The Nomad As Peace Machine: Nomadism in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*

By

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Abstract

This thesis looks at the trope of the nomad, specifically the Deleuzian warrior-nomad, in J.M. Coetzee's novels *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Waiting for the Barbarians.* The protagonists of both novels are considered in terms of their transgressions of political and ethical boundaries. There is a discussion of the nomad who transgresses state control while moving from within state subjectivity. The Magistrate from *Waiting for the Barbarians* is discussed in this regard, while Michael K from *Life & Times of Michael K* is analyzed as a Deleuzian warrior-nomad.

This thesis also looks at ways in which a totalitarian state controls citizen's abilities to welcome guests, and questions to what extent individuals can challenge these controls. The protagonists from both novels are compared and it is concluded that both characters yearn for a kind of intimate encounter that transgresses personal limits, and that it is this kind of ontological nomadism that is the most difficult.

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Introduction: The People Are Not An Allegory, They Are People.

Almost all of the criticism dealing with South African writer J.M. Coetzee focuses on his work as a response to the violent excesses of the apartheid era. I will read his novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* (*WFB)* and *Life & Times of Michael K (MK)* as texts that posit theories of territory, circulation, and how the warring and peace-making nomad responds to an oppressive state.

Coetzee's novels, often set in timeless unnamed geographies and with eponymous references to classic European texts – *Life & Times of Michael K* to Franz Kafka, *Foe* to Daniel DeFoe, *Waiting for the Barbarians* to Samuel Beckett – could be criticized as seeking legitimation from the European literary tradition as a way of being *less* political, *less* race-conscious, and *less* of a target for apartheid censors. Form, in political times, is as contentious as content; this relation between the political "truth" of a text and the direct or distant style is central to contemporary discourse about Coetzee's novels and reflects the ways the protagonists in novels such as *Life & Times of Michael K* (*MK*) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* are read as responding to their politically volatile settings. Derek Attridge, in *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event*, approaches the relation of Coetzee's form, content and ethical responsibility by questioning how allegorically or literally the novels should be read.

Attridge's thesis for his chapter on *WFB* and *MK* is that a "wholly nonallegorical reading" of a text would "refrain from any interpretation whatsoever" and would instead "do justice" to the text by creating a new and

inventive text of "equal singularity"(36). This reading would be "literal" in a sense that the literary text would be treated as a non-metaphorical event experienced by and responded to by a "singular" reader, in this case Attridge.

Noting that a lack of temporal or geographic specificity tempts "allegorical reading", Attridge calls *WFB* the "paradigm case of [. . .] temporally and spatially unspecific fiction" (41). *MK*, located specifically in the Western Cape of South Africa, takes place in an undated future. For these reasons Attridge selects Coetzee's novels *WFB* and *MK* as suggestively allegorical texts that can be read as a collection of singular events that the reader, "not as free-floating subject but as the nexus of a number of specific histories and contextual formations," is authorized to "bring [. . .] into being, differently each time, in a singular performance of the work[s] not so much as written but as writing" (9). Thus *WFB* would be no more relevant to post-apartheid politics than to post-9/11 security, ETa attacks or to the reader's domestic troubles. This stands in contrast to Frederic Jameson's approach, in which he infamously asserts that " [a]ll third-world texts are necessarily [. . .] allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as [. . .] *national allegories,* even when, or perhaps [. . .] particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (Jameson 69). There is no way, Jameson would say, that Coetzee's novels can be read as Attridge reads them, as open textual signifiers malleable to the "contextual formations" of each reader. These readerly formations, Jameson's theory suggests, would be as appropriative as the complicated allegorical readings Attridge assesses as equally appropriative.

Certainly Attridge understands the relevance that subjectivities broader than the academic reader bring to analyses of Coetzee's works; I do not wish to present Attridge as wholly solipsistic in his treatment of novels that are about imperialism, rape, war, and torture. He writes that:

[. . .] a responsive reading of a literary work will always be alert to the possibility of allegorical meaning, to the constant leaking of meaning away from the literal. Given the extensive suffering caused in South Africa by dehumanizing codifications, it is perhaps not surprising that many of its writers, including Coetzee, have staged the allegorizing process in their works. (Attridge 62)

Thus, although aware of the inevitable presence – allegorical or literal –of the actual violence of apartheid in Coetzee's novels, Attridge decides to read meaning more broadly in (or into) the novels. In a desire to be forward about his own guilty subjectivity as a white academic responding to a text about colonial violence, Attridge perhaps overcompensates for this impulse. Puzzling through the novels for clues to apartheid responsibility and guilt could reduce the texts to historical documents and corresponding readings of them to historicist appropriations. Privileging the "literal" as somehow more "singular" and honest about the imposed presence of the particular academic reader, though, results in a response that is too clean, too pedantic, and somewhat far from the many messy, overtly political, guilt-ridden responses to South African apartheid narratives[1].

Attridge recommends less allegorical readings because they "draw[ ] us into unfamiliar emotional and cognitive territory" instead of, as in a strict one-to-

[1] For my critical discussion of *WFB* and *MK* I am relying largely on Attridge's recent writing on Coetzee. His approach to Coetzee's novels is mostly concerned with the ethics of reading and reflects the importance of the ethical response, an issue I will discuss throughout my thesis.

one allegorical reading, laying out "a reminder of what we already know only too well" (43). He wishes to attend to his personal response to the novels, to what he calls the "details of [an] encounter" with the text, rather than "the political, historical, or moral truths that we can apprehend perfectly well without Coetzee's aid" (45). Certainly Attridge provokes my indignation when he assumes that a diverse readership is equally aware of historical and contemporary events in South Africa and the world, and when he suggests that there are "moral truths" that a certain "we" can "apprehend". This is Heideggerian metaphysical thinking that makes assumptions of *a priori* truths ("moral" truths at that!) that only a select group is capable of accessing. I think, though, that Attridge's response to Coetzee is somewhat like Coetzee's response to political events; neither wish to write about specific, identifiable places, events, and people, yet both wish to be sensitive and compassionate to the condition of humanity in the late twentieth century. In the following passage Attridge defends a highly personal, introspective response to Coetzee and to (post) colonial texts:

The point I wish to make is that allegorical reading of the traditional kind has no place for [. . .] uncertainty and open-endedness, [for a] [. . .] sense that the failure to interpret can be as important, and quite as emotionally powerful, as success would be. [. . .] And it is through responsive reading, an immersion in the text, that we participate in, and perhaps are changed by, this complex understanding of hope and fear, illusion and disillusionment. (48)

It is as if, afraid of speaking too confidently for others –a common anxiety among post-structuralist and post-colonial critics –Attridge espouses speaking

exclusively for oneself. One cannot, perhaps, ever represent the experience of another, especially if that other is a fictionalized character. Yet the suggestion that "immersion in the text" will make a reader more empathetic is erroneous; we have all known people who refuse to read books by or about gays, feminists, or First Nations people –empathetic immersion in a text is likely a case of preaching to the converted (48). And I disagree outright with Attridge's claim that by "seeking worlds elsewhere", that is, by reading fictional narratives as allegorical references to material dilemmas, the reader is forced to "play[. . .] down" the "intimate experience of an individual [reader]'s inner states" and even to suppress what Attridge most values in literary reading, "the posing (but not resolving) of delicate ethical dilemmas" (48). In other words, Attridge suggests that by reading an allegorical resolution to an ethical problem a reader would assume the actual problem being allegorized is also resolved. On the contrary, I would say that the very process of interacting with a text while at the same time acknowledging the political, class, gender and culture biases that every reader brings leads inevitably to multiple lateral connections between the text, the reader's experiences, and the (allegorized or otherwise) experiences of non-fictional others.

Attridge's discourse of the ethics of how to read post-colonial texts is reminiscent of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's foundational 1998 post-colonial article "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Reflecting on Michel Foucault's "analysis of the centuries of European imperialism", Spivak argues that "the substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed which often accounts for Foucault's appeal can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the 'concrete' subject of

oppression that, in fact, compounds the appeal" (87). Attridge, it seems, has recognized the dangers of appearing too blatantly to have a "substantive concern" for the oppressed, and does not wish to privilege his role as a professional academic –indeed as one of Coetzee's most well-known critics. He wishes, undertaking a complex turn of humility, to *not* draw attention to himself as a particularly gifted humanitarian or freedom-fighter; he does not claim to speak for the oppressed. Instead, he wishes to speak only for himself as a reader and for his experience of Coetzee's novels as events.

There are multiple problems with this approach. Spivak details the ethical troubles for writers like Attridge, and myself as well. If the colonized other is ascribed an "inaccessible blankness," then the colonial academic creates "*the* place for the production of theory" (Spivak 89). Certainly Attridge could be accused of simply giving up on recognizing the voices of the oppressed in *MK* and *WFB* and instead filling in the silence with his experience as yet another academic and writer fictionalizing *his* experiences. Still, with the extensive explanation he gives for his non-allegorical readings, Attridge presents himself as a reader who does not rashly decide to pass over socio-political allegory in an attempt to, as Spivak warns, "hide the relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation" to himself, the literal and metaphoric colonial reader (89). At one end the grand arrogance of righteous ethnocentrism; at the other the bland and vicious process of "relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation" (89). For Spivak, the subaltern truly cannot speak in Attridge's book or in my thesis.

However, Spivak contends that "sustained [work] on the *mechanics* of the constitution of the Other" is a worthwhile endeavour (89). This, at times, is the work Attridge engages in, and is the most responsible approach I can take in my work on Coetzee's novels. I will not succeed in solving the problem of whether writing about the subaltern is futile appropriation. My thesis examines the fear and anticipation the empire, the nation, and the colonized inhabitants of fictional and non-fictional states feel towards nomadic figures and possible ways nomadic figures can be met with hospitality. Though my desire to understand this literary, psychological and political phenomena is driven by personal curiosity about the world I live in, I do not doubt that my work will inevitably assimilate fictional and non-fictional nomads into my own "production of theory." The theoretical and fictional texts I am reading are not written by traveling, homeless, migrant or nomadic authors; mostly, they are texts by academics and writers working within institutions in western cities. Most writing on Coetzee's novels responds to the texts as either works of theory, experiments in narrative form, or as political allegory; although my focus on the nomad will be similar to these responses in that I will not evade the political implications of the texts, I will focus on *WFB* and *MK* as productions of theory in their own right, especially of theories of the nomad as a destabilizing force of exteriority.

Michael Valdez Moses' article "Solitary Walkers: Rousseau and Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*" compares eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, forced by debt and scandal to flee his home, with Coetzee's protagonist K, forced by war to flee his home. Beyond this condition of nomadic

homelessness, Moses finds, in Rousseau's defense of solitude and a "repudiation of all civic ties and obligations", a literary parallel to Michael K which could provide a "serious response" to the charges of moral carelessness and social irresponsibility that have been brought against "Michael K and his creator"(133). This article, like others on Michael K and like Attridge's study, defends Coetzee against critics who take Coetzee's imprecise socio-political settings as morally evasive. Similar criticism is often leveled at post-structuralist theorists; ethical relativism is misunderstood as ethical apathy and a refusal to close debates with definitive moral resolutions read as a retreat from responsibility. Moses' "defense" of Coetzee, however, rests on the assumption that both Rousseau and Michael K actively reject the soiled passions of society for a purer reverie with nature. Further, Moses concludes that Coetzee's narrative is the communicative bridge between the Michael K's inarticulable reverie and the mass of relationships that form society; such a conclusion, however generous to Coetzee, still seems overly hasty to *forgive* Coetzee for seeming uncaring. It is as if the unnamed critics who read Coetzee as a cold observer are Moses' intended reader, or at least as if the reader is herself a materialist, anti-intellectual Marxist.

Moses is not the only critic who writes about Coetzee in a defensive tone. Ian Glenn, in his essay "Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and the Politics of Interpretation," defends Coetzee from those who consider him "irrelevant" as a commentator on "real" ethical and political matters, and therefore irrelevant as a South African writer. Glenn notes that although Coetzee refuses to "commit himself to articulating or advancing a future", such a position "is also a refusal to

benefit from the struggle of others, to speak for the Other" (25). This defense is in line with Spivak's conclusion that any representation of the subaltern ultimately re-affirms the subaltern position. Glenn's defense of Coetzee is more post-structuralist than Moses'; still, both critics are intent on rescuing Coetzee from moralists and on positioning him as someone who cares more than the detached and abstract narratives of the novels might suggest. I see this impulse to position Coetzee as politically responsible a provocative metaphor in itself when considered alongside a reading of K, the protagonist of *MK,* who seems (and may well be) terminally apathetic towards his homeland's war. Indifference, I will show in my treatment of the nomad, does not always equal invisibility or irresponsibility, and even if the indifferent, nomadic, unlocatable narrator/protagonist is invisible to politics, the ire that his or her indifference provokes leads to a political and ethical discourse worth investigation. K, though positioned outside the community of the state-at-war, is in an unwillingly yet continual discourse with the state, and this tenuous relationship reveals more about the power and intent of the state than it does about the intentions of K.

In post-colonial theory there is much discussion of the fragile ground upon which notions of a unified culture, nation, state, or empire have always rested. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, presents his theory of cultural hybridity in which the imagined community of the nation is revealed to be in constant re-negotiation. In the introduction to his study Bhabha stresses that currently the:

[. . .] very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities – as the *grounds of national comparativism* –are in a profound process of redefinition. [. . .] there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities.(7)

The imagined communities represented in *MK* and *WFB* include the nation, the Empire, the community of soldiers, and the barbarians; as these communities disintegrate, dissipate, are attacked or are mobilized, Coetzee's protagonists consider their identities in the context of larger social identities. Bhabha opposes his theory of transnational and translational hybridity to theories of nationalism that lead to genocide and territorial wars; I am less optimistic that redefinition can replace assimilation or that models of overlapping hybridity can peacefully replace national models of hierarchical ethnic, class, and national categories. Though the promise of living together in peace is desirable, the danger is ever-present that conflict and difference will be repressed in favour of organization and categorical belonging; this is a particular problem that I will address in my discussion of camps in *WFB*.

