatism and the genesis of thought in the context of encounter. *WB* begins with the arrival of Colonel Joll at the colonial outpost to quell a rumoured barbarian invasion. Prior to the arrival of Joll and his force from the capital, the colonial outpost had been administered by Magistrate. As the administrative officer of the district, he believed that he represented the civilising power of Empire. He did

not only collect tithes and taxes, protect trade routes, administer the communal lands, and supervise the settler garrison; he also administered justice by presiding over the law-court. Magistrate had succeeded in managing the walled settler town of three thousand inhabitants as the bastion of civilisation in a desert of ruins and barbarians. He derived satisfaction as "a responsible official in the service of Empire" and as he waited for his retirement he indulged himself by reading the classics and excavating the ruins (41). There is a certain delusion and taken-for-grantedness on Magistrate's part on the nobility of his stewardship at the colonial outpost. His conviction did not raise any ethical issues for him about his role as the agent of Empire since he had not been confronted with any crisis that problematises what he represents. At this point in his career, the image that Magistrate crafts for himself can be described as a colonial father who, to borrow from Fanon, "unceasingly restrains [his] fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts" (Fanon 1968, 170).

However, the military operation to flush out the barbarian threat results in the imposition of emergency powers and unleashes a year-long violent regime of imperial "spectacles of debasement and suffering and death" (Coetzee 1980, 131) that puts into question the epistemological authority of Empire as the bulwark of civilisation. Magistrate is removed as the administrator. He comes to realise that Empire is not defined by principles of autonomy, justice, progress and freedom as he had assumed but, to borrow from Deleuze, by the "perpetuation or conservation of organs of power" (Deleuze 1987, 394) that require from its servants not love but "merely that they perform their duty" (Coetzee 1980, 6). The duplicity and dogmatism of Empire is represented by Joll's terroristic invasion of the frontier town. Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel's actions are motivated by the conviction that the survival of Empire depends on the containment and liquidation of barbarians. The irony, which WB points out, is that Empire's project of normality or imperial control over Others is impossible without dehumanising

and characterising them as barbarians. As Magistrate is quick to inform the young officer "The people we call barbarians are nomads, they migrate between the lowlands and the uplands every year, that is their way of life" (Coetzee 1980, 54). In other words, the category "barbarians" in so far as it designates the Other is an imposition by the colonial power as a result of its contempt for and fear of the Other. It is here that Coetzee gets to the horror at the heart of Empire's civilisatrice mission and normality: Empire is inherently the denigration of being; the manufacture of bestial life, shame and humiliation through spectacles of torture. Coetzee's strategic move is to expose the complicity of Magistrate's liberalism in Empire's dehumanisation of being by unsettling his illusion of colonial beneficence through a radical encounter with Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel on the one hand, and the barbarian girl on the other. It is in staging these encounters that Coetzee succeeds in revealing the hidden shame, humiliation and cruelty in the rhetoric of Empire as civilisation and engendering thought on what it means to be human.

It is therefore impossible to appreciate the criticality of the thematic of redemption, becoming-traitor, and community in *WB* without reflecting on the critical place of the encounter. A genuine encounter challenges preconceived ideas or categories and confronts thought with its breakdown that forces it to think. As O'Sullivan observes, a genuine encounter functions as "a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack…for the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world…a way of seeing and thinking this world differently" (O'Sullivan 2006, 1). This is why a radical encounter takes on the character of original violence inflicted on thought and awakens thought from its natural stupor and conformism, which *Doxa* imposes (Deleuze 1994, 139).

The first and originary encounter in *WB,* then, is Magistrate's encounter with Joll. Magistrate's becoming-traitor can be understood in the context of this encounter, its ramifications and his subsequent encounter with the partially blind and crippled

barbarian girl. Magistrate's initial attitude to the activities of Joll is indifference to annihilation. However, once he, the advocate of law and justice, is imprisoned and tortured in the same room where the barbarians had been tortured and some killed, Magistrate comes face to face with the dark side of Empire. The violence of this encounter to Magistrate's thought is the subject matter of the novel.

