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Becoming And Being Mother: Navigating Pain, Love, And Care Across Cultures And Literature

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This paper explores the multifaceted concept of motherhood, examining its significance across various cultures, religions, and literary representations. It delves into the diverse portrayals of mothers and motherhood, highlighting the intersection of pain, love, and care in the process of becoming and being a mother. Drawing from religious beliefs and cultural traditions, the paper demonstrates the central role of mothers in shaping societies and philosophies. Through an analysis of J.M. Coetzee's literary works, particularly his depiction of mother characters, the paper explores the complexities of motherhood, including the painful process of pregnancy and the transformative journey towards becoming a mother. Furthermore, it discusses Coetzee's narrative approach, which challenges conventional structures and offers a nuanced understanding of human existence, where truth emerges from conflicting perspectives and nuanced interpretations. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes the dynamic nature of motherhood and its profound impact on individuals and societies, transcending simplistic notions and inviting readers to engage with its complexities.
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In every kind of female love, something of maternal love appears also. – Friedrich Nietzsche
Mother and daughter: the protocols of womanhood being passed on, generation to generation. – J. M. Coetzee
Motherhood—unmentioned in the histories of conquest and serfdom, wars and treatise, exploration and imperialism—has a history, it has an ideology, it is more fundamental than tribalism or nationalism. – Adrienne Rich

LIFE manifests in different recognition of the existential requirements. One such requirement is a mother. The presence of a mother, the basis of a life—if life is important, the birth of a child is important, the presence of a mother is necessary. The word mother immediately comes to our mind when we think of a child.[1] The continuity of existence renews itself in the circle of life and death. The renewal of life depends on the mother, if not the father, always, in case, we know the innocence in which we understand and define things have been changed through different socio-political motives.[2] Is it ubiquitous that every character is born out of a mother?[3] The mother is a woman first, and then a mother; though the second role is nowhere compulsory, it is a choice—a choice that can be interpreted in many ways, but difficult to fathom. With the passage of time, the meaning of the word mother connotes a host of relations—with one's country, language, and becomes a metaphor for many relational aspects of human lives.[4]
In various religious beliefs, especially in Christianity Mary becomes a mother conceiving Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. In all the major religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam) motherhood plays an important role. In

[1] The OED defines mother as "A woman in relation to her child or children," "A female animal in relation to its offspring," an elderly woman," "Denoting an institution or organization from which others of the same type derive," and "the head of a female religious community." We notice that the first and he second definitions hints at the gender identity. The third definition suggest before we know the surrogacy, the word mother is linked with childbearing women.
[2] Subjugation becomes a norm, without considering the fact that we all move towards death: "to live is to give oneself, to perpetuate oneself, and to perpetuate oneself and to give oneself is to die. The supreme delight of begetting is perhaps nothing but a foretaste of death, the eradication of our own vital essence" (de Unamuno 133). It is pity. We are all subjected to pity. This is not an assertion, it is a fundamental truth of existence. And that is why love and care are a condition to existence: "pity, then, is the essence of human spiritual love, of the love that is conscious of being love, of the love that is not purely animal, of the love, in a word, of a rational person. Love pities and pities most when it love most" (de Unamuno 137).
[3] Here I am using the word 'character' instead of person. Imagining the characters in literary writing, whether the history of his parentage is given or not, we assume that s/he is the child of a mother.
[4] Motherhood and mothering have been the subject of debate and discussion—surrogate mothers, fulltime mothers, adoptive mothers, teenage mothers, mothers who live in poverty.

most cases, it is idealized, though the idealization can be read as a form of belief. Motherhood in Africa is influenced by diverse mythologies and local lore. The figure of the mother is central in African philosophy and spirituality. The deities in Indian cultures for that matter are addressed with the noun mother. The process of being a mother or the state of being a mother is familiarly understood as motherhood. Mother is a more specific term whereas motherhood is accepted in a broader sense—one: the being (a mother), and another: the process of becoming. Being mother rests upon in giving birth to a child: a passion—Kristeva claims—a driven force as a medium of the reflexive consciousness.[5] Passion is different from emotion, "emotions belongs to all vertebrates…passion, on the other hand, and are specific to man, because they suppose the existence of reflexive consciousness" (Kristeva 80). Though there is a significant reason for defining femaleness by the patriarch, but being mother is also a process of experiencing one's own self, own body. As Adrienne Rich says: "We learn, often through painful self-discipline and self-cauterization, those qualities which are supposed to be "innate" in us: patience, self-sacrifice, the willingness to repeat endlessly the small, routine chores of socializing a human being" (Rich 37). Being mother is a process of becoming which the mother develops through pregnancy and reflexive consciousness. The concept of a 'good mother' does depend on an understanding, not as a biologically given, but as a process through which an individual acquires the knowledge of care and love. Both the mother and the child start off as other to each other, become familiar and learn to accept each other, and generate tenderness, care and benevolence. Thus according to Kristeva "It is in motherhood that a woman can find a chance to remedy the hysterical drive/meaning, emotion/cognition noncongruence and to experience the amorous passion that is the condition of life for her and her children" (Kristeva 86). Adrienne Rich argues in a similar vein:

The child gains her first sense of her own existence from the mother's responsive gestures and expressions. It's as if, in the mother's eyes, her smile, her stroking touch, the child first reads the message: *You are there*! And the mother, too, is discovering her own existence newly. She is connected with this other being, by the most mundane and the most invisible strands, in a way she can be connected with no one else except in the deep past of her infant connection with her own mother. And she, too, needs to struggle from that one-to-one intensity into new realization, or reaffirmation, of her being-unto-herself (Rich 36).