Bhabha extends his optimistic view of nation-building discourse between communities to literature when he asserts that "the South African novels of Richard Rive, Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer, [and] John Coetzee are documents of a society divided by the effects of apartheid that enjoin the international community to meditate on the unequal, asymmetrical worlds that exist

elsewhere"(7).[2] Bhabha does not privilege symmetrical communities, yet his comment that "unequal, assymetrical worlds" exist "elsewhere" to the "international community" suggests that equality and symmetry are attainable or, if questionably so, desireable, and that Coetzee, Gordimer, Rive and Head serve as the very reminders of otherness that Spivak doubts academics can or will listen to. Still further in *Location of Culture*, Bhabha maintains that unequal loci and asymmetrical national profiles are the hallmarks of the postmodern, post-colonial, and increasingly cosmopolitan nation.

Homi Bhabha begins his chapter "DissemiNation" by recalling that he has:

> [. . .] lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and *émigrés* and refugees; gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. (199)

Bhabha proposes that, especially from the late-twentieth century on, these gatherings, along with equivalent dispersals, are the network from which "cultural identification and discursive address" are constructed in order to "function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation'" and place the dispersed and gathered people as "immanent subjects of [. . .] social and literary narratives" (201). The nation

[2] Such a universal allegorical reading of Coetzee is exactly what Attridge would wish to avoid.

does not cease its efforts to fix subjects in static categories; Bhabha lists sexuality, territorial jealousy, 'culture', and class as some areas of categorical slippage (201). Certainly migrants and nomads slip through categories of class and territory, and as far as visible manifestations of "national culture," nomads are not expected, even less than settled citizens, to perform convincing and consistent linguistic, cultural, academic, and geographic nationalism.

Still, the assumption that a fixed geographic location precludes a reliable cultural location may not be valid and must be tested. From such an assumption it could follow that transient groups lack the linguistic and material markers of ethnicity or culture and that the very rootlessness of nomads threatens the stability of "settled cultures." This is, of course, untrue. Romany language, although neither taught in public schools nor given media space in Central and Eastern Europe, has survived a remarkable four hundred years as an oral minority language with regional dialects. To date the various material manifestations of Eastern European culture have not been threatened by the constant presence of Romany culture (though one would not know this by the continued presence of anti-Romany racism) (Kalvoda 93-111, Kolsti 51-58, Crowe 61-74). Romanies, consistently performing a culture that rankles official national culture, exist in a position that, although permanent, is also permanently peripheral to geographic nationalism (Kalvoda 93-111, Kolsti 51-58, Crowe 61-74). It is not only geographic wanderings that upset national boundaries; alternative cultural performance disturbs official national cultures.

Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity and the constant negotiation of national culture depends on the continual infiltrative movement of alternative cultural performance. He writes that individual people enact their versions of the nation in the "scraps, patches and rags of daily life", and that these acts become, ultimately, "the signs of a coherent national culture"(29). These acts, what Bhabha calls the "narrative performance" of the nation, eventually "interpellat[e] a growing circle of national subjects," thus continuing the "accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (29). The "people" Bhabha refers to consist of any person existing within the nation, and the pedagogical is a conception of the nation that finds its authority in tradition, teleology, and public morality. That *all* "the people" are not always included in the official national narrative is obvious; Bhabha cites Frantz Fanon and Julia Kristeva for examples of how large populations –African Americans and women –are routinely pushed to positions of liminality. By continually approaching, challenging and altering boundaries of the imagined nation, Bhabha posits, liminal groups maintain a discourse that questions who "the people" are.

This discourse is not always peaceful, and "the people" do not always seek legitimation from the centre; to assume a telos of temporary national balance assumes, I think (though Bhabha protests otherwise that the people are "the cutting edge between the totalizing powers" that seek homogeneity and "forces that signify [. . .] contentious, unequal interests), that a dialectic between state and individual is a Hegelian process with an historical process of state-creation

(209). Indeed, Bhabha may be seeking a nation-individual discourse that stays within Hegelian dialectics and is thus easily accessible to political, literary, and social thinkers. Still, I sense a certain leveling power in the reduction of discourse to a dialectic equation; further in my thesis I will examine this leveling with (equally if not more "contentious" philosophically) post-structuralist relativism and the difficulty of responding on an individual level to multiple and often chaotic difference within a state.

Still, Bhabha writes that "[c]ultural identification is poised on the brink" of confusion and "undecidability", and the idea of the modern "people" spills from the "abyss of enunciation where the subject splits" and "the pedagogical and the performative are agonistically articulated", leaving the "language of national collectivity and cohesiveness [. . .] at stake" (220). This agonistic articulation, that is, a kind of conflict of identity politics between the liminal minorities and the ephemeral idea of a national identity, is indeed a kind of culture war, and the people can be seen as identity warriors. The people though, in Bhabha's construction (and because it *is* a construction, a "plan" of sorts, it can not really reflect of the chaos of human relations), lever their conflict from the opposite sides of the nation, yet are equally aware of a shared, if contested "language of national collectivity". However, if one thinks of the people as Deleuzian nomadic warriors, they are people *external* to the national identity apparatus who have no need for collectives or cohesiveness; they neither seek hegemonic legitimation nor build fresh legitimating institutions.

To be fair, it is likely that Bhabha's performative and pedagogical dialectic is conceived as a process of re-creation without an historical apex[3]; I am not saying that Bhabha is as orthodox Hegelian. For Bhabha, modern national culture, more an evolving concept than a fixed entity, can look to neither an originary beginning nor a future culmination of unified national expression. Bhabha does not carry the idea of confrontation and dismissiveness to a potentially anarchic conclusion (he projects a series of co-operative theses); for this, I turn to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Bhabha, as a cultural critic, desires a nation with a peaceful traffic of confrontation and legitimation; I will explore what this traffic would look like without the thetic resolution of legitimation. The Deleuzian nomad is non-dialectic, seeking neither a successful anti-thetical challenge nor a temporary resolution. I will treat Coetzee's novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life & Times of Michael K* as narratives of non-dialectic nomads in discourse with a dialectic state apparatus; this discourse, voluntary or forced, reflects way the state assimilates, deflects or welcomes a wide range of categorical others.

This discussion of the dialectic as a reductionist strategy (especially for cultural theory) has roots in metaphysics and, more recently, in post-structuralist theory. Throughout his writing, Martin Heidegger wrestles with the circular tendencies of philosophy; though I see Bhabha's nation as a circle rather than an historicist line of progress, the dialogue between liminal groups and legitimized nationhood is a dialectic that constantly disrupts, re-writes and disrupts again the

[3] Except that the goal of global peaceful co-existence of an infinite number of fluid populations seems an ever present mark of his writing.

thesis of nationhood with the liminal anti-thesis. Though Bhabha does not propose any final resolution to this dialectic, I think the very nature of such a dialectical dialogue suggests a *telos,* and I will posit the Deleuzian nomad, as seen in Coetzee's two texts, as external to the thesis, the anti-thesis, and the *telos* (or resolution). Heidegger, in his discussion of "the circular movement of philosophy," recognizes the unavoidably dialectical nature of critical circling and suggests that a "view of the centre" is the goal of the "circular course" (187). Perhaps Bhabha's modern nation has a centre, and though he would certainly suggest that such a centre is altered by the performative (liminal) –pedagogical (legitimated) dichotomy, it is not far from Heidegger's metaphysical thinking that "[t]he circular character of philosophical thought is directly bound up with its ambiguity, an ambiguity that is not to be eliminated or, still less, leveled off by means of a dialectic"[4] (187). Though Bhabha celebrates ambiguity, he maintains the performative (liminal) and pedagogical (legitimated) dialectic, and does, to an extent, "level off" some ambiguity. There are groups that refuse to perform liminality in response to or rejection of the pedagogy: these groups are the most feared, reviled, and desired and are the nomadic groups that slip under the well-worn circular route of a metaphysical or cultural dialectic.

Through the dialectic, then, Bhabha's modern national culture, denied a linear legitimation of historicism, turns from being a "symbol of modernity" [5] into becoming "the symptom of [. . .] the 'contemporary' within modern culture"

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[4] Further Heidegger writes that, though it is "characteristic" that "such attempts to level off this circularity and ambiguity of philosophical thinking through the use of dialectic", "all dialectic in philosophy is only the expression of an embarrassment" (187).

[5] Especially as Jean-François Lyotard outlines in *The Postmodern Explained.*

(211)[6]. I would like to settle on this idea as the nation as a "symptom" –not as a *sign* of a larger entity, as if national culture is a landmass and the nation its most visible mountain. Rather, the nation, that is, the geographic, economic, linguistic and legal space marked as *one* property (in the case of South Africa, marked as such by a colonial power) is itself a symptom of something circulating with no regard for state apparatus or national imaginings; as a symptom of a disease.

The disease, I would like to propose, is that of ill hospitality, especially ill hospitality to those who travel through our national and state-secured spaces. Jacques Derrida, especially in his later works, wrote on and spoke of the great danger and great importance of hospitality, defense and what he called auto-immunity. Absolute hospitality ends with the martyrdom of the host, and ill hospitality results in war. Attempts to define how the proper guest will appear to the proper host often translates into xenophobia, a police state or paranoia. Security for *self* and compassion for an *other* are concerns for hosts of all types – in a neighbourhood, a philosophical dialogue, or a nation. If the nomad is an always transient figure, he or she is the eternal guest and the most difficult host; how often and where can the nomad be welcomed? Where can a nomad exterior to the state and deprived of its resources welcome guests? Is the circulation of a nomad dangerous, philosophically (there can be no resolution, no thetic end to a dialectic), politically (the nomad will never assimilate, can not be counted on to remain loyal), and ethically (the nomadic other does not stay still) dangerous?

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[6] This non-linear symptom is something I imagine as a circle of philosophy shrinking and growing, scattering and swelling with disparate groups, and I imagine the circle as a plague mark, as a circular disease scar.

As such the nomadic figure is more than a metaphorical and literal example of performative personhood with and against the discourse of "the people;" rather, the nomad reflects formulations of hospitality and welcome. Like a disease without regard for class, gender, or age, the nomad may move through multiple nations (imagined or actual), stay within one nation, or be oblivious to ideas of nationhood (or even personhood) at all. Trailing this figure, like the auto-immune response that destroys as it travels, is the state defense, categorizing, reducing, interning and killing as it moves. These movements of crossing, these crossings which do not recognize national or territorial boundaries at all, are especially disturbing to apartheid and post-apartheid narratives in which boundaries of territory, language, and personhood are layered thick with decades of violent oppression.

Apartheid, as a system of institutionalized racist categorization, relies on boundaries that are not to be crossed. Ato Setyi-Oto, in his paper "Fanon and the Possibility of Postcolonial Critical Imagination," gives an account of apartheid as "something more than an extreme order of separation and exclusion [that is] made palpably manifest in space" (8). While, like First Nations segregation and oppression in Canada, apartheid *is* most manifest in the legislation of forbidden, permitted, private, public or otherwise restricted territory, Setyi-Oto describes how the most resilient form of racialized oppression takes root beyond real estate, legal, and police control:

Call apartheid a metaphor for a certain family of obdurate habits of mind and attitudes to the world: an insistence on isolate particulars, a refusal of universals;

contempt for the principle of connectedness, above all an inability or unwillingness to discern the human commonalities that, for better or worse, reside in the discrete histories and cultures of diverse and divided communities, commonalities that precede and survive the brute and odious facts of social and political separations. (8)

As such, the legislators of the apartheid nation, in their obduracy, created a system of exclusion which relies on violent denial. *WFB* opens with the Magistrate describing Joll, the representative of the Empire "here on emergency powers":

I have never seen anything like it: two little discs of glass suspended in front of his eyes in loops of wire. Is he blind? I could understand it if he wanted to hide blind eyes. But he is not blind. The discs are dark, they look opaque from the outside, but he can see through them. He tells me they are a new invention. (*WFB* 1)

The "new invention" is the stubborn "insistence on isolate particulars" Sekyi-Oto describes: a taxonomy of politicized discretions between sentient beings that must be enforced. Every being, with the help of shaded glasses, can be observed and categorized; no light is too bright to prevent state scrutiny. Further, Sekyi-Oto writes that "the most ruinuous consequence of apartheid" is:

what Soyinka [. . .] called a "narrowness of vision", a vision immured in the particularism of racial self-assertion, litigation and vindication. A prison house of language in which the totality of your moral vocabulary risks being colonized, compulsorily diverted from any concern with the human predicament as a *human* predicament; any solicitude for the dignity of the human person as a person, as

opposed to being a member of a spurned and insurgent collectivity. A post apartheid moral consciousness would then be first and foremost, an exercise in the retrieval of these common human dramas and predicaments. (Sekyi-Oto 8) (underlining, punctuation and italics original to text)

Personhood, that is, a guaranteed position not only in a nation or a bounded territory, but

within the space of ideas (even if defined by empire, these terms reflect desire for security and comfort denied to those outside of them) of morality, "dignity" and "the human person as a person," is narrowly perceived and, in a "state of emergency" in which power is threatened, is increasingly narrowly defined (8). Liberal humanist rights of personhood, enacted as access to land, resources and legal rights, are extended only to those defined as legal persons.

Sekyi-Oto's final call for "retrieval" of some commonality would require, before any (re)construction of such liberal humanist ideals as universal personhood, a definite and equally stubborn *crossing* of the taxonomy of person and non-person. Thus the nomad, figuratively and literally, is the first movement in releasing perception and action from a "prison house of language." The dialectic of "the dignity of the human person as a person, as opposed to being a member of a spurned and insurgent collectivity", though, needs to be undone if it is not to be replicated. For if the persons of the previously "spurned [. . .] collectivity" move to the category of "person[s] as [. . .] person[s]," without dismantling the dialectic spaces, these categories will be replenished with new groups of oppressed, and personhood will expand to include *more* groups but, as a

category, will maintain boundaries and will always exclude. Inclusion requires exclusion; in *WFB* the Magistrate, through his relationship with the nomad girl, comes to realize how politically problematic it is to dismantling state binaries of person and non-person and to decide as an individual when human rights are due.

Beyond producing semantic instability, the nomad and the nomadic approach calls for a response. Once the boundaries of personhood are shaken, how can an ethically concerned person respond to apparent violation of persons in their environment? This response is always undertaken with a combination of personal and public power; indeed, the power to choose one's behaviour and to alter the course of those in one's environment is always the most volatile and dangerous resource. In hospitality this power is brought to an aporia like no other. Hospitality is always a discourse of power and ethics yet is never an ideal act; the guest may be outside of the state's ideal of universal personhood, and the oppressive state dialectic may be the structure that guarantees the security of the state itself. An examination of the nomadic challenge to state categorization in *Life & Times of Michael K*, a careful look at the difficulties of ethics under a state of emergency in *Waiting for the Barbarians,* and finally a comparison of how the protagonists of both novels respond to state oppression and violence will shows ways in which a nomadic response can be ethically, politically and geographically transgressive.