It is important to focus on the consequences of Empire's fixation on *recognition* or *representation* that Magistrate's encounter with Joll makes visible. Joll arrives at the obscure frontier town with a single mission: to find the truth and to exterminate it. The truth Joll and the Third Bureau are seeking is first and foremost a confirmation of their definition of the barbarians as a threat to Empire. For Joll, to *recognise* a barbarian is to ratify the rumour that the barbarians are planning an invasion on Empire. Where this implicit claim becomes impossible to sustain, Joll and Mandel use force to extort confessions. Joll's obsession with the truth of the barbarian as the enemy of Empire/State could be understood in terms of Deleuze's observation that underlying the dogmatic Image of thought is the presupposition that "thought has an affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true" (Deleuze 1994, 131). Like Deleuze, Coetzee suggests that this attitude breeds "life-giving illusions", barbarism and acts of terror. The enduring value of *WB* then is that it explores with the poignant economy of reflexivity the consequences of Empires' preoccupation with its truth of the Other as a barbarian; the shame of complicity and compromise, and the place of conscience and responsibility under a draconian regime. Hence the importance of Magistrate's intense grappling with the meaning of *justice, law and order, freedom* and *being*. Early in the novel, in a conversation with Joll after overhearing the latter's torture of the barbarian old man who had been falsely arrested and accused, Magistrate interrogates Joll on truth and the responsibility of the interrogator. Joll's response is revealing: "There is a certain tone. A certain tone enters the voice of a man who is telling the truth. Training and experience teach us to recognize the tone" (Coetzee 1980, 5). This is the first revelation that Magistrate's

encounter with Joll brings up. The novel explores the implications of this dogmatic attitude which Magistrate aptly summarised as "Pain is truth: all else is subject to doubt" (Coetzee 1980, 5). Joll's philosophy contradicts Magistrate's insistence on law and justice as the truth of our humanity.

Another instance of Magistrate's encounter with the shame of Empire is the "exemplary spectacle" of the writing scene at the square. The first expeditionary force into the hinterland led by Colonel Joll returns to the settler town square with twelve miserable barbarian captives to prove to the people that the barbarians are real (Coetzee 1980, 113). They are brought in "stark naked" with "a loop of wire running through the flesh of each man's hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks" (*Ibid*). After failing to escape the contamination of the atrocity to be committed on the barbarians, Magistrate is forced to join the crowd of thousands that have gathered to observe the undignified spectacle. Using a stick of charcoal, Colonel Joll first writes on each barbarian "ENEMY… ENEMY… ENEMY" (Coetzee 1980, 115). We see here the convergence of or complicity between writing and colonial violence and cruelty. Ironically, this cruel colonial calligraphy unsettles Empire's moral and epistemological authority in that it demonstrates that barbarians are not Others that Empire's civilizes; they are constructions. After Joll's inscription, the barbarians are flogged to the pleasure of the "civilised" crowd until the black charcoal, the dust, the sweat and blood become indistinguishable. The height of this depravity occurs when Joll takes a four-pound hammer to beat them. It is at this point that Magistrate is forced to yell: '*No! No! No!* You are depraving the people! (…) You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast…Look! We are the great miracle of creation!" (Coetzee 1980, 116-17). For this rude interruption of Empire's cruel game of definition, inscription and exhibition, Magistrate is clubbed down by Colonel Joll's men. This encounter with the violence of Empire makes him think about what it means to describe barbarians as miracles of creation, as "*Men*" and to demand justice for them. Magistrate is for the first time

confronted with the contradiction of the heart of Empire: the gap between the aspiration to universalise autonomy and justice, and the impossibility of demanding the same for the Other. How can one demand justice and equality for the Other who, by Empire's rationalisation, are not "Men"?

This is why Justice is Empire's arch-enemy since it can only become meaningful when the ideology of domination of other peoples and their lands and resources is abandoned and a new sociability or community becomes thinkable. This is the new trajectory Magistrate's thought begins to take. Prior to his encounter with Joll, his philosophy was based on the primacy of law and justice. He saw his duty as ensuring that "memory of justice does not fail" (Coetzee 1980, 152). However, confronted with the "new science of degradation that kills people on their knees," Magistrates realises that if there is to be the possibility of a people to come, it will require a redefinition of law and justice. Towards the end of the novel, when Joll and the Third Bureau destroy the settlers' "world of tranquil certainties", Magistrate rightly begins to think of the "task of rebuilding" (Coetzee 1980, 156). This task is contingent on a becoming-traitor and new thought.