This is a painful process. It is painful because the mother has to destabilize the self. Coetzee very strongly represents this painful process in his work through the representations of mother characters from different strata of life. He is aware of the fact that though we believe that motherhood is a universal category, basically it is also a matter of choice, and that for women in many societies being a mother is not a choice but a socially, religiously given role. It is no surprise then, that the representation of mother and motherhood is very different in the literature of the third-world countries. The socio-economic and political factors work at the core of this status. There is no definitive structure to define motherhood. The mother characters often represent the multiple identities that mothers are bestowed with. Coetzee, for instance, does not deal with the pain of the pregnancy as of becoming-a-mother but moves towards become-a-mother. For the powerless women, the imperative to become a mother grounds the mother's own self, and gives her a new light to see coming from the future "their own human will to power, their need to return upon the world what it has visited on them" (Rich 38). Representation of motherhood is never static—it represents the ideal, the mundane, the different complexities and aspects of motherhood. In Western art and literature,[6] the exploration of mother and motherhood rushes to Mary to avoid the Oedipal complex, and the artist becomes free from the anxiety, and "Mary gives it a halo of cool self-restraint" (*Hatred and Forgiveness* 69). Such representations are available in the works of prominent painters like Sandro Botticelli and Giovanni Bellini. While Botticelli's young Madonna is freed from pleasure, frustration, and

[5] Though Kristeva has not mentioned, but it seems she has developed the idea formulated by Eugene Halliday as "Reflexive Self-Consciousness" in his book Reflexive Self-Consciousness (1989) in relation to enlightenment. He proposes that Reflexive Self-Consciousness is way through which we prepare ourselves, and respond to the demand of life—our relation to world, a respond of the consciousness to the world and mankind. Halliday believes that the source of being is sentience or consciousness. In Buddhist philosophy Reflexive Self-Consciousness is considered as Self-awareness (Svasaṃvedana). Introduced by the Indian philosopher Dignaga, Svasamvedana is developed from perception and inference.

[6] Notable among them are Euripides's Meda (431 BC); Anne Bronte's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848); Nathaniel Hawthrone's The Scarlet Letter (1850); Anthony Trollope's Orley Farm (1861); Elizabeth Gaskell's Wives and Daughters (1864-1866); Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (1877); Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886); Oscar Wilde's Lady Windermere's Fan (1893); George Bernard Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893); Maxim Gorky's The Mother (1906); D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers (1913); Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage and Her Children (1939); and The Caucasian Chalk Circle (1948); Margaret Drabble's The Millstone (1965); Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985); Tony Morrison's Beloved (1987); and Doris Lessing's The Fifth Child (1988).

pain (Fig 3.1); Bellini's Madonna (Fig 3.2) represents the history of Venice—the feminine representations of his time, his experience of marriage and fatherhood, and the death of his wife and son. Bellini's mother is not a happy one—she represents his own agony and pain. Eventually, his later portraits of women have the reflection of Mary, but subsequently his focus moves from the mother as a sacred subject to his participation of pleasure in a woman (Fig 3.3), representing the feminine

Fig 3.1. *Madonna and Child in Glory*, Botticelli, Florence, Uffizi, 03 July 2016 expression. Thus we see that mother and motherhood represent different aspects in which an artist rephrases his own understanding. The representations vary from time to time, and also depends on the geopolitical situation.

In Coetzee, the thematic of mother and motherhood—his Christian background, his interest in Western art and music, his life in South Africa and Australia—develops from his strong relationship with his mother. It shapes his mother characters in a time frame with a particular geopolitical situation: Anna K in the *Life & Times of Michael K* is a poor maidservant, weak and wrecked by war; Mrs. Curren in the *Age of Iron*, a dying mother, suffering from

Fig 3.2. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Francis, John the Baptist, Job, Dominic, Sebastian, Louis of Toulouse and Angles.* The Academia, Venice. 30 June 2016.

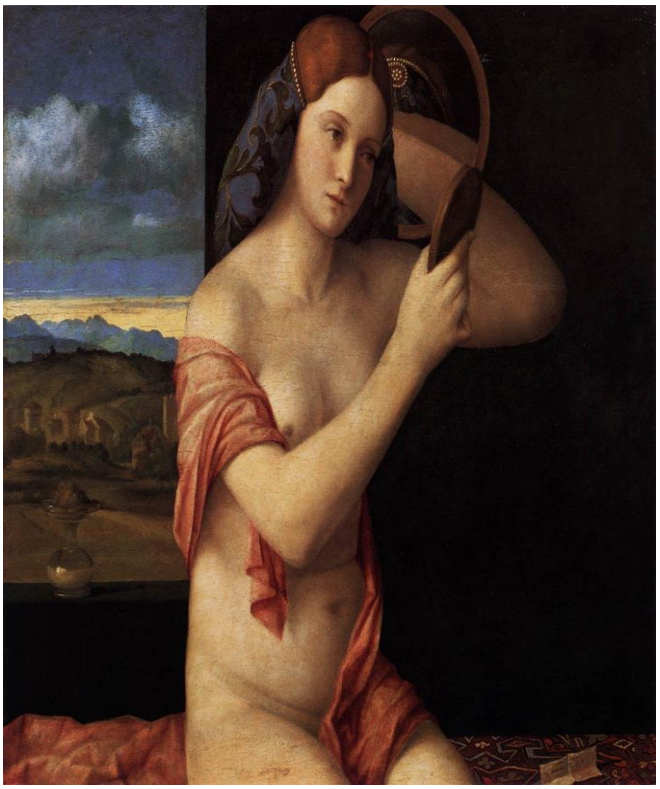

Fig 3.3. Giovanni Bellini, *Naked Young Woman Holding a Mirror.* Web Gallery of Art

cancer, professor of classical literature, longing for her only married daughter in the United States, and hoping for a new South Africa from the devastated society, armed children, ignorant authorities; Lucy in the *Disgrace*, a lesbian, refuses to put rape charges against the Afrikaners, and keeps the child to reclaim the choice of her own to become a mother. Mother in *The Childhood of Jesus* becomes an ontological search, invoking the Absence of the Father. Through the eyes of women characters, and especially mother characters, Coetzee has registered the brutality and anger of the Apartheid era, the need of love and care to face the pain that is inflicted by others, by establishing the ontology of the pain of motherhood.

Coetzee's narrative emphasizes that the value of human relationships develop from pain and suffering. He does not define motherhood in any essentialist terms—motherhood is definitive of pain. Underneath the ontology of pain, there is the ontology of love and care—in order to discover this, Coetzee transgresses the self and becomes the other to understand the condition of the mother. It is through art and literature one finds a proper way to express what one cannot be or what pains one. His representation of motherhood is a complex one. For him, it is a sign system to indicate the crucial role that a mother plays in human lives. His delineation of the mother is not a unique, unilateral representation. Through his strong sense of the mother and motherhood (his long engagement with the issue, especially in the third-world countries), he transgresses his own self into a unique narrative of mother and motherhood.