Neither Locked Up Nor Standing Guard: Michael K as Pure Exteriority.

In Deleuze and Guattari's chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus,* "The War Machine: Treatise on Nomadology", the nomad is introduced as a figure whose psychic structure opposes that of the ideals of the liberal humanist state. Though

Deleuze and Guattari's 'nomad' is a theoretical rather than an anthropological or territorial term, their profile of the nomad-warrior is that of a person who moves recklessly through territory defined by state and social control. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the nomad is disturbing inasmuch as he or she is counter-discursive to a state apparatus that exercises control over vital flows of words, feelings, territory, desire and death. Just as a result of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is that the definition of criminality and perversion can be seen as a priori to the state construction, observation, and coercion of a legal subject, "the exteriority of the war machine [the nomad] in relation to the state apparatus is everywhere apparent but remains difficult to conceptualize" (Deleuze and Guattari 354). In Deleuze and Guattari's theory of nomadology, war is a condition which arises when a subject, or a tribe or collection of subjects who exist externally to the apparatus of the state move, invent, and produce ideas, images, affect and desire[7].The external condition of the nomad is not that of Bhabha's performative minority groups circling and eventually perforating and joining the majority national group; on the contrary:

> It is not enough to affirm that the war machine is external to the apparatus. It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking. (Deleuze and Guattari 354)

[7] Of course, these subjects are more often known as "the enemy": enemies of the state, enemies of democracy, evildoers, sinners, criminals.

The war machine is a collective body that, because it moves in a constant flow of this disruptive exteriority, especially in relation to the state, is war itself (366). Not needing a socially validated sense of "self" (self as interiority), the nomad warrior refutes the validation of state categorization and being-location. The nomad *is* war on the state, "as the surest mechanism directed against the formation of the State: war maintains the dispersal and segmentarity of groups" (357). External to sources of official legimitation and existing without desire to express individual interiority, the Deleuzian nomad does not necessitate (even invalidates) categorical, concentric, or discernible identity-giving groups. Without groups and group regulation there is no need for a hierarchy of power, and thus no need for a state.

Theorizing an entity who exists without a constant desire for individualized interiority validated by a discernible, reliable, hierarchized social apparatus, Deleuze and Guattari imagine a kind of social and psychical warrior who is born and dies at war with the apparatus, "leading him to solitude and a prestigious but powerless death" (357). In some ways, Michael K embodies this Deleuzian nomad-warrior; he does not try to align his interiority (indeed rarely acknowledges his interiority) with the state apparatus that he fears and avoids, he moves through time and space with minimal regard to (and certainly little to no desire for) the formation of social groups, and he does not connect his particular needs to the needs of others through acts of social cohesion. Rather, K exists, or strives to exist, peripherally to the state and social apparatus, without need or desire to destabilize, destroy, or appropriate the literal or metaphoric properties of

the state. If K is a nomadic warrior, he is never on the attack, and he has very little to defend; still, his inability to understand and co-operate with the war-state's spatial, temporal and social apparatus is a metaphysically destabilizing presence.

How, then, could K be seen as a Deleuzian nomad at odds with the groups of settled people and the representatives of the state apparatus he encounters? The wandering rebels he encounters, the warriors who in fact aim to threaten the state apparatus, terrify him with their guns and donkeys and disregard for his tenuous garden. In the work camps he meets poor landless families who are *de facto* nomadic groups, and in the "soft camp" hospital he becomes one of a number of patients and prisoners. In each of these encounters, Michael K resists, through hesitation, inability or apathy, joining the groups that, in their opposition or co-operation with the state, actively engage in discourse with the state apparatus. Their nomadism runs no deeper than their geographic travels; they move from point to point along the state map of approved subjectivity. From his garden hideout, he watches a group of rebels, "men who blew up railway tracks and mined roads and attacked farmhouses" yet who appear to him "nothing so much as a football team: eleven young men come off a field after a hard game, tired, happy, hungry" (109). K reflects that he could join their movement, be their cook, and become part of a band of men officially resisting the state; certainly this passing imagination reflects K's theoretical sympathy with anti-state nomads. Yet K has either too little interiority to desire the power of being an official rebel or takes too much comfort from his quiet solitude with his garden; he belongs to another marginal group, the "men [who] stay behind and keep gardening alive"

(109). In this instance, then, K's sense of connection to his garden rather than to social power along with his negligible desire for external relationships keeps K from social identification. This consideration and concluding rejection of group identification marks K as a genuine Deleuzian warrior-nomad, and is a social pattern K repeats throughout the novel.

Early in the novel, on his foot journey to his mother's birthplace, K is given a meal and a bed to sleep in by a man identified as "the stranger" (47). The stranger's family is shy, and K feels he should offer a narrative in exchange for their hospitality:

> K spoke of his journey. 'I met a man the other day,' he said, 'who told me they shoot people they find on their land.' His friend [the stranger] shook his head. 'I've never heard of that,' he said. 'People must help each other, that's what I believe.' (48)

Certainly it is this guiding idea of generosity to all "people" that K benefits from repeatedly, perhaps to the extent that it keeps him alive. Throughout his journey, those whom he meets feed and shelter him as often as (or while) they control and confine him. Yet K does not recognize "helping others" as a moral imperative either originating within himself or as a Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*[8], a moral consensus to which he belongs:

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[8] In *Glas*, Derrida offers the following by way of definition of *Sittlichkeit:*

> In the major exposition of the Encyclopedia or the [Elements of the] Philosophy of the Right, the 'objective spirit' is developed in three moments: abstract right (*Recht*), morality (*Moralitat),* and *Sittlichkeit* – a term translated in various ways (ethics, ethical life, objective morality, *bonne moeurs*), but I won't try to translate it in my turn. (One day, elsewhere, I'll tell why I love this German word.)
>
> Now within *Sittlichkeit*, the third term and the moment of synthesis between right's formal objectivity and morality's abstract subjectivity, a syllogism in turn is developed. (4)

> Do I believe in helping people? he wondered. He might help people, he might not help them, he did not know beforehand, anything was possible. He did not seem to have a belief or did not seem to have a belief regarding help. Perhaps I am the stony ground, he thought. (48)

This self-reflection, early on in K's journey, is important in establishing him as a very *different* kind of man. It is more than K's external physical deformity, his uncorrected hare-lip, that sets him apart from the stranger's family who welcome him and later from the camp inhabitants he lives among and the doctors who treat him. Rather, it is what seems to be a deficient interiority and an inability to see himself as separate from yet in complex social restricted relationships to others. He seems, often, mentally impaired or emotionally damaged. When K's mother dies in a hospital, K senses the hospital staff observing his reactions, almost as if he knows his response will be insufficient: "He clasped his hands and stared hard at his feet. Was he expected to say something? He separated his hands and clasped them, over and over" (31). Though at such a moment, orphaned, homeless and mute, K seems an unlikely warrior-nomad, it is at this early moment in the novel that he most resembles Deleuze and Guattari's description of the warrior-nomad: "The warrior [nomad] is in the position of betraying everything, including the function of the military, *or* of understanding nothing" (354). He betrays everything because he understands nothing in relation to anything; without an

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Sittlichkeit can be thought of as an objective, accepted moral manifestation of codified ethics. I think of it as Hegel's suggestion of how a subject can live the objectively good life.

intrinsic highly regulated interiority, he has no need of a categorized, rationalized relationship with external apparatus.

K, though, is not confronted with either a battlefield or a government. He is sitting in a public hospital, being asked questions about his dead mother's "name, age, place of abode, religious denomination", where K was taking her, and whether K had her travel documents with him (31). K explains that he was "taking her home," that "[i]t was cold where she lived in Cape Town, it was raining all the time, it was bad for her health" (31). Perhaps because he is afraid, as the Deleuzian external warrior is, of "betraying everything" to the hospital authorities he is suddenly suspicious of, or because he "understand[s] nothing," K begins to "fear he [is] giving away too much, and [. . .] answer[s] no more questions" (31). K's fear seems justified when the hospital official gives up questioning him but then returns to ask whether K has spent time in "an asylum or institution for the handicapped or place of shelter" (31). Once he leaves the hospital, carrying his mother's ashes and a set of clothes the hospital staff gives him, he lives aimlessly in the town, ceasing "to observe the curfew", "not believ[ing] that any harm would come to him; and if it should come, it would not matter" (34). Whether K understands too little to be afraid or does not understand the necessity of fearing the state, he continues his movement through the town, disregarding money, time, and territory.

K's untethered connection between his internal subjectivity and the objective external world he moves through is more than a character development or even a convenient parallel to the Deleuzian nomad. The temporal, spatial, or

metaphoric space K inhabits, that is, a suspension between recognizing self and naming others is the space of the primary moment of metaphysical thinking. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in *The Philosophy of History,* first published in 1807, obsesses over the progression of man towards an ideal relationship between internal subjectivity, "right action", and the objective world. Hegel writes repeatedly that a state like K's, a state of subjective permeability in which a subject with a loosely constructed sense of interiority fails to perceive the world with distinction and taxonomy, is "unworthy." In *The Philosophy of History*, covering the known human world and history, one of Hegel's most telling examples is his treatment of what he calls "Hindoo Nature" (140-1). The metaphor he chooses to describe the "dream state" in which "the individual ceases to be conscious of self *as* such, in contradistinction from objective existences" is that of a languishing, glowing post-partum woman, free from the burden of pregnancy and welcoming the "gift of a beloved infant" (140).What this state (that Hegel describes as dangerously seductive) lacks is an understanding of the essential externality of the objective world, the world outside of self, and the sense of a "system of relations", all "rationally connected" (140-1). The object world is thus a set of tools to which the right man applies right action. History as a narrative of human acceleration towards perfect control and perfect power is propelled by such right actions.

K is not a candidate for Hegelian right action. Deleuze and Guattari's warrior-nomad disturbs the state apparatus as he travels, disregarding the state system of legitimated object relations and rules of right action towards property,

sexuality, economics and violence. K, in his nearly somnambulist state, does not actively seek to destroy state or moral systems; still, his very disregard of the official hierarchy of external categories sets him apart from others. He cares more for his pumpkin seeds than for the war machine, he chooses his dugout burrow over a life with rebels, and cannot imagine (and is indeed grateful for his childlessness) the responsibility of having children. Hegel, ever the proponent of teleological progress and moral improvement, links a clear acceptance of the objective world to correct *Sittlichkeit* and locates this response in the sphere of Understanding. The sphere of Understanding is a highly desirable privilege, and those outside do not deserve/make/rank as historical agents:

> For should we approach the charm of this Flower-life – a life rich in imagination and genius –in which its whole environment and all its relations are performed into a Garden of Love –should we look at it more closely and examine it in the light of Human Dignity and Freedom –the more attractive the first sight of it had been, so much more unworthy shall we ultimately find it in every respect. (Hegel 140)

Hegel deems this "Flower-Life" unworthy because, in such a state of "a dream, the individual ceases to be conscious of self *as such*, in contradistinction from objective existence" (140). It is uncanny, though not surprising, how much like a subject of the "Flower-Life" K is presented as throughout the novel. Reflecting on his realization that he will "never announce himself" to the rebels, K comes to the limits of his self-knowledge and distinction of his *self* as such from others *as such:*

> Always, when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding baulked, into which it was useless to pour words. The words were eaten up, the gap remained. His was always a story with a hole in it: a wrong story, always wrong. (109-110)

That K connects his lack of desire to announce himself to an history-making group of rebels with his inability to narrate a cohesive, bounded self *for* himself suggests that his exteriority is indeed a result of a very different interiority. His odd interiority is pathologized as retardation, laziness or rebellion at various times throughout the novel.

The greatest criticism Hegel can level at any group of people is that their lack of awareness will deny them the opportunity of existing actively in History, of lacking sufficient interiority to project objectivity onto a territory which "expands itself to a rationally connected whole" (140). K does not expand his design to a state whole; he hides in his burrow and camouflages his movements, fleeing equally from police, soldiers, rebels, and doctors. Michael K, then, is at once a warrior-nomad, resisting the questions and systems of the state apparatus, and as such a person who does not project desire to mark the external world as his personal historical blackboard; he neither desires to engage with the state by fighting it nor to impress history with a narrative of his own. K is, in his eyes, a man whose story has "a hole in it" (110).

Ironically, though K considers himself unwilling and *unable* to add his story to history, his subject position, by resisting (if by accident or design) dialectical relationships that resist or affirm hegemonic power, is that which is

best situated to disturb not only state control, but especially residual colonial and racist oppression. Homi Bhabha, in the introduction to *The Location of Culture*, writes that "[w]hat is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (2). While K does not represent a culture, and I do not wish to present K as an allegorical figure of emergent peaceful resistance to violence in apartheid South Africa, it is his journey with an experimental subjectivity, one which is so far beyond categorical object perception that the subject itself is not privileged over the object (K's self-neglect, for example) that provides an ontological terrain for post-colonial resistance. That is, if K himself is a space in which non-appropriative views of the object world are entertained, then a colonial drive to reduce people to settlers, soldiers, rebels or workers flounders.

Bhabha, though writing more politically than strictly ontologically, recognizes the important complexity of subjectivities like K's and ventures to discuss them: "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood –singular or communal –that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (2). K's impossibility as an allegorical figure for a new South African peace-maker, at least in the Bhabhian sense that a nation is a constantly performed, contested and negotiated "idea" – yet still always an attended idea – excepts K inasmuch as his "in-between" subjectivity leaves no space for nation or "the idea of society." K is not interested in re-defining society,

he is not collaborative, does not demand legitimation and does not offer to share his difference with others – this is not multiculturalism. Though K's subjectivity does contest the colonial power, this contestation occurs more by default than purpose; I think, indeed, that most people surviving (post)colonial trauma are more likely to contest power in this manner than in the "innovative" and collaborative way Bhabha suggests.