An important aspect of Magistrate's encounter with Joll Bureau occurs when he is arrested and interrogated after returning from leading the barbarian girl back to her people. Magistrate had found the barbarian girl begging at the gates of the barracks. To relieve her of the shame of begging, he installed her in the barracks kitchen as a "scullery-maid. The journey to the limits of Empire brings Magistrate face-to-face with "the brown-faced, weather-beaten, narrow-eyed barbarians on native soil" (Coetzee 1980, 76). It is at once an anxious and revealing encounter. First, with no means of communication, the encounter between the coloniser and the barbarians is reduced to silence and gazing at each other. We can surmise that this gaze engenders disturbing questions for Magistrate: what did the barbarians see in him? What does he represent? Did they see him, as the Namaqua Hottentots in *Dusklands* (1974) saw Jacobus Coetzee as "an irrelevance" or "another accident" (Coetzee

1974, 98) unworthy of their most serious attention? Secondly, the barbarian girl's rejection of Magistrate's request to return to the town on her "own choice" constitutes a potent indictment and rejection of Empire's civilising pretentions. Being-together is possible only when the axiomatics of Empire is abandoned and a new ethics of being is founded.

For making contact with the barbarians and "contracting a liaison" (Coetzee 1980, 91) with the girl, Magistrate is charged with "treasonously consorting with the enemy" (Coetzee 1980, 85) and confined by Joll. The interrogation presents to him, for the first time, the rare opportunity to challenge Joll's notions of what Empire represents. To Joll's claim that "the natives are at war with us," Magistrate counters "Unless we are the enemy" (85). He shifts the definition of "barbarians" to refer specifically to Empire. He describes Joll and his men as "the new barbarians" (Coetzee 1980, 85). We see here Magistrate's redefinition of treason or betrayal as liberation. Once he has been charged with treason, he concludes, "my alliance with the guardians of Empire is over. I have set myself in opposition, the bond is broken, I am a free man (Coetzee 1980, 85). In other words, he becomes a traitor and an exile. But as Magistrate realises this freedom that his *becoming-traitor* to Empire inaugurates is a dangerous one. Not only will he suffer pain, loneliness and hunger as a result of his confinement, he will also be hung upside down at the square floating back and forth in "an arc a foot above the ground like a great old moth with its wings pinched together, roaring, shouting" (Coetzee 1980, 133). The people enjoying the spectacle interpret Magistrate's roars and shouts of agony and humiliation as "the barbarian language".

An indication of how Magistrate's encounter with the violence of Empire and the barbarian girl produces new thought can be seen in the interview session when he is brought before Joll and asked to decipher the slips he had excavated. Joll and his men had found the chest of wooden slips in Magistrate's apartment and assumed that it represented communication between him and the barbarians. Joll cannot read the barbarian scripts. His ingenious interpretation of

the slips constitutes a powerful critique of Empire. This encounter reveals the limits of its power to define and the extent to which he has leapt out of the semiotics of Empire. Attwell has described Magistrate's performance in this episode as directed at "undermining Joll's terroristic drive for certainty, for truth" (Attwell 1993, 78). What is more, it signals Magistrate's transformation into a traitor to Empire as a particular structure of thought, feeling and practice.

To grasp the radicalism of his interpretive performance, it is significant to remember that before the arrival of Joll and his men, Magistrate had been unsuccessful at deciphering the barbarian slips. What has changed between then and this translation that he is forced to present to Joll is that his encounters with the barbarian girl and the debasing activities of the Third Bureau have engendered a new mode of thought that operates outside the hermeneutics of Empire. By giving voice to the barbarian slips and in the process staging a new regime of meaning that is antithetical to Empire's conception of the barbarians as a people without history and writing, Magistrate radically reorients his relation as a traitor and an exile and in the process becomes a producer of new realities rather than a transmitter of Doxa. Magistrate's reading deliberately privileges *war, vengeance, justice* and *history* in order to problematize Empire's deployment of these foundational concepts and to raise the issues of ethics and responsibility. His betrayal or exile alienates him and transforms him into an object of scorn and ridicule. As Joll tells him, far from becoming "the One Just Man" and a "martyr" who sacrifices his "freedom to his principles", he is merely "a clown," a dirty "madman…an old beggar-man…a refuse-scavenger" with no future (Coetzee 1980, 125). In Empire's grammar of disgust and profane, Magistrate has become a "traitor" for his refusal to "affirm allegiance to Empire" (Coetzee 1980, 143). However, contrary to Joll's claim, Magistrate's treason or exile signifies the obsolescence of Empire's logic of community and looks forward to a radically different community.