WRITING IS A PROCESS—"the question of becoming" as Deleuze mentions in the essay "Literature and Life"—in which writers become the creator/s of diverse characters who many a times do not remain in the purview of one's own gender. Shakespeare is mostly recognised for characters like Hamlet, Iago, Macbeth, and King Lear, but can one forget the name of Desdemona, Juliet, Viola, Rosalind, Cordelia, and Lady Macbeth? "The shame of being a man—is there any better reason to write?" asks Deleuze (?), and that could raise different questions like: Are we shameful of being 'man'? Is a man shameful of not being a woman? Is woman/motherhood a personal or a universal category? Is it necessary to know the identity, gender, religion and race of an author?[7]

[7] The best-selling Italian novelist Elena Ferrante's true identity is a question in the literary world until now. There are many speculations about her/his gender, and her/his real name. Some claim that the writer is a male and some argue that the writer is a female, but in both the cases the real name of the author is a mystery. It is the same as people arguing about the true identity of Shakespeare. But does it really matter? The various speculations on the true identity comes from the various issues that the author deals with the novel. That's what happens with Elena Ferrante; Claudio Gatti, an Italian journalist suddenly reveals in 2016 that Elena Ferrante is Anita Raja who lives with her husband in Rome. Ánita

In the process of becoming, one transgresses one's self and plays the role of the other. The important part in the process is the imagination, and the act of being dog/man/woman: "Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes woman, becomes animal or vegetable, becomes molecule, to the point of becoming imperceptible" (Deleuze 225). This notion of Deleuze is very clear in Coetzee's *Age of Iron* when Mrs. Curen says about Mr. Vercueil: "When I write about him I write about myself. When I write about his dog I write about myself; when I write about the house I write about myself. Man, house, dog: no matter what the word, through it I stretch out a hand to you" (AI 09). It is not the form but the closure of that becoming; becoming is a process irrespective of any gender. The act of 'becoming' transforms the writer's own gender, identity and colour. Coetzee's writing and the portrayal of his woman and mother characters formalize the process of becoming, not only to attain a form but "to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or undifferentiation" (Deleuze 226) where it is difficult to distinguish between a man, a woman, or a molecule. This act of proximity engages one's understanding of the larger good, and one's ability to imagine beyond the self. The power of an impersonality does not occur from generality but from a singularity, and with it, a writer becomes a man, a woman, a beast, a child, and if necessary, a molecule.

David Attwell's *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face-to-Face with Time* (2015), engages more comprehensively with the process of becoming-a-writer in Coetzee's writing.[8] The book is not a biography as Attwell admits at the very beginning. It is a book about Coetzee's "growth and development" as a writer (JMCLW xvii). Attwell minutely explores Coetzee's notebooks, manuscripts, and research papers and unravels the process of writing and his creative process—available at the University of Texas, Austin. The struggle is visible on every page of the book—Attwell provides pictures of Coetzee's notebooks and all the important notes in the manuscripts and has compares them with the published texts. This helps the reader to understand Coetzee's thinking and his process of writing. It is true that a book is important to a reader, and the author becomes a distant star, like a dead one, but Attwell's book definitely challenges this notion and reinstates the author. It re-establishes Coetzee's work of art as a physician's work; "the world is the set of symptoms whose illness merge with a man," and "literature then appears as an enterprise of health . . ." (Deleuze 228).

In most of Coetzee's works, women are prominent leading characters— Elizabeth Costello, Mrs. Curren, Magda, the Barbarian girl, and Lucy—situated in various socio-political conditions, raising an ethical question of being-woman and being-mother. Is being-mother a process or a given category? Does imagination have any gender? How is it for a mother to be a philosopher who takes an ethical stance against torture and cruelty? How does it feel for a cancer-ridden mother to live in an apartheid state longing for her own daughter? Coetzee's novels reflect the conditions of the mother as a human condition, more than a condition of the gender. The pain of being-a-mother is in most cases ignored as the role of the mother is stigmatized as somebody who is expected to straitjacket. As David Attwell argues, "the assertively feminine position in Coetzee's writing is at times a proxy for a self-staging that has a little to do with gender"(JMCLW 142). Coetzee's relationship with his mother Vera Coetzee and the struggle she had in her family reflects in many of his fictional works, especially in *Boyhood.* Attwell points out that:

Vera's influence on Coetzee's authorship is profound … her intelligence, the struggle in her marriage, her limited financial means, the strength of her relationship with her sons, all left their mark on Coetzee's writing. Many of his leading characters are women, articulate heroines who struggle against trying circumstances, often contesting patriarchal authority" (JMCLW 142).

Raja publishes translated works in German from the same publishing house (Edizione e/o) where Ferrante also publishes her work. He claims that Anita Raja is Elena Ferrante because in recent years Anita Raja's payment has been increased tremendously after Ferrante's first novel was made into a movie. Various writers and critics have condemned Gatti's claim, and his audacious intervention into an author's personal life. The Guardian's columnist Suzanne Moore rightly points out that "Ferrante's work is often spoken of as a rare glimpse into the interior world of female friendship. It is that, but so much more. It is also about a writer's obligations to the community they write about. It is about a desire to disappear. It is about male violence and power and politics. The novels chart the changes in Italy from the 1950s to the 2000s, taking in the fascists, the communists, the radical movements, the drugs, the coming of technology. This is social history made flesh. The search for the author's true identity is also driven by an incredulity that a woman could do that. What if this is not just memoir – the lesser feminised confessional – but the product of imagination and intellect? Is this somehow cheating? This seems to be the implication of this need to investigate her" (Deborah Orr, The Guardian).

[8] This book is not a biography; it sketches Coetzee's long engagement with his methods of writing. John Christoffel Kannemeyer's J. M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing (2012) gives vivid biographical sketches of Coetzee, and this is his first authorised biography. It deals with various unknown facts about him and his family. Kannemeyer died in 2011 leaving a massive biographical sketch of Coetzee.