This is not to say, however, that K does not relate intensely to a place; though place for K is not social: place has a smell, a feel, and a time, and is as desired an entity as perhaps the imaginary nation is for Bhabha's theorized hybrid citizen. The identity K returns to, once he leaves the towns and hospitals and escapes from a work camp, is that of a gardener, and the place he seeks is a garden. K was an urban gardener in Cape Town before the war forced him out of the city, and within one year he becomes a furtive nighttime pumpkin grower on a deserted savannah farm. Though at first he lives on small birds and insects he catches at the abandoned farm, he soon finds a packet of seeds, clears land, and restores a furrow irrigation system. In the first happy moment in the novel, K's "deepest pleasure" comes "at sunset when he turn[s] open the cock at the dam wall and watch[es] the stream of water run down its channels to soak the earth, turning it from fawn to deep brown" (59). K thus expresses a sense of interiority with a functional, systematic relation to a place – he is a gardener of a specific garden, and the land becomes a garden as he becomes a gardener. These names – garden, gardener – are co-dependent and seasonal, and though a pair are not in binary discord; though garden-gardener could represent a dialectic, I think that

K's submission to the elements subverts any Hegelian notion of rational object relations. K's almost constant state of hunger and thirst as he gardens and his minimal attempts to satiate himself are evidence of this submission and point away from a dialectic of mastery and progress. His "nature" is an activity, but this activity is not a work of historical conquest: "It is because I am a gardener," K thinks, because "that is [his] nature" (59). Still, it must be noted that gardening – clearing, irrigating, and cultivating the soil – could be perhaps the *least* nomadic activity. Is agricultural not the most commonly cited trait of civilized cultures, of those fence-building, territory-marking, city-building peoples?

I believe that the *way* K gardens and the relationship he maintains with the land he cultivates (if not territorially nomadic) disturbs a perception of nature categorized as an object-world secondary to a colonial, territorial subject and is thus systematically nomadic. Just as the garden can be a metaphor for idyllic escape, K, through his relationship to his garden, separates himself from the towns and the state: "He lived by the rising and the setting of the sun, in a pocket outside time. Cape Town and the war and his passage to the farm slipped further and further into forgetfulness" (60). The time of the garden – a time marked by dryness, water, heat, and seed growth and thus as outside of civilized history as "barbaric" nomads are often described – is not of time marked by the city and the war; the more he is intent on his garden the less he is an historical, active, citizen of a state at war. K's pumpkins are ripening; he tends them at night and sleeps during the hot day[9]. Living on roasted pumpkins and spring water, K learns

[9] Paul Franssen, in his article "Fleeing from the Burning City: Michael K, Vagrancy and Empire," suggests that K's gardening is his way of ensuring "progeny," as if the seeds he carries with him

"to love idleness, idleness no longer as stretches of freedom reclaimed by stealth here and there from involuntary labour [. . .] but as a yielding up of himself to time, to a time flowing slowly like oil from horizon to horizon over the face of the world, washing over his body, circulating in his armpits and his groin, stirring his eyelids" (116). His activities are exterior to the semiotics of the state war economy, although sometimes "the other time in which the war had its existence reminded itself to him as the jet fighters whistled high overhead," K lives "beyond the reach of calendar and clock in a blessedly neglected corner, half awake, half asleep" (116). Spatially and temporally, then, K's garden is a space external to – that is, as *outside of* as a nomadic force – the state apparatus.

Just as he learns to love idleness and distances himself from the war through rest, K's active relationship with his garden disturbs the state language of object relations. Though he learned his trade in the state capital (in urban public gardens, places of constructed and state-controlled beauty) and brings it to the war-emptied countryside, K's pumpkin patch is not a colonial project; rather, it is an attempt to live lightly on the land and to feed himself outside of the economy of the war state. His garden is not a capitalist or empire-building enterprise:

> The worst mistake, he told himself, would be to try to found a new house, a rival line, on his small beginnings out at the dam. Even his tools should be of wood and leather and gut, materials the insects would eat when one day he no longer needed them. (104)

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are "his sole bequest to posterity" (458). Such a reading lends a sense of slow colonial industriousness to K's activities.

Tools, defined by the Deleuzian state apparatus, are "abstracted from [the] territory and [are] applied to the earth as an object" and inscribe work "to the earth as an object" (401). Though K applies force to the soil, his tools are not conceived as weapons abstracted from and applied externally to the land in an act of object possession. K's activity with his garden is nothing like what Deleuze describes as the State work, which involves a "capture of activity by the State apparatus, and a semiotization of activity by writing" (401). Within one season weather and animals will wash away K's garden, leaving no inscription. The Deleuzian warrior-nomad does not semiotize activity; Deleuze gives the example of jewellery making and metalworking as nomadic activity which does not produce language of permanence and codification but is rather a decorative, mobile, light practice which can never be "of the order of work with its condition of gravity, resistance, and expenditure" (401). A garden such as K's, unbound by fences, camouflaged carefully and watered by moonlight, is not planted for permanence but is nurtured with careful attention to the need for invisibility – certainly different from a colonial or settler agricultural project which would be built with "a language of permanence and codification." K's garden language is temporal and seasonal, unbound by syntactical fences, unaffected by fertilizers and insecticides. The colonial farm, like colonial language, marks and codifies land into parcels of permanent territory working at once to strengthen the state apparatus and to weaken, even to decimate, indigenous flora, fauna and human culture. Thus, though K uses his tools to turn the dry earth, establishes a rudimentary irrigation system, and plants pumpkins (not a "perfect" Deleuzian

nomad), his gardening does not form a semiotic of expenditure and territory. He is afraid of signaling his project to other humans:

> For a week he did not go near the farmhouse but crept about in the dark tending his acre, fearing that the merest clatter of pebble against pebble would echo across the veld and give him away. The young pumpkin leaves now seemed nothing so much as vivid green flags proclaiming his occupation of the dam: he spread grass painstakingly over the vines, he even considered cutting them back. He could not sleep but lay on his bed of grass beneath the oven-heat of the root straining his ears for the noises that would herald his discovery. (105)

Discovery would provoke a dialogue of ownership and of K's right to be on the land and to grow pumpkins. K consistently elides this dialogue of ownership and entitlement.

For all the activity with his pumpkin garden, K, underweight, malnourished and physically weak, is poorly suited to physical labour. At the work camp, he "line[s] up at the gate with the other men, but at the last moment decline[s] to board the truck" (84). K tells the guard, " 'I'm sick, I can't work' " (84). "Suit yourself, but you won't be paid", the guard answers (84). K's weakness, a result of malnutrition (a diet of pumpkins, grubs, and birds is not sufficient, and when he falls ill he barely eats at all), prevents him from working, which prevents him from being paid, which prevents him from purchasing food and nourishing his body. Such is the capitalist conception of nourishment and labour; one works to feed the body which is made strong in order to work. Like an

anorexic using her body as a battleground against repression and sexism, K's body is the point at which he revolts against the *Sittlichkeit* of paid labour as foundational human activity: that the commodification of time and the body can only be confronted in the body. This is not an interiorization of revolution; rather, K controls the only material revolution he can – the movement of his body. He argues with the camp guard:

> 'I don't want to work. Why do I have to work? This isn't a jail.'
>
> 'You don't want to work but you want other people to feed you.'
>
> 'I don't need to eat all the time. When I need to eat, I'll work.'(85)

K asks the guard to open the gate, to let him out of the camp. The guard refuses and swears that he will shoot K if he climbs the camp fence to escape. Pausing, the guard sets out to explain to K the benefit of camp life:

'Let me tell you something, my friend,' sa[ys] the guard, 'for your own good, because you're new here. If I let you out now, in three days you'll be back pleading to be let in. I know. In three days. You'll be standing at the gate here with tears in your eyes pleading with me to let you back. Why do you want to run away? You've got a home here, you've got food, you've got a bed. You've got a job. People are having a hard time out here in the world, you've seen it, I don't need to tell you. For what do you want to join them?' (85)

K's answer is as simple: "I don't want to be in a camp, that's all" (85). Towards the end of the novel, K returns to war-ravaged Cape Town and sleeps on cardboard inside the closet of the abandoned building he once lived in with his mother. He reflects that it is his simplicity that protected him in the camps, that he

has no stories to tell of "a life passed in prisons", of "day after day, year after year with [his] head pressed to the wire, gazing into the distance" (181). K *is* the distance: his apathy for production and for the success or failure of the state machine puts him at an impossible "away": "Perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all camps at the same time. Perhaps that is enough of an achievement, for the time being. How many people are there left who are neither locked up nor standing guard at the gate?" (182). The camps have swollen to take over the country: the state, after an unspecified but lengthy period of civil war, has:

> camps for children whose parents have run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and people with little heads, camps for people with no visible means of support, camps for people chased off the land, camps for people they find living in storm-water drains, camps for street girls, camps for people who can't add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night. (182)

The state is a gathering, categorizing, defining, limiting machine: if there is anyone *not* grouped, anyone *not* of the state power, against the state power, or held in a camp under state power, then a new category is formed. The list of camps seems ludicrous; it is, rather, exhaustive: there is a camp for every citizen and it is inconceivable that someone can, more than once, escape a camp. K runs away from a brutal labour camp, from a camp for itinerant landless workers, and finally from a camp hospital –he doesn't want to be held in a camp of any kind.

He wants, simply, to be *outside* of the space of the camp. More than individual heads or military figures – there is no single military figure unassociated with a camp or group in the *MK* – the camps consolidate rampant power and pervasive/invasive control: "[. . .] the State is not defined by the existence of chiefs; it is defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power" (Deleuze and Guattari 357). The camps could be seen as the state's ill organs of power out of control –as power is exercised over the bodies and minds of those in the camps, that power burgeons and creates new camps, new sites of power. K's evasion of belonging is a way of keeping his body and mind away from the acts of state power and is another example of his behaviour as subversive to the state apparatus.

K's movement through state space and refusal to stay within the oppressive space of the camp is again like the behaviour of a Deleuzian warrior-nomad. The warrior-nomad, Deleuze and Guattari write, is like a piece in the Japanese game of military origins *go*. State figures are like a set of chess pieces; in chess, each figure is limited to a set of qualities and enclosed movements within an enclosed space. Like the state that feverishly creates sets and subsets of camps and camp occupants, "in chess, it is a questioning of arranging a closed space for oneself, thus of going from one point to another, of occupying the maximum number of spaces" (Deleuze and Guattari 354). The closed, guarded camps, are like the " 'striated' space of chess", and K's wanderings, through towns, farms, and the savannah, is the " 'smooth' space of Go", his movement "not from one point to another, but [. . .] perpetual , without aim or destination;

without departure or arrival" (353). K is born, K leaves Cape Town for the countryside, and presumably K dies –these places and times could be interpreted as departure and arrival, and his tenure in each a kind of encampment. But K himself does not see his life as a series of confined residencies strung along striated time. Thinking of his mother, and of her mother, and her mother's mother, he thinks to himself, "I come from a line of children with no end", and though he tries to, cannot imagine a maternal origin, a "figure standing alone at the head of the line" (117). As a gardener, K needs only to "spend time with [his] nos[e] to the ground" (181). Just as any day will do, any piece of fertile, watered land will do, and he dreams of carrying seeds in his shoes, the lining of his coat, and planting the seeds thinly over "miles of veld patches of soil no longer than [his] hand" (*MK* 182-83). He would, a traveling gardener, avoid thieves, police and rebels, and tend to the plants secretly, in pockets of time and space stolen from the state.

K *seeks out* the obscurity of pure exteriority, of slipping between camps, between charity and oppression, between violence and generosity. In the third and last camp K stays in, he is a patient in the camp hospital. Refusing to eat, skeletal, and silent, K elicits the fascination of the Chief Medical Officer. The Officer, who narrates this chapter, calls K "[t]he obscurest of the obscure, so obscure as to be a prodigy" (142). At this camp, there is a "choir and a pastor" for their souls and "for their bodies a medical officer" (143). In this, a camp for those too weak to work or fight, K is assigned to a creative category: "Under *Category* I read *Opgaarder* [. . .] 'What is an *Opgaarder*?' I said. Noel: 'Like a squirrel or an ant

or a bee. 'Is that a new rank?' I said. 'Did he go to *opgaarder* school and get and *opgaarder's* badge?" (137). Like the striated state appropriating the nomad-warriors' knowledge and exterior virtuosity, the state appropriates K' burrower-status. His inhumanity, his insect-like ability to escape the massive and slow state, is assessed by the State taxonomy.

The state machine, functioning through units of power created from the territory and bodies within its boundaries, must locate every person (and non-person) to be effective. There can be no exterior place; no uncategorized being, no unmapped territory, no unnamed genus. For those who cannot be placed, or whose death is undesirable and life is of minimal use, the state creates the space of the camp; in *WFB* camps are an excessive default mechanism for sorting the state's people. In *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes the internment and concentration camps of the twentieth century as "the place[s] in which the most absolute *condition inhumana* ever to appear on Earth w[ere] realized" , and that this absolute inhumanity "is ultimately all that counts for the victims as well as for posterity" (36). Agamben maintains that such camps, whether literally with us, exist "in some sense as the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we still live", because the camp, a place for those who, like K, or regarded neither as citizens important to the war machine nor foreigners with assets to colonize or skills to assimilate, are what Agamben calls "denizens": the *opgaarder* of the state at war. Camps, and people to strip of all form of citizenry and thus put into camps, exist wherever "one is dealing with the extension to an entire population of a state of exception linked to

a colonial war" (38)[10]. Thus the South Africa of *MK*, a post-colonial state in a state of civil war, extends a state of exception to the entire population: normal laws of humanity, whatever condition they may have been maintained in before the war (and these conditions could have been oppressive as well) are excepted so that the state can maintain control. The state is martial; in a flurry it seeks to categorize every living being and to appropriate and put to use the warrior energy of those Deleuzian nomads who dare to evade categorization. The camps can be seen, then, as categorical reductions, as if the population is finally organized into a series of statistical properties fed into the state war-machine: the nomad, disrupting the statistical rendering of the population, is war against the state war machine[11].

K is the slipperiest of figures – when he inexplicably manages to escape the camp hospital, he escapes his categorization as insect, surely the most demeaning position the state could possibly create for him. Bhabha's theory of categorical slippage depends on the categories themselves being slippery; he works to show how categorization of populations, in the modern (contemporary) nation-state is less a process of placement and more a process of temporal narration. He proposes that "complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address [. . .] function in the name of 'the people' of 'the nation' and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives"

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[10] I will further discuss camps in Chapter Three.

[11] The terrifying manner in which camps are a statistical solution to homelessness, poverty, unemployment is obvious. There is, then, something pathological about approaching populations as groups (genus, ethnicities, liminalities, etc) that function or malfunction; solutions are terrifying ends and Agamben encourages, in this book and others, an approach to our fellow sentient beings that does not seek "solutions."