The last defining encounter in WB is Magistrate's encounter with

the partially blind and crippled barbarian girl. She was part of a group of barbarians prisoners rounded up from their village by Joll and brought to the settler town in his quest for the truth about the barbarian invasion. Her father died at the hands of Joll. Joll's cruel methods of extracting confessions have left her partially blind and crippled. Disfigured, abandoned and a beggar, she is a living symbol of imperial disfiguration and disposability. Although Magistrate rescues and installs her in the kitchen, he also regularly invites her to his apartment. His encounter and relationship with the barbarian girl is at the centre of Coetzee's indictment of the duplicity of Empire and the quest for a new sociality. Magistrate's relations with the girl is dominated by an intense desire to decipher her body in order to get to the truth of what actually happened to her in the torture room. However, it is this inordinate desire that exposes Magistrate's complicity in the dehumanisation of the barbarians and makes him realise that he is no different from Joll, as he had assumed. Magistrate's encounter with Joll and the barbarian girl complicates Empire's conception of Otherness. Joll represents the intimate Other, the always already dark side of Empire.

The analysis has shown that Magistrate's encounters with Joll and the blind barbarian girl are traumatic and enabling sites. But we have yet to explore encounter in terms of the ethics of *what the body can do* or ethology. Simply put, what a body can do "corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected" (Deleuze 1990, 218). Although our aim is not an ethological analysis, ethology, in so far as it emphasises the affective implications of bodily encounter, is essential to further clarifying Magistrate's becoming-traitor. It must be admitted that Deleuze does not draw an explicit connection between encounter as the genesis of thought and encounter in terms of Spinoza's "physics of bodies." Nonetheless, as the following analysis reveals, the circumstances of Magistrate's becoming-traitor makes such a synthesis possible and allows us to describe the quest for community or a common justice in terms of "the composition of relations between existing bodies" that yield joy (Deleuze 1988, 115). Our analysis draws on Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

According to Deleuze, Spinoza's singular contribution to the modern conceptions of individuality is his recognition that "a body affects other bodies or is affected by other bodies" (Deleuze 1988, 123). This has radical implications since a body's individuality is now defined by its capacity for affecting or being affected.

Ethology is the study of animal and human behaviour from the perspective of "their powers and their capacities for affecting and being affected" (Gatens and Lloyd 100). Ethological analysis makes a crucial distinction between active affections or *actions* and passive affections or *passions*. *Actions* and *Passions* describe two conceptualisations of the possible outcomes of a body's encounter with another body. When a body encounters another one, such as Magistrate encounters Joll and the barbarian girl, and the two bodies are incompatible, the result is *sadness*. We have already seen how Magistrate's encounter with Joll and his men occasions the degradation of the barbarian body, the production of shame and humiliation. The barbarians and Magistrate are therefore affected or acted upon by Joll and his cohorts. The result is sad passions. *Passions*, it is important to note, have their origin outside the individual and diminish the power of acting**.** As Deleuze argues "sad passions represent the lowest degree of our power, the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantoms of superstition, to the mystifications of the tyrant" (Deleuze 1988, 123). Conversely, when we encounter another body that agrees with us, the encounter produces *joy* and increases our power to act. A joyful encounter is the result of a common notion, which refers to agreement, or understanding, that makes it possible for bodies to co-exist joyfully. Coetzee's assertion that an awareness and acceptance of a common justice is the basis of community is uncannily similar to Deleuzo-Spinoza's notion of common notions as that which makes the coming-into-being of community possible.