As it is already mentioned Coetzee's autobiographical element is visible in all his work. In his creative process, he cannot remove the man who is writing it. Even in most of his lectures and public talks, it is difficult to distinguish between the representation of fact and fiction. He tells stories in public platforms and emphasizes that he is a storyteller, and his job is to tell stories. At the College de France he says: "writing is a compulsion – the result of an interruption in the normal course of a life,"[9] and "self is always present, but as narrative rather than truth" (JMCLW 7-8). He explores motherhood from different sections of the society—the pain of the working-class woman who gives birth to a disabled son (in the case of Anna K); the pain of the mother who steps beyond the patriarchal-norms to talk about animal and their rights (in the case of Elizabeth Costello). It is interesting to notice his speech at the Nobel Banquet, Stockholm, 10 December 2003; he did not talk about his writing or writing process but rather about his mother:

YOUR MAJESTIES, Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentleman, Distinguished Guests, Friends, The other day, suddenly, out of the blue, while we were talking about something completely different, my partner Dorothy burst out as follows: On the other hand, 'she said, on the other hand, how proud your mother would have been! What a pity isn't still alive! And your father too! How proud they would have been of you!'

Even prouder that of my son the doctor?' I said. 'Even prouder than of my son the professor?'

'Even prouder.'

'If my mother were still alive,' I said, 'she would be ninety-nine and a half. She would probably have senile dementia. She would not know what was going on around her.'

But of course I missed the point. Dorothy was right. My mother would have been bursting with pride. My son the Nobel Prize winner. And for whom, anyway, do we do the things that lead to Nobel Prizes if not for our mothers?

'Mommy, Mommy, I won a prize!'

'That's wonderful, my dear. Now eat your carrots before they get cold.'

Why must our mothers be ninety-nine and long in the grave before we can come running home with the prize that will make up for all the trouble we have been to them?

To Alfred Nobel, 107 years in the grave, and to the Foundation that so faithfully administers his will and that has created this magnificent evening for us, my heartfelt gratitude. To my parents, how sorry I am that you cannot be here.

Thank you. (J.M. Coetzee, Speech at the Nobel Banquet, Stockholm, 10 December 2003)[10]

The after-dinner speech sums-up Coetzee's long and persistent engagement with womanhood, and especially motherhood. The important point to notice in this speech is what would be the mother's reaction when she comes to know that her son has received the Nobel Prize: "That's wonderful, my dear. Now eat your carrots before they get cold."

BEING A MOTHER is a process, a state of existence that comes with or without the choice, a weakness that is also a strength. As Kristeva points out, "It is in motherhood that the link to the other can become love—but it is neither obligatory nor standard and, when it happens, it is at the price of multiple failures coupled with modest successes (Kristeva 87). In other words:

If there is consensus to be found in these debates, it is that conventional sentiments about motherhood inadequately describe and serve to mystify the actual circumstances of most women who mother, even as they may also sublimate the fear and resentment of men who cannot be mothers, or of the always unsatisfied inner child. It is commonly recognized, in some circles at least, that the position of the mother in our culture and our language is riddled with its history of psychic and social contradictions. Motherhood offers women a site of both power and oppression, self-esteem and self-sacrifice, reverence and debasement. (Hansen 3)

To see something as something is different from being something. To be something is the state of only being in that condition, which is difficult for another to *be*. It is in that conjugal understanding that we understand motherhood—an experience that only a mother experiences, as Adrienne Rich writes: "The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding, inside a woman's body"(Rich 11). Only a mother will feel and understand that experience. Motherhood as a state of being and becoming does not refer only to childbirth; it is the person's ability to have motherly qualities like care, love, and sacrifice.[11] Motherhood does not distinguish women from men, but "it is essential." Kristeva rightly mentions that "Religion and fundamentalism have so brutally assigned women to reproduction alone, and, in counterpoint, female liberation movements have so ferociously

[9] While talking about writing and the self, Coetzee quotes the opening line of Dante's Inferno "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita," 'In the middle of the journey of our life.' In Doubling the Points, he says, "all writing is autobiography" and "all autobiography is storytelling" (391). In a lecture given at the University of Cape Town, he quotes from one of T.S. Eliot's letters: "The creation of a work of art is a painful and unpleasant business; it is a sacrifice of the man to the work, it is a kind of death" (qtd. in JCLW 09).

[10] www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2003/coetzee-speech-e.html, accessed 17 August 2017.

[11] In the Abrahamic traditions, 'mother' is replaced by the figure of the 'father' as a symbol of love, care, and sacrifice. But of course, there is Mary in Catholicism to consider too.

opposed this '"repression"' that—against all evidence—it seems difficulty to speak of motherhood today without being accused of normative thinking" (Kristeva 54).
Coetzee's mother characters go against this normative thinking. Elizabeth Costello liberates Molly from the pages of *Ulysses* (1922) in her fictional work *The House of Eccles Street*: "I wanted to liberate her from that house, and particularly from that bedroom, with the bed with the creaking springs, and turn her house – as you say – on Dublin" (EC 13). The interviewer asks Elizabeth Costello whether she sees "women in general as prisoner of marriage and domesticity" (EC 13), and in her reply Costello says:
Yes, to an extent Molly is a prisoner of marriage, the kind of marriage that was on offer in Ireland in 1904. Her husband Leopold is a prisoner too. If she is shut into the conjugal home, he is shut out. So we have Odysseus trying to get in and Penelope trying to get out. That is the comedy, the comic myth, which Joyce and I in our different ways were paying respect to. (EC 13)
She liberates both Leopold and Molly from the societal structure that not only controls gender equality, but as Costello emphasizes, we need to see realismbeyond what is given. As such,
Realism has never been comfortable with ideas. It could not be otherwise: realism is premised on the idea that ideas have no autonomous existence, can exist only in things. So when it needs to debate ideas, as here, realism is driven to invent situations – walks in the countryside, conversations – in which characters give voice to contending ideas and thereby in a certain sense embody them. (EC 09)

Costello claims that "men will have to set about reclaiming the Heathcliffs and Rochesters from romantic stereotyping too, to say nothing of poor old dusty Casaubon" (EC 14). The discussion on mothers and motherhood foregrounds the question of the body, self, and embodiment.[12] Can we do anything outside the body? It is the social consciousness that shapes the category of the human; and as religious texts emphasize, man's rule over other living beings starts the categorization at the very beginning in the understanding of dichotomy of the self and the other. But this category of the other is not an empirical given; "alterity is the fundamental category of human thought" (Beauvoir 6).