(201), so that there is always an inscription which takes place, a constant movement which is not, Bhabha asserts, linear or historicist (201). Temporally and culturally, he states, the nation as "an apparatus of power [. . .] produces a continual slippage of categories" and that this slippage guarantees is that a nation is never more or less than a "measure of the liminality of cultural modernity" (201). The process, then, of categorization, will fail as a teleological project, and the nation Bhabha describes will narrate a continuous story of exteriority and interiority, of the hegemonic and the liminal. His model assumes that the narration is a dialogue between parties, and that a desired condition of, in not unity, then balance and reciprocal authorial power is an achievable outcome.

But K, categorized by the administration of a camp for the weak and unfit as an *opgaarder*, does not debate his liminality. He does not speak ideologically for or against the camps, he does not declare himself a reservoir of cultural or personal narrative to be drawn upon. The Chief Medical Officer tries to befriend him, to feed him, to feed his emaciated body; K refuses this as he would any invitation into the state machine: "'Why do you want to make me fat? Why fuss over me, why am I so important?'" (135). The doctor's answer reveals that it is not compassion but control that keeps the state interested in K's existence: " 'You ask why you are important, Michaels [K] . The answer is that you are not important. But that does not mean you are not forgotten. No one is forgotten. Remember the sparrows. Five sparrows are sold for a farthing, and even they are not forgotten'" (136). This biblical reference[12] to God's infinite care reveals that the CMO's compassion, in his own mind at least, is part of a lineage of the ideals

[12] Luke 12:6.

of Christian Liberalism, especially unconditional, uncategorical love. Unfortunately, in the state at war it is control that is unconditional; Western colonialism has re-written the text of the parable of the sparrow to be a parable of a warring patriarch. Even the commodified body of a bird, indeed a taxonomical step above the *opgaarder* insect, is hoarded and counted, not forgotten.

K wishes, it seems, to be forgotten. The Chief Medical Officer's obsessive interest in K shows how difficult it is to be ignored and forgotten by all of humanity, even if such ignominy is desired. What is it that the CMO is attracted to in K? Perhaps it is, rather, something the CMO seeks in himself – his growing disillusionment with the war, his desire to live somewhere peaceful and maybe to achieve a kind of moral balance. Renunciation is often equated with ascetic morality. In "Fleeing from the Burning City: Michael K, Vagrancy and Empire," Paul Franssen maintains that Coetzee does not mean for Michael K to "constitut[e] and unqualified idealization of nomadism or vagrancy" as a figure of high morality in a time of war, even though the CMO "does seem to regard K as an example to be emulated" (459). Because, for all the medical help the CMO gives to the prisoners, he is still a functionary in the state war machine, healing bodies enough to send them back to the machine. The CMO sees in K a person who has excepted himself from the war machine by living within himself, for himself, and by himself.

The problem with the CMO's adoration is that K's escape from the war is *not* an ethical response to an abhorrent political state. K cares very little for anyone other than himself (or perhaps his pumpkins and melons). The CMO,

whom Franssen further characterizes as "a white liberal intellectual [. . .] inevitably complicit with the white system of [apartheid] power" is seeking a promise that while the war continues, and after the war ends, there will be a way to live guiltlessly (461). Thus the CMO sees what he wants desperately to see, that is, that K could show him how to exist in an area that "lie[s] between the camps and belong[s] to no camp", for a place to settle "till things improve, perhaps forever" (163). But K does not care, really, whether things improve or whether the space he inhabits belongs to anyone. K wants, simply, to be left alone, forever, in a space where he may sleep, eat, move and garden as little or as much as he wants. The CMO convinces himself that, in "a gathering, a thickening darkness above one bed alone [K's bed]", he would, if he were more attentive, see a "gathering" that would be "the truth" (165). Mistakenly, the CMO wishes he could ask K one question; that is, what K *means* to him. The CMO is intent on a discourse of meaning, an exchange of desire and influence between himself and K. Yet K's very exteriority, his absentness that threatens the state and destabilizes the security the camps offer the state at war, depends utterly on his untethered solitary nature. K means to mean nothing to anyone; if he barely mourned his mother, he certainly has no desire to "mean" anything to the CMO. It is the CMO who wishes to respond to the war, it is the CMO who enters into a discourse of social responsibility and yearns for an idyllic path of intended peaceful resistance. K has no such intent; his resistance is accidental.

Still, the CMO has reason to be amazed by K: K evades every category the state applies to him, and when he is placed in the camps (in the open of violence),

he escapes this condition as well. He psychically and physically escapes the state's exercise of power. It is as if the state's categorical gathering has built to a frenzy of concentration camps, marching bands, factory-like hospitals and ruined cities, and one small, weak figure with no wealth of interior cunning has relied on his very insignificance to elude the pervasive force of war. The CMO calls K "[t]he obscurest of the obscure, so obscure as to be a prodigy" and ascribes a kind of mystical knowledge to him, assuming K is withholding this resource of intentional obscurity out of shyness or utter foreignness (142). In K the CMO sees a path for departure from the spiritual exhaustion of the state war machine and adds to this escapism a kind of superior spirituality, as if K is not only apart from but also enlightened above the agony of the war. What the CMO fails to recognize is that just as K does not care to change the path of the war, he does not intend to offer a path of ease or redemption to those caught in the suffering of the war.

Indeed, K is the exterior figure, his non-participation in the dialectic of war and peace, of state and stranger, of health and illness, confounds power. K will not leave a mark on the nation's narrative (whether a Bhabhian narrative of liminal and hegemonic discourse or a Hegelian narrative of dialectic progress); he is outside of time, the Chief Medical Officer tells him:

> We have all tumbled over the lip into the cauldron of history: only you, following your idiot light, [. . .] evading the peace and the war, skulking in the open where no one dreamed of looking, have managed to live in the old way, drifting through time, observing the seasons, no more trying to change the course of history than a grain of sand does." (152)

Like the Deleuzian warrior-nomad who is "caught in a process of accumulating exploits leading him to solitude and a prestigious but powerless death," K follows the pinlight of his camera obscura, seeing space as an uncategorized open and time as ahistorical.[13] He is neither complicit with the war nor in open discord against it. K's non-responsive evasion, is certainly an alternative to co-operation with state violence, though whether or not it can be considered an ethical *response* will become clearer when considered in relation to *WFB*.

[13] Because the academic (and/or the official) historian works from the (often *censored*) documents of another hand, such as historian is limited by the inscription of the previous hand, a hand, Benjamin implies, that likely served the ruling classes: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Theses VII. 256-57). As text, then, the historical document is "taint[ed]" by barbarism in content and form. To "brush against the grain" of this history is to re-configure, to re-*form* the event. Is K's refusal to inscribe his mark of sorrow in the war-narrative a brush against the grain at a time of emergency , the time Benjamin says we always already live in? I will further discuss the implications of a state of emergency in my third chapter.

Transgressions: The Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* as Nomad.

In *WFB* the Magistrate recalls how "at least once in every generation [. . .] an episode of hysteria about the barbarians" emerges , and from this cyclical myth he assumes that the "stories" of barbarian theft, attacks, murder and plunder that come to his colonial border town are just that, stories from a paranoid Empire (*WFB* 9). Yet he cannot deny that the Empire's response to the real or imagined barbarian threats have brought his "easy years" of peace to an end, and that he can no longer assume that the balance between barbarians, townsfolk and imperial forces will "stay steady on its course" (9).The Empire's executive forces have appropriated this historical conflict in order to declare a state of emergency, and the Magistrate's comfortable life as a peon of the Empire is brought in conflict with a warring, expansive colonial project led, in the Magistrate's town, by Colonel Joll, the envoy of the Empire.

Though in *WFB* it is the Empire, not the nomadic barbarians, that provokes the narrative's conflict, the barbarians as nomads are represented as a potentially disruptive force. In *MK*, a single slippery nomadic figure crosses through state territorial and epistemological boundaries and poses a threat to the stability of the state war machine to classify and contain the people. In *WFB* the state sees the nomadic barbarians as potential threats that can be not only presented to the colonists as a threat worthy of a military state of emergency, but as people who can be epistemologically manipulated for exclusion from the state's definition of "the people". In *WFB,* by assigning the nomads non-person status, the Empire creates a state of exception in which the Empire's executive

power is legitimated beyond all juridical, military and civil codes. Though a state of exception enables political expediency and practically limitless executive power, the state of exception is neither created solely for nor by political means; rather, it is a condition in which violent intervention in the political and the personal realm is unlimited. Thus the Magistrate, the judicial representative of the Empire, finds himself a representative of a state that exercises power beyond the limits of liberal humanism. The Magistrate alternately positions himself within and outside of this power, crossing and re-crossing the changing boundaries of state morality, and thus becoming the most important of the novel's nomadic figures.

The morally ambivalent Magistrate responds to the state's violent intervention by initiating a relationship with a girl the Empire's forces have tortured and left in the Magistrate's town. Whereas Michael K excuses himself from involvement, never harming anyone but also not responding to the suffering and chaos surrounding him,

the Magistrate initiates a relationship with a victim of state violence. The Magistrate, a lecherous, lazy, self-serving man, initiates a relationship with a victim who has far less power within the state than he does. Though he is not the literal nomad of the novel, his actions transgress boundaries of state-sanctioned morality, and he responds to a girl who is herself a nomad; thus an analysis of his actions must look at both the response of settled people to nomads and at ways in which a citizen can be nomadic by crossing and re-crossing boundaries of state-approved behaviour. The Magistrate is never entirely aligned with either nomads

or the Empire; his position is one of alternating allegiances and excursions outside of and back into the sphere of imperial power. Considering his political and ethical ambiguity, can his discourse with the girl be seen as heroic or hospitable? If not, how, and why, does he fail? Is his failure to respond ethically to state violence different, more effective, or equal to K's in *MK?* Perhaps, in the Magistrate's various discursive expressions of guilt, desire, irritation and compassion towards the girl and her people, the difficulty of an ethical response in a violent political climate is revealed as being inherently nomadic, returning to self interest as often as crossing to the needs of the other.

WFB begins with the Magistrate of a small colonial town meeting Colonel Joll, a military representative of the Empire –this meeting of judiciary and military powers begins a narrative of a colonial state in which, increasingly, the force of law is exercised through decrees which decreasingly depend upon a norm of human civility or even human good: "We sit in the best room of the inn with a flask between us and a bowl of nuts. We do not discuss the reason for his being here. He is here under the emergency powers, that is enough" (1). The Magistrate immediately understands that which cannot be discussed, and it is exactly from this place of *no* dialogue being "enough" dialogue that the ethical dilemma of the narrative emerges. The Magistrate must eventually confront this space in which there are no reasons provided for the exercise of executive power, and he must negotiate his own responsibility to his state power and to the nomadic people targeted by the state's violence. Emergency executive powers[14], and thus

[14] Giorgio Agamben, in *State of Exception*, theorizes the political state of exception as having two components: "extension of military authority's wartime power" into civil space, and a suspension

state potential for violence, are without limit; they are legitimated not by the due process of law but by the maintenance of executive power as an end in itself, accompanied by the judiciary and military forces as the means. In "Civilization and the Two Faces of Law: J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," Sinkwan Cheng describes "Joll's transgression of the [due process of] law" as part of the "periodic violation of due process by a ruling in-group" that is necessary for imperial rule (2351). Cheng does not call this violation of civil law a state of exception, but incorporates the violation into a definition of the Empire's law as law in which "outlaw" is "inevitable implicated" (2351). Thus as the Magistrate responds to an extension of state power, he must take into account his own power as a judicial state representative; soon he must decide upon his own definition of law and civil limits since the state will recognize few.

Since it is ostensibly a threat to security which compels the declaration of a state of exception, there is usually, at least in the initial stages of the state of exception, a need for a justified and palpable threat. In *WFB*, the nomadic "barbarians", external to the colonial town and the Empire's control are an always available threat; like the Deleuzian nomads, their geographic and political exteriority opposes the concentrated interiority of the Empire. Just as Deleuzian nomads weaken the validity of the state apparatus by not requiring categories to self-validate a sense of interiority, the barbarians threaten the Empire's executive

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of whatever "constitutional norms that protect individual liberties" (5). When these two conditions merge, executive powers extends into the legislative sphere, usually through measures announced as emergency or security measures (7). While traditionally the state of martial law is preceded by parliamentary and executive decree, the state of exception functionally erases distinctions between legislative, judicial, executive and military power; executive power has the force (the military) of law (the judicial) and thus no judicial or elected debate is necessary to legitimate exercise of power.

power to locate and classify beings[15]. To sustain the Empire's machine of executive power, the barbarians must be enfolded –their exterior threat assimilated and their free ranging power annihilated.[16]

The inside into which the Empire would fold the barbarians is the colonial town the Magistrate holds tenuous judicial power over. This land, rumored to be surrounded by hostile tribes of "barbarians," marks the inclusion of the colonial townspeople as the Empire's citizens and the barbarians as those beyond the limits of the Empire's claims to civility. The right to crossing these boundaries of

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[15] In a manner similar to colonial powers coalescing their powers away from the Empire's nation – an extra-national power building of sorts – Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, clarifies that the Nazis did not limit themselves to nationalism. Rather, the Nazi party's propaganda "was directed towards their fellow-travelers and not their convinced members; the latter, on the contrary, were never allowed to lose sight of a consistently supranational approach to politics" (3). The anti-Semitism at the black heart of National Socialism was not a result of nationalism; pan-national anti-Semitic leagues had existed in Europe for decades. The question, then, of how and why anti-Semitism benefited Nazi power-building cannot be answered by pointing to Germanic ethno-national fervor, as both nationalism and anti-Semitism had long existed in Europe without giving rise to a foundationally anti-Semitic military regime.

Arendt discusses the two most common reasons given for Nazi anti-Semitic fervor –the scapegoat theory in which a random, innocent victim is selected to bear the blame for a range of social ills, and the theory of eternal anti-Semitism, which is at best uncomplicated, at worst, an expectation of and excuse for continued institutionalized anti-Semitism.

In the end, Arendt writes, the reasons a group is selected for systematic torture and murder are equal parts ridiculous, random, calculated and historical. The greater question is that which Giorgio Agamben asks – that is, when the group of victims is named as such, how is it that any political-juridical structure can create a space for the most inhuman consideration of humans possible? Inhuman is a term I select purposely –the parameters of liberal humanism which define the limits, rights and responsibilities of a citizen (and, conversely, of a foreigner), exist in the negative in the philosophical and material space of a camp. The internment, the concentration, the refugee camp: in these spaces the human is a photo-negative, a shadow dug into the earth. The camp is an inversion of everything that is real, yet (and) it is real as the positive, the affirmative, and the definitive.