The distinction between encounters that increase our power to act and those that diminish or decompose has two implications for our reading of *WB*. Firstly, it enables us to redefine Evil. From Joll's

imperial perspective, barbarians are evil or enemies of Empire. From an ethological emphasis on *passions* and *actions*, however, evil is defined in terms of any power that threatens or decomposes the composition of convivial relations. As Deleuze asserts, in ethological analysis "*evil is always a bad encounter*" (Deleuze 1990, 247; emphasis included). This illuminates Coetzee's shift in emphasis from the Other as evil to evil, as a bad encounter which degrades life. If evil is not located in specific groups but bodies that produce sadness, then the ethical responsibility lies in producing encounters that generate shared values. If the dominant ethological encounter in *WB* is the one that decomposes bodies, diminishes their power to act and therefore imposes suffering, then the quest for a new community is paramount. What this reveals is that encounter, understood in terms of affections, supplements our initial analysis of encounter as violence that provokes the genesis of thought. These two conceptualisations have a profound bearing on reading *WB* not only as an exploration of colonial torture or violence but, more importantly, as the search for an alternative composition of relations or affective compatibilities.

We can now examine the meaning of Magistrate's becoming-traitor to Empire. His becoming-traitor is first and foremost an awakening of consciousness that allows him to see his true place in Empire. As he acknowledges, "I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he [Colonel Joll] the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow. Two sides of Imperial rule, no more, no less" (Coetzee 1980, 149). This epiphany signifies a fundamental ethical shift from his initial position that he was the good servant of Empire dispensing Law and Justice at its margins. Reflecting on why it was impossible to inaugurate positive encounters, Magistrate makes his most insightful statement:

> It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and to plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to

> end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies …By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. A mad vision yet a virulent one (Coetzee 1980, 146).

This is not just a diagnosis of what Empire represents; it is Magistrate's valediction to Empire as a form of history and community. Although at the end of the novel Magistrate is reinstated as the administrator, it is clear that he is a transformed character no longer under the illusions of imperial superiority. He realises that to live outside the history of Empire means organising encounters that will produce joy.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that a nuanced reading of encounter and treason in WB yields significant insights rarely articulated in the existing literature. One important implication of our approach is that it redefines Magistrate's agency and signification. Far from being a victim, Magistrate is a herald of a coming community. His ethical transformation calls for a re-examination of his claim, towards the end of the novel, that "When some men suffer unjustly it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it" (152). Magistrate is more than just a witness; he is an exilic figure who resists Empire through his betrayal.

In a profound way, Magistrate's becoming-traitor implies that he is the last man at the end of history. This recalls Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). For Fukuyama, the end of history means the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism over its ideological competitors. The universalisation of capitalism, Fukuyama argues, means that 'there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all the really big questions had been settled' (Fukuyama 1992, xii). It is important to stress that the end of History is not to

be taken literally. In fact, for Fukuyama, it refers to "the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolutions" (ix).

In *WB*, the end of history refers to the dissolution or collapse of the moral and political legitimacy of Empire and the termination of its arborescent image of thought, which breeds violence and shame. History, in *WB*, refers to Empire as a type of cruel historical encounter or socio-political organisation. As Colonel Joll tells Magistrate, this history is indifferent to the martyrs of freedom and equality and the dehumanisation or spectacles of cruelty that Empire stages in the colony. History, for Empire, is about its victories; its domination of territories and practices condensed in the idiom of normality. Hence, the post-historical man in *WB* is one who has escaped the duplicity of Empire and summons a new community and historical configuration; the post-historical man bears witness to the irrationality of Empire's normality. In this sense, Magistrate is the last man of a specific history. As the last man of the end of Empire's history, therefore, Magistrate acknowledges that "a paradise on earth" will not only be a community beyond Good and Evil but one that will be based on the art of making "concessions" (Coetzee 1980, 169). It is therefore significant that Magistrate regards himself as the "last magistrate" (Coetzee 1980, 168); an acceptance that Empire and its time of history are dead.

Unlike Fukuyama, Coetzee's last man of history is one who speaks the truth of a new man and a new way of organising encounters between and among people in order to produce an oasis of mutual coexistence. The end of history in *WB* then is not about the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism but the realisation that the "history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects" is "cause for shame" (Coetzee 1980, 169). To become a traitor to Empire is to become a *lost subject*, an exile and a post-historical man.