Located in space and time, all bodies exist in a geopolitical setup. For Professor Lurie in *Disgrace*, women are transformed and replaced by one identity to another identity. "He himself has no son. His childhood was spent in a family of women. As a mother, aunts, sisters fell away, they were replaced in due course by mistresses, wives, a daughter" (*Disgrace* 7). Lurie tells Melanie that "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the beauty she brings into the world. She has a duty to *share it*" (*Disgrace*16; my emphasis). Lurie fails to understand Melanie's pain of helplessness. Lurie's liberal thinking and understanding of freedom revolve only around himself, his idea of the self. He emphasizes to Melanie that she ought to "share it [her beauty] more widely" even when she has shared her body already. But when it comes to his daughter, the body becomes a place of sanctity—to protect. It becomes hard for Lurie to accept Lucy's decision to keep the child after the rape. Petrus is the mirage of Lurie's interior self. Petrus suggests that he will be the temporary father of Lucy's child till Lucy's rapist becomes a grown-up man. Lucy accepts Petrus's proposal. Lurie thinks of Lucy's rapist as being "morally deficient" and "like a jackal sniffing around, looking for mischief" (*Disgrace* 218). The modes of desire between Lurie and the minor rapist creates a moral conflict in the text. Lurie fails to identify his own nature in that of the rapist-child.

Lurie represents the institution of heterosexuality. Lucy detests it. Lucy accepts the rape as an accident—more of a pathetic situation where reason does not work— in the barren farm of South Africa. Lucy understands the land sociologically better than Lurie. Being a mother is a painful state for her, but that is the only way to start from the beginning, from the scratch:
It is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no prosperity, no rights, no dignity.
'Like a dog.'
'Yes, like a dog.' (*Disgrace* 205)

[12] The various social injustices perpetrated women come under the study of Feminism, and out of that, the feminist movement sought for rights for women in various social platforms. The history of feminist movement which can be traced back to the 19th century (First Wave), the early 20th century (Second Wave), and mid-20th century (Third Wave) focuses on divergent social and political rights of women. The different movements that come under the radar of the centuries can also be traced back to the writings of the early centuries. Jeremy Bentham in his book Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations (17881) rejects the idea of women's inferior mind. Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) still remains the landmark book for feminist thought.

Lucy challenges the institutionalized form of motherhood that "demands of woman maternal 'instinct' rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self" (Rich 12), and rejects motherhood as a sacred entity. Accepting motherhood, Lucy challenges the notion of the body as an object of social control and the institutionalized norms of motherhood. Lucy's embodied self places her in opposition to the social norms, accepting the pain rather the avoidance of pain. Lucy rejects social constructionism and accepts her body, embodying the self, questioning the norms of motherhood. Lucy is caught in the dichotomy of the self and society. By accepting the child Lucy not only hopes to secure her identity but accepts the pain, as Rich points out:

A man may beget a child in passion or by rape, and then disappear; he need never see or consider child or mother again. Under such circumstances, the mother faces a range of painful, socially weighted choices, abortion, suicide, abandonment of the child, infanticide, the rearing of a child branded "illegitimate," usually in poverty, always outside the law (Rich 12).

Lucy invents the possibility of motherhood—not as an inescapable biological fate. Coetzee looks at motherhood from a post-humanist point of view where motherhood is also a matter of choice—a responsibility that one can take up, and Lucy emphasizes: "Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too" (*Disgrace* 216).

Lucy's labour as a farmer and her desire to liberate herself through the process of labouring signifies the dual meaning of the word 'labour'.[13] In all European languages, labour signifies pain, effort and the pang of birth.[14] Contrary to Lurie, who asks Lucy to leave the farm and to drop the child, she considers labour as a dire necessity to sustain life and for the evolutionary process. Both the processes is indispensable to sustain life. As Turner argues:

Human universal characteristics are not fixed and static; what human beings share is not a fixed datum of biology but a universal capacity for transformative labour. Secondly, the human capacity to overcome and surmount 'nature' presupposes social relations which enhance human agency and consciousness. These relations are historically variable, depending on the mode of production which is dominant in any given society. (Turner 194)

The *Age of Iron* captures the pain and agony of a suffering mother, longing for her only daughter, in a time of social unrest that shifts the attention and turns the personal pain into social agony. Coetzee's autobiographical involvement is more pertinent in the *Age of Iron*. After the death of Vera Coetzee on 6 March 1985, he starts working on the novel in June next year. He writes in his notebook:

Who shall guard the Guardians? Who shall censor the censor? The question is unanswerable without a theory of absolutions. It is not answerable in a secular framework. There must be a class or caste of people outside society who are shunned or kept at a physical distance because they touch pollution . . . . (qtd. in JMCLW 143)

This record signifies that Coetzee's *Age of Iron* mirrors more than a suffering body; it persistently signifies the sociological, the political importance of an ill body. The body is never outside of a state. Mrs. Curren is aware of the social upheaval in South Africa. She compares her own bodily condition with the state: "I have cancer from the accumulation of shame I have endured in my life. That is how cancer comes about: from self-loathing, the body turns malignant and begins to eat away itself" (AI 145). Coetzee's drafts and notebooks bear the testimony of painful accounts of his relationship with Vera, her views on South Africa, and the "contradiction between love and ethical misgiving" (JMCLW 145).[15] Cancer-ridden Mrs. Curren longs for her married daughter in the United States. She lives with her maid-servant Florence, her two little daughters, and her fifteen-year-old son, Bheki, who stays in her native place (but comes to stay when the condition in Guguletu is bad), and the recently arrived Vercueil. There is no other way to communicate her vulnerable position except through words:

I must reach out to you in words. So day by day I render myself into words and pack the words into the page like sweets: like sweets for my daughter, for her birthday, for the day of her birth. Words out of my body, drops of myself, for her to unpack in her own time, to take in, to suck, to absorb. As they say on the bottle: old-fashioned drops, drops fashioned by the old, fashioned and packed with love, the love we have no alternative but to feel toward those to whom we give ourselves to devour or discard. (AI 9)

[13] The word labour means both a) work, toil and, b) the process of giving birth.

[14] The European words for the word labour are: the Greek, ponos; the German, Arbeit; the French, travail (Arendt 48).

[15] Mrs. Curren's attachment with her maidservant Florence, her son Bheki and her friend John's involvement in the local movement sets the plot in this novel. This could be the reason that Coetzee has changed the narration several times, and also he has changed the title quite a number of times. The novel's final title (Age of Iron) is finalised after several changes of names: a) 'No. 6,' b) 'The House on Toll Road,' c) 'Rule of Iron,' d) 'Winter,' and finally the Age of Iron.