[16] Agamben, in *The Open: Man and Animal*, discusses what he calls "the anthropological machine [. . .] at work in our culture" (37). The animal is certainly one of the most loved, used and abused others to human subjectivity and animals are at once excluded and enfolded similar to the way exoticized human Others are. This (de) humanizing machine of infinite categorization depends on locations of interiority and exteriority:

Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the [anthropological] machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the including of an outside. (Agamben 37)

inclusion and exclusion is controlled by the Empire. The barbarians remain beyond the town limits and are excluded from imperial control, and so maintain a degree of agency and determinacy; like the Deleuzian nomad, and like Michael K, their self-determined movement threatens state power and any citizen inside the town who would join them in this free movement would thus be, like Michael K, a warring presence. There is, then, a contentious space that is neither inside nor outside, but those who move through this liminal space are denied civil protection. This is not like Bhabha's rather euphoric description of the "[g]atherings of exiles and *émigrés* and refugees; gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers [. . .]" (Bhabha 201). Understanding the Empire as a creative and inclusive cultural space with "edges", however permeable and transient, neglects the fact that it is at these very porous edges that the greatest political, personal and ontological terror is enacted. The nomadic figure, either a traveling nomadic barbarian or a morally ambiguous guilt-ridden magistrate, travels along these dangerous edges.

Ironically, it is not these spaces of ideological collision that are feared the most. In *WFB,* rumours circulate about of the threatening spaces the barbarians emerge from. These rumours are not the creative circulation of emerging identity in the style of Bhabha's nation in flux. Rather, these threats serve to at once *include* a terrifying vision of the nomads in the imperial town, to *exclude* the nomads from the townsfolk's civil security to *include* and confirm the townsfolk as not-nomads and therefore as citizens, and to *exclude* any actions against the nomads (these actions thus being actions *for* the citizens) from being considered

un-civil. These lines of inclusion, like the hierarchical classification in MK, serve to strengthen the intrusive power of the state, and the Magistrate's choice to cross these lines renders him a nomadic threat to the Empire. Whether his threat is intentional or at all destabilizing to the Empire is something I will question when I look specifically at his relationship with the barbarian girl.

Since these patterns of inclusion and displacement are evident from the pettiest town politics to the most grandiose imperial maneuvers for expansion, it is perhaps no surprise that the rumours of an impending barbarian invasion in *WFB* come to the Magistrate's town not from the barbarians or from the town's people, but from the Empire's capital:

> [. . .] last year stories began to reach us from the capital of unrest among the barbarians. Traders traveling safe routes had been attacked and plundered. Stock thefts had increased in scale and audacity. A party of census officials had disappeared and been found in shallow graves. Shots had been fired at a provincial governor during a tour of inspection. There had been clashes with border patrols. The barbarian tribes were arming, the rumour went; the Empire should take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war. (9)

The Magistrate himself doubts the validity of these accounts: "Of this unrest I myself saw nothing. In private I observed that once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the barbarians" (9). The Magistrate's "private" observation that the barbarians are not threatening is, though, just that: a personal, secretive reflection on his town and the Empire. Similarly, soon after

Joll's arrival, the Magistrate, observing the idyllic agricultural farms around the town, tells himself that he "believe[s] in peace, perhaps even peace at any price" (15). This statement, made early on in the narrative, reveals the Magistrate's desire to see himself as a peaceable, judicial, and even wise figure in contrast to the militaristic Empire he works for. Founded on his age and experience – experiences the reader has little knowledge of – these reflections, as well as his decision to keep them private are early indications of both his complicity with the Empire and his desire to see himself as morally responsible. The conflict between these two conditions eventually sets the Magistrate on a transgressive, nomadic path and leads him to his ambiguous moral and political relationship with the girl and her people that is the ethical centre of the narrative.

After Joll's first expedition out of the town, a group of river people the Magistrate describes as "aboriginal, older even than the nomads", are captured and brought to the barracks because when they see the soldiers coming, they "hid[e] in the reeds" and are thus declared at least culpable, if not undoubtedly guilty (*WFB* 19). The Magistrate is furious that these people have been captured: They live in settlements of two or three families along the banks of the river, fishing and trapping for most of the year, paddling to the remote southern shores of the lake in the autumn to catch redworms and dry them, building flimsy reed shelters, groaning with cold through the winter, dressing in skins. Living in fear, skulking in the reeds, what can they possibly know of a great barbarian enterprise against the Empire? (*WFB* 19)

Precisely this ignorance of a threat to the Empire makes the river folk suspects: how can they be people of the Empire if they do not fear the Empire's enemy but fear the Empire's own military? These people, then, are not people protected by the Empire – their lives are constellations in the Empire's expansion, but are excluded from the Empire itself. The Magistrate's response to the fisherfolk's capture and internment would be unacceptable to the Empire insofar as it conflicts with the rules of state exclusion; still, he is complicit with Colonel Joll inasmuch as he lives next to the interned fisherfolk yet neither releases them nor attempts to dramatically improve their conditions. Any course of action he would undertake regarding them would transgress Joll's state of emergency powers, and for this reason the Magistrate's frustration, still expressed only to himself and to the guards beneath him, cannot be read as an act of rebellion against the increasingly repressive Empire.

Indeed, the opposites of civil security and open discourse – internment and torture – are the Empire's response to the fisherfolk. In torture there is an interlocutor and a respondent but there is no space for the discovery or surprise of discourse; there is only demand and confirmation. Excluded from civic space, the fisherfolk, are captured and forced into a space in which normal human rights are excepted. Anything can occur in this space; to the Empire the fisherfolk are non-people whose only remarkable characteristic are their lives, which are marked by their proximity to death. The Magistrate's consideration that the fisherfolk should be allowed the civic right to peaceful self-determination and his private revulsion at Joll's torture of the fisherfolk is exactly the response to the ethical-political

state of exception that the state tries to discourage by interning nomads. At this point in the narrative, the Magistrate effectively submits to the Empire's demand that those in the camps be deprived of civility and that citizens, like the Magistrate, may not offer hospitality to the prisoners. He stays within the boundaries of the state and even as he is confronted with the imperial space of the prison camp, does not yet respond significantly enough to present a transgressive challenge.

The fisherfolk's camp is an example of the particular zone of the state of exception in which the rules of inclusion and exclusion are exercised through violence. The fisherfolk, those whose existence declares an unintentional, passive, war on the state (in this way much like Michael K), are included in the town only by their enclosure in the prison. There is no ethical or responsive limit to the space they are kept in –no compassionate response is offered to these non-citizens. The Magistrate, considering himself a peaceable, thinking man, is upset by the extreme conditions of the camp, and as he hears the cries of the tortured fisherfolk, he feels that "the joy has gone from [his] life" (24). Nevertheless, he avoids contact with the interned and tortured fisherfolk, effectively offering no response to what he obviously considers abhorrent moral acts. At this point, then, he crosses no imperial boundaries and is as resolutely a part of the imperial order as the prison guards.

Like the camps in *MK*, the power of violent internment camps to segregate and control those inside and outside them is the material and political embodiment of state power. Wolfgang Sofsky, a German sociologist, describes the conditions

at Nazi concentration camps as those of "absolute power" (20-23). Such power, Sofsky writes, "liberates a perpetrator from all inhibitions; cruelty comes unhinged" (23). The "paradigms" of absolute power as exercised through violence are "terror, punishment, excess and massacre," and within this model "[v]irtually anything [by the perpetrator or, in some circumstances, by the victim] can be ventured, repeated, intensified, or halted, without reference to norms or goals" (23). The torture Colonel Joll metes out to the prisoners is not assessed by the limits of civility afforded to imperial citizens; though the Magistrate is shocked, he thinks only to himself that he has, "all [his] life believed in civilized behaviour" and that "on this occasion, however, [. . .] the memory [of the violence Joll does to the fisherfolk] leaves me [him] sick with myself [himself]" (25). There is no logic of justice the Magistrate can discover to understand the violence; no norms of either the town or the Empire explain it. The Magistrate's passivity while the fisherfolk are being tortured could be explained, then, as the shock of an ethical aporia; the camps represent the extreme manifestation of state control and the prospect of presenting a challenge to such a state is as unimaginable as the violence of the camps themselves.

Sofksy also suggests that another way to see such state violence in "excess" is as "an act of uninhibited self-expansion, one that simultaneously extinguishes sociality," thus altering ways in which all citizens of the state interact with one another (23). Expansion may seem to be a quality of nomadic movement, yet for the Deleuzian warrior-nomad the points along a path are subordinate to the path itself, a path which is "a trajectory" that "distributes

people [. . .] in an open space, one that is indefinite" (Deleuze and Guattari 380-81). The space the warrior-nomad moves through is not striated "by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures" and "stands in opposition to the law" (380-81). The space in which the state of emergency creates and exercises violence is the most controlled and limited of socio-geographies; ironically, these controls of people and the space they may inhabit are enforced with unlimited and excessive violence. In *WFB* the expanding colonial Empire disregards the limits of civility while at the same time restricting behaviour in every territory it inhabits.

Thus the Empire expands beyond the borders of the town into the homes of the fisherfolk at the same time as it brings the violence of such aggressive expansion into the town; "sociality," that is, a network of normal social relations based on a standard of human rights, is violated. Sofksy writes that it is this absolute, exceptional "[p]ower to kill" that turns a "prisoner society into a provisional society" (23). No citizen abiding by the rules of the violent state – like the Magistrate in the beginning of *WFB* – may be a freely sociable host; the citizen who undertakes to act on norms of sociality and/or hospitality he or she assumes as *a priori* to state power sets him or herself in opposition to an apparatus of cruelty that permeates every social, moral and political norm. This person becomes the nomad, traveling – metaphorically or physically, or in the Magistrate's case, both – contrary to the state's boundaries, oppositional in act and thought. This opposition is, of course, different from the distant and

unintentional opposition Michael K presents; it is a disruptive, transgressive response, nomadic in thought and action.[17]

This is how, then, the Magistrate relinquishes his status as citizen: the relationship he enters into with the girl is an act of nomadic disruption (though one he undertakes with a curious lack of apparent reflection on the ways this act contravenes the imperial state of emergency). He tells of his meeting with girl as if it were the most unexpected accident, something he could neither predict nor prevent. After the fisherfolk and nomads are tortured and the survivors are released, the Magistrate comes across the girl begging in "the shade of the barracks wall", and as he passes her she "give[s] [him] a strange regard, staring straight ahead of her until [he is] very near, then slowly turning her head away" from him (27). Indeed, she looks peripherally from her spot in the shade of the prison that damaged her. He feels her sideways glance like the guilt he felt about her capture and torture; as he stands within the hegemonic imperial discourse he feels his complicity as a trace of the state violence[18]. The girl's marred vision, like the Magistrate's remorse, is not a functioning part of the Empire's expansion machine: there is no room in imperial expansion for either the nomadic girl or the Magistrate's guilt. This is not to suggest that the Magistrate's curiosity and response to the girl come only based on a well of compassion; he certainly wishes for his own moral comfort as much as he may want to improve her living conditions. He does not want to erase her blighted vision and scarred body from

[17] Though in *WFB* the Magistrate's behavior responds to an undeniably violent and oppressive regime, such acts of nomadic social transgression can also themselves be violent and oppressive.
[18] As if the State oppresses its victims yet leaves a trail of suffering, a cloud of guilt, on the whole nation.

the town, to send her away healed and strong; rather, he is motivated by a desire to "struggle on with the old story, hoping" to "reveal why it was that [he] thought it worth the trouble" (26). The story he wishes to resolve is the story in which he is the peaceable judicial head of a town in the borderlands, a story in which his complicity with the Empire does not demand ethical compromise: ironically, then, it seems that his relationship with the nomadic girl originates from his desire to remain a fixed, comfortable, self-respecting citizen. The result is far different; his act is inassimilable with the Empire and the story is traversed and undone by his metaphorically nomadic transgression of imperial power.

The Magistrate is not, at least initially, aware of the potentially rebellious nature of his relationship with girl. As the Magistrate initiates this relationship, then, his complicity with the girl's capture and torture, the guilt he feels about this complicity, his desire to return to the peaceful life he led before Joll's arrival, and even his penchant for young mistresses must be considered. It is, then, with guilt, sorrow and perhaps lechery that the Magistrate meets and approaches the girl in the town square, offers her employment as his laundress and brings her to his rooms. Later in the narrative he reflects that he "gave the girl [. . .] protection," that he was moved to help her at least partly by a "decent impulse" to "be her father," but also for his own guilty need for "penance and reparation" (88). The girl sees his kindness through her peripheral visions; this can be read as a suggestion that she recognizes that his generosity is only partly altruistic (though the reader, like the Magistrate, does not have insight into her thoughts). The Magistrate achieves, as he washes her injured, swollen feet, a kind of ecstasy:

> I lose myself in the rhythm of what I am doing. I lose awareness of the girl herself. There is a space of time which is blank to me: perhaps I am not even present. When I come to, my fingers have slackened, the foot rests in the basin, my head droops. (30)

His physical condition seems post-coital; indeed, the Magistrate satisfies the repressed emotions he felt during the torture of the fisherfolk and nomads, and so the "blissful giddiness" he achieves is self-serving (30). His act of foot-washing that could be seen as the ultimate act of servitude and humility, then, is coloured by the pleasure he gains from it and the self-absorption in which he loses "awareness of the girl": how can this act be one of crossing, of a nomadic venture from his secure position within the Empire?

Perhaps it is this difficult moral nature of his contact with the girl that *makes* the Magistrate a nomad. In *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Emmanuel Levinas describes the relationship of discourse between self and Other as a kind of venture beyond one's own limits, as an attempt (an attempt, not necessarily successful) to reach "the metaphysical event of transcendence" through "the welcome of the Other, hospitality" (254). The welcome of the Other is, Levinas writes, expressed through languages, and the hospitality through desire; the *transcendence* of these elements, however, is "bound to love,"an emotion that "aims at the Other; it aims at him in his frailty" (Levinas 256). Certainly the Magistrate reaches towards the girl from *his* frailty –his guilt, his lechery, his self-interest – yet he also reaches towards her battered, frail feet. As he moves from his own frailty towards hers, he transcends the rituals of the

warring Empire with a ritual of his own desire and her need; this is, whatever the motives, an act of nomadic disruption to the Empire. There is no discourse and hospitality in the Empire's *attack* on the fisherfolk and nomad's physical vulnerability: the torture and imprisonment did create an exchange of desire or the "movement [that] proceeds from the other" in the "moral summons" of the "facing position" of discourse (Levinas 196).