I began with the epigram from *WB* in which Magistrate ruminates on forgiveness and the possibility of a "second chance to build our earthly paradise" (Coetzee 1980, 173). The choice of this epigram was not only intended to emphasise the centrality of the

quest for a different community but also to register the ethical gap that separates Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusklands* and Magistrate in *WB*. After having killed the Hottentots for no apparent reason other than to assert his reality and mastery, Jacobus rationalises his violent acts as:

> No more than any other man do I enjoy killing; but I have taken it upon myself to be the one to pull the trigger, performing this sacrifice for myself and my countrymen, who exist, and committing upon the dark folk the murders we have all wished. All are guilty, without exception. I include the Hottentots. Who knows for what unimaginable crimes of the spirit they died, through me? God's judgment is just, irreprehensible and incomprehensible. His mercy pays no heed to merit. I am a tool in the hands of history (Coetzee 1974, 106).

However, as the epigram shows, it is precisely this history that must be rejected. What does it mean to position oneself as a tool in the hands of history for one's people or race? The difference between Magistrate and Jacobus is that the former recognises that the "errors that have been committed by others in our name" are bad betrayals and therefore require forgiveness that will inaugurate the difficult task of building a paradise. Magistrate's becoming-traitor is, therefore, a refutation of Jacobus Coetzee's sacrificial act on behalf of his race.

References

Abdaoui, Kamel. "The Trope of Border-crossing Journeys: Ethics of Hybrid Encounters in J. M. Coetzee's W*aiting for the Barbarians* and *Age of Iron*." *Brolly. Journal of Social Sciences* 1.3 (2018): 7-26

Asempasah, Rogers. "War on Terror: On Re-reading Dracula and Waiting for the Barbarians."*Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities.* Vol. V, No. 3 (2013): 150-161.

Attwell, David. *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

—— "An Exclusive Interview with J. M. Coetzee" *Dagens Nyheter,* 8 Dec. 2003.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Author as Producer." *New Left Review* 1/62. July August 1970.

Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians.* London: Vintage, 2000 [1980]

—— *Dusklands*. London: Vintage, 1998 [1974].

—— "Into the Dark Chamber: The Writer and the South African State." *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*. Ed. David Attwell. Cambridge Mass: Harvard UP, 1992. 361-368.

Crary, Alice. "Coetzee's Quest for Reality." In Patrick Hayes & Jan Wilm. Eds. *Beyond the Ancient Quarrel: Literature, Philosophy, and J. M. Coetzee*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017: 125-142.

Deleuze, G. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. R. Hurley. San Francisco: City Light, 1988b.

—— *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. M. Joughin. New York: Columbia Univ., Press, 1990

—— *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. P. Patton. London: Athlone Press, 1994

—— *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. B. Massumi. Minneapolis: Minnesota Univ. Press, 1987

Durrant, Sam. *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*. Albany: Univ. State of New York Press, 2004

Eckstein, Barbara. 1989. "The Body, the Word, and the State: J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians." NOVEL: A Forum on Fictions* 22.2 (1989): 175-198.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans.Constance Farrington. Geat Britain: Penguin Books, 1968.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992.

Gallagher, Susan Van Zanten. "Torture and the Novel: Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians." Contemporary Literature* 29.2 (1988): 277-285.

Gatens, Moira & Lloyd, Genevieve. *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*. London & New York: Routledge, 1999.

Hall, Alice. *Disability and Modern Fiction: Faulkner, Morrison, Coetzee and the Nobel Prize for Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Hamilton, Grant. *On Representation: Deleuze and Coetzee on the Colonized Subject*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011

—— 'The Communion of Clouds: Becoming-Woman in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*.' *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2018).

Jolly, Rosemary Jane. "Territorial Metaphor in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*." *Ariel* 20.2 (1989): 69–79.

Lochner, Liani. "Power and the Subject in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, Volume 47, Number 4 (October 2016): 103-134.

Moses, Michael Valdez. "The Marks of Empire: Writing, History, and Torture in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians." The Kenyon Review, New Series* 15.1 (1993): 115-127.

O'Sullivan Simon, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Samolsky, Russell. *Apocalyptic Futures: Marked Bodies and the Violence of the Text in Kafka, Conrad, and Coetzee.* USA: Fordham University Press, 2011.

Winter, Sarah. "Magistrate, the Camp, and the Novel: J. M. Coetzee and the Subject of Human Rights." Novel: A Forum on Fiction 47:2 (Summer 2004): 261-283.