Mrs. Curren expresses her painful state and love for her daughter through language. Her pain does not resist language, though, Elaine Scarry claims that "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it…and a state anterior to language" (Scarry 4). In Mrs. Curren's case, it is through writing (language) a letter to her daughter, that she describes her pain, her love for her daughter, she wishes to be close to her daughter. She does not even know whether her daughter will receive the letter or not. But writing for her becomes an attempt to share her feelings and unpleasant state of painful days. However, this does not affirm that there will always be an expression of pain. It suggests that there is no definitive form through which one can theorize pain. In this case, the narrative of pain helps understand the nature of pain, it's relation and connection to the external world and its inexpressibility. As David Biro suggests that pain does not take an object like other experiences (Biro 37), and that's why Emily Dickinson writes:

Pain—has an element of Blank—
It cannot recollect
When it begun—or if there were
A time when it was not—
It has no future—but itself—
Its infinite contain
Its past—enlightened to perceive
New periods—of pain. (Dickinson 109)

Having pain is having certainty, it is a vibrant presence for the possible realization of oneself, lacking any concrete form. The sense of pain, the realization of pain helps one to connect with the other, it is the knowledge and experience through which one realizes someone's pain immediately. Brio points out that "pain shatters our sense of being as a being-in-the-world and isolates us from others" (Biro 41). It is true that pain is very subjective, it is a locked-up category, it is in the loneliness of pain that individuality particularizes of existence, it is a category which cannot be traded. It has a didactic quality. It is an integral part in which we restructure our individuality. Mrs. Curren's world is shattered in her pain, but it helps her to see what is it to be human in all its bewilderment and confusion. Pain creates the possibility of love, it is painful in which we seek to love and we also learn the importance of love:

We embrace our children to be folded in the arms of the future, to pass ourselves on beyond death, to be transported. That is how it was when I embraced you, always. We bear children in order to be mothered by them. Home truths, a mother's truth: from now to the end that is all you will hear from me. So: how I longed for you! How I longed to be able to go upstairs to you, to sit on your bed, run my fingers through your hair, whisper in your ear as I did on school mornings, "Time to get up!" (AI 5)

Coetzee's narrative of Mrs. Curren retreats from her love for her daughter to Bheki, Bheki's friend John, and Vercuiel. Her vulnerability enables her to understand the native people in a better way and become sensitive about the political turmoil. Vulnerability is not the frailness of the body, but it "indicates human exposure to psychological harm or moral damage or spiritual threat. More generally it includes our ability to suffer psychologically, morally and spiritually rather than merely a physical capacity for pain from our exposure to the physical world" (Turner 13). The assumption that women are frail is more of a cultural notion and specific to gender-bias. The unpredictability of death when confronted with nature makes living beings frailer than any other thing. Mrs. Curren's vulnerability enables her to see everything equally: "Why do I give this man food? For the same reason I would feed his dog (stolen, I am sure) if it came begging. *For the same reason I gave you my breast*. To be full enough to give and to give from one's fullness: what deeper urge is there?" (AI 7; my emphasis). This is a moment of revelation in the text. It transgresses one's *self* into the *other*.

Coetzee removes the boundaries between *self* and *other* and rephrases love as universal.
Vulnerability is a state of existence where every time we face different kinds of pains, we are reminded of our frailty.[16] The state of vulnerability is not static; it is in a flux within the social narrative.[17] The social narrative determines the

[16] The issue of vulnerability can be traced in Aristotle's discussion of Biology. The concept is derived from the Latin "wound." The possibility of wound is the possibility of life that is why it is a metaphor forthe human condition. The Seven Wounds of Christ are associated with "veneration of passion." "These wounds were evidence of the humanity and suffering of Christ and these human attributes came to emphasize his sharing of human attributes through a common vulnerability" (Turner 244). In Hatred and Forgiveness, Julia Kristeva suggests that 'vulnerability' should be an additional fourth term with 'liberty,' 'equality,' and 'fraternity,' so that, suffering and pain can be a legitimised in the social narrative (Kristeva 42)

state (vulnerability) of the body. The change of bodily function depended on modern medical changes. It is not only dependent on empirical observation, but also on the cultural framework. In the case of disability, the social norms are abhorrent because disability is perceived 'abnormal' within the social narrative.[18] The social narrative decides upon the fact of whether a particular individual is normal or not. The anatomical maps of the human body largely structured on the modern medicines become part of the dominant social narrative. Thus, social institutions are not free from the prejudices that have been prevalent in society. These kinds of social narrative disassociates the feelings of a disabled child's mother, and leads to a stigmatization perpetuated by social institutions.

THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP is essential in Coetzee's understanding of Motherhood. It is a painful process—an emotion comprising desire and suffering. Michael K develops psychic pain because of his disability, and he fails to count himself as a part of the community. Not only the child, but the mother also experiences the pain and alienation[19] as disability is recognized as a social taboo. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* begins with the declaration: "The first thing the midwife noticed about Michael K when she helped him out of his mother into the world was that he had a hare lip" (LTMK 1). It becomes a matter of shame for Anna K to keep her child with other children while she is away for work, because "their smiles and whispers hurt her" and "year after year Michael K sat on a blanket watching his mother polish other people's floors, learning to be quiet" (LTMK 3-4). The novel insists upon the painful aspect of mothering, as in the case of Anna K. Anna K's pain is ontologically given, without any choice, by virtue of existing in the world, by virtue of being in the world. Her motherhood is not so much given as ontologically given with self-sacrificing love.

Throughout the novel then, Coetzee narrates motherhood as an essentially ontological given, but he connects it to deep sustaining engagement with the land, so much so, that land is the sustaining condition for existence. Michael K becomes a gardener, and he does not have women friends because of his face and remains aloof from everybody. Because of his disability, Michael K could not develop any social contract except with his mother. When his mother dies on the way to Prince Albert, her home, he has nothing left but takes her ashes across the land without much money, and tries to give a burial in her home, and her home is the mother-earth. While digging a hole to put his mother ashes, — "hoping that a voice would speak reassuring him that what he was doing was right—his mother's voice, if she still had a voice or a voice belonging to no one in particular… but no voice came"—he begins his life as a cultivator (58-59). Michael K tries to pay back his own debt to his mother. He gives up everything to save his mother's ashes. The pain of motherhood is also very clearly the pain of mother earth—the pain of motherhood is the capacity for grief, to sustain pain. To forget the pain of his mother's demise, he embraces the earth of Price Albert as Mother Earth. He feels the same way what Lucretius describes centuries back about the Mother Earth:

[17] In both the natural and social sciences, anything that is part of human beings is socially produced, and the sociologist calls this production constructionism. According to Turner "constructionism invites us to presume that all facts are necessarily social facts in the sense that social communities produced them" (11). But the problem with social constructionism is that social facts cultural ignoring the phenomenological aspect of the body, body as a lived experience (Turner 11).