The Magistrate desires, from the girl, the reciprocity of the kind of discourse Levinas might call love. He wants, at least, to decipher, to de-mystify, to *know*, the "marks on [her] body", and though his desire for her has not, he believes "taken on that direction, that directedness" he associates with penetrative sexual intercourse, he feels the distance between their bodies at times as a "curdling, thickening" space, at times "flat, blank" (33-36). His desire to know her *without* penetrating or marking her body is, at least in this way, in opposition to the relation the Empire has with her and with her body; this may not be enough to qualify his feeling for her as love, but is certainly an attempt at a movement towards the girl that is *not* the hatred the Empire's soldiers and tortures met her with.

His desire for the girl, and his gentleness with her, then, is not a matter of a desire to penetrate and have her[19]. It *is* a desire to know something of her, to

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[19] Senkwen Cheng writes that the Magistrate and Joll "share a craving" for knowledge of and mastery over the barbarians, and that both men "violate the girl's body by treating the body as a means to a truth that lies beyond it" (2357-9). I disagree that the Magistrate's physical intimacy with the girl is as "superficial," violent and negligent as Joll's (Cheng 2357). Though I agree with Cheng that neither men come to know the girl (neither men learn her language, for example), I believe that the Magistrate's refusal to have intercourse with her in his home is significant and is different than how Joll behaves. Do we really ever know people? Does physical intimacy ever predict knowledge of the other? This is a question for another study, perhaps a study of love in a time of colonial war.

read her body through intimate and gentle touch. Hospitality, if one works with Levinas' suggested definition, is the desire for intimacy with an Other expressed through welcome material contact – a bed, a meal, a foot washing. The Magistrate's relations with the girl could, then, be qualified as hospitable. Problematically, this extension of material comfort is, in the Magistrate's case inevitably connected to the oppressive Empire: the resources he is hospitable *with* (employment, shelter, food) are available to him only because he complies with Empire. Thus the ways that he "feed[s] her, shelter[s] her", even the way he "use[s] her body" are a violation of the passages of exchange the Empire condones: he crosses these passages and presents himself as a nomadic threat to the state (32). In a way, his self-absorption and oblivion of how contrary he is to the Empire, resembles Michael K's relation with the state: neither man sees himself as a palpable threat to the expansive warring state, yet both men are ultimately interned for their nomadic behaviour that is perceived as threatening.

What the Magistrate is aware of is how the barbarians – the actual nomads – have been constructed as targets of contempt, not as bodies to be deciphered through hospitality, but as bodies whose enigmas are read as threats. Before his venture to return the girl to her people, he curses his own inability to reduce this hostility:

> It is this contempt for the barbarians [. . .] that I as magistrate have had to contend with for twenty years. How do you eradicate contempt, especially when that contempt is founded on nothing more substantial than differences in table manners, variations in the structure of the eyelid? Shall I tell you

> what I sometimes wish? I wish that these barbarians would rise up and teach us a lesson, so that we would learn to respect them. (55)

How much he really wishes barbarian violence on *himself* is doubtful; he did not risk subordination to help the fisherfolk and only helps the girl once Colonel Joll has left town.[20] Perhaps, as part of his need to himself as a peaceable, hospitable man, he assumes that the barbarians would recognize his goodness, see him with the girl, and spare him their lesson on how "to respect them." After failing to convince a young soldier that the barbarians are wise, patient, people who want only "to move about with their flocks from pasture to pasture," the Magistrate tellingly asks himself whether his "indignation at the course that [the] Empire takes [is] anything more than the peevishness of an old man who does not want the ease of his last years on the frontier to be disturbed" (56). Perhaps his indignation at the attacks on the barbarians *is* based on nostalgia for years of peace; this is not in itself an extraordinarily weak or inexcusable motive for peace. The problem is that the Magistrate consistently and with little or no factual proof, represents the barbarians as peaceful, traveling hunters and shepherds; he dismisses every report of barbarian violence and exoticizes the girl as a referent for these harmless nomads. In the same way that the girl's acquiescence with his odd ablutions brings him comfort and assuages his guilt, the absence of the

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[20] Debra Castillo, in "The Composition of the Self in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*," suggests that both Joll and the Magistrate are waiting for the barbarians. Joll is waiting for, even anticipating the barbarians who "would validate his assumption of control over emergency powers" (79). The Magistrate, Castillo writes, is waiting for a force that will free him of his association with the Empire, an association he has come to find distasteful and burdensome. I am not sure that, at least in the earlier stages of the novel, before the Magistrate has been complicit in the torture of the fisherfolk, the Magistrate wishes to relinquish the privilege he gains by working for the Empire. As well, his guilt develops, rather conveniently, along with his realization that his power to legislate and rule the town is rapidly disappearing.

barbarian tribes in the town allows him to project a vision of a peaceful, Bhabhian world of flowing cultural exchange onto an Empire that has mistakenly declared a state of military emergency. His relations with the girl, then, would be an hospitable act of welcome in the tradition of the town he has long lived peacefully in; he defines himself as a traditional liberal humanist against an incorrectly repressive regime.

In *Of Hospitality*, Jacques Derrida writes that hospitality always exists in an aporia of tension between self and state, between public domain and private desire, between the ideal of unlimited hospitality and the reality of the limitations of hospitality. Derrida calls the compulsion for absolute hospitality "*The* law of unlimited hospitality", a law which asks the host "to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition" (77). As a compulsion, Derrida suggests that hospitality is a Western, especially Western Christian, social value (and like other social values, is maligned, misperformed and variously interpreted), and as such hospitality fits within the framework of Christian Liberalism that Attwell suggests the Magistrate wishes to align himself, and thus comes from a history of the perspective (Attwell 80). The idea of *absolute* hospitality, and the pursuit, successful or not, of absolute hospitality is, I propose, the ultimate transgressive nomadic act of exchange and the most destabilizing act within a state at war. As an act of exchange, absolute hospitality exceeds all limitations of bodily boundaries, and as an act within a political context, absolute hospitality rejects rules of commerce,

limits on property, and the categorization of some people as unfit for hospitality (criminal, enemy). It would unsettle the way that the state, Deleuze and Guattari describe it, would read the warrior-nomad "arriving from without" the state as appearing necessarily in "a negative form: stupidity, deformity, madness, illegitimacy, usurpation, sin" (353-54). This is not to say that the nomad is a guest; rather, that the act of receiving the nomadic person from without –without the Empire or, personally, without oneself –the host transgresses the state characterization of these exterior nomads as inherently dangerous, criminal and unwelcome. The girl in *WFB* certainly does not arrive in the bordertown as a guest, and when the Magistrate meets her she is deformed, partially blind and likely a prostitute. She, the nomadic person with no readable subjectivity, scarred by the state's hatred, provokes the Magistrate into a compromised hospitality that is itself a nomadic response.

Derrida makes it clear in *Of Hospitality* that no one can successfully perform an act of absolute hospitality, and suggests that it is doubtful whether anyone would even desire it. Yet this impulse towards "this thought of pure hospitality (a thought that is also, in its own way, an experience)," Derrida writes in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, presents to us the difficulty and the challenge of "the idea of the other, of the alterity of the other, that is, of someone who enters into our lives without having been invited" (129). Such a challenge is offered at every meeting and intimacy, so that any person who desires intimacy and communication must confront their own limits of hospitality.

Certainly absolute hospitality is different than what the Magistrate offers the girl; though he verbally requests no obvious reciprocity, justification or pleasure from her, he is aware of the compromised nature of their relationship, and is motivated at least partly by a desire to see himself, privately, as a rebel, or at least as a redeemed participant in the imperial order. He gains pleasure from massaging her feet and body, and the investigation he undertakes to uncover the details of her torture adds to his perception of himself as a just, concerned man (37-39). As a further complication to his supposed hospitality, she is not an invited guest of her own free will. Her people have left her behind and his people have left her incapable of leaving. She sleeps in his room as a platonic guest, but even this arrangement is not hers; when she attempts to seduce the magistrate in his room he refuses her caresses (59).

The Magistrate's refusal to have intercourse with the girl in his room, ostensibly born out of some odd and surprising sense of propriety (the Magistrate visits prostitutes in the village and sleeps with other girls in his employ even while adoring the barbarian girl), is yet another example of the limits of his hospitality: the girl may be expressing sincere sexual desire for him, in which case, as an absolute host he would be required to reciprocate in kind. Equally, though, she may be offering what she thinks is expected as payment for the hospitality she has received. In either case, this exchange of sexual comfort is imperfect and compromised and ends in the girl's humiliations and the Magistrate's "gloom" (60). This is not to suggest that a properly ethical response to the Empire's oppression of the barbarians would be to take the girl and other

barbarians as lovers; Derrida writes that "unconditional hospitality" is likely not "ethical, insofar as it depends on a decision" (129). David Attwell, in *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing,* writes that, to the Magistrate the girl is an "enigmatic presence [. . .] thwarting the process of subject-constitution" and that in "disallowing penetration" Coetzee "both acknowledges and refuses to perpetuate these generalized implications of dominance" (Attwell 79)

Certainly the power imbalance in their relationship is exacerbated by gender, politics, age, and her physical handicap. Yet the reader does not fully know the reason the girl decides to offer herself to the Magistrate, nor does the Magistrate seem to understand his inability to respond sexually to her: there is, in this awkward exchange, a failure of discourse, a miscommunication of desire. Both are left alone, neither cross from their bodies into the other's[21], and the Magistrate's impotency in the face of the girl's apparent desire reflects his failure to traverse the distance between them. It is here that a kind of ontological nomadism falters; the Magistrate does not enter the body of the nomad and the nomad girl does not envelop the colonizer's body. It is telling (and suggests that the Magistrate feels the failure of his relationship with the girl as a discursive, ethical enterprise of the peaceable man he wishes to see himself as) that soon after this incident the Magistrate undertakes geographic and political nomadism by returning the girl to her people.

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[21] Even the Magistrate's success in manually bringing the girl to orgasm, the act he calls "the most collaborative" they "have yet undertaken," brings them "no closer" and indeed only reminds the Magistrate of how unreadable, inaccessible, and foreign he finds the girl (47). She is conquered neither by his food, his shelter or his pleasuring; in this manner their attempt at nomadic discourse that transcends her role as a foreign barbarian and his as a colonial peon is impotent.

Whether the Magistrate's journey with the girl to her people is the act of a failed philanthropic colonist towards a weakened native or a genuine attempt to enter the aporia between absolute and limited hospitality, it is remarkable in its imaginative audacity. The journey is broached by a "blunder" as the Magistrate asks the girl an intimate question:

> I ask the girl about her sisters. She has two sisters, the younger, according to her, 'very pretty, but scatterbrained'. 'Would you not like to see your sisters again?' I ask. The blunder hangs grotesquely in the air between us. We both smile. 'Of course,' she says" (57).

It *is* grotesque; the Empire's violence has separated the girl from her people and the Magistrate keeps her as an employee and bedmate far from her sisters. In this equation of power he is the only person who can bring her to her sisters. To do so he would have to, as an imperial escort, return the girl to the barbarians the Empire has declared a threat to state borders. He proposes to cross the lines of state civility; he would cross the dialectic of state and enemy in order to extend his version of hospitality beyond the borders of his own home. Typically for the ambiguous generosity the Magistrate offers the girl, the journey is *his* undertaking and the girl "gives no sign of rejoicing" about it (63). In the context of his failure to achieve intimacy with the girl in his own home, his motives for returning her to her people is, undeniably, at least partly a failure of hospitality on his terms. Yet the *narrative* of the journey to her people, the journey as it appears to the Empire, is one of extension and rebellion against the *political* limitations placed on hospitable civility. If the Magistrate cannot overcome and cross his personal

limits of hospitable discourse, he may at least challenge the political limits – though which crossing is the most courageous and generous is certainly debatable. This act, crossing political and geographic borders, is still a politically nomadic act like that of a Deleuzian warrior-nomad. Just as the warrior-nomad is not a purely motivated hero moving purposely against the state, the Magistrate's commitment "to a course" towards the barbarians is motivated more by his own discomfort and guilt than by an anti-imperial manifesto (*WFB* 63). In this way, he brings a warrior-nomad's "*furor* to bear against the sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power *(puissance)* against sovereignty, a machine against the apparatus," but does so peripherally, unintentionally and for selfish reasons (Deleuze and Guattari 352). It is this very self-absorption and conflicted motivation that makes him not *less* of a warrior nomad but *more* of a warrior nomad: the Deleuzian nomad does not concern him or herself with the precise rules he or she breaks or the morals he or she transgresses.[22]

Like a warrior nomad who betrays "the collective law of [the] people, the law of the people that prohibits 'choosing' the enemy" the Magistrate approaches a space of exteriority that disregards the state distinction between enemy and citizen, foreigner and friend (Deleuze and Guattari 355). The barbarian girl represents both escort and prisoner, traveling with the horses, men and food that the Magistrate brings, yet proving herself a far more adept traveler in the alternating heat and cold of their winter desert journey (65-68). Though she

[22] The warrior-nomad "bears witness to another kind of justice, one of incomprehensible cruelty at times, but at others of unequaled pity (because he unites bonds)" (Deleuze and Guttari 352).

verbally expresses no gratitude for the men's escort, it is on the journey that she and the Magistrate consummate their physical relationship and the Magistrate feels sexual pleasure *with* (rather than *from*) the girl: "[. . .] I feel her hand groping under my clothes, her tongue licking my ear. A ripple of sensual joy runs through me, I yawn, stretch, and smile in the dark. Her hand finds what it is seeking" (69). Indeed, her hand finds him, and it is only now, on the journey away from the Empire in the space of exteriority, that they traverse the boundaries of their bodies: in this act they are nomadic through eros, traveling the most difficult distance to travel, that between two people. It is not a furor *against* empire, not a celerity or secrecy against the epistemological power of the expanding Empire, but as they have sex the Magistrate narrates that "in a minute five months of senseless hesitancy are wiped out and I am floating back into easy sensual oblivion" (69). The months of waiting within the Empire's town, employing the girl in his own peonage, and investigating the Empire's torture machine is not "wiped out," because without this time he and the girl would not be on the journey. That the Magistrate wakes from their sex "with a mind washed so blank that terror rises in" him suggests that he feels, for the first time, the extremes to which he has left his secure position within the Empire and has crossed state boundaries restricting political and personal interactions (69).