[18] In Coetzee's Slowman, Paul Rayment meets with an accident. He is hit by a car when he was on his way home on his bicycle, and loses his leg. Paul murmurs half-consciously "something that befalls one, something unintended, unexpected." (21) "If you have hitherto been a man, with a man's life, may you henceforth be a dog, with a dog's life." (26). He refuses to wear a prosthesis:

> If he were to give in and accept a prosthesis there would be a stronger reason for exercising the stump. As it Is, the stump is of no use to him at all. All he can do is to carry it around like an unwanted child. No wonder it wants to shrink, retract, withdraw.
>
> But if this fleshly object is repulsive, how much more so a leg moulded out of pink plastic with a hinge at the top and a shoe at the bottom, an apparatus that you strap yourself to in the morning and unstrap yourself from at night and drop on the floor, shoe and all. (Slowman 58)

He denies vulnerability through the refusal to wear prosthesis and asking for assistance.

[19] Alienation is painful. Alienation was first defined by sociologists Robert Merton (1957), Melvin Seeman (1959), and Dwight Dean (1961), where they have included feelings of isolation, normlessness, and powerlessness. These are the feelings which come out from other feelings like rejection, instability, and failure. For a better discussion see George Henderson's Psychosocial Aspects of Disability. Marx has emphasized the role of the capitalist society where the worker loses his or her own vitality to think under the pressure of production. The production of the labour is thus directly related, the question of how to define the normal and the abnormal. Turner points out that "The complexity of the body as both a natural phenomenon and a social product can be exposed by attempting to extend Marx's notion of alienation into a discussion of disease. The problem of disease in the human body in turn brings out the subjective and objective experiences of embodiment" (Turner 196).

Finally, we all arise from seed celestial…
And therefore 'Mother' is a name that's fitting for the Earth,
For what arises from the earth falls back to earth once more,
And that which was sent down to earth from heaven's aethereal shore
Is taken up again into the quarters of the sky. (Lucretius 66)

Michael K also enacts Marx's notion "of man's sensuous appropriation of nature" (Turner 196), and he understands that "under slavery and patriarchy, ownership of bodies is precluded by the political and legal system of control, so that agents experience their bodies as objects which are ruled externally" (Turner 197). His attachment to Mother Earth is a replacement of his own mother and establishes the fact that social institutions like family is also the product of social stigmatization, but not the mother earth. He constructs his relation with mother earth:

Every grain of this earth will be washed clean by the rain, he told himself, and dried by the sun and scoured by the wind, before the seasons turn again. There will be not a grain left bearing my marks, just as my mother has now, after her season in the earth, been washed clean, blown about, and drawn up into the leaves of grass.
So what is it, he thought, that binds me to this spot of earth as if to a home I cannot leave? We must all leave home, after all, we must all leave our mothers. Or am I such a child, such a child from such a line of children, that none of us can leave, but have to come back to die here with our heads upon our mothers' laps, I upon hers, she upon her mother's, and so back and back, generation upon generation? (LTMK 124)

This is a sheer reflection of the impermanence of life and everything that moves Michael K into philosophical inquiry about life. Coetzee examines the relationship that Michael K builds between his mother and mother earth.

In Coetzee's *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), motherhood is a responsibility to take up, and pain is in some way definitive of this fundamental quality of being a mother. The text neither deals with Jesus nor anything on Jesus Christ, but as in most of Coetzee's writings, the text definitely resonates with an allegorical interpretation of motherhood. Even though the book does not deal with Christ; Christ is important here because he does not have a father (or his father is god). Mary chooses to give birth to Jesus; whose birth causes her substantial pain. Later, she accepts the dead body of Jesus. As it is evident in most of his works that Christian theology is integral to the understanding of pain and suffering.
The novel begins with Simone, a forty-five-year-old man, and David, a five-year-old boy, in an unknown place called Novilla.[20] They arrive in Novilla as migrants and stay in the refugee camp called Belstar. They try to cope with the new place and try to learn Spanish. Simone has no family, and David has lost his parents—"Not my grandson, not my son, but I am responsible for him" (CJ 01*)*. Simone's intention is to help David to find his mother, but the letter which describes David's family is missing, and the boy's father is mentioned only once: "A letter went missing that might have explained everything. As a result, his parents are lost, or more accurately, he is lost. He and his mother have been separated, and we are trying to find her. His father is a different matter" (74). Simone does not know David's mother. He has no information, but he is sure that when he sees her, he would recognize her. The novel moves slowly without any definite time and space. The major element in the text is: Simone needs to understand the convention and culture of the new place. The main element is Simone's quest for David's mother. Though there is a strong element of slowness in the novel, there are several things happening in the narration (intertextual referential structure): Simone engages in many philosophical discussions referring to Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Cervantes, Kafka, and Goethe. The most important reference is the name of Jesus in the title, whereas nowhere the text discusses or compares Jesus with David. But the title hints at the childhood of Jesus which, thematically purports the childhood and search for the mother: "We, David and I, came here, as everyone does, for the sake of a new life, a new beginning. What I want for David, what David wants too, is a normal life like any other youngster's. But—it stands to reason—to lead a normal life he needs a mother, needs to be born to a mother, so to speak" (CJ 79). The painful journey of Simone to find David's mother resembles Jesus's journey on behalf of goodness—a journey of love and care. David asks if Simone is his *padrino*?[21] Simone says: "No, I am not. No one invited me to be your *padrino*. I am just your friend" (CJ 33). David emphasizes that he can be David's *padrino,* and he emphatically replies:

[20] Place bears an important mark-shift in Coetzee's work. Beginning with Dusklands (1974) and ends with Disgrace (1999) involves South-Africa; Australian journey begins with Elizabeth Costello (2003). Childhood of Jesus (2013) and The Schooldays of Jesus (2016) a sequel, takes place in Novilla, an imaginary utopian socialist capital city renders a complex spatial relationship between Coetzee and space. This, however, claims many critics his trans-national feature.
[21] David asks, what is padrino? Simone replies: "A padrino is someone who acts your father when for some reason your father cannot be here" (C J 33). In the Spanish-speaking countries padrino means a godfather.