In their journey to the barbarians, then, the Deleuzian nomad's exteriority meets the aporia of responsive hospitality. The Magistrate is not a completely free-ranging expressive nomadic warrior and into the aporia of hospitable discourse he brings his power from and "terror" of the state apparatus. He thus

faces the dilemma Derrida describes as between "on the one hand, unconditional hospitality that dispenses with law, duty, or even politics, and, on the other, hospitality circumscribed by law and duty," yet for the Magistrate there is a "third hand": his own limitations (Of Hospitality 135). I am not suggesting that sexual intercourse is a kind of hospitality akin to welcoming a guest into one's home; rather, like Levinas' description of love, especially erotic love as fearing "for another, [coming] to the assistance of his frailty", intimate physical relations can be a way to transgress the boundaries of body, culture and politics in a way similar to personal hospitality (Levinas 256).

Using the magisterial power he has to commandeer the journey's small retinue, the Magistrate undertakes hospitality as the imperfect host of an imperfect guest. When he and the girl part, he looks on her for the last time not as a treasured friend but as "a stranger; a visitor from strange parts now on her way home after a less than happy visit" (79). As he returns to the town, he reflects that he finds "her face hardening over in [his] memory, becoming opaque, impermeable, as though secreting a shell over itself" (82). His contact with the girl, transgressive, nomadic and intimate as it may have momentarily been, is receding into his memory and he hopes only to "live out [his] life in ease in a familiar world" (82).

The town the Magistrate returns to is not, and cannot be again, the quiet frontier town he longs for is under direct Imperial control and he is charged with "treasonously consorting with enemy" (85).At first he embraces what he sees as the end of his "alliance with the Empire," seeing himself as "a free man" in whose

previous minimal opposition to the Empire there was "nothing heroic": in the prison Joll puts him in he is at first peaceful, imagining a lengthy martyred stay (87).

After suffering imprisonment and psychological and physical torture, the Magistrate exercises some of his last remaining agency to question the Empire's authority when he cries out against the public torture and humiliation of the barbarians Colonel Joll captures. He speaks out against their public torture and humiliation, to call attention to their status as humans deserving the civility accorded to humans by the state: "'Look! [He] shout[s]. 'We are the great miracle of creation! But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself! How - !' Words fail [him]. 'Look at these men!' I recommence. '*Men!*'" (117). Words do fail the Magistrate; he cannot offer the category of citizen to the prisoners because the state has, literally, labeled them "enemy." David Attwell discusses this protest as the Magistrate crying out against the "illiberal" nature of the Empire, but with the Magistrate's call for attention to "liberal" values appearing problematically anachronistic (Attwell 84). This supports a characterization of the Magistrate as nostalgic for a time of peace and security; such nostalgia is markedly *not* that of the eternally exterior warrior nomadic. His nostalgia betrays his attachment to his memory of the peaceful colonial town: he seeks to repair history, not to live outside of it like Michael K or a pure Deleuzian warrior nomad would. He did not cry out this way the first time he heard the cries of torture, the first time he witnessed the crushing of feet; yet it is only *because* his original

complicity bothers him as it does that he is moved to protest state violence, even at a definite physical cost to his own security.

The Magistrate's attempt to extend the hospitality of liberal humanism to the prisoners is reduced to the grandstanding of a decrepit fool; Colonel Joll's men beat the Magistrate in the head and drag him to prison, where the Magistrate doubts his will as an activist for humanity. He ruminates that it is "[e]asier to be beaten and made a martyr. Easier to lay my head on a block than to defend the cause of justice for the barbarians: for where can that argument lead but to laying down our arms and opening the gates of the town to the people whose land we have raped?" (118) Indeed, the Magistrate's idealistic vision of himself as a heroic rebel and ally of the barbarians is never tested; the barbarian hordes never arrive and he has no arms to lay down and no family to surrender to violence. He is, he knows, "[t]he old [M]agistrate, defender of the rule of law, enemy in his own way of the State, assaulted and imprisoned, impregnably virtuous, [. . .] not without his own twinges of doubt" (118). He is no galloping hero, his vision of himself as a martyr reveals his vision of his own enduring fame as a self-interested motive for his protest of the imperial violence.

The Magistrate is no wild and eminently powerful Deleuzian nomad-warrior. His power comes equally from his position as a state functionary as from his objective criticism of the illiberal state apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari write that the "war machine", that is, the force of pure exteriority, when directed towards anything "is directed against the State, either against the potential State whose formation it wards off in advance or against actual States whose

destruction it purposes" (359). The Magistrate has had a long life of involvement with the Empire's "formation", and his reflections after being beaten in the head reveal that he doubts his desire for the complete "destruction" of the Empire's apparatus. The Magistrate's end suggests that while he remains within the formation and protection (and punishment) of the state he maintains his role as a civic subject. His experiences with the girl and in prison leave him with a conflicted and morally ambiguous subjectivity, but do not transform him into a revolutionary hero, welcoming the state's downtrodden victims into his limitless protection. He is released from prison a weakened, homeless man, whose desire is "never to know hunger again" (139-142). "Singing for his keep", he tells tales of his travel with the girl and subsequent torture to the curious townspeople from whom he must hope for the hospitality of food (139).

The Magistrate, then, in order to extend civility to a nomadic guest, forfeits the power he has accumulated from years of co-operation with the state apparatus, thus becoming, though imperfectly, a transgressive nomad. The right of absolute hospitality, that is, the right to welcome any visitor into one's home is severely compromised in a state of exception in which the state apparatus extends into every imaginable space of the state (and often beyond the state). He is, like the girl, like the captured nomads, deprived of the power and the rights accorded to those included in state groups, a condition which, at one point, seems that it will "lead[s] him to solitude and a prestigious but powerless death," a condition that Deleuze and Guattari describe as a common end for the nomad (Deleuze and

Guttari 357). However, the way in which the Magistrate is most obviously *not* a warrior nomad is in his end.

At the end of the narrative, living in his abandoned apartment after the Empire's soldiers have left and the few remaining townsfolk wait for the barbarian invasions, he still disbelieves the threat of the nomads (156-57). His relationship with the girl long over and his trust in the Empire shattered, he dreams not of a heroic yet powerless end, but of "pass[ing] these last days [. . .] 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" (157). Unlike Michael K, who feels that "there is time enough for everything", for planting seeds with care, and does not seek a future or a past other than the one he lives in, the Magistrate dreams, still, of resting comfortably and waiting for his martyrdom, waiting, interminably, for the cryptic barbarians who would make him the one just man (*MK* 183).

Conclusion: The Nomadic Circuit in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Life & Times of Michael K.*

By examining Michael K's nomadic disruption to state categorization in *Life & Times of Michael K* and by analyzing how the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* responds, nomadically and otherwise to imperial oppression, I have tried to show how there are various ways in which a nomadic response can be ethically, politically and geographically transgressive. These transgressions, in the case of Michael K, may be unintentional, yet they trouble the state apparatus' attempts to categorize and control individual subjectivity. Living exterior to the state, Michael K differs from the Magistrate, whose nomadism moves from within state bureaucracy to desert land beyond imperial frontiers. The Magistrate's nomadic transgressions are burdened by his constant self-investigation in a way that Michael K's is not; yet both men, by the end of their narratives, are solitary and introspective. The difference between these two men is the difference between attempting a transgression (however compromised) against a violent state and fleeing from all contact with the state; how these behaviours reflect on the difficulties of acting ethically in a violent time is relevant beyond the context of South African history and politics that informs them.

Derek Attridge asks what "grips and compels" the reader to an experience of the novel that is beyond the experiencing of de-coding a political allegory, and suggests that *MK* invites the reader "to apprehend, and follow in its twists and turns, a consciousness unaffected by many of the main currents of modernity"

(49). That Michael K is a different kind of human resonates with a reading of K as an (albeit imperfect) Deleuzian warrior-nomad; how, though, does Michael K, like the Magistrate, share a common humanity with us, the readers? How far is Michael K's social distance and his desire to live in "a blessedly neglected corner, half awake, half asleep [. . .] like a lizard under a stone" from the Magistrate's machinations to situate himself between the Empire and the barbarians (*MK* 115-16)? Michael K's non-responsive nomadic exteriority is, insofar as it is transgressive and provocative, ethically related to the Magistrate's eventful relationship with the nomad girl and the Empire. The Magistrate at the end of *WFB* is becoming Michael K in *MK* – after years of war, after the barbarians arrive (or never arrive), after the town is reduced to a complex of buildings looted and then deserted by imperial forces and populated by those too young, too old or too decrepit to flee, it is not far-fetched to imagine that the Magistrate will embrace K's exteriority (*WFB* 154-57). Yet the Magistrate returns to his original quarters, encourages the townspeople to grow their own food, and "in all measures for [the townspeople's] preservation" he takes "the lead" (159).

What I suggest is that the Magistrate's various discursive expressions of guilt, desire, irritation and compassion towards the girl and her people is only a part of his transgression against the Empire. Once the Empire has proven ineffective and destructive, once the imperial soldiers have looted the town, frightened away the fisherfolk and reduced civil law to routines of public torture and empty heraldry, the Magistrate does not need to travel or rebel in order to transgress the Empire. Like the CMO in *MK* the Magistrate has idealized a

nomad, and like the CMO he ultimately remains in his outpost. Though he claims to have wanted to "live outside history [. . .] to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects," he writes this claim at his magisterial writing-table, thus leaving a "memorial" of himself and his town (169). In the end, his continued leadership role with his town – much more than the intimacy he attempted with the girl – is his historical narrative.

At the end of *WFB* the Magistrate comes across a children building a snowman in the town square. It is a scene he has dreamed versions of, a scene in which he finds the girl in the town's "snowswept square" building a snow town that "is empty of life" (57). In his dreams he sees no life in her world; her creations are as empty as her scarred eyes seem to him. As a symbol of his failure to know her, the dream reminds him that he only sees her "blankness" and that he has failed to traverse the most difficult journey, the distance between two people (51). As a nomad moving between two people, crossing boundaries of subjectivity, he fails. The Deleuzian warrior-nomad *has* no limited subjectivity, is all exteriority, like K, is not troubled by the impenetrability of others.

When the Magistrate meets the children in the square *outside* of his own subconscious, he recognizes that although it is similar it is "not the scene [he] dreamed of" (170). In the square the snowman the children make "is not a bad snowman" (170). It is crowned with a child's cap, and though he notices the snowman is "armless," he does not wish "to interfere" (170). Unwilling to build the snowman arms or change the children's game, he tells himself that "[l]ike much else nowadays, I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long

ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere" (170). The snowman is a metaphor for the other who is powerless to move away from or towards the Magistrate, and the Magistrate's final sentence reveals his understanding that however futile, however compromised, he will continue to move between complicity, guilt, desire and compassion. He cannot sculpt or inscript his narrative on the other, whether the other is a horde of unknown barbarians or a single girl. Though there is no compelling evidence in either novel that the approach of self-involved diffidence that K exhibits is a more ethical or transgressive than the Magistrate's contradictory and compromised attempt at reparation for his complicity with the Empire, what *is* apparent is that the ethical response is by nature a nomadic circuit that challenges the limits of categorized subjectivity.

K's response, through most of the novel seems barely a response. In most of Michael K's nomadic journey through the war-ravaged countryside he is not guided by a self-constructed narrative, does not seek a legacy, and does not seek an audience to advise or influence. Unlike the Magistrate, who towards the end of *WFB* tells his story for food and chastises Joll for shortsightedness and militarism, K ends his narrative crouched in the rubble of the home he once hid in with his mother. As he tries "to relax his body inch by inch," he imagines himself as an "earthworm" who is also a kind of gardener, living in non-narrative silence, sinking through the cement floor by *relaxing* through it (182). Yet his final fantasy is of beginning another garden in the country and of a traveling companion with whom he would leave the city and for whom he would find a teaspoon of water:

He would clear the rubble from the mouth of the shaft, he would bend the handle of the teaspoon in a loop and tie the string to it, he would lower it down the shaft deep into the earth, and when he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way, he would say, one can live. (*MK* 184)

In relation to the Deleuzian nomad who, by his very exteriority and self-reliance, declares war on the state, K seeks reliance on his own technology, his own infrastructure, and in this last fantasy, his own community. A community of two is small, indeed, but a community of two gardeners is an edenic foundation, and the idea of it suggests that K is less independent of human relations, less of a nomad warrior, than he seems. He could be, at this point, so worn down by being driven from his pumpkin patch, repeatedly interned by the state and by his increasing physical weakness, be ready for a companion. Are his days as a Deleuzian warrior nomad coming to an end? Deleuze and Guttari ask what the defeated warrior-nomad becomes:

> Could it be that it is at the moment the [nomadic] war machine ceases to exist, conquered by the State that it displays to the utmost its irreducibility, that it scatters into thinking, loving, dying, or creating machines that have at their disposal vital or revolutionary powers capable of challenging the conquering State? (356)

K has not ceased to exist, but the end of the novel suggests that he wishes for a change to his solitary circuit through the warring state. What he could not maintain on his own, then, and what he refused from the CMO, is absolute separation from others. He still imagines himself as a "creating machine," a

gardener, and still does not openly desire "revolutionary powers," but his idea of a companion and a shared well suggests another kind of nomadism (Deleuze and Guattari 356). Levinas writes that "the facing position," the position K imagines himself in with a partner, "can only be a moral summons," and is a "movement [which] proceeds from the other"(196). I am not suggesting that K has decided that his solitude is lacking morality; rather, I suggest that just as K's oblivious circulation presents a nomadic challenge to the state, the prospect of a partner he would "guide" to the countryside would present K with an ontological challenge. This relationship would be a *responsibility* for K: he imagines himself as a guide from the seaside to the country, as a procurer of fresh water, as a buyer of seeds and as someone who would offer his companion a way that "one can live" (*MK* 184). This responsibility represents a "movement" towards an intimate other, a nomadic crossing from the boundary of separate self to the needs of an other.

K's fantasy of intimacy is simple, edenic and uncomplicated. The Magistrate's transgressive relationship with the barbarian girl is layered with compromise, ambiguity and political power. Just as the barbarians do not enter into a creative Bhabhian discourse with the Empire in *WFB*, so it is unlikely that K and the homeless man who shares his shelter will create a garden paradise for two. Still, both the Magistrate and K seek to respond to what Levinas, describing face to face discourse, calls "the incomprehensible nature of the presence of the Other," a response that, for K, comes in a quiet space of his imagination, and for the Magistrate in his understanding of the limitations of an ethical response.

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