That is not up to you my boy. You can't choose a *padrino* for yourself, as you can't choose your father. There isn't a proper word for what I am to you, just as there isn't a proper word for what you are to me. However, if you like, you can call me Uncle. When people say, *who is he to you?* You can say, *He is my uncle. He is my uncle and he loves me.* And I will say, *He is my boy*." (CJ 33)

This is an unconditional love, although Simone can't be a father figure like Jesus. *The Childhood of Jesus* certainly evokes the question of migrancy and the driving force behind modern nation-states.[22] The ethical responsibility of a writer is best expressed in writing, creating, and evoking the moral question of the undeserved suffering caused by an individual or a state. Creating a utopian society, the novel could draw the present condition of the refugee migrant families and children in the European countries. This arbitrary connection is important in Coetzee's later works (*The Childhood of Jesus* and *The Schooldays of Jesus)*. The pertinent question in Coetzee's writing is how art can evoke horror. He does that through the representation of a child-mother relationship. Possibly, *the Childhood of Jesus* (2013) and *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016) are attempts to portray the condition of thousands of migrant children (Fig 3.4) like David.[23]

The search for the mother, motherland, and mother tongue in CJ suggests that Coetzee's narrative as a narrative of displacement, that many people are facing especially the people of Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Afghanistan.[24] In Coetzee's late writing, the plot moves from South Africa to Australia, and then to an unknown utopian place where life moves slowly, everybody gets everything, the bus is free, there are no ticket stubs for the museums, and

Fig: 3.4. A migrant child walks from the Macedonian border into Serbia, near the village of Miratovac. *The Guardian*. Web; 22 June 2017.

[22] The Childhood of Jesus can be read with reference to Plato's The Republic.

[23] On30 January 2016 the Guardian reported: "The plight of unaccompanied child refugees has emerged as one of the most pressing issues in the migrant crisis. Last week it was announced that Britain would accept more unaccompanied minors from Syria and other conflict zones. According to Save the Children, an estimated 26,000 unaccompanied children entered Europe last year. Europol, which has a 900-strong force of intelligence analysts and police liaison officers, believes 27% of the million arrivals in Europe last year were minors. "Whether they are registered or not, we're talking about 270,000 children. Not all of those are unaccompanied, but we also have evidence that a large proportion might be," said Donald, indicating that the 10,000 figure is likely to be a conservative estimate of the actual number of unaccompanied minors who have disappeared since entering Europe"
(https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/30/fears-for-missing-child-refugees#img-1).

[24] In this important work on the Syrians, Syrian Crisis: Massive Displacement, Dire
Needs and a Shortage of Solutions, Elizabeth Ferris, Kemal Kirisci, and Salman Shaikh report that the displacement in Syria is over 6 million. Their statistic shows that 1 in 3 Syrians has been displaced. They are displaced because of direct attack and other forms of violence (https://www.brookings.edu)

everybody gets food—an ideal place for immigrants. In a letter to Paul Auster on 26 September 2009 Coetzee writes:
It is not uncommon for writers, as they age, to get impatient with so-called poetry of language and go for more stripped-down style ("late style"). The most notorious instance, I suppose, is Tolstoy, who in later life expressed a moralistic disapproval of the seductive powers of art and confined himself to stories that would not be out of place in an elementary classroom. A loftier example is provided by Bach, who at the time of his death was working on his *Art of Fugue*, pure music in the sense that it is not tied to any particular instrument.
One can think of a life in art, schematically, in two or perhaps three stages. In the first you find, or pose for yourself, a great question. In the second you labor away at answering it. And then, if you live long enough, you come to the third stage, when the aforesaid great question begins to bore you, and you need to look elsewhere. (*Here and Now: Letters 208-211*)

PAIN, LOVE, AND CARE are inter-related elements in Coetzee's narrative. These elements are dependent on each other as a relational category. Coetzee's narrative moves beyond the conventional structure through which we generally understand about pain, love, and care. He does not either provide a manifesto of these elements or direct his readers towards a simple solution for the suffering body, for someone who is looking for love, for someone needs care. His narrative represents a conflicting structure where the truth is not one dimensional, but emerges out of a nuanced understanding of the history of human existence. Mrs. Curren's pain is not only physical, she had to increases her doses after the death of Bheki. Her narrative of pain signifies that the body is located and shaped by certain sociocultural and economic condition. Another aspect of the representation of the mother's pain (or anybody for that matter) is dependent on the medium and the will of expression. Medium of expression is not the only language but Mrs. Curren being a professor, has the medium of expression, and able to write down about her condition. Writing (depicted in the epistolary mode of narration) serves as a healing method, whereas Florence working as a maid who loses her son, does not have the medium of expression. Her inexpressibility signifies that there are countless experiences of pain that go unwritten. However, Mrs. Curren moves from her own self to see her responsibility for the other. She realizes that her cancer is not only located in her body but the illness can also be related to the Apartheid regime. As Levinas observes "pain can become the central phenomenon of the diseased state. These are the '"pain-illness,"' to which the patient's other psychological states bring no relief but, on the contrary,anxiety and distress, adding to the cruelty of pain" (Levinas 92). Coetzee's narrative brings these parallel pictures which raise the question of expression, sympathy, and invokes the truth in the ethical level. One's pain and suffering should not go obscure in another's accounts of pain and suffering, and becomes necessary to "consider the '"pain illness"' of beings who are psychologically deprived, retarded, impoverished in their social life and impaired to the other person" (Levinas 92). It also signifies that our notion of the world depends on how we connect ourselves with the other emotionally and imaginatively. The expression of pain is subjective, and it also depends on the subject's socio-economic condition. We are not given many accounts of Anna K, only a short brief of her painful journey in a wheelbarrow. Anna K's pain continues through Michael K, who shows unconditional love to his mother, and loses his interest in everything. David's search for his mother is not allegorical in the level of the title, but the narrative allegorically invokes the refugee crisis and the fate of thousands of mothers and children who are victims of war and political upheaval.